PHILOSTORGIUS' PLACE IN THE TRADITION OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

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A number of ecclesiastical historians wrote in Greek in the fifth century A.D., in a genre whose tradition began with Eusebius. Because of the Eusebian influence it is easy for us today to define this tradition too much from the position of hindsight; to impose a linearity and to overlook or ignore diversity. In particular, we can hardly help emphasising (and possibly in some cases overemphasising) the importance of those works which have come down to us, as I suspect happens also in the case of secular historiography.

Among the variety of features which distinguish Eusebius' ecclesiastical history from history written in the 'classicising' or secular mould (i.e. the tradition ultimately going back to Herodotus and Thucydides), three characteristics in particular should be noted. First, his work, like that of the antiquarians, went back to the more remote past rather than focussing on contemporary history which could use eyewitness accounts. Secondly, there was extensive use of documents quoted verbatim (somewhat after the fashion of biography) rather than paraphrased. Thirdly, the subject matter tended to define ecclesiastical matters as those dealing with the succession of bishops, persecutions and battles with heresy.

This paper will look more closely at those ecclesiastical historians who wrote in Greek in the fifth century and in particular the heterodox historian Philostorgius and consider his work in relation to the Eusebian tradition and

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1 I would like to thank David Konstan and Rosalie Cook for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.
to other contemporary influences. It will be suggested that he may have played a pivotal role in the development of the tradition of ecclesiastical historiography. In other words, Philostorgius and his work should not be seen in the light of Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret; rather they should be considered, in part at least, in terms of their response to him.3

It was in the mid-fifth century that ecclesiastical history really flourished though the Eusebian model had already attracted followers such as Gelasius of Caesarea and the translator Rufinus. During the reign of Theodosius II (402-50), we know of four ecclesiastical historians each writing in Greek and each beginning from the reign of Constantine: the Eunomian (or Neo-Arian) Philostorgius, whose work which probably appeared in the early 430s, finished with the events of 425; Socrates, writing early in the 440s, and covering events down to 439; Sozomen (c. 443 or a little later) covering much the same ground as Socrates but endeavouring to add to and improve on his predecessor's work; and Theodoret, bishop of Cyrrhus, who wrote during the 440s.

Now if we want to determine the development of the tradition of ecclesiastical historiography, the chronology is crucial. Philostorgius' publication is usually agreed to have occurred before 433,4 as in that year a

3 Cf. the opinion of A. Momigliano, The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography (California 1990), p.144: 'The relatively more thoughtful remarks on the subject (i.e. the sack of Rome) by Sozomenus may well be due (as in other cases) to the influence of Philostorgius'.

4 F. Winkelmann, revision of Bidez' GCS edition of Philostorgius (Berlin 1981), cxxxiii-iv; J. Quasten, Patrology III (4th ed., Utrecht/Antwerp, 1985), p.531. F.M. Clover, 'Olympiodorus of Thebes & the Historia Augusta', HA Coll. Bonn 1979-81 (1983), argued for a date in the late 430s for Philostorgius. Rejecting the (admitted) argument from silence, he argued that the portents Philostorgius referred to may have been concocted from phenomena as late as 437 and that Philostorgius probably used Philip Sidetes, whom he dates to the late 430s. I do not find this convincing, as Philostorgius need not be referring to exact phenomena, occurring together and recently. The relationship between the works of Philostorgius and Philip Sidetes is unclear, but the implication of Photius' comments is that Philip was a
great fire occurred in Constantinople, but is not mentioned by Philostorgius in the list of contemporary disasters with which the work concludes. Two further points add some strength to this argument (though it is an argument from silence). One is that Philostorgius certainly spent some time in Constantinople and is presumed to have lived there. The other is that the list of disasters he compiles is not a mere record of incidents but essentially the climax to his work, whose thesis is that the emperor, Theodosius II, by attempting to exterminate the Arians has brought down the wrath of Heaven. A fire in the capital would suit this purpose admirably. There is, however, a complicating factor, since Philostorgius' history was not preserved directly but through a summary written by the ninth-century patriarch Photius, though, as a Constantinopolitan, the argument runs, he would have been unlikely to pass over such an event.

To move to surer ground. Socrates, it is agreed, is firmly to be placed before Sozomen, who does not name him but uses him in a manner which makes clear the relationship. Socrates probably appeared soon after 439, and Sozomen c.443 or a little later. Theodoret's date was disputed but has now been shown to be mid to late 440s and his ecclesiastical history is thus the last of our group.

contemporary of Sisinnius, who died in 428. A date in the 420s is more likely for Philip.

5 A.M. Nobbs, 'Philostorgius' View of the Past', in Graeme Clarke et al. (eds.), Reading the Past in Late Antiquity (Sydney 1990), pp.262-3.
6 As established by G. Schoo, Die Quellen des Kirchenhistorikers Sozomenos (Berlin 1911). The decisive passages are Soc. HE 1.10 and Soz. HE 1.22.
7 For Socrates date (soon after 439) see his HE 7.48. Sozomen is usually dated 443, but this date has been correctly challenged by C. Roueché, 'Theodosius II, the cities and the date of the 'Church History' of Sozomen', JTS 37 (1980), 130-32. Sozomen's work could thus be later (but not much earlier, if we allow for his revision of Socrates' material).
Before examining the influence of Philostorgius on the subsequent tradition, I would like to emphasise both the variety and quantity of historical writing that was being produced at this time. What this meant in practice was that there were options for someone interested in writing about the past; a choice of genre, style and content. The interest of Theodosius II in history, and that of his wife Eudocia in the patronage of literature, must have fostered the interest of many writers. Even pagans could write history and look for imperial favours. Church history was not the only 'approved' way of writing about the past. Olympiodorus writing his self-styled 'material for history' around 425⁹ dedicated his work to the emperor; this was primarily a history of western events and included pagan portents and miracles. Moreover, Olympiodorus' work was read and used by Christian writers.

Around the late 420s appeared the 'Christian History' of Philip Sidetes — a 36 book encyclopaedic work with each book divided into several volumes. This was evidently a Christianising universal history with discussions of a variety of topics including astronomy, mathematics and geography. Socrates (HE 7.27) contrasts this with ecclesiastical history. One of its main weaknesses he says is confusion of chronology. There are other forms of writing about the past dating from this period. Palladius in 419/20 dedicated to Theodosius' chamberlain Lausus the so-called 'Lausiac history', a series of edifying lives of monks. With it may be grouped the 'Religious History' of Theodoret (dated 444), which is also an account of the lives of monks. Biography had always been seen by the ancients as a separate genre from history and it is clear especially from the division of his material by Theodoret into ecclesiastical history and other forms that this division was maintained. Indeed, monasticism itself, though a prominent feature of Christianity from the fourth century was not necessarily seen as ecclesiastical. Socrates does not write about it, though Sozomen makes it a feature of his work. The formation of a considerable number of monastic communities was clearly one of the factors which led to a divergence from the Eusebian model.

persuasive, as is his conclusion (p.73) that Theodoret's history post-dates those of Socrates and Sozomen.

⁹ F.M. Clover, op.cit., n.4, argues for a date c.438 for Olympiodorus. This is largely based on his redating of Philostorgius' and Philip Sidetes' works to later 430s which I consider unlikely for the reasons mentioned above (n.4).
The existence of other forms of Christian writing about the past serves to sharpen our view of the genre of ecclesiastical history, as does our knowledge of other types of work written by fifth-century historians (i.e. because they show what ecclesiastical history was not). Philostorgius, for instance, wrote separately an argument against Porphyry (HE 10.10) and Philip Sidetes wrote a refutation of Julian’s treatises against the Christians (Soc. HE 7.27). The continuing polemic between Christians and pagans continued to spark off historical productions on both sides; Zosimus in the early sixth century provides a good example.

Eusebius in writing his ecclesiastical history was very conscious of writing about a new nation (HE 1.4). Because of the persecutions and the recently embattled position of the church, its defence was necessary, and the documents he quotes are an essential feature of his desire to demonstrate the Christian victory. By the middle of the next century, persecutions of the Christians simply did not enter the subject matter of history and even legislation against pagans had lost any novelty. So although Christians such as Philostorgius knew there was a place for anti-pagan polemic, it did not belong in their histories. So, except for defence of the Christian cause in the account of the reign of Julian, there was no general need for the type of contrast Eusebius so starkly drew between his ideal Christian emperor, Constantine, and his 'pagan' challenger, the representative of darkness, Licinius.

Argument now centred around doctrinal controversies, topics which certainly had their place in Eusebius but which were not all encompassing so long as the church was under external threat. Here is an important point for us to consider in explaining the forest of ecclesiastical histories written within, at a most generous estimate, a twenty-year period. The pagan Olympiodorus could dedicate his work to Theodosius II, Socrates writes extensively in praise of him, and Sozomen both dedicates his work to him and secures his imprimatur. There was no such hope for one who was not 'orthodox'. Heretics were the main enemy for the church historian, however he defined his position.

Recent studies have emphasised that 'orthodoxy' must be seen as a development, not something static and instantly accepted. Moreover, those subsequently branded as heretics (Arius and Eunomius, for example) were presenting their ideas as orthodox, using Scripture and defining the nature of Christianity. In the views of such men and their followers it was the Athanasian party (or whoever opposed their own views) who were the 'impious', the heretics. This view can clearly be seen in Philostorgius, despite the orthodox filter imposed by his transmission via Photius. Hindsight has greatly hampered our understanding of fourth and fifth-century church history as it is all too easy to assume that the defeat of the Arian position was a foregone conclusion. It should cause no surprise (though it has done!) that Philostorgius is among the staunchest attackers of Julian. His Christianity was no less intense for having been subsequently branded heretical.

It is also important to note the historiographical changes which followed upon the great changes in the life of the Church which resulted from Constantine's conversion. The church became involved in doctrinal conflicts of a basic nature in which the whole Empire was caught up. Moreover, once the emperor was Christian, the distinction between ecclesiastical and secular matters was bound to become blurred (and increasingly so) as emperors, such as Theodosius I, used their imperial power to enforce religious orthodoxy. These two factors profoundly affected the way Eusebian historiography was continued, but the manner and degree to which they changed the histories reflected the individuality of our particular historians.

It must have seemed quite natural for Philostorgius to continue the HE of Eusebius, who was suspected of Arianising tendencies even in his own day. Philostorgius' starting point is the Arian controversy — at least this is what Photius mentions as soon as he has summarised the preface. Philostorgius naturally begins with a sympathetic account of Arius, and tells about Athanasius the sorts of stories the 'orthodox' historians tell about Arius and his supporters. His chronological framework is supplied by the emperors. Throughout his work until book X a balance is observed


between ecclesiastical and secular events, but in books XI and XII the matters dealt with are almost entirely secular. It has been asked whether his model or his sources simply proved inadequate for continuing with church history.\textsuperscript{13} The most likely explanation seems to be that he had no heart for reporting the virtual crushing of the Eunomian cause under Theodosius II, and turned instead to an apocalyptic presentation of his own day, where he tries to show divine wrath being visited upon the Roman world.

It seems that Philostorgius' view of the wrath of God descending on the 'orthodox' simply could not go unanswered, especially in such a literary climate as that fostered by Theodosius II. While we do not know what circulation Philostorgius enjoyed in his own day, his work was certainly preserved; many subsequent Byzantine writers, not all of whom were Arians, used his work, up to and including the Suda, and the \textit{HE} survived in entirety until the time of Photius. His work must have circulated and therefore had to be answered. Nor does it seem likely, given his pro-Christian and pro-Arian stance, that he was simply writing for those of like mind, who would no doubt have enjoyed his work but needed no convincing. The Arians clearly had their own version of the past hundred-odd years, which needed, in the eyes of Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret to be combated, a task which gave each of them at least one motive for writing. Hence the very extensive use of documents — letters especially — by all of them but particularly by Theodoret in writing about the Arian controversy. The control of the presentation of the past was clearly a very important matter and warranted three attempts, all covering roughly the same chronological period, a past to which both 'orthodox' and Arian could lay some claim.

This is not to say Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret took precisely the same stance. All are anti-Arian and against Arius' followers, the neo-Arians. Novatian sympathies have been detected in Socrates;\textsuperscript{14} perhaps here too is a motive for Sozomen's immediately subsequent attempt to cover much the same ground. The relationship between Theodoret and these two historians is not so clear, though as Theodoret wrote subsequently to both Socrates and

\textsuperscript{13} For a fuller discussion see \textit{ibid.}, p.262.
\textsuperscript{14} P. Allen, 'The Use of Heretics and Heresies in the Greek Church Historians: Studies in Socrates and Theodoret', in G.W. Clarke et.al. \textit{op.cit.} (n.5), pp.267-270.
Sozomen he may have known their work.\textsuperscript{15} He, too, had his perspective. As a bishop (the other two are lawyers) he was closer to Eusebius in his narrow definition of church history and more concerned with doctrinal controversy as such. He also had a personal concern, as he was under suspicion in his own times of association with the Nestorians, so he had the added motive of writing to establish the orthodoxy of his own views on Church history.

Though this paper deals mainly with the time of Theodosius II and the four contemporary writers who took up chronologically from where Eusebius concluded, I do not wish to suggest that the tradition of ecclesiastical historiography finished there.

Gelasius of Cyzicus wrote church history in the later fifth century. Photius has preserved accounts of the works of John of Aigai, a Nestorian who took events onwards from 450 (\textit{Bibλ1 41 and 44}), and Basilius of Cilicia (\textit{Bibλ42}) who wrote of the period from Zeno to Anastasius. Others, such as Zachariah of Mytilene and John of Ephesus wrote in Syriac. The last full-scale Greek church history we possess is that of Evagrius in the late sixth century. In his work the distinction between the secular and the ecclesiastical has almost vanished. From tantalising notices such as those appearing in Photius we can see how dangerous it is to define a whole tradition on the basis of just those works which have survived, though it should be said that the three 'orthodox' writers, Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret, were clearly viewed as authoritative by their own successors, Greek and Latin. Theodore Anagnostes conflated the three and Cassiodorus arranged (\textit{via Epiphanius}) for a compilation and Latin translation under the title 'Historia Tripertita'.

In trying to define Philostorgius' place in the tradition I have suggested that as he is probably the earliest of the mid-fifth century continuators of Eusebius; the other writers with their emphasis on the Arian controversy are partly reacting to him and to the Arian literary tradition which he represents. He is one of our first interpreters of the tradition of Eusebius. His departures, for example, into secular events of the early fifth century, are likely to have been significant for those who came after him. The \textit{variety} of historical expression at this time needs to be brought into our picture of the period, so that certain of the influences at work on the writing of history may be seen in proper perspective. Finally, it should be seen that the Eusebian pattern

\textsuperscript{15} See n.8 above.
was still 'under review' as it were, being adapted to suit varying purposes. It is only looking back and seeing the similarities between these four historians that we may be tempted to see the tradition as rigid. It was not so at the time and Philostorgius played a significant role in developing it.