

# The Gothic Civil War and the Date of the Gothic Conversion

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AT THE END of the fourth book of his *Ecclesiastical History*, Socrates turns to the migration of the Goths into the Roman Empire and their defeat of the Emperor Valens at Adrianople in 378. He introduces this section with an excursus (4.33) on the conversion of the Goths to Christianity, a subject much closer to his theme of church history than Adrianople. Socrates recounts a civil war between the rival chieftains Athanaric and Fritigern; when Fritigern was worsted, he sought help from Valens, who offered him military support to defeat his rival; in thanks for this support, Fritigern converted to Christianity and caused his followers to do the same. Socrates goes on to describe the missionary activity of the Gothic bishop Ulfilas, who played a rôle in engineering the Gothic conversion: Ulfilas' proselytizing had provoked the rancor of Athanaric, who began a ruthless persecution against Gothic Christians, dated from other sources between 369 and *ca* 372. Given that Socrates provides a narrative of the Gothic conversion and associates it with a datable persecution, one would assume that we could easily derive a date for the conversion of Fritigern's Goths.

Socrates, however, is not the only source to discuss the question nor to offer information on the date of the conversion. Sozomen, supplementing Socrates' material with other sources, dates the conversion to 376—a date supported by Theodoret, who may have used him as a source, and Jordanes, who probably did not. Moreover, Socrates is the only independent source for the civil war between the Gothic leaders Athanaric and Fritigern. The absence of this civil war from the more reliable contemporary account of political events in Ammianus Marcellinus has led some to question whether Socrates offers fabricated or confused material. These discrepancies have produced much debate: four different dates and a variety of modes of conversion have been proposed. A brief review of

this debate will show that the tendency to reject Socrates is recent and that scholarly consensus has rarely strayed far from his account.

Until the 1950s, almost no one questioned Socrates' credibility. Most historians simply accepted him without attempting to explain his apparent chronological problems and the absence of the civil war in Ammianus.<sup>1</sup> Only Zeiller regarded the discrepancy between Socrates and Sozomen as significant enough to merit redating the conversion to 376, based on Theodoret and Jordanes. Because Zeiller did not support his date with a systematic investigation, and perhaps also because it did not appear in an account of Gothic history *per se*, it fell into obscurity.<sup>2</sup> Thus E. A. Thompson first thoroughly explored the issue in a case against Socrates, first in an article of 1956 and more broadly in his monograph on the Visigoths.<sup>3</sup> Thompson pointed out that Socrates appears to place the Gothic civil war immediately before 369, when it should by all rights appear in Ammianus' version of Gothic events for 367–369. He noted that Sozomen redates Socrates' story, leaving both sources open to question. Indeed, because all the ecclesiastical historians and their followers attribute the Goths' Arianism to their conversion under the last Arian emperor, Thompson dismissed them outright as naive attempts to account for Gothic Arianism. Instead, he cited passages that, he argued, indicate that the Goths

<sup>1</sup> W. Streitberg, *Die gotische Bibel*<sup>6</sup> (Heidelberg 1971) xiiiiff; J. Mansion, "Les origines du christianisme chez les Goths," *AnalBoll* 33 (1914) 5–30 at 5, dates the civil war and Valens' intervention to 370; O. Seeck, *Geschichte des Untergangs der Antiken Welt*<sup>2</sup> (Stuttgart 1913) 93f, does not date the conversion precisely, but clearly places it at the end of the Gothic persecution of 369–372; L. Schmidt, *Geschichte der deutschen Stämme bis zum Ausgang der Völkerwanderung. Die Ostgermanen*<sup>2</sup> (Munich 1934) 237ff, also avoids precise dating, but favors Socrates' account and thus places the conversion before the Gothic migration of 376; K. D. Schmidt, *Die Bekehrung der Ostgermanen zum Christentum I* (Göttingen 1939) 239ff, accepts Socrates' account; P. Scardigli, "La conversione dei Goti al Cristianesimo," in *La conversione al Cristianesimo nell' Europa dell' Alto Medioevo* (=Settimane di studio, Centro Italiano di Studi sull' Alto Medioevo 14 [Spoleto 1967]) 47–86, describes the conversion in sociological terms without questioning the validity of Socrates.

<sup>2</sup> J. ZEILLER, *Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces danubiennes de l'empire romain* (=BEFAR 112 [Paris 1918: hereafter "Zeiller"]) 452ff.

<sup>3</sup> "The Date of the Conversion of the Visigoths," *JEH* 7 (1956) 1–11, and *The Visigoths in the Time of Ulfila* (Oxford 1966: hereafter "Thompson, Visigoths") 78ff, 103ff.

were still pagan in the early 380s.<sup>4</sup> Rejecting the testimony of Socrates as a fabrication, he argued against an active, state-sponsored effort to convert the Goths; their conversion, a process and not an event, began after the Romano-Gothic treaty of 382 and was completed by 395.

Thompson's new date received a cool reception. Fridh, the one historian to support it, recognized that Thompson's account created difficulties of its own: after rejecting the ecclesiastical historians' dates for the conversion as apologetic for Gothic Arianism, Thompson could not explain why the Goths turned to Arianism under Theodosius, who actively persecuted non-Nicenes.<sup>5</sup> Others offered more general criticisms. Chrysos' investigation, which emphasized the discrepancies between Socrates and Sozomen, demonstrated that Sozomen's information about the conversion was drawn from Socrates, and thus Socrates' version was preferable. Like Thompson, Chrysos attempted to reconcile Socrates with Ammianus: Socrates 4.33 was strictly chronological, thus Socrates' civil war preceded the persecutions that began in 369 and paralleled Ammianus' Gothic war of 367–369; Valens had initiated the conversion effort in conjunction with his military campaigns and succeeded in converting Fritigern, whom Valens then rescued in 369.<sup>6</sup>

Schäferdiek took a different and ultimately more defensible tack: Thompson had seriously misinterpreted the references to Gothic paganism after 376. Furthermore, both Thompson's and Chrysos' assumption about the strictly chronological order of Socrates 4.33 failed to note that the account was divided into

<sup>4</sup> Thompson, *Visigoths* 89ff, followed by A. Fridh, "Die Bekehrung der Westgoten zum Christentum," in V. E. Hagberg, *Studia Gothica. Die eisenzeitlichen Verbindungen zwischen Schweden und Südosteuropa* (= Vorträge beim Gotensymposium im Statens Historiska Museum Stockholm 1970 [Stockholm 1972]) 130–43 at 137f, citing Ambrose, *De Fide* 2.16.139f (CSEL LXXVIII 106) a. 378, Ep. 10.9 (PL XVI 983), and adding Hieron. *Hebr. Quaest. in Gen.* 10.21, *In Ezech.* 11.1476 (CC LXXV 575).

<sup>5</sup> Thompson, *Visigoths* 107ff, offers less than convincing explanations of the origin of Gothic Arianism; Fridh (*supra* n.4) 138f accepts Thompson's thesis, but rejects his explanations for others also less than solid.

<sup>6</sup> E. CHRYSOS, Τὸ Βυζάντιον καὶ οἱ Γότθοι. Συμβολή εἰς τὴν ἔξωτερικὴν πολιτικὴν τοῦ Βυζαντίου κατὰ τὸν δ' αἰῶνα (Thessaloniki 1972: hereafter 'Chrysos') 109ff. In dating the conversion at the end of Valens' first Gothic war, Chrysos actually developed the position of two previous scholars: K. K. Klein, "Fritigern, Athanarich und die Spaltung des Westgotenvolks am Vorabend des Hunneneinbruchs (375 n. Chr.)," *Soforsch* 19 (1960) 34–51; L. Varady, *Das letzte Jahrhundert Pannoniens 376–476* (Amsterdam 1969) 26ff.

two sections, of which the second chronologically preceded the first. Thus the messy business of reconciling a Gothic civil war with Ammianus' Gotho-Roman war could be avoided. From Socrates' collocation of the civil war and the conversion amidst other material datable between 373 and 375, Schäferdiek put the conversion in these years.<sup>7</sup> His position began to win acceptance and was even expanded upon by Rubin, who used a variety of sources to provide a broader picture of the context of the conversion.<sup>8</sup>

In 1986, however, P. Heather reexamined the problem in the most detailed source-critical investigation to date. He revived and expanded Thompson's arguments against Socrates to show that Socrates had mistakenly invented the Gothic civil war by confusing the Romano-Gothic war of 367–369 and the collapse of the Gothic confederacy in the wake of the Hun invasions *ca* 376. He also rejected Chrysos' preference for Socrates over Sozomen because, he argued, Sozomen deliberately redated Socrates' conversion story to 376 from an independent source or sources that favored this date. Heather also examined other sources for the conversion in an effort to strengthen the case for 376.<sup>9</sup>

Heather's impressive case has begun to win acceptance, at least among English-speaking scholars.<sup>10</sup> He did not, however,

<sup>7</sup> K. SCHÄFERDIEK, "Germanenmission," *RAC* 10 (1978: hereafter 'Schäferdiek, "Germanenmission") 492–548 at 497ff, and "Zeit und Umstände des Westgotischen Übergang zum Christentum," *Historia* 28 (1979: 'Schäferdiek, "Zeit") 90–97; P. HEATHER, "The Crossing of the Danube and the Gothic Conversion," *GRBS* 27 (1986: 'Heather, "Conversion") 289–318 at 313ff, also rejects Thompson's use of evidence to derive a date after 376.

<sup>8</sup> Z. RUBIN, "The Conversion of the Visigoths to Christianity," *MusHelv* 38 (1981: hereafter 'Rubin') 34–54; cf. H. WOLFRAM, *History of the Goths*, tr. T. J. Dunlap (Berkeley 1988: 'Wolfram') 68ff, 75ff; U. Wanke, *Die Gotenkriege des Valens: Studien zu Topographie und Chronologie im unteren Donaauraum von 366 bis 378 n. Chr.* (Frankfurt a.M. 1990) 111. O. Gschwantler, "Bekehrung und Bekehrungsgeschichte," *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde*<sup>2</sup> (1976) II 176f, presents both Thompson's and Schäferdiek's positions without choosing between them.

<sup>9</sup> Heather, "Conversion." Zeiller (452ff) first argued for a date in 376, as did M. Cesa, "376–382: Romani e barbari sul Danubio," *StUrb* B 3 (1984) 63–99 at 66, independently.

<sup>10</sup> J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London 1989) 331, and 527 at n.43; P. HEATHER and J. MATTHEWS, *The Goths in the Fourth Century* (Liverpool 1991: hereafter 'Heather and Matthews') 103ff; P. Rousseau, "Visigothic Migration and Settlement, 376–418: Some Excluded Hypotheses," *Historia* 41 (1992) 345–61 at 347f; SCHÄFERDIEK stands by his original date

deal fully with those like Schäferdiek who find a break in the middle of Socrates' account. This paper will reexamine this position, providing new evidence for Schäferdiek's reading, offering a new explanation for the absence of Ammianus' Gothic civil war, and refuting attempts to use other sources to date the conversion. Ultimately, the paper will demonstrate that Socrates' account, read properly, is the only plausible and coherent explanation for the Gothic conversion, which should be placed between *ca* 370 and 375.

Of course the conversion was a process. Nor did all the Goths convert in the wake of the circumstances described at Socrates 4.33. In fact, Socrates makes it clear that only Fritigern and his followers converted as part of the agreement he describes, and even their conversion could be more easily described as a process than an event. Thus to set a date for the official conversion of the Goths oversimplifies in some ways a complex issue. Certainly Christian Goths existed inside *Gothia* before Fritigern's official conversion, just as non-Christian Goths existed after the conversion, even inside the Roman Empire. Nevertheless, the matter is of interest in understanding the politics of the 370s and the nature of mass conversion efforts among non-Romans. If Socrates' account of the conversion is accepted, it follows that (1) there had been a major split in the Gothic confederation before the Hun invasions; (2) Valens had earlier diplomatic contact with the Tervingi Goths whom he decided to admit to the Empire in 376; (3) fourth-century emperors were interested in spreading and defending Christianity among non-Roman peoples; and (4) non-Roman peoples sometimes responded favorably to official efforts at conversion as a means of strengthening Roman ties. The date of the conversion is thus subordinate to a host of questions. Accepting Socrates means more than preference for one date over another: it involves a key passage for the interpretation of fourth-century Romano-Gothic relations and for active Roman pursuit of pro-Christian policies among non-Romans.

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(373/375) without mentioning Heather: "Das gotische Christentum im vierten Jahrhundert," in *Triuwe. Studien zur Sprachgeschichte und Literaturwissenschaft. Gedächtnisbuch für Elfriede Stutz* (Heidelberg 1992: 'Schäferdiek, "Gotische Christentum"') 19–50 at 27ff.

## I. Socrates and the Gothic Conversion

Socrates' account, the only independent source for a conversion of the Goths north of the Danube, is as follows:<sup>11</sup>

οἱ πέραν τοῦ Ἰστροῦ βάρβαροι οἱ καλούμενοι Γότθοι, ἐμφύλιον πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς κινήσαντες πόλεμον εἰς δύο μέρη ἐτήθησαν· ὦν τοῦ ἐνὸς ἡγεῖτο Φριτιγέρνης, τοῦ δὲ ἐτέρου Ἀθανάριχος. [2] Ἐπικρατεστέρου δὲ τοῦ Ἀθαναρίχου φανέντος, Φριτιγέρνης προσφεύγει Ῥωμαίοις, καὶ τὴν αὐτῶν κατὰ τοῦ ἀντιπάλου ἐπεκαλεῖτο βοήθειαν. [3] Γνωρίζεται ταῦτα τῷ βασιλεῖ Οὐάλεντι· καὶ κελεύει τοὺς ἐνιδρυμένους κατὰ τὴν Θράκην στρατιώτας βοηθεῖν τοῖς βαρβάροις κατὰ βαρβάρων στρατεῦσιν· καὶ ποιοῦνται νίκην κατὰ Ἀθαναρίχου πέραν τοῦ Ἰστροῦ, τοὺς πολεμίους εἰς φυγὴν τρέψαντες. [4] Αὕτη πρόφασις γέγονε τοῦ Χριστιανοῦς γενέσθαι τῶν βαρβάρων πολλούς, ὁ γὰρ Φριτιγέρνης χάριν ἀποδιδούς ὦν εὐεργέτητο, τὴν θρησκείαν τοῦ βασιλέως ἡσπάζετο, καὶ τοὺς ὑφ' ἑαυτῷ τοῦτο ποιεῖν προετρέπετο.

This passage is remarkable for its lucidity and the quality of circumstantial detail: Socrates names both Athanaric, the independent leader of the Gothic confederation of Tervingi, and Fritigern, the chieftain who came to fill Athanaric's rôle as overlord when the Tervingi fled south of the Danube.<sup>12</sup> He clearly states that a civil war erupted between the two leaders while they dwelt north of the Danube (οἱ πέραν τοῦ Ἰστροῦ βάρβαροι); that Athanaric defeated his rival, a likely fact given Athanaric's resources as overlord of the Tervingi confederation (4.33.1f); that Fritigern entered Roman territory to seek aid, but that his request had to be reported to Valens indirectly (γνωρίζεται ταῦτα τῷ βασιλεῖ Οὐάλεντι)—information that

<sup>11</sup> *H.E.* 4.33.1–4, ed. R. Hussey (Oxford 1853) 559ff.

<sup>12</sup> When Ammianus first reports the Tervingi's request to immigrate (31.4.1), he cites only Alavivus as leader. When narrating the process of entry, Alavivus is joined by Fritigern (31.4.8: *et primus cum Alavivno suscipitur Fritigernus*). Thompson (*Visigoths* 87) and Heather ("Conversion" 295) argue that this impugns Socrates' account, for Alavivus, not Fritigern was the original leader of the Goths in 376. In fact, Socrates says nothing about who led the Goths in 376, whether in his discussion of the conversion or the immigration (4.34). If Ammianus' failure to mention Fritigern at 31.4.1 indicates that Fritigern was not among the initial leaders who requested immigration, we must assume that Alavivus accepted Fritigern as an ally before he entered the Empire because he was an ally of Rome. It should be noted, however, that even Ammianus is not consistent: later (31.5.3) he mentions only Fritigern as the Gothic leader in a period when Alavivus was certainly still alive.

squares with our knowledge that Valens was 1,500 km. away at Antioch; that Valens offered Fritigern support from riparian units stationed in Thrace (τοὺς ἐνιδρυμένους κατὰ τὴν Θράκην στρατιώτας)—the likeliest troops to have been available, given that Valens' comitatensian army was with him in Antioch; and that Fritigern used these forces to defeat Athanaric in a conflict that he locates again north of the Danube (ποιοῦνται νίκην κατὰ Ἀθαναρίχου πέραν τοῦ Ἰστροῦ). He then relates that in thanks, Fritigern converted to Christianity and convinced his people to do the same. To confirm that all these events had taken place before the Danube crossing in 376, indeed, before the Hun invasion that provoked that crossing, the first sentence of Socrates' next chapter reports that the Goths had made peace among themselves after Fritigern's victory and were thus at peace when the Huns arrived.<sup>13</sup>

Socrates' account would not be problematic had he ended it at 4.33.4. He continues, however, in a manner that has been used to impugn his accuracy. After 4.33.1-4, Socrates makes a clear aside to explain that this conversion to Arian Christianity under an Arian emperor accounts for the Goths remaining Arians even up to his day (4.33.5). He then initiates an excursus on how Ulfilas invented Gothic writing, translated the Bible, and began the process of teaching the Goths the holy scriptures (4.33.6). When Ulfilas began to teach not just Fritigern's Goths but those of Athanaric, Athanaric felt his ancestral religion was being perverted and launched a series of persecutions against Christians that led many to martyrdom (4.33.7). Socrates concludes with a section on Arius and why the barbarians, in their simple-mindedness, accepted his doctrine (4.33.8f).

The persecution to which Socrates refers is certainly that which lasted from the end of Valens' first Gothic war in 369 until at least 372 when Saba was martyred.<sup>14</sup> Some have

<sup>13</sup> *H.E.* 4.34.1: οὐκ εἰς μακρὰν δὲ οἱ βάρβαροι φιλίαν πρὸς ἀλλήλους σπείσαντες, αὐθις ὑφ' ἐτέρων βαρβάρων γειτονιαζόντων αὐτοῖς τῶν καλουμένων Οὐνῶν καταπολεμηθέντες.

<sup>14</sup> The beginning of the persecution is firmly dated at Hieron. *Chron. s.a.* 369 (ed. Helm p.245): *Atharicus rex Gothorum in Christianos persecutione commota plurimos interficit et de propriis sedibus in Romanum solum expellit*; cf. Prosper *Chron.* 1140 (=a. 370). The end of the persecution must fall after the martyrdom of Saba on 12 April 372: *Pass. S. Sabae* 7 (ed. H. Delehaye, *AnalBoll* 31 [1912: hereafter 'Delehaye'] 221=Heather and Matthews 116f). The persecution is also attested at Oros. 7.32.9; Sozom. *H.E.* 6.37.12ff (edd., J. Bidez and G. C. Hansen, *GCS* 50 [Berlin 1960: hereafter 'Bidez and Hansen']); Basil *Epp.* 155, 164-65; Epiph. *Adv. Haeres.* 70.15;

assumed, as Socrates' account of the persecution follows his narrative of the civil war and the conversion, that Socrates understood the events to have occurred in that order. This would mean that the civil war Socrates describes took place before the persecution in 369 and continued up to that persecution—in other words, that the Gothic civil war coincides with Valens' first Gothic war (367–369).<sup>15</sup> A relatively detailed account of this war survives at Amm. Marc. 27.5. Thus, those who believe that the civil war occurred simultaneously with or as part of the 367–369 war have attempted to reconcile Ammianus' account of Valens' Gothic war with Socrates on the Gothic civil war. Heather has proven that this is impossible.<sup>16</sup>

Heather has not, however, refuted arguments that the Gothic civil war occurred shortly after the persecutions of 369–372.<sup>17</sup> This thesis of Schäferdiek acknowledges that Socrates 4.33 is divided into two sections, the latter of which took place before the former. The first section (4.33.1–4) narrates the civil war up to Fritigern's conversion; the second (4.33.6–9), after a clear aside at 4.33.5, treats Ulfilas' evangelizing activities and moves into the persecutions that resulted. A closer examination of Socrates' language confirms that 4.33 should in fact be read in this way.

Socrates begins his Ulfilas excursus with *τότε δὲ καὶ*, a transition he uses five times (including 4.33).<sup>18</sup> To understand the temporal relations that Socrates intended between the first and second sections of 4.33, his other uses of this formula should be considered. *τότε δὲ καὶ* generally occurs, as at 4.33.6, after a brief

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August. *De civ. D.* 18.52; [Jo. Chrys.] *Sermo* 1 (PG LII 808); Greg. *Tur. Hist. Franc.* 2.4; the *menologion* account of twenty-six martyrs at Delehaye 279 (=PG CXVII 368=Heather and Matthews 125ff); *Passio Innae Rimae et Pinae* at Delehaye 215f; cf. 275ff; Rubin 36ff; Wolfram 68f, 81ff; Schäferdiek, "Germanenmission" 504f.

<sup>15</sup> E.g. Heather, "Conversion" 294: "No date is provided, but inasmuch as the persecution began in 369, the rest of the action can only reflect Valens' first Gothic war."

<sup>16</sup> Valens' Gothic war: Amm. Marc. 27.5.1–10; Zos. 4.11.1–4 (ed. F. PASCHOU, [Paris 1979: hereafter 'Paschoud'] II.2 272f); for attempts to reconcile the accounts of Ammianus and Socrates: Chrysos 122f; Varady (*supra* n.6) 27ff; *contra*, Heather, "Conversion" 294f.

<sup>17</sup> Schäferdiek, "Germanenmission" and "Zeit"; Wolfram 69f.

<sup>18</sup> 2.27.1, 45.17; 4.9.5, 33.6; 5.13.5. Schäferdiek ("Zeit" 92f) recognized that *τότε δὲ καὶ* indicated a narrative shift that allowed for the introduction of material chronologically preceding what it follows, but did not offer the linguistic parallels cited here.



aside (2.27.1, 45.17; 5.13.5) and often introduces passages that add depth by setting a scene or filling out the narrative (2.45.17; 4.9.5). The transition seems to carry the force of "but also at that time." It generally introduces ongoing events or circumstances, things that began at a period preceding the main narrative or occurred simultaneously. Thus at 5.12 Socrates discusses the events leading to Theodosius' civil war with Maximus and at 5.14 their conflict. In between he inserts rumors about the outcome of the war spread during Theodosius' absence from Constantinople; τότε δὲ καὶ, which clearly implies simultaneity, introduces the rumors (*H.E.* 5.13.5; cf. *Thuc.* 2.8.1). At 2.45.17 τότε δὲ καὶ actually moves the narrative back in time: Socrates relates the Macedonian and Acacian heresies, briefly digresses, then returns to a discussion of the Apollinarian heresy (2.46). Again τότε δὲ καὶ introduces the transition, which here moves back in time, for it begins a narrative of the origins of the Apollinarianes, *père et fils*, and describes the progress of their heresy up to the present. So too at 4.9.12 Socrates tells how Valens expelled the Nicenes and Novatians from Constantinople, then says that Valens exempted Marcianus, who was serving the emperor for some time (ἐστρατεύετο). "But also at that time (τότε δὲ καὶ) he was a priest in the Novatian church and was teaching (ἐδίδασκεν) grammar to Anastasia and Carosa the daughters of the Emperor...." The sequence of tenses clearly shows that Socrates uses τότε δὲ καὶ to set a scene (Marcianus' teaching) that precedes and continues up to the events he has just discussed (Valens' Novatian expulsions)—the same force of τότε δὲ καὶ at 4.33.6. Socrates relates the Gothic civil war in chronological order. He makes a brief aside, then uses τότε δὲ καὶ to step back from the narrative for a scene that includes Ulfilas' scriptural work, his missionary activity, and the persecutions that this provoked. All of this *preceded* rather than *followed* the Gothic civil war.<sup>19</sup> To assume that Socrates' chronology is flawed because his narrative relates details of the civil war and conversion before the persecution of 369 misunderstands Socrates' idiom. These examples prove that

<sup>19</sup> At 2.27.1 τότε δὲ καὶ introduces an event that chronologically follows the preceding events. This passage is unique in that the intervening excursus is much longer than the excursus in other cases cited. More importantly, this usage does not weaken the argument: the instances cited prove that passages introduced by τότε δὲ καὶ need not follow chronologically what precedes them (as Thompson, *Visigoths* 87ff, and Heather, "Conversion" 294ff); in fact they generally do not.

Socrates often related events in reverse chronological order and signaled that he did so with τότε δὲ καί.

Thus Socrates' testimony on the Gothic civil war and Fritigern's conversion is internally consistent. Indeed, Socrates should be given credit more broadly for his careful use of contemporary sources and his general accuracy in the narration of political events. His chronology is usually much more precise than the largely derivative account of Sozomen (Bidez and Hansen xlvii) that Heather favors. Socrates is accurate on the events of Valens' reign primarily because he carefully used contemporary sources. As the only ecclesiastical historian of the period to use the *Consularia Constantinopolitana*, he alone of the ecclesiastical historians properly dates the battle of Nacoleia (defeat of the usurper Procopius) to late May 366<sup>20</sup> and, more importantly, only he correctly dates Valens' arrival in Constantinople before his Gothic campaign to late May 378.<sup>21</sup> He is the only ecclesiastical historian—indeed the only historian besides Ammianus—to report both versions current among contemporaries of Valens' death at Adrianople.<sup>22</sup> Finally, he is the only ecclesiastical historian to have directly used the speeches of Valens' contemporary panegyrist Themistius.

Indeed Socrates is the original source for knowledge that Themistius delivered a speech to Valens, then at Antioch, on the eve of the Gothic migration in 375.<sup>23</sup> In fact, it is significant

<sup>20</sup> H.E. 4.9: ἐν ὑπατεία Γρατιανοῦ καὶ Δαγαλααίφου (a. 366) ἐγένετο, περὶ τὰ τελευταία τοῦ Μαίου; *Consularia Constantinopolitana* s.a. 366 (ed. Mommsen, MGH AA IX.2 [hereafter 'Cons. Constpl.']) 241) offers 27 May 366 as the date for the defeat; 20 June at *Chron. Pasch.* s.a. 366 is probably inaccurate. On Socrates' use of the *Cons. Constpl.* see F. Geppert, *Die Quellen des Kirchenhistorikers Socrates Scholasticus* (= *Studien zur Geschichte der Theologie und der Kirche* III.4 [Leipzig 1898]) 32ff; cf. R. W. Burgess, *The Chronicle of Hydatius and the Consularia Constantinopolitana. Two Contemporary Accounts of the Final Years of the Roman Empire* (Oxford 1993) 197.

<sup>21</sup> *Cons. Constpl.* s.a. 378: *His cons. ingressus est Valens Aug. ab Oriente Constantinopolim die III kal. Iun.*; Soc. 4.38: περὶ τὴν τριακάδα τοῦ Μαίου μηνός.

<sup>22</sup> Soc. 4.38; cf. Amm. Marc. 31.13ff. Contrast Sozom. 6.38.3ff; Philost. H.E. 9.17 (edd. J. Bidez and F. Winkelmann, GCS V<sup>2</sup> [Berlin 1972] 123f).

<sup>23</sup> On Socrates' direct use of Themistius: Geppert (*supra* n.20) 78; on Themistius speech to Valens in 375: Soc. 4.32; cf. the derivative information at Sozom. 6.36.6–7.37.1. Them. [Or. 12], which purports to be a Latin translation of the Προσφωνητικὸς λόγος described by Socrates, is a forgery: R. Foerster, "Andreas Dudith und die zwölfte Rede des Themistius," *NJbb* 3 (1900) 74–93; cf. G. Dagron, "L'Empire romain d'orient au IV<sup>e</sup> siècle et les traditions politiques de l'hellenisme: Le témoignage de Thémistios," *TravMém* 3 (1968) 1–242 at 21ff.

that Socrates prefaces his account of the Gothic conversion and civil war with a report of this speech. It is certainly possible that Themistius, who had been directly involved in Gothic policy and had served as Valens' ambassador to the Goths in 369,<sup>24</sup> reported further information pertinent to the events that Socrates describes at 4.33. This would explain Socrates' collocation of Themistius' speech with the Gothic conversion. Furthermore, Socrates—and not Sozomen—can be shown to have directly used the ecclesiastical history of Gelasius of Caesarea, the late fourth-century continuator of Eusebius. It is equally likely that Gelasius, who was certainly interested in the conversion of non-Roman peoples, would have transmitted an account of the Gothic conversion.<sup>25</sup> To be sure, there is no proof that either Themistius or Gelasius reported the events at Socrates 4.33. Both are possible sources for an account whose origins are ultimately untraceable. Whether or not they supplied Socrates with his information for 4.33, Socrates' careful use of these and other accurate, contemporary sources indicates that he was not writing in a void. Though chronologically remote from the events he narrates, he composed from some sources as close or closer to those events than Ammianus.

## II. Ammianus and the Gothic Conversion and Civil War

As Heather has pointed out, it is not difficult to understand why Ammianus fails to mention the conversion: he wrote in a classicizing tradition that did not regard Christianity as appropriate to the study of *res gestae*.<sup>26</sup> Discussion of the conversion

<sup>24</sup> Them. Or. 10.132d–133a; cf. Dagron (*supra* n.23) 22, 102.

<sup>25</sup> On Socrates direct use of Gelasius see F. Winkelmann, *Untersuchungen zur Kirchengeschichte des Gelasius von Kaisareia* (=SBBerlin 3 [1966] 22. Though Winkelmann argues (105f) that Gelasius' history left off after Julian's death, G. W. Bowersock ("Mavia, Queen of the Saracens," in W. Eck, H. Galsterer, H. Wolff, ed., *Studien zur antiken Sozialgeschichte: Festschrift Friederich Vittinghoff* [Vienna 1980] 477–95 at 479ff), argues convincingly that Gelasius' narrative continued into Valens' reign.

<sup>26</sup> Heather, "Conversion" 294; cf. Chrysos 111. On Ammianus' avoidance of Christian words and themes see A. D. E. Cameron and A. M. Cameron, "Christianity and Tradition in the Historiography of the Later Empire," CQ n.s. 14 (1964) 216–28; R. C. Blockley, *Ammianus Marcellinus: A Study of his Historiography and Political Thought* (=CollLatomus 41 [Brussels 1975]) 123ff; E. D. Hunt, "Christians and Christianity in Ammianus Marcellinus," CQ n.s. 35 (1985) 186–200; V. Neri, *Ammiano e il Cristianesimo. Religione e politica nelle 'Res Gestae' di Ammiano Marcellino* (Bologna 1985) 26.

of a segment of the Tervingi confederation would not be expected; but Ammianus is famously reliable on questions of political history and had good sources on the Tervingi confederation.<sup>27</sup> Would he have omitted information that could change our understanding of Gothic history?

Heather, following Zeiller, argued that Ammianus does indeed provide the same information as Socrates 4.33 but in a different and more reliable sequence.<sup>28</sup> His argument is built on two assumptions: first, that Socrates' ordering of events at 4.33 must be corrected, as it is demonstrably confused about a Gothic civil war before the 369–372 persecution (*i.e.*, when Ammianus would have mentioned such a war in his account of Valens' first Gothic war); second, that at 4.33 Socrates has accidentally combined events from Valens' first Gothic war with those from the Gothic split and crossing of the Danube in 376, events accurately reported as distinct in Ammianus. As shown, the first assumption is untenable: according to Socrates' narrative conventions, the Gothic civil war postdated Ulfla's missionary activity and the Gothic persecutions of 369–372. Thus the second assumption—that Socrates' Gothic civil war must be reconciled with Ammianus' description of Valens' first Gothic war—becomes unnecessary. Indeed, based on the circumstantial details related in each account, such a reconciliation is not even possible. Thus Heather contends that Socrates' report of Roman military action north of the Danube (4.33.3) should be equated with Ammianus' description of Valens' first Gothic war (27.5.2–6). Socrates, however, explicitly describes an action (1) by troops stationed in Thrace (*i.e.*, riparian units), (2) working in conjunction with Gothic forces (3) in Valens's absence;<sup>29</sup> Ammianus describes an action (1) by comitatensian troops brought to Thrace (2) without aid from the barbarians (3) in Valens' presence. Similar discrepancies militate against Heather's attempt to equate the split between Athanaric and Fritigern at Soc. 4.33 with Ammianus' Gothic split in the face of Hun invasions (31.3.8) and the subsequent flight of Fritigern's

<sup>27</sup> Ammianus may have even had information on the internal workings of the Tervingi confederation from Athanaric's minion Munderich: 31.3.5; see G. Sabbah, *La méthode d'Ammien Marcellin. Recherches sur la construction du discours historique dans les Res Gestae* (Paris 1978) 174f; Wolfram 70f and n.208.

<sup>28</sup> Heather, "Conversion" 296ff; Zeiller 453.

<sup>29</sup> κελεύει (Valens) τοὺς ἐνιδρυμένους κατὰ τὴν Θρᾷκην στρατιώτας βοηθεῖν τοῖς βαρβάροις.

Goths south of the Danube (31.4.5). Ammianus describes (1) a definitive break-up of the Gothic confederation (2) brought on by foreign invasions, (3) in which Athanaric lost power and (4) the majority of the *Goths* (*populi pars maior*) migrated south of the Danube (5) never to return; Socrates describes (1) a smaller fissure between a single *reiks* and the Gothic *index* (2) brought about by religious rankling, (3) after which Athanaric retained control over the confederation and (4) only Fritigern crossed the Danube (5) temporarily before returning to his homeland with the intention of remaining. To be sure, superficial similarities between Ammianus and Socrates exist (internecine strife, Roman military activity in *Gothia*). Socrates, however, reports numerous circumstantial details that do not fit at all with the details of Ammianus' narratives. Only by ignoring these and presuming that Socrates completely interchanged two unrelated events can Ammianus and Socrates be equated. Otherwise, Socrates apparently records a Gothic civil war entirely omitted in Ammianus.

This assumption is naturally uncomfortable, for Ammianus is remarkably reliable and is indeed the only trustworthy source for most Gothic events under Valens. He rarely errs, but rarely does not mean never. In fact, he makes two topographical mistakes in treating Valens' Gothic wars of 367–369 and 376–378 and, in his account of Adrianople, a doublet leaves the interpretation of the battle in question.<sup>30</sup> More typically his are sins of omission. He omits important details on the events preceding Valens' first Gothic war ignores and Valens' fortification program in the second year of that war.<sup>31</sup> The final scene of his history describes the massacre of a band of Goths on the eastern frontier without saying that these were in revolt. Zosimus, whose report on this revolt had been considered less reliable than Ammianus' silence, has been vindicated: referen-

<sup>30</sup> Topographical errors: 27.5.2 seems to locate Daphne mistakenly on the south bank of the Danube: details in Wanke (*supra* n.8) 91ff; 31.11.2 reports that the Goths were encamped *circa Beroeam et Nicopolim*, which are separated by *ca* 100 km and the formidable Shipka pass; doublet: Valens leaves Melanthias twice in succession: 31.11.1f, 12.1.

<sup>31</sup> Ammianus omits the raids carried out in Thrace by Procopius' Gothic allies in 366 and Valens' refusal to return the raiders to Athanaric. Cf. Zos. 4.10.1f; Eunap. fr. 37 (ed. and tr. R. C. BLOCKLEY, *The Fragmentary Classicizing Historians of the Later Roman Empire* II [Liverpool 1983: hereafter 'Blockley'] 52ff=fr. 37 Müller, *FHG* IV). He fails to mention Valens' reconstruction and reprovisioning of Danube fortifications: *CIL* III 7494; Zos. 4.10.4; Them. *Or.* 10.136d–138b.

ces from Gregory of Nyssa confirm his version.<sup>32</sup> Zosimus and the ecclesiastical historians also say that the Goths who revolted in Thrace after 376 had already reached Constantinople when Valens arrived there, important information that Ammianus also omits.<sup>33</sup>

More importantly, Ammianus omits an Isaurian revolt during the early stages of the Gothic crossing (*ca* 375)<sup>34</sup> and fails to report a Saracen revolt in 378, which prevented Valens from attending promptly to the Gothic problem<sup>35</sup>—hardly minor points. The Isaurian revolt of *ca* 375 obliged Valens to commit comitatensian forces to this eastern province precisely when these forces could have overseen the Gothic crossing in 376 and perhaps controlled the explosive situation. Similarly, the Saracen revolt forced Valens to postpone his plans to move west in late 377 and thus kept him from subduing the Goths who were beginning to overrun Thrace south of the Haemus

<sup>32</sup> Amm. Marc. 31.16.8; Zos. 4.26.1–27.1. Paschoud (II.2 388ff n.154) had strongly criticized Zosimus' inaccuracy, but his criticism is proven unwarranted by Gregory of Nyssa *De iis qui baptismum differunt* (PG XLVI 424), *Vita Theodori* (PG XLVI 736f=*Gregorii Nysseni Sermones* Pars II, edd. G. Heil, J. P. Cavarnos, O. Lendle [Leiden 1990] 61f). The connections between Gregory of Nyssa and Amm. Marc. 31.16.8 and Zos. 4.26.1–9 are treated in depth by C. ZUCKERMAN, "Cappadocian Fathers and the Goths," *TravMém* 11 (1991: hereafter 'Zuckerman') 473–86 at 479ff; cf. S. Elbern, "Das Gotenmasaker in Kleinasien (378 n. Chr.)," *Hermes* 115 (1987) 99–106.

<sup>33</sup> Soc. 4.38; Sozom. 6.39.2ff; Zos. 4.22.1ff; Eunap. fr. 42 Blockely=42 Müller; cf. John of Antioch fr. 184.2; Theophanes *Chron. a.m.* 5870; Cedrenos I 548. Ammianus (31.8.6: *ad usque Rhodopen et fretum quod immensa disterminat maria*) implies that the Goths reached the Hellespont in 378, but does not elaborate.

<sup>34</sup> For the Isaurian uprising in 376/377 see Eunap. fr. 43.4 Blockely=45 Müller. The date derives from Zos. 4.20.1f, who reports the same events in a passage placed after the death of Valentinian I in 375 (4.19.1) and simultaneous with the Hun invasions in *ca* 376 (4.20.3ff). Ammianus (27.9.6f) mentions an Isaurian uprising *ca* 367/368 and Paschoud (II.2 371f n.141) believes that Eunapius, followed by Zosimus, had simply misplaced the 367/368 uprising in his narrative of the events of 376. It is clear from Eunapius, however, that he deliberately narrated both the earlier and the later uprisings at the same point in his narrative, *i.e.*, *ca* 375, as first noted by Blockely 141 n.97, whose dating of this second Isaurian revolt in Valens' reign is confirmed by Basil's letters of 375 (esp. *Epp.* 215, 217 canons 55–57), which refer to this revolt. For more on the revolt see N. LENSKI, *Valens and the Fourth Century Empire* (diss.Princeton 1995: hereafter 'Lenski').

<sup>35</sup> The revolt is attested at Soc. 4.36; Sozom. 6.38; Rufinus *H.E.* 11.6; Theod. *H.E.* 4.23 (ed. L. Parmentier and F. Scheidweiler, GCS 44<sup>2</sup> [Berlin 1954] 263ff); on the revolt and its date see Bowersock (*supra* n.25); I. Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century* (Washington 1984) 139ff.

(Lenski 332). Ammianus' omission of both revolts obscures information that could shape the reader's understanding of Valens' foreign policy in the years of the Gothic crossing. Despite Ammianus' careful cataloguing of Isaurian and Saracen affairs earlier,<sup>36</sup> he does not mention these uprisings in Book 31, where he treats the years in which they occurred. Book 31 also relates nothing about the Goths between 369 and the Hun invasion of *ca* 375, *i.e.*, the period described at Socrates 4.33.1–4. Though Book 31 is artfully constructed—indeed, partly because it is constructed as a work of art—it concentrates very narrowly on Gothic events between *ca* 375 and 378. Anything outside this scope has been omitted, even if it is peripherally relevant. Ammianus' failure to relate what was (see *infra*) a fairly minor Gothic civil war *ca* 372 should no more surprise than his failure to treat the Isaurian and Saracen revolts. His omissions are especially easy to understand, given that all three events were directly related to the spread of Christianity, a subject around which Ammianus steers a wide berth. If filling gaps in Ammianus' narrative requires caution, so too does the assumption that Ammianus gives all the information needed to reconstruct fourth-century foreign policy. In the case of the Saracens and Isaurians, this assumption is demonstrably false. So too for Frigigern's Goths, Socrates indicates that the full story is not in Ammianus.

### III. Sozomen

As long recognized, Sozomen's account of the Gothic conversion derives from Socrates. Chrysos first laid out the relationship systematically.<sup>37</sup> He also recognized (119f) that Sozomen had at least two other sources: Eunapius' *Histories* or a derivative account, and a hagiographical source (or sources) on

<sup>36</sup> On Saracens: 14.4.1–7; 23.3.8, 5.1; 24.2.4; 25.6.9f; *cf.* Matthews (*supra* n.10) 342ff; on Isaurians: 14.2.1–20; 19.13.1f; 27.9.6f; *cf.* Matthews 355ff. Ammianus may even have known of the Saracen revolt of 377/378, settled by an agreement under which a number of Arab auxiliaries rode west with Valens to face the Goths; Ammianus specifically mentions these at Adrianople: 31.16.5f. Either he had only incomplete sources for the origin of the Saracen forces, or he chose to leave out an account of their revolt.

<sup>37</sup> Chrysos 113ff; G. Schoo, *Die Quellen des Kirchen Historikers Sozomenos* (= *Neue Studien zur Geschichte der Theologie und der Kirche* 11 [Berlin 1911]) 23, 150, presented the same conclusion in condensed form. Socrates' information was also recycled in the largely apocryphal *Life of Niketas*; *cf.* Delehaye 281ff.

Athanasius's persecutions. Sozomen cobbled his sources into an account that dates the Gothic conversion after the crossing of the Danube in 376. He did so only by making numerous gross factual errors, but his account must nevertheless be considered.

Heather built an important argument on Sozomen's redating of Socrates material. He attempted to show that the independent sources of Sozomen convinced him deliberately to redate the Gothic conversion to 376. To facilitate his investigation, Heather dissected Sozomen's account into a schematic table displaying "Material from Socrates" and "Other Material" (298f). This table need not be reproduced; its general presentation of Sozomen's borrowings is accurate. But its earliest grouping at 6.37.1f is debatable. Following Chrysos, Heather believes that 6.37.2 derives from Socrates 4.34.1—inherently unlikely, for Sozomen would have skipped an entire chapter of Socrates, jumping from Soc. 4.32 to 4.34.1, to pluck a single sentence introducing the Gothic migration south of the Danube. In fact, although Sozom. 6.37.2 and Soc. 4.34.1 treat the same subject, they differ significantly in sentence structure and vocabulary:

Sozom. 6.37.2: Γότθοι γάρ, οἱ πέραν τοῦ Ἰστροῦ ποταμοῦ τὸ πρὶν ᾠκοῦν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων βαρβάρων ἐκράτουσαν, ἐξελαθέντες παρὰ τῶν καλουμένων Οὐνῶν εἰς τοὺς Ῥωμαίων ὄρους ἐπεραιώθησαν.

Soc. 4.34.1: αὐθις ὑφ' ἑτέρων βαρβάρων γειτνιαζόντων αὐτοῖς, τῶν καλουμένων Οὐνῶν, καταπολεμηθέντες καὶ τῆς ἰδίας ἐξελαθέντες χώρας, εἰς τὴν Ῥωμαίων γῆν καταφεύγουσι.

Sozomen probably initiated his account of the Gothic migration with material not from Socrates but from another source—quite likely the same source that he continued to follow for how the Huns found their way into Gothic territory by pursuing a deer across Lake Maeotis (6.37.3f). This story, current in later sources, is believed to derive from Eunapius.<sup>38</sup> Its occurrence in Sozomen is taken as a signpost that Sozomen used Eunapius or a derivative account.<sup>39</sup> Heather posits Philostorgius as the possible intermediary. This possibility becomes more enticing by the similar vocabulary in Sozom. 6.37.2 (cited

<sup>38</sup> Procop. *Goth.* 4.5; Jord. *Get.* 123ff, which claims Priscus as the source; Agath. 5.11; Eunapian origin: cf. Heather, "Conversion" 300.

<sup>39</sup> Bidez and Hansen (li) believe that Sozomen used Eunapius directly, but cannot be shown to have used Philostorgius directly (liii); Schoo (*supra* n.37: 83ff) believes that Sozomen used Philostorgius, though he does not list Sozom. 6.37 among the passages he regards as Philostorgian.



*supra*) and the epitomated version of Philostorgius' *Ecclesiastical Histories* 9.17, where the Eunapiian account of the Huns and Lake Maeotis also appears:

“Ὅτι οἱ πέραν τοῦ Ἰστροῦ Σκύθαι, τῶν Οὐνῶν αὐτοῖς ἐπιστρατευσάντων, ἀνάστατοι γέγονασι, καὶ πρὸς τὴν Ῥωμαίων γῆν ἐπεραιώθησαν. εἶεν δ' ἂν οἱ Οὐννοὶ οὐδ' οἱ παλαιοὶ Νεβροὺς ἐπωνόμαζον, καὶ παρὰ τὰ Ῥιπαῖα καταφυγέμενοι ὄρη, ἐξ ὧν ὁ Τάναις εἰς τὴν Μαιώτιδα λίμνην κατασυρόμενος τὸ ρεῖθρον ἐκδίδωσιν.

Of course, Philostorgius' account survives only in excerpted form, and the above passages compress details from a much longer original. Thus the similarities between Sozomen and Philostorgius are not incontrovertible. But the similar vocabulary and the mention of Hunnic origins beyond Lake Maeotis render probable Heather's assumption of Philostorgius as the Eunapiian intermediary.

If so, Sozomen used Philostorgius rather than Socrates to construct the first part of his narrative (6.37.2–5). After following Socrates up to 6.37.1, he put him aside and did not use him again until 6.37.6. Thus to emend Heather's table:

Sozomen	Material from Socrates	Other Material (Philostorgius?)
(a) 6.37.1	Themistius' oration brings Valens to religious tolerance; public events interrupt Valens' plans (4.32.3f)	
GOTHIC MIGRATION		
(b) 6.37.2		Huns drive the Goths south of the Danube.
(c) 6.37.3f		Digression: Huns attack the Goths.
(d) 6.37.5–6A		Huns defeat Goths; Ulfilas' embassy to Valens enables Goths to settle in Thrace.
(e) 6.37.6B–7	Transitional sentence; Gothic civil war; Valens' intervention; the conversion (4.33.1–5).	

This arrangement is not only more economical than that of Heather (and Chrysos), it helps to clarify some difficulties with Sozomen's account. At 6.37.5 Sozomen makes an important mistake—the first in a series of four errors. Whether misled by Philostorgius (?) or, more likely, simply carried away by the force of his narrative, Sozomen has the Goths crossing the Danube *before* they sent an embassy for permission to immigrate into Thrace. Both Ammianus and Zosimus, whose account derives from Sozomen's *Urquelle* Eunapius, make it clear that this was not in fact the sequence. The Goths appealed to Valens before crossing the Danube.<sup>40</sup> But Sozomen's narrative has already pulled him across the Danube and he must follow its sequence by mislocating the appeal. The narrative continues to pull Sozomen into a series of related errors. He asserts that the civil war broke out between Athanaric and Fritigern south of the Danube (6.37.6f). Here, probably for the first time, he turns to Socrates, but once again he mistakenly relocates the Gothic civil war, and thus Athanaric, south of the Danube.<sup>41</sup> As Sozomen continues, he must also omit Socrates' explicit notice that the war took place on the far side of the Danube (περὰν τοῦ Ἰστρου) and Socrates' implication that Fritigern's conversion in the aftermath of the war also occurred north of the Danube. Heather contends that the omission of this geographical notice proves that Sozomen "deliberately re-structured his major source." This cannot be refuted, but we need not accept that "Unless one attributes Sozomen's modification of Socrates to personal whim ... the most economical explanation is that he was influenced by another source" ("Conversion" 303).

On the contrary, the most economical explanation is a simple narratological blunder. Sozomen begins his account of the events of 376 with a source (Philostorgius?) that described the Hun invasions and the Gothic immigration south of the Danube. By the time he begins inserting material from Socrates, he is forced to manipulate that material to fit a context south of the Danube where his narrative sequence already locates the Goths. This same problem leads Sozomen to a fourth error, in which he claims (6.37.12ff) that Athanaric's persecution oc-

<sup>40</sup> Amm. Marc. 31.4.1; Eunap. fr. 42 Blockley=42 Müller; cf. Zos. 4.20.5.

<sup>41</sup> Numerous sources confirm that Athanaric first crossed south of the Danube after the 376 migration; *Cons. Constpl. s.a.* 381 alone offers the date: *PLRE I* 120f, *s.v.* "Athanaricus."

curred south of the Danube. Here, not just Socrates, but independent hagiographical sources prove him wrong. More importantly, Sozomen had these sources at his disposal (Chrysos 120). A tenth-century *menologion*, apparently derived from the same source used by Sozomen, relates the burning of twenty-six Gothic martyrs. Although considerably abbreviated, it states clearly that the event took place in *Gothia*, before the death of Valentinian I in 375. Sozomen describes the same story (6.37.14), yet (as noted) he misplaces it south of the Danube and assigns it to events dating after Valentinian's death.<sup>42</sup> Sozomen thus takes great liberties with the chronology and topography not just of Socrates but of other independent sources.

Heather contends that Sozomen had at his disposal a source that induced him deliberately to emend Socrates' dating and location for the Gothic conversion. Sozomen's verifiable disregard for chronology and topography, however, indicates that he can hardly be said to have "carefully repositioned" Socrates' account. Though Sozomen's errors all eventually stem from the single decision to relocate Socrates' account of the conversion south of the Danube in 376, they indicate a very weak grasp of the events Sozomen describes and a willingness to disregard chronology in favor of the flow of his narrative. If Sozomen had an alternate account, detailed and accurate enough to induce him to emend Socrates, it would also have been detailed and accurate enough to prevent making his major blunders. In any case, such an alternative account cannot be confirmed—only a hunch that, if it existed, Philostorgius might have transmitted it. Heather admirably demonstrates that Sozomen probably employed Philostorgius (304f), but the preserved epitome of this historian mentions nothing of the conversion or civil war (see *infra*). Though it is possible, even likely, given Philostorgius' interest in Ulfilas, that he treated the issue, to argue that

<sup>42</sup> The account of the *menologion* is described in an entry dated 26 March (PG CXVII 368). The text (Delehaye 279=Heather and Matthews 126f) directly states that the martyrdoms took place ἐν Γοθίᾳ and describes the transfer of the relics from Gothic to Roman territory. The incident is probably also commemorated in the fragment of a Gothic calendar under 23 October: Stamm-Heyne, *Ulfilas oder die uns erhaltenen Denkmäler der gotischen Sprache* (=Bibliothek der ältesten deutschen Literatur-Denkmäler I [Paderborn 1913] 276=Delehaye 276=Streitberg (*supra* n.1) 472=Heather and Matthews 129=K. Schäferdiek, "Das gotische liturgische Kalenderfragment—Bruchstück eines Konstantinopeler Martyrologs," *ZNTW* 79 (1988: hereafter 'Schäferdiek, "Kalender"') 116–37 at 118. For Gothic tent churches see Hieron. *Ep.* 107.2.

this version acted as a corrective to Socrates is entirely speculative.

#### IV. Sources Unusable to Date the Conversion

(1) *Eunapius fr. 48.2 Blockley (= fr. 55 Müller)*, a key passage for the religious position of the Goths when they crossed the Danube, derives from the tenth-century *Excerpta de Sententiis* of Constantine Porphyrogenitus. The excerpts closely maintain the order of Eunapius' material, and because this excerpt (*Exc. de Sent.* 53) follows notices on Theodosius' reign (*Exc. de Sent.* 48–49), previous editors assumed a Theodosian date. Heather used the sequence of Zosimus, who also followed Eunapius' order, to prove that the passage is in fact associated with the Danube crossing of 376.<sup>43</sup>

Nevertheless, Heather (309f) also asserts that the passage implies that the Goths converted as a precondition for entry into the Empire in 376. This is not what the passage states. Blockley's translation of relevant parts of the fragment makes this clear:

Each tribe had brought along from home its ancestral objects of worship together with their priests and priestesses, but they kept a deep and impenetrable silence upon these things and spoke not a word about their mysteries. What they revealed was fiction and sham designed to fool their enemies. They all claimed to be Christians and some of their number they disguised as their bishops and having dressed them up in that respected garb and having provided for them, as it were, a large fox-skin, brought them forward. Thereby they were able to get access to and appropriate what they rendered unguarded by swearing oaths which they held in contempt but which the emperors greatly respected. They also had with them some of the tribe of so-called 'monks', whom they had decked out in imitation of the monks amongst their enemies.... The barbarians used these devices to deceive the Romans since they shrewdly observed that these things were respected amongst them, while the rest of the time, under cover of the deepest secrecy, they worshipped the holy objects of their native rites with noble and guileless intent. Although the situation was such, the Romans had fallen into such folly that even those who appeared to be

<sup>43</sup> Heather, "Conversion" 305ff; *contra*, Müller, *FHG* IV 35 *ad* Eunap. fr. 48; Blockley n.106 *ad* Eunap. fr. 46.1, 4, and I (1981) 104; *cf.* Rubin 35.n.8.

sensible persons were clearly and readily persuaded that they were Christians and bound by all Christian rites.

Eunapius does not state or even imply that the Gothic *conversion* belonged to the agreement of 376. He does state that not all those Goths who crossed were in fact Christians. This was natural, whether the conversion fell in 376 or *ca* 372, for complete compliance with religious mandates can never be enforced. Well after 376 pagan Goths continued living in Roman territory.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, Eunapius never distinguishes between those Tervingi who, under Fritigern and Alavivus, crossed the Danube with imperial permission, and the other barbarians (Gothic Greuthungi, Taifals, Alans, and Huns), who crossed without it, had no agreement with the Romans, and presumably were not Christians. Their ranks may have constituted the bulk of the pagan hordes whom Eunapius decries. Eunapius does state that the Goths took an oath to the Romans as a condition for entry and implies that in it they swore that they were Christians. If anything, however, he implies that the Goths who courted the Romans with their false oath already claimed to be 'Christians' when they came courting.<sup>45</sup> They already had their own ecclesiastical hierarchy, including bishops and monks whom they could produce as evidence of their 'Christian faith'. Thus, ultimately, Eunapius' testimony proves only that the barbarians who crossed the Danube were not fully Christianized and that those who had been accepted were received on the understanding—indeed, on the condition—that they were Christians. He does *not* make it clear whether those barbarians who won their way into the Empire by pretending to be Christians were Christians already or agreed to convert in 376.

(2) *Philostorgius* 9.17. Heather raises the possibility that an account in Philostorgius, perhaps based on Eunapian material, may have been at the root of a deliberate restructuring of Socrates' account by Sozomen (304f). Philostorgius' *Ecclesiastical History* survives only in the excerpts of Photius (*ca* 858). Ch. 9.17 in the standard edition treats the Hun invasions, the Gothic crossing and revolt, Valens' response, and the battle of Adrianople. It thus covers the same sequence of events as Sozomen, but does not mention the Gothic conversion at all. Philostorgius certainly had an interest in Gothic Christianity, as

<sup>44</sup> E.g., *PLRE* I 372f, *s.v.* "Flavius Fravitta."

<sup>45</sup> So argued by Chrysos 126 with n.2; Schäferdiek, "Zeit" 95f; Rubin 34f.

attested in his chapter on Ulfilas (*H.E.* 2.5). This passage indicates that Philostorgius clearly understood that the activity of conversion had been occurring in Gothic territory since the third century and that official contacts between the emperor and Gothic Christians dated at least to the 330s. Whether Philostorgius also knew of the official conversion of Fritigern and his followers is unknown. If he did, the Philostorgian material in Photius indicates that he did not associate Fritigern's conversion with the crossing of the Danube in 376. This does not mean that the association was not in Philostorgius' original text, but only that no trace of it survives in Photius.<sup>46</sup>

(3) *John of Antioch fr. 184.2 Müller* is cited by Heather as inconclusive support for a 376 dating. In fact, John of Antioch says no more than that Valens converted the Goths and later fought with them in the second Gothic war. His testimony provides no gauge for the date of the conversion.

(4) *Theodoret 4.37.1-5* directly supports a date in 376. The kernel of his version reports ὅτε τὸν Ἰστρον διαβάντες πρὸς τὸν Βάλεντα τὴν εἰρήνην ἐσπέισαντο, τῆνικαῦτα παρῶν Εὐδόξιος ὁ δυσώνυμος ὑπέθετο τῷ βασιλεῖ πεῖσαι οἱ κοινωῆσαι τοὺς Γότθους. Theodoret asserts that the conversion was part of the terms of the Gothic crossing. His credibility, however, is seriously compromised by his simultaneous contention that Eudoxius of Constantinople (d. ca 370) was a major catalyst and present at the conversion (cf. 4.37.3). Thus Theodoret has also been used to support a date of 369 for the conversion (Chrysos 112, 121f). Moreover, the conversion in Theodoret is not from paganism to Christianity but from Nicene to Arian Christianity. Heather's attempt, however, to reconcile this inconsistency by positing two separate conversions—one among Ulfilas' Christianized Goths at Nicopolis in the 360s and another among Fritigern's pagan Goths in 376—lacks confirmation in either Theodoret or other sources.

Theodoret, always recognized as the most unreliable of the canonical fourth-century ecclesiastical historians, takes great liberties with his sources that result in serious distortions. Even his account of Adrianople is gravely flawed:<sup>47</sup> he distorts events

<sup>46</sup> Photius was not careful in his selection or copying of Philostorgius' material and even altered what he found: Bidez and Winkelmann (*supra* n.22: xiiff; on Photius' methods see W. Treadgold, *The Nature of the Bibliotheca of Photius* (Washington 1980) 81ff.

<sup>47</sup> On Theodoret's lack of rigor in using sources: Parmentier and Scheidweiler (*supra* n.35) xxiiff, xxvii (Adrianople).

by claiming that Valens hid in a village (ἐν τινι κώμῃ) during the entire contest (4.36.1). Moreover, his discussion of Adrianople lumps together all his information on "Scythia" regardless of its chronological setting. Thus he includes not only the Gothic conversion among the events of 376/378, but also a story from Sozomen about Valens' encounter with Vetrano, the bishop of Tomi in Scythia Minor. Valens certainly was at Tomi, as a recently discovered inscription shows, but this must have been in 368, when Ammianus attests his presence in the area, not in 376/378, when Valens never proceeded north of the Haemus.<sup>48</sup>

Theodoret's distortions of the Gothic conversion and its surrounding events are easily explained. His purpose—strictly programmatic—attempts aetiological explanations for the divine punishment of Valens and the Arian Christianity of the Goths. (4.37.1). Theodoret had no interest in chronological accuracy, only a programmatic interest in narratological consistency. Just as he lumps the Vetrano incident with the Gothic crossing, he explains the Gothic conversion as part of the same sequence of events. He may even have believed that the conversion was part of the treaty of 376, for his use of Sozomen's Vetrano incident makes it certain that he had read Sozomen. Unfortunately, Theodoret's exclusively programmatic interests pushed him to create an account that is little more than a puzzle. Though it may contain elements of truth, their sequence is distorted and thus useless for purposes of chronology.

(5) *Orosius* follows his narrative of Adrianople with the notice (7.33.19): *Gothi antea per legatos supplices poposcerunt, ut illis episcopi, a quibus regulam Christianae fidei discerent, mitterentur. Valens imperator exitiabili pravitate doctores Arriani dogmatis misit.* Significantly *Orosius* confirms—independently of Socrates' account—that an official conversion of at least some Goths occurred as part of a diplomatic agreement with Valens. Heather argues that the negotiations referred to (*per legatos supplices*) must be those conducted in 376 between Valens and the Tervingi fleeing *Gothia*. This contention need be accepted only if it is assumed a priori that relations between the Romans and all Goths were cut off between 369 and 376. Without this assumption *Orosius* could be used to confirm a date in any year

<sup>48</sup> Theod. *H.E.* 4.35; Sozomen (6.21.3ff) places the incident among events of ca 367; *AE* (1978) 716 (Valea Seaca, near Tomi), dedicated to Valentinian, certainly marks Valens' activity in the area; cf. *CIL* III 12518b (367/375 from near Miristea near Tomi). Valens is attested in Scythia Minor at vicus Carporum (Hirsova?) in 368: *Amm. Marc.* 27.5.5.

between 370 and early 378, when Valens was on the eastern frontier and thus compelled to conduct negotiations through legates.<sup>49</sup>

(6) *Jordanes Get. 131f*, like Theodoret, directly attests the conversion as an element of the crossing in 376. Jordanes' account, the latest source cited by Heather, was written after the various permutations of the conversion story had proliferated. His account could thus ultimately derive from any number of sources. Most likely, Jordanes relied primarily on Orosius, whose *legati supplices* he took to imply the envoys of 376.<sup>50</sup> In his 1986 article Heather was reluctant to put much credence in Jordanes' testimony, and his convincing indictment of Jordanes in his 1991 monograph leaves the credibility of this sixth-century historian on fourth-century issues in serious doubt.<sup>51</sup> Though Jordanes confirms unequivocally a conversion in 376, he is generally the most unreliable source to treat the issue.

(7) *A sixth-century Gothic ecclesiastical calendar*, which survives under an eighth-century palimpsest, has been used by some to support Socrates' date, but it too must be rejected. The relevant entry from 23 October records a notice sometimes interpreted as a reference to Fritigern: *thize ana Gutthiudae managaize marytre jah Frithareikeis* ("[Remembrance of] the many martyrs among the Gothic people and of Frideric").<sup>52</sup> The most important of the text's clear errors is transcription of the Gothic chieftain (?) whom it celebrates. The manuscript actually reads *Frithareikeikeis*, a mistranscription of *Frithigairnis reikis*, as some argue.<sup>53</sup> The emendation is plausible

<sup>49</sup> Heather, "Conversion" 312; Rubin (50ff) uses the same passage in support of a conversion *ca* 372.

<sup>50</sup> For Jordanes' use of Orosius both generally and in this passage see Mommsen's edition of Jordanes, *MGH AA V* xxvii, 92 n.2; cf. Fridh (*supra* n.4) 136.

<sup>51</sup> "Conversion" 312 with n.56, and *Goths and Romans 332-489* (Oxford 1991: hereafter 'Heather, *Goths*') 34ff; cf. Schäferdiek, "Zeit" 90, who believes that Jordanes misinterpreted Orosius' notice as a reference to 376; more on Jordanes at J. J. O'Donnell, "The Aims of Jordanes," *Historia* 31 (1982) 223-40.

<sup>52</sup> Stamm-Heyne (*supra* n.42) 276=Delehaye 276=Streitberg (*supra* n.1) 472=Schäferdiek, "Kalendar," 118; English translation and commentary in Heather and Matthews 129.

<sup>53</sup> H. Achelis, "Der älteste deutsche Kalendar," *ZNTW* 1 (1900) 308-35 at 308f; R. Loewe, "Der gothische Kalendar," *ZDA* 60 (1922) 258-62; Schäferdiek, "Kalendar," 123ff; Rubin 52f; rejected by Thompson, *Visigoths* 157f; Heather and Matthews 129 n.61.



though far from conclusive. Thus it cannot be pressed for dating the Gothic conversion. If Fritigern were commemorated in the Christian calendar, and even if he was commemorated for converting the Goths under his control, the conversion could just as easily have occurred in 376 as in *ca* 372.

## V. The Circumstances of the Gothic Conversion

The evidence for the Gothic conversion is complex and confusing. Ultimately, however, only Socrates presents a reliable and detailed account, not only clarifying the date of Fritigern's and his Tervingi followers' conversion, but offering unique information on developments in the Tervingi confederation in the crucial period between the end of Valens' first Gothic war and the Hun invasions (369–*ca* 376). Socrates avers that there had been an important split in the Tervingi confederation before the Hun invasions that led to diplomatic contact between Valens and those Goths whom he decided to admit to the Empire in 376. This information militates against Heather's major tenet (*Goths* 135ff) that the Tervingi confederation was, if anything, strengthened in the aftermath of the first Gothic war, and that the Tervingi remained unified and strongly anti-Roman even after the Huns forced them to seek refuge among the Romans. Socrates also indicates that fourth-century Roman emperors were interested in spreading and defending Christianity among non-Roman peoples and that, at least in the case of the Goths, those peoples used Christianity as a means of strengthening Roman ties. This evidence draws into question a theory of another major opponent of Socrates' veracity, Thompson, who argued strongly against active evangelization among "northern barbarians" in the fourth century—a position that forced him to explain away the abundant evidence for fourth-century Gothic Christianity and especially to impugn Socrates.<sup>54</sup> The arguments of Thompson and Heather must be revised in light both of Socrates' apparent veracity and of other sources that support Socrates' picture.

<sup>54</sup> E. A. Thompson, "Christianity and the Northern Barbarians," in A. Momigliano, ed., *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* (Oxford 1963) 56–78; cf. Schäferdiek, "Germanenmission," and "Gab es eine gotisch-arianische Mission im süddeutschen Raum?" *ZBayLandGesch* 45 (1982) 239–57.

Socrates' discussion of evangelization among the Goths (4.33.6–9) adduces only the example of Ulfilas, certainly the most famous and perhaps the most powerful agent of Christian propagation among Gothic peoples. Ulfilas was, however, by no means the only force to push for Gothic Christianization. Some sources dating to Ulfilas' childhood indicate that Roman contemporaries were aware of Gothic Christians in the early fourth century, and others that a Gothic bishop named Theophilus, whom Socrates names as Ulfilas' teacher, sat at the council of Nicaea in 325.<sup>55</sup> In the fifth century Socrates (1.18.4) and Sozomen (2.6.1) also believed that the Goths began to embrace Christianity under Constantine. In fact, Christians had lived within the territories of the Gothic confederation since the third century. Philostorgius asserts that Ulfilas' Cappadocian ancestors had been carried north of the Danube during the Gothic raids of the 260s.<sup>56</sup> If Ulfilas is any indication, by the early fourth century his Christian family was giving its children Gothic names and speaking fluent Gothic.<sup>57</sup> Saba, the zealous Christian martyr in Athanaric's persecutions, was considered Gothic by γένοϛ and the story of his martyrdom indicates many other Christians in his village.<sup>58</sup> Other martyrological sources confirm that Christians were common in *Gothia* and, given their names, that they were integrated members of Gothic society. Thompson's attempts to downplay the significance of these Gothic Christians as strictly lower class, a contention attested only in Saba's case, contradicts the

<sup>55</sup> Early fourth-century Gothic Christianity: *Euseb. VC* 4.5; *Praep. Evang.* 1.4.6; *Ath. De incarn.* 51.2 (*SC CXCIX* 450.9); *cf. Tert. Adv. Iud.* 7 (*PL II* 650); see Schäferdiek, "Germanenmission" 497f, and "Gotische Christentum" 20ff; Ulfilas' birthdate: Thompson, *Visigoths* xiii; Theophilus: *Soc. H.E.* 2.41; H. Gelzer, H. Hilgenfeld, O. Cuntz, edd., *Patrum Nicaenorum nomina* (Leipzig 1898) 56, 117, 141, 215; *cf. Euseb. VC* 3.7. Wolfram (78f) argues that Theophilus was Crimean, but Socrates' testimony that he taught Ulfilas makes this unlikely; *cf. Schäferdiek*, "Gotische Christentum" 20f n.7f.

<sup>56</sup> *Philost. H.E.* 2.5. It is not clear to which Gothic raids Philostorgius refers, because he locates them in the reign of Valerian and Gallienus, *i.e.*, 260 or earlier, but the Gothic raids in Cappadocia took place in the mid-260s. On the date see Wolfram 52.

<sup>57</sup> On Ulfilas' linguistic capabilities *cf. Auxentius* 33 [53] (*CCLS LXXXVII.1* 160ff).

<sup>58</sup> *Pass. S. Sabae* 1, Delehaye 216: Γότθοϛ ὦν τῷ γένει. For other Christians in Saba's village: *Pass. S. Sabae* 3f, Delehaye 217.30, 34, 218.35=Heather and Matthews 113f.

patent evidence of the Gothic queen Gaatha and her children—Christians in the 370s and 380s.<sup>59</sup>

The structures of ecclesiastical hierarchy attested in Gothic territory also give the impression of some degree of organization. Besides the bishop Theophilus and Ulfilas, who acted as bishop in Tervingi territory in the 340s, a bishop with the distinctively Gothic name Goddas served in *Gothia* in the early 380s and another named Silvanus died before 369.<sup>60</sup> The Goth Saba, probably a lector or cantor, was in contact with the priests Sansalas and Gouthicas, the latter of whom also has a Gothic name.<sup>61</sup> Given that only a handful of evidence survives from Gothic territory in the fourth century and that even that handful provides clear testimony of Gothic Christians and Gothic ecclesiastical structures, any attempt to downplay the importance of Christianity among the fourth-century Goths must be rejected.

Though it is possible to establish that Christians of both Gothic and non-Gothic background lived in fourth-century *Gothia*, it is difficult to pinpoint how Christianity penetrated Gothic territory. The sources for the Gothic conversion attest the evangelical efforts of three sects: Audians, Nicenes, and Homoian 'Arians'. Epiphanius of Salamis (*Adv. Haeres.* 70.15) describes the proselytizing activity of the heretical teacher Audius, banished to Gothic territory at an unspecified date. There he established Christian communities and even ordained bishops, one of whom, Silvanus, was already dead before the beginning of Athanaric's persecutions in 369.<sup>62</sup> Epiphanius' testimony allows us to infer that evangelical activity was going on well before 369, though in the case of the Audians it was entirely accidental, resulting from Audius' exile.

Epiphanius states that the persecution affected not just Audians but also Nicenes, whose presence among the fourth-century Goths is confirmed by the *Passion of St Saba*, which

<sup>59</sup> Thompson, *Visigoths* xvii, 77, 84; *contra*, Rubin 89f; on the names Achelis (*supra* n.53) 323; Mansion (*supra* n.1) 11.

<sup>60</sup> Goddas: *Pass. SS. Innae Rhimae et Pinae* at Delehaye 215f; the Audian bishop Silvanus: Epiph. *Adv. Haeres.* 70.15.

<sup>61</sup> Saba as lector or cantor: Heather and Matthews 112 n.21; Sansalas and Gouthicas: *Pass. S. Sabae* 4, Delehaye 218f=Heather and Matthews 114.

<sup>62</sup> Epiphanius' persecution is almost certainly that begun in 369: H.-C. Puech, "Audianer," *RAC* 1 (1950) 912. Given that Audius flourished in Syria in the 340s (Hieron. *Chron. s.a.* 341), it seems reasonable to assume that his exile and missionary efforts occurred well before the persecution of 369.

makes a point of identifying its subject as "orthodox."<sup>63</sup> Saba's orthodoxy is further implied by three letters of Basil (*Epp.* 155, 164–65), one of which alludes to the story of Saba's martyrdom.<sup>64</sup> Basil wrote in hope of acquiring the relics of Saba, an unlikely prospect if Saba had not been orthodox. *Epp.* 164–65 reveal at least one avenue of Nicene evangelical activity among the Goths. The letters are addressed to Ascholius, not (as previously assumed) the Bishop of Thessalonica who later baptized Theodosius, but a simple priest of that name, apparently a Cappadocian, actively operating in Gothic territory (Zuckerman 473ff). Based just outside *Gothia*, perhaps in Scythia Minor, Ascholius had direct influence over Saba, whose *Passion* he may have composed. This is clear from the letters, which also indicate that Ascholius' evangelizing efforts were intentional, not, as with Audius, accidental. Basil employs the typical agonistic metaphors of martyrology to praise Ascholius as the "trainer" of the martyr "athlete," whom he "strengthened for the contest of piety" (*Ep.* 164). He also refers to him as having "honored the land that bore you with a martyr who has recently contended for the prize in the barbarian country that is your neighbor" (*Ep.* 165), a clear indication of missionary efforts within Gothic territory by a Roman based outside it. Basil even implies (*Ep.* 164) that such orthodox missionary efforts predated Ascholius: an otherwise unattested Eutyches, now dead, springs to Basil's mind—another who tamed "the barbarians by the power of the Spirit and the operation of his gifts."

Thus Basil clearly knew of intentional Orthodox missionizing among the Goths. Socrates indicates that Ulfilas conducted similar evangelical activities in the interests of a third Christian sect, the Homoian "Arians." Socrates is not the only source for Ulfilas' evangelical activities north of the Danube. Sozomen also reports a supplemented version of Socrates' account and two independent sources, Philostorgius (2.5) and a letter by Ulfilas' pupil, Auxentius of Durostorum (35 [56]), provide additional testimony. Unfortunately, Auxentius and Philostorgius offer

<sup>63</sup> *Pass. S. Sabae* 2, Delehaye 217=Heather and Matthews 112. The twenty-six martyrs were probably also orthodox, given that their bones were assembled by Gaatha: *χριστιανῆ οὔσα καὶ ὀρθόδοξος*, Delehaye 279=Heather and Matthews 127.

<sup>64</sup> *Ep.* 164: τὸ ξύλον, τὸ ὕδωρ, τὰ τελειωτικὰ τῶν μαρτύρων, as long understood, refers to the martyrdom of Saba at *Pass. S. Sabae* 7, Delehaye 220f, cf. 289; Heather and Matthews 119, 124 n.52; Zuckerman 477.

contradictory dates for Ulfilas' consecration and the beginning of his mission ἐν τῇ Γετικῇ. Whether the date of his consecration is 336 under Constantine or 341 under Constantius II, both sources imply that the emperor was somehow actively involved with Ulfilas' work.<sup>65</sup> On Philostorgius' testimony, Ulfilas was actually sent on embassy by the Gothic king to Constantine and consecrated under his auspices. Auxentius too implies (35 [56]; 37 [59]) that Ulfilas was consecrated to convert the Goths, though he claims no imperial involvement. Auxentius does reveal that, when Ulfilas was expelled from Gothic territory in a persecution of native Christians during the 340s, the emperor Constantius II received him into Roman territory and established him and his community of Christian Goths at Nicopolis ad Istrum (Nikjup) in Moesia.<sup>66</sup> Roman emperors thus possibly played a rôle in Ulfilas' consecration and certainly in his protection from Gothic persecution.

According to Socrates 4.33, Ulfilas continued his missionary activity in *Gothia* from within Roman territory even up to the onset of Athanaric's persecutions in 369—a perfectly plausible story given the circumstances. Ulfilas established ecclesiastical structures for his community of Gothic 'Arians' only 50 km from the Danube border. He spoke Gothic, understood Gothic social and tribal structures, and, of prime importance for purposes of evangelization, he translated the Bible into Gothic. His missionary zeal is unlikely to have ceased after his expulsion, and his geographical and ecclesiastical position make it more than likely that he continued his efforts, whether personally or through envoys.<sup>67</sup> Socrates relates that Ulfilas' evangelical efforts extended into the territories of both Fritigern and

<sup>65</sup> Schäferdiek ("Germanenmission" 499, and "Wulfila: vom Bischof von Gotien zum Gotenbischof," *ZKircheng* 90 [1979] 253–303 at 254ff) and T. D. Barnes ("The Consecration of Ulfila," *JThS* 41 [1990] 541–45) give preference to Philostorgius and date the consecration to 336; Heather and Matthews (142f) prefer Auxentius and a date of 341/342; Wolfram (77f) tries to reconcile Auxentius and Philostorgius by positing two embassies of Ulfilas to Roman territory. Only new evidence can resolve the issue.

<sup>66</sup> Auxentius 36 [58]–37 [59]; Philost. 2.5. Auxentius' date for the persecution (seven years after Ulfilas' consecration) depends on whose argument is accepted for the date of consecration: cf. *supra* n.65. The Goths whom he established at Nicopolis are still attested there in the sixth century (Jord. *Get.* 267). They were perhaps not within the city but near it, given that the Nicopolitans fiercely resisted the Gothic raiders after 376: Eunap. fr. 47.1f Blockley; Isid. *Hist. Goth.* 10 (MGH AA XI 271f); cf. Wolfram 75ff.

<sup>67</sup> Rubin 43; *contra* Schäferdiek, "Gotische Christentum" 40ff.

Athanasius. Here he must be speaking of the ancestral/geographical spheres of influence that each controlled as *reiks*. Though Athanasius was overlord of the Tervingi confederation (*index/ kindins?*), he retained his rôle as the leader (*reiks*) of a geographically and ancestrally delimited subgroup of followers (*kuni/ baurgs*: Wolfram 89ff). Ulphilas' attempts to spread Christianity within that subgroup apparently provoked Athanasius to initiate the persecutions of 369–372.

It is difficult to determine whether Ulphilas' evangelical activity was imperially mandated or personally motivated. Philostorgius' account and a confused notice in Theodoret would indicate that imperial forces had some hand in encouraging Ulphilas.<sup>68</sup> In fact, encouragement rather than active sponsorship seems to have characterized imperial attitudes to the process of Christianization beyond the borders. Valens probably did not organize a program to convert the Goths, but he and his officials would have supported those who did convert and would have claimed some right to defend them—the norm since Constantine wrote to Sapor as *τις κοινὸς τῶν ἀπανταχοῦ κηδεμῶν* on behalf of the Christians in Persia. His letter, preserved in Eusebius' *Life of Constantine* (4.8–14), provides a paradigm of the claims to influence that Christian emperors laid over non-Roman Christians.<sup>69</sup>

Similar claims were made in numerous related circumstances involving autonomous border peoples whose political leadership, *i.e.*, royal houses, had decided to convert. In some cases, like Fritigern's, the decision was made with the active knowledge that it would strengthen the bond with Roman imperial authorities. The king and queen of Iberia, after converting under the guidance of a Christian slave, sent to Constantine requesting a Roman alliance and asking for a bishop.<sup>70</sup> The queen of Axum on the horn of Africa and her son Ezana converted in 333 under the influence of a Nicene traveler

<sup>68</sup> Philost. *H.E.* 2.5; Theodoret, *H.E.* 4.37.1f, says that Eudoxius of Constantinople convinced Valens to compel Ulphilas to convert to Arian Christianity in hope that this would strengthen Romano-Gothic peace.

<sup>69</sup> See T. D. Barnes, "Constantine and the Christians of Persia," *JRS* 75 (1985) 126–36.

<sup>70</sup> Rufinus *H.E.* 11.10; Soc. 1.20; Sozom. 2.7; Theod. *H.E.* 1.23 Cf. F. Thelamon, *Païens et chrétiens au IV<sup>e</sup> siècle. L'apport de l' "Histoire ecclésiastique" de Rufin d'Aquilée* (Paris 1981) 85ff; D. Braund, *Georgia in Antiquity: A History of Colchis and Transcaucasian Iberia 550 BC–AD 562* (Oxford 1994) 246ff.

named Frumentius, later appointed their bishop by Athanasius. Constantius attempted to force Frumentius to travel to Alexandria for an examination of his doctrinal position. Athanasius preserves Constantius' letter to the Bishop of the Axumites, where the emperor clearly hoped to force Frumentius to conform to the "law of the church and the official faith."<sup>71</sup> Constantius also supported the mission of the 'Indian' Theophilus to Himyar, across the Red Sea from Axum, probably in hopes of gaining political influence in that region as well. Even the Saracen revolt (mentioned above) was triggered by Valens' attempts to exert control over the election of a Saracen bishop.<sup>72</sup> In Armenia the imperial apparatus used Christianity as a means to influence the political leadership and, as with the Saracens, Valens personally exerted efforts to influence the selection of an Armenian bishop.<sup>73</sup> In short, Christianity provided a diplomatic link between Rome and the independent eastern territories over which she claimed some influence. In this context, Valens' support of Christians north of the Danube makes perfect sense. Despite no firm evidence that he actively sponsored missionary efforts in *Gothia*, there is every reason to believe that, as elsewhere, he supported and encouraged Gothic Christians. For Socrates this was clearly the case with Fritigern, who was favorable to Christians before he won Valens' support and who converted with his followers to strengthen his Roman ties. In his case, as in so many others, Roman leadership employed Christianity as a remote control to extend Roman influence among non-Romans and to manipulate affairs beyond direct Roman sway.

Non-Christian Goths certainly knew and feared this connection between the Romans and Christians within their territory.

<sup>71</sup> Rufinus *H.E.* 11.9–10, followed by Soc. 1.19; Sozom. 2.24; Theod. *H.E.* 1.22; Athan. *Apol. ad Const.* 29–31 (SC LVI 121ff); cf. S. Munro-Hay, *Aksum. An African Civilization in Late Antiquity* (Edinburgh 1991) 77f, 202ff.

<sup>72</sup> On Himyar: Philost. *H.E.* 3.4ff; cf. A. Dihle, "Die Sendung des Inders Theophilus," *Palingenesia* 4 (1969) 330–36; on the Saracen revolt see *supra* 60f.

<sup>73</sup> On political influence more broadly see N. Garsoïan, "Politique ou orthodoxie? L'Arménie au quatrième siècle," *REArm* n.s. 4 (1967) 297–320 (= *Armenia between Byzantium and the Sassanians* [London 1985] IV); on Valens' efforts to influence the selection of a replacement for Narses see G. May, "Basilius der Grosse und der römische Staat," in B. Moeller and G. Ruhbach, edd., *Bleibendes im Wandel der Kirchengeschichte* (Tübingen 1973) 47–70 at 40ff; on Christian missionary activity as a foreign policy tool see R. C. Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy: Formation and Conduct from Diocletian to Anastasius* (Leeds 1992) 140ff.

As in the case of Ascholiu, Roman territory offered a base from which to evangelize among the Goths. The martyrologies reveal that it also offered a haven for Gotho-Christian refugees. In the *Passion of Saba* the priest Sansalas took temporary refuge from Athanaric's persecution in Roman territory, as did the Gothic queen Gaatha in the *menologion* account of the twenty-six martyrs. Gaatha later returned with a Christian layman, apparently to continue the fight for Christianity.<sup>74</sup> Many fled on a more permanent basis. Constantius II granted Ulfilas and his people land for settlement within two-days' walk of Gothic territory.<sup>75</sup> As Socrates reveals, Ulfilas took advantage of this location to continue conversions in *Gothia*. Contacts between Gothic Christians and their Roman counterparts are also attested in the traffic in relics between Gothic and Roman territory.<sup>76</sup> Thus little wonder that Athanaric persecuted Christianity as a direct threat to his ancestral religion—a threat linked to his greatest political enemy.<sup>77</sup> His predecessor as *index* of the Tervingi had taken the same measures, probably for the same reasons, in the 340s.<sup>78</sup> Christianization gave Rome a toe-hold in territories she did not control—a toe-hold of which she gladly took advantage and which her enemies greatly feared and resented.

<sup>74</sup> Sansala: *Pass. S. Sabae* 4, Delehaye 218=Heather and Matthews 114; Gaatha: Delehaye 279=Heather and Matthews 127.

<sup>75</sup> Oros. 7.32.9: *plurimi in Romanum solum non trepidi, velut ad hostes, sed certi, quia ad fratres, pro Christi confessione fugerunt*; Augustine (*De civ. D.* 18.52) claims to have known Gothic brethren who had witnessed the persecution; on Ulfilas' settlement at Nicopolis see *supra* 75f.

<sup>76</sup> *Pass. Sabae praef.* (Delehaye 216=Heather and Matthews 111) is addressed from the church of "Gothia" to the church of Cappadocia. On Saba's relics cf. Basil *Epp.* 155, 164–65; Bishop Goddas transferred the relics of Inna, Rima, and Pina to Roman territory from Gothic territory via a Black Sea port called Haliscus (*Pass. Innae Rimae et Pinae*, Delehaye 216), and Gaatha transferred those of "the Twenty-Six" martyrs to Cyzicus (Delehaye 279=Heather and Matthews 127).

<sup>77</sup> Soc. 4.33.7: ὁ Ἀθανάριχος, ὡς παραχαρattoμένης τῆς πατρώου θρησκείας, πολλοὺς τῶν χριστιανιζόντων τιμωρίας ὑπέβαλλεν; Sozom. 6.37.12: ὡς τῆς πατρώας θρησκείας καινοτομουμένης; Eriph. *Adv. Haeres.* 70.15: "... from jealousy of the Romans, because the Roman emperors were Christians" (tr. P. R. Amidon, *The Panarion of St. Epiphanius Bishop of Salamis. Selected Passages* [New York 1990] 278).

<sup>78</sup> Persecution of the 340s: Auxentius 36 [58]–37 [59]; Philost. *H.E.* 2.5; and probably Cyrill. Hiers. *Catech.* 10.19 (PG XXXIII 688) s.a. 350; see also Wolfgram 79ff; for sources on Athanaric's persecution cf. *supra* n.14.



In sum, Christianity in Gothic territory during the fourth century was common and well organized and reached even the upper echelons of Gothic society. Conversion was brought about through passive and active evangelical efforts undertaken by Christians both inside and outside Gothic territory, with encouragement not just from Roman ecclesiastical authorities but from the imperial administration. Finally, Gothic central leaders regarded Christianity as a real and present threat from Rome and acted on their perceptions by instituting two anti-Christian persecutions. Thus Socrates 4.33.6–9 provides crucial information for the existence of evangelical activities among northern barbarians of precisely the sort that Thompson categorically denied. Only by rejecting Socrates' precise testimony could Thompson build his case for the complete absence of officially encouraged evangelization among northern barbarians. Acceptance of Socrates, on the contrary, permits fully understanding the significance of the myriad sources for Gothic Christianization in the period up to 369.

Thus far Socrates 4.33 on events before Athanaric's persecutions. We must now examine how Socrates 4.33.1–4 fits with what is known about the years following 369. Socrates is the only independent source for a Gothic civil war in the 370s, but good evidence attests unstable Gothic social and political structures in the years of Athanaric's persecution. The Gothic martyrologies clearly attest the *index's* inability to enforce his mandate. Beyond the structural difficulties of compelling obedience among a huge population spread over a vast territory, these martyrologies, particularly those of Saba and the twenty-six martyrs, reveal open defiance of Athanaric's persecution order not just at the lowest levels of society but among the elites. Rubin (36ff) has carefully outlined this intra-tribal fragmentation (*cf.* Thompson, *Visigoths* 64ff).

This resistance to Athanaric's authority must be seen in the context of the aftermath of Valens' Gothic war (367–69). Athanaric had brought the war on the Goths by sending troops to aid Valens' rival, the usurper Procopius, and threatening Valens if these men were not returned.<sup>79</sup> Athanaric's war had devastated the Gothic economy and left the Goths teetering on

<sup>79</sup> Athanaric's support of Procopius: Amm. Marc. 26.10.3; 27.4.1; 31.3.4; Zos. 4.7.1f; Athanaric demands his men's return: Eunap. fr. 37 Blockley=37 Müller; Zos. 4.10.1ff.

the brink of starvation.<sup>80</sup> His treaty with Valens, which sharply curbed Romano-Gothic trade and completely ended tribute, perpetuated this economic chaos.<sup>81</sup> In the wake of these difficulties, Athanaric felt compelled to launch a persecution in order to shore up his sagging authority.<sup>82</sup> Not surprising, his heavy-handed techniques of control provoked further resistance. Socrates' description of the rebellion of one Gothic *reiks*, Fritigern, against Athanaric's central authority is easy to comprehend in this context. Whether Fritigern was the only *reiks* to rebel or simply the only one Socrates mentions because of his subsequent conversion is unknown.

As the Gothic martyrologies mention a variety of leaders who resisted the persecution on various levels, it seems logical to assume that Fritigern would not have operated alone. Indeed, two roughly contemporary homilies of Basil indicate that infighting among Gothic chieftains was considered normal.<sup>83</sup> Given Basil's direct communication with people on the Gothic border and his awareness of Athanaric's persecution, he probably writes as an informed source. *Ep.* 155 (related to *Epp.*

<sup>80</sup> Amm. Marc. 27.5.7: *commerciis vetitis ultima necessariorum inopia barbari stringebantur.*

<sup>81</sup> On the cessation of trade and tribute: Them. *Or.* 10.135b-d=Heather and Matthews 43f; for the treaty also see Amm. Marc. 27.5.7ff; Zos. 4.11.4. Numismatic evidence indicates that the ban was relatively effective in restricting trade: O. Toropu, "La frontière nord-danubienne de la Dacie Ripenses depuis l'abandon de la Dacie traiane jusqu'aux invasions hunniques," in *Actes du IX<sup>e</sup> Congrès International d'Études sur les Frontières Romaines, Mamaia 1972* (Bucharest 1974) 71-81; C. Preda, "Circulatia monedelor romane post-aureliene in Dacia," *StCerclstVeche* 26 (1975) 441-86.

<sup>82</sup> Here I differ with Heather's interpretation of the war of 367-369, based on Them. *Or.* 8 and 10. Heather (*Goths* 117f; Heather and Matthews 25) correctly contends that Amm. Marc. 27.5.9 and Them. *Or.* 10, esp. 135a, indicate that Valens' victory over Athanaric was far from decisive—a point already acknowledged: cf. L. Schmidt (*supra* n.1) 232f; Dagron (*supra* n.25) 102f; Wanke (*supra* n.8) 107ff. The argument that Themistius (*Or.* 8.113a-115d, 116d, 118c) indicates that Valens was already backing down from Athanaric in early 368 is less well-founded, partly because its chronology is weak, partly because it fails to take into account the broader economic conditions under which Valens operated: see Lenski 214ff with n.27. Even if Athanaric's tactics of evasion had prevented Valens from achieving a decisive victory, Athanaric had suffered defeat in the only battle he risked with Valens (Amm. Marc. 27.5.6); his territory and people were devastated (27.5.7; Zos. 4.11.2f); and he was compelled to send multiple embassies for peace (27.5.7; Them. *Or.* 10.133a). The war was a stalemate, leaving both sides weaker, not, as Heather, a clear victory for Athanaric.

<sup>83</sup> In *Psalms*. VII 7.5 (PG XXIX 239), *De Invid.* 4 (PG XXXI 380).

164 and 165 cited in connection with Saba's martyrdom) provides further support. Though the correspondent is anonymous, it is commonly agreed that Basil addresses Junius Soranus, the *dux Scythiae Minoris*, who according to the *Passion of Saba* (8, Delehaye 221=Heather and Matthews 117) sent envoys to recover Saba's relics. Soranus had written Basil about the persecution and Basil responds with the request that Soranus send the relics to Caesarea, reminding him that "whatever relief you provide for those suffering persecution for the name of the Lord, this you lay by for yourself on the day of recompense." Basil's vague and allusive testimony—in classic late Greek epistolary style—indicates that a Roman military commander in the diocese of Thrace had firm enough contacts inside barbarian territory to obtain the relics of Gothic martyrs and was even able to offer some form of "relief" (ἀνάπαυσις) to those suffering persecution.<sup>84</sup> The testimony fits remarkably well with Socrates' story of the Roman riparian troops in Thrace supporting a Gothic leader favorable to Christianity. Moreover, the traditional date of the letter, 373, fits best with Roman intervention before 376.<sup>85</sup>

Ammianus offers further evidence that ties—in part based on Christianity—had been established between Valens and the Tervingi leaders whom he allowed to cross the Danube. When the Goths wished to negotiate with the citizens of Adrianople in 378, they sent a Christian priest as legate (Amm. Marc. 31.15.6). Fritigern and his Goths thus continued to believe, as they had in 376 (Eunap. fr. 48.2 Blockley=55 Müller), that the Christian clergy among them served a useful diplomatic function. But Fritigern regarded Christianity as more than just a diplomatic tool. In the days before the battle of Adrianople, he sent a *Christiani ritus presbyter* to Valens' camp to ask for peace terms (Amm. Marc. 31.12.8f). Thompson, quick to point out that Ammianus ranks the priest *cum aliis humilibus*, dismissed his significance in Gothic society. This phrase certainly reveals that the priest was not from the Gothic aristocracy, but Ammianus also refers to his close relationship with Fritigern and says that Fritigern had entrusted the priest with a secret missive

<sup>84</sup> The contact is more striking because Valens and Athanaric had halted most trans-Danubian traffic by their treaty of 369: see *supra* n.81.

<sup>85</sup> W.-D. Hauschild, tr. and comm., *Basilus von Caesarea. Briefe II* (Stuttgart 1973) 168 n.157; cf. S. C. Alexe, "Saint Basile le Grand et le christianisme romain au IV<sup>e</sup> siècle," *StudPatr* 17.3 (Oxford 1982) 1049–59.

explaining his desire for peace.<sup>86</sup> Clearly Fritigern regarded a Christian priest not just as a suitable legate but as a trusted confidant. Other passages confirm a special relationship between Fritigern and the Romans and indicate that even up to the battle of Adrianople Fritigern sought peace. He even pushed his case for peace against the resistance of the more militant Greuthungi, Alan, Hun, and Taifal sub-chieftains in his multi-ethnic group.<sup>87</sup>

These strong links between Fritigern and the Roman leadership, based in part on Christianity, could have been established after a conversion in 376. But this scenario seems unlikely. Less than a year after his entry into the Roman Empire, Fritigern rebelled. The rebellion, triggered by Roman abuses, would probably have led Fritigern and his Goths to throw off any recently acquired emblems of Roman dominance. If under the terms of submission in 376, the Tervingi had been required to convert, it is hard to believe that they would have retained Christian priests as confidants and remained committed to the Arian religion imposed on them by imperial fiat only six to nine months earlier. More likely, Fritigern's Christianity was deeply rooted and linked to a more positive choice to convert as a confirmation of close ties with Rome. It also seems likely that Fritigern's apparent 'pro-Roman' sentiments stretched back to a period when the Romans had indeed won his favor.

## VI. Conclusion

Numerous sources support the information at Socrates 4.33. By combining their testimony with Socrates' account, a well-rounded impression of the Gothic civil war and Fritigern's conversion emerges. Evangelizing efforts among the Goths since the second quarter of the fourth century provoked a reaction from the Gothic central leadership, who twice persecuted Gothic Christians—the second time in the aftermath of Valens' war against the Goths (367–369). This war must have weakened the authority of the Tervingi *index* Athanaric, who implemented the persecution at least in part to strengthen his position. Rather than ensuring unity, however, his actions led to the fragmentation in the Tervingi confederation attested in Socrates

<sup>86</sup> Thompson, *Visigoths* 75, cf. 157; *contra*, Rubin 49.

<sup>87</sup> Amm. Marc. 31.4.1, 8; 5.5; 12.14; Eunap. fr. 48.2 Blockley=55 Müller; cf. Wolfram 72.

and the martyrologies. The *reiks* Fritigern, who had already accepted the evangelizing efforts of Ulfilas in his own sphere of influence, openly rebelled against Athanaric and won military support from Valens. He eventually concluded peace with Athanaric but, in thanks to Valens, converted to Christianity. No date for this can be certain. The last datable event in Athanaric's persecution, Saba's death, falls in 372. At some later point, Athanaric made peace with his rebellious sub-chieftain(s) and perhaps then Fritigern converted.

By the time the Huns invaded *ca* 376, the Tervingi had suffered internal fragmentation, in which at least one sub-chieftain had successfully broken away from Athanaric's leadership. This reconstruction necessarily affects our impression of the strength and unity of the group that begged Valens for entry into the Empire in 376. Heather's portrait of the Gothic Tervingi and their northeastern counterparts, the Greuthungi, as relatively strong, unified, and anti-Roman must clearly be modified. The Huns were certainly the main factor that shattered the Tervingi confederation and drove the Goths south of the Danube. Socrates makes it clear, however, that before the Hun invasion the Tervingi had experienced internal difficulties that had led to the initiation of relations between Valens and the only Goths to whom Valens would later grant permission to enter the Empire.<sup>88</sup>

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November, 1995

<sup>88</sup> Thanks are due to Peter Brown, Ted Champlin, and Tim Barnes for their help. Peter Heather deserves special thanks for carefully reading and commenting on this paper, despite his differences with it.