



## Paulus Orosius - a Christian propagandist?

*Marc-Antoine Linstädter*

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Seminar paper from the year 2006 in the subject History - World History - Early and Ancient History, grade: 1,0, University College Cork, course: Seminar: Myth and History, 14 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: The Spanish historian, priest and Christian apologetic Paulus Orosius (c.385-420 A.D. ) has often been subject to controversial discussions in the scientific community. A contemporary and pupil of Augustine of Hippo (354-430 A.D.), Orosius exerted significant influence not only during his lifetime (e.g. as a speaker against the Priscillianists or the Pelagians on various synods) but, through his work, considerably contributed to later developments in the fields of historiography as well as geography. Although Orosius' writings have been accused of simplicity compared to the much more elaborate *De civitate dei* or even showing signs of haste, he together with Augustine fundamentally shaped the Christian perspective on history in late antiquity and, even more so, in the early middle ages. His works were widely distributed and used in the early medieval period and gained enormous popularity, so that even today about 200 manuscript-copies of them are still extant.

The alleged influence Orosius exerted on Christianity in the centuries to follow and during his lifetime as well as his quite radical position on a divine Roman-Christian claim to leadership (which I will examine in detail) could probably qualify him for the term „Christian Propagandist“, as suggested in the title. Thus, in this essay, I will focus on the question whether Orosius can be described as a „Christian propagandist“ in the modern sense.

To answer this question properly, it will at first be necessary to define my notion of propaganda, since the term itself is quite blurry when used unconsciously. I will then establish the historical background by giving a short biography of Orosius himself, focusing mainly on his works, teachings and his relationship to Augustine of Hippo. The immediate events in history which influenced Orosius and Augustine when compiling their works will also be dealt with in this part. In the main part of my disquisition, I will test the applicability of the term „propagandist“ on Orosius through a thorough analysis of his life and works. Concluding, I will sum up my results and propose a well-founded critical answer to my initial question and give an outlook on possible fields of further research.

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