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## CONSTANS AND GRATIAN IN ROME

T. D. BARNES

DURING the third century Roman emperors ceased to treat Rome as their normal place of residence and the city lost its old position as the imperial capital. Diocletian and his colleagues passed their reigns either traveling or in palaces which they maintained elsewhere, closer to the armed frontiers of the empire, in cities such as Nicomedia, Aquileia, or Trier.<sup>1</sup> The emperor thus escaped the constricting ambience of a city where he was expected to conduct himself more as a magistrate than as a monarch.<sup>2</sup> By the same token, the way was prepared for the establishment of a new imperial capital to rival the old. The foundation of Constantinople was a result, not the cause,<sup>3</sup> of the declining importance of Rome. Constantine's city fulfilled, in the eastern provinces, a role which Nicomedia had already played in the reigns of Diocletian and Licinius.<sup>4</sup>

When the imperial court had departed, many of the former causes of conflict and hostility between emperor and the Senate of Rome disappeared, and the ruler's habitual absence lent his occasional presence an increased significance.<sup>5</sup> The *adventus Augusti* was no longer a ceremony which heralded permanent residence, but one which presented a rare political opportunity for both parties. Hence any serious attempt to understand or interpret the fourth century cannot avoid inquiring when, why, and under what circumstances emperors visited Rome. However, investigation of the question has been hampered by too ready an acceptance of the statement of a panegyric:

<sup>1</sup> For these three cities, see respectively Lactantius *Mort. Pers.* 7.10; 10.6; 17.4ff; *Pan. Lat.* 7(6).6.2; E. M. Wightman, *Roman Trier and the Treveri* (London 1970) 58ff.

<sup>2</sup> J. Straub, *Zum Herrscherideal in der Spätantike* (Stuttgart 1939) 187ff.

<sup>3</sup> As is often assumed, e.g., by R. Janin, *Constantinople Byzantine*<sup>2</sup> (Paris 1964) 21.

<sup>4</sup> For Nicomedia as Licinius' capital, note Sozomenus *HE* 4.16.6; *Suda* A 4450 (1.415 Adler).

<sup>5</sup> On the ceremonial aspect of imperial visits, see now S. MacCormack, *Historia* 21 (1972) 721-752.

his annis qui lustra mihi bis dena recensent,  
 nostra ter Augustos intra pomeria vidi,  
 temporibus variis; eadem sed causa tropaei  
 civilis dissensus erat. venere superbi,  
 scilicet ut Latio respersos sanguine currus  
 adspicerem.

So Claudian makes the goddess Roma declare, in a poem recited in January 404 (*VI Cons. Honorii* 392ff). One hundred years takes one back to 304: the poet may or may not have known that Diocletian visited Rome to celebrate his *vicennalia* in November 303, and that Maximian came in the following year.<sup>6</sup> What three visits had Claudian in mind? If he refers only to visits immediately after a civil war, then they could be one each by Constantine (312), Constantius (357), and Theodosius (389). Therefore, Theodosius visited Rome once only.<sup>7</sup> Alternatively, if it be supposed that Theodosius visited Rome twice, then Claudian has overlooked either his second visit (in 394) or that of Constantius a generation earlier. Moreover, so it is asserted, Claudian's words render it highly improbable that Gratian ever visited Rome.<sup>8</sup> But Claudian states that there have been only three visits in all, each of them immediately after a civil war, and the modern exegetes have exhibited a forgetfulness similar to that of Claudian. Constantine also visited Rome to celebrate his *decennalia* (in 315) and *vicennalia* (in 326), and on both occasions the celebration of the imperial anniversary was partly combined with that of the defeat of a rival.<sup>9</sup>

Five imperial visits to Rome, four of them after civil wars, are thus indubitably attested in the relevant hundred years, even apart from the presence there of Maximian (306–308), Maxentius (306–312), and the usurper Nepotianus (350):<sup>10</sup> Constantine three times (312, 315,

<sup>6</sup> Lactantius *Mort. Pers.* 17.1ff; *Pan. Lat.* 7(6).8.6ff.

<sup>7</sup> So W. Ensslin, "War Kaiser Theodosius I zweimal in Rom?" *Hermes* 81 (1953) 500–507. For the opinions of earlier scholars, see also A. Piganiol, *L'empire chrétien* (Paris 1947) 268; E. Demougeot, *De l'unité à la division de l'empire romain* (Paris 1951) 111; E. Stein and J. R. Palanque, *Histoire du Bas-empire I*<sup>2</sup> (Paris/Bruges 1958) 534f.

<sup>8</sup> A. Cameron, *HSCP* 73 (1968) 262f.

<sup>9</sup> For Constantine's movements, see O. Seeck, *Regesten der Kaiser und Päpste für die Jahre 311 bis 476 n. Chr.* (Stuttgart 1919) 163f, 176f; T. D. Barnes, *JRS* 63 (1973) 29ff. On the achievements commemorated, note respectively *ILS* 694; Publilius Optatianus Porfyrius *Carm.* 4.7: "sed nunc te, victor, vicennia picta honorent!"

<sup>10</sup> On whom, cf. *PLRE* 1.624.

and 326), Constantius (357), and Theodosius (389). It is hardly prudent, therefore, to invoke Claudian against a sixth, a seventh, or even an eighth visit. Various items of evidence either state or imply that Theodosius went to Rome after the defeat of Eugenius (6 September 394), and direct statements can be found that both Constans and Gratian visited the city. Of these three alleged visits, that of Theodosius has received ample discussion.<sup>11</sup> That of Constans appears to be generally ignored, while that of Gratian has been both accepted with confidence<sup>12</sup> and denied by means of peculiar argumentation.<sup>13</sup>

Some months after the death of Constantine, his three sons partitioned the Roman empire between them (autumn 337). Soon a dispute arose between the eldest and the youngest, the former exercising or claiming the position of guardian over the latter. To assert his pretensions, Constantine invaded Italy, but was ambushed and killed near Aquileia (early 340). Constantius was in Syria conducting and supervising warfare against the Persians in Mesopotamia. Consequently Constans seized the opportunity to annex Constantine's provinces to his portion.<sup>14</sup> When he learned of his brother's death he was in Pannonia. He proceeded swiftly to Aquileia, where he is attested in April 340<sup>15</sup> — and subsequently (it should be argued) to Rome. The occasion was opportune, and Constans' movements are totally unknown for a full year between 25 June 340, when he was at Milan, and 24 June 341, when he was at Lauriacum on the Danube.<sup>16</sup>

Two items of evidence can also be invoked. First, the *Passio Artemii*, deriving (so it is plausibly conjectured) from Philostorgius. Although the full text of his ecclesiastical history no longer survives, it was summarized by Photius, whose outline permits the identification of

<sup>11</sup> Most recently by A. Cameron, *HSCP* 73 (1968) 248–265.

<sup>12</sup> A. Alföldi, *A Conflict of Ideas in the Late Roman Empire* (Oxford 1952) 90; A. Demandt, *Zeitkritik und Geschichtsbild im Werk Ammians* (Bonn 1965) 68.

<sup>13</sup> "There is no direct evidence for this visit, and in view of the difficulties involved in accommodating four imperial visits, it is hardly possible even to consider a fifth . . . Moreover it would be very strange if Ammian had failed to mention an event of such significance as Alföldi, for example, attributes to it" (A. Cameron, *HSCP* 73 (1968) 262–263 n. 28).

<sup>14</sup> For these events, see O. Seeck, *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt* 4 (Berlin 1911) 40ff.

<sup>15</sup> *CTh* 2.6.5, 10.15.3.

<sup>16</sup> *CTh* 9.17.1, 8.2.1 = 12.1.31. Seeck emended the subscription of *Cj* 2.19.11 so that it showed Constans at Aquileia on 22 September 340 (*Regesten* 78, 189). A date before 337 seems more probable (*PLRE* 1.284f).

large and important fragments preserved elsewhere.<sup>17</sup> The hagiographer reports that Constans was visiting Rome when his brother attacked.<sup>18</sup> The chronology can hardly be defended, since Constans was at Naissus at least in January and early February.<sup>19</sup> However, the fact of the visit may be correct: in the immediate context, the *Passio Artemii* offers a detailed description of the territorial divisions of autumn 337.<sup>20</sup>

The second item is even more conjectural. The father of the orator Symmachus made a dedication, probably of a statue, to Constans:

Felicitatem publicam / clementia et virtute / cumulant, d.n. Fl. Iul. / Constanti pio felici / victori ac triumphatori Aug., / Aur. Avianius Symmachus v.c. / praef. annonae, d.n.m.q. eius.

(*NdS* 1886.362 = *ILS* 726)

The occasion could have been an imperial visit. It was conjectured long ago that Constans visited Rome in 349.<sup>21</sup> A visit nine years earlier is an even easier hypothesis. The Prefect of the City led an embassy to Constans: he was absent from Rome for six weeks and resumed office on his return.<sup>22</sup> He may have proceeded back to Rome accompanied by the emperor.

A visit to Rome by Gratian is explicitly attested, in a heterogeneous compilation, apparently put together in Constantinople in the eighth century,<sup>23</sup> which goes under the name of *Παραστάσεις σύντομοι χρονικάί* or, in Latin garb, *Breves enarrationes chronicae*.<sup>24</sup> According to this source, Gratian went to Rome after his marriage.<sup>25</sup> Now Gratian married Constantia c. 374, and the narrative of Ammianus precludes a visit before Gratian's father died (17 November 375) or in the critical

<sup>17</sup> See J. Bidez and F. Winkelmann, *Philostorgius Kirchengeschichte*<sup>3</sup> (*GCS*: Berlin 1972).

<sup>18</sup> *Passio Artemii* 9 = Philostorgius *HE* 3.1<sup>a</sup> (p. 30.11 Bidez): *ἐκείνου πρὸς τὴν Ῥώμην ἀποδημήσαντος*.

<sup>19</sup> *CTh* 12.1.29 (19 January), 10.10.5 (2 February).

<sup>20</sup> *Passio Artemii* 8 (pp. 29–30 Bidez). For modern discussion of this partition, see Stein and Palanque (above, n. 7) 484f.

<sup>21</sup> T. Mommsen, *Codex Theodosianus* 1.1 (Berlin 1904) ccxxix, apparently arguing from *CTh* 11.7.6.

<sup>22</sup> *Mon. Grm. Hist.*, Auct. Ant. 9.68.

<sup>23</sup> In the reign of Constantine V (741–775); cf. C. Mango, *The Brazen House* (Copenhagen 1959) 10.

<sup>24</sup> Edited by I. Bekker, *Corpus scriptorum historiae Byzantinae* 15 (Bonn 1843) 166–193 (in part); T. Preger, *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum* 1 (Leipzig 1901) 19–73. References will be given to both Preger's chapter divisions and the Bonn pagination.

<sup>25</sup> *Brev. Enarr. Chron.* 50 (p. 178): *Γρατιανὸς μετὰ τὸ γάμμου ἐν Ῥώμῃ παρεγένετο*.

year of Adrianople (378).<sup>26</sup> If it occurred, the visit will belong to 376 or 377, a date also to be deduced from a speech of Themistius.

Themistius' thirteenth speech (in the traditional numeration) is a product not suited to the tastes or inclinations of most modern readers. The orator praises Gratian as befitted a philosopher, in a Platonic fashion: he alludes frequently to the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, and addresses the emperor as a "boy surpassing old age in virtue" and a "beautiful boy."<sup>27</sup> Themistius clearly delivered the speech in Rome,<sup>28</sup> whose inhabitants he salutes as leaders of the human race, and to the Senate.<sup>29</sup> It has sometimes also been believed that he delivered it in the presence of the emperor, with whom he had traveled to Rome.<sup>30</sup> But the whole tenor of the oration presupposes Gratian's absence rather than his presence. Although the invocations of Gratian in the second person might seem to imply his presence, Themistius more often uses the third person.<sup>31</sup> One mode of referring to the emperor, therefore, is an artifice, and it must be the former. Moreover, at the end of the speech Themistius looks forward to Gratian's triumphal entry into Rome and summons both Valens and Gratian to leave their tents and ditches in order to visit the imperial city.<sup>32</sup> Neither emperor can yet have arrived.

The speech thus provides circumstantial evidence for an imperial visit to Rome. It demonstrates that Gratian projected a visit when Themistius spoke, and nothing forbids the hypothesis that he did in fact journey to Rome shortly afterward. The peroration may disclose the precise date.<sup>33</sup> Although Themistius has already spoken confidently of the throng which will greet Gratian, he concludes with a prayer to Zeus, Athene, and Quirinus to grant mutual love between the emperor

<sup>26</sup> Ammianus 29.6.7, cf. 21.5.6 (Constantia born in the winter of 361/2). Mommsen adduced Ammianus 30.10.1, which refers to November/December 375, to prove that Gratian remained in Trier during 376 (*Codex Theod.* 1.1. ccliii). He is followed by A. Cameron, *HSCP* 73 (1968) 263.

<sup>27</sup> *Orat.* 13, esp. 165d, 171a.

<sup>28</sup> *Orat.* 13.177d: 'Ρώμη... ἥς ἦκω θεατής.

<sup>29</sup> *Orat.* 13.178b; 34.29.

<sup>30</sup> E.g., O. Seeck, *Die Briefe des Libanios* (Texte und Untersuchungen: 30, nos. 1, 2 [1906] 303), whence *PLRE* 1.891. For disproof, see H. Scholze, *De temporibus librorum Themistii* (Diss. Göttingen 1911) 45ff.

<sup>31</sup> *Orat.* 13.169b, etc.

<sup>32</sup> *Orat.* 13.179b; 179d.

<sup>33</sup> The editors of *PLRE* have contrived to follow Seeck for the date of Themistius' journey to Rome (1.891: "probably in the summer of 376"), Scholze for the date of the speech (893: "377 May/June — but 376 is possible")

and Rome.<sup>34</sup> That could be significant. Gratian's reign began with a political crisis, in which first the elder Theodosius, then his enemy Maximinus, were executed on imperial orders.<sup>35</sup> A visit to Rome in the summer of 376 may have been a political necessity, and may have answered Themistius' prayers.

For convenience of reference, a table of validly attested and historically probable imperial visits to Rome (312–395) may be given. For the five certain cases only the earliest or most important evidence is listed, for the others only explicit statements of the emperor's presence.

Constantine: three visits are attested in the Calendar of Philocalus, which notes *advent(us) divi* on 18 and 21 July and 29 October (*CIL* 1<sup>2</sup>, pp. 268, 274 = *Inscr. It.* 13.2, pp. 250/251; 256/257).

in 312: Lactantius *Mort. Pers.* 44.1ff.

in 315: *Frag. Vat.* 33, 274; *CTh* 11.30.3.

in 326: Jerome, *Chronicle* a. 326 (*GCS* 47.231); *Mon. Germ. Hist.*, Auct. Ant. 9.232.

Constans: in 340: *Passio Artemii* 8 = Philostorgius *HE* 3.1a (p. 30 Bidez).

Constantius: in 357: Ammianus Marcellinus 16.10.5ff.

Gratian: in 376 or 377: *Breves enarrationes chronicae* 50 (p. 178 Bonn).

Theodosius: two visits are implied by Theodoret *HE* 5.23.8.<sup>36</sup>

in 389: *Pan. Lat.* 2(12).47.3ff; calendars and laws.<sup>37</sup>

in 394: Prudentius *Contra Symmachum* 1.405ff; Zosimus 4.59.1ff; 5.38.2; Theodore Lector *Epit.* 277 (p. 85 Hansen).<sup>38</sup>

Lack of explicit attestation on the imperial coinage should be immediately obvious: the mint of Rome seems never to employ the legend *Adventus Augusti* throughout the period.<sup>39</sup> Less patent, but more serious, are the corollaries for the evaluation of other types or classes of evidence, if the alleged visits of Constans and Gratian are historical.

The secular history of much of the reigns of Constantine and his successors is badly documented in the extant evidence. For the reigns of Diocletian (in part) and of his immediate successors, Lactantius'

<sup>34</sup> *Orat.* 13.180a/b.

<sup>35</sup> On this obscure period, see A. Demandt, "Der Tod des älteren Theodosius," *Historia* 18 (1969) 598–626.

<sup>36</sup> Identified as the source of Theodore Lector by G. C. Hansen, *Theodoros Anagnostes Kirchengeschichte* (*GCS*: Berlin 1971) 85. On the variants in the text of Theodoret, see A. Cameron, *HSCP* 73 (1968) 253ff.

<sup>37</sup> Seeck, *Regesten* 275, 277.

<sup>38</sup> The source of Theophanes a. 5886 (pp. 73f de Boor).

<sup>39</sup> e.g., the legends in 388–393 (*RIC* 9.132ff).

*De mortibus persecutorum* provides a full and vivid narrative, but only as far as the death of Maximinus Daia (summer 313). Later in the century, Ammianus Marcellinus' history both illuminates the workings of the Roman Empire and offers a detailed account of the political and military activities of the emperors from 353 (where the text now begins) to the proclamation as Augustus of the younger Valentinian (22 November 375), with a final book devoted to the Goths in Moesia (down to 378). Later still, the poems of Claudian permit a reconstruction of the complicated events following the death of Theodosius (17 January 395).<sup>40</sup> For the intervening periods, the narrative sources are far less satisfactory: the extant ecclesiastical historians have little interest in political history for its own sake, the epitomators often traverse several years in a single sentence, and the account of Zosimus suffers equally from his own incompetence and the bias and incompetence of his source.<sup>41</sup> Yet there once existed fuller accounts of these periods. Although the early books of Ammianus Marcellinus were probably soon lost, some Greek histories of the fourth century survived long enough to be read and summarized by Photius in the ninth century or excerpted by order of Constantine Porphyrogenitus in the tenth.<sup>42</sup> As a double consequence, many important events have left no trace in the extant narrative sources, and late Byzantine writers sometimes preserve isolated facts or genuine names from the fourth century.

A single example in each category will illustrate. Allusions by Themistius and Libanius appear to constitute the sole surviving evidence for a conspiracy against the life of Theodosius.<sup>43</sup> The emperor Jovian had a wife whom Ammianus Marcellinus mentions.<sup>44</sup> No source earlier than the ninth century seems to state her name, but there is no reason to doubt that she really was called Charito.<sup>45</sup> The metaphrastic life of St. Nicolaus of Myra contains an account of a rebellion of Taifali

<sup>40</sup> Brilliantly exploited by A. Cameron, *Claudian: Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius* (Oxford 1970).

<sup>41</sup> Viz., Eunapius, who seems to have made grave errors even when recounting contemporary events, cf. Cameron, *Claudian* 474ff.

<sup>42</sup> Observe the cases of Eunapius (*FHG* 4.7ff) and Philostorgius (above, n. 17) and the obvious use of well-informed sources in Petrus Patricius fr. 13-18 (*FHG* 4.188-191) and by John of Antioch (*FHG* 4.601ff).

<sup>43</sup> Themistius *Orat.* 19, esp. 230b/c; Libanius *Orat.* 1.241f.

<sup>44</sup> Ammianus 25.8.9, 10.11.

<sup>45</sup> According to *PLRE*, "her name is given by Zonaras only" (1.201). In fact, the earliest source to name Charito appears to be Nicephorus the Patriarch, *Chron. comp.* p. 104 de Boor, who was translated into Latin c. 870 by Anastasius Bibliothecarius (C. de Boor, *Theophanis Chronographia* 2 (Leipzig 1885) 47).



settled in Phrygia in the reign of Constantine:<sup>46</sup> the fact is often accepted as authentic.<sup>47</sup>

The *Breves narrationes chronicae* thus require a detailed evaluation before all the genuine history can be confidently disengaged from the many patent fictions. For the fifth century the compiler or compilers clearly derive much material from the lost ecclesiastical history of Johannes Diakrinomenos.<sup>48</sup> Of the fourth century also they occasionally display abstruse and accurate knowledge. It can be deduced from the subscription to a letter which Athanasius quotes that when Constantine died in May 337 his eldest son was in Gaul.<sup>49</sup> The compilers were aware of this fact,<sup>50</sup> which is crucial to an understanding of the political events attendant on the death of Constantine, but not always given due prominence in modern accounts.

The same source may also preserve the names of otherwise unattested persons who lived in Constantinople in the fourth century. The rhetor Cyprus (it is affirmed) erected a statue of Helena, the mother of Constantine, in the church of Hagia Sophia; in the same building stood a statue of the quaestor Galenus, and in the Smyrnaeum one of the *praepositus* Hilarion.<sup>51</sup> A recent prosopographical manual enters Cyprus, Galenus, and Hilarion as if the trio are genuine persons attested by a trustworthy source,<sup>52</sup> yet passes over other names in silence. The statue of Galenus belonged to a group containing one of the consular Serapion. He is omitted. So, with greater justification, are the Callistratus alleged to be the first consul honored in the forum of Constantinople, and the Demophilus alleged as a pagan general under Julian. Similarly absent are the philosopher Canonaris and the general Maximinus, also presented as historical characters from the time of Constantine.<sup>53</sup>

The selection has clearly been arbitrary, perhaps even random.<sup>54</sup> Better criteria are available. If the *Breves narrationes chronicae* have some authentic information about the fourth century which is not

<sup>46</sup> PG 116.337ff.

<sup>47</sup> C. Patsch, *Sb. Wien* 208.2 (1928) 30; W. Fluss, *RE* 4A (1932) 2028; E. A. Thompson, *The Visigoths in the Time of Ulfila* (Oxford 1966) 11.

<sup>48</sup> Named at *Brev. Enarr. Chron.* 48, 67, 71 (pp. 177f, 187, 188).

<sup>49</sup> Athanasius *Apol.* 2.87.4ff; cf. E. Schwartz, *Gesammelte Schriften* 3 (Berlin 1959) 270.

<sup>50</sup> *Brev. Enarr. Chron.* 70 (p. 188); cf. M. Treu, *Excerpta anonymi byzantini* (Ohlau 1880) 19, quoted by Preger (above, n. 24) 66.

<sup>51</sup> *Brev. Enarr. Chron.* 11, 7 (pp. 65, 63).

<sup>52</sup> *PLRE* 1.237, 382, 434.

<sup>53</sup> *Brev. Enarr. Chron.* 11, 59, 49, 54f (pp. 65, 182, 178, 179f).

<sup>54</sup> In partial illustration of the equally unsatisfactory treatment of other sources in *PLRE*, see *Phoenix* 26 (1972) 140-182; 27 (1973) 135-155.

directly transmitted elsewhere, then every name must be taken into account and assessed on its own merits, as must every statement about an emperor's movements, whether it relates to the younger Constantine or to Gratian's visit to Rome.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> A. Cameron has recently declared that "the *Parastaseis* are so stuffed with such staggering absurdities and confusions (especially where Constantine is concerned) that it is seldom worth even attempting to explain them, much less sift out the few grains of historical fact behind them" (*Porphyrius the Charioteer* [Oxford 1973] 110).