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Sozomen, Barbarians, and Early Byzantine Historiography

Walter Stevenson

One of the strongest bonds between classical antiquity and the present is our intense interest in ethnicity. For the ancient world this interest was most prominent in the literary genre of history from its extant origins in Herodotus. Though not all historians in antiquity shared this interest, there is still a continuum of ethnography from Herodotus to the Roman Tacitus and on into late antiquity in Ammianus Marcellinus.¹ In Latin writing this interest carries on into the Middle Ages with authors like the Venerable Bede.² But in the Byzantine historiographical tradition it seems to dwindle, especially when we look at the mainstream Christian history of the empire. For example, when one of the best historians of Byzantium, Michael Psellus, comes upon one of the most important ethnic groups that the Byzantines dealt with, the people of Rus', this is all he can muster:

At this stage of my history I would like to explain the reasons for this naval expedition (on the part of the people of Rus'), quite unprovoked by the emperor. This barbarian nation had consistently cherished an insane hatred for the Roman Empire,

¹Some argue that historiography developed directly from the distinct early genre of ethnography. See C. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Berkeley 1983), especially 12–16 on ethnography and its relation to historiography.

²See W. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton 1988).

and on every possible occasion, first on one imaginary pretext, then on another, they waged war against us.³

If we compare this with the pages upon pages of careful and balanced research that Herodotus, or even Ammianus, share with us on the Persians, the archenemies of Greece and Rome, we are left to scratch our heads. Somewhere in the passing of the tradition of historical writing from Herodotus to Psellus the ethnographical digression was lost. In this paper I examine one small moment in the transition from Herodotean to Byzantine historiography, and use this to discuss early Byzantine attitudes towards the Christian evangelization of barbarians.⁴

Sozomen, writing in mid-fifth century Constantinople, stands out as an exception proving the rule in Byzantine historiography. He is the first and last Christian Byzantine historian to make a serious effort at ethnography.⁵ When we consider

³*Chron.* 90–91: ἐνταῦθα δὲ καὶ τοῦ λόγου γενόμενος, βούλομαι τὰς αἰτίας ἐρεῖν ἅφ' ὧν ἐκεῖνοι μὴδὲν ἐναντιωθέντι τῷ αὐτοκράτορι τὴν ἐπιθαλάττιον ξυγκίνησιν καὶ στρατοπεδίαν πεποιήνται. τὸ βάρβαρον τοιγαροῦν τοῦτο φύλον ἐπὶ τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίαν τὸν πάντα χρόνον λυττᾶ τε καὶ μέμνηε, καὶ ἑφ' ἑκάστῳ τῶν καιρῶν τοῦτο ἢ ἐκεῖνο εἰς αἰτίαν πλαττόμενοι, πρόφασιν καθ' ἡμῶν πολέμου πεποιήνται. For an interesting recent study see A. Kaldellis, *The Argument of Psellos' Chronographia* (Leiden 1999).

⁴I. Ševčenko, "Religious Missions Seen from Byzantium," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 12–13 (1988–9) 7–27, cites, epitomizes, and comments brilliantly on the scant literature dealing with Byzantine missions.

⁵From Olympiodorus and Priscus to Procopius a classicizing secular historiography led naturally to some ethnographic digressions—e.g., Procopius *Goth.* 7.14, where he opens his famous discussion of the democratic Slavs. See J. Kapitanffy, "Griechische Geschichtsschreibung und Ethnographie in der Spätantike," *AUB* 5–6 (1977–8) 129–143. But little of this ethnography is as developed as we will see Sozomen's, and the secular perspective fades after Procopius. Where to draw the line between ecclesiastical and secular history? J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, "Ecclesiastical Historians on their own Times," *Studia Patristica* 24 (1993) 151–163, argues that ecclesiastical history is a distinct genre that was born with Eusebius and died after Theodoret (early fourth to mid-fifth centuries). Though I agree that Eusebius' break from tradition could be seen as sharp enough to warrant separating his text from the genre of history, Liebeschuetz himself concedes that Sozomen deals extensively with state affairs as does Socrates. Evagrius consciously imitates ecclesiastical historians but includes even more secular topics. In turn the subsequent tradition of Byzantine historians from the seventh century on will deal with heresies, iconoclasm, intrigue in the hierarchy, etc., without being called ecclesiastical history. So, *pace* Liebeschuetz, I prefer to see Sozomen in a continuum of ancient historical writing rather than isolating him in a genre distinct from

how quickly Christianity was spreading outside the boundaries of the eastern Empire in the fourth and fifth centuries it is striking how little mention barbarians and their evangelization earn in the early ecclesiastical histories.⁶ To illustrate this point I will begin by showing that Sozomen's predecessors, Eusebius, Rufinus, and Socrates, de-emphasized the natural interest that the historical genre had expressed in ethnography, and that Sozomen broke away from his predecessors with an experiment in adapting ethnography to Christian history. We will then consider why Sozomen made this innovation, and why his successors rejected it. I will argue that the Byzantine court's need for Christian unity against a hostile world had a narrowing effect on historians who themselves felt more of a threat than curiosity when considering foreigners. By contrast, Sozomen's eastern background⁷ may point to an explanation for his ethnographic interests, since subsequent Syriac interest in

mainstream historiography. E. Argov, "Giving the Heretic a Voice: Philostorgius of Borissus and Greek Ecclesiastical Historiography," *Athenaeum* 89 (2001) 497–503, gives a review of the recent literature on late antique historiography.

⁶See F. Winkelmann, "Die Bewertung der Barbaren in den Werken der oströmischen Kirchenhistoriker," in E. K. Chrysos and A. Schwarcz, edd., *Das Reich und die Barbaren* (Vienna 1989) 221–235, at 221: "Aufs Ganze gesehen nimmt die Barbarenproblematik nur einen geringen Teil der Interessen und des Stoffes der oströmischen Kirchengeschichtsschreibung ein ... Ethnographische oder inhaltsreiche geographische Angaben sind sehr selten." See also A. E. Nobbs, "Digressions in the Ecclesiastical Histories of Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret," *JRH* 14 (1986) 1–11, at 7: "For Socrates (and later Sozomen) the ethnographic interest is subordinated to a theological purpose such as the account of the nation's conversion." Though I agree with this basic point, I will attempt to show that there is a significant difference between Socrates and Sozomen in ethnography. T. Urbainczyk, "Observations on the Differences between the Church Histories of Socrates and Sozomen," *Historia* 44 (1997) 355–373, provides a clear and thoughtful analysis of Sozomen's deliberate deviations from Socrates, though she does not treat ethnography.

⁷Sozomen tells us his home was Bethelia in Gaza, so he may be assumed to have spoken Aramaic as his native language. He refers to the "Syrian language" in his text, perhaps talking down to his ethnocentric audience in Constantinople. At any rate, he shows a certain identification with Syriac Christianity. See E. Argov, "An Ecclesiastical Historian in Search of an Identity: Aspects of Early Byzantine Palestine in Sozomen's 'Historia Ecclesiastica,'" *ZAC* (forthcoming).

evangelism and ethnography contrasts with Byzantine historiography.

The de-emphasis of ethnography in early Christian historiography

Sozomen's predecessors and contemporaries in church history shy away from discussion of foreign peoples.⁸ Eusebius (*HE* 3.37) tells briefly of evangelists spreading the Gospel beyond the empire, but he does not follow up on this with specifics in his history. For example, when the topic of the Saracens comes up he shuns this fascinating desert people, instead confining his narrative to the grudging statement that they harassed the persecuted Christians who were fleeing into the desert: "In that mountain region very many were enslaved by the barbarian Saracens. Some of them with difficulty and at great cost were ransomed; others never to this day."⁹ Socrates has been discussed as having ethnographical digressions of a sort, though these are brief and openly rhetorical.¹⁰ For instance, Socrates discusses a hieroglyph in the temple of Serapis that both pagans and Christians claimed as their own. But his paragraph on the subject is simply an effort to solve a theological problem—he shows no interest in Egyptian culture or in hieroglyphics

⁸It is tempting to consider Palladius' *Lausiaca History* as a potential model, but it is not clear that it would have been considered a history, and Palladius is not very interested in ethnography; so too Rufinus' *Historia Monachorum*. The genre of Universal Chronicles, of course, is far more interested in foreign peoples though its efforts to find ethnic origins in the mists of remote antiquity fall outside of the scope of this paper. For a discussion of Byzantine chroniclers' research into Egypt and the Near East see W. Adler, *Time Immemorial: Archaic History and Its Sources in Christian Chronography from Julius Africanus to George Syncellus* (Dumbarton Oaks Studies 26 [1989]).

⁹*HE* 6.42 (ed. G. Bardy [Paris 1955]): πολλοὶ δὲ οἱ κατ' αὐτὸ τὸ Ἀραβικὸν ὄρος ἐξανδραποδισθέντες ὑπὸ βαρβάρων Σαρακηνῶν· ὧν οἱ μὲν μόλις ἐπὶ πολλοῖς χρήμασιν ἐλυτρώθησαν, οἱ δὲ μέχρι νῦν οὐδέπω. This is the first use of the term Saracen in extant Greek, and it sets the standard tone for dealing with the desert peoples—they were dangerous and hostile savages to be avoided.

¹⁰Nobbs (*supra* n.6: 7) mentions Socrates and hieroglyphics. Though it is correct to consider this an historical digression, it is clearly not an ethnographical digression similar to Sozomen's. Egypt had been part of the "civilized" Greco-Roman world for 700 years, and a dispute over the contentious use of a hieroglyph does not tell us much about Egyptians.

themselves.¹¹ Theodoret does describe the efforts of John Chrysostom to win the Arian Goths back to orthodoxy, but the passage shows less interest in Goths as a people than in Chrysostom's holy war against heresy.¹² Beyond the discussion of wars against them, and here and there a terse episode of triumphant mass conversion, the ecclesiastical historical tradition gives little notice to foreign peoples. Though a scholarly tradition from the time of Cassiodorus has put Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret into one mold, that of the "tripartite history," Sozomen is distinct in this area.¹³

It should be noted that our early Christian historians had at

¹¹Soc. *HE* 5.17 (ed. G. C. Hansen [Berlin 1995]; transl. A. Zenos, modified): "When the Temple of Serapis was torn down and laid bare, there were found in it, engraven on stones, certain characters which they call hieroglyphics, having the forms of crosses. Both the Christians and pagans on seeing them, appropriated and applied them to their respective religions: for the Christians who affirm that the cross is the sign of Christ's saving passion, claimed this character as peculiarly theirs; but the pagans alleged that it might appertain to Christ and Serapis in common; 'for', they said, 'it symbolizes one thing to Christians and another to heathens'. While this point was controverted amongst them, some of the pagan converts to Christianity, who understood these hieroglyphic characters, interpreted the form of a cross and said that it signifies 'Life to come'. This the Christians exultingly laid hold of, as decidedly favorable to their religion. But after other hieroglyphics had been deciphered containing a prediction that 'When the cross should appear'—for this was 'life to come'—the Temple of Serapis would be destroyed', a very great number of the pagans embraced Christianity, and confessing their sins, were baptized. Such are the reports I have heard respecting the discovery of this symbol in form of a cross. But I cannot imagine that the Egyptian priests foreknew the things concerning Christ, when they engraved the figure of a cross."

¹²Theodoret *HE* 1.2.31.

¹³See Urbainczyk (*supra* n.6), who discusses a variety of possible differences, though ethnography is not discussed. H. Leppin, *Von Constantine dem Großen zu Theodosius II: das christliche Kaisertum bei den Kirchenhistorikern Socrates, Sozomenus und Theodoret* (Göttingen 1996) 4, also sees a variety of fundamental differences, "sie (our three authors) unterscheiden sich sowohl in Hinblick auf ihre soziale Stellung und kirchenpolitische Position als auch auf ihr intendiertes Publikum." See also Y.-M. Duval, "Les métamorphoses de l'historiographie aux IV^e et V^e siècles: renaissance, fin ou permanence de l'Empire romain," in J. Harmatta, ed., *Actes VII^e Congrès FIEC II* (Budapest 1984) 137–182, at 174–175, where he argues that Sozomen's Book 9 follows Philostorgius and Olympiodorus closely. W. Stevenson, "Sozomen on Victor and the Easter Controversy," *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 74 (2001) 567–575, also discusses a sharp difference between Sozomen and Socrates.

hand material on successful evangelism of foreigners. The empire witnessed a remarkable spread of Christianity outward from almost all of its political boundaries. Sozomen dwells at length on Ulfila's evangelical work with the Goths; he not only won over large numbers of converts, but even created an alphabet and translated the Gospels into Gothic.¹⁴ In addition he gives us glimmerings of the spread of Christianity among the Arabs,¹⁵ Armenians,¹⁶ Celts,¹⁷ Ethiopians,¹⁸ Georgians,¹⁹ Persians,²⁰ and "Scythians,"²¹ among others. In fact, this evangelism culminated in Byzantium's most successful conversion, that of the Slavs, who would eventually continue the Byzantine legacy after the fall of Constantinople.²² As with the Goths, there was not only no imposition of Greek language, but rather a sensitive and successful adaptation of Greek Christianity to the language and culture of the "barbarians." As later historians,

¹⁴See H. Sivan, "Ulfila's Own Conversion," *HThR* 89 (1996) 375–377, who discusses Sozomen's particularly glowing and lengthy account of Ulfila's life and conversion of the Goths: *HE* 4.24 (meeting with Arians), 6.37 (conversion of Goths and of self), 7.17 (the tradition of preaching in the Gothic language).

¹⁵*HE* 6.38, discussed below

¹⁶*HE* 2.8. The Armenian king Tiridates had a divine sign and thus chose to convert his people. Sozomen calls them the first of the barbarians to convert.

¹⁷*HE* 2.6. Sozomen claims that the Celts/Gauls were converted by priests who were taken captive in the Gothic raids of the mid-third century.

¹⁸*HE* 2.24. The conversion of the Indians will be discussed below.

¹⁹*HE* 2.7. A captured woman taken slave displayed unusual asceticism and healing powers and thus won over the "Iberian" (Georgian) royal family. See B. Bäbler, "Der Blick über die Reichsgrenzen: Sokrates und die Bekkehrung Georgiens," in B. Bäbler and H. Nesselrath, edd., *Die Welt des Sokrates von Konstantinopel* (Munich 2001) 159–197, for a discussion of Georgians in fifth-century historians.

²⁰*HE* 2.8. The Persians were converted by their conversations with the Armenians.

²¹*HE* 6.21. For the "Scythians" we are shown an already converted bishop of Tomi, near what was traditionally called Sarmatia but by this time probably representing a mixture of that mélange called Goths along with the Huns. These Scythians are shown resisting the Arian tendencies of Valens. *HE* 7.26 tells of the holy bishop Theotimus' experience with the Huns.

²²See F. Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions among the Slavs* (New Brunswick 1970), who relates the story from the first Slavic conversions under Heraclius to the climactic efforts of Saints Constantine (Cyril) and Methodius in the ninth century.

like Michael Psellus, largely overlooked the conversion of the Slavs, Eusebius and Socrates overlooked early evangelical successes among foreigners. These successes were left for Sozomen to pick up and discuss.

Sozomen's ethnography

The best example to demonstrate Sozomen's more intensive ethnographic emphasis is the conversion story of the remarkable Arab queen Mavia and the discussion that she generates in the tradition of ecclesiastical historians.²³ The story first appears in Rufinus of Aquileia's *Ecclesiastical History* (2.6). That Rufinus mentions this episode at all shows a development away from his manifest Eusebian model.²⁴ But Rufinus is content to mention the conversion without any commentary on the Saracens themselves. Unlike Eusebius he is discussing an empire under the control of what he considers a heretic, Constantius II. He uses this episode to show how the monk Moses' piety overcame Constantius' Arian bishop—the first appearance of a monk in church history. But Rufinus is drawn into no further discussions of the Saracens themselves or how they were converted.

Socrates apparently used Rufinus as his direct source.²⁵ He treats the episode in a similar way, though he adds at the end a note of triumphalism:²⁶

When the emperor departed from Antioch, the Saracens, who had before been in alliance with the Romans, revolted from them, being led by Mavia their queen, whose husband was then

²³Winkelman (supra n.6: 221) recognizes this passage as the exceptional ethnographical passage in early eastern church history: "So berichtet z. B. Sozomenos, Kirchengeschichte 6, 38, 10–16 ... ohne Parallele bei Sokrates oder Theodoret ... über die Sarkenoi ..."

²⁴For a thorough study of Rufinus see F. Thélamon, *Paiens et chrétiens au IV^e siècle: l'apport de l'Histoire ecclésiastique de Rufin d'Aquilée* (Paris 1981).

²⁵For a full study on Socrates see T. Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople: Historian of Church and State* (Ann Arbor 1997).

²⁶The place of triumphalism in the ecclesiastical historians is discussed below.

dead. All the regions of the East therefore were at that time ravaged by the Saracens: but their fury was repressed by the interference of Divine Providence in this way ...²⁷

As with Rufinus, Socrates' narrative is focussed on the political turmoil that the Saracens had caused and on the necessity that this disruption be put down. Socrates ignores the opportunity to delve into the spread of Christianity or into interesting aspects of the Saracens as a people.²⁸

When we come to Sozomen, we are surprised to see that he values ethnography and displays skill and detachment in discussing it. When, following Socrates' structure, he reaches the episode of Mavia's reconciliation with the empire, he delves into the ethnographical profile of the Saracens:

They practice circumcision like the Jews, refrain from the use of pork, and observe many other Jewish rites and customs. If they deviate in any way from the observances of that nation, it must be ascribed to the lapse of time, or to their intermixing with the neighboring nations. Moses, who lived many centuries after Abraham, only legislated for those whom he led out of Egypt ... The ancient Hebrews organized their community life using unwritten customs before the Mosaic legislation. These people (Saracens) certainly served the same gods as the neighboring nations, honoring and naming them similarly, so that by this similarity to their neighbors in religion, they showed the origin of the change away from their fathers' customs. As is usual, in the lapse of time, their ancient customs fell into oblivion, and other practices gradually got the precedence among them. Some of their tribe afterwards came into contact with the Jews, gath-

²⁷Soc. *HE* 4.36: ἀναχωρήσαντος δὲ τῆς Ἀντιοχείας τοῦ βασιλέως, Σαρακηνοὶ οἱ πρώην ὑπόσπονδοι, τότε Ῥωμαίων ἀπέστησαν, στρατηγούμενοι ὑπὸ Μανίας γυναικός, τοῦ ἀνδρὸς αὐτῆς τελευτήσαντος. πάντα οὖν τὰ ὑπὸ τὴν ἀνατολὴν ὑπὸ τῶν Σαρακηνῶν κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν ἐπορθεῖτο χρόνον· ἀλλὰ τις Θεοῦ πρόνοια τὰ Σαρακηνῶν κατέστειλε δι' αἰτίαν τοιαύτην ...

²⁸Theodoret, the third of Cassiodorus' tripartite group, ignores the Saracens in his history, though he mentions Mavia in a different context at *HE* 9.20 (edd. L. Parmentier and F. Scheidweiler [Berlin 1954]). See T. Urbainczyk, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus: the Bishop and the Holy Man* (Ann Arbor 2002), for a full discussion of Theodoret.

ered from them the facts of their true origin, returned to their kinsmen, and inclined to the Hebrew customs and laws. From that time on, until now, many of them live their lives according to the Jewish precepts. Some of the Saracens were converted to Christianity not long before the present reign. They shared in the faith of Christ by contact with the priests and monks who dwelt near them, who practiced philosophy in the neighboring deserts, and who were distinguished by the excellence of their life, and by their miraculous works.²⁹

Not only is the very presence of an ethnographical digression in Sozomen surprising, but the absence of moral and theological judgment is more striking. Where is the triumphalism of church history in this discussion of the “conquered” Saracens? Is it perhaps implied in an anti-Semitic comparison with the Jews? This would seem very unlikely not only because of the neutral language in the passage, but also since Sozomen shows himself relatively lacking in anti-Semitism (for a fifth-century church historian).³⁰ Further, Sozomen does not disparage the Saracens, though he knew that more of them chose to return to Judaism

²⁹Soz. *HE* 6.38 (edd. J. Bidez and G. C. Hansen [Berlin 1960]; transl. C. Hartranft, modified): τοιοῦτον δὲ τὸ γένος ἔλκοντες ἅπαντες μὲν ὁμοίως Ἑβραίοις περιτέμνονται καὶ ὑείων κρεῶν ἀπέχονται καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ τῶν παρ’ αὐτοῖς ἔθῶν φυλάττουσι. τὸ δὲ μὴ πάντα ἐπίσης αὐτοῖς πολιτεύεσθαι χρόνῳ λογιστέον ἢ ταῖς ἐπιμιξίαις τῶν περὶ τὰ ἔθνη. Μωσῆς τε γὰρ πολλοῖς ὕστερον χρόνοις γενόμενος μόνοις τοῖς ἀπ’ Αἰγύπτου ἐξεληθούσιν ἐνομοθέτησεν... ἐπολιτεύοντο οἱ πάλαι Ἑβραῖοι πρὸ τῆς Μωσέως νομοθεσίας ἀγράφοις ἔθεσι κεχρημένοι. ἀμέλει τὰ αὐτὰ δαιμόνια τοῖς ὁμόροις ἔσεβον καὶ παραπλησίως αὐτὰ τιμῶντες καὶ ὀνομάζοντες ἐν τῇ πρὸς τοὺς πέλας ὁμοιότητι τῆς θρησκείας τὸ αἴτιον ἐδείκνυον τῆς παραποιήσεως τῶν πατρίων νόμων. οἷα δὲ φιλεῖ, χρόνος πολὺς ἐπιγενόμενος τὰ μὲν λήθη παρέδωκε, τὰ δὲ πρεσβεύεσθαι παρ’ αὐτοῖς ἐποίησεν. μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα τινες αὐτῶν συγγενόμενοι Ἰουδαίοις ἔμαθον, ἀφ’ ὧν ἐγένοντο, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ συγγενὲς ἐπανήλθον καὶ τοῖς Ἑβραίων ἔθεσι καὶ νόμοις προσέθεντο. ἐξ ἐκείνου τε παρ’ αὐτοῖς εἰσέτι νῦν πολλοὶ Ἰουδαϊκῶς ζῶσιν. οὐ πρὸ πολλοῦ δὲ τῆς παρουσίας βασιλείας καὶ χριστιανίζειν ἤρξαντο. μετέσχον δὲ τῆς εἰς τὸν Χριστὸν πίστεως ταῖς συνοουσίαις τῶν προσοικούντων αὐτοῖς ἱερέων καὶ μοναχῶν, οἳ ἐν ταῖς πέλας ἐρημίαις ἐφιλοσόφουν εὖ βιοῦντες καὶ θαυματουργοῦντες.

³⁰See Stevenson (supra n.13) for a demonstration that Sozomen tried to correct some of Eusebius’ anti-Semitism. Of course, Sozomen started his history with a veiled attack on Jews and could hardly be called a tolerant author by modern standards. But in comparison to Eusebius and Socrates he is remarkably detached and open in his discussions of Judaism.

than to convert to Christianity.³¹ In the context of fourth- and fifth-century legislation against conversion to Judaism (*Cod. Theod.* 16.8) the historian's detachment is even more interesting. Is the implication of early polytheism meant as a slur on both Jews and Saracens? Once again in the context of an ethnographical digression it is difficult to find any clues in the language indicating Christian triumphalism.

Yet more remarkable is the sophistication of method that the passage demonstrates. Sozomen shows an understanding of the effects of the cultural transition from orality to literacy, implying that the Hebrew oral culture was similar to its neighbors and did not differentiate itself until the "Mosaic" legislation was written down. We can see in this cultural transition from oral polytheism to literate Mosaic monotheism the beginnings of a developmental model. By showing the Saracens fading in and out of Hebrew cultural development Sozomen seems to imply that any culture could follow this path, and that the development of Judeo-Christian monotheism was not the patrimony of any ethnic group, but rather an ethnically open process that people like the Saracens could enter into at various stages.³² In this way he recognized the com-

³¹The authoritative works on pre-Islamic Arabs are G. W. Bowersock, *Roman Arabia* (Cambridge 1983); I. Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century* (Washington 1984), *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century* (1989), *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century* (1995).

³²One might suspect that Sozomen has pasted into this passage a standard discussion of "Ishmaelites," but his recent predecessors' and contemporaries' opinions of Arabs do not agree with him. See, e.g., John Chrysostom, *Homily 3 on the Gospel of Matthew* (PG 57.16): "Because Saracens, and Ishmaelites, and Arabs, and as many as are sprung from those ancestors, have nothing in common with the race of the Israelites. For this cause then he passes over those in silence, and hastens on to His forefathers, and those of the Jewish people." See also Theodoret, *Commentary on Isaiah* 13.20 (ed. J.-N. Guinot [Paris 1980]): "He calls Arabs those that we call Saracens. These are the people who come and go there bringing necessary wares to sell. The Palestinians also call Arabs Saracens. The holy Moses censured their commercialism [misquote of Gen. 37.28 where Joseph is bought into slavery by the nomads], 'The nomad merchant Ishmaelites.'" The general belief seems to be, as Chrysostom so forcefully states it, that Ishmaelites/Saracens had nothing to do with Jews.

plexity of cultural mixing and how blurred the lines of cultural traditions can be.

Why Sozomen amplified ethnography

Though Sozomen makes almost no overt mention of his purpose in pursuing ethnography, I will argue several possible motivations that arise from his unique historical goals. First, Sozomen appears to have used his ethnographical digressions to appeal to the educated elite of Constantinople by reviving the ancient style of Herodotus. Second, and more central to the goals of his history, he wanted to draw attention to Christian evangelism and the monks on the periphery of the empire who were peacefully engaging foreigners and converting some. Finally, he was attempting to build a bridge between court and monastic Christianity, an attempt in harmony with the vision of the empress Pulcheria with whom he may have been connected. The result of Sozomen's efforts was a broader, more compelling Christian history than others wrote in Greek late antiquity.

The most obvious aspect of Sozomen's divergence from Eusebius and Socrates is his effort to imitate the ethnography of ancient precedents. It is likely that part of his goal was to return to classical pagan models like Herodotus.³³ Such classisizing would allow him to polish the rhetorical appeal of Christianity for fifth-century Constantinople's educated elite.³⁴ Though

³³See A. Momigliano, "Pagan and Christian Historiography in the Fourth Century A.D.," in A. Momigliano, ed., *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* (Oxford 1963) 91: "Some of them (most particularly Sozomen) tried to be more conventional in their historiographical style, more obedient to rhetorical traditions." See also T. D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius* (Cambridge 1993) 206: "Sozomenus employed Socrates as his main source and rewrote him in a more elevated style, more in keeping with the traditions of serious pagan historiography."

³⁴See Leppin (*supra* n.13) 246: "Es ging Sozomenus demnach nicht nur darum, in der Kirche zu wirken, sondern auch nach außen hin, also in einem gewissen Umfang eine missionarische Tätigkeit zu entfalten; die verhältnismäßig ambitionierte literarische Durchformung des Werks erklärt sich unschwer mit dem Bestreben des Autors, auch ein Publikum anzusprechen, das dem Christentum noch fremd gegenüberstand und sich nicht mit theologischen Schriften beschäftigen wollte, dafür aber höhere Ansprüche an die literarische Gestaltung

Sozomen's proem is far more prolix than Herodotus', there is what appears to be a deliberate parallel. Sozomen openly declares his intent to discuss foreign peoples:

When I considered whether I ought to confine myself to the recital of events connected with the Church under the Roman government, it seemed more advisable to include, as much as I could, research into events affecting the faith among the Persians and barbarians.³⁵

Herodotus' proem opens with the announcement that he will treat Greeks and barbarians equally:

Herodotus of Halicarnassus' researches are here set down to preserve the memory of the past by putting on record the astonishing achievements of both Greeks and barbarians; and more particularly, to show how they came into conflict.³⁶

It is plausible that Sozomen was thinking of Herodotus when composing his proem. Like Herodotus he promises to balance discussions of his own cultural world with discussions of barbarians, and like Herodotus he uses the language of research (ιστορησαι).³⁷ The more educated audience of Constantinople, whether pagan or Christian, may well have understood this reference and welcomed a taste of ancient culture into Eusebius' generally anti-hellenist genre. Of course, Sozomen does not par-

von Geschichtsschreibung stellte." For discussion of this facet of Sozomen see P. Allen, "Some Aspects of Hellenism in the Early Greek Church Historians," *Traditio* 43 (1987) 368–381.

³⁵HE 1.1: βουλευομένω δέ μοι, εἰ ὧν ἔγνω μόνον προσῆκεν ἀναγράψαι τὰ γενόμενα περὶ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ἀνά τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἀρχὴν, ἔδοξεν εὖ ἔχειν, ἐφ' ὅσον ἐφικέσθαι δυνήσομαι, καὶ τὰ παρὰ Πέρσας καὶ βαρβάροις συμβάντα ἐπὶ τῇ θρησκείᾳ ιστορῆσαι.

³⁶Hdt. 1.1 (transl. A. de Sélincourt, modified): Ἡροδότου Ἀλικαρνησέος ἱστορίας ἀπόδεξις ἦδε, ὡς μήτε τὰ γενόμενα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων τῷ χρόνῳ ἐξίτηλα γένηται, μήτε ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θωμαστά, τὰ μὲν Ἕλλησι, τὰ δὲ βαρβάροισι ἀποδεχθέντα, ἀκλέα γένηται, τὰ τε ἄλλα καὶ δι' ἣν αἰτίην ἐπολέμησαν ἀλλήλοισι.

³⁷Use of the Greek ἱστορία/ιστορέω is common enough in the proems of late antique historians—Socrates, for example, also uses it in his proem, though not in reference to his own work. Sozomen's combination of drawing attention to barbarians and his research together is what might have recalled Herodotus.

allel anything like Herodotus' massive discussion of Egypt;³⁸ he is respectfully nodding at the tradition of pre-Christian historical writing.³⁹

But there are less apparent reasons for Sozomen to delve into ethnography. He has left us traces of the origin of his ethnographical interest within his history, and these traces seem to cluster around his discussion of evangelism. For instance, when he relates the episode of Frumentius creating the first diocese in India, he appends an editorial digression on why someone would think of traveling to India:

It is necessary to relate the reason for the ordination of Frumentius. It was as follows: The most celebrated philosophers among the Greeks explored unknown cities and regions. Plato, the friend of Socrates, dwelled for a time among the Egyptians, in order to acquaint himself with their manners and customs ... [Sozomen gives a list of Greek philosophers who traveled to far lands as part of their education]. Besides these philosophers, thousands of wise men among the Greeks, ancient and modern, devoted themselves to this travel. In emulation, Meropius, a philosopher of Tyre in Phoenicia, journeyed as far as India. They say he was accompanied by two youths, named Frumentius and Edesius; they were his relatives; he conducted their rhetorical training, and educated them liberally.⁴⁰

³⁸In Book 2; see Allen (supra n.34), who discusses Sozomen's debt to Herodotus.

³⁹B. Grillet and G. Sabbah, *Sozomène: Histoire ecclésiastique* (Paris 1983) 13–20, persuasively speculate that Sozomen was educated by the monks in Gaza and that this education left him familiar with, and not shy of, pagan culture; "Sozomène met une certaine coquetterie même à en faire part à ses lecteurs appartenant, semble-t-il, à un milieu assez cultivé. Il mentionne les Argonautes (I, 6), le mythe d'Apollon et de Daphné (V, 19), Pan et les Muses de l'Hélicon (II, 5,4), Pausanias et les guerres médiques (II, 24,2), Aristote (III, 15 et VII, 17), Homère, Ménandre, Euripide, Pindare (V, 18), etc." (17 n.4).

⁴⁰HE 2.24: ἀναγκαῖον καὶ τὴν αἰτίαν τῆς Φρουμεντίου χειροτονίας διεξελθεῖν. ἔχει δὲ ὧδε· περὶ πολλοῦ τοῖς παρ' Ἑλλησιν εὐδοκιμωτάτοις φιλοσόφοις ἐγένετο πόλεις καὶ τόπους ἀγνώτας ἱστορεῖν. οὕτω γοῦν Πλάτων ὁ Σωκράτους ἐταῖρος Αἰγυπτίους ἐνεδήμησε τὰ παρ' αὐτοῖς μαθησόμενος ... ἄλλοι τε ἐπὶ τούτοις μυρία τῶν παρ' Ἑλλησι σοφῶν, ἀρχαῖοι καὶ νεώτεροι, τοῦτο ἐσπούδασαν. οὓς ζηλώσας Μερόπιός τις φιλόσοφος Τύριος τῆς Φοινίκης παρεγένετο εἰς Ἰνδοῦς. εἶποντο δὲ αὐτῷ παῖδες δύο, Φρουμεντίος τε καὶ Ἐδέσιος, ἀμφοῖν δὲ γένοι αὐτῷ προσήκοντες· οὓς διὰ λόγων ἤγε καὶ ἐλευθερίως ἐπαίδευεν. Compare

Here Sozomen establishes Frumentius as the equivalent of Plato in Egypt, that is, as a great thinker engaged in philosophical pursuits. But at this point the story turns away from praise of the liberal arts to evangelism. The narrative proceeds to bring Frumentius back as a slave in the royal court of India. After proving his merit there he is given freedom. Then Sozomen finally comes to the point of his relatively lengthy digression:

Frumentius, however, instead of returning to Phoenicia, went to Alexandria; for with him patriotism and filial piety were subordinate to religious zeal. He conferred with Athanasius, the head of the Alexandrian Church, described to him the state of affairs in India, and the necessity of appointing a bishop over the Christians located in that country. Athanasius assembled the local priests, and consulted with them on the subject; and he ordained Frumentius bishop of India, since he was peculiarly qualified and apt to do much service for the faith among those to whom he was the first to manifest the name of Christian and sowed the seed of participation in the doctrine. Frumentius, therefore, returned to India, and, it is said, discharged the priestly functions so well that he became an object of universal admiration, and was revered as no less than an apostle.⁴¹

So we find that a Platonic, intellectual curiosity led Frumentius to become the bishop of India. Both Sozomen's long defense of travel to barbarians as a noble tradition and his very decision to include this romantic tale tell us something about his view of

Socrates *HE* 1.19, who gives the Frumentius story without this introduction or the stress on liberal education and its role.

⁴¹*HE* 2.24: Φρουμέντιος δὲ τὴν ἐπὶ Φοινίκην ὁδὸν τέως ἀναβαλλόμενος ἀφίκετο εἰς Ἀλεξάνδρειαν· ἔδοξε γὰρ αὐτῷ οὐ καλῶς ἔχειν πατρίδος καὶ γένους δευτερεύειν τὴν περὶ τὰ θεῖα σπουδὴν. συντυχῶν δὲ Ἀθανασίῳ τῷ προΐσταμένῳ τῆς Ἀλεξανδρέων ἐκκλησίας τὰ κατ' Ἰνδοὺς διηγήσατο καὶ ὡς ἐπισκόπου δεῖ αὐτοῖς τῶν αὐτόθι Χριστιανῶν ἐπιμελησομένου. ὁ δὲ Ἀθανάσιος τοὺς ἐνδημοῦντας ἱερέας ἀγείρας ἐβουλεύσατο περὶ τούτου· καὶ χειροτονεῖ αὐτὸν τῆς Ἰνδικῆς ἐπίσκοπον, λογισάμενος ἐπιτηδειότατον εἶναι τούτον καὶ ἱκανὸν πολλὴν ποιῆσαι τὴν θρησκείαν, παρ' οἷς πρῶτος αὐτὸς ἔδειξε τὸ Χριστιανῶν ὄνομα καὶ σπέρμα παρέσχετο τῆς τοῦ δόγματος μετουσίας. ὁ δὲ Φρουμέντιος πάλιν εἰς Ἰνδοὺς ὑποστρέψας λέγεται τοσοῦτον εὐκλεῶς τὴν ἱερωσύνην μετελθεῖν, ὡς ἐπαινεθῆναι παρὰ πάντων τῶν αὐτοῦ πειραθέντων, οὐχ ἦττον ἢ τοὺς ἀποστόλους θαυμάζουσι.

ethnography and evangelism. He seems to argue that pagan intellectual traditions and Christian evangelism are not only not opposed, but in fact closely allied. The study of foreign lands and peoples not only enriches education but also wins foreigners over to Christianity.

It has been argued that digressions like the story of Frumentius show Sozomen's eagerness to reach an educated pagan audience.⁴² This is indeed apparent in this story and a variety of others, but does not undercut the connection of ethnography with evangelism. Though liberal scholars like Frumentius may initiate foreign churches, in Sozomen monks play a more important role. This facet of Sozomen's narrative is well known⁴³ and manifests itself in a variety of ways—most interestingly in a personal anecdote from his family history. Sozomen tells us how his grandfather was converted by the monk Hilarion (5.15). In a case of demonic possession neither the local pagans nor Jews could cure the victim, but the monk Hilarion was able to do so by using the name of Christ. The context of the story, persecution of Christians under the reign of Julian, makes it clear that Sozomen's home region of Gaza saw Christians as a minority. Nevertheless in this case the monk's presence and holiness were instrumental in converting the family to Christianity.⁴⁴

A more general example of monkish evangelism can be seen in

⁴²See Leppin (*supra* n.13) 246.

⁴³Urbainczyk (*supra* n.6) 362–364 argues for Sozomen's particular stress on monks. See also Grillet/Sabbah (*supra* n.39) 43, "Au cours de trois longs développements, aux livres I, III et VI, il décrit l'existence de ces moines et le rayonnement qu'ils exercèrent sur les populations de tout le pourtour méditerranéen oriental." L. Cracco Ruggini, "The Ecclesiastical Histories and Pagan Historiography: Providence and Miracles," *Athenaeum* 55 (1977) 107–126, argues that holy men were esteemed by all the early ecclesiastical historians: "Along with emperors, in fact, holy men of the Egyptian desert and of the Syrian and Palestinian countryside are the new heroes of the Church Histories" (116). Though Socrates also discusses monks, Sozomen's emphasis is perceptibly more prominent. For instance, a rough quantification: Socrates uses the words *μοναχός/μοναχικός* 44 times, Sozomen 104 (TLG searches).

⁴⁴Sozomen cannot resist adding that his grandfather (like Frumentius) showed great devotion to liberal studies and especially mathematics.

Sozomen's account of the Saracens that was discussed above. The narrative underlines that it was only by the unusually just and holy presence of the monk/bishop Moses among the far-flung Saracens that Queen Mavia and her people were won over to Christianity. Whether or not this account is historically accurate, it is one of Sozomen's many episodes in which monks play a role in evangelism.⁴⁵ In his discussion of the spread of Christianity in the eastern Mediterranean, Sozomen is more explicit and rises to even a higher level of enthusiasm:

They [monks] were instrumental in leading nearly the whole Syrian nation, and most of the Persians and Saracens, to the proper religion, and caused them to reject paganism. After beginning the monastic philosophy there, they brought forward many like themselves.⁴⁶

Their ascetic life (the conventional term was "Christian" or "monastic philosophy"), their humility and devoutness far from the perceived decadence of Constantinople, attracted the foreigners living nearby. Even their ability to speak local languages distanced them from the haughty Byzantine court.

Sozomen also uses these monks to underline what he seems to see as a fundamental conflict between the politically powerful hierarchy of the church and the rather independent monks. Sozomen found the perfect material to illustrate this conflict in the life of John Chrysostom.⁴⁷ We are shown at great length the

⁴⁵See J. S. Trimingham, "Mawiyya: the First Christian Arab Queen," *Theological Review of the Near East School of Theology* 1 (1978) 3–10: "Though Sozomen's statement that most of the Saracens were converted is certainly exaggerated, his claim that conversions came about mainly through the mediation of ascetics and monks, rather than through the agents of the established ecclesiastical organizations, is not far from the truth" (6). See also G. W. Bowersock, "Mavia, Queen of the Saracens," in W. Eck *et al.*, ed., *Studien zur antiken Sozialgeschichte: Festschrift F. Vittinghoff* (Vienna 1980) 477–495.

⁴⁶HE 6.34: Σύρους τε γὰρ ὡς ἐπίπαν καὶ Περσῶν καὶ Σαρακηνῶν πλείστους πρὸς τὸ οἰκεῖον ἐπηγάγοντο σέβας καὶ ἑλληνίζειν ἔπαυσαν· μοναχικῆς τε φιλοσοφίας ἐνθάδε ἄρξαντες πολλοὺς ὁμοίους ἀπέδειξαν.

⁴⁷Sozomen devotes almost his whole eighth book to Chrysostom and the controversies surrounding him. Winkelmann (*supra* n.6: 222) noticed a connection with evangelism in Chrysostom (though Sozomen curiously ignores Chrysos-

monkish bishop of Constantinople caught between the machinations of Theophilus, patriarch of Alexandria, and the righteous, humble pleas of the monks of Egypt.⁴⁸ Sozomen's depiction that the politically sophisticated Theophilus could pursue a petty squabble with these virtuous monks all the way to the expulsion of the holy St John Chrysostom from Constantinople, leaves no doubt where his sympathies lie. The book ends with two dire warnings: the portentous death of Arcadius' wife Eudoxia,⁴⁹ who had opposed Chrysostom; and Sozomen's judgment on the relation of church and state, "About this period the dissensions by which the Church was agitated were followed, as is frequently the case, by disturbances and commotions in the state."⁵⁰ Thus he sets the stage for reform.

tom's evangelical initiative): Theodoret *HE* 5.30–31 (transl. B. Jackson), "It was perceived by John that the Scythians were involved in the Arian net; he therefore devised counter contrivances and discovered a means of winning them over. Appointing presbyters and deacons and readers of the divine oracles who spoke the Scythian tongue, he assigned a church to them, and by their means won many from their error. He used frequently himself to visit it and preach there, using an interpreter who was skilled in both languages, and he got other good speakers to do the same. This was his constant practice in the city, and many of those who had been deceived he rescued by pointing out to them the truth of the apostolic preaching. On learning that some of the Nomads encamped along the Danube were thirsty for salvation, but had none to bring them the stream, John sought out men who were filled with a love of labor like that which had distinguished the apostles, and gave them charge of the work. I have myself seen a letter written by him to Leontius, bishop of Ancyra, in which he described the conversion of the Scythians, and begged that fit men for their instruction might be sent." Though this is a remarkable story of Chrysostom's foresight, one can see that this is a reaction to the Goths' Arian allegiance, and probably not the first organized effort at foreign missions. Chrysostom's tight connection to monasticism also explains his unparalleled effort to initiate evangelism from Constantinople.

⁴⁸See Chrysostom's *Comparatio regis et monachi*, in the edition of D. G. Hunter, *A Comparison between a King and a Monk* (Lewiston 1988). Hunter argues persuasively that this is a genuine work of Chrysostom.

⁴⁹*HE* 8.27: "About the same period some hailstones of extraordinary magnitude fell at Constantinople and in the suburbs of the city. Four days afterwards, the wife of the emperor died. These occurrences were by many regarded as indications of Divine wrath on account of the persecution that had been carried on against John."

⁵⁰*HE* 8.25. Sozomen did not have to struggle to find a list of military disasters in the first decade of the fifth century.

The reform arrives with Pulcheria at the beginning of Book 9. Sozomen's encomium to this empress indicates he had a particularly close relationship with the pious sister of Theodosius II.⁵¹ Pulcheria's monastic ways allow Sozomen to close his history with the bright news of this reformed and holy court that espoused the virtues of Sozomen's beloved monks.⁵² He is also able to achieve a practical advantage by ending his history with praise of the court under which he would publish. But Sozomen's particular emphasis on Pulcheria supports her favor for monastics and may even suggest that Sozomen himself enjoyed some favor in this court. Whatever the case may be, his ordering of the last two books of his history sets up a dialectic of court and monastery that is resolved in the celebrated perfection of the "reign" of Pulcheria.⁵³

It is possible that Sozomen's interest in ethnography arose from his unusual background.⁵⁴ His family's positive experience in being evangelized by monks and his own enjoyment of the

⁵¹See *HE* 9.1–3. No other figure in the history draws such lavish and extensive praise. Leppin (supra n.13: 249–250) feels that Sozomen shared Pulcheria's pious enthusiasm, and this sympathy led to his exaggeration of her importance—there is no discussion of those sharing the regent's power at the time, Anthemius, Chrysaphius, and Eudocia: "Den klärsten Hinweis für seine zeitgeschichtliche Einordnung liefert indes die in den ersten Kapiteln des neunten Buches überdeutliche Hochschätzung der Kaiserschwester Pulcheria, deren Einfluß auf die Entwicklung Theodosius' II. er so sehr betont, daß der in den ersten Regierungsjahren des Theodosius ebenfalls einflußreiche Anthemius gar nicht auftaucht. Pulcheria hatte sich zwar in den vierziger Jahren gegen die von Socrates besonders geachtete Kaisergattin Eudocia durchgesetzt, besaß aber nicht mehr den maßgeblichen Einfluß, den sie einst, in den frühen Regierungsjahren des Theodosius genoßen hatte; der Eunuch Chrysaphios war jetzt der wichtigste Berater des Kaisers. Zur Orientierung an Pulcheria paßt wiederum, daß für Sozomenus die Reliquienverehrung und die Bestätigung des Glaubens durch Wunder so wichtig sind: Pulcherias Religiosität manifestierte sich besonders stark in diesem Bereich."

⁵²Socrates, in his panegyric to Theodosius II (*HE* 7.22), gives the credit for the monastic court to the young emperor himself: "He rendered his palace little different from a monastery: for he, together with his sisters, rose early in the morning, and recited responsive hymns in praise of the Deity."

⁵³See A. Cameron, "The Empress and the Poet: Paganism and Politics at the Court of Theodosius II," *YCS* 27 (1982) 217–289, esp. 263–267 where he explicates the subtleties of Pulcheria's career at court.

⁵⁴His childhood proximity to Saracens may have played a role.

reforms of the court of Pulcheria may have inspired him to draw the focus of his history away from the narrowly traditional, triumphalist attention to the victories of the Christian state and hierarchy over heretics and barbarians. Rather his monkish proclivities could lead him to broaden the field of his narrative to include a sympathetic documentation of foreigners and their first interactions with Christianity.

Why Eusebius and Socrates de-emphasized ethnography

Ethnographic digressions seem perfectly suited to the purposes of Christian history, since we know that Christians spent so much time and effort from the mid-first century through the fourth wandering among foreign peoples attempting to convert them to Christianity. A modern parallel may help to illustrate the point: we might know almost nothing of the Algonquin language or the religious practices of the Aztecs without the vast documentation of Christian missionaries. The Christian tendency to wander, learn foreign languages, and record their experience is the foundation for our ethnographical knowledge of the pre-Colombian Americas. It seems natural that early Christians would have followed a similar pattern.

But the early Christian historians confront us with a daunting problem: why did they ignore such a rich area of traditional historiography, an area very well suited to the enormous successes of Christian missionaries in the third and fourth centuries? I will argue that Eusebius set a narrow precedent that stemmed from his own experience of Christian victory over Roman persecution. His intense focus on the empire's role in cementing this victory, and on the threat of doctrinal dissent, blinkered him and his successors from expanding to traditional areas of discussion like ethnography.

This narrowing of vision in Eusebius often goes by the name triumphalism. And if triumphalism marks the essence of Christian historiography, then Eusebius would be the fountain-

head of this tradition. Many have noticed the tendency of Eusebius' new historical form to emphasize the victory of Christianity and to depict a world fully under the control of the new Christian state so emphatically that it could be seen as Byzantium's most radical and essential historiographical innovation. For instance, a recent book judges Eusebius' successors Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret in this way:

Those extollers of the pro-Nicene Christian "establishment," that intellectual triumvirate who confirmed for all time the role of Church history as a necessary act of rhetoric and a distinct literary genre, followed their most notable predecessors, Eusebius of Caesarea, Rufinus of Aquileia and Philostorgius of Cappadocia, in documenting the apportionments of divine justice in ecclesiastical and wider affairs. From Eusebius ... they imbibed confident providentialism, if not triumphalism, reassuring their readers that God was protecting His people against error and political disorder.⁵⁵

Readers familiar with Eusebius will have a hard time disagreeing with this point on triumphalism. In fact, it is difficult to overemphasize the force of Eusebius' rhetorical drive. For instance, in this passage taken from his own speech forming the centerpiece of his history's triumphal last book, he claims that

⁵⁵G. W. Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography* (London/New York 2000) 213; he continues, "These three, I venture to assert, are the veritable consolidators of Byzantinism: Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret, a trio leaving us with the post Biblical 'synoptic problem' of early Orthodoxy, and confirming yet again that the age-old task of the historian to apportion praise and blame was being resumed in Christian historiographical assessments." See also Lepin (*supra* n.13) 25, who notices a recent trend away from the tripartite model: "Der Forschungsüberblick hat vielleicht deutlich machen können, daß das monolithische Bild der drei Kirchenhistoriker, das in der älteren Forschung gezeichnet wurde, sich aufzulösen beginnt; aus verschiedenen Richtungen gibt es Ansätze, Unterschiede zwischen den drei Autoren herauszuarbeiten." See also J. Harries, "Sozomen and Eusebius: the Lawyer as Church Historian in the Fifth Century," in C. Holdsworth and T. P. Wiseman, edd., *The Inheritance of Historiography, 350–900* (Exeter 1986) 45–52, who mentions, "an apparently conscious attempt by Sozomen, as by Socrates, to redefine ecclesiastical history, a genre dominated by its founder, Eusebius of Caesarea, as a proper subject for secular historians" (45).

Christianity has conquered the whole world with Christ as the new king:

For which of the kings who ever lived achieved such greatness as to fill the ears and mouths of all men on earth with his name? What king established laws so just and impartial, and was strong enough to have them proclaimed in the hearing of all mankind from the ends of the earth and to the furthest limit of the entire world? Who made the barbarous, savage customs of savage races give place to his own civilized and most humane laws?⁵⁶

Of course Christianity had from the beginning emphasized a vague, apocalyptic triumph in the resurrection of Jesus, but the key to Eusebius' innovation is adapting this spiritual triumph to the political world. The followers of Jesus, cowering under persecution for centuries, hardly could have imagined the Roman Empire as the Church with Christ as a metaphorical emperor doling out judgment on foreigners obstructing Greco-Roman Christianity.⁵⁷ Eusebius' triumphalism draws most of his attention away from the world of Christianity and focuses it instead on the the new born Christian state.

⁵⁶Eus. *HE* 10.4.17–18, from a speech on the new churches in Tyre presumably given by Eusebius himself: τίς γὰρ τῶν πώποτε βασιλέων τοσοῦτον ἀρετῆς ἠνέγκατο, ὡς πάντων τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς ἀνθρώπων ἀκοὴν καὶ γλῶτταν ἐμπλήσαι τῆς αὐτοῦ προσηγορίας; τίς βασιλεὺς νόμους εὐσεβεῖς οὕτω καὶ σώφρονας διατάξάμενος ἀπὸ περάτων γῆς καὶ εἰς ἄκρα τῆς ὅλης οἰκουμένης εἰς ἐπήκοον ἅπασιν ἀνθρώποις ἀναγινώσκεσθαι διαρκῶς ἐκράτουνεν; τίς ἀνημέρων ἔθνῶν ἔθη βάρβαρα καὶ ἀνήμερα τοῖς ἡμέροις αὐτοῦ καὶ φιλανθρωποτάτοις παρέλυσεν νόμοις; Momigliano (*supra* n.33: 91) suggests that the providential and triumphal aspects of Eusebius were inherited from his Hellenized Jewish precedents, but I have found no parallels in Maccabees or Josephus to compare to this passage.

⁵⁷Eusebius's tenth book provides the triumphal celebration. Mostly he is content to quote imperial edicts supporting the catholic church, but also allows himself to pour out remarkably innovative inferences on the nature of Christian victory. For instance, at 10.9.7 where he equates Constantine and his son Crispus (who was executed shortly thereafter) to God the Father and Christ the Son in their victory at Adrianople in 324: "Taking God the universal King, and God's Son the Savior of all, as Guide and Ally, father and son together divided their battle array against God's enemies on every side, and easily carried off the victory: every detail of the encounter was made easy for them by God, in fulfilment of His purpose."

Some have pointed to Eusebius' preoccupation with doctrine as the essence of his narrow historical focus. For example, Momigliano asserted that the essence of Eusebius' historiography was protection of Christian doctrinal purity—certainly a novel aspect of the genre of church history.⁵⁸ Eusebius spends many of his pages advertising various heresies. But the character of his defense paradoxically undermines the triumphalism, and Eusebius' call to arms against the foes of Greco-Roman Christianity can hardly reflect the Christian doctrine of his time. Christian Scripture, ante-Nicene Church Fathers, and even the dogmatic statements of the Council of Nicaea do not suggest that Christianity should and will conquer "barbarian" customs by imposing civilized "laws." In addition, not only is Eusebius fantasizing that Christianity has imposed its customs (which were remarkably diverse in the early fourth century) on "barbarians," but he is implying that the Greco-Roman culture will be the only vehicle for the spread of Christianity. Such a definition of what is "Christian" would exclude the considerable local bodies of Aramaic, Coptic, Ethiopian, and Persian Christianity, to name a few. So, though Eusebius attempts to define a Christian historiography that will defend doctrinal purity, his narrow focus on Greco-Roman Christianity and its imperialistic goals undermines his intent. Doctrinal purity for Eusebius is just another face of triumphalism.

Rufinus and Socrates, who followed Eusebius closely in their approach, did open themselves to a more detached discussion of secular affairs as well as some few glimpse of foreigners. But the overall impression is that they maintained Eusebius's narrow focus. As we have seen, they did this under particular political and historical pressures. Sozomen, in his turn under unique circumstances that differentiated him even from his co-

⁵⁸Momigliano (*supra* n.33) 91.

evals Socrates and Theodoret, attempted to open up Christian historiography, in a few areas.

Why did early Byzantine historiography ignore its evangelistic “victories” over barbarians? Even Sozomen made relatively little use of the vast material at his hands. One general approach to this question arises from the discussion of the goals of Christian discourse in the fourth and fifth centuries. Eusebius’ contemporary setting is different enough from Socrates’ and Sozomen’s that he should be left out of this discussion: after decades of undignified official repression he clearly felt the need to celebrate Christianity’s independence, and to celebrate the agent of this victory, Constantine. His understanding of the inevitability of Christian victory led to particular enthusiasm in stressing the role of the emperor as God’s vicar on earth. But the scene had changed by the time of Socrates. The progress of emperor and church hand in hand towards a perfectly harmonized Christian world state had been uneven at best from the time of Constantius’ divisive Arianism to Julian’s apostasy to the military and political breakdowns after Theodosius’ death. The Christian world state did not appear so inevitable as Eusebius had dreamed. So Theodosius II was left with the task of winning over not just recalcitrant members of the pagan elite, but also with reviving a somewhat dubious and disaffected Christian elite.⁵⁹ The setting required Christianity as a unifying

⁵⁹See Momigliano (*supra* n.33) 81: “Towards the end of the century the situation changed. Theodosius’ death precipitated a political crisis, and the barbarians were soon taking advantage of it with invasions on an unprecedented scale. The intervention of the state in theological matters appeared less attractive to people who had witnessed the trials of the Priscillianists and the cruel executions that concluded them. Many Christians became less certain of themselves and went back to paganism. Many pagans became more aggressive and dared to say openly that the new religion was responsible for the collapse of the empire. In the pagan field resignation yielded to fury, and in the Christian field aggressiveness had to be turned into self-defence.” Compelling though Momigliano’s point is here, more recent work has tended to see less clearly drawn lines between pagans and Christians. For instance, P. Brown, *Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Christianisation of the Roman World* (Cambridge 1995), draws attention to how mixed Christianity was with its pagan precedents in

world view, required more rhetorical polish to win the recalcitrant over to it, and also required particular stress on the emperor and his court's role in unifying church with state against a very hostile world. In this setting historians writing in Greek focused on the emperor and his court in Constantinople, and attempted to show how all providential historical forces were working together to solidify the control of this imperial center over the world. Socrates, and Sozomen to a lesser degree, reflect such a rhetorical necessity.⁶⁰

Sozomen's unusual ethnic background may offer an area for future investigation. Sozomen appears to have come from an Aramaic-speaking family that lived on the periphery of the Greek Christian *oikumene*. Though he chose to live and work close to the court in Constantinople, his own formative experience in the Christian minority of Gaza living among Jews, pagans, and Christians of various sorts (Aramaic, Greek, "Judaizing," proto-Nestorian, etc.) may have tugged him away from imperial historiography just enough to add some short ethnographical digressions. Here it is of interest that the Syriac historiographical tradition, living on or outside the boundaries of the empire, maintained interest in the evangelization of foreigners.⁶¹ Like Sozomen, Syriac ecclesiastical historians showed

the fourth and early fifth centuries. More important than internal strife seems to be the unifying effect barbarian invasions brought to the empire. As Greco-Roman Christians unified for the survival of their state, christianization of barbarians became less interesting than military victories over them.

⁶⁰L. Cracco Ruggini, "Universalità e campanilismo, centro e periferia, città e deserto nelle Storie Ecclesiastiche," in S. Calderone, ed., *La storiografia ecclesiastica nella tarda antichità* (Messina 1980) 159–194, suggests that each emperor leaves his politico-theological imprint on the missionaries of his time in the ecclesiastical historians: "È per questa ragione che i miracoli riferiti dalla storiografia ecclesiastica cattolica si concentrano quasi tutti al tempo di Costantino, di Teodosio I, di Teodosio II, mentre per quella ariana—con logica identica ma capovolta—gli ὑπερφυῆ ἔργα e i successi missionari di Ezio, Eunomio, Leonzio, Candido, Evagrio, Florenzio, Teofilo Indo, ecc. abbelliscono il regno di Costanzo II e avvantaggiano per divino disegno la sua casata e il suo impero" (180). The emperor's vision clearly was expressed in historiography.

⁶¹Winkelman (*supra* n.6) 224 mentions a Syriac connection for evangelism of foreigners. He points specifically to John of Ephesus, *EH* 4.6–8, 49–53, on the conversion of the Nubians and Alodei. Ševčenko (*supra* n.4) 14 also discusses

interest in both monks and evangelism. But even Sozomen's pragmatic and brief glimpses through the window of distant cultures seems not to have captured the imaginations of subsequent historians in Constantinople.⁶² The court, its actions, policies, and wars, would remain the focus of later Byzantine historiography. Ethnography and evangelism would be left to Latin and Syriac historians.⁶³

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John of Ephesus on missions. W. Witakowski, "The *Chronicle* of Eusebius: Its Type and Continuation in Syriac Historiography," *Aram* 11–12 (1999–2000) 419–437, discusses the mixing of Greek Christian historiographical motifs in Syriac writing. Syriac missionary enthusiasm is well documented, for instance in remains from the seventh century in Tang dynasty China where the emperor welcomed a monastic community: see L. Tang, *A Study of the History of Nestorian Christianity in China and its Literature in Chinese* (Frankfurt am Main/New York 2002). Because Syriac historiography seems to lose its interest in missions after Pseudo-Zachariah of Mytilene, I would hesitate to push my point too far. Suffice it to say that interest in ethnography and evangelism is more prominent in Syriac historians.

⁶²An intermediate figure is Evagrius Scholasticus, who states in his proem that he is following Sozomen (as well as Eusebius, Socrates, and Theodoret). Evagrius is from a Syriac background and writes in Antioch far from the Byzantine court. His interests thus are somewhere between Constantinople and Syriac-speaking lands and his focus on things Antiochene reflects this. See P. Allen, *Evagrius Scholasticus the Church Historian* (Leuven 1981), for a full study.

⁶³A version of this paper was presented at the East-Central European Humanities Institute seminar "Byzantine Heritage," Lviv 2001. Special thanks to Professors Jerzy Axer and Robert Sucharski for organizing it and inviting me, and also thanks to the participants whose comments were all helpful to me. I would also like to thank Eran Argov, Michael Compton, Olenka Pevny, and Loren Samons for their suggestions.