



Sozomen
Complete Works

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The Complete Works of

SOZOMEN

(c. 400-c. 450 AD)



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The Delphi Classics Catalogue



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Version 1

The Complete Works of
SOZOMEN OF BETHELIA



By Delphi Classics, 2024

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Complete Works of Sozomen



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The Translation



Beit Lahia, a city in the Gaza Strip, north of Jabalia — Sozomen's birthplace

Ecclesiastical History (c. 450)



Translated by Chester D. Hartranft, 1890

A Roman lawyer and historian of the Christian Church, Salamanes Hermias Sozomenos was born in c. 400 into a wealthy family of Bethelia, a small town near Gaza. Sozomen informs us that his grandfather and household became Christians under the reign of Constantius II. The story goes that Alaphrion, a neighbour of his grandfather, was miraculously healed by Saint Hilarion, who cast out a demon. As eyewitnesses to the miracle, Sozomen's family then converted to Christianity. This conversion marked a turning-point in the Christianization of southern Palestine, according to his account and his grandfather became a highly esteemed interpreter of Scripture. The descendants of Alaphrion went on to establish churches and convents in the district and were zealous in promoting monasticism.

Sozomen appears to have been brought up in the circle of Alaphrion and acknowledges a debt of gratitude to the monastic order. His early education was directed by the monks of his native place. Although it is difficult to surmise the type of learning he received in these monastic schools, his writings reveal the meticulousness with which he was grounded in Greek studies. His later writings serve as a monument of his reverence for the monks in general and for the disciples of Hilarion in particular.

As an adult Sozomen received training as a lawyer, studying the practice of law in Beirut. He then journeyed to Constantinople to commence his career as a lawyer, likely at the court of Theodosius II. Whilst employed in this role, he conceived in c. 443 the project of writing a history of the Church. He produced two works on the subject, though only the second text has survived. His first work had covered in twelve books the history of the Church, from the Ascension of Jesus to the defeat of Licinius in 323. His sources included Eusebius of Caesarea, the Clementine homilies, Hegesippus and Sextus Julius Africanus. Sozomen's second work continues approximately where his first history left off. He wrote the manuscript in Constantinople from 440 to 443 and dedicated it to Emperor Theodosius II.

The text is structured into nine books, generally arranged along the reigns of Roman Emperors:

- Book I: from the conversion of Constantine I until the Council of Nicea (312-325)
- Book II: from the Council of Nicea to Constantine's death (325-337)
- Book III: from the death of Constantine I to the death of Constans I (337-350)
- Book IV: from the death of Constans I to the death of Constantius II (350-361)
- Book V: from the death of Constantius II to the death of Julian the Apostate (361-363)
- Book VI: from the death of Julian to the death of Valens (363-375)
- Book VII: from the death of Valens to the death of Theodosius I (375-395)
- Book VIII: from the death of Theodosius I to the death of Arcadius (395-408).

- Book IX: (incomplete) from the death of Arcadius to the accession of Valentinian III (408-25).

In his dedication Sozomen states that he intended cover up to the 17th consulate of Theodosius II (439). The extant text ends in c. 425. Scholars disagree on why the end is missing. Some venture that Sozomen suppressed the ending as it had referred to the Empress Aelia Eudocia, who later fell into disgrace through her supposed adultery. However, it appears that Nicephorus, Theophanes, and Theodorus Lector actually read the end of Sozomen's work, according to their own later histories. Many scholars believe that the work actually came down to that year and that consequently it has reached us only in a damaged condition.

Sozomen borrowed heavily from other sources. The source for about three-quarters of his history was the writings of his elder contemporary, Socrates Scholasticus. The literary relationship between the two historians is widely reported. The extent of Sozomen's dependence on Socrates cannot be accurately determined. It appears that Sozomen used Socrates as a guide to sources and order. In some matters, such as in regard to the Novatians, Sozomen is entirely dependent on Socrates. Yet, Sozomen did not simply copy Socrates. He went back to the principal sources used by his fellow writer and other sources, often including more detail than appears in Socrates' accounts. Sozomen also makes much use of Eusebius, the first major Church historian. The *Vita Constantini* of Eusebius is expressly cited in the description of the vision of Constantine. Sozomen appears also to have consulted the *Historia Athanasii* and the works of Athanasius, including the *Vita Antonii*. The ecclesiastical records used by Sozomen are chiefly taken from Sabinus, to whom he continually refers.

For the period from Theodosius I, Sozomen appears to have disregarded Socrates and followed Olympiodorus of Thebes, who was most likely Sozomen's only secular source. A comparison with Zosimus, who also made use of Olympiodorus, seems to suggest that the majority of Sozomen's ninth book is an abridged extract from Olympiodorus.

The first printed version of Sozomen, which was based on the Codex Regius of 1444, was that of Robert Estienne at Paris in 1544. The first translated edition to be published was that of Christopherson, appearing in Latin in Geneva in 1612. A noteworthy edition was completed by Valesius (Cambridge, 1720), who used, besides the text of Stephens, a Codex Fucetianus, "Readings" of Savilius, and the indirect traditions of Theodorus Lector and of Cassiodorus-Epiphanius.

Sozomen's history is distinguished for its classical literary style, its favouring of monasticism and its greater use of western European sources. He likely intended to recast Socrates' work in a superior literary style for an audience not only of ecclesiastics, but also of the cultured laity. Although he demonstrates less critical method and limited theological comprehension, Sozomen's unique inclusion of rare sources makes his work invaluable and serves as a useful corrective of Socrates' text. His *Ecclesiastical History* had a lasting influence, preserving for the medieval church the majority of its knowledge of this period.



Hilarion the Great, by Basil II, Vatican Library, c. 1000



Solidus of Theodosius, minted in Constantinople, c. 435



Theodosius receives the Phrygian Apple and inquires Eudocia about it. A scene from the fourteenth century 'Manasses Chronicle'

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Constantine's vision and the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in a ninth century Byzantine manuscript – the conversion of Constantine I is the chief event narrated in Book I of Sozomen's 'Ecclesiastical History'



Bust of Valentinian III, Louvre. Valentinian III (419-455) was Roman emperor in the West from 425 to 455. His ascension forms one of the final events narrated in 'Ecclesiastical History'.

ADDRESS AND PROPOSAL

ADDRESS TO THE EMPEROR THEODOSIUS BY SALAMINIUS HERMIAS SOZOMEN, AND PROPOSAL FOR AN ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY



THE POPULAR SAYING is, that the former emperors were zealous about some useful matter or other; such as were fond of ornaments, cared for the royal purple, the crown, and the like; those who were studious of letters, composed some mythical work or treatise capable of fascinating its readers; those who were practiced in war, sought to send the weapon straight to the mark, to hit wild beasts, to hurl the spear, or to leap upon the horse. Every one who was devoted to a craft which was pleasing to the rulers announced himself at the palace. One brings a precious stone not easily susceptible of polish; another undertakes to prepare a more brilliant color than the purple robe; one dedicates a poem or treatise; another introduces an expert and strange fashion of armor.

It is considered the greatest and a regal thing for the ruler of the whole people to possess, at least, one of the homely virtues; but no such great estimate has been made of piety, which is, after all, the true ornament of the empire. Thou, however, O most powerful Emperor Theodosius, hast in a word, by God's help, cultivated every virtue. Girt with the purple robe and crown, a symbol of your dignity to onlookers, you wear within always that true ornament of sovereignty, piety and philanthropy. Whence it happens that poets and writers, and the greater part of your officers as well as the rest of your subjects, concern themselves on every occasion with you and your deeds. And when you preside as ruler of contests and judge of discourses, you are not robbed of your accuracy by any artificial sound and form, but you award the prize sincerely, observing whether the diction is suitable to the design of the composition; so also with respect to the form of words, divisions, order, unity, phraseology, construction, arguments, thought, and narrative. You recompense the speakers with your favorable judgment and applause, as well as with golden images, erection of statues, gifts, and every kind of honor. Thou showest greater personal favor toward the speakers than the ancient Cretans did toward the much-sung Homer; or the Alevadæ did to Simonides; or Dionysius, the tyrant of Sicily to Plato, the companion of Socrates; or Philip the Macedonian, to Theopompus the historian; or the Emperor Severus to Oppianus, who related in verse the kinds, nature, and catching of fish. For after the Cretans had rewarded Homer with a thousand *nummi*, they inscribed the amount of the gift on a public column as if to boast of their excessive munificence. The Alevadæ, Dionysius, and Philip were not more reserved than the Cretans, who boasted of their modest and philosophical government, but quickly imitated their column, so that they might not be inferior in their donative. But when Severus bestowed upon Oppianus a golden gift for each line of his moderate verse, he so astonished everybody with his liberality, that the poems of Oppianus are popularly called golden words to this day. Such were the donations of former lovers of learning and discourses. But thou, O Emperor, surpasses any of the ancients in your liberality to letters, and you seem to me to do this not unreasonably. For while you strive to conquer all by your virtues, you also conduct your own affairs successfully, according to your thorough knowledge of the story of those ancient affairs, so prosperously directed by the Greeks and Romans. Rumor says that during the day, you take military

and bodily exercise, and arrange affairs of state by giving judicial decisions, and by making note of what is necessary, and by observation, both in public and private, of the things which ought to be done; and at night that you busy yourself with books. It is a saying, that there serves you for the study of these works, a lamp which causes the oil to flow automatically into the wick, by means of some mechanism, so that not one of the servants in the palace should be compelled to be taxed with your labors, and to do violence to nature by fighting against sleep. Thus you are humane and gentle, both to those near, and to all, since you imitate the Heavenly King who is your pattern; in that He loves to send rain, and causes the sun to rise on the just and unjust, as well as to furnish other blessings ungrudgingly. As is natural, I hear also that by your various learning, you are no less familiar with the nature of stones, and the virtues of roots, and forces of remedies, than Solomon, the wisest son of David; while you excel him in virtue; for Solomon became the slave of his pleasures, and did not preserve to the end, that piety which had been for him the source of prosperity and wisdom. But thou, most powerful Emperor, because you set your restraining reason in array against levity, art not only an autocrat of men, but also of the passions of soul and body, as one would naturally suppose. And this, too, ought to be remarked: I understand that you conquer the desire for all food and drink; neither the sweeter figs, to speak poetically, nor any other kind of fruit in its season, can take you prisoner, except the little that you touch and taste, after you have returned thanks to the Maker of all things. You are wont to vanquish thirst, stifling heat, and cold by your daily exercise, so that you seem to have self-control as a second nature. Lately, as is well known, you were anxious to visit the city of Heraclea in Pontus, and to restore it, prostrated by time, and you took the way in the summer season through Bithynia. When the sun about midday was very fiery, one of the body-guard saw you, heated with much sweat and clouds of dust, and, as if to do you a favor, he anticipatively offered to you a bowl which reflected brilliantly the rays of the sun; he poured in some sweet drink, and added cold water thereto. But you, most powerful Emperor, received it, and praised the man for his good will, and you made it obvious that you would soon reward him for his well-wrought deed with royal munificence. But when all the soldiers were wondering with open mouth at the dish, and were counting him blessed who should drink, you, O noble Emperor, returned the drink to him and commanded him to use it in whatever way he pleased. So that it seems to me that Alexander, the son of Philip, was surpassed by your virtue; of whom it is reputed by his admirers, that while he, with the Macedonians, was passing through a waterless place, an anxious soldier found water, drew it, and offered it to Alexander; he would not drink it, but poured out the draught. Therefore, in a word, it is appropriate to call you, according to Homer, more regal than the kings who preceded you; for we have heard of some who acquired nothing worthy of admiration, and others who adorned their reign with scarcely one or two deeds. But thou, O most powerful Emperor, hast gathered together all the virtues, and hast excelled every one in piety, philanthropy, courage, prudence, justice, munificence, and a magnanimity befitting royal dignity. And every age will boast of your rule as alone unstained and pure from murder, beyond all governments that ever existed. Thou teachest your subjects to pursue serious things with pleasure, so that they show zeal for you and public affairs, with good will and respect. So that for all these reasons, it has appeared to me, as a writer of Ecclesiastical History, necessary to address myself to you. For to whom can I do this more appropriately, since I am about to relate the virtue of many devoted men, and the events of the Catholic Church; and since her conflicts with so many enemies lead me to your threshold and that of your fathers? Come thou, who knowest all things and

possesest every virtue, especially that piety, which the Divine Word says is the beginning of wisdom, receive from me this writing, and marshal its facts and purify it by your labors, out of your accurate knowledge, whether by addition or elimination. For whatever course may seem pleasing to you, that will be wholly advantageous and brilliant for the readers, nor shall any one put a hand to it after your approval. My history begins with the third consulate of the Cæsars, Crispus and Constantine, and stretches to your seventeenth consulship. I deemed it proper to divide the whole work into nine parts: the first and second books will embrace the ecclesiastical affairs under Constantine; the third and fourth, those under his sons; the fifth and sixth, those under Julian, the cousin of the sons of the great Constantine, and Jovian, and, further, of Valentinian and Valens; the seventh and eighth books, O most powerful Emperor, will open up the affairs under the brothers Gratian and Valentinian, until the proclamation of Theodosius, your divine grandfather, as far as your celebrated father Arcadius, together with your uncle, the most pious and godly Honorius, received the paternal government and shared in the regulation of the Roman world; the ninth book I have devoted to your Christ-loving and most innocent majesty, which may God always preserve in unbroken good will, triumphing greatly over enemies, and having all things under your feet and transmitting the holy empire to your sons' sons with the approbation of Christ, through whom and with whom, be glory to God, and the Father, with the Holy Spirit forever. Amen.

BOOK I

DELPHI  CLASSICS

End of Sample