politisch-theologische Liturgie, die in allen Provinzen durch Umzüge und Fest-tage zu einem großen Stimmungstheater ausgebaut werden konnte [um] das Los der Provinzialen erträglicher zu machen (p. 396). Clearly, Dahlheim should be able to bring the substance of the information up to the level of his smartly phrased presentation. Doing so would win his book additional respect.

Austi

Karl Galinsky


This impressive book is the result of more than ten years of research. While working on a project on late Roman Christian notions of leadership back in 1998, Susanna Elm realized the central importance of Gregory of Nazianzus’ second oration in this respect, as it represents the earliest systematic treatment of Christian priesthood propagated by a member of the Greek-speaking Roman elite. Gregory’s text occupies indeed an important place in ‘Sons of Hellenism’ and the focus on the idea of leadership is pervasive in the discussion, although the book enters much wider fields. It is about two competing – yet related – visions of universalism and the Roman Empire exemplified by, or rather crystallized in the emperor Julian and Gregory respectively. Given the far-reaching consequences of the outcome of the debate for the political and religious identity of the late Roman Empire and its heirs, Elm’s subject is central to the cultural history of Late Antiquity, and she treats it masterfully.

The book is constructed as a roughly chronological narrative, switching from one protagonist to the other in carefully directed scene changes with flashbacks and anticipations.

The first chapter, ‘Nazianzus and the Eastern Empire, 330–361’, sketches the back-ground, both at the personal and local level (Gregory’s student days, for instance, and his connectedness, even at the small town of Nazianzus), and at the imperial level. Constantius II gets considerable attention as Elm persuasively redresses the largely negative picture of the emperor in ancient and modern historiography. He is shown to have been personally involved in the attempts at reaching a consensus in the complex christological controver-sies of the period. The resulting compromise, the ‘homoian’ (or ‘Arian’) formulation of Constantinople, 360, was signed by Western and Eastern bishops, including Gregory’s father, Gregory the Elder, bishop of Nazianzus. The compromise did not last: as early as 361, Christian leaders from West and East revoked their signing. Nazianzus was one of the cities that witnessed a schism as a result. Apart from the rehabilitation of Constantius, two main observations from this chapter characterize both the whole period and Elm’s approach to it. First, she rightly insists that there are not simply two camps within Christian-ity (heretical Arianism versus Nicene orthodoxy) – which necessitates a nuanced discus-sion of the technical, theological and philosophical matters. Second, theology and politics went hand in hand.


Das Erstellen und Weitergeben von Kopien dieses PDFs ist nicht zulässig.
an apologētikos logos as well as an autobiography in which the new emperor shapes his own life in deliberate contrast to that of Constantius, and presents himself as the choice of the gods; and the Epistle to Themistius, whose Aristotelian preference for a moderate mixture of leisure and labour was endorsed by Constantius, whereas Julian ascribes a far greater value to a philosophical life of intense retreat. Elm insists on the classical background of the debate on the true philosophical life and the ideal ruler. Taking this background into account one should interpret Julian’s seeming reluctance to accept public office as an indication of his high leadership potential. His claim that to attain true opinions about divine things is the highest form of philosophical achievement is equally Platonic.

The next chapter, ‘Philosopher, Leader, Priest. Julian in Constantinople, Spring 362’, first sketches the broad context of the emperor’s concepts of the true philosophical life. A brief survey of neoplatonism leads to Maximus of Ephesus, who had had enormous impact on the young Julian. The opposite stance was propagated by Themistius, e.g. in his orations 20–23 and 26. After his arrival at Constantinople as sole emperor, Julian gathered around him philosophers representing a range of positions, thus showcasing his penchant for philia and parrhēsia. He also expressed his own opinions on questions of epistemology, hermeneutics, theology and rituals. Four of his texts are discussed at length: Against the Cynic Heraclius, on the interpretation of myths in the correct allegorical fashion, with the famous myth of Julian’s own origins; the Hymn to the Mother of the Gods, an innovative mixture of philosophical discourse and hymn, focusing on the interplay between transcendent and physical realities, with a central role for Attis (Christ-like) mediating function, divine nature, descent and ascent back to a more intense divinity; Against the Uneducated Cynics, once again claiming that philosophy was the path to the divine, and that therefore philosophers were priests, holding up as an example Diogenes – as portrayed by Julian; and finally the notorious law regarding teachers (CTb 133.3), along with the imperial letter 62 (64c Bidez), circulated in June and July 362. This edict would deeply affect Gregory, to whom Elm returns in the next three chapters, constituting Part Two – arguably the heart – of her book.

Together, indeed, these chapters give an in-depth analysis of Gregory’s Inaugural Address (or.2, traditionally known as Apology for his Flight to Pontus and/or On the Priesthood). Elm calls it the «earliest systematic discussion of the theoretical and practical foundations of Christian leadership» (p. 151). She dates the oration to Easter 363, a year later than the customary dating. Although this one year makes an important difference, given the synchronicity with Julian’s reign, she gives only a brief argumentation for her «more plausible» (p. 153) proposal. Be that as it may, the oration was delivered after Gregory’s ordination by his father, his move with Basil to Annesi and his return, in the difficult context of the inter-Christian tensions in Nazianzus sketched in chapter 1. As Elm repeatedly affirms, although the ideas proposed in the oration are historically located, they were meant to have universal significance.

Chapter 4, ‘On the True Philosophical Life and Ideal Christian Leadership’, underlines the classical basis of Gregory’s Christian position – and the remarkable similarity to Julian. Gregory’s initial refusal of office, his criticism of uneducated bishops, his basic assumption of a kinship between the divine and its creation, and his view of the philosopher as a physician of the soul all have parallels in Julian’s writings and often go back to Platonic or Stoic concepts and teachings, such as Plato’s qualifications for the ideal ruler. There are, of course, also differences. Elm points, for instance, to divergent terminology: for the affiliation of man with God Gregory uses the expression πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν σύνεσις (common in early Christian authors, not the Platonic ὥσπερ θεός, as Julian does.

The next chapter, ‘The Most Potent Pharmakon. Gregory the Elder and Nazianzus’, concentrates on the local context of the second oration, notably on Gregory’s father and the latter’s opponents at Nazianzus. Elm interprets Gregory the Younger’s relationship with his father in the context of the patria potestas in the late Roman East, and argues that he was very much a man of his time, if we look at his public speaking in orations 1–3, rather than someone weighed down with a complex psychological relationship with his
father (which is the prevailing view in many works on Gregory). The father’s signature under the ‘Arian’ document is attributed to ‘simplemindedness’, once a good thing, but now bishops need full philosophical preparation – or at least a well-prepared adviser, such as the son. Elm demonstrates that throughout his first 6 orations Gregory worked hard to gain prestige. She then tries to identify the local audience, which did not necessarily form a homogeneous group. It is plausibly subdivided into ‘overzealous monks’, and friends and peers, some of whom are discussed, based on the letters and poems. This well-defined audience of friends and acquaintances explains, Elm argues, both the force of Gregory’s criticism and his wish to remain conciliatory.

At the same time, Gregory aims at a larger public and responds to a wider context, as we learn in chapter 6, ‘Armed Like a Hoplite. Gregory the Political Philosopher at War: Eunomius, Photinus, and Julian’. In oration 2, Gregory takes a position in the debates on the true philosophical life: he prefers a more Aristotelian ideal, as he fully embraced the ergon. Here again, Elm corrects the dominant scholarly reading of Gregory as an unworldly man and insists that his position is to be interpreted against the background of the contemporary non-Christian world: Gregory takes sides with Themistius, whom he must have known as a political philosopher, against Julian. At the same time, he attacks enemies on the inside, namely, non-Nicene Christians, which Elm cautiously tries to locate precisely. Since Basil, with whom Gregory had passed a period of seclusion, was already on the inside, namely, non-Nicene Christians, which Elm cautiously tries to locate precisely. Since Basil, with whom Gregory had passed a period of seclusion, was already attacked by Eunomius of Cyzicus, it is plausible that this prominent ‘anomocean’ Arian was also Gregory’s implicit target. Elm gives a detailed survey of Eunomius’ career and reconstructs his central arguments on epistemological, semantic and theological matters, again showing these matters to be interrelated, to have a link with the theme of leadership and to be part of a broader debate on the (divine?) origin of names that goes back to ancient philosophy.

The third and last part returns to Julian, and particularly to Gregory’s response to the emperor after his death. Chapter 7, ‘A Health-Giving Star Shining on the East. Julian in Antioch, July 362 to March 363’, takes up the thread of Julian’s reign. (The imagery in the chapter’s title appears both in Ammianus Marcellinus and in Libanius). As in chapter 3, Elm first sketches the historical circumstances: the difficulties and setbacks during his protracted stay in Antioch (famine, mounting displeasure with the emperor), and the disastrous Persian campaign leading to Julian’s death. She then analyses four texts written during this period: the Hymn to King Helios, in which the tripartite Sun is shown to respond to contemporaneous Christian debates; Against the Galileans, which is written rather ‘for the sake of’ than ‘against’ the Christians, Elm argues, as Julian wished to educate and to cure his Christian subjects, motivated by his imperial clemency and philantropia; the Epistle to the Priest Theodorus, probably the most significant of his imperial letters to pagan priests; and the Misopogon, Julian’s very last work, interweaving psogoi with anti-Cynic diatribe. Elm concludes this chapter with a nuanced and rather sympathetic balance of Julian’s life, accomplishments and vision. His vision of Rome was a consistent system that merged everything – only to be countered by an equally comprehensive Christian vision.

This Christian vision, as elaborated in direct response to Julian, is the subject of the book’s final chapters. In ‘The Making of the Apostle. Gregory’s Oration 4 against Julian’, Elm sets out to refute the majority view that Gregory had no knowledge of Julian’s writings. The essential tenets of Gregory in this oration are, first, that God had sent Julian as a punishment and combined it with instruction, to warn and guide, and, second, that Roman power was divinely preordained to be Christian. Elm aptly labels the oration an inverted Fürstenspiegel, by which Gregory wanted to inflict a damnatio memoriae upon Julian, not by erasure but by representation, unmasking his inconsistency, partiality and duplicity. Conversely, Gregory praises Constantius, as the complete opposite of Julian, thus proposing his version of the correct Christian political philosophy and equating Rome with Christianity.

Gregory had not only a political but also a cultural message. The latter is dealt with in chapter 9, ‘A Bloodless Sacrifice of Words to the Word. Logoi for the Logoi’. The core of
Gregory’s reaction to Julian’s school law – a response that heavily influenced the interpretation of the law in scholarly literature – consists of the separation of what Julian had declared intrinsically linked, namely Greekness, *logoi*, and the sacred. Gregory’s position is based on linguistic theoretical premises that are different from those of both Julian and Eunomius. (Elm inserts a relatively long discussion of the theological orations 27–31 delivered in Constantinople almost 20 years later, which elaborate on the same arguments). The primary target of or. 4, Elm suggests, were those Christians who either rejected the use of classical rhetoric, literature and philosophy or used it incorrectly. Gregory posits that the universal *Logos* intended *logoi* to belong to all. As in or. 6 *On Peace*, he underlines that Greek learning was even integral to a proper Roman Christian order.

The last chapter, ‘Gregory’s Second Strike, *Oration* 5’, deals with the second invective against Julian, composed during Procopius’ revolt (365–366). Elm correctly regards it as the most political of the first six orations. She reads it as a conscious response to Libanius’ *Epitaphius* for Julian, composed in the spring of 365. Both texts reflect an evident need to explain Julian’s brief reign in providential terms – and both authors believed that the emperor should be remembered, but obviously not in the same way. Elm pays careful attention to other pagan contemporaries and observes that the pagan and Christian voices crossed the religious divide: Themistius is shown to have a different perception of Julian and his successor Jovian than Libanius – one that is rather similar to Gregory’s. The latter’s audience of elite members, Elm suggests, must have been aware of the arguments by Themistius and Libanius – and perhaps also of Julian’s *Misopogon*, a work named in or. 5.14, although the scholarly consensus, cautiously challenged by Elm, is that Gregory had not read it. In the contemporary turbulent period Gregory took a clear position, pro Valens and against Procopius, who presented himself as the legitimate heir of his cognate Julian. Orations 4 and 5, Elm concludes, show Gregory as a fully active political philosopher.

This is also one of the more general theses in the ‘Conclusion. Visions of Rome’. Gregory was, just like Julian, Themistius and the other protagonists of this book, entirely a man of his time. Bishops, it is said, behaved more or less like other members of the high imperial administration. Their dominant concern was how to govern the *oikoumenē* of the Romans and advise others who exercised greater power. Christians and pagans alike agreed that there was one way to the divine. Those who were closest to the divine (for Christians, those who truly comprehended the Trinity), were those who should govern or advise the rulers. Hence the central goal of elite men such as Gregory to persuade one’s peers of one’s legitimate authority. We know the outcome of the debates: Gregory’s universal Roman Christianity, deeply embedded in Greek *paideia*, was to become the prevailing vision of (new) Rome. Yet, Elm reminds us, non-orthodox Christians became outsiders: paradoxically, therefore, it was to be a universality that excluded.

This unusually rich book is a plea for, and at the same time an inspiring example of, a broad interdisciplinary study of the period, crossing the traditional boundaries of pagan versus Christian authors, and literary versus historical or theological/philosophical approaches of these authors and their texts. Elm clearly shows that there is an intrinsic link between philosophy, religion, and politics and that the pagan and Christian thinkers shared these beliefs. Julian and Gregory are, in this sense, case studies that stand paradigmatic for a much larger social history of ideas. Both protagonists receive a refreshingly nuanced, and sometimes rather revisionist portrait in this book. Elm’s Julian is much more tolerant, for instance, than the one sketched at about the same time by Polymnia Athanassiadi.1 Moreover, she rightly corrects – often inspired by the work of Neil

---

1 Vers la pensée unique. La montée de l’intolérance dans l’Antiquité tardive. Paris 2010, chapter 3. It was published after Elm had finished her manuscript, but Athanassiadi’s 1981
McLynn – Gregory’s near-canonical characterizations as a gifted theologian, but a weak man and a disastrous bishop. In fact, even though his self-fashioning rhetoric persistently extolled ascetic retreat and contemplation, he managed to write himself, by showcasing his paideia, into the capital as the bishop of New Rome.

Elm’s expert knowledge of all historical, philological and philosophical disciplines involved, as well as her mastery of the primary sources and secondary literature, is overwhelming. Her overall intention to present the subject in a nuanced way, to sketch broad contexts, and not to accept any standard scholarly presentation at face value, makes for a rewarding, but also for a demanding read. Few readers (and reviewers, for that matter) will share the broad background with the author. Although written in a very accessible style, the book seems most appropriate for advanced scholars of Late Antiquity, who will invariably learn a lot and be challenged to reconsider their own conceptions. This is not to say that I am completely convinced in all respects. Let me express one hesitation and one minor point of criticism.

1. Elm is absolutely right in stressing the importance of the pagan context and, more specifically, Julian’s challenges, for understanding Gregory’s first six orations, and also in choosing these men as representative of a major evolution in Roman political thinking. However, I get the impression that she tends to overstate her case by seemingly presenting these factors as all-explaining, see e.g. p. 306: «From Christology, cosmology, and history to exegesis, all subsequent debates about Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxis responded to Julian’s challenge…» and already p. 2: «Only (italics KD) by observing this process in the literary duels between Julian and Gregory may we see the adaptation and transformation of traditional Roman themes in Christian self-definition, theology and political theory». Similarly, the overall focus on self-representation and on writing as competition for leadership and power, relevant as it is, may seem a little one-sided.

2. Greek terms. One of the book’s many strengths is Elm’s attention to the Greek phrasing of the primary sources, which are often quoted in the numerous footnotes (along with discussions that prove how well-read she is on purely philological matters too, such as the transmission history of the texts). She avoids Greek in the main text, but often inserts key words in transcription. As a rule, these are taken from the authors under discussion, but this is not always the case, sometimes with misleading results. In her discussion of Julian’s Hymn to the Mother of the Gods, for instance, Elm’s wording suggests that Cybele is called theotokos (p. 131 «‘in very truth the Mother of the Gods’ – theotokos», similarly p. 133 and 301), but Julian uses the term only, and accusingly, in relation to Mary. Another example is the recurrent mention of the enkyklia (sic, KD) paideia, again suggesting that Julian uses a term which is in fact not attested in his works. Perhaps more importantly, Elm’s repeated claim that the term θέωσις was coined by Gregory as a neologism appears not to be correct. It is already attested.

in the third century. Moreover, it is a normal derivation of the common verb θεόω; even if it were attested for the first time in Gregory (who, admittedly, is the first preserved author to use it regularly), I would be more cautious in interpreting it as a «conscious innovation». This is not to deny the importance of the concept (some 10 pages of chapter 9 go under the heading Apostasis versus Θέωσις).

To conclude, this erudite book, linking the local and specific to the universal and general, is destined to become an important point of reference not only for students of Gregory and Julian, but for all historians of the fourth century.

Gent

Kristoffel Demoen


1 Gregory Thaumaturgus, In annuntiationem s. virginis Mariae (PG 10.1157B): υποσχέσεως τῆς θεώσεως.