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John of Ephesus: Historian on the Edge

Abstract: This paper offers a revisionist account of much within the career and œuvre of John of Ephesus, in particular the famous third part of his *Ecclesiastical History*. Against the frequent presentation of John as a prominent and indeed ecumenical figure within his own ‘miaphysite’ communion – and the *Ecclesiastical History* in turn as the collective memory of that communion –, this paper instead presents him as a member of a small and controversial circle of Severan bishops who formed in Constantinople in c. 566, and the *Ecclesiastical History*, in particular elements within its third part, as John’s attempt both to legitimise that circle’s precarious position and to apologise for its role in successive scandals. In this context, John appropriated to himself a series of powerful Christian images – the evangelist, the archbishop, the confessor. But in each case the claim was dubious, designed to legitimise a figure who was far more vulnerable, marginal, and controversial than his own claims, and those of moderns, allow. In its conclusion, the paper suggests that appreciation of John’s text is likewise inhibited by the wider modern tendency to overestimate, in this period, the coherence, spread, and significance of ‘the miaphysites’.

Introduction

In the year 926/7, the higoumen of Dayr al-Suryān embarked on a fateful, five-year visit to distant Baghdad, there to beg the caliph al-Muqtadir, on behalf of the monasteries of the Wādī al-Naṭrūn, for relief from the poll tax. While in Mesopotamia that higoumen, Mushe of Nisibis, decided to travel northward, to the traditional heartlands of the Syriac Orthodox Church, and there to gather a large number of Syriac manuscripts

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in order to enrich his own institution's collection.¹ If he had not done so, our knowledge of early Syriac literature would be much impoverished.² Among the reported 250 manuscripts which Mushe carried back to the more arid climes of the Egyptian desert, two contained important texts of the sixth-century historian and hagiographer, John of Ephesus: first, the so-called third part of his *Ecclesiastical History* (*EH*);³ and second, his *Lives of the Eastern Saints* (*LoES*).⁴ Although neither manuscript is complete, without the former our knowledge of this part of the *EH* would depend on its reception (partial and paraphrased) in later historians; and without the latter, we would know but a small proportion of the chapters of the *LoES*.⁵ In turn, we would be bereft of perhaps our most important witness to the politics and culture of 'the miaphysite', Severan church in the middle to late sixth century.

The person known to modernity as John of Ephesus – but in his own period, more often as John of Amida or John of Asia⁶ – was born at the beginning of the sixth century in northern Mesopotamia, and as an orphaned youth became a monk. The defining theological tension for religious elites of the age was either acceptance or rejection of the dyophysite Christology of the Council of Chalcedon, and John was part of that generation of dissenting bishops and ascetics who were removed from their sees and monasteries under the emperors Justin and Justinian.⁷ After various peregrinations, he

1 For Mushe's biography, see esp. J. Leroy, Moïse de Nisibe, in I. Ortiz de Urbina (ed.), *Symposium Syriacum, 1972: célébré dans les jours 26–31 octobre 1972 à l'Institut Pontifical Oriental de Rome*. Rome 1974, 457–70; M. J. Blanchard, Moses of Nisibis (fl. 906–943) and the Library of Deir Suriani, in L. S. B. MacCoull (ed.), *Studies in the Christian East in Memory of Mirrit Boutros Ghali*. Washington, DC 1995, 13–24. For his collection of manuscripts also: S. P. Brock, Abbot Mushe of Nisibis, Collector of Syriac Manuscripts, in C. Baffioni et al. (eds.), *Gli studi orientalistici in Ambrosiana nella cornice del IV centenario, 1609–2009: primo dies academicus, 8–10 novembre 2010*. Rome 2012, 15–32.

2 S. P. Brock, Without Mushē of Nisibis, Where Would We Be? Some Reflections on the Transmission of Syriac Literature, in R. Y. Ebied et al. (eds.), *Symposium Syriacum VIII: the University of Sydney, Department of Semitic Studies, 26 June–1 July, 2000*. Leuven 2004 = *J ECS* 56 (2004), 15–24.

3 British Library (= BL) Add. 14,640 (7C), with W. Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum Acquired since the Year 1838*. 3 vols, London 1870–1872, vol. 3 1061–2, who notes that the scribe is perhaps the same as BL Add. 14,647 (next note).

4 BL Add. 14,647 (688) fol. 1–136, with Wright, *Catalogue* (as footnote 3 above) vol. 3 1094–8. Neither BL Add. 14,640 nor 14,647 bear a colophon connecting them to Mushe, but their early date suggest that both belonged to his collection; see Brock, *Without Mushē of Nisibis* (as footnote 2 above) 17–9.

5 The main other witness, with a much smaller proportion of chapters, is BL Add. 14,650 (875) fol. 161–88, which seem to have entered the collection of Dayr al-Suryān at the end of the ninth century; see H. G. Evelyn-White, *The Monasteries of the Wadi 'n Natrûn*. 3 vols, New York, NY, 1926–1933, vol. 2 442 n. 13. For the chapters attested in other manuscripts, see J. J. Van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus: A Monophysite Historian in Sixth-century Byzantium*. Groningen 1995, 39 n. 4. Van Ginkel's thesis remains the most thorough and important contribution on John.

6 On his various designations, see PCBE 3: *Prosopographie du Diocèse d'Asie* (325–641). Paris 2008, 495.

7 For this process, see esp. V. Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*. Oxford 2008.

came to Constantinople in c. 540, where he would reside for most of his career.⁸ Here he would write, amongst others texts, the *LoES* and *EH*.⁹ According to internal references, the *LoES* was first completed in 565/6 – soon after the death of Justinian in November 565, but before that of the Severan patriarch Theodosius in summer 566¹⁰ – but then expanded in 566/7,¹¹ and 567/8.¹² When John began the text, and how much he revised it, is nevertheless opaque. The *EH*, in contrast, was published in three parts. The extant third part covers the period from 571 to 588 across six books and was completed and revised in several stages from the first half of the 570s onwards.¹³ In its introduction, John claims that hitherto, in two parts and across twelve books, he had surveyed Christian history ‘from the times of Julius Caesar ... up to the sixth year of the reign of Justin the younger son of Justinian’s sister [i.e. Justin II]’, that is, to 570/1 (ⲉⲃⲉⲗⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲟⲩⲁⲩⲓ ⲛⲟⲩⲣⲉⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲟⲩⲛⲉⲃⲉⲗⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲟⲩⲁⲩⲓ ⲛⲟⲩⲁⲩⲓ ⲛⲟⲩⲁⲩⲓ ... ⲓⲛⲉⲃⲉ).¹⁴ We should perhaps surmise, then, that the task was undertaken following, or alongside, the final redaction of the *LoES*. This earlier portion of the *EH* is lost but partly accessible in excerpts or paraphrases contained in later witnesses – above all, the *Chronicle*

⁸ For John’s biography, see below n. 20.

⁹ Edition of *Lives of the Eastern Saints*: E. W. Brooks, John of Ephesus. *Lives of the Eastern Saints*. PO 17–9. Paris 1923–1925. For the *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History*, I have cited for ease of reference E. W. Brooks, *Ioannis Ephesini historiae ecclesiasticae pars tertia*. CSCO 105, Leuven 1935, while also consulting the new online edition of Nikolai Kiel (<https://pta.bbaw.de/text/42f98b11/urn:cts:pta:pta0200.pta001.pta-syc1>). (As part of Philip Forness and Hartmut Leppin’s John of Ephesus project, Silvio Roggo has produced several further resources for research into John of Ephesus; see the ‘Online Publications’ available on the project website: https://www.goethe-university-frankfurt.de/132206613/Commentary_on_John_of_Ephesus_Ecclesiastical_History.) For the fragments from the second part, I cite from the editions of the dependents, but see also E. W. Brooks, *Ioannis Ephesini historiae ecclesiasticae fragmenta quae e prima et secunda parte supersunt*, in E. W. Brooks, *Incerti auctoris Chronicon Pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum*. CSCO 104, Leuven 1933, 402–20. All translations are my own.

¹⁰ See John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints* 35 (Brooks PO 18 622), referring to the recent death of Justinian and the year 877 (565/6) (but see the next note); 47 (Brooks PO 18 680), referring to the current year as 877; 48 (Brooks PO 18 688), referring to recent death of Justinian and succession of Justin, the current year as 877, but with Theodosius still alive, as also at in the chapter’s conclusion (Brooks PO 18 690) (but see the next note); 49 (Brooks PO 18 697), referring to the current year as Justin I (565/6); 58 (Brooks PO 19 226), referring to the present year as 877 (but see the next note).

¹¹ See John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints* 35 (Brooks PO 18 623), referring to the current year 878 (566/7); 35 (Brooks PO 18 585), referring to the same; 48 (Brooks PO 18 688 with n. 6), referring to the death of Theodosius nine months after Justinian; 58 (Brooks PO 19 206), referring to the year 878 (but see the next note).

¹² See John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints* 58 (Brooks PO 19 227), referring to the present year as 879 (567/8).

¹³ For the chronology of different books and chapters of the *Third Part*, see Van Ginkel, John of Ephesus (as footnote 5 above) 71–7. Van Ginkel supposes that John could not have begun writing the third part until 574, but as Silvio Roggo suggests to me, it is more probable that he began soon after 571.

¹⁴ See *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 1.3 (Brooks 4).

of *Zuqnin* and the *Chronicle* of Michael the Great.¹⁵ From their comments and quotations we can suppose that the *EH*'s second part ran from Theodosius II to 570/1.¹⁶ As no witness contains identifiable material earlier than the reign of Constantine, however, one must wonder if John's claim to have begun the first part with 'Caesar' is not an overstatement.¹⁷

The second and third parts of the *EH* are an indispensable witness to various ecclesiastical controversies of the sixth century, in particular those within the broad Severan communion of which John was part. However, the title, '*Ecclesiastical History*' (Syr. ܐܘܨܬܘܪܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܥܩܠܝܘܬܐ or ܐܘܨܬܘܪܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܥܩܠܝܘܬܐ), might mislead, for John is not simply the narrator of but often an actor within the drama.¹⁸ As such his account sits somewhere at the intersection of historiography, memoir, apology, and auto-hagiography. Despite this, modern commentators on John have often been content to repeat his narratives as though simple reportage, and in this paper, I will bring out several subtle but pointed distortions which John employs in narrating events, and in particular his own role within them. It might seem paradoxical to speak of John, whose historiographical career was spent in the east Roman metropolis, as an 'historian on the edge'. In doing so I want to capture two interrelated arguments made here: first, that John was a far more controversial and marginal figure within his own communion than he would confess; and, second, that he was in the *EH* far more aggressive, as both apologist and polemicist, than his own repeated claims to dispassion allow.¹⁹ In place of John's self-projection as an eminent, and indeed ecumenical, figure among competing Severan factions – a projection which moderns have often accepted and amplified – I here present him as a member of a small, precarious, and divisive circle of Severan bishops in Constantinople, and the final part of the *EH* in turn not as the collective memory of the emergent Severan communion, but as an attempt both to legitimate that circle's position and to excuse its pre-eminent role in successive scandals.

15 For the relevant part of the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, I have used J.-B. Chabot, *Incerti auctoris Chronicon Pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum*. 3 vols, CSCO 91, 104, 121, Leuven 1927–1949. For Michael: J.-B. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche (1166–1199)*. 4 vols, Paris 1899–1910. Other dependences (e.g. from the *Chronicle to 1234*) are noted below. For a cautious tabulation of the dependences see Van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus* (as footnote 5 above), Appendix B–C.

16 See the discussion in Van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus* (as footnote 5 above) 54–7.

17 Cf. Van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus* (as footnote 5 above) 47–9 (who accepts the existence of lost material from Caesar to Constantine).

18 These titles are suggested in the conclusion and opening of extant books of the *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* (Brooks 52, 118–20, 251–3, 275). See also the discussion in Van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus* (as footnote 5 above) 194–5. As Hartmut Leppin points out to me, this autobiographical element distinguishes John from the ecclesiastical historians of the fifth century, but less so from his contemporary Evagrius Scholasticus.

19 For the apologetic element of the third part of the *EH*, see already Van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus* (as footnote 5 above) 84 (calling it 'partisan and personal, at times chaotic and impressionistic') and the single paragraph at 97–98.

Part I: Mover and Shaker

John the Evangelist?

Despite the profoundly autobiographical character of John's extant corpus, his career must be reconstructed from a number of short, scattered, and often vague asides which punctuate it.²⁰ Rather than rehearse such reconstructions here, I will focus on two aspects which seem to me most problematic, and which impact upon our later exploration: first, his purported evangelisation, while still a deacon or priest, of southwestern Asia Minor; and second, his subsequent consecration as Severan metropolitan of Ephesus.

Across his corpus, John often refers to an imperial commission received from Justinian to convert the pagans of southwestern Asia Minor, and evidently later styled himself 'overseer of the pagans (ܐܘܨܬܪܝܢܐ)'.²¹ According to a passage of the second part of the *EH* now extant in the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* and the *Chronicle* of Michael the Great, in 541/2 the emperor Justinian had commissioned John to convert the pagans of 'Asia, Caria, Lydia, and Phrygia (ܐܣܝܐ ܕܥܪܝܐ ܕܠܝܕܝܐ ܕܦܪܝܓܝܐ)', so that 70,000 souls were baptised; their blood sacrifices abolished; and their altars and sacred trees obliterated. In place of these cults rose ninety-six churches (fifty-five at public expense) and twelve monasteries, with vestments, books, and liturgical vessels provided through imperial largesse.²² (The same episode is twice recounted in the *LoES*, with significant variations, but referring again to 'Asia, Caria, Phrygia, and Lydia'.)²³ Later in his text, Michael the Great again appears to quote (in paraphrase) the same passage,²⁴ but adds the detail

²⁰ Fundamental to modern work is A. P. D'jakonov, *Ioann Efesskij i ego cerkovno-istoričeskie Trudy*. St Petersburg 1908; with minor revisions in Brooks, PO 18 iii–xv; E. Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés monophysites d'Asie antérieure au VI^e siècle*. Leuven 1951, 207–15; Van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus* (as footnote 5 above) 27–37. The most authoritative account within the same tradition is now PCBE 3 (as footnote 6 above) 494–519 (Iōannēs 43).

²¹ See *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 2.4 (Brooks 58, adding the title 'idol breaker [ܐܘܨܬܪܝܢܐ]'), 41 (Brooks 107); 3.15 (Brooks 141); 3.36 (Brooks 169); Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 9.24 (Chabot vol. 4 288, using 'missionary to the pagans [ܐܘܨܬܪܝܢܐ]'); *Lives of the Eastern Saints* 50 (Chabot PO 19 157, using the same).

²² See *Chronicle of Zuqnin* (Chabot vol. 2 77–8); abbreviated at Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 9.24 (Chabot vol. 4 287–8). The former places the mission in AG 853 and the latter in Justinian 15 (both 541/2). Cf. also *Chronicle to 1234* ed. J.-B. Chabot, *Anonymi auctoris Chronicon ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens*. CSCO 81–82, Leuven 1916–1920, vol. 1 198.

²³ See *Lives of the Eastern Saints* 43 (Brooks PO 18 658–60) memorialising the four deacons who assisted the mission in Asia, and referring to ninety churches and ten monasteries in 'four provinces (ܐܣܝܐ ܕܥܪܝܐ ܕܠܝܕܝܐ ܕܦܪܝܓܝܐ)'; and esp. 47 (Brooks PO 18 681), which refers to the same mission, but here claiming 80,000 converts, ninety-eight churches (plus seven converted synagogues) and twelve monasteries, and explicitly naming the four provinces ('Asia, Caria, Phrygia, and Lydia').

²⁴ Note that the Syriac now gives 7,000 converts, perhaps a scribal error for 70,000 (Chabot vol. 2 n. 6).

that in the dioceses of Ephesus, Magnesia, Nyssa, and Tralles – that is, cities along the Maeander Valley, upriver from Ephesus – thousands were converted through the collaboration of Justinian and John, with 23,000 pagans baptised at Ephesus; he then at once adds a passage, under the thirty-fifth year of Justinian (561/2), which reports how five pagan priests were seized in the capital and their idols and books burnt. ‘John burnt around 2,000 (books?) in Asia’, it adds in conclusion.²⁵ The suggestion, therefore, is that the entire section on the pagans of the Maeander and on the burning of books derives from a portion of the second part of John’s *EH* which described the late reign of Justinian, even if that portion does not appear in the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*.²⁶

In the extant third part of the *EH*, John also refers to his purported mission among the pagans. In its third book – following a long description of the infamous pagan scandal which reportedly rocked the reign of Tiberius, and which implicated the Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch – John again recounts his imperial commission as ‘overseer of the pagans’ in Asia, Caria, Phrygia and Lydia, and how in the region of Tralles he converted thousands, constructing twenty-four churches and four monasteries.²⁷ The most important of these monasteries is said to have been built, over six years, on the site of a large pagan temple which once regulated 1,500 other shrines within the region, and which was located in the mountains at a village called ‘Dareira’ or similar (Syr. ܕܪܝܪܐ).²⁸ According to John’s account, the emperor himself endowed the churches and monasteries and issued three edicts which recognised the authority of the ‘Dareira’ monastery over the other new establishments. After its completion, however, the (Chalcedonian) bishop of Tralles attempted to incorporate the monastery within his own endowment and petitioned Justinian to that end. The emperor, John continues, was outraged at the bishop’s attempt to appropriate an institution founded at his own initiative and expense, and henceforth ordered that John go and administer the church of Tralles,

25 Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 9.33 (Chabot vol. 4 324–5).

26 Note also that in Michael’s *Chronicle* the section runs in parallel to a report of John of Ephesus’s suppression of Montanism in Phrygia, also described at *Chronicle of Zuqnin* (Chabot vol. 2 125), on which, see also S. Gerö, Montanus and Montanism according to a Medieval Syriac Source, *JThS* 28 (1977) 520–4. John also refers to his prosecution of prominent pagans in Constantinople at *Chronicle of Zuqnin* (Chabot vol. 2 76–7), under AG 852, Justinian 19 (545/6); see also *Chronicle to 1234* (Chabot vol. 1 193).

27 The mission is also referred to at *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 2.44, where John recounts the efforts of a Deuterius (future Severan bishop of Aphrodisias) in assisting him, and again lists the provinces where he was active as ‘Asia, Caria, Phrygia, and Lydia’ (Brooks 111). Several others said to have assisted John are memorialised in *Lives of the Eastern Saints* 39, 40, 43, 51; cf. PCBE 3 (as footnote 6 above) 502–3.

28 In a review of Brooks’s edition and translation, E. Honigmann proposed to see the otherwise unknown Gr. Dareira; see E. Honigmann, L’histoire ecclésiastique de Jean d’Éphèse, *Byz* 14 (1939) 615–25, at 620–1 (pointing to Lydian parallels for the form). S. Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor*. 2 vols, Oxford 1993, vol. 2 118 offers ‘Daeira’ and suggests it has a ‘convincing Anatolian appearance’.

with the bishop as his subordinate.²⁹ John makes the quite startling claim, therefore, that at some point, perhaps in the later 540s, his anti-pagan mission had led to a status as the *de facto* bishop of Tralles.³⁰

John's account has often raised the suspicion of scholars. Some have questioned, for example, the willingness of the emperor to entrust so prominent a mission to a Mesopotamian, anti-Chalcedonian of a mere thirty years;³¹ the willingness of that missionary, in turn, to contribute new members to the Chalcedonian Church;³² or his ability, as a deacon or priest, to perform baptisms and consecrate churches.³³ Others have asked if the pagan central cult which John describes could ever have existed;³⁴ been sceptical of the numbers of conversions which he claims;³⁵ or wondered if his 'pagans' were not in fact semi-Christianised, or crypto-pagan, peasants (of the kind whom one of John's hagiographic heroes, Symeon the Mountaineer, is said to have encountered and set right in Mesopotamia).³⁶ In the most recent salvo, Hartmut Leppin has pointed to the account's dependence on various clichés around mission and conversion, and

²⁹ John of Ephesus, *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 3.36–7 (Brooks 169–72; Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.12).

³⁰ Cf. PCBE 3 (as footnote 6 above) 502 calls the tale 'peu crédible'.

³¹ See e.g. H. Leppin, Skeptische Anmerkungen zur Mission des Johannes von Ephesos in Kleinasien, in W. Ameling (ed.), *Die Christianisierung Kleinasien in der Spätantike*. Bonn 2017, 49–59, at 54 (focused on John's confessional stance more than age).

³² Conversion to Chalcedon is explicit in Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 9.24 (Chabot vol. 4 287–8), who might make an inference. For discomfort at this problem, see the discussion in e.g. S. Ashbrook Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis: John of Ephesus and The Lives of the Eastern Saints*. Berkeley, CA, 1990, 29; Van Ginkel, John of Ephesus (as footnote 5 above) 31–2; PCBE 3 (as footnote 6 above) 501; V. Ruggieri and N. Loda, Un caso di missionarietà monofisita in Asia Minore (VI secolo) nell'invio di Giustiniano: aspetti storico-giuridici ed archeologici, *Apollinaris* 71 (1998) 309–24, at 314–6.

³³ See V. Menze, Johannes von Ephesus und Kaiser Justinian: ein Missionar, sein Patron und eine Heidenmission im Kleinasien des 6. Jahrhunderts, in E. Winter (ed.), *Vom Euphrat bis zum Bosphorus. Kleinasien in der Antike: Festschrift für Elmar Schwertheim zum 65. Geburtstag*. Bonn 2008, 451–60, esp. 454, who nevertheless accepts the basic truth of the account and suggests that Justinian later backed an already successful missionary effort; cf. Menze, Justinian (as footnote 7 above) 254–65. That John was a deacon in 541 is suggested in *Lives of the Eastern Saints* 25 (Brooks PO 18 536). It is unknown when he became a priest.

³⁴ Mitchell, *Anatolia* (as footnote 28 above) vol. 2 118.

³⁵ Mitchell, *Anatolia* (as footnote 28 above) vol. 2 117–9; *contra* F. Trombley, Paganism in the Greek World at the End of Antiquity: The Case of Rural Anatolia and Greece, *HThR* 78 (1985) 329–36, who works backwards from John's numbers in an unconvincing attempt to vindicate them.

³⁶ B. Flusin, Christianiser, rechristianiser: Jean d'Éphèse et les missions, in H. Inglebert et al. (eds.), *Le problème de la christianisation du monde antique*. Paris 2010, 293–306. For Symeon: *Lives of the Eastern Saints* 16; and for the theme of *re-Christianising*, cf. *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 4.8 (referring to Longinus in Nubia). See also on this point J. J. Van Ginkel, Monk, Missionary and Martyr: John of Ephesus, a Syriac Orthodox Historian in Sixth-century Byzantium, *Journal of the Canadian Society of Syriac Studies* 5 (2005) 35–50, at 40–1.

suggested John's inflation of pagan numbers in order to intimate the failure of the Chalcidonian empire.³⁷

I would like to suggest a further reason to be sceptical of John's status as the effective evangelist of large swathes of southwestern Anatolia. When he provides actual detail, as we have seen, it seems that his activities were concentrated around Tralles, or perhaps along the Maeander; but he nevertheless claims an imperial mandate over a much broader area, embracing the combined zone of Asia, Caria, Phrygia, and Lydia – indeed, when he refers to his mission, he almost always lists the same provinces and in the same order.³⁸ The combination is significant, for in his later career, as we shall see, John assumes a role as titular metropolitan at Ephesus (capital of Asia), and his closest episcopal collaborators in Constantinople, and apparent suffragans, are the titular bishops of the leading sees of the very same provinces. Writing from the middle 560s, he therefore retrojects into the long reign of Justinian a claim to supra-regional authority, underwritten by the emperor, which precisely mirrors a later aspiration both to ecclesiastical oversight and to imperial patronage.³⁹ Rather than assuming that his anti-pagan activities provided the basis for his later status as metropolitan, therefore, we might instead see the narration of those activities as a retroactive, and doubtless distorted, attempt to legitimise that same status.⁴⁰ Indeed, in his tale of Dareira and the acquisitive bishop of Tralles, the intended connection is more or less explicit – John's earlier position as imperially sponsored missionary and monastic luminary results later in a quasi-episcopal status.⁴¹

Perhaps paradoxically, the same account evidently serves elsewhere to explain John's absence from events of some importance. In Michael the Great's narrative, the reign of Justin II (565–578) commences with new initiatives towards peace with the Severans, with successive gatherings at Constantinople and Callinicum. We shall return to these gatherings below, but it suffices to note here Michael's striking statement that the emperor desired to send our 'John of Asia' to Callinicum alongside an actual dip-

37 Leppin, *Skeptische Anmerkungen* (as footnote 31 above). For John's appropriation of the image of the anti-pagan missionary, cf. J.-N. M. Saint-Laurent, *Missionary Stories and the Formation of the Syriac Churches*. Berkeley, CA, 2015, 75–9.

38 Above pp. 207–8.

39 See below p. 230.

40 Pace e.g. Honigmann, *Évêques* (as footnote 20 above) 231.

41 In this perspective it is perhaps not coincidental that in the sole, oft-cited instance in which John claims to have gone to Ephesus (c. 542?), he presents himself as travelling in the company of John bishop of Hephæstopolis, and assisting in the ordination of seventy priests in the city's Church of St John, having first ordained fifty at Tralles; see *Lives of the Eastern Saints* 25 (Brooks PO 18 538–9). John thus presents himself in a quasi-episcopal role in the two same sees over which he later claimed authority. On the Church of St John, which Justinian significantly remodelled at some unknown point (Procopius, *Buildings* 5.1.4–6), see N. Karydis, *The Evolution of the Church of St. John at Ephesos during the Early Byzantine Period*, *JÖAI* 84 (2015) 97–128 (noting the dismissal of the identification of a 'John, the holiest archbishop' attested in an inscription at the site with our John, at 110–1).

lomat, but that John, preoccupied with baptising pagans, refused.⁴² The passage, then, appears to derive from John of Ephesus's *EH*. There is no good reason to accept that John's mission – whatever its nature or extent – now stretched into its third or fourth decade, or that it dominated his life to such an extent that the baptism of converts was his central concern. The principal purpose of the claim, no doubt, is to excuse John's absence from a significant meeting of co-confessionalists – or, perhaps, to dissociate him from a controversial gathering over which, as we shall see, his circle seems in fact to have exerted a distant but decisive influence.⁴³

In support of this suggestion, we might note a similar claim once again derived from the second part of the *EH*. A notice embedded in the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* – and more briefly in the *Chronicle of Michael* – reports that after the death of Theodora (548) the emperor was advised that the time was ripe to reconcile the dissenters from Chalcedon, and that he therefore began instructing 'me, John of Asia' so as to gather in the capital representatives from all the monasteries of Syria, with generous provisions to do so. Fearful of the monks' censure for the inconvenience of the summons, however, John claims to have refused his commission, so that Justinian dismissed him, and instead dispatched another, more eager, person. Thereafter, around 400 aged ascetics gathered in the Constantinopolitan 'House of Isidorus', an imperial hospital, where they reportedly debated the faith, without significant result, for one year.⁴⁴ The large colloquium is difficult to date, but the detail concerning the recent death of Theodora suggests the period c. 550.⁴⁵ The precise placement need not concern us here. What matters is that the historian felt compelled, when writing at some point before 571, to excuse his evident lack of involvement in organising, some two decades earlier, a significant gathering in Constantinople. It alerts us once again to John's retroactive attempts to elevate his own importance, and points us, as we shall now see, to the insecure position which he occupied in this later period.

⁴² Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.1 (Chabot vol. 4 332). The diplomat was PLRE III Ioannes 81.

⁴³ See below pp. 220–8, esp. p. 227.

⁴⁴ See *Chronicle of Zuqnin* (Chabot vol. 2 139–40). Note that the rubric places the event in AG 874 (562/3), while the previous annalistic notice – no doubt also derived from the *EH* – concerns the Fifth Ecumenical Council, which the description itself, in conflict with the rubric, correctly places in Justinian 26 (552/3). In the shorter notice at Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 9.30 (Chabot vol. 4 312), the colloquium falls before the Council. On the House of Isidorus, see R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin. Première partie, Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat œcuménique. Tome III, Les églises et les monastères*. 2nd ed., Paris 1969, 554 n. 9, 559 n. 9. It is interesting to note that 'Isidorus' is later called the brother of 'Eubulus', in whose hospital John of Ephesus was later imprisoned (below n. 211); see PLRE III Eubulus; Isidorus 1.

⁴⁵ Cf. PCBE 3 (as footnote 6 above) 508 (suggesting 'vers 549').

From John of Amida to John of Asia

This, then, leads us to our second problematic aspect of John's career – the date of his consecration as metropolitan of Ephesus. A long-standing modern consensus places this in 558.⁴⁶ Remarkably, John – seldom shy to engage in self-promotion – does not seem to have detailed the event within the second part of the *EH*, since none of the dependents refers to it. Following its famous description of the plague (attributed to 'John of Asia'), and before the rubric for AG 858 (546/7), the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* provides a list of rulers and clerics, Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian, who were prominent 'at this time'. The list of Severan bishops – Eunomius of Amida, John of Pergamon, Photius of Smyrna, Sergius of Harran, John of Qenneshrin, John of Callinicus, John of Asia 'who has written this', and Qashshish of Chios – bears some resemblance to a list in John's extant corpus, as we shall soon see.⁴⁷ But even if it derives from the second part of the *EH*, as seems probable, it is no doubt out of chronological position. For it evidently describes the Severan episcopate in the early or mid-560s, and not c. 545 as the sequencing suggests.⁴⁸

To understand John's consecration, and the broader formation of the Severan episcopate, we must instead turn to the *LoES*. He comments on his consecration in a single chapter but does not there offer a date. Nevertheless, since that same chapter claims that a Peter was made bishop of Smyrna, and one Kashish bishop of Chios, around the same time as John, and since these two are each the focus of a dedicated chapter within the text, a date has been reckoned through the complex process of calibrating chronological spans given in those chapters with inferred dates for John's own career. Thus, it is argued that John first met Peter, then serving in the household of a patrician, Caesaria, in Constantinople in c. 535;⁴⁹ and observed that thereafter Peter spent a reported eighteen years in Alexandria, five in Smyrna, and four more as Smyrna's bishop.⁵⁰ Likewise, it is supposed that Kashish and John, once fellow monks in the Monastery of Mar John of Amida, had parted company by 540,⁵¹ and thereafter observed that Kashish

46 Amongst the most authoritative accounts, see e.g. Brooks, PO 17 v; Honigmann, *Évêques* (as footnote 20 above) 210; Van Ginkel, John of Ephesus (as footnote 5 above) 32, 219 (although 559 should be demanded by the revisionist chronology at 29–31); PCBE 3 (as footnote 6 above) 505. All of these scholars are indebted to the reconstruction of D'jakonov, Ioann Efesskij (as footnote 20 above).

47 See *Chronicle of Zuqnin* (Chabot vol. 2 110). 'Photius' is perhaps a mistake for 'Peter', who is his associate in the *Lives of the Eastern Saints* (below n. 63). For John's list see below p. 214.

48 See Honigmann, *Évêques* (as footnote 20 above) 169–70.

49 Based upon the statement that John visited Peter in Alexandria, but was 'acquainted' with him before (*Lives of the Eastern Saints* 56 [Brooks PO 19 198]). It is then supposed that this was John's second visit to Alexandria in 541; that Peter had once worked in Constantinople, in the household of the patrician Caesaria; and that John had encountered him there during his first visit to the capital in 535 (*Lives of the Eastern Saints* 13 [Brooks PO 17 211]). See esp. Brooks PO 17 iv–v; PO 19 198 n. 1.

50 These numbers and locations are explicit: *Lives of the Eastern Saints* 56 (Brooks PO 19 198–9).

51 Based upon the passage at *Lives of the Eastern Saints* 51 (Brooks PO 19 159–60), which speaks of John and Kashish parting ways after moving westward from the East; see also Brooks PO 19 162 n. 1.

The passage is dense but important. As we have seen, John indicates that he was appointed at the same time as Peter of Smyrna, to whom he also attributes a four-year episcopate before his death. If we accept this information, we could reasonably situate that episcopate anywhere in the decade or so before the *terminus ante quem* of the text, 567/8.⁶³ (By that same year, as we shall see, documents also suggest that Peter is dead.)⁶⁴ Nevertheless, there is a complication. John implies that both his and Peter's elevation occurred *after* the appointment of Paul as archbishop of Antioch; and is explicit that both also occurred *after* an initiative to appoint twelve bishops to Egypt. It is normally reasoned that the consecration of Paul occurred in 564.⁶⁵ Might the appointment of John, then, have occurred much later than has often been presumed?

For independent witness to his consecration, we must turn to a document from 566. This belongs to the so-called *Documenta Monophysitica*, a remarkable compilation of documents compiled in or soon after 580, and witnessing various controversies within the emergent Severan episcopate (in particular from 560–580).⁶⁶ The documents follow a chronological progression and fall into obvious groups – it begins with several texts related to the deposed patriarch Theodosius of Alexandria (d. 566) and his struggles against tritheism (the belief in three individualised natures in the Godhead),⁶⁷ then

Ford, *Ordination and Episcopacy in the Severan-Jacobite Church AD 518–c. 588*, unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford 2016, 232–42.

63 For the four-year episcopate, see *Lives of the Eastern Saints* 56 (Brooks PO 19 197–9), which is focused on Peter and his brother Photius. For the *terminus post quem* it is reasonable to use the traditional date of Peter's consecration (558); see above n. 50.

64 See below p. 217.

65 See Brooks, *The Patriarch Paul* (as footnote 60 above) 469. Brooks points out that in *Documenta* 23 al-Hārith, returning from Constantinople, announces to Jacob Baradeus that Theodosius has told him of something pleasing in regard to the archimandrite Paul (Brooks 144), taken to be his imminent consecration; and that the same visit is dated, with some precision, to Nov. 563 in Theophanes, AM 6056. On Paul's appointment, see now P. Blaudeau, *Paul le Noir, l'homme qui ne voulait pas être patriarche (miaphysite) d'Antioche. À propos d'un désaccord nettement signifié et de ses raisons géo-ecclésiologiques*, in A. Gros-lambert et al. (eds.), *Entre Rhône et Oronte: Mélanges en l'honneur de Bernadette Cabouret*. Lyon 2022, 59–73, at 64–8.

66 For the date of the *Documenta*, see A. Van Roey / P. Allen, *Monophysite Texts of the Sixth Century*. Leuven 1994, 267, 300–1. I cite the documents according to the numbers which Van Roey and Allen propose therein. For a stimulating comparison of the *Documenta* and John's *EH*, with particular attention to their divergent presentations of authority within the Severan communion, see now P. Wood, *Recognising Rhetoric: Using the Syriac Dossiers to Re-read John of Ephesus*, in P. Blaudeau / P. Van Nuffelen (eds.), *Documenting the Challenges of the Late Antique Miaphysite Church*. Leiden/Boston (forthcoming). I am grateful to Philip Wood for an advanced view of this article.

67 *Documenta* 1–7. Modern narratives of the origins of tritheism, which often repeat John of Ephesus's heresiological polemics, are in much need of critical revision, but see A. Van Roey, *La controverse trithéite depuis la condamnation de Conon et Eugène jusqu'à la conversion de l'évêque Elie*, in W. C. Delsman et al. (eds.), *Von Kanaan bis Kerala. Festschrift für Prof. Mag. Dr. Dr. J. P. M. van der Ploeg O.P. zur Vollendung des siebzigsten Lebensjahres am 4. Juli 1979*. Kevelaer 1981, 487–97; A. Van Roey, *La controverse trithéite jusqu'à l'excommunication de Conon et d'Eugène (557–569)*, *OLP* 16 (1985) 141–65; R. Y.

comes a sizeable group of ten letters around the appointment of Paul,⁶⁸ and the subsequent group, consisting of five letters, concerns Theodosius's commission to Paul to consecrate bishops to Egypt.⁶⁹ This Egyptian initiative is no doubt identical to that referred to in the passage from the *LoES* above. In the first of these five letters, Theodosius asks the new patriarch Paul to consecrate the priest Longinus as bishop of the Nobades; in the second Theodosius instructs Paul to go to Alexandria with bishops of the East and to perform consecrations and ordinations; and in the final three he informs various local interests – three existing (and somewhat opaque) Severan bishops in Lower Egypt;⁷⁰ their counterpart Theodore of Philae and the monks in Upper Egypt; and the clerics of Alexandria – of Paul's mandate. The initiative must belong to 565 or the first half of 566, before the death of a then infirm Theodosius. Therein the latter seems to have reversed his long-standing refusal to consecrate bishops to his own province, and there is perhaps some suspicion that his entourage exploited his illness to launch the initiative.⁷¹ Either way, it is probable that it never came to fruition. Egyptian evidence is silent, and in the copious polemic which will come to surround Paul of Antioch, including his later interference at Alexandria, there is never a suggestion that he there consecrated twelve Egyptian bishops.⁷² Although John of Ephesus counts the twelve among Jacob Baradeus's consecrations in the *LoES*, his silence around their actual names and bishoprics seems to speak against their appointment.

Strikingly, the sequencing of John's passage in the *LoES* suggests that his own consecration fell *after*, and not before, both the consecration of Paul and the Egyptian initiative, and thus in 566 at the earliest, once placed in conversation with the *Documenta*.

Ebied et al., *Peter of Callinicum: Anti-Tritheist Dossier*. Leuven 1981, 20–33; Van Roey and Allen, *Monophysite Texts* (as footnote 66 above) 105–43; A. Grillmeier et al., *Christ in Christian Tradition*. Vol. 2: From the Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590–604). 4 vols, London 1987–2013, vol. 3 268–80.

68 *Documenta* 8–17. Note that three (15–17) concerns the approval of Paul's appointment from the several prominent archimandrites in the East. For the novel role of such letters in the legitimization of the Severan patriarchs, see Ford, *Ordination and Episcopacy* (as footnote 62 above) 203–20.

69 *Documenta* 18–22. Note that *Documenta* 19 and 22 are also cited in the *Florilegium against the Paulianists*; see L. Lontie, *Le Procès de Paul de Bêth Ukkâmê, patriarche monophysite d'Antioche* (564–81). 3 vols, unpublished PhD thesis, Institut Catholique de Paris 1994, vol. 2 25–7.

70 On these bishops (John of Cellia, Joseph of Metelis, and Leonidas of unknown see), see P. Booth, *Towards the Coptic Church: The Making of the Severan Episcopate*, *Millennium* 17 (2017) 151–89, at 161–2.

71 Note that in the crucial *Documenta* 19 (mandating Paul to appoint the twelve in Egypt) Theodosius states that he is too old and ill to perform the ordinations himself, and signs the document with a simple cross and 'farewell'. The next witness John of Ephesus (witnessed here for the first time as bishop; below p. 217) then insists that the patriarch has signed 'in his own hand (ⲙⲏⲣⲉ ⲁⲓⲛⲁⲥⲉ)' and suggests that the curtness is 'on account of the distress of his body (ⲕⲉⲓⲛⲁⲓⲛⲁⲥⲉ ⲛⲁⲓⲛⲁⲥⲉ ⲛⲁⲓⲛⲁⲥⲉ)' (Chabot 134–6). Cf. the same on the subscription to *Documenta* 22.

72 An attempt to realise the initiative perhaps lies behind two reports that Paul aspired to the throne of Alexandria after Theodosius's death and even travelled there, but was resisted; see Michael the Great, 10.1 (Chabot vol. 4 332–3); 10.2 (Chabot vol. 4 335–6). The former no doubt derives from John of Ephesus's *EH*; the latter is hostile to Paul and must come from another pen; cf. below p. 221.

Indeed, the earliest independent attestation of his elevation appears in the group of documents connected to the same initiative. In the earlier documents around the consecration of Paul, there is no suggestion of bishops in the capital besides Theodosius. But Theodosius's second letter to Paul – that which orders him to perform consecrations at Alexandria in league with eastern bishops – bears signatures from several others: a deacon of Alexandria, Peter; a Constantinopolitan priest, Basil; an Alexandrian priest, Longinus; John, bishop of Pelusium; and, before all these, 'John, by the grace of God archbishop of the metropolis of Ephesus (ܩܘܪܩܘܩܩܐܢܐ ܕܥܝܢ ܩܘܠܩܘܩܩܐ ܕܥܝܢ ܩܘܠܩܘܩܩܐ)'.⁷³ The same signatories then appear, in the same order, on the letter to the clerics of Alexandria.⁷⁴ The earliest independent attestation of John as archbishop, then, occurs in 566, and although it is possible that he had been appointed some time earlier, the witness of an independent source at once alerts us to the dangers of chronological reconstructions within the confines of John's corpus – not only because of potential carelessness or imprecision, but also because of obfuscations and omissions which are more deliberate.

Bishops of Constantinople

In the passage of the *LoES* on Jacob's consecrations explored above, John describes three appointments simultaneous with his own: Peter at Smyrna; John at Pergamum; and Peter at Tralles.⁷⁵ All three sees fell within the Roman province of Asia, and their bishops were traditional suffragans of the metropolitan of Ephesus. Although, as we have seen, it is difficult to date the consecrations with precision, this looks like a targeted attempt to create an Asian power base oriented around the new, Severan, metropolitan. Nevertheless, we know little about these bishops. Peter of Smyrna, as we have seen, is the subject of a chapter in the *LoES*, but is said have died by the time of its composition (in c. 565–c. 568), after a reported four-year episcopate.⁷⁶ Almost nothing is known of John of Pergamum or Peter of Tralles.⁷⁷ Indeed, in those documents witnessing debates within the Severan communion in the later 560s, the three bishops do not appear, and their fates are uncertain.⁷⁸ Instead, John of Ephesus's collaborators, and

⁷³ *Documenta* 19 (Chabot 135, correcting ܩܘܠܩܘܩܩܐ). Note that it is only in the *Documenta* that John is explicitly acknowledged as archbishop or metropolitan; cf. PCBE 3 (as footnote 6 above) 495.

⁷⁴ *Documenta* 22.

⁷⁵ Above p. 214.

⁷⁶ See above n. 63. On Peter, see Honigmann, *Évêques* (as footnote 20 above) 215–6. For the composition of the *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, see above p. 205.

⁷⁷ See Honigmann, *Évêques* (as footnote 20 above) 216–7. John of Pergamon appears amidst the list of famous bishops at *Chronicle of Zuqnin* (Chabot vol. 2 110).

⁷⁸ Note the single appearance within the *Documenta* of Julianus of Alabanda (below n. 130), suggesting that other bishops might lie outside the horizons of the collection.

apparent subordinates, are no longer claimants to the cities of the Asian coast, but to major metropolitanates and archbishoprics.

We have seen that the first group of texts compiled within the *Documenta* concerns Theodosius and tritheism; the second the appointment of Paul in 564; and the third the Egyptian initiative of 564–565. But a fourth substantial group within the *Documenta*, consisting of seven texts, charts the renewal of tritheism and the development of formal opposition among Severan bishops and monks c. 566–568, following the death of Theodosius.⁷⁹ The first document within the group, a letter sent in 568 from the bishops of Constantinople to their colleagues in the East, as well as to sixteen named archimandrites, provides a useful précis of the new crisis. The episcopal recipients are listed as Jacob (Baradeus), Theodore (of Arabia), John (of Chalcis), John (of Seleucia), John (of Sura), and Sergius (of Harran); while the senders are John (of Ephesus), Stephan (of Cyprus), Longinus (of the Nobades), Ptolemy (of Phrygian Laodicea?), Elisha (of Sardis), and Paul (of Aphrodisias).⁸⁰ (Their sees are not named but can be deduced from other documents, and from the *LoES* and *EH*.) Comparing the signatories to the passage on Jacob's consecrations in the earlier *LoES* (c. 565–568), therefore, we observe both strict continuity in the constitution of the eastern episcopate and (excluding John and Paul) a significant expansion in claimants both to western sees – associated with traditional archbishoprics (Cyprus) or metropolitanates (Laodicea and Sardis) – and even to a non-Roman see in Africa (Nubia). There is no evidence that these bishops rushed to take up residence in their titular dependencies. Rather, within the *Documenta*, as we shall see, the same group now forms a consistent episcopal node in Constantinople.

When, however, were Stephan of Cyprus, Longinus of Nubia, Ptolemy (of Laodicea), and Elisha of Sardis consecrated? We know little of Ptolemy outside of the *Documenta*, but the other three feature in the third part of John's *EH*.⁸¹ Both Elisha and Stephan will later enter into communion with the Chalcedonians and then become the reported focus of imperial efforts at reconsecration. Elisha appears somewhat fleetingly in this context; but Stephan features at some length.⁸² For our immediate purposes, we note that during a supposed confrontation over reconsecration with the emperor in 571, John puts into the mouth of Stephan a claim that he had been bishop of Cyprus for twenty years, having been appointed by the patriarch Theodosius.⁸³ This would place his consecration is c. 551, and is surely impossible.⁸⁴ If it were the case, we would expect Stephan

⁷⁹ *Documenta* 25–31. Note that *Documenta* 23–4 again concern the appointment of Paul in 564 and are out of chronological sequence in the compilation.

⁸⁰ *Documenta* 25.

⁸¹ On Ptolemy, see Honigmann, *Évêques* (as footnote 20 above) 231, who argues that his see was Phrygian Laodicea, on the basis that his counterparts laid claim to the other regional metropolitanates. For his fate in 571, cf. below p. 237.

⁸² See below pp. 233–42.

⁸³ *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 1.16 (cf. Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.5).

⁸⁴ Pace Honigmann, *Évêques* (as footnote 20 above) 221–3, who cautiously accepts it.

to have appeared in John's list of Jacob's consecrations up to c. 565–568 in the *LoES*; or in the diverse correspondence of the *Documenta* before 568, when Stephan's name first appears. It is far more probable that he was consecrated in 567 or even 568, soon after Theodosius's death; and that John, writing here in the middle 570s, has claimed for his episcopate a longevity, and an association with Theodosius, which in fact never existed.

Similar distortions seem to surround the career of Longinus. We have seen that the *Documenta*, within its materials on the Egyptian initiative of c. 565/6, includes a mandate in which an infirm Theodosius instructs Paul, now Severan patriarch of Antioch, to consecrate Longinus as bishop of the Nobades.⁸⁵ From the *EH* it is evident, however, that this was not realised while Theodosius was alive. The fourth book of the third part of the *EH* introduces Longinus as a priest who, late in the patriarch's life, officiated in his place at the altar.⁸⁶ It progresses to the life and death of the first purported evangelist of Nubia, Julian,⁸⁷ before remarking how, on the very day of his death, the patriarch Theodosius was mindful of the new converts, and of a previous instruction of Julian and of Theodora, and ordered the consecration of Longinus. Following the patriarch's death, therefore, Longinus was appointed bishop of the Nobades, but before he could set out on his mission, he was denounced before the emperor, arrested, and placed under guard. For three years, he remained so, until he fled in disguise and at last reached his see.⁸⁸ If we follow the chronology of the *EH*, therefore, we should imagine Longinus's consecration late in 566 or soon after; and his departure from Constantino-ple three years later.

We will see that serious doubts surround this account. But what at once strikes the reader of both the *EH* and the *Documenta* is the evident attempt to emphasise the long-standing connection of Theodosius and Longinus. Thus, where John of Ephesus is careful to record Longinus's substitution for the patriarch during the eucharist, the *Documenta* includes, as one of the earliest texts within the compilation, a text signed by 'Longinus, priest of the holy Alexandrian church (ⲕⲁⲩⲁⲗⲁⲛⲁⲛⲁ ⲛⲓⲁⲓⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲓⲁⲓⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲓⲁⲓⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲓⲁⲓⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲓⲁⲓⲁⲛⲁⲓ)'.⁸⁹ This is presented as an example of the declarations which Theodosius had demanded of his clerics in the capital, recognising his anti-tritheist *Theological Discourse* (c. 560). But it cannot be insignificant that Longinus's example is selected. Both John of Ephesus and the compiler(s) of the *Documenta*, therefore, make evident pains to legitimise Longinus through his connection to Theodosius, even if Theodosius cannot in fact have consecrated him. Indeed, John of Ephesus even goes so far as to implicate

⁸⁵ *Documenta* 18.

⁸⁶ *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 4.5.

⁸⁷ *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 4.6–7.

⁸⁸ *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 4.8. John does not record who consecrated Longinus.

⁸⁹ *Documenta* 7 (Chabot 86). As noted in Van Roey and Allen, *Monophysite Texts* (as footnote 66 above) 141, Longinus's exemplar is presented in the single manuscript of the *Documenta* (BL Add. 14,602), but not in the version attached to Theodosius's *Theological Discourse* in BL Add. 14,541 fol. 48a (Wright, *Catalogue* [as footnote 3] vol. 2 586), underlining the pointedness of the attribution in the *Documenta*.

the long-deceased Theodora (d. 548) within Longinus's appointment, or at least in the appointment of a bishop to the Nobades.

The presentation of the appointment of Longinus in both the *EH* and the *Documenta* is, therefore, far from innocent. John, Stephan, and Longinus belonged to a circle of western Severan bishops which had formed around the death of the patriarch Theodosius in 566. John of Ephesus himself was appointed at some point before that death; but the elevations of Stephan and Longinus both belong to subsequent years. Both the *EH* and *Documenta* evidence a certain disquiet over the status of both bishops, and are swift to associate their rise, somewhat dubiously, with the unimpeachable will of Theodosius. In their evident distortions both sources point to the precarious status of these parvenu bishops and their claims to grand bishoprics; but also, as we will now see, to the successive controversies in which the same bishops found themselves enveloped.

The Affair at Callinicum

In describing the earliest reign of Justin II (565–578), the *Chronicle* of Michael the Great states that the new emperor desired to establish peace in the church, and to that end received Theodosius as patriarch and ordered him restored to his see. When, however, Theodosius soon died, Justin ordered a lavish funeral, at which Athanasius, the grandson of Theodora, pronounced an address which denounced Chalcedon.⁹⁰ The *Chronicle* then proceeds to describe two large gatherings through which the emperor aspired to restore the Severans to union: a first in Constantinople, described as lasting one year and apparently involving, on the Severan side, various hīgoumens and notables (as well as, it seems, Jacob Baradeus); and the second, when the former proved unsuccessful, at Callinicum on the Euphrates frontier, and involving at least three Severan bishops and various monks.⁹¹ The meeting at Callinicum, which must have occurred in the period from late May to early November 567, is recounted in some detail.⁹² It is probable that both descriptions derive for the most part from the second part of John's *EH*, for here we

⁹⁰ For Athanasius, see PLRE III Athanasius 5.

⁹¹ Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.1; and cf. also *Chronicle to 1234* (Chabot vol. 2 246–52). For John, who combined his mission with an embassy to the Persians, see Menander Protector, fr. 9 (Blockley), with PLRE III Ioannes 81.

⁹² The date of 568 is often repeated; see e.g. W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement: Chapters in the History of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries*. Cambridge 1972, 319; Van Ginkel, John of Ephesus (as footnote 5 above) 34. Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.1 (Chabot vol. 4 331), however, places it in the second year of Justin, i.e. from 14th Nov. 566 onwards. The *terminus post quem* is provided by the so-called 'first *syndoktikon* of the East' (= *Documenta* 29), dated 17th May 567, which was composed before the meeting, in contrast to the so-called 'second *syndoktikon* of the East' (= *Documenta* 31), dated 3rd Jan. 568; see also Van Roey and Allen, *Monophysite Texts* (as footnote 66 above) 286; and below pp. 226–7.

also discover that aforementioned passage in which ‘John of Asia’ refuses the emperor’s supposed request to convene the conference at Callinicum alongside another John, a patrician and imperial diplomat.⁹³

Nevertheless, before proceeding to describe that conference, Michael’s *Chronicle* includes a passage which seems somewhat discordant with John of Ephesus’s known preoccupations.⁹⁴ This describes how Paul, following Theodosius’s death and despite his consecration as patriarch of Antioch, aspired to the throne of Alexandria, but how the Alexandrians instead preferred Athanasius, the grandson of Theodora. When Paul wrote to them slandering his rival, the account continues, the Alexandrians responded with an ‘act (Gr. πᾶσις) of very hateful accusations (ܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ)’ against Paul, which Athanasius then showed to the emperor. When an attempt to bribe the Alexandrians through the wealth inherited from Theodosius failed, Paul then retreated to the Jafnid phylarch al-Ĥārith, who ordered that his name be proclaimed in all the churches; but the Alexandrians were scandalised.⁹⁵ It is possible that Paul’s efforts in Alexandria represented an attempt to realise the mandate of Theodosius to establish bishops there;⁹⁶ but as our source makes clear, opponents saw overreach, and even an aspiration to the throne of Alexandria.⁹⁷ Paul is here an unambiguous villain;⁹⁸ and there is no mention that his rival, Athanasius, was a prominent patron of tritheism, that same doctrine of individual natures in the Godhead which had, late in his life, animated the patriarch Theodosius.⁹⁹ Both are uncharacteristic of John of Ephesus, who indeed seems to have described the Alexandrian affair in quite different terms, omit-

93 See above pp. 210–1. It is nevertheless doubtful that the description of Theodosius’s funeral derives from John, since it presents Athanasius in a positive light and fails to mention his tritheism. This aligns it instead with the anti-Paulianist source detected below.

94 For a useful guide to the materials in Michael’s *Chronicle* which concern Paul in this period (before John’s *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History*), see T. Hermann, Patriarch Paul von Antiochia und das alexandrinische Schisma vom Jahre 575, *ZNW* 27 (1928) 263–304, at 277–9 (our passage at 278).

95 Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.2 (Chabot vol. 4 333).

96 See above p. 216.

97 So also Hermann, Patriarch Paul (as footnote 94 above) 291. Cf. Blaudeau, Paul le Noir (as footnote 65 above) 68–9, who also accepts the truth of the accusation but instead sees in Paul’s aspiration an attempt to reinhabit the role of Theodosius as ‘ecumenical patriarch’ of the Severan communion.

98 So also Hermann, Patriarch Paul (as footnote 94 above) 281–2; Blaudeau, Paul le Noir (as footnote 65 above) 68 n. 46.

99 Cf. above p. 215. On Athanasius and tritheism in this period, cf. *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 5.1, which also claims that Athanasius tried to win over John of Ephesus to the cause (in c. 570). Athanasius would later align with John Philoponus on the resurrection (*Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 5.5–7), and is sometimes regarded, along with the patriarch Sergius, as the co-dedicattee of Philoponus’s (non-tritheistic) *On the Creation of the World* (ed. G. Reichardt, Joannis Philoponi De Opificio Mundi Libri VII. Leipzig 1897) which is dedicated to a bishop or patriarch ‘Sergius’ and a nobleman ‘Athanasius’ (Reichardt 2, with the suggested identification at vi). This would place the text in Sergius’s patriarchate, c. 557–c. 561. Sergius and Athanasius are elsewhere associated (Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 9.30), but the confluence of names in *On the Creation of the World* might still be a coincidence.

ting Paul and focussing instead upon the failed aspirations of the tritheist Athanasius.¹⁰⁰ Instead the passage appears to belong to a parallel anti-Paulianist source which Michael has interwoven around the account of Callinicum in John of Ephesus.¹⁰¹ That source will appear again, and provides us with a vital alternative perspective.

We will see that Justin's unionist initiative in 567 was indeed complicated through a resurgence of tritheism among the Severan bishops following Theodosius's demise. Within the *Documenta*, that aforementioned group of texts which records the same resurgence begins with successive *syndoktika* produced at Constantinople in late 566 or early 567, and both condemning tritheism.¹⁰² The titles to these texts suggest that the tritheists are the allies of the bishops Conon and Eugenius, but this is not explicit in the texts themselves – indeed both bishops sign the second *syndoktikon*.¹⁰³ The immediate target is perhaps instead the mercurial Alexandrian philosopher John Philoponus, who had begun to advocate tritheism in this same period.¹⁰⁴ As we have seen, still in the *LoES*

100 See Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 9.30 (Chabot vol. 4 314–5). The account appears under Athanasius's name in a list of heretics of the age of Justinian; for John's authorship of the material, if not the list, see below p. 231.

101 Note that the same episode of Paul's interference at Alexandria is recounted in *Chronicle to 1234* (Chabot vol. 2 242–3), when what is sent to the emperor is not a *praxis* but rather the anti-Athanasian letter of Paul, and where there is no report of the latter's attempt to bribe the Alexandrians. Nevertheless, it here serves as a preface to the consecration of Theodore in 575 where (in contrast to John of Ephesus's insistence, below p. 246) it is twice stated that Paul was responsible for the appointment, and where the act is even presented as an attempt to isolate Athanasius. Although the nature of the episode's transmission to both Michael and the chronicler is unclear, neither version suggests that John of Ephesus is the sole or immediate source.

102 *Documenta* 26–7. *Documenta* 25 explains that the first was at once rejected for reasons which are unclear: 'But those who so desire can ascertain the reason for its repeal from what one of their supporters wrote in Asia, and which disturbed that whole region' (Chabot 148). For Asian tritheists, cf. p. 231, on the monk Polycarp, who might be the referent here.

103 *Documenta* 27 (Chabot 160). Note that the pair also sign *Documenta* 35, which accepts Paul; cf. below p. 228.

104 *Pace* Honigmann, *Évêques* (as footnote 20 above) 184–5. An Alexandrian anathema against Philoponus, pronounced by the bishop John of Cellia (above n. 70), is included as *Documenta* 28, where its chronological positioning (and the narrative in *Documenta* 25) suggests that it occurred in the first half of 567, shortly before Callinicum. Philoponus's tritheist phase is witnessed only in short Syriac fragments of his texts, for which see A. Van Roey, *Les fragments trithéites de Jean Philopon*, *OLP* 11 (1980) 135–63. It is possible that a recent tritheist book noted as circulating in the East in *Documenta* 31 (Chabot 168), dated 3rd Jan. 568, is a work of Philoponus; see also Van Roey, *Les fragments trithéites* (as above) 162; Van Roey and Allen, *Monophysite Texts* (as footnote 66 above) 284. If so, however, this should be distinct from his *On Theology* (called also *On the Trinity*), which is probably that which Photius, *Bibliotheca* 75 (ed. R. Henry, Photius: *Bibliothèque*. 9 vols, Paris 1959–1991, vol. 1 153) claims to be response to a catechetical sermon of John Scholasticus, patriarch of Constantinople, given during the 'first indiction of the reign of Justin' (i.e. during Lent 568). On Philoponus and tritheism, see U. M. Lang, *Notes on John Philoponus and the Tritheist Controversy in the Sixth Century*, *OC* 85 (2001) 22–40; J. Zachhuber, *The Rise of Christian Theology and the End of Ancient Metaphysics*. Oxford 2020, 155–67.

(c. 565–568) Conon and Eugenius are celebrated as the earliest appointments of Jacob, with no hint that the pair might be tritheist heretics. It seems probable, therefore, that their embrace of tritheism was gradual; and that likewise their episcopal colleagues hesitated to effect a formal condemnation.¹⁰⁵

Our narratives for Callinicum nevertheless suggest that by the middle of 567, at least, the tritheism of Conon and Eugenius was more explicitly at issue. Returning now to material derived from John of Ephesus, Michael's *Chronicle* states that although the gathering – which, let us note here, met first at Dara, and then removed to the Monastery of Mar Zakkai at Callinicum – met for the purposes of union with the imperial church, the Severans soon disagreed over tritheism and divided into two camps: on the one side, Conon, Eugenius, and a bishop Theonas,¹⁰⁶ as well as certain monks; and on the other, Jacob, Theodore of Arabia, Paul, John of Asia, Stephan, Longinus, Elisha, and Ptolemy. Nevertheless, only Jacob, Theodore, and Eugenius seem to have been present in person. The patrician John, according to the *Chronicle*, began proceedings with a long appeal to the principle of *oikonomia* and then presented an imperial edict (called an ܩܕܝܫܐ = Gr. ἡδικτον, Lat. *edictum*)¹⁰⁷, quoted *in toto*, expressing a classic Cyrilline Christology (including his 'from' but not the Chalcedonian 'in' two natures) and even removing the anathema on Severus.¹⁰⁸ In a response (called a ܩܪܬܐ, and once a ܩܪܬܐ ܕܩܝܡܐ = Gr. χάρτης, Lat. *charta*)¹⁰⁹ which is again quoted *in toto*, 'the bishops' then demanded two explicit 'miaphysite' additions to the edict, as well as the restoration of deceased Severan bishops to the diptychs, and offered, if the same additions proved unacceptable, to recognise the emperor Zeno's irenic Henoticon of 482 (which had eschewed endorsing a 'one' or 'two' formula). But the document also adds an intriguing final con-

105 It is tempting to place within this broad context (late 566 to early 568) an unpublished excerpt from a lost text of Paul, contained within an anti-Paulianist work extant in a single ms. in Syriac (BL Add. 14,533, fol. 169r^a; see Wright, Catalogue [as footnote 3 above] vol. 2 973) and described as 'the *didaskalion* given to John patriarch of Constantinople, against three gods' (= *CPG* 7208). Therein Paul complained that certain persons (Conon and Eugenius?) prevaricated in their explicit condemnation of 'the Grammarian' (sc. John Philoponus) and had presented to the patriarch some sort of text on this subject; see the transcription and translation in Lontie, *Le Procès de Paul* (as footnote 69 above) vol. 2 19–20, vol. 3 15. If the *didaskalion* does not date to this period, when John Philoponus and John Scholasticus were indeed somehow in dialogue (cf. n. 104), it might attach to Paul's disputation before John in 569/70; so Honigmann, *Évêques 198–9* (as footnote 20 above); Lontie, *Le Procès de Paul* (as footnote 69 above) vol. 1 14; see below pp. 231–2.

106 On Theonas, cf. also John of Ephesus, *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 5.1, where he is presented as an appointee of Theodosius who was then deposed, but who joined Conon and Eugenius after the pair's condemnation (in 569/70; see below p. 231). His see and precise career are obscure.

107 Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.2 (Chabot vol. 4, 333, 335).

108 Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.2 (Chabot vol. 4, 335–6); cf. *Chronicle to 1234* (Chabot vol. 2 249–50). For analysis, see Grillmeier et al. *Christ* (as footnote 67) vol. 2 484–6. The reported document is quite distinct from the second edict of Justin on the faith (see below p. 235).

109 Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.2 (Chabot vol. 4, 333–5).

dition: ‘If Anastasius accepts the union, he will sit upon his throne; if not another will sit [upon it] (ܐܢܫܘܨܐܢܐ ܕܥܘܨܘܒܐ ܕܥܘܨܘܒܐ ܕܥܘܨܘܒܐ ܕܥܘܨܘܒܐ)’. This must be a reference to the Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch (561–570, 593–599).¹¹⁰ The *Chronicle* continues to recount how the assembled parties then agreed to send this text to the patrician John, but when the monks asked for it to be read there was uproar. One – named as Cosmas of the Monastery of Mar Cyrus at Callinicum (ܩܘܨܡܘܨ ܕܩܝܪܘܨ ܕܩܠܠܝܢܝܩܘܨ) – tore up the text in the middle of the gathering. When Jacob redrafted the same text and submitted it to the patrician John, the outraged monks forced him to anathematise it.¹¹² A frustrated John then retreats and reports the affair to the emperor.

Within the *Documenta*, we encounter a letter of the heads of the Syrian monasteries of Mar Bassus, Mar Biza, and Bartha, and ‘the rest of the higoumens (ܩܘܨܡܘܨܐ ܕܩܝܪܘܨܐ ܕܩܠܠܝܢܝܩܘܨܐ)’, to Jacob Baradeus, written soon after Callinicum.¹¹³ Following a long doctrinal statement which includes a condemnation of tritheism, the monks refer to a *charta* (ܟܪܝܫܬܐ) published at Callinicum, which departed from the faith of the fathers and which did not condemn Chalcedon or the Tome of Leo. Nevertheless, it attempted to deceive the more simple through mentioning Severus but ignoring his teachings, so that when read it scandalised the assembled audience, who tore it up. Here, then, the imperial *edictum* and the bishops’ *charta* are instead conflated and the situation simplified. But a telling addition – in which the authors profess themselves ignorant of whether ‘another *charta*’ was presented, and insist that, if so, it did not have their approval – suggests an awareness of the more complex scenario described in Michael’s *Chronicle*. The letter ends on a more ominous note. Rumour has reached the authors from the capital that certain people ‘among those who consider themselves to be on our side (ܩܘܨܡܘܨܐ ܕܩܝܪܘܨܐ ܕܩܠܠܝܢܝܩܘܨܐ)’ are asking that Jacob and Theodore go to the capital on the pretext of union, but in fact to make them recognise the aforementioned *charta*.¹¹⁴

The standard understanding of Callinicum is that the monks reacted to, and ripped up, the imperial edict, on the basis that it contained no explicit condemnation of Chal-

110 On Anastasius, see P. Goubert, *Patriarches d’Antioche et d’Alexandrie contemporains de saint Grégoire le Grand: Notes de prosopographie byzantine*, *REB* 25 (1967), 65–76, at 65–8; P. Allen, *Neo-Chalcedonism and the Patriarchs of the Late Sixth Century*, *Byz* 50 (1980) 5–17, at 13–5; Grillmeier et al. *Christ* (as footnote 67) vol. 3 359–85.

111 Cf. below n. 125.

112 Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.2 (Chabot vol. 4 334–5, quotations at 334).

113 The date is no doubt close to, perhaps identical with, that of *Documenta* 31 (3rd Jan. 568); see Van Roey and Allen, *Monophysite Texts* (as footnote 66 above) 286. On the communities mentioned, see E. Honigmann, *Nordsyrische Klöster in vorarabischer Zeit*, *Zeitschrift für Semitistik und verwandte Gebiete* 1 (1922) 15–33, nn. 1, 3, 5. But on Mar Bassus, see his correction in Honigmann, *Évêques* (as footnote 20 above) 188–90.

114 *Documenta* 32 (Chabot 172–7). This might be a reference to Severan lay people; cf. n. 164.

indication of its apparent entanglement with tritheism. The *syndoktikon*, which was produced by a gathering of monks at the Monastery of Mar Bassus, is signed by forty-five eastern archimandrites.¹²³ The second *syndoktikon* – dated 3rd January 568, and thus after Callinicum – was also produced by a gathering at Mar Bassus, and explains itself as a response to the continued agitation of the tritheists against Paul, and their attempts to claim Jacob and Theodore for their camp – a striking reference, no doubt, to their perceived acquiescence in the aborted demotion of Paul at Callinicum, in league with Eugenius.¹²⁴ This second *syndoktikon* again condemns tritheism. It is signed by fifty-eight archimandrites, most of them identical with the signatories of May 567. But it also refers to a letter from the bishops of Constantinople (listed as John, Eunomius, Stephan, Longinus, Elisha, Ptolemy) which had warned against tritheism and which the authors received ‘through the chaste monks of the holy Monastery of Saint Zakkai and Cyrus, both of Callinicum (ܩܝܪܘܫ ܕܩܠܝܢܝܩܘܡܝܘܢ ܕܩܝܫܝܢܐ ܕܩܝܫܝܢܐ ܕܩܝܫܝܢܐ)’.¹²⁵ This letter is not included in the *Documenta*, and perhaps for good reason. Mar Zakkai was the venue for the gathering at Callinicum; and Cosmas of Mar Cyrus was that monk who reportedly tore up the bishops’ response to Justin’s edict. This suggests that an anti-tritheist letter from John of Ephesus and his colleagues was dispatched to the monks at Callinicum in advance of the gathering, and later forwarded to Mar Bassus; but also that the monastic agitation at the conference, which protected the interests of Paul, was not as spontaneous or autonomous as John of Ephesus’s account would like its reader to assume. Hence it might be that John’s aforesaid claim to have refused Justin’s offer to mediate the conference was based less in a desire to aggrandise himself than in an attempt to distance himself from the fallout.¹²⁶ The letter of Justin to Sargona, nevertheless, suggests where official censure in fact fell.

A close re-examination of the various sources produced around Callinicum – the account of John of Ephesus embedded in the *Chronicle* of Michael; an anti-Paulianist source embedded in the same; and the *Documenta* – presents a quite different narrative to that which has hitherto prevailed in scholarship. Following the death of Theodosius, Paul had caused a scandal in his perceived attempts to interfere within the patriarchate of Alexandria, rivalling the powerful courtier Athanasius and perhaps turning erstwhile allies, Conon and Eugenius, against him. The ensuing conflict – in which the issues of tritheism and the status of Paul appear inseparable – cut across the

¹²³ See *Documenta* 29.

¹²⁴ Pace Van Roey and Allen, *Monophysite Texts* (as footnote 66 above) 284–6 who, by drawing a sharp distinction between the issue of tritheism and that of Chalcedon, are forced to say of *Documenta* 31 (the second *syndoktikon*) and 32 (which refers to Callinicum) that ‘[a]lthough their authors are the same and both documents were probably written at the same time, there is no relation between this letter [*Documenta* 33] and the second *syndoktikon*.’

¹²⁵ *Documenta* 31 (Chabot 168). In his Latin translation (117 n. 1), Chabot suggests that ‘Cyrus’ is ‘*nomen viri non monasterii*’, but Michael’s narrative (above p. 224) shows that it was indeed a monastery.

¹²⁶ For this claim, see above pp. 210–1.

new emperor's attempts to reconcile the Severans at large to Chalcedon. When a gathering under the imperial diplomat John was scheduled for Callinicum, the bishops in the capital under John of Ephesus, the allies of Paul, wrote to its monastic communities warning somehow of the tritheist threat. As part of their negotiations with the patrician John, the bishops Jacob, Theodore, and Eugenius submitted a *charta* which proposed a more 'miaphysite' creed; but which also accepted that Paul would lose his status in the unionist church. Perhaps the former alone, in its failure to name and shame Chalcedon, is sufficient to explain the subsequent monastic dissent against the *charta*. But the evidence suggests that internal Severan rivalries – in which the issues of tritheism and the appointment and ambitions of Paul intersected – also informed if not determined it. Rumours indeed swirled that Jacob and Theodore had gone over to Paul's tritheist critics; and the emperor Justin pointed the finger of blame at Paul himself, arresting two of his allies, Longinus and Stephan, in the capital. Perhaps within a year of its formation, therefore, the circle of aspiring Severan bishops in Constantinople found itself immured in controversies both within and outside the Severan communion.

On Not Three Gods

Both the *Chronicle* of Michael and the *Documenta* make it quite evident that the issue of tritheism within Severan circles was inseparable from opposition to Paul.¹²⁷ Indeed, the next two groups within the *Documenta* deal with that very same nexus. The first group consists of three letters: a first in which Paul complains to Jacob and Theodore about the verbal and written assaults of the tritheists, who spread the rumour (no doubt following their perceived slight of Paul at Callinicum) that the pair have embraced tritheism and now oppose him – he thus asks them to confirm their loyalty;¹²⁸ a brief but positive response from the pair;¹²⁹ and a letter from the eastern archimandrites to the bishops in Constantinople (John [of Ephesus], Conon, Eugenius, Eunomius, Julianus, Stephan, Elisha, Ptolemy, and Longinus) acknowledging the crisis around Paul and likewise accepting him.¹³⁰ The first and second must date to the end of 567 or early 568.¹³¹ But if the third is in proper chronological sequence, it is striking that Conon and Eugenius still have standing among their colleagues. This was soon to change.

A subsequent group contains six texts which record the pair's condemnation. The first two represent the attempts of Jacob to persuade Conon and Eugenius to recognise

¹²⁷ For this connection, see also Lontie, *Le Procès de Paul* (as footnote 69 above) vol. 1 114–7.

¹²⁸ *Documenta* 33.

¹²⁹ *Documenta* 34.

¹³⁰ *Documenta* 35. For Julianus (bishop of Alabanda in Caria), who is otherwise known only in the list at *Lives of the Eastern Saints* 50 (see above p. 214), see Honigmann, *Évêques* (as footnote 20 above) 220.

¹³¹ The response of Jacob and Theodore to Paul is mentioned in *Documenta* 32 (Chabot 167), which was written on or soon after 3rd Jan. 568 (the date of *Documenta* 31, the second *syndokikon*).

all the transactions of Theodosius (meaning both the condemnation of tritheism and the appointment of Paul); and to persuade bishops in the capital (John, Eunomius, Stephan, Longinus, ‘and their companions’ [ⲉⲓⲛⲟⲙⲓⲟⲩ ⲉⲩⲛⲟⲙⲓⲟⲩ ⲉⲩⲥⲧⲉⲃⲁⲛⲟⲩ]) to forgive and unite with Eugenius.¹³² (This, no doubt, refers to his actions against Paul at Callinicum, where Conon was absent.) More efforts at peace followed, including, it seems, a meeting of Jacob and Paul with Conon and Eugenius at the court of al-Hārith in Arabia; and a further meeting of Jacob and Eugenius at Garbadiso. When these efforts failed, according to the narrative embedded in these documents, the bishops of the East (named as Jacob, Theodore, John, John, Sergius) sent an encyclical to the bishops of the capital which recognised all the acts of Theodosius, and which in the extant version also bears the signatures of John [of Ephesus], Stephan, Longinus, Ptolemy, Elisha, and Paul.¹³³ The encyclical is said to have given Conon and Eugenius three days to respond, and upon their refusal, a general council met in the capital and issued a further letter, with the same signatories, anathematising the pair and emphasising the emperor’s desire for unity.¹³⁴ The bishops then wrote to the Church in Arabia explaining their actions;¹³⁵ in a famous response, 137 Arabian archimandrites approved.¹³⁶

Within the same documents it is notable again that the named bishops in Constantinople form a consistent group – either as signatories or addressees –, although with occasional additions (Eunomius of Amida, Eugenius of Seleucia, Conon of Tarsus, and Julianus of Alabanda), perhaps as different persons passed through the capital.¹³⁷ Although their sees are never named, perhaps for fear of official censure, they are consistently called bishops, and moreover exist in a strict hierarchy. When the bishops in the capital are cited together, the list follows an established order (John, Stephan, Longinus, Ptolemy, Elisha, and Paul); and when the same group subscribes alongside their eastern counterparts, the elevated status of John of Ephesus is again clearly demarcated. Thus, the metropolitans Jacob and Theodore sign first; *then* John of Ephesus; then the Eastern bishops; then those in the capital.¹³⁸ John of Ephesus, then, is, unambigu-

132 *Documenta* 36–7 (quotation at Chabot 187).

133 See the narratives of previous events in *Documenta* 39–40. The encyclical is preserved, with its signatories, as *Documenta* 38.

134 *Documenta* 39.

135 *Documenta* 40.

136 *Documenta* 41. For comments on the famous list of subscriptions, and previous scholarship, see F. Millar, Christian Monasticism in Roman Arabia at the Birth of Mahomet, *Semitica et Classica* 2 (2009) 97–115; R. Hoyland, Late Roman Provincia Arabia, Monophysite Monks and Arab Tribes: a Problem of Centre of Periphery, *Semitica et Classica* 2 (2009) 117–39.

137 See *Documenta* 31 (Chabot 168), which refers to a letter to the monks of the East from ‘John, Eunomius, Stephan, Longinus, Elisha, and Ptolemy’; *Documenta* 35 (Chabot 181), a letter from the archimandrites of the East to the bishops in Constantinople (‘to the bishops John, Conon, Eugenius, Eunomius, Julianus, Stephan, Elisha, Longinus’); *Documenta* 37 (Chabot 187), a letter from Jacob Baradeus of which the title presents the addressees as ‘John, Eunomius, Stephan, Longinus, and their party’.

138 See *Documenta* 38 (Chabot 189, 195); 39 (Chabot 204).

notion of individuated natures neatly avoided¹⁴⁸ – and answered well.¹⁴⁹ Note that here ‘John of Asia’ is placed before the patriarch Paul.

In the *Chronicle*, we seem therefore to have two accounts of the meeting, one from our anti-Paulianist source, emphasising the imperial over the sectarian perspective; and another from John of Ephesus, emphasising the anti-tritheist perspective and his own participation in events. Here, however, we can apply a further control on John’s claims. For in his *Bibliotheca*, the ninth-century patriarch Photius records having read the *Acts* of the same doctrinal disputation held under the Chalcedonian patriarch John. He lists the participants as Conon and Eugenius on the one side, and Paul and *Stephan* on the other. Photius otherwise offers little more than a brief and dismissive resumé of the tritheist position, but for our purposes it is notable that John of Ephesus is afforded no role in the event, and Stephan is the other protagonist. It has been suggested that the account in Michael’s *Chronicle*, which elevates John of Ephesus, has somehow substituted the name of Stephan out of embarrassment, since he (as we shall see) later communed with the Chalcedonians.¹⁵⁰ But both Paul and John of Ephesus of course did likewise, and it is preferable to see instead the hand of John himself, once again inserting himself into a context where he was in fact more marginal.¹⁵¹

Where does this leave us? The evidence suggests that after the death of Theodosius, a new wave of episcopal consecrations occurred, claiming oversight in three theatres: southwestern Asia Minor; Cyprus; and Nubia. There is no evidence that any of these new bishops went to reside in or near their titular sees, and documents suggest that all, in fact, remained for now in the capital. In effect, then, this created a new Constantinopolitan power bloc within the Severan communion. If Paul were responsible for these consecrations, as seems probable, there is nevertheless no overt indication that Jacob and his allies disapproved. Rather, it was the reported attempt of Paul to intervene in Alexandria – and the tension which this produced with the powerful courtier Athanasius – which seem to have encouraged the conflict at Callinicum and the subsequent, if reluctant, marginalisation of Conon and Eugenius. Their colleagues now condemned the pair as tritheists, and a disputation in Constantinople aimed at reconciliation instead ended in mutual recrimination. As the 560s turned to the 570s, then, the newly formed circle of Constantinopolitan bishops around Paul and John of Ephesus

148 The tritheists seem often to have raised the issue; see e.g. *Documenta* 13, 14, 26, 27, 31, 32, 38.

149 Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 9.30 (Chabot vol. 4 318); cf. Bar Hebraeus, *Ecclesiastical Chronicle* ed. J.-B. Abbeloos and T. J. Lamy, *Gregorii Barhebraei Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*. 3 vols, Leuven 1872–1877, vol. 1 237. Note that John in *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 5.3 recalls this event, claiming to have written about it in earlier books.

150 See e.g. Honigmann, *Évêques* (as footnote 20 above) 211; Lontie, *Le Procès de Paul* (as footnote 69 above) vol. 1 13–4; PCBE 3 (as footnote 6 above) 511. On Stephan’s communion, see below p. 234.

151 The same suggestion in S. Roggo, *The Conflict over the Patriarchate of Constantinople under Eutychios and John Scholastikos (552–582) and its Impact on Imperial Religious Policy*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge 2022, 99.

patriarch forced them to receive the Chalcedonian sacrament, torturing or imprisoning the recusants. To some communities the patriarch went in person to celebrate the eucharist, reconsecrating the church, proclaiming the Council of Chalcedon, and establishing new clerics to administer the sacraments.¹⁵⁵ Through such mechanisms, John claims, a large number of priests were persuaded to commune within the Chalcedonian Church, were at first received according to their rank, and held services thirty-six times. But then the patriarch decided to depose and reordain them.¹⁵⁶

So begins John's narrative of persecution under Justin.¹⁵⁷ The reader of these sections will note a disturbing lack of detail. But command of detail is not John's concern, for the evident purpose is to construct a general atmosphere of official violence and duress, and thus to set the stage for a series of more high-profile, and more precise, forced defections. First, John recounts how the Chalcedonians attempted to force three bishops – already imprisoned in various monasteries in and around the capital – to recant, and then to reconsecrate them to new sees. Paul (bishop of Aphrodisias) was forced to commune, and then sent to the (Chalcedonian) metropolitan of Aphrodisias to be reconsecrated as bishop of Antioch, in Caria;¹⁵⁸ another, Elisha (bishop of Sardis), was likewise compelled to accept Chalcedon, but upon resisting reconsecration at the hands of the (Chalcedonian) metropolitan of Sardis, was imprisoned in another monastery,¹⁵⁹ while a third, Stephan (bishop of Cyprus), was beaten to the point of death, forced to commune, and then reconsecrated, despite his protestations at the uncanonical nature of the act.¹⁶⁰ The reader familiar with the doctrinal conflicts of the previous decade will at once recognise that the named bishops all belong to the circle of John of Ephesus. But there is no indication here of the failed outreach, and mediation, of emperor and patriarch among the same circle in the years prior.

Having foregrounded the submission of Paul, Elisha, and Stephan, and the violence through which he explains it, John of Ephesus now provides some crucial background to that submission, although the casual reader might well misunderstand the actual

155 See *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 1.10–1.

156 *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 1.12 (and cf. Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.3).

157 See also the intriguing passage at Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.5 (Chabot vol. 4 338–9b), not from John of Ephesus, which suggests that before persecution broke out, Justin had intended to send Paul, John of Asia, Theodore, Longinus, Stephan, Elisha, and Ptolemy as envoys to Rome, but that the patriarch John then derailed the mission for fear that the envoys would depose and replace the pope. The context for this is quite obscure, unless we suppose that the pope was required to ratify the integration (or reconsecration) of the bishops, perhaps hinted at in John of Ephesus, *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 1.24. On the possible source, cf. below n. 176.

158 *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 1.14. John returns to the reconsecration of Paul at 2.42–3, where he quotes his supposed formal act of recantation.

159 *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 1.15.

160 *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 1.16 (cf. Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.5; *Chronicle to 1234* [Chabot vol. 2 253]), including Stephan's dubious claim that he had been bishop of Cyprus for twenty years, on which see above pp. 218–9.

sequencing of events.¹⁶¹ He explains how the patriarch John Scholasticus had gathered together from their monasteries in the capital the patriarch Paul (the Black), Elisha, Stephan, and John himself and ‘imprisoned’ them in the patriarch’s palace. Then begin discussions about union, during which the bishops rebuff the patriarch for his reordination of priests and bishops.¹⁶² Soon the emperor Justin dispatches a doctrinal edict to the group to serve as the basis of union. John does not describe the content, although states that although it departed from Chalcedon on some points, it nevertheless agreed with it on others. When the bishops therefore proposed corrections to it, these delighted the emperor, but his more hardline advisors persuaded him to include but trifling amendments.¹⁶³ Then begin a series of protracted wranglings until – still imprisoned and under increasing duress from their guards, officials, and even lay persons of their own confession – the bishops agree to commune twice, on the solemn promise of the Chalcedonian patriarch that the Council of Chalcedon will be abrogated.¹⁶⁴ Thereupon the bishops enter into communion, all the while grieving and anathematising Chalcedon.¹⁶⁵ The promised renunciation of the Council, however, never occurs, and John now offers an emotive account of the grief and regret which overcame the group, who again refuse to commune.¹⁶⁶ As a result, a sympathetic Justin offers them a list of vacant sees from which to choose, a blandishment which the bishops refuse.¹⁶⁷ Now angry, the emperor orders a trial before the patriarch and senate, and when the bishops boldly denounce dyophysitism, they are separated and imprisoned in various places in or near to the capital.¹⁶⁸

The text of the final edict to which John here refers is preserved, with minor divergences, in two historians – Evagrius Scholasticus and Michael the Great.¹⁶⁹ For the most part, it imitates Justinian’s neo-Chalcedonian position in the *Edict on the Right Faith*, with minor variations which serve to de-emphasise Christ’s two natures (still acknowledged in contemplation) and to emphasise unity (both in his composition and in his subjectivity as hypostasis of the Word).¹⁷⁰ Indeed, it seems impossible that the patriarch,

161 John’s chronological distortions around the course of events are well brought out in Roggo, *Conflict* (as footnote 151 above) 100–11, who argues that there was in fact no persecution of the bishops *before* the edict of March 21, which was identical to that which Paul, John, Elisha, and Stephan assented.

162 *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 1.17–8. It is probable that the reordinations, if real, in fact occurred after the union was agreed (so also Roggo, above n. 151).

163 *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 1.19.

164 *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 1.20–3. For the reported role of Severan laity in Constantinople in pressuring the group, cf. also *Documenta* 42 (Chabot 189); and n. 114 above.

165 *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 1.24.

166 *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 1.25.

167 *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 1.26–7.

168 *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 1.28–9. John’s broad account is paraphrased and quoted at Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.5–6; *Chronicle to 1234* (Chabot vol. 2 252–3).

169 See Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.4; Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.4.

170 See Grillmeier et al. *Christ* (as footnote 67) vol. 2 486–90.

in the face of a mere handful of dissenters, in fact promised to repeal Chalcedon, and John of Ephesus and his colleagues can have had little doubt that the edict to which they assented represented the established imperial position. Perhaps the group did indeed concede under pressure. But that John's arrangement first foregrounds (artificially) the issue of reconsecration – of Paul of Aphrodisias, Elisha of Sardis, and Stephan of Cyprus – and then, after the union, raises once again the emperor's offer of different episcopal sees, might suggest that the question of the status of the bishops within the unionist church again formed part of the subsequent impasse.

Throughout his account, John of Ephesus makes much of the issue of reconsecration, presenting it as an uncanonical denial of his protagonists' priesthood, and having them protest that if their priesthood is to be annulled, so too should their baptism. He even claims that the emperor, upon Stephan's protests, drew up a decree banning such, but that the Chalcedonian patriarch John was able to suppress it.¹⁷¹ Within these divergent claims, we can recognise the contours of a genuine contemporaneous debate – conducted both within and between various Christian factions and authorities – around the legal and sacramental standing of clerics who changed confession.¹⁷² Silvio Roggo has indeed argued that the reordinations were born from the sacramental rigorism of John Scholasticus's hardline entourage who, despite John's deceptive sequencing, refused to recognise the priesthood of the Severans after the emperor and patriarch had brought them into communion (thus derailing the enterprise).¹⁷³ This is indeed possible, but we also cannot discount John of Ephesus's transformation of a more moderate plan to depose, reconsecrate, and reappoint the bishops to vacant sees, without annulling their priesthood, into something more insidious, insulting, and illegal, thus disguising the Severans' own dissatisfaction at the outcome of their submission.¹⁷⁴ The reintegration of the competing, but quite unequal, episcopal hierarchies must indeed have presented various challenges to the impresarios of the new union. Severan bishops had hitherto been considered both heretics and pretenders, and there could be no question of a convert supplanting an established Chalcedonian incumbent within the titular see, or co-existing alongside him. (Stephan, so John claims, was consecrated bishop of Cyprus, which can only mean that the incumbent had died.)¹⁷⁵ Faced with this conundrum, it would not be surprising if some Chalcedonians indeed proposed reordination; but we

171 *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 1.16. Cf. also the claim that some Chalcedonians were opposed to the reordination of Severan priests at *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 1.12.

172 For this debate see Ford, *Ordination and Episcopacy* (as footnote 62 above) esp. 112–64.

173 Roggo, *Conflict* (as footnote 151 above) 105–10.

174 In this connection, we might note Paul of Aphrodisias's act of recantation, recognising Chalcedon, included at *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 2.43. It is notable that such an act (rather than rebaptism or anointment) is the sole condition for readmitting Severans to the church in the late sixth-century Timothy of Constantinople, *On Those Who Enter the Church or; On the Reception of Heretics* (PG 86 12–69).

175 See *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 2.3, stating that the emperor granted a remission of taxes to the island to aid him (no doubt because he was controversial); cf. Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.6

should also not be surprised if John and his colleagues bristled at plans to relocate them to less prestigious sees. Indeed, according to John's account and in contrast to the fate of Stephan, his colleagues Paul (of Aphrodisias) and Elisha were now to be suffragans of the same Chalcedonian metropolitans whose sees they had recently coveted; while Ptolemy (of Laodicea), according to an independent notice in the *Chronicle* of Michael and *Chronicle to 1234*, was now made 'sexton (ἑξαστάς = Gr. παραμονάριος) of a martyrion' – a remarkable demotion.¹⁷⁶

Whatever the precise circumstances, we should not allow John's legalistic rhetoric to obscure the basic fact of his communion with the Chalcedonian patriarch.¹⁷⁷ He wishes to present that communion, variously, as a mere expedience on the path to the anticipated repeal of Chalcedon; as insincere; and as the consequence of intimidation. In this, he demonstrates his awareness of how controversial the act in fact was. At least since the turn of the sixth century, Severan literature had begun to elevate the eucharist and its rites as crucial markers of differentiation from the Chalcedonians. Across canons, letters, and hagiographic vignettes, various Severan luminaries prohibited indiscriminate communion across different churches, warned their co-confessionals over the spiritual dangers which resulted from communion with the Chalcedonian heretics, and told stories of the corruption and ineffectiveness of the Chalcedonian eucharist. Commitment to the Severan eucharist was, therefore, a central aspect of the confessional identity articulated by Severan elites.¹⁷⁸ Indeed, John himself had included, in the earlier *LoES*, stories of Severan ascetics being forced to receive the Chalcedonian host.¹⁷⁹ In communing, therefore, John and his associates in the capital had crossed a bright red line which was, at least in part, of their own making.

(Chabot vol. 4 341), which makes the further claim that Stephan later recanted and fled the island; also *Chronicle to 1234* (Chabot vol. 2 253).

176 Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.6 (Chabot vol. 4 341); cf. also *Chronicle to 1234* (Chabot vol. 2 254). The notice records the fates of the various bishops with the circle of Paul and John and seems supportive of them. It is perhaps identical to that which soon before describes their aborted dispatch to the Roman pope; see above n. 157.

177 For John's forensic rhetoric (both secular and ecclesiastical) in and around the episcopal trial scenes, in an attempt to delegitimise the Chalcedonians and to deflect from the defendants' precarious canonical status, see W. Bunce, Flawed Forensics: Miaphysites on Trial in the Courts of Justin II, *Hugoye* 26 (2023) 47–95, esp. 70–89.

178 See esp. Menze, Justinian (as footnote 7 above) 158–65; also V. Menze, Priest, Laity and the Sacrament of the Eucharist in Sixth-Century Syria, *Hugoye* 7 (2004) 129–46; V. Menze, The *Regula ad Diaconos*: John of Tella, His Eucharistic Ecclesiology and the Establishment of an Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in Exile, *OC* 90 (2006) 44–90.

179 See esp. *Lives of the Eastern Saints* 5 (Brooks PO 17 96); with C. Shepardson, Martyrs of Exile: John of Ephesus and Religious Persecution, in É. Fournier / W. Mayer (eds.), *Heirs of Roman Persecution: Studies on a Christian and Para-Christian Discourse in Late Antiquity*. Abingdon 2019, 277–95, esp. 279.

All Apologies

Despite his repeated claim that all four bishops retracted and bewailed their communion, the second book of John's third part suggests a quite different scenario.¹⁸⁰ When the patriarch Paul was discovered to have composed, from his prison, a book condemning what had occurred, the patriarch and emperor threatened him with death.¹⁸¹ (A tale which serves also to signal, of course, the courage of John in composing his own such book.) Upon this, however, Stephan 'bishop of Cyprus', being in great favour with the emperor, intervened on his behalf, and an offer was made to Paul that if he entered into communion once more, all would be forgiven. In the presence of the senate and of certain unnamed Alexandrians, Paul obliges, and the Chalcedonian patriarch John – said to fear that Paul would replace him – suggests to Justin that Paul be offered the vacant see of Jerusalem or Thessalonica.¹⁸² The emperor refuses.¹⁸³ We notice, then, that once again John inserts the issue of reappointment to a prominent see into his narrative; but also that his two colleagues, far from repudiating their submission, continued in or returned to communion with emperor and patriarch. Elisha no doubt did likewise.¹⁸⁴

As we have seen above, the *Documenta* show that Paul had already been a figure of some controversy within the tritheist crisis of the late 560s, and controversy was evidently now revived.¹⁸⁵ John of Ephesus claims that Paul, having gained the confidence of the emperor and with the connivance of the patriarch John, soon slipped his guards and escaped the capital, fleeing to the Jafnid phylarch, and consistent protector of Paul, al-Mundhir.¹⁸⁶ Later, he will state that Paul fled Constantinople and went to Syria, and twice laid a *libellus* of penitence before 'the Synod of the East' (ܩܘܨܬܐ ܕܡܘܨܘܢܐ,

¹⁸⁰ The claim is repeated at *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 2.1.

¹⁸¹ *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 2.2.

¹⁸² The claim around the patriarchate of Jerusalem creates a problem, since the traditional if insecure date of the death of its incumbent, Macarius, is c. 574 (cf. Honigmann, *Évêques* [as footnote 20] 200); see, however, Roggo, *Conflict* (as footnote 151 above) 116–7, who regards John of Ephesus as reliable on this point.

¹⁸³ *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 2.3.

¹⁸⁴ See *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 2.4, where Stephan encourages to follow the example of Paul and Elisha, letting slip that the latter also had in fact remained in, or returned to, communion; cf. *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 1.15 and above p. 234. See also the apparent fate of Ptolemy of Laodicea at p. 237 above.

¹⁸⁵ See above pp. 220–33.

¹⁸⁶ *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 2.8. On these sections of Book 2, cf. Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.6; *Chronicle to 1234* (Chabot vol. 2 253–5). For the Jafnids as supporters of Paul, cf. *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 4.21–2, 4.36, 4.39, 4.41–3; Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.1, 12–3, 17; *Documenta* 23, 39, 41, 42. For analysis, see esp. G. Fisher, *Between Empires: Arabs, Romans, and Sasanians in Late Antiquity*, Oxford 2011, esp. 56–64; P. Wood, *Christianity and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, in G. Fisher / J. Dijkstra (eds.), *Inside and Out: Interactions between Rome and the Peoples on the Arabian and Egyptian Frontiers in Late Antiquity*, Leuven 2014, 353–68, at 356–63.

the benefit of the church, despite the damage to himself;¹⁹⁵ that a period of penitence was not in fact needed;¹⁹⁶ that small concessions were permissible if made in pursuit of the salvation of the many;¹⁹⁷ and that he did not support Justin's edict in full, since it contradicted Severus.¹⁹⁸ We notice therefore that his framing of the event seems quite distinct from that of John of Ephesus. In one fragment, Paul does refer to the Chalcedonians' 'clear transgression over promises (ܠܢܘܩܨܐ ܕܠܗ ܠܗܠܠ ܐܘܡܗܘܢܘܬܗܘܢ),' without further detail,¹⁹⁹ and in another deploys a series of biblical parallels which suggest that one might forgive or risk the broken promise of a ruler for the sake of some greater good.²⁰⁰ But where John places an overwhelming emphasis on the violence and deception of his opponents, Paul, at least in the fragments, appeals rather to his own accommodation and ecumenism. We are reminded again, therefore, that John's account appears tendentious.

That Paul's *Apology* differed in its framing of events in 571 is reinforced in an anti-Paulianist dossier now extant in a single Syriac manuscript in the British Library (Add. 14,533). This consists of two parts and focuses for the most on another crisis which would envelop Paul in the later 570s.²⁰¹ Let us note for now that both parts cite Paul's *Apology*. The first of these, a *Florilegium against the Paulianists*, is much-neglected, but has been transcribed and translated in the unpublished doctoral thesis of Luc Lontie.²⁰² It contains five citations from a text it calls 'the first *Apology*' (ܐܘܡܘܢܐ ܕܡܘܠܐܘܬܐ).²⁰³ Therein Paul recalls his imprisonment alongside 'John, Stephan, and Elisha' within the 'episcopal residence (ܘܠܘܬܐ ܕܡܘܠܐܘܬܐ)', and how the group, having examined their consciences, decided upon the path to union – for, Paul continues, it was reasoned that,

195 *Documenta* 42 (Chabot 238), still in quotation from the subscription.

196 See *Documenta* 42 (Chabot 229, 280). Cf. the argument at *Documenta* 42 (Chabot 238–9), apparently Sergius's own, that other bishops had communed with heretics and then been promptly readmitted to the orthodox communion.

197 *Documenta* 42 (Chabot 283–4), quoting the *Apology*.

198 *Documenta* 42 (Chabot 293), quoting the *Apology* but clarifying its meaning with a fuller quotation from an otherwise unattested letter of Paul to Jacob Baradeus (*CPG* 7206).

199 See *Documenta* 42 (Chabot 238), quoting the *Apology*'s subscription. Cf. the words of Sergius at *Documenta* 42 (Chabot 237, 289–90), where he refers twice to the repeated promises of both emperor and patriarch.

200 *Documenta* 42 (Chabot 283–4), in which Paul points out that the Maccabees forced to consume pork (cf. *2 Macc.* 6–7) would likewise have accepted the concession if it meant liberating Antiochus and his followers from impiety; and that he has followed the example both of Jacob in consenting to a new pact with Laban in order to wed Rachel (cf. *Gen.* 29:15–29), and of Moses and Aaron in submitting to the deceptive Pharaoh for the sake of liberating their people. Sergius develops these arguments in *Documenta* 42 (Chabot 285–92). See also Lontie, *Le Procès de Paul* (as footnote 69 above) vol. 1 55, 121–2.

201 BL Add. 14,533 fol. 167r^a–170r^b, 172r^b–176v^b; see Wright, *Catalogue* (as footnote 3 above) vol. 2 973–4, nn. 43, 44, 46.

202 Lontie, *Le Procès de Paul* (as footnote 69 above) vol. 2 1–28 (trans. vol. 3 1–22), with the study in vol. 1 59–74. I am extremely grateful to Emiliano Fiori for sharing a copy of this important thesis with me.

203 For the existence of a second *Apology*, cf. below pp. 250–1.

though making some small condescension (ܛܘܠܘܢܝܘܬܐ), if it did not produce the desired result they might then return to their previous ‘exactitude (ܕܥܝܩܘܢܝܘܬܐ)’, without contravening the canons.²⁰⁴ Their union, then, is again represented as a form of permanent doctrinal accommodation in pursuit of some unspecified goal.

Lontie likewise has published the second collection, an anonymous *Treatise against the Paulianists* dated to the late 570s, to which the *Florilegium* serves as an effective appendix.²⁰⁵ Here Paul’s *Apology* is criticised for two further features – his reported praise of Justin’s Edict, and his claim that in approving it he had made the Chalcedonians climb without himself stooping.²⁰⁶ We again get the impression, therefore, of the diverse excuses which Paul had proffered; but we also note that John of Ephesus’s picture of violence and deception again appears rather remote. In another section, the author again refers to Paul’s communion with the Chalcedonians and criticises his failure to extract from them an anathema against the *Tome* of Leo and the proclamation of two natures after the union. The author twice notes that this caused ‘many believers and bishops’ to abandon the true faith.²⁰⁷ Among these unnamed bishops, we must surely count John of Ephesus.

The Making of the Martyr

Paul’s communion in 571 was, therefore, the cause of outrage in wider Severan circles. Were the other communicants, John of Ephesus and his colleagues, immune to the criticism which attached to Paul? Their names do not appear in Sergius’s *Defence* or the *Treatise against the Paulianists*, which focus instead on Paul. But in a precious comment in the *Ecclesiastical History*, John informs us that he too had submitted an *Apology* (ܕܥܘܢܝܘܬܐ) to the Synod of the East, indicating that he also was forced to defend his actions in 571.²⁰⁸

The comments come amidst a section of text in which John describes, in emotive prose, the personal consequences of breaking communion with the Chalcedonians, immediately following his description of Paul’s re-entrance into the Chalcedonian communion.²⁰⁹ Styling himself as ‘superintendent of the pagans and idol-breaker (ܕܥܠܘܢܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܘܒܕܝܘܬܐ)’, lest the reader forget, John now describes how Stephan – who, we will

²⁰⁴ Lontie, *Le Procès de Paul* (as footnote 69 above) vol. 2 20–2.

²⁰⁵ L. Lontie, *Un traité syriaque jacobite contre les partisans de Paul de Bêth Ukkâmê (564–581)* (ms. British Library Ad. 14.533, f. 172r^ob–176v^ob), *OCP* 63 (1997) 5–51, with 45 for the date (c. 576–578); cf. Wright, *Catalogue* (as footnote 3 above) vol. 2 974. For the relation of the *Florilegium* and *Treatise*, see Lontie, *Le Procès de Paul* (as footnote 69 above) vol. 1 60.

²⁰⁶ *Treatise against the Paulianists* (Lontie 12).

²⁰⁷ *Treatise against the Paulianists* (Lontie 34–6).

²⁰⁸ *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 2.6 (Brooks 61).

²⁰⁹ See above p. 238.

remember, seems not to have broken communion, and was elevated to the Chalcedonian throne of Cyprus – was sent to John in his new ‘prison’, the Hospital of Eubulus.²¹⁰ There Stephan several times visited and invited him to renewed discussions with the emperor, patriarch, Paul, and Elisha. When John answered with anathemas and insults, repudiating union, Stephan twice reported the plan of the court to subject John to a painful death. When he still could not persuade him, he departed for Cyprus.²¹¹ John now turns to a long description of his miserable condition, alone, in prison, and the various afflictions which beset him: gout; ‘plagues’ of insects (lice, fleas, flies, bedbugs, gnats); and mice.²¹² With this image, John of course adopts a role as autohagiographer, casting himself as budding martyr – imprisoned and tormented, but unflinching in the face of death.²¹³ This self-presentation should no doubt be treated with a good dose of scepticism. Nevertheless, however, one reckons the reality of John’s position in this period, it is obvious that in the *Ecclesiastical History* he selects and amplifies this presentation for apologetic purposes, offsetting the image of the unwitting apostate with that of the unwavering confessor.

All this serves as a preface to John’s aforementioned comment about his submission to the Synod of the East, where the apologetic purpose of the image is more or less explicit. His condition, John states, he repeatedly affirmed in various letters and in his *Apology* to the Synod ‘and to all ranks of believers (ܩܘܪܕܐܢܐ ܕܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ)’, therein describing both his miserable state and a vision which appeared to him, and pleading that he has not misrepresented or embellished the truth. Ostensibly, John then quotes from the *Apology* in order to explicate the vision. He claims that in his despair a beautiful young man in a spotless white tunic, whom John at first mistook for one of the hospital’s attendants, several times appeared to him. The youth reassured him that God remained with him; gave to him a strange but restorative drink; and promised him great rewards for his suffering. After eight days, the youth no longer appeared, but when John interrogated a guard about the mystery attendant, the guard revealed that no such person existed on the staff and realised that a ‘vision of God ... and one of the angels or saints (ܩܘܪܕܐܢܐ ܕܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ ... ܩܘܪܕܐܢܐ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ)’ must have appeared to John.²¹⁴ Here, it seems, ends the purported quotation from the *Apology*, but

²¹⁰ On the Hospital of Eubulus, northeast of Hagia Sophia, see Janin, *Les églises* (as footnote 44 above) 558 n. 6. Despite its purpose, it might have been regarded as a bastion of Chalcedonism, since one of its directors (*xenodochoi*), the infamous Paul ‘the Jew’, had replaced Severus as patriarch of Antioch in 518/19; see Theophanes, AM 6011. On hospitals and other charitable institutions as ecclesiastical prisons in this period (including John’s own imprisonment), see J. Hillner, *Prison, Punishment, and Penance in Late Antiquity*. Cambridge 2015, 283–90.

²¹¹ *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 2.4 (cf. Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.6).

²¹² *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 2.5 (cf. Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.6; *Chronicle to 1234* [Chabot vol. 2 254]).

²¹³ So also Van Ginkel, *Monk, Missionary, and Martyr* (as footnote 36 above) 42.

²¹⁴ *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 2.6 (Brooks 64; cf. Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.6).

no doubt it served there as it serves in the *Ecclesiastical History* – to cloak John himself in a shroud of hagiographic righteousness. The reader familiar with hagiographic literature will at once recognise the arrival of a divine being and comforter resplendent in white. More specifically, one might also recall contemporaneous reports from the miracles of healing saints, when a pious supplicant sees the saint or saints on their rounds amongst the sick in a vision, and at first mistakes them for doctors.²¹⁵ John presents himself emphatically, therefore, as the recipient of divine grace and favour, a saint in the making. Whatever others might think of his communion with the Chalcedonians, therefore, God himself had no such anxieties.

John's reference to various letters and to the dispatch of his *Apology* both to the Synod and to 'all ranks of believers' signals a wide-ranging attempt to excuse his communion, not only before the eastern episcopate but also before monks and perhaps lay patrons. Later, he returns again to the same letters. Having recounted his vision – and then, in brief, his transfer from the hospital to an island, and thence to house arrest – John recalls again that he has also recounted his fate, and his vision, in numerous letters, and begs forgiveness if they be found to contain differences, additions, or omissions. None of these letters survives. But John's comments are sufficient that we can at least appreciate these sections of the *Ecclesiastical History* as one part of a sustained and, it seems, sometimes inconsistent apologetic campaign, in which he differentiated himself from his fellow communicants, from Stephan and indeed from Paul, in emphasising his profound personal suffering, his bitter renunciation of Chalcedon, and the divine visitation which reassured him of rewards to come. At whom precisely was this campaign directed? The composition of the *Ecclesiastical History* in Syriac suggests an eastern and relatively unhellenised audience – perhaps those same monastic communities which had been so prominent in the denunciation of tritheism, but who would, as we shall see below, distance themselves from Paul in the courses of the 570s.²¹⁶ That John felt compelled to repeat his defence in Book 2 of the *EH* – most of which he composed in 577/8 – suggests that his earlier efforts had left some unconvinced.

Was John, like Paul, required to undergo a period of penance? John himself remains silent, but this is not improbable. An aforementioned chapter of Michael the Great – which seems to depend upon the lost opening chapters of the fourth book of the third part of the *EH* – describes a controversy among the orthodox in the 540s as to whether a Chalcedonian cleric who converted should be reordained, and indeed rebaptised. In the end, an edict was issued from the ecclesiastical authorities in Constantinople (sc. Theodosius and others) which laid down that converts should not be reordained or rebaptised per se, but that their ordinations and baptisms should be made legal through

²¹⁵ See e.g. *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* 17 ed. L. Deubner, Kosmas und Damian: Texte und Einleitung. Leipzig and Berlin 1907, 142–3; *Egyptian Miracles of Cosmas and Damian* 4 ed. E. Rupprecht, Cosmae et Damiani Sanctorum Medicorum Vita et Miracula e Codice Londinensi. Berlin 1935, 14–7.

²¹⁶ See below p. 245.

formal reception in the orthodox church. The same decree also laid down the periods of penance for Chalcedonian clerics who converted: two years for bishops, priests, and deacons, following which a bishop would recite over them the prayer of ordination, and their status would be validated.²¹⁷ If John of Ephesus, writing here in the 580s, is indeed responsible for this episode, then the reason for its inclusion is quite opaque. Perhaps he here wanted to contrast the more liberal stance of the Severans with the reported rigorism of his persecutors in Constantinople; or perhaps he wanted to remind his readership that those bishops who underwent penance were meant to be reintegrated. Whatever the reason, it seems probable that John, like Paul, had earlier undergone the prescribed period of formal penance for his defection to the Chalcedonians in 571. There is little good reason, however, to suppose that he was later able to redeem in full his reputation.²¹⁸

Fuel to the Fire

Before his return to the Severan communion, Paul involved himself in another provocative act: the appointment, in the summer of 575, of a new Severan patriarch of Alexandria.²¹⁹ It is probable that the appointment of Theodore was intended to counter the rise of an anti-Paulianist, Severan faction at Alexandria, as well as providing a means for Paul and his circle to reassert themselves within the wider Severan communion.²²⁰ It was nevertheless a grave miscalculation. The act, and Paul's role within it, would generate a huge corpus of polemical and counter-polemical literature, not all of it extant or

²¹⁷ Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 9.31 (Chabot vol. 4 319–21). The subsequent material in Michael derives from *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 4.5–8, also focused on the 540s, so that it seems the episode derives from the lost book 4.1–4; so also Van Ginkel, John of Ephesus [as footnote 5] Appendix C). I thank Silvio Roggo for this point. The sole chronological indicators within the episode itself are the mention of Jacob and Theodore as bearers of the edict to the East, which suggests the period after their consecration in 542/3. The subsequent section in the text concerns Theodora's dispatch of Julian to evangelise Nubia (before 548).

²¹⁸ For the assumed success of John's apologetic campaign, see e.g. Van Ginkel, John of Ephesus (as footnote 5 above) 90. This, however, demands accepting John's own claims around his heroic resistance and later ecumenical status; cf. below pp. 248–54.

²¹⁹ It is evident that Paul had still not been received into communion at the time of Theodore's appointment: see *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 4.10; and *Treatise against the Paulianists* (Lontie 10–2), which claims that Jacob then readmitted him before becoming aware of events at Alexandria. For his subsequent reception, cf. *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 4.15; Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.12; and for doubts around its canonical basis: *Treatise against the Paulianists* (Lontie 18–22).

²²⁰ For the anti-Paulianist faction, see the explicit comment in the citation from the letter of Theodore of Copris, *Letter to Longinus* (CPG 7225) in Sergius's *Defence = Documenta* 42 (at Chabot, 273–4), with Booth, *Towards the Coptic Church* (as footnote 70 above) 166–7. For the appointment of Theodore within the context of Paul's wider ecclesiological ambitions: Blaudeau, *Paul le Noir* (as footnote 65 above) 69–70.

even published.²²¹ Written in the later 570s, both the *Treatise* and the *Florilegium against the Paulianists* are devoted to denouncing it, and in 580 Sergius of Nicaea's *Defence* (= *Documenta* 42) responded to a lost polemic against the act from a priest of Mar Bassus. Mar Bassus, let us remember, had once been a bastion in Paul's network of anti-tritheist monasteries, and although its bishop John, as we shall now see, also participated in the consecration of Theodore, in subsequent years at least some of its members now turned against their patriarch.²²² It is clear that other monks did likewise.²²³

John of Ephesus recounts the affair at some length in the *EH*. When Longinus had spent around five years in Nubia, he claims, Satan stirred up the archpriest and archdeacon of Alexandria, Theodosius and Theodore, to summon him from Nubia for the purposes of consecrating a new Alexandrian patriarch.²²⁴ En route, Longinus consulted with Theodore bishop of Philae – one of the few remaining Severan incumbents – and won his formal approval.²²⁵ In the meantime, the Synod of the East had sent two new bishops, John of Marbas (Mar Bassus, but also Severan bishop of Qenneshrin) and George Urtāyā, to consult with Longinus and Theodore of Philae about Paul's possible reception into communion.²²⁶ John claims that the bishops had intended to sail south along the Nile, but instead found Longinus at Mareotis, where he had travelled in order to complete his mission on behalf of the Alexandrians. When Longinus encouraged the pair to assist him, they responded that they could not do so without the permission of their own patriarch, Paul. Paul is then fetched from some unspecified nearby place, where he is hiding 'clothed in the guise of a soldier (ⲕⲁⲗⲓ ⲛⲓ ⲛⲓ ⲛⲓ ⲛⲓ ⲛⲓ ⲛⲓ)'. At this, Longinus and his two eastern colleagues consecrate a monk, Theodore of Rhamnis, as patriarch of Alexandria. John insists that Paul played no part in Theodore's elevation, since he had still not been admitted into communion, although later he did approve, and even

221 For its development, see the useful guide in Lontie, *Le Procès de Paul* (as footnote 69 above) vol. 1 136–47.

222 See above p. 224.

223 John of Ephesus, *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 4.19, 31 (and cf. Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.12–3) suggests that monasteries at large were divided between Jacobites and Paulianists, but does not provide details and might misrepresent monastic support for Paul; cf. *Treatise against the Paulianists* 36, claiming that Egypt and most of the East broke with him. A general *volte face* of the eastern monasteries might provide one explanation for their prominence within the *Documenta*, which as a compilation goes to some lengths to demonstrate their earlier support for Paul's appointment (*Documenta* 15–7) and actions against tritheism (*Documenta* 29, 31, 32, 35). For discussion of Paul's loss of some monastic support, see also Ford, *Ordination and Episcopacy* (as footnote 62 above) 223–6; and cf. below n. 230 on Mar Ḥaninā.

224 Since the consecration occurred in the summer of 575, John here seems to place Longinus's arrival in Nubia in c. 570; cf. above p. 219. That Longinus was indeed in Nubia when summoned to Alexandria is also stated in *Documenta* 42 (Chabot 272).

225 *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 4.9.

226 On John and George, see Honigmann, *Évêques* (as footnote 20 above) 188–90, 232–7; and below pp. 247–8.

exchanged synodicals with Theodore.²²⁷ John continues that the Severan clergy at Alexandria – enraged at the perceived interference of Paul, who was still then unabsolved – soon appointed their own rival patriarch, Peter, who at once issued a deposition of Paul and broke communion.²²⁸ Despite mutual polemics between Peter and Jacob, the latter now recognised Peter and also approved the deposition of Paul.²²⁹ According to John’s account, Paul and his patron al-Mundhir now made considerable efforts to re-establish contacts with Jacob, and when Longinus and Theodore of Rhamnis travelled to the east, a meeting with the adherents of Jacob was agreed at the desert Monastery of Mar Ḥaninā on the Euphrates – once supportive of Paul but now, it seems, opposed.²³⁰ Here Longinus, according to John, was ambushed by the partisans of both Jacob and the Alexandrian Peter, who presented him with a written indictment. Longinus refused to read it and, John claims, barely escaped with his life.²³¹

A not dissimilar narrative can be reconstructed too from Sergius’s *Defence*. This for the most part deals with the issue of Paul’s deposition *in absentia*,²³² but he like John also addresses the accusation that Theodore’s appointment had occurred without the cognisance of Alexandria’s clerics or the local Severan bishops (John of Cellia and Joseph).²³³ In doing so, he cites several documents which provide substantial support for John’s account. These are: letters of the priest Theodosius and deacon Theodore of Copris at Alexandria, asking Longinus to come to Mareotis to consecrate a patriarch,²³⁴ a *Mandate* of Theodore of Philae approving the action in advance,²³⁵ an ‘affidavit’ (Syr. ܠܘܕܝܩܝܐ, Gr. διαμαρτυρία) which Paul had given, via al-Mundhir, to a certain ‘Mar

227 *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 4.10; see also *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 1.40.

228 *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 4.11–2, 16.

229 *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 4.12, 14–5.

230 The location, seat of the bishop John of Sura Romanorum, is confirmed in a subscription cited in Sergius’s *Defence* = *Documenta* 42 (Chabot 244). On Mar Ḥaninā’s previous support of Paul, see *Documenta* 35 (Chabot 182); and Honigmann, *Nordsyrische Klöster* (as footnote 113 above) 31 n. 84, who places it between Barballisus and Callinicum, near Sura. It is notable that the anti-Paulianist anti-patriarch Peter of Callinicum (below p. 252) was consecrated there in 581; see Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.17. For its newly pre-eminent role in the anti-Paulianist resistance, see Ford, *Ordination and Episcopacy* (as footnote 62 above) 221–3.

231 *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 4.22. On all this, cf. the account of Michael the Great, *Chronicle* 10.12–3; also *Chronicle to 1234* (Chabot vol. 2 244–5).

232 See *Documenta* 42 (Chabot 228–65), which explores various historical precedents, in conversation with the polemic of Probus.

233 For this accusation, see *Documenta* 42 (Chabot 229, 270).

234 See Theodosius, *Letter to Longinus* (Chabot 272–3) (CPG 7223), which also refers to a letter to Theodore of Philae; Theodore of Copris, *Letter to Longinus* (Chabot, 273–4) (CPG 7225), which in turn refers to the hostility between John of Cellia and Joseph of Metelis, and calls Longinus to Mareotis. On the cause of the hostility, see Booth, *Towards the Coptic Church* (as footnote 70 above) 166–7. Joseph seems to have died while Longinus was at Mareotis; see *Documenta* 42 (Chabot 278).

235 *Documenta* 42 (Chabot 274–5). Sergius (unlike John of Ephesus) admits (Chabot 276) that Theodore later retracted it. Sergius also cites from John of Cellia, *Letter to Longinus* (Chabot 277–8) (CPG 7230),

Antiochus';²³⁶ and several letters relating to Longinus's presence in the east and at Mar Ḥaninā, wherein he insisted (like John) that Paul was not present at, nor advised on, the consecration of Theodore.²³⁷ Sergius also appeals to a book on the entire affair by George Urtāyā, one of the consecrating bishops;²³⁸ and likewise to a mysterious text on the matter by one Metras, which he dismisses.²³⁹ We note, then, that Longinus (like Sergius) also insists that Paul had no hand in Theodore's consecration; although there is no place here, it seems, for John of Ephesus's strange admission that Paul was somehow in the region and indeed summoned to the event, but neither prompted nor participated in it.

At first sight, we have a general confluence of evidence between the *EH* and Sergius's *Defence*. But a further anonymous tract in Syriac, composed from the Jacobite perspective, complicates matters. Like Sergius's *Defence*, the aforementioned *Treatise against the Paulianists* deals with the nexus of issues around the penance of Paul, the appointment of Theodore (and Peter), and Paul's deposition, first refuting several pro-Paulianist arguments and then developing several anti-Paulianist arguments of its own.²⁴⁰ The author cites various texts also referred to in John of Ephesus's narrative and in Sergius's *Defence*. But their interpretation is quite different. Thus, the author disputes that the *Mandate* of Theodore of Philae or the letters of Theodosius and Theodore legitimised the appointment of a new patriarch;²⁴¹ while a *Homologia* of the consecrating bishops George and John – perhaps identical with the 'book' which Sergius attributes to

approving the appointment of Theodore. John of Ephesus does not refer to this, mentioning John only as one of the consecrators of Peter; see *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 4.11.

236 *Documenta* 42 (Chabot 264). Brooks, *The Patriarch Paul* (as footnote 60 above) 475 suggests that Antiochus was a monastic representative of Jacob.

237 Longinus, *Letter to the Archimandrites* (Chabot 241) (*CPG* 7218), no doubt those gathered at Mar Ḥaninā; see also the subscription to the same by John of Mar Bassus (Bishop of Qenneshrin) (Chabot 244). To this context also belong: Longinus, *Letter to John of Beth Mar Ḥaninā [Bishop of Sura Romanorum]* (Chabot 242) (dated Nov. 576); Longinus, *Letter to the Patriarch Paul* (Chabot 243). Note also that Sergius refers to a dispute between Jacob, Jacob's syncellus Sergius, and Longinus, but passes over these since conducted in Greek (Chabot 240). On Longinus's apologies, cf. also below n. 245.

238 *Documenta* 42 (Chabot 244). On George, see above n. 227.

239 *Documenta* 42 (Chabot 247).

240 On the conflict of the collection with John of Ephesus's narrative of 575, and their competing presentations of the legitimacies of Theodore and Peter, see further Lontie, *Le Procès de Paul* (as footnote 69 above) vol. 1 127–35, 174–80; Ford, *Ordination and Episcopacy* (as footnote 62 above) 254–94; and on the rhetorical strategies and ideological positioning of the collection, now also Wood, *Recognising Rhetoric* (as footnote 66 above).

241 *Treatise against the Paulianists* (Lontie 24). See also the reference to a lost letter of Theodore of Philae to the Alexandrians at *Treatise against the Paulianists* (Lontie 24). The letter of John of Cellia to which Sergius refers (above n. 235) is also refuted as insufficient to approve a patriarch; see *Treatise against the Paulianists* (Lontie 24).

the former – is presented as mendacious and indeed a cause for deposition.²⁴² More texts are now cited, some of them said to have been included in a large, anti-Paulianist compilation.²⁴³ Where John of Ephesus and Sergius seek to dissociate Paul from Theodore's appointment, the anonymous author cites several witnesses to the close involvement of Paul, still a penitent, in affairs, including the aforementioned Metras – whom Longinus, it is here said, appointed as priest whilst also consecrating Theodore –, several leading members of the Alexandrian Emporium, and even Longinus himself, said to have revealed it to Jacob Baradeus.²⁴⁴ Indeed, Longinus is accused of earlier misleading Jacob over the nature of Theodore's (and Peter's) consecration.²⁴⁵ Between the *Defence* of Sergius and the anonymous *Treatise*, therefore, we witness various points of polemic and counter-polemic, to some extent oriented around the same small corpus of texts. But we are reminded too that John of Ephesus's narrative sits very much on Sergius's side of the conversation.

A Passionate Dispassion

John of Ephesus wants his readership to accept two principles of the *EH*'s third part: first, that it was produced under duress; and second, that it is dispassionate. The first point is established at the outset, where John begs his audience for forgiveness for any disorder or repetition, for it was composed in difficult circumstances (that is, the context of persecution which the text itself constructs).²⁴⁶ The second soon follows. Having described at length his and his allies' entrance into, and withdrawal from, the

242 *Treatise against the Paulianists* (Lontie 28), attributed to George alone at *Treatise against the Paulianists* (Lontie 30). The identification with Sergius's 'book' was long ago suggested in Honigmann, *Évêques* (as footnote 20 above) 236–7. It is rejected in Van Roey and Allen, *Monophysite Texts* (as footnote 66 above) 297 for reasons which are not clear. Note that the *Treatise* here alludes to a letter from the higoumens Palladius and Zenobius, who seem to be the heads of Mar Bassus and Mar Biza; cf. Honigmann, *Évêques* (as footnote 20 above) 236. It is not clear if the higoumens had therein approved of their bishops' actions.

243 See Lontie, *Un traité syriaque* (as footnote 205 above) 46–9 for the contents. Honigmann, *Évêques* (as footnote 20 above) 228 n. 3 identifies it with the indictment which Longinus refused to read at Mar Ḥaninā.

244 See *Treatise against the Paulianists* (Lontie 10, 12), citing the treatise of Metras and two work of Jacob via the anti-Paulianist compilation. The members of the Emporium (named as Bacchus, Theodore, and Damian) were perhaps the leaders of Alexandria's ship-owning class, a powerful pro-Severan interest group; cf. John of Ephesus, *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 1.33.

245 *Treatise against the Paulianists* (Lontie 14; also 24), referring to a letter of Longinus to Jacob Baradeus on Theodore's consecration. Longinus seems to have written a similar letter to the Alexandrians: *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 4.14.

246 *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 1.3; see also *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 2.50. Note the scepticism of Van Ginkel, John of Ephesus (as footnote 5 above) 84.

Chalcedonian communion within the opening chapters, John then anticipates, at some length, the scepticism of those readers ‘who are practised in lofty understanding and mentally acute (ܩܠܒܘܬܗܘܢ ܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܥܠܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ: ܩܠܒܘܬܗܘܢ ܩܘܪܝܢܐ)’, and who might suppose his account to be fictional and rhetorical, and both question his knowledge of events and point to his status as a partisan within them. In response, John appeals to his own proximity to, and participation in, the things described; but also to the many conversations with emperor and patriarch which he has omitted, for fear of prolonging his narrative. While this hardly answers the accusation of selectivity, John then adds that despite his opposition to the Chalcedonians, he has eschewed all favouritism, recrimination, and slander, and embraced instead the simple truth.²⁴⁷ Such statements are of course counterproductive. For John’s expectation of criticism is a fair indication that he has, in fact, distorted events.

In line with John’s own self-image as a non-partisan figure among the Severans, it has sometimes been claimed that the *EH* endeavours self-consciously to establish a shared past for the community at large.²⁴⁸ In its reception, this might well be a perception and effect of the text. But it is doubtful that John, at least in composing its third part, could have intended his text thus; or that his Severan contemporaries can have read it as such. For his account of the later 570s and 580s is marked with a near constant polemic against his circle’s various opponents.²⁴⁹ Thus, John punctuates the aftermath of Theodore’s consecration in 575 with a patent assault against ‘the Alexandrians’.²⁵⁰ Following his account of the consecration and Paul’s exchange of letters with the new patriarch, John at once insists that the participants presumed to have performed a ‘great deed in accordance with the canons (ܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܥܠܝܘܬܐ: ܩܠܒܘܬܗܘܢ ܩܘܪܝܢܐ)’, and for ‘the union and establishment of the Syrian and Alexandrian churches (ܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܥܠܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܠܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܠܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܠܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܠܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܠܝܘܬܐ)’, but that the Alexandrians’ ignorance of the initiative gave rise to ‘trials, confusion, controversies, divisions, separations (ܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܥܠܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܠܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܠܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܠܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܠܝܘܬܐ ܕܥܠܝܘܬܐ)’, but also, he adds, presented ‘to the “barbarous people” of Alexandria (ܩܠܒܘܬܗܘܢ ܩܘܪܝܢܐ)’, an impetus ‘to malice and savagery which was lacking all

247 *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 1.30 (Brooks 40–1).

248 See e.g. Van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus* (as footnote 5 above) 99; P. Wood, ‘We have no king but Christ’: Political Thought in Greater Syria on the Eve of the Arab Conquest. Oxford 2010, 176, 213 (although cf. now n. 250); M. Debié, *L’Écriture de l’histoire en syriaque: Transmissions interculturelles et constructions identitaires entre hellénisme et islam*. Leuven 2015, 406. See also P. Bruns, *Kirchengeschichte als Hagiographie? Zur theologischen Konzeption des Iohannes von Ephesus*, *StP* 42 (2006) 65–71.

249 For the rhetoric of delegitimization which John applies to the Julianists but also Tritheists, and his divergent attitude to the reintegration of their bishops, see Ford, *Ordination and Episcopacy* (as footnote 62 above) esp. 135–41, 171–201.

250 See also Wood, *Recognising Rhetoric* (as footnote 66 above) for the ‘relative suppression of Alexandria’s prominence’ in the *EH*.

order and moderation (ⲗⲁⲃⲣⲁ ⲛⲁⲃⲁⲃⲁⲛⲁ ⲛⲁⲃⲁⲃⲁⲛⲁ ⲛⲁⲃⲁⲃⲁⲛⲁ ⲛⲁⲃⲁⲃⲁⲛⲁ ⲛⲁⲃⲁⲃⲁⲛⲁ).²⁵¹ Indeed, John continues to an emotive account of the Alexandrians' rival consecration of Peter, in which the Alexandrians force two Antiochene bishops²⁵² to participate with John bishop of Cellia in the uncanonical appointment, 'when furious rage possessed them and malicious savagery and barbarous impetuosity were their guide (ⲛⲁⲃⲁⲃⲁⲛⲁ ⲛⲁⲃⲁⲃⲁⲛⲁ ⲛⲁⲃⲁⲃⲁⲛⲁ ⲛⲁⲃⲁⲃⲁⲛⲁ ⲛⲁⲃⲁⲃⲁⲛⲁ ⲛⲁⲃⲁⲃⲁⲛⲁ)'. This was the result of schism and dissent throughout the church, which John laments at some length. But the Devil was its true instigator, so that the Alexandrians, again 'as pharaohs and a barbarous people (ⲛⲁⲃⲁⲃⲁⲛⲁ ⲛⲁⲃⲁⲃⲁⲛⲁ ⲛⲁⲃⲁⲃⲁⲛⲁ)', 'came upon such confusion, disturbance, and barbarism (ⲛⲁⲃⲁⲃⲁⲛⲁ ⲛⲁⲃⲁⲃⲁⲛⲁ ⲛⲁⲃⲁⲃⲁⲛⲁ ⲛⲁⲃⲁⲃⲁⲛⲁ ⲛⲁⲃⲁⲃⲁⲛⲁ)', that none paused to consider whether the appointment was proper.²⁵³ Rather, like a man beset with blindness, fever, and the passions, the clerics of Alexandria rushed to make a rival appointment, despite the decade-long interregnum since the death of Theodosius.²⁵⁴ Blame for the subsequent crisis is therefore shifted from the provocative actions of Longinus and Paul to the Devil and to the innate barbarism and impetuosity of his Alexandrian stooges.

The appointment of Peter, 'a simple and ignorant man (ⲛⲁⲃⲁⲃⲁⲛⲁ ⲛⲁⲃⲁⲃⲁⲛⲁ)',²⁵⁵ was therefore uncanonical; and 'many' regarded him as an adulterer. Uncanonical too, therefore, were the seventy consecrations which Peter then performed, in such numbers and with such haste, John intimates, that the new bishops were far from the required calibre – thus, in effect, delegitimising the entire Severan episcopate of Egypt.²⁵⁶ Peter, he continues, now deposed Paul *in absentia* and published a circular letter in which he made unspecified accusations against Jacob, but also, 'because of the old enmity and hatred which [the Alexandrians] had for Paul, appended a *libellus* full of accusations, murders, and falsehood to the effect that Paul and others with him had acted and communicated with the Synodites [sc. the Chalcedonians]' – a charge which, John states, the accused had condemned as false 'in the *Apology* which they addressed

251 *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 4.10 (Brooks 191). The repeated designation of the Egyptians as a 'barbarous people' quotes Ps. 114.1 (LXX: ἐξ Αἰγύπτου ... ἐκ λαοῦ βαρβάρου; Peshitta: ⲛⲁⲃⲁⲃⲁⲛⲁ), where it is applied to the people of Pharaoh in distinction from those of Jacob. It cannot here be descriptive or a compliment.

252 John indicates that both bishops were called Antoninus, and were recent appointments of Jacob; see Honigmann, *Évêques* (as footnote 20 above) 238. Their sees are unknown.

253 *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 4.11 (Brooks 193–4). On John of Cellia, cf. above n. 70.

254 *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 4.12 (Brooks 194–5). For ecclesiastical politics during this interregnum, cf. Booth, *Towards the Coptic Church* (as footnote 70 above) 160–8.

255 *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 4.11 (Brooks 193).

256 On these new bishops (whom John counts at eighty in *Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History* 1.40), see P. Booth, *A Circle of Egyptian Bishops at the End of Roman Rule (c.600): Texts and Contexts*, *Mus 131* (2018) 21–72.

the text at its most contentious moments, it is evident that John is a consistent defender of Paul and critic of his detractors.²⁷⁴ We have seen that the *EH* runs cover for Paul throughout his crisis-prone patriarchate: around Callinicum and the condemnation of the tritheists in the late 560s; around his communion with the Chalcedonians in 571; and around the consecration of Theodore in 575. But it is in this final context that the juxtaposition of claims to objectivity with polemical and apologetic elements becomes most jarring. The Alexandrians are impetuous barbarians; the patriarchs Peter and Damian are unlettered and unlawful; Jacob is a useful idiot. The third part of the *EH* is not the chronicle of an emergent communion; it is an embittered salvo in its internal conflicts.

Conclusion

Historians have often presented the Christological conflicts of the period between Chalcedon and the Arab-Muslim conquests as a quasi-Manichaean struggle between two equal but opposed parties of bishops, ‘Chalcedonian’ and ‘miaphysite’.²⁷⁵ This reductive framing is flawed in at least three regards. First, it tends towards the reification of ‘the miaphysites’ as a group on the ground, beyond the proper use of ‘miaphysite’ as a modern term for categorising various Christians who, though often vehemently opposed to each other, nevertheless recognised one or other formulation of ‘one (incarnate or composite) nature’ in Christ; second, it underestimates the gross imbalance which existed, in particular from the middle reign of Justinian, between the hundreds of Chalcedonian bishops, spread throughout the empire, and the small handful of insurgent Severan bishops who began to form, in northern Syria, northern Mesopotamia, and southwestern Asia Minor (later also Egypt), in the latter part of the same reign; and third, it fails to appreciate that the Severans who claimed the grand titles of ‘bishop’, ‘metropolitan’, and ‘archbishop’ performed none of the actual duties which we associate with Justinianic bishops – engaging in regional administration; managing large-scale patrimonies; leading urban liturgies – but were instead much more liminal figures, ensconced in rural monasteries or Constantinopolitan villas and of dubious legal status.²⁷⁶ These misunderstandings, I suggest, are fatal to a proper appreciation of the oeuvre of John of Ephesus.

274 Cf. Van Ginkel, Monk, Missionary, and Martyr (as footnote 36 above) 43: ‘John tried to be impartial, but his sympathies were clearly with Paul.’ So also Ford, Ordination and Episcopacy (as footnote 62 above) 248. *Contra* Lontie, *Le Procès de Paul* (as footnote 69 above) vol. 163–73, 175–6, who accepts and repeats John’s presentation of his own ‘irénisme’.

275 See e.g. P. Bell, *Social Conflict in the Age of Justinian: its Nature, Management, and Mediation*. Oxford 2013, 132–9, 160–209.

276 For the rustication of the Severan episcopate see (for Syria) Honigmann, *Évêques* (as footnote 20 above) 173–4; (for Egypt) E. Wipszycka, *The Institutional Church*, in R. Bagnall (ed.), *Egypt in the Byzan-*

From the outset of his episcopal career, John's position was insecure. The precise date of his consecration is uncertain, although it perhaps occurred much closer to the death of Theodosius in 566 than has hitherto been appreciated. When John then appears in our documentation, it is as a member of a circle of bishops gathered around Paul the Black in Constantinople, but nevertheless soon claiming a series of high-profile sees in Asia, Cyprus, and Nubia. John presents himself as metropolitan of Ephesus, although he seems seldom, if ever, to have visited his titular see.²⁷⁷ Nevertheless in the *LoES*, completed and extended in the same period, he began to reinforce his claim to the ecclesiastical dependencies of Ephesus (Asia, Caria, Lydia, and Phrygia) through elevating an obscure earlier mission among the 'pagans' of the same region. There is good reason to doubt several aspects of John's account of that mission, which is soon set out again, with some variants, in the second and third parts of the *EH*. But here we have been less interested in the realities of that account than in John's recurrent retellings of it, and in his repeated concatenation of the same four provinces. Therein John presented himself as the effective evangelist of the region at large. Thus, his later elevation as its metropolitan might be seen not as an impudent intrusion but as the simple institutionalisation of an earlier, less formal, status.

That John so often referred to his 'pagan' mission is one index, I suggest, of the social, institutional, and legal insecurities which attached to new bishops within the emergent Severan episcopate. But the vulnerabilities which pertained to all Severan bishops were compounded in John's case through the successive controversies in which his particular Constantinopolitan circle involved itself. The activities of Paul the Black – in particular, his attempts to interfere in, or even to claim, the Alexandrian patriarchate after 566 – seem at once to have been controversial, and opposition soon intersected with the revalidation of tritheism among certain Severan bishops. This conflict cut across Justin II's attempts to bring the bishops back into communion, and when the monastic allies of Paul derailed a gathering at Callinicum – galvanised, it seems, in the realisation that their patriarch would lose his status in the unionist church – imperial censure fell upon Paul and his Constantinopolitan bishops. It is perhaps this background that informed the emperor's famous and more targeted efforts to bring those same bishops into communion in 571. In circumstances which remain unsure, Paul, John, and others accepted the long-held imperial position on the faith, but their communion seems to have faltered against the technicalities of reintegrating them within the existing Chalcedonian structure, and perhaps also against a storm of criticism which flowed from the East. Soon Paul and John were writing apologies for their actions, and Paul (and probably also John) performed a long penance. Paul's position must have been impossible, but soon he was immured in a further crisis when, with his evident approval, Longinus

tine World. Cambridge 2007, 331–49, at 345, M. C. Giorda, Bishops-Monks in the Monasteries: Presence and Role, *JJP* 39 (2009) 49–82; Booth, Towards the Coptic Church (as footnote 70 above) 174–80.

277 See above n. 41.

effected the appointment of a new Alexandrian patriarch whom both the Alexandrians and the Jacobites refused. Thus began a protracted period of polemics and counter-polemics, until Paul went into isolation.

The composition of the third part of the *EH* cannot be separated from this context. John of Ephesus wants his readership to suppose that his narrative is mere detached reportage, and moderns have often indulged him. But John is a leading actor in his own drama, and it is not surprising to detect a series of wilful distortions throughout the text, in particular where events concern the circle of Paul, an arriviste group whose grand claims to ecclesiastical title were quite at odds with the realities of their status, and whose manoeuvring in respect of both their Severan co-confessionals and the Chalcedonian establishment led to their progressive marginalisation. In this complex and insecure context, John appropriated to himself a series of powerful Christian images – the evangelist; the archbishop; the confessor. In each case the claim was dubious. We should rightly question whether he indeed converted myriads of pagans across southwestern Asia Minor; whether he was ever archbishop of Ephesus in any meaningful sense; and whether he was a committed defender of the Severan faith in the face of Chalcedonian persecution. How contemporaries received such claims cannot be known, although John himself seems to have anticipated criticism, and it is not difficult to suppose that the various enemies of Paul would have received his narratives with scepticism if not outrage. But circulate those narratives did, so that John's sleights of hands were later inscribed, and made authoritative, within Syriac Orthodox historiographical memory. The pages of modern ecclesiastical history are likewise replete with tales of John's activities against the pagans of Asia Minor; his unwitting communion at the hands of his persecutors; and his noble transcendence of the successive conflicts which afflicted the Severans. More critical perspectives should prevail.