

Harmony 1.1 - Prefaces to the Histories

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Socrates	Sozomen	Theodoret
Why did the Greeks but not the Jews convert to Christianity?		
	<p>1.1.1 I have often spent time considering how it is that other men are very ready to believe in God the Word, while the Jews are so skeptical, although from the very beginning it was to them that the prophets instructed concerning the things of God and in particular informed them of the events surrounding the coming of Christ long before they happened.</p> <p>1.1.2 In addition, Abraham, the founder of their nation and of the circumcision, was considered worthy to be an eyewitness, and the host of the Son of God. And Isaac, his son, was honored by being a type of the sacrifice on the cross, for he was led bound to the altar by his father and, as accurate students of the sacred Scriptures confirm, the sufferings of Christ took place in the same way.</p> <p>1.1.3 Jacob predicted that the nations would expectantly hope for Christ, as they now do. In the same way, he foretold the time when he would come, saying that the tribe of Judah would no longer supply a tribal leader or Jewish rulers for the nation. This clearly referred to the reign of Herod, who was an Idumean on his father's side and an Arabian on his mother's, and the Jewish nation was put under his rule by the Roman senate and Caesar Augustus.</p> <p>1.1.4 Among the other prophets, some declared beforehand the birth of Christ, his indescribable conception, how his mother remained a virgin after his birth, and his people and country. Some predicted his divine and marvelous deeds, while others foretold his sufferings, his resurrection from the dead, his ascension into heaven, and the events which accompanied each. But if anyone remains ignorant of these facts, they can easily learn them by reading the sacred books.</p> <p>1.1.5 Josephus, the son of Matthias, who was a priest and most distinguished among both Jews and Romans, can also be regarded as a notable witness to the truth concerning Christ. For he hesitates to call him a man because of the miraculous</p>	

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	<p>deeds which he did and says that he was a teacher of truthful doctrines, openly calling him Christ and recording that he was condemned to death on the cross and appeared alive again on the third day. Josephus was also not ignorant of the countless other wonderful predictions that had been uttered beforehand by the holy prophets concerning the Christ. He further testifies that Christ converted many to himself, both Greeks and Jews, who continued to love Him, and that the people named after him had not become exterminated.</p> <p>1.1.6 It appears to me that by narrating these things he all but proclaims that, when one considers his deeds, Christ is God. Thus, as if struck by the miracle, he somehow took a middle path, in no way attacking those who believed in Jesus, but rather agreeing with them. When I consider this matter, it seems very remarkable to me that the Hebrews did not act first and immediately turn to Christianity before the rest of mankind.</p> <p>1.1.7 For since the Sibyl and some other oracles announced the future events concerning Christ beforehand, we cannot therefore be certain that all the Greeks were unbelievers. Yet there were only a small number who were highly educated and who could understand such prophecies. For they were, for the most part, in poetic form, and were proclaimed with more obscure words to the people.</p> <p>1.1.8 Therefore, in my judgment, it was the result of heavenly foreknowledge and for the sake of the agreement in future events that such future facts were allowed by God to be made known not only by his own prophets, but in part also by strangers. It is like a musician who, when playing a new and strange melody, picks out the extra notes of the melody lightly, and thus adds new ones to those already existing. Let this suffice to note that the Hebrews, although in the possession of more and clearer prophecies concerning the coming of Christ, were yet less willing than the Greeks to have faith in him.</p> <p>1.1.9 At the same time, we should not think that it was totally unreasonable that the church was mainly built up by the conversion of other nations. For, first of all, it is clear that in divine and important matters, God delights to bring about changes in a miraculous way. And secondly, remember that it</p>	

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	<p>was by living lives of uncommon virtue that those, who at the very beginning were the leaders in religious matters, maintained their influence.</p> <p>1.1.10 Perhaps they did not indeed possess the gift to speak with rhetorically beautiful speeches nor have the ability to convince their hearers by their precise phrases or mathematical proofs. But they, none the less, accomplished the work they had undertaken. They gave up their property, ignored family ties, were stretched out on crosses, and, as if given bodies not their own, suffered many excruciating tortures. They were neither seduced by the praise of the populace or city rulers nor terrified by their threats. Rather, they clearly showed by their conduct that they were sustained in their struggles by the hope of a higher reward. That is why they did not need to resort to verbal argumentation. For with no effort on their part, their actions themselves forced the residents of every house and city to acknowledge the validity of their testimony, even before they knew what that testimony was!</p>	
Motivation for writing each history		
<p>1.1.1 Eusebius Pamphilus, wrote the history of the church in ten books. He ended it at the point in time when Constantine was emperor and the persecution which Diocletian had begun against the Christians came to an end.</p> <p>1.1.2 He also wrote a life of Constantine, but gave only brief space to the matters regarding Arius. He focused instead on providing a more literary conclusion to his composition and in his praise of the emperor, rather than on an accurate statement of the facts.</p> <p>1.1.3 Now I am proposing to write the details of what has taken place in the churches since that time and extending up to our own time. I will begin by narrating the details which he left out. I will not attempt to produce a great literary display, but to lay before the reader what I have been able to collect from documents, and what I have heard from those who were familiar with the facts as they were narrated.</p>	<p>1.1.11 Thus it must be recognized as a divine and miraculous change which has taken place among humanity, since ancient cults and the laws of nations are now scorned. Many of the most famous Greek writers used their powers of eloquence to describe the Calydonian boar, the bull of Marathon and other similar wonders which have actually occurred in city or country or which have a mystic origin. So why should I not also rise above my position, and write a history of the Church?</p> <p>1.1.12a For I am convinced that since the topic is not about the deeds of men, it might seem almost incredible that such a history should be written by me. But with God nothing is impossible.</p> <p>1.1.12b At first I was strongly inclined to trace the course of events from the very start of the church. But I realized that similar records of the past up to their own time had already been compiled by those extremely wise men, Clement and Hegesippus, successors of the apostles, by the historian Africanus, and by Eusebius Pamphilus, a man intimately acquainted with the sacred Scriptures and the writings of</p>	<p>1.1.1 When artists paint pictures and murals of ancient historical events, they both provide visual pleasure and make and keep the past alive for many years. Historians merely substitute books for panels, and lively description for colors. In this way, they make the memory of past events both stronger and more permanent. For the painter's work fades over time.</p> <p>1.1.2 For this reason I too shall try to record in writing the events in church history which have until now been passed over. For I don't think it right to stand by idly while the proper recognition for great deeds and profitable stories fades into oblivion.</p> <p>1.1.3 That is why I have often been urged by my friends to undertake this work. But when I compare my own abilities with the size of this undertaking, I shrink from attempting it. Trusting, however, in the assistance of the giver of all good, I enter upon a task which surpasses my own strength.</p>

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<p>1.1.4 And since it has an important bearing on the subject in hand, it is appropriate to start with a brief account of Constantine's conversion to Christianity.</p>	<p>the Greek poets and historians. So, I decided to merely compile an overview in two books of what was recorded about the churches from the ascension of Christ to the fall of Licinius. Now, however, by the help of God, I will endeavor to recount the subsequent events as well.</p>	
<p>Claim of credibility based on a wide use of sources</p>		
	<p>1.1.13 I will record the dealings with which I have been connected, and also those about which I heard from persons who knew or saw the affairs in our own time or in previous generations. I have also sought out records of events of earlier date, among the religious laws which were enacted, in the proceedings of the councils of the period, about the innovations that arose in the church, and in the letters of emperors and church officials. Some of these documents are preserved in palaces and churches; others circulated elsewhere and are in the possession of scholars.</p> <p>1.1.14 I thought frequently of reproducing all of these, but on further reflection I thought it better, because of their immense bulk, merely to give a brief synopsis of their contents. When, however, controversial topics are discussed, I will not hesitate to transcribe freely from any work that can assist in explaining the truth.</p> <p>1.1.15 Someone who is unfamiliar with past events might conclude that my history is untrue because he reads conflicting statements in other writings. Such a person should realize that ever since the teachings of Arius and other more recent hypotheses have been propounded, the church officials have themselves at times differed in their opinions. As a result, some have transmitted their own individual views in writings, for the benefit of their respective followers. Also, remember that these rulers assembled councils and issued decrees as they pleased, often condemning unheard those whose belief was different from their own. They endeavored to their utmost to convince the rulers and government officials of the time to side with them. Intent upon maintaining their own teaching as orthodox, the partisans of each position respectively formed a collection of such letters as favored their own heresy, omitting all the documents that supported the contrary views.</p>	

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	<p>1.1.16 These are the kind of obstacles which impede our own attempts to arrive at a proper conclusion on this subject! Still, in order to maintain historical accuracy, one must pay very strict attention to all means of discovering the truth. Therefore, I felt myself bound to examine as many of these types of writings as I was able.</p> <p>1.1.17 Do not think that I am filled with a disrespectful or malicious attitude because I have devoted so much space to the disputes of church leaders among themselves, especially concerning the importance and pre-eminence of their own heresy. In the first place, as I have already said, a historian must regard the truth as more important than anything else. Also, particularly the teaching of the catholic church can be shown to be the most genuine, since it has been tested frequently by the intrigues of those thinkers which have opposed it. Yet, since God is in control, the catholic church has remained preeminent, has regained its own supremacy, and has led all the churches and the people to accept its own truth.</p>	
The scope and goal of each history		
<p>1.18.14-16 For my task is not to enumerate of the emperor's actions, but simply such as are connected with Christianity, and especially those which relate to the churches. Wherefore I leave to others more competent to detail such matters, the emperor's glorious achievements, inasmuch as they belong to a different subject, and require a distinct treatise. But I myself should have been silent, if the Church had remained undisturbed by divisions: for where the subject does not supply matter for relation, there is no necessity for a narrator. Since however subtle and vain disputation has confused and at the same time scattered the apostolic faith of Christianity, I thought it desirable to record these things, in order that the transactions of the churches might not be lost in obscurity. For accurate information on these points procures celebrity among the many, and at the same time renders him who is acquainted with them more secure from error, and instructs him not to be carried away by any empty sound of sophisticated argumentation which he may chance to hear.</p>	<p>1.1.18 I considered restricting myself to recording the events connected with the church within the Roman empire. But it seemed more advisable to include, as much as possible, the record of events relating to our religion among the Persians and barbarians as well. Nor is it unknown to include within a history of the church an account of those who were the fathers and originators of what is called monasticism, and of their immediate successors. For they are famous among us either because we saw them or heard about them.</p> <p>1.1.19 I do not want to seem ungracious towards them, nor do I want their virtue to be forgotten, nor to have people think that I did not know their stories.</p> <p>1.1.20 Instead, I want to leave behind a record of how they lived so that others, led by their example, might attain a blessed and happy end. As the work proceeds, I will discuss these subjects as much as possible.</p> <p>So, asking the help and favor of God, I now proceed to narrate these events. My history will begin at this point.</p>	