

The Crossing of the Danube and the Gothic Conversion

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AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS provides a detailed account of the relations between the Emperor Valens and the Goths during the period 367–378. But essentially because Ammianus does not mention it, there has been much controversy over the date of a Gothic conversion to Christianity ascribed in other sources to the reign of Valens. Equally, because the historians Socrates and Sozomen link a civil war among the Goths to the conversion, it has also been unclear when this split might have taken place. It will be argued here that the primary accounts found in Socrates, Sozomen, and Eunapius can be reconciled with the secondary ones of Jordanes, Theodoret, and Orosius to suggest a Gothic conversion in 376. Further, combined with Ammianus, they strongly indicate that Christianity initially affected only elements of one Gothic group, the Tervingi, and was part of the agreement by which Valens allowed them to cross the Danube and enter the Empire in 376. It also becomes clear that the split too affected only the Tervingi, and occurred immediately before the crossing and conversion.

This reconstruction in turn highlights the Huns' rôle in overturning the established order in Gothic society: their attacks first divided the Tervingi, who were unable to agree on an appropriate response, and prompted the larger group to seek asylum in the Empire and accept conversion to Christianity. While these conclusions emerge from a detailed examination of the primary sources, this study is concerned as much with history as with historiography, and it is first necessary to place the discussion in the context of relations between the Empire and the Goths in the fourth century.

I. Introduction

By the mid-fourth century, the Goths were the most dangerous of the Roman Empire's neighbours north of the lower Danube frontier. Two large Gothic confederations, the Tervingi and Greuthun-

gi,¹ are attested for the period prior to *ca* 375. The Tervingi, who inhabited the territories of modern Moldavia and Wallachia, were closest to the Danube frontier and attracted considerable imperial attention. In the 330's the emperor Constantine pacified the Tervingi and instituted close formal ties with them. In this settlement the Tervingi were perhaps made legally part of the Empire, provided troops when required for imperial campaigns (for whose upkeep the Romans made payments), and were granted special trading rights. The frontier was open for commerce, despite the normal official policy of controlling cross-border traffic through a small number of designated outlets.² These arrangements lasted for about thirty years, not without problems. In 347/8, for instance, there was a diplomatic crisis during which a large number of Gothic Christians fled south of the Danube under Ulfila. This does not seem to have occasioned any major readjustment in the established form of the relationship.³ In the reign of Valens, however, Constantine's accord with the Goths fell apart. From 367 to 369 the emperor fought against the Goths north of the Danube led by the Tervingi ruler Athanaric (who also seems to have received aid from the Greuthungi), until hostilities were ended by the Treaty of Noviodunum, signed on a ship in the middle of the river. This reversed Constantine's settlement and broke the close ties between Goths and Empire. Trade was restricted to two centres, and payments in return for troops were discontinued.⁴

The mid-370's saw further changes in Valens' relations with the Goths. Probably for some time, Hunnic invasions from the east had posed an increasing threat to Gothic security; *ca* 375 a Greuthungi king fell in battle and his followers moved west to escape their troubles, triggering a chain reaction that completely altered the strategic situation north of the Danube. In 376 two Gothic groups came to

¹ The common equation of these, respectively, with 'Visigoths' and 'Ostrogoths' is anachronistic. The question cannot be dealt with here, but the reader should note that secondary authorities refer to Tervingi as Visigoths, and Greuthungi as Ostrogoths.

² General accounts of Constantine's relations with the Goths can be found in L. Schmidt, *Geschichte der deutschen Stämme bis zum Ausgang der Völkerwanderung: Die Ostgermanen*² (Munich 1934) 225ff; E. A. THOMPSON, *The Visigoths in the Time of Ulfila* (Oxford 1966 [hereafter 'Thompson']) 3ff; E. K. CHRYSOS, *Τὸ Βυζάντιον καὶ οἱ Γότθοι* (Thessalonica 1972 [hereafter 'Chrysos']) 41ff, and "Gothia Romania: zur Rechtslage des Föderatenlandes der Westgoten im 4. Jahrhundert," *Daco-Romania* 1 (1973) 52-64; H. Wolfram, *Geschichte der Goten* (Munich 1979) 60ff.

³ Philost. *HE* 2.17, with Chrysos 77ff, *contra* Thompson 13ff.

⁴ For the war of the 360's the main texts are *Amm. Marc.* 27.5 and *Them. Or.* 10; for commentary see Schmidt (*supra* n.2) 232f; Thompson 13ff; Chrysos 103ff; Wolfram (*supra* n.2) 74f; all agree that the 369 treaty separated Roman and Goth, although there is some disagreement over which side wanted this separation.

the river asking for asylum within the Empire: one, the Greuthungi, the other, the larger part of the Tervingi, who had split from Athanaric and were now led by Alavivus and Fritigern. Valens responded by admitting the Tervingi but excluding the Greuthungi, who managed an illegal crossing to unite with the Tervingi. In Valens' second Gothic war the emperor and his army were eventually destroyed at Hadrianople in August 378 (Amm. Marc. 31.3ff). Valens' reign thus saw three major phases in relations with the Tervingi: the close ties inherited from Constantine were broken by the first Gothic war after 367; a period of separation followed; and in 376 the Tervingi were brought into unprecedentedly close contact with the Empire by the Danube crossing.

The primary sources that report a conversion in the reign of Valens give differing accounts of its date and place. Orosius (*Adv. pag.* 7.33.19) dates a conversion to Valens' reign but does not say precisely when. Socrates also records a Gothic conversion in Valens' reign but places the action more precisely north of the Danube and within the context of a civil war between Athanaric and Fritigern, before the former's persecution of Gothic Christians beginning after the treaty of Noviodunum in 369.⁵ For Jordanes and Theodoret, however, conversion was part of the agreement giving the Tervingi legal entry into the Empire in 376.⁶ Sozomen largely copied Socrates' account (specifically the sequence of civil war, conversion, and persecution), but located the action south of the Danube before the second Gothic war that led to Hadrianople. This, of course, would mean 376.⁷ Finally, there have been attempts to introduce into the argument a fragment of Eunapius describing the crossing of some 'barbarians' into the Empire, although Eunapius' editors have been unanimous in taking this as a reference to an event in the reign of Theodosius I.⁸

This disagreement has led to uncertainty over when, if at all, a conversion should be dated in the different phases of Valens' relations with the Goths. Four positions have been adopted. One group has followed the account of Socrates, in which civil war leads to conversion. Given that this takes place before Athanaric's perse-

⁵ Soc. *HE* 4.33 (ed. R. Hussey [Oxford 1853] 559–61; for the date of the persecution see Hieron. *Chron. s.a.* 369 (ed. R. Helm, *GCS* [Berlin 1956] 245).

⁶ Jord. *Get.* 25.131f (ed. Th. Mommsen, *MGH AA VI* [Berlin 1882] 92); Thdt. *HE* 6.37 (ed. L. Parmentier and F. Scheidweiler, *GCS* [Berlin 1954] 273f).

⁷ Soz. *HE* 6.37 (J. Bidez and G. C. Hanson, ed., *GCS* [Berlin 1960] 294–97).

⁸ Eunap. fr.55 MÜLLER = fr.48 R. C. BLOCKLEY; cf. their respective comments at *FHG IV* (Paris 1868 [hereafter 'Müller']) 38f and *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire I* (Liverpool 1981 [hereafter 'Blockley']) 104f, 160 n.56.

cution, the action must belong to Valens' first Gothic war, between 367 and 369.⁹ The second group uses Socrates' basic account but, because of serious problems that arise when it is accepted in full, considers it to be chronologically confused. On this understanding, Athanaric's persecution should be placed before, not after, the conversion; the other events (including the conversion) fall between the persecution and the crossing of the Danube, *ca* 372 to 375.¹⁰ The third group has followed Theodoret and Jordanes in dating the conversion to 376, interpreting Orosius' ambiguity and the accounts of Socrates and Sozomen as confused descriptions of the same event.¹¹ Finally, some scholars have considered the evidence for a conversion in the reign of Valens too confused to be conclusive. They place more weight on references to Goths as pagans after Hadrianople, and suggest that conversion took place sometime in the reign of Theodosius I.¹²

The date of the conversion has great historical importance, for it establishes the circumstances of the mass penetration of the Danube frontier by the Goths in 376, leading up to the battle of Hadrianople. It decides whether the Tervingi who fled south of the Danube in 376 had already been involved in a deep split, leading to a Christian conversion and a client relationship with the Emperor Valens, or whether this was all part of the disorder associated with invasion by the Huns. These events, indeed, have often been seen as heralding the collapse of Roman power, so that no apology is necessary, especially given previous scholarly disagreement, for returning again to the complex problems surrounding the Gothic conversion.

On one level a single date for the conversion of a people does not make sense. Conversion is a process, not an event, and takes time to come to fruition. Indeed, before the reign of Valens, the Goths and especially the Tervingi had long been exposed to Christianity from a number of sources, and it is clear that the new religion had a consider-

⁹ Chrysos 109–24; L. Varady, *Das letzte Jahrhundert Pannoniens 376–476* (Amsterdam 1976) 27ff; K. K. Klein, "Frithigern, Athanaric und die Spaltung des Westgotenvolks," *Südostforschungen* 19 (1960) 37ff.

¹⁰ K. Schaferdiek, "Der germanische Arianismus. Erwägungen zum geschichtlichen Verständnis," in D. Baker, ed., *Miscellanea Historiae Ecclesiasticae* III (= *Bibl. RHE* 50 [Paris 1970]) 76f, and "Zeit und Umstände des westgotischen Übergangs zum Christentum," *Historia* 28 (1979) 90ff, followed by Wolfram (*supra* n.2) 73ff, and (with amplification) Z. Rubin, "The Conversion of the Visigoths to Christianity," *MusHelv* 38 (1981) 34ff.

¹¹ J. Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces danubiennes* (= *BEFAR* 112 [1918]) 452ff.

¹² Thompson 86ff; A. Fridh, "Die Bekehrung der Westgoten zum Christentum," in U. E. Hagberg, ed., *Studia Gotica* (Stockholm 1972) 130–43.

able impact.¹³ A single date can have meaning, however, where it marks an intention, often on the part of the leadership of a group, to advance the process of conversion consistently. Such a date refers not to a group adherence body and soul to a new set of beliefs, but marks rather a determination to change public practice. A later example of a date with similar significance in Gothic history would be the rejection of Arianism by the Visigothic king Reccared in 587: this was a single decision that committed the Visigothic leadership to orthodoxy, but followed a long process in which catholic inroads into Gothic Arianism had made it a practical and even necessary course to choose.¹⁴ Detailed examination of the sources will indicate that in 376, similarly, the leadership of the Tervingi committed itself to changing the practice of the group and adopted the so-called 'semi-Arian' religion of the Emperor Valens in place of their ancestral paganism.

II. The Greek Sources

Socrates

Socrates provides a clear account of a partial Gothic conversion that has been accepted in full by the first group of scholars:

- (a) The Goths are divided by civil war, one group led by Fritigern, the other by Athanaric (4.31.1).
- (b) Athanaric gains an advantage and Fritigern flees to the Romans to request their help. Valens orders troops in Thrace to assist Fritigern; they are victorious over Athanaric north of the Danube (4.33.2f).
- (c) Fritigern adopts Valens' religion out of gratitude and urges his fellow countrymen to do likewise. As Valens was an Arian, the Goths became so and have remained so (4.33.4f).

¹³ Most famous are the missions of Ulfila, on which see Philost. *HE* 2.5; cf. also the letter of Auxentius printed in F. Kauffmann, *Aus der Schule des Wulfila. Texte und Untersuchungen zur altgermanischen Religionsgeschichte* I (Strasbourg 1899) 73ff, with Thompson xiiiiff for commentary. Other missions were carried out by the heretical bishop Audius, who even ordained bishops (Epiph. *Haer.* 70). Orthodoxy was represented by Cappadocian missionaries such as Eutyches, mentioned in Basil *Ep.* 164, and the Goth St Saba (for the latter cf. H. Delehaye, "Saints de Thrace et de Mésie," *AnalBoll* 31 [1912] 216–21). While a different conversion date will be proposed, I would accept much of the picture of Gothic society *ca* 375 painted by Thompson (64ff) and Rubin (*supra* n.10: 36–41): that is, of a people coming increasingly under Roman cultural influence, in which Christianity was a major element. The strength of the Christian impact is best seen in the fact that it frightened the leaders of the Tervingi into two waves of persecution (see 316ff *infra*).

¹⁴ E. A. Thompson, "The Conversion of the Visigoths to Catholicism," *Nottingham Mediaeval Studies* 4 (1960) 4–35.

- (d) The then bishop, Ulfila, invents Gothic script and undertakes missions (4.33.6).
- (e) Ulfila's missions go beyond Fritigern's people into Athanaric's, which rouses the latter to anger and causes the persecution. The chapter closes with a brief account of Arius' doctrine and error (4.33.7-9).

Although Socrates makes no distinction between the Tervingi and the Greuthungi, his reference to Fritigern and Athanaric shows that it is the former who are being discussed. No date is provided, but inasmuch as the persecution began in 369, the rest of the action can only reflect Valens' first Gothic war. Those who wish to follow Socrates have therefore had to integrate his account with the independent description of this war in the reliable contemporary historian Ammianus Marcellinus. At no point in Ammianus' narrative does religion appear, and there is no mention of a civil war or of subsequent Roman intervention.

The absence of religion does not in itself make it difficult to reconcile Ammianus with Socrates. Although he wrote in Latin, Ammianus belongs among those late Roman classicising historians who otherwise wrote in Greek, attempted to follow classical examples of historical writing, and had a fixed idea of the subjects and language appropriate to their work. As a relatively recent innovation, Christianity was not considered an acceptable subject: even demonstrably Christian classicising historians avoided technical Christian vocabulary. Recent studies have concluded, indeed, that although Ammianus was well-acquainted with Christianity, he deliberately omitted Christian religious elements from the events he recounts.¹⁵ Even in Socrates the conversion is linked to political events, so that its absence in Ammianus need not present a major problem. If there is no other difficulty, he can simply be supposed to have concentrated on secular politics and ignored the religious element. Ammianus' omission of a civil war and subsequent Roman intervention, however, is a more serious problem, which those who wish to follow Socrates have had to overcome.

Representative of the way these issues have been faced is Varady's approach. He suggests that in 367 Valens attacked all the Tervingi; but

¹⁵ Ammianus' account of the war appears at 27.5. On the question of genre see Blockley 86ff; classicising vocabulary is discussed by A. D. E. and A. M. Cameron, "Christianity and Tradition in the Historiography of the Later Empire," *CQ* N.S. 14 (1964) 316-28; on Ammianus and Christianity see R. C. Blockley, *Ammianus Marcellinus: A Study of His Historiography and Political Thought* (= *Coll. Latomus* 41 [Brussels 1975]) 123ff; E. D. Hunt, "Christians and Christianity in Ammianus Marcellinus," *CQ* N.S. 35 (1985) 186ff.

during the break enforced by adverse weather in 368, an alliance was made with Fritigern, and in 369 Valens assaulted only Athanaric's Goths. Integration of the two accounts along similar lines has been proposed by other scholars who wish to follow Socrates.¹⁶ Although attractive at first sight, such attempts are clearly unacceptable when the two accounts are closely compared. Thompson has identified the most obvious inconsistency: if Fritigern led the victorious faction in 369, it becomes hard to explain why Athanaric was still leader of the Tervingi when the Huns attacked them *ca* 376, as Ammianus testifies. This inconsistency is deepened by the fact, often ignored, that until his disappearance Alavivus, not Fritigern, led those Tervingi who fled south of the Danube.¹⁷ Fritigern does not seem to have been even second-in-line to Athanaric in 376, which is incompatible with the view that he had been an important client of the Empire since 369.

More generally, Ammianus and Socrates understand the overall action quite differently. In Socrates' account Roman intervention occurs when the Gothic civil war forces Fritigern to flee south of the Danube for Roman help. In Ammianus it is Valens who begins the war in response to a series of aggressive acts by the Goths, who first threaten the frontier and then send help to the usurper Procopius.¹⁸ In Socrates, Valens exploits the division to establish a client relationship with one of the factions, while nothing of this appears in Ammianus. If Socrates is describing the war of 367–369, then Ammianus' version is not only incomplete (which is indisputable),¹⁹ but also fails to report the most significant outcome of the war. It would have been a major diplomatic success for Valens to have detached part of Athanaric's Goths, with important consequences for frontier security; yet not a word of this appears in Ammianus. Indeed, Ammianus describes a stalemate rather than a success. This is apparent, above all, in Valens' inability to enforce symbolic superiority when the peace treaty was signed. That he met Athanaric on a ship in the middle of the Danube opposite Noviodunum indicates that he had been unable to make the Goth come to him, either on Roman soil or north of the Danube in Athanaric's own land, where it was customary to receive 'barbarian' surrenders.²⁰

¹⁶ Varady (*supra* n.9) 27ff; Chrysos 122f; Klein (*supra* n.9) 39ff.

¹⁷ Thompson 87; on Alavivus see Amm. Marc. 31.4.1.

¹⁸ For the threat to the frontier, 26.6.11; on Procopius, 26.10.3.

¹⁹ For the campaigns north of the Danube, for example, Ammianus never mentions time and direction.

²⁰ With 27.5.9 *cf.* the historian's own gloss at 31.4.13; on submission to emperors beyond the frontier see 17.12.9ff, 18.2.15f, 30.6.1f.

Given these discrepancies Socrates cannot simply be combined with Ammianus; the two versions do not complement each other, and in proposed combinations Ammianus' account has been forced to fit Socrates'. Some choice must be made between them, and there can only be one response. Ammianus wrote a contemporary narrative of wide scope and tremendous detail; in contrast, while Socrates is interesting and important, he does not inspire great confidence in particulars. Those who wish to follow him stress his accuracy, but such assertions are difficult to justify. Even with a subject central to his interests—the Arian dispute, for example—Socrates was capable of major chronological errors, such as misdating the Council of Serdica by about five years.²¹ Northern 'barbarians' were peripheral to his interests, and inaccuracy correspondingly more likely.

In this case, however, no choice is necessary. When we consider the whole of Ammianus' account of relations between Valens and the Goths, elements common to both Ammianus and Socrates indicate that the latter confused an account that was originally similar to Ammianus'. Zeiller's demonstration of this point has not received the credit it deserves.²² He maintained that Socrates confused the persecution of 369 with the events of 376, when the Goths fled south of the Danube. Indeed, the argument can be taken a stage further, since Valens' first Gothic war also appears briefly in Socrates. Using the sections into which Socrates' account was divided above, the chapter can be rearranged in this way:

Events of 367–369

Events of 376

- (a) the Gothic split (Amm. Marc. 31.3.8, where the Tervingi divide in the face of the Huns; the only difference being the extent of conflict involved²³)

²¹ To stress Socrates' value Chrysos 122 declares him *ἀξιόπιστοτέρα πάντων*, and Varady (*supra* n.9) 27 n.36 "die einzige authentische Quelle zur Ermittlung der fraglichen Ereignisfolge." For the misdating of Serdica see G. F. Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories* (= *Théologie historique* 46 [1977]) 188f.

²² Zeiller (*supra* n.11) 453.

²³ See 314 *infra*. Rubin (*supra* n.10) 46f argued that Ammianus' pluperfect *deseruerat* implies that the break with Athanaric occurred before the troubles associated with the Hunnic invasions. This usage in a subordinate clause is dictated by the fact that the main verb is in the imperfect (*quaeritabar*) and does not carry this implication. Ammianus here securely links Athanaric's political troubles to the problems resulting from the invasions (31.3.4–8), and no other explanation for them is required. Rubin also overestimates the degree of panic among the fleeing Goths: they were sufficiently organised to spend some time (*diuque deliberans*) agreeing upon a sensible joint approach to the problems posed by the Huns and sending an embassy to Valens to request asylum (31.3.8 and 4.1).

(b.1) Fritigern's flight, where the wording clearly implies movement south of the Danube (*Φριτιγέρνης προσφεύγει Ῥωμαίους*) = the flight of the Tervingi before the Huns (Amm. Marc. 31.4.5)

(b.2) Roman campaigns north of the Danube; *cf.* the wording *ποιούονται νίκην κατὰ Ἀθαναρίχου πέραν τοῦ Ἰστροῦ* = Valens' first Gothic war (Amm. Marc. 27.5.2–6)

(c) the resulting conversion of the Goths (in which Ammianus had no interest)

(d) A digression: the work of Ulfila

(e.1) Athanaric's persecution, not in Ammianus, but securely dated by Jerome, following the campaign of 367–369

(e.2) Another digression: Arius' errors

Ammianus' detailed account could not be derived from one structured like Socrates', while Socrates' account could well have been put together from one structured generally like Ammianus' but also concerned with the religious dimension. Socrates' sequence of events is the logical outcome of a combination of Valens' first Gothic war (and the subsequent persecution) with an account of the Gothic split and the crossing of the Danube in 376. Athanaric's name would have been common to both sets of information and was perhaps the cause of the confusion. Whether the two sets of information came from different sources is unclear. They were describing chronologically separate events, of course, and might well have been taken by Socrates from different portions of the same source. Whatever the case—and there is no clear indication of where Socrates found his information—Ammianus can be used to unravel Socrates' confusions.

Analysis of Socrates, therefore, suggests the following conclusions: The reconstruction of events proposed by those who would follow his account must be rejected, because their main authority has confused events of the 360's with those of the 370's. Equally, those scholars who find chronological confusion only in Socrates' account of the persecution (the second group of opinion) would also seem to be mistaken. Keeping Socrates' order of events and merely redating them after 372 avoids the most obvious problem, *i.e.*, Fritigern's appear-

ance and position, but it otherwise transmits the confusions that underlie Socrates' entire account. Indeed, this second position is in itself untenable: for, as Thompson (88) has pointed out, it is inconceivable that a major military expedition north of the Danube could have been launched at this date without being mentioned by Ammianus.

Faced with these confusions Thompson rejected Socrates outright. Confusion certainly exists, but complete rejection seems unwarranted. Athanaric's persecution, Valens' campaign north of the Danube, the Gothic split, and Fritigern's flight south (in a different order) all find confirmation in independent, trustworthy sources. It may be suggested, therefore, that Socrates' association of the conversion with Fritigern's flight to obtain help from Valens might also have some basis in fact. This is uncertain, but the hypothesis that a Gothic conversion was bound up with the lawful crossing of the Danube in 376 by the Tervingi under Alavivus and Fritigern (otherwise described by Ammianus) can be tested against the other sources.

Sozomen

Detailed examination suggests that Sozomen read, in addition to Socrates, another source that dated a Gothic conversion to 376. It was probably this source that prompted Sozomen to depart from Socrates in placing the conversion south of the Danube. Since the existence of this alternate source has never been established, it must be demonstrated with care.

Chrysos has confirmed that Sozomen drew heavily and directly on Socrates for information about the Goths and Valens. To illustrate the debt, Sozomen's chapter can be broken down by source:²⁴

<i>Sozomen</i>	<i>Material from Socrates</i>	<i>Other Material</i>
(a) 6.37.1.	An oration of Themistius brings Valens to religious tolerance (4.32)	
(b) 6.37.2	1. Introduction: public events interrupt Valens' plans (4.32) 2. The Goths are driven south of the Danube by the Huns (4.34)	
(c) 6.37.3-4		Digression on how the Huns attacked the Goths

²⁴ Chrysos 113ff; cf. G. Schoo, *Die Quellen des Kirchen Historikers Sozomenos* (Berlin 1911) 150.

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| (d) 6.37.5–6A | | The Huns defeat the Goths, a Gothic embassy to Valens led by Ulfila enables them to settle in Thrace |
| (e) 6.37.6B–7 | Transitional sentence, then Socrates' account of the Gothic civil war followed by Valens' intervention and the conversion (4.33.1–5) | |
| (f) 6.37.8–11A | | Introductory sentence, then extra information on Ulfila |
| (g) 6.37.11B–12A | Ulfila teaches, invents Gothic letters, and carries out the missions that lead to the persecution (4.33.6–8) | |
| (h) 6.37.12B–14 | | Extra information on the persecution |
| (i) 6.37.15A | Goths quickly make peace among themselves (4.34.1) | |
| (j) 6.37.15B | Goths devastate Thrace (4.35.1) | |
| (k) 6.37.16A | Valens learns his mistake in accepting the Goths (4.35) | |
| (l) 6.37.16B | The miscalculations behind Valens' policy (4.34) | |
| (m) 6.37.17 | The Gothic revolt brings Valens to Constantinople; he changes his religious policy (4.35) | |

Sozomen reproduces the setting for conversion familiar from Socrates: Gothic civil war followed by Fritigern's request for help, Valens' intervention, a conversion out of gratitude, and the persecution. But because the chain of events is placed south of the Danube, the end result is a redating to the period after 376.

Jeep attempted to explain this discrepancy by supposing that Sozomen had returned to Socrates' source and drawn on it at greater length. This is clearly impossible, for the two place the conversion in explicitly different geographical settings. Jeep's argument would require that one or other misunderstood the common source; even given their known failings, this seems unlikely. More recently it has

been suggested that Sozomen's account is a conflation of Socrates and a chapter in Theodoret's *Ecclesiastical History*. There is, however, no substantial resemblance between Theodoret and Sozomen beyond the location of the conversion south of the Danube, and this cannot explain Sozomen's alterations.²⁵

The most substantial attempt to explain the relationship is that of Chrysos (119f), who concluded that in addition to Socrates, whom Sozomen not only used as a primary source but largely copied, Sozomen used a source that described the arrival of the Huns (c). Indeed, Sozomen reproduces the tale of the hunter and the doe, which originated with Eunapius but may have come to Sozomen through an intermediary. He also added to Socrates further information about the Gothic persecution (h) that seems to have come from a hagiographic source. If the material on the Huns was derived from Eunapius directly, this hagiography would represent a third source, since Eunapius would have no interest in individual Gothic martyrs. These observations are sound but do not explain why Sozomen changed the order of events. Chrysos asserted that Sozomen was simply following his own inclinations without further authority: Sozomen fabricated the material in sections (d) and (f) to remove the taint of Arianism from Ulfila and the Gothic martyrs; his account, in other words, represents orthodox apologetic. In support of this interpretation Chrysos pointed out that Sozomen omitted Socrates' explicit statement that the martyrs were Arians, and he suggested that Ulfila's embassy (f) was a deliberate misplacing of the Goth's known embassy of ca 340. In 376 Valens was at Antioch, and there would have been no time for an embassy to reach him from the Danube.²⁶

This explanation makes little sense of the evidence. Sozomen does not "correct" (Chrysos' *διόρθωσις*) the Arianism of the martyrs: he omits Socrates' specific conclusion, *ὥστε γενέσθαι μάρτυρας τῆνικαὐτὰ βαρβάρους ἀρειανίζοντας*. But this by no means whitewashes doctrinal differences. While Sozomen states that Ulfila was originally orthodox he makes it explicit that the Goth then joined the Arians at the Council of Constantinople under Eudoxius and Acacius in the reign of Constantius (*i.e.*, the council of winter 359/360). He therefore considers Ulfila to have been an Arian from 360 onwards,

²⁵ I. Jeep, "Quellenuntersuchungen zu den griechischen Kirchenhistorikern," *Jahr. f. cl. Phil.* 14 Suppl. (Leipzig 1884) 149f. That Sozomen represents a conflation of Socrates and Theodoret was suggested by Schaferdiek, "Zeit und Umstände" (*supra* n.10) 94f, but this has been rightly rejected by Rubin (*supra* n.10) 42.

²⁶ Chrysos 120–22, esp. 121: *ἀποβλέπει εἰς πέραν τοῦ ἱστορικοῦ ἔργου εὕρισκομένας σκοπιμότητας*. For the date 340: Philost. *HE* 2.5.

and any Goth converted by him after that date would be also. Since the persecution takes place in the reign of Valens, who became *Augustus* in 364, there is no doubt that Sozomen thought that the Gothic martyrs were Arians, since they had been converted by Ulfila.²⁷ Changing the order of events does not 'de-Arianise' the Gothic martyrs.

The information in sections (d) and (f) can, to some extent, also be confirmed, thus disproving the charge of fabrication. It is certain that Ulfila participated in the embassy of *ca* 340, and he is not named by any other source as an envoy in 376. But despite the distance from the Danube to Antioch, the Gothic request for asylum in 376 was, as Ammianus makes clear, transmitted by an embassy; and given his Gothic background and past association with the emperor Constantius, Ulfila would have been the natural go-between for Goths and emperor.²⁸ Section (f), moreover, corresponds with what actually happened at the Council of Constantinople. The emperor gathered representatives of the different groups of opinion in the protracted ecclesiastical dispute that had followed the Council of Nicaea in 325. From these, Constantius and his leading bishop, Acacius of Caesarea, attempted to create a moderate consensus that would guarantee ecclesiastical peace. Ulfila is known to have been present, and his creed preserves views entirely in accord with its settlement, based on the definition of the relationship between Father and Son as *ὁμοιος* in nature.²⁹

Chrysos' explanation is unconvincing, therefore, because the charge of fabrication cannot be substantiated. It should be noted that Chrysos' motive in attacking the reliability of Sozomen was to establish the trustworthiness of Socrates; this, as has been seen, is an untenable position with or without reference to Sozomen. Better progress can be made towards understanding Sozomen when there is no desire to validate Socrates.

In placing Sozomen's reordering of events in proper perspective, it is important to consider what was at his disposal. Apart from Socrates, he had information from other sources on Ulfila, the Goths, and

²⁷ Soc. 4.33.7; *contra* Soz. 6.37.8; for the Council of Constantinople: T. A. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism* (Philadelphia 1979) 299ff. The Arianism of Sozomen's martyrs was established by J. Mansion, "Les origines du Christianisme chez les Gots," *AnalBoll* 33 (1914) 9.

²⁸ Amm. Marc. 31.4.1. Constantius had taken a strong personal interest in Ulfila's work: *cf.* Philost. 2.5, and 316f *infra*.

²⁹ On the council see Kopecek (*supra* n.27) 348ff; Ulfila's presence there is recorded by Soz. 4.24.1, and his creed is quoted in Auxentius' letter (Kauffmann [*supra* n.13] 73).

the political events of *ca* 376 listed above in sections (c), (d), (f), and (h). He was unable, however, to correct Socrates' misplacing of the persecution and simply followed his sequence of events, without knowing that the persecution predated the crossing of the Danube by some seven years and that it was incorrect to place Athanaric south of the Danube in 376, both consequences of following Socrates' general structure.³⁰ His information, then, was limited, and it would be wrong to think of him as conducting an investigation into Gothic history, as the language of some scholars might suggest.³¹ Sozomen had no independent view of Gothic history that would have equipped him to criticise Socrates, and was unaware that he was making serious errors. Here, as in his work generally, he must be considered a compiler with limited resources.

Sozomen nevertheless quite consciously relocated Socrates' account of the conversion south of the Danube, as examination of the text shows. Proceeding methodically he reworked and carefully repositioned Socrates' material to make it fit the new order. At 6.37.2b (section [b.2] above) Sozomen reproduces Socrates' account of the Hunnic attacks that drove the Goths into Roman lands:

Sozomen 6.37.2b:

καὶ τῶν ἄλλων βαρβάρων ἐκράτουν,
ἐξελαθέντες παρὰ τῶν καλουμένων
Οὐννων, εἰς τοὺς Ῥωμαίων ὄρους
ἐπεραιώθησαν.

Socrates 4.34.1:

αὐθις ὑφ' ἐτέρων βαρβάρων γει-
νιαζόντων αὐτοῖς, τῶν καλουμένων
Οὐννων, καταπολεμηθέντες καὶ τῆς
ιδίας ἐξελαθέντες χώρας, εἰς τὴν
Ῥωμαίων γῆν καταφεύγουσι.

When reproducing it, however, Sozomen placed this information among other Socratean material that appears in the original at 4.32 and 4.33. With Socrates 4.34 thus relocated between 4.32 and 4.33, the Gothic conversion (4.33) now follows the Hunnic attacks (4.34), while in the original it preceded them. This could only have been done deliberately.

Another example emphasises the care with which Sozomen edited Socrates' account. In his version of Valens' intervention in the Gothic civil war, Socrates states explicitly that victory was won north of the Danube. When Sozomen reached the same point, he virtually copied Socrates but was careful to omit the location of the victory, for in his reordered account the Goths had already fled south into the Empire:

³⁰ Athanaric did not arrive at Constantinople until 11 January 381 and died there soon after, on 25 January: *Const. Constant. s.a.* 381 (*Chron. Min.* I 243).

³¹ *E.g.* Thompson 87, Fridh (*supra* n.12) 136.

Sozomen 6.37.7:

τοῦ δὲ βασιλέως ἐπιτρέψαντος συμμαχεῖν αὐτῷ τοὺς ἐν Θράκῃ στρατιώτας, αὐθις συμβαλὼν ἐνίκησε καὶ τοὺς ἀμφὶ Ἀθανάριχον εἰς φυγὴν ἔτρεψεν.

Socrates 4.33.3:

[Οὐάλης] κελεύει τοὺς ἐνιδρυμένους κατὰ τὴν Θράκην στρατιώτας, βοηθεῖν τοῖς βαρβάροις κατὰ βαρβάρων στρατεύουσι· καὶ ποιοῦνται νίκην κατὰ Ἀθαναρίχου πέραν τοῦ Ἰστρου τοὺς πολεμίους εἰς φυγὴν τρέψαντες.

It is clear, then, that although Sozomen had only limited knowledge and wrote well after the events, he deliberately re-structured his major source.

Unless one attributes Sozomen's modification of Socrates to personal whim—which is unlikely and cannot be documented—the most economical explanation is that he was influenced by another source. This must have made it clear that Socrates, by putting the conversion north of the Danube, had misplaced it. Armed with this extra information, Sozomen returned to his main source and re-structured it accordingly. He nevertheless used Socrates' general account of the surrounding circumstances (civil war, appeal for help, Valens' intervention), which suggests that this other source was not as detailed as Socrates. Sozomen was apparently unaware that in adhering to Socrates' general outline, he was being led into further confusion with the appearance of Athanaric south of the Danube in 376 and the misdated persecution. Again the limitations of Sozomen's knowledge are apparent; his other source seems to have corrected the place of conversion but provided no check for the other details.

This other source clearly combined two pieces of information, the Danube crossing and a subsequent conversion: for without this combination Sozomen would not have re-structured Socrates. Of the material in Sozomen's chapter not drawn from Socrates (and which should reflect this other source), section (d) contains half the combination, bringing the Goths south of the Danube. Sozomen's account of the conversion, of course, is taken directly from Socrates, and no indication survives of how the other source originally reported it. Nevertheless, reference to Ulfila in section (d) as the leader of the embassy to Valens both makes it likely that the source contained a note on the conversion and also explains why this has left no trace in Sozomen. Ulfila's appearance shows that the source had an interest in the religious history of the Goths, so that such information would not have been out of place. Equally, if the source had stated Ulfila's rôle in the conversion (as his part in the embassy of 376 would suggest), no trace of this would be visible because Sozomen simply

followed Socrates' account of the conversion, which had already emphasised Ulfila's responsibility in the matter (4.33.4). Mention of Ulfila in Sozomen's other source would thus have been masked by his appearance in Socrates.

Only suggestions can be made on the origin of the other non-Socratean material in this chapter of Sozomen. Section (c), describing the arrival of the Huns, may well have been attached to section (d) and thus derive from the crucial other source. Section (c) originated in Eunapius; and although it has been argued that Sozomen knew him at first hand, the correspondence is not striking enough to prove direct borrowing.³² The same origin might also be proposed for section (f) since it contains extra information on Ulfila, who is named in (d). Section (h), however, seems to derive from a quite different hagiographic source, perhaps even the original *Passion*, for it strongly resembles fragments in the *Synaxaries*.³³

We may conclude that the careful and deliberate changes made in adapting Socrates are best explained by supposing that Sozomen followed another source: for there is no reason to think that he fabricated the material, and the limitations of his knowledge show that he had no independent view of Gothic history. Underlying Sozomen, it appears, is a source that linked the Gothic conversion to the Danube crossing of 376. As far as one can tell, it seems to have been fairly detailed and accurate, since it described an embassy that is known to have taken place. In essentials it agreed with what has emerged from Socrates: Fritigern's Goths were converted when they found asylum in the Empire. Two authorities, therefore, provide the same information independently. Neither inspires much confidence by itself, simply because of the argumentation required to disentangle the confusions; but the agreement of independent sources makes the association of a conversion with the 376 Danube crossing much more likely.

Sozomen's Source and Eunapius

Since the source used by Sozomen contained material on Ulfila and the Goths, showed interest in political affairs, and may also have used Eunapius, one possibility is obvious. The neo-Arian historian Philostorgius seems to have had a greater interest in political affairs than other church historians; and among the surviving fragments there is some precise information from an earlier period on Ulfila and

³² See Schoo (*supra* n.24) 80ff on these passages; *cf.* the judgment of Blockley 99f.

³³ *Cf.* Delehaye (*supra* n.13) 280f.

the Goths that mentions Ulfila's dealings with emperors and imperial clergy. A continuing interest in Ulfila and the Goths would have produced information of the kind that Sozomen read in his other source and reproduced in part in sections (d) and (f). The Eunapius material in section (c) may also have come to Sozomen from Philostorgius, who had some knowledge of Eunapius. It is possible, however, that Sozomen himself knew Eunapius, so that his knowledge may have been both direct and indirect.³⁴ It is of course easy to assign material to sources that have not survived; Philostorgius is a reasonable suggestion, but one that cannot be pressed.

This directs attention to Eunapius, a discussion of whose work contributes more to an understanding of the Gothic conversion than the question of Sozomen's source. Some scholars have attempted to introduce into the argument a fragment of Eunapius that describes the crossing of unnamed "barbarians" into the Empire. Although Eunapius' editors assign the fragment to the reign of Theodosius I, closer examination shows this judgment to be misleading, since the fragment almost certainly refers to the crossing of the Danube in 376. Indeed, it provides a third independent witness that a conversion to Christianity facilitated the Goths' entry into the Empire.

The fragment appears as number 53 in the series excerpted for the *De sententiis* of Constantine Porphyrogenitus. This collection provides most of the Eunapius material that has survived directly from antiquity, and our argument can be confined to these excerpts with little loss of directly Eunapius material. Moreover, the passages in the *De sententiis* (like the others made for Porphyrogenitus) seem to have been excerpted strictly in the order that they appeared in Eunapius' original work.³⁵ One uncertainty is removed, therefore, since no Eunapius material in the *De sententiis* is out of place because of mistakes in modern interpretation.

The argument will also assume that Zosimus can be taken to reflect Eunapius' original work closely and can therefore act as a control for placing the *De sententiis* excerpts. Discussion of the relationship between Zosimus and Eunapius has proceeded from Photius' statement that Zosimus did little more than summarise Eunapius. The accuracy of this assertion has been disputed, but it seems agreed that Zosimus

³⁴ Philost. 2.5; cf. Blockley 99f on Sozomen and Philostorgius' knowledge of Eunapius.

³⁵ *Excerpta de sententiis* 53 (ed. U. P. Boissevain [Berlin 1906] 89; subsequent page references are to this edition). On the reconstruction of Eunapius' text see Blockley 97; the working methods of the excerptors are discussed by J. M. Moore, *The Manuscript Tradition of Polybius* (Cambridge 1965) 129.

made such an extensive use of Eunapius's work that his history retains much of the outline of Eunapius' original.³⁶ It seems reasonable, therefore, to distribute the Eunapian excerpts from the *De sententiis* according to the way in which subjects appear in Zosimus. (As will emerge, the argument confirms the assumption that Zosimus reflects Eunapius' original closely, since the order of the *De sent.* excerpts neatly fits Zosimus' changes of subject.)

Examination of Zosimus indicates the absence of a strict annalistic structure. This accords entirely with what is known of Eunapius, who denied that an historian should concern himself with precise dates.³⁷ The non-annalistic structure is important: although the events of 376 are referred to in *De sent.* 39 (corresponding to Zos. 4.20.3), Zosimus' narrative returns to the action of 376 at 4.26.1, after describing the accession of Theodosius. When the intervening *De sent.* excerpts are compared with Zosimus' history, there is no reason why §53, describing the crossing, should not correspond with Zosimus' later mention of the events of 376:

§39 clearly refers to the arrival of the Huns, and its contents are reflected at Zosimus 4.20.3.³⁸

§§40–44 are small fragments that would be out of order if the structure were annalistic; they probably belong to an account of Isaurian troubles, reviewing past outbreaks. The occasion would be an Isaurian revolt in 376, reported in Zosimus at 4.20.1.³⁹ It should be noted that Zosimus there promises to return to these troubles, but never does so; he had, therefore, additional material but chose to omit it. That Zosimus mentioned the Isaurian outbreak of 376 only once, before the passage that corresponds to the preceding fragment, need cause no concern: Zosimus has merely omitted the information that was the source of the fragments.

§§45–47 deal with the Gothic war, through the general Sebastianus' arrival in the East and his military reforms. They can be positioned precisely, taking the narrative to Zosimus 4.23.3, where the same subjects are covered.⁴⁰

§§48f have led editors astray and caused the misplacing of 53; the editors have associated them with Zosimus' account of Theodosius' moral inad-

³⁶ Phot. *Bibl.* 98 (ed. R. Henry, II [Paris 1960] 66). Blockley (97f) has reservations about Zosimus' use of Eunapius, but uses Zosimus as a framework for Eunapius when there is insufficient directly Eunapian material from the *Excerpta*.

³⁷ Frr.1, 14.1 Blockley (1, 7 Müller) suggest a non-annalistic structure; cf. Blockley 6f.

³⁸ *De sent.* pp.84f, Eunap. fr.41.1 Blockley (41 Müller); both Müller and Blockley (104) agree with the association.

³⁹ *De sent.* pp.85f, Blockley fr.43.1–4 (44f Müller); for the explanation cf. Blockley 104 and 160 n.53.

⁴⁰ *De sent.* p.86, Blockley fr.44.1, 2, 4 (46f Müller).

equacy.⁴¹ Closer examination suggests, however, that the fragments refer instead to Theodosius' accession, since they comment on the evil effects of sudden promotion: οὐ γὰρ ἔφθασε παρελθὼν ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν, καὶ καθάπερ μειράκιον νεόπλουτον πατρός ἐπὶ πολλῶ χρόνῳ πολλὰ χρήματα σεσωρευκότος, διὰ σωφροσύνην καὶ φειδῶ ἀθρόως κυριεύσαν τῶν πραγμάτων σφοδρόν τινα καὶ παντοῖον ὄλεθρον κατὰ τῶν εὐρεθέντων μαίνεται . . . They should therefore be placed earlier than is usual, at Zos. 4.24.4f (Theodosius' accession). That this is the better position is further confirmed by the next two excerpts.

§§50f deal with the barbarians in Thrace: 50 discusses Nicopolis and 51 describes general suffering. Blockley associated them with Zosimus 4.33.2; but although Thrace is mentioned at this point, the barbarians are mainly infesting Macedonia and Thessaly. A much better context is 4.25.2, which deals directly with "barbarians" in Thrace. Indeed, the reference to Thrace in the later passage pointed to by Blockley refers back to this earlier one.⁴² Blockley could not, of course, use this passage because he had already placed §§48 and 49 after it.

§52 is the most difficult to position because of the difficulty of disinterring its point. Blockley considered that its thrust was moral decay, and that Theodosius was again the target. He therefore placed it at Zos. 4.33.3f.⁴³ The first sentence, however, contradicts this: τοιοῦτον δέ τι ἰστόρηται γενέσθαι κατὰ τὴν Νέρωνος βασιλείαν ἀλλὰ περὶ μίαν πόλιν—suggesting rather that what happened to the city in the time of Nero also affected the later Empire, but more widely. The main subject of the excerpt might therefore be disease or re-colonisation (the two subjects mentioned). It remains hard to place but is perhaps best understood as further comment on the suffering of cities, and placed at Zosimus 4.25.2.

§53 is the excerpt central to the enquiry, and has been dated to the reign of Theodosius.⁴⁴ Blockley associated it with Zos. 4.33.3f, but again the contents do not fit the proposed context. The passage in Zosimus certainly deals with the tricks and deceptions of "barbarians" (the main point of the excerpt), but the setting is completely wrong. Zosimus' barbarians were established in Macedonia and Thessaly, while in this excerpt the barbarians cross into the Empire from outside: φυλαὶ μὲν γὰρ τῶν πολεμίων τὴν ἀρχὴν διεβεβήκεσαν ἄπειροι, καὶ πλείους ἐπιδιέβαινον. This fits perfectly the context of Zos. 4.26.1, where, having dealt in part with Theodosius' reign, the historian recalled the crossing of the Danube in 376. Not only do the excerpt and Zosimus agree on the crossing, but Zosimus goes on (4.26.1f) to describe the

⁴¹ *De sent.* p.87, Müller fr.48 with his comment 35f (Blockley fr.46.1, 4); *cf.* Blockley 104, who associates them with Zos. 4.27–29 (*i.e.*, after the position I suggest for *De sent.* 53).

⁴² *De sent.* p.87, Müller fr.50 (Blockley fr.47.1–2, *cf.* p.104); Macedonia and Thessaly: Zos. 4.31.5ff (4.25.2, referred to at 4.33.2).

⁴³ *De sent.* pp.87–89, Blockley fr.48.1 (54 Müller); *cf.* Blockley 160 n.56.

⁴⁴ *De sent.* p.89, Müller fr.55 (Blockley fr.48.2; *cf.* 160 n.56).

conditions under which the barbarians had then been admitted—again corresponding to the substance of this excerpt.

§§54f do not greatly assist placement: 54 refers to the corruptions of Theodosius' reign (*cf.* also *Zos.* 4.27.1–28.4, 4.33.1, 4.33.3f) before discussing the circumstances of Gratian's death (4.35.2f), with which 55 would seem to correspond.⁴⁵ They would fit either the traditional placement or the proposed reordering.

The argument cannot prove that *De sent.* 53 refers to the 376 Danube crossing, but the proposed realignment seems to make better sense of the evidence. *De sent.* 39 and 45–47 (and consequently the intervening 40–44) can be positioned precisely against *Zosimus'* text, as can 50f. This again confirms the placement of 48f. *De sent.* 52 remains problematic, but there is no reason why 53 should not be associated with *Zos.* 4.26.1 and refer to the events of 376.⁴⁶

De sent. 53 is not explicit: there is no indication of the reign in which the events described took place, and the *φυλαὶ τῶν πολεμίων* remain unnamed throughout. The general circumstances, however, are more revealing. The people mentioned came from beyond the frontier, as the use of *διαβαίνω* in the first sentence makes clear, but were allowed to enter the Empire without meeting resistance (*οὐδενὸς κωλύοντος*), that is, deliberately, rather than through military weakness: *πανταχοῦ τὸ ἀφύλακτον διὰ τῶν καταφρονουμένων ὄρκων παρ' ἐκείνοις, παρὰ δὲ τοῖς βασιλεῦσι σφόδρα φυλαττομένων, ὑποτρέχοντες καὶ κατασκευάζοντες*. That the people entered the Empire by agreement fits the circumstances of 376. To place the action precisely, however, one must ask whether these circumstances would suit any other known occasion in the period.

Zosimus at several points records barbarian crossings into the Empire. But the apparent reference to 376 is the only occasion sanctioned by treaty. In one other instance crossing is allowed without resistance, but this followed treachery rather than a treaty. On every other occasion when barbarians attempt to cross, they are resisted by

⁴⁵ *De sent.* p.89f, Müller fr.56f (Blockley fr.48.3 and 50); for the association of fr.55 *cf.* Blockley 105, 160 n.57.

⁴⁶ The general spread of the fragments of *De sententiis* in comparison with *Zosimus'* narrative offers no decisive indication as to how they should be arranged, since there is no marked pattern to serve as a guide. The traditional view has substantial gaps between *De sent.* 47 and 48 (corresponding to four chapters of *Zosimus*, between 4.23 and 4.27–29) and *De sent.* 49 and 50 (at least four chapters between *Zos.* 4.27–29 and 4.33.2). The new order would have one large gap of nine chapters of *Zosimus* between *De sent.* 53 and 55 (*Zos.* 4.26 and 4.35), with only *De sent.* 54, describing Theodosius' moral failings, to fill it. The gap between *De sent.* 55 and 56 shows this to be no problem, however, since it encompasses the thirteen chapters between *Zos.* 4.35 and 4.48.

force, though prisoners were sometimes brought into the Empire.⁴⁷ The fragment, in effect, fits no other occasion recorded by Zosimus. It is not impossible that Zosimus omitted Eunapius' entire account of these events, but they seem too important for this, for the wording suggests a large force: *πλείους ἐπιδιέβαινον*. The repositioning thus combines with internal evidence to associate *De sent.* 53 with the events of 376.

Certain scholars have attempted to use this excerpt to show that the Goths had already been converted in 376, because the people who cross have bishops, monks, and priests.⁴⁸ The whole point, however, is that the people were not actually Christian, merely pretending to be so: *εἶχε δὲ ἐκάστη φυλὴ ἱερά τε οἴκοθεν τὰ πάτρια συνεφελκομένη καὶ ἱερέας τούτων καὶ ἱερείας . . . ἢ δὲ εἰς τὸ φανερόν προσποιήσις καὶ πλάσις εἰς τὴν τῶν πολεμίων ἀπάτην διηρτυμένη καὶ συντεθειμένη, Χριστιανοὶ τε εἶναι πάντες ἔλεγον . . .* The aim of the pretence was to gain entry into the Empire, and Christians were considered peaceful. *De sent.* 53 concludes: [the imperial authorities] *συμπεπεῖσθαι σαφῶς καὶ ἀμάχως τοὺς δοκούντας νοῦν ἔχειν ὅτι Χριστιανοὶ τέ εἰσι καὶ πάσαις ταῖς τελεταῖς ἀνέχοντες*. It can be suggested, therefore, that this passage of Eunapius provides a third account linking Christianity to the events of 376 and making it one of the conditions on which the Goths were allowed to enter the Empire.

Eunapius' is, in fact, a hostile version of the events described by both Socrates' and Sozomen's other source. As we have noted, an overnight conversion could not be expected, and the point is confirmed by the church historians. In Socrates (4.33.4) Fritigern himself converts, then urges his followers to do the same; many, rather than all, the Goths are subsequently converted. Eunapius, however, was hostile both to Christianity, which he regarded as harmful to the Empire,⁴⁹ and to barbarians; in his account a partial conversion (the natural state of affairs) thus becomes deliberate deception, a trick to gain admittance to the Empire. Indeed, this fits the rest of his account of Valens' relations with the Goths, inasmuch as he seems to have regarded the whole chain of events from the crossing of the Danube to the battle of Hadrianople as a Gothic plot to destroy the Empire.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ The crossings: Zos. 4.25.1, 26.1, 31.3, 34.2f, 34.6, 35.1, 38f; treachery of deserters: 4.31.3; prisoners: 4.39.5.

⁴⁸ Schaferdiek (*supra* n.10) "Arianismus" 77, "Zeit und Umstände" 95f, followed by Rubin (*supra* n.10) 34f; Chrysos 126 n.2.

⁴⁹ Cf. Blockley 18ff.

⁵⁰ See, e.g., Eunap. fr.42 (cf. Zos. 4.20.5–7): the Goths were meant to surrender their arms as part of the agreement, but kept them by concealment.

There is no need, therefore, to think the Goths' conversion a sham; Eunapius misinterprets as another example of Gothic treachery the fact that there were, as one might expect, both Christians and non-Christians among the Goths who entered the Empire.

There are other problems in Eunapius' account. He fails to distinguish between the Tervingi, for instance, who crossed by agreement, and the Greuthungi, who did not. Given the amplification provided by the other sources, however, this need not affect the central point. While some Eunapian material—the digression on the Huns, for example—does appear in Sozomen, their accounts of the conversion seem independent of each other. Sozomen concentrates on the rôle of Ulfila, and there is no sign that Ulfila even appeared in Eunapius. Indeed, it is doubtful that Eunapius would have chosen to record the deeds of a man who, as a Christian 'barbarian', embodied the historian's two great hatreds. Thus, the agreement of a third independent source greatly strengthens the case for a 376 conversion.

Secondary Greek Accounts of the Conversion

Two other Greek sources record the Gothic conversion, but it is likely that they followed one of the independent accounts we have already isolated. They can be used, then, to confirm the proposed interpretation, but not as independent witnesses. John of Antioch places the conversion in the reign of Valens, but does not specify the precise date: ὅτι Οὐάλης ὁ ἀρειανόφρων τὸ τῶν Γόθων γένος Χριστιανίζειν παρασκευάσας, ὑπ' αὐτῶν ὕστερον ἐπολεμέϊτο, ὡς καὶ μέχρι τειχῶν τῆς πόλεως ἀφικέσθαι.⁵¹ The latter part of the passage refers to the second Gothic war, south of the Danube. After Hadrianople, Fritigern led the Goths as far as Constantinople. The first part, dealing with the conversion, might therefore be dated immediately before, to 376, since there is no intervening account of the Danube crossing—a subject of major interest; but this is by itself inconclusive. The other secondary Greek account, that in Theodoret's *Ecclesiastical History*, places the conversion south of the Danube and before the Gothic revolt against Valens (*i.e.*, 376). Chrysos cited Theodoret in his attack on Sozomen's credibility because Theodoret did not portray the Goths as thoroughgoing Arians: he could serve,

⁵¹ Fr.184.2 Müller; *Excerpta de insidiis* 77 (ed. C. de Boor [Berlin 1905] 11). Ammianus records the Goths' approach to Constantinople at 31.16.4. John of Antioch's sources are uncertain for this period; he may have used Socrates (A. Koecher, *De Ioannis Antiocheni aetate, fontibus, auctoritate* [Bonn 1871] 30) but also seems to have known Eunapius (Blockley 98f); thus he could have found an account of the conversion in either, or indeed both.

therefore, as another example of orthodox apologetic to confirm Chrysos' interpretation of Sozomen. According to Theodoret, Eudoxius of Constantinople suggested that Valens bring Ulfila's Goths to his brand of religion; but Eudoxius died *ca* 370. Thus, for Chrysos, Theodoret contains a confused account of a 369 conversion.⁵²

Theodoret has associated two incompatible pieces of information, for Eudoxius died before the Goths crossed the Danube in 376. Indeed, the whole of the second part of the chapter is puzzling, since the Goths described by Theodoret are converted not from paganism to Christianity, but from orthodoxy to Arianism. They had been Christians for some time: *πάλαι γὰρ τὰς τῆς θεογνωσίας ἀκτίνας δεξάμενοι τοῖς ἀποστολικοῖς ἐνετρέφοντο δόγμασι* (4.37.1). It can be suggested, therefore, that the bulk of the chapter refers not to 376, but to a time when already-Christian Goths came to associate with the Arian party of Eudoxius and Valens through the agency of Ulfila. The bulk of the chapter documents, in fact, the continuing struggle for a comprehensive church settlement in the East. A suitable context would be after Valens' accession in 364, when Eudoxius (bishop of Constantinople from 360) attempted, under Valens' auspices, to bring the East into line with his views. Theodoret may have confused information about the first group of Goths (already Christianized), who crossed the Danube in 348 led by Ulfila, with information about the second and more famous crossing of 376.⁵³ Theodoret provides, therefore, another link between the crossing and the conversion, and in addition extends our understanding of the life of Ulfila and those who left Gothia with him in 348.

Study of the Greek sources yields several conclusions. Socrates confused the chronology of an account of relations between Valens and the Goths. In this account conversion came about as part of Valens' assistance to Fritigern against Athanaric, which, when compared to Ammianus' account, suggests that it took place in 376. Sozomen used another source that also associated a conversion with the 376 crossing, and whose authenticity there is no obvious reason to doubt; Sozomen, at least, considered it more authoritative than

⁵² Thdt. 4.37; for Theodoret's sources see Parmentier and Scheidweiler (*supra* n.6) xxiii; *cf.* Chrysos 121f, commenting on 4.37.5.

⁵³ Valens' attempted church settlement in the 360's is discussed by Kopecek (*supra* n.27) 422ff; on 348 see Philost. 2.5. The explanation offered above is not the only one possible. If the emperor in the second part was originally unnamed, so that the account dealt with Ulfila, Eudoxius, and an anonymous ruler, this might represent another version of the Council of Constantinople in 359/360. However, Eudoxius never wielded as much influence with Constantius as he did later with Valens, so that the later dating seems preferable.

Socrates and re-structured the latter accordingly. Eunapius *De sent.* 53 almost certainly refers to 376 and provides a third account that makes conversion part of the crossing. These primary sources are reflected in John of Antioch and Theodoret; the latter explicitly dates the conversion to 376. The Greek sources, taken as a group and combined with other information, represent a strong tradition that a conversion was one of the conditions under which the Tervingi made a legal crossing of the Danube in 376.

III. The Latin Sources

The Latin sources that deal with the conversion are comparatively clear and much easier to use.⁵⁴ The primary source is Orosius, whose account is by itself inconclusive: Valens is again responsible for the conversion, but the date is unspecified. According to Orosius the Goths asked Valens for teachers *per legatos supplices*. For such a request to have been made, Valens and the Goths must have been on good terms, which in itself suggests 376. This follows, of course, from our interpretation of the Greek sources, but also serves to clarify it. Before 369 Valens was fighting the Goths; and from 369 to at least 372 Athanaric was persecuting Christians north of the Danube. No conversion is conceivable before Athanaric's power was broken *ca* 376 by the Huns, nor after Fritigern's revolt against Valens, which would necessarily date the conversion to 376. Indeed, Orosius' phrase *per legatos supplices* is reminiscent of the words in which Ammianus described the envoys sent by the Goths in 376.⁵⁵

In contrast, Jordanes is quite explicit: the Goths promise to take Valens' faith as part of the agreement to allow them passage across the Danube. The only issue here is the reliability of this statement. Jordanes' account of Gothic history has been shown to contain many errors and confusions: men are made to lead the wrong groups, and the relationships between them are misunderstood. In isolation Jordanes' account cannot be considered decisive; given all other indications, however, his explicit testimony provides at least supporting evidence in favour of a 376 conversion.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Isid. *Hist. Goth.* 7f is highly derivative and need not be discussed: *cf.* Thompson 88 n.1.

⁵⁵ Oros. 7.34.19; on the 360's war and Noviodunum, *supra* 290f. Amm. Marc. describes the embassy of 376 at 31.4.1: *missisque oratoribus ad Valentem, suscipi se humili prece poscebant.*

⁵⁶ Jord. *Get.* 25.131; on Jordanes' mistakes see B. Croke, "Jordanes' Understanding of the Usurpation of Eugenius," *Antichthon* 9 (1975) 81ff. The following errors are

IV. A Post-376 Conversion?

Analysis of the sources, then, would suggest that a Gothic conversion was part of the crossing in 376, or at least took place in the reign of Valens. A fourth group of scholars has nevertheless argued that these sources are indeed mistaken; their argument is based on references to the Goths as pagans after 376. Thompson is representative: "The whole story of the alleged war and the appeal to Valens for Christian teachers should be dismissed as a fabrication designed to account for the Arianism of the Visigoths." He bases this assertion on the silence of Ammianus.⁵⁷ But among the sources he dismisses are our three independent Greek accounts, supported by two Latin authorities and by secondary references, all pointing to conversion *ca* 376. The Eunapius fragment is particularly important because it does not explain Gothic Arianism. Nothing suggests that Eunapius had any interest in the controversy between Arianism and orthodoxy: he saw the conversion of the Goths as simply another example of their treachery. The unanimity of the sources, together with Eunapius' separate concern, makes their witness too substantial to be dismissed by assertion.

Ammianus' silence can be used convincingly against those who postulate Roman intervention north of the Danube between 369 and 376. It is not surprising, however, that he should have been silent about the Christian element in a political event of which he gives in other respects a full account: as we have seen, his tendency is to ignore Christianity as far as possible.⁵⁸ Thompson argued that, even apart from the issue of Christianity, Ammianus overturns the accounts of at least Socrates and Sozomen because he records no Gothic civil war. But Ammianus does record a split among the Tervingi, most of whom broke with their established leader, Athanaric.

evident in Jordanes' account of events *ca* 376: 25.131, all the 'Visigoths' flee south of the Danube and there is no mention of Athanaric's Tervingi, who remained behind (*cf.* Amm. Marc. 31.4.13); 26.134, Alatheus and Saphrax appear as Visigothic leaders, although in fact they were Greuthungi (Amm. Marc. 31.3.3); 28.142, Athanaric succeeds Fritigern, although Fritigern deposed him (Athanaric later went to Constantinople after being deposed again: *cf.* PLRE I 120f). Schaferdiek, "Zeit und Umstände" (*supra* n.10) 90, asserts that Jordanes altogether lacks independent value and simply interpreted Orosius to mean 376. This is an oversimplification of the source problems in the *Getica*, which make it quite possible, despite his many mistakes, that Jordanes had independent knowledge. For a recent introduction to the *Getica* and its problems see J. J. O'Donnell, "The Aims of Jordanes," *Historia* 31 (1982) 223-40.

⁵⁷ Thompson 88f, followed by Fridh (*supra* n.12) 136ff.

⁵⁸ *Supra* 294.

This could not have taken place without a political coup; and the question is one of the degree of conflict surrounding the coup, rather than one of basic disagreement in our sources. The split certainly generated enough ill-feeling for one of Athanaric's kinsmen to fight later for the Romans against those Goths who had broken away.⁵⁹ Thus there is no basic contradiction between Ammianus and the other sources, for in all of them appear division among the Goths, an embassy to the emperor, and a subsequent crossing by consent.

The positive evidence for a conversion after 376 consists of two passages of Ambrose of Milan. The first is a passing reference in the *De fide*, which can be dated to 378, where Ambrose describes the problems affecting the Danubian lands and compares the Goths to Gog in Ezekiel: *totum illum limitem sacrilegis pariter vocibus et Barbaricis motibus audivimus inhorrentem?* Thompson interpreted *sacrilegis vocibus* to mean that Ambrose considered the Goths pagans. But in Ambrose the term *sacrilegus* is not reserved for pagans alone: it is his favourite insult for the Arians who opposed him at the Council of Aquileia in 381.⁶⁰ Ambrose's language is inconclusive, therefore, and might in fact indicate that the Goths were already Arians in 378.

The second reference appears in a letter of May 382, giving an account of Aquileia. Ambrose here attacks a certain Arian named Julianus Valens, who had adopted a Gothic habit unsuitable for Christians: *nisi forte sic solent idolotrae sacerdotes prodire Gothorum*. Two questions follow: are the *idolotrae sacerdotes* pagans and, if so, does it necessarily follow the Goths were pagans also? Although the natural answer to the first is 'yes', further thought makes this less secure, for Ambrose is complaining about a specifically Christian priest. Despite his clothing, there is no charge of apostasy; Julianus Valens still remained a Christian. Ambrose's polemic also concentrates on what seems to be the priest's collaboration with the Gothic enemy: *qui . . . declinavit sacerdotale concilium; ne eversae patriae, proditorumque civium praestare causas sacerdotibus cogeretur*. Since Julianus Valens was an Arian who collaborated with the Goths, Ambrose's description could also fit the Arian priests of a recently converted people in whom old pagan habits would not have died out overnight: Ambrose may provide a glimpse into the Gothic world where pagan forms affected the new religion. What seems at first sight an innocuous comment might be the key to Ambrose's complaint, *etenim*

⁵⁹ Amm. Marc. 31.3.8: *populi pars maior, quae Athanaricum attenuata necessariorum penuria deseruerat*; Athanaric's kinsman is Modares, whom Zosimus discusses at 4.25.2ff.

⁶⁰ *De fide* 2.16.140; cf. Thompson 89 and Fridh (*supra* n.12) 137; on Aquileia: Ambr. Ep. 10; cf. the judgement of Schaferdiek, "Zeit und Umstände" (*supra* n.10) 94f.

abhorret a more Romano. Religious custom, rather than religious adherence, may have caused the problem.⁶¹

Even if these *idolotrae sacerdotes* were pagans, this would not rule out conversion. As we have seen, it is unlikely that an entire people would have changed their religion overnight, particularly since the conversion of 376 seems to have affected primarily the political leadership of the Tervingi. More important, the conversion affected only those Goths who entered the Empire by agreement: the Tervingi of Alavivus and Fritigern. At least one other sizable group, the Greuthungi of Alatheus and Saphrax, crossed the Danube illegally at more or less the same time (Amm. Marc. 31.5.3). No promise to convert bound them, and the existence of pagan Gothic priests in the Balkans *ca* 380 need not disprove a 376 conversion.

The arguments for a conversion after 376 are not convincing. They neither undermine the evidence pointing to 376 nor show that the passages in Ambrose are substantial proof of conversion at a later date. Indeed, conversion in the 380's creates a serious problem, because the Goths became Arian rather than orthodox Christians. It is hard to understand how the Goths became Arian when the ultra-Nicene Theodosius was ruling, unless the mass of the people had been converted before 380. Explanations have of course been offered: it has been suggested that Theodosius used Arianism to separate the Goths from the rest of the population of the Empire, that a more hierarchical Trinity appealed to the Gothic leadership, and that Arianism helped preserve Gothic independence.⁶² Any of these might be correct, but all are hypothetical attempts to deal with an awkwardness in the record; moreover, since no source actually states that the Goths were converted in the 380's, they are also unnecessary. To reverse Thompson's argument, a conversion in 376 provides an entirely logical explanation of Gothic Arianism: they simply adopted the form of Christianity favoured by their imperial patron, Valens.

V. Conclusion

The sources thus offer no serious rival to 376 as the date of the Gothic conversion. It remains to demonstrate that this makes sense in the context of fourth-century relations between the Goths and the

⁶¹ Ambr. *Ep.* 10.9; Thompson 90 and Fridh (*supra* n.12) 138 see a reference to paganism; on the alternative see Schaferdiek, "Zeit und Umstände" (*supra* n.10) 95.

⁶² Separation is suggested by A. Ehrhardt, "The First Two Years of the Emperor Theodosius," *JEH* 15 (1964) 10ff, hierarchy and independence by Thompson 109f.

Empire. The link between conversion and the legal crossing of the Danube made by the Tervingi carries with it the implication that religion was a political issue to Roman and Goth. The surviving information on relations between the Empire and the Tervingi is limited, providing a series of episodes rather than a comprehensive account. These suggest, nevertheless, that religion was important politically and was thought to influence loyalties.

Before the invasion by the Huns, the Tervingi leadership resisted the spread of Christianity with two persecutions, in 347/8 and from 369 to at least 372. The first receives only passing mention and its causes can only be guessed; but the later persecution left more of a mark. Two related motives are reported: according to the church historians, Athanaric ordered persecution because the ancestral tribal religion was becoming debased, while Epiphanius records that it was designed to spite the Romans, whose emperors were Christians.⁶³ It would seem that the Tervingi were afraid that Christianity would undermine that aspect of Gothic identity which was derived from a common inherited religion, and that Christianity was associated with an empire whose influence they attempted to resist.

That religion was a political issue to Gothic leaders is confirmed by the way in which persecution followed important events in Gothic-Roman relations. The milder persecution of 347/8 was linked to a diplomatic dispute with which Constantius was forced to deal before attacking the Persians with Gothic help. More strikingly, the better-known persecution after 369 was launched in the same year that the Treaty of Noviodunum separated Roman and Goth,⁶⁴ and may well have been designed to rid Gothia of the religious as well as the political influence of the Empire.

These fears on the part of the Gothic leadership had some basis in reality, for the Empire had a manifest interest in the spread of Christianity. Ulfila was ordained by the emperor Constantius' leading bishop, Eusebius of Nicomedia; the same emperor is reported to have received Ulfila personally when the latter was forced to flee to the

⁶³ On the state of ancestral religion: Soc. 4.33.7 (*cf.* Soz. 6.37.12); the anti-Roman motive is reported by Epiph. *Haer.* 70; *cf.* Thompson 98ff. The persecution of 347/8 may have been caused by evangelism, since Philost. 2.5 implies that Ulfila's mission was to those already Christian, whereas the translation of the Bible into Gothic suggests that Ulfila was committed to wider missionary activity.

⁶⁴ On 347/8 see E. A. Thompson, "Constantine, Constantius II, and the Lower Frontier," *Hermes* 84 (1956) 379ff; there is no evidence for an invasion, nor was there a break in the Constantinian settlement, as Thompson thought; *cf.* Chrysos 77f. The second persecution is dated to 369 by Eusebius/Jerome (*supra* n.5); for the separation of Roman and Goth caused by Noviodunum, see *supra* 290f.

Empire in 347/8. It may be that the idea was already current that Christianity could help to pacify dangerous peoples.⁶⁵ Whatever the case, Christians north of the Danube had strong links with those south of it. The priest Sansala, for instance, moved south of the river to avoid the persecution after 369, while strong links are clear between Gothic Christians and the churches in Asia Minor. This bond perhaps originated when Goths took Christian prisoners there in the third century, but they continued to develop: the body of St Saba was transported to Cappadocia, for instance, even though he was of Gothic rather than Roman descent. That this was done through the agency of Junius Soranus, then *dux Scythiae*, provides some further justification for doubts among the Gothic leadership about the loyalty of its Christian subjects. Soranus had his own links with Cappadocian Christianity: he is the addressee of Basil *Epp.* 155 and 165. But his agents in Gothic lands, from whom he presumably received Saba's body, were no doubt also of use to him in his function as the military commander of forces in a frontier province on the Danube.⁶⁶ Indeed, such contacts may have formed the kind of network from which, in 365, imperial officers had received advance warning of Gothic aggression on the Danube (*cf.* Amm. Marc. 26.6.11).

Religion seems therefore to have been a political issue to both Empire and Goths in the fourth century; a religious clause would thus have been a natural part of the agreements that brought them into an unprecedentedly close relationship in 376. Final confirmation is provided by Fritigern's choice, when he attempted to stave off battle before Hadrianople in August 378, to send Christians—including at least one priest—as his representatives to Valens.⁶⁷

To conclude: the sources strongly suggest that a Gothic conversion was part of the agreement by which the Tervingi of Alavivus and Fritigern gained legal admittance to the Empire in 376. This would have applied to other Goths, especially the Greuthungi of Alatheus and Saphrax, who entered the Empire illegally at the same time.

⁶⁵ On Ulfila: Philost. 2.5; for the link between Christianity and pacification see Thompson, "Christianity and the Northern Barbarians," in A. Momigliano, ed., *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* (Oxford 1963) 65ff; for parallel imperial interest in Christian mission in the fourth century, this time to the Himyarites, see A. Dihle, "Die Sendung des Inders Theophilus," *Palingenesia* IV (Wiesbaden 1969) 330–36.

⁶⁶ Sansala: *Passio S. Sabae Gothi* 4 (Delehaye [*supra* n.13] 218, lines 23ff); Cappadocia: Ulfila's family had been taken by the Goths from Cappadocia (Philost. 2.5), and Eutyches was also from there; Soranus: *Passio S. Sab.* 8 (Delehaye 221.11ff); *cf.* *PLRE* I 848.

⁶⁷ Amm. Marc. 31.1.8 and 15.6.

From this it follows that the split among Athanaric's following immediately preceded the crossing. Socrates and Ammianus combine to make the chain of events clear: the Tervingi split over what response to make to the Hun invasions; then Alavivus and Fritigern led one group into the Empire to seek asylum. No client relationship between Valens and any part of the Tervingi should be envisaged before the split. Gothic independence established at Noviodunum in 369 was maintained into the 370's.

Above all, the correct order of events deepens our understanding of the catastrophic effects of the Hunnic invasion upon the Goths. Because of the Huns, the independent Tervingi were first deeply divided, then forced into a client relationship with the Empire, and at the same time surrendered their ancestral religion. Similarly, the Greuthungi lost a king in battle and were forced to migrate westward, leaving their homes. Without detailed study of the sources, these conclusions remain obscured and the history of the Gothic world distorted. Independent Gothia north of the Danube fell to the Huns, not to internal division.⁶⁸

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