Fragments of the History

John of Epiphania (c. AD 600)

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John of Epiphania, On the submission of Chosroës the Younger to Maurice the Roman Emperor (date) JOHN OF EPIPHANIA: PREFACE TO HIS HISTORY Very few details have been preserved for us of the writer of this history. Our only sources for information about him and his life derive from a short reference to him in the Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Book V Chapter 42 and what few details he provides about himself in his short preface. All that we can say is that he was somehow related to Evagrius with whom he shared the similar titles of σχολαστικοῦ and ἀπὸ ὑπάρχων/ἀπὸ ἐπάρχων, and that he also served as a legal advisor to Gregory, the Patriarch of Antioch, therefore being present at his meeting and trips involving the Persians from which he learned what he wrote. Of John's history, only a fragment remains containing the first five chapters in the Codex Vaticanus Graecus 1056 of which it occupies folio 94 until the manuscript breaks off six folios later from there being too badly mutilated. What happened to the rest of the work is a mystery.

John's history seems to have found a small audience in its time. Written perhaps a year or two after the restoration of Chosroës in 591 A.D., it was made use of in certainty by Evagrius Scholasticus before he finished in 593/4 A.D. and Theophylact Simocatta, whose work the Whitby's date to the reign of Heraclius (1). After this century, subsequent writers seem to have made little use or none of it. Theophanes the Confessor writing in the early ninth century apparently makes use only of Theophylact Simocatta and Evagrius for the information he reproduces concerning the submission of Chosroës. In addition, Photius in his great Library makes no mention of John though he does of Evagrius with whom (perhaps) he confused John because of their similar titles, but this seems quite unlikely given that subsequently the great compiler of histories, John Zonaras, in the mid-twelfth century makes no use of him, but of almost exclusively Simocatta in his account (2). Furthermore, the fact that his history was apparently unknown to the extractors of the emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus (945-959 A.D.) who extracted many other works of the sixth century now lost also shows the small breadth of his readership and almost suggests that he may never have published the work, of which we possess this small fragment.

However, because his work was made use of by Evagrius and Theophylact, we can at least construct and suggest what his history must of looked like. We have the beginning and that allows us to see where to begin reconstructing. Evagrius V.6-14 obviously derive from John with a few of Evagrius's own digressions into the ancient history and characteristics of some of the places such as that of Nisibis V.9 and Apamea V.10 as well as some ecclesiastical events and the madness of Justin II, which he considerably elaborates V.11. From his text we can also see what was present in the lacunae of our text. However, after this point where the manuscript breaks off, what came next is open to conjecture, but probably Evagrius follows it in summary continuing to add his own comments in chapters 14-15 and 19-22. As Evagrius ends his fifth book with the accession of Maurice, we can suppose that there too was where John ended his first part before proceeding on to what he knew.

Of Book VI by Evagrius, Chapters 1-16 follow John's work more or less. The speech given by Gregory to the soldiers in 12 is probably taken word for word from John's history and therefore should be viewed as an example of John's style of writing speeches, which becomes useful for dealing with Theophylact Simocatta's long and tiresome discourses. Whatever the case, the letters provided in Simocatta as having passed between Varam and Chosroës almost certainly derive from John who would have had a chance to get his hands on the originals while in Persia. The subsequent information on the cross and the inscription on it as it appears in both histories also derives from John. Finally, in all probability we can say that John's history ended where his Evagrius's did with the death of Gregory while returning from Persia, since this would seem the ideal place. The text below was translated from K. Mäller, Fragmenta historicorum graecorum, vol. 4 (1851), p.272f.

1. Michael and Mary Whitby (trans.), The History of Theophylact Simocatta: An English Translation with Introduction, Oxford University Press, (1986) pg. xiii 2. This is evidenced by the language and the rewording of Theophylact v.15.5-8 in Zonaras p. 189 History of the submission of Chosroës the Younger to Maurice the Roman Emperor By John of Epiphania the Scholastic and the Expraefectus [Translated by Scott Kennedy]

PART I

1. What the Romans and Medians felt and did making war on each other during the reign of the Roman emperor Justinian has been described by Agathias of Myrina, a preeminent man amongst the rhetors of Byzantium recording after Procopius of Caesarea the events happening involving the barbarians. As it is of great importance that which we have heard: the king of the Persians taking flight from his own land after having been deposed and submitting to the Roman State in order to gain the aid of the emperor Maurice in restoring himself to the throne, I have embarked upon this work not given confidence to do so by any particular eloquence on my

part, nor by any previous study, but so that such a thing as this should not be left unspoken for posterity, since if the greatest deeds are not preserved in words and committed to memory, they will be extinguished by the darkness of silence. For words provide life as things wear away. Having been involved in some of these events and spoken with Chosroës and other particularly mentionable Medians (I was previously an advisor to Gregory, the archpriest of the city of Antioch, accompanying him frequently to meetings with them, and after the end of the war, I went with Gregory to Persia when he was promoting concord amongst them), I do not believe it is misplaced for me to narrate these events, as I am able to, to those who do not know about them.

As it is necessary to know precisely about important previous events to learn about what follows, I feel I must make mention of the events that took place prior to me in brief including the revolt that took place against Hormisdas the father of Chosroës before proceeding to the rest of the work reminding those who know about these things of the actions taken and giving a starting point for those who have not heard anything at all of them to learn clearly before proceeding to subsequent events.

2. When Justinian after reigning for thirty nine years ended his life, he died in peace with other nations including the Medians and was succeeded by his nephew Justin the younger under whom the peace treaties Justinian had made with Chosroës, the Persian king, for a period of fifty five years after having waged war on another, which were in their twentieth year during the seventh year of Justin's reign and would reach their end in the ninth year of the emperor Maurice, broke down. The causes of their strife with one another were as such: the Romans were displeased that the Persians intending to Homerites (an Indic race allied and subject to them), with them having no choice, had made an attack on them in the present period of peace. Besides this, as the Turks had sent envoys to the Romans to which the emperor Justin had responded sending Zemarchus, a member of the Senate, back with them again, the Persians planned to bribe the Alans through whose lands they were about to make their passage to become an obstruct Zemarchus and the Romans and Turks with him. The Medians had a similar way about it finding causes for war with the Romans as the Armenians, their vassals, had risen up in revolt, killed their ruler by the name of Surenes, and gone over to the Roman Empire with the Romans welcoming them and offering them an alliance. Their contentiousness increased even further (for whoever wishes to learn the most disgraceful reason, though true) when Justin did not deem to pay the Medians the five hundred pounds of gold each year previously agreed to under the peace treaties and let the Roman State remain forever a tributary of the Persians.

3. As the time drew near for the previously agreed sums of money to be taken to Chosroës (it had been agreed to pay the amount for ten years time), nothing was done as had been agreed and instead Justin, the Roman emperor, sent in haste to

the east his general Marcian, who was amongst the patricians of the Senate and was related to him being not unskilled in war and exceptionally brave. Crossing the Euphrates River, Marcian came to Osroëne already when the summer was underway, and with the barbarians having no forewarning of war he sent a contingent of three thousand men to Arzanene entrusting Theodore and Sergius, who were descended from the family of Rabdios, with command of them as well as sending Juventinus, the commander of the legions in Chalkis. They invaded suddenly ravaging Persian land and returned carrying off a considerable amount of plunder in all haste. After the winter season, Marcian gathered together his forces again and set out from Dara meeting with the barbarians in front of the city of Nisibis led by Varaman, who was in command of the companies stationed them. A fierce battle followed in which the Romans turned to the barbarians to flight vigorously near the Persian place called Sarmathon bringing down many of them then making an attempt at the fortress of Thebython where they spent ten days. Unable to seize it, they returned to the city of Dara while it was still spring and again invaded enemy land planning to besiege Nisibis with the approval of the emperor Justin.

4. While they were encamped near the city, King Chosroës set out from Babylon with an army of Medians crossing the Tigris River and passing over empty land, as the Roman had not heard of the king's movements, and came upon the Persian fortress of Amvaron (it is five days distant from the city of Circesion), where he dispatched Adaarman, as the general was called, to cross the Euphrates River there and plunder Roman territory with thousands of his own Medians and nomadic barbarians. At the same time, he urged Avorras on to the Romans besieging Nisibis. When Adaarman reached the city of Circesion, he crossed the Euphrates and began to forage Roman lands without any restraint. For due to the previous peace and quiet that they had enjoyed during the reign of Justinian, their war time preparation had receded and their virility completely vanished. As no one dared to come to blows with the barbarians, Adaarman was able to come as far as the city of Antioch ravaging the sites and fields near the city and then advancing on Coele Syria. He made camp not far from the great city of Apamea, to whose citizens' embassies he promised to enter the city and leave it unharmed, but then actually entering it where the Persians seized their possessions, enslaved its inhabitants, and put the entire city to the flame then returning in all haste to their own land. As a result of these actions, the emperor Justin dispatched Acacius (the Romans are accustomed to add the name of Archelaus) removing Marcian, who was still besieging Nisibis, from office because he had doubts about his loyalty as the city had not yet been taken control of.

5. As the Romans were retreating, they came to a fortress on the border named Mardes by its inhabitants where King Chosroës suddenly...laying siege himself...and the water of the city...constructing great (the word is unclear -???? by the city wall and making use of projectile launching machines against it, and

because no external aid came for its inhabitants, he captured the city with the Medians violently mounting onto the city walls. He plundered the entire city and enslaved its inhabitants including even John the son of Timostratus, a man of surpassing strength and honor who had been entrusted with the rule and administration of the city, and then left behind a considerable garrison and returned home while the Romans were still holed up at the fortress of Mardes with Magnus in command, who also was in charge of imperial monies. Not many days later, Justin came down suddenly with a physical ailment and fearing for it all made a truce in that year with the Persians. As his ailment grew worse, he decided to announce his adoption of Tiberius, who commanded his bodyguards (Romans call this person the comes excubitorum) and proclaimed him Caesar handing over to him the cares of government. Of all of Justin's actions, this one, besides providing a good and indeed salutary period of rule, proved responsible for a great number of fair things for Roman affairs. When it happened that Tiberius took charge in these present circumstances, lest some terrible harm befall...to save and the starting points...

seemed...Theodore who was in charge of the affairs of Armenia holding many other not ignoble offices being very learned and quite well able to see to what was necessary, so he sent off the barbarians revealing the things being done about him according to his arrangement and charging Chosroës to make a truce. A short while later, he sent off in haste to the east likewise Justinian, the son of Germanus, who numbered amongst the patricians of the Senate, entrusting him with charge of the war as he had been a man raised in the ways of war coming to maturity in it being subject neither to the rashness of youth, nor the frailty of age. Justinian came in all haste to the east taking care for the good conduct and order of his soldiers. Tiberius the Caesar then sent an army not small in number off in speed taking great care for its preparation for war by allocating a boundless sum of money and raising a mighty and war-like number from the nations taking great care for the coming war. As the duration of the truce was nearing its end, the Persians gathered themselves near Dara and came upon the city of Constantina, which Dara is four hundred and ninety stades to the west of (1).

1. Unfortunately, most of this passage must derive from the History of Theophanes of Byzantium who covered the reigns of Justin and Tiberius, which is summarized by Photius in Codex 64 and also the fragments preserved of Menander the Guardsmen 14-20 who covered the same period of time. This text was translated by Scott Kennedy, 2008, and kindly released by him into the public domain. This file and all material on this page is in the public domain - copy freely.

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene

and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.

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