

Joseph J. Reidy: *The ‘Lost Arian History’ in Late Antique and Medieval Historiography*. Cham / Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan 2024. X, 336 p. € 139.09. ISBN: 978-3-031-55443-8.

Cyril Mango referred to the complicated discussions about the hypothetical Lost Arian History (hereafter LAH) as a “can of worms”,<sup>1</sup> though, undoubtedly under the influence of Roger Scott,<sup>2</sup> the assessment in the introduction to his Theophanes translation is less negative while being suitably cautious.<sup>3</sup> This is the arena into which Joseph Reidy carefully ventures in this publication of his 2015 Saint Louis University doctoral dissertation.<sup>4</sup>

The Introduction (pp. 1–33) sets the scene in a triptych of which the first part (pp. 2–16) surveys the process of identifying the LAH, from Henry Melvill Gwatkin’s postulation of non-Nicene elements in the *Chronicon Paschale*, through Pierre Batiffol’s confirmation of Gwatkin’s hypothesis, to Joseph Bidez’s expanded search for traces, especially in Theophanes’ *Chronographia*, and publication of the resulting fragments in an appendix to his edition of the *Ecclesiastical History* of Philostorgius.<sup>5</sup> Bidez’s 48 fragments show clear signs of a homoian tendency (the belief that God the Father and God the Son were similar without being consubstantial) as well as an interest in Antioch, though Reidy lays down an advance marker for his own hypothesis by querying the assumption that everything must stem from a single text. The

- 1 C. Mango: Constantine’s Mausoleum: Addendum. In: *ByzZ* 83, 1990, p. 434.
- 2 See R. Scott: The Image of Constantine in Malalas and Theophanes. In: P. Magdalino (ed.): *New Constantines. The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th–13th Centuries*. Papers from the Twenty-sixth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, St Andrews, March 1992. Aldershot 1994 (Publications of the Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies 2), pp. 57–71, at pp. 67–70.
- 3 C. Mango/R. Scott (eds.): *The Chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor. Byzantine and Near Eastern History, AD 284–813*. Oxford 1997, pp. LXXX–LXXXI.
- 4 J. J. Reidy. *An Alternative History of the Church. A Study of the Lost Arian History*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, St Louis University 2015.
- 5 H. M. Gwatkin: *Studies of Arianism. Chiefly Referring to the Character and Chronology of the Reaction which Followed the Council of Nicaea*. 2nd ed. Cambridge 1900, pp. 219–223; P. Batiffol: Un historiographe anonyme arien du IVe siècle. In: *RQA* 9, 1895, pp. 57–98; Philostorgius: *Kirchengeschichte. Mit dem Leben des Lucian von Antiochien und den Fragmenten eines arianischen Historiographen*. Hrsg. von J. Bidez. Bearb. von F. Winkelmann. Berlin. 1981 (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte 21).

second part (pp. 16–27) reviews recent opinions about Bidez’s thesis that range from the scepticism of Peter Van Nuffelen, who has robustly questioned many of the assumptions on which Bidez based his reconstruction,<sup>6</sup> to suggestions of additional sources such as Jerome and Ammianus that may have been influenced by the LAH, and the thesis of Richard Burgess about a lost Antiochene continuation of Eusebius’ *Chronicle*.<sup>7</sup> All these views will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters. The third part (pp. 27–32) considers the appropriateness of continuing to refer to the lost source as ‘Arian’ when its homoian interest makes it non-Nicene but not identical with what views can reliably be attributed to Arius himself, before the chapter closes with a very brief overview of the volume’s contents.

The second chapter (“Bidez’s Sources Revisited”, pp. 35–59) considers in greater detail the texts from which Bidez constructed his LAH, with the *Chronicon Paschale* and Theophanes as the corner-stones (pp. 36–43). Reidy’s presentation of both texts is less than convincing. For the former he follows Warren Treadgold’s thesis that the author was not a member of the clergy,<sup>8</sup> but rather in the employment of Bonus, with the failure to praise Patriarch Sergius and lack of interest in doctrinal issues being key reasons. However, in his later treatment of Eusebius of Emesa (pp. 215–217), Reidy argues that a clerical author might focus on secular rather than religious material, and the same judgment could be applied to the *Chronicon Paschale*; with regard to Sergius it is important to remember the patriarch’s aversion to being noticed,<sup>9</sup> one that resulted in Theodore Syncellus not referring to his cell-mate by name despite his prominence in the events being described in his homilies.<sup>10</sup> Treadgold did not note that the praise of Bonus occurs in a report on

6 P. Van Nuffelen: What Happened After Eusebius? Chronicles and Narrative Identities in the Fourth Century. In: R. Flower/M. Ludlow (eds.): *Rhetoric and Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*. Oxford 2020, pp. 160–179.

7 R. W. Burgess: *Studies in Eusebian and Post-Eusebian Chronography*. Stuttgart. 1999 (*Historia-Einzelschriften* 135).

8 W. T. Treadgold: *The Early Byzantine Historians*. New York 2007, pp. 340–345.

9 George of Pisidia, *Bellum Avaricum* 227; ed. A. Pertusi: *Giorgius Pisida: Poemi*. Edizione critica, traduzione e commento. Vol. 1: *Panegyrici epici*. Ettal 1960 (*Studia patristica et Byzantina* 7).

10 Theodore Syncellus: The Homilies ‘On the Robe’ and ‘On the Siege’. Translated with Introduction and Notes by Mi. Whitby. Liverpool 2024 (*Translated Texts for Historians* 87), pp. 17–18.

the 626 Avar siege of Constantinople that had, most probably, been commissioned by Sergius himself for the absent emperor; nor did he consider the text's treatment of the life of Christ that had to be aligned with the chronology of the Creation, which in connection with the text's well-known attention to Easter supports the clerical credentials of the author. With regard to Theophanes, Reidy accepts Cyril Mango's thesis that George Syncellus was primarily responsible for the *Chronographia* through the provision of all the constituent materials,<sup>11</sup> but does not note more recent discussions about precisely what was involved.<sup>12</sup> Theophanes deserves full credit for how the sources that he inherited from George were put together, for example what parts of Procopius' Wars were used, how he eliminated some non-Nicene aspects of the LAH or iconoclast elements of source material for the eighth century, or the linguistic combination of two independent sources, Theophylact Simocatta and the Great Chronographer, to create a composite narrative of a specific event.<sup>13</sup> Fortunately, these issues do not directly affect his study of the LAH.

After these foundations Reidy reviews the other texts that Bidez identified as potentially belonging to the LAH circle, with Jerome's *Chronicle* and the remains of Philostorgius' *Ecclesiastical History* as the earliest elements (pp. 43–50); for the former the link is tenuous, substantially an interest in Antioch and the same time-frame, whereas the latter is more firmly connected through shared doctrine as well as content. Reidy then moves to Theophylact of Ohrid, the eleventh-century bishop whose Martyrion presents fifteen martyrs from Thrace who suffered under Julian (pp. 50–52), before surveying various Syriac texts, namely the lost seventh-century *Chronicle* of Jacob of Edessa and the later texts that depended on it and furnish our knowledge of their lost antecedent (pp. 52–59). Throughout this chapter Reidy's aim is simply to describe the various texts rather than assess the validity of the postulated connections: that will come later.

The third chapter continues to set the scene ("Eusebius of Caesarea and his Early Continuator", pp. 61–80), by assessing first the contribution of the

- 11 C. Mango: Who Wrote the Chronicle of Theophanes? *Zbornik Radova Vizantoloskog Instituta* 18, 1978, pp. 9–17.
- 12 E.g. papers in the collection edited by M. Jankowiak and F. Montinaro: *Studies in Theophanes*. In: *T&MByz* 19, 2015.
- 13 Mi. Whitby: The Great Chronographer and Theophanes. In: *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 8, 1982–1983, pp. 1–20.

first historian of the church (pp. 61–66) and then his immediate successors (pp. 67–80). With regard to Eusebius, what is important for Reidy is the tripartite nature of his historiographical achievement that is represented by the three different works, the *Chronicle*, the narrative of persecution in the *Martyrs of Palestine*, and the *Ecclesiastical History*. Again this treatment establishes a marker for his eventual hypothesis about the LAH. Discussion of Eusebius' successors is dominated by the question of Gelasius of Caesarea and the Anonymous of Cyzicus, a tricky issue that could also be categorised as a mare's nest. Here Reidy presents the complexities with admirable clarity and in particular attempts to advance discussion by tackling various problems in the thesis of Van Nuffelen.<sup>14</sup> For Reidy the fourth-century bishop of Caesarea, Gelasius, did write an *Ecclesiastical History*, but this failed to survive primarily because after a generation or so it was incorporated into a compilation, similar to the later work of Theodore Lector, in which the Anonymous of Cyzicus brought together information from Gelasius, Rufinus and Socrates. As Reidy admits, all this is highly conjectural.

The next three chapters examine in greater detail writers who might have used or been influenced by the LAH. For the most part this concerns texts that survive, which helps to keep the element of speculation within bounds. The fourth chapter ("The *Ecclesiastical Histories* of Socrates and Sozomen", pp. 81–128) is devoted to these two authors, primarily the latter since Socrates is accorded only five pages (pp. 81–86), where the main issue is to demonstrate that Sabinus, whose collection of conciliar documents from a homoiousian perspective (the belief that God the Father and God the Son were of similar substance but not consubstantial) was an important source for the church historian, could not have been responsible for the LAH. Thereafter Sozomen holds centre stage. First an introduction presents him as an unscrupulous user of uncited sources, one who preferred to accumulate parallel accounts of events rather than attempt the harder work of evaluating and perhaps reconciling divergent versions (pp. 86–91). This is followed by an investigation of his relationship with Philostorgius (pp. 91–113), whether he exploited his work or shared a common lost source. Twelve passages where parallels have been noted are examined, though the fact that Philostorgius only survives in epitomised form renders close scrutiny impossible: as a result, conclusions are necessarily tentative, going no further than that Euna-

14 P. Van Nuffelen: Gélase de Césarée, un compilateur de cinquième siècle. In: *ByzZ* 54, 2004, pp. 621–639.

pius may have provided some shared secular material and that Sozomen appears to have had access to some non-Nicene material. Gelasius of Caesarea emerges as a possible common source and Sozomen's connections with him and Theodoret are reviewed in the next section (pp. 113–128), with the suggestion that Gelasius' work may have been a Nicene reaction to the LAH and hence the intermediary who conveyed to Sozomen faint traces of that lost text. Here the mare's nest becomes particularly intractable as we are invited to consider links that involve two sources that are lost and one that only survives as an epitome.

Chapter 5 (“The *Ecclesiastical History* of Theodoret”, pp. 129–155) continues to mine Theodoret of Cyrillus for possible evidence for the LAH through eight passages, of which the first two present the homoian Constantius II in a positive light and the remainder concern Julian's hostility to Christians. The complexities of the previous chapter continue to bedevil this analysis, with, for example, speculation that the *Chronicon Paschale* might have had access to a truncated version of the LAH to explain why it does not mention Julian's attempt to rebuild the Jerusalem temple, a story whose witnesses would otherwise strongly suggest a link with the LAH. To be fair to Reidy, he admits that things may be “too convoluted to propose anything with confidence” (p. 146) and that “[t]here are simply too many variables” to be sure about conclusions (p. 154). With such caveats, however, his individual investigations do have value in unpicking and clarifying possible relations between similar accounts of events.

Whereas chapters 4 and 5 deal, in the main, with material that can be argued to have some connection with the LAH, chapter 6 (“Consideration of Other Sources from Ammianus to Zonaras”, pp. 157–200) concludes that for the author who occupies most of the space, Ammianus (pp. 157–195), the evidence is insufficiently strong to support a link. Scrutiny of seven passages, of which the longest relates to the deaths of the *dux Aegypti* Artemius and of the Alexandrian patriarch George of Cappadocia (Amm. 22.11), does, however, suggest that he had access to a Christian historical text, though the fact that the *Chronicon Paschale* and other works linked to the LAH do not record the great tsunami of 365 (Amm. 26.10.15–19) means that this lost work is not a plausible candidate. The chapter's final pages (pp. 196–199) deal with George the Monk, Cedrenus, and John Zonaras; Cedrenus in particular needs further research into his use of sources, though he has plausibly been identified as a rare, perhaps unique, case of an author who knew the *Chronicon*

*Paschale*.<sup>15</sup> Overall, the limited overlaps of these later authors with LAH material are likely to have resulted from their use of an intermediary such as Philostorgius, or a text that had used his work.

So far the chapters have aimed at untangling the constituent parts of the LAH mare's nest, but, having clarified matters as far as possible, in chapter 7 ("Toward a New Reconstruction", pp. 201–238) Reidy advances his own hypothesis. He first reprises an argument advanced by him a decade previously<sup>16</sup> to build upon Richard Burgess' important reconstruction of the postulated Antiochene continuation of Eusebius' *Chronicle* (pp. 202–219),<sup>17</sup> arguing against Burgess' identification of the author as pro-Nicene and instead suggesting Eusebius of Emesa as its creator. The doctrinal stance of this Eusebius seems to have been homoiousian, though avoidance of polemical criticism of other views was a characteristic of his writing, and he accompanied Constantius II on campaign in the East after his interests in astrology led to expulsion from his see. In the next section ("A Lost Antiochene Martyrology", pp. 219–226), Reidy examines a sequence of passages that are much longer than those associated with Burgess' Antiochene continuation, which start with the account in the *Chronicon Paschale* of Shapur's failed siege of Nisibis in 350 and cover the persecution of Christians during Julian's brief reign, with a focus on the unpleasant fates of those most responsible and of apostates. Although much of this material deals with Antiochene martyrs, the presence of the narratives relating to Constantius II means that this text is not an exact parallel for Eusebius of Caesarea's *Martyrs of Palestine*, although that remains a relevant model for this type of presentation of Christian heroes and for the subsequent incorporation of such material into a wider historical work. Following Julian's death, material that can be associated with the LAH reverts to a more annalistic style, closer to that of Burgess' Antiochene continuation, and to explain this Reidy postulates a "Continuation of the *Continuatio*" (pp. 226–230) that at some point became incorporated into a tripartite work. In the conclusion to the chapter (pp. 230–238) the non-Nicene bishop Euzoius of Cyzicus is identified as the possible author

15 C. Gastgeber: Das Chronicon Paschale und der Megas Chronographus. Marginalnotizen im codex unicus Vaticanus gr. 1941. In: E. Juhász (ed.): Byzanz und das Abendland III. *Studia Byzantino-Occidentalia*. Budapest 2015, pp. 179–198, at p. 197.

16 J. J. Reidy: Eusebius of Emesa and the *Continuatio Antiochensis Eusebii*. In: *JEH* 66, 2015, pp. 471–487.

17 Burgess (see note 7).

of the later parts of this triptych, or possibly the creation of the whole collection. The suggestions are interesting but certainty is not possible.

Having presented his own conjectural reconstruction, Reidy closes the volume with two useful appendices. The first (pp. 243–300) reviews in detail the 48 fragments that Bidez had connected with the LAH, analysing each in the light of the various discussions in the preceding chapters; my one regret here is that Reidy did not provide a text and translation of the fragments, since this would have saved the constant need to revert to the GCS edition.<sup>18</sup> The second appendix (pp. 301–309) presents a conjectural reconstruction of the second two parts of his postulated triptych, namely the Continuation of the *Continuatio*<sup>19</sup> and the lost Martyrology.

Reidy admits that his approach to the fragmentary remains of the LAH is unapologetically ‘maximalist’, in the tradition of Bidez indeed (pp. 229–230), in contrast to the ‘minimalist’ approach of Peter Van Nuffelen.<sup>20</sup> The caution of Van Nuffelen is undoubtedly safer, but there is also justification for Reidy’s desire to push the boundaries of our knowledge by exploring hypothetical links since it is clear that there may well have been connections between passages in sources that spill over beyond Van Nuffelen’s restrictions.<sup>21</sup> As long as it is recognised and constantly remembered how speculation is being piled on speculation, Pelion upon Ossa, and that any inferences drawn from such researches must be hedged around with appropriate qualifications, then I would agree with Reidy that the attempt is worth making, even if the results are highly conjectural. To my mind, Reidy retains the necessary balance and so offers a possible reconstruction of an important lost historical source from the mid-fourth century, a period that was not well-

18 There is an English translation in Philostorgius: Church History. Translated with an Introduction and Notes by P. R. Amidon Atlanta, GA 2007 (Writings from the Greco-Roman World 23).

19 It should be noted that Reidy terms Notice 10 from the *Chronicon Paschale* (p. 303) in fact relates to the proclamation of Gallus as Caesar in 351, whereas it is Notice 11, from Theophanes and Jerome, that deals with a Jewish revolt in Palestine in the same year.

20 P. Van Nuffelen (op. cit in note 6); id.: Considerations sur l’anonyme Homoéen. In: E. Amato/P. De Cicco/B. Lançon/T. Moreau (eds.): Les historiens fragmentaires de langue grecque à l’époque romaine impériale et tardive. Rennes 2021, pp. 207–222.

21 Cf. pp. 202 n. 1, 219 n. 86.

served by writers from the Nicene camp – that indeed was one reason why later writers had to turn to a work with a different doctrinal thrust. Even those who disagree with Reidy's approach will need to rethink their arguments in the light of his work, while all those studying the historiography of the fourth century will benefit from his analyses of specific passages in his chosen authors.

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