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Killing Julian: the Death of an Emperor and the Religious History of the Later Roman Empire

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KILLING JULIAN: THE DEATH OF AN EMPEROR AND THE RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF THE
LATER ROMAN EMPIRE

by

Benjamin Rogaczewski

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ABSTRACT
KILLING JULIAN: THE DEATH OF AN EMPEROR AND THE RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF THE
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by

Benjamin Rogaczewski

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2014
Under the Supervision of Professor Carlos Galvao-Sobrinho

This thesis addresses an intriguing question concerning the death of emperor Julian, known throughout history as “the Apostate.” Although Julian ruled for less than two years, his reign and death were the center of debate for centuries. Ancient writers composed different death narratives for the last “pagan” emperor, elaborating upon certain details in the narratives and adding portions, probably fictionalized, of the story where they thought necessary. It is my view that these different death narratives were used as literary loci to discuss the growing power of the church and the relations between church and state. Analysis of these narratives, written by Gregory Nazianzus, Libanius, Ammianus Marcellinus, and the ecclesiastical historians of the fifth century (Socrates of Constantinople, Sozomen of Gaza, and Theodoret of Cyrrhus) allows the historians a more nuanced view of the religious and political history of late antiquity, specifically concerning Christianization in the empire and relations between bishop and emperor, church and state. This thesis will argue that the narratives of Julian’s death, written in the fourth and fifth centuries, were colored by these two political and religious concerns of the period.

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For Dr. Michael Lovano of St. Norbert College, who gave me my first notes on Julian and the keys to Byzantium, and to my parents, Patricia and Gregory Rogaczewski, who encouraged me to follow the perennial path of *Paideia*.

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“ἔργων δὲ οὐδαμοῦ διήγησις τὸ πᾶν δυναμένη μηνῦσαι, ἀλλ’ ἀμυδρά καὶ σκιά καὶ συγγραφῆως οὐχ ὑπηρετοῦντα στόματι.”¹ -- Libanius, *Ep.* 120.8.

¹ But at no time have I received a fully detailed narrative of events, but a shapeless, shadowy tale, unsuited for the lips of a historian.

Prologue: Julian the “Passing Cloud”

Emperor Julian, also known as “the Apostate,” remains an enigmatic figure of history. Julian is remembered mainly as the emperor who “tried to turn back the clock” and reverse what his uncle, Constantine the Great, had already set in motion, namely the state protection and promotion of Christianity. Julian sought to restore the pagan religions to their former glory by reinstating certain beneficial rights and privileges that had previously been revoked by Constantine. Even though he reigned as emperor for less than two years, from 361 to 363 CE, Julian and his reign continued to be subjects of controversy for centuries to come. Following his death, a debate arose among those writing about Julian’s life, concerning how he was to be remembered. Some wished to remember him as a persecutor, others as a reformer and philosopher. From this debate, several different perspectives on Julian and the key events in his life and reign emerged. His rejection of Christianity and conversion to paganism,² and his failed Persian expedition were endlessly discussed. Even the manner of his death fighting against the Persians, which was told in many different versions, was a matter of contention.

Why were there so many different accounts of Julian’s death? Why did these writers so insistently claim their particular versions to be the “true” account? These are some of the

² When concerned with paganism, or the traditional Roman religions, modern historians often use the term as an “umbrella” expression referring to several cults. These cults included numerous oriental cults, such as Mithraism, local or civic cults, such as the cults of Asclepius and Magna Mater, and the imperial cult containing the pantheon of deified emperors. I have used the terms “paganism” and “traditional Roman religions” here and throughout much in the same way as other modern historians. See Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome* Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 371-373.

questions I asked as I began my study of Julian's reign. These questions are important though because they show that these writers were not composing their accounts of Julian's death innocently, but rather constructing narratives with a set agenda in mind. There is a definite variety among these death narratives. Some are drastically different than others, while some contain subtle, yet discernable, changes. By highlighting these differences among the narratives, and placing them in the context in which they were written, we begin to better understand the authors' immediate concerns. I argue in this thesis that the way in which these authors constructed their individual death narratives reflects each author's concerns, particularly with the religious changes in the Roman Empire.

By the mid-fourth century, Christianity was no longer a persecuted religion, but was instead promoted and protected by the state. Paganism was certainly still present in the empire but now had to take the backseat to another powerful religion, Christianity. Following Constantine, all Roman emperors, with the exception of Julian, were Christian. Julian decided to return to paganism and enact several religious reforms to guarantee the revitalization and survival of the pagan religions. These facts made Julian's reign and life controversial in that, had he lived longer, it is quite possible that Christianity would not have achieved the status and power it did in later times. Let us begin with a brief account of Julian's life before we turn to the narratives of his death.

The Life of Julian

Julian was born in Constantinople in 330 CE, during the reign of his uncle, Constantine. However, Julian was orphaned at the age of seven, as his mother had died while giving birth to him, and his father and several other members of his family were murdered after Constantine's death in 337.³ According to some sources,⁴ Constantius, Constantine's son and heir to the empire in the East, orchestrated the murders. The sources do not agree, but most say that Julian's father, Constantine's half-brother, planned a *coup d'état* against Constantine's sons.⁵ The implication was that upon murdering Constantine's sons, Julian's father would then establish himself and his sons as *Augusti* and *Caesars* in the empire. The only two male members to survive the murders were Julian and his half-brother Gallus: the former because he was so young, and the latter because he was ill at the time and was believed to be dying.⁶ After the massacre of Julian's family, Constantius, ruler of the Eastern Roman Empire, sent Julian and Gallus away from Constantinople to Nicomedia in Bithynia, placing the young princes under house arrest.⁷ There, under the watchful eyes of Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, Julian began his education. Through the instruction of his beloved and influential pedagogue Mardonius, Julian grew to appreciate the canon of classical works including Homer and Hesiod.⁸

³ Julian, *Letter to the Athenians*, 270c-d. [LCL Ed.]

⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 25.3.23 [Penguin Ed.]; Gregory Nazianzus, *Or.* 4.21 [BCL Ed.]; Libanius, *Or.* 18.10 [LCL Ed.]; Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.1 [BCL Ed.].

⁵ Robert Browning, *The Emperor Julian* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 34-35.

⁶ Lib., *Or.* 18.10; Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.1.

⁷ Browning, *Emperor Julian*, 39.

⁸ Lib., *Or.* 18.11; Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.1.

Julian left Bithynia in 342 when Eusebius died, and until 348 the young prince lived near Caesarea in Cappadocia.⁹ Julian wrote later in life of those years as being sad and solitary.¹⁰ In his Letter to the Athenians, he described how Constantius forbade him from leaving the imperial estate at Caesarea and people from visiting him. He felt lonely and isolated, “like a prisoner in a Persian garrison.”¹¹

In Caesarea, he continued his education as a Christian under the mentorship of the learned George, bishop of Caesarea. Julian studied scripture and Christian commentaries on the scriptures in George’s well-stocked library, which contained a large selection of books by both Christian and pagan authors, including the Neo-Platonist commentaries on Aristotle and Plato, which would later prove to be a major intellectual influence on him.¹² In spite of the exile in Cappadocia, Julian later remembered George’s library fondly.¹³ In 348, when he turned eighteen years old, Constantius summoned him to Constantinople, ending his exile. However, Julian did not remain in the capital long. According to Libanius, the pagan orator from Antioch:

[Julian] was now on the threshold of manhood, and the princeliness of his nature was attested by many notable signs. This allowed Constantius no rest, and so, fearful that his capital, which was so influential in the formulation of public opinion and in matters of government the peer of Rome, should be attracted to the young man’s excellence, with some untoward consequences for himself, he had him packed off to

⁹ Raymond Van Dam, *Kingdom of Snow: Roman Rule and Greek Culture in Cappadocia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002) 98.

¹⁰ Browning, *Emperor Julian*, 39.

¹¹ Julian, *Letter to the Athenians*, 271b-c.

¹² Browning, *Emperor Julian*, 40.

¹³ Julian, *Ep.* 23. [LCL Ed.]

Nicomedia, since that city would cause him not nearly so much alarm, and there [Constantius] provided facilities for [Julian's] education.¹⁴

Thus, Julian returned to Nicomedia, where he continued his education. It was also in Nicomedia that Julian heard of Libanius. At that time, the orator, whose reputation was at its apex, had just left Constantinople to set up a school of rhetoric in that city.¹⁵ In his *Autobiography*, Libanius tells us that he was highly esteemed in Nicomedia,¹⁶ where his lectures attracted not only students, but also a distinguished audience of local notables, both pagan and Christian.¹⁷ According to Libanius, the bookish Julian wished to study under him, but his Christian teacher and imperial guardian, Hecebolius, prohibited Julian from even seeing the pagan Libanius.¹⁸ Libanius attributes Hecebolius's prohibition to jealousy, but more likely it was because Libanius was openly pagan, and Constantius wished Julian's education to be strictly Christian.¹⁹ Julian obliged but cleverly circumvented his teacher's prohibition, purchasing lecture notes from one of Libanius's students.²⁰

While in Nicomedia Julian also heard of the Neo-Platonists²¹ teaching philosophy in Pergamum, among them, Aedesius, who had studied under the famous Neo-Platonist

¹⁴ Lib., *Or.* 18.13.

¹⁵ Id. *Or.* 1.55-56. [LCL Ed.]

¹⁶ Ibid. 1.52-53.

¹⁷ Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* 8.2. [NPNF Ed.]

¹⁸ Lib., *Or.* 18.14-15; Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.1.

¹⁹ Polymnia Athanassiadi, *Julian: An Intellectual Biography* (London: Routledge, 1992) 30.

²⁰ Lib., *Or.* 18.15.

²¹ Neo-Platonism was a more spiritualized late antique version of Platonic philosophy that focused primarily on theurgic practices, such as mystical visions, and asceticism. Averil Cameron, *The Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993) 80-81.

philosopher Iamblichus.²² Julian was fascinated by the Neo-Platonist teachings and the ideas of Iamblichus, especially those combining philosophy with magic and supernatural experiences such as prophecies and visions.²³ Julian's fascination with magic and prophecy is evident in his later writings and was also commented on by the writers of Julian's life.²⁴ Having studied Neo-Platonist philosophy, including the works of Iamblichus, during his exile in Cappadocia, Julian wanted to learn more about the work of these mystical philosophers.²⁵ Unfortunately for Julian, Aedesius was far too old to take him on as a student. Instead, he sent Julian to another great Neo-Platonist, Maximus of Ephesus.

It seems odd that Julian was prohibited from attending the lectures of Libanius, but was allowed to listen to the teachings of the pagan Neo-Platonists of Pergamum. The sources, including Julian, do not discuss this contradiction, but a closer look at the historical context provides insight. Julian was in Pergamum around 351 and at that time Constantius was preparing for war. In 350, Magnentius, a general in the West, led a revolt against Constans, Constantius's brother and sole ruler in the West, and subsequently killed Constans.²⁶ Constantius marched his armies westward against Magnentius and made Gallus, Julian's half-brother, Caesar in the East. With Constantius far away in the western portion of the Empire and Gallus ruling the East, Julian had more freedom concerning his education. Julian's interest in the Neo-Platonists, however, was not completely unnoticed. Gallus appears to have known

²² Eunapius, *Vitae Phil.* 429-431[LCL Ed.].

²³ Glen Bowersock, *Julian the Apostate* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978) 28.

²⁴ Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 25.4.15.

²⁵ Cameron, *Later Roman Empire*, 89.

²⁶ Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.25.

about his half-brother's fascination and often sent his theological advisor, the deacon Aetius of Antioch, to make sure Julian had not become a pagan.²⁷ Whatever the case, Constantius and Gallus did not prohibit Julian from seeing the mystical Neo-Platonists of Pergamum, even though they clearly could have done so.

Julian's rejection of Christianity can be dated to around 351. He described his embrace of paganism as a pivotal moment in his life, recounting it as "an extraordinary longing for the rays of the god [to] penetrate deep into [his] soul."²⁸ Julian also claimed in November or December 362 "till his twentieth year [he] walked in that road of [Christianity], but for twelve years now [he has] walked on this road."²⁹ This timing corroborates 351 as the date of his rejection of Christianity and embrace of paganism.³⁰ Although he claimed that he "converted" to a pagan religion in 351, Julian knew that he could only do so in private. As Libanius records in his *Funeral Oration* for Julian

Despite the change in [Julian's] beliefs, he kept the same appearance as before, since to reveal them was out of the question. Aesop here would have composed a fable not of an ass in a lion's skin but of a lion in an ass's hide: though he really knew what was right to know, he pretended a knowledge of what was safer.³¹

²⁷ Julian, *Ep.* 82.

²⁸ Julian, *Or.* 4.130C. [LCL Ed.]

²⁹ As a pagan. *Id.*, *Ep.* 47.434D.

³⁰ *Id.* *Or.* 4.130C.

³¹ *Lib.*, *Or.* 18.19. Here Libanius uses Aesop's 33rd fable, *The Ass in the Lion Skin*, as a metaphor for Julian's conversion. The lion was a symbol and degree, or rank, of Mithraism, while it is clear that Libanius is mocking Christians by representing them with the ass, perhaps a reference to an old rumor claiming that Christians worshipped a donkey-headed deity. For the degrees of Mithraism, see D. Jason Cooper, *Mithras: Mysteries and Initiation Rediscovered* (York Beach: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1996) 113-139. For the rumor that Christians worshipped a donkey-headed deity, see Tertullian, *Ad Nationes* 11. [ANF Ed.]

If Gallus indeed was keeping a watchful eye on Julian's religious curiosity through the deacon Aetius, then Libanius's words are understandable. Julian needed to keep his devotion to paganism a secret until he could safely make it public.

In 354, while Constantius was still in the West, he received dire news from Antioch. The city suffered a severe famine and Gallus was doing little to solve the problem. According to Libanius and Ammianus, starvation turned the Antiochenes into an angry mob, demanding that Gallus provide food. When the mob approached Gallus about the matter, Gallus blamed the issue on the governor of Syria, claiming that the governor refused to open the granaries to the people. This was false, but the Antiochenes did not know. Believing the story, the mob tore the governor apart.³² News about this distressed Constantius. His Caesar in the East had not only allowed, but also incited the Antiochenes to kill the governor of the city. Such an act could not go unpunished. He summoned Gallus to Milan, and Gallus, thinking Constantius would raise him to the position of Augustus in the East, obeyed the summons.³³ Gallus was arrested by Constantius's soldiers en route to Milan, charged with treason, and executed. Julian and Constantius were now the only living male members of the Constantine dynasty.

Julian was implicated in Gallus's "treason" and summoned by Constantius to Milan as well.³⁴ However, he was met with a very different outcome brought on by an unexpected savior: the empress Eusebia, Constantius's wife. Julian was not familiar with her, and yet she

³² The reasons for Gallus's removal are complex and vary greatly. The episode about the famine of Antioch is only one significant reason for Gallus's removal. For the other reasons, see Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 14.7.1-18, 14.9.1-6.

³³ Ibid. 14.11.11-12.

³⁴ Ibid. 15.2.6-8.

was the only member of Constantius's court to speak on behalf of the young prince.³⁵ Eusebia protected Julian and even said that he should be allowed to continue his education in Athens. Why the empress spoke on Julian's behalf is difficult to understand. According to Ammianus, Eusebia either "feared a journey to distant parts or [...] her native sagacity led her to consult the interest of the state" and "urged that preference should be given to a kinsman above any other."³⁶ No matter the reason, Julian's life was spared and he left Milan for Athens.

Around 355 CE, Constantius, now sole emperor, was forced to tend to affairs on the eastern border with Persia, at a time when hostile Germanic tribes were attacking the Roman frontier along the Rhine. Constantius understood that the empire was too big to be ruled by one man alone. To lead the defense of the West in his absence, he recalled Julian from Athens, and established him as Caesar in Gaul.³⁷

Julian as Emperor

As ruler and commander of the Roman forces in the West, Julian had many military successes including the Battle of Strasbourg in 357 where he was outnumbered against several barbarian tribes.³⁸ Constantius did not have the same military successes as Julian and lost many soldiers against the Persians.³⁹ Due to this loss he needed part of Julian's troops. When the emperor commanded Julian's soldiers to leave for Persia, a command they had no desire

³⁵ Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 15.2.6.

³⁶ Ibid. 15.8.3.

³⁷ Ibid. 15.8.7-9, *Lib. Or.* 18.36-37.

³⁸ Browning, *Emperor Julian*, 85.

³⁹ Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 20.4.1-2; *Lib., Or.* 18.91-93. Although Constantius claimed the reason for his need of reinforcements was due to military set backs, the underlying reasoning was Constantius's envy of Julian's numerous victories in Gaul, and wished Julian's military force to be reduced.

to carry out, they rose up and proclaimed Julian as Augustus at Paris in 361.⁴⁰ Julian accepted the acclamation, set himself up as emperor, and marched East to Constantinople for a showdown with Constantius. Along the way, however, Julian learned that Constantius had died from illness and that he had become the sole ruler of the empire.⁴¹

These events opened an entirely new chapter not only in Julian's life, but also in the history of the later Roman Empire. As sole emperor, Julian launched a religious revolution. As noted above, Julian had seemingly abandoned Christianity and privately returned to the worship of the pagan gods. Now, in 361, he did so publicly in Constantinople. All sources agree that once Julian became emperor, he began to reverse the previous measures that gave Christianity and the church considerable power within the empire.⁴² Pagan temples that Constantine and his sons had closed were opened for public worship and maintained by means of the state.⁴³

Julian did not directly persecute but did try to weaken the Christian church by encouraging Christians to abandon Christianity. Rather than persecute Christians with the sword as many of his predecessors had done, Julian believed it was better to use compassion to bring Christians over to the worship of the traditional Roman gods.⁴⁴ In addition to his attempts to restore paganism, Julian forbade Christian teachers from teaching the pagan

⁴⁰ Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 20.4.13.

⁴¹ Ibid. 21.15.2.

⁴² Lib., *Or.* 18.126-130; Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.1; Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.16.

⁴³ Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.1; Lib., *Or.* 30.7-8. [LCL ed.]

⁴⁴ Julian, *Epp.* 40 and 41.

classics. Christian teachers who used to teach Homer and Thucydides were now compelled to focus on the gospels and other books of the New Testament of the Bible.⁴⁵

At the same time, Julian also tried to bankrupt the church in a number of ways. First, he removed all state funding.⁴⁶ The church now had to rely on traditional forms of funding, by counting on donations from the pious.⁴⁷ Secondly, Julian rescinded the church's privilege to use the *cursus publicus*. Clerics had been given access to the courier system, which made travel very inexpensive, and they used it frequently to attend synods or councils.⁴⁸ Finally, Julian returned the public, taxable municipal lands back to the cities—land that had previously been given to the church by his predecessors.⁴⁹ This was partly an attempt to restore municipal finances, as cities were underfunded and many deeply in debt, but the impact of this on the church was significant as it stood to lose an important source of revenue. Julian would simultaneously strengthen the cities and weaken the church by bankrupting the latter.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ There were exceptions to this edict. For example, the famous sophist Prohaeresius was exempt from the edict and encouraged to continue teaching the classics as a Christian. However, Prohaeresius refused the exemption. Robert Browning, *Emperor Julian*, 172.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 138.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Julian, *Ep.* 15, 26. Some clergy members, such as deacon Aetius and Basil of Caesarea, were allowed to use the system, but only with permission from Julian himself. Perhaps Julian meant to deal a crippling blow to the church, now plagued with religious debates upon the arrival of the previously exiled bishops. Bishops wishing to travel to these debates could no longer rely on the courier system, and thus needed to fund their own travel expenditures.

⁴⁹ Bowersock, *Julian*, 74; Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, 3.1 [ed. Cameron].

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 74.

Julian even funded a project to rebuild the great Jewish temple of Jerusalem, much to the chagrin of contemporary Christians.⁵¹ The successful construction of the temple would have meant disaster for the church, disproving Jesus's prophecy that no stone from the temple would remain.⁵² The project, however, met with failure from natural disasters: fires and earthquakes. Finally, Julian declared religious tolerance and recalled all Nicene⁵³ bishops and clergy exiled for their doctrinal views by the emperor Constantius.⁵⁴ The recall of these bishops reignited religious disputes between Nicene Christians and those who rejected the Nicene Creed. With the bishops at each other's throats, Julian hoped to be free to promote his own idealized version of paganism: a polytheist Roman religion molded in the framework and hierarchal structure of Christianity.⁵⁵ After initiating these reforms, he set his gaze on Persia, preparing his soldiers for an invasion of Persian territory.

In May 362, Julian left Constantinople to set up his military headquarters at Antioch. He likely chose Antioch because it was formerly Constantius's military headquarters, and a central point between Constantinople and Persia.⁵⁶ There his friend and mentor, Libanius, and the Antiochenes greeted him, but not as he expected. His advent into the city was met with

⁵¹ Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.20; Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.22; Gregory, *Or.* 5. 3-4 [BCL ed.].

⁵² Matthew 24.2, Mark 13.2, Luke 19.44 and 21.6.

⁵³ The ecclesiastical historians referred those who followed the creed established at the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE to as Nicenes. Even though contemporaries did not refer to themselves or others as Nicenes, I retain the term because it makes it much easier for modern historians to discuss and explain the complexities of the Arian controversy, which continued to be a thorny issue in the church years after the council of Nicaea. I have used of the term "Nicene" here and throughout in this manner.

⁵⁴ Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.1.

⁵⁵ Julian, *Fragment of a Letter to a Priest*, trans. W. C. Wright, Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998) 293-339. [LCL ed.]

⁵⁶ Browning, *Emperor Julian*, 152. See Fig. 3 for Julian's route to Persia.

mournful wails and lamentations. Julian had arrived during the pagan festival of the Adonia, when the citizens mourned the death of Venus's beloved Adonis.⁵⁷ Julian likely was pleased to see the citizens of Antioch, a city with a large Christian population, celebrating a pagan festival, but disconcerted that pagan participation was not nearly as prominent as he had hoped. He found the city's temples to be lacking in sacrifices, a problem he blamed on the parsimonious *curiales*, the members of the city council, who were unwilling to furnish the pagan priests with funds.⁵⁸ Julian also noticed that certain pagan temples, such as the temple of Apollo in nearby Daphne, had become gathering places for Christians, rather than pagans. For example, the temple of Apollo had recently become the resting place for the bones of the Antiochene martyr, St. Babylas, whose presence disturbed the oracles of Apollo.⁵⁹ Julian removed the bones of the martyr from the temple and returned them to the city of Antioch. Shortly after the transportation of the martyr's bones, the temple of Apollo caught fire and portions of it were destroyed. Julian blamed the Christians of Antioch for the fire and subsequently closed the octagonal Great Church of Antioch and confiscated its liturgical vessels, both actions earning Julian much revulsion from the Christian population of Antioch.⁶⁰

Julian's relationship with the Antiochenes, including pagans, was fraught with problems. First, he was displeased with the *curia* or city council for not dealing with the deteriorating economic situation of the city. It was the fiscal responsibility of the *curiales* to

⁵⁷ Bowersock, *Julian*, 96.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 97-98.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 99.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

collect taxes from the people of the city. If the *curiales* could not gather this initial amount, they would have to pay the difference out of their own coffers. Not surprisingly, many candidates for the *curia* did not want to be *curiales* and bribed other much poorer citizens to take their place in the council.⁶¹ Julian saw this corruption in Antioch, and tried to put a stop to it at once, ordering a formal investigation of the *curia* nominations, and subsequently forcing certain candidates to fulfill their fiscal duties as *curiales*.⁶² This did not garner Julian any praise from the aristocracy of Antioch, nor did it make him any friends among them. Among the aristocrats and Christians of the city, Julian's popularity drastically diminished.⁶³

As a last resort to please those citizens who hated the emperor, Julian endeavored to solve the famine⁶⁴ issue in Antioch. He saw that there was much grain in the city, but priced exorbitantly to make the greedy merchants wealthier. Julian, therefore, established fixed prices for the grain, and had more grain imported from nearby cities.⁶⁵ Unfortunately, however, the merchants purchased the grain at the fixed prices and then sold it for a higher cost to nearby cities or the rural population outside of Antioch. It was a disastrous solution and did not solve the famine issue at all.

Soon Julian's ill-received actions caused an indignant reaction from the angry Antiochenes. They began to mock and lampoon the emperor, making fun of his philosopher's

⁶¹ Bowersock, *Julian*, 98.

⁶² Julian, *Misopogon*, 367C-368C. [LCL ed.]

⁶³ Bowersock, *Julian*, 101

⁶⁴ It is interesting to note that Julian's numerous soldiers, billeted at Antioch, did not help matters in the starving city of Antioch.

⁶⁵ Bowersock, *Julian*, 100.

beard, his austere lifestyle, and his love of books.⁶⁶ Julian answered these criticisms with criticisms of his own in the form of a satirical work titled *the Misopogon*, or “beard-hater”. In the work, Julian mocks himself while referring to his beard and his ascetic lifestyle, but also, in turn, mocks the Antiochenes for their ingratitude to him and their vulgar slights to his character. It was an odd reaction from an emperor. Rarely had an emperor responded to mockery with self-mockery. More often than not, such mockery was met with violent retribution. According to historian Polymnia Athanassiadi,

Over a moment of frustration [Julian’s] uncle Constantine, whom Julian so much resembled, would resort to some act of supreme violence, of which he [Constantine] would later repent.⁶⁷

The Antiochenes, who no doubt saw the resemblance between Constantine and Julian, naturally feared such violent retribution, but ultimately were shocked and surprised by the work.⁶⁸ In the *Misopogon*, Julian also expressed his indignation at a city he considered an imperial capital⁶⁹ and threatened to move his military headquarters and imperial court to Tarsus in Cilicia, upon his victorious return from Persia.

The war with Persia was not of Julian’s making. The conflict dated back to the third century, but after a lull followed the Roman victory over the Persians under Galerius in 298, hostilities were reignited under Constantine.⁷⁰ In 335 Persian forces invaded the kingdom of

⁶⁶ Browning, *Emperor Julian*, 158.

⁶⁷ Athanassiadi, *Julian*, 202.

⁶⁸ Bowersock, *Julian*, 103-104.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 95.

⁷⁰ Eusebius, *VC* 4.9-13.

Armenia, a Roman ally, compelling Constantine to go to war with Persia.⁷¹ He ordered his son, Constantius II, to defend the stronghold of Amida and prepared for an invasion of Persia in 337 but died of illness as he set out to the front.⁷² Constantius inherited the war brought on by his father. Julian tells in his *Panegyric to Constantius* how Constantius was beset by concerns surrounding his father's Persian invasion: confusion, an unavoidable war, numerous hostile raids, allies in revolt, and a lack of discipline in the garrisons.⁷³ Constantius defeated the Persians in 343 and 346, but was unable to deal a decisive blow and the conflict continued into Julian's reign.⁷⁴ The latter was determined to finish what his uncle had started and to succeed where his cousin, Constantius, had failed. One gains a sense of Julian's utmost self-confidence from his words in a letter to Arsaces the Satrap of Armenia:

For my military preparations and my set purpose are for one of two things; either to pay the debt of nature with the Parthian⁷⁵ frontier, after I have won the most glorious victories and inflicted on my foes the most terrible reverses, or to defeat them under the leadership of the gods and return to my native land as a conquering hero, after I have set up trophies of the enemy's defeat.⁷⁶

The allure associated with the idea of the conquest of Persia had long driven numerous Roman commanders and emperors to dream of conquering Persia. The conqueror of the Persian Empire would surely have been recognized as a new Alexander the Great. Many

⁷¹ Browning, *Emperor Julian*, 189. Constantine's compellation to war with Persia is debated. There are some scholars who believe that Constantine initiated war without compellation. Cf. R. C. Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy* (Leeds: Francis Cairns Ltd., 1992) 12.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Julian, *Or.* 1.20b. [LCL ed.]

⁷⁴ Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, 15-16.

⁷⁵ Another name for Persian.

⁷⁶ Julian, *Ep.* 57.

Roman generals, such as Crassus, Marc Antony, Caesar, Trajan, and Constantine had all either set out to conquer the Parthian/Persian Empire or made preparations to do so. Of these, only Trajan was partly successful for a short period. Julian himself speaks admiringly about those who conquered Persia in a speech, preserved in Ammianus Marcellinus's *Res Gestae*, and delivered to his soldiers before his invasion of Persia:

I mean to demonstrate to you by more than one example that this is not, as some scandal-mongers suggest, the first time that Romans have invaded the kingdom of Persia. To say nothing of Lucullus or of Pompey, who after traversing the lands of the Albani and Massagetae⁷⁷, whom we now call Alans, broke into this country also and set eyes on the Caspian Sea, we know that Antony's lieutenant Ventidius gained countless bloody victories in these parts. Passing on, however, from early times, I will run over events in more recent history. Trajan and Verus and Severus came back from this country crowned with the laurels of victory.⁷⁸

The invasion of Persian territory was launched on March 5, 363. Although Julian had been successful against tribal warriors in Gaul, he had no experience fighting against the more disciplined and hard-trained soldiers of Persia armed with elephants and *cataphracts*, or armored cavalry.⁷⁹ However, Julian was determined to finish the war he inherited with a decisive victory, relying on a strategy of deception and misdirection. Julian split the army,

⁷⁷ Hostile tribes from Illyria (modern Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia) and Persia, respectively.

⁷⁸ Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 23.5.16-28. Lucullus: Roman general who fought against the Armenians from 73 to 67 BCE; Pompey: Roman general who fought wars in the east from 66 to 63 BCE, conquering much of Asia Minor, Pontus, Syria and Judaea; Ventidius: a Roman general and ally of Antony who defeated the Parthians in battle around 40 BCE; Trajan: the Roman emperor who invaded Persia in 113 CE and took over Mesopotamia; Verus: as co-emperor with Marcus Aurelius, he fought the Parthians from 161 to 166 CE; Severus: Roman emperor who defeated the Parthians around 197 CE.

⁷⁹ Browning, *Julian*, 192.

sending some troops northward to Armenia to meet Arsaces, and taking the main body of his army first northward but then turning around and moving straight for the Persian capital of Ctesiphon.⁸⁰ Shapur II, king of Persia, sent messengers to negotiate an equitable peace treaty between Rome and Persia, but Julian refused to negotiate.

Julian and his troops marched from Antioch to Hierapolis, then to Carrhae, Callinicum, and finally to Circesium.⁸¹ By April 6, his army had already crossed into Persian territory.⁸² However, what Julian found in Persia surprised him. As he marched his troops further into enemy territory, he never saw a substantial Persian army. There were some enemy raids and reconnaissance maneuvers, but no main body army. Shapur and his men were nowhere in sight. Although this made Julian uneasy, he continued onwards until he reached Ctesiphon. Here he found a main portion of the Persian army defending the capital city.⁸³ However, Julian camped far away from the capital to give the Persians full view of his massive army, to frighten the enemy. He also held cavalry games for the men to keep up their morale.⁸⁴ The time was coming when Julian could lay siege to the city and end this war with Persia. All he needed to do was wait for the other portion of his army and the Armenian allies. Victory, he thought, was within his grasp.

Julian's army came close to defeating the Persians. Libanius asserts in a letter addressed to one Aristophanes that Julian was initially successful in his invasion of

⁸⁰ Browning, *Emperor Julian*, 196.

⁸¹ See Fig. 3 for Julian's route through Persia.

⁸² Browning, *Emperor Julian*, 199.

⁸³ Ibid. 204-207; Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 24.6.1-10.

⁸⁴ Bowersock, *Julian*, 113.

Mesopotamia and victory in Persia imminent.⁸⁵ Later sources, both pagan and Christian, criticized aspects of Julian's Persian expedition, but had he not died fighting the Persians in 363, as we shall see below, he would have returned from Persia victorious and *invictus*, or "unconquerable." Such a feat would have given him enormous prestige and political clout, legitimizing his religious reforms and enabling him significantly to expand them, perhaps empowering traditional Roman religion, discrediting Christianity. In other words, had Julian won that war, the victory would perhaps have altered in significant ways the subsequent political and the religious history of late antiquity. This was not lost on contemporaries, non-Christian and Christian. Julian's invasion of Persia worried Christians. Knowing of his military victories in Gaul, Christians feared that if he were successful in Persia, he would attack the Christian church upon his return.⁸⁶ However, this would never come to pass as Julian met his end when the final setback of the expedition happened.

The other portion of his army and the promised Armenian auxiliaries did not come. Forced either to lay siege to Ctesiphon with his main troops or to retreat, Julian believed a Roman defeat was imminent. However, he needed to make a decision quickly because the Persians had implemented a scorched earth policy and Roman supplies were beginning to run out. In June of 363, Julian retreated from Ctesiphon with his army, heading north to meet the other portion of his army but on June 26, he was mortally wounded in a Persian skirmish.

After Julian's death, the soldiers proclaimed Jovian, the leader of Julian's bodyguards, as the new emperor. Jovian, however, was forced to retreat and sign a humiliating treaty with

⁸⁵ Lib., *Ep.* 109.2-4. [LCL ed.]

⁸⁶ Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.4; Julian, *Ep.* 41.

the Persians. The negotiations called for some of the Roman cities that bordered the Persian Empire, such as Nisibis and Amida, to come under Persian rule in exchange for the safe retreat of the Roman forces.⁸⁷ According to Errington, this humiliating defeat prevented the Romans from attempting a Persian invasion for the next centuries, forcing them to focus their military attention on the defense of the eastern border.⁸⁸

How did Julian die? This question became a matter of great interest and controversy for a long time among writers and historians in late antiquity and produced several conflicting versions of the events. As we shall see, most authors agree that the spear of a cavalryman wounded him, but the identity of this cavalryman became an object of dispute. Some say it was a Persian or a Saracen.⁸⁹ Others claim that a Christian Roman soldier held the spear. Some authors even say that Julian was killed by a demon or that God had a hand in the murder. This disagreement and the different accounts of this emperor's death form the subject of this study. Why did the death of Julian, an emperor who ruled for less than two years, attract so much controversy? Furthermore, why did the event draw the attention of so many writers, pagan and Christian, who continued to rewrite it and rewrite about it for more than a hundred years after the event? The persistent controversy over Julian's death, not least among Christians in the fifth century, is important because, as I will argue here, it opens a window into the religious history of the later Roman Empire, particularly for what it can tell us about the

⁸⁷ Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, 27.

⁸⁸ R. Malcolm Errington, *Roman Imperial Policy from Julian to Theodosius* (Chapel Hill: the University of North Carolina Press, 2006) 44.

⁸⁹ Saracens were nomadic, Arab auxiliaries who fought for either the Romans or the Persians. In the sources, the Greek word used to describe them is *Σαρακενοι*. Bowersock, *Julian*, 116-117.

concerns of later writers for the process of Christianization of the empire and relations between empire and church. In other words, this thesis will try to set the debate about Julian's death against a larger historical background in which Christianity became the official state religion of the empire and Christian writers were writing histories of a church triumphing over paganism. Surprisingly, modern scholars have neither discussed nor analyzed the conflicting accounts of Julian's death nor have they asked about the larger meaning of the dispute over events surrounding his death. They are often brought up in modern scholarship as bookends to Julian's life and nothing more.⁹⁰

Before we turn to this scholarship, a word about Julian's own writings is needed. His extant oeuvre includes writings on a variety of genres: poetry, satire, panegyric, letters, and critical discourse. We know more about this emperor than many others, not only because he readily wrote often, but also because posterity preserved much of his work. His numerous letters give much insight into the affairs of the empire and provide critical biographical information. The fact that he often reveals his thoughts and feelings in his writings gives a great deal of insight into his character and personality, with a richness and depth to rival the work of Marcus Aurelius, a fact Julian would have himself relished.⁹¹

His *Against the Galileans*, a treatise against Christianity, appears to have been highly influential among pagans. It had an enduring power and appeal and excited so much anti-Christian feeling that Cyril, the patriarch of Alexandria and one of the most powerful clerics in

⁹⁰ The modern biographies of Julian in English, such as Browning's *Emperor Julian*; Bowersock's *Julian*; and Athanassiadi's *Julian*, all include Julian's death as an ending point in Julian's reign but do not analyze the deaths further.

⁹¹ Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 25.4.15.

the Roman Empire, felt compelled to reply to Julian, attacking his polemical arguments in his own *Contra Julianum*, written between 420 and 430 CE, that is, more than half a century after Julian's death.

Most intriguing of all are Julian's satirical works, the *Misopogon* and the *Caesars*. The latter was a satire written for the Saturnalia of 361.⁹² The satire depicts past Roman emperors, many of whom are openly mocked, attending a feast in the heavens among the gods and goddesses. Julian even mocks his own uncle Constantine, who rejects the gods and embraces the deities of Pleasure and Incontinence, who make their abode in Jesus Christ. The avenging deities then punish Constantine and his sons because they killed their kindred.⁹³ Both satires reflect Julian's own humor, which appears sardonic at times and outright comical at others.

It is rather surprising that much of Julian's work survives, especially since it was those who considered him to be a persecutor, Christians, who copied down most of his works. This suggests that many Christians saw in Julian's work something very significant, whether it was his writing style or content. His discourses could be seen by future Christians as exemplars of classical rhetoric and heated polemic. And his satires could be seen as entertaining for future generations simply for their comedic descriptions of the gods, emperors, and Julian himself. However, it is possible that these works continued to have an appeal among elite circles in late antiquity whose allegiance to Christianity was perhaps at best only nominal and who insisted in keeping Julian's memory alive.

⁹² Julian, *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, trans. W. C. Wright (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998) 343. The Saturnalia is a festival devoted to the agricultural Roman god Saturn in the month of December.

⁹³ Julian, *Caesars*, 336a-c. [LCL ed.]

Although Julian wrote much about his life and times, he obviously could not write about his own death. Such a task would be left to those who knew him personally and those who simply knew of him. In either case, although pagans and Christians copied many of Julian's works, it is likely that these works were preserved selectively, helping to create a certain memory and project a particular image of the late emperor for posterity.

Recent Scholarship in English on Julian

Robert Browning (1978), Glen Bowersock (1978), Polymnia Athanassiadi (1992), and Susanna Elm (2012) have published the most influential modern book-length studies in English on Julian and his reign.

Robert Browning saw Julian as a “man of his time sharing alike its superstition and its rationalism, its pragmatism and its concern for dogma.”⁹⁴ For Browning, although Julian accomplished very little and most of his reforms were reversed by Jovian after his death, “[Julian’s] memory has lasted through the ages, and the enigma of his personality has stimulated the intellect and the imagination of fifty generations.”⁹⁵ In his epilogue, Browning gives a broad survey of the written works about Julian from the late fourth century on. Within this survey he talks about how Julian became “the Apostate” and how his legendary figure was remembered through the ages.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Browning, *Emperor Julian*, xi.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 218.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 228.

Browning's epilogue, where he looks at Julian's legacy, considers how Christians in the West saw Julian, juxtaposing it with a brief survey on how Christians in the East saw Julian. Augustine and Prudentius, prominent Christians writing at the turn of the fifth century, offer somewhat forgiving descriptions of Julian that respect his character, but present him as a misguided intellectual leader.⁹⁷ This shows that Christians did not always share the same opinion about Julian. Western Christian thinkers tended to be less critical of the emperor than their eastern counterparts. The most critical accounts concerning Julian came from eastern metropolises such as Antioch and Alexandria where Julian's religious reforms had the greatest impact on a large Christian population and where pagans, who continued to worship the gods and emperors even into the fifth and sixth centuries, remained a significant presence. There pagan-Christian rivalry and conflict were common, sometimes leading to violent confrontation.⁹⁸

However, Browning was not interested in why the narratives of Julian's death attracted so much controversy, nor does he discuss the larger religious and political context of the time when these writers were writing in the fourth and fifth centuries. This thesis includes an analysis of why the most prominent narratives about Julian's death were written the way they were and also looks at their socio-religious context.

Glen Bowersock, for the most part, disagreed with Browning's view of Julian; his biography of the emperor was intended as a reply to Browning's work. Bowersock saw Julian as a "puritanical pagan" who was out of touch with the rest of the empire, rather than a "man

⁹⁷ Browning, *Emperor Julian*, 225-226.

⁹⁸ Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.13, 5.16, 7.15.

of his time,” who, like the majority of pagans followed the pagan traditions of his forefathers. For example, the ascetic Neo-Platonist⁹⁹ movement that Julian adhered to did not appeal to the majority of the population in the later Roman Empire.¹⁰⁰ The majority of the population would not have readily imagined an emperor who slept on a pallet or ate meager meals.¹⁰¹ In fact the people of Antioch mocked his ascetic behavior, suggesting that they found it to be odd and unappealing.

Bowersock sought to present the “historical” Julian, examining his actions and analyzing his reactions and contemporaneous portraits. His main concern was to reconcile each narrative to see which stories agreed with one another, integrating the narratives together in order to find the truest portrayal of the “historical” Julian.¹⁰² Like Browning, however, he does not address why the stories of Julian’s life (and death) were written in their own particular way. Thus, while Bowersock paid close attention to how the sources constructed an image of Julian for posterity, he does not address how the narratives contained in these sources came into being, particularly with respect the narratives of Julian’s death. In other words, like Browning, Bowersock was not concerned with why those narratives differed so much from one another and what these differences might tell us about the complex religious history of the period.

⁹⁹ Cf. E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an age of anxiety* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965) 35.

¹⁰⁰ Bowersock, *Julian*, 79-80.

¹⁰¹ Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 25.4.4.

¹⁰² Bowersock, *Julian*, xi.

Polymnia Athanassiadi found Julian to be psychologically fascinating because of his peculiar actions. Drawing on the letters and orations of Julian as evidence, Athanassiadi constructed an intellectual biography of Julian, attempting to see into the mind of the emperor. She portrayed Julian as a religious genius, striving to build a pagan church to rival that of Christianity.¹⁰³

Athanassiadi's intellectual biography of Julian considers the emperor's educational and religious reforms, and tries to explain why Julian wrote certain works, like the *Misopogon* and *Against the Galileans*. She also investigates why different writers of antiquity wrote about the late Roman emperor. However, she fails to provide analysis for some of the narratives, especially the pagan narratives. While referring to Christian writers of the later Roman Empire, she notes that, "Those who lived during his reign wished to commemorate their deliverance from it,"¹⁰⁴ but she does not discuss the pagan writers like Libanius, who sought to rehabilitate the memory of Julian.

Finally, Susanna Elm's *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church* focuses on Julian, Gregory Nazianzus, a prominent theologian and bishop from Cappadocia, and their vision of a Hellenized Rome. Elm asks: What made Christianity last? And how did it adapt to continuously changing external circumstances while retaining a core message?¹⁰⁵

To answer these questions, Elm analyzes some of the writings of those two authors. She focuses on Gregory's "inaugural" oration, the *Apology for his Flight to Pontus*, written

¹⁰³ Athanassiadi, *Julian*, 165-168.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 227.

¹⁰⁵ Susanna Elm, *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church: Emperor Julian, Gregory of Nazianzus, and the Vision of Rome* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 1.

during Julian's reign, and his two *Invectives Against Julian*, which were written soon after Julian's death. Then she takes issue with Julian's satirical orations, such as the *Misopogon*, and his critical speeches, such as, for instance, his seventh oration, *To the Cynic Heraclius*, in which Julian criticized Cynicism. She speculates that Gregory wrote his *Invectives Against Julian* because of Julian's familial connection to the usurper Procopius who led a revolt in 365 CE, when the *Invectives* were written, and also proposes that we see Libanius and Gregory engaged in a dialogue concerning Julian.¹⁰⁶ Although Elm situates the different versions of Julian's death in Libanius's orations and Gregory's *Invectives*—both of which will be discussed in detail below—in the political context of the time, she does not confront these accounts with other narratives of this emperor's demise in the work of the ecclesiastical historians. In looking at Gregory's and Libanius's narratives of Julian's death, this study will take issue with Elm's interpretation. It will also analyze the ecclesiastical historians, including their use of Gregory and Libanius, against the larger political and religious context of the time.

The Death Narratives of Julian as a Lens into the Religious History of the Later Roman Empire

In part, the reasons for the existence of conflicting narratives of Julian's death (and life) are obvious. While Christian writers generally sought to vilify a man they equated with the anti-Christ, some pagans presented a more positive portrait of a Roman ruler who grasped *Romanitas*, the essence of the ancient Roman traditions of classical literature and culture.

¹⁰⁶ Elm, *Sons*, 454-458.

However, as we shall see, the issue is more complex than that. The Christian accounts are not necessarily uniform in their criticism, especially when concerned with the manner of Julian's demise. The same is true for the pagan narratives. Christian leaders such as Athanasius of Alexandria assured Christians that Julian's reign was nothing more than a passing cloud,¹⁰⁷ but for another century there continued to be an enormous interest in his reign and, particularly, in his death. The different death narratives covered in this thesis grew out of this interest, and reflected deep-seated concerns about religious affairs in the empire.

Christian writers, especially the fifth-century ecclesiastical historians, wrote about the history of the fourth century as a narrative of Christian triumph. According to these Christian writers, following Constantine's conversion, Christianity continued to spread uninterrupted throughout the Roman Empire and beyond, triumphing over the pagan gods with the outlawing of paganism in the reign of Theodosius I. Yet, as historian Peter Brown and others have shown, this "triumphalist" narrative did not seem to match reality. Instead, it reflected deep-seated uncertainties among church leaders about the stability of the church as an institution, and the sincerity and depth of Christian "conversion." As Brown put it, "the Church may have defeated the gods; but it had not defeated, in its own congregations, the towering force of religious habits taken directly from the Christian past."¹⁰⁸ Historian Ramsay MacMullen also commented on this "triumph" saying

The triumph of the new religion [Christianity] appeared now manifest and irreversible. The moment had come to accept the verdict of history as it was realized, beyond all denial, in 'the

¹⁰⁷ Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.15.

¹⁰⁸ Peter Brown, *Authority and the Sacred* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 23.

Christian empire.' But there remained quite contradictory practices and events to be noticed from time to time post-312, post-400, indeed for many centuries to come, showing the church's enemies not yet swept from the field, the national religion [paganism] still stubbornly alive.¹⁰⁹

Much of the empire's population in the fourth and well into the fifth century continued to celebrate certain pagan rituals and festivals, not merely out of habit, but because such activities were still very popular among pagans and even Christians.¹¹⁰ Even though most Roman emperors, since Constantine, were Christian, this did not necessarily mean that the entire population immediately followed suit. Indeed, it was the persistence of paganism that compelled Julian to apostatize from Christianity and embrace the traditional pagan gods and rituals. One might even go so far as to say that Julian's promotion of paganism, however brief, resurrected the bygone pagan deities, giving them a more public presence in the empire. The ecclesiastical historians, however, depicted a world in which, as MacMullen observed,

pagans were not only defeated ... but had in fact all been converted. Really ... such was far from true.¹¹¹

Naturally, as one might guess, pagans and Christians continued to enter into heated conflicts concerning their respective religious presences in the empire, and Julian's reign, life and death were at the heart of these quarrels. In fact, the fascination Julian continued to exercise on Christian writers, such as Cyril of Alexandria, who wrote against Julian almost seventy years after the emperor's death, may have been rooted in these persistent anxieties

¹⁰⁹ Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) 3.

¹¹⁰ Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 388.

¹¹¹ MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism*, 5.

about the presence of paganism in a world imperfectly Christianized. The idea of an emperor like Julian, who, raised a Christian, apostatized later in life and used his Christian upbringing and education against the church, pointing out its contradictions and the flaws in Christian doctrine and ideals, was threatening to the church. Such attacks might have been expected from pagan philosophers, like as Porphyry of Tyre, who wrote his *Against the Christians* about a century before Julian's treatise criticizing Christianity, but not from an emperor; least of all one from the house of Constantine, who, having been educated by devout bishops, abandoned Christianity and sought to undermine the church. Julian was particularly dangerous to the church because his position of power gave legitimacy to his words and actions, even after his death. In addition, his rule provided a template, or model, for how to turn back the clock, create alternatives to the Christian way, and deprive the church of power. If there was a Christian "triumph" over paganism, as the Christian writers of the fourth and fifth century asserted, Julian's reign and its promotion of paganism, whether successful or otherwise, seemed to represent a caesura in the narratives of Christian triumph in Late Antiquity. The posthumous attacks against the emperor suggest that he continued to be perceived as something of a threat even after his demise, which tells us a great deal about the concerns of Christian authors with the extent and depth of the Christianization of the empire.

The death of Julian also easily lent itself as material for extended disquisitions about imperial power and, in Christian narratives, the relations between imperial power and the church. This was naturally a sensitive issue in the later empire. Ever since Constantine, Christian emperors had become deeply involved in church affairs, especially in matters

concerning decisions about discipline (e.g., the Donatist controversy) and doctrine (e.g., the Arian dispute).¹¹² This was particularly an issue as the Arian controversy unfolded. The quarrel between the Alexandrian priest Arius and Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria, over the generation of the Son of God at the outbreak of the controversy forced Constantine to intervene repeatedly to bring peace to the church and suppress dissidents and heretics.¹¹³ This set a precedent that was followed repeatedly throughout the fourth and fifth centuries by Constantine and his successors as that controversy persisted.

The church's reaction to imperial meddling in its affairs was ambiguous: on the one hand, it welcomed the emperor's willingness to suppress heretics, schismatics, and (sometimes) pagans, but on the other, it resented the loss of autonomy and independence.¹¹⁴ The historical narratives of the fourth century in many ways reflected this preoccupation with the place of imperial jurisdiction in the church and, as this thesis will suggest, the episodes in the life and, particularly, death of the emperor Julian allowed Christians to advance claims about church and empire, divine and secular power.

¹¹² Cameron, *Later Roman Empire*, 69. Even Julian had a hand in church affairs by allowing previously exiled bishops to return to their respective communities, an action that caused heated and at times violent conflict among those who had been exiled and those who were allowed to remain in the empire.

¹¹³ The Alexandrian priest Arius disagreed with his bishop's view of the relationship between the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. The bishop preached that God the Father was co-eternal with God the Son. Arius disagreed, saying that since the term "son" implies an origin from the Father and, if God is eternal, then God the Father and God the Son could not be co-eternal together. How could the Son, a creature derived from the Father, be just as eternal as the Father? This disagreement created such a commotion amongst the congregations of Alexandria that the emperor was forced to intervene to keep the peace. Philip Amidon, *Philostorgius: Church History* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007) xiii.

¹¹⁴ Eusebius, *VC*, 4.74-75; Athanasius, *Historia Arianorum* 7.52. [NPNF ed.]

In what follows, then, I propose to analyze the narratives of Julian's death, addressing how the authors constructed their narratives, whom the authors included (or omitted) in their accounts, and what role the protagonists played in the unfolding of the story. I pay special attention to the socio-religious context in which these narratives were composed, which has been absent in much recent modern scholarship.

The thesis consists of three chapters and a conclusion. Chapter One deals with the sources for Julian's death, specifically the accounts of Julian's contemporaries, Gregory Nazianzus, Libanius and Ammianus Marcellinus, and those of the fifth-century church historians, Socrates of Constantinople, Sozomen of Gaza, and Theodoret of Cyrrhus, who wrote different versions of Julian's demise. Where possible I discuss their sources, point out the interconnections among them, and try to place their work in a larger cultural and historical context.

Chapter Two examines how the different narratives were constructed, and why they were constructed in a certain way. In Chapter Three I expand the discussion from Chapter Two in an attempt to show how the death narratives of Julian served as a literary locus for late Roman writers to discuss Christianization and relations between church and state.

The authors listed above were not the only sources about Julian's death. I omit from this thesis discussion on the work of Eunapius of Sardis, Rufinus of Aquileia, Eutropius and Philostorgius for a number of reasons.

In the work of some of these authors, the narratives of Julian's death have not survived. For example, although Eunapius's fragmentary *Universal History* tells much about

Julian's reign and his embrace of Neo-Platonic philosophy, Julian's death is unfortunately missing among the extant fragments.¹¹⁵ The version of Julian's death in Rufinus, Eutropius, and Philostorgius is very similar to the more complete accounts given by the authors discussed here. Socrates reproduces much of Rufinus's account and expands on it.¹¹⁶ Ammianus's version appears to be an expansion of the death narrative from Eutropius's *Breviarium historiae Romanae*, a brief compendium of the history of the Roman Empire from the founding of Rome to the fourth century CE.¹¹⁷ Philostorgius, who wrote a church history in the fifth century, includes an account of Julian's death that is very similar to those in Socrates and Theodoret.¹¹⁸ So in looking at the sources, I privileged the most prominent, that is, detailed, accounts of Julian's death.

I also chose to focus on authors from the eastern portion of the empire. I have done this for a number of reasons. First, the death narratives about Julian from the writers of the eastern half of the empire tend to be more detailed than those of writers from the West.¹¹⁹ This is probably due to the fact that writers in the East knew more about Julian, who spent most of his life in the East.

¹¹⁵ Eunapius, *Exc. de Sent.* 24, from *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire*, trans. R. C. Blockley (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1983) 41-43.

¹¹⁶ Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.1.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Eutropius, *Brev.* 10.16.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Philostorgius, *Hist. Eccl.* 7.15 [Bidez ed.]; Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* 6.2; Theodoret, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.20 [NPNF ed.].

¹¹⁹ Cf. Rufinus, *Hist. Eccl.* 10.37; Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.21.

Chapter One: How the Sources Interconnect

Before discussing the different narratives of Julian's death and their historical context, let us take a closer look at the sources and their interconnections, situating them and their authors in their larger historical context, which will provide us the key to the analysis of these accounts and the reason why they differ from one another. I pay special attention here not only to the way in which the authors were aware of alternative versions of that emperor's death, but especially to how their accounts differed from one another.

One important distinction is between contemporaneous and non-contemporaneous writers, both extant and non-extant, as contemporary accounts of Julian's death often served as sources for later writers, particularly the fifth-century ecclesiastical historians, even when they rejected and modified those accounts. For example, Sozomen of Gaza, a ecclesiastical historian who wrote a history of the church around 440 CE, tells several stories about Julian's death, but does not reveal his sources. It is clear, however, that he had in mind at least one of Libanius's versions of Julian's demise (on which more below), since he refers to Libanius directly and quotes his *Funeral Oration Over Julian*. But even when later authors use sources that are no longer extant or cannot be named, the similarities in their accounts suggest that they drew on a common source or sources, sometimes giving historians a clue as to what the unnamed source was.

The writers contemporaneous with Julian were Gregory Nazianzus (330-390 CE), Libanius (314-393 CE), and Ammianus Marcellinus (330-ca. 391 CE). Libanius and Ammianus were stalwart pagans, while Gregory was a Christian—though a Christian with a deep respect

for Hellenic culture and education. All three wrote on Julian's death and knew him personally as a student and/or emperor. This familiarity, however, does not mean of course that we should take their accounts of Julian's death at face value. All sources, but perhaps even more so those authors closest in time to the events, must be read with a critical eye, because their accounts were not innocent of distortions, colored by their authors' particular biases at the time. Let us look at each one of these authors in turn.

Gregory Nazianzus: Cappadocian Father and Hellene

Gregory Nazianzus was born into an elite family around 329 or 330 CE near the provincial city of Nazianzus in southwest Cappadocia.¹²⁰ At the time of his birth, his father and the rest of his family had only recently converted to Christianity, according to Raymond van Dam, due to Constantine's patronage.¹²¹ Although his father, Gregory the Elder, became bishop of Nazianzus, he understood the importance of the Greek classics for the education of his children.¹²² It is no surprise then that he sent Gregory, his son, to Athens around 348 or 349 CE to receive an education in philosophy and rhetoric, while Caesarius, Gregory's younger

¹²⁰ See Fig. 3 for map of Cappadocia.

¹²¹ Raymond Van Dam, *Becoming Christian: The Conversion of Roman Cappadocia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003) 79.

¹²² *Ibid.*

brother, studied medicine in Alexandria, and then went to Constantinople to serve as a physician in the imperial court.¹²³

While in Athens, Gregory met Julian as a fellow-student. In their early twenties, both took lessons from the same teachers. In his second *Invective Against Julian*, written around 364 CE, after Julian's death, Gregory later described how he remembered the young Julian as having an

Unsteady neck, his shoulders always in motion and shrugging up and down like a pair of scales, his eye rolling and glancing from side to side with a certain insane expression, his feet unsteady and stumbling, his nostrils breathing insolence and disdain, the gestures of his face ridiculous and expressing the same feelings, his bursts of laughter unrestrained and gusty, his nods of assent and dissent without any reason, his speech stopping short and interrupted by his taking breath, his questions without any order and unintelligent, his answers not a whit better than his questions.¹²⁴

These risible characteristics caused Gregory the student to remark, "What an evil the Roman world is breeding!"¹²⁵ This biting and disparaging portrait of Julian is not surprising, when we consider that it was written after Julian's religious reforms against Christianity took effect. Gregory's description was obviously colored by his experience of Julian's polemical actions against Christianity and the church.

¹²³ John A. McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001) 30-32.

¹²⁴ Gregory, *Or.* 5.23.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* 5.24.

Gregory spent almost a decade in Athens as a student, and later fondly remembered those years, referring to Athens as a golden city of learning.¹²⁶ By 358 CE, he was back in Nazianzus. The return to Nazianzus signaled Gregory's entrance into a new stage of his life. According to Raymond Van Dam, Gregory had several career choices in his native land: as the son of an aristocratic family, he could start a political career as a municipal magistrate; he could become a teacher of rhetoric; or follow the footsteps of his father and become a clergyman.¹²⁷ At first Gregory chose to teach rhetoric, but in 361 his father ordained him priest, a burden he says he was unwilling to receive.¹²⁸ In protest, Gregory left Nazianzus, abandoning his father, to live as a monk with his friend Basil of Caesarea.

Around early 361, soon after Gregory left Nazianzus, emperor Constantius compelled many eastern bishops to sign a creed meant to unify the eastern churches under an "Arian"¹²⁹ doctrine of faith. Although many of these bishops, one of whom was Gregory's father, opposed Constantius, they feared possible persecution and subscribed to the creed.¹³⁰ When

¹²⁶ Elm, *Sons*, 23, 26.

¹²⁷ Van Dam, *Kingdom*, 189.

¹²⁸ Gregory, *Or.* 1.1. [NPNF ed.]

¹²⁹ The term Arian refers more properly to the doctrine of faith proposed by the Alexandrian presbyter Arius condemned at Nicaea in 325. By the 350s no one in the East preached Arius's original ideas, but many Christians had also refused to embrace the Nicene Creed, which had defined the Son as *homoousios* (consubstantial) with the Father. In the late 350s, some among the latter rejected the use of "ousia" (substance) language in the definition of the Son, calling him simply "similar" (*homoios*) to the Father. In 359 and 360, Constantius sought to unify the church under a *homoian* creed, which the Nicene attacked as "Arian." Calling *homoian* doctrine Arian is therefore a mischaracterization. However, the term Arian is so often used in the sources and in the modern literature to represent the various forms of doctrinal opposition to Nicaea. For the sake of simplicity, here and throughout, I retain the term to indicate the many non-Nicene doctrines of God.

¹³⁰ Elm, *Sons*, 59.

Constantius died, the Nicene accused Gregory the Elder of heresy and “betraying” orthodox doctrine.¹³¹ This seems to have been what prompted Gregory to return to Nazianzus in order to help and advise his father. The Christian disputes of local Nazianzus, however, were not the only recent issues Gregory was concerned with. Soon he, and Christianity itself, had to grapple with a different threat.

In 361, while Gregory was in monastic retreat, Julian became emperor and declared not only his rejection of Christianity, but also economical and religious reforms that directly affected the church. He allowed all previously exiled bishops and clerics to return, which only fueled the Arian controversy, creating more dissension within Christian communities, such as Nazianzus. He also removed state funding for the church and seized the municipal lands Constantine and Constantius had given to the church and returned them to the cities.¹³² These measures were intended to restore the finances of many cities, which had fallen into neglect, but they also had the effect of removing an important source of income from the control of the church. Back in Nazianzus, Gregory had to deal not only the opposition to his father in the Christian community, but also join the opposition to the new religious policies of the emperor Julian.¹³³

Gregory’s return to Nazianzus and resignation to the life of a cleric is inextricably connected to his work as a theologian; and he quickly became one of the greatest theologians of the fourth century, writing numerous treatises, orations and sermons concerning the

¹³¹ Gregory, *Or.* 18.18.

¹³² Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.5.

¹³³ McGuckin, *Gregory*, 115-116.

doctrinal questions of his time. Gregory's performance in the Christological debates of the period, especially his steadfast defense of Nicene orthodoxy, later earned him the appellation "the Theologian", an epithet given to him at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, sixty years after his death.¹³⁴ He also wrote several orations for his friends and family, and several letters and poems, containing much autobiographical information.

His works were clearly widely read in Christian circles, at least from the late fourth century onwards. Gregory does not tell much about publishing, but he does mention hiring *tachygraphers*, persons who copied an orator's words as he spoke.¹³⁵ He also left instructions with his nephew Eulalios, bishop of Nazianzus, regarding how certain orations were to be edited and published after his death.¹³⁶ It is difficult to know which of these orations the bishop chose for initial publishing. However, the fact that his theological orations delivered at Constantinople were among the most copied of all Byzantine manuscripts other than the Bible, according to historian John McGuckin, suggests that they were the ones edited and published by Eulalios.¹³⁷

Most of Gregory's writings from 361 to 363 contain references to Julian and his reign. Around Easter 363, Gregory gave his inaugural oration (as historian Susanna Elm calls it), known as the *Apology for his Flight to Pontus*, whose purpose was to explain why he had left Nazianzus so abruptly after his ordination and to speak about what being a Christian leader

¹³⁴ Elm, *Sons*, 4.

¹³⁵ Elm, *Sons*, 154, 30n, see Gregory, *Or.* 42.26.

¹³⁶ McGuckin, *Gregory*, 394-395.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* 395.

meant during the “persecutory” reign of Julian.¹³⁸ Aside from the apology for his flight, the oration gave Gregory the chance to announce his strong opposition to the reforms of Julian. In the year before Gregory’s return to Nazianzus, Julian had prohibited Christian teachers from teaching rhetoric and philosophy.¹³⁹ In the oration, Gregory says

Of external warfare I am not afraid, nor of that wild beast, and fullness of evil, who has now arisen against the churches, though he may threaten fire, sword, wild beasts, precipices, chasms; though he may show himself more inhuman than all previous madmen, and discover fresh tortures of greater severity.¹⁴⁰

Gregory’s acutely hostile language in this oration foreshadows the vicious attacks against the emperor in his *Invectives* against Julian. The emperor of course opposed the use of violence against Christians and carefully avoided persecuting them.¹⁴¹ Instead, he removed the privileges previously granted to the church to encourage Christians to turn away from Christianity as he had done.¹⁴² However, Gregory wished to convey the impression that Julian actually was persecuting Christians and hurting the church—and, indeed, he may have perceived it that way; for Gregory surely understood the importance of imperial patronage to the church. Hence, it is perhaps not surprising that he portrays Julian as a persecutor of Christians, recalling images of the Christian persecutions of old. This “wild beast” that now ruled the empire had discovered “fresh tortures of greater severity” namely tortures that affected the coffers of the church.

¹³⁸ Elm, *Sons*, 152-154.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* 151.

¹⁴⁰ Gregory, *Or.* 2.87.

¹⁴¹ Julian, *Letter to the Bostrans*; Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.15.

¹⁴² Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.5.

But Gregory had other personal reasons to oppose Julian. Around the time he wrote the *Apology*, Julian had passed Nazianzus on his way to Antioch to prepare for war against the Persians.¹⁴³ Julian was displeased with the Christian zeal of the Cappadocians and his correspondence during this time suggests that he dismissed many, if not all, Christian Cappadocians from court,¹⁴⁴ including Gregory's brother, Caesarius. Not only had Julian prohibited Gregory from teaching rhetoric, which he loved, but he also slighted Gregory's family. This may also have been one of the reasons behind Gregory's composition of his two *Invectives Against Julian*, the second of which contains accounts of the emperor's death.

Invectives were rhetorical pieces used to attack a person or idea with biting criticism. These speeches have a long history in the tradition of Greek and Roman oratory, and Demosthenes's *Philippics* (against Philip of Macedon) served as a model for Gregory's own vigorous attack against Julian and his policies.¹⁴⁵ Given the scandalous, permissive language and the mockery of Julian's character, many scholars have wondered whether Gregory ever delivered his invectives at all. According to scholar Johannes Quasten, they would never have been declaimed publicly because of their bitter language against an emperor.¹⁴⁶ The disrespectful tone Gregory used in these invectives would have been below what was expected from the "Theologian." Considering the volatile nature of the *Invectives*, Gregory may have limited their distribution, making them available for a select few Christians. However, it

¹⁴³ Van Dam, *Kingdom*, 190.

¹⁴⁴ Julian, *Ep.* 35.375c.

¹⁴⁵ Elm, *Sons*, 341.

¹⁴⁶ Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, Vol. 3 (Notre Dame: Christian Classics, 1986) 242.

is equally possible that Gregory's *Invectives* were published under a different title, so that they could be more widely distributed.

In the fifth century, Socrates of Constantinople had access to the *Invectives*, probably in the library or archives of the church of Constantinople. The historian quotes a passage from the second *Invective Against Julian*, the same quote earlier concerning Gregory's description of Julian as a student in Athens. It is interesting to note that, although Socrates quotes verbatim from Gregory's second *Invective*, he refers to it as the *Second Oration Against the Pagans (or Hellenes)*.¹⁴⁷ This would suggest that Gregory's *Invectives* circulated under a different title, one less hostile to an emperor from the Constantinian dynasty. The fact alone that Julian, a relative of Constantine, was the first emperor born in Constantinople might have been reason enough for the title alteration of the *Invectives* in the "city of Constantine." Whatever the case, it was thanks to Gregory's *Invectives* that Julian would be known to posterity as the Apostate.¹⁴⁸

How well known and read were these invectives? According to scholar Jean Bernardi, among the many manuscripts containing collections of Gregory Nazianzus's orations, the oldest codices include the *Invectives*. These codices are Mosquensis Synodalis 57 and Ambrosianus E 49-50 inf. (gre 1014), both of which date to the ninth century, but probably represent two different manuscript traditions, given the differences in the order in which the orations are arranged.¹⁴⁹ This suggests that the *Invectives*, despite their embarrassing language, were transmitted along with Gregory's most important orations from a very early date. The

¹⁴⁷ Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.23.

¹⁴⁸ Elm, *Sons*, 4.

¹⁴⁹ Jean Bernardi, from *Grégoire de Nazianze, Discours 1-3* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1978) 56-58.

Ambrosianus, branded as A, seems to have been copied many times and the surviving manuscripts copied from A are Vaticanus graecus 2061 a.b., branded as R, and Ottobonianus 396, branded as O, both from the tenth century.¹⁵⁰ That the corpus of Gregory's works was transmitted into Byzantine times is not surprising, given the importance of his orations for the development of Christian doctrine, but the inclusion of the *Invectives* in these collections suggests that these orations were in fact deemed to be an integral part of Gregory's work and, I would hazard to guess, were widely read within Christian circles.

Gregory does not reveal who the audience was for both *Invectives*. Elm speculates that the first *Invective* was written for a predominately Christian audience that was highly educated, sophisticated, and, above all, familiar with Julian.¹⁵¹ These Christians (including Gregory's brother Caesarius) would have been directly affected by Julian's policies. Elm also speculates that, since Gregory refers to Julian's *Misopogon*, the second *Invective* was more specifically meant for an Antiochene audience.¹⁵² However, the *Misopogon* would have been widely known in the East so Gregory's audience was probably broader. In my view, the *Invectives* were also intended to be read by pagans, as Gregory's message, perhaps even a warning, was clear: God triumphed over the pagan Julian and ordained that the future governance of the Roman Empire was to be Christian.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Jean Bernardi, from *Grégoire de Nazianze, Discours 4-5, Contre Julien* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1983) 68.

¹⁵¹ Elm, *Sons*, 422.

¹⁵² Ibid. 422-423. Gregory, *Or.* 5.41.

¹⁵³ Ibid. 338.

Although both *Invectives* show the same hatred towards Julian, their origin, context, and dates of composition are different. The first *Invective* was probably written around 363, just after Julian's death.¹⁵⁴ Elm argues that it was written in response to Julian's edict prohibiting Christians from teaching the classics. In it, Gregory speaks of his love for the Greek classics and claims that Julian's edict constituted an abuse of imperial power.¹⁵⁵ Although Jovian rescinded most of Julian's religious decrees, for some odd reason he did not rescind Julian's edict against Christian teachers. It would not be amended until the reign of Valentinian.¹⁵⁶

In the first *Invective* Gregory also gives his own version of Julian's life, from the time of the slaughter of his kinsmen following Constantine's death and including a comparison between the reign of Julian and that of his immediate predecessor, Constantius. To Gregory, Julian was not only "the Dragon, the Apostate [...] the public and private enemy of all in common,"¹⁵⁷ but also an example of a poor philosopher, taught by those "he had picked up out of the highways and pits."¹⁵⁸ Constantius instead, though a "heretic," had been more benevolent and tolerant than Julian, the persecutor.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ Elm, *Sons*, 337; McGuckin, *Gregory*, viii.

¹⁵⁵ Gregory, *Or.* 4.5.5-7.

¹⁵⁶ Julian, *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, trans. W.C. Wright, Vol. 3 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961) xxi; *CTh* 13.3.6.

¹⁵⁷ Gregory, *Or.* 4.1.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 4.43.

¹⁵⁹ Elm, *Sons*, 338.

Gregory wrote his second *Invective Against Julian* around 364, focusing on the Christian God's triumph over Julian.¹⁶⁰ Although Julian believed the gods destined him for greatness through the conquest of Persia,¹⁶¹ the Christian God ultimately defeated him for his hubris and devotion to the pagan gods. Whereas Gregory's first *Invective* presented Julian as a tyrant and violent ruler, his second *Invective* criticized Julian's failed Persian expedition, death and apotheosis.

The second *Invective* contains different versions of Julian's demise, some even presenting Julian's death in a comedic fashion.¹⁶² Gregory notes that his informants were potential eyewitnesses on the expedition and those who heard stories or perhaps rumors from those involved with the expedition.¹⁶³ Although Gregory does not say specifically who his sources were, the fact that he includes the statement that some of them were present in Persia leads the reader to believe that these stories, or at least some of them, are authentic. However, as we shall see, this is questionable.

It is also important to note that, although Gregory used information from different informants, he did not necessarily use this information to write impartial history. Instead he used the information to project different images of Julian, none of which could be claimed fairly to represent Julian's life and death. Whether or not the information he received was true

¹⁶⁰ Gregory, *Or.* 4.28; *Id.*, *Or.* 5.1.

¹⁶¹ Julian, *Ep.* 57 (*To Arsaces, Satrap of Armenia*). Julian writes to Arsaces asking for an alliance in the upcoming war with Persia. Julian believes that his alliance with the gods and their protection are enough to convince Arsaces to join his expedition or face the wrath of the gods. See the Introduction for an excerpt from the letter, p. 17.

¹⁶² See Appendix B for each of Gregory's versions.

¹⁶³ Gregory, *Or.* 5.13.

was less important than how Gregory used this information to construct the image he wished to convey. We will return to this in greater detail in Chapters Two and Three.

In one of Gregory's versions, Julian's death was similar to the death of Cyrus the Younger who fought alongside Xenophon and his "Ten-Thousand" in the battle of Cunaxa.¹⁶⁴ The story goes that Cyrus recklessly attacked the enemy king, his brother Artaxerxes, and was killed by enemies because of his rashness. This version of Julian's death, comparing Julian's death to that of the reckless Cyrus, finds an echo in the versions of Libanius and Ammianus (as we shall see), in which a reckless Julian is mortally wounded because he is not wearing a breastplate.¹⁶⁵

Gregory then relates other stories about Julian's death. As Gregory tells it:

[Julian] had gone up upon a lofty hill to take a view of his army and ascertain how much was left him for carrying on the war; and then when he saw the number considerable and superior to his expectation, he exclaimed, "What a dreadful thing if we shall bring back all these fellows to the land of the Romans!" as though he begrudged them a safe return. Whereupon one of his officers, being indignant and not able to repress his rage, ran him through the bowels, without caring for his own life.¹⁶⁶

Gregory implies that these "fellows" were Roman and, I would speculate that he wished to depict Julian as a vainglorious warmonger who saw how numerous his armies remained during the war and was worried how those in Rome would view his triumph with so few

¹⁶⁴ For the Battle of Cunaxa, see Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 1.8.

¹⁶⁵ The translation by C.W. King notes that Gregory included this account of Julian's death in order to save his own conscience. It is possible that Gregory wishes to save face with his congregation and gives an account that many perhaps had heard, but he does not end his narrative there. C.W. King, *Julian the Emperor* (London, England: George Bell and Sons, 1888) 96 n.1.

¹⁶⁶ Gregory, *Or.* 5.13.

casualties. It would be as if he had never gone to war, and thus never achieved the glory of other great conquerors of the East, such as Alexander the Great. In another version, a barbarian jester, who followed the camp, driving away ill humor and amusing the drunken soldiers,¹⁶⁷ kills Julian. King's translation of the second *Invective* includes an interesting gloss about this version that says

This tale about the jester is borrowed from Lampridius, who gives it as one of the many current [versions] respecting the death of [emperor] Alexander Severus [in 235 CE]. The "Historia Augusta," a recent compilation, was then in everybody's hands.¹⁶⁸

The comment that the *Historia Augusta* was "in everybody's hands" seems exaggerated, but Gregory's audience may have been familiar with this story about Alexander Severus, and, thus, understood the comedy behind the connection. Therefore, Gregory likely has included this story, a fool killing an even greater fool, to incite laughter amongst his audience at the expense of Julian.

Finally, Gregory comes to an episode that seems to be a continuation of the "Cyrus" version above. Noting that he must not pass over an episode that truly shows Julian's madness,¹⁶⁹ he writes that Julian attempted to throw himself into a river in order to become a god. This episode in particular must have intrigued the reader, especially because Gregory develops it more than the other accounts of the death itself, which receive only passing mention. Gregory seems to have wanted the reader to pay closer attention to this part of the

¹⁶⁷ Gregory, *Or.* 5.13.

¹⁶⁸ King, *Julian the Emperor*, 96n1.

¹⁶⁹ Gregory, *Or.* 5.14.

story, whose purpose, as we shall see in greater detail later, seems to have been to mock Julian's alleged attempt to attain divinity and to criticize the pagan ritual of deification. The story is particularly interesting in that it is not completely Gregory's, but rather a twisted borrowing, taken from Arrian's narrative of Alexander the Great's death in the *Anabasis*.

With his *Invectives*, Gregory presented a narrative of Julian's reign to a Christian audience that countered those pagans wishing to remember Julian as a savior or benevolent ruler, and in the same breath showed the Christian God's victory over Julian the "antichrist" and "dragon."¹⁷⁰ This narrative created a portrait of Julian that shaped his memory for posterity—a memory that would enter into the narratives of the three ecclesiastical historians, Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret, whose histories of the church became enormously influential in the Byzantine East and the medieval West.

Libanius: Sophist of Syria, Comrade of Julian

Libanius was a well-known sophist and teacher of rhetoric, who spent his career teaching in major cities of the eastern Roman Empire such as Constantinople, Nicomedia, and Antioch, his birthplace. Libanius's copious writings are not only important to historians seeking to understand the life and reign of Julian, they are also invaluable to those seeking to understand social, religious, intellectual, and cultural life in the later Roman world.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Gregory, *Or.* 4.1.

¹⁷¹ Glanville Downey, *Antioch in the Age of Theodosius the Great* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962) 86.

Born in 314 CE in Antioch, the capital of Syria, to a local noble family belonging to the curial class, Libanius witnessed firsthand the crucial social, economic, and political transformation of Roman society brought about by the reforms of Diocletian¹⁷² and Constantine and by the rise of the church.¹⁷³

Like Gregory Nazianzus, the young Libanius left Antioch for Athens around 336 CE, just before the death of Constantine, to study philosophy and rhetoric.¹⁷⁴ After completing his studies, Libanius spent about fourteen years moving from city to city, trying to establish himself as a teacher of rhetoric.¹⁷⁵ By the late 340s he was happily teaching in Nicomedia.¹⁷⁶ This provincial capital appealed to Libanius in that it contrasted with the bustle and the rough-and-tumble politics of its close neighbor Constantinople. Before arriving in Nicomedia, Libanius had taught rhetoric in Constantinople where he had a difficult time adjusting to the competition and malice of rival teachers, who, according to his *Autobiography*, were jealous of his popularity. In Nicomedia he did not find such competition.¹⁷⁷ In reality it was more likely that Libanius was pleased to be a particularly big fish in a rather small pond, where other big fish would not challenge him.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷² The senior emperor who established a tetrarchy, or “four rulers”, and economic, as well as military, reforms in the late third century.

¹⁷³ Downey, *Antioch*, 87.

¹⁷⁴ Lib., *Autobiography and Selected Letters*, trans. A.F. Norman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992) 1.

¹⁷⁵ J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch: City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972) 2.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Lib., *Or.* 1.51.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. 1.52.

It was during his stay in Nicomedia that Libanius first came to know the young Julian.

It is clear from Libanius's *Funeral Oration Over Julian*, written in 365, that Julian wished to learn oratory from him, but was forbidden by the Christian Hecebolius, his teacher of rhetoric.

Libanius wrote

The reason for the fact that [Julian] found pleasure in my oratory and yet avoided its author was that marvelous teacher of his. He had bound him with many fearsome oaths never to be or to be called my pupil and never to be enrolled on the list of my students.¹⁷⁹

Julian swore to Hecebolius that he would not meet with the pagan Libanius and study under him. However, as we saw earlier, Julian still found ways around this oath by paying someone to copy Libanius's lectures.¹⁸⁰

While in Nicomedia, Libanius wrote a panegyric to the then ruling emperors Constantius and Constans, which was brought to the attention of Constantius himself.¹⁸¹ Probably in 349, Constantius called Libanius to Constantinople where an imperial salary and official appointment as an imperial sophist awaited him. So, for the second time, Libanius resided in the imperial capital, and once again, despite his prestige, was unhappy, longing to return to his home at Antioch.¹⁸² According to Liebeschuetz, who draws on Libanius's *Autobiography*, after suffering from ill health and a scandal concocted by rival and jealous sophists, Libanius was granted permission to return to Antioch.¹⁸³ After 354 CE, he was back

¹⁷⁹ Lib., *Or.* 18.14.

¹⁸⁰ Bowersock, *Julian*, 27-28.

¹⁸¹ Liebeschuetz, *Antioch*, 2.

¹⁸² *Ibid.* 2-3.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.* 3.

teaching rhetoric in his native city, where he remained until his death sometime around 393 CE.¹⁸⁴

The move to Antioch, which was then the seat of the imperial court, did not diminish Libanius's reputation as a teacher of rhetoric and sophist, and in time, his skills made him a respectable and influential local leader. His connections with the imperial court enabled Libanius to serve as an intermediary between the Antiochenes and the emperor, garnering him respect and popularity at Antioch. On more than one occasion the city chose him as ambassador to court to speak on their behalf,¹⁸⁵ not least when Julian resided at Antioch in preparation for his Persian expedition. During that time, Julian was appalled by the city's indifference to pagan cults. He was so displeased with the Antiochenes that he vowed to move the court to Tarsus (modern Mersin, Turkey) upon his return from victory in Persia, to spite them.¹⁸⁶ The Antiochenes, worried about the fate of their city and a lessening of its prestige, implored Libanius to write to the emperor, pacify his anger, and apologize on their behalf.¹⁸⁷

As a famous teacher and former imperial rhetor, Libanius enjoyed a diverse and large audience, comprised of pagans and Christians alike, ranging from poor students attending his lectures to the educated elites from several eastern cities to high-ranking officers in the imperial court, including of course the emperor himself. For example, some of his later

¹⁸⁴ Liebeschuetz, *Antioch*, 3.

¹⁸⁵ Another fine example of Libanius as the mediator between Antioch and the emperor happened in 387 CE when emperor Theodosius raised taxes. The citizens of Antioch rioted, and several images of the emperor were defaced in the riot. The Antiochene implored Libanius to write to Theodosius and pacify his anger. See Lib., *Or.* 19 (*To the Emperor Theodosius, About the Riots*) for the entire event.

¹⁸⁶ Lib., *Or.* 1.132.

¹⁸⁷ Id. *Or.* 15.6-10.

orations were addressed to the emperor Theodosius, and, because of Libanius's court connections, it is probable that Theodosius and some of his courtiers read his speeches. In addition to his numerous orations, 1,544 of Libanius's letters also survive, forming the largest collection of extant letters from antiquity.¹⁸⁸ The recipients of his correspondence varied greatly, from members of the ruling house, such as emperors Julian and Theodosius I, to imperial officers of various ranks to clerics and bishops, such as Basil of Caesarea.

The connections with the powerful could also prove dangerous. For instance, after Julian died, the anti-pagan reaction that followed caused fear in the hearts of many pagans. At that time, Libanius writes, as if he feared for his life:

A barbarian tried to rouse the emperor against me [Libanius], asserting that I never ceased to bewail the fate of the fallen Julian. The emperor [Jovian] was about to slay me in dishonor as punishment for his resentment, but a Cappadocian, a good fellow and a schoolmate of mine who had great influence with [Jovian], exclaimed, 'Now, how would you feel, for him to lie slain, while the living words which he has written about you, go everywhere?' Such was my crisis, such my salvation.¹⁸⁹

Despite Libanius's customary penchant for self-aggrandizing, the quote bespeaks the tension and anxiety immediately following Julian's death—indeed, any change of regime in the Roman Empire. First, there was a tacit understanding that Julian's reign and death were not to be topics of discussion. In a sense, Julian suffered something similar to *damnatio memoriae*. The fact that Libanius was harassed for "bewailing the fate of the fallen Julian" suggests that he was suspected, and guilty, of breaking this rule. Above all, the idea that Libanius's "words"

¹⁸⁸ Scott Bradbury, *Selected Letters of Libanius* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004) 19.

¹⁸⁹ Lib., *Or.* 1.138.

would “go everywhere” also shows the importance of Libanius in Antioch. The only thing preventing Jovian from having Libanius killed was the threat that the sophist’s writings concerning the new emperor would be circulated. Libanius’s writings as well as his reputation as a rhetorician saved his life, and also, I suggest, showed just how widespread his readership was.

A look at the manuscript tradition for Libanius’s orations may give a clearer perspective of his audience and influence. One hundred and thirty-four mss. survive containing at least one of the three orations that mention Julian’s death: 59 mss. contain *Or. 17 (Lament Over Julian)*, 49 include *Or. 18 (Funeral Oration Over Julian)*, and 26 contain *Or. 24 (Upon Avenging Julian)*.¹⁹⁰ Sixteen mss. contain all three, and among these sixteen, for some unexplained reason, eight were used by Richard Foerster to establish the manuscript tradition. The oldest mss. go back to the tenth century, but the eight that were used by Foerster were Chisianus R VI. 43 from the 11th and 12th c. (named C), Monacensis 483 from the 10th c. (A), Vaticanus Palatinus 282 from the 14th c. (P), Urbinas 126 from 1316 (U), Vindobonensis XCIII from the 12th c. (V), Marcianus Append. XCI.2 from the 14th c. (I), Marcianus 437 from the 15th c. (M), and Barberinus II. 41 from the 15th c. (B).¹⁹¹ The large number of mss. of Libanius’s orations, including those containing the Julianic orations, also suggests Libanius was widely read for centuries after his death. And the respectable number

¹⁹⁰ Lib., *Selected Orations*, trans. A.F. Norman, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003) lv.

¹⁹¹ Id., *Selected Orations*, lv.-lvi.

of western manuscripts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries attests to the interest in Julian among Renaissance humanists.

As noted above, Libanius is one of the most important sources on Julian's life and death. When Julian died in Persia, Christians saw his death as a sign from God. According to Libanius, when rumor of Julian's death reached Antioch, there was loud cheering from the Antiochenes. In a letter to Scylacius, written in November 363, Libanius describes these rejoicing fellows as "enemies of gods and of [Julian] whom you rightly describe by enrolling him in the company of the gods."¹⁹² Libanius defended Julian's memory and opposed those Christians who sought to execrate the late emperor. Libanius refers to Julian's death in three different orations, written at different times: the *Lament Over Julian* [Or. 17] (364 CE), the *Funeral Oration Over Julian* [Or. 18] (365-366 CE) and *Upon Avenging Julian*¹⁹³ [Or. 24] (379 CE). It is puzzling that each of these orations contains a different version of Julian's death, something we will return to in detail in Chapters Two and Three.

In contrast to Gregory, Libanius gives far more detail concerning the death of the emperor. Whereas Gregory offers the reader several different stories, Libanius gives only one version of Julian's death, claiming that it is the "true" version.¹⁹⁴ Yet, he in fact provides three slightly different versions of the death in the *Lament*, *Funeral Oration*, and *Avenging Julian*. With each of these orations, this one "true" version changes as Libanius adds more detail to it.

¹⁹² Lib., *Ep.* 120.3.

¹⁹³ Hereafter referred to as the *Lament*, the *Funeral Oration*, and *Avenging Julian*.

¹⁹⁴ Lib., *Or.* 18.267

In his first account of the emperor's death, the *Lament*, dated to 364, Libanius writes very briefly that a Persian spear killed Julian, but attributes the deed to a lack of divine aid, blaming the gods for abandoning their devout follower, Julian.¹⁹⁵ In the second account, the *Funeral Oration*, composed about a year later, Libanius adds several new elements that were borrowed and used by later historians like Ammianus, Socrates, and Sozomen. Thus, Julian rides into battle trying to rally his troops against the attacking Persians, but is stabbed by a lance, and taken away to his tent for medical attention, where he dies. One important addition to this account is Libanius's accusation that a Roman soldier murdered Julian, that is, that his death was the result of treason.¹⁹⁶

It is odd that Libanius would wait more than a year after Julian's death to write this speech—a belated eulogy praising the emperor's character and deeds. But, if we believe Libanius that Julian's successors persecuted those sympathetic to Julian's religious agenda, this may explain why he waited to write the funeral oration at a more propitious time. For this oration also carried a defense of Julian's image as a just ruler, a devout Hellene, and most importantly, a monarch treacherously murdered. Furthermore, Libanius hints that Julian was not only killed by a Roman soldier, but by a Christian soldier. This shift in blame from a foreign enemy to a domestic, internal one is highly significant, since with that Libanius clearly sought more explicitly to implicate Christians in the death of an emperor—an act of high treason. The charge would prove to be both controversial and influential. Libanius's imperial connections, his familiarity with Julian, his renown as an effective orator, and wide readership

¹⁹⁵ Lib., *Or.* 17.5.23-24. See Appendix C, v. 23-24.

¹⁹⁶ See Appendix C, v. 274-275.

(which included none other than John Chrysostom, one of his Christian students) may have fueled the controversy around the allegation long into the fifth century when the ecclesiastical historians Socrates and Sozomen picked it up and responded to it in their church histories as we shall see in Chapter Three.

Libanius returned to the subject of Julian's death yet a third time in his *Avenging Julian*, written in 379, during the wake of the Roman defeat at the hands of the Gothic army in Adrianople. In this highly polemical oration, Libanius suggests that military disasters afflicting the Roman world were somehow connected to Julian's death. The oration was meant to convince the emperor Theodosius I that the gods had abandoned Rome because Julian's death had gone unavenged. At the heart of the speech is the claim that the Roman authorities' failure to punish the culprits of Julian's murder contributed to Roman defeat. Libanius wrote:

How then have the enemy gained the upper hand of us? I am convinced that some god is angered with us and fights on their side, and of what I believe to be the cause of this anger, [Julian's unavenged death], I will go on to speak.¹⁹⁷

The death narrative of *Avenging Julian* is very similar to that in the *Funeral Oration*. Libanius diverts attention again from the Persian adversaries and then focuses on who he considers to be the true enemies of the state and Rome: the Christians. He reiterates his charge that a Christian soldier murdered the emperor, but gives it a new twist. He considers the possibility that a Saracen,¹⁹⁸ hired by the Christians, killed Julian. In the *Funeral Oration*, Libanius hinted that a Christian was to blame for the death of Julian, but now he was willing

¹⁹⁷ Lib., *Or.* 24.5.

¹⁹⁸ The Saracens were then Arab soldiers serving as auxiliaries in the Roman (or Persian) army.

to implicate the entire Christian community in that murderous act, arguing that they should be punished for treason.¹⁹⁹ We can see here how the account of Julian's death became a vehicle to express concerns about much larger political and religious issues.

How reliable were Libanius's accounts and what were his sources? Libanius tells us he inquired into the manner of the emperor's death, sending letters to those persons accompanying Julian in Persia such as Philagrius, a loyal officer and notary in Julian's army.²⁰⁰ Even so, Libanius admits he found it difficult to procure reliable narratives about the Persian expedition as his informants presented him with a "shadowy tale unworthy of a historian's lips".²⁰¹ Still, this did not deter him from writing different versions of the emperor's death, which—whether they were based on rumor or official information—were clearly not free of bias. Perhaps the lack of reliable evidence allowed Libanius a great deal of latitude to reconstruct the emperor's death as he thought it must have happened—and his views on "what must have happened" evolved with time and gained greater depth and color reflecting the concerns of the time when each account was written.

Both Gregory and Libanius wrote about Julian's death. Because information about Julian's death was insufficient, fragmentary, and often unreliable or because these writers chose to reinterpret or ignore the information they possessed, they exercised a great deal of freedom in describing this emperor's death, choosing to fictionalize the stories about his demise to suit specific political and religious purposes. Given the stature and position of both

¹⁹⁹ Lib., *Or.* 24.26.

²⁰⁰ Id. *Ep.* 115; Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 21.4.2.

²⁰¹ Lib., *Ep.* 120.8.

writers and their familiarity with Julian, however, these accounts quickly became mainstream and spread throughout the eastern empire *as history*. What did a self-avowed historian, such as Ammianus Marcellinus, have to say?

Ammianus Marcellinus: Soldier, Historian, and Hellene

Ammianus Marcellinus was the last contemporary author to write an account of Julian's death that is still extant. He was born in Antioch around 330 CE. Unfortunately Ammianus does not give much biographical information about himself prior to 353 when he joined the Roman army. His historical method, similar to that of the Roman historian Tacitus,²⁰² gives the impression that Ammianus was well versed in Latin literature, and the fact that he refers to himself in his historical work, *Res Gestae*, as a *Hellene*, or Greek, shows that he was proud of his Greek heritage.²⁰³ His education and the fact that he was enlisted in the military as a *protector domesticus*, one who protects and moves with the emperor, suggest that Ammianus probably came from a noble family, perhaps from the lower *curial* class of Antioch.²⁰⁴

From 353 to 359, Ammianus was assigned to general Ursicinus, *magister equitum*, or master of the horse, in the East, one of the highest-ranking officers in the late Roman military

²⁰² T.D. Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998) 48-49.

²⁰³ Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 31.16.9.

²⁰⁴ John Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1989) 77.

hierarchy.²⁰⁵ Under Ursicinus, Ammianus traveled with the army from Antioch to northern Italy and from there to Gaul. In 355, when Julian was made Caesar and summoned to Gaul, Constantius ordered Ursicinus to remain there with the army, since the inexperienced Julian would need help. This would have been the first time Ammianus saw Julian in person, whose leadership and character seems to have made a lasting impression on Ammianus. Later, the young Antiochene soldier would admit that his historical narrative concerning Julian was more of a panegyric than history.²⁰⁶

But Ammianus did not stay in Gaul for long and soon returned to the eastern front with Ursicinus,²⁰⁷ and, thereafter, he disappears from the *Res Gestae*. It is difficult to know whether Ammianus left the army, but it is possible that he retired after the city of Amida fell to the Persians during the reign of Constantius. The defense of Amida, a major city along the Persian border, had been entrusted to Ursicinus, but he could not successfully defend it. When the city fell, Ursicinus was held personally responsible for the defeat and forced into retirement with dishonor.²⁰⁸ Ammianus, being loyal to his general, may also have been forced to retire or, considering the charge against Ursicinus to be false, have decided to leave the army, at least temporarily.²⁰⁹ For we know he later reentered the army in time to participate in Julian's brief and disastrous Persian expedition in 363. Indeed, Ammianus is one of the only eyewitness accounts we have of that expedition, making his narrative of enormous value to

²⁰⁵ Barnes, *Ammianus*, 54.

²⁰⁶ Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 16.1.3.

²⁰⁷ Ibid. 18.6.

²⁰⁸ Barnes, *Ammianus*, 102.

²⁰⁹ Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 20.2.

historians of late antiquity and Julian's reign. It is difficult, however, to determine where Ammianus was when Julian was wounded. That the historian does not tell us who wounded Julian suggests, though of course it does not prove, that he was not near the emperor when he died, and thus that he did not know how it happened.

After Julian's demise in Persia, Ammianus left the army permanently, returning to Antioch for a period, but eventually going to Rome.²¹⁰ It was there, in the 390s, that Ammianus wrote, in Latin, his *Res Gestae*, a history of the Roman Empire from the reign of Nerva in 96 CE to the death of Valens in 378. The history was originally written in thirty-one books, of which, only the last eighteen are extant. The subject of his history is the Roman emperors and imperial affairs.²¹¹ Generally speaking, Ammianus commented on affairs within the empire through a secular lens, rarely speaking about religious matters.²¹²

There are certain aspects about the *Res Gestae* that give the reader some idea of who Ammianus's audience was, as historian John Matthews observed:

To choose the Latin language, and to complete his history in Rome, meant that Ammianus sought his audience among men who did not know him already and share his own background and opinions; it may indeed ... have included Theodosian courtiers in Rome for the emperor's visit of 389 and staying there until his departure for the east in summer.²¹³

²¹⁰ Matthews, *Roman Empire*, 9-10.

²¹¹ *Ibid.* 231.

²¹² *Ibid.* 435.

²¹³ *Ibid.* 446.

Because of Ammianus's location, historical style, and language, modern historians, such as Matthews, believed that his history was meant strictly for a Roman, western audience.²¹⁴ Although he could have written his work in his birthplace of Antioch, Ammianus decided to write his history, or at least complete it, in the eternal city. It is particularly interesting that, instead of using his native Greek, Ammianus wrote in Latin. As such, Ammianus is a rare instance of a native Greek speaker writing literature (or history) in Latin, which is what led Matthews to suggest that his audience consisted predominately of Latin speakers and readers.

Yet the *Res Gestae* does not seem to have enjoyed a wide audience in the West. Most of its surviving text comes from two ninth-century Carolingian manuscripts from the Benedictine abbeys of Hersfeld and Fulda in Germany. The Hersfeld manuscript has been designated as M in the tradition of Ammianus, while the Fulda has been designated as V. The M manuscript was dismembered for book-binding in the sixteenth century, and only six leaves of the original survived. Four fifteenth-century copies of the V manuscript are extant: Vat. lat. 1874 (designated as D), Vat. lat. 2969 (E), Par. lat. 6120 (N), and Florent. S. Marc. I.V.43 (F). All other manuscripts appear to be later copies of the fifteenth-century F.²¹⁵ The paucity of manuscripts suggests that Ammianus's *Res Gestae* was not a popular text, read perhaps only in limited circles, and thus not copied very often. Indeed, in the West, until the Renaissance, knowledge of the reign (and death) of Julian came mostly from the fifth-century ecclesiastical historians, translated into Latin. When Ammianus's history was re-discovered, albeit in

²¹⁴ Matthews, *Roman Empire*, 446.

²¹⁵ See Matthews, *Roman Empire*, 477 n. 8, for the ms tradition.

incomplete form, it provided a new perspective on the pagan emperor who came to be so admired by Renaissance humanists.

What does Ammianus say about Julian's death? Despite accompanying Julian to Persia, and being there at the time of the emperor's death, Ammianus's narrative in fact echoes that of Libanius's *Funeral Oration*. The same elements are there: Julian's side is pierced by a cavalryman's spear, Julian falls from his horse and is then carried to his tent for medical attention. There, Julian pronounces a death speech, a device commonly used by classical authors such as Thucydides and Plato, and dies a rather "Socratic" death.²¹⁶ Unlike the dying Julian in Gregory Nazianzus, who regretted his premature death at the hands of the Persians, Ammianus's Julian uses his last breath to praise philosophical ideas and readily accepts death as a gift from the gods.²¹⁷ This death speech resembles Socrates's speech in Plato's *Phaedo*. Ammianus clearly "rewrote" Julian's death with Socrates in mind. We will return to this in Chapters Two and Three.

Another major difference between Libanius's and Ammianus's narratives is the identity of Julian's attacker. While Libanius suggests that a Christian killed Julian, or at least that Christians had some connection with the death of the pagan emperor, Ammianus says that he does not know who wounded Julian. Ammianus does mention that a rumor had spread amongst the Persians that Julian was killed by one of his own soldiers, but is noncommittal about it, neither confirming nor denying the identity of Julian's murderer. Ammianus's silence on this issue is probably deliberate and can perhaps be explained by the

²¹⁶ Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 25.3.13.

²¹⁷ Gregory, *Or.* 5.14; Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 25.3.13-25.3.19.

entirely different historical context in which he was writing, as we shall see in Chapter Three. For now, let us look more closely at the relationship between Ammianus and Libanius, both of whom were pagan, came from Antioch, and knew Julian personally.

As hinted above, there is reason to suspect that Ammianus read and used Libanius's version in writing his own account. First, Ammianus wrote his *Res Gestae* in the early 390s, some thirty-odd years after Julian's death. The interval between the time of Julian's death and the written work was long enough for Ammianus to consult what others, not least the influential sophist Libanius, had said about the emperor's death. Admittedly, there is no direct evidence showing that Ammianus had read Libanius's orations, and the only other possible connection between these two contemporaries of Julian, other than their common birthplace and religious preferences, is a letter from Libanius congratulating a certain Marcellinus in Rome, who was giving public readings of his new history of the Roman Empire.²¹⁸ Although scholars have debated this letter for years, there is no agreement on the identity of this particular Marcellinus: was it Ammianus or someone else? The content of the letter does not help either. Yet there must have been very few "Marcellini" writing history in Rome who were also Libanius's acquaintances, so the connection is certainly possible. Indeed, one wonders whether Ammianus, an officer in the army, might have been one of Libanius's informants returning with the retreating army from Persia. Though composed only in the 390s, Ammianus may have written his version of the Persian expedition and Julian's death from his own "eyewitness" perspective rather than borrow from Libanius. If he spoke with Libanius,

²¹⁸ Barnes, *Ammianus*, 55.

perhaps the right assumption is that Libanius used Ammianus's, or another soldier's account, to compose his own narrative about Julian's death, rather than the other way around.

Ultimately, however, it is the dissimilarities that are important to this study and we will try to make some sense of them in Chapters Two and Three.

The writings of Julian's contemporaries, especially Gregory and Libanius, significantly influenced later accounts of this emperor's death, particularly those of the fifth-century ecclesiastical historians. The latter, above all, played a very important role in determining how Julian's reign and death were to be remembered, as their church histories were circulated and read by many in East and West in the centuries that followed.

The Fifth-Century Ecclesiastical Historians

Socrates (c. 380-c. 442 CE), Sozomen (c. 375-c. 450 CE), and Theodoret (c. 393-c. 453 CE) wrote their church histories as a continuation of the ecclesiastical history of Eusebius of Caesarea, author of the first *Church History* and of the *Life of Constantine*.²¹⁹ Eusebius was a pioneer in the genre of church history, recording major events such as Diocletian's persecution against the church and the turnaround after Constantine's conversion to Christianity. The later chapters of the history were also meant to commemorate Constantine as a patron and protector of the church. When the ecclesiastical historians of the fifth century

²¹⁹ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, trans. Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999) 1.

composed their histories, Christianity was the state religion of the empire and had amassed immense wealth. Christianity had also made deep inroads among the Roman elite and aristocracy. Paganism was still very present in the empire, but it had lost financial and political support. Pagan temples were now closed permanently and citizens prohibited from sacrificing to the gods under penalty of death.²²⁰ Unlike Eusebius's history of the church, their narratives were therefore meant to chronicle this Christian "triumph" over the pagan gods, which they presented as pre-ordained by divine providence.²²¹

The fifth-century historians were also particularly interested in the theological controversies that racked the church.²²² For them, as well as the emperors, dissension within the church was more dangerous than external conflicts. As these disputes unfolded, they sparked a debate on the emperor's role in church affairs. As emperors intervened in these disputes, sometimes with a heavy hand, the fifth-century historians portrayed them as leaders and patrons of the church.²²³ However, Attitudes to this idea varied, with some Christians expressing appreciation for the emperor and others expressing disapproval, believing the emperor had no right to meddle in the affairs of the church since he was not a member of the clergy. In these church histories, especially in those of Socrates and Sozomen, these contradictory feelings concerning the role of the emperor in the church shaped their narratives of Julian's death, as we shall see in Chapter Three.

²²⁰ *CTh.* 16.10.13.

²²¹ Glenn F. Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1986) 189.

²²² Thomas Ferguson, *The Past is Prologue* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2005) 165-166.

²²³ Cameron, *Later Roman Empire*, 67.

We know little about Socrates's life and what we do know is based on what can be gleaned from biographical references to certain locations or persons in his history. Socrates Scholasticus was probably born around 380 CE in Constantinople. The evidence for this comes from information concerning the education of his early years. Two pagan grammarians from Alexandria taught Socrates and related to him how they escaped the destruction of the Serapeum in 391, which would suggest he was born around 380.²²⁴

Until recently scholars were in agreement that Socrates was a lawyer in Constantinople due to the epithet "Scholasticus" in the manuscripts of his work. In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, this title was often associated with lawyers.²²⁵ However, scholars, such as Theresa Urbainczyk, disagree on whether or not Socrates was a lawyer based on his appellation. According to Urbainczyk, the title "Scholasticus" could also simply mean someone who was a learned scholar, so it would be wrong to assume that Socrates was a lawyer simply because of that epithet. It is safer to presume that Socrates was an educated scholar, researching and writing his *Ecclesiastical History* in Constantinople.

Socrates was the first of what Thomas Ferguson calls the "synoptic ecclesiastical historians"—church historians writing in the Nicene tradition around the same time and each using similar sources.²²⁶ His history, which was originally published in separate volumes finished one by one, covers events from 305 to 439 and appears to have been commissioned by

²²⁴ Theresa Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople: Historian of Church and State* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1997) 19. If the grammarians began to teach him sometime after 391 CE, this would make Socrates between the ages of twelve and fifteen, more probable ages to be taught by a grammarian.

²²⁵ Urbainczyk, *Socrates*, 13-14.

²²⁶ Ferguson, *Past*, 15.

a certain Theodore.²²⁷ Socrates criticized Eusebius for not elucidating certain themes in the history of the church especially those concerning the Arian controversy,²²⁸ which he elaborated, quoting documents when he could.

Socrates's sources are wide ranging. For his chapters on the fourth century, he relied on Eusebius and Rufinus of Aquileia, a Latin church historian of the late fourth century, whose work, he claimed, contained false or undocumented information, which he sought to correct.²²⁹ For these chapters, he drew extensively on the lost writings of Sabinus of Heraclea—a fourth-century “Arian” leaning bishop, who wrote on the councils of the early church—and Athanasius of Alexandria. He also used a broad range of official documents and decrees as well as the correspondence of bishops and emperors, evidence that suggests he had access to the imperial and church libraries of Constantinople.²³⁰ It is clear that he consulted several pagan sources such as the writings of Libanius and even Julian himself. His discussion of the reign of Julian drew on several sources contemporary with the emperor, particularly Libanius and Gregory Nazianzus.²³¹ His extensive use of documents and willingness to cite and quote his sources gave his history authority and an air of authenticity and led later historians, like Sozomen and Theodoret, to use Socrates as a source for their own respective histories.

When considering the audience of Socrates's church history, or any of these church histories, it is difficult to gauge exactly whom the author had in mind. Some scholars, like W.

²²⁷ Urbainczyk, *Socrates*, 64.

²²⁸ *Ibid.* 43-44.

²²⁹ *Ibid.* 49-50.

²³⁰ *Ibid.* 50.

²³¹ *Ibid.* 156.

V. Harris, believe that these historians wrote their respective histories without a specific audience in mind.²³² However, Urbainczyk disagrees with Harris noting that:

The Church may have been rich but it is difficult to believe it countenanced the expense of copying texts [...] if no one was going to read them. Histories were clearly important to establish contemporary claims of the Church in power and point to the mistakes of the heresies. It was important not only that these things were written down but that people were made acquainted with them as well.²³³

With this in mind, it seems probable that these historians indeed wrote with a clear idea of who their audience was, which can be inferred from information gleaned from the histories themselves.

Since that Theodore, whom Socrates calls a “holy man of God”, commissioned Socrates to write this history, it would be safe to assume that Theodore was initially the primary audience of his work.²³⁴ However, addressing this Theodore, Socrates tells us he was not concerned with a fine literary style, because he wanted everyone, not just educated people, to be able to understand his work.²³⁵ This suggests that Socrates meant for his history to not only be read by Theodore, but by a much broader audience as well.

Whatever the case, we know that Socrates enjoyed a wide readership in late antiquity and beyond, and not only in ecclesiastical or monastic circles. His work, along with Sozomen and Theodoret, was read and often quoted by late Roman, medieval and Byzantine sources, in the West in a condensed Latin translation.

²³² Urbainczyk, *Socrates*, 67.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ *Ibid.* 64-65.

²³⁵ *Ibid.* 65-66; Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.1.

Cassiodorus's *Historia Tripartita* consisted of a compilation of an earlier Greek compendium of the three synoptic histories collected and edited around 500 CE by another Theodore, a reader at Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.²³⁶ Cassiodorus oversaw the translation of this compilation from Greek into Latin, enlisting the help of a monk named Epiphanius, which thereafter became known as the *Historia Tripartita*, or the Tripartite Histories. By the ninth century, the *Historia* had become one of the quintessential collections of church histories and was readily used by educated Christians from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance.²³⁷

In the East, Photius, the ninth-century patriarch of Constantinople and scholar, made a similar collection of the church historians, but he may not have combined them into one compendium for his *Bibliotheca*. Photius speaks of the three of them together, often comparing their literary styles.²³⁸ Although this does not suggest they were combined into one work, it does, however, suggest that the three histories were often times compared with one another and read side by side.

Socrates discusses the reign of Julian in book three, where he also describes Julian's death, drawing on Libanius and Gregory Nazianzus. However, Socrates provides his own commentary on the events. For instance, he quotes verbatim a passage from Libanius's *Funeral Oration*, but then proceeds to a discussion on whether or not a Christian soldier killed

²³⁶ Laistner, M.L.W. "The Value and Influence of Cassiodorus' Ecclesiastical History." *The Harvard Theological Review* Vol. 41 (1948): 52.

²³⁷ Laistner, "The Value and Influence of Cassiodorus", 58-59.

²³⁸ Cf. Photius, *Bibl.* 28.30-31.

Julian.²³⁹ After considering the charge, he replaces the Christian murderer with an evil supernatural being, whom Christians often associated with the pagan gods. The role of religious conflict in the composition of these accounts of Julian's death is clear and will be discussed further in Chapters Two and Three.

Sozomen of Gaza also reveals little about his own background. He was probably born around 375 CE into a wealthy Christian family from Gaza. His grandparents had converted to Christianity after seeing the famous desert monk Saint Hilarion perform a miracle. Sozomen probably studied law in Beirut and then practiced it in Constantinople.²⁴⁰ It was there that he wrote his church history around 443 CE, some years after Socrates finished his own.²⁴¹

Sozomen's *Ecclesiastical History*, which covers the years from 325 to 450, was intended to be a continuation of an earlier work possibly in the tradition of Eusebius, but unfortunately not extant: a chronicle of Christian history from the Ascension to Constantine's conversion.²⁴² Sozomen describes this early *Chronicle* of the church in the preface of his *Ecclesiastical History*. It was an epitome written in two books, narrating the history of the early church up to the reign of Constantine, and his sources were Clemens and Hegesippus (whom he calls "successors of the apostles") Africanus, a second-century chronicler, and Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*.²⁴³ Sozomen does not comment on his reasons for writing his church

²³⁹ Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.23.

²⁴⁰ David Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity* (New York: Routledge, 2002) 119.

²⁴¹ Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* trans. Samuel Bagster (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1897) viii.

²⁴² Quasten, *Patrology*, 535.

²⁴³ Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* 1.1.

history. That he drew extensively on Socrates's *History* as source would suggest that he, too, most likely meant for his church history to be a continuation of Eusebius's work.

Sozomen opens the work by speaking about a literary competition in Constantinople, for which he hopes to submit his church history for a prize. According to scholar Glenn Chesnut, Sozomen's history was meant as a literary monument to the Christianization of the empire, commemorating the new "Golden Age" of learning, inaugurated by Theodosius II and marked by, among other things, the assembling of his eponymous codex of laws.²⁴⁴ If this was the case, Sozomen's dedication of the work to Theodosius II may provide some idea of who was his intended audience.

However, the first chapter of the church history is quite different than the dedication. The first chapter mentions neither the competitions from the dedication page nor Theodosius II. Instead, Sozomen describes how Christians worshipped God righteously while Jews and pagans wandered in ignorance. When speaking about the church history itself, Sozomen says:

I shall record the transactions with which I have been connected, and also those concerning which I have heard from persons who knew or saw the affairs in our own day or before our own generation.²⁴⁵

The major differences between the dedication page and the main body of the church history make it difficult to establish Sozomen's intended audience. However, since Sozomen considerably used the work of Socrates for his own church history, it is likely that Sozomen,

²⁴⁴ Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories*, 204.

²⁴⁵ Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.1.

like Socrates, intended his work for a widespread audience made up of Christian elites, probably clergy, and perhaps some secular elites.

Sozomen's main source was Socrates's *Ecclesiastical History*. However, he also consulted other writers and documents and was especially well informed about events in Palestine. Even where he quotes or paraphrases Socrates, he often brings his own view to bear on imperial and ecclesiastical affairs, corrects Socrates (without naming him) where he disagreed with him, and discusses in great detail events concerning his native homeland of Gaza.²⁴⁶ While Socrates wrote from a Constantinopolitan perspective, Sozomen, who knew Aramaic, drew on sources from Gaza and Palestine, where pagans, Christians, and Jews had been living next to each other for centuries. As we shall see in Chapter Three, the locale in which these church historians wrote greatly affected their narratives, especially concerning criticism or praise for the emperor.²⁴⁷

Sozomen proposes his own versions of Julian's death, including in his account several stories concerning prophetic visions about his demise.²⁴⁸ He says that the killer could have been a Persian, Saracen, or a Roman soldier, but surprisingly his account, drawing on Libanius's *Funeral Oration*, confirms that a Christian soldier killed the emperor, that is, Sozomen, agrees with Libanius's accusation. However, Sozomen denies that Julian's death was a crime, narrating an intriguing story that, as we shall see, suggests it was God who willed it.

²⁴⁶ Rohrbacher, *Historians*, 123-124.

²⁴⁷ This theme is not unique to Sozomen's death narrative of Julian, but rather is reoccurring throughout the *Ecclesiastical History*. Teresa Urbainczyk suggests that Sozomen used Socrates's history for factual information, but then adjusted the information to fit his own agenda, in this case criticism of the state's role in church affairs.

²⁴⁸ See Appendix H for the prophetic visions presented by Sozomen.

Finally, there is Theodoret of Cyrrhus, the last of the synoptic ecclesiastical historians, about whom we know far more than we do about Socrates and Sozomen thanks to his numerous and voluminous writings. Most of Theodoret's correspondence, sermons, and historical writings are extant and constitute important sources for the cultural, social and religious history of the fourth and fifth centuries.

Theodoret's birth date is unknown but scholars speculate that it was around 393 CE in the city of Antioch.²⁴⁹ Theodoret reports that his mother was barren and sought the advice of the local holy men. A certain ascetic named Macedonius prophesized his birth, but with the condition that Theodoret was to devote his life to God (hence his name, *Theodoretus*, or "gift of God").²⁵⁰

In 423 Theodoret was consecrated bishop of Cyrrhus, a city in the hinterland of Syria.²⁵¹ During his time as bishop, Theodoret became involved in the Christological disputes dividing the church, particularly, the Nestorian controversy. In 430, Cyril, the powerful bishop of Alexandria, anathematized the teachings of Nestorius, the archbishop of Constantinople, sparking a dispute that split the church.²⁵²

The Nestorian controversy began, like many other Christological disputes of the period, over theological interpretation. Nestorius had preached in Constantinople that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was not the *theotokos* or, "mother of God," as she had been referred to in

²⁴⁹ Theresa Urbainczyk, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus: The Bishop and the Holy Man* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002) 10.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 20.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.* 21. See Fig. 3.

²⁵² Adam M. Schor, *Theodoret's People: Social Networks and Religious Conflict in Late Roman Syria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011) 4.

Constantinople, but rather the *christotokos* or, “mother of Christ.” This was based on the understanding that a human being could not bear a god, and thus the Incarnation must have taken place after Christ’s birth. Cyril adamantly rejected this idea and Theodosius II convened a council in 431 in the city of Ephesus to appease the discordant bishops and perhaps exonerate Nestorius, his choice for archbishop of Constantinople.²⁵³ In the end, however, Nestorius was condemned as a heretic and exiled by Theodosius II. Theodoret, who had defended Nestorius during the council, rejected the condemnation. Having sided with the losing party, and therefore also being suspected of heresy, he was confined to Cyrrhus by an imperial order in 448, unable to leave the city, so he would not disturb the “orthodox.” In 449, under the influence of Dioscorus, Cyril’s successor in Alexandria, Theodosius II called another council at Ephesus, where Theodoret was deposed and all his works about Nestorius were condemned and destroyed. Other suspected Nestorians, such as Flavian of Constantinople, were beaten and died of their wounds.²⁵⁴ It was only in 451, after Theodosius II’s death, that Theodoret was reinstated due to a compromise reached at the council of Chalcedon in that same year.²⁵⁵ Theodoret seems to have passed away not long after this, near the Syrian coastal city of Apamea.²⁵⁶

²⁵³ W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) 19-22.

²⁵⁴ Chadwick, Henry. “The Exile and Death of Flavian of Constantinople: A Prologue to the Council of Chalcedon.” *The Journal of Theological Studies* Vol. 6 (1955): 18-19.

²⁵⁵ Urbainczyk, *Theodoret*, 27.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 28.

Theodoret's church history differs from that of Socrates and Sozomen in that he is more outspoken against the enemies of Christianity such as the emperor Julian.²⁵⁷ The history covers the period from the reign of Constantine to 429. Theodoret drew mainly on Athanasius and other Nicene sources as well as on the oral traditions from his native Syria. It is also possible that he read, or at the very least knew about, the ecclesiastical histories of Socrates and Sozomen. According to Adam Schor, the purpose of Theodoret's church history, other than to continue the tradition of Eusebius, was to establish an Antiochene tradition in the genre.²⁵⁸

The work was clearly intended for a classically educated audience (primarily ecclesiastics, but perhaps also secular notables) capable of reading Attic Greek, the language in which the *Ecclesiastical History* was written. We have evidence from the church history, especially regarding the reign and death of emperor Julian that also suggests that his primary audience was Antiochene or Syrian.²⁵⁹

Along with the many letters and church documents preserved in the *Ecclesiastical History*, many of which are only found there, Theodoret also narrates several stories concerning Julian. These stories are important because, I will argue below, they seem to reflect his anxieties about the Christianization of the empire. While Socrates and Sozomen were particularly concerned with dissention within the church, Theodoret's account reflects a preoccupation with the persistence of paganism, along with ecclesiastical dissension.

²⁵⁷ Urbainczyk, *Theodoret*, 30.

²⁵⁸ Schor, *Theodoret's People*, 121, 57-58. Theodoret wished to give a Syrian perspective different from the Constantinopolitan (Socrates) and Palestinian (Sozomen) ones.

²⁵⁹ See Appendix I for Theodoret's versions surrounding Julian's death.

Each of the authors discussed above dealt with the reign and death of Julian in their own peculiar way. The similarities between the accounts reveal some of their interconnections. Both Gregory Nazianzus and Sozomen expressed displeasure at the pagan Julian and his “persecution” of Christians, regarding him as antichrist and tyrant, much in the same way that Libanius and Ammianus Marcellinus could praise Julian as a philosopher king adding Socratic elements to his death scene. Yet the death narratives of Gregory and Sozomen are very different from one another, reflecting the particular concerns of these writers at the time when they composed their accounts. The same is also true of the two pagan narratives: Libanius and Ammianus use similar Socratic elements, but in different ways to achieve slightly different purposes. Even the ecclesiastical historians, who used similar sources and wrote their works around the same time, are in disagreement about the emperor’s death. Comparing and contrasting these death narratives can perhaps help us to explain why these writers wrote such divergent accounts of Julian’s death, and above all, why Julian’s death remained a subject of so much controversy.

Chapter Two: The Many Deaths of Emperor Julian

The following chapters attempt to show how these authors' narratives were colored by their agendas concerning the Christianization of the empire and the thorny problem of relations between bishops and emperors, church and state, at a time when the former had come increasingly to depend on the patronage of the latter. This chapter attempts to dissect the different versions of Julian's death, looking in greater detail at how they differed from one another.

Let us begin with Gregory's second *Invective*,²⁶⁰ that vicious attack against Julian, containing biting criticism and mockery. Gregory begins his narrative with a disclaimer

Up to this point [Julian's retreat from Ctesiphon], such is the universal account; but thenceforward, one and the same story is not told by all, but different accounts are reported and made up by different people, both of those present at the battle, and those not present.²⁶¹

However, Gregory settles for one particular version of Julian's death, claiming the details should not be passed over. He writes:

[Julian] was lying upon the bank of the river, and in a very bad way from his wound, when, remembering that many of those before his time who had aimed at glory, in order that they might be thought something higher than mortals, had (through some contrivances of their own) disappeared from amongst men, and thereby got themselves accounted gods; so he, being filled with a craving for similar glory, and at the same time ashamed of the manner of his end (by reason of the disgrace arising from his temerity), what does he contrive and what do?...He endeavors to throw his body into the river, and

²⁶⁰ See Appendix B.

²⁶¹ Gregory, *Or.* 5.13.

for this purpose he was using the assistance of some of his confidants and accomplices in his secret doings! And had not one of the imperial eunuchs perceived what was going on, and telling it to the rest out of disgust at the extravagant notion, prevented his purpose from being effected—why, another new god born out of an accident, would have manifested himself to the stupid!²⁶²

Now, there are many peculiarities about this story, not the least of which is its almost exact similarities to a well-known account of the death of Alexander the Great by the second-century CE biographer, Arrian. The story told by Arrian reads:

One writer has even had the face to declare that when [Alexander] knew his death was imminent he went out with the intention of throwing himself into the Euphrates, in order to disappear without trace and make it easier for posterity to believe that one of the gods was his father and he had gone away to join him. His wife Roxane, this writer continues, happened to see him as he left the building, and stopped him, whereupon he gave a great cry and bitterly reproached her for grudging him the eternal fame of divine birth. I do not wish to appear ignorant of these stories [...] I put them down as such and do not expect them to be believed.²⁶³

When Julian began his Persian expedition, many had already compared the Roman emperor to Alexander the Great.²⁶⁴ Gregory knew that Julian wished to be seen as Alexander reborn²⁶⁵ and took every chance he could to discredit this image. The idea that Julian might return from Persia with a victory in hand worried Christians a great deal. A victory against Persia would have given Julian the necessary leverage to sway Christians to leave the church and revitalize

²⁶² Gregory, *Or.* 5.14.

²⁶³ Arrian, *Anabasis Alexandri*, 7.28. [Penguin Ed.]

²⁶⁴ Lib., *Or.* 15.2. Socrates, *Eccl. Hist.* 3.21.

²⁶⁵ Gregory, *Or.* 4.41.

and promote the worship of the pagan gods. However, Julian failed in Persia, suffering what Gregory made sure to present as a “humiliating defeat.”²⁶⁶

Another particularly interesting point to this account is that Gregory uses it not only to mock Julian, but pagans in general. He appears to be especially critical of those pagans closest to the emperor. Gregory says that Julian was “using the assistance of some of his confidants and accomplices in his secret doings” in his attempted deification. The “secret doings” portion appears to be referring to pagan rituals, which Gregory describes in his first *Invective Against Julian*, as events taking place in “sanctuaries inaccessible to the multitude and feared by all.”²⁶⁷ Gregory seems to suggest that those pagans closest to Julian, ardently, but foolishly, believed that the emperor was destined to be a new Alexander. Therefore, in the *Invective’s* account of Julian’s death, Gregory turns Julian’s attempt to assimilate himself to the image of Alexander the Great on its head. He readily and perversely accepts that analogy, advertised by Julian and all his courtiers to muster support for his enterprise, but only to show what a sham that analogy was. In other words, after Julian’s demise, Gregory readily and willingly accepts Julian’s comparison with Alexander, but only to show that Julian could never be a new Alexander. Narrating Julian’s death—and comparing it to Alexander’s—served that purpose well.

Ultimately, the purpose of this story is to strike a blow at Julian’s vainglory, for likening himself to Alexander the Great. Finally, it is meant to criticize the pagan ritual of

²⁶⁶ Gregory, *Or.* 5.

²⁶⁷ *Id. Or.* 4.55.

emperor deification, the act of making an emperor a god, a point that will be covered more in depth in Chapter Three.

Libanius's accounts of Julian's death, as we have seen, appear in the *Lament*, *Funeral Oration*, and *Avening Julian*. The *Lament* contains Libanius's immediate reaction to Julian's death: it expresses his shock and confusion upon hearing the news of the emperor's demise, but he is vague on the circumstances of Julian's death:

But the justice of the gods, it seems, was such that, though feasted with offerings of fat, after promise of success and initially grudging him nought, they finally put all into confusion and robbed us of him too, baiting him like fishers and luring him on to his death at the hands of the Assyrians he had conquered.²⁶⁸

The death narrative of the *Lament* begins with Libanius reproaching the gods for “baiting [Julian] like fishers” and allowing him to die “at the hands of the Assyrians.” It is perhaps understandable that Libanius would berate the gods for abandoning Julian. For Libanius and many other pagans, Julian represented more than just an emperor; he was the pagan champion for the revival of traditional religion.²⁶⁹ When the spear pierced Julian's side, it was not just ending his life, but also his entire religious program. Libanius had already seen the desecration and destruction of temples by Christians, but now he feared this desecration would continue with the death of Julian.²⁷⁰ However, as we saw in the previous chapter, the hostile environment of Antioch following Julian's death prevented Libanius from speaking out about such concerns, forcing him to be vague about Julian's death.

²⁶⁸ Lib., *Or.* 17.6.

²⁶⁹ Ibid. 17.9.

²⁷⁰ Ibid. 17.34.

Libanius was more specific in the *Funeral Oration*.²⁷¹ In that account, a dust storm covers the night battle between the Romans and Persians, and a portion of Julian's Roman cavalry breaks rank. Julian—in haste and without a breastplate, no less—rides to bring the cavalry back into line and brings with him one escort. In the fray, however, he is stabbed by an cavalryman's spear. The spear passes through his side and pierces his arm as well. Wounded, he falls from his horse, but seeing the blood and wishing not to discourage his troops, he mounts his horse again in order to rally his men. Yet, he falls from his horse again and is taken to his tent. With his last breath, he reproves his closest friends for crying, just as Socrates had done before his own death in Plato's *Phaedo*.²⁷² Julian then dies among his more intimate friends.

The reference to Socrates is particularly interesting in this account. Libanius returns to it several times when speaking about Julian dying in his tent:

[Julian's] tent was like the prison that had held Socrates, the company like the company there, his wound the poison, and his words those of Socrates. Socrates was the only one not to be in tears: so was [Julian].²⁷³

The analogy between the martyred philosopher and Julian is direct and explicit. There are a number of ways to look at Libanius's comparison between Julian and Socrates. It is possible that Libanius simply wishes to compare Julian to a famous philosopher. However, it is equally possible, and more probable, that Libanius was trying to make a larger statement. By comparing the deaths of Julian and Socrates, Libanius seems to suggest that both figures were

²⁷¹ For the full account, see Appendix D, v. 268-273.

²⁷² Plato, *Phaedo*, 117d-e. [Jowett Ed.]

²⁷³ Lib., *Or.* 18.272.

essentially similar. Like Socrates, Julian died for a much larger cause, in this case, I suggest, the revitalization of Roman tradition. For Libanius, Julian was a true Roman who understood the importance of upholding the traditions of Greco-Roman culture and the idea of a benevolent and tolerant Roman empire like that of the Antonines, much in the same way Socrates understood the importance of an enlightened governing power.

The comparison seems to have been particularly important to contemporary pagans and bespeaks the way in which they understood Julian's demise, whose death seemed to mark the end of an era—not only because it dealt a blow to the attempts to restore traditional religion, but because of its implications for Julian's larger restoration program for cities and towns, support of traditional culture, and return to prosperity and tolerance. Thus, several decades later, Ammianus, in his own account of Julian's death, makes a similar comparison, elaborating it, as we shall see below, by putting in the mouth of the dying Julian a speech that was similar to Socrates's speech in the *Phaedo*. However, what about Libanius's particular interest in Julian's killer?

In The *Lament*, Libanius takes up the question of who killed Julian, implicating some "Assyrian" as the murderer. In the *Funeral Oration* he abandoned the idea that Julian was murdered by a Persian and suggests that a Roman soldier committed the deed. Although Libanius does not say explicitly who the Roman soldier was, he leads us to believe that he was a Christian. He writes:

Indeed, we should be very grateful to the enemy for not claiming credit for what they had not done, and *for allowing us to seek his murderer from among ourselves*. For those fellows, who found his existence detrimental to themselves and whose

whole manner of life was contrary to the law, *these had long conspired against him, and then at last seized their chance and acted.* The motives that drove them to it were their natural wickedness, that had no scope under his government, and more especially, *the honors paid to the gods*, where their ambitions were poles apart from his.²⁷⁴

In this passage Libanius not only accused a “lone” Christian of murdering the emperor—“seek his murderer ... among ourselves”—but also made his death the product of a wide-ranging Christian conspiracy—“those ... who found his existence detrimental to themselves ... had long conspired against him ... The motives ... were ... the honors paid to the gods.” The act of killing the emperor, a divine figure, chosen by the gods, was considered to be so heinous and treasonous that Libanius believed no true Roman would have committed such an act. In order to find Julian’s murderer, Libanius must look for one who would commit such a crime, and to his understanding, the only persons “wicked” enough to commit such a crime would be those “whose whole manner of life was contrary to the law,” the Christians. Such an accusation naturally called into question Christian loyalty to the state and, more importantly, presented Christians (or perhaps more pointedly Christian church leaders) as a dangerous group of people whose interests did not necessarily coincide with the interests of Rome and its empire. In other words, regardless of who killed Julian and regardless of the manner of his death, Libanius appropriated the event to create and disseminate a particularly detrimental image of Christianity. So we can begin to see here why it was that Julian’s death became so controversial and an object of continued interest. Later Christian writers like Socrates, bent

²⁷⁴ Lib., *Or.* 18.275. My italics.

on portraying Christians as loyal imperial subjects aligned with Rome's interests, would adamantly refute Libanius's charges.

In 379 Libanius wrote yet another account of Julian's death in *Avenging Julian*, which, in its broad outline, was similar to the *Funeral Oration* with some additional details. As we have already hinted, this speech was intended as a warning to the new emperor, Theodosius I, of the dangers Christians posed to the state and to explain why the empire was failing militarily. At that time, Theodosius had returned to Constantinople after losing several battles in an ongoing conflict with the Goths, who had already defeated Valens at Adrianople in the previous year. Libanius claimed that the empire's military setbacks were in fact due to the failure of Julian's successors, (Jovian and Valens) to avenge Julian's death.²⁷⁵ Accordingly, the gods had abandoned Rome, causing the military setbacks. He writes:

Our renowned Julian received that blow in the side as he strove to unite part of his line that had broken, spurring his horse towards them, cheering and threatening. The assailant who inflicted the wound was a Taiene [Saracen], acting in obedience to their leader's command. This action, indeed, would probably secure for the chief a reward from the people who were keen to have him killed.²⁷⁶

Calling the murderer a "Taiene" does not stop Libanius from implicating the Christians. Further down in the speech, he argues that Shapur II, king of the Sassanid Persians, offered a reward to anyone who killed Julian, but since no one came forward to claim the reward, Libanius concludes that a Roman and a Christian must have murdered Julian:

²⁷⁵ Lib., *Or.* 24.15.

²⁷⁶ Id., *Or.* 24.6. The Taiene were a tribe of Saracens, or Arab auxiliaries, who fought for either the Romans or Persians, depending on who paid them more. Libanius here implies that a Christian has paid this certain Taiene to assassinate Julian. See Bowersock, *Julian*, 116-117.

If then [Julian] died by a spear thrust, and this was not inflicted by a Persian, it follows that the murderer was one of our people, who did themselves or somebody else a good turn by assassinating him so that the religion of the gods should fall into dishonor, for they almost burst with rage at the honor in which it was held.²⁷⁷

Libanius goes on to warn Theodosius of other would-be assassins who might attempt to kill the emperor, as they had done to Julian:

As things are, it was *against the head of state that that horseman and his steel delivered the stroke in the heat of battle*, sent upon that errand by a wicked cabal from some foul tent of dire conspiracy. Sire, there may perhaps be yet other rascals lurking in a solitary tent, *enemies of their own leaders*. Nature could never improve them, but fear perhaps may restrain them.²⁷⁸

In pagan circles, Christians were often seen as “enemies of the state”, since they did not adhere to the Roman state religion. This was especially the case in times of crisis, when oracles and prophecies arose that the gods were angry at Rome.²⁷⁹ Libanius believed and hoped others would too that the gods were angry with Rome, not only because Julian’s death was unavenged, but also because Christians posed a threat to Roman society with their rejection of traditional religion, breaking away from the ideal of *Romanitas*.²⁸⁰ When ecclesiastical historians like Socrates pick up this story, they rewrite Julian’s death not only to

²⁷⁷ Lib., *Or.* 24.21.

²⁷⁸ Ibid. 24.29. My italics.

²⁷⁹ R. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (San Francisco: Harpercollins, 1988) 426.

²⁸⁰ Lib., *Or.* 24.29-30.

exonerate Christians, but also to weaken Libanius's argument attributing the ruin of the empire to the abandonment of religious tradition.²⁸¹

In turning from Libanius to Ammianus, we note a subtle, yet significant change on the focus of the death narrative. Unlike Libanius, Ammianus wished to turn away from the debate of who murdered Julian, and focus on Julian's military career and divine-like character. By shifting the focus, Ammianus seemingly sought to use the death narrative of Julian for a different purpose than that of Libanius, even though the stories of both writers are very similar.²⁸²

Thus, in Ammianus, a spear strikes Julian, wounding his side and arm; then he is taken on his shield to his tent to receive medical attention. Finally, after speaking philosophically about the soul, his wound bursts and he dies. However, the novel element in Ammianus's account, absent from Libanius's narratives is Julian's death speech.

The speech begins with Julian addressing his friends, saying that he is not upset to be dying in this manner, and that he understands that the gods bestow death as a reward for men of outstanding merit. He goes on to say:

I do not regret what I have done, nor am I troubled by the consciousness of any serious wrongdoing, either when I was relegated to an obscure corner or since I have enjoyed imperial power. This [imperial power] came to me as a gift from the gods to whom I am akin, and I have kept it, to the best of my belief, free from stain, showing *moderation* in the conduct of civil matters, and waging war, whether offensive or defensive, only after mature deliberation. But well-conceived plans are not always attended by success, since the ultimate

²⁸¹ Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.23.

²⁸² Cf. Appendix D, v. 268-269 with Appendix G, v. 21.

outcome of any enterprise is in the hands of the powers on high.²⁸³

Julian continues to speak on how a ruler should rule his subjects, explaining how he tried to follow the standard of an enlightened ruler carefully. Then, Julian speaks about his death:

I am not ashamed to admit that I learned long ago from a prophecy in which I put faith that I should fall in battle. I give thanks to the everlasting god that I am not dying *through secret conspiracy* or from a painful and lingering disease or as a condemned criminal, but have been found worthy to take so honorable a departure from the world in the midst of a successful and glorious career. Fairly considered, the man who seeks to escape death when his hour is come is as base a coward as the man who seeks it when it is his duty to avoid it.²⁸⁴

This speech is clearly modeled on Socrates's death speech in Plato's *Phaedo*:

I am quite ready to admit [...] that I ought to be grieved at death, if I were not persuaded in the first place that I am going to other gods who are wise and good (of which I am as certain as I can be of any such matters), and secondly (though I am not so sure of this last) to men departed, better than those whom I leave behind; and therefore I do not grieve as I might have done, for I have good hopes that there is yet something remaining for the dead, and as has been said of old, some far better thing for the good than for the evil.²⁸⁵

And Julian:

Nature is calling in my debt, and like an honest debtor I shall repay it gladly, not, as some might expect, in affliction and sorrow, because I share the common conviction of philosophers that the soul's bliss is of a higher order than the

²⁸³ Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 25.3.17. My italics.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 25.3.19. My italics.

²⁸⁵ Plato, *Phaedo*, 63b-c.

body's, and believe that when the better is separated from the worse one should rejoice rather than grieve. I bear in mind also that in some instances the gods themselves have bestowed death as the supreme reward on certain men of outstanding merit.²⁸⁶

Both Plato's Socrates and Ammianus's Julian welcome death as a transition of the soul from the body to a higher plane among the gods and outstanding and wise men.²⁸⁷ Here, Ammianus takes this comparison between Julian and Socrates that Libanius had already made in his *Funeral Oration* a step further. While Libanius's Julian is depicted as a victim of conspiracy and murder, Ammianus's Julian, much like Socrates, is depicted as a philosopher who accepts, and even welcomes, his fate, which came about not "through secret conspiracy," but at the hands of the enemy in glorious battle. We will come back to Ammianus's exoneration of Christians in Chapter Three.

Ammianus's attempt to present the dying Julian in the guise of a philosopher emperor contrasts with his critique of Julian's unwise policies regarding the Christians. While he praises Julian's prudence and promotion of paganism, he nonetheless criticizes some of Julian's reforms such as his edict against Christian teachers.²⁸⁸ This suggests that Ammianus, and likely other pagans, disagreed with some of Julian's more zealous religious reforms. Instead, the evidence suggests that Ammianus was concerned overall with an unprecedented amount of religious intolerance and conflict within the empire.

²⁸⁶ Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 25.3.15. For the entire death speech, see Appendix F, 25.3.15-20.

²⁸⁷ Plato, *Phaedo*, 117d-177e; Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 25.3.22. See Appendix F, 25.3.23.

²⁸⁸ See Appendix F, 25.4.1, 25.4.20.

Finally, Ammianus explains that, while many have criticized Julian for his Persian campaign, Julian only attempted to finish what his uncle Constantine began some decades earlier.²⁸⁹ His defense of Julian is clear:

Our hero [Julian], who was sent to the West as a Caesar only in name, retrieved this situation with almost miraculous rapidity, driving kings before him like the lowest slaves. With the same passionate eagerness to put things right in the East he attacked the Persians, from whom he would have won a triumph and an addition to his titles, if his designs and glorious deeds had been seconded by the favor of Heaven.²⁹⁰

According to Ammianus, Julian believed that since he was successful in the West against the Germanic barbarians, he therefore would be successful in the East against the Persians. It seems completely logical, and depicts Julian not as the warmonger of Gregory Nazianzus, but as a Roman general who does not go to war without reason. From Ammianus, the former army officer, it is a sign of deep respect for Julian, but that Ammianus had to make that defense suggests that Gregory's view of Julian had found widespread acceptance.

With the exception of Julian's edict against the teachers, Ammianus has few criticisms of the emperor, focusing his attention on Julian's reign with a sense of nostalgia. However, unlike the accounts of Libanius, there is no plea for a return to the time of Julian's reign, but no doubt Ammianus generally saw that time as one of peace in comparison to his own, during the turbulent reigns of Valens and Valentinian, when treason trials plagued major cities such

²⁸⁹ See Appendix F, 25.4.23.

²⁹⁰ Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 25.4.24.

as Rome and Antioch.²⁹¹ Ammianus's presentation of Julian's death was informed by concerns that were different from those of the previous generation. Those of the previous generation of writers, such as Libanius, were concerned with the question of who killed Julian, while the issue of how Julian would be remembered became an ulterior worry. Once again, the death of the emperor provides this writer with a vehicle or conduit for conveying his ideas.

We come to a very different world as we move into the fifth century and the ecclesiastical historians' accounts of Julian's death. Of the three church historians discussed here, Socrates of Constantinople gives the most information on Julian.²⁹² His account of Julian's death derives from Libanius's *Funeral Oration*, but contains some new elements. Socrates refers to the story that a Christian soldier murdered Julian and then writes:

But Callistus, one of his bodyguards, who celebrated this emperor's deeds in heroic verse, says, in narrating the particulars of this war, that the wound of which he died was inflicted *by a demon*. This is possibly a mere poetical fiction, or perhaps it was really fact; for vengeful furies have undoubtedly destroyed many persons.²⁹³

There are a couple significant points to this account. First, Socrates introduces Callistus, Julian's bodyguard and alleged eyewitness to Julian's death, as a direct source of information. The reference to an eyewitness is important because it allows Socrates a greater

²⁹¹ For information on the reigns of Valens and Valentinian, see p. 105. Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 28.1.16-20, 29.1.1-15.

²⁹² David Buck, "Socrates Scholasticus on Julian the Apostate", *Byzantion* 73 (2003): 301.

²⁹³ Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.21. My italics.

claim to authenticity; he is the only historian to mention this Callistus.²⁹⁴ Secondly, Socrates says that a demon killed Julian, thus placing the blame on a divine being and, in doing so, exonerating a Christian soldier of blame and questioning Libanius's account. To Socrates, but more generally to Christians in the fifth century, the idea of a Christian soldier murdering the emperor, even a pagan emperor, was unacceptable because it suggested that Christians were willing to break their oath of loyalty to the emperor and commit high treason. In other words, Socrates's version of Julian's death bespeaks a concern to rehabilitate Christians imputed with the murder of an emperor. To many Christians in the fifth century, disturbed by the escalating doctrinal controversies then dividing church and empire, it was particularly important to demonstrate a church in harmony with imperial interests and willing to work closely with the state. This was especially true of those Christians closely associated with the imperial court and the capital such as Socrates and his more immediate audience. The idea that zealous Christians had secretly conspired to murder an emperor, even a pagan one—that is, that they had acted autonomously to kill an emperor—did not accord with the image of Christianity and the church that some fifth-century Christian intellectuals wished to portray.

Yet, not all Christians viewed it that way. In writing his version of Julian's death, Sozomen, changed the story yet again and, surprisingly, fully embraced the charge of a Christian murderer, whom he presented as an agent of divine will and, therefore, ultimately unaccountable for the deed.

²⁹⁴ Buck, "Socrates Scholasticus", 315.

Like Socrates, Sozomen draws on Libanius. His version of the story is similar to Socrates's and other Christian accounts, with some slight differences. For example, when Julian is attacked, as in Libanius's *Funeral Oration*, a great dust storm covers the scene and a mysterious horseman stabs Julian with a spear. But Sozomen introduces a series of tales concerning visions prophesying Julian's death.²⁹⁵

Sozomen accepts the charge that the murderer of Julian was a Christian soldier, whom he both praises and defends, saying that he acted:

like the ancient slayers of tyrants, who exposed themselves to death in the cause of liberty, and fought in defense of their country, their families and their friends, and whose names are held in universal admiration.²⁹⁶

Here Sozomen justifies the killing of Julian by referencing the heroic "tyrant-slayers" of the past, conjuring perhaps the images of those famous Athenians of the sixth century BCE, Harmodius and Aristogeiton, who murdered the tyrant Hipparchus.²⁹⁷ In killing the emperor, the Christian soldier had in fact performed an equally glorious deed, "delivering" the Roman people from tyranny and restoring their freedom! But Sozomen takes his defense of the Christian murderer one step further, narrating a story, apparently taken from a Syrian legend,²⁹⁸ concerning a friend of Julian, who received a revelation while travelling to Persia to join the emperor in battle. Then:

²⁹⁵ For the entire account, see Appendix H, v. 2.

²⁹⁶ Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* 6.2.

²⁹⁷ Herodotus, *Histories*, 5.55.

²⁹⁸ Cf. Norman Baynes, "The Death of Julian the Apostate in a Christian Legend," *The Journal of Roman Studies* (1937): 24.

While on the road, he [Julian's friend] found himself so far from any habitation that he was obliged, on one night, to sleep in a church. He saw, during that night, either in a dream or a vision, all the apostles and prophets assembled together, and complaining of the injuries which the emperor had inflicted on the Church, and consulting concerning the best measures to be adopted. After much deliberation and embarrassment two individuals arose in the midst of the assembly, desired the others to be of good cheer, and left the company hastily, as if to deprive Julian of the imperial power. He who was the spectator of this marvel did not attempt to pursue his journey, but awaited, in horrible suspense, the conclusion of this revelation. He laid himself down to sleep again, in the same place, and again, he saw the same assembly; the two individuals who had appeared to depart the preceding night to effect their purpose against Julian, suddenly returned and announced his death to the others.²⁹⁹

This striking story serves two purposes. First, as we have seen, unlike Socrates, Sozomen accepts that the Christian soldier is guilty of murdering an emperor, a crime of treason. However, by stressing that divine will decided the fate of Julian, Sozomen is able to free the Christian soldier, and by extension, Christians in general, of any guilt in the murder of an emperor and, therefore, also of the charge of treason: it was ultimately God who decided, while the soldier was merely an instrument of God's will.

In rewriting his own version of Julian's death, Sozomen was also making a subtle but much larger claim about relations between the church and the imperial power. If God had sanctioned the murder of an emperor, not only was the perpetrator of the deed exempt of the charges of murder and treason, but also the event showed that divine power, and its representatives on earth, the hierarchy of the church, could, in certain circumstances, claim

²⁹⁹ Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* 6.2.

precedence and even supremacy over secular or imperial power. We will return to this in Chapter Three.

Theodoret's account of Julian's death also includes stories concerning mystical visions about Julian's death. However, Theodoret embroiders his account with stories containing Syrian references that add a new twist to Sozomen's account. In a story only found in Sozomen, Julian proclaims, before leaving for Persia that "he will treat the Christians with such severity that the Son of the Carpenter will not be able to save them."³⁰⁰ The famous theologian Didymus of Alexandria then replies that the Son of the Carpenter is making a coffin, presumably for the emperor, foreseeing Julian's death.

In Theodoret's version of the story, however, a Christian pedagogue from Antioch who had apparently fallen afoul of the famous Libanius replaces Didymus. Theodoret writes:

[A pedagogue], who was better educated than is usually the case with pedagogues, was the intimate friend of the chief teacher of that period, Libanius the far-famed sophist [...] Now Libanius was a heathen expecting victory and bearing in mind the threats of Julian, on one day in ridicule of our belief he said to the pedagogue, "What is the carpenter's son about now?" Filled with divine grace, he foretold what was shortly to come to pass. "Sophist," said he, "the Creator of all things, whom you in derision call carpenter's son, is making a coffin." ...After a few days the death of the wretch [Julian] was announced. He was carried out lying in his coffin. The vaunt of his threats was proved in vain, and God was glorified.³⁰¹

Who was this pedagogue from Antioch in Theodoret's story and why bring him into his account? In 387, Libanius wrote an oration titled "Against the Slanders of the

³⁰⁰ Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* 6.2.

³⁰¹ Theodoret, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.18.

Pedagogue.”³⁰² The oration was a response to a disgruntled pedagogue who could not afford to pay Libanius for lessons, and so took to slandering Libanius outside of an auditorium near the forum. Since Theodoret was a bishop in the province of Syria and familiar with Antiochene traditions and, naturally, Libanius’s reputation, he probably knew about this oration and replaced the Alexandrian Didymus with the Antiochene pedagogue known from Libanius’s oration. Theodoret appears to question the account of Libanius through this tale, using a native figure with a connection to Antioch and Syria, likely familiar to his Syrian audience. In doing so, as noted in Chapter One, Theodoret offers a distinctly Antiochene account of Julian’s death.

In addition, Theodoret’s version betrays a special concern to show the triumph of Christianity over paganism, probably motivated by the stubborn persistence of paganism in Syrian and the empire.³⁰³ Thus, after a spear wounded Julian, Theodoret has Jesus appear in front of him. Julian then takes some of the blood from his wound and flings it at the apparition exclaiming, “Thou hast won, O Galilean!”³⁰⁴ This phrase would permanently enter the annals of church history as Julian’s last words and as an acknowledgement of defeat not only by a devout worshipper of the gods, but above all, by the Roman emperor. Such acknowledgment would have had enormous symbolic value because it depicted a champion of the pagan gods admitting defeat in the presence of the “one, true God.” Theodoret thus recast Julian’s death as an episode in what he imagined was a war of religion. But of course, regardless of Theodoret’s

³⁰² Lib., *Or.* 34.

³⁰³ Cf. Theodoret, *Eranistes*, which discusses numerous heresies still present in the empire, including paganism. For more on this point see p. 125-126.

³⁰⁴ Theodoret, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.20. See Appendix I, v. 20.

and Sozomen's attempts to have their readers believe that paganism had been defeated with the death of Julian, this was far from reality. Pagan worship was still present in many regions of the empire, including in heavily Christianized Syria, in the fifth century, and beyond. This will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three: Julian's Death as a Lens into the Religious History of the Later Roman Empire

As we have seen in the last chapter, each of our authors writes about Julian's death from a particular point of view. The larger historical and social context of these writers is crucial to understanding the differences among these narratives. The Roman Empire in which these authors lived was undergoing rapid change. Foreign threats from the Persians in the East and Germanic tribes in the North created tension in the boundaries of the empire.³⁰⁵ The church, although gaining strength as a religious institution, continued to suffer from religious disputes, in which the emperor usually held a significant role. Paganism went from being state tolerated to proscribed in a matter of decades, but still thrived among the people in much of the empire. We have already seen how many writers chose the story of Julian's death as a conduit to discuss much that was happening in the period. Writers likely did this because the death of an "apostate" emperor, who determined to transform the empire and Roman society, was a locus to debate sensitive issues, such as relations between the church and emperor and the progress of Christianization in the empire.

I will situate these different death narratives in their historical context in an attempt to understand why these authors chose to write about Julian's death in such disparate versions at the time of composition. Did the events of the period color these narratives? Did the religious concerns surrounding Christianization in the empire and the relationship between church and state affect how they depicted Julian's death? These are the questions I

³⁰⁵ Cameron, *Later Roman Empire*, 135-139.

sought to answer in the following portion of the chapter. Let us turn first to the narratives of Julian's contemporaneous authors—Gregory, Libanius, and Ammianus. Gregory's *Invectives* and Libanius's *Lament* and *Funeral Oration* were written in the 360s.

As we saw in Chapter One, historian Susanna Elm speculates that Gregory wrote and delivered his *Invectives* in 365, during Procopius's revolt. In September of 365, the usurper Procopius, a cousin of Julian's, led a revolt against Valens, Jovian's successor in the East, and successfully took control of Constantinople. According to Elm, Gregory used the *Invectives* not only to criticize Julian's reign and person, but also to cast his support for Valens against the usurper Procopius. Political concerns outweighed the religious ones, and, thus, the Nicene Gregory could look past the contradiction in his supporting the *homoian* Valens. However, the suggestion that Gregory would compromise his beliefs just to declare his support for Valens over Procopius is hard to believe. As the reader will recall from Chapter One, Gregory's father endured criticism for signing Constantius's *homoian* creed, forcing Gregory to help his father with damage control. If Gregory did cast support for the *homoian* Valens, he would have undoubtedly come under similar attack from Nicene adherents. Gregory, a staunch Nicene, could not compromise his faith and remain unscathed from such criticism. Therefore, I would argue that these *Invectives* were more concerned with the events immediately following Julian's death, such as the accession of Jovian, rather than the Procopian revolt. This is not to say that the revolt did not affect the construction of the narratives immediately following Julian's death. On the contrary, this revolt appears to be the context for Libanius's composition of his *Funeral Oration* (below).

But why did Gregory launch such a volatile attack against Julian only after his death? After all, most of Julian's reforms were rescinded by the time Gregory was writing his second *Invective Against Julian*, so it would seem that this attack was unnecessary. However, when this oration is placed in the context of the Persian expedition's aftermath, the reasons for Gregory's heated diatribe are clear. After Julian's death in 363 CE, the throne was seized by Jovian, the captain of Julian's men-at-arms and, if we believe the Christian sources, a devout Nicene Christian.³⁰⁶ By July of 363, news of Julian's death, Jovian's accession, and the humiliating peace treaty with Persia had spread to major eastern cities, such as Antioch and Alexandria. Not surprisingly, the reactions to this news were generally unfavorable. Many citizens mocked the new emperor for not putting up more of a fight, and Libanius himself marveled that the king of Persia had not asked for more cities, when he clearly could have.³⁰⁷ Even Gregory admitted that the terms of the treaty were "disgraceful and so unworthy of the hand of Romans."³⁰⁸

With Jovian facing an onslaught of mockery, Christians now needed a scapegoat for what had happened in Persia. For Christians, it was clear who that scapegoat was. Consequently, Julian and his Persian expedition became the target of a smear campaign. Jovian's supporters, mostly Christian but some pagan,³⁰⁹ used propaganda to promote the new

³⁰⁶ Gregory, *Or.* 5.15; Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.22; Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* 6.3; Theodoret, *Hist. Eccl.* 4.1.

³⁰⁷ Lib., *Or.* 18.279, John of Antioch, *Fr.* 181, from *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire*, trans. R. C. Blockley (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1983) 47.

³⁰⁸ Gregory, *Or.* 5.15.

³⁰⁹ The imperial orator Themistius wrote in an oration praising Jovian that the new emperor was correct in retreating from the awful situation contrived by Julian. Cf. Themistius, *Or.* 5.66a-d.

emperor, and attempted to place as much blame on Julian as they could. The late emperor brought the Roman army to their disgraceful demise for his own glory, and Jovian was the one who was forced to make the shameful, yet necessary peace treaty with Persia. Thus, in his second *Invective*, Gregory twists the situation around saying “if anyone acquits the late [Julian] and charges the present emperor, he is, in my opinion, but an ignorant critic of what has happened.” However, Julian was in fact a popular figure due to his initial successes in Persia. Libanius writes that many citizens expected Julian to be victorious, and that the emperor’s positive dispatches from Persia, along with prisoners of war, strengthened those expectations.³¹⁰

Compared to Julian, Jovian appeared to be unpopular and needed to increase his already diminished popularity somehow. Thus, a smear campaign against Julian was set in motion. Because of its volatile nature, Gregory’s second *Invective Against Julian* appears to be a part of this campaign, his depiction of Julian as a vainglorious warmonger corroborating the opinion that Julian was completely responsible for the Persian expedition and its humiliating aftermath. However, there are two other aspects of the second *Invective* that perhaps connect it with Jovian’s smear campaign. First, Susanna Elm has suggested that because it contains references to Julian’s *Misopogon*, the second *Invective* appeared to be meant for an Antiochene audience, or at least an audience with links to Antioch.³¹¹ With many Antiochenes mocking Jovian upon his entrance to the city, Gregory may have chose the smear campaign in Antioch as the perfect time to cast support for Jovian in an attempt to popularize the new Christian

³¹⁰ Lib., *Ep.* 109.2.

³¹¹ Elm, *Sons*, 469.

emperor. Second, Gregory's explicit reference to Julian's entourage could be seen as an attack on those pagans closest to Julian. As we saw in Chapter One, Libanius came under direct attack from the followers of Jovian for his praise of Julian. The mistrust Gregory places on Julian's entourage, who are depicted as promoters of Julian's apotheosis through pagan folly, corroborates with Jovian's pressure on Julian's closest friends. In other words, Jovian's smear campaign gave Gregory the perfect opportunity to both denigrate Julian and criticize pagans. Therefore, Gregory's second *Invective* appears to be a part of this movement to denigrate Julian and consequently popularize Jovian. However, the second *Invective* is so multifaceted that it serves another purpose.

Gregory's mockery of Julian and deification no doubt characterized his reign as that of superstitious folly, but to ridicule him as a "false-Alexander the Great," depicting him as a comedic foil to the great general, gave Gregory the ammunition he needed to denigrate Julian himself. Here was the emperor who wished to be a new Alexander but failed miserably to conquer Persia, suffering an ignominious death, having fallen from his horse, lying helplessly by the bank of the river, with an open bleeding wound. Here was the ruler who, like Alexander, craved to become a god but was prevented not by a royal wife, as Alexander had been (in Arrian's account), but by a wretched eunuch. It was a pathetic scene. In recreating the death of Julian, Gregory not only criticized the practice of deification, but also seems to go beyond that to dismantle and deride such an artifice of imperial power as a sheer product of empty vainglory. This criticism acquires special meaning when we read the passage against the background of the evolving relations between bishops and emperors, church and state.

For in mocking the emperor, Gregory was also claiming ground and placing himself, and the church, in a position of power above the emperor, not only emperor Julian, now dead, but also imperial power at large. However, once Gregory attacked Julian, criticizing his reign and person, it was only a matter of time before pagans like Libanius stepped forward to defend the late pagan emperor.

Let us turn now to Libanius's earlier accounts of Julian's death. As noted above, when news of Julian's death reached Antioch in July 363, Libanius was so disconsolate he claimed he considered committing suicide.³¹² It was not until New Year's Day 364, months after Julian's death, that Libanius composed his *Lament* and then the *Funeral Oration* a little over a year later.

In Chapter One, I suggested that the long interval between the two works stemmed from the fact that Libanius seems to have felt threatened by the new regime because of his support of Julian, but it is possible, too, that he waited to collect reliable information about events surrounding the emperor's death.³¹³ In a letter to Scylacius, Libanius describes how "many people have made armed attack upon me" and that "a bolt has been aimed at me from

³¹² Lib., *Ep.* 111.2-3.

³¹³ Liebeschutz, *Antioch*, 5. The new emperor Jovian arrived in Antioch on 22 October 363, along with his retreating army. With the soldiers camped in Antioch, Libanius could easily gather his information. Lib., *Ep.* 118, 1. We also know from his letters that, by October 363, Libanius began ardently to search for accounts of the Persian expedition from those who accompanied the emperor to compose Julian's funeral oration. Lib. *Ep.* 115.2-3.

cover, and I [Libanius] have been accused of disloyalty.”³¹⁴ It is, however, also possible that Libanius could not properly compose anything until 364 because of depression.³¹⁵

Whatever the case, Libanius appears to have broken his silence around the same time as Jovian’s entrance into Antioch. In fact, I would argue that the composition of Libanius’s earliest accounts of Julian’s death coincide with the previously mentioned smear campaign, likely compelling Libanius to defend Julian’s reputation and his Persian expedition, both of which were distorted by Jovian’s propagandists at that time. Libanius himself relates in a letter to Aristophanes, a fellow pagan and admirer of Julian, his exact reasons for composing the *Lament*. He relates:

If anyone thinks that I by an oration [the *Lament*] have exacted vengeance from those who slander him [Julian] and is desirous of hearing it because he hates those who hate him, he is quite right. But do not let him think me such a simpleton as to be unaware that the exaction of such punishment is not without danger, for the same people who slander him [Julian] hold the reins of power.³¹⁶

The passage tells more about the campaign to discredit Julian in the wake of Jovian’s accession. It also reveals Libanius’s clear-eyed realization of the danger he ran in seeking to rehabilitate Julian’s memory; as he noted, Julian’s slanderers were in charge of the empire. No wonder the *Lament* was left unpublished due to the dangerous political environment in which pagans and Julian’s supporters found themselves in Antioch and elsewhere.

³¹⁴ Lib., *Ep.* 120.6. November 363.

³¹⁵ Id. *Ep.* 111.2.

³¹⁶ Id. *Ep.* 133.6.

Therefore, there are a number of possible reasons for why Libanius remained silent for so long. As mentioned earlier, his ardent search for information may have hindered any writings about Julian's reign, as Libanius sought credible information from those returning from Persia. It is also equally possible that the state's surveillance of Libanius and others may help us understand why Libanius wrote two speeches in Julian's honor and two different accounts of his death so close together in the *Lament* and *Funeral Oration*.

In the *Lament*, Libanius blames a Persian for the death of Julian, but in the *Funeral Oration*, he accuses a Christian of killing the emperor. Why the change? Although Libanius refrains from charging the Christians with murder, already in the *Lament* he does not hesitate to criticize Christians for their "irreligious" behavior:

A creed [Christianity], which we had until then laughed to scorn, which had declared such violent, unceasing war against you [Julian], has won the day, after all. It has quenched the sacred flame: it has stopped the joyful sacrifices: it has set them on to spurn and overthrow your altars: your temples and sanctuaries it has closed, or demolished, or profaned, or given to harlots to dwell in: it has utterly undone the reverence that was yours, and has established in your inheritance a dead man's tomb.³¹⁷

Even in the religiously charged atmosphere of Jovian's reign, Libanius was clearly not afraid to take Christians to task. However, charging them with the treasonous murder of an emperor and, even worse, with putting an end to the Roman ambitions to conquer their archrival, the Persian Empire, was a far more serious matter. It is possible that, in the *Funeral Oration*, Libanius was simply reacting to the smear campaign against Julian's Persian expedition

³¹⁷ Lib., *Or.* 17.7.

started by those Christians critical of Julian's reign. Yet, at the heart of this speech is Libanius's questioning of Christian loyalty to the state. What had changed in the empire?

By the time Libanius wrote the *Funeral Oration*, Jovian was dead. He died unexpectedly in 364 CE, and the soldiers chose a strict general named Valentinian to replace him as emperor.³¹⁸ Valentinian revived some of the reforms imposed by the emperor Diocletian decades earlier, but instead of four emperors ruling portions of the empire, he decided that two emperors would suffice: one to rule the East, and the other, the West. Valentinian chose his brother Valens to rule the eastern portion of the empire, taking the West for himself.

When Libanius composed the *Funeral Oration* around 366, Valens had already defeated the usurper Procopius and, once again, was the emperor of the East. However, Valens's victory marked the beginning of another smear campaign against Julian. Procopius was Julian's kinsman, and therefore had a legitimate claim to the throne that Valens wished to invalidate. To make matters worse, as the rebellion gained steam, a rumor was spread that the dying Julian had bestowed the purple mantle upon Procopius, declaring him as his heir.³¹⁹ Procopius no doubt used this rumor as propaganda to strengthen his claim to the throne. These complex political developments in the aftermath of Julian's (and Jovian's) death brought Julian and his legacy back into the spotlight. Both Ammianus and Libanius relate the varieties of punishments for the adherents of the usurper. Ammianus says that most of the allies of Procopius were punished, but those allies who also happened to be friends or

³¹⁸ Matthews, *Roman Empire*, 189.

³¹⁹ Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 26.6.1-3.

admirers of the late Julian were punished far more severely.³²⁰ Libanius himself was accused of composing a panegyric for the usurper, an action he vehemently denied.³²¹ Whether or not he actually composed this oration for Procopius depends on how much we want to believe Libanius. However, it is clear that many informants—and no doubt there were many Christians among them—sought to accuse Julian’s friends of subversion, because of Julian’s family connections to the usurper.

Julian was now not only the apostate and a vainglorious general, but also the cousin of Procopius, whom Valens portrayed as a usurper. It is not surprising then that these developments fueled a renewed campaign against Julian and his former supporters, seen now as potential sympathizers of the usurper. The renewed attacks against Julian may have been the reason why Libanius composed a new version of Julian’s death in order not only to provide new ammunition to counter the war propaganda flowing from Valens’s court, but also to raise doubts about the circumstances of Julian’s death and charge the Christians with murder in order to deflect the charge of treason. Naturally, Libanius must have weighed the risks of doing this in that volatile environment, and he may have come to the conclusion that it was to his advantage to preempt an attack against him by using his most powerful weapon: words. As one of the most talented and effective orators of his time, equally celebrated in pagan and Christian circles with a wide readership and connections, Libanius, in rewriting Julian’s death may also have been protecting his own skin with the weapons he best commanded.

³²⁰ Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 26.10.8

³²¹ Lib., *Or.* 1.163.

The thought that a Christian killed Julian was not altogether a surprising idea. According to Libanius several pagans already believed it to be true.³²² However, Libanius's use of Julian's death in this manner gave new life to that idea. His imperial connections and renown in the imperial capitals would have been enough for many to give Libanius's words ample consideration. It is no surprise then, that later ecclesiastical historians, such as Socrates, writing almost a half-century later, felt compelled to deny Libanius's accusation, calling it ridiculous and false. Consequently, Julian's death, rewritten in the turbulent aftermath of Procopius's revolt, became the literary locus of a century-long debate concerning Christian loyalty to the state, to which we will return below.

Another major difference between the *Lament* and the *Funeral Oration*, the addition of Socratic elements, may also be seen as a reaction to the political fallout of the Procopian revolt. Following the rebellion, Valens invited informants to come forward to incriminate any disloyal persons. One such person was Libanius, but he fortunately was not brought to book on the charge. Others, however, were less fortunate. According to Ammianus, those whose names were brought to Valens were met with a number of tortures that were far worse than any death.³²³ Ammianus depicts Valens as a tyrant, establishing open tribunals, a depiction corroborated in Libanius's *Funeral Oration*. Libanius relates:

What further tribulations have followed upon the murder of our emperor! Rabble-rousers who prate against the gods give themselves airs, while our priests are subjected to illegal

³²² Lib., *Ep.* 120.3-4.

³²³ Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 26.10.9-14.

inquisitions...Philosophers are visited with physical violence.³²⁴

Ammianus and Libanius present Valens's reign as one of terror and tyranny unlike the enlightened rule of emperor Julian, who had not instilled terror on his subjects, nor held open inquisitions in order to halt those who opposed his views. He more or less left his domestic enemies alone, while focusing on foreign foes like the Persians. The comparison between Julian and Socrates is one that portrays Julian as a benevolent philosophical ruler, like the philosopher king of Plato's *Republic*. Libanius, therefore, presents Julian as a just and magnanimous ruler, in direct contrast to Valens, and uses the death scene to drive his point home. Libanius recalled Julian's reign in the *Funeral Oration* in a nostalgic way--a golden age in comparison to the age of terror set up by Valens. Decades later, in the 390s, Ammianus developed that comparison further by making the dying Julian pronounce a Socratic speech.

Finally, let us turn to Libanius's *Avenging Julian*. Valens ruled until 378, when he was killed in battle against the Goths at Adrianople.³²⁵ After Valens's demise, Gratian, the successor to Valentinian in the West,³²⁶ chose Theodosius, a retired soldier from a prominent military family that had fallen into disgrace under Valentinian, to be his co-emperor in the East.³²⁷ Having performed admirably in the military and raised to the post of *magister equitum*, or

³²⁴ Lib., *Or.* 18.286-287. It seems odd that Libanius would be vague in the *Lament* and then be so forthcoming in the *Funeral Oration* about his criticism for Valens. However, as we saw in Chapter One, many of Libanius's works were to be circulated if something had happened to him. It is possible the *Funeral Oration* was similarly meant to be circulated upon Libanius's death, and therefore remained unpublished.

³²⁵ Cameron, *Later Roman Empire*, 137.

³²⁶ Valentinian died of illness in 375.

³²⁷ Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.2.

cavalry commander, Theodosius seemed more than capable of quelling the Gothic rebellion and avenging the death of Valens and the rout at Adrianople.³²⁸ Surprisingly, he failed at both tasks. His army fell apart in the summer of 380, and military command in the East reverted to Gratian.³²⁹ Theodosius, becoming extremely ill, retreated to the capital, Constantinople.³³⁰ When Theodosius entered Constantinople on 24 November 380, Libanius wrote the *Avenging Julian*, addressing it to the new emperor.³³¹ As we have seen, the sophist blamed the many military failures that were crippling the state to the fact that no one had brought Julian's murderer to justice. Ultimately, the oration is a call for revenge and justice.

Appealing to a long Roman tradition of duty and piety, Libanius stresses that it was the obligation of the state and the duty of a pious ruler to investigate how an emperor died and, if possible, to avenge his death, but neither Jovian nor Valens had made any attempts to do this. For this reason, Libanius asserted, both these emperors had met sudden and terrible deaths. Therefore, Libanius warned Theodosius not to repeat the mistakes of his predecessors if he wished to avoid their fate.³³²

The speech moves from the charge against one Christian man to a larger indictment of Christianity, or at least its powerful leaders, who, since Julian's death, but especially under Valens, had again made enormous gains and were now more vocal than ever in calling for a

³²⁸ Errington, *Roman Imperial Policy*, 29.

³²⁹ Heather, Peter. "Liar in winter: Themistius and Theodosius", *From the Tetrarchs to the Theodosians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 185

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

³³¹ Lib., *Selected Orations*, trans. A. F. Norman Vol. 1, footnote a, 490-491.

³³² *Id.*, *Or.* 24.41.

more systematic attack against the traditional pagan religions.³³³ Thus, this oration was composed in a way not only to serve as a call for Theodosius to avenge Julian's "murder," but also to express concerns for the welfare of the pagan religions and temples, which were being attacked by Christians, as we shall see below. Thus, he notes:

As things are, it was against the head of state that that horseman and his steel delivered the stroke in the heat of battle, sent upon that errand by a wicked cabal from some foul tent of dire conspiracy. Sire, there may perhaps be yet other rascals lurking in a solitary tent, enemies of their own leaders.³³⁴

The above passage reaffirms Libanius's indictment against Christians already made in the *Funeral Oration*: Julian's death was not the decision of one enemy, but instead was orchestrated by a group of Christian conspirators. However, Libanius takes this charge one step further. According to him, this dangerous "cabal", was still operating in the empire, plotting against the state. Essentially, he warns Theodosius that these conspirators may also attack him, just as they had done with Julian. He depicts these Christians as bold traitors, unafraid to murder the emperor and harm the interests of the state.

Libanius justifies his charge, claiming that it was clear who had to gain from Julian's death:

Though they ought to be punished for a murder like this, they have reaped the fruits of office, as if it were the Persian king they had murdered.³³⁵

³³³ R. A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1990) 110-114.

³³⁴ Lib., *Or.* 24.29.

³³⁵ Ibid., *Or.* 24.27.

These same avaricious Christians were now abusing the emperor's good will, while plotting against his majesty and the state. How was it that those who deceived the imperial power to attain wealth were not punished for the murder of Julian, but rather rewarded? That heinous crime—Julian's murder—, in Libanius's opinion, must not go unpunished. Indeed, Libanius's warning against the Christians could be seen as a concern with the boundaries of ecclesiastical power, which also preoccupied many Christian writers. By claiming that a Christian murdered Julian and was never brought to book, Libanius implies that Christians enjoyed a limitless amount of power given to them by the state. The late 370s and early 380s was a period with attacks on pagan temples, and against pagans themselves. Christian monks, who were once relegated to the deserts in order to protect pagans and their temples, were now allowed to destroy temples and attack pagans.³³⁶ Such anti-pagan practices were curtailed by Valens and Valentinian, and to some extent into Theodosius's reign, in order to keep the peace.³³⁷ However, the evidence suggests that such protections for pagans began to disappear, as the church grew more powerful and more present as a political entity.

In this speech, then, Libanius appears less concerned with rehabilitating Julian's character or image. The Socratic elements and question of how Julian was to be remembered are tossed aside and attention is therefore directed to the question of who murdered Julian. Although Libanius seems to be more concerned with immediate issues like the barbarian invasions, such issues appear to be the pretext for more pressing concerns. What truly worried Libanius was no doubt the close alliance between the emperor and the church that had grown

³³⁶ *CTh*, 16.3.1. 16.3.2.

³³⁷ Freeman, *AD 381*, 119-120. Lenski, *Failure of Empire*, 215-217.

stronger under Theodosius. Such an alliance would have only increased the occurrences of anti-pagan violence and laws. Libanius's primary concern here is religious toleration. He had already seen the demolition of temples and altars during the reign of Valens. Now, with the new regime, he might have felt there was a new chance to sway the emperor into protecting the temples and traditions of the empire.

In a later oration written for Theodosius in the late 380s concerning the welfare of pagan temples, Libanius voiced his concerns about the massive religious changes taking place in the empire following Julian's death.³³⁸ Libanius says that

You regard your religion as better than the other, but that is no act of impiety nor yet just cause for punishment either. Nor have you excluded its adherents from advancement, but you have given them office and made them your companions at table.³³⁹

Libanius's main point was not to accuse Theodosius of impiety, but of dangerous favoritism towards Christians, which bred conflict and violence and was disrupting the peace of the empire. Libanius notes the neglect and unlawful destruction of temples by Christian monks, which went unpunished. He notes that these same monks looted homes of citizens, claiming that many peasants suffered because they lived on previously owned temple lands. When the victims of the lootings approached the bishop about the matter, the bishop commended the monks and scolded the victims, saying they were lucky not to have lost more.³⁴⁰ How the world had changed since Julian! To be sure, that speech was less concerned with denouncing

³³⁸ Lib., *Selected Works*, trans. A.F. Norman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977) 92.

³³⁹ Id., *Or.* 30.53.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., *Or.* 30.11.

Christian atrocities or with bringing Christians to justice, which Libanius knew would not happen, than with obtaining the emperor's assurance that temples and pagans, like him, would be protected.

Libanius placed the emperor's death at the center of his argument for a change in course in matters of policy, but to do so, he has to rewrite Julian's death, kill him all over again, and create a fiction of the murder. To Libanius, if there was one final chance to bring justice for Julian and protect the traditional Roman religions, this was the right moment, following the Gothic wars, with the empire on its knees. Libanius saw his opportunity to reach out to the new ruler in the East, Theodosius, and used this oration not only to bring up Julian's death once more, but also to warn Theodosius to be wary of those who would desecrate ancient Roman traditions and temples. Libanius may truly have been convinced that a Christian murdered Julian, since it was the Christians who had everything to gain from Julian's death.³⁴¹ Ultimately, however, he was not so much asking Theodosius to avenge Julian as expressing his concerns about the growing power Christians commanded. Although his efforts seemed, in hindsight, to be in vain, the fact that Libanius fought ardently for religious tolerance and protection for pagan temples tells us what, according to Libanius, was at stake in the empire during Theodosian age: the vulnerability of pagan traditions and the creation of a new, Christian Roman Empire.

³⁴¹ Lib., *Or.* 24.27. See Appendix E, v. 27.

Writing in the late 390s, at a time when the religious changes that so troubled Libanius in the *Avening Julian* had more or less become permanent, Ammianus also tried to rehabilitate Julian's reign, but purposefully left out of his narrative of Julian's death the charge against Christians put forth by Libanius. Why? To answer this question, let us consider another important difference between the accounts of Libanius and Ammianus.

As we have seen, Ammianus is the only contemporary writer who reports on Julian's Socratic death speech in its entirety, unlike Libanius who only alludes to it.³⁴² The speech itself is most likely fictitious. However, the fact that Ammianus decided to insert it in his narrative is important. In his eulogy of Julian, Ammianus says that Julian cultivated not only the four cardinal virtues of self-control, wisdom, justice, and courage, but also other virtues befitting an enlightened ruler.³⁴³ Perhaps Ammianus, like Libanius, sought to show Julian as the philosopher-king of Plato's *Republic*, a just and virtuous ruler who practices, protects, and encourages wisdom.³⁴⁴

Why would Ammianus choose to associate Julian's death with that of Socrates in the *Phaedo* in the 390s? There are a number of possible reasons for this connection. However, it is difficult to place his account in any definitive historical context. Unlike Gregory Nazianzus and Libanius, who composed their death narratives in orations focused on one particular historical event or figure, Ammianus's account was presented in a history, covering a large breadth of time and many areas of Roman antiquity. Such circumstances make it difficult to

³⁴² Lib., *Or.* 18.272.

³⁴³ Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 25.4.1-2.

³⁴⁴ Plato, *Republic*, 5.473d.

examine Ammianus's account with a particular event in mind. It is possible, however, to examine Ammianus's death narrative of Julian against the author's larger preoccupations as evidenced in his *Res Gestae*. Ammianus appears to have been highly critical of emperors deeply involved in the religious conflict—indeed of any conflict caused by religion.³⁴⁵ For example, in his brief description of Constantius, Ammianus relates how

The plain and simple religion of the Christians was bedeviled by Constantius with old wives' fancies. Instead of trying to settle matters he raised complicated issues which led to much dissension, and as this spread more widely he fed it with verbal argument.³⁴⁶

It is clear from the above passage that Ammianus considered ecclesiastical concerns as superfluous and harmful to the empire, and thus criticized the emperor's involvement in such matters, which, without imperial support, would have never happened. Thus, he notes that Constantius fueled more conflict by engaging in these ecclesiastical disputes.

Ammianus, like Libanius before him, portrayed Julian as a philosopher king in contrast to his predecessor Constantius (and successors). Although Julian had his faults, as did many emperors depicted in the *Res Gestae*, Ammianus considered him to be the ideal Roman ruler, who should abstain not only from frivolous ecclesiastical debates, but also from religious conflict in general.³⁴⁷

Ammianus composed his work at a time when the political and religious situation of the empire had changed dramatically. Theodosius had been able firmly to establish himself as

³⁴⁵ Cf. Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 27.3.12, see the Damasus and Ursinus riots.

³⁴⁶ Ibid. 21.16.18.

³⁴⁷ Cf. Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 25.4.1-8, for Julian as exemplar figure of the cardinal virtues.

emperor of the East, and there was also no doubt about his religious dispositions and support of Christianity. He also passed several decrees, proscribing the public worship of traditional pagan religion.³⁴⁸ Ammianus seems to have understood that Theodosius's long reign marked the dawn of a new age in the empire, and his work betrays a sense of nostalgia for a past that would not return, but above all a concern with the new religious violence that was sweeping the empire whether among Christians or pitting Christians against pagans. This disrupted the peace and distracted the state from more pressing political issues. In the context of the 390s, then, when Theodosius's anti-pagan legislation seemed to give Christian crowds, fanatical monks, and corrupt officers, a free hand in dismantling the legacy of traditional Roman religion and to justify the rise of intolerance and violence against non-Christians,³⁴⁹ Ammianus's appeal to Socrates, who like the Julian of his own account, had been a victim of intolerance, suggests a comparison between the despotic control of the thirty tyrants of Athens, and persecution of pagans by Christians under Gratian and Theodosius.³⁵⁰

It also, of course, signals resignation. Libanius, in the early 380s might have thought it was still possible to bring the emperor to mistrust the Christians. By the time Ammianus was writing, however, this was no longer the case. His greatest concern was to make an appeal for Christian tolerance—of one another and of pagans. We infer this not only from Ammianus's subtle assimilation of Julian to Socrates, but from other passages in his *Res Gestae*.³⁵¹ Indeed, Libanius's *For the Temples*, already mentioned above but composed in the wake of

³⁴⁸ *CTh.* 16.10.11.

³⁴⁹ Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 29.1.1-33.

³⁵⁰ Freeman, *AD 387*, 124.

³⁵¹ Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 21.16.18.

Theodosius's anti-pagan decrees, was also an appeal for tolerance in the vastly changed circumstances of the Theodosian age.

Thus, with Ammianus, here we have, once again, Julian's death being recreated in a way that reflected the preoccupations and anxieties of a new age. A good ruler should be like a philosopher in life and in death. It was perhaps only surprising that the figure of Julian, in particular the episode of his mysterious death, had to be repeatedly reimagined, rewritten, and recreated. Because he was a Christian apostate and the last pagan emperor of Rome, and precisely because he died in the way he did, on the cusp of achieving that which the Romans since the time of Pompey and Crassus had failed to do, the memory of his reign and his death lent itself as material for polemics between Christians and pagans at the end of antiquity, particularly around the turn of the fifth century, when Christian hostility against and intolerance of pagans increased dramatically.

The Church Historians and the Death of Julian

One of the crucial themes in the history of the Roman Empire in late antiquity, particularly in the fifth century, was the relationship between church and state. The subject has been a topic of interest for centuries. Constantine had lavished the church with splendid gifts, and even considered himself to be "a *bishop* of those outside [the church]." ³⁵² However, many Christians had misgivings about the emperor's role and were ambivalent about the

³⁵² Eusebius, *VC* 4.24.

growing interference of the state in church affairs. As noted in the Introduction, a good example of this was imperial intervention in the Arian dispute during the fourth century. When riots broke out in Alexandria over the teachings of Arius, Constantine was forced to step in and interfere to keep the peace. And to do so, he was not afraid to compel bishops or priests to come to an agreement over matters of faith nor did he hesitate from punishing those bishops who disobeyed his orders.³⁵³ Constantine was not the only emperor to impose a particular doctrine of faith. Constantius repeatedly intervened in ecclesiastical affairs to bring unity to the church. Valens took a similar approach in imposing a *homoian* creed on those bishops in the East still adhering to the Nicene formula.³⁵⁴ In the 380s, Theodosius imposed Nicene Christianity on all Christians, branding all dissidents as heretics. Clearly the emperor played an important role in these doctrinal disputes, and his presence provoked strikingly varied reactions from Christians.

The Nicene Christians praised the harsh measures that Constantine and his successors used against those they saw as heretics. Yet when the tables were turned, and the non-Nicene adherents won the sympathy of the emperor, the Nicenes criticized imperial power for meddling in the affairs of God and the church.³⁵⁵ For instance, when Theodosius decided to impose the Nicene Creed on the church and to persecute the non-Nicene, Nicene bishops

³⁵³ Cameron, *Later Roman Empire*, 68-69.

³⁵⁴ Lenski, *Failure of Empire*, 243-245.

³⁵⁵ Athanasius, *Historia Arianorum*, 7.52, where he criticizes Constantius for interfering in church affairs, and outlines how the emperor never once played a decisive role within the church and should trouble himself with secular matters, where he belongs.

praised the emperor, considering him an example of divine providence.³⁵⁶ Yet Athanasius and Ossius of Cordoba, both staunch Nicenes, criticized a hostile Constantius for meddling in the affairs of the church, claiming he should concern himself only with matters of state.³⁵⁷

The issue became even more acute in the fifth century CE as the church gained more wealth and power and its bold leaders more willing to challenge imperial power. Such was the case during the Nestorian controversy. As we have seen in Chapter One, several bishops, including Theodoret, had supported Nestorius, archbishop of Constantinople, and his view that the mother of Jesus did not bear God in her womb. Nestorius's doctrine divided Christian communities in the East and earned him the enmity of Cyril, the powerful bishop of Alexandria. Theodosius II initially backed Nestorius, and convened a Council at Ephesus in 431. However, Cyril was persuasive and convinced many of the other bishops that Mary was *Theotokos*, while underhandedly bribing the court officials from Constantinople to assent in his favor.³⁵⁸ Eventually Theodosius acquiesced, accepted Cyril's doctrine, and removed Nestorius from his bishopric and exiled him. However, this did not end the matter and the controversy continued even after Theodosius's death in 450.

On the whole, the Nestorian controversy was unlike previous doctrinal disputes in that the bishops now held an immense amount of power never seen before from ecclesiastical leaders in the past. By the latter half of the fourth century, bishops had emerged as powerful leaders, thanks to the patronage of the emperor. This new power brought an abundance of

³⁵⁶ Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.10.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 6.44.

³⁵⁸ John Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), 14.

wealth as well through imperial and private largesse. The state commissioned the building of new basilicas and churches, and imperial donations, as well as tax-exemptions, gave ecclesiastical leaders control over a surfeit amount of wealth, often earmarked for social needs like feeding the poor, but nonetheless made bishops incredibly wealthy, and therefore powerful.³⁵⁹ It is no wonder that Cyril was able to provide a bribe of over 2,500 pounds of gold to the court officials of Constantinople!³⁶⁰

With this incredible amount of wealth in order, many bishops advanced to positions of great authority as city leaders, imperial educators, and imperial advisors. Emperors even welcomed bishops to their personal table, a distinguished honor.³⁶¹ These new positions of power and authority gave the bishops, the official vicars of God, ample opportunity to institutionalize the divine will of God, and therefore, give “the church the upper hand.”³⁶² In other words, bishops controlled enough resources to become major political players.

In sum, in the fifth century, relations between church and state, albeit strengthened, remained fraught with tension and these developments influenced the way Christian authors crafted their narratives of Julian’s death.

These authors were particularly concerned to address the charge, made by Libanius (and others) that Christians were responsible for Julian’s murder. As noted in Chapter Two, Socrates sought to refute the charge by saying a demon killed Julian. At a time when bishops and emperors were locked in an unfinished struggle over matters of doctrine and faith in

³⁵⁹ Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity*, 13-14.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 14.

³⁶¹ Lib., *Or.* 30.53.

³⁶² Glen Bowersock, “From Emperor to Bishop,” *Classical Philology* Vol. 81 (1986): 306.

which many bishops were boldly contesting the legitimacy of imperial authority and testing the limits of their power,³⁶³ the allegation that Christians had plotted to murder an emperor was obviously a sensitive subject. If this allegation were true, that a Christian murdered an emperor, it would suggest that, under certain circumstances, the church condoned the slaying of an emperor. Because the emperor imposed church doctrine that was decided upon by the bishops of the empire, how could the allegation of a Christian murdering the emperor *not* appear to be a sensitive subject?

Let us now turn to Sozomen, who oddly enough agreed with Libanius's charge that a Christian murdered Julian, arguing that whoever performed the deed, acted as an agent of God. The murderer should be praised for being like the tyrant slayers of Athens. In other words, he argued that God was responsible for dispatching Julian. However, based on the context of the period, I would suggest that Sozomen's story serves another purpose. Sozomen understood that the relationship between church leaders and imperial power was delicate and, at times, confrontational. By showing that divine will justifies the murder of a Roman emperor, Sozomen is able to safely state with a simple story that church leaders are the only ones able to interpret divine will and control imperial power. However, it is still odd that Sozomen would diverge drastically from his main source, Socrates. Considering both authors wrote their histories around the same time with similar historical contexts, one would think the stories would be almost identical. Yet, as we have seen, this is not the case. So why does Sozomen's account change so much from that of Socrates? To understand this divergence in

³⁶³ Frend, *Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, 76-77.

the accounts, just as in the case of Ammianus, we must examine a reoccurring theme within Socrates's history: the emperor as a benevolent ruler.

For Socrates, the emperor was a necessary figure, without whom the church would have been plagued by constant discord with bishops quibbling over doctrine. Socrates's description of Theodosius I as a deeply devout and pious ruler reflects the Constantinopolitan perspective that strongly supported the emperor in his struggle to impose doctrinal uniformity in the empire.³⁶⁴ It was perhaps this reverence for the majesty of imperial power that informed Socrates's recreation of Julian's death, not only the need to answer to Libanius's charge, but also to exonerate Christians from the charge of treachery.

The thought of a Christian murdering the emperor, even one as hostile to Christianity as Julian, was unthinkable. Thus, Socrates exonerates Christians of the alleged murder of Julian and protects the bond between church and state, by depicting Julian being killed by a demon, instead of a Christian. Socrates saw the protection an emperor could grant and the power he could wield; for this church historian, the power of the state surpassed the power of the church, which certainly had its limits in the fourth century. The doctrinal conflicts of the fifth century constantly tested the limits of their own power and authority vis-à-vis the power of the throne. In that particular context, the death narratives of Socrates and Sozomen seem to reflect a concern over the boundaries of power between church and state. However, by the time of Theodoret, the mid-fifth century, we find a very different perspective on the relationship between church and state.

³⁶⁴ Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.10.

In his death narrative of Julian, Theodoret begins by establishing Julian as an unqualified general, depicting him, much in the same way that Gregory Nazianzus does, as a vainglorious general who cares only for his own glory, neglecting his soldiers' welfare or safety.³⁶⁵ He then relates how a spear struck Julian, while the gods did nothing to protect the emperor or strike down his killer. Like Sozomen, Theodoret embraces the notion that Julian's killer was an agent of God, but not necessarily Libanius's charge that the murderer was a Christian. He writes:

Some say that he was wounded by an invisible being, others by one of the Nomads who were called Ishmaelites; others by a trooper who could not endure the pains of famine in the wilderness. But whether it were man or angel who plied the steel, without doubt the doer of the deed was the minister of the will of God. It is related that when Julian had received the wound, he filled his hand with blood, flung it into the air and cried, "*Thou hast won, O Galilean.*"³⁶⁶

For Theodoret, it did not necessarily matter who it was that killed Julian, only that Julian was dispatched through the divine will of God. In doing so, Theodoret exonerates Julian's killer of any crime, and praises them as a "minister of the will of God." Although the narrative is similar to that of Sozomen's, when placed in the context of the Nestorian controversy, in which Theodoret played a direct role, this account conveys a similar but perhaps more personal message. If we consider the fact that Theodosius placed Theodoret under house arrest for his defiance of Nestorius's condemnation, the message becomes clear. The bishop's picture of an emperor defying Christ to his last breath, with no contrition or repentance, sends a chilling

³⁶⁵ See Appendix I, v. 20.

³⁶⁶ Theodoret, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.20.

reminder to the reader: the emperor does not hold the final say, and he, unlike God, is not omnipotent and immortal. The only way Theodoret chooses to deliver this message without endangering himself, is to make Julian, not Theodosius II, the target of God's vengeance, but it is more than likely that Theodoret, being held under house arrest at the time, used Julian's death to speak about the independence of the church vis-à-vis the state.

Yet, unlike the other two church historians, Theodoret was also interested in using Julian's death to attack and discredit the pagan gods. In his narrative, Theodoret mockingly comments on how the gods abandoned Julian, saying:

Ares who raises the war-din had never come to help him ...
[Apollo] had given lying divination; [Zeus] who glads him in
the thunderbolts had hurled no bolt on the man who dealt the
fatal blow.³⁶⁷

We saw similar sentiments in Libanius's *Lament*, where the sophist bemoaned the absence of the gods at Julian's death, but Theodoret's references to the pagan gods reflect a different purpose. By asking the gods directly, albeit perhaps rhetorically, in his *Lament*, Libanius acknowledges their presence, but Theodoret points out the absence of the gods to prove a point: the pagan gods do not exist. They were not there to protect their champion, and were certainly not there to avenge his death. This is such a major point because it addresses the folly of those pagans still present in the empire, as well as Christians who continued to celebrate pagan traditions and festivals. As discussed in Chapter Two, pagans were still very much present in the empire during the fifth century, much to the chagrin of the bishops who attempted to convert the populace.

³⁶⁷ Theodoret, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.20.

Since the fourth century, when Constantine legalized Christianity, the conversion of non-Christians to Christianity continued to be an issue for church leaders. Assimilation, that is the erasing of the old pagan traditions and replacing them with Christian ones was complex and never as complete as church leaders had hoped.³⁶⁸ For instance, well into the sixth century, many Christians continued to celebrate pagan festivals as their ancestors had done centuries before.³⁶⁹ Although bishops decried these pagan rituals and festivals, they could not prevent them from celebrating them. In 392, Libanius noticed this in his speech *For the Temples*, saying:

And if [the bishops] tell you that some other people have been converted by such measures and now share their religious beliefs, do not overlook the fact that they speak of conversions apparent, not real. Their converts have not really been changed—they only say they have. This does not mean that they have exchanged one faith for another—only that this crew [of Christians] has been bamboozled. They go to their ceremonies, join their crowds, go everywhere where these do, but when they adopt an attitude of prayer, they either invoke no god at all or else they invoke the gods.³⁷⁰

Bishops were very much aware of this “insincere conversion.” In addressing this “insincere conversion”, later ecclesiastical historians, such as Theodoret, chose to popularize the idea of a church triumphing over paganism. These triumphalist narratives interwove lies with history to create stories that drastically diverged from reality. Paganism was still very much present in the empire in the fifth and even sixth century. Theodoret confirms this idea in his *Eranistes*, a series of dialogues between two figures named Eranistes, or “wanderer”, and Orthodoxos, or

³⁶⁸ MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism*, 103-105.

³⁶⁹ See Introduction with a reference to Brown, *Authority*, p. 23.

³⁷⁰ Lib., *Or.* 30.28.

“follower of the straight path.” In the second dialogue, Eranistes comments “They [Christians] gave this instruction [Christianity] to the unbelievers. Now the greater part of the world has professed the faith.” Orthodoxos, Theodoret’s mouthpiece, replies, “But we have still among us Jews and pagans and of heretics systems innumerable, and to each of these we must give fit and appropriate teaching.”³⁷¹

We find similar concerns in his *Ecclesiastical History*, not least in the death narrative of Julian, which, I suggest, he used to promote a view of Christian triumph over the pagan gods. By making the dying Julian, the Roman emperor who sought to reverse the flow of history, acknowledge that Christian victory before a vision of Christ and admit defeat, Theodoret implied that a Christian triumph was inevitable, and that there was in fact no turning back.

³⁷¹ Theodoret, *Eranistes*, Dialogue 2.

Conclusion: Julian's Reign in the History of Late Antiquity

After Julian's death in 363 CE, his reign and, in particular, his death continued to be an object of debate throughout the empire. This was peculiar given the fact that he ruled for less than two years. Why did people continue to discuss the reign and death of an emperor who ruled for such a short period of time? It is true that Julian's actions, such as the failed Persian expedition, were of interest for years to come, but the repeated rewriting of different versions of his death was curious and calls for some explanation. As Adrian Murdoch put it, "Where there was a lacuna in the story, they [the authors] were only too happy to plug it and as the person who killed Julian was unknown, it gave people a *tabula rasa* on which to scrawl graffiti."³⁷²

Why is it that the story of Julian's death changed over and over again for at least a century after his death? The answer this study tried to provide is that Julian's death lent itself as a literary locus for discussion of a series of issues concerning the religious and political history of the late empire. These issues were inextricably linked to the processes of Christianization in the empire and relations between church and state.

The first death narratives from Gregory Nazianzus and Libanius drew on vague or "shadowy" sources, allowing them opportunities to invent their own versions of Julian's death. Gregory, by inventing a story drawn from a second-century CE legend of Alexander the Great, could mock Julian for his attempt to emulate Alexander the Great. Such a volatile and

³⁷² Adrian Murdoch, *The Last Pagan: Julian the Apostate and the Death of the Ancient World* (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 2008) 187-188.

scathing mockery of Julian undoubtedly served, as I suggested in this thesis, to denigrate the late emperor in a smear campaign during the aftermath of the Persian expedition, and consequently elevate Jovian's dwindled popularity. Libanius, by using analogous references to Plato's *Phaedo* and other reports from the Persian expedition, would try to rehabilitate Julian's reign in response to the attacks against the late emperor. The death narratives found in his *Lament* and *Funeral Oration* accused Christians of being enemies of the state by portraying Julian as a victim of injustice for the traditional Roman religions, and pinning a treacherous conspiracy on the church, which had already begun to grow in immense wealth and power by the late fourth century. Ultimately, this allegation of treachery was so upsetting to Christians that the ecclesiastical historians of the fifth century would address it.

The later writings of Libanius and Ammianus during the reign of Theodosius show a very different use of Julian's death. With Theodosius's army falling apart against the Goths and Gratian in the West taking over military command in the Gothic war, Libanius saw his chance to mold the death narrative of Julian in such a way as to convince Theodosius that the military failures were due to the abandonment of the traditional religions and the shirking of avenging Julian's murder. However, in reality, the purpose of his *Avenging Julian* appeared to be more concerned with protecting pagan temples at a time when anti-pagan sentiment was the status quo, than avenging Julian's death. Ammianus sought to present Julian and, by extension, I have argued, the imperial power as an enlightened ruler, above the religious contention of the day and a champion of tolerance.

Turning from the fourth century to the fifth, the ecclesiastical historians used the death narrative of Julian in new ways. This was a period fraught with religious disputes, especially concerning the teachings of Arius and Nestorius, with the emperor as the central figure imposing church doctrine in these affairs alienating and often punishing large sections of the episcopate.³⁷³ I have tried to show that these conflicts, between emperors and bishops were also reflected in the way the ecclesiastical historians portrayed Julian's death.

Socrates defended Christians from the charges of having killed an emperor and blamed the death of Julian on a demon. In the case of Socrates at least, the reason for this was Socrates's understanding of the state's important role in the protection and promotion of the church, a sentiment attributed to his Constantinopolitan perspective.

By contrast, Theodoret and Sozomen embraced the idea of a Christian murdering the emperor, seeing the action being guided by divine will. This was a time when many determined and powerful bishops saw their authority repeatedly called into question by the emperor's interference in matters they considered to be of the greatest importance, that is the salvation of human souls through the teaching of the right, saving doctrine.³⁷⁴ In the fifth century, bishops were often deposed, banned, or imprisoned on account of their faith. The church was obviously far more firmly established as an institution in Roman society, and bishops had become important power players. Therefore, it is not surprising to see church leaders engage in a more systematic critique of the role of the state in the church and of the

³⁷³ Carlos Galvão-Sobrinho, *Doctrine and Power: Theological Controversy and Christian Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013) 78-79.

³⁷⁴ Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity*, 33.

traditional framework of state-church relations in place since the time of Constantine.

Bishops never lost sight of the fact that the emperors played a significant role in the triumph of Christianity, and that their patronage had empowered the church. However, ecclesiastical leaders had no qualms about questioning emperors' claims to have the right to interfere in the church. This new outlook, I have suggested, is what informed the accounts of the fifth-century ecclesiastical historians. An important difference to note between Socrates, and Sozomen and Theodoret, was the locale of the historians. Not only were the latter historians writing in provinces far from the emperor's gaze in Constantinople, but in provinces where Christological disputes, such as the Arian and Nestorian Controversies, waged more fiercely and where imperial interference in the church caused enormous disruption, alienating large sections of an increasingly disgruntled episcopate.³⁷⁵

What, then, does the story of Julian's death teach us about the religious and political history of late antiquity? The story would seem to be a mirror of the vast changes Roman society was going through in an arc of a century or so since his death. Some accounts, such as those of Gregory Nazianzus and (early) Libanius, who wrote during the immediate aftermath of the Persian expedition and the revolt of Procopius, reflect a great deal of political anxiety. Others, such as Ammianus, who tried to rehabilitate the memory and reign of Julian, attempting to depict Julian as the philosopher ruler that all emperors should emulate, had other concerns in mind at a time when paganism was being proscribed. Ammianus, in particular, who understood the church was there to stay, by comparing Julian to Socrates,

³⁷⁵ Council of Ephesus, *Sess. Vii*; Eusebius, *VC*, 2.69.

might have used Julian's death to portray an ideal ruler, who stood above the fray of religious divisions and gave an example of tolerance. Ultimately, I hope that this thesis has proven unequivocally that these death narratives need to be analyzed further, and not just used as the latter bookend of Julian's life.

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Appendix A: Constantinian Dynasty taken from Frederic Madden's "Christian Emblems on the Coins of Constantine I the Great, His Family and His Successors". Kessinger Publishing: Whitefish, MT. 2004.

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Fig. 2: Map of Julian as Caesar in Gaul. Ancient World Mapping Center. "À-la-carte". <<http://awmc.unc.edu/awmc/applications/alacarte/>> [Accessed: October 23, 2013 3:32pm].

Fig. 3: Map of Julian as Emperor. Ancient World Mapping Center. "À-la-carte". <<http://awmc.unc.edu/awmc/applications/alacarte/>> [Accessed: October 23, 2013 5:45pm].

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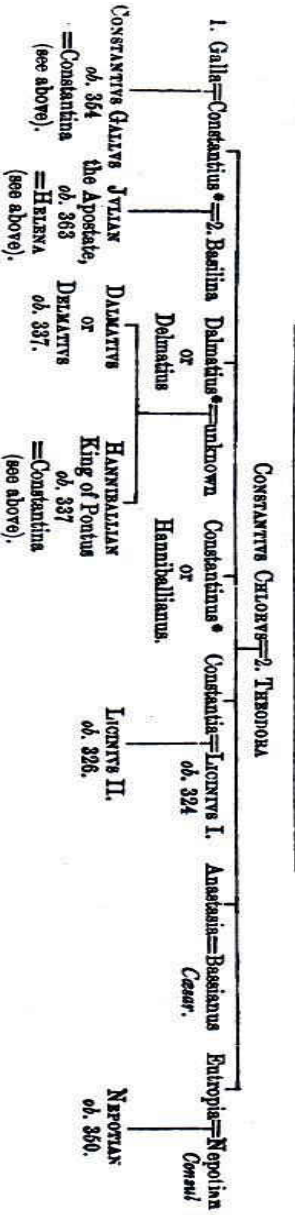
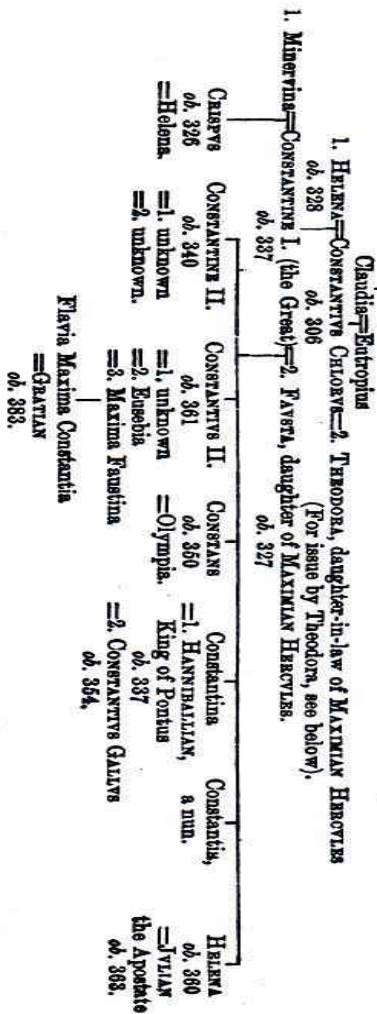
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Appendix A: Constantinian Dynasty

GENEALOGICAL TABLE.

Crispus, brother of the Emperors CLAUDIUS II. and QUINTILLIUS



* The three sons of Theodora are in the "Alexandrian Chronicle" distinguished as *Dalmatus*, *Constantius*, and *Hanniballianus*; but by Zonaras they are named *Constantinus*, *Hanniballianus*, and *Constantius*, while Theophanes expressly asserts that Hanniballianus is the same with Dalmatus. The conflicting evidence has been carefully examined by Tillemont, who decides in favour of the "Alexandrian Chronicle," but the question is involved in much obscurity.—(The late Professor Ramsay, Smith's "Dict. of Biog.", 4, v, "Hanniballianus.")

NOTE.—The names in small capitals show those of whom coins are known to exist.

from Frederick Madden's book "Christian Emblems on the Coins of Constantine I. the Great, His Family, and His Successors"

Appendix B: Maps



Figure 1: Julian's Early Life & Education

This map shows cities central to Julian's early life and education. Those places where Julian studied are starred on the map. Other cities depicted on the map with open circles are relatively significant to other parts of Julian's life, or were affected by his reign. For example, Dadastana is the location of the death of Jovian, the immediate successor to Julian.

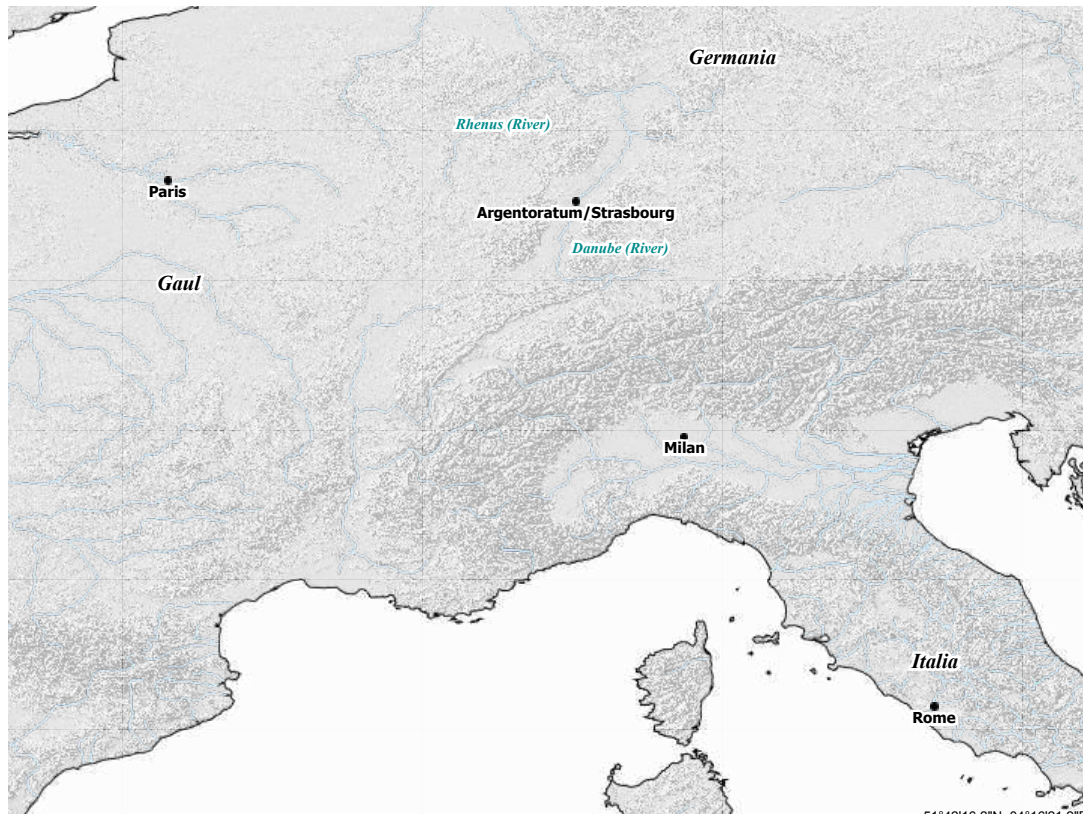


Figure 2: Julian as Caesar in Gaul

This map shows the major cities of the West in which Julian spent his time as Caesar, with the exception of Rome, which Julian never entered.

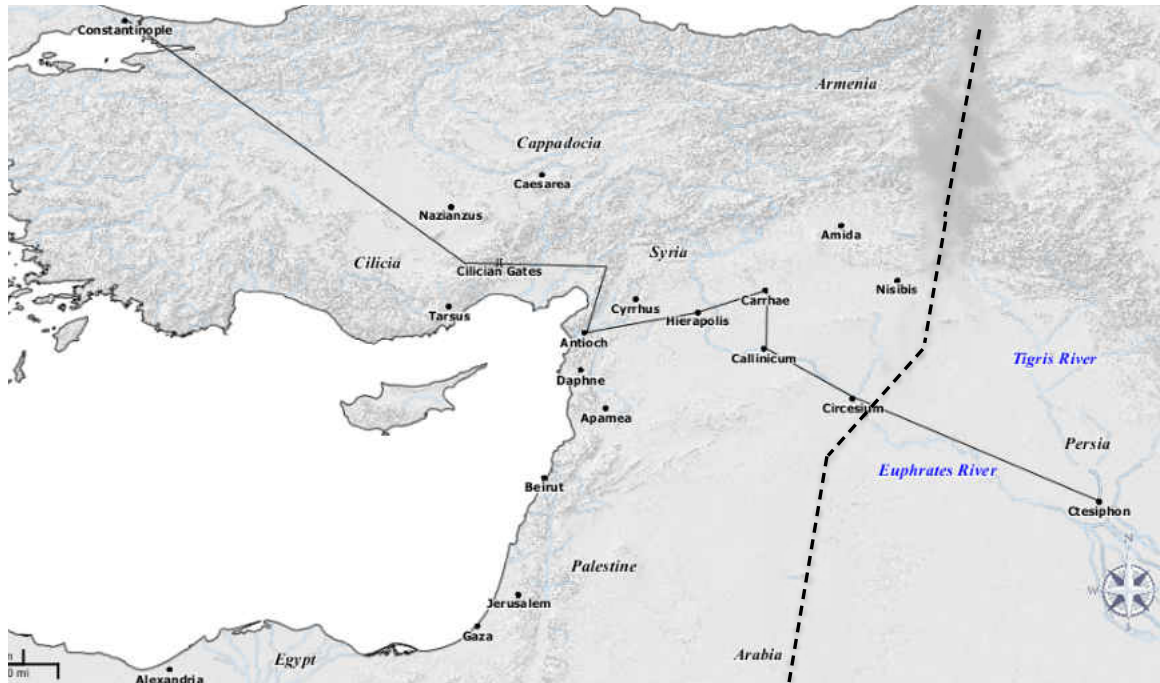


Figure 3: Julian's Expedition to Persia

This map shows the Roman Near East during the reign of Julian. It includes Julian's route to Persia from Constantinople to Ctesiphon. The dotted line is the approximate border between the Roman and Persian empires. The cities on the map were those directly affected by Julian in some way. For example, Nisibis and Amida (just south of Armenia) were lost to the Persians in Jovian's peace negotiations with Persia, after Julian's death.

Appendix C: Gregory Nazianzus's Second *Invective Against Julian* (Or. 5.13-14)

13. Up to this point, such is the universal account; but thenceforward, one and the same story is not told by all, but different accounts are reported and made up by different people, both of those present at the battle, and those not present; for some say that he was hit by a dart from the Persians, when engaged in a disorderly skirmish, as he was running hither and thither in his consternation; and the same fate befell him as it did to Cyrus, son of Parysatis, who went up with the Ten Thousand against his brother Artaxerxes, and by fighting inconsiderately threw away the victory through his rashness. Others, however, tell some such story as this respecting his end: that he had gone up upon a lofty hill to take a view of the army and ascertain how much was left him for carrying on the war; and that when he saw the number considerable and superior to his expectation, he exclaimed, "What a dreadful thing if we shall bring back all these fellows to the land of the Romans!" as though he begrudged them a safe return. Whereupon one of his officers, being indignant and not able to repress his rage, ran him through the bowels, without caring for his own life. Others tell that the deed was done by a barbarian jester, such as follow the camp, "for purpose of driving away ill humor and for amusing the men when they are drinking." At any rate, he receives a wound truly seasonable and salutary for the whole world, and by a single cut from his slaughterer he pays the penalty for the many entrails of victims to which he had trusted (to his own destruction); but what surprises me, is how the vain man that fancied he learnt the future from that means, knew nothing of the wound about to be inflicted on his own entrails! The concluding reflection is for once very appropriate: the *liver* of the victim was the approved means for reading the Future, and it was precisely in that organ that the arch-diviner received the fatal thrust.

14. One action of this person deserves not to be passed over in silence, as it contains, to wind up many others, the strongest exemplification of his madness. He was lying upon the bank of the river, and in a very bad way from his wound, when, remembering that many of those before his time who had aimed at glory, in order that they might be thought something higher than mortals, had (through some contrivances of their own) disappeared from amongst men, and thereby got themselves accounted gods; so he, being filled with a craving for similar glory, and at the same time ashamed of the manner of his end (by reason of the disgrace arising from his temerity), what does he contrive and what do? For not even with life does wickedness become extinct. He endeavors to *throw his body* into the river, and for this purpose he was using the assistance of some of his confidants and accomplices in his secret doings! And had not one of the imperial eunuchs perceived what was going on, and telling it to the rest out of disgust at the extravagant notion, prevented his purpose from being effected—why, another new god born out of an accident, would have manifested himself to the stupid! And he, having thus reigned, thus commanded his army, closed his life in this way.

Appendix D: Libanius's *Lament Over Julian* (Or. 17.23-36)

23. Who then was it who forged the spear that was to have such power? What god sent a daring horseman against our emperor, or aimed the spear at his breast? Or was it no god, but his compulsive zeal to alarm and arouse an army sluggish, unused to activity and for the greater part unacquainted with wounds? Yet though he had no thought for his own safety, the wonder is that Aphrodite or Athena did not rescue him.

24. For they would have been merely imitating their ancient feats of rescue, when one of them rescued Menelaus and the other Paris, though he was a criminal and deserved throttling. But what discussion took place in heaven then? Who rose to accuse Ares, as Poseidon once did, when our wounded emperor still breathing was borne away on his shield and the whole army lamented and their weapons dropped from their hands, as the oars dropped from the hands of Odysseus' comrades in the Sicilian strait?

25. Then surely there was a lament of the Muses and laments in Boeotia and Thrace and their beloved hills as they bewailed the lawlessness that had overtaken earth and sea and sky, and, besides, how they had been robbed of their altar feasts.

26. We, too, lament him according to our professions. Philosophers bewail the death of one who was their companion in their investigations of the works of Plato. Rhetors bewail one who was an expert in oratory and the criticism of oratory. Litigants requiring a just decision bewail him, a judge more upright than Rhadamanthys.

27. Ah, the poor peasantry! What a prey you will be to those appointed to collect your taxes! Alas for the power of the town councils, even now in decline and soon to become a mere shadow! Alas for the governors of cities! Vanished will be the reality of your titles, as though in the ritual of procession, and the ruler will be under the thumb of the ruled! Alas for the cries of the oppressed poor! How fruitlessly will you rise to heaven! Alas for the regiments of the army, who have lost an emperor who on campaign shared the rations of the rank and file! Alas for the laws which might justly have been held to be those of Apollo and are now trampled underfoot! Alas for oratory, for the power and strength it won and, no sooner won, lost! Alas for the hands of the secretaries, whose speed could not equal the eloquence of his tongue! Alas for the disaster that afflicts the whole world!

28. This was a second flood in mid-summer or a visitation of fire, such as they say was kindled when Phaethon drove his chariot. Yet this is something far more pitiful. Then the earth was empty: now the good are outraged by the bad, and the cities are for wickedness as abundant fodder for a beast, that it can fatten upon them.

29. When a man ails in soul and is full of base desires, it is better for him to die rather than to live with the better part of his soul held in bondage by the worse. So now it would be better for the whole world also to lie hidden under perpetual storm rather than to be girdled with cities and to produce a race of men among whom vice is held in honor and virtue dishonored.

30. Breathe freely again, you Celts. Dance for joy, you Goths. Raise your cry of triumph, you Sarmatians. The yoke upon has been broken and your necks are free. This then was what was meant when the temple of Apollo was wasted by fire, that the god abandoned the earth

since it was going to be defiled. This was the meaning of the earthquakes that shook the entire world: they were harbingers of the riot and disorder to come.

31. Most excellent of emperors, in all your mighty deeds, you used to spare a thought for me who praise you and for my oratory that would praise your deeds. I trained my intellect so that I should not be inadequate to deal with your achievements, like a wrestler continually in training and aware that a strong challenger was coming to meet him. Well, now I tell of his deed and I shall do so. I shall not dishonor them by silence, but it will be others who hear my strains. He who gained the victories lies in his grave, cutting short the fine and noble hopes of the world.

32. The blow fell on Agamemnon, but he was king of Mycenae. Upon Cresphontes, but he was king of Messene. Upon Codrus, but he was acting in obedience to an oracle. Upon Ajax, but he was a weak-hearted general; and on Achilles, but he was ruled by love and anger, a turbulent character on the whole; and on Cyrus, but he had sons to succeed him, and on Cambyses, but he was mad. Alexander died, but by no enemy hand, and he was besides one who might have given grounds for criticism. Yet the emperor who ruled over all from the west to the rising sun, whose soul was filled with virtue, still a young man and with no sons to follow him, he has been done away with by some Persian.

33. At the news I gazed up to heaven expecting bloody drops of rain to fall, such as Zeus showered over Sarpedon, but I saw them not. Yet perhaps he did scatter them over his corpse but this was not noticed in the dust of battler and the blood of the slain.

34. Alas for the shrines, the temples and the statues that are now cast out from the palaces! He set you up to be witnesses near by of his achievements, and now you are cast out in dishonor by those who proclaim that they are purging the place. Alas for the tears you cause to be shed for you! You are lamented not, as the poet says, "for the day," but you keep men stricken with grief, and shall do so, "while rivers run and trees grow tall."

35. Men before now have stoned to death on the spot messengers of your passing, as though they were the actual murderers or the bearers of impossible tidings, just as if they had told of the death of some god. Men before now have passed their son's grave with never a tear, but whenever they gaze upon your statue, floods of tears well up, as some address you as son, others as father, but all alike as their protector.

36. Alas for the bereavement that has afflicted the whole world. You cured it of its ill like a good physician, and then delivered it up once more to fever and its earlier ailments. Alas for my forlorn old age and double grief! I mourn for my emperor as others do, and I mourn a companion and a friend.

Appendix E: Libanius's *Funeral Oration Over Julian* (Or. 18.267-275)

267. So far his progress was a triumphant one and a pleasant tale for me to tell, but hereafter—alas, you gods and spirits and fickleness of fortune!—what a story I am forced to relate! Would you prefer me to draw a veil over the sequel and to stop my tale on this note of success? Blessings light upon you, gentlemen, for your cries of grief! What then is your wish? That I give way to lamentation or say on? It appears that, sorrow-stricken at the event as you are, you yet demand an account of it, and so I must speak on, and put a stop to a *false* report current about his death.

268. The Persians were now in despair: they had been brought to their knees, and feared that our army, already in possession of the best of their territory, would make their winter quarters there. They had chosen their envoys and were counting out the gifts to send, including even a crown, and they intended to dispatch the embassy next day to plead for peace, leaving Julian to define the terms. Then part of the column was detached from the rest; some of the troops were engaged in defending themselves against their assailants and the rest, without noticing, continued on their way, while a violent storm suddenly arose, gathering clouds of dust and whirling them along, an encouragement to any who wished to do us hurt. The emperor was riding in haste with only one attendant as escort to repair the gap in the ranks, when a cavalryman's spear pierced him. He was without armor: confident in his success, apparently, he had taken no precautions, and the spear passed through his arm and penetrated his side.

269. Our noble emperor fell to the ground and, seeing the blood gushing out, he wanted to conceal what had occurred. He remounted straightaway, but when the bloodstains showed that he was wounded, he called out to everyone he met not to be afraid about his wound, for it was not fatal. That was what he said, but he was already beginning to succumb. He was carried to his tent, to his soft bed and the lion skin and straw of which it was made.

270. The doctors said that there was no hope, and the army, hearing the news that he was dying, all began to wail and beat their breasts and drench the ground with tears. Their weapons fell from their hands and were cast aside, and they thought that no messenger even would ever get back home from there with the news.

271. But the Persians offered the gifts destined for Julian to the gods of their salvation; they began to dine at their usual table, when up to now they had used the ground instead; they dressed their hair in its accustomed style, having neglected to do so during the whole time of crisis, and their behavior at the death of that single man was just as though their enemies had utterly disappeared, swallowed up by the earth. Both sides then were convinced that the Roman success depended on his genius, the Romans by their lamentations, believing they were lost, the Persians by their rapturous rejoicing, believing that they were already victorious.

272. You can gather his courage even from his last words. When all about him gave themselves up to lamentation and not even the philosophers could restrain themselves, he reproved them all, but especially the philosophers. The exploits of his lifetime would take him to the Islands of the Blest, he said, yet they bewailed him as though he had lived a life worthy

of Tartarus. His tent was like the prison that had held Socrates, the company like the company there, his wound the poison, and his words those of Socrates. Socrates was the only one not to be in tears: so was he.

273. His friends begged him to appoint a successor to the throne, but he saw nobody anything like himself and remitted the decision to the army, bidding them do their utmost to save themselves, for he had spared himself no toil in saving them.

274. Who was it that killed him, you would like to know. I do not know his name, but that his murderer did not belong to the enemy is clearly proved by the fact that none of the enemy received any reward for killing him. But the Persian king issued a proclamation and invited his killer to claim a reward, and if he had come forward he could have obtained a great prize, yet nobody boasted of doing it, not even in his desire for reward.

275. Indeed, we should be very grateful to the enemy for not claiming credit for what they had not done, and for allowing us to seek his murderer from among ourselves. For those fellows, who found his existence detrimental to themselves and whose whole manner of life was contrary to the law, these had long conspired against him, and then at last seized their chance and acted. The motives that drove them to it were their natural wickedness, that had no scope under his government, and more especially, the honors paid to the gods, where their ambitions were poles apart from his.

Appendix F: Libanius's *Upon the Avenging of Julian* (Or. 24.6-30)

6. Our renowned Julian received that blow in the side as he strove to unite part of his line that had broken, spurring his towards them, cheering and threatening. The assailant who inflicted the wound was a Taiene, acting in obedience to their leader's command. This action, indeed, would probably secure for the chief a reward from the people who were keen to have him killed. So he made the most of the opportunity offered by the prevailing confusion and the winds and swirling dust to strike him and retire.

7. He fell immediately but then remounted and supervised the dispositions for the safety of the line, and though he saw his blood gushing out, he did not stop busying himself with such considerations until he lost consciousness. So he was carried to his tent and, when all around him stood weeping, he was the only one to shed no tear. He uttered no word of regret for his campaign but commended himself for it, and remarked that he was sorry, not at the necessity of dying, but at leaving his army leaderless. Then, with his gaze already on the gods to whom he was soon to be translated, he gave up his life.

8. Another man took his place as emperor. He should have supported his dead predecessor without delay, and should have marked the commencement of his reign by punishing his death, but he decided that this was superfluous and pointless. So the dead body was brought home, to the jeers of those who had contrived such a crime. In the many peace parleys held with the Persians not a whisper was heard that any of them had been rewarded for the murder, even though a reward was to be expected.

9. I feel that the gods were angered against that emperor and so he was compelled to make peace on terms such that the enemy gained more than they could ever have dreamed of, the whole of Armenia, the acquisition of the important frontier city of Nisibis, and many strong fortresses.

10. However, he may not have been able to institute such an enquiry for reasons that I think are obvious, the speedy death that befell him: but when the two brothers [Valens and Valentinian] came to the throne, there was the same slackness in avenging him. They showed great concern about his tomb, and for the expense it involved also, but still they were ready to meet it, and sent supervisors whom they questioned on their return. In short, their desire was to appear enthusiastic for a magnificent memorial for him.

11. So far, so good; not so the sequel, for they did not so much please by their action as displease by their inaction. It would have been better for them to have done what they shirked and to have shirked making such arrangements in preference to behaving as they actually did. Nobody is pleased with a handsome monument to innocent victims of murder as much as with the punishment of the murderer. Well, it was the current story that the murderer was from our side, and that it was a scandal that he was not brought to book, but they were not moved by it as they should have been, and they did not summon the members of their council to make enquiries into the murder, even though the disasters they suffered constantly reminded them of the matter.

12. The Sarmatians crossed the Danube with no fear of the invincible army of the senior of the two, and they ravaged the wholly prosperous province of Illyria, and transferred

to their own country all that prosperity, the fruits of many a long year. One may well wonder at the grief of the local governor that caused him to be of the opinion that his was year of mourning, not of consular rank: but what must we consider the origin of such venturesome activities by our inferiors?

13. In my opinion, it is to be found here. Also, the revolt of the pretender, that brought the cities to utter disaster and caused the junior of the two emperors to inflict and to experience great suffering, may be ascribed to the same cause—and much more so in the case of the revolt that followed. Procopius at least, whatever else he might be, was a relative of Julian. In fear and hiding and in daily expectation of arrest, fleeing from the death he anticipated, he made his final throw; but for men, on whom he had lavished kindness, to whom he had granted honors and whom he accounted his friends, for them to share his table and yet engage in such a plot against him, this must surely arise from the cause I have assigned.

14. The bloodshed both here and in Rome denotes the wrath of heaven, and in consequence of this some met their doom and others expected it. Panic reigned over land and sea. I am not criticizing the emperors: they were within their rights to impose on proven criminals the penalty prescribed by law, but the very fact that countless people proved deserving of the extreme penalty, and that the majority of them belonged to families of renown, confirms my assertion that the world is harassed by some supernatural power.

15. These last disasters are obviously those of an ill-starred people. We have lost twenty-five provinces, and the natives who lived outside walled towns have been taken off as prisoners, while those inside eat up everything they have and then, when they die of starvation, they are not even buried, but their relatives drag them up to the top of the wall and throw the poor wretches down from there, naked.

16. Such is the carnival that the Goths have held. Up to now they used to shiver every time they heard mention of the Romans' skill in warfare, but now they are victorious, and we die, nobly and as befits brave men, but perishing all the same. And now that those who have spent their lives in arms have gone, we resort to our peasantry. We can expect the worst and have no gleam of hope unless you take my advice, Sire, and do away with what I affirm to be the cause of our troubles.

17. Some persons, I suppose, will say that I am inventing a murder that never happened, for, according to them, his murderer was one of the enemy. Now I will not argue the point that a Persian would never have dared to come into the midst of our army unless bent on suicide, or that if their numbers had been greater, the number of these killed would have been greater too. The fact remains that he was the only one to be killed, and no one near him and none of his bodyguard suffered a scratch, nor indeed was likely to, since Julian was the prize and Julian the target against whom he was dispatched.

18. I repeat what I have stated previously: since that time there have many embassies to the Persian king, and it is the usual thing for Persians to plume themselves on recollection of their successes, and they often tell the tale of the disasters they have caused the Romans and of any emperor they have slain. Yet neither the Persian king himself, nor any of his

generals nor any private individual even is known to have claimed for any Persian the responsibility for his death.

19. It is said that there is no representation of the even in the picture, where it certainly would have appeared if this was how it happened, since it would been so much to their credit, but he appears there as a lion breathing out fire. They have depicted all that they suffered, but they have not added anything they knew they had not done, nor did they take credit for what had not occurred.

20. The most telling point is that Victor, Salustius and the rest of the envoys sent to arrange a peace settlement were asked by Sapor if the Romans were not ashamed to have shown no concern for avenging Julian after he had been the only one to fall. That is the clearest possible indication of the real nature of the business. "Why!" he exclaimed, "when one of my commanders was killed, I flayed alive the men who failed to die at his side, and I sent their heads to console his kinsmen." Sapor would never have used such words of reproof if the deed had been done by one of the enemy, for how could they punish anyone they could not lay their hands on?

21. If then he died by a spear thrust, and this was not inflicted by a Persian, it follows that the murderer was one of our people, who did themselves or somebody else a good turn by assassinating him so that the religion of the gods should fall into dishonor, for they almost burst with rage at the honor in which it was held.

22. But there has been none to come forward as accuser or informant, it may be retorted. But for all that, you ought to investigate the matter and sit in judgment upon it for many a day without relaxing. To those who were reluctant to produce proof though able to do so, you should have applied suasion, encouragement and incentive. You ought to offer rewards, promise gifts and, by Heaven! Use threats so as not to let them stay silent.

23. If you did this, you would have plenty to proclaim the news and to inform you who it was who engineered the assassination, who first got wind of it, by what arguments the murderer was induced to act, the amount of the bribe, the accessories to the crime, where he betook himself after inflicting the wound, and the identity of those boon companions who shared in his triumph.

24. If you made no move, obviously the safest course for anyone who could set up a hue and cry was to keep his mouth shut. Had the emperors stirred themselves, if the governors made it plain that they would not cease their enquiries until the secret came to light, it very quickly would have come to light, for, as it was, there were mutterings in dark corners to tell how the whole business was contrived. Such people considered it the height of folly, when persons who were in duty bound to show their displeasure failed to do so, for others to ask for trouble in their uncertainty whether their action would meet with any approval and in their fear that some harm even might be the consequence.

25. Before now, wayfarers have been murdered, the killers have gone off and enjoyed themselves on the proceeds, and there was nobody to hand them over to the law, but the judge did not give up the case as hopeless and doze off because no prosecutor appeared. No! he moved heaven and earth, let nothing go by default and resolutely applied the sharp eye of

intuition. As a result, murderers have been arrested when they were sure that the crime was beyond proof any kind.

26. The truth has been discovered about many such crimes committed both in cities and far from human habitation. The watch committee do not think it enough merely to consign the victim to his grave, but they approach the governor, make their deposition and describe the incident, and he thinks it his duty to have the miscreant brought to book.

27. So, if we are to be so zealous for any Tom, Dick or Harry, shall we not avenge this prince without peer? If provincial governors have the power to bring such matters to light, shall your imperial power be ineffective in the quest? No indeed! Just show that you will be glad to have the fellows arrested, and people will appear to hand the beasts over to you, once you rid them of fear that they may suffer some harm in consequence for the wealth the murderers have amassed from their positions of office. The fact is, without a word of exaggeration, that though they ought to be punished for a murder like this, they have reaped the fruits of office, as if it were the Persian king they had murdered.

28. Thus, even if your neglect of punishment has not produced the disastrous results I have just related, you ought certainly to give some attention and provide some such protection for those who are summoned to the throne. By the imposition of punishment you will put a stop to such criminals, but if you let them go scot free, you will stir up for yourselves—just what, I will forbear to mention: it does not bear thinking upon! So I have come today, on the face of it, to speak on behalf of Julian, but in fact, on behalf of yourselves, the living emperors. By punishing his death, you cannot give him back his life, but you can at least protect your own. So ensure that your soldiers risk their lives for their leaders, or, if they refuse to do so, that at least they do not behave like enemies towards them.

29. If a general or military officer had met some such fate, I would expect you to attack their murderers, in case the continuance of the practice should result in a progression from lesser victims to the greatest. As things are, it was against the head of state that that horseman and his steel delivered the stroke in the heat of battle, sent upon that errand by a wicked cabal from some foul tent of dire conspiracy. Sire, there may perhaps be yet other rascals lurking in a solitary tent, enemies of their own leaders. Nature could never improve them, but fear perhaps may restrain them.

30. But to revert to my point: even if no danger to the empire were involved, it would still be right and proper for you to put an end to their enormities by means of your anger at what they have done. In fact, however unwilling you may be, you cannot help doing so. These aggressors who inspire panic in the inhabitants of Rome itself, though they be many days' distance removed from it, counsel you to take thought for avenging him; and when that is done, there will be no more trouble from the Goths.

Appendix G: Ammianus Marcellinus's *Res Gestae* (25.3.1-25.4.27)

1. When we set forward, the Persians, who had learnt by their frequent defeats to shun pitched battles, laid secret ambuscades on our road, and, occupying the hills on each side, continually reconnoitered our battalions as they marched, so that our soldiers, being kept all day on the watch, could neither find time to erect ramparts round their camp, or to fortify themselves with palisades.
2. And while our flanks were strongly guarded, and the army proceeded onward in as good order as the nature of the ground would allow, being formed in squares, though not quite closed up, suddenly news was brought to the emperor, who had gone on unarmed to reconnoiter the ground in front, that our rear was attacked.
3. He, roused to anger by this mishap, without stopping to put on his breastplate, snatched up his shield in a hurry, and while hastening to support his rear, was recalled by fresh news that the van which he had quitted was now exposed to a similar attack.
4. Without a thought of personal danger, he now hastened to strengthen this division, and then, on another side, a troop of Persian cuirassiers attacked his center, and pouring down with vehemence on his left wing, which began to give way, as our men could hardly bear up against the foul smell and horrid cries of the elephants, they pressed us hard with spears and clouds of arrows.
5. The emperor flew to every part of the field where the danger was hottest; and our light-armed troops dashing out wounded the backs of the Persians, and the hocks of the animals, which were turned the other way.
6. Julian, disregarding all care for his own safety, made signs by waving his hands, and shouted out that the enemy were fleeing in consternation; and cheering on his men to the pursuit, threw himself eagerly into the conflict. His guards called out to him from all sides to beware of the mass of fugitives who wore scattered in consternation, as he would beware of the fall of an ill-built roof, when suddenly a cavalry spear, grazing the skin of his arm, pierced his side, and fixed itself in the bottom of his liver.
7. He tried to pull it out with his right hand, and cut the sinews of his fingers with the double-edged point of the weapon; and, falling from his horse, he was borne with speed by the men around him to his tent; and the physician tried to relieve him.
8. Presently, when his pain was somewhat mitigated, so that his apprehensions were relieved, contending against death with great energy, he asked for arms and a horse, in order that, by revisiting his troops, who were still engaged, he might restore their confidence, and appear so secure of his own recovery as to have room for anxiety for the safety of others; with the same

energy, though with a different object, with which the celebrated leader, Epaminondas, when he was mortally wounded at Mantinea, and had been borne out of the battle, asked anxiously for his shield; and when he saw it he died of his wound cheerfully, having been in fear for the loss of his shield, while quite fearless about the loss of his life.

9. But as Julian's strength was inferior to his firmness, and as he was weakened by the loss of blood, he remained without moving: and presently he gave up all hope of life; because, on inquiry, he found that the place where he had fallen was called Phrygia; for he had been assured by an oracle that he was destined to die in Phrygia.

10. When he was brought back to his tent, it was marvelous with what eagerness the soldiers flew to avenge him, agitated with anger and sorrow; and striking their spears against their shields, determined to die if Fate so willed it. And although vast clouds of dust obscured their sight, and the burning heat hindered the activity of their movements, still, as if they were released from all military discipline by the loss of their chief, they rushed unshrinkingly on the enemy's swords.

11. On the other hand the Persians, fighting with increased spirit, shot forth such clouds of arrows, that we could hardly see the shooters through them; while the elephants, slowly marching in front, by the vast size of their bodies, and the formidable appearance of their crests, terrified alike our horses and our men.

12. And far off was heard the clashing of armed men, the groans of the dying, the snorting of the horses, and the clang of swords, till both sides were weary of inflicting wounds, and the darkness of night put an end to the contest.

13. Fifty nobles and satraps of the Persians, with a vast number of the common soldiers, were slain; and among them, two of their principal generals, Merena and Nohodares. Let the grandiloquence of antiquity marvel at the twenty battles fought by Marcellus in different places; let it add Sicinius Dentatus, adorned with his mass of military crowns; let it further extol Sergius, who is said to have received twenty-three wounds in his different battles, among whose posterity was that last Catiline, who tarnished the glories of his distinguished family by everlasting infamy.

14. But sorrow now overpowered the joy at this success. While the conflict was thus carried on after the withdrawal of the emperor, the right wing of the army was exhausted by its exertions; and Anatolius, at that time the master of the offices, was killed; Sallust the prefect was in imminent danger, and was saved only by the exertions of his attendant, so that at last he escaped, while Sophorius his counselor was killed; and certain soldiers, who, after great danger, had thrown themselves into a neighboring fort, were unable to rejoin the main army till three days afterwards.

15. And while these events were taking place, Julian, lying in his tent, thus addressed those who stood around him sorrowing and mourning: "The seasonable moment for my surrendering this life, O comrades, has now arrived, and, like an honest debtor, I exult in preparing to restore what nature reclaims; not in affliction and sorrow, since I have learnt, from the general teaching of philosophers, how much more capable of happiness the mind is than the body; and considering that when the better part is separated from the worse, it is a subject of joy rather than of mourning. Reflecting, also, that there have been instances in which even the gods have given to some persons of extreme piety, death as the best of all rewards.

16. "And I well know that it is intended as a gift of kindness to me, to save me from yielding to arduous difficulties, and from forgetting or losing myself; knowing by experience that all sorrows, while they triumph over the weak, flee before those who endure them manfully.

17. "Nor have I to repent of any actions; nor am I oppressed by the recollection of any grave crime, either when I was kept in the shade, and, as it were, in a corner, or after I arrived at the empire, which, as an honor conferred on me by the gods, I have preserved, as I believe, unstained. In civil affairs I have ruled with moderation, and, whether carrying on offensive or defensive war, have always been under the influence of deliberate reason; prosperity, however, does not always correspond to the wisdom of man's counsels, since the powers above reserve to themselves the regulation of results.

18. "But always keeping in mind that the aim of a just sovereign is the advantage and safety of his subjects, I have been always, as you know, inclined to peace, eradicating all licentiousness—that great corruptress of things and manners—by every part of my own conduct; and I am glad to feel that in whatever instances the republic, like an imperious mother, has exposed me deliberately to danger, I have stood firm, inured to brave all fortuitous disturbing events.

19. "Nor am I ashamed to confess that I have long known, from prophecy, that I should fall by the sword. And therefore do I venerate the everlasting God that I now die, not by any secret treachery, nor by a long or severe disease, or like a condemned criminal, but I quit the world with honor, fairly earned, in the midst of a career of flourishing glory. For, to any impartial judge, that man is base and cowardly who seeks to die when he ought not, or who avoids death when it is seasonable for him.

20. "This is enough for me to say, since my strength is failing me; but I designedly forbear to speak of creating a new emperor, lest I should unintentionally pass over some worthy man; or, on the other hand, if I should name one whom I think proper, I should expose him to danger in the event of some one else being preferred. But, as an honest child of the republic, I hope that a good sovereign will be found to succeed me."

21. After having spoken quietly to this effect, he, as it were with the last effort of his pen, distributed his private property among his dearest friends, asking for Anatolius, the master of the offices. And when the prefect Sallust replied that he was now happy, he understood that he was slain, and bitterly bewailed the death of his friend, though he had so proudly disregarded his own.

22. And as all around were weeping, he reproved them with still undiminished authority, saying that it was a humiliating thing to mourn for an emperor who was just united to heaven and the stars.

23. And as they then became silent, he entered into an intricate discussion with the philosophers Maximus and Priscus on the sublime nature of the soul, while the wound of his pierced side was gaping wide. At last the swelling of his veins began to choke his breath, and having drunk some cold water, which he had asked for, he expired quietly about midnight, in the thirty-first year of his age. He was born at Constantinople, and in his childhood lost his father, Constantius, who, after the death of his brother Constantine, perished amid the crowd of competitors for the vacant crown. And at the same early age he lost his mother, Basilina, a woman descended from a long line of noble ancestors.

25.4.1. Julian was a man to be classed with heroic characters, and conspicuous for the brilliancy of his exploits and his innate majesty. For since, as wise men lay it down, there are four cardinal virtues—temperance, prudence, justice, and fortitude—with corresponding external accessories, such as military skill, authority, prosperity, and liberality, he eagerly cultivated them all as if they had been but one.

2. And in the first place, he was of a chastity so inviolate that, after the loss of his wife he never indulged in any sexual pleasures, recollecting what is told in Plato of Sophocles the tragedian, that being asked when he was a very old man whether he still had any commerce with women, he said "No," with this further addition, that "he was glad to say that he had at all times avoided such indulgence as a tyrannous and cruel master."

3. And to strengthen this resolution he often called to mind the words of the lyric poet Bacchylides, whom he used to read with pleasure, and who said that as a fine painter makes a handsome face, so chastity adorns a life that aims at greatness. And even when in the prime of life he so carefully avoided this taint that there was never the least suspicion of his becoming enamored even of any of his household, as has often happened.

4. And this kind of temperance increased in him, being strengthened by a sparing indulgence in eating and sleeping, to which he rigidly adhered whether abroad or at home. For in time of peace his frugal allowance of food was a marvel to all who knew him, as resembling that of a man always wishing to resume the philosopher's cloak. And in his various campaigns he used commonly only to take a little plain food while standing, as is the custom of soldiers.

5. And when after being fatigued by labor he had refreshed his body with a short rest, as soon as he awoke he would go by himself round all the sentries and outposts; after which he retired to his serious studies.
6. And if any voice could bear witness to his use of the nocturnal lamp, by which he pursued his lucubrations, it would show that there was a vast difference between some emperors and him, who did not even indulge himself in those pleasures permitted by the necessities of human nature.
7. Of his prudence there were also many proofs, of which it will be sufficient to recount a few. He was profoundly skilled in war, and also in the arts of peace. He was very attentive to courtesy, claiming just so much respect as he considered sufficient to mark the difference between contempt and insolence. He was older in virtue than in years, being eager to acquire all kinds of knowledge. He was a most incorruptible judge, a rigid censor of morals and manners, mild, a despiser of riches, and indeed of all mortal things. Lastly, it was a common saying of his, "That it was beneath a wise man, since he had a soul, to aim at acquiring praise by his body."
8. Of his justice there are many conspicuous proofs: first, because, with all proper regard to circumstances and persons, he inspired awe without being cruel; secondly, because he repressed vice by making examples of a few, and also because he threatened severe punishment more frequently than he employed it.
9. Lastly, to pass over many circumstances, it is certain that he treated with extreme moderation some who were openly convicted of plotting against him, and mitigated the rigor of the punishment to which they were sentenced with genuine humanity.
10. His many battles and constant wars displayed his fortitude, as did his endurance of extreme cold and heat. From a common soldier we require the services of the body, from an emperor those of the mind. But having boldly thrown himself into battle, he would slay a ferocious foe at a single blow; and more than once he by himself checked the retreat of our men at his own personal risk. And when he was putting down the rule of the furious Germans, and also in the scorching sands of Persia, he encouraged his men by fighting in the front ranks of his army.
11. Many well-known facts attest his skill in all that concerns a camp; his storming of cities and castles amid the most formidable dangers; the variety of his tactics for battles, the skill he showed in choosing healthy spots for his camps, the safe principles on which his lines of defense and outposts were managed.
12. So great was his authority, that while he was feared he was also greatly loved as his men's comrade in their perils and dangers. And in the hottest struggles he took notice of cowards for

punishment. And while he was yet only Caesar, he kept his soldiers in order while confronting the barbarians, and destitute of pay as I have mentioned before. And haranguing his discontented troops, the threat, which he used, was that he would retire into private life if they continued mutinous.

13. Lastly, this single instance will do as well as many, by haranguing the Gallic legions, who were accustomed to the frozen Rhine, in a simple address, he persuaded them to traverse vast regions and to march through the warm plains of Assyria to the borders of Media.

14. His good fortune was so conspicuous that, riding as it were on the shoulders of Fortune, who was long his faithful guide, he overcame enormous difficulties in his victorious career. And after he quitted the regions of the west, they all remained quiet during his lifetime, as if under the influence of a wand powerful enough to tranquillize the world.

15. Of his liberality there are many and undoubted proofs. Among which are his light exactions of tribute, his remission of the tribute of crowns, and of debts long due, his putting the rights of individuals on an equal footing with those of the treasury, his restoration of their revenues and their lands to different cities, with the exception of such as had been lawfully sold by former princes; and also the fact that he was never covetous of money, which he thought was better kept by its owners, often quoting the saying, "that Alexander the Great, when he was asked where he kept his treasures, kindly answered 'Among my friends.' "

16. Having discussed those of his good qualities, which have come within our knowledge, let us now proceed to unfold his faults, though they have been already slightly noticed. He was of an unsteady disposition; but this fault he corrected by an excellent plan, allowing people to set him right when guilty of indiscretion.

17. He was a frequent talker, rarely silent. Too much devoted to divination, so much so as in this particular to equal the emperor Hadrian. He was rather a superstitious than a legitimate observer of sacred rites, sacrificing countless numbers of victims; so that it was reckoned that if he had returned from the Parthians there would have been a scarcity of cattle. Like the celebrated case of Marcus Caesar, about whom it was written, as it is said, "The white cattle to Marcus Caesar, greeting. If you conquer there is an end of us."

18. He was very fond of the applause of the common people, and an immoderate seeker after praise even in the most trifling matters; often, from a desire of popularity, indulging in conversation with unworthy persons.

19. But in spite of all this he deserved, as he used to say himself, to have it thought that that ancient Justice, whom Aratus says fled to heaven from disgust with the vices of men, had in his reign returned again to the earth; only that sometimes he acted arbitrarily and inconsistently.

20. For he made some laws which, with but few exceptions, were not offensive, though they very positively enforced or forbade certain actions. Among the exceptions was that cruel one which forbade Christian masters of rhetoric and grammar to teach unless they came over to the worship of the heathen gods.

21. And this other ordinance was equally intolerable, namely one which allowed some persons to be unjustly enrolled in the companies of the municipal guilds, though they were foreigners, or by privilege or birth wholly unconnected with such companies.

22. As to his personal appearance it was this. He was of moderate stature, with soft hair, as if he had carefully dressed it, with a rough beard ending in a point, with beautiful brilliant eyes, which displayed the subtlety of his mind, with handsome eyebrows and a straight nose, a rather large mouth, with a drooping lower lip, a thick and stooping neck, large and broad shoulders. From head to foot he was straight and well proportioned, which made him strong and a good runner.

23. And since his detractors have accused him of provoking new wars, to the injury of the commonwealth, let them know the unquestionable truth, that it was not Julian but Constantine who occasioned the hostility of the Parthians by greedily acquiescing in the falsehoods of Metrodorus, as we have already set forth.

24. In consequence of this conduct our armies were slain, numbers of our soldiers were taken prisoners, cities were razed, fortresses were stormed and destroyed, provinces were exhausted by heavy expenses, and in short the Persians, putting their threats into effect, were led to seek to become masters of everything up to Bithynia and the shores of the Propontis.

25. While the Gallic wars grew more and more violent, the Germans overrunning our territories, and being on the point of forcing the passes of the Alps in order to invade Italy, there was nothing to be seen but tears and consternation, the recollection of the past being bitter, the expectation of the future still more woeful. All these miseries, this youth, being sent into the West with the rank of Caesar, put an end to with marvelous celerity, treating the kings of those countries as base-born slaves.

26. Then in order to re-establish the prosperity of the east, with similar energy he attacked the Persians, and would have gained in that country both a triumph and a surname, if the will of heaven had been in accordance with his glorious plans and actions.

27. And as we know by experience that some men are so rash and hasty that if conquered they return to battle, if shipwrecked, to the sea, in short, each to the difficulties by which he has been frequently overcome, so some find fault with this emperor for returning to similar exploits after having been repeatedly victorious.

Appendix H: Socrates of Constantinople *Church History* (3.21)

21. The emperor meanwhile invaded the country of the Persians a little before spring, having learned that the races of Persia were greatly enfeebled and totally spiritless in winter. For from their inability to endure cold, they abstain from military service at that season, and it has become a proverb that 'a Mede will not then draw his hand from underneath his cloak.' And well knowing that the Romans were inured to brave all the rigors of the atmosphere he let them loose on the country. After devastating a considerable tract of country, including numerous villages and fortresses, they next assailed the cities; and having invested the great city Ctesiphon, he reduced the king of the Persians to such straits that the latter sent repeated embassies to the emperor, offering to surrender a portion of his dominions, on condition of his quitting the country, and putting an end to the war. But Julian was unaffected by these submissions, and showed no compassion to a suppliant foe: nor did he think of the adage, 'To conquer is honorable, but to be more than conqueror gives occasion for envy.' Giving credit to the divinations of the philosopher Maximus, with whom he was in continual intercourse, he was deluded into the belief that his exploits would not only equal, but exceed those of Alexander of Macedon; so that he spurned with contempt the entreaties of the Persian monarch. He even supposed in accordance with the teachings of Pythagoras and Plato on 'the transmigration of souls,' that he was possessed of Alexander's soul, or rather that he himself was Alexander in another body. This ridiculous fancy deluded and caused him to reject the negotiations for peace proposed by the king of the Persians. Wherefore the latter convinced of the uselessness of them was constrained to prepare for conflict, and therefore on the next day after the rejection of his embassy, he drew out in order of battle all the forces he had. The Romans indeed censured their prince, for not avoiding an engagement when he might have done so with advantage: nevertheless they attacked those who opposed them, and again put the enemy to flight. The emperor was present on horseback, and encouraged his soldiers in battle; but confiding simply in his hope of success, he wore no armor. In this defenseless state, a dart cast by some one unknown, pierced through his arm and entered his side, making a wound. In consequence of this wound he died. Some say that a certain Persian hurled the javelin, and then fled; others assert that one of his own men was the author of the deed, which indeed is the best-corroborated and most current report. But Callistus, one of his bodyguards, who celebrated this emperor's deeds in heroic verse, says in narrating the particulars of this war, that the wound of which he died was inflicted by a demon. This is possibly a mere poetical fiction, or perhaps it was really the fact; for vengeful furies have undoubtedly destroyed many persons. Be the case however as it may, this is certain, that the ardor of his natural temperament rendered him incautious, his learning made him vain, and his affectation of clemency exposed him to contempt. Thus Julian ended his life in Persia, as we have said, in his fourth consulate, which he bore with Sallust his colleague. This event occurred on the 26th of June, in the third year of his reign, and the seventh from his having been created Caesar by Constantius, he being at that time in the thirty-first year of his age.

Appendix I: Sozomen of Gaza *Church History* (6.1-2)

1. In the heat of the conflict, which ensued, a violent wind arose; and the sky and the sun were totally concealed by the clouds, while the air was at the same time mixed with dust. During the darkness, which was thus produced, a horseman, riding at full gallop, directed his lance against the emperor, and wounded him mortally. After throwing Julian from his horse, the unknown assailant secretly went away. Some conjectured that he was a Persian; others, that he was a Saracen. There are those who insist that he who struck the blow was a Roman soldier, who was indignant at the imprudence and temerity, which the emperor had manifested in exposing his army to such peril. Libanius, the sophist, a native of Syria, the most intimate friend of Julian, expressed himself in the following terms concerning the person who had committed the deed:

“You desire to know by whom the emperor was slain. I know not his name. We have a proof, however, that the murderer was not one of the enemies; for no one came forward to claim the reward, although the king of Persia caused proclamation to be made, by a herald, of the honors to be awarded to him who had performed the deed. We are surely beholden to the enemy for not arrogating to themselves the glory of the action, but for leaving it to us to seek the slayer among ourselves.

Those who sought his death were those who lived in habitual transgression of the laws, and who had formerly conspired against him, and who therefore perpetrated the deed as soon as they could find an opportunity. They were impelled by the desire of obtaining a greater degree of freedom from all control than they could enjoy under his government; and they were, perhaps, mainly stimulated by their indignation at the attachment of the emperor to the service of the gods, to which they were averse.”

2. In the document above quoted, Libanius clearly states that the emperor fell by the hand of a Christian; and this, probably, was the truth. It is not unlikely that some of the soldiers who then served in the Roman army might have conceived the idea, since Greeks and all men until this day have praised tyrannicides for exposing themselves to death in the cause of liberty, and spiritedly standing by their country, their families, and their friends. Still less is he deserving of blame, who, for the sake of God and of religion, performed so bold a deed. Beyond this I know nothing accurately concerning the men who committed this murder besides what I have narrated. All men, however, concur in receiving the account which has been handed down to us, and which evidences his death to have been the result of Divine wrath. A proof of this is the Divine vision which one of his friends had, which I will now proceed to describe. He had, it is related, traveled into Persia, with the intention of joining the emperor. While on the road, he found himself so far from any habitation that he was obliged, on one night, to sleep in a church. He saw, during that night, either in a dream or a vision, all the apostles and prophets assembled together, and complaining of the injuries which the emperor had inflicted on the Church, and consulting concerning the best measures to be

adopted. After much deliberation and embarrassment two individuals arose in the midst of the assembly, desired the others to be of good cheer, and left the company hastily, as if to deprive Julian of the imperial power. He who was the spectator of this marvel did not attempt to pursue his journey, but awaited, in horrible suspense, the conclusion of this revelation. He laid himself down to sleep again, in the same place, and again, he saw the same assembly; the two individuals who had appeared to depart the preceding night to effect their purpose against Julian, suddenly returned and announced his death to the others.

On the same day a vision was sent to Didymus, an ecclesiastical philosopher, who dwelt at Alexandria; and, who, being deeply grieved at the errors of Julian and his persecution of the churches, fasted and offered up supplications to God continually on this account. From the effects of anxiety and want of food during the previous night, he fell asleep while sitting in his chair. Then being, as it were, in an ecstasy, he beheld white horses traversing the air, and heard a voice saying to those who were riding thereon, *“Go and tell Didymus that Julian has been slain just at this hour; let him communicate this intelligence to Athanasius, the bishop, and let him arise and eat.”* I have been credibly informed that the friend of Julian and the philosopher beheld those things. Results proved that neither of them were far from having witnessed the truth. But if these instances do not suffice to prove that the death of Julian was the effect of Divine wrath on account of his persecution of the Church, let the prediction of one of the ecclesiastics be called to mind. When Julian was preparing to enter upon the war against the Persians, he threatened that on the termination of the war he would treat the Christians with severity, and boasted that the Son of the Carpenter would be unable to aid them; the ecclesiastic above mentioned thereupon rejoined, that the Son of the Carpenter was then preparing him a wooden coffin in view of his death.

Julian himself was well aware whence the mortal stroke proceeded, and what was the cause of its infliction; for, it is said, when he was wounded, he took some of the blood that flowed from the wound, and threw it up into the air, as if he had seen Jesus Christ appearing, and intended to throw it at him, in order to reproach him with his slaughter. Others say that he was angry with the sun because it had favored the Persians, and had not rescued him, although, according to the doctrine of the astronomers, it had presided at his birth; and that it was to express his indignation against this luminary that he took blood in his hand and flung it upwards in the air.

I know not whether, on the approach of death, as is wont to be the case when the soul is in the act of being separated from the body and when it is enabled to behold diviner spectacles than are allotted to men, and so Julian might have beheld Christ. Few allusions have been made to this subject, and yet I dare not reject this hypothesis as absolutely false; for God often suffers still more improbable and astonishing events to take place in order to prove that the religion named after Christ is not sustained by human energy. It is, however, very obvious that, throughout the reign of this emperor, God gave manifest tokens of His displeasure, and permitted many calamities to befall several of the provinces of the Roman Empire. He visited

the earth with such fearful earthquakes, that the buildings were shaken, and no more safety could be found within the houses than in the open air. From what I have heard, I conjecture that it was during the reign of this emperor, or, at least, when he occupied the second place in the government, that a great calamity occurred near Alexandria in Egypt, when the sea receded and again passed beyond its boundaries from the reflux waves, and deluged a great deal of the land, so that on the retreat of the waters, the sea-skiffs were found lodged on the roofs of the houses. The anniversary of this inundation, which they call the birthday of an earthquake, is still commemorated at Alexandria by a yearly festival; a general illumination is made throughout the city; they offer thankful prayers to God, and celebrate the day very brilliantly and piously. An excessive drought also occurred during this reign; the plants perished and the air was corrupted; and for want of proper sustenance, men were obliged to have recourse to the food usually eaten by other animals.

The famine introduced peculiar diseases, by which many lives were lost. Such was the state of the empire during the administration of Julian.

Appendix J: Theodoret of Cyrrhus *Church History* (3.18-22)

18. Another instance is that of an excellent man at Antioch, entrusted with the charge of young lads, who was better educated than is usually the case with pedagogues, and was the intimate friend of the chief teacher of that period, Libanius the far-famed sophist.

Now Libanius was a heathen expecting victory and bearing in mind the threats of Julian, so one day, in ridicule of our belief he said to the pedagogue, *“What is the carpenter's son about now?”* Filled with divine grace, he foretold what was shortly to come to pass. *“Sophist,”* said he, *“the Creator of all things, whom you in derision call carpenter's son, is making a coffin.”*

After a few days the death of the wretch was announced. He was carried out lying in his coffin. The vaunt of his threats was proved vain, and God was glorified.

19. A man who in the body imitated the lives of the bodiless, namely Julianus, surnamed in Syrian Sabbas, whose life I have written in my *“Religious History,”* continued all the more zealously to offer his prayers to the God of all, when he heard of the impious tyrant's threats. On the very day on which Julian was slain, he heard of the event while at his prayers, although the Monastery was distant more than twenty stages from the army. It is related that while he was invoking the Lord with loud cries and supplicating his merciful Master, he suddenly checked his tears, broke into an ecstasy of delight, while his countenance was lighted up and thus signified the joy that possessed his soul. When his friends beheld this change they begged him to tell them the reason of his gladness. *“The wild boar,”* said he, *“the enemy of the vineyard of the Lord, has paid the penalty of the wrongs he has done to Him; he lies dead. His mischief is done.”* The whole company no sooner heard these words than they leaped with joy and struck up the song of thanksgiving to God, and from those that brought tidings of the emperor's death they learned that it was the very day and hour when the accursed man was slain that the aged Saint knew it and announced it.

20. Julian's folly was yet more clearly manifested by his death. He crossed the river that separates the Roman Empire from the Persian, brought over his army, and then immediately burnt his boats, so making his men fight not in willing but in forced obedience. The best generals are wont to fill their troops with enthusiasm, and, if they see them growing discouraged, to cheer them and raise their hopes; but Julian by burning the bridge of retreat cut off all good hope. A further proof of his incompetence was his failure to fulfill the duty of foraging in all directions and providing his troops with supplies. Julian had neither ordered supplies to be brought from Rome, nor did he make any bountiful provision by ravaging the enemy's country. He left the inhabited world behind him, and persisted in marching through the wilderness. His soldiers had not enough to eat and drink; they were without guides; they were marching astray in a desert land. Thus they saw the folly of their most wise emperor. In the midst of their murmuring and grumbling they suddenly found him who had struggled in mad rage against his Maker wounded to death. Ares who raises the war-din had never come to help him as he promised; Loxias had given lying divination; he who clads him in the

thunderbolts had hurled no bolt on the man who dealt the fatal blow; the boasting of his threats was dashed to the ground. The name of the man who dealt that righteous stroke no one knows to this day. Some say that he was wounded by an invisible being, others by one of the Nomads who were called Ishmaelites; others by a trooper who could not endure the pains of famine in the wilderness. But whether it were man or angel who plied the steel, without doubt the doer of the deed was the minister of the will of God. It is related that when Julian had received the wound, he filled his hand with blood, flung it into the air and cried, "*You have won, O Galilean.*" Thus he gave utterance at once to a confession of the victory and to a blasphemy. So infatuated was he.

21. Julian had left Edessa on his left because it was adorned with the grace of true religion, and while in his vain folly he was journeying through Carræ, he came to the temple honored by the impious and after going through certain rites with his companions in defilement, he locked and sealed the doors, and stationed sentinels with orders to see that none came in till his return. When news came of his death, and the reign of iniquity was succeeded by one of piety, the shrine was opened, and within was found a proof of the late emperor's manliness, wisdom, and piety. For there was seen a woman hung up on high by the hairs of her head, and with her hands outstretched. The villain had cut open her belly, and so I suppose learned from her liver his victory over the Persians.

This was the abomination discovered at Carræ.

22. It is said that at Antioch a number of chests were discovered at the palace filled with human heads, and also many wells full of corpses. Such is the teaching of the evil deities.

When Antioch heard of Julian's death she gave herself up to rejoicing and festivity; and not only was exultant joy exhibited in the churches, and in the shrines of martyrs, but even in the theatres the victory of the cross was proclaimed and Julian's vaticination held up to ridicule. And here I will record the admirable utterance of the men at Antioch, that it may be preserved in the memory of generations yet to come, for with one voice the shout was raised, "*Maximus, thou fool, where are your oracles? For God has conquered and his Christ.*" This was said because there lived at that time a man of the name of Maximus, a pretender to philosophy, but really a worker of magic, and boasting himself to be able to foretell the future. But the Antiochenes, who had received their divine teaching from the glorious yokefellows Peter and Paul, and were full of warm affection for the Master and Savior of all, persisted in execrating Julian to the end. Their sentiments were perfectly well known to the object of them, and so he wrote a book against them and called it "*Misopogon.*"

This rejoicing at the death of the tyrant shall conclude this book of my history, for it were to my mind indecent to connect with a righteous reign the impious sovereignty of Julian.