

# ADALYA

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SUNA-İNAN KIRAÇ AKDENİZ MEDENİYETLERİ ARAŞTIRMA ENSTİTÜSÜ  
SUNA & İNAN KIRAÇ RESEARCH INSTITUTE ON MEDITERRANEAN CIVILIZATIONS

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THE ANNUAL OF THE SUNA & İNAN KIRAÇ RESEARCH INSTITUTE ON MEDITERRANEAN CIVILIZATIONS

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**Yönetim Yeri:** Barbaros Mh. Kocatepe Sk. No. 25  
Kaleiçi 07100 Antalya Tel: +90 242 243 42 74  
Faks: +90 242 243 80 13 E-posta: akmed@akmed.org.tr  
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Barbaros Mah. Kocatepe Sk. No. 25  
Kaleiçi 07100 ANTALYA-TURKEY  
Tel: +90 242 243 42 74 • Fax: +90 242 243 80 13  
akmed@akmed.org.tr  
www.akmed.org.tr

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## Christianity in Lycia: From its beginnings to the “Triumph of Orthodoxy”

Julian BENNETT\*

### Introduction

In his seminal article on the churches of Lycia, R. M. Harrison opined that the relative lack of information about Christianity in that region during the Imperial period was “probably accidental”, basing his observation on the belief that the coastal cities of the region, ‘in close commercial contact’ with the Levant and Egypt, were likely to be as “receptive to the new religion as were other, better documented parts of Asia Minor”<sup>1</sup>. The reality is, though, that a broad range of evidence does exist to suggest that some of Lycia’s inhabitants were receptive to the “new religion” from as early as the Apostle Paul’s first missionary journey to Anatolia in c. 46/48. The principal purpose of this article, then, is to identify and elaborate on these items regarding early Christianity in Lycia as a means of correcting this rather one-sided opinion. In addition, however, the opportunity is taken to explore here a greatly neglected topic: namely the reaction of the Lycian Church to the various Christological debates that repeatedly divided the early Church from the sole reign of Constantine I and the First Ecumenical Council in 325, to the regency of Theodora and the Synod of Constantinople in 842 and its celebration of the “Triumph of Orthodoxy”, marking the final defeat of iconoclasm and so also the genesis of the modern Eastern Orthodox Church. This excursus, though, will naturally necessitate some basic analysis of the underlying issues to elucidate their substance and so better understand the controversies they generated and how these impacted on the wider Church. The picture that emerges with specific regard to Lycia is a mixed but interesting one, for it suggests that up to at least the 7<sup>th</sup> century, members of the Lycian Church were often attracted to and embraced dogmas and doctrines that were denounced as heretical by the mainstream Church.

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\* Dr. Julian Bennett, Bilkent Üniversitesi, İnsani Bilimler ve Edebiyat Fakültesi, Arkeoloji Bölümü, 068000 Bilkent, Ankara. E-mail: bennett@bilkent.edu.tr

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<sup>1</sup> Harrison 1963, 119; cf. also Schultze 1926, 188-209, which was Harrison’s principal source on the subject. Cf. also Fedalto 1988, 224-238, for a list of ecclesiastical sees and their bishops in Lycia, although this omits some of the bishops named in the various documents collated by Mansi 1758-1798.

## Christianity in Lycia: The Beginnings

The origins of Christianity in Lycia are indeed obscure. Nevertheless, there is at least a possibility that they are connected with the first missionary journey directed by the Apostle Paul between about 46 and 48 after he was charged by the fellow followers of Jesus Christ at Antioch on the Orontes to go with Barnabas and spread word of his teachings<sup>2</sup>. Having been joined in Antioch by John Mark, their mission began on Cyprus, the principal target of the missionaries being those resident members of the Hellenised Jewish Diaspora who were thought likely to at least listen to their discourse<sup>3</sup>. Yet it is clear enough that Paul and Barnabas were perfectly happy to welcome Gentiles also among their audiences, these being referred to in the accounts of Paul's missionary journeys as *sebomenoi*, in the sense of *sebomenoi ton theon*, or 'those who fear God'<sup>4</sup>, and who are termed in the later epigraphic record as *Theosebes* or 'Godfearers'<sup>5</sup>. These were Gentiles who consciously followed certain of the Jewish customs and laws including regularly attending the meetings of their Jewish fellow-citizens but who had not proselytised, that is to say, had not formally converted to Judaism. Such Godfearers were, however, quite open to the evangelising Judaic doctrine being preached by Paul and Barnabas. Indeed, the openness on the account of some Gentiles in this way had already been established at Antioch on the Orontes, where several 'Greeks' had adopted the system of religious belief based on the sayings expounded by Jesus Christ, so becoming known, along with those Jews who also espoused the doctrine, as Christians<sup>6</sup>.

According to Acts in the canonical New Testament, our principal source for this stage in the spread of the Christian doctrine, the Apostles met with some success while preaching at the synagogues on Cyprus. Nowhere is it stated if their audiences included Gentiles or not<sup>7</sup>, and yet as they certainly preached to such mixed audiences in Anatolia, it seems at least possible that those who listened to their teachings on Cyprus were a mixed bunch. At the very least word of these reached Sergius Paulus, the Roman governor of the island, for he seems to have summoned them to his presence where they had to deal with the objections of a sorcerer 'named Elymas' before Paulus converted to their faith<sup>8</sup>. Indeed, it would seem that Paulus then encouraged Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark, to make their way to Antioch by Pisidia in the Anatolian province of Galatia: he was a native of that place, and it is reasonably assumed that he would have known of both Jews and Godfearers there prepared to host the three evangelisers and listen to their message<sup>9</sup>. As it was, though, after their arrival at Perge John Mark left for

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Acts 10.22 for a Roman centurion named Cornelius who was classed as one who 'feared God, and so to all intents and purposes one of those later classed as a 'Godfearer'; also Acts 11.1, with 11.20-21, for Gentiles in the Levantine region and at Antioch receiving 'the word of God' and 'tuning unto the Lord', before Paul's first missionary journey: although they are not specifically referred to a 'Godfearers' it would surely be disingenuous not to classify them as such. Also Acts 11.26, for the statement 'And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch', and Acts 13.1-4, for the decision to send Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey. For an overview of Paul's mission among the Gentiles see Klutz 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 13.4-12.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Acts 17.4, with 16.14, 17.17, and 18.7. See also Acts 10.2, 22 and 35, and 13:16 and 26, for the alternative term of *theoboumenoi* or *theoboumenou ton Theon*.

<sup>5</sup> Reynolds - Tannenbaum, 1987, 48-66. Note that such 'Godfearers' were not exclusive to Anatolia, being found in other parts of the Roman Empire also in the Late Republic and Early Principate (e.g., Horace Sat.1.9.68-72, and Juv. Sat. 14.96-101). The term itself is found once only in the New Testament in John 9:31.

<sup>6</sup> Acts 11.20-21, with 11.26.

<sup>7</sup> But note that in Gal.2.8-9, Paul describes his mission with Barnabas as being 'to teach to the Gentiles'

<sup>8</sup> Acts 13.6-12.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Mitchell 1994, 6-10, especially 7.

Jerusalem, leaving Paul and Barnabas to continue to Antioch on their own. Then, after spending some time there, they proceeded to direct their missionary endeavour at other major urban centres in Galatia, with Paul re-visiting the same province in connection with his second missionary journey<sup>10</sup>, although he made the province of Asia his target for the third<sup>11</sup>.

To be sure, the record provided for us in the canonical Acts omits any mention of the newly annexed province of Lycia<sup>12</sup>, except for recording two short visits by Paul to the region. The first of these was when he arrived at Patara at the end of his third missionary journey, when on his way from Troas to Jerusalem; the second being a stop at Myra under armed escort on his way as a prisoner to Rome<sup>13</sup>. As such, then, if we are to rely on this source alone Paul made no attempt at evangelising in Lycia during any of his missions to Anatolia, despite places such as Phaselis among other centres in the province that were the home of Jewish communities - and so we can assume Godfearers also - from at least the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.<sup>14</sup>. The non-canonical *Acta Pauli*, on the other hand, tells a different story. According to this, after leaving Iconium towards the end of his first missionary journey, and so in about 48, the Apostle made his way to Antioch by Pisidia and thence to Myra to take ship to Sidon in Phoenicia, staying at Myra long enough to perform at least three miracles involving his Gentile host and two members of that host's family<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, according to another part of the same *Acta Pauli*, it was at Myra that Paul was found by Thecla of Iconium in her search for his acceptance of her as a follower of the doctrine he preached, and where she received baptism at Myra from "he that hath worked with thee", so possibly from Barnabas<sup>16</sup>. Although this work was declared apocryphal in the 5<sup>th</sup> century<sup>17</sup>, it seems that this was done as much for political reasons as for any questions over its veracity or otherwise, and some would hold that it is a credibly accurate as well as a near contemporary record of Paul's doings in Anatolia during his first missionary journey. Admittedly, it does contradict the canonical Acts in some places<sup>18</sup>: but just as the four canonical gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are contradictory in places, there is no need to 'throw the baby out with the bathwater', to coin a phrase, and deny the Acts of Paul and Thecla a hearing in their favour. True, it, like the Acts and even the four canonical works of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are as much literary compositions as historical account, but we should not ignore the evidence that the Acts of Paul and Thecla were certainly held to be as genuine a source as the Acts in the early Church. Thus it will be that elements not germane to the main story were simply edited out of the Acts and the account of Paul's travels

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<sup>10</sup> Acts 16:1-6.

<sup>11</sup> Acts 19:1.

<sup>12</sup> For the annexation of Lycia, cf. Bennett 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Acts 21.1 (Patara), and 27.5 (Myra).

<sup>14</sup> See 1 Maccabees 15.23 for Jewish communities at Phaselis and elsewhere in Lycia c. 150 BC; also Josephus *Bellum Judaicum* 1.428, where the community at Phaselis is mentioned in connection with the political programme of Agrippa I (r. 10 B.C.-A.D. 44). These literary references aside, epigraphic evidence indicates Jewish communities in Lycia during the Imperial period at Tlos (CIJ 2.757) and at Limyra (CIJ 2.758).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Elliot 2005, 371, and 374-375: the *Acta* were certainly in existence by 190, as shown by Tertullian *De Bapt.* 17:5.

<sup>16</sup> *Acta Pauli et Thecla* 40-41; some versions of the story claim that Thecla was baptised in the theatre at Myra.

<sup>17</sup> Elliot 2005, 350. The *Acta Pauli* was declared apocryphal mainly because it was considered a key text of the heretical Manichaeans, and, according to Tertullian, *De Bapt.* 17.5, the presbyter who compiled it was deposed, Jerome *Cat. Script. Eccl.* 7, adding that he was personally deposed by the Apostle John

<sup>18</sup> E.g., according to Acts 14.24-26, at the end of their first missionary journey Paul and Barnabas re-traced their original route through Pisidia to Pamphylia, taking ship at Attaleia for Antioch on the Orontes rather than embarking at Myra for Sidon.

in Anatolia and elsewhere suitably abridged for public consumption<sup>19</sup>. In which case, a stop at Myra by the Apostle at the end of his first missionary journey during which he resided with a local Godfearer and met others of the same persuasion there should perhaps not be so adamantly dismissed out of hand as most biblical scholars do, essentially on account of their rejection of the Acts of Paul and Thecla.

Howsoever we view the alleged evangelising visit the Apostle made to Myra during his first missionary journey the possibility of a resident congregation of proto-Christians there during the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. is somewhat strengthened by a Late Antique hagiography reporting the trial and then execution at Myra of Nicander and Hermaeus, Lycia's first known martyrs<sup>20</sup>. According to this source, Nicander was the first bishop of Myra and Hermaeus his deacon, both men having been ordained in person by Titus, one of Paul's first Gentile converts, and continues by reporting how Nicander and Hermaeus were tried for excessive proselytising for which reason they were condemned to death and martyred.

Their crime as such, then, was not their Christianity per se - for despite popular belief the religion was never formally declared illegal - but their proselytizing, and by extension their transgression of accepted social norms. After all, in the Graeco-Roman world the public respect for, and sacrifices to, the traditional gods were an essential and ritualised part of the social structure, in part because they served to promote social unity, but also because of the generalised belief that the failure of a community to maintain the appropriate relationship with the gods could result in losing their favour and so leading to some form of punishment by them. The problem was that certain of the early Christians, through combining proselytising in favour of a God and a form of religion that were entirely new, along with a refusal to follow accepted social conventions and show respect to the traditional gods, easily upset those of their fellow citizens of a more conservative mind, who could interpret their behaviour as atheism or asebia, ungodliness or impiety, and so atheism. To be sure, atheism in itself was not a crime in Roman law, for it was just one branch of philosophical discourse. But the public denial and the ostentatious contempt by 'atheists' of accepted social and religious practices could certainly be interpreted as anti-social and subversive behaviour of a kind liable to cause a breach of public order. In which case as local authorities were obliged to keep their areas of jurisdiction free from disorder, then it is easy to see how excessive proselytising by Christians could be viewed as both shocking and offensive disrespect towards the established law and order, and so deserving of punishment. And for their part, martyrdom was welcomed by those Christians condemned to death as a way of bearing witness to the sincerity of their beliefs, so continuing the Judaic origins of their faith by following the established Judaic tradition of a persecuted minority that remained faithful to God unto death<sup>21</sup>.

Of course, a hagiography such as that reporting the trial and the martyrdom of Nicander and Hermaeus is a document shaped and constructed to suit a specific purpose, and we might doubt its value as even a pseudo-historical source of information regarding early Christianity in Lycia. And yet its claim that two ordained priests were tried and then executed in the province for their excessive proselytising - and so impiety - at a date around the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. can be substantiated by considering the overall context of this alleged martyrdom. Firstly,

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<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., Haenchen 1971, 112-116, whose views on the historicity of the Acts are admittedly not widely shared today.

<sup>20</sup> Delehaye 1902, col. 191; cf. Lackner 1980.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Frend 2000, and more especially Bowersock 1995, *passim*, for martyrology in the early Christian period.

it dates to about the same time that the emperor Domitian was implementing a campaign against even his own relatives for the crimes of atheotism and asebia<sup>22</sup>, Secondly, there are several examples of martyrdom resulting from proselytising and other 'disturbances of the peace' by Christians in this general period as in, for example, Bithynia, where within a decade or so of the alleged events at Myra, Pliny the Younger, then governor of the province, was faced with a somewhat similar episode of "impiety" in that province. As he specifically noted in a letter to the emperor Trajan, not only were followers of the "superstition" (as Pliny termed Christianity) to be found in both urban and rural areas of Bithynia, the doctrine having spread "like a contagion", but more pressingly, the blatant conduct of these Christians was creating some form of disturbance in his province<sup>23</sup>. Pliny fails to specify exactly how these Christians had caused such umbrage there, although it was most probably through denying the customary sacrifices to the accepted gods, a common reason for martyrdom in the Imperial period. More to the point though was the way in which the behaviour of these Bithynian Christians had brought them to the attention of, at first, their own local authorities and then Pliny, as governor of the province. He condemned without a second thought those who persisted adamantly in declaring their Christianity, and quite rightly so, according to Trajan, who went on to caution Pliny against actively seeking out those who followed the faith, advice evidently intended to prevent creating more martyrs and so potentially attracting more converts to the belief<sup>24</sup>.

### From the First Century to the "Edict of Milan"

The *Acta Pauli* and the *Passion of Nicander and Hermaeus* stand almost alone as evidence for the impact or spread of Christianity in Lycia until the second decade of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. For the intervening period all that we have are a series of hagiographies, most without specific dating evidence. However, it is generally accepted that the persecution initiated by the emperor Decius between 250-251 was when Themistocles of Myra was martyred<sup>25</sup>, while that of Valerian between 258-260 resulted in the deaths of Paregorius and Leo of Patara<sup>26</sup>. These three aside, it was presumably one or other of these two early periods of persecutions that saw the martyrdom of two other Myra-based Christians, Crescens, and Dioskorides<sup>27</sup>. As was most usually the case with all of the early Christian martyrs, the crime shared by these men was that of refusing to make a public sacrifice to the established gods in the presence of a Roman magistrate, such sacrifices having been decreed by Decius and later by Valerian on occasions when the Empire as a whole was seen to be under extreme external and internal threat<sup>28</sup>.

Although we might once again question the historical accuracy of these specific hagiographies, their true value in many ways is how they at the very least reflect the cherished traditions of later Christians: that by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, the religion had firmly taken root at

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Cassius Dio 67.14.1-2 with 68.1.2; Eus. *Hist.Eccl.*3.15-20.

<sup>23</sup> Pliny *Epistle* 10.96.

<sup>24</sup> Pliny *Epistle* 10.97. This and the preceding letter are, incidentally, our only evidence for the widespread existence of Christianity in Bithynia before the 4<sup>th</sup> century. As such they provide a salutary reminder that the absence or lack of evidence for the spread of Christianity in many parts of the Roman Empire up to the time of Constantine need not necessarily reflect the actual situation.

<sup>25</sup> *Syn. Ecc. Const.* col. 334.

<sup>26</sup> Delehay 1902, cols. 472-473.

<sup>27</sup> For Crescens: cf. Delehay 1902, col. 603; and for Dioskorides: Delehay 1902, col. 676. For the sake of completeness it is necessary to note here that there is no basis for the tradition that St. Christopher was in any way connected to Lycia: cf. Woods 1994 and the references cited there.

<sup>28</sup> For the Decian persecution, see in particular Barnes 1968 with Frend 2000, 827-829.

Myra, the de facto provincial capital of Lycia, as well as at Patara. Moreover, as Myra held the foremost place in the tales surrounding the origins of Christianity in Lycia, and by the 4<sup>th</sup> century was already recognised as the province's principal ecclesiastical centre, then it does seem reasonable to assume this was the place where the religion first took hold in the province. Which naturally takes us to Nicholas of Myra, the brightest star in the firmament of Anatolian Christianity, best known today in his guise as Santa Claus, and so without a doubt the most famous of the early Christians of Lycia. To be sure, there is a wealth of tradition that surrounds this man, of which we need to note here simply the central elements, beginning with him being the only son of a wealthy local family whose parents died of the plague, and who is said to have made at least one pilgrimage to Palestine and to Egypt in his youth before being ordained. The story goes on that he was imprisoned during the Great Persecution initiated in 303 by Diocletian, Emperor of the East, and was subsequently rewarded for his adherence to the faith by being made Bishop of Myra by Constantine I. Moreover, it is said that he also won a large tax reduction for Myra from that same emperor, and that he personally took apart Myra's temple of Artemis, along with several others buildings of the type. Indeed, it is held that such was his Christian fervour that when attending the Council of Nicaea in 325, he went so far as to punch the nose of the Alexandrian priest Arius on account of the Arius' heretical teachings.

Certainly, there can be no doubt that there was a Nicholas of Myra who died sometime before 343<sup>29</sup> and was honoured with a cult at his hometown before the later 5<sup>th</sup> century, and later privileged by Justinian with a church at Constantinople that he shared with Priscus of Sebaste<sup>30</sup>. However, there is frankly no basis in truth for the main stories concerning him as outlined above or the traditions relating to his gift giving, never mind his attendance at the Council of Nicaea. Quite simply, the deeds and accomplishments of the Nicholas of Myra historically attested in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century were increasingly confused with those of the more than ten other but later holy men of Lycia who share that name, if especially Nicholas the Thaumaturge, better known as Nicholas of Zion<sup>31</sup>, and so through a series of imponderables and transformations producing a composite, the Santa Claus of the modern world. Exactly when and how this process began is of course beyond the scope of this review, although it was certainly under development by the 6<sup>th</sup> century, when the claim that this 4<sup>th</sup> century Nicholas of Myra attended the Council of Nicaea first appears<sup>32</sup>.

Be that as it may, this is not to say that the attested early 4<sup>th</sup> century Nicholas of Myra did not suffer active punishment during the Great Persecution initiated by Diocletian in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century. After all, this was in theory if not always in practice an all-encompassing anti-Christian pogrom, beginning on 23 February 303 with a decree issued by that emperor and aimed at the Church as an institution<sup>33</sup>, and which then lasted - with one brief interruption - for some ten years. Under that decree churches and the scriptures were ordered destroyed, Christian property was confiscated, leading members of the church were removed from public office,

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<sup>29</sup> Fedalto 1988, 225.

<sup>30</sup> Procopius de Aed., 1.6.30 8.

<sup>31</sup> Anrich 1914-1917, II, 368-527, especially 441-454, and Ševčenko - Ševčenko 1984, 13-14; also Harrison 2001, 79-85, drawing heavily on these two.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Gelzer, et al. 1898, lxxv, and lxxix, with 67; also Anrich 1914-1917, II, 459-460: both sources are in a sense somewhat ancient, yet are just as useful and valid today as was accepted by R. M. Harrison when he compiled his initial works on Christianity in Lycia in the 1960's.

<sup>33</sup> Lactantius De Mort. 12. The real origin of the persecution, though, goes back to a late 3<sup>rd</sup> century decree against Christians serving in the Roman army; cf. Lactantius De Mort. 11.

and Christians as a group were excluded from the courts unless prepared to make a sacrifice beforehand. What is more, although Diocletian had wanted no bloodshed<sup>34</sup>, such was the public hostility towards the Christian community in some parts of the Empire that people occasionally did ignore the emperor's wish, as in Phrygia, where a mob destroying a church killed its entire congregation in the process<sup>35</sup>. True, it may well have been, given the rabidly anti-Christian stance of Galerius, Diocletian's Caesar, or junior colleague and named successor, that this mob in Phrygia simply assumed a priori imperial approval for their actions. If so, then they were not far off the mark, for a further edict issued by Galerius in 304 ordered that all bishops be imprisoned and that they and their congregations make a public sacrifice, obstinacy in this matter resulting in punishment of one form or another.

Moreover, worse was to come for those Christians in the eastern Empire after 1 May 305, when Diocletian retired from public life and Galerius assumed his rank and title, Diocletian's ostensibly equal-ranking colleague, Maxentius, emperor of the West, also retiring to be replaced by his Caesar Constantius. While Constantius, who had a Christian wife, chose not to implement the anti-Christian pogrom in his realm, under Galerius the pace of persecution in the Eastern Empire now increased significantly. Even so, as time went by imperial officials in that area found themselves being increasingly challenged by the provocative and even obdurate behaviour of those Christians who chose to challenge the State through their martyrdom, either in its extreme form of capital punishment or through service in the mines and the like<sup>36</sup>. Indeed, it was this steadfast resolve on their part to die for their faith that helped persuade Galerius, when seriously ill, to take a step back and re-think his opinion of Christianity and the power of the God the Christians believed in. The result was his decree of 30 April 311 that essentially repealed all the existing anti-Christian laws, on condition that the Christians "do nothing contrary to good order", and, more tellingly, that they pray to their own God "for our (sc. Galerius') safety, for that of the republic, and for their own, so that the republic may continue uninjured on every side, and that they may be able to live securely in their homes"<sup>37</sup>.

In the event, Galerius' decree provided only a short respite from active persecution, as after his death a few days later, on 5 May 311, Maximinus Daia, his Caesar and successor as the Emperor of the East, promptly set about ignoring it. Already infamous for the way in which he actively persecuted Christians before Galerius' death, what seems to have motivated Maximinus' behaviour now is that his predecessor's last edict had resulted in a series of fairly riotous celebrations by Christians in some parts of the Eastern Empire. Such is revealed by a remarkable inscription found at Lycian Arykanda, a copy of a letter sent by the 'nation of the Lycians and Pamphylia' to Maximinus Daia, now emperor of the East, and his colleague Licinius, the then formal Emperor of the West but also allotted a share of the Eastern Empire, requesting that sanctions be applied against those "turbulent Christians" who, "long suffering from madness", threatened to offend the established gods<sup>38</sup>. Exactly how the emperor responded to this specific request is unknown: we have no copy of his reply. But it could well have resulted in a renewed and even intensified pogrom in Asia Minor, as was certainly the case

<sup>34</sup> Lactantius *De mort.* 11.8

<sup>35</sup> Eusebius *H.E.* 8.11.1.

<sup>36</sup> Lactantius *Div. Inst.* 5.22, with 13.1, and 23. An extreme example of such behaviour is provided by Eupl(i)us of Sicilian Catania: having repeatedly shouted outside the governor's office that he was a Christian and happy to die for his beliefs, he was duly obliged with both torture and execution: Musurillo 1972, 310-319.

<sup>37</sup> Lactantius *De Mort.* 34-35; also Eusebius *Vit. Const.* 1.57.

<sup>38</sup> CIL 3.12132 = TAM, II, 785 = OGIS 569 = Novak 2001, 5.7.

in Egypt, where the Christian community suffered from a concentrated period of persecution, many of its members meeting their death at this time<sup>39</sup>.

More to the point, though, while we have no evidence as to what extent this second phase of the Great Persecution was enforced in provinces other than Egypt, it was at this time that Methodius of Olympus in Lycia was allegedly martyred<sup>40</sup>. A confirmed neo-Platonist, he was the first major figure in the Church to refute through his *Aglathon* the anti-Christian pronouncements of Origen on the nature of the Resurrection<sup>41</sup>. As such, then, he deserves an especial note here as the first Lycian Christian to make a wider mark in the field of Christology, even though it must be admitted that there is no certainty he was ever a bishop, whether of Olympus or any other place, nor can his status as a martyr be verified<sup>42</sup>. That said, if Methodius did indeed experience death through martyrdom at this time, then he and the otherwise obscure aforementioned first Nicholas of Myra, would seem to be the two only Lycians who suffered in any way during the Great Persecution.

Superficially this might be taken as an indication that under Diocletian, Christianity was not as firmly rooted in Lycia as it was in other parts of the Eastern Empire. However, that seems inherently unlikely for, as we have seen, the region had produced martyrs in earlier times. Also, the Arycanda inscription of 311 and its clear expression of discontent by the peoples of Lycia and Pamphylia with the “turbulent” Christians in their region only makes sense if that “turbulence” was both widespread and initiated by substantial numbers of people. In which case the real explanation is more likely that the Christians of Lycia were wise enough to keep their heads down and refrain from any overt and public activity at this time, and if faced with the dilemma of either making a public sacrifice to the traditional gods or facing death, simply dissimulated in favour of the former option. There was, after all, many a precedent for taking this course of action and later being excused for doing so, thanks to the decision of the Council of Carthage in 251 adopted by Rome later the same year: that those who had sacrificed during the Decian persecution in order to avoid death should be welcomed back into the Church after being dealt with according to their individual guilt<sup>43</sup>. Yet whatever the explanation for this apparent dearth of Lycian martyrs during the Great Persecution, this decade-long period of legal harassment suddenly came to an end thanks to the so-called “Edict of Milan”, and its guarantee of freedom of worship for all.

The principal catalyst for this revolutionary change in attitude towards Christianity, which exempted Christians from the public duty of honouring the traditional gods, was quite simply the especially unstable political situation that developed in the Roman Empire during the years 305-312. The circumstances themselves need not be discussed in detail here, except to note that the turning point came with the capture of Rome on 29 October 312 by Constantine, son of the deceased Constantius, former Emperor of the West, so bringing to an end a long and protracted civil war for the control of that region. Our principal sources for the events leading up to the victory that day agree that either a few days or the night before the battle for Rome Constantine received a vision assuring the victory if he and his army fought in the name of the God of the Christians. Up to this point and for a few years more Constantine publicly placed

<sup>39</sup> Eusebius H.E. 4-5; and 8.9.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Jerome *De vir. Ill.* 83; also Patterson 1997, 17-21.

<sup>41</sup> Patterson 1997, 18-19, with Bonwetsch 1917, 219. The substantially later claim that Methodius was bishop of Patara may have arisen from the knowledge that his dialogue against Origen was delivered at that place.

<sup>42</sup> Patterson 1997, 1921.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Cyprian Ep. 53, 54, 55 and 68.

his faith in Apollo in the guise of Sol Invictus, the "Invincible Sun", his father's patron deity. Although his mother was a Christian, there is no evidence that he had previously embraced the religion. However, his rather generalised belief in the supremacy of a single divinity, usually identified as Apollo and which had developed from a theology developed by the neo-Platonist philosophers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, was widely shared at that time. Indeed, Constantine's own triumphal arch at Rome, erected to honour his victory there in 312, quite specifically says that this victory came about through *instinctu divinitatis*, "the instigation of the divine", leaving open to interpretation the exact nature of that deity. On the other hand, although he continued to issue coins with the image of Sol Invictus up to the year 325, and so ostensibly venerating one of the accepted pantheon at Rome, within three months of capturing the city he made his pro-Christian stance perfectly clear when he set about using imperial funds to construct on imperial property Rome's first purpose-built church, St. John Lateran, and began to pass a series of measures favouring the once penalised Christian community in Rome<sup>44</sup>.

What is much more relevant to us, though, is the meeting that took place at Milan in February 313, between Constantine, de facto ruler of the Western Empire, and Licinius, its de jure emperor, but who in reality only controlled the Balkans. Licinius fairly quickly agreed to relinquish all his claims to the Western Empire in return for Constantine's support for a coup against Maximinus Daia so that Licinius could assume the position of emperor of the East. However, reaching that agreement required a series of concessions from both sides including the adoption of a series of common civil rules and procedures to apply in both the western and the eastern parts of the empire, of which the best known is that we know as the "Edict of Milan". This granted "the Christians and all others absolute authority to follow the religion which each may desire, so that by this means whatever divinity is enthroned in heaven may be gracious and favourable to us and to all who have been placed under our authority..." and that "...no one who has given his mental assent to the Christian persuasion or to any other which he feels suitable to him should be compelled to deny his conviction, so that the Supreme Deity, whose worship we freely observe, can assist us in all things with his wonted favour and benevolence"<sup>45</sup>.

To be sure, there was no "Edict of Milan" as such. Lactantius, our sole contemporary source for the text as set out above simply repeats the relevant details of the accord between the two men as these were set out in a letter from Licinius to the governor of Bithynia and posted at Nicomedia on 13 June 313<sup>46</sup>. Yet there can be no doubt as to the accord's significance in the history of Christianity. Not only were Christians now allowed to worship their God in their own way, but the very wording of the accord gave a none-too subtle precedence to Christianity in specifically stating that freedom of worship was granted to "Christians and all others" rather than simply "to all citizens" of the Roman Empire. That said, the authors of the measure were mindful enough of the substantial numbers in the Roman Empire as a whole who followed the old religions. This is why they were careful to include in their text the same formula used on the Arch of Constantine, making reference to a "Supreme Deity" without specifying who that divinity might be.

As it is, the evidence is that the "Edict of Milan" was primarily directed at the citizens of the Eastern Empire, for the Diocletianic persecution never really took hold in that part of the

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<sup>44</sup> Eusebius H.E. 10.5.21-24.

<sup>45</sup> Lactantius De Mort. 48; see also Eusebius H.E. 9.9.12.

<sup>46</sup> Lactantius De Mort. 48.

Western Empire, originally ruled by Constantius and ‘inherited’ by Constantine. This allows for the suggestion that the prime mover at Milan for this momentous guarantee of religious freedom to Christians was Licinius. Such would make perfect sense. Although there is no reliable data regarding the relevant proportions of Christians to others in either the Western or Eastern Empire, the consensus is that more Christians were to be found in the latter than in the former, despite the Diocletianic persecution having been an essentially continuous feature of life there since 303. As such then, an elementary deduction is that Licinius saw how an extension of religious tolerance to the oppressed Christians of the Eastern Empire would win him their support in his campaign against Maximinus Daia.

### From the Edict of Milan to the Council of Nicaea

The idea that Licinius favoured granting freedom of worship to Christians simply to win their support in his war against Maximinus Daia was certainly common amongst contemporary Christian chroniclers, who maintain that that once he assumed sole rule of the Eastern Empire in the summer of 313, he began to persecute all those believers who came under his rule<sup>47</sup>. The truth of the matter, though, is not so clear-cut. For example, within a year of his installation as emperor of the East the church hierarchy in Anatolia and Syria at least felt confident enough to hold the Council of Ancyra<sup>48</sup>. This - the first church council to be held in the Eastern Empire after the “Edict of Milan” was agreed - was primarily concerned with resolving the matter of those Christians who had apostatised or otherwise foresworn their faith during the Great Persecution. Presided over by either Vitalis of Antioch or Marcellus of Ancyra, it followed the spirit of the much earlier Council of Carthage in providing a number of penalties for those who now wished to be welcomed back into the church. The severity of these depended more on the rank of the person than the degree of their participation in non-Christian ceremonies.

And yet, while the meeting of a church council at Ancyra certainly testifies to Licinius’ overall public tolerance of Christianity, over the next few years he seems to have gradually brought in a series of laws with a distinct anti-Christian bias<sup>49</sup>. Although there may have been legitimate reasons for at least some of these measure, e.g. as a means of resolving public discord in individual communities in part perhaps stimulated by violently-opposed adherents of different Christian doctrines, the introduction of these laws provided Constantine with a badly needed excuse to initiate a campaign against Licinius and show himself as the champion of the one true faith. He had already demonstrated his desire to be seen in this way with his decision to preside over the Council of Arles in 314, called to resolve a number of issues dividing the Western Church, most especially Donatism<sup>50</sup>. Moreover, he was also displaying an increasing intolerance for what he clearly saw as a parallel state structure formed around the old political elite at Rome, a group whom he damned on account of their belief in *superstitio* (“superstition”), the same allegation that for long had been addressed at the Christians<sup>51</sup>. It was quite natural, then, that he would take advantage of Licinius’ allegedly anti-Christian measures as an excuse to extend his authority and his religious views over the Eastern Empire as well as the Western. And so the short military campaign that ended with the defeat of Licinius at

<sup>47</sup> E.g., Soz. H.E. 3.

<sup>48</sup> Mansi 1758-1798, II, cols 523-539.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Eusebius Vita Cons. 1.51-2.2 with 2.24, 2.29-9, 2.42, 3.12 and 3.20.

<sup>50</sup> Eusebius H.E. 10.5.21-24.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. CIL 11.5265 = ILS 705.

Chrysopolis on 18 September 324 allowed Constantine to take his place as undisputed ruler of the Roman Empire.

Now that he ruled the entire Roman Empire, Constantine was able to take his active interest in the doings of the Church - as was so clearly expressed at the Council of Arles - a stage further. The thing was that in a once-divided empire where Christianity had been a suppressed religion, separated communities had come up with different and competing ideas about the nature and basis of their faith. In this regard a major source of debate was the concept of the Trinity, the fundamental basis of Christianity, and its principal tenet, that although God is one in essence (*ousios*), he is three in person (*hypostasis*), that is to say, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are distinct and equal aspects of the one Trinity. Many early Christians found it difficult to rationalize how a single *ousios* could be expressed through three parts and not be just another form of polytheism or syncretism. But what was even harder for many others to comprehend, and something not obviously answerable from the teachings of the apostles, was how one part of that Trinity, as represented by Jesus Christ, could be both human and divine, and so become the Word of God made flesh to die on the cross for the salvation of humanity.

Ever since the early days of the church professional and amateur theologians had sought a way of defining the exact relationship between the divine and human elements of Jesus Christ, a central truth and guiding light for those who followed Christianity. In actuality, the matter itself was probably of little concern to the majority of ordinary people: as long as they were convinced that their form of belief was correct, then they were happy. What now brought it to the attention of Constantine though was an increasingly aggressive dispute among the ecclesiastical hierarchy surrounding the attempt by an Alexandrian priest named Arius to, in effect, square the circle. A detailed discussion of Arius' argument is of little relevance here, and for our purposes it will suffice to summarise its substance. This essentially maintained that Jesus Christ was neither entirely human nor entirely divine: instead of being the exact same divine essence (*homoousia*) with God the Father, Jesus Christ as God the Son merely shared that same divine essence (*homoiousia*).

Arius' interpretation certainly satisfied a majority of those believers who were concerned over the way in which the three forms (*hypostases*) of God smacked of polytheism, because although he did not touch on the matter of the Holy Spirit, he stressed the unity of the three forms of God in sharing the same divine essence. However, his analysis and identification of three *hypostases* was seen by many leading theologians of the day as implying three quite separate identities and not three forms of one Trinity, so denying the unity of the Trinity as a single *ousios*. But what was worse in their eyes was that Arius' interpretation made the Son, in the form of Jesus Christ, a created being of a quite separate essence from the Father, rather than a being who had existed since time began, as the Bible had announced. Moreover, this was a created being formed expressly to demonstrate through his teaching the way to be morally and spiritually God-like rather than being of one pre-existing substance with the other elements of the Trinity.

Although the ins-and-outs of the matter were far beyond the average person, involving as they did relatively obscure concepts derived from Greek-inspired neo-Platonism, the developing division between the ecclesiastical leaders representing the various parts of the empire evidently troubled Constantine. He desired uniformity of belief and decided to resolve the issue by convening for the following year the first-ever ecumenical council, that is to say, a council composed of church representatives and theological experts from both the eastern and western parts of the empire, and force them to resolve the dispute. His intention was that it should

meet at Ancyra, but he then decided on Nicaea because that place was more convenient for both emperor and priests to travel to than was central Anatolia<sup>52</sup>. When the proceedings began in May 325, only 300 or so of the original 1,800 invitees actually made the journey<sup>53</sup>, among them Eudemus of Patara, the sole representative of the Lycian church<sup>54</sup>. And it was this fractional representation - hardly representative of the entire church and with not all of its advocates likely to be entirely familiar with Greek philosophical terminology or its equivalent in Latin - that through a mixture of spite and ignorance determined Arius' teachings heretical and ordered his excommunication<sup>55</sup>. Furthermore, to forestall any further debate on the matter, this same fraction adopted as canon law a statement of belief, the initial form of what Christians refer to as the Nicene Creed, and which at Constantine's insistence proclaimed the Son as *homoousios* - consubstantial or "one in essence" with the Father - in the hope that this would put an end to the debate on the nature of Jesus Christ and the idea that he was in any way somehow distinct from God the Father.

### Christianity in Lycia: From the Council of Nicaea to the Council of Chalcedon

Given that the Council of Nicaea was the First Ecumenical Council, and that it was called specifically to deliberate and decide on an important doctrinal matter, then the actuality of the Lycian church sending a single delegate, Eudemus of Patara, is especially remarkable when we consider that there were seven or so delegates at Nicaea from Lycia's neighbouring province of Phrygia, eleven from Pisidia, five from Caria, and another seven from Pamphylia<sup>56</sup>. Moreover, the absence at Nicaea of any envoy from Myra is even more noteworthy, given the rank of that place as the civil and so also the ecclesiastical metropolis of the region. As such, the failure of the Lycian church to send their senior bishop along with a larger body of priests to take part in the Council of Nicaea or, to be precise, to agree to the adoption of the homoousian creed decided there, with its identification of the Son as being of the same essence or substance with the Father, might suggest that the Christians of Lycia favoured strongly another doctrine, perhaps the doctrine espoused by Arius that had now been declared heretical.

Direct proof is lacking, but the possibility that the Lycian Church as a whole favoured Arianism or at least another dogma at variance with the creed agreed at Nicaea, finds a degree of support in what took place in 359 at the Council of Seleucia in Isauria<sup>57</sup>. One of two parallel church meetings organized that year by the pro-Arianist emperor Constantius II, the other being at Arminium, these were convened to resolve yet another developing difference between elements of the church arising directly from the doctrine agreed at Nicaea. That is to say, as Jesus Christ was both God and man, then exactly how did his human and divine natures coexist?<sup>58</sup> As it were, the meeting at Seleucia quickly degenerated into an acrimonious

<sup>52</sup> Eusebius *Vita Const.* 3.8 with Hanson 1988, 152-153 regarding Ancyra as the original choice of location.

<sup>53</sup> Accounts provided by three representatives who were there differ as to the number who actually attended. Eusebius says there were 250 delegates (*Vita Const.* 3.9), but according to Eustathius of Antioch there were 270 (*Theodorus Eccl.Hist.* 1.7), while Athanasius of Alexandria reports 318 (*Ad.afros ep.syn.* 2).

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Gelzer et al. 1898, lxiii with lxvii and lxx, also 73 and 151. Note incidentally that Le Quien (or his posthumous editors) mistakenly assigned several of those who attended the later council of 381 to that of 325.

<sup>55</sup> Arius was eventually readmitted to communion after making a rather bland confession of faith in 328; see Soc. H.E. 1.26, and Soz. H.E. 2.27.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Gelzer et al. 1898, 37-43 for these.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Harrison 1963, 119.

<sup>58</sup> Photius *Ep.HE.Phil.* 4.10.

and increasingly fierce dispute over a compromise proposed by Acacius of Caesarea, that the Son should be seen as *homoios* in the sense of "like" the Father rather than being of or sharing the same essence. Although Acacius found a significant body of support for his thesis, including Eudoxius of Antioch, George of Alexandria and Uranius of Tyre, and also the three representatives from Lycia, Eutychianus of Patara, Basilus of Caunus and Eustathius of Pinara and Sidyma<sup>59</sup>, the majority of delegates at Seleucia found the concept a little too close to the view originally propounded by Arius. And so they proposed an alternative that would, they hoped, satisfy all parts of the church, namely the Creed of Antioch as was approved at the Synod of Antioch in 341 with its declaration that the Son was of a "similar" substance to the Father<sup>60</sup>. But this failed to satisfy Acacius and his supporters, and as allegations of heresy were tossed back and forth and repeatedly countered, so the Council of Seleucia split into two distinct and intractable factions who eventually sent to Constantius two separate and opposing decisions.

As the second of these councils, that at Arminium, likewise (if less violently), failed to come to doctrinal accord, Constantius chose to use his imperial prerogative and have the matter resolved with a meeting of all parties at Constantinople in 360. This resulted eventually in the adoption - at the insistence of the Arianist-leaning emperor - of a doctrine following that of Acacius in declaring the Son to be *homoios*. Furthermore, once again at the emperor's demand, the council also quite specifically decided that because of the confusion caused by the terms *ousia* and *hypostases*, their use was henceforth prohibited in any discussions about the nature of God<sup>61</sup>. All the same, despite its imperial approval, this homousian creed was opposed by various theologians not the least because it left wide open the question to what extent the Son and Father were indeed alike. But any further discussion of the matter was stalled for a time at first by the firm opposition of Constantius and then after his death in 321 by the pro-polytheistic stance taken by his successor Julian (r. 361-363). However, those who favoured the Nicene view eventually witnessed its restoration when, after the short reign of the pro-Nicene emperor Jovian (r. 363-364), the army appointed as emperor the equally avowedly pro-Nicene Valentinian (364-378). That said, any joy in the Eastern Empire was probably somewhat muted when Valentinian then decided to assume command of the Western Empire and gift the rule of the East to his brother Valens (r. 364-378), for Valens was openly pro-Homouian in his belief.

In the event, though, Valens proved to be generally pragmatic and accepting of his brother's seniority as emperor of the West when it came to any discussions of Christian doctrine in his realm, conceding that this was the best way of preserving unity in the empire. Thus, for example, while he had no compunction in arranging for the swift exile of the strongly anti-Arianist and pro-Nicene Peter II of Alexandria almost immediately after Peter's consecration as patriarch, he soon afterwards authorised his return in response to the demands of Pope Damasus at Rome, who was clearly backed by Valentinian and desirous of unity in the empire at all costs. Indeed, it was this desire for unity of empire above all that best explains Valens' caution regarding the growing influence in Asia Minor of the Trinitarian doctrine then being developed by the Cappadocian Fathers - Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nanzianus. The thesis they developed - that the Trinity of the Father, Son and Spirit was one in substance (*ousia*) with three equal identities (*hypostases*) - was intended to counter the continued popularity of Arianism in the Eastern Empire, along with two other alternative dogmas that

<sup>59</sup> Photius Ep.HE.Philo. 4.11, with Soc. Schol. H.E.2.10. For the support of Eutychianus and Eustathius cf. Mansi 1758-1798, III, 322, where Eustathius is described as bishop of "Pinarorum et Didymorum", a mistake for Sidyma.

<sup>60</sup> Soc.Schol. HE. 2.39, with Sozomen H.E. 4.22.

<sup>61</sup> Athanasius De Syn. 30; also Soc. H.E. 2.41.8-16.

had emerged since Nicaea: Macedonianism, a doctrine that taught the Holy Spirit was established in God the Son and subordinate to Son and Father, so making it close to Arianism; and Apollinarianism, which in direct opposition to Arianism emphasised the divinity of Jesus Christ over his humanity, so reducing the humanity of Jesus Christ to his physical form.

The evidence is clear that Lycia was a region where one or more of these dogmas had taken a hold. We learn this from a letter sent between 374 and 379 by Basil of Caesarea to Amphilochius of Iconium. This requested Amphilochius to send a trusted representative to Lycia to establish the veracity of a report Basil had received that certain Lycians were “estranged from the opinion of the Asiani”, that is to say, the followers of non-Nicene doctrines, and now “wish to embrace communion with us”, to whit the upholders of the Nicene tradition<sup>62</sup>. What is more, the letter states expressly that if Amphilochius could delegate someone to the task, that representative should be instructed to meet certain bishops and other clerics of Lycia, naming these as Alexander of Corydala; the presbyter Diotimus at Limyra; the presbyters Tatianus, Polemo and Macarius at Myra; Eudemus of Patara; Hilarius of Telmessus and Lucianus of Phellus. These eight were named because, according to Basil, they were “sound in faith” and “clear of the heretic’s pest”, and their specific naming provides clear proof that non-Nicene traditions were not only common amongst the Lycian church but, at least by inference, were also favoured by the bishops of Myra and Limyra.

Although we have no direct evidence for the success or otherwise of Basil’s letter, the fact remains that non-conformist beliefs such as Arianism, Macedonianism and Apollinarianism, were clearly held widely and strongly enough in enough parts of the Eastern Empire to demand the almost immediate attention of Theodosius I (r. 378-395) when he succeeded Valens as emperor of the East. A start was made with the issue of his *Cunctos populos* at Thessalonika in 380, which declared that the Nicene form of Christianity as then preached specifically by Damasus of Rome and Peter II of Alexandria, was the only acceptable statement of Christian faith. Following from this, he decided to deal with the popularity of Macedonianism and Apollinarianism in the Eastern Empire by convening the Second Ecumenical Council at Constantinople for 381 in an attempt to bring about the uniformity of discipline and doctrine in the church. It very quickly declared as heretical all those dogmas that conflicted with the creed adopted at Nicaea, rejecting at the same time the homouian doctrine adopted in 360, and formally adopted the Trinitarian doctrine of the Cappadocian Fathers - that the Trinity of the Father, Son and Spirit were of one *ousia* with three *hypostases*. Then, in an attempt at better clarifying the obscure philosophical terminology used in elucidating Christian theology, the council adopted the so-called “Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed”. Those agreeing to it included ten bishops of Lycia: Tatianus of Myra, Pionius of Choma, Eudemius of Patara, Patricius of Oenoanda, Lupicinus of Limyra, Macedon of Xanthus, Romanus of Bubon, Thoantius of Araxa, Hermaius of Balbura and Callinicus of Podalia<sup>63</sup>.

The council’s embrace of this Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed naturally did not bring to a complete end any of the non-Nicene traditions espoused in the empire. Indeed many of the predominately Arianist German mercenaries then serving the emperors of the West and of the East held firm to their faith with little or no objection from either the state or the church. Nor did it bring to an end contrasting interpretations on the matter of the relationship

<sup>62</sup> Basil Ep. 218: a *terminus ante quem* of ca. 374 is provided by Amphilochus’ appointment to the see of Iconium in that year, a *terminus post quem* by Basil’s death in 379.

<sup>63</sup> Le Quien 1740, col. 973.

between the human and divine natures of Jesus Christ. Thus a little more than 40 years after the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople the church was once again divided on this issue, thanks to the preaching of Nestorius, a monk of Syria. Having greatly impressed the emperor Theodosius II (r. 408-450) with his sermons, the emperor made him Patriarch of Constantinople in 428, only for Nestorius to almost at once involve himself in an on-going dispute between several prominent theologians over the precise nature of the Virgin Mary, the earthly mother of the Son. On the one hand were those who insisted that since Jesus Christ was God in human form, so his mother was to be identified as *Theotokos*, "the giver of birth to God", but this was greatly objected to by the others who stated that, as God was eternal, so he could not be "born". But where Nestorius made matters much worse was to seek a compromise by suggesting that the correct term for the Virgin was *Christotokos*, the "giver of birth to Christ", so implying that God the Son in the form of Jesus Christ was a separate creation of God the Father, and that Jesus Christ had two rather loosely united and distinct natures, divine and human, rather than one.

Cyril of Alexandria was among the first to object that such a viewpoint denied the principle that Mary had given birth to God the Son, for it separated the pre-existing God the Son from his historical humanity expressed through Jesus Christ, and so also in effect denied the possible salvation of humanity through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross and his resurrection. In addition, the implication that Jesus Christ was newly born of the Virgin Mary and had two natures seemed to Cyril and others as tantamount to Arianism. In other words, through his well-intentioned meddling, Nestorius had quite inadvertently re-ignited a debate that many thought had been settled at the Second Ecumenical Council in 381. As he began to face more and more public opposition to his views, he convinced Theodosius II to convene what became the Third Ecumenical Council at Ephesus in 431. Some 250 bishops attended, and while many assumed that Nestorius would win the backing of the emperor and survive any form of condemnation, in the ensuing debates his opponents, led by Cyril of Alexandria and supported by Celestine I of Rome, won the majority of the votes including those of Erennianus of Myra, Eudoxius of Choma, Aristocritus of Olympus and Timotheus of Telmessus with Eudocias<sup>64</sup>. Nestorius' teachings were pronounced heretical, and he was deposed and sent back to a monastic life.

The fact that only three of the Lycian bishops attended the Council - or at least voted in its favour - might just suggest that Nestorianism had found a degree of a favour within the wider Lycian Church. Superficially, the premise should not be pushed too far, even though we have seen that sections of the Lycian church had displayed openness to non-Nicene traditions. Those congregations that had once held out for one or other non-conformist doctrine may well have embraced Nestorianism. But whether this was the case or not, the rejection by the Third Ecumenical Council of any doctrine stressing duality over unity in a single hypostasis, if especially when coupled with its failure to address the question of exactly how the divine and the human were expressed in the person of Jesus Christ, opened the way for even more debate on the issue. And so the appearance of yet another doctrine that would divide the church, in this case centring on the proposal made by Eutyches archimandrite of Constantinople and ironically a passionate opponent of Nestorius.

Eutyches' suggestion was that Jesus Christ had only one *physis*, in the sense of one nature, and so represented a fusion of human and divine elements in a *monophysis* in which

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Mansi 1758-1798, IV, cols.1219 and 1226, for Erennianus of Myra, Eudoxius of Choma and Aristocritus of Olympus; and Le Quien 1740, I, col. 987, for Timotheus of Telmessus with Eudocias.

his human nature was “dissolved like a drop of honey in the sea”. This view - that Jesus Christ was of one nature in which the subordinate human was scrambled with the predominant divine - was almost immediately denounced as heretical for implying that Jesus Christ was neither truly God nor human. Consequently, in 448 Eutyches was summoned to a synod held at Constantinople to which the sole Lycian representative was Januarius of Macra<sup>65</sup>. He was accused and found guilty of heresy, his doctrine Eutychism was formally anathemised at the same time<sup>66</sup>. Eutyches, however, protested the verdict claiming he had been grievously misunderstood: what he really meant was that although God the Son had two natures, these were merged to form a single entity through the incarnation in the form of Jesus Christ. The ever-pliant Theodosius II responded to his plea by convening a meeting at Ephesus in 449 to review the matter, but although this was meant to be ecumenical, Leo I of Rome initially failed to attend the event and the Western church as a whole was hardly represented<sup>67</sup>. More significantly, though, such was the discord among those who did convene there, coupled with an intense and developing rivalry for pre-eminence within the ecclesiastical elite, that Eutyches even found support from some of his erstwhile accusers and was exonerated, Romanus of Myra being one who spoke in his favour<sup>68</sup>.

The proceedings at Ephesus broke up with the various church leaders excommunicating each other to such an extent that when Leo I of Rome heard what had happened he was so scandalised that he nullified all of the council’s decisions. Moreover, he also despatched a letter, the “Tome of Leo”, setting forth his views on the matter, essentially that Jesus Christ had two natures and was neither “of” nor “from” two natures. However, as Theodosius II died before being able to respond to this, it was left to his successor Marcian (r. 450–457) to deal with the problem, and so the Fourth Ecumenical Council was convened at Chalcedon in 451. This was attended by some 370 delegates including thirteen from Lycia, namely: Romanus of Myra, Zenodotus of Telmessus, Theodorus of Antiphellus, Philip of Balbura, Antipatrus of Caunus, Andreas of Tlos, Romanus of Bubon, Cyrinus of Patara, Eudoxius of Choma, Stephen of Limyra, Fronto of Phaselis, Nicholas of Acarassus and Aristocritus of Olympus<sup>69</sup>. These thirteen followed the majority of the delegates there by beginning the proceedings with a declaration that the Council at Ephesus in 449 was unrepresentative, describing it as the “Robber Council” before formally nullifying all of its proceedings. The delegates then dealt with the matter of Eutyches and Eutychism, which was again denounced as a heresy. In addition, as a clear censure and rejection of any other such Monophysite interpretations of Jesus Christ having a single nature, almost all of the 370 representatives at the Council approved an unambiguous Dyophysite standpoint, that following from the incarnation Jesus displayed “two natures (*physes*), without confusion, without change, without division, the division of the two natures being not cancelled by the union, but rather the quality of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one Person (*prosopon*), and one Subsistence (*hypostasis*), not parted, nor separated into two persons, but one and the same Son ... in Jesus Christ”. Indeed many of the delegates chose to express their personal approval of this dogma by adding their own supportive comments to the final document, among the Romanus of Myra, who stated that “I was

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<sup>65</sup> Le Quien 1740, I, 983.

<sup>66</sup> Mansi 1758-1798, VI, cols. 495-98.

<sup>67</sup> Mansi 1758-1798, VI, cols. 503-508.

<sup>68</sup> Le Quien 1740, I, col. 968.

<sup>69</sup> Mansi 1758-1798, VII, cols. 430-442 with VI, 1086.

not forced to (sign) this (agreement). It is my pleasure to report that, as I stand before the chair of Constantinople (= the Patriarch Anatolius), all the more so since he has honoured me and ordained me. I sign this free from all constraint"<sup>70</sup>.

## From the Council of Chalcedon to the Second Council (Fifth Ecumenical) of Constantinople

As it was, however, the Dyophysite dogma adopted at Chalcedon in 451 did not meet with the approval of Dioscorus of Alexandria, who argued that the concept of Jesus Christ with two *physes* was equal to Nestorianism. And so the council replaced him with Proterius who, as head of the church in Egypt, quickly discovered that the majority of the population there also opposed the Chalcedonian dogma. Hence the refusal by the Egyptian Church to accept the new creed, and so the first steps towards what was to become an independent Coptic Church of Egypt.

Indeed it soon became clear that large numbers of Christians in the Eastern Empire were also not at all happy with the Chalcedonian formula, with the result that in 457/458, the then emperor Leo I (r. 457-474) requested letters from the leaders of each diocese confirming their agreement and that of their bishops, each letter being signed by that leader and by, or on behalf of, all of his subordinate bishops. A transcript of the letter sent by Peter of Myra and the *Synodi Myrensis* has survived, and this provides the names of a further 20 bishops along with their sees: Eudoxius of Choma, Cyrinus of Patara, Stephen of Limyra, Eudoxius of Acalissus, Leontius of Araxa, Andreas of Tlos, Nicholas of Acarassus, Athanasius of Xanthus, Hypatius of Sidyma, Pannychius of Ascanda, Anatolius of Olympus, Cyrinus of Oenoanda, Nicholas of Caunus, Aquilinius of Podalia, Nicholas of Balbura, Aristodemus of Phaselis, Eustachius presbyter for Theodorus of Antiphellus, Carponas presbyter for Palladius of Corydalla, Gelasius presbyter for Romanus of Bubon, Nicholas archdeacon for Heliodorus of Pinara and Timaseus presbyter for Leontius of Candyba<sup>71</sup>. Given that in the case of the last five of these, the letter was signed *manibus dolente*, by proxy, by a church official of the relevant see on behalf of the named bishop, the indications are that by this time the Lycian Church was a thriving institution with no less than twenty-one ecclesiastical sees, each of which with a carefully structured series of church officials. That aside, though, what is of equal interest is the relatively high incidence of men named Nicholas among the signatories, along with other popular local names, but also names that hark back to earlier religious traditions such as Anatolius and Heliodorus.

As it subsequently developed, though, despite this series of letters confirming that the church in Lycia along with the other churches of Asia Minor accepted Chalcedonianism, the apparent ascendancy of that dogma was severely tested by the accession of the emperor Zeno (r. 474-491). An Isuarian by birth, he openly favoured a Monophysite stance. However, desiring unity within the church, he asked Acacius Patriarch of Constantinople to formulate a declaration of belief that would be acceptable to both the Chalcedonians and the non-Chalcedonians. Hence the issue in 482 of the *Henotikon*, or "Edict of Union", a document that included the decisions on the divinity of Jesus Christ made at Nicaea in 325 and at Constantinople in 381 but which omitted any reference to the decree of Chalcedon in 451 establishing the distinction

<sup>70</sup> Mansi 1758-1798, VII, col. 448.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Mansi 1758-1798, VII, cols. 567-580, where many of the entries have a corrupt version of the name (e.g., Narensis for Pinamensis = Pinara).

between Jesus Christ's human and divine essences. As such, the *Henotikon* was satisfactory enough to those who held Monophysite views, for it did not emphasise the duality aspect of Jesus Christ; however, since it did stress the oneness, many Chalcedonians found it perfectly acceptable. Indeed this deliberate ambiguity along with pressure from the emperor Zeno to assure the adoption of the *Henotikon* throughout the Eastern Empire made it a viable choice for uniting the church in that region. However, Felix III of Rome denounced the *Henotikon* as heretical, and formally deposed and then excommunicated Acacius and the majority of his theological supporters.

So began the Acacian Schism, a split hardened by the accession in 491 of the emperor Anastasius I Dicorus (r. 491-518), who confounded matters even further by being an open supporter of Miaphysitism. This was a doctrine originally elaborated by Cyril of Alexandria and Severus of Antioch in response to the then popularity of Nestorianism in an attempt at unifying the church. It held that the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ are united in one (*mia*) physis, the two being united without separation, without confusion and without alteration, but with each nature having an individuality<sup>72</sup>. However, Miaphysitism was seen by many Chalcedonians as being yet another form of Monophysitism, with Palmatius of Oenoanda being among many who attacked Anastasius I for holding "Monophysite" views. So began an open quarrel between the emperor and those leaders and laypersons of the Eastern Church who favoured Dyophysitism, culminating in a revolt by the army in Thrace against the emperor. This forced him in 451 to ask Hormisdas of Rome to suggest a way of resolving matters. Hormisdas naturally demanded that Anastasius and his ecclesiastical supporters make a complete and public acceptance of Chalcedonian doctrine, but Anastasius, more inclined to deal with an emerging threat from the Sassanians, chose to prevaricate on the matter. Thus it was left to his successor Justin I (r. 518-527) to end the schism with his public acceptance of Hormisdas' demands at the Hagia Sophia on 28 March 519, even though Justin's decree confirming the Dyophysite doctrine as the one true dogma met with sustained opposition throughout several parts of the Eastern Empire. Indeed the Egyptian and the Syrian Church quite simply ignored the decree and remained firmly opposed to the Chalcedon doctrine.

Such was the situation on the accession of Justin's successor Justinian I (r. 527-568). As it is, the evidence is clear enough that although Justinian himself embraced Chalcedonianism, his wife Theodora was a Monophysite, and so it was only natural that many suspected the emperor of being a closet Monophysite. Whether this was the case or not, he found himself stranded in the middle of the two opposing doctrinal views. And so in May 536, in an attempt at proving his Chalcedonian credentials, he happily agreed to preside over a church council at Constantinople to finalise the proceedings against the Miaphysite Anthimus, former patriarch of Constantinople, and to hear the cases against Severus of Antioch, Peter of Apamea and the monk Zoara for holding Eutychian beliefs. The Council ended with Anthimus being forbidden to return to his earlier see of Trapezus, and the condemnation of the others for their Eutychism. Those who signed the verdict as representatives of Lycia included John of Olympus, John of Podalia, Paul of Oenoanda, Lycinus of Patara, Eustathius of Tlos and Nicholas of Rhodiapolis<sup>73</sup>.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Le Quien 1740, I, cols. 989-990. Miaphysitism remains the fundamental belief of the modern Oriental Orthodox Churches, who reject the accusation that it is just another form of monophysitism.

<sup>73</sup> Mansi 1758-1798, VIII, col. 1049. Anthimus was tried in absentia as he was in secret, hiding under the protection of Theodora.

Justinian made further attempts at deflecting all rumours regarding his own beliefs with edicts issued in the winter of 543/544 and in 551 that condemned Nestorianism and any of its allied beliefs. However, as might be expected, neither edict satisfied entirely his detractors. And so he, like so many of his predecessors, found himself saddled with an increasingly divided church, but in this case at a time when unity was greatly needed throughout the empire to further the military efforts against the Sassanid Empire. Hence Justinian's decision to convene the Fifth Ecumenical Council at Constantinople in 553, which concluded by condemning all Nestorian-type doctrines, anathemising their authors and adopting a longer but more precise version of the Chalcedonian position. This stated that the two natures of Jesus Christ isolated at Chalcedon were essentially two sets of attributes expressed in a single person in a hypostatic union. As such, then, by emphasizing that Jesus Christ did not simply "exemplify" God the Son but "is" God the Son, and also by deliberately omitting any express condemnation of Monophysitism, the formula served to bridge the gap between them and the Chalcedonians.

Four of the 160 or so ecclesiastical authorities who attended and agreed to the proceedings of the Fifth Ecumenical Council were from Lycia: Philip of Myra, Theodorus of Limyra, Erasmus of Cibyra and Philippus of Phellus<sup>74</sup>. From this R. M. Harrison conjured up a state of affairs in which this low number of Lycian signatories indicated that a majority of their episcopal peers were firmly opposed to a council prepared to tolerate Monophysitism at a time when there was, Harrison supposed, a "proliferation of [such] monasteries" in the Lycian countryside<sup>75</sup>. The simple fact of the matter is that just as before, it was not essential for every bishop from every province and diocese to attend this or any other council unless formally required to. Indeed the list of signatories to the Fifth Ecumenical Council suggests that attendance was limited to a prearranged number of representatives from each region, most of these sending between two and five. That aside, though, Harrison's contention that there was a majority of Monophysite monasteries in Lycia at this time has very little to commend it<sup>76</sup>. True, the post-Chalcedon period saw numbers of Monophysite monks in the Eastern Empire forced to seek refuge in the countryside<sup>77</sup>, and the remote hinterland of Lycia was as good a place as any for them to retreat into. However, there is scant evidence in literary form or from archaeology for a "proliferation" of such monastic communities in Lycia at this time - Monophysite or Chalcedonian<sup>78</sup>. The formula agreed at the Fifth Ecumenical Council in any case actually made it possible for Monophysite monks to settle in urbanised areas - even in Constantinople itself where their presence was actually encouraged and supported by both Theodora and Justinian<sup>79</sup>.

<sup>74</sup> Mansi 1758-1798, IX, cols. 174, 176, 389, 391, and 392; cf. also Le Quien 1740, I, col 985.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Harrison 1963, 120: the idea came from Schultze 1926, 192.

<sup>76</sup> Although Harrison was prone to identify any apparently isolated church in Lycia as a monastery in his original 1963 article, his paper on Lycia originally prepared for publication in 1990 and which appears in edited form as Harrison 2001, 8-47, takes a more cautious view.

<sup>77</sup> Menze 2008, 125-127.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Hellenkemper 1994, 217, noting in passing that the attribution of certain churches in Lycia as being monastic in origin is based on their apparent similarity with the plans of monastic churches in Egypt, notably the presence or absence of a Triconch plan to either the church as a whole or to a chapel of a church. However, as Hellenkemper, 232, also notes, "regional traditions seem to be stronger than liturgical ties" in the churches of southern Asia Minor. This is clearly not the place to discuss the matter any further, although it will suffice to note here that while there is as yet no comprehensive and easily accessible synthesis of early church architecture in Lycia (Harrison 1966 still being the fundamental work on the subject), the matter of church architecture and liturgy in Lycia will be addressed in more detail elsewhere. A fundamental problem in any such discussion is, of course, the lack of excavated examples (although it is hoped that the on-going excavations at Hacimusalar will help rectify that problem), and more pertinently the lack of fully published examples, that of the main church on the Gemiler Island being a rare exception; cf. Asano 2010.

<sup>79</sup> Hatlie 2007, Ch. 4 *passim*.

However, we need not dismiss entirely out of hand Harrison's conviction that at this time the Lycian countryside was populated with followers of Monophysite traditions. After all, in 542 when Justinian was made aware that certain parts of Asia Minor had the distinction of being home to large numbers of "pagans" (in the pejorative sense of country dwellers who were so uneducated that they had not formally converted to Christianity), he resolved to send the pro-Monophysite John of Ephesus and a team of clerics into the countryside to deal with the matter. He and his team were certainly active in Asia, Lydia, Caria and Phrygia. Although they are not recorded as proselytising in Lycia specifically, there is every reason to suppose that its mountainous inner parts retained a predominately rural identity and which likewise lacked a suitable ecclesiastical infrastructure, allowing elements of "paganism" to flourish there. As such, it is perhaps reasonable to speculate that John and his team may well have targeted the region, which was, after all, a known centre of "heretical" beliefs in earlier times. The point being that if this were so, then it is unlikely that their converts were exposed to any obtuse theological debate and so were inducted into the Monophysite tradition that John followed.

Whether or not Lycia was subject to John of Ephesus' mission, in which he claimed to have "rescued" some 80,000 souls, built 92 churches and established ten monastic foundations<sup>80</sup>, cannot be established. On the other hand, there can be no doubt as to the Chalcedonian position of his Lycian contemporary Nicholas of Holy Sion, perhaps the most famous of the post-Nicene Christians of Lycia through, as mentioned above, confusion with the earlier Nicholas of Myra. The lifespan of Nicholas of Holy Sion closely matched that of Justinian, for he founded the monastery by that name in the early years of the emperor's reign. He died only three years before Justinian did after he had been appointed bishop of Pinara. His biography was compiled fairly shortly after his death, and although its author was evidently not totally familiar with the topography of Lycia, it provides rich detail about Nicholas' activities, the Lycian countryside at this time, and in passing the state of the church and the beliefs and practices of the local Christians<sup>81</sup>. While chiefly devoted to the miraculous and other works of this Nicholas, where the Life is of some interest is the series of feasts and other jollities that this Nicholas arranged in the countryside, and at which it seems he may also have been involved in a certain amount of proselytising and remedial missionary work<sup>82</sup>. As such, it may well indicate that Nicholas of Holy Sion felt an acute need to install Christian doctrine among the Lycian country folk, quite possibly in response to the way that the Fifth Ecumenical Council and the endeavours of John of Ephesus had furthered the spread, if not actually the revival, of Monophysite beliefs in the region.

### From the Fifth Ecumenical Council to the "Triumph of Orthodoxy"

As had been the case before, although a formula adopted by an ecumenical council, in this case the Fifth, had managed to paper over the main doctrinal divisions with the Church, it did not satisfy everyone. Thus the unity of the church continued to be disturbed by those reactionary elements on the Chalcedonian and the non-Chalcedonian side that, generally speaking, sought a more rigorous declaration on the exact nature of Jesus Christ. As had been the case during the reign of Justinian, the disputes on the matter had become more rancorous precisely

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Menze 2008, 257 with n. 968 for the sources; also Mitchell 1995, 118-119.

<sup>81</sup> Ševčenko - Ševčenko 1984; for convenient summaries of the life and doings of Nicholas of Holy Zion, see Harrison 1963, 120 and Foss 1994, 23-24 with 27-28. For the localisation of many of the places noted in the Vita recording the activities of Nicholas, see now Alkan 2011.

<sup>82</sup> Ševčenko - Ševčenko 1984, 15.

when an emperor desperately needed unity throughout the empire in order to implement his political programme. The emperor in this case was Heraclius (r. 610-641), and he proposed to resolve the differences between the two sides by suggesting that the church adopt a thesis developed by Sergius I of Constantinople. That patriarch considered that the agreement at Chalcedon dividing the human and divine natures of Jesus Christ too much and so echoed the Nestorian principle of the two persons in Jesus Christ. Moreover, he also believed that the decisions of the Council of 553 had assigned a rather generalised form of humanity to Jesus Christ rather than true humanity. To counter these perceived failings, Sergius elaborated a thesis that centred on the concept of Jesus Christ having two equal natures, human and divine, but a single will (*thelema*) conjuring up the image of Jesus Christ utilising his divine and his human elements in a single hypostasis.

Heraclius hoped that this Monothelite formula would facilitate union on the basis that, other than for the most intransigent on both sides, a majority of Chalcedonians could accept the concept of Jesus Christ having a single will with two natures, and that a majority of non-Chalcedonians could agree to him having two natures expressed through a single will. And so the formal implementation of the doctrine was announced in 638 by means of the *Ecthesis*, making Monothelism the official and imperially sponsored position of the church. Inevitably one group of theologians, led by Severinus of Rome, denounced the *Ecthesis* almost immediately, in this case on the grounds that it seemed to invalidate all earlier ecclesiastical debates and discussions simply for the sake of a unity. More pertinently, though, in suggesting that it was the divine that activated the humanity in Jesus Christ, the *Ecthesis* also appeared to deny the completeness of that humanity and so smacked of Apollinarianism.

The emperor, having more important matters to deal with than what he believed to be little more than obtuse obstructionism, essentially chose to ignore yet another developing schism. Not so his successor, Constans II Pogonatos (r. 641-668), who issued an edict, the "Type of Constans", in 648 that banned any further discussion on the matter, with his officials required to treat quite brutally any who refused to acknowledge the authority of the *Ecthesis*. Yet open dissent to this imperially-sponsored and supported doctrine soon reappeared with the accession of Constans' son Constantine IV (r. 668-685). This is why he, like so many of his predecessors, convened yet another church council in one more forlorn attempt to resolve what was a completely unsolvable matter. And so the Sixth Ecumenical Council met at Constantinople in 680, and by its close in 681, had formally condemned Monothelism as well as all other dogmas related to it such as Monoenergetism. It also reasserted the primacy of the Chalcedonian doctrine, agreeing that through the Incarnation, Jesus Christ had become fully consubstantial with humanity in both substance and will, thus formalising the division between the Dyophysites and Monophysites. In truth it was a rather pointless decision, for in reality neither side had been especially happy with the compromise nature of the *Ecthesis*. In any case, most of those churches that held to doctrinal positions deemed Monophysite were in regions now under Islamic control and so free from any attempt at having the Chalcedonian doctrine imposed on them<sup>83</sup>.

The decisions of the Sixth Ecumenical Council were signed individually by the bishops of the various metropolises on behalf of their diocese with Polyectus of Myra signing for the Synod of Myra<sup>84</sup>, although those other clerics present also added their signatures as did Zemarchus of

<sup>83</sup> These churches are those grouped today as the Oriental Orthodox Church.

<sup>84</sup> Mansi 1758-1798, XI, 691.

Sidyra and Georgius of Oenoanda<sup>85</sup>. Their acceptance established harmony in ecclesiastical circles in what yet remained of the greatly diminished empire ruled from or owing allegiance to Constantinople. This sense of equanimity, however, was eventually broken by the arguments that developed in the early 8<sup>th</sup> century around the role in liturgical contexts of icons, those images representing Christ and the Saints that were usually painted on wood, but also painted on walls and placed on floors in mosaic form. To some within both the spiritual and the temporal hierarchy in Late Antiquity the First Commandment seemed to prohibit the making of any kind of image whatsoever<sup>86</sup>. But to others of the time, and even earlier, an icon was seen as simply an image that helped a person focus their prayers<sup>87</sup>. Either way, the debate eventually became a matter of greater notice during the second decade of the reign of the emperor Leo III (r. 716-741), who became convinced by the arguments presented to him by the puritanical Constantine of Nacolia that the First Commandment expressly prohibited the existence of icons. Hence the publication in 726 of an edict commanding the destruction of all icons of a religious nature, complementary to which Leo III ordered the removal of the *Christos antiphonetes*, a famous image of Jesus Christ that stood over the *Chalke*, the official entrance to the Great Palace at Constantinople.

Gregory II of Rome at once objected to the edict, detailing the scriptural evidence for the use of icons as a means of showing reverence to the divine. However, Leo ignored this and instead unleashed an official programme of iconoclasm throughout the regions that were still controlled militarily from Constantinople. His programme was continued by his son and successor, Constantine V Copronymus (r. 741-775), despite a rebellion by iconodules at Constantinople, so giving him the excuse to intensify the agenda set forth by his father. Moreover, aware of the resistance to his programme both within and outside the regions he controlled, Constantine V chose to convene for the year 754 an ecumenical council at Constantinople at which he could impose his will on the entire church. For the meeting, although this was intended to be the Seventh Ecumenical Council, the patriarchs of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch in Syria and Jerusalem, either refused or were unable to attend or even send deputies or other representatives on their behalf, while the See of Constantinople itself was currently vacant, which is why the proceedings were led by Theodosius of Ephesus and Pastilias of Perge. Needless to say, those attending did as the emperor demanded and decreed that icons depicting Jesus Christ embodied a subtle form of Monophysitism, in that they could only show his human nature, while those that represented the saints or the Virgin Mary were simply idols, and so all such images were duly anathemised<sup>88</sup>.

Outside of the Constantinopolitan Empire, however, icons continued to be accepted within the various Christian congregations as aids to prayer with leading clerics such as John of Damascus, for example, playing a major role in a generalised opposition to the iconoclastic stance formalised by the Council of 754. Indeed, a strong element of opposition was evident at Constantinople itself, which is why Leo IV (r. 775-780), Constantine's son and successor,

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<sup>85</sup> Le Quien 1740, I. 973 and 990.

<sup>86</sup> Exodus 20:3-5. The controversy over icons dates back to the earliest days of the church, but one of the most prominent opponents from the period following the "Edict of Milan" was Eusebius H.E., 7.18, who refers to the production and veneration of images as being "a heathen practice".

<sup>87</sup> Eg. Augustine of Hippo, *De mor. eccl. cath.* 34.

<sup>88</sup> The proceedings of the council do not survive, nor does a list of those attending. However, the conclusion of that council is summarised in the surviving records relating to the Seventh Ecumenical Council; cf. Mansi 1758-1798, XII, cols. 575-578, with *ibid.*, XIII, cols. 205-207.

initially tried to establish a compromise between the leaders of the iconoclast and the iconodule factions. Thwarted in this, it was left to his widow Irene, as regent on behalf of their son Constantine VI (r. 780-797), to bring about reconciliation with her proposal to hold a synod at Constantinople in 786 to resolve the issue. In the event this was prevented from discussing the issue by elements of the military that remained faithful to the iconoclast dogma, and so the delegates, including two from Rome, relocated to Nicaea where they met in 787 at what is formally accepted as the Seventh Ecumenical Council. The proceedings there evidently considered all sides of the argument; Theodorus of Myra, for example, represented the iconoclastic faction, and Nicholas, the previous bishop of Myra, argued on behalf of the iconodules.<sup>89</sup> In the end those attending the council agreed that the veneration of icons could hardly be called idolatry, as the reverence shown to the person depicted thereon was not directed at the substance of the icon, whether of wood, paint or stone, but passes to the prototype of the icon - the person depicted. As such then, the council agreed that the portrayal of Jesus Christ in his human form along with all others of significance in the formation of Christianity were quite acceptable as aids to prayer and devotion. With Theodorus of Myra being declared heretical, the council's decision was affirmed by, among others, sixteen other representatives from Lycia: Leo of Limyra, Nicodemus of Sidyma, Theodorus of Pinara, Constans of Tlos, Leo of Corydalla, Constantinus of Candyba, Stephenus of Caunus, Stephenus of Araxa, Anastasius of Patara, John the deacon of Phaselis, Georgius of Nysa, Georgius of Oenoanda, Stauracius of Zenopolis, Peter the deacon of Arycanda and Nicetas of Meloetai<sup>90</sup>.

Irene's restoration of the icons, including the *Christos antiphonetes* over the *Chalke*, survived her overthrow in 802 and remained firm throughout the reign of the Nikephorian dynasty, only to come to an end after the palace coup that brought about the accession of Leo V (r. 813-820). The circumstances that led to this were the series of major military reverses suffered by the Nikephorians and the persuasive arguments directed at Leo V by leading members of the army and the clergy that these defeats had come about because of the restoration of icon veneration. Wishing to better understand the matter, Leo V asked the opinion of his patriarch Nicephorus I, who made the elementary mistake of replying that as the Seventh Ecumenical Council had agreed to the restoration of icons, then there was no point in any further discussion. This greatly enraged the emperor who in 815 proceeded to remove once more the *Christos antiphonetes* at the entrance to the Great Palace at Constantinople, and then oversee the official restoration of iconoclasm at a synod held in the Hagia Sophia that same year.

Leo's successor Michael II (r. 820-829) continued with this renewed attack on icon veneration, publicly reaffirming the decrees of the Council of 754. Indeed, such was his passion for iconoclasm that in 824 he even sent a mission led by Nicetas, the then bishop of Myra<sup>91</sup>, to the Carolingian ruler Louis the Pious, King of Aquitaine, imploring him to embrace iconoclasm and complaining inter alia that many "have removed the holy cross from their churches and replaced it by icons before which they burn incense...[and they]...sing psalms before them, prostrate themselves before them, implore their help. Many even dress up these icons in linen garments and choose them as godparents for their children.... Some priests even scrape the

<sup>89</sup> Le Quien 1740, I, col. 969; also Mansi 1758-1798, XIII, 381. Note that Fedalto 1988, 225, rejects this Nicholas of Myra.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Le Quien 1740, I, cols. 972, 974, 976, 980, 981, 982, 986, 987-988, 990, 993 and 994.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Le Quien 1740, I, col. 969, who notes that Nicetas was subsequently declared heretical after the restoration of icon veneration.

paint off these icons, mix it with wine and consecrated bread, and give it to the faithful.... Others, despising the churches, celebrate the Divine Service in private houses, using an icon as their altar"<sup>92</sup>.

The mission had no success, not the least because Louis the Pious acknowledged the authority of the iconodulic patriarchs of Rome.

Leo's iconoclastic programme was duly followed and even intensified by his son and successor Theophilus (r. 829-842) with his obsessive desire to eradicate all traces of iconodulism resulting in episodes of extreme torture<sup>93</sup>. As with the Great Persecution of Diocletian all those years before, however, such extreme attempts at eradicating a belief held by many merely served to publicise it and bring forth many more willing to suffer for their convictions. And so when Theophilus died and his widow Theodora became regent on behalf of their son Michael III (r. 842-867), she quickly set about the restoration of icon veneration in the area ruled from Constantinople, this being duly confirmed without opposition at a synod held there in 843. The decision was formalised by a procession on 11 March from the palace at Blachernae, where the meeting was held, to the Hagia Sophia on the First Sunday of Great Lent that year, since which time it has been celebrated annually on the same feast day as the Triumph of Orthodoxy<sup>94</sup>.

## Conclusions

The evidence as set out above in the first part of this article, scanty though it admittedly is, and also using sources that some might consider unreliable, tends to support R. M. Harrison's opinion that the inhabitants of early Imperial Lycia were likely to be as "receptive to the new religion as were other, better documented parts of Asia Minor"<sup>95</sup>. Although the recorded number of pre-Nicene Christians in Lycia - known almost entirely from the accounts of their martyrdom only - is less than ten, that number still stands in comparison with other provinces of the Roman Empire in the period before the sole rule of Constantine I. Moreover, the evidence is that the Lycian church can indeed trace its origins back to the time of the apostles, perhaps as a direct result of evangelising there by the Apostle Paul there in the course of his first missionary journey, and so it is likely that the Christians of Lycia formed a substantial substratum within the population of that province in the pre-Nicene period. The idea that such a community could have existed and escaped contemporary notice might seem a little farfetched. But the perception finds a degree of support from the well-documented problems that Pliny the Younger had with Christians in Bithynia in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century. His letter to the emperor Trajan on the matter of these adherents to the "superstition" in that province is the sole evidence for Christianity there before Diocletian initiated his Great Persecution in 301. Indeed, it finds further support from the Aycanda text of 313 recording the letter sent by the "peoples of Lycia and Pamphylia" to Maximianus making a complaint against the riotous celebrations of Christians in those provinces after they were given freedom of worship that same year by the deathbed edict of Galerius. The implication of the text is clearly that at the time there were already substantial numbers of Christians in those two provinces.

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<sup>92</sup> Cf. Mansi 1758-1798, XIV cols. 417-422.

<sup>93</sup> E.g., the monks Theophanes and Theodore of Constantinople, who were convicted of idolatry and punished by being lashed 200 times each before having their faces branded with twelve lines of verse; cf. Martyrol. Rom. 27 December.

<sup>94</sup> Mansi 1758-1798, XIV cols. 787-788; cf. Percival 1994, 576.

<sup>95</sup> Harrison 1963, 119.

As is only to be expected, our knowledge of Christianity in Lycia after 324, when Constantine unified the Roman Empire, is fairly wide-ranging. What does seem to be the case, though, is that the members of the Lycian church had by that time already been exposed to a variety of doctrinal influences, and that a significant number then and later may well have followed dogmas condemned as heretical at the First, Second and Third Ecumenical Councils: namely, Arianism, Macedonianism and Apollinarianism, and Nestorianism. Whatever the reality of the matter though - and Basil of Caesarea's letter of 374-379 provides clear evidence that non-conformist dogmas were widespread in Lycia before the Second Ecumenical Council, and Eutychism was certainly favoured by Romanus of Myra at the "Robber Council" at Ephesus in 449 - the bishops and officials of the Lycian church appear to have given their full support to the decisions of the Fourth Ecumenical Council at Chalcedon in 451. Such is shown by the letter signed by the bishop of Myra and the then twenty other bishops of Lycia sent to the emperor Leo I in 457/458 confirming their adherence to the decisions reached at Chalcedon in 451. Similarly the letter sent by Palmatius of Oenoanda to Anastasius I that scolded him for holding to Miaphysitism, a doctrine that Palmatius and many others saw as a form of Monophysitism, testifies to the dominance of the Chalcedonian position in the region at that time, even though there is a very slight hint that some Christians in Lycia may have embraced non-Chalcedonian dogmas right up to the time of Justinian. Be that as it may, all the evidence that we have seems to confirm that from that time onwards the Lycian church was on the whole fully conformist to the views of the successive patriarchs of Constantinople except that, as R. M. Harrison noted, "The impact on Lycia of Iconoclasm in much of the eighth and first half of the ninth centuries can only be conjectured"<sup>96</sup>. What is clear, though, is that the senior members of the Lycian ecclesiastical hierarchy held opposing views on the matter to a greater or lesser degree, although the self-evidently firmly iconoclastic stance of Nicetas of Myra resulted in him being sent on a mission to Louis the Pious in 824 requesting that he embrace iconoclasm. However, none of the Lycian bishops, with the exception of Theodorus of Myra, seem to have been condemned for whatever stance they took on the matter. So one might in truth question the extent to which the other bishops of Lycia simply went with the flow: favouring iconoclasm when that was demanded at Constantinople and opposing it when iconodulism was back in fashion at the capital. And so it was that as far as it can be established, the Lycian church wholeheartedly accepted the decision to restore icon veneration at the 843 Synod at Constantinople, so giving us the "Triumph of Orthodoxy".

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<sup>96</sup> Harrison 1963, 121.

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## Özet

### Lykia'da Hıristiyanlık: Başlangıcından 'Ortodoksluğun Zaferi'ne Kadar

Lykia'da Hıristiyanlığın kökeni ciddi bir şekilde incelenmemiştir. Bunun başlıca sebebi Aziz Paulos'un M.S. 46/47-57 yılları arasında Anadolu'daki misyoner etkinliğinin Lykia'ya ulaşmadığı, ve böylece Lykia halkının 325 yılında İznik'te toplanan Konsil'de Hıristiyanlığa imparatorluk desteği verilmesi öncesi yeni dine geçişinin yavaş olduğu şeklindeki genel kanıdır. Benzer şekilde 843 yılındaki Constantinopolis Synodu'na kadar bu eyalette dinin gelişimine çok az dikkat edilmiştir. Aslında bu, modern Doğu Ortodoks Kilisesi'nin doğumuna giden kilit aşamalardan biridir, çünkü aynı yıl 11 Mart Pazar günü İkonoklazmanın kesinlikle lanetlenmesini, yani bugün 'Ortodoksluğun Zaferi' olarak kutlanan olayı anma amacıyla özel bir ayin içerir. Ne var ki, bu makalede gösterileceği gibi, M.S. 1. yy.'ın ortasından 9. yy.'ın ortasına kadar geçen 800 yıllık sürede Hıristiyanlığın kökeni ve yayılımını izlememizi ve bu döneme damgasını vuran çeşitli doktrinlere karşı Lykia Kilisesi'nin tepkisi değerlendirmemizi sağlayacak yeterli veriye sahibiz.

Aslında Hıristiyanlaştırma çabalarının Lykia'ya kadar uzandığına ve henüz M.S. 100 yılına gelinmeden Myra gibi yerlerde aktif bir Hıristiyan cemaatinin varlığına dair ikna edici kanıt mevcuttur. Üstelik, yazılı kaynaklardan Lykia'da M.S. 325 yılı öncesinde az sayıda ama önemli martyrin bulunduğu öğrenilmektedir. Buna karşın Arykanda'dan M.S. 311 yılına ait epigrafik kayıtlar eyalette o sırada görece çok sayıda Hıristiyan bulunduğunu teyit etmektedir. Daha da ilginç, bir çok açıdan, Lykialı Hıristiyanların Mesih İsa'nın gerçek doğası konusundaki doktrinlerden ve de özellikle Arius'un geliştirdiği Ariusçuluk dogmasından çok etkilendiğine dair belirtiler vardır. Bu özellikle Arius'un radikal öğretisiyle yüzleşmek için İznik'te düzenlenen 325 yılındaki İznik Konsili'ne eyaletten tek bir temsilcinin gönderilme şeklinden anlaşılmaktadır.

Lykia'daki İznik Akdini izlemeyen geleneklerin etkisinin 381 yılındaki II. Ekümenik Konsil'e kadar büyük oranda azaldığı görülmektedir çünkü dokuz tane Lykialı piskopos Kilise'nin sahiplendiği İznik-Constantinopolis Akdine imza atmıştır. Yine de elimizdeki kanıtlar Lykia Kilisesi'nin unsurlarının İsa Mesih'in doğası hususunda resmi İznik temelli görüşle çok mutlu olmayan din görevlilerini dinlemeye hazır olduğunu göstermektedir.

IV. Ekümenik Konsil'in kararları 471 yılına gelindiğinde yerleşmişti. O yıl Constantinopolis tarafından doğrudan veya dolaylı olarak kontrol edilen taşra kiliselerinin piskoposları, aralarında 21'i Lykia'dan olmak üzere, Kalkhedon kanonlarını kabul ettiklerini bizzat teyit ettiler, böylece Kilise'ye bir çeşit birlik hissi sağladılar. Ancak bu birlik, monofizitliği lanetlemeyen monofizit-lehdarı İmparator Zenon tarafından 482 yılında Henotikon'un yayınlanmasıyla ciddi şekilde sarsıldı. Bununla ortaya çıkan anlaşmazlık Iustinianus zamanında 553 yılında

Constantinopolis'te toplanan V. Ekümenik Konsil'de Nasturilik ve diğer tüm yandaş inançların tekrar lanetlenmesine kadar sürdü. Bu hususta şunu da belirtmek gerekir: İznik'i kabul etmeyen inançların bu ve daha önceki lanetlenmelerine karşın 7. yy.'ın başlarına kadar Lykia'nın çeşitli bölgelerinde monofizitlik ve benzeri doktrinlerin etkisinin sürdüğüne dair kuvvetli imalar mevcuttur.

VI. Ekümenik Konsil'in 680-681'de Constantinopolis'te toplanmasına ve İznik-Constantinopolis Akdinin önemini tekrar teyit etmesine kadar geçen sürede Lykia Kilisesi, İznik Akdini izlemede birleşmiş ve bu konsilin İsa Mesih'in monofizit veya benzeri yorumunu destekleyen herhangi bir dogmayı lanetlemesinde hemfikir görünmektedir. Bu karar Doğu ve Batı Ortodoks ve Şark Ortodoks Kiliseleri arasında artan ayrımı biçimlendirmiş olmasına karşın Küçük Asya'daki ve Roma İmparatorluğu'nun geri kalanındaki kiliselere uyum getirmiştir. Bu uyum erken 8. yy.'da İmparator III. Leon'un ikonaların rolü üzerindeki tartışmalara ikonaları lanetleyerek son vermesine kadar sürmüştür. Bunu izleyen İkonoklazma dönemi Lykia Kilisesi'ni de bölmüş olabilir, çünkü Myralı Niketas 824 yılında ikonasever Sofu Louis'e İkonoklazmayı kucaklaması için elçi gönderilmişti. Öyle ki, eyaletteki ikonasever ilerigelenler 787 yılında VI. Constantinus'un naibesi Irene'nin İznik'te VII. Ekümenik Konsil'i toplayıp ikona tapınımının yasal hale getirmesine kadar sessiz kalmayı tercih etmiş olabilirler. Bu karar V. Leon tarafından reddedilerek İkonoklazmanın ikinci evresini başlatmasına karşın III. Mikhael'in naibesi Theodora'nın 843'te Constantinopolis'te Synod toplaması ve 'Ortodoksluğun Zaferi' ile bu dönem sona ermiştir.

