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GIBBON ET ROME

A LA LUMIÈRE DE L'HISTORIOGRAPHIE MODERNE

Dix exposés suivis de discussions
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Gibbon and Julian

The enthusiasm of Edward Gibbon for Julian the Apostate is neither surprising nor secret. The author of the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* could be expected to have a natural affinity for an emperor who tried to undo the work of Constantine. Gibbon's extensive treatment of Julian spans chapters 19, 22, 23, and most of 24 of the *Decline and Fall*, and its amplitude emphasizes the significance he attached to a ruler whose uncontested reign lasted but a year and a half. Gibbon's portrait of Julian, like that of Ammianus Marcellinus, is admiring though critical at times. The criticism subtly encourages the reader to take the panegyrics more seriously. Yet this was not Gibbon's intention : the complexity of his account has other causes.

Gibbon's interest in Julian had deep roots. At the age of eighteen, in the second year after his arrival in Lausanne to recover from an adolescent conversion to the Church of Rome, Gibbon included in his reading the *Vie de Julien* by the Abbé de la Bletterie, a work which — as he later recorded in his memoirs — “first introduced me to the man and the times”¹. Julian, the arch anti-Christian, must have been an exciting figure to one who had not so long ago embraced Catholicism. Gibbon did more than merely read the life of Julian. He notes in his memoirs that he composed an essay on the truth of the miracle which stopped the rebuilding of the Temple of Jerusalem², — a miracle he resolutely refused to credit in the *Decline and Fall* and which, it appears, he had already learned to explain away as early as 1755.

Also in 1755 the young Gibbon wrote in his Commonplace Book an entry on Julian's treatment of the Christians. Although written

¹ *Memoirs*, p. 79.

² *Ibid.* : “I should be glad to recover my first essay on the truth of the miracle which stopped the rebuilding of the temple of Jerusalem.”

in imperfect French, it is an eloquent witness to the care with which he read La Bletterie's biography; and its opening lines prove conclusively that already at the tender age of eighteen Gibbon had hit upon the interpretation of Julian's policy which he was to elaborate over twenty years later in the *Decline and Fall*. The French entries from the Lausanne Commonplace Book of 1755 have unfortunately never been published, and it is therefore a particular pleasure to make public for the first time Gibbon's early note on Julian in the very city in which it was originally written. The full text is given separately, but here the pertinent opening lines must be quoted to show Gibbon's view of Julian's religious policy and, in addition, his opinion that it was dangerous. It will be recalled that he had officially taken the sacraments of Protestant Christianity at Lausanne on Christmas Day in 1754. Here are Gibbon's words: *Julien l'Apostat avait pour grand but de detruire la religion Chretienne et certainement il s'y prenait bien. C'etait le persecuteur le plus doux, le plus systematique et en meme tems le plus dangereux de tous. Il avait senti que les X Grandes Persecutions n'avaient fait qu'augmenter le nombre de Chretiens et il resolut de se conduire autrement pour les abattre*. One is instantly reminded of the *Decline and Fall*: "I have endeavoured faithfully to represent the artful system by which Julian proposed to obtain the effects, without incurring the guilt or reproach, of persecution."³ When Gibbon came to the study of Julian in 1755, it was a crucial moment in the unraveling of his Christian education.

Nine years later, back in Lausanne once again before his Italian tour, Gibbon returned to the Apostate and to the Abbé de la Bletterie. His journal reveals that he read at this time the Abbé's *Histoire de Jovien*, which included translations of several of Julian's works as well as a selection of letters. Of this book Gibbon wrote in ecstatic French, *Quelle littérature, quel goût, et quelle élégance! J'ajoute et quelle modération! Julien étoit payen et l'Abbé ne hait que les Jésuites*⁴. Meanwhile Gibbon was also exploring the magisterial commentary on Julian's *Caesares* by Ezechiel Spanheim⁵.

³ See the reference to Julian in *English Essays*, p. 553: "Christianisme according to Julian the Apostate ... in French." The manuscript is identified as B. M. Add. MSS. 34880, of which Craddock published the English entries. "Christianisme" (*sic*) is published below as an Appendix. Cf. *Decline and Fall*, ch. 23, vol. 2, p. 403.

⁴ *Journal à Lausanne*, p. 224.

⁵ Cf. *Miscellanea*, p. 117.

By the year 1781, when volumes two and three of the *Decline and Fall* were published and Gibbon's account of Julian was thereby given to the world, he wrote to his step-mother, Dorothea, a letter soliciting her opinion of the new volumes, of which he had sent her a pre-publication copy: "Read judge pronounce: and believe that I sincerely agree with my friend Julian in esteeming the praise of those only, who will freely censure my defects."⁶ My friend Julian — he had been an old companion, since 1755, on the road to religious emancipation. Gibbon admired him for what he was, at least as far as could be told. Near the end of chapter 22 of the *Decline and Fall* Gibbon observed that most rulers were natively undistinguished and if "stripped of their purple and cast naked into the world, would immediately sink to the lowest rank of society, without a hope of emerging from their obscurity"⁷. For Gibbon Julian was different: "But the personal merit of Julian was, in some measure, independent of his fortune."⁸ That was what particularly impressed the historian. In the winter of 1790-91 he composed a new footnote to be added to the *Decline and Fall* at this point and to suggest that the only other ruler of comparable native talent was the recently deceased Frederick the Great⁹.

Gibbon's involvement with Julian was therefore lifelong and grounded in what was probably the most profoundly formative experience of his life, the conversion to Roman Catholicism and its aftermath. He had already read both of La Bletterie's books, studied Julian's own writings, and even written on Julian's plan to rebuild the Jewish temple before the day he sat musing on the steps of the Ara Coeli in 1764.

To write the *Decline and Fall*, which eventually took shape after that day (more fateful to Gibbon in retrospect than perhaps it appeared at the time)¹⁰, Gibbon immersed himself in the apposite

⁶ *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 260, No 496 (dated Feb. 24, 1781).

⁷ *Decline and Fall*, ch. 22, vol. 2, p. 357.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *English Essays*, p. 340: "Frederic alone, of the monarchs of the age, was capable, like Julian, of making his own fortune."

¹⁰ The experience of October 15, 1764, as the barefooted friars were singing Vespers and "the idea of writing the decline and fall of the City first stated to my mind" (*Memoirs*, p. 136), is absent from Gibbon's journal of the time. In the original draft of the *Memoirs* he had assumed that there was a reference to that momentous occasion: "In my Journal the place and moment of conception are recorded"; but in subsequent drafts he correctly omitted this claim. Cf. David P. Jordan, *Gibbon and his Roman Empire* (Chicago, 1971), p. 18.

ancient sources and scholarly discussion. His regard for Robertson and Hume and his acknowledged advocacy of philosophic history, uniting the achievements of *philosophe* and *érudit*, must never be allowed to obscure his astoundingly arduous labour in examining, as best he could, all the basic evidence for his theme. The *Decline and Fall*, though indisputably a recognizable child of the eighteenth century, endures as history because it is solidly built on the evidence. Criticism of the work must inevitably return to the evidence if Gibbon's historical achievement is to be understood.

In the case of Julian Gibbon was working with materials he already knew well. Here, as elsewhere in his history, his handling of sources and scholarship can be most illuminating, especially where Gibbon is clearly guilty of inconsistency or contradiction. It is worth remembering that the *Decline and Fall*, written over a period of nearly twenty years, does not represent a coherent vision or provide a single, sustained interpretation. Gibbon wrote with relative fluency, except in certain notoriously troublesome passages like the opening chapters and the treatment of Constantine¹¹. His views and outlook changed as he went along; the General Observations at the end of chapter 38 are at variance with many of his earlier remarks on the causes of Rome's decline¹²; and the summary judgements at the end of the whole work have only a tangential relation to the General Observations. Gibbon's mind was not monolithic. It was remarkably receptive to new evidence and divergent views.

The fundamental ancient sources for Julian are numerous — in the first place Ammianus, Julian himself, Libanius, and Gregory of Nazianzus. In addition there is a mass of additional testimony in Latin epitomators, in Eunapius, Zosimus, and the later ecclesiastical historians. Gibbon shows awareness of the problems posed by the abundance of evidence. He recognizes and endeavours to take account of the partisan character of much of what survives. He knows that Libanius' eulogies can be unreasonable or unreliable, and he appreciates the venom of Gregory. He has some sense of the transmission of traditional versions, but he antedates the era of serious *Quellenforschung* and generally misses the indirect indi-

¹¹ Cf. *Memoirs*, p. 159: after the troublesome composition of the chapters on Constantine and a six-month excursion to Paris, "I was now master of my style and subject: and while the measure of my daily performance was enlarged, I discovered less reason to cancel or correct".

¹² See, for example, G. W. Bowersock in *Daedalus*, Summer 1976 (an issue devoted entirely to Gibbon), pp. 63-71.

cations of lost sources. It is Gibbon's manner to identify, if he possibly can, one or two trustworthy writers on whom he can rely heavily in his narrative, while he reserves for the footnotes the discrepancies which other texts happen to provide. In this respect he most of all resembles older generations of textual critics, identifying the best manuscript and then sticking to it. They should have reconstructed the archetype.

Gibbon's high regard for Tacitus as a philosophic historian fully explains his dark portrait of Augustus¹³; his reliance on the *Historia Augusta* for the third quarter of the third century is the reason he wrote such nonsense on the successors of Aurelian¹⁴, even though for previous periods he had rejected the same source when he had better sources to hand. For Julian Gibbon identified Ammianus as his authority, and he repeatedly alerted his readers to that fact. With a persistence which seems like reassurance in the face of lingering doubt, Gibbon describes Ammianus as "impartial": "an impartial historian", "the impartial testimony of Ammianus", "Ammianus has impartially stated ..." ¹⁵. Yet historians would undoubtedly agree that Ammianus was not impartial in assessing Julian. The fulsome praise which begins Book 16 of his History and the lengthy catalogue of Julian's virtues which follows the scene of his death are sufficient to dispel any sense of impartiality. It is, of course, true that Ammianus sometimes found fault with Julian, on two occasions especially — the Chalcedon trials and the edict forbidding Christians to teach the pagan classics¹⁶. Gibbon too could find fault

¹³ Cf. *Decline and Fall*, ch. 9, vol. 1, p. 208: "... Tacitus, the first of historians who applied the science of philosophy to the study of facts." On Augustus, *Decline and Fall*, ch. 3, vol. 1, pp. 58-71, especially 60 ("It would require the pen of Tacitus ...") and 70 ("The tender respect of Augustus for a free constitution which he had destroyed can only be explained by an attentive consideration of the character of that subtle tyrant").

¹⁴ Observe Gibbon on the alleged interregnum after Aurelian's death, *Decline and Fall*, ch. 12, vol. 1, p. 308: "The contention that ensued is one of the best attested but most improbable events in the history of mankind." On this matter, see now R. Syme, *Emperors and Biography* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 237-238, 242-243.

¹⁵ *Decline and Fall*, ch. 19, vol. 2, p. 177; ch. 22, vol. 2, p. 346, n. 1; ch. 22, vol. 2, p. 356, n. 5.

¹⁶ Amm., 22, 3, 7 (*ipsa mihi uidetur flesse Iustitia*); 22, 10, 7 (*illud autem erat inclemens, obruendum perenni silentio, quod arcebat docere magistros rhetoricos et grammaticos, ritus Christiani cultores*). Cf. 25, 4, 20. Ammianus also faulted Julian for *leuitas*, but he admired the emperor's awareness of this weakness and his concern to check it: cf. E. A. Thompson, *The Historical Work of Ammianus Marcellinus* (Cambridge, 1947), pp. 79-80. Thompson is excellent in his discussion of those prejudices of Ammianus which reflect his social class.

with the emperor he admired. The attitudes of Gibbon and Ammianus are so close that it is difficult to say whether Ammianus' work shaped Gibbon's view of Julian or whether Gibbon's predilections drew him to a sympathetic narrator like Ammianus. The fact is that the biography by La Bletterie is guardedly favorable, and that at the age of eighteen Gibbon had absorbed the outlook of Ammianus through the mediation of the Abbé.

In any event Ammianus' History clearly dominates much of Gibbon's account of Julian. We hear of the emperor's "temperance", his "regard for justice", "his clemency", "the active vigour of his own genius", his "inimitable virtues", his "humanity"¹⁷. Precisely in the major points where Ammianus faults Julian, Gibbon does too, actually quoting the phrase "Justice herself appeared to weep" with reference to the condemnation of Ursulus¹⁸. The Mesopotamian campaign is largely written out of Ammianus and includes the entire death-bed speech in the style of Socrates' departure from life.

But Ammianus did not tell everything about Julian, as Gibbon was aware. For certain topics, notably the emperor's early career down to about 355 and his religious policy, it was necessary to look elsewhere; once again it is clear that Gibbon chose his principal ancient guides on the basis of presumed trustworthiness, and he followed them even when — in the course of writing — he introduced contradictions of what he had written before. For the early career and the beginning of the German campaigns Gibbon judged Julian himself to know best, and he laid weight on the famous justificatory letter to the Athenians. He savoured Julian's humour and fairness¹⁹; while admitting Julian could occasionally exaggerate, Gibbon was nevertheless not above preferring Julian's own testimony to that of the impartial historian (as in the case of the achievements of 356)²⁰.

¹⁷ *Decline and Fall*, ch. 19, vol. 2, p. 205 (temperance, clemency, vigour of genius); ch. 22, vol. 2, p. 325 (inimitable virtues); ch. 22, vol. 2, p. 343 (humanity). See Ammianus' review of Julian's virtues at 25, 4, 1-15.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, ch. 22, vol. 2, p. 351: "But Justice herself (if we may use the pathetic expression of Ammianus) appeared to weep ..." On the prohibition of Christians as teachers of grammar and rhetoric, *Ibid.*, ch. 23, vol. 2, p. 389: "A just and severe censure ..."

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, ch. 19, vol. 2, p. 187, n. 3 (humour); *Ibid.*, p. 207, n. 2 from the previous page (fairness).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, ch. 19, vol. 2, p. 206, n. 2: "Ammianus (16, 2, 3) appears much better satisfied with the success of the first campaign than Julian himself."

In discussing Julian's religious policy, Gibbon turned chiefly to Libanius and to Julian as revealed particularly in the letters. These texts revived and reinforced the judgements he had made in his youth. He was always reluctant to place any faith in ecclesiastical invective, like that of Gregory of Nazianzus²¹. Even so, the lavishness of Libanius' detail, together with the often repellent arrogance and cruelty in Julian's later letters, led Gibbon to sketch a portrait of the emperor in chapter 23 which is startlingly at variance with the virtues and humanity sketched in the preceding chapters. Here, in the matter of religion, Gibbon is not merely noting a few errors in the manner of Ammianus: he is making an indictment. This indictment follows oddly upon the last words of chapter 22: "Even faction, and religious faction, was constrained to acknowledge the superiority of his genius in peace as well as in war, and to confess, with a sigh, that the apostate Julian was a lover of his country, and that he deserved the empire of the world."²² The end of chapter 23, on Julian's religious policy, is very different: "It is impossible to determine how far the zeal of Julian would have prevailed over his good sense and humanity; but, if we seriously reflect on the strength and spirit of the church, we shall be convinced that, before the emperor could have extinguished the religion of Christ, he must have involved his country in the horrors of a civil war."²³ So now religious faction did not acknowledge Julian's genius. We see that a potentially destructive zeal or — to use Gibbon's other word — fanaticism had made Julian intolerant, bent on eradicating Christianity and on a headlong course to civil war.

It is precisely Gibbon's change of principal sources which released and intensified his old opinion of Julian's religious policy. The change underlies the very different character of Julian in chapter 23. There, through Libanius and Julian himself, Gibbon uncovered in the emperor a religious fanaticism as oppressive and inhuman as that of Julian's Christian opponents. Early in his chapter Gibbon persuaded himself that Julian's religiosity was an isolated aberration,

²¹ Observe Gibbon's sense of relief at *Ibid.*, ch. 24, vol. 2, p. 443, n. 3 from the previous page: "The calumnies of Gregory, and the legends of more recent saints, may now be *silently* despised."

²² *Ibid.*, ch. 22, vol. 2, p. 358. Gibbon annotates this remark with a quotation from Prudentius which had appeared conspicuously in the frontispiece of both parts of the original 1735 edition of La Bletterie's *Vie de Julien* (published anonymously in Amsterdam). The page references in Gibbon's *Commonplace Book* reveal that this was the edition of La Bletterie's work which he read in 1755.

²³ *Ibid.*, ch. 23, vol. 2, p. 405.

which in no way infected his conduct of other affairs. "Julian could break from the dream of superstition to arm himself for battle ; and after vanquishing in the field the enemies of Rome, he calmly retired into his tent, to dictate the wise and salutary laws of an empire, or to indulge his genius in the elegant pursuits of literature and philosophy."²⁴ As he went on working, Gibbon pondered his sources and judged otherwise. He condemned the fragmentary letter of Julian to a priest as displaying "the skill of a Jesuit", and he labelled "unworthy of a philosopher" a wish that opinions contrary to one's own should be suppressed²⁵. Gibbon censured the "vain and ambitious mind" of "the Imperial Sophist"²⁶. He accused Julian of being ungenerous ; he declared, "his pity was degraded by contempt, his contempt was embittered by hatred"²⁷. He charged the emperor with "the true spirit of a bigot"²⁸. Such was "my friend Julian".

Gibbon's perception of pagan fanaticism does him credit and immeasurably deepens his study of the apostate. It arises directly from his confrontation with the sources, which are amply supplemented — as always — by a variety of references in the notes. Once, however, Gibbon turned from his materials on religion back to Ammianus for the final phase of Julian's life, the modest and virtuous emperor of the earlier chapters again took his place in the narrative of the *Decline and Fall*. Gibbon was even moved to offer a spirited defense of Julian's burning of the ships²⁹, and he asserted that Julian displayed in his last moments "the love of virtue and of fame, which had been the ruling passions of his life"³⁰. Gibbon regretted that Julian failed to make a "timely and judicious nomi-

²⁴ *Ibid.*, ch. 23, vol. 2, p. 368.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, ch. 23, vol. 2, p. 374, n. 2 (skill of a Jesuit), and p. 375, n. 1 (unworthy of a philosopher). It is noteworthy that Ammianus had written in a totally different context (the purging in Constantius' court of eunuchs, barbers, cooks and the like) that Julian was *non ut philosophus ueritatis indagandae professor*. A surprising remark, but see E. A. Thompson, *op. cit. supra* n. 16, p. 83.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, ch. 23, vol. 2, p. 384.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, ch. 23, vol. 2, p. 388.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, ch. 23, vol. 2, p. 389, n. 1, on two lines of Homer "which Julian has changed and perverted in the true spirit of a bigot". This goes well beyond Ammianus' opinion (25, 4, 17) that Julian was *superstitiosus magis quam sacrorum legitimus obseruator*.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, ch. 24, vol. 2, pp. 435-436.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, ch. 24, vol. 2, p. 442. Note Ammianus' phrase *popularitatis amore* (22, 14, 1).

nation of an associate and successor"³¹. At no point did Gibbon ever attempt to reconcile the Julian of chapter 23 with the Julian of other chapters. This is because he was writing a continuous history of vast scope, — a history which reflects at each point the sources on which he was relying. As these changed, so did his history.

Ever since 1788 it has been fashionable to explain much in the *Decline and Fall* on the basis of the scholarly and philosophic works available to Gibbon rather than the authentic testimonia. It was in the *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* of December 1788 that an anonymous reviewer scored Gibbon's reliance on Sébastien Le Nain de Tillemont and the deficiencies of the narrative for the period not covered by Tillemont: *An wie vielen Stellen, besonders wo Tillemont ihm nicht aushalf, hat er doch weder den Hergang der Sache so richtig erzählt, als er jetzt bei uns Deutschen selbst schon aus den correctern Compendien bekannt ist ...*³² It is true that the later narrative of Gibbon has grave weaknesses, but this is to be explained in terms of Gibbon's difficulty in coping with and even locating Byzantine and oriental sources. The excellence of the earlier volumes of the *Decline and Fall* is not to be explained by the aid of Tillemont, despite Gibbon's handsome tributes to him³³. A scholarly reviewer may perhaps be excused for attempting to explain Gibbon's prodigious achievement by a reference to a sound compendium, but it is regrettable that today a critic can assert that Gibbon "slavishly followed Tillemont"³⁴.

We have already observed the positive impact of the ancient sources on Gibbon's account of Julian. One may also observe some of the numerous places at which Gibbon shows himself totally, even

³¹ *Ibid.*, ch. 24, vol. 2, p. 443.

³² *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen*, 1788, pp. 2051-2052. This point was repeated, in Latin, by Meusel, referring to the *GGA* review, in Vol. 4, part 1 (Leipzig, 1789), p. 343, of the *Bibliotheca Historica*, where it was noticed by Gibbon himself, who excerpted it in draft E of his *Memoirs*. Cf. Bury's introduction to his edition of *Decline and Fall*: "From the historical, though not from the literary, point of view, Gibbon, deserted by Tillemont, distinctly declines ..." On Gibbon and Tillemont, see now O. Chadwick, *Daedalus*, Summer 1976, p. 121.

³³ E. g., *Decline and Fall*, ch. 47, vol. 5, p. 37, n. 1 from the previous page: "And here I must take leave of that incomparable guide, whose bigotry is overbalanced by the merits of erudition, diligence, veracity, and scrupulous minuteness." *Memoirs*, p. 147: "I applied the collections of Tillemont, whose inimitable accuracy almost assumes the character of Genius, to fix and arrange within my reach the loose and scattered atoms of historical information."

³⁴ D. P. Jordan, *op. cit. supra* n. 10, p. 143.

culpably innocent of Tillemont. This is not to deny that Gibbon really did look at the *Mémoires ecclésiastiques* and the *Histoire des empereurs* for the issues on which he cites them explicitly. As he proudly and justly proves in the celebrated *Vindication*, Gibbon did not quote his authorities at second hand. But the error of the German reviewer, and of most critics since, has been to assume that because Gibbon consulted Tillemont for the many points on which he refers to him, he therefore followed him throughout. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Tillemont wrote a thorough analysis, still valuable today, of the chronology of the extirpation of the Flavian house after Constantine's death³⁵. Gallus and Julian were the sole survivors of the massacre. Gibbon's narrative shows him utterly ignorant of the problems³⁶. He simply follows Julian's own version in the letter to the Athenians, and he has no footnote to signal any difficulty. As to Julian's birth-date, Gibbon confidently places it on November 6, 331³⁷, although Tillemont had shown that the evidence for November 6 was in all probability a conflation with the date on which Julian was made Caesar³⁸. In telling the story of Julian's death, Gibbon is so much the prisoner of Ammianus that he has quite forgotten his earlier view that Julian was born in 331 and unconcernedly repeats Ammianus' statement that he died in his thirty-second year³⁹. That too, incidentally, had been a point discussed ably by Tillemont⁴⁰.

The date of Julian's re-capture of Cologne has long been a knotty problem. Tillemont has an admirable treatment of the matter, demonstrating that Cologne was recovered in 356⁴¹. Gibbon, relying on Julian's letter to the Athenians and ignorant of Tillemont's argument (based on a phrase in that very letter), confidently dates the event to 357⁴². For the proclamation of Julian as Augustus at Paris

³⁵ Tillemont, *Histoire des Empereurs*, vol. 4, pp. 664-665.

³⁶ *Decline and Fall*, ch. 18, vol. 2, pp. 154-155.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, ch. 19, vol. 2, p. 188; ch. 22, vol. 2, p. 344, n. 3 (which actually refers to Tillemont for the year but misses his remarks on the day).

³⁸ Tillemont, *Histoire des Empereurs*, vol. 4, p. 694.

³⁹ *Decline and Fall*, ch. 24, vol. 2, p. 442. Cf. Amm., 25, 3, 23 (*anno aetatis altero et tricesimo*).

⁴⁰ Tillemont, *Histoire des Empereurs*, vol. 4, p. 693.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 683.

⁴² *Decline and Fall*, ch. 19, vol. 2, pp. 206-207. Julian's language is, fortunately, precise: Πόλις τε ανέλαβον τὴν Ἀγορῶπιτιναν ἐπὶ τῷ Ῥήνῳ, πρὸ μηνῶν

in the early spring of 360, Gibbon depends upon Ammianus for the most part, although he has also incorporated a few items here from Libanius and Zosimus. Had he studied his Tillemont, he would not have neglected the distribution of leaflets after the officers had dined with Julian on the night of the proclamation⁴³. Ammianus, like Julian in his letter to the Athenians, omits this detail in order to strengthen the impression that there was no conspiracy to make him Augustus. Gibbon argues for his innocence. Yet Tillemont disclosed the incriminating evidence of the leaflet campaign among besotted troops on the very night Julian was proclaimed Augustus.

As to the vexed question of who cast the spear which killed Julian in 363, Tillemont wrote an excellent and sensible analysis of all the evidence⁴⁴. Gibbon follows Ammianus with scarcely any awareness of the problems involved. At one moment he thinks boastful Christians were responsible for the story of a Christian assassin, at another he acknowledges that the pagan Libanius charged that it was a Christian⁴⁵. He does not examine the early testimony of Gregory or the circumstantial detail of Philostorgius. Gibbon would have done well to solicit the help of the "mule of the Alps" for the treacherous slopes at the end of Julian's life.

Of eighteenth-century scholars it was not so much Tillemont who conspicuously aided Gibbon in his study of the ancient evidence for Julian. The work of another scholar seems to have been much more important, and that was, as we should have expected, the work of the Abbé de la Bletterie, whose relatively sympathetic view of Julian had so long been familiar to Gibbon. On occasion Gibbon explicitly acknowledges his indebtedness to La Bletterie in dealing with difficult or awkward passages in the original texts. The famous remark in chapter 22 about Julian's "shaggy and populous beard" is annotated with a note referring to La Bletterie's translation of the relevant lines of the *Misopogon* in which Julian mentions the lice that inhabit his beard⁴⁶. Gibbon declares that like the Abbé, "I have contented myself with a transient allusion"; but even with this admission the reader might not suspect that Gibbon's amusing

ἐαλωκυῖαν που δέκα. The indication of the months is decisive, since the city had been lost to the Romans before Julian went to Gaul (Amm., 15, 8, 19).

⁴³ Tillemont, *Histoire des Empereurs*, vol. 4, p. 449. This item occurs in Zosim., 3, 9.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 699-700.

⁴⁵ *Decline and Fall*, ch. 24, vol. 2, p. 454.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, ch. 22, vol. 2, p. 349, n. 2.

conceit, a "populous" beard, is directly translated from the Abbé's French, *cette barbe longue et peuplée*⁴⁷. In his rendition of Julian's deathbed speech in Ammianus, Gibbon similarly turned to La Bletterie for help, as he admits in a footnote: "The version of the Abbé de la Bletterie is faithful and elegant. I have followed him in expressing the Platonic idea of emanations, which is darkly insinuated in the original."⁴⁸

What Gibbon needed particularly was help in interpreting the ancient sources, and for Julian La Bletterie filled the need. Even where his books are not acknowledged (or criticized), Gibbon's use of them can occasionally be demonstrated. Two good illustrations of this occur in the narration, based on Ammianus, of Constantius' designation of Julian as Caesar in 355. Gibbon's version brings Constantius to the tribunal, "holding by the hand his cousin Julian, who entered the same day into the twenty-fifth year of his age"⁴⁹. But all Ammianus says is *eumque manu retinens dextera haec sermone placido peroravit*⁵⁰. The right hand is specified (Gibbon omits the detail), and there is nothing to match "who entered the same day ..." Compare La Bletterie's version: *tenant par la main Julien, qui entroît ce jour-là même dans sa vingt-quatrième année*⁵¹. Just at this moment Gibbon obviously followed La Bletterie's lead and naturally, with his excellent feeling for French idiom, converted the 24th year into the English equivalent, the 25th. Both La Bletterie and Gibbon, unlike Tillemont, believed Julian to have been born precisely on November 6th in 331.

In the same passage of Gibbon we read that after Constantius had spoken, "the approbation of the soldiers was testified by a respectful murmur"⁵². Ammianus says at this point *interpellans contio lenius prohibebat*⁵³. A modest interruption is indicated. Compare the words of the Abbé, *aïant été interrompu par un murmure d'approbation*⁵⁴. There is the origin of Gibbon's "approbation ... by a respectful murmur".

⁴⁷ La Bletterie, *Vie de Julien*, p. 271.

⁴⁸ *Decline and Fall*, ch. 24, vol. 2, p. 441, n. 1.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, ch. 19, vol. 2, pp. 187-188.

⁵⁰ Amm., 15, 8, 4.

⁵¹ La Bletterie, *Vie de Julien*, p. 89.

⁵² *Decline and Fall*, ch. 19, vol. 2, p. 188.

⁵³ Amm., 15, 8, 9.

⁵⁴ La Bletterie, *Vie de Julien*, p. 89. For the suggestion that Gibbon occasionally altered La Bletterie's account subtly to create a presupposition in Julian's

Overall the treatment of Julian in the *Decline and Fall*, in spite of its inconsistencies, may be justly admired. It is certainly no accident that Gibbon himself in his *Memoirs* wrote of this part of his history in precisely the same language as he used for Ammianus: "my impartial balance of the virtues and vices of Julian was generally praised."⁵⁵ The recognition of the emperor's fanaticism or zeal is what gives Gibbon's otherwise laudatory portrait its edge, and the reader can savour the witty irony of the observation that Julian "escaped very narrowly from being a bishop or perhaps a saint"⁵⁶. A modern scholar, by employing similar terms without the irony, lacked Gibbon's insight. In *L'empire chrétien* Piganiol declared, *Plus que la plupart des théologiens, ses contemporains, qu'on décore de ce beau titre, il (Julien) mériterait d'être considéré comme un saint*⁵⁷. The author of a recent survey of scholarship on Julian was right to say that although Gibbon was unable to benefit from the detailed research of the last two centuries his "excellent account" is "more judicious than some modern scholars have supposed"⁵⁸.

It is chiefly in details that modern historiography has overtaken Gibbon's Julian, and it may now be worthwhile to see what progress has been made.

The Date of Julian's Birth: It was noticed in the late nineteenth century that an oracular epigram about Julian in the Palatine Anthology carried the following annotation — χρῆσιμος δοθεὶς Ἰουλιανῷ τῷ ἀποστάτῃ ὅτε τὴν γενέθλιον ἡμέραν ἐπιτελῶν ἑαυτοῦ διῆγεν περὶ Κτησιφῶντα ἀγῶνας ἱππικῶς θεώμενος⁵⁹. Since Julian's presence outside Ctesiphon can be dated no earlier than May 363, a birthday in May or June (before Julian's death on the 26th) seemed to be

favour, see M. Baridon's new and significant study, *Edward Gibbon et le Mythe de Rome* (Paris thesis, presented 1974 and reproduced 1975), vol. 2, pp. 694-695. But it is unwarranted to assume that Gibbon was actually re-working La Bletterie's narrative rather than that of Ammianus with the help of La Bletterie. What matters is not where Gibbon differs from the Abbé but where he differs from Ammianus and agrees with the Abbé.

⁵⁵ *Memoirs*, p. 162.

⁵⁶ *Decline and Fall*, ch. 23, vol. 2, p. 361, n. 1.

⁵⁷ A. Piganiol, *L'empire chrétien* (Paris, 1947), p. 145.

⁵⁸ W. Kaegi, *Classical World*, 58 (1965), p. 231.

⁵⁹ *Anth. Pal.*, 14, 148: C. Radinger, *Philologus*, 50 (1891), p. 761 and K. J. Neumann, writing immediately after Radinger in the same number of *Philologus*, pp. 761-762. On the games near Ctesiphon, see Libanius, *orat.*, 18, 249; 1, 133; *Ruf. Fest.*, 28; Eunapius, *frg.* 22, 2 (Dindorf).

imposed. Some scholars therefore adopted the view that Julian had recently celebrated his birthday before his death in 363; noting that Ammianus attests that he died in his 32nd year, they place his birth in May-June, 332⁶⁰. This intolerable conclusion, of which Gibbon was happily unaware, presupposes that Ammianus' testimony⁶¹ implies that Julian's 31st rather than his 32nd birthday fell in 363. And yet Tillemont had argued long ago against such a presupposition⁶². Julian himself demonstrates a date of birth in 331 in his well known epistle to the Alexandrians, in which, during the winter of 362-363, he reports that he had been a Christian for twenty years and a pagan for twelve — thus a total of thirty-two⁶³.

Tillemont, La Bletterie, and Gibbon were all on sure ground in fixing Julian's birth-day to 331. Tillemont's rejection of Silvius' testimony that the birthday was actually November 6th was, though ignored by La Bletterie and Gibbon, soundly argued. The birthday could be dated anytime after June 26th. The Palatine Anthology lemma can be reconciled with the other evidence by the simple assumption that Julian's birthday games were held a few weeks or more before the actual day so as to take advantage of the arrival at Ctesiphon. We should return therefore to the wisdom of Tillemont in placing Julian's birth in the second half, conceivably in July, of 331. The lemma in the Palatine Anthology is a red herring.

⁶⁰ E. von Borries, *RE*, X 1 (1917), col. 26; R. Browning, *The Emperor Julian* (London, 1975), p. 32. Browning's recent espousal of this untenable date is very odd in view of its repudiation since von Borries' Pauly article by most scholars — e. g. N. H. Baynes, *JHS*, 45 (1925), p. 252; F. Schemmel, *Philologus*, 82 (1927), p. 455; J. Bidez, *La vie de l'empereur Julien* (Paris, 1930), p. 10; E. Richtsteig, *Philologische Wochenschrift*, 51 (1931), p. 428; G. Ricciotti, *Julian the Apostate*, trans. M. J. Costelloe (Milwaukee, 1960), p. 5. T. D. Barnes points out to me that Browning's version is probably due to dependence upon the entry for Julian in the *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge, 1971), which is here — as often — unreliable.

⁶¹ *Amm.*, 25, 3, 23.

⁶² Tillemont, *Histoire des Empereurs*, vol. 4, p. 693.

⁶³ *Jul.*, *Epist.*, 111, 434 D (ed. J. Bidez [Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1924], p. 191): οὐχ ἁμαρτήσασθε γὰρ τῆς δευτέρας ὁδοῦ πειθόμενοι τῷ πορευθέντι κακέϊνῃ τὴν ὁδὸν ἄχρις ἐνιαυτῶν εἴκοσι, καὶ ταύτην ἤδη σὺν θεοῖς πορευομένῳ δωδέκατον ἔτος. The evidence of *Ps. Aur. Vict.*, *epit.*, 42, 12 for Julian's age when he became Caesar (*annos natum fere tres et viginti*) is irreconcilable with all other testimony and certainly wrong. The evidence of Socrates (*hist. eccl.*, 3, 1) and Sozomen (*hist. eccl.*, 5, 2) that Julian was eight years old (Socrates: δεκαετής γὰρ ἦν; Sozomen: ὄγδοον ἡλικίας ἦγεν ἔτος) when his family was massacred is more relevant to the problem of the date of the massacre than that of the birth of Julian.

The Exile at Macellum.: Julian states that he and his brother were put in isolation for six years by Constantius⁶⁴. It is clear from Ammianus and Sozomen that the scene of this exile was a château near Kayseri in central Anatolia, the *fundus Macelli*⁶⁵. Gibbon and his predecessors assumed that the six-year period immediately antedated Gallus' elevation as Caesar, and accordingly the two half-brothers were relegated to Macellum in 345. This chronology was later followed by Seeck, Geffcken, and Festugière⁶⁶.

Norman Baynes, first in a review of Seeck's *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt* and again in an important article⁶⁷, stressed the confusion which had arisen in modern historiography because of Libanius' total suppression of the six-year exile in his eulogistic biography of Julian, the ἐπιτάφιος λόγος. By careful attention to the age of Julian during his study at Nicomedia when Libanius was — as he boasts — teaching there, Baynes proved that Julian would have been too young before 345 to fit Libanius' description of Julian at Nicomedia (πρόσηβος), and — more important — he could not possibly have gone there in or after 351 because Libanius left in 349⁶⁸. To place Julian in Nicomedia before Libanius' departure it is necessary to remove him from Macellum in 348 or so. Accordingly, given the six years of exile, we can start the exile of Gallus and Julian in about 342. This new chronology of the Macellum period is convincing and satisfying. It has been taken over by Libanius' most recent editor, A. F. Norman⁶⁹, although it is unfortunately not even noticed by Julian's latest biographer, R. Browning⁷⁰.

The Hymns of Ephraem: The Christian saint, Ephraem of Nisibis and later of Edessa, composed in Syriac four magnificent hymns of invective against Julian soon after his death⁷¹. These precious

⁶⁴ Jul., *epist. ad S. P. Q. Ath.*, 271 B-C (taken when κομιδῆ μειράκιον).

⁶⁵ Amm., 15, 2, 7; Sozomen, *hist. eccl.*, 5, 2. Cf. Julian (ref. in previous note), ἐν ἀγρῷ τιμῆ τῶν ἐν Καππαδοκίᾳ.

⁶⁶ O. Seeck, *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt*, IV (Berlin, 1911), p. 457; J. Geffcken, *Kaiser Julianus* (Leipzig, 1914), p. 128; A. J. Festugière, *Antioche païenne et chrétienne* (Paris, 1959), p. 64.

⁶⁷ *English Historical Review*, 27 (1912), pp. 757-759; *JHS*, 45 (1925), pp. 251-254.

⁶⁸ *JHS* (*loc. cit.* previous note) with reference to Libanius, *orat.*, 18, 13 (ἦδη δὲ πρόσηβος ἦν).

⁶⁹ *The Julianic Orations, Libanius, Selected Works*, ed. A. F. Norman, *Loeb Classical Library*, vol. I (London, Cambridge Mass., 1969), p. IX.

⁷⁰ R. Browning, *op. cit. supra* n. 60, pp. 42, 47 and 52.

⁷¹ The best edition is by E. Beck, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, 174, *Scriptores Syri*, 78 (Louvain, 1957).

documents, unknown to the eighteenth century, take their place alongside the invectives of Gregory of Nazianzus as prime evidence for the contemporary Christian view of Julian. Ephraem provides an eye-witness description of the emperor's body as it lay before the walls of Nisibis on the way to burial at Tarsus⁷²; and he records from his own experience the scene, previously known from Ammianus, of the Persian standard being raised over the city⁷³. Ephraem also alludes to "the lance of paradise, the lance of justice" which destroyed Julian⁷⁴, but he betrays no hint that he believed the spear to have come from any other source than the Persian enemy. Particularly interesting and new is Ephraem's direct reference to the notoriously controversial Julianic coins depicting a bull⁷⁵. Ephraem connects these coins with Julian's support of the Jews; he identifies the bull with Julian and views it as an evocation for the Jews of the golden calf. This interpretation of the coinage may conceivably spring from Ephraem's imagination, but it must be said that the late date of the bull coins is perfectly consistent with Julian's cultivation of the Jews. Furthermore Ephraem's lines are the first and only literary allusion to those coins.

The Letter to the Jews: Gibbon accepted this letter of Julian as genuine, while acknowledging that doubts had been expressed. The debate over authenticity continues unabated. Cumont, Bidez, and Joseph Vogt in the present century have all labelled the letter a forgery by a Jewish hand⁷⁶, but Hans Lewy, in a detailed study written in modern Hebrew, has made an important case for authenticity⁷⁷. Certainly familiarity with the Old Testament as shown in

⁷² Ephraem, *op. cit.*, Hymn 3, strophes 1-3.

⁷³ *Ibid.* Cf. Amm., 25, 9, 1.

⁷⁴ Ephraem, *op. cit.*, Hymn 3, strophe 14.

⁷⁵ Ephraem, *op. cit.*, Hymn 1, strophes 17-19: "The bull of the heathen, which was etched in his heart, he struck in that image for the people he loved ... The Greek king was suddenly a bull ... The circumcised saw the bull struck on the coins and rejoiced that the calves of Jeroboam had been resurrected." For the problems of this coinage, see F. D. Gilliard, *JRS*, 54 (1964), pp. 138-141 (in ignorance of the evidence of Ephraem).

⁷⁶ J. Bidez and F. Cumont, *Iuliani Epistulae Leges Poematia. Fragmenta varia* (Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1922), pp. 279-280; J. Vogt, *Morgenland*, 30 (1939), pp. 46 ff.

⁷⁷ Johanan Hans Lewy, *Olamot Nefgashim* (Jerusalem, 1969), pp. 221-254. These studies first appeared in 1960, fifteen years after Professor Lewy's death. See also, in support of authenticity, W. Den Boer, *Vigiliae Christianae*, 16 (1962), pp. 179 f. and M. Avi-Yonah, *The Jews of Palestine* (Oxford, 1976), p. 199.

the letter is no proof of forgery : Julian had a Christian education for twenty years. But it may be judged odd to find Julian addressing the patriarch as ἀδελφόν, and it is strange that the letter proposes not to rebuild the temple as such but the holy city Ἱερουσαλήμ (named by this uninflected form) and to re-populate it with Jews.

Eunapius : The greatest weakness in Gibbon's narrative is the absence of any systematic attempt to determine the sources of his sources. For the career of Julian this is especially crucial, since it is known that Eunapius wrote a history which included material on Julian given to him by Julian's distinguished physician and companion, Oribasius⁷⁸. Photius reported that Zosimus was virtually an epitomator of Eunapius⁷⁹ ; but for the better part of a century the authority of Mendelssohn, Zosimus' editor, was sufficient to persuade scholars that Photius was wrong in respect to Zosimus' Book III, which deals with Julian⁸⁰. Yet Photius had access to both the first and second editions of Eunapius' history. The problem arose from the parallels between Zosimus and Ammianus in conjunction with the supposition that Eunapius' history appeared after Ammianus' work was finished.

It is an immense tribute to contemporary source criticism that Mendelssohn's dogma has been successfully overturned and that the plain testimony of Photius can now be accepted. The fundamental point is that Ammianus himself, no less than Zosimus, had access to Eunapius. Hence the parallels. This was argued first by W. R. Chalmers on the weak assumption that Eunapius' account of Julian

⁷⁸ Eunapius, frg. 8 (p. 216 Dindorf): ὁ Περγαμηνὸς ἀνὴρ Ὁρειβάσιος ... ἀσεβήσεν ἔβρα περιφανῶς εἰ μὴ συγγράφοιμι · καὶ τῶν γε πράξεων, πάσας δὲ ἠπίστατο παρῶν ἀπάσαις, μάλᾳ ἀκριβῶς ὑπόμνημα συντελεῖ πρὸς τὴν γραφήν · ὥστε οὐκ ἦν ἀναβολὴ καὶ βουλομένῳ ῥαφθμεῖν. This passage implies that Oribasius wrote his ὑπόμνημα expressly for Eunapius' use and not for independent circulation.

⁷⁹ Photius, *Bibl.*, cod. 98 (p. 84 Bekker): εἶποι δ' ἂν τις οὐ γράψαι αὐτὸν ἱστορίαν, ἀλλὰ μεταγράψαι τὴν Εὐναπίου, τῷ συντόμῳ μόνον διαφερούσαν. Photius mentions that there were two editions of Eunapius' history.

⁸⁰ L. Mendelssohn, introduction to his edition of *Zosimus* (Leipzig, 1887), pp. XXXIX f., singling out Magnus of Carrhae as Zosimus' source on the mistaken assumption that Malalas preserved a long fragment of Magnus (Malalas' words are reprinted as a fragment of Magnus under that author in Dindorf, pp. 366-369). Cf. L. Dilleman, *Syria*, 38 (1961), p. 126, n. 1 ; pp. 149-151. Two citations of an author at some distance apart do not mean that everything in between is a fragment of that author. This seems to be a hard lesson to learn, and the popularity of collections of fragments does not encourage the learning of it.

was released in advance of his whole history⁸¹. The point is now conclusively proved by T. D. Barnes in a forthcoming monograph, which includes a demonstration from the cross-references in Eunapius' *Lives of the Sophists* that the whole first edition of the history was available by 379 and therefore readily accessible to Ammianus⁸². Even the second edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* now states unambiguously, "It appears that Ammianus drew heavily on Eunapius' narrative"⁸³.

This is very palpable progress, of the kind Gibbon would have readily appreciated. It opens up afresh the whole question of the Eunapian tradition about Julian in sources other than Ammianus and Zosimus, and it serves to remind us that through Eunapius we gain access to an authoritative eye-witness of acknowledged intelligence and probity, Oribasius. We must not, therefore, ignore — as Gibbon did — Zosimus' report of the leafleting among the soldiers on the night when Julian was proclaimed Augustus⁸⁴. It was not for nothing that Julian in his letter to the Athenians mentioned only the one anonymous letter distributed much earlier among the Celts and Petulantes — with its denunciation of Constantius. Julian told the Athenians that his advisors, aware of that one letter, had urged him to gather and despatch the troops Constantius requested "before similar letters could be scattered broadcast among the rest of the legions"⁸⁵. Julian deliberately suppressed the fact that this was exactly what happened. Ammianus, not so impartially, suppressed the same fact, although it can be fitted harmoniously into

⁸¹ W. R. Chalmers, *CIQ*, n. s. 10 (1960), pp. 152 f. Cf. A. F. Norman, *CIQ*, n. s. 7 (1957), pp. 129 f. and A. Cameron, *CIQ*, n. s. 13 (1963), pp. 232 f. The credit for demolishing Mendelssohn's position by dislodging Magnus as Zosimus' source belongs to E. A. Thompson, *op. cit. supra* n. 16, pp. 28-33.

⁸² T. D. Barnes' monograph is largely concerned with the *Historia Augusta* and is due to be published in the *Collection Latomus*. He devotes one chapter to the first edition of Eunapius' history. The crucial point is that the references in the *uitae Sophist.*, pp. 476 and 482 Boissonade to events of 395 show, contrary to what had been assumed, that the first edition of Eunapius' history did *not* include any events as late as that. And if not, nothing in that edition can be shown to be later than 378; reference to items ἐν τοῖς κατὰ Ἰουλιανὸν διεξοδικοῦς (*uitae Sophist.*, p. 483) will be unambiguously to the first edition of the history.

⁸³ *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford, 2nd. ed., 1970), s. v. Ammianus Marcellinus. The entry is by E. A. Thompson. For a survey of scholarship on this subject since Mendelssohn, see Zosime, *Histoire nouvelle*, ed. F. Paschoud, vol. 1 (Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1971), pp. XLIII-LVII.

⁸⁴ Zosim., 3, 9.

⁸⁵ Jul., *epist. ad S. P. Q. Ath.*, 283 C :

the narrative he gives. Gibbon, in his 23rd chapter, openly acknowledges that there was a conspiracy in 360⁸⁶. It is further proof of the inconsistency in Gibbon that there is no sign of this opinion in the full narrative in chapter 22.

The Eunapian tradition, in conjunction with a remark of Libanius, can also furnish help in the matter of Julian's death. Although both Gregory of Nazianzus and Libanius originally expressed doubt about the hand that cast the fatal spear⁸⁷, by 379 Libanius had acquired information which had clearly not been available to him at the time of the *ἐπιτάφιος λόγος*. In his speech on the avenging of Julian Libanius declared that the one who killed the emperor was *Ταϊήνός τις ἐντολήν πληρῶν τῷ σφῶν αὐτῶν ἄρχοντι*⁸⁸. There can be no question but that *Ταϊήνός* is a Greek form of the Syriac *tayyâyé*, which is the exact equivalent of *Σαρακηνοί* (*Saraceni*), in its fourth-century sense of nomadic Arabs⁸⁹. Thus by 379 Libanius had learned that a Saracen killed Julian, and he presents this as a certainty in his speech. His information coheres perfectly with a fragment of Philostorgius on Julian's death, in which the assassin is described as a Saracen in Persian employ⁹⁰. Since Oribasius is cited there for clinical reports of the emperor's condition, the probability is high that these details in Philostorgius derive from Eunapius, an author whom, it is generally agreed, he used⁹¹. The brief and summary account of Zosimus offers at no point any contradiction of these details. His use of the word *ξίφος* instead of *δόρυ* (as in Philostorgius) is nothing more than an example of *ξίφος* in its late-Greek meaning of spear-point⁹². Unlike Zosimus, Ammianus

⁸⁶ *Decline and Fall*, ch. 23, vol. 2, p. 366, n. 3, relying upon Eunapius, *vitaē Sophist.*, p. 476 Boissonade (*vita Maximi*).

⁸⁷ Greg. Naz., *orat.*, 5, 13; Liban., *orat.*, 18, 274.

⁸⁸ Liban., *orat.*, 24, 6.

⁸⁹ On the *Tayyâyé* see J. B. Segal, *Proc. Brit. Acad.*, 41 (1955), pp. 119-120. Cf. Amm., 22, 15, 2 (*Scenitas ... Arabas quos Saracenos nunc appellamus*) and 23, 6, 13 (*Scenitas Arabas quos Saracenos posteritas appellavit*).

⁹⁰ Philostorgius, ed. Bidez (2nd edition by F. Winkelmann [Berlin, 1972]), p. 101.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 103 (Oribasius). On Philostorgius' use of Eunapius, see Bidez-Winkelmann, pp. CXXXVIII-CXXXIX. Cf. Philostorgius' verb (p. 101), *πλήττει* (sc. *Ἰουλιανόν*) with Zosimus' *πλήττεται* (3, 9).

⁹² Zosim., 3, 9. For examples of *ξίφος* as the point of a spear in late Greek, cf. Stephanus' *Thesaurus*, s. v. (col. 1673). Note Theodoret, *hist. eccl.*, 3, 25, 6 *ὡσε τὸ ξίφος*. Zosimus' word therefore in no way indicates a different tradition from sources which mention a spear.

was no mere epitomator of Eunapius. He avoided reproducing the Eunapiian version of Julian's death, perhaps in the interest of encouraging the rumours of Christian culpability. In any case, the evidence of Libanius and Orbasius (as transmitted by Eunapius) makes it extremely likely that Julian's killer was in fact a Saracen on the Persian side.

Quite apart from Gibbon's excusable ignorance of the Eunapiian tradition, the valuable reference in Libanius' speech of 379 was also lost to him. He was working with a text in which the words *Ταῖνός τις*, though present in the manuscripts, had been emended to *ἄσους*. Gibbon actually quotes the passage in Greek in a note and — reading *ἄσους* — supposes that "this dark and ambiguous expression" points to Athanasius⁹³. In this supposition, based on a poor emendation, Gibbon was following the Abbé de la Bletterie⁹⁴.

* * *

It will be appropriate to terminate the present investigation of Gibbon and Julian by calling attention to one of the twentieth-century's most thoughtful readers of the *Decline and Fall*. This is the Greek poet, Konstantinos Kavafis, whose critical notes on Gibbon — written in elegant English — are for the most part still unpublished⁹⁵. It is clear that Gibbon's account of Julian made a strong impression on the poet. He wrote no less than seven poems on the emperor between 1896 and 1933⁹⁶. Gibbon's twenty-third chapter must have proved the most sympathetic to Kavafis, for the Julian he depicts is consistently arrogant, pretentious, intolerant, and insufferable.

Kavafis read Gibbon with a critical eye, as one can see from the few notes which have so far been made public. He likes to mention omissions and errors in the *Decline and Fall*⁹⁷. He takes issue

⁹³ *Decline and Fall*, ch. 24, vol. 2, p. 454, n. 5.

⁹⁴ La Bletterie, *Histoire de Jovien*, p. 42, n. (a). The Abbé assumed that Libanius was referring to a Christian bishop by the term *ἄρχοντι*.

⁹⁵ See M. Peridis, *Ὁ Βίος καὶ τὸ Ἔργο τοῦ Κωνστ. Καβάφη* (Athens, 1948), pp. 78-80 and R. Liddell, *Kavafy* (London, 1974), pp. 119-121.

⁹⁶ In the edition of G. Savidis, with translations by E. Keeley and P. Sherrard (London, 1975), these seven poems appear on pages 234, 240, 270, 274, 286, 336 and 382.

⁹⁷ Cf. M. Peridis, *op. cit. supra* n. 95, p. 79.

with Gibbon's low opinion of Gregory of Nazianzus⁹⁸. He sympathizes with the lonely, oppressed, and forgotten people⁹⁹. Julian he saw as calculating in his triumph and wanting in humanity. It is likely that when all Kavafis' notes on Gibbon are published, we shall see more clearly his disagreement with the favorable side of Gibbon's Julian. But from the other side of the "impartial balance" Kavafis drew his inspiration. His first poem on Julian, entitled "Julian at the Mysteries", is based on Gibbon's report of the demons' withdrawal when Julian inadvertently made the sign of the cross¹⁰⁰. Another of the Julian poems, "Julian and the Antiochenes", while prefaced by a quotation from the *Misopogon* on the preference of the Antiochenes for the Chi (Christ) and the Kappa (Constantius), is obviously inspired by Gibbon's citation of that passage in connection with his extended description of the luxury and pleasures at Antioch¹⁰¹. "Immoral to a degree" wrote Kavafis, "and probably more than a degree, / they certainly were. But they had the satisfaction that their life / was the notorious life of Antioch, / delectable, in absolute good taste" :

Ἀνήθικοι μέχρι τινός — καὶ πιθανὸν μέχρι πολλοῦ —
ἦσαν. Ἄλλ' εἶχαν τὴν ἱκανοποίησι πού ὁ βίος τους
ἦταν ὁ περιλάλητος βίος τῆς Ἀντιοχείας,
ὁ ἐνήδονος, ὁ ἀπόλυτα καλαισθητός.

There is an irony which Gibbon himself would have appreciated in the fact that a sensualist like Kavafis, steeped in the Hellenic culture of which Julian was so proud, utterly repudiated the ascetic paganism of the apostate for the licentious and luxurious Christianity of Antioch. The fanaticism of Julian was only a replay of the fanaticism of certain Christians, whereas the self-indulgent excesses

⁹⁸ See the note on Gregory published by R. Liddell, *op. cit. supra* n. 95, p. 120: "No artist — the word is not misplaced here — had spoken so boldly before." This note is attached to Gibbon's comment on the "loose invectives of Gregory", *Decline and Fall*, ch. 23, vol. 2, p. 390, n. 1.

⁹⁹ Cf. M. Peridis, *op. cit. supra* n. 95, p. 79 and the note of Kavafis quoted in the original English on p. 80 (reproduced in R. Liddell, *op. cit.*, p. 121).

¹⁰⁰ The poem appears on p. 336 of the edition cited above in n. 96. The passage in Gibbon is at *Decline and Fall*, ch. 23, vol. 2, p. 367, n. 1. It is quoted by Savidis in his note on Kavafis' poem, pp. 430-431 of the Greek-English edition.

¹⁰¹ The poem appears on p. 274 (*supra* n. 96). The quotation from Julian is at *Misopogon*, 357 A. The context in Gibbon is *Decline and Fall*, ch. 24, vol. 2, pp. 408-409 with n. 2 on p. 409.

of the old paganism — the free and easy life of pleasure — were to be found among the good Christians of Antioch. This is the paradox which Kavafis drew from his reading of the *Decline and Fall*. It is an edifying paradox, which teaches us much about the fourth century ; and it is a proof of the still undiminished power of Gibbon's Julian.

APPENDIX

From Gibbon's Commonplace Book, Lausanne 1755
(begun March 19th)

Brit. Lib. Add. MS. 34880 fol. 8r : I am most grateful to Professor G. P. Goold for securing the excellent services of Mr. Paul Naiditch, who made a preliminary transcript of the following text. Gibbon's faulty French is reproduced as he wrote it, although his deletions and insertions (all trivial) have been respected. Like so many other scholars, I am grateful to John Murray for making the Gibbon material available at the British Library.

Julien l'Apostat avait pour grand but de detruire la religion Chretienne et certainement il s'y prenait bien. C'etait le persecuteur le plus doux le plus systematique et en meme tems le plus dangereux de tous. Il avait senti que les X Grandes Persecutions n'avaient fait qu'augmenter le nombre de Chretiens, il resolut de se conduire autrement pour les abattre.

Voila quelques-unes de ses mesures que j'ai tiré du nouvel Historien de la vie de Julien.

I Il affectait de parler des Chretiens quelquefois avec pitié (1) quelquefois avec mepris (2) jamais avec haine ; et faisait parade souvent d'une grande moderation a leur egard (3).

II Tous les Emplois Civils et militaires etaient donnés a des Payens, tous les convertis etaient recu avec empressement et bien recompensés (4) et pour obliger tous ceux qui approchaient sa personne d'etre Payens il faisait entrer des actes d'Idolatrie par tout (5).

III Il defendit aux Chretiens de tenir école et d'expliquer les auteurs Payens a la jeunesse, qu'il permit de frequenter les Ecoles des Payens (6).

IV Il rappela tous les Eveques soit Ariens soit Orthodoxes (qui avaient été chassés de leurs sieges), et sous un masque de modération tachait d'entretenir la division entre eux (7).

V Il travaillait a reformer les mœurs et le culte des Payens (8).

VI Il permit quelqfois aux habitans des provinces d'exercer des violences contre les Chretiens, mais toujours tacitement et se faisant un merite du pardon qu'il leur en accordait (9).

VII Quand il faisait mourir quelque (10) Chretien il employait toujours quelque raison pour prouver que ce n'était pas a cause de sa religion. L'on comptait ordinairement que s'il fut revenu de son expedition en Perse il aurait mis la derniere main a son projet. On s'attendait a voir eclorre a son retour les plus terribles Edits. C'était, dit-on, son dessein de fermer les tribunaux aux Chretiens, de leur interdire les places publiques et les marchés. Offrir de l'encens aux dieux devait devenir un prealable necessaire pour faire la moindre fonction civile, pour se defendre en justice pour acheter du pain, pour jouir des droits les plus communs de l'humanité. L'Auteur de la vie de Julien croit que cette conduite aurait ruiné dans peu d'années la religion Chretienne (11).

In right margin

[pag.] 7e : *Chrestianisme*

(1) : *Vie de Julien p. 141*

(2) : *Idem 142*

(3) : *Idem p. 263*

(4) : *Idem p. 142*

(5) : *Idem p. 173*

(6) : *Idem p. 162*

(7) : *Idem p. 147*

(8) : *Idem p. 168 V. aussi p. 94 de ce Recueil - Art. Paganisme*

(9) : *Idem p. 178 et seq.*

(10) : *Idem p. 231*

(11) : *Idem p. 321*

DISCUSSION

F. Paschoud : Deux points m'ont tout particulièrement intéressé dans la communication de M. Bowersock. D'abord ce qu'il a dit de la date de naissance de Julien, un problème qui se pose pour moi dans mon commentaire au livre 3 de Zosime. Ensuite et surtout le problème des sources concernant l'expédition perse de Julien. Comme M. Bowersock, je pense qu'on a bien fait d'oublier la théorie de Mendelssohn, qui voyait la source de Zosime chez Magnus de Carrhes. En revanche, je ne crois guère à la possibilité qu'Ammien ait utilisé Eunape. Il est mathématiquement prouvable qu'il a dû exister un lien entre le récit d'Ammien et celui de Zosime : malgré leurs divergences, ils ont en commun une somme de données précises (noms de lieu, étapes, distances, effectifs d'unités, etc.) si considérable qu'on est contraint d'admettre que ces deux récits s'inspirent au moins en partie d'une même source. Personnellement, je ne crois pas que cette source commune soit Eunape ; je pense que c'est le *ὑπόμνημα* d'Oribase qui nous fournit le lien nécessaire (je n'ai pas changé d'opinion par rapport à ce que j'ai exposé dans mon introduction à mon premier volume de l'édition de Zosime [Paris, 1971], pp. LIII - LVI).

G. W. Bowersock : Certainly, the *hypomnema* of Oribasius is a crucial item in explaining the link between Ammianus and Zosimus. It seems to me that Eunapius, frg. 8, makes it clear that Oribasius wrote his *hypomnema* for the sole purpose of encouraging Eunapius to write his history by providing him with first-hand data. It was not meant for circulation, and we have no reason to think that it did. If Eunapius was equally available to Ammianus and to Zosimus, he would appear to be the obvious transmitter of Oribasius' material and thus to explain what they have in common. Of course I would not (and could not) deny the hypothetical possibility that Oribasius' *hypomnema* for Eunapius was later circulated and used by Ammianus. But in any case, as Pho-

tius says, it was Eunapius' history which Zosimus used. Why, if it was available, assume that Ammianus used something different ?

A. Chastagnol : Ce que vous nous avez dit de l'utilisation de Tillemont m'a paru particulièrement intéressant. Certes Gibbon l'a connu, mais il a utilisé cet auteur de manière moins constante que pour les périodes antérieures et pour les périodes postérieures. Cela peut s'expliquer d'abord par le fait qu'il disposait pour Julien et son temps de sources anciennes plus nombreuses et plus développées que pour les autres époques, à commencer par Ammien Marcellin, qu'il prisait particulièrement, et par Julien lui-même. D'autre part, il pouvait s'appuyer ici sur les deux ouvrages de La Bletterie, ouvrages et personnage qu'il appréciait depuis longtemps, comme vous nous l'avez très bien montré.

Je demeure perplexe sur l'antériorité ou la postériorité d'Eunape par rapport à Ammien. C'est une question difficile à résoudre, de même que celle de la source commune de Zosime et d'Ammien, qu'il s'agisse d'Oribase ou d'un autre. Il convient de rester prudent lorsqu'on disserte sur des sources perdues.

G. W. Bowersock : Prof. Chastagnol is quite correct in pointing out that the sources for Julian are more numerous, but a survey of Gibbon's citation of Tillemont for other parts of the *Decline and Fall* reveals a comparable pattern to that which I have outlined for the chapters on Julian. Prof. Paschoud's paper illustrates this point admirably. As to lost sources, prudence is indeed necessary ; but, as Prof. Chastagnol's own work has taught us, the subject cannot be ignored by the modern student of ancient history. The profitable study of Ammianus, Zosimus, or the *Historia Augusta* — to cite only three examples — would be impossible without disciplined *Quellenforschung*.

M. Baridon : Gibbon a toujours eu une prédilection particulière pour les abbés savants comme Fleury, Simon et Foncemagne. Il suit ici La Bletterie d'une façon qui montre combien il veut se distinguer de Voltaire disant de Julien qu'il avait « toutes les qualités de Trajan, toutes les vertus de Caton »

et qu'il « fut en tout égal à Marc-Aurèle, le premier des hommes ». Ce genre de « bigoterie » des philosophes déplaît à Gibbon qui veut bien marquer que Julien lui-même doit être considéré impartialement. Néanmoins on peut prouver que par l'adresse de son style, Gibbon dispose son lecteur favorablement envers Julien. Le problème est un problème de *ton*.

Peut-être Gibbon se pose-t-il parfois en critique de Julien quand ce dernier va trop loin dans la restauration du paganisme. C'était mettre en danger l'Etat pour une question religieuse ; et le credo de Gibbon dans ce domaine, c'est que le politique prime l'ecclésiastique. Je renvoie sur ce point à ma communication. J'ajoute que j'ai été très intéressé par ce que nous a dit le professeur Bowersock de ce qu'il faut bien appeler, chez Gibbon, une faille dans la méthode historique. A mon sens, s'il a, bien à tort, placé Ammien au-dessus de Tillemont, c'est qu'il considère qu'un militaire doublé d'un païen le servira mieux qu'un érudit qui écrit dans sa préface qu'il travaille « pour la gloire de l'Eglise ».

G. W. Bowersock : These are helpful remarks, but it is worth emphasizing again that Gibbon's orientation of the reader in favour of Julian is due ultimately to the use of Ammianus. With regard to Tillemont it is quite true, and pertinent to my argument, that Gibbon's criticisms of that scholar were sometimes as sharp as his final expressions of praise were eloquent.

A. Momigliano : There is very little left to say after this admirable paper. But I should like to ask for some more information on three interrelated points : what did Gibbon think of Spanheim's work on Julian ? What did Gibbon make of Julian's imitation of and admiration for Lucian ? How did Gibbon react to the well known eighteenth century general problem about the philosopher (Marcus Aurelius or Julian) as persecutor ?

G. W. Bowersock : These are important topics and clearly inter-related. Gibbon disliked Spanheim's *Caesares* for its pedantry. The wit of Julian's Lucianic work appealed to him, and this is not surprising in view of the luminous tribute which Gibbon pays to Lucian as the only real genius of

second-century literature. But Gibbon could also see Julian's wit dry up in the petulant and angry parts of the *Misopogon*. Julian's loss of control, like his religious fanaticism or "zeal", did not escape Gibbon's critical eye. He might have profitably reflected on the fact that Marcus was an important model for Julian — and that under Marcus there was persecution too.