AMMIANUS AND EUTHERIUS

by D. Woods
(University College Cork)

ABSTRACT

Ammianus Marcellinus digresses at length on the career and character of the eunuch Eutherius, and such is his praise of Eutherius that it is generally agreed that he must have used him as one of his sources. A comparison of Ammianus’ account of an alleged plot to assassinate Julian shortly after his revolt at Paris in 360 to Libanius’ account of the same reveals that Eutherius has concealed his involvement in this plot. Furthermore, he has misrepresented his expulsion from Julian’s domain back to the court of Constantius II as a result of this plot as a diplomatic mission. He remained in disgrace under Julian, but was restored to office when Jovian recalled many former officials under Constantius to court once more. His reputation as Julian’s faithful praepositus cubiculi is undeserved.

For our knowledge of the life and career of the eunuch Eutherius we rely almost totally on the testimony of Ammianus Marcellinus. He first introduces us to Eutherius when he describes his role in defence of Julian Caesar against the lies of the former magister equitum per Gallias Marcellus during the early months of 357. Some Alamanni had besieged Julian in his winter-quarters at Sens for a month, during which time the magister equitum per Gallias Marcellus had failed to send any reinforcements to his aid, despite being stationed nearby (Amm. 16.4.1–3). As a result, the emperor Constantius II had dismissed Marcellus from the army altogether, but Marcellus had not left it at that. He had tried to defend himself before Constantius and his consistory at Milan by claiming that Julian was plotting against the emperor. Fortunately, Julian had anticipated this, and had sent his praepositus cubiculi Eutherius to Milan shortly after Marcellus in order to contradict his testimony (Amm. 16.7.2). The result was that Marcellus was discredited, and returned in disgrace to his native town of Serdica (Amm. 16.8.1). It is even possible that the praefectus praetorio per Illyricum Anatolius tried to curry favour with the emperor by prosecuting this disgraced general on a charge of cowardice. Whatever the case,

1. PLRE I, Eutherius 1, 314–15.
Ammianus uses his description of Eutherius’ role in defence of Julian as an opportunity to digress at length upon his life and character (16.7.4–10). The length of the digression is itself surprising, and its contents even more so. Ammianus cannot speak too highly of Eutherius, in stark contrast to his usual bitter criticism of eunuchs in general, and of Eutherius’ contemporary and fellow-eunuch Eusebius in particular, Constantius’ praepositus cubiculi c.337–61. For this reason, therefore, most commentators have accepted that Eutherius was personally known to Ammianus, and that Ammianus had probably used him as an oral source in the composition of his history.4

I do not doubt that Eutherius had served as one of Ammianus’ oral sources, and that they had probably met at Rome itself, sometime after Eutherius’ retirement there. But this assumption requires that we scrutinize Ammianus’ account of the life and career of Eutherius very carefully, since if Eutherius was Ammianus’ principal source on his own life, and on many of the events in which he had participated, then one must suspect Ammianus’ final text of a strong bias in his favour. In order to detect this bias, therefore, one must contrast Ammianus’ account of events against other accounts of these same events, and the results are startling. Whether Ammianus perpetrated a deliberate fraud upon his readers, or was himself deceived, there can be little doubt that his history is seriously misleading in parts.

The key to uncovering the extent to which Ammianus has accepted Eutherius’ version of events almost entirely at its face value lies in Libanius’ funeral oration upon Julian which he delivered in 365. Here Libanius records that Julian treated those who had opposed his elevation as Augustus at Paris in February 360 with the greatest consideration, forbidding anyone even to look at them in a threatening manner. He then continues:

ἀντὶ γὰρ εὔφραγειας οὐκ ἔδησαν κατὰ τὴν παρομοίαν, ἀλλὰ ἐξουλθήσαν ἀποκτεῖναι τῶν εὐνούχων τὸν μᾶλλον περὶ εὐνόμην ἐλπίδιν ἀναπερφώσαντες. ἢ δὲ ἄνοις ἐγγὺς τοῦ φόνου στρατιώτης ἐξ Ἀπόλλωνος ἐσσίτο καὶ τὸ γενησόμενον ἢ δὲ καὶ συνεκάλει τὸν ὄχλον εἰς ἐπικουρίαν, οἱ δὲ θεόν τε καὶ τὸ συντεθέν ἄνιχνευν. καὶ τὸ μέγιστον,


Ammianus records an event which is clearly identifiable as that preserved by Libanius here, but he puts a completely different gloss upon it (20.4.20–22). He claims that a palace-decurion had hastened to the camp of the units entitled *Celtae* and *Petulantes*, wildly shouting that Julian had been killed, and that these soldiers had rushed to the palace. The result was that:

> ‘... strepituque immani excubitores perculsi, et tribuni et domestorum comes Excubitor nomine, veritique versabilis perfidiam militis, evanuere metu mortis subitae dispalati’ (20.4.21).6

The soldiers were then admitted to the council chamber where they saw that their new emperor was actually alive and unharmed. It had all been a false alarm, or so Ammianus would have us think.7 Now, it is clearly impossible to reconcile the different accounts by Ammianus and Libanius of this alleged plot. Either there was a real plot or there was not. One or the other must be mistaken. Fortunately, Julian has himself left us an account of this same episode, by which we may judge which of Ammianus' or Libanius' accounts is the more reliable (Ep. ad Ath. 285a–d). There is no contest. Julian agrees with Libanius that there really had been a plot, and supports his account of the sequence of events which had led to the discovery and end of this plot. Unfortunately, he does not specify the names and occupations of those behind the plot, describing them merely as ‘the friends of Constantius’ (οἱ Κωνσταντίου φίλοι). But this does not in any way contradict Libanius' testimony in this matter. It merely proves that Libanius did not use this particular work by Julian as his source here. Yet modern commentators have proven curiously reluctant to accept Libanius' claim that a eunuch, his *praepositus cubiculi*, participated in the

7. J. den Boeft, D. den Hengst, and H.C. Teitler, *Philological and Historical Commentary on Ammianus Marcellinus XX* (Groningen 1987) 102, convict Ammianus of fraud here, claiming that he wanted to prevent his readers from realising that the soldiers were not as unanimous in their support for Julian's elevation as he had earlier claimed. While I do not deny that Ammianus can be very deceptive at times, it is difficult to catch him in outright falsehoods, rather than acts of omission or misleading emphases. Hence my concern that we should consider the nature of his source here instead. I am even less convinced by the claim that Ammianus adapted his account of Julian's accession in imitation of Tacitus' account of the mutiny which had seen an attempt to hail Germanicus as Augustus in AD 14, and that this accounts for the discrepancies between his account and that of Libanius or of Julian himself even. See M.F. Williams, *‘Four Mutinies: Tacitus Annals 1.16-30; 1.31-49 and Ammianus Marcellinus Res Gestae 20.4.9–20.5.7; 24.3.1–8’*, *Phoenix* 51 (1997) 44–74, esp. 63–66.
plot against Julian. So one editor has claimed that Libanius' information results from a confusion somehow between Excubitor, the name of the comes domesticorum as preserved by Ammianus, and the cubiculi of the title of the praepositus cubiculi. While I do not doubt that Libanius had little Latin, and that he may well have misinterpreted various technical Latin terms for this reason, or have misconstrued a longer passage of text, not only is such an explanation rather farfetched in itself, but it also ignores the larger picture, that Julian's own evidence supports the testimony of Libanius rather than of Ammianus. It must be said in his defence, however, that at least this editor has admitted that there is a serious problem here, while others have chosen simply to ignore Libanius' testimony.

So why is it so difficult to believe Libanius that his praepositus cubiculi participated in a plot to kill Julian? Because Eutherius was his praepositus cubiculi at this time, and Eutherius was loyal to Julian, or so it is normally assumed. Rather than ignore Libanius' testimony, however, we should re-examine the evidence for Eutherius' loyalty to Julian.

The first piece of evidence which seems to underlie many modern assumptions concerning the loyalty of Eutherius to Julian must be the role he played in defence of Julian against the lies of Marcellus during early 357. But is this really relevant to the situation which existed after the elevation of Julian as Augustus in 360? In 357, Eutherius had only to tell the truth, and had not been forced to choose between Constantius and his Caesar at that time. In short, he had been in no personal danger, and had merely performed his duty, to report to Constantius on what had really occurred at the court of his Caesar. For one must remember that it was Constantius who had appointed Eutherius as Julian's praepositus cubiculi following his elevation of Julian as Caesar on 6 November 355. As Julian himself complains, it was only with difficulty that he had managed to persuade Constantius to allow him to retain four of his existing domestics for his personal service (Ep. ad Ath. 277b), and his friend, the doctor Oribasius, had only been allowed to join his court because Constantius had not known that he was his friend (Ep. ad Ath. 277c). Hence Eutherius was loyal
performing his duty to Constantius rather than to Julian when he reported
the truth concerning events in Gaul during the winter of 356/7, and it was
entirely incidental that this was to the advantage of Julian. It was only
when Julian was hailed as Augustus in February 360 that Eutherius was
finally forced to decide between Constantius and Julian. Worse still, if we
are to believe Ammianus, Eutherius had gone so far as to stake his life on
Julian’s loyalty back in 357 (16.7.3), so there was a strong possibility that
his life would be forfeit should Julian’s revolt fail. And its failure must
have seemed very probable indeed, given the success which Constantius
had enjoyed against earlier Gallic usurpers, both Magnentius in 353 and
Silvanus in 355. So the best chance Eutherius had of preserving his life
was to compensate for his earlier misjudgement concerning the loyalty of
Julian, and his failure to pre-empt Julian’s revolt, by participating in a
plot to assassinate him.

Next, the fact that Julian sent Eutherius as one of his two envoys to
Constantius in order to inform him concerning his elevation as Augustus
does not prove that he thought highly of Eutherius, or that Eutherius felt
any particular loyalty to him (Amm. 20.8.19). For Julian had chosen his
magister officiorum Pentadius as the other envoy to Constantius, the same
Pentadius who had been at loggerheads with Julian since he had played
a part in the recall of Secundus Salutius from Julian’s court in 358, and
whom Julian blamed for Constantius’ demands for reinforcements from
him during the winter of 359/60, despite the fact that this would have
severely curtailed his ability to defend Gaul (Jul. Ep. ad Ath. 282b–c).
So Julian could hardly have chosen as his envoy anyone more hostile to
his interests than Pentadius, and as a final proof of the hostility between
the two, one should add that Pentadius was tried for his part in the
downfall in 361/2 of Julian’s brother, Gallus, by the so-called commission of
Chalcedon during the winter of 361/2, although he was acquitted (Amm.
22.3.5). It seems likely, therefore, that Julian had had a reason to dislike
Pentadius, because of his alleged complicity in the death of his brother
Gallus, long before they met even. So where does this leave Eutherius?
One need not assume that Julian was any more favorably disposed to him
at this stage than he was to Pentadius. Indeed, the facts suggest that
Pentadius and Eutherius had actually been expelled from Julian’s domain,
as much for their own safety as anything else, rather than that they had
been specifically chosen for a special diplomatic mission. Once expelled,
they would have been expected to report to Constantius concerning the
latest developments in Gaul, and Julian gave them some letters to take
to Constantius since they would be heading in that direction anyway, but
theirs was a one-way mission rather than a round-trip. Nor would they
have dared to refuse this mission, or to destroy the letters once they had
escaped Julian’s immediate control, for example, since diplomatic contact
between Constantius and Julian was inevitable, and Constantius would undoubtedly have taken a dim view of such action when it finally came to light, as it would have. So by accepting this mission they were protecting themselves from Constantius as much as from Julian, since their initial news was going to anger Constantius anyway, regardless of the contents of any letters. Ammianus does not actually say this, of course, because he is merely repeating Eutherius' gloss on events many years later. But the facts speak for themselves, even as dimly preserved by Ammianus. Despite his initial claim that Eutherius and Pentadius had been expected to report back to Julian concerning what they had seen at Constantius' court (20.8.19), one notes that Ammianus does not confirm that they actually returned. He says only that Constantius dismissed them (20.9.4), which may mean that they were allowed to depart unpunished from his court, no mean thing given his earlier claim that Constantius had received them in fury (20.9.2) rather than that they were sent back, or allowed to return, to Gaul. In the same line, he reveals that it was his quaestor Leonas whom Constantius sent to Gaul with a reply for Julian, which would seem rather pointless had Eutherius and Leonas been returning there anyway. Hence one can already detect Eutherius' re-interpretation of events in hindsight here, that he has persuaded Ammianus that he and Pentadius had been sent on a diplomatic mission to Constantius, from which they had been expected to return to Julian, but that Constantius had detained them in the East and sent Leonas with his reply instead.

Finally, the positive assessment of Eutherius' loyalty towards Julian rests on a third piece of evidence also, a letter by Julian to a certain Eutherius in which he asks him to offer sacrifices on his behalf, and invites him to Constantinople. It is clear, therefore, that Julian must have written this letter sometime about his arrival in Constantinople on 11 December 361 (Amm. 22.2.4), but before his final departure from there in late May or early June 362. Yet although modern commentators invariably identify the addressee of this letter as the praepositus cubiculi Eutherius, there is no evidence to support this identification. The letter is addressed to Eutherius simply, with no explanation of rank or title. Nor does the main body of the letter conceal any hint to this effect. It is brief and to the point, revealing little more than that Eutherius was a pagan and that Julian wanted him to come to Constantinople. Not only is there no evidence that our Eutherius was a pagan, but his long career of service

13. E.g. Bidez (note 12) 34-5; Wright (note 12) xlvi; Bowersock (note 10) 63; PLRE I. Eutherius 1, 315.
14. It is not unusual for commentators to describe the praepositus cubiculi Eutherius...
to and under the Constantinian dynasty, in the immediate company of
the emperors themselves from Constantine I to Constantius II, suggests
that he was most probably a Christian. On the other hand, the very
wording of the letter, the fact that Julian makes a polite request, asking
Eutherius to come to Constantinople if he had the leisure rather than
commanding his presence there, suggests that the Eutherius addressed was
a private citizen rather than a member of the imperial administration, and
that Julian was addressing him in his private capacity also rather than as
emperor. We should compare it to his letter to the Arian cleric Aetius,
in which he invited him to Constantinople in order to renew their former
acquaintance, and assume that this Eutherius was a former acquaintance
also. It certainly should not disturb us that we seem to know nothing else
concerning this Eutherius, since many of the shorter of Julian’s surviving
letters are addressed to individuals who remain otherwise unknown. But
if one does wish to identify him with a known figure at this period, then
there is no good reason why one should prefer to identify him with the
eunuch Eutherius rather than with the Eutherius who had been governor
of the provinces of Armenia in 360, and Augustamnica in 361.

It is my argument, therefore, that there is no evidence to support the pre­
vailing assumption that there was ever any special bond of loyalty between
Julian and his praepositus cubiculi Eutherius. On the contrary, Ammianus’
evidence suggests that Julian dismissed Eutherius from his service, since he
follows his description of Eutherius’ behaviour under Julian with a vague
admission that Eutherius took premature retirement for a period which
suggests that Julian actually dismissed him.

‘Is praepositus cubiculi etiam Iulianum aliquotiens corrigebat, Asi­
ticis coalitus moribus, ideoque lemem. Denique digressus ad otium,
asscitusque postea in palatium, semper sobrius et in primis consistens,
ita fidem continentiamque virtutes coluit amplas, ut ... ’ (Amm.
16.7.6).

It has been claimed, on the basis of Julian’s letter to an unspecified
Eutherius as already mentioned, that it was Julian who recalled Eutherius

as a pagan without clarifying that their only source for this is Julian’s letter to
an unspecified Eutherius, e.g. Baldwin (n. 11) 92; J. Fontaine (ed.), Ammien

16. E.g. Ep. 3 (Wright) to Eumenius and Pharianus; Ep. 11 (Wright) to Leontius;
Ep. 35 (Wright) to Aristoxenus; Ep. 42 (Wright) to Callixeine; Ep. 68 (Wright) to
Dositheus. One cannot give an overall figure in this matter, since the identification
of some addressees with homonyms who are often little more than names is itself
a matter of controversy, as is the correct reading of some of their names even.

17. The latter Eutherius is known only from the correspondence of Libanius. See
PiRE I, Eutherius 2, 315.
to duty in the palace, but this verges on the absurd. It requires us to believe that Julian dismissed Eutherius, or allowed him to retire, only to recall him to service again perhaps up to two years later. But was he really so uncertain and changeable? The wider political context suggests an entirely different interpretation. A whole series of officers or officials under Constantius II were dismissed by Julian only to be restored by his successor Jovian. These included the magistri militum Lucillianus and Lupicinus who were restored to office as the magister peditum praesentalis and the magister equitum per Orientem respectively, and the personae non gratae under Julian who profited from his death were the future imperial brothers Valentinian and Valens, and the former cura palatii Saturninus. In short, the wider political circumstances suggest that it was either Jovian or Valentinian who recalled Eutherius to duty once more. This is not to claim that Jovian restored him as his praepositus cubiculi, since evidence suggests that a certain Probatius most probably held this office by the time of Jovian’s residence in Antioch in late 363. One must remember that although he was Julian’s praepositus cubiculi for a period, Julian was only a Caesar at the time, so that in the overall scheme of things, Eutherius had probably ranked considerably lower than either Eusebius himself, Constantius’ own praepositus cubiculi, or his most senior assistant even, the primicerius cubiculi. Hence he need not have obtained sufficient prominence under Jovian to impact upon our scant sources for this period, but he was back on the road to power once more.

Ammianus manages to avoid disclosing any specific information concerning the nature or duration of Eutherius’ service after his recall to the palace, but the fact that he chose to retire to Rome at the end of this period of renewed service is itself significant (Amm. 16.7.7). It suggests that he

19. On Lucillianus, see Amm. 21.9.6–10, 25.8.9. On Lupicinus, see Jul. Ep. ad Ath. 281a–b; Amm. 20.9.9, 26.5.2.
20. On Romanus, see Amm. 22.11.2, 28.6.5. On Vincentius, see 22.11.2, 29.5.6. In general, see B.H. Warmington, ‘The Career of Romanus, Comes Africae’, BZ 49 (1956) 55–64.
22. See the appendix to Athanasius, Epistula ad Jovianum.
had spent his renewed service in the West after the division of the unified
empire between the brothers Valentinian and Valens in 364. He retired
there, one suspects, because the friends, contacts, and clients whom he
had cultivated over the years were concentrated there. Given that he was
himself of eastern origin, an Armenian who had served under Constantine
I for some years, this seems the best explanation for his failure to retire
to the eastern capital Constantinople, that he would have been relatively
isolated and without influence there. We are ill-informed concerning the
identity of successive praepositi cubiculi under any of Valentinian I or his
sons Gratian and Valentinian II, so it is hardly surprising that the fasti
allow of the identification of Eutherius as the senior praepositus cubiculi
under Gratian, for example. In fact, we can only identify two praepositi
cubiculi under any of these emperors, the Rhodanus whom Valentinian I
had burned to death for theft, probably in 364 before he had even left
Constantinople for the West, and the Calligonus who threatened bishop
Ambrose of Milan under Valentinian II in 386, but was himself executed
on a charge of immorality shortly thereafter.24 However, Ammianus does
make one small slip which suggests that he believed that Eutherius was the
praepositus cubiculi under Gratian in 378.

Zosimus preserves a detailed account of what he alleges was the transfer
in 378 of a senior military officer Sebastianus from the court of Gratian
to that of Valens in which he claims that Sebastianus had left the West
because the emperors there were not able to think for themselves, because
of their youth, and were controlled by the slanders of their eunuch
praepositi cubiculi (HN 4.22.4). The Suda preserves a fragment of the History
of Eunapius of Sardis to the same effect, that Sebastianus’ uprightness
annoyed the emperors’ eunuchs, so that they had him replaced.25 This is
direct relevance to us because Ammianus provides a description of the
alleged transfer of Sebastianus to the East very similar to that of Zosimus
(31.11.1–4), so much so that it seems probable that they depend on the
same ultimate source here. It is noteworthy, therefore, that Ammianus
claims only that Sebastianus had been sent to Valens from Italy at his own
request. He fails to mention the alleged role of the western court-eunuchs
in this transfer, despite the fact that he shared the common prejudice
against eunuchs, as we can see from the manner in which he had sought to
excuse his praise of Eutherius earlier. So why does he pull his punch here?
The answer, I suspect, is that he does so out of respect for Eutherius, or,

24. On Rhodanus, see John Malalas, Chron. 13.31 (p. 340, ed. C. de Boor, Leipzig,
1883); Chron. Pasch. s.a. 369; John of Antioch, frg. 183 (p. 607, ed. C. Müller,
Paris, 1861). On Calligonus, see Amb. Ep. 20.28; Amb. de Joseph. 6.34; Aug. c.
25. Suda Σ 177 = Eunapius, frg. 44.3 in R.C. Blockley (ed.), The Fragmentary
Classcising Historians of the Later Roman Empire II (Liverpool 1983) 66–9.
to be more precise, because he knew that Eutherius had been Gratian's praepositus cubiculi at the time.

Some final details remain. How did Eutherius manage to persuade Ammianus of the truth of his account of his career under Julian in Gaul in the face of Libanius' testimony, for example, or whatever sources Libanius had himself used? The best explanation seems to be that he played upon Ammianus' exaggerated respect for Julian and his prejudice against Constantius. The key lies in the decadence and excess which Julian was alleged to have found when he finally inherited Constantius' court, and the reforms which he was alleged to have instituted at that time. Ammianus describes at length how Julian had dismissed all the palace attendants, and although he does not mention the court-eunuchs by name, there can be no doubt that he intends us to include them among those dismissed (22.4.1–5). Libanius confirms this, as does Zonaras, but the most interesting testimony is that by Socrates who claims that Julian dismissed the eunuchs because they were unnecessary since his wife had died and he had decided to remain unmarried.26 This, I suspect, is the sort of excuse which Eutherius offered to Ammianus for his dismissal under Julian. He had been dismissed, or decided to retire, because Julian had decided to live the life of an ascetic philosopher-king, with a minimum of household help, and, anyway, his wife had just died also. In point of fact, however, despite his earlier comment that Julian had dismissed all his eunuchs, Libanius himself lets slip that he had retained some, but that they were now confined to menial duties (Or. 18.149). Furthermore, Jovian's torture and dismissal of Probatius and his fellow eunuchs because they tried to obtain an imperial audience for an Arian delegation at Antioch, combines with their description as the successors of the eunuchs Eusebius and Bardio under Constantius, to suggest that Jovian had actually inherited them from Julian, and was only looking for an excuse to get rid of them when they made their mistake.27 Whatever the case, Eutherius seems to have tried to persuade Ammianus that his retirement was part of a larger package of reforms, and no reflection on him personally. This, I suspect, is the reason behind one of Ammianus' rare criticisms of Julian, that in dismissing all the palace attendants he had failed to act as a philosopher claiming to research into the truth:

Laudari enim poterat, si saltem moderatos quosdam licet paucos retinuisset, morumque probitate compertos' (22.4.2).28

27. Athan. Ep. ad Jov. Suda I 401 = Eunapius, frg. 29.1 (Blockley), refers to a eunuch Theophilus who built a library under Julian; but this is probably a corrupt reference to the dux Aegypti Theophilus mentioned in Jul. Ep. 45 (Wright).
Here we see a reflection of Eutherius’ explanation of his retirement, that Julian went too far too fast in his court-reforms, and Socrates confirms that some did criticize Julian at the time because they thought that these reforms brought the imperial dignity into contempt (HE 3.1.53).

There was a limit, of course, to how far Eutherius could go in his re-interpretation of the past before he made even Ammianus suspicious. Hence he stuck as closely as possible to the truth as far as the physical events were concerned, at least those that had been witnessed by a wider public, but he was free to impute whatever motivations he wished to all concerned, and to dispute the details of any other accounts which purported to describe more secret events. In short, he so overawed Ammianus by the demonstrable accuracy of his knowledge of the period, and a volume of detail often unobtainable elsewhere, that he persuaded Ammianus to believe his account of the alleged plot to kill Julian, that it had been a false alarm, on general principles alone. In a strange way, he may even have turned the general prejudice against eunuchs to his advantage here, claiming that the allegations of his involvement in a plot to kill Julian was merely another example of how people were always prepared to believe the worst of court-eunuchs. Yet in his need to stick as closely to the truth as possible, he has preserved a detail which lends credence to Libanius’ testimony. Ammianus’ claim that the alarm had been raised by a palace-decurion reinforces Libanius’ claim that his praepositus cubiculi had been involved in a plot to kill Julian in so far as the palace-decures served under the praepositus cubiculi.29 One suspects that the decurion had seen, or overheard, something suspicious during the course of his duties under Eutherius, and that this had spurred him to seek allies in an attempt to prevent the counter-coup.30

Finally, it is important to emphasize that Julian does not make a single clear and unambiguous reference to Eutherius in any of his surviving works. Despite the fact that in his letter to the Athenians he refers by name to thirteen individuals who played some part or other in his rise to power in Gaul, whether as friend or as foe, he does not make an anonymous reference even to his ‘faithful’ praepositus cubiculi.31 It is clear, therefore,

30. Julian describes the man who had raised the alarm as one of those in charge of his wife’s escort (Ep. ad Ath. 285b: τις τῶν ἐπιτηθήσεως τῆς προδύσι τῆς ἑμὼς γυναῖκας), and while it is tempting to identify him with the palace-decurion mentioned by Ammianus, one wonders whether different sources have not emphasized different members of a loyalist delegation to the camp of the Petulantes and Celtae which consisted of more than just one man. Eutherius emphasizes the role of the decurion because it was he against whom he felt most bitter as the one who had first alerted the loyalists within the palace to the threat to Julian.
31. Chnodomarius, Ep. ad Ath. 279c; Florentius, Ep. ad Ath. 280a, 282c, 283a–c; Lupicinus, (Ep. ad Ath. 281a, 282d, 283a–c; Salutius, Ep. ad Ath. 281d, 282c;
that Eutherius was nowhere near as influential at this period as he seems to have pretended to Ammianus, whether as friend or foe.

To conclude, the former *praepositus cubiculi* Eutherius was undoubtedly a valuable source for Ammianus as he composed his history, but he had an agenda of his own, the protection of his good name, to which Ammianus failed to pay due attention. He quickly realised that Julian was going to be the hero of Ammianus' work, even if a flawed one, and tailored his reminiscences accordingly. Hence it is that Ammianus records that Julian cleverly anticipated Marcellus' complaints against him in 357 by sending Eutherius to court to defend his name, and that this Eutherius spoke out bravely in his defence. But one may well suspect that it was actually Constantius who had sent for Eutherius, and that Eutherius had done no more than speak the bare truth against someone whom he had little cause to fear. Similarly, Eutherius was not a proper ambassador when sent to Constantius in the summer of 360, but an expelled person who happened to have been given a message for Constantius since he was going to him anyway. This is not to claim that Eutherius would necessarily have objected to greater public knowledge of his role in a plot to assassinate Julian. Doubtless, this would have enhanced his reputation in some Christian circles at Rome. But it would also have encouraged Ammianus to engage in vague and clichéd attacks upon his reputation of the sort to which eunuchs were routinely subjected. It may also have made him enemies in a city where there were still many rich and influential pagans.  

It is impossible to date Ammianus' presence in Rome, and his contact with Eutherius, with any certainty, but one presumes that they most probably met during the mid- or late 380s, at a time of increasing tension between pagan and Christian because of

---

32. For a review of the modern controversy concerning the strength of Christianity among the Roman aristocracy by the end of the fourth century, and the extent to which the usurper Eugenius (392-4) was a figurehead for a pagan reaction to increasing persecution, see T.D. Barnes, 'Religion and Society in the Age of Theodosius', in H. Meynell (ed.), *Grace, Politics, and Desire: Essays on Augustine* (Calgary 1990) 157-75.

33. There is no direct and indisputable evidence for the presence of Ammianus at Rome. Libanius wrote a letter to a certain Marcellinus at Rome c.392 (*Ep. 1063*), but the identity of this Marcellinus is much disputed. See C.W. Fornara, 'Studies in Ammianus Marcellinus I: The Letter of Libanius and Ammianus' Connection with Antioch', *Historia* 41 (1992) 328-44, against the identification of Libanius' addressee with Ammianus Marcellinus, and the reply by J.F. Matthews, 'The Origin of Ammianus', *CQ* 44 (1994) 252-69. I rely here on the circumstantial evidence adduced by Matthews (n. 4) 8-17, such as that his bitterness concerning the temporary expulsion of foreigners from Rome during a famine c.384 suggests that Ammianus was one of those expelled then (14.6.19), and that his description of Constantius' entry to Rome in 357 was inspired by his witness of the entry of Theodosius I there in 389 (16.10.1-17).
such incidents as the removal of the statue of Victory from the Senate-House in 382.\textsuperscript{34} Hence Eutherius seems to have decided that his most prudent response to Ammianus' requests for information concerning his early career would be to exaggerate the honesty and efficiency with which he had performed his duties, no matter who the emperor was, and to try and obscure his involvement in a failed plot to kill that most controversial of emperors, Julian the Apostate. Given the praise which he continues to enjoy, I think we can say that he succeeded in his aim.

---

Acta Classica is published annually by the Classical Association of South Africa. The journal has been in production since 1958. It is listed on both the ISI and the SAPSE list of approved publications.

For further information go to: