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## EPHRAEMIUS, PATRIARCH OF ANTIOCH

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The sixth century in the Eastern Roman Empire saw the appointment to high ecclesiastical offices of several laymen chosen from the upper ranks of the army and the civil service. Apollinaris, patriarch of Alexandria from 551 to 570, had been before his appointment a high military officer, and his successor John had likewise passed the whole of his previous career in the army.<sup>1</sup> It was evidently their marked executive ability which was responsible for the sudden translation of such men from the government service to the church, and in their new careers their energy and their mastery of administrative detail no doubt outweighed any previous lack of training in theological affairs.

One of these "warrior bishops" was Ephraemius of Amida, patriarch of Antioch from 527 to 545. Many of the events in his career can be traced in some detail. There are, however, certain incidents which historians have not yet had occasion to examine in the detail which they deserve. These episodes throw further light on his character, and one of them in particular affords an additional glimpse of the days in the summer of 540 when Antioch lay helpless before Chosroes and the invading Persian army.

For the early stages of Ephraemius' career in the government service no evidence has been preserved. An inscription shows that at some time he was *comes sacrarum largitionum*, i. e. head of the central treasury of the empire. After this he became *comes Orientis*, at some time late in 522 or early in 523, and he still held this office in November, 524.<sup>2</sup> As

1 For these and other similar appointments, see J. Maspero, *Histoire des patriarches d'Alexandrie* (Paris, 1923), 256-257 (cf. also 161, n. 1).

2 The inscription, found near Seleucia Pieria, was set up during his tenure of the *comitiva Orientis* (see V. Chapot, "Antiquités de la Syrie du Nord," *Bull. de Correspondance Hellénique*, XXVI [1902], 166-168, 289; cf. P. Perdrizet in *Comptes rendus de l'Acad. des inscriptions et belles-lettres* [1924], 324. The date given in this inscription shows that he was *comes Orientis* in November, 524.

"count of the East" he was the civil administrator of Palestine and Syria. His office was a peculiarly exacting one, for in addition to the duties which any such post carried with it, Ephraemius was responsible for the administration of Antioch, where he had his headquarters. Traditionally one of the most turbulent cities of the East, Antioch was, at the time when Ephraemius was posted there, chronically troubled by the riots of the partisans of the circus factions.<sup>3</sup> The unruly population had an additional cause for discontent in the recent suppression (A. D. 520) of the local Olympic festival, a measure of government economy which deprived the city of one of its most famous and most popular entertainments.<sup>4</sup>

His routine tasks must have been sufficiently burdensome; but in addition Ephraemius was soon called upon to cope with two extraordinary disasters which visited Antioch. The first was a great fire which broke out in October, 525, and seems to have devastated a considerable part of the city.<sup>5</sup> Ephraemius had apparently retired from the office of *comes Orientis* before the fire, for the post is said to have been held by a certain Anatolius at the time of the disaster.<sup>6</sup> Evidently, however, Ephraemius was soon called upon to take up his old duties, for he is again found as *comes Orientis* in the following spring.<sup>7</sup> It is not unlikely that he was re-

Malalas' reference to his appointment (416, line 20, Bonn ed.) occurs in a context which indicates that he entered office during the first indiction (Sept. 1, 522—Aug. 31, 523). On the life of Ephraemius see, in addition to the studies cited below, A. Jülicher, "Ephraimios," in Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie*, VI, col. 17, and C. Karalevskij, "Antioche," in Baudrillart, *Dict. d'hist. et de géogr. eccl.*, III, col. 577; cf. also *Histoire de l'église*, publ. sous la direction de A. Fliche et V. Martin, tome IV (by Labriolle, Bardy, Bréhier, and Plinval; Paris, 1937), 431. The reader may refer to these treatises for certain minor details of Ephraemius' career in the church which it seems unnecessary to repeat here.

3 Mal. 416, 20.

4 Mal. 417, 5; cf. Procopius, *Anecdota*, XXVI, 6-9.

5 Mal. 417, 9.

6 Mal. *loc. cit.* In the Greek text of Malalas preserved in the codex Baroccianus at Oxford it is stated (417, 17) that Ephraemius was patriarch at the time of the fire. The Church Slavonic version of Malalas, which states that Euphrasius was patriarch during the fire, now proves that the reading in the Greek text is a scribe's mistake (See V. M. Istrin, *Chronika Ioanna Malaly v slavianskom perevode*, in the *Sbornik otdeĭ, russkago yazyka i slovesnosti Akademii Nauk*, tom. XCI, p. 19; I take this information from the English translation of this version by Professor Matthew Spinka, which it is hoped may soon be published). Theophanes, in his account of the event (A. M. 6018, p. 172, 9 ed. De Boor) says that Euphrasius was patriarch. The names could easily have been confused because of their similarity, and the confusion would have been made easier by the circumstance that Ephraemius was later made patriarch.

7 See the following paragraph.

called to office expressly to take charge of the rebuilding of the burned areas, possibly because Anatolius had proved to be unequal to the task.

But the city was not left in peace, for as though the fire were not a sufficient calamity, a catastrophic earthquake visited it in May, 526. The chronicler John Malalas, who lived at Antioch and possibly was an eye-witness of the disaster, has left an account of it which leaves no doubt that the city was almost completely destroyed.<sup>8</sup> Here again Ephraemius seems to have distinguished himself, for he was chosen (in 527) to be the successor of the patriarch, Euphrasius, who had perished in the disaster.<sup>9</sup> Malalas says that he was compelled to accept the election; his choice under the circumstances by the local clergy and the approval of the appointment by Justin and Justinian show how widely his ability must have been recognized.

To his ecclesiastical office Ephraemius brought the energy and the methodical habits of the state functionary, and it is easy to picture his vigor in organizing the persecution of the Monophysites in 536.<sup>10</sup> Another side of his character, which is perhaps somewhat unexpected in the light of his early career, is reflected in his literary activity. Information has been preserved concerning three collections of theological writings by him; fragments of these can be recovered, and they show an astonishingly wide knowledge of earlier theological literature.<sup>11</sup>

In what is perhaps the most striking episode of his career, Ephraemius appears again in another great catastrophe in the history of Antioch, the capture and sack of the city by the Persians in 540. Because of the condition of the sources, it is not possible to reconstruct with certainty his rôle on this occasion, but enough evidence remains to suggest the probable course of his conduct.

<sup>8</sup> Mal. 419, 5; many details now lost from the Greek text are preserved in the Church Slavonic version mentioned above.

<sup>9</sup> Mal. 432, 19; Evagrius, *Eccl. Hist.*, IV, 6. Karalevskij is mistaken in stating (*op. cit.*, col. 699) that Ephraemius became patriarch in 526; the election is dated by Malalas and by Theophanes (A. M. 6019, p. 173, 20) at about the time of the death of Justinus (Aug. 1, 527). There is no evidence how the patriarchate was administered in the interval before Ephraemius' election.

<sup>10</sup> See J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire* (London, 1923), II, 377-378; Maspero, *op. cit.*, 122, 144, 180; Labriolle, etc., *op. cit.*, 454-455.

<sup>11</sup> O. Bardenhewer, *Gesch. d. altkirchl. Lit.*, V (Freiburg-i.-B., 1932), 17-18.

When Chosroes invaded Syria in 540, he found the land at his mercy; part of the Roman army was busy in the western half of the empire, and the garrisons which remained in the East were insufficient to resist his advance.<sup>12</sup> In the circumstances, the inhabitants of the larger cities often decided to purchase their safety, and the Persians slowly proceeded west almost unopposed. Antioch was, of course, the richest prize in Syria, and when Justinian learned of the invasion, he sent his cousin Germanus there, accompanied by only three hundred soldiers. Germanus saw that the defences of the city were in such a condition as to make resistance hopeless: the fortifications seem to have been in places badly planned, and they were probably insufficiently garrisoned. Moreover, the promised reinforcements were not sent.<sup>13</sup>

For what followed our principal source is Procopius. While he is generally trustworthy and truthful, his work was in a sense an "official" history, and sometimes he does not see fit to tell everything. In the present instance one detail of the events which preceded the capture of the city is preserved also in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Evagrius, written about fifty years after the event. Evagrius says that he used Procopius' account, but he also lived at Antioch and so had access to other local sources of information as well. It chanced that Evagrius disagrees with Procopius in this detail, which has to do with the part played by Ephraemius. The point has been neglected by modern historians, who have followed Procopius' account throughout.<sup>14</sup>

Procopius tells us that when it became apparent that the city could not be defended, the inhabitants held a council, "at which it seemed most advisable to offer money to Chosroes and thus escape the present danger. Accordingly, they sent Megas, the bishop of Beroea, a man of discretion who at that time happened to be tarrying among them, to beg for mercy from Chosroes."<sup>15</sup> Megas met Chosroes near Hierap-

12 For the history of the invasion see Bury, *op. cit.*, II, 89 ff.

13 Procopius, *Wars*, II, vi, 9-15.

14 In addition to Bury's account (p. 96), see the description in Ch. Diehl, *Justinien* (Paris, 1901), 583; also W. G. Holmes, *The Age of Justinian and Theodora* (ed. 2, London, 1912), II, 588 ff., and H. Leclercq, "Antioche (Archéologie)," in Cabrol-Leclercq, *Dict. d'arch. Chrét. et de liturgie*, I, cols. 2390 f. (see below, note 19.)

15 Procop. II, vi, 16-17, translated by H. B. Dewing in the *Loeb Classical Library*.

olis, and succeeded in persuading the king to accept 1000 pounds of gold and "depart from the whole Roman empire."<sup>16</sup> Megas returned to Antioch to obtain the money, and Chosroes proceeded to storm and capture Beroea (Aleppo) when the inhabitants were unable to pay the ransom of 4000 pounds of silver which he demanded.

Megas (Procopius continues), upon reaching Antioch and announcing the terms arranged by him with Chosroes, failed utterly to persuade them to carry out this agreement. For it happened that the Emperor Justinian had sent John, the son of Rufinus, and Julian, his private secretary, as ambassadors to Chosroes . . . These men had reached Antioch and were remaining there. Now Julian . . . explicitly forbade everybody to give money to the enemy, or to purchase the cities of the emperor, and besides he denounced to Germanus the chief priest [i. e. patriarch] Ephraemius, as being eager to deliver over the city to Chosroes. For this reason Megas returned unsuccessful. But Ephraemius, the bishop of Antioch, fearing the attack of the Persians, went into Cilicia. There too came Germanus not long afterwards, taking with him some few men but leaving the most of them in Antioch.<sup>17</sup>

Procopius goes on to describe how the Persians finally captured the city after a brief resistance. He concludes:

Chosroes commanded the army to capture and enslave the survivors of the population of Antioch, and to plunder all the property, while he himself with the ambassadors descended from the height [above the city] to the sanctuary which they call a church. There Chosroes found stores of gold and silver so great in amount that, though he took no other part of the booty except these stores, he departed possessed of enormous wealth. And he took down from there many wonderful marbles and ordered them to be deposited outside the fortifications, in order that they might convey these to the land of Persia. When he had finished these things, he gave orders to the Persians to burn the whole city. And the ambassadors begged him to withhold his hand only from the church, for which he had carried away ransom in abundance. This he granted to the ambassadors, but gave orders to burn everything else.<sup>18</sup>

Compared to this, Evagrius' account is of the briefest. He says only that Procopius described the attack on Antioch, Ephraemius "having left the city on the failure of all his plans. He is said to have saved the church and everything

16 Procop. II, vi, 25.

17 Procop. II, vii, 14-18.

18 Procop. II, ix, 14-18 (cf. II, x, 6).

around it by arraying it with the holy offerings, so that they might serve as a ransom for it."<sup>19</sup>

It is noteworthy that the one specific detail which Evagrius does give concerning the capture of the city is a flat contradiction of his predecessor's account. Evagrius' work being an ecclesiastical history, he would naturally be interested to a greater extent than Procopius in the patriarch's rôle in the crisis. This is of course in itself no reason to accept without hesitation his statement concerning the work of Ephraemius; but if Procopius' account is examined in the light of Evagrius', it seems possible to recover at least in part the circumstances which may have lain behind this discrepancy.

It will have been noticed that Procopius attributes the decision to try to ransom the city entirely to the populace, and that he makes no mention whatever of how this plan was viewed by Germanus. Then he says that Julian denounced Ephraemius to Germanus "as being eager to deliver over the city to Chosroes"—he does not indicate what method Ephraemius was supposed to have in mind. Finally he says that Chosroes spared the church at the intercession of the emperor's ambassadors because they pointed out that the treasures taken from it amounted to an abundant ransom for the building.

In the last detail—that the treasures served to ransom the church—the two writers agree. Apparently Procopius either did not wish to ascribe the preservation of the church to the patriarch, or did not know (or did not believe) that this action should be attributed to him. There are indications which suggest, with some plausibility, what may actually have happened. It is evident that Germanus would have been compelled to agree to the effort to ransom the city, if indeed he did not actually (as Bury believes) propose the plan himself.<sup>20</sup> Elsewhere Procopius displays a marked

19 *Ecc. Hist.*, IV, 25. The way in which both Procopius (in the passage cited above) and Evagrius speak of "the church," without using a descriptive epithet, implies that it was the most important of the churches at Antioch. At this time, this would be the Church of the Virgin, built by Justinian after the earthquake of 526 (Mal. 423, 1; cf. Procop. *Buildings*, II, x, 24). The famous church of Constantine is said to have been burned in this earthquake (Mal. 419, 21; Leclercq, *loc. cit.*, confuses the accounts of the earthquake and the sack by the Persians, stating mistakenly that the church of Constantine was burned in 540).

20 Bury, *loc. cit.*; this is also the opinion of J. Haury, *Byz. Ztschr.*, IX (1900), 346.

tendency to praise the emperor's cousin, and to attribute to him an energy and an ability which Malalas, for example, does not find in him.<sup>21</sup> Thus, since the effort to buy off the Persians was forbidden by the emperor's own envoys, it seems possible that Procopius suppressed Germanus' part in the scheme in order to save his face. Ephraemius, however, had no claim to vindication and so Procopius represented him as being "denounced" to Germanus, with whom he may actually have been working in close collaboration.<sup>22</sup>

Whether Ephraemius ought to have remained in Antioch when it became clear that the city could not be saved is a debatable point: certainly it is difficult to believe that he fled in fear, as Procopius says he did. In any case the great church itself was saved, and it seems impossible, in the light of Procopius' account, to deny to the patriarch the credit for realizing that there was a chance to preserve at least the building itself by giving up its treasures to the greedy invaders, and for having the courage to put this plan into execution. Thus it is possible to recover one more instance of determined and decisive action by the church in an emergency which the secular power was unable to meet.

<sup>21</sup> Procop. *Wars*, VII, xl, 9 and *Anec.*, V, 8 ff.; Mal. 480, 1; cf. Haury, *loc. cit.*

<sup>22</sup> Germanus would of course have given up the effort to ransom the city when the envoys arrived; possibly he abandoned Ephraemius, without making an effort to save him from their accusations.