

# ARCADIUS THE SON OF THE EMPEROR THEODOSIUS II

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Although the personal proper name Ἀρκάδεια is attested for a woman at Thespieae as early as the fifth century B. C. (*IG* VII.1905), and the masculine names Ἀρκάδιος, Ἄρκας and Ἀρκάδιων are found sporadically in various parts of the Greek world<sup>1</sup>, no Arcadius of any rank or social standing appears to be known in the Roman world before the jurist Aurelius Arcadius Charisius, who was *magister libellorum* during the reign of the emperor Diocletian (*Dig.* 1.11.1)<sup>2</sup>. Thereafter the name Arcadius is reasonably well attested, if not common: the *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* registers another four Arcadii for the fourth century and eight for the period between 395 and 527 in addition to two members of the Theodosian dynasty<sup>3</sup>.

Flavius Arcadius, the elder son of the emperor Theodosius, born in 377 or 378 (Socrates, *HE* 6.23.7; Cedrenus 1.334 Bonn), who was proclaimed Augustus by his father on 19 January 383 and died on 1 May 408 (*Descriptio consulum* 383.1; Socrates, *HE* 5.20.5, 6.23.7, 7.1.1; Marcellinus 408.3; *Chr. Pasch.* 570.13-15 Bonn = *Chr. Min.* 2.69) is a familiar historical figure<sup>4</sup>. It is entirely otherwise with the ill-documented Arcadius who appears to be his grandson. There are (so it seems) only two extant items of evidence. For what has often been adduced as contemporary testimony

for the existence of this Arcadius turns out upon close inspection to be irrelevant.

## AN UNBORN PRINCE

Some manuscripts of the *Cento Probae* preface this biblical paraphrase in the form of a Virgilian cento with fifteen hexameter verses composed for a calligraphic copy of the poem made for presentation to an eastern emperor<sup>5</sup>. (The vexed questions of which noble Proba is the author and the date of the poem may fortunately be waived in the present context, since it was certainly composed well before 395.) These prefatory verses open with an invocation of the recipient of the manuscript:

*Romulidum doctor, clari lux altera solis,  
eoa qui regna regis moderamine iusto,  
spes orbis fratrisque decus: dignare Maronem  
mutatum in melius divino agnoscere sensu  
scribendum famulo quem iusseras.*

After a brief summary of the contents of Proba's poem, the verses conclude with a wish that it may be read not only by the emperor to whom the manuscript is to be presented, but also by his descendants:

*haec relegas servesque diu tradasque minori  
Arcadio, haec ille suo semini, haec tua semper  
accipiat doceatque suos augusta propago.*

Who is the emperor addressed and who is this *Arcadius minor*? Although the contrary has been asserted often and with confidence<sup>6</sup>, it is clear that

1. FRASER, P. M.; MATTHEWS, E. *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* I, Oxford, 1987, 79; II, Oxford, 1994, 63; IIIA, Oxford, 1997, 70; IIIB, Oxford 2000, 64. Two men with the name Ἀρκάδιος were buried on Delos in the late Hellenistic period: *Exploration archéologique de Délos* XXX, Paris 1974, 148 n. 265, 181 n. 369 (both dated there between c. 100 B. C. and c. 100 A. D.).

2. On Charisius, see now HONORÉ, A. M., *Emperors and Lawyers*<sup>2</sup>, Oxford 1994, 160-162.

3. *PLRE* I, 1971, 99, Arcadius 1-4; II, 1980, 130-132, Arcadius 2-7; 58, Alexander 20; Phlegethius 2.

4. See, e. g., SIECK, O., *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt* V, Berlin 1913, 263-375.

5. Edited by SCHENKL, K., *Poetae Latini Minores* I (CSEL 16), 16, Vienna 1888, 568.

6. As by DESSAU on *ILS* 818, 5; BURY, J. B., *History of the Later*

the emperor addressed must be Arcadius, not his son Theodosius II. For this eastern emperor rules jointly with his brother, the emperor of the West, and his brother is presented as his equal in rank and prestige. That fits the brothers Arcadius and Honorius perfectly: had the verses been addressed to Theodosius II, they would have presented the western emperor Valentinian III as his junior imperial colleague, not an equal, and as his son, not his brother (as in *CTh.* 6.23.4, issued by Theodosius on 16 March 437: "*dominus ac filius noster Valentinianus semper Augustus*")<sup>7</sup>. Hence the *Arcadius minor* of these verses must be an expected or hoped for son of Arcadius who has not yet been born<sup>8</sup>, and the verses themselves were composed before the son of Arcadius, who was born on 10 April 401, was named after his grandfather Theodosius rather than after his father (Socrates, *HE* 6.6.40; Hydatius 27; Marcellinus 401.3; *Chr. Pasch.* 567.20-21 Bonn = *Chr. Min.* 2.67).

#### THE RELATIVES OF GALLA PLACIDIA

After her son Valentinian III had been installed as emperor of the West in 425, Galla Placidia constructed the Church of Saint John the Evangelist in Ravenna in thanksgiving for her delivery from dangers at sea, apparently during the successful expedition against the usurper Johannes in 425<sup>9</sup>. Lavish mosaics with accompanying inscriptions in the apse of the church commemorated the reason for its construction. Unfortunately, neither the mosaics nor the inscriptions survived the remodelling of the church in 1568, so that they are known only from a series of partial reports and descriptions — by Agnellus in the ninth century, in two medieval sermons of the twelfth or thirteenth century, and by the local historian Girolamo Rossi

in the late sixteenth century. The relevant texts are printed in full and in parallel by F. W. Deichmann in his classic study of Late Antique Ravenna<sup>10</sup>. However, the publication of the lost inscriptions by Eugen Bormann in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (*CIL* XI, 276), even though it contains one very serious error (which Mommsen failed to detect), makes the grouping of names clearer than the original continuous texts. It is on these groupings that the crucial identification depends.

The reports, it must be observed, contain minor verbal mistakes. Most obviously, the transmitted version of *CIL* XI, 276e = *ILS* 818.1 = *ILCV* 20e must be emended to *liberationis pericul<or>um maris votum solvit*: the grammatical subject is the singular Galla Placidia Augusta, the accusative *periculum* cannot be construed, and the tense of the verb must be present or perfect, not future. It is almost equally obvious that the threefold *NEP*, which can only be interpreted as an abbreviation for *nepos*, i. e., "grandson", makes no sense and should therefore be presumed to be a reporting error for the frequent and well-attested *NP*, i. e., *nobilissimus puer*, the standard designation in the Later Roman Empire for infant or youthful sons of emperors who had not yet been coopted into the imperial college<sup>11</sup>.

The relatives of Galla Placidia, apart from her son Valentinian III and her daughter Iusta Grata Honoria, who appear together with her as dedicators of the church (*CIL* XI, 276e), are divided into two groups, the dead and the living. There are two groups of five dead relatives (*CIL* XI, 276c = *ILS* 818.3, 4 = *ILCV* 20c). On one side were four deceased emperors Constantine, Theodosius, Arcadius and Honorius, each designated *D*, i. e., *divus*<sup>12</sup>, together with a Theodosius designated *n(obilissimus) p(uer)*, who can only be the short-lived son of Placidia and the Gothic king Athaulf, who was born and died in 415<sup>13</sup>. On the other side were the emperors Valentinian, Gratian and Con-

*Roman Empire I*<sup>2</sup>, London 1923, 220 n. 3; BARNES, T.D., "Another Forty Missing Persons", *Phoenix* 28, 1974, 228; CAMERON, A., "The empress and the poet: paganism and politics at the court of Theodosius II", *Yale Classical Studies* 27, 1982, 265-266; *PLRE* II, 1980, 130, Arcadius 1.

7. Similarly Anicius Achillius Glabrio Faustus, consul and praetorian prefect of Italy to the Roman Senate on 25 December 438: "quam rem [sc. Theodosius' issuing of the law code that bears his name] aeternus princeps dominus noster Valentinianus devotione socii, affectu filii comprobavit" (*Gesta senatus* 2 [1.17-18 Mommsen]).

8. So, correctly, TEUFFEL, W.S.; KROLL, W.; SKUTSCH, F., *Geschichte der römischen Literatur III*<sup>6</sup>, Leipzig — Berlin 1913, 279; HOLM, K.G., *Theodosian Emperresses. Women and Dominion in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley 1982, 178 n. 14.

9. For a full discussion of what is known about the church, see DEICHMANN, F.W., *Ravenna. Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes I*, Wiesbaden 1969, 152-157; II.1, Wiesbaden 1974, 93-124.

10. DEICHMANN, *o.c.*, II.1, 108-111.

11. For the title *nobilissimus puer* applied to Varronianus, Valentinianus Galates and Honorius, the infant sons of the emperors Jovian, Valens and Theodosius as consuls in 364, 369 and 386 respectively, see CAMERON, A.; BAGNALL, R.S.; SCHWARTZ, S.; WÖRZ, K.A., *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire*, Atlanta 1987, 262, 272-274, 306-309.

12. For the standard use of *divus* for deceased emperors whose memory had not been condemned, see CHASTAGNOL, A., "Un chapitre négligé de l'épigraphie latine: La titulature des empereurs morts", *REL* 62, 1984, 275-287, who concludes with the strange assertion that the last epigraphical mention of *divi* occurs between 340 and 350 (*o.c.*, 287).

13. *PLRE* II, 1980, 1100, Theodosius 5.

stantius, the husband of Galla Placidia<sup>14</sup>, together with the *n(obilissimi) p(ueri)* Gratianus and Joannes, both brothers of Galla Placidia who died before their father Theodosius<sup>15</sup>. And there were four persons whose names were preceded by the abbreviation *DN*, i. e., *dominus noster* or *domina nostra*, the normal designation for living emperors and their wives (*CIL* XI, 276d = *ILS* 818.5, 6; *ILCV* 20d)<sup>16</sup>. Three of the four names are immediately and readily identifiable: one pair comprises the eastern emperor Theodosius and his wife Eudocia, who had been an Augusta since 2 January 423, while one of the other pair is Eudoxia, the daughter of Theodosius and Eudocia, who married Valentinian III on 25 October 437 in Constantinople and was proclaimed Augusta by her husband in Ravenna on 6 August 439<sup>17</sup>. By elimination, therefore, it follows that the *d(ominus) n(oster) Arcadius* who was paired with Eudoxia must be a son of Theodosius II presented as possessing imperial status: for he cannot be the Arcadius who was the father of Theodosius II and who died in 408<sup>18</sup>, since this Arcadius appeared elsewhere in the series of mosaics in his proper place, as a *divus* among Placidia's deceased relatives.

This deduction was drawn by Ralf Scharf in 1990, who did not shrink from drawing substantive historical inferences from the purely formal argument from titulature: Scharf deduced (1) that Arcadius, the son of Theodosius II, was proclaimed Caesar or Augustus by his father in the winter of 439/440; (2) that, since no coins were minted in Arcadius' name and no surviving document includes him as a member of the imperial college, he must have died very shortly after his proclamation, and (3) that after he died, all traces of his brief reign and even of his very existence were assiduously removed from the official record<sup>19</sup>. These are disturbing corollaries, but they are not historically impossible, since there is an almost perfect parallel to such an official suppres-

sion of a Late Roman emperor's existence. For the name of the Caesar Germanus, who married a daughter of Tiberius and was briefly a member of the imperial college in August 582, has deliberately been edited out of the transmitted heading of an imperial constitution issued on 11 August 582 (*Novellae post Iustinianum* 13, cf. *Chr. Pasch.* 690.7-16 Bonn; John of Nikiu, *Chronicle* 94.26 [p. 151, trans. R. H. CHARLES]; Theophanes, a. 6074 [252.2-4]; Zonaras 14.11.22-26)<sup>20</sup>.

## A SERMON OF NESTORIUS

Has Arcadius, the son of Theodosius, left any other discernible trace in the evidence that survives from the fifth century? Scharf, who adduced none and in fact denied that there was any, dated his birth to the autumn of 434 or the following winter<sup>21</sup>. However, a sermon from the fifth century which refers to the baptism of a son of the reigning emperor is relevant. In a short communication presented to the Tenth International Conference on Patristic Studies in Oxford in 1987<sup>22</sup>, I suggested that the sermon might be attributed to Nestorius, who was bishop of Constantinople from the spring of 428 until the late summer of 431, and that the reference could be interpreted as merely prospective, so that the sermon, if by Nestorius, could be alluding to the pregnancy of Eudocia which ended with the birth of her short-lived daughter Flacilla, who died in 431 (Marcellinus 431.1, cf. Nestorius, *Liber Heraclidis*, p. 520 BEDJAN = p. 331, trans. NAU = p. 379, trans. DRIVER and HODGSON: "death carried off the daughter of him who was then reigning")<sup>23</sup>. That exegesis of the passage now seems to me to both forced and unnecessary. Although the sermon is indeed by Nestorius, it may refer to Arcadius, the son of Theodosius II.

An eighth or ninth century manuscript in the Monastery of Saint Catherine in the Sinai preserves a sermon delivered on the Sunday after Epiphany, apparently in Constantinople, which it attributes to John Chrysostom (Sinaiticus graecus 491, fols. 103-115; *BHG* 1929; *CPG* 4482, with *Supplement* [Turnhout 1998], p. 324). The full text

14. For the correct reading, see DEICHMANN, *o.c.*, II.1, 1974, 144. The name was misreported as *Constantinus* by BORMANN, *CIL* XI, 276c, and the error is repeated in both *ILS* 818.4 and *ILCV* 20c.

15. BARNES, *o.c.*, 224-225.

16. For the restriction of *dominus noster* (and its Greek equivalent) to living emperors, see recently, HEINEN, H., "Herrscherkult im römischen Ägypten und *damnatio memoriae* Getas. Überlegungen zum Berliner Severertondo und zu Papyrus Oxyrhynchus XII 1449", *Römische Mitteilungen* 98, 1991, 295; JONES, C. P., "Imperial Letters at Ephesos," *Epigraphica Anatolica* 33, 2001, 44.

17. *PLRE* II, 1980, 410-412, Eudoxia 6.

18. As is argued by HOLLUM, *o.c.*, 178 n. 14.

19. SCHARF, R., "Die 'Apfel-Affäre' oder Gab es einen Kaiser Arcadius II?", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 83, 1990, 435-450.

20. *PLRE* IIIA, 1992, 529, Germanus 6. Germanus was proclaimed Caesar by Tiberius together with Maurice on 5 August: Maurice presumably had him killed immediately after Tiberius died on 14 August.

21. SCHARF, *o.c.*, 447, cf. 445: "Doch findet dieser Kaiser in keiner anderen Quelle Erwähnung".

22. BARNES, T. D., "The Baptism of Theodosius II", *Studia Patristica* 19, 1989, 8-12.

23. BARNES, *o.c.*, 1989, 12.

was first published in 1977 by Antoine Wenger<sup>24</sup>, who had already, in 1952, published its peroration and drawn attention to its historical content<sup>25</sup>. Wenger consistently dated the sermon to 12 January 402 and interpreted its peroration as confirming disputed details in the *Life of Porphyry, Bishop of Gaza* by Mark the Deacon (BHG 1570), whose historicity has been seriously contested since the seventeenth century<sup>26</sup>. However, Wenger changed his mind on the authorship of the sermon: whereas in 1952 he had accepted the manuscript attribution to John Chrysostom, in 1977 he identified the author as John's enemy Severianus of Gabala<sup>27</sup>. This attribution must be rejected out of hand: on grounds of both style and theology the sermon cannot be by Severianus<sup>28</sup>. Nevertheless, Wenger deserves to be given credit for detecting the correct attribution, even though he then rejected it on the basis of a false premiss.

Wenger observed that not only is the Christology of the sermon markedly Antiochene, but the emphasis on the two natures of Christ in its exordium is characteristic of the language and theology of Nestorius: accordingly, Wenger stated that he would willingly have ascribed the sermon to Nestorius but for the undoubted fact that the emperor Theodosius II never had a son, which (so he held) excluded altogether the possibility that the author of the sermon could be Nestorius<sup>29</sup>. But, since there is evidence that Theodosius had a son, this argument lapses, and the sermon can be interpreted as referring to him in its concluding prayer:

On behalf of our God-loving emperor, let us ask that he be given by Christ the lord of the universe letters of appointment<sup>30</sup> to a consulate that

24. WENGER, A., "Une homélie inédite (de Sévérien de Gabala?) sur l'Épiphanie", *Analecta Bollandiana* 95, 1977, 73-90.

25. WENGER, A., "Notes inédites sur les empereurs Théodose I, Arcadius, Théodose II, Léon", *Revue des études byzantines* 10, 1952, 51-54.

26. For attempts to defend the historicity of the *Life of Porphyry*, which are compelled, despite themselves, to concede that it cannot be the contemporary eye-witness account that it pretends to be, see GRÉGOIRE, H.; KUGENER, A., *Marc le diacre: Vie de Porphyre, évêque de Gaza*, Paris, 1930, VII-XXXIX; TROMBLEY, F. R., *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c. 370-529 I*<sup>2</sup>, Leiden, New York, Cologne 1995, 187-282.

27. WENGER, o.c., 1952, 52-53; o.c., 1977, 76-78.

28. AUBINEAU, M., *Un traité inédit de Christologie de Sévérien de Gabala. In centurionem contra Manichaeos et Apollinaristas (Cahiers d'orientalisme 5)*, Paris 1983, 20-21; VOICU, S.J., *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité XIV*, Paris 1989, 759.

29. WENGER, o.c., 1977, 79. That Theodosius' marriage to Eudocia "produced no male offspring" has recently been reasserted in the *Cambridge Ancient History* 14, 2000, 42 n. 59 (LEE, A.D.), with appeal to HOLM, o.c., 178 n. 14.

30. Reading δέλτου<ς> for the transmitted δέλτου μέν.

will last many years<sup>31</sup> and that it be possible for him by Christ's grace to say of a son who is being baptised and administers rule over the world with him: "This is my beloved son; listen to him".

The passage does contain an implicit future reference, since the present participles do not necessarily entail that the emperor's son has already been baptised or has already proclaimed emperor as the colleague of his father. But it surely implies that an infant son of Theodosius II was alive in a January while Nestorius was bishop of Constantinople, that is, in January 429, 430 or 431.

Two items of evidence, which are entirely independent of each other, thus speak of (1) an infant son of Theodosius II born in 430 or shortly earlier and (2) an Arcadius who was the son of Theodosius and an emperor, albeit very briefly, in the winter of 439/440. It seems unduly sceptical, therefore, to deny that Eudocia, the wife of Theodosius, gave birth to a son who was called Arcadius. The mosaics in the Church of Saint John the Evangelist in Ravenna, however, do not constitute adequate proof that Theodosius II proclaimed his young son Arcadius emperor: they prove only that Galla Placidia in Italy believed that Arcadius had been (or would soon be) proclaimed emperor by his father in Constantinople — which is not at all the same thing. Eudocia's separation from her husband and the execution of Paulinus on suspicion of adultery with her<sup>32</sup>, suggest in combination that there may have been doubts about the paternity of her son Arcadius even during the unfortunate infant's short lifetime<sup>33</sup>. On a sober assessment, therefore, it must be concluded that deliberate suppression of the truth by contemporaries has successfully concealed the full story of the son of Theodosius II from the critical gaze of any modern enquirer<sup>34</sup>.

WENGER, o.c., 90, printed the manuscript reading (which is ungrammatical) with the comment that "la lecture δέλτουμην s'impose mais on n'en voit pas le sens", but he also pointed the way to the emendation proposed here by observing that "l'orateur pense sans doute aux inscriptions consulaires". For δέλτοι in the sense of *codicilli* conferring an official appointment, see, e. g., Himerius, *Orat.* 36.13 (151.40-42 COLONNA); Sozomenus, *HE* 9.7.2; Evagrius, *HE* 6.24 (241.1-2 BIDEZ-PARMENTIER).

31. Rather than "many consulates", as πολυέτους ... ὑπατείας was translated by WENGER, o.c., 90 ("de nombreux consulats").

32. The charge is confirmed by the contemporary evidence of Nestorius, *Liber Heraclidis*, p. 520 BEDIAN = p. 331, trans. NAU = p. 379, trans. DRIVER and HODGSON: "that demon, the chief of adultery, who cast down the empress with insult and contumely".

33. On Eudocia and Paulinus, see esp. CAMERON, o.c., 1982, 258-263; SCHARF, o.c., 446-450, cf. SCHARF, R., *Spättrömische Studien. Prosopographische und quellenkundliche Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des 5. Jahrhunderts nach Christus (Mannheimer Historische Forschungen 9)*, Mannheim 1996, 22-23.

34. CAMERON, o.c., 267.