

BYZANTINA LODZIENSIA

LI

Between Authority and Orthodoxy

Historical Perspectives and Narrative Strategies
in Sozomen of Bethelia's *Historia Ecclesiastica*

Cyril Adrian Francis Chilson



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Cyril Adrian Francis Chilson



Lodz 2026

Cyril Adrian Francis Chilson – Blackfriars Studium, Oxford

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For Tali

מִיָּמִים רַבִּים, לֹא יוֹכְלוּ לְכַבֹּת אֶת-הָאֵהָבָה, וּנְהָרוֹת, לֹא יִשְׁטְפוּהָ

Canticum Canticorum, 8, 7

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*

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Cyril A. F. Chilson

Oxford, 19th August, 2025.

Feast Day of Saints Timothy, Thecla, & Agapius, martyrs of Gaza.

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General Introduction



Οὐχ ὑμῶν ἐστὶν γινῶναι χρόνους ἢ καιροὺς οὓς ὁ πατὴρ ἔθετο ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ¹

Christus dagegen hat das element der Innerlichkeit, der Reflexion, der subjectivität, in die Welt gebracht. Die Sinnlichkeit hat er zum inneren Bewusstsein überhaupt, das Recht zur Moralität erhoben; darum ist Christus der Mittelpunkt der verflossenen Zeit, weil er es ist, der Radicalreformen der Menschheit herbeigeführt und das grosse Blatt der Weltgeschichte umschlagen hat².

Church history was made up of three elements: miracles, monkery, and popery³.

La storia può apparire, all'uomo classico, come una améthodos hýlē; e tuttavia essa ha un metodo e un senso per gli storici Greci e Romani, metodo e senso diversi secondo le varie epoche e i vari autori. Spesso siamo tentati di dare una definizione unitaria del pensiero storico classico, contrapponendolo, come intuizione ciclica del tempo e dominata dall'idea della fortuna, all'intuizione lineare, che sarebbe giudaica e cristiana⁴.

¹ Acts 1, 7.

² A. VON CIESZKOWSKI, *Prolegomena*, p. 25.

³ J.H. NEWMAN, *Letter to James Robert Hope*, 6th Nov. 1843, p. 12.

⁴ S. MAZZARINO, *Il pensiero storico classico*, vol. II, p. 376–377.

Ecclesiastical History (henceforth *HE*⁵) is, as the name suggests, a Christian genre of historical writing. It has been widely recognised as a milestone in the development of historiography, even if the length and strength of the double umbilical cord which links it with other historiographical traditions, namely the Graeco-Roman classical and the Judeo-Biblical, may still be the subject of scholarly debate⁶. If we were to approach works bearing this name as part of their title without previous knowledge about the genre, it is quite likely we would infer from that name that the works were dedicated either to a historical account of the Christian Church (or one of the Christian denominations) or, alternatively, that the work in question may be a history of a non-religious entity such as a place, an ethnicity, or a state, written from an ecclesiastical point of view. Such is one of the Latin contributions to this genre namely the *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* or 'Ecclesiastical History of the English People', written ca. 731 by St Bede the Venerable (Latin: *Beda venerabilis*, 672/3 – 735), a Benedictine monk and scholar from the monastery of St Paul, Jarrow, in present day county of Tyne and Wear, north-eastern England. Bede combined in his ecclesiastical history a description of the advance of Christianity in Roman and Anglo-Saxon England with an important detailed description of England in general from 55 BC to his own day⁷.

Another potential interpretation could suggest a 'hybrid', i.e. an account of both ecclesiastical and secular affairs whereby the Christian Church is at the centre of a narrative (implicitly at times) which nonetheless flows along (mostly) secular chronological lines. The ecclesiastical historian may focus on points of tangency (e.g. of co-operation, co-existence, or conflict) between the Church and the secular world. This raises the question how to delineate the borderline between the two realms, a question which tends to become more challenging after the so-called 'conversion' of Constantine in 312 and the continued Christianisation of the Roman Empire under his rule⁸.

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

⁶ For an assessment of *HE qua* genre, which convincingly highlights its indebtedness to pagan Graeco-Roman historiography, see: P. VAN NUFFELEN, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 161–175; D.J. DE VORE, 'Genre and Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 19–49, with further bibliography.

⁷ See: *Bede the venerable* (cf. Bibliography, primary sources). See also: J.M. WALLACE-HADRILL, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, p. XVI–XXI.

⁸ Despite its questionable nature, we shall use throughout this study, for the sake of convenience, the word 'conversion' whenever the dramatic turn in Constantine's policy towards the

The issue of ‘ecclesiastical’ and ‘secular’ is far from being merely a ‘technical’ one. In fact, it is bound to raise more questions. The motivations to write a *Historia Ecclesiastica* may vary. Is a *HE* written by a cleric necessarily more apologetical than one written by a layman? Can a Christian layman write a *HE* while heeding classical principles of pagan origin e.g. Tacitus’ ‘*sine ira et studio*’⁹? These questions, by no means trivial, inevitably throw us into the minefield of approaching ‘truth’ in historiography, a virtue much feted by historians since its earliest beginnings of historical writing in the Greco-Roman world¹⁰. Christianity, as opposed to a polyphonic Greco-Roman paganism¹¹ has offered a new, unfathomable truth namely the salvific universally liberating Truth of Christ, a truth which purports to embed the metaphysical in the material and demonstrate the role of the temporal, including time itself, in God’s plan for His Creation¹². This Truth, from the Christian Church’s point of view, has a historical pedigree. The Church has traced this pedigree to the Hebrew Bible as Holy Scripture, testifying to God’s Truth, previously revealed to the Israelites through the Covenants with their Patriarchs, reaffirmed through their prophets but is now (i.e. after the coming of Christ), offered to all mankind as a new era of liberating hope¹³. If we bear in mind that Christ’s Promise was not limited to the future *παρουσία* but also meant a continuous recognition of His Presence in the middle of the world, i. e. in the *hic et nunc* (an element which became more and more dominant in the life and thought of the Church in the first three centuries AD and shaped during that era a Christian sense of historicity and a distinctive Christian Tradition¹⁴

Christian Church in 312 needs to be referred to. Studies of this conversion abound. For the latest discussions of Constantine’s conversion see: S. BRALEWSKI, *Konwersja Konstancyna Wielkiego na chrześcijaństwo*, p. 45–79; T.D. BARNES, *Constantine: Dynasty and Power*, p. 1–26; D. POTTER, *Constantine the Emperor*, p. 131–160; G. BONAMANTE, *Lo status quaestionis*, p. 33–63. N. LENSKE, *Constantine and the Cities*, p. 67–83.

⁹ *Annales*, I, 1.

¹⁰ For a recent up-to-date discussion of ‘truth’ in Greco-Roman historiography see: M. TAMIOLOAKI, *Lucian on Truth and Lies*, p. 267–283.

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

¹² On the Christian truth and its relation to history see: P. RICEUR, *Histoire et Vérité*, p. 93–112.

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

¹⁴ The term ‘tradition’ (*παράδοσις*; *traditio*) was already used by St Paul (e.g. 1 Cor. 11, 2; 2 Thess. 2, 15) with regard to the spread of heterodoxy among the churches. St Paul also ensures that the tradition related by him be passed down to posterity to safeguard orthodoxy

the appearance of Christian historiography alongside a growing interest in the Christian interpretation of time and historicity (apart from their role in pagan classical philosophy in the fourth and fifth centuries) becomes apparently more prominent in Christian thinking¹⁵. Once we become able to contextualise politically and intellectually the genre of *HE*, we are due to face a fundamental question: How the ecclesiastical historian may think and write through the prism of the Christian Truth? Will they try to harmonise the likely tension between the temporal and the eternal or rather highlight it? Will ecclesiastical historiography be necessarily merely apologetical or would it develop a more nuanced approach?¹⁶

Another fundamental question which emanates from the former one would be: how the choices of the church historians reflect their historical perspectives

(2 Tim. 2, 2). Thus, through the succession from the apostles onwards, the apostolic tradition became a yardstick by which the truthfulness and the historicity of the Christian Truth were measured, as was acknowledged time and again by the Church Fathers e.g. Hippolytus of Rome (ca. 170–235), who penned a short treatise entitled Ἀποστολικὴ Παράδοσις which claims to be an accurate and authoritative account of the rites and organisation of the Church. His younger contemporary ORIGEN of Alexandria (ca. 185–254) remarked: ... *servetur vero ecclesiastica praedicatio per successionis ordinem ab apostolis tradita, et usque ad praesens in Ecclesiis permanens: illa sola credenda est veritas quae in nullo ab ecclesiastica discordat traditione.* (*De Principiis, Praefatio*, 2). On tradition and historicity in the early church see: G. EBELING, *Die Geschichtlichkeit der Kirche*, p. 31–65. Ebeling makes a clear distinction between ‘tradition’ and historical recollection (which is, of course, the foundation of every historiography): *Tradition ist also ein Vergangenheit und Gegenwart zur Einheit verbindendes, als geschichtlicher Zusammenhang fortdaurendes Geschehen. Diese Tradition sich fortpflanzende und darum gegenwärtig bleibende Vergangenheit ereignet sich nicht als historische Erinnerung, sondern als unmittelbarer Geltungsanspruch* (*ibidem*, p. 33).

¹⁵ For a survey of history as ‘Heilsgeschichte’ in Patristic thought, see: A. LUNEAU, *L’Histoire du Salut*, esp. p. 161–187 and p. 287–356. For an excellent summary of the Greek Patristic approach to time and temporality (as opposed to the Latin Fathers’ strand of thought which culminates in St Augustine) see: D. BRADSHAW, *Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers*, p. 311–366. For St Augustine’s view of time and eternity as presented in his *Confessiones* see: C.L. TROUP, *Temporality, Eternity and Wisdom*, esp. p. 82–116.

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

(as there is no historiography without perspectives) and what are thus the narrative strategies which the church historians in question may employ to achieve their goals?¹⁷

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

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

When the Constantinopolitan lawyer, Sozomenus Scholasticus, or with his full name, Salamanes Hermeias Sozomenos (Σαλαμάνης Ἑρμεΐας Σωζομενός), normally known in English as Sozomen²⁰, set out to write a *Historia Ecclesiastica*²¹, probably around 450, ecclesiastical history was, it seems, an established genre of late antique Graeco-Roman historiography, particularly in the Greek east from which it had originated. Ecclesiastical histories were written before Sozomen’s days mostly in Greek, although one important contribution to this

¹⁷ The applicability of the discipline of narratology to historiography has been asserted (albeit in passing) already by one of the founders of narratological studies. See: R. BARTHES, *Introduction à l’analyse structurale des récits*, p. 1–27. A more elaborate defence of that assertion was offered by the American theorist Hayden White, who argued that ... *there is an element of poetry in every historical account. This is because in our account of the historical world we are dependent ... on the techniques of the figurative language both for our characterization of the objects of our narrative representations and for the strategies by which to constitute narrative accounts of the transformations of those objects in time.* See: H. WHITE, *The Historical Text*, p. 41–62.

¹⁸ For a concise introduction see: A.P. JOHNSON, *Eusebius*, esp. p. 1–24.

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

²⁰ For a detailed analysis of Sozomen’s names, see chapter III *infra*.

²¹ NB: Individual contributions to this genre will be referred to in the footnotes by their authors’ (and oeuvres, if necessary) abbreviated sigla (cf. Bibliography).

genre, dating from the beginning of the fifth century (402/403), had been made in Latin by the Italian born monk Rufinus of Aquileia²².

The new genre was apparently well-received among the neighbouring cultures of the early Byzantine Church, namely, the churches of Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Armenia, where Christian literature was beginning to thrive in the local languages. Ecclesiastical histories were translated and original contributions to the genre were to appear at a later stage²³.

The genre of ecclesiastical history seems to have reached Egypt, although the Egyptian contribution survives only in fragmentary state²⁴. Present scholarship adduces the former existence of a *HE* in Coptic dating back to the fourth century from a surviving Arabic translation of parts of that work, into which a Coptic translation of Eusebius' *HE* seems to have been incorporated. These were embedded in the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*, a compilation started by Severus ibn al-Muqaffa, Coptic Orthodox bishop of Hermopolis Magna in Upper Egypt (d. 987)²⁵.

Other fragments and paraphrases are scattered in a plethora of manuscripts, collections of ecclesiastical documents and other works and are undergoing a scholarly process of re-construction²⁶. Important original ecclesiastical historiography in Syriac; however, was to appear in the sixth century, as is attested above all by the surviving portion of John of Ephesus' Syriac *HE*²⁷.

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

²³ For the Armenian translation of Eusebius' ecclesiastical history, see: EUSEBIUS, *Historia ecclesiastica*, ed. A. CHAREAN. On the Armenian translation of the church historian Socrates of Constantinople see: G.C. HANSEN, *Einleitung*, in IDEM (ed.) *Sokrates Kirchengeschichte*, p. xxv–xxviii, and R.W. THOMSON, *The Armenian Adaptation*, p. 6–13. We do not know of any translation of Sozomen's *HE*. Was the very rich, classicising style of his Greek prose an insuperable challenge? On Sozomen's style see: G.C. HANSEN, *Prosarhythmus*, p. 82–93, and G. SABBAAH, B. GRILLET, *Sozomène*, p. 35, p. 65 and p. 82–93.

²⁴ On Coptic literature in late antiquity, see: R.S. BAGNALL, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, p. 251–260. See also: A. BOUD'HORS, *La version copte de l'Histoire ecclésiastique*, p. 267–270. Note also: J. DEN HEIJER, *À propos de la traduction copte de l'Histoire ecclésiastique d'Eusèbe de Césarée*, p. 185–193. On original ecclesiastical historiography in Coptic see: H. BRAKMANN, *Eine oder zwei koptischen Kirchengeschichten?*, p. 128–142.

²⁵ Cf. SEVERUS.

²⁶ On recent efforts to re-construct the Coptic *HE*, see: A. CAMPLANI, *L'Historia ecclesiastica en copte et l'historiographie du siège épiscopale d'Alexandrie*, p. 417–424.

²⁷ On John of Ephesus see: J.J. VAN GINKEL, *John of Ephesus*. See also: S.A. HARVEY, *Remembering Pain*, p. 295–308, and EADEM, *Theodora the 'Believing Queen'*, p. 209–234.

The newly invented Christian historiography might have found a welcoming readership throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. We can reach such a conclusion because as far as we know, translations from the Greek began to circulate relatively soon after the appearance of the original editions. The first ecclesiastical history was translated into Latin, Syriac, Coptic, and Armenian, thus seemingly following the ever-growing dissemination of Christianity in the Graeco-Roman world (and concurrently on the fringes and beyond the traditional limits of Hellenisation and Romanisation in Europe, Asia, and Africa) after the Constantinian conversion. The translations into the aforementioned oriental languages (alongside Latin²⁸) might suggest that Christianity was

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

continuing to spread quite successfully even beyond the eastern borders of the Roman Empire²⁹. The main area of expansion was the territories controlled by Sassanian Persia, where growing numbers of Christian scholars, scribes, and potential readers in these languages were to be found, despite strong anti-Christian propaganda which was not unconnected to Persian imperial relations with the Roman Empire³⁰.

This situation caused frequent skirmishes with the predominantly Zoroastrian court of the Sassanian shahs, escalating at times into all-out persecutions which resulted in more names being added, in these regions, to the lists of Christian martyrs³¹.

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

The Christian Armenians were soon (i.e. as of the early fifth century) armed with Mesrob-Mashtots's newly invented national script. This invention was followed by a vast project of translations from Syriac and Greek. Having translated the Bible, as well as selected items of pagan and Christian literature, Armenian scholars did not neglect to translate ecclesiastical histories into their own language – sometimes more than once – as seems to be the case with Socrates of Constantinople's *HE*³². This successful reception of ecclesiastical histories in Ar-

²⁹ For a study of the translations and reception of Eusebius' *Historia ecclesiastica*, see: M.J. HOLLERICH, *Making Christian History*.

³⁰ On Sassanian policies *vis-à-vis* the Christians in the fourth century see: L.E. PATTERSON, *Minority religions in the Sasanian Empire*, p. 183–189. Note also: T. DARYAEE, *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of An Empire*, p. 69–98 and B. DIGNAS, E. WINTER, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals*, p. 77–83.

³¹ Sozomen is a Greek source of unique importance for the persecutions of Christians in Persia in the early 340s. See: SOZOMEN, II, 9–15. The acts of the Persian martyrs in the reign of Shapur II (309–379) are also documented in a manuscript in Syriac (British Library MS. Add. 12150). This manuscript dates from 411 and is attributed to Bishop Marutha of Martyropolis (Syriac: ܡܪܘܬܐ, *Mayperqit* in Northern Mesopotamia, present day Silvan in the Diyarbakir region, south-eastern Turkey). For a guide to the Persian *Martyr Acts*, see: S.P. BROCK, *The History of the Holy Mar Ma'in*, p. 77–84. For a revisionist view, challenging the idea of Zoroastrianism as the 'state-religion' of the Sassanian Persian empire, see: P. GIGNOUX, *Church-state Relations*, p. 72–80.

³² See: R.W. THOMSON, *The Armenian Adaptation*, p. 6–14. As has been mentioned, no Armenian translation of Sozomen is known to have been made. For a study of early Armenian translations see: L. TER-PETROSIAN, *Ancient Armenian Translations*. On the influence of the

menia, permits a further assumption: that the genre may have had a certain role in the efflorescence of original historical writing in classical Armenian in the fifth and sixth centuries.

Like most inventions, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Eusebius' new historical genre, did not come into being *ex nihilo*³³. Like his teacher, Pamphilus, and his teacher's teacher, Origen, Eusebius belonged to a Patristic school of thought, which drew on a fusion of pagan (i.e. Greek) and Jewish traditions. The invention of *Historia Ecclesiastica* unsurprisingly reveals this fusion at work, as the *HE* is deeply rooted in pagan Greek historiography as well as in Jewish Hellenistic traditions. It would therefore seem that before any serious attempt to study Sozomen's *Historia Ecclesiastica* can be made, our attention must turn first to the development of the genre in question over the period of about a hundred and fifty years (ca. 300–450) from the appearance of the first ecclesiastical history up to Sozomen's own contribution to the genre. In doing so, it is necessary to make steps towards a more coherent definition of the genre despite some endemic obstacles (to be discussed below). The genre includes several works which are still often consulted but rarely studied, as was observed by Arnaldo Momigliano, although, as will be shown here, this situation has changed considerably³⁴.

Momigliano's observation was based on an overview of the sparse relevant modern scholarship³⁵, and his preliminary discussion (published posthumously) showed that students of late antiquity seldom found the ecclesiastical historians worth looking at on their own merits, despite their undeniable richness as sources³⁶, which keeps them indispensable for any study of the eastern and western empires (and indeed some of their neighbours) up to the seventh century. Along these lines it would perhaps be fair to say that until the last decade of the twentieth century the prevailing consensus was that the genre of ecclesiastical history was the invention of one author, Eusebius Pamphili (ca. 260–339), bishop of

Armenian translation project on historical writing in Armenian until the eighth century see in brief: R.W. THOMSON, *The Armenian Adaptation*, p. 2–6. See also: IDEM, *The Formation of the Armenian Literary Tradition*, p. 135–150.

³³ For important observations see: A. LOUTH, *Eusebius and the Birth of Church History*, p. 266–274.

³⁴ A. MOMIGLIANO, *The Classical Foundations*, p. 132.

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

³⁶ An exception which illustrates the contrasting norm is E. STEIN, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*.

Caesarea Maritima in Palestine, whose work became, because of the so-called 'Constantinian conversion'³⁷, a model for imitators and continuators.

The ecclesiastical historians were often castigated for being what they were, instead of what certain scholars wanted them to be³⁸. These scholars seem to have ignored the different literary norms of late antiquity. Another common view until quite recently was that the historians concerned, despite certain passages in their writings exhibiting independent outlook, were merely copying each other's work³⁹.

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

³⁷ For a discussion and an assessment of Constantine in Sozomen's *Historia ecclesiastica*, see chapter 5 of the present study.

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

³⁹ It should be noted that Gibbon had already observed that *There is a remarkable difference between the two ecclesiastical historians [Socrates and Sozomen] who in general bear so close a resemblance.* See: E. GIBBON, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, p. 164. Gibbon's observation remained largely ignored. See e.g. G.F. CHESNUT, *The First Christian Histories*, p. 205–206. Nonetheless, Chesnut goes on to say, inconsistently (p. 206), that Sozomen's *HE* is ... *a genuinely critical piece of historiography...* The debate on the validity and use of 'classical' and 'Byzantine' as cultural and indeed literary categories remains very lively and keeps revolving around the same focal points namely those of 'continuity' and 'change'. This debate becomes at times a vicious circle and Anthony Kaldellis, with full awareness of the potential pitfalls, offers us now a way ahead: *It was only in recent times that the narrow definition of the 'classical', the one that prevailed in the second century AD itself, was revived and institutionalized in western academies. Modern classicism affected to despise 'later' literature while fully adhering to its verdicts and canonical constructions and relying on its scholarly tools. There is considerable scope for ideological deconstruction here. Our Classical Studies are in many respects still caught-up in these nineteenth-century tangles ... slowly, we are working our way back to a more holistic Byzantine view of Greek antiquity.* See: A. KALDELLIS, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, p. 41.

udice) from the discipline of New Testament studies the term 'synoptic' to describe the respective church histories of the authors concerned.

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

Auch in formaler Beziehung lässt sich diese starke Einheit der nacheusebischen Kirchengeschichtsschreibung nachweisen. Sie ist, um Wilhelm Bauers Ausdruck zu gebrauchen, eine ausgesprochen 'referierende Geschichtsschreibung'. Die Fortsetzer des Euseb begnügen sich, das rein Tatsächliche des geschichtlichen Geschehens mitzuteilen, ohne den Ursachen nachzufragen ... Sie machen auch keinen Versuch, von den dargestellten Personen anschauliche Porträts zu entwerfen. Alle die angeführten Persönlichkeiten erwecken einen leblosen und starren Eindruck; es fehlt ihnen eine individuelle Physiognomie. Sie gleichen byzantinischen Gemälden, die ohne die Kunst der Perspektive gemalt sind⁴⁰.

Nigg's unflattering view of the ecclesiastical historians was reiterated almost without modification some eighteen years later by Robert L.P. Milburn in the fourth of his eight Bampton Lectures, delivered at the University Church of St Mary The Virgin, Oxford, in 1952. Milburn did not try to challenge Nigg's harsh judgement of the 'synoptic' ecclesiastical historians (Socrates of Constantinople, Sozomen of Bethelia, and Theodoret of Cyrrhus). Nonetheless, being an Anglican clergyman (he was serving at the time as chaplain of Worcester College, Oxford), he seems to have felt obliged to salvage the cornerstone of the genre, the first ecclesiastical history, which he nonetheless regarded with esteem. However, his subtle suggestions to look at the merits of this work can easily be applied also to later church histories, and thus the genre as a whole is rescued from being classified as worthless. It should be stressed that the unflattering view of the ecclesiastical historians was shared even by eminent Anglican churchmen, who were patristic scholars of renown, such as Bishop J.B. Lightfoot (1828–1889), also cited by Milburn. Milburn's lectures are thus an apologetic endeavour aimed at a revival of interest in the significance of 'Early Christian Interpretations of History' (as they were titled in print⁴¹) without compromising the essential criteria of

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

⁴¹ R.L.P. MILBURN, *Early Christian Interpretations of History*. See especially his discussion of Eusebius: p. 54–73.

modern scholarship. Although the historian can still find these lectures valuable, it would be fair to say that Milburn's main addressees appear to have been theologians and the theologically minded. It should also be noted that the elegant collective noun 'Interpretations' may suggest that Milburn was fully aware of the differences between the ecclesiastical historians and 'other' Christian authors (e.g. Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Augustine, Orosius) whose writings can indeed teach us about early Christian perceptions of history or (as with Augustine) about Christian attitudes towards the concepts of time and temporality⁴². In fact, most of the works concerned touch upon these issues without falling necessarily into any particular accepted category of historiography. One may question Milburn's intentions, but regardless of his goals, it is hard to deny, with hindsight, that he nonetheless took an important step towards an alternative assessment of the ecclesiastical historians, based on their intrinsic qualities.

The notion whereby the church histories may be, despite all possible reservations (above all those concerning their 'originality'⁴³), a unique genre worth studying, appeared in an article by Glanville Downey, 'The Perspective of the Early Church Historians', which had been mentioned earlier as a still-useful (albeit limited) presentation of the problems which arise from an attempt to define coherently the perspective of ecclesiastical historiography in the period under discussion⁴⁴. Published a decade later was the paper 'Church History and Early Church Historians' by Robert Markus⁴⁵. Markus' discussion, it should be noted, is still of great relevance for any student of ecclesiastical historiography and of Eusebius in particular.

Two important contributions to the study of the ecclesiastical histories were made shortly afterwards, in the late seventies. These were Glenn Chesnut's book *The First Christian Histories*, published in 1977 (a revised and enlarged second edition appeared in 1986⁴⁶), and the proceedings of a conference entitled *La storiografia ecclesiastica nella tarda antichità*, held at the University of Erice in December 1978⁴⁷. Both contributions, in their different ways, set out to explore the riches of the ecclesiastical histories on their respective merits. Chesnut sought to

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

⁴³ This brings us back to the modern charge of 'plagiarism'. Yet the following (modern) observation offers a more nuanced perspective: *The patch writer recognises the profundity of the source and strives to join the conversation in which the source participates. To join this conversation, the patch writer employs the language of the target community.* See: R. MOORE HOWARD, *Standing in the Shadow of Giants*, p. 7. See also: G. CONSTABLE, *Forgery and Plagiarism*, p. 1-41.

⁴⁴ G. DOWNEY, *The Perspective of the Early Church Historians*, p. 57-70.

⁴⁵ R. MARKUS, *Church History and Early Church Historians*, p. 1-17.

⁴⁶ The revised version does not offer any radical modifications.

⁴⁷ *La storiografia ecclesiastica*, ed. S. CALDERONE.

uncover the principles of late antique Christian *historiosophy*⁴⁸, but the greater part of his discussion is, in fact dedicated to the first ecclesiastical historian, Eusebius of Caesarea. Some church historians, such as Rufinus of Aquileia (ca. 345–411) and Philostorgius of Borissus (368 – ca. 430), are not mentioned at all, and the focus of the study – wherever it appears to be focused – is often the theological outlooks of the authors concerned, and less their merits as historians. The collected papers of the Erice conference; however, are perhaps the first true modern attempt to apply contemporary methods of analysis to the works of the church historians, and thus the reader is provided, probably for the first time, with a discussion that sets out to demonstrate that ecclesiastical histories were indeed a genre with dynamic intrinsic development and individual contributors, contrary to previous dismissive criticisms.

This change in the assessment and treatment of ecclesiastical historians over the last four decades is reflected clearly in Wolfgang Liebeschuetz's paper, 'Ecclesiastical Historians on Their Own Times', which was read at the eleventh international conference on patristic studies, held in Oxford in 1991⁴⁹. Liebeschuetz, despite his own reproachful attitude towards the ecclesiastical historians in the main, observed nonetheless 'high-literary qualities' in Theodoret's *HE*⁵⁰. Yet this intriguing observation has been enigmatically left by Liebeschuetz unaccompanied by any further (essential) explanations.

Indeed, even the harshest critics could never have claimed that the ecclesiastical histories, despite their name, were restricted to historical events that pertained solely to the 'church' (in any sense of this word)⁵¹. Quite the contrary. The works that belong to this genre are packed with an abundance of information, without which our knowledge of late Roman and early Byzantine religious, political, social, and military affairs would be significantly more limited. Yet even

⁴⁸ *Historiosophy* is the area of philosophy exploring the significance, if any, of human history. It is particularly concerned with the possibility of teleological development – that is, a design, purpose, directive principle, or finality in the process of human history – including the possibility of a metaphysical factor in that process. The term was coined by the German Catholic philosopher Franz Xaver Von Baader (1765–1841) and was borrowed by his better-known friend, the idealist philosopher Friedrich von Schelling (1775–1854). *Historiosophy* was re-introduced in the twentieth century by thinkers such as the philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), the scholar of Islamic thought Henry Corbin (1903–1978) and the *doyen* of Jewish Mysticism studies Gershom Gerhard Scholem (1897–1982). See: S.M. WASSERSTROM, *Religion after Religion*, p. 159–161.

⁴⁹ J.H.W.G. LIEBESCHUETZ, *Ecclesiastical Historians*, p. 151–163.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 156.

⁵¹ For an example of a short contribution which exhibits a budding, albeit hesitant, awareness of this key element in ecclesiastical historiography (note the title), see: J. HARRIES, *Patristic Historiography*, p. 269–279.

if their informational value has been acknowledged at times, the record may still show that the individual authorial voices of the ecclesiastical historians have been consistently overlooked.

More recently; however, this rather unexciting *status quaestionis* has greatly changed. Contemporary scholars, it seems, have lent their ears to Arnaldo Momigliano's posthumously-published call for a radical re-evaluation of the ecclesiastical historians⁵².

A range of new specialised studies, more attuned to the delicate (yet very significant) differences between the church historians, have appeared over the last decades. The immediate benefit for scholarship lies primarily in a new awareness of the unique voices in each of the ecclesiastical histories, thus far collectively and as already mentioned, often unflatteringly labelled, if not entirely dismissed. To this wave belong (in chronological order of their publication) the monographs by F. Thelamon on Rufinus of Aquileia⁵³, T. Urbainczyk on Socrates of Constantinople⁵⁴, and M. Wallraff⁵⁵ on the same church historian. Wallraff is also the editor (together with Jonathan Stutz and Nicholas Marinides) of the surviving fragments of a *HE*, composed by another bishop, Gelasius of Caesarea (d. 395)⁵⁶. Other contributions to Eusebian studies by D. Mendels, E. Carotenuto, M. Verdoner, A. Johnson and J. Schott, the first volume of a commentary on Eusebius and more recently, J. Corke-Webster's monograph on the inventor of the genre *Historia Ecclesiastica*⁵⁷.

Other scholars who were more interested in specific aspects of Christian historiography have nonetheless contributed to the rediscovery of nuances and shades of colour on the canvases that the ecclesiastical historians have left us. Under this category fall works such as F. Winkelmann's overview of the contacts between ecclesiastical histories and Byzantine historiography⁵⁸, D. Timpe's preliminary considerations of the genre of ecclesiastical history (with emphasis on Eusebius)⁵⁹, H. Leppin's study of the idea of the 'Christian Emperor' as reflect-

⁵² A. MOMIGLIANO, *The Classical Foundations*, p. 132–152.

⁵³ F. THELAMON, *Païens et Chrétiens*.

⁵⁴ T. URBAINCZYK, *Socrates of Constantinople*.

⁵⁵ M. WALLRAFF, *Der Kirchenhistoriker Sokrates*.

⁵⁶ GELASIIUS OF CAESAREA, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. M. WALLRAFF, J. STUTZ, N. MARINIDES.

⁵⁷ See respectively: D. MENDELS, *The Media Revolution of Early Christianity*; E. CAROTENUTO, *Tradizione e innovazione*; M. VERDONER, *Narrated Reality*; EUSÈBE DE CÉSARÉE, *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, ed. S. MORLET, L. PERRONE, *commentaire*; and J. CORKE-WEBSTER, *Eusebius and Empire*.

⁵⁸ F. WINKELMANN, *Rolle und Problematik*, p. 257–269.

⁵⁹ D. TIMPE, *Was ist Kirchengeschichte?*, p. 171–204.

ed in Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret⁶⁰, T. Ferguson's analysis of the role of the genre of ecclesiastical history (Eusebius of Caesarea, Rufinus of Aquileia and Philostorgius of Borissus) in the theological controversies of the fourth century and indeed, in the shaping of a Nicene concept of orthodoxy⁶¹, G. Trompf's study of 'Early Christian Historiography', published with the sub-title 'Narratives of Retributive Justice', thus revealing in a nutshell the hermeneutic principles which guide the author's interpretation of the ecclesiastical histories, i.e. regarding them as a link in a chain of the Judeo-Christian literary tradition, built up around the biblical principle of Divine Retribution, traced back by Trompf with painstaking efforts to the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles⁶². P. Allen, who published in 1981 a monograph on the sixth-century church historian Evagrius Scholasticus (ca. 535 – ca. 594), has contributed two important articles in which she has highlighted the place of concepts such as 'Hellenism' and 'heresy' in the narratives of Socrates and Theodoret⁶³. A different aspect of the ecclesiastical histories attracted the attention of Ivan Krivushin, who in a short book, published in post-communist Russia (yet still imbued with Marxist approach), has looked at the role of the crowd in the narratives of all the church historians up to Theodoret⁶⁴.

Also of interest are the works of the Australian scholar, Alana E. Nobbs. Nobbs has to her credit an important comparison of digressions in Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret. Nobbs has also dedicated papers to various aspects of the Eunomian Church historian, Philostorgius of Borissus, which have undoubtedly helped to draw scholarly attention to this exceptional church historian⁶⁵. Philostorgius has also received some attention outside the Anglophone world, mostly in Germany and France⁶⁶.

The entire problem of ecclesiastical historiography and its relation to classical pagan historiography (including its late antique exponents), has received

⁶⁰ H. LEPPIN, *Von Constantin dem Großen zu Theodosius II.*

⁶¹ T.C. FERGUSON, *The Past is Prologue.*

⁶² G.W. TROMPF, *Early Christian Historiography*. On Luke as the 'first Christian historian', see: *ibidem*, p. 47–106. See, however: J. SCHRÖTER, *Lukas als Historiograph*, p. 237–262.

⁶³ P. ALLEN, *Some Aspects of Hellenism*, p. 368–381; EADEM, *The Use of Heretics and Heresies*, p. 265–289.

⁶⁴ See: I. KRIVUSHIN, *История и народ.*

⁶⁵ A.E. NOBBS, *Digressions in the Ecclesiastical Histories*, p. 1–11. On Philostorgius see: EADEM, *'Philostorgius' View of the Past*, p. 250–264.

⁶⁶ See respectively: *Philostorg im Kontext der Spätantiken Geschichtsschreibung*, ed. D. MEYER; J.-M. PRIEUR, *À l'ère selon l'Histoire ecclésiastique de Philostorge*, p. 529–552, and IDEM, *Eunome selon l'Histoire ecclésiastique de Philostorge*, p. 151–172. For a discussion of Philostorgius' place in the tradition of the genre, see: E.I. ARGOV, *Giving the Heretic a Voice*, p. 497–524.

fresh reconsideration. David Rohrbacher, in his introductory survey of historiography in the fourth and fifth centuries, has placed the ecclesiastical historians in a more general context, which includes contemporary pagan historians. Another survey, by the French scholar Hervé Inglebert, focuses on the development of the genre within the wider context of Christian historiography and covers, albeit in a nutshell, a longer period of time (from the second century to the seventh century) and the diverse linguistic and cultural scenes where the genre of *Historia Ecclesiastica* left its mark⁶⁷.

The Christian literary context of ecclesiastical historiography; however, was the focus of a colloquium entitled *L'Historiographie de L'Église des premiers siècles*, held at the University of Tours in September 2000. The range of relevant topics covered was extremely wide and stretched from historiography in the New Testament to Christian historiography of the seventh century. The ecclesiastical historians were not neglected, and most were discussed from different angles by various contributors. Even so, it is important to note that the ecclesiastical historian whose work is the concern of the present study, Sozomen of Bethelia, received attention only from one participant in the colloquium, Guy Sabbah⁶⁸.

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

This edition includes valuable introductions and offers a particularly rich apparatus of footnotes which are of essential importance to any student of this ecclesiastical historian⁶⁹. Other notable essays dedicated to the ecclesiastical historians, authored by Friedhelm Winkelmann, Peter Van Deun, Hartmut Leppin, and Gabriele Marasco were published in a collection edited by the latter⁷⁰.

A more recent German contribution to a little explored aspect of *HE* as genre of apologetics was made by Martin Wallraff⁷¹. Recent important Italian

⁶⁷ See: H. INGLEBERT, *Le développement de l'historiographie chrétienne*, p. 559–584.

⁶⁸ G. SABBAB, *Sozomène et la politique religieuse des valentiniens*, p. 293–314. Sabbah's contribution to the Tours conference is focused on one specific aspect of the text: Sozomen's treatment of the religious policies of two Roman emperors, the pro-Nicene Valentinian I (364–375) in the west and the pro-Arian Valens (364–378) in the east.

⁶⁹ SOZOMEN, livres I–II, SC 306; livres III–IV, SC 418; livres V–VI, SC 495; livres VI–IX, SC 516.

⁷⁰ See: *Greek and Roman Historiography*, ed. G. MARASCO.

⁷¹ See: M. WALLRAFF, *Warum ist Kirchengeschichte*, p. 1–19.

and Polish scholarship on the subject should also be noted⁷². A major contribution to the study of fifth-century ecclesiastical historiography to date; however, is Peter Van Nuffelen's comparative study of Socrates and Sozomen, dedicated chiefly to their historical views as reflected through their methods of handling their source materials. Incidentally, Van Nuffelen provides a revised examination of their respective sources, picking up from where the previous scholarship on Socrates left off in 1898, and on Sozomen in 1911⁷³. Yet, Van Nuffelen deals with the ecclesiastical historians even-handedly and is thus, seeking to colonise a territory quite different from that of a monograph on a single historian⁷⁴.

Another important Francophone addition to relevant scholarship, which is, in fact, a work in progress is a commentary on Eusebius' ecclesiastical history of which only the first volume has appeared thus far⁷⁵.

The most recent attempt at a monograph on Sozomen (and indeed the first one since Georg Schoo's study of Sozomen's sources), is Caterina Berardi's *Linee di storiografia ecclesiastica in Sozomeno di Gaza* (Bari 2016). Unfortunately, this work leaves much to be desired⁷⁶. The latest substantial contribution to the study of Christian historiography in late antiquity, focusing on Eusebius of Caesarea and the reception of his *Historia Ecclesiastica* through the ages up until the present, is M.J. Hollerich's *Making Christian History: Eusebius of Caesarea and His Readers* (Oakland 2021). Sozomen receives in this gigantic work a brief discussion and a few additional mentions, all of which emanate from the author's view, whereby Sozomen's indebtedness to Eusebius is quite minimal⁷⁷.

⁷² See e.g. M. SIMONETTI, *L'imperatore arbitro*, p. 447–464; A. BALDINI, *Considerazioni ulteriori su Sozomenos*, p. 387–391; K. ILSKI, *Kirchengeschichte als Weltgeschichte*, p. 121–129; M. STACHURA, *Wandlungen und Kontinuität*, p. 131–146; IDEM, *Walka państwa rzymskiego z pogaństwem i herezją*, p. 127–148. However, a substantial Polish contribution to scholarship on ecclesiastical historiography is: S. BRALEWSKI, *Obraz papieżstwa*; IDEM, *Symmachia Cesarstwa Rzymskiego z Bogiem chrześcijan*. A large portion of this work is dedicated to this theme through the prism of the ecclesiastical historians from Eusebius to Evagrius Scholasticus.

⁷³ P. VAN NUFFELEN, *Un héritage de paix et de piété*; F. GEPPERT, *Die Quellen des Kirchenhistorikers Socrates Scholasticus*; G. SCHOO, *Die Quellen des Kirchenhistorikers Sozomenos*.

⁷⁴ This has been recognised by Van Nuffelen himself. See: VAN NUFFELEN, *op. cit.*, p. xxii, where the author acknowledges, in the introduction to his study, the long overdue need for a monograph dedicated to Sozomen: *Sozomène est moins populaire ... aucune monographie n'est consacrée à son histoire ecclésiastique. C'est un manque qui c'est fait sentir, car de nombreuses questions ne peuvent être clarifiées sans une vue d'ensemble sur son ouvrage*.

⁷⁵ See: *Histoire Ecclésiastique. Commentaire*, ed. S. MORLET, L. PERRONE, vol. I.

⁷⁶ See Peter Van Nuffelen's incisive review of Berardi's book in: IDEM, *Old and New Debates on Sozomen*, p. xlv–xlviii.

⁷⁷ See: M.J. HOLLERICH, *Making Christian History*, p. 68–83 and *passim*.

An important recent contribution to the contextualisation of *Historia Ecclesiastica* in the development of Christian historiography between the fifth and early thirteenth centuries, is Joseph Reidy's study of the so-called 'Lost Arian Historian'. Reidy's work is in many ways, a pioneering study of a missing link in the chain of ecclesiastical historiography⁷⁸.

We shall not conclude the present exploration of recent academic research of fifth-century ecclesiastical historiography without mentioning five doctoral dissertations which remain unpublished to date: Luke Gardiner's study of Socrates (Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge 2013), Emerance Delacenserie's thesis on the reception of Socrates (University of Ghent 2016) and earlier comparative studies from the US: Brian D. Fitzgerald, *Pagan activities during the reigns of Valens and Theodosius I according to the church historians Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret* (Princeton Theological Seminary 1995), Scott A. Rushing, *The Apostolic Tradition in the Ecclesiastical Histories of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret* (Baylor University 2013). A most recent contribution focused on Sozomen has been made by Sławomir Bralewski, who has teased out from Sozomen's narrative the church historian's assessment of virtues and qualities of two role models: the pious Christian ruler and the wise ascetic, devoted to the practice of a superior philosophy⁷⁹.

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

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

⁷⁸ See: J.J. REIDY, *The 'Lost Arian History'*.

⁷⁹ See: S. BRALEWSKI, *The Catalogue of Virtues*, p. 31–50.

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

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

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

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

The sixth and last chapter seeks, in the light of the conclusions drawn from the preceding chapter on Constantine, to extend the study to Sozomen's account of Constantine's successors, Constantius II, Julian, and Valens, leading, as we hope, towards a synthesis of those elements of Sozomen's authorial voice which were evidenced in the previous five chapters. This chapter offers a re-configuration of Sozomen's outlook. It attempts to explore Sozomen's view of a succession of emperors whose handling of the Constantinian legacy was marked by their rejection of the Doctrine of Nicaea and therefore may offer a good test case of coherence in Sozomen's thought. The present study seeks to identify and elucidate a distinctive individual element in Sozomen's authorial voice, rather than focusing on the evident differences between him and his predecessor (most notably, the portrayal of monks and holy men which Sozomen often supplements

by independent and indeed, unique material)⁸⁰. It follows that this theme ought to remain beyond the scope of the present study, although inevitably several occasional incursions into this territory must be allowed nonetheless⁸¹. Given the constraints of the present format, Sozomen's account of Theodosius I's reign and the plethora of new questions it raises, had to be left out too⁸².

We shall endeavour here to define the essence of Sozomen's individual authorial voice, which still remains overshadowed by the proximity in time, place, and choice of genre, to Socrates of Constantinople and his own *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Our working assumption will be that certain essential and indeed peculiar characteristics of the Palestinian born church historian may be found in portions of his narrative which are still often classified as mere plagiarism of Socrates' ecclesiastical history, leading certain scholars to believe that Sozomen's *HE* could not warrant much more than *Quellenforschung*⁸³. Recent scholarship, as has been already argued, has re-opened the case of the ecclesiastical historians. Now that the former *communis opinio* seems to have lost its sway, it seems high time to ask whether Sozomen of Bethelia was merely a follower of Eusebius of Caesarea, a successor of Socrates of Constantinople, or, rather, an ecclesiastical historian in his own right.



⁸⁰ A clear example of this lack can be found in D.F. CANER, *Wandering, Begging Monks*, p. 169–170, cf. also p. 190 and 197.

⁸¹ See however: T. URBAINCZYK, *Observations on the Differences*, p. 355–373 (esp. p. 362–364).

⁸² On this account see: R.M. ERRINGTON, *Christian Accounts of the Religious Legislation of Theodosius I*, p. 410–135.

⁸³ See e.g. G. SCHOO, *Die Quellen des Kirchenhistorikers Sozomenos*, p. 16–18. Schoo's research results have been effectively revised and augmented by Van Nuffelen. See: P. VAN NUFFELEN, *Un héritage*, p. 455–497.

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