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CILICIAN BISHOPS AND FOURTH-CENTURY CHURCH POLITICS*

Turhan KAÇAR**

ÖZET

Dördüncü yüzyıl, eskiçağ Hıristiyanlığının en uzun dönemi olarak dikkate alınmalıdır, çünkü Hıristiyan kilisenin gelecekteki kaderini etkileyen en ciddi değişimler bu yüzyıl içerisinde ortaya çıktı. İlk olarak bu yüzyılın hemen başında imparator Diocletianus'un (284-305) yaklaşık on yıl süren büyük takibatına tanık oluyoruz. Takibatın sona ermesiyle Hıristiyan dünya, sadece piskoposların yaralarını sarmak için organize ettikleri konsillere değil, daha da önemlisi imparator Constantinus'un (306-337) ihtidasına da şahit oldu. Bir Roma imparatorunun Hıristiyanlığı benimsemesi haliyle kilise-devlet entegrasyon sürecini de başlatan bir gelişmeydi ki, bu entegrasyon en çok eyaletlerden gelen piskoposların oluşturduğu kilise konsillerinde görülebilmektedir. Narcissus, Silvanus ve Diodorus gibi piskoposların merkezinde oluşan bu çalışmanın amacı, IV. yüzyıl içerisinde Kilikyalı piskoposların bölgesel ve global kilise politikalarındaki rollerini incelemektir. Temel soru Kilikyalı piskoposların konsillerdeki mevcudiyetinin devamlılıklarının araştırılması ve politik kararların oluşmasında Kilikyalıların nasıl bir yol izlediklerini incelemektir. Bulgularımıza göre, Kilikyalı piskoposlar, Roma'nın diğer doğu eyaletlerine nazaran, incelediğimiz dönemde kilise politikalarında çok etkin roller üstlenmişlerdir. Bunun en önemli nedeni Kilikya ile Antakya arasındaki coğrafi yakınlığın politik işbirliğinde de ortaya çıkmasıdır.

I. Introduction

The fourth century is the most vital turning point of ancient Christianity, because many changes took place at that period regarding the future fate of the Church. First of all, the century begins with the 'Great Persecution'

* An earlier version of this paper was read at the *Third International Symposium on the Archeology of Cilicia*, organized by the Mersin University, Research Center for Cilician Archeology in Mersin in June 2002. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. S. Mitchell of Exeter University and Dr. H. Elton of British Institute of Archeology at Ankara for their comments and offers of corrections. However, all the possible shortcomings are mine.

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of the Diocletianus, which intermittently continued for about a decade. Secondly, the end of this persecution brought not only the conversion of Constantinus but also the councils of bishops to heal the wounds of the persecution. In spite of the fact that there were very sharp differences in the western churches, the conversion of a Roman emperor naturally resulted in the integration of the church and state in the East, and this was mostly achieved at the church councils. Thirdly, it was also a period, in which the most serious theological dispute, the Arian controversy, broke out and consequently led to a traffic of church councils to establish a generally accepted doctrinal definition in the middle years of the century. The Arian controversy was a major problem that the emperors had to deal with. However, there were also localized ecclesiastical problems, emerged from ascetic, theological and political concerns, such as local interpretations of the Arianism, the Meletians in Egypt, the Anatolian asceticism of Eusebius of Sebaste, and the Monophysite teachings of the Syrian theologian Apollinarius, which was condemned at the second ecumenical council of Constantinopolis in 381. In fact, the first two ecumenical councils of the early church took place in the fourth century and their decisions and definitions of the Creed are still used by present day Christians to declare their own faith.

In the fourth century Cilician bishops were visibly present at the increasing number of the church councils. They played a more active role in the politics of the church than the bishops of other provinces, such as Isauria, Pamphylia or Caria. The basic aim of this paper is to explore the presence and role of Cilician bishops in the ecclesiastical politics of the fourth century, mainly in the context of the Arian controversy. It also attempts to analyze the question, how far they were at the center of these activities. The localized ecclesiastical problems do not fall within the limited objectives of this article.

Names of Cilician bishops were already listed in the records of third and early fourth century church politics. Helenus of Tarsus participated in the council of Antiochia in 268/9 and presided at the last session of that council.¹ Helenus had also played a prominent role in the rebaptism controversy a generation earlier, before the crisis caused by Paulus of

¹ Eusebius, *HE*, VII.30.1.

Samosata.² In the fourth century, Cilician bishops were present at the councils of Ancyra and Neocaesarea after the last great persecution, which forced the early Christians to heal their internal divisions. These councils, dated before Nicaea, included three Cilician bishops among their participants, Lupus of Tarsus, Narcissus of Neronias and Amphion of Epiphania.³ It is difficult to reconstruct the exact role that the three Cilician churchmen played at these gatherings, but we can speculate that while Lupus of Tarsus was representing the Cilician province, Narcissus and Amphion probably accompanied their bishop as discussants or advisers.

II. The Cilician Bishops and the Arian Controversy

The real weight of the Cilician bishops' presence in the church meetings of the fourth century emerged in the Arian political and theological crisis which dominated the middle years of the fourth century, between the 320s and 381. The controversy originally broke out in Alexandria and at once became a serious matter of contention all over the Mediterranean cities of the Roman Empire.⁴ The theological dimension of this controversy was the conflict of views about the nature of the Son of God. Arius argued that God the Father was not co-eternal with the Son of God. He was condemned first at a synod in Alexandria, then in Antiochia, and finally at the council of Nicaea in 325.⁵

The Alexandrian synod that condemned Arius had also forced him to leave the city at some point between A.D. 318 and 323. Arius, like Origen a century earlier, went to Palestinian Caesarea, where Eusebius the church historian was the bishop. Then Arius went to Nicomedia, where another Eusebius was the bishop, and having convened a regional synod of Bithynia this Eusebius gave Arius a full support.⁶ It was probably this event that led to an exchange of letters and propaganda pamphlets between

² Eusebius, *HE*, VI.46.3.

³ Mansi, II. 534, 549; Hefele 1871, 200.

⁴ Eusebius, *VC*, II.61; Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 69.1.1; Socrates, *HE*, I.5; Sozomenus, *HE*, I.15; Theodoret, *HE*, I.1.

⁵ There are several comprehensive accounts of the various stages of the Arian controversy in English literature. See for the most important works; Hanson 1988; Williams 1987; Luiheid 1982; Barnes 1981.

⁶ Telfer 1936, 60-63; Barnes 1981, 205.

the bishops of the Mediterranean cities.⁷ Two leading Cilician supporters wrote letters on behalf of Arius and they also requested the addressees to write to the bishop of Alexandria to reconsider his attitude against Arius and his teaching. One of the bishops who wrote a letter to the Alexandrian bishop was Athanasius, bishop of Anazarbus. According to the Arian historian Philostorgius this Athanasius had become a friend of Arius in the school of Lucianus the martyr in Antiochia.⁸ A fragment of Athanasius' letter is still preserved.⁹ Another Cilician who wrote a letter was Narcissus, bishop of Neronias. He had addressed at least three letters lobbying on Arius' behalf to Eusebius (of Caesarea), Euphronius and Chrestus.¹⁰

Meanwhile, in A.D. 324, Constantinus became the sole ruler of the Roman empire after defeating the eastern *Augustus* Licinius. Constantinus at once intervened into the Arian controversy and attempted to reconcile both sides. In order to achieve an ecclesiastical peace in the eastern Church Constantinus sent Ossius of Corduba (in Spain) to Alexandria as an intermediary with a letter.¹¹ However, Ossius' mission did not succeed. On the way back to Nicomedia, Ossius came to Antiochia, where a recent episcopal election led to disorder. Ossius assembled a synod of fifty bishops from the neighboring provinces of Syria in late 324 or early 325.¹² Among the participants of this synod, if I have correctly identified them, there were nine bishops from the cities of Cilicia.¹³ At this council, one of their number, Narcissus of Neronias, was provisionally excommunicated together with two other bishops, Eusebius of Caesarea and Theodotus of Laodicea. It is interesting to observe that Athanasius of Anazarbus did not

⁷ Eusebius, *HE*, II.62; Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 69.4.3.

⁸ Philostorgius, *HE*, III.15.

⁹ Opitz 1934, *Urkunde* 11, Athanasius' letter is dated about 322.

¹⁰ Opitz 1934, *Urkunde* 19.

¹¹ The text of the letter is preserved in Eusebius, *VC*, II.64-72.

¹² This council of Antiochia is not mentioned by Eusebius and it was an unknown meeting until E. Schwartz discovered and published its synodal letter in 1905. For the council of Antiochia see Schwartz *GS III*, 169-87; the synodal letter was published in Opitz 1934, *Urkunde* 18; the English version of the letter is in Cross 1938; for the historical background and the narrative of the meeting see Barnes 1981, 213-4; Hanson 1988, 146-51.

¹³ A complete list of the Cilician bishops who attended the church councils in the fourth century (up to the second general council) may be seen in the appendix of this paper.

come to Antiochia, though he went to the council of Nicaea later in the same year. If it is not an exaggeration of Philostorgius, there were twenty-two bishops who supported Arius at Nicaea. Three Cilician bishops' names appeared on his list, Athanasius of Anazarbus, Narcissus of Neronias, and Tarcondimantus of Aegae.¹⁴

It is obvious that like many eastern participants at the council of Nicaea, they had to sign the creed under the imperial pressure, because their disloyalty to the Nicene creed immediately after the council proves the weight of the imperial pressure on the signatories.¹⁵ The policy developed after Nicaea to remove the strong pro-Nicene bishops from their places was the first sign of the anti-Nicene reaction. The campaign started with the deposition of Eustathius from Antiochia, Asclepius from Gaza and later continued with Athanasius of Alexandria (after his election in 328) and Marcellus of Ancyra.¹⁶ Bishops mostly moved obliquely according to the direction of the winds of ecclesiastical politics. This can be best observed in the deposition of Eustathius. In early 325, at the council of Antiochia, Eustathius had led the Syrian bishops who provisionally excommunicated Eusebius of Caesarea and Narcissus of Neronias. The same Syrian bishops were also controlled by Eustathius of Antiochia at the council of Nicaea. However, when the anti-Nicene reaction surfaced soon after Nicaea, it had aimed to depose the strict pro-Nicene bishops. Now an almost identical group under the leadership of Eusebius and Narcissus turned against their leader Eustathius and brought charges against him. The outcome of the council of Antiochia may also be counted as the first success of Narcissus and his friends against the rival party, because two leading pro-Nicenes, Eustathius and Asclepius, had been removed. Narcissus was one of the central figures in the council, which had also attempted to transfer Eusebius from Caesarea to Antiochia.¹⁷ This did not succeed, but first Euphronius (a friend of Narcissus)¹⁸ then Flaccillus, a

¹⁴ Philostorgius, *HE*, I.8a.

¹⁵ Lane Fox 1986, 656; Elliott 1992, 169-94.

¹⁶ For the different chronologies of the deposition of Eustathius, see Chadwick 1948, 27-35, as 326 or 327 and Hanson 1984, 171-79, as 331.

¹⁷ Eusebius, *VC*, III.62.

¹⁸ Euphronius was probably one of the recipients of Narcissus' letters, written at the beginning of the Arian crisis.

friend of Eusebius, were elected as bishop. Later at some point in the first half of the 340s Narcissus and Flaccillus ordained another Eusebius as bishop of Emesa (mod. Homs).¹⁹

In 335 a council of sixty bishops met in Tyrus a Phoenician city, to judge Athanasius of Alexandria.²⁰ Two Cilician bishops, Narcissus and Macedonius of Mopsuestia played an active role at the council, which organized a commission of five bishops to investigate the accusations against Athanasius. Macedonius of Mopsuestia was one of the five bishops, who went to Egypt to investigate the accusations in the place., Narcissus, If not also Macedonius, was at the council of Jerusalem in the same year (A.D.335), when Arius was formally readmitted to the church.²¹ This council was not only a religious meeting but had also been an occasion for celebrating the *tricennalia*, the thirtieth year in the reign of Constantinus.²²

The activities of Narcissus and Macedonius were also attested during the early 340s. The council of Antiochia in 341, generally known as the Council of Dedication, was attended by at least six bishops from Cilician cities. Narcissus was one of the leaders at the council, because the addressees of letter of Julius, bishop of Rome, included him.²³ This council was held particularly to dedicate the Golden Church in the presence of about ninety bishops, and it produced important documents.²⁴ By now Constantinus was dead and the eastern bishops were free to produce new creeds to replace the Nicene one. Apparently the attitude of Constantius must have been encouraging. As he had already been an *Augustus* in the East, Constantius will have been aware of the fact that the Nicene creed was disliked in the eastern Church, and that the important bishoprics of the East were in the hands of anti-Nicene bishops. In order to get empire-wide acceptance of the new creed of Antiochia, at the instigation of Constantius the council organized a delegation of bishops and sent them with the creed

¹⁹ Socrates, *HE*, II.9; see also Hanson 1988, 387 ff.

²⁰ Socrates, *HE*, I.27, 30; Sozomenus, *HE*, II.25.

²¹ Eusebius, *VC*, IV.43.

²² The *tricennalia* of Constantinus is lavishly described by Eusebius, *VC*, IV. 43-47.

²³ Athanasius, *Apologia contra Arianos* (= *Defence against the Arians*), 20.

²⁴ The documents of the council is preserved in Athanasius, *De Synodis* (= *On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia*), 22, 23, 25; Socrates, *HE*, II.10.

to the western *Augustus* Constans, who was then in Gaul. The eastern delegates included Theodore of Heraclea, Maris of Chalcedon, Marcus of Arethusa and Narcissus of Neronias.²⁵ The same Narcissus was also a leading bishop of the eastern party at the council of Serdica, the first ecumenical fiasco in 343.²⁶ The council of Serdica had primarily been intended to settle the cases of the exiled eastern bishops, but the eastern and western bishops were not even prepared to meet under one roof due to their political differences. So the outcome of Serdica was the first schism between the East and the West.²⁷ Both sides organized alternative encyclical letters to declare their position and the western bishops' letter included the name of Narcissus as being a leader of the Arian party of bishops. The list of the eastern bishops includes at least five Cilician representatives.

The fiasco at Serdica forced the eastern bishops to find a way of reconciliation with the western bishops in the following year and they organized another council in Antiochia in 344. Another creed, known as the long-lined creed, was promulgated. This was also sent to Constans, the western emperor, with a delegation of bishops. Narcissus was probably carefully excluded as he had already been excommunicated by the western bishops at the council of Serdica. Instead another Cilician, Macedonius of Mopsuestia, was among the members of the party.

It is nevertheless very likely that Narcissus was one of the most trusted bishops of Constantius, because we find him acting as one of the delegation which was sent to Constans by Constantius to justify the action against Paulus of Constantinopolis, who had forcibly seized the bishopric with the aid of his congregation and had lynched Hermogenes, the emperor's general (*magister equitum*).²⁸ Also according to Sozomenus, probably at the end of the 340s (349?) Narcissus and other leading Arian bishops (then called the Eusebians by their rivals) assembled at a synod in Antiochia and once more condemned Athanasius. Athanasius, who was very keen to present his case, as if it was no more than a theological conflict between the Arians and himself frequently accused Narcissus of being an enemy.

²⁵ Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 25; Socrates, *HE*, II.18; Sozomenus, *HE*, III.10.

²⁶ For the council of Serdica see, Barnard 1980, 1-25; Hanson 1988, 293ff.; Barnes 1993, 71-81;

²⁷ Kaçar 2002, 139-51.

²⁸ Socrates, *HE*, II.13, 18; Sozomenus, *HE*, III.7.

I hear that Leontius, who is now at Antioch[ia], Narcissus of the city of Neronias, George, who is now at Laodicea and the Arians with them are spreading much gossip and slander about me and charging me with cowardice because, when I was sought by them to be killed, I did not deliver myself up to be surrendered into their hands.²⁹

During the 350s Narcissus, as a trusted bishop for Constantius, continued to undertake leading roles in church politics. In A.D. 351, he was at a Sirmian council, which judged the theology of Photinus, a pupil of Marcellus of Ancyra. One of the authors of the creed written at that meeting was Narcissus.³⁰ In 356, Narcissus was one of the committee of the bishops who ordained George of Cappadocia as bishop of Alexandria.³¹ Then, in 358 Narcissus reported Basileus of Ancyra to Constantius as he was forming new theology,³² and in a work written at about the same time, Athanasius accused Narcissus, of having been degraded three times at the councils, and called him ‘the wickedest of the Arian party’.³³ The presence of Narcissus in the church politics ceases at this point. He probably died at some point between 358 and 359, because he was not present at the council of Seleucia on the Calycadnus in 359, a council which was manipulated by his own Arian party.³⁴

III. Changing Directions: Cilician Bishops in the Middle Way

In a work written in 359, Athanasius, the harsh pro-Nicene bishop of Alexandria, described a group of bishops which included Silvanus, bishop of Tarsus, as ‘brothers, who mean what we mean, and dispute only about the word’.³⁵ These bishops were labeled semi-Arians by Epiphanius of Salamis and they are regarded by modern researchers as taking a middle

²⁹ Athanasius, *Apologia de Fuga* (=Defence of His Flight), 1.1.

³⁰ Hefele, II.193.

³¹ Sozomenus, *HE*, IV.8.

³² Philostorgius, *HE*, IV. 10.

³³ Athanasius, *Apologia de Fuga*, 1, 28.

³⁴ For the council see Socrates, *HE*, II.39; Sozomenus, *HE*, IV.22; Theodoret, *HE*, II.22; A list of forty-three bishops of the Arian party preserved by Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.26.1-8, does not include Narcissus among them. Also see Hanson 1988, Brennecke 1988, 40 ff.

³⁵ Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 41.

way between the Nicenes and the Arians.³⁶ In fact, in the second half of 350s a new avenue opened in church politics with the introduction of a new creed, promulgated and accepted at the council of Sirmium in 357. This new doctrine centered on the unlikeness of the Father and the Son and it led to a further division among the anti-Nicene bishops of the eastern provinces. While some bishops gathered around Basileus of Ancyra, others grouped around Acacius of Palestinian Caesarea and Eudoxius of Antiochia.³⁷

One of the leading bishops in Basileus' circle was Silvanus of Tarsus, who was elected to the bishopric in the reign of Constantius probably before 351,³⁸ because Silvanus was one of the twenty-two eastern bishops who formulated the first Sirmian creed and deposed Photinus of Sirmium at that year.³⁹ Apparently the career of Silvanus began in anti-Nicene eastern episcopal circles. In fact, the very middle of the fourth century has rightly been called a 'period of confusion', during which numerous attempts were made to find a generally acceptable way of doctrinal reconciliation.⁴⁰ The anti-Nicene bishops of the eastern churches frequently produced alternative texts to replace the Nicene creed between 340 and 360. However these attempts also led to further theological divisions and political groupings among these churchmen especially after the theological discussion of 357, when another creed that defended the unlikeness of the Son to the Father was produced. While one group of ecclesiastics went further away from the Nicene doctrine and offered radical theologies, another group tried to keep a balance between the two polarized camps, and even approached the Nicene interpretations of Christianity, either because of sincere theological concerns, or because of the unavoidable political circumstances.

³⁶ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73; L(hr 1993, 81-100.

³⁷ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.2.1 ff. preserves a letter of George of Laodicea to Basileus and Basileus' doctrinal declaration after a synod in Ancyra. Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.23.2,4, 6, carefully groups Basileus' party including Silvanus.

³⁸ *DCB* IV, p. 669.

³⁹ Hilary, II.6.8. (=Wickham 1997, 78).

⁴⁰ Hanson 1988, 348 ff.

The place of Silvanus of Tarsus in this new development was in the second group. The first political sign of the division can be seen in the controversy between Cyrillus of Jerusalem and Acacius of Caesarea in 358. When Cyrillus was deposed by Acacius, he took refuge at the church of Tarsus, where he became a preacher. Although Acacius urged Silvanus not to protect Cyrillus, the bishop of Tarsus paid no heed, and continued to keep him in the city, as his teaching was very popular.⁴¹ Meanwhile Silvanus had already joined the homoiousian church party of Basileus of Ancyra, who, having held a synod in Ancyra, approached the emperor Constantius and persuaded him to call another general council to find a final theological reconciliation. This decision was made about 358. The emperor intended that the council should be an ecumenical one. Nicomedia was chosen as the location of the meeting. However, an earthquake on 24 August 358 made it impossible and the planned council was divided.⁴² The western council was held at Ariminum, and the eastern council at the Isaurian capital Seleucia on the Calycadnus. As this city housed a large garrison of the imperial army, the decision was carefully and deliberately made. The council of Seleucia was attended by a hundred and sixty bishops and two high profile imperial commissioners, that comes Leonas and Bassidius Lauricius the commander of the army in Isauria (*comes et praeses Isauriae*).⁴³

The council of Seleucia was immediately divided into two different camps between the semi-Arian and the strict Arian bishops. Silvanus was a leader of the semi-Arian group. When the council was dissolved by the imperial representatives a few days after it had been convened, both parties sent a delegation of ten bishops to Constantinopolis, where another council would be organized with the participation of these delegations. Silvanus became one of the representatives of the semi-Arian group (the majority party at Seleucia) at the court council in Constantinopolis.⁴⁴ However, Silvanus and the other leading figures of Basileus' party (including Basileus himself) were purged from their sees at that court council in 360. There is no question that the real ground behind these

⁴¹ Theodoret, *HE*, II.22.

⁴² Sozomenus, *HE*, IV.16; Hanson 1988, 371 ff.; Barnes 1993, 139.

⁴³ For the careers of Bassidius Lauricius and Leonas see *PLRE* I, 497-99.

⁴⁴ Theodoret, *HE*, II.27; Socrates, *HE*, II.39.

depositions was theology, but the nominal reason for the deposition of Silvanus was that he had illegally translated Theophilus, bishop of Eleutheropolis to Castabala.⁴⁵ Yet it is not certain whether Silvanus was effectively deposed, because the church historians never mention a replacement in Tarsus, although new appointments were made in the sees of Ancyra, Constantinopolis, Cyzicus, and Sebaste, whose bishops had also been deposed together with Silvanus. In fact, in the case of Silvanus the deposition may not have been carried out, because shortly after the decision to depose him had been taken, Constantius had died and the Roman empire fell into hands of a pagan emperor, Iulianus, who deliberately granted freedom to the bishops exiled under Constantius' rule. The ecclesiastical historians do not tell us anything about the activities of the semi-Arian group in the reign of Iulianus, yet we find Silvanus and his circle in the first group of bishops that petitioned Iovianus after the death of Iulianus, seeking to ensure the banishment of their rivals.⁴⁶ However political circumstances changed very rapidly, as the reign of Iovianus lasted less than a year, and Valens, an Arian, became *Augustus* of the East. He was under the strong influence of Eudoxius of Constantinopolis, who had baptized him.⁴⁷ During the early years of Valens, Silvanus was an opposition leader. He and his friends assembled at a synod in Lampsacus at some point between 364 and 366, and then they tried to find an alternative support to strength their positions. The synod of Lampsacus organized an envoy to Valentinianus, the western *Augustus*. There were two Cilicians in this embassy, Silvanus and Theophilus, bishop of Castabala, whom Silvanus himself had ordained. The envoys failed to communicate with Valentinianus, but instead managed to obtain the support of Liberius, the bishop of Rome. This too was not achieved easily. Liberius did not at first want to receive these eastern bishops, regarding them as Arians and enemies of the Nicene doctrine. In fact, Silvanus and the other bishops with him were not fully pro-Nicene though they were not Arians either. Although they were willing to accept the Nicene creed, they rejected the term *homoousios* (of the same essence), instead of which they had previously introduced

⁴⁵ Sozomenus, *HE*, IV.24.

⁴⁶ Socrates, *HE*, III.25.

⁴⁷ Epiphanius, Panarion, 69.13.1.

homoiousios (of similar essence) to explain the relation of the Son to the Father. However, when Liberius insisted on their acceptance of the Nicene creed as a precondition of meeting Silvanus and his friends, these had no choice but to agree. After they accepted the Nicene creed, they tended to explain the terms *homoiousios* and *homoousios* as meaning the same thing. Silvanus and the other bishops with him returned from the West with the full support of the bishop of Rome⁴⁸ and attempted a series of regional synods in various parts of Asia Minor. At a synod in Tyana it was agreed that a larger council should be held in Tarsus. This at least shows the prestige of Silvanus among the anti-Arian bishops. However, this synod never assembled, because Eudoxius of Constantinopolis had advised the emperor Valens to prevent it.⁴⁹ As the evidence about Silvanus in the sources stops here, his later career cannot be reconstructed.

IV. The Second General Council and the Cilician Impact

The most eminent churchman in Cilicia after St. Paul was Diodorus, bishop of Tarsus from 378 to 394, originally from a noble family of Antiochia.⁵⁰ There are many biographical details about the early career of Diodorus, who was born in Antiochia and educated in Athens with the emperor Iulianus.⁵¹ After the days at Athens he was attached to the church of Antiochia as a layman. The then bishop, Leontius, allowed Diodorus to introduce an antiphonal choir in the church.⁵² Theodoret notes how, as a layman, he worked zealously with his friend Flavianus to prevent the appointment of Aetius as deacon.⁵³ It is evident that Diodorus was politically active in the church. Basileus of Caesarea in a letter to another Cilician bishop during the early days of the Apollinarian controversy, called Diodorus the ‘nursling of Silvanus’ of Tarsus.⁵⁴ However, there is no further evidence on the origin of this connection, whether it was formed

⁴⁸ Basil [Basileus], Letter, 67.

⁴⁹ Socrates, *HE*, IV.12; Sozomenus, *HE*, VI.12; cf. Hefele 1876, 283-87.

⁵⁰ Theodoret, *HE*, IV.24.

⁵¹ Julianus, *Letter*, 55.

⁵² Theodoret, *HE*, II.19.

⁵³ Theodoret, *HE*, II.19. Aetius was a heretic, who played a central role in the promulgation of the Sirmian creed in 357, and it was this creed that divided the Arians.

⁵⁴ Basil of Caesarea, *Letter* 244.3. (To Patrophilus of Aegae).

in Antiochia or in Tarsus. Diodorus probably first began his church career as priest in 361, when Meletius was made the bishop of Antiochia

During his priesthood in Antiochia Diodorus founded a monastic school, called an asketerion, at which the most important figures of the next generation, including Ioannes Chrysostomus and Theodore of Mopsuestia, were educated, and it was here that an important theological controversy, Nestorianism, took root. As a matter of fact, Diodorus was regarded as the head of the Antiochene school of the late fourth century. His theology would later become controversial, because the Alexandrian theologians saw the origins of Nestorianism, which was condemned in the fifth century, in his doctrines. Briefly, the theology of Diodorus was as follows; he opposed the allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures, and put a strong emphasis on its narrative meaning. The Christology of Diodorus was also derived from the tradition of Antiochia that maintained the reality of the two natures in Christ.⁵⁵

Diodorus' patron, Meletius, was exiled in 361 after a very short tenure of the bishopric in Antiochia,⁵⁶ and could only resume his function after Valens' death in 378. It was this Meletius, who ordained Diodorus as bishop of Tarsus. He was active in the councils of Antiochia in 379 and of Constantinopolis in 381 as a credal author and as a touchstone of orthodoxy.⁵⁷ Both councils published documents to refute the Apollinarian theology.⁵⁸

Diodorus' role as a politician and a theologian became determinative at the second general council, which was assembled by the emperor Theodosius to re-establish Nicene orthodoxy in the eastern churches.⁵⁹ As earlier emphasized, his theological position is not considered here, and the discussion is only restricted to his role as a politician, because it was this political scheme that separated the East and the West, and led to hostile

⁵⁵ For the theology of Diodorus see, Grillmeier 1965, 352 ff.; Greer 1966, 327-341. For Antiochene and Alexandrian theologies also see Kelly 1977, chapters 11 and 12.

⁵⁶ Brennecke 1988, 66 ff.

⁵⁷ *C.Th.* XVI.1.3 (*Episcopis tradi*).

⁵⁸ The only single monograph on Apollinarianism in English literature is still Raven's work, which was published eighty years ago. Raven 1923, 126; For the council of Antiochia in 379 and its creed see Schwartz 1935, 198 ff.

⁵⁹ King 1961; Ritter 1965, 33-41; Geonakoplos 1981, 159 ff.; Staats 1996, 59 ff.

diplomacy between the Alexandrians and Antiochenes (or Constantinopolitans). During the sessions at the second general council, Meletius, bishop of Antiochia, died and his place was unexpectedly filled by Flavianus with the full support of Diodorus. Why did the full support of Diodorus for Flavianus lead to a further political crisis between the East and the West? In order to answer this question the ecclesiastical circumstances in Antiochia since early 360s must be recalled. When the emperor Iulianus granted freedom to the previously exiled bishops, the church of Antiochia entered a chaotic period, with several figures claiming to be the true bishop of the city. There were four main claimants: the Arian Euzoius, the Apollonarian Vitalis,⁶⁰ and two pro-Nicenes Paulinus and Meletius. By the time the Arians lost imperial support their bishop also lost his legitimacy. However, there arose a serious division between the two Nicene bishops. Meletius had been ordained by Arian bishops, and therefore the pro-Nicene bishops did not recognize him. Yet, when he was found to be pro-Nicene, he was immediately deposed and sent into exile by Constantius in 361. However, about a year later Iulianus came to power and published a decree which freed for the bishops, who had been previously exiled in the reign of Constantius.⁶¹ As the pro-Nicene bishops did not recognize Meletius on the ground that his ordination was an Arian one, they ordained Paulinus as the Nicene bishop of the city.⁶² Although Meletius declared himself a Nicene bishop, Paulinus did not step back for a while. Eventually they reached an agreement that there would not be a new election when one of them died, but the survivor would be sole bishop. However, when Meletius died, Flavianus was elected bishop of Antiochia contrary to this agreement, and it was Diodorus who had used his influence to ensure Flavianus' election. The connection between Flavianus and Diodorus goes back to late 350s, when they opposed the appointment of Aetius. The election of Flavianus simply deepened the schism in Antiochia. On the other hand the western church did not recognize the election and excommunicated both Diodorus and Flavianus.⁶³ There

⁶⁰ Raven 1923, 139-41.

⁶¹ Socrates, *HE*, III.11; Sozomenus, *HE*, V.5; Philostorgius, *HE*, VI.7, VII.4. .

⁶² Paulinus was ordained by an Italian bishop, Luciferius of Cagliari (a city in the islands of Sardinia), who was returning from exile in Egypt Thebaid immediately after the death of Constantius. Athanasius, *Tomus ad Antiochenos* (=Letter to the People of Antiochia), 4; cf. Hanson 1988, 640 ff.; for the narrative of the events leading this ordination see Barnes 1993, 157-8.

⁶³ Sozomenus, *HE*, VII.11.

had already been a crisis of trust between the churches of Rome and of Antiochia since the early 340s and this crisis continued into the next century.

Another political move by Diodorus at the council of Constantinopolis was the election of Nectarius as bishop of the eastern capital. Nectarius was probably an unbaptised,⁶⁴ retired senator from the post of *praetorius urbanus* of Constantinopolis (originally from Tarsus). When Gregorius of Nazianzus resigned from the candidacy of the bishop of Constantinopolis because of the Alexandrian opposition,⁶⁵ the emperor Theodosius sought a new candidate. The opposition to Gregorius was nothing more than a result of the rivalry between Alexandria and Antiochia, as both sees tried to control the episcopacy of the capital. When Theodosius refused to accept the Alexandrian candidate, the cynic philosopher Maximus, the bishop of Antiochia, made a list of possible candidates. According to the historian Sozomenus, it was at this stage that Diodorus suggested Nectarius as a candidate and the emperor approved. If the story told by Sozomenus is true, the role of Diodorus was determinative. Apparently the occupation of the imperial see by a provincial associate would be of great benefit for any bishop.⁶⁶ However, it may also be speculated that it was Theodosius who wanted to appoint Nectarius as bishop, and he used an efficient theologian and leader like Diodorus as an intermediary. However, the shared Cilician origin of Diodorus and Nectarius (both from Tarsus) did not escape notice of the emperor. The determinative role of Diodorus at the election of Nectarius can also be seen the latter's baptism before his consecration. It was again Diodorus who instructed another Cilician, Cyriacus of Adana to teach all the required religious procedure to Nectarius.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Nectarius' ordination as the bishop of Constantinopolis was not unprecedented in the early Church. Ambrose of Milan, though an unbaptised imperial governor, had been ordained some years ago from the council of Constantinopolis to the bishopric of Milan. Socrates, *HE*, IV.30; Sozomenus, *HE*, VI.25.

⁶⁵ In the resignation of Gregory, the only factor was not the Alexandrian opposition. Gregorius had tried to prevent the election of Flavian to heal the schism in Antiochia, yet he was not successful. As Gregorius was not also a man of politics, he disliked the political games. Gregorius reflects his dislike in a letter to Anatolius the patrician written in 382, where he regards the councils as the platforms for contentions. Gregorius of Nazianzus, *Letter* 130; Kidd 1932, 112-13; cf. Stevenson 1989, 118-19.

⁶⁶ Cilician influence in the staff of Nectarius is in fact noted by Sozomenus, *HE*, VII.10.

⁶⁷ Sozomenus, *HE*, VII.10.

V. Conclusions

The above discussion has centered on three Cilician bishops, Narcissus, Silvanus and Diodorus, who played crucial roles in church politics between the 320s and 381. These figures were not only individuals who efficiently represented their sees in the councils or at the court, but they were also representing three different theological tendencies in the early church at the episcopal level. Narcissus was a serious Arian, Silvanus and his group were regarded as semi-Arian, and Diodorus was one of those who articulated the Nicene creed at the second general council, and established a standard for the new orthodoxy. Although the active participation of Narcissus might suggest that Cilicia was a stronghold of the Arian interpretation of the Christianity, this was not true, because its capital Tarsus was in the hands of a Nicene bishop. We have seen Lupus of Tarsus and Amphion of Epiphania at the councils of Ancyra and Neocaesarea and then at Antiochia in early 325.⁶⁸ In a work written about 356, Athanasius reported that the same Lupus and Amphion were pro-Nicene bishops who supported him.⁶⁹

From looking at the position of Narcissus, we can draw some conclusions. First of all, the city of Neronias was one of the important political strongholds of the Arian form of Christianity. We have seen that the name of its bishop frequently occurred in the Arian group. The same can also be said for Mopsuestia. Narcissus was one of the most reliable bishops of Constantius, because whenever the emperor organized a church synod or helped to promote one, Narcissus was at the head of the list. Furthermore, the absence of the bishop of Tarsus, before Silvanus, shows that the Cilician capital was controlled by an anti-Arian faction, and its bishop(s) did not therefore share the same platforms with Narcissus. It also leads us to think that the emperor Constantius, though an Arian (or at least a ruler who saw the possibility of ecclesiastical unity with the Arian bishops), was tolerant towards the other groups, so long as no one emerged from them as a troublemaker. Having examined the existence of the three different changing theological trend in Cilicia, we must note that particular regions did not stick to their own brand of Christianity, but rather the forms of

⁶⁸ The list of signatories given by Mansi does not name Lupus but Theodora instead.

⁶⁹ Athanasius, *Ad Episcopos Ægypti* (=To the Bishops of Egypt), 8.

Christianity changed as the bishops trimmed their sails in the political winds at least in the fourth century.

As to the question of how the Cilician bishops managed to maintain their position in the forefront of church politics, the answer must be discerned from the whole of this paper, which has emphasized the central place of Antiochia in the fourth century. Its geographical and cultural connections and closeness to Antiochia must have been a substantial advantage for Cilicia,⁷⁰ because as an important province of the Roman empire, Cilicia was a central link between Asia Minor and Syria. Therefore it does not surprise us to find Cilician bishops together with Syrians in the church meetings. As we have also seen, most of the important church councils were held in Antiochia, and creeds were formulated there. Furthermore Cilician bishops, such as Athanasius of Anazarbus, Silvanus, Diodorus, and later Theodore of Mopsuestia, were educated at Antiochia and even ordained to their Cilician sees from Antiochia.

Apart from Diodorus of Tarsus, those Cilician bishops were no great pioneers on matters of theology, because, though they had attended in the acceptance of various creeds, and disputed doctrine, it was only Diodorus who had found followers and whose views were a matter of concern in the centuries to come. Another point that has to be made here is that Antiochia occupied a central place in those political and theological conflicts. Most of the councils, which promulgated new creeds or installed or deposed bishops were held in that city. This was not only because Antiochia was the center of the East, and was called crown city of the East by Ammianus, it was because in the 340s the emperor frequently stayed in or close to Antiochia. In fact, when Constantius moved to the West in 350s, the center of the church politics shifted too, though the players of the political games remained the same. Thus, it is not difficult to understand that while the bishops of Antiochia became the central focus of the church politics, the Cilician bishops remained secondary to them. In other words, in the church politics of the fourth century Cilicia worked under the shadow of Antiochia.

⁷⁰ To emphasize the close connection between Cilicia and Antiochia (or Syria) A Harnack notes that under Domitianus or Traianus *Κοινὸν Κιλικίας* met in Antiochia. Harnack 1905, 324, note 1.

Appendix

A List of the Cilician Bishops at the Fourth-Century Church Councils (up to the Second General Council in A.D. 381).

The Council of Ancyra (before 325): Lupus of Tarsus, Narcissus of Neronias, Amphion of Epiphania (Mansi II.534, cf. Hefele 1871, 200).

The Council of Neocaesarea (before 325): Lupus of Tarsus, Narcissus of Neronias, Amphion of Epiphania (Mansi II, 549).

The Council of Antiochia (early 325): Amphion of Epiphania; Narcissus of Neronias; Macedonius of Mopsuestia; Nicetas of Flavias; Paulinus of Adana; Lupus of Tarsus, Tarcondimantus of Aegae; Hesychius of Alexandria Minor. (Opitz 1934, Urkunde 18; Cross 1938)

The Council of Nicaea (AD.325): Theodorus of Tarsus, Amphion of Epiphania, Narcissus of Neronias, Moses of Castabala, Nicetas of Flavias, Paulinus of Adana, Macedonius of Mopsuestia, Hesychius of Alexandria Minor, Tarkondimantos of Aegae; Eudemius,, a chorepiscopus. (Mansi II, 694)

The Council of Tyrus (AD. 335): Narcissus of Neronias, Macedonius of Mopsuestia (Socrates, HE, I.27, 30; Sozomenus, HE, II.25).

The Council of Antiochia (AD. 341): Macedonius of Mopsuestia, Narcissus of Neronias, Tarcondimantus of Aegae, Hesychius of Alexandria Minor, Moses of Castabala, Nicetas of Flaviadis (Mansi II, 1308)

The Council of Serdica (AD.343): Macedonius of Mopsuestia, Dionysius of Alexandria Minor, Eustathius of Epiphania, Pison of Adana, Narcissus of Neronias. (Mansi III, 138-40; Hilarius, Against Valens and Ursacius, I.2. 29, cf. Wickham 1997, 38-41).

The Council of Seleucia (AD. 359): Silvanus of Tarsus (Socrates, HE, II.39. Sozomenus, HE, IV.22). (A list of the forty-three bishop of the party of Acacius of Caesarea in Palastine preserved by Epiphanius, Panarion 73.26.2-8, do not include any Cilician bishop's names.).

The Council of Lampsacus (at some point between 364 and 66): Silvanus of Tarsus, Theophilus of Castabala (Socrates, HE,IV.12; Sozomenus, HE, VI.11).

The Second General Council (Constantinopolis 381): Diodorus of Tarsus, Cyriacus of Adana, Hesychius of Epiphania, Germanus of Corycus, Olympius of Mopsuestia, Philonius of Pompeiopolis, Aeriis of Zephyrion, Theophilus (or Philomusus) of Alexandria Minor. (Mansi III, 569).

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⁷¹ The following abbreviations are used throughout this work: C.Th: *Codex Theodosianus* (tr. by Clyde Parr, *The Theodosian Code*, Princeton 1952); DCB: *Dictionary of Christian Biography* (ed. by H. Wace & W. Smith London 1877); HE: *Historia Ecclesiastica* (a conventional abbreviation for the church histories of the fourth and fifth century writers like Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomenus, Theodoret, Philostorgius); PLRE: *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* vol. I, (ed. by A.H.M. Jones, J.R. Martindale and J. Morris, Cambridge 1971) VC: *Vita Constantini* (=The Life of Constantinus)

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