STRATEGIUS AND THE 'MANICHAEANS'

The early career of Strategius Musonianus, whom Constantius II appointed as his *praefectus praetorio Orientis* in 354, has been re-examined recently by Drijvers.[1] He concluded that the Strategius mentioned by Eusebius of Caesarea in his *Vita Constantini* was probably different from the Strategius Musonianus described by Ammianus Marcellinus in his *Res Gestae*, and that it was likely that the latter commanded three languages, Greek, Latin, and Aramaic. It is my purpose here to offer a new argument in defence of the traditional identification of the Strategius named by Eusebius with the Strategius Musonianus of Ammianus, which argument also requires that we abandon any speculation concerning his command of a third language in addition to Latin and Greek.[2]

We must begin by clarifying what it is that Eusebius actually says about Strategius. According to Eusebius, Constantine I sent one of his *comites* to Antioch in order to help restore the peace of the church there (*VC* 3.59). Two church councils assembled at Antioch during this period, the first of which was held in 326 and witnessed the deposition of Eustathius from his see there in favour of Eulalius.[3] The second was held at least a year later during which Euphronius was appointed bishop of Antioch following the death of Eulalius. Eusebius preserves a letter which Constantine addressed to this second council in favour of the candidacy of Euphronius, and in which he states that he had been informed of the business of this council not just by the letters of the bishops themselves, but by the letters of the *comites* Acacius and Strategius also (*VC* 3.62). This is the only occasion on which Eusebius, or one of the documents that he quotes, mentions Strategius by name. It is important to emphasize

[1] J. W. Drijvers, 'Ammianus Marcellinus 15.13.1–2: some observations on the career and bilingualism of Strategius Musonianus', *CQ* 46 (1996), 532–7.

[2] Two recent publications have failed to deal adequately with this topic. Doubtless for reasons of space, B. H. Warmington, 'Some Constantinian references in Ammianus', in J. W. Drijvers and D. Hunt (edd.), *The Late Roman World and its Historian: Interpreting Ammianus Marcellinus* (London, 1999), 166–77, n. 24, refers to Drijvers's 'unconvincing arguments' concerning Musonianus' need for a knowledge of Aramaic, and states (n. 34), that Drijvers's chronology of Musonianus' career 'rests on some doubtful hypotheses', but does not expand. A. Cameron and S. G. Hall, *Eusebius: Life of Constantine* (Oxford, 1999) does not even acknowledge the existence of Drijvers's paper in the relevant section (305–8) of its idiosyncratic and disappointing commentary.

[3] See, most recently, R. W. Burgess, *Studies in Eusebian and Post-Eusebian Chronography* (Stuttgart, 1999), 191–6, who dates the deposition of Eustathius to 328. His article, 'The date of the deposition of Eustathius of Antioch', *JThS* 51 (2000), 150–60, simply reproduces the same. Burgess's dating relies on his reconstruction of a hypothetical source common to Jerome's *Chronicle*, the *Chronicon Paschale*, Theophanes, and several Syriac chronicles. As I will explain elsewhere, however, he has failed to notice that this common source, which he names the *Continuatio Antiochiensis Eusebii*, postdated most events by two years. This, for example, is why it dated the council of Nicaea in 325 to 327, even by Burgess's own reconstruction, and the ordination of Athanasius as bishop of Alexandria to 330, as attested by Jerome and the *Chronicon Paschale*, rather than to the correct date of 328, although Burgess arbitrarily restores the correct date in his reconstructed text. Hence Burgess's reconstruction actually supports the date of 326 for the deposition of Eustathius as argued by H. Chadwick, 'The fall of Eustathius of Antioch', *JThS* 49 (1948), 27–35. So I will refer to the council at which Eustathius was deposed as the council of Antioch in 326, and that at which Euphronius was elected bishop as the council of Antioch in 327.

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this fact, that there were (at least) two separate councils of Antioch at this period. Eusebius has condensed a complicated sequence of events, and we cannot easily assume that the anonymous *comes* whose mission to Antioch he first records is necessarily identifiable as either Acacius or Strategius. He may have been a different individual altogether. So the claim by Eusebius that this first *comes* was 'one of the best approved and most faithful of those who were honoured with the dignity of *comes*', need not refer to Strategius. Indeed, even if one were to allow that this were so, one must also remember that Eusebius wrote his *Vita Constantini c.* 339, and that such flattering comments may tell us more about Strategius' subsequent rise to power than the reality of his situation a decade earlier.

Ammianus' statement concerning the early career of Strategius Musonianus seems straightforward enough (15.13.2):

> After Domitianus was dispatched by a cruel death, his successor Musonianus governed the East with the rank of praetorian prefect, a man famed for his command of both languages, from which he won higher distinction than was expected. For when Constantine was closely investigating the different religious sects, Manichaeans and the like, and no suitable interpreter could be found, he chose him, as a person recommended to him as competent; and when he had done that duty skilfully, he wished him to be called Musonianus, whereas he had hitherto had the name of Strategius. From that beginning, having run through many grades of honour, he rose to the prefecture, a man intelligent in other respects and satisfactory to the provinces, mild also and well-spoken, but on any and every occasion, and especially (which is odious) in hard-fought lawsuits and under all circumstances greedily bent upon filthy lucre.[4]

It is frustrating that Ammianus does not provide more information by which to date Strategius' investigation of the Manichaeans and other sects. Nor does it help that we possess no further information concerning his career under Constantine. In so far as Strategius needed an excellent command of two languages to conduct his investigation, that is both Latin and Greek, one assumes that this investigation occurred in the Greek-speaking East. Strictly speaking, therefore, this investigation may have occurred at any time during the period between Constantine's recovery of the east in 324 and his death in May 337. It seems a reasonable interpretation of Ammianus' words, however, that Constantine was not personally acquainted with Strategius before he appointed him to investigate the Manichaeans and others.

It is time now to examine Drijvers's argument in this matter, which he summarizes as follows:

> given the discrepancy between Eusebius and Ammianus Marcellinus, the general reliability of Ammianus' *Res Gestae* as a historical source, together with the fact that Ammianus—being a native from Antioch—might have known Strategius, (most likely also an Antiochene) it is more probable that Strategius the *comes*, mentioned in Eusebius' *Vita Constantini*, was a different man from the Strategius Musonianus mentioned in Ammianus' *Res Gestae*.[5]

There are three premises in this argument, but it will suffice here to discuss the first two only: the alleged discrepancy between Eusebius and Ammianus, and the general reliability of Ammianus' *Res Gestae*. Since the second and third premises only build upon the first, and much ink has already been spilt on this subject recently, I will not delay here on the subject of Ammianus' origin.[6] It is enough to note merely that no

[4] Trans. J. C. Rolfe, *Ammianus Marcellinus I*, Loeb Classical Library 300 (Cambridge, MA, 1935), 199.

[5] Drijvers (n. 1), 534–5.

[6] See J. Matthews, 'The origin of Ammianus', *CQ* 44 (1994), 252–69. As I have argued elsewhere, 'Maurus, Mavia, and Ammianus', *Mnemosyne* 51 (1998), 325–36, there is good reason to suspect that Ammianus was from somewhere in Phoenicia rather than Antioch, even if he was

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evidence is adduced to explain why a senior Christian figure like Strategius should ever have had any association at all with a relatively junior pagan like Ammianus, even if they were both from the same city.

So what is this alleged discrepancy between Eusebius and Ammianus? Drijvers argues that it is obvious from Ammianus' words that Constantine did not personally know Strategius when he appointed him to investigate the Manichaeans, but that it is clear from Eusebius' words that Constantine did know Strategius when he appointed him to report on events surrounding the council of Antioch.[7] So if the same Strategius received both appointments, his investigation of the Manichaeans can only have occurred before his attendance at the council of Antioch. Yet, he continues, the identification of Eusebius' Strategius with Ammianus' Strategius 'implies that contrary to Ammianus Marcellinus' information Strategius' career did not start with the investigation into the Manichaean and similar sects, but with a pacifying action in 326 in Antioch', or so he would have us believe. Hence the discrepancy. Either Eusebius or Ammianus is wrong, or they are describing different individuals. The real problem here, however, lies in his assumption that the identification of the two Strategii requires that Strategius' career began with his attendance at the council of Antioch. While it may be true that some commentators have simply assumed that the one Strategius attended the council of Antioch first, then investigated the Manichaean and similar sects, this is a secondary assumption which is irrelevant to their central identification of Eusebius' Strategius with Ammianus' Strategius. In fact, all Drijvers has proved is that if Eusebius' Strategius is identified with Ammianus' Strategius, then the investigation into the Manichaeans could not have occurred after his attendance at the council of Antioch, and this only if we accept his interpretation of Eusebius' text, that it is clear that Constantine did know Strategius when he appointed him to report on the council of Antioch. He has not answered those who would identify Eusebius' Strategius with Ammianus' Strategius in the assumption that the council of Antioch occurred after rather than before the investigation into the Manichaeans.[8]

Much more importantly, though, Drijvers' basic assumption—namely that Eusebius' words prove that Constantine knew Strategius before he appointed him to report on the council of Antioch—is flawed. In support of this claim he alleges that Strategius 'is called most trustworthy, he belonged to the emperor's entourage, he (and Acacius) had sent letters to Constantine to inform him about the situation in Antioch and Constantine mentions Strategius by name in one of his letters'.[9] The last part of this statement, that Strategius sent letters to Constantine to inform him about the situation in Antioch, and that Constantine mentions Strategius by name in one of his

educated in the latter city. T. D. Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality* (Ithaca, NY, 1998), 54–64, reaches a similar conclusion on different grounds. In the same volume (82–4), Barnes also argues that Ammianus was an apostate Christian. Yet even if Ammianus had been educated as a Christian at Antioch, the size of the city, the bitter divisions between its various Christians factions, and the age discrepancy between Ammianus and Strategius, all tell against their ever having met.

[7] Drijvers (n. 1), 534. I use the term 'appoint' loosely here. Many commentators assume that Constantine sent both Acacius and Strategius from his court to Antioch in order to restore the peace of the church there, although Eusebius does not actually say this. I will argue elsewhere that Strategius was already present in Antioch as the governor of Syria, and that his role there *c.* 326–7 is best compared to that of the governor of Isauria, Lauricius, at the council of Seleucia in 359. See Epiph. *Adv. Haer.* 73.25; Soc. *HE* 2.39–40.

[8] For example, the entry for Strategius in *PLRE* 1.611, sets his investigation of the Manichaeans before his attendance at the council of Antioch, as does Warmington (n. 2), 175.

[9] Drivjers (n. 1), 534.

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letters, is quite irrelevant here. It describes events after the appointment of Strategius to report on the council of Antioch, depending in fact on the one passage which attests his attendance at that council (*VC* 3.62), and tells us nothing whatsoever concerning the relationship between Constantine and Strategius before the council, which is the real issue here. As for the first part of this statement, that Strategius is called most trustworthy and belonged to the emperor's entourage, this depends on a passage which, as I have already described above, refers to an anonymous *comes* who attended an earlier council of Antioch (*VC* 3.59), not to the mission of Strategius and Acacius at a second council of Antioch which was held about a year later. Drijvers has not perceived this, however, because he has failed to recognize the condensed and partial nature of Eusebius' narrative at this point.

This brings us to the second premise in Drijvers's main argument: 'the general reliability of Ammianus' *Res Gestae* as a historical source'. It is always dangerous to argue from the abstract to the particular, and this case is no exception. While one does not doubt that Ammianus' account of various military campaigns, for example, are generally reliable, the same cannot be said of his treatment of the religious controversy current in his lifetime. One commentator has argued, and I agree with him, that, as far as Christianity is concerned, 'an insidious bias can be detected in Ammianus' language and presentation that betokens deep hostility and contempt'.[10] The best example of this is Ammianus' claim that the *magister equitum per Orientem* Sabinianus conducted military exercises among the tombs of Edessa in 359 (18.7.7 *per Edessena sepulchra*). A similar claim elsewhere that bishop George of Alexandria had described the temple of Genius there as a 'tomb' (*sepulchrum*), which insult had contributed towards his murder by a pagan mob (22.11.7), proves that Ammianus was well aware of the manner in which 'tomb' (*sepulchrum*) was used as a term of religious abuse by both pagans and Christians during the fourth century, each to describe the others' places of worship.[11] So when Ammianus refers to the tombs of Edessa, he actually refers to Edessa's martyrial churches which were famed for their relics, but does so in a most insulting manner. It is possible, of course, to interpret this text quite literally, and to hold that Ammianus simply refers to the parade-ground at Edessa which was outside the city walls like the cemeteries, and that his use of the term *sepulchrum* here represents, at most, an unfortunate coincidence.[12] Yet the repeated use by Ammianus of such language of religious abuse in respect of various Christian individuals or institutions establishes a pattern of coincidences such that it becomes clear that these are not really coincidences at all. I have argued elsewhere, for example, that Ammianus' criticism of the 'effeminate verses' (22.4.6 *cantilenae molliores*) practised by the court-soldiers under Constantius II was really an attack upon the prayer-services which these soldiers used to attend at the court of an emperor whose Christianity Ammianus characterized as an 'old-woman's superstition' (21.16.18 *anilis superstitio*), 'old-woman's verse' (*anilis cantilena*) being another term of abuse current in the religious debate of the late fourth century.[13]

The fact that Ammianus was familiar with such language of religious abuse is

[10] See T. D. Barnes, 'Ammianus Marcellinus and his world', *CPh* 88 (1993), 55–70, at 69. This topic is developed at length in Barnes (n. 6), 79–94.

[11] See J. den Boeft, J. W. Drijvers, J. den Hengst, and H. C. Teitler, *Philological and Historical Commentary on Ammianus Marcellinus XXII* (Groningen, 1995), 206.

[12] For example, see J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London, 1989), 485, n. 20.

[13] See D. Woods, 'Ammianus 22.4.6: an unnoticed anti-Christian jibe', *JThS* 49 (1998), 145–8.

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important here because it points to a second possible interpretation of his reference to the Manichaeans and similar sects. For 'Manichaean' was itself a common term of religious abuse by the end of the fourth century. Various Christian factions routinely denounced their theological opponents as 'Manichaeans', even when there was little or no evidence to substantiate such a charge.[14] Nor did they hesitate to use it in anachronistic fashion even of those who had lived before the advent of Manichaeism.[15] A vivid example of the ease with which this accusation was flung about is furnished by Jerome, who in his letter of 384 to Eustochium at Rome (*Ep.* 22.13), decries the fact that any woman who showed signs of fasting there was likely to be accused of being 'a wretched Manichaean nun'. While it is true that accusations of Manichaeism were a feature of internal Christian debate rather than of the wider controversy between pagans and Christians, there seems no reason why Ammianus should not have learned of the derogatory Christian use of the term 'Manichaean'. It has been demonstrated elsewhere that Ammianus' criticism of the ecclesiastical policy of Constantius II, for example, testifies to his 'familiarity with religious terminology in orthodox Christian circles'.[16] So when Ammianus claims that Strategius was appointed to investigate the Manichaeans and similar sects, he may be referring to his attendance at the council of Antioch in 327 and his investigation of the charges which the various theological factions made against each other at that time. This is not to claim that any bishops present at Antioch in 327 actually accused their opponents of Manichaeism. Rather Ammianus simply projects back in time to 327 the most common feature of Christian theological debate in his era, accusations of Manichaeism. Whether this is an entirely novel characterization of this council on his part is open to debate. For orthodox Christians had long been accustomed to associate their 'Arian' opponents with the Manichaeans by the time at which he was writing.[17] In so far as the 'Arian' party dominated at the council of Antioch in 327—and this was a council that sought to appoint Eusebius of Caesarea, notorious for his sympathy to the 'Arian' cause and his disagreements with the more strident advocates of Nicene orthodoxy, to the see there—then orthodox western Christians of the age of Theodosius may also have characterized it as an 'Arian' or 'Manichaean' council.[18] It is possible, therefore, that Ammianus has simply misunderstood a slighting orthodox reference to the council of Antioch in 327. It is a more convincing suggestion, however, that Ammianus knew exactly what he was doing when he characterized this council as an investigation into Manichaeism. It simply did not matter to him whether the particular group of Christians whose actions he derided were also mocked by other Christians. For not only does he seem to have disliked all Christian factions equally, as best evidenced by

[14] See R. Van Dam, *Leadership and Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Berkeley, 1985), 80–7, 101–6.

[15] See T. D. Barnes, 'Methodius, Maximus, and Valentinus', *JThS* 30 (1979), 47–55, at 49, on the translation by Rufinus of Aquileia in 399 of the dialogue *De recta in deum fide* where he describes the Marcionist Megethius as a Manichaean.

[16] See V. Neri, 'Ammianus' definition of Christianity as *Absoluta et Simplex Religio*', in J. den Boeft, D. den Hengst, and H. C. Teitler (edd.), *Cognitio Gestorum: The Historiographic Art of Ammianus Marcellinus* (Amsterdam, 1992), 59–65.

[17] See R. Lyman, 'A topography of heresy: mapping the rhetorical creation of Arianism', in M. R. Barnes and D. H. Williams (edd.), *Arianism after Arius: Essays on the Development of the Fourth Century Trinitarian Conflicts* (Edinburgh, 1993), 45–62.

[18] On Eusebius' position, see C. Luibhéid, *Eusebius of Caesarea and the Arian Crisis* (Dublin, 1978).

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his critical characterizations of both Athanasius of Alexandria (15.7.7) and his great 'Arian' rival for the see there, George (22.11.3–10), but he was also attacking the synodal process itself, common to all groups, rather than any particular theology.[19]

This interpretation, that Ammianus refers to the council of Antioch in 327 rather than to some otherwise unattested investigation of the Manichaeans and other sects, solves a number of problems. The primary problem, of course, is the lack of supporting evidence that Constantine ever took any special interest in Manichaeism. In particular, it is difficult to believe that Eusebius could have failed to include some brief reference to this special investigation of the Manichaeans in his *Vita Constantini* had it really occurred: he devotes four chapters to the actions of Constantine against heretics in general (*VC* 3.63–6), even quoting an edict which Constantine addressed to the Novatians, Valentinians, Marcionites, Paulians, Cataphrygians, and all other heretical groups also, by which he confiscated their meeting-places and forbade them to meet at all.[20] This edict constituted a blanket-ban on heretics, including those not specifically named in its opening address, and in so far as it includes those groups with whom the Manichaeans were often associated, there can be little doubt that they were also subject to its measures. In the present context, therefore, its importance cannot be overemphasized. Firstly, it suggests, if it does not actually prove, that there was no need for a special imperial investigation into a heresy before any action was taken against it, not unless one supposes that there was a multitude of such investigations which have left remarkably little impact upon the historical record. Secondly, it ends the speculation concerning the apparent failure of Constantine to condemn Manichaeism. His apparent omission in this matter, together with his alleged investigation into Manichaeism, led Drijvers to the disconcerting conclusion that 'it may have been reassuring for Constantine that the Manichaean christological stance conformed

[19] It is noteworthy that Ammianus ends his summary of Strategius' career and character with a criticism of his participation in hard-fought lawsuits. This provides the key to the correct interpretation of his apparent praise of the skill exhibited by Strategius in his investigation of the Manichaeans and the like. There is no contradiction between apparent praise and final criticism in that both highlight Strategius' argumentative nature, and the adversarial and legalistic nature of synods that would have appealed to a man like Strategius who liked nothing more than a good argument over technical niceties. It is arguable, therefore, that Ammianus is opposed to the synodal process itself, because of its legalistic nature and his intense prejudice against lawyers, as much as to the religious, specifically Christian, nature of the subject-matter. In general, see J. F. Matthews, 'Ammianus on Roman law and lawyers', in den Boeft *et al.* (n. 16), 47–57.

[20] *VC* 3.64 *'Επίγνωτε νῦν διὰ τῆς νομοθεσίας ταύτης, ὦ Νοουατιανοί, Οὐαλεντῖνοι, Μαρκιωνισταί, Παυλιανοί, οἵ τε κατα Φρύγας ἐπικεκλημένοι, καὶ πάντες ἁπλῶς εἰπεῖν οἱ τὰς αἱρέσεις διὰ τῶν οἰκείων πληροῦντες συστημάτων, . . .* Warmington (n. 2), 174–5, treats this edict as if it had been addressed to five specific groups of heretics only—Novatians, Valentinians, Marcionites, Paulians, and Cataphrygians—apparently ignoring the final part of the address altogether. Apart from anything else, it would have been impractical for Constantine to try and address each and every group by name. First, there was the problem of nomenclature. The relevant groups would never have accepted that they were covered by such terms as 'Cataphrygians', which were essentially derogatory characterizations of their groups by non-members. Second, there were simply too many different groups whom the majority regarded as heretical or schismatic. For example, Epiphanius of Salamis was able to name eighty such in his *Panarion* which he wrote *c.* 374–6. It is clear, therefore, that Constantine addressed his edict to five specific groups of heretics not because he regarded them as the only heretics, or because his measures were directed against them alone, but because he regarded them as the most numerous or problematic groups. Cameron and Hall (n. 2), 306–8, do not clarify how they interpret this address. However, they do not translate the *καὶ* of *καὶ πάντες*, so giving the impression that the final clause was simply in apposition to the five groups already named rather than in reference to the wider 'heretical' world.

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with the Nicene creed'.[21] For while it remains true that no specifically anti-Manichaean legislation has survived, which does not itself prove anything, the above edict reveals that there existed legislation whose scope was very broad indeed, and within whose scope Manichaeism surely fell. So there was no need for specifically anti-Manichaean legislation, and the assumption, in the absence of the same, that the Manichaeans had somehow passed some basic test of orthodoxy, must now be rejected.

A second problem is that there seems to have been no good reason why Constantine should have wanted to investigate Manichaeism. Drijvers raises the possibility that Constantine had wished to investigate the political activities of the Manichaeans rather than their doctrines, only to conclude that 'it seems more likely, especially since Manichaeism was not the only "heresy" to be investigated, that Strategius had to conduct an official inquiry into the Manichaean doctrines'.[22] But why? Constantine had already committed himself to Christianity long before he recovered the east from Licinius in 324, the *terminus post quem* for his alleged investigation into the Manichaeans. It ought to have been enough for him simply to condemn this religion, on the advice of the bishops and others to whom he normally turned in such matters. Indeed, this was probably one of the few matters upon which the bishops of the mainstream Christian theological factions could easily agree, that Manichaeism was to be condemned. So there was simply no point in investigating that which all had already agreed to condemn.

This gets to the very heart of the matter. Only relatively new doctrinal formulations or teachings could have deserved the detailed investigation which Constantine seems to have intended in this case. This points us towards the so-called 'Arian' controversy once more. Although the council of Nicaea condemned the teachings of Arius in 325, it still remained to define the exact nature of these teachings, what was 'Arian', and what was not. So in the context of the council of Antioch in 327, and the election of a successor to Eulalius in the see of Antioch, it was important to Constantine that the theological viewpoints of the chief candidates were tested and proved to be in accordance with the decisions of the council of Nicaea in 325. But this was a difficult task because the boundaries between 'Arianism' and orthodoxy were not yet clearly established. This, then, was part of Strategius' task in 327, to report on the theological disputes at the council of Antioch and its decisions concerning the 'Arianism' or not both of individuals, candidates for the see of Antioch or not, and of various doctrinal formulas.

The final advantage of the present interpretation is that it allows us to accept Ammianus' words concerning Strategius' knowledge of both languages, that is Greek and Latin, at their face value. Drijvers argues that in order to conduct a thorough investigation of Manichaean doctrine Strategius would have had to have had a firm grasp of Aramaic both in order 'to read the Manichaean scriptures in their original language, as well as to interrogate the Aramaic-speaking Manichaeans without the mediation of an interpreter'.[23] Since one could hardly deny that a man of his status must also have possessed both Greek and Latin, one is forced to admit that Strategius must have possessed not two, but three languages. So either Ammianus is mistaken in his claim, or in his implication at least, that Strategius possessed 'only' two languages, or those two languages were not Greek and Latin, but Aramaic and one of either Greek and Latin. Drijvers seems to favour the latter alternative, identifying the two languages as those spoken in Ammianus' home town of Antioch, namely Greek and

[21] Drijvers (n. 1), 536, n. 32. In this he merely follows S. N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China: A Historical Survey* (Manchester, 1985), 96.

[22] Drijvers (n. 1), 535. [23] Ibid. 536.

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Aramaic.[24] The logic is impeccable, but the conclusion is disturbing, both that Ammianus should have misled us into believing that Strategius knew only two languages rather than three, and that he should have done so at the expense of Latin, the language in which he himself was writing and the official language of the administration of the empire. The problem lies with the initial premise, that Strategius was appointed to investigate Manichaean doctrines. He was appointed rather to report on matters of Christian doctrine discussed at the council of Antioch in 327. He needed two languages, both Greek and Latin, because the debate at this church council would have been conducted in Greek for the most part, while his reports to Constantine would have had to be submitted in the official language of the administration, Latin. He needed a particularly high standard in both languages because he had first to follow a complex Greek debate filled with abstract philosophical terms whose precise meanings were themselves the subject of the debate, and then to translate the same into Latin without obscuring the true complexity of this debate, the different usages and subtle nuances of many of these abstract terms.[25] He deserves our sympathy.

I have argued so far that when Ammianus describes Strategius' investigation of the Manichaeans and other sects, he probably refers to his attendance at the council of Antioch in 327. In so far as Ammianus was probably educated at Antioch, it may well be the case that he learned of the controversy surrounding this council, and the presence of Strategius at the same, sometime during his own youth. There is an alternative possibility, however, that Ammianus refers not so much to the attendance by Strategius at one particular council but to his attendance rather at several different councils over a much more extended period of time. Athanasius of Alexandria informs us that Strategius, or Musonianus as he calls him, attended the council of Serdica in 343 on behalf of Constantius II.[26] This suggests that he performed much the same role of ecclesiastical or theological reporter repeatedly, if not continuously, from his first attendance at Antioch in 327 until his attendance at Serdica in 343, although not necessarily at the same rank within the administration on each occasion. The main subject of the more important church councils of this period remained the 'Arian' question, so it made good sense to retain Strategius in the same role once he had acquired his expert knowledge of the relevant terms and issues. It is arguable, therefore, that Strategius probably reported to Constantine concerning the developments at various other councils also, not just that at Antioch in 327, and that it is this to which Ammianus refers here as his investigation of the Manichaeans and other sects, his ongoing role as a religious reporter for Constantine. Our ignorance of the precise details of his role, however, is due to the poor quality of much of our information and sources concerning these councils.

It is a noteworthy feature of Ammianus' history that he barely acknowledges the important church councils or synods which met during the period for which his work survives, even though they were often attended even by the emperors themselves. In fact, he explicitly refers to these councils twice only. On the first occasion, he describes the exile by Constantius of bishop Liberius of Rome, explaining that Liberius had refused to endorse the deposition of bishop Athanasius of Alexandria from his see as had already been agreed by a church council or synod (15.7.6–7). Secondly, in his obituary of Constantius, Ammianus criticizes his general ecclesiastical policy, claiming

[24] Ibid. 537.

[25] See the chapter entitled 'Semantic confusion' in R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318–381* (Edinburgh, 1988), 181–207.

[26] Athan., *Apol. c. Ar.* 36; *Hist. Ar*. 15.

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that as bishops rushed backwards and forwards to attend the councils which he caused to be summoned, they placed an almost unbearable burden on the *cursus publicus* (21.16.18). There are important similarities, it seems to me, between these two passages and that under discussion here. Firstly, even when Ammianus does reluctantly admit that there were such things as church councils, they are not the immediate subject of interest, but serve only to illustrate some more important point, as he sees it anyway. Secondly, Ammianus refuses to commit himself as to the details of any of these councils, exactly when and where they met. So we do not learn which council it was that condemned Athanasius (actually it was several), nor do we learn which council it was that put the greatest burden on the *cursus publicus*. It is arguable, therefore, that Ammianus' description of Strategius' investigation of the Manichaeans and other sects is a characteristically oblique reference to a church council or series of church councils. True, he omits in this instance the sort of periphrastic formula which he often uses when describing Christian institutions, and which he includes in these other two references to church councils.[27] Yet he is not entirely consistent in his use of such formulas, and their use on one occasion need not preclude their omission elsewhere. More importantly, however, his reference to the investigation by Strategius of the Manichaeans and similar sects is not a neutral statement of fact, but a derogatory remark. As already explained, the characteristic feature of such derogatory remarks is that they can be interpreted in two different ways. Interpreted literally, they seem entirely inoffensive, but interpreted in the manner in which they were intended, in the context of the religious polemic at the end of the fourth century and as part of a pattern of similar remarks rather than as isolated incidents, then their true offensiveness becomes much more apparent. Why it is that Ammianus does not attack Christianity in the open and unambiguous manner of some of his contemporaries, Eunapius of Sardis for example, is an interesting historiographical question.[28] It may be due not so much to his fear for his personal safety under an increasingly militant Christian regime, as to the tension between his literary and religious aspirations. He wanted his *Res Gestae* to be a literary success, and in an increasingly Christian world this meant that his anti-Christian polemic had to be toned down. So one should not expect him to make the polemical nature of his characterization of Strategius' attendance at a number of church councils too obvious by explicit use of the term *synodus* or open mention of Christianity any more than one should expect him to make the polemical nature of his characterization of Sabinianus' visit to the martyrial churches at Edessa in 359 more obvious by explicit use of the term *ecclesia* and open statement of Sabinianus' Christianity. For his main target audience was a sensitized pagan élite who knew exactly what he meant without his having to spell it out.

Finally, it has often been assumed that Constantine bestowed the nickname Musonianus upon Strategius because of his great skill in languages,[29] although Ammianus does not explicitly say this. The alternative, I suggest, it that he bestowed it upon him because Strategius addressed his reports to him from the Temple of the Muses in

[27] 15.7.7 *coetus in unum quaesitus eiusdem legis cultorum* (*synodus ut appellant*) *removit a sacramento*; 21.16.18 *catervis antistum iumentis publicis ultro citroque discurrentibus per synodos* (*quas appellant*). On the significance of these formulas in general, see A. and A. Cameron, 'Christianity and tradition in the historiography of the later Roman empire', *CQ* 14 (1964), 316-28.

[28] Cf. D. Woods, 'A Persian at Rome: Ammianus and Eunapius, *Frg.* 68', in Drijvers and Hunt (n. 2), 156–65.

[29] For example, Matthews (n. 12), 71. Warmington (n. 2), 173, sees in it an allusion to the first-century Stoic Musonius Rufus.

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Antioch. John Malalas reports that in 335 the first *comes Orientis*, a Christian by the name of Felicianus, established his headquarters in the Temple of the Muses at Antioch, but this does not necessarily mean that he had been the first imperial official to do so (Mal. *Chron.* 13.4). I suggest that he pulled rank and commandeered a building which had long seen official use, probably as the headquarters of the governor of Syria, from as early as 326 even. Hence the fact that Ammianus dates Constantine's bestowal of the nickname of Musonianus upon Strategius to the time of his alleged investigation of the Manichaeans reinforces my argument that this investigation took place at Antioch, and is identifiable, in fact, with the council of Antioch in 327.

It is my argument, therefore, that the Strategius mentioned in Eusebius' *Vita Constantini* is identifiable as the Strategius Musonianus of Ammianus' *Res Gestae*. Not only are their names identical, but both attended church councils on behalf of Constantine I and reported to him concerning the same. For Ammianus' statement that Constantine appointed Strategius to investigate the Manichaeans and similar sects is not meant to be taken literally. Rather it is a derogatory characterization of church councils based on what Ammianus knew of them in the west by the end of the fourth century when various episcopal factions were accustomed to accuse their opponents of Manichaeism as a matter of routine almost even though this had little or nothing to do with the real subjects of their disputes.

University College Cork DAVID WOODS
d.woods@ucc.ie

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