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A BOOK ON AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS*

Professor Barnes is one of the most outstanding specialists in Late Antiquity as his numerous contributions and magisterial books prove. We shall single out: Tertullian. Oxford 1971; The Sources of the Historia Augusta. Bruxelles 1978; Constantine and Eusebius. Cambridge, Mass. 1981; The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine. Cambridge, Mass. 1982; Athanasius and Constantius, Cambridge, Mass. 1993.

Since the publication of the last volume of the historical commentary on Ammianus Marcellinus by J. Szidat in the year 1996 this book is one of the most important publications on Ammianus Marcellinus. This book has its origins in the Townsend Lectures organised by Cornell University.

Barnes says: “The time is thus ripe for a systematic investigation of the structure, nature, and quality of Ammianus’ *Res Gestae*, which combines literary and historical approaches. In the chapters that follow, the formal structure of the *Res Gestae* and its arrangement of material are laid out (Chapters III–V). Next, the historian’s origin, social status, culture, and attitudes are investigated (Chapters VI–IX). Third, Ammianus’ presentation of both the main historical actors and several supporting characters in the period for which the history is extant are assessed (Chapters X–XIII). Then it is asked how Ammianus interpreted the whole sweep of Roman history and what he expected of the future (Chapter XIV). In conclusion, Ammianus is compared briefly with two other great historians: Tacitus, whom he had read and whom he imitated in various ways, and Macaulay, who uncannily resembles him as a historian (Chapter XV). The aim is to provide a companion to Ammianus on the model of Sir Charles Firth’s classic companion to Macaulay’s *History of England*, which concentrated on the modern historian’s fundamental historical beliefs and his manner of depicting persons and events” [p. 19].

This work is opposed to the views expressed in the book by *J.F. Mattheus*, The Roman Empire of Ammianus. London 1989, but, at the same time, complementary. The book by *Barnes* starts by a Preface (pp. VII–VIII) followed by a useful list of the editions, translations and commentaries (pp. IX–XII). Barnes

* *T.D. Barnes*, Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality. Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1998. XIV + 2 sheets + 290 pp.

seeks what differentiates Ammianus from the IV century A.D. (p. VII). In the first chapter "The impartial historian" (pp. 1–10) he has offered a good biography in summary of Ammianus (pp. 1–2) and has evaluated the figure of Ammianus in modern scholarship. In the second chapter (pp. 11–19) "Reality and its representation" Barnes deals mainly with style. The third chapter is devoted to "Sincerity and Style" (pp. 20–31). Beside the already proposed by C. Wachsmuth's theory of the two patterns for the division of books in long histories: pentads or hexads, we should not forget the principle of the *historia continua* according to which one author continued the previous one. Ammianus, who followed the methods of hexads of Tacitus, has continued Tacitus *Histories*, though the first thirteen books of the *Res Gestae* are lost. The remaining are organized in the following way: XIV–XIX, Gallus and Julian as Caesars (353–359); XX–XXV, Julian as Augustus (360–363), XXVI–XXXI, The reigns of Valentinian in the West (364–375) and Valens in the East (364–378) [p. 25]. In chapter IV "Narrative and Excursus" (pp. 32–42) Barnes maintains that the *Res Gestae* were written according to triads and hexads (p. 32) and in the following chapter "Dating, Emphasis, and Omission" pp. 43–50 Barnes adds that Ammianus was not an annalistic historian (pp. 44–45). The sixth chapter (pp. 54–64) on "Origin and Social status" is very good: it includes the famous letter to Libanius, *Epist.*, 1063 with fine arguments to date it in the year 360. In the following chapter (pp. 65–78) "The Greek Template" interprets the last sentence of the work that Ammianus wrote *ut miles quondam et Graecus* (31.16.9); the chapter is very erudite showing the weight of Greek culture and Latin language in Ammianus. In chapter VIII (pp. 79–94) Barnes insists in the Greek character of Ammianus' thought (p. 90) and believes to discover a polemic against Christianity in the work of Ammianus. This is followed by another chapter (pp. 95–106) on "Things seen and things read" with a good analysis of the origin of the different *excursus*. In the tenth chapter (pp. 107–119) "Enemies, animals and stereotypes" appears a realistic approach. In the following chapter (pp. 120–128) "Empires and Eunuchs" must be observed, that according to Barnes, Ammianus followed the conventions of his time in relation to women. Beside the good emperor (Julian) there are the bad Caesars and Emperors: Gallus, Constantius, Jovian such as described in the following chapter "Tyranny and incompetence" (pp. 129–142). The next chapter (XIII) pp. 143–165 denominated "The new Achilles" is very reasonably devoted to Julian. The following chapter (XIV, Past, Present and Future, pp. 166–186) deals with Ammianus as a historian of the decline. For the discussion on the ages of Rome (XIV, 6.2–5) in pp. 173–175, see *Alonso-Núñez*, *The Ages of Rome*. Amsterdam 1982. In the last chapter (XV, pp. 187–198) "Tacitus, Ammianus, and Macaulay" Barnes compares the works of these authors to a drama. Barnes has also compared

Ammianus' *Res Gestae* with Macaulay's *History of England*.

Several points have been dealt with in the Appendices: 1. "The text of Ammianus" (pp. 210–208), which is a very good survey. Until now *L.D. Reynolds*, "Ammianus Marcellinus", in *Text and Transmission. A Survey of the Latin Classics* (Oxford 1983), pp. 6–8 is the main authority. 2. "The structure of Livy's *Ab urbe condita*" (pp. 209–212), where Barnes says that the scope of the work by Livy was from the origins of Rome until the battle of Actium (31 BC), which is very plausible since Greek historians always end at this date because of its enormous importance for them. Barnes adds that Livy went until the death of Drusus in the year 9 BC and probably thought to finish in the year 9 AD with the disaster of Varus. 3. "Ammianus' References to the last books" (pp. 213–217) is very useful. 4. "Consular dates in the *Res Gestae*" (pp. 218–221), where Barnes says that he does not think that the organization of the material by Ammianus was annalistic (p. 218). 5. "Formal *Excursus*" (pp. 222–224) is very useful. 6. "Ammianus' use of 'Accentual Clausulae' " (pp. 225–230) shows that Barnes is even interested in formal aspects of the *Res Gestae* by Ammianus. 7. "Corrupt and mistaken dates" (pp. 231–236) shows Barnes' interest in the textual tradition. 8. "Missing *Praefecti Urbis*" (pp. 237–240) proves Barnes' interest in an important detail. 9. "Maximinus and the trials at Rome under Valentinian" (pp. 241–246) is very polemic. 10. "The monuments of Valerius" (pp. 247–254) is very careful in detail and unveils an extraordinary command of the sources.

The book finishes with an extensive bibliography (pp. 255–277) and different indexes (pp. 279–290).

This work is beside this of J.F. Matthews one of the most important books on Ammianus Marcellinus and not only this but both of them are superb contributions to the History of Historiography.

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