

Theodore, the Bishop of Heraclea in Thrace, in the Service of Constantinople

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Abstract

This article highlights the figure of Bishop Theodore of Heraclea in Thrace, who had a great influence on the course of the Arian controversy. He actively participated in the synods that reflected the convictions and interests of a very influential group of bishops gathered around Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople in the 330s, 340s, and 350s. This group, the Eusebians, had a decisive influence on the religious policy of both Constantine the Great in the last years of his reign and his successors in the eastern part of the Roman Empire, Constantius II and Valens. As a close associate of bishops Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople and Macedonius, who took over the leadership of the Constantinopolitan Church after Eusebius, Theodore of Heraclea supported Constantinople's position in the theological field and its efforts – as the new capital of the eastern part of the empire – to gain as much influence as possible in the ecclesiastical and political sphere. With these efforts, the bishop influenced events in the eastern Alpine region, northern Italy, and the western Balkans.

Keywords: Theodore of Heraclea; Athanasius of Alexandria; Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople; Macedonius of Constantinople; Arian controversy; Antioch; Aquileia

Izvleček

Teodor, škof Herakleje v Trakiji, v službi Konstantinopla

Članek osvetljuje lik škofa Teodorja iz Herakleje v Trakiji, ki je s svojim delovanjem pomembno vplival na potek arijanskega spora. Aktivno je sodeloval na sinodah, ki so v tridesetih, štiridesetih in petdesetih letih 4. stoletja predstavljale odraz prepričanj in interesov zelo vplivne skupine škofov, zbranih okoli Evzebijja iz Nikomedije/Konstantinopla. Ta skupina, imenovana evzebijjanci, je odločilno usmerjala versko politiko tako Konstantina Velikega v zadnjih letih njegovega vladanja kot njegovih naslednikov v vzhodnem delu države, Konstancija II. in Valensa. Kot tesen sodelavec škofov Evzebijja iz Nikomedije/Konstantinopla in Makedonija, ki je po Evzebijju prevzel vodstvo Cerkve v Konstantinoplu, je Teodor iz Herakleje podpiral stališča Konstantinopla tako na teološkem področju kot v prizadevanjih, da si kot nova prestolnica vzhodnega dela države tudi na cerkveno-političnem področju ustvari čim večji vpliv. V teh prizadevanjih je škof sooblikoval potek dogodkov, ki so se odvijali na ozemlju vzhodnih Alp, severne Italije in zahodnega Balkana.

Ključne besede: Teodor iz Herakleje; Atanazij iz Aleksandrije; Evzebij iz Nikomedije/Konstantinopla; Makedonij iz Konstantinopla; arijanski spor; Antiohija; Akvileja

The Arian controversy, which deeply divided the Church in the fourth century, also marked the politics of the Roman emperors of that time, who largely used it to achieve their political goals. The eastern Alpine region, northern Italy, and the western Balkans were also not spared by this controversy. Several key events relevant to the course of the conflict took place in this area (for instance the Synod of Milan in 345, the four synods of Sirmium in the 350s, and the Synod of Aquileia in 381). In addition, some crucial personalities that significantly influenced the development of events in this dispute – especially Valens of Mursa, Ursacius of Singidunum, and Ambrose of Milan – also came from this area.

The central topic of this article is Bishop Theodore of Heraclea in Thrace, who was not from the geographical area in question, but he nonetheless significantly influenced the course of the Arian controversy with his activities and actively participated in the events that took place there. Presenting his role during the first 30 years of the Arian controversy not only elucidates the events in the political and ecclesiastical sphere in the eastern Alpine region, northern Italy, and the western Balkans, but also reveals the role of Constantinople in those events. In the background of the bishops' activities, a constant striving for gradually strengthening this city's power is clearly revealed, not only in the political sense but also in the ecclesiastical domain. Although the bishops of Heraclea (Perinthus)¹ in Thrace had the right to appoint the bishops of Byzantium² and later Constantinople,³ the balance of power between the two cities began to change with the foundation of Constantinople. This was not achieved overnight, but gradually. After Constantine established the city as his new capital and a new decision-making centre, its bishops still had to acquire their future important role in the Church. The bishops of Heraclea actively participated in this process. In this development of events, the role of Theodore, who became the Bishop of Heraclea in the years when Constantinople was founded, stands out in particular.

¹ After 297, based on reforms carried out by Diocletian, Perinthus/Heraclea was the capital of the Roman province of Europe; von Bredow 2006. Constantinople had a special status in this system of administration from 359 onward; Olshausen 2011.

² Crawford 2013a, 229.

³ According to Zonaras (*Epitome historiarum* 13.3.29), Constantinople was previously a bishopric of Thracian Heraclea (Heracleia) because the city had been submitted to Perinthus by Severus. See also Amidon 2007, 127, n. 21. Philostorgius reports that the bishops of Heraclea had the privilege of playing the main role in installing the bishops of Constantinople; Philost. *h.e.* 9.10. Sozomen provides similar information. According to him, Paul succeeded Alexander as the Bishop of Constantinople against the advice of Eusebius of Nicomedia or Theodore of Heraclea. Because they both headed the episcopal sees closest to the new capital, Sozomen thinks they had the right to decide on the selection of its new bishop; Soz. *h.e.* 3.3.1. However, the selection did not proceed that way. Paul may have been appointed by Athanasius, the Bishop of Alexandria, who passed through Constantinople in 337 on his way from exile to Alexandria; Crawford 2013a, 232. As Matthew R. Crawford correctly suspects, Athanasius's involvement in the consecration of the new Bishop of Constantinople could have been an attempt to extend his influence over the new capital. For the election of the new Bishop of Constantinople after Alexander's death, see also Cedilnik, Moreau 2024, 150–155.

Theodore of Heraclea and Athanasius's first exile

Theodore of Heraclea⁴ is first⁵ mentioned in written sources in connection with the efforts of the opponents of Athanasius, the bishop of the prominent episcopal see of Alexandria, to accuse him before Emperor Constantine because of his – as they sought to demonstrate – criminal offenses. According to Theodoret,⁶ Theodore was one of the leaders of this group together with Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea. Under the influence of their accusations, the emperor attempted to convene a synod in Caesarea, Palestine, in 334. Because Athanasius did not respond to the invitation to take part in it, Constantine ordered him to come to the synod in Tyre the following year.⁷ There Athanasius was condemned and deposed. Just like the year before, Theodore of Heraclea was again among his most important opponents at the Synod of Tyre.

Exactly ten years had passed since the First Council of Nicaea was convened by Emperor Constantine with the aim of unifying the positions of the bishops present regarding Arius's interpretation of the relationship between God the Father and His Son. The council did not achieve its purpose because the controversy spread and strengthened after it. Consequently, the Synod of Tyre deposed Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria, at that time the most prominent representative and defender of the resolutions adopted by the Council of Nicaea. Although Emperor Constantine insisted on the correctness of the decisions made at the council, his advisers on religious matters, among whom Eusebius of Nicomedia gradually became the most important, managed to convince him that it was necessary to exclude the bishops that did not want to cooperate with Eusebius and his associates to restore peace in the Church. In 335, Eusebius was still the Bishop of Nicomedia, but with the support of his adherents, the Eusebians (especially, as one may presume, Theodore of Heraclea⁸ and Macedonius, Eusebius's later successor on Constantinople's episcopal throne),⁹ he became the Bishop of Constantinople only two years later.¹⁰ After Alexander, who was the first Bishop of Constantinople, Eusebius was the first pro-Arian bishop of the new capital.

⁴ Athanasius of Alexandria (*ep. Aeg. Lib.* 7.2–6) lists Theodore among the bishops that received their episcopal consecration from the hands of Eusebius of Nicomedia and his supporters with the task of spreading the Arian heresy. Therefore, one might suppose that Theodore was ordained as bishop by Eusebius between 328, when the Bishop of Nicomedia returned from exile, and 334. See also Crawford 2013a, 230.

⁵ Although Anonymous (Gelasius) of Cyzicus (*h.e.* 2.7.43) reports that Theodore took part in the Council of Nicaea, this is probably not true because the lists of its participants include Paideros of Heraclea, Theodore's predecessor; *Socr. h.e.* 1.13.12. See also Schäferdiek 1996a, 51; Crawford 2013a, 229–230.

⁶ Thdt., *h.e.* 1.28.2. Schäferdiek 1996a, 51–52; Crawford 2013a, 229–230.

⁷ *Soz.*, *h.e.* 2.25.1. Simonetti 1975, 114–115; Barnes 1993, 21–22.

⁸ See n. 3.

⁹ For Macedonius's role in making Eusebius of Nicomedia the Bishop of Constantinople, see Cedilnik, Moreau 2024, 150–155.

¹⁰ Cedilnik, Moreau 2024, 154–155.

His activities before and after his appointment as the Bishop of Constantinople laid the foundations for the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Theodore of Heraclea was one of the most important supporters of Eusebius of Nicomedia. In 334 and 335, he participated in all key activities organized by the Bishop of Nicomedia that led to Athanasius's first exile. Not only did he participate in the Synod of Tyre as one of the leading figures of the "plot" against Athanasius,¹¹ but he was also a member of the commission sent to Mareotis near Alexandria to verify the credibility of the charges against Athanasius. This commission also included Theog(o)ni(u)s of Nicaea, Maris of Chalcedon, Macedonius of Mopsuestia, and two Illyrian bishops, Valens of Mursa and Ursacius of Singidunum.¹² It was based on this commission's findings from the scene of the crimes allegedly committed that the synod condemned Athanasius. However, the Bishop of Alexandria left Tyre before the sentence was pronounced at the synod and went to Constantinople to meet Emperor Constantine in person. His efforts to persuade the emperor of the injustice done to him were thwarted by the arrival of a group of bishops led by Eusebius of Nicomedia. According to Sozomen,¹³ one of those bishops was Theodore of Heraclea. Other sources do not mention him. However, they list other close associates of Eusebius of Nicomedia: Theognis of Nicaea, Patrophilus of Scythopolis, Eusebius of Caesarea, Valens of Mursa, and Ursacius of Singidunum.¹⁴ Regardless of whether Theodore was in this group of bishops or not, it can be concluded that, already in the period when the Bishop of Heraclea is first mentioned in the sources, he – as one of Eusebius of Nicomedia's closest collaborators – actively participated in Eusebius's efforts to prevent Athanasius of Alexandria from effectively participating in the endeavour to end the Arian controversy and to create conditions that would enable Eusebius to put his initiatives into action.¹⁵

His further conduct is in line with these efforts. This is evidenced by the events he took part in and the role he played in them:¹⁶ the Synod of Antioch (341), the election of the new Bishop of Constantinople (341), the mission to Emperor Constans in Trier (341/342), the Council of Serdica (343), the Synods of Heraclea (?) and Antioch (349), and the Synod of Sirmium (351).

¹¹ Ath., *apol. sec.* 77.2. Apart from him, Athanasius mentions Eusebius of Nicomedia as the leader of the group, as well as Theognis of Nicaea, Maris of Chalcedon, Narcissus of Eirenopolis/Neronias, and Patrophilus of Scythopolis.

¹² Theodore is listed second or third among the members of the commission; Ath., *apol. sec.* 28.1, 75.1; Socr., *h.e.* 1.31.3; Soz., *h.e.* 2.25.19; Thdt., *h.e.* 1.30.11. See also Schäferdiek 1996a, 52–53.

¹³ Soz., *h.e.* 2.28.13.

¹⁴ Socr., *h.e.* 1.35.1–2; Ath., *apol. sec.* 87.1. Athanasius does not list Maris of Chalcedon, whom Sozomen and Socrates mention in their lists, and neither of the two mention Eusebius of Caesarea.

¹⁵ See also Crawford 2013a, 231.

¹⁶ Although the sources do not mention Theodore's attendance at the Synod of Constantinople in 336, Matthew R. Crawford assumes that the bishop took part in it because Eusebius of Caesarea (*Marcell.* 2.4.29) reports the participation of the Bishop of Thrace, which could very well refer to the Bishop of Heraclea; Crawford 2013a, 231. The synod deposed Marcellus of Ancyra, appointed Basil as his replacement, and rehabilitated Arius; Barnes 1993, 56.

Athanasius's second exile and the Synod of Antioch (341)

After Constantine's death in 337, with the permission of Constantine II, the eldest of the late emperor's sons, the bishops condemned and banished by the series of synods in the East were allowed to return. Athanasius, the Bishop of Alexandria, was also among the exiles that were returning to their episcopal sees. Because the amnesty proclaimed by Emperor Constantine II ignored the resolutions of the synods by which these bishops were condemned, it aroused fierce opposition among the bishops that had made the most efforts to expel them. As in the past, their undisputed leader was Eusebius of Nicomedia. In 337, he changed the place of his episcopal see for the second time¹⁷ and became the Bishop of Constantinople. He and his associates also managed to win the favour of the new ruler in the East, Constantius II, the younger brother of Constantine II. However, the return of the exiled bishops was against Constantius's interests as well. It would enable the rulers in the western part of the empire – his two brothers, Constantine II and Constans – to assert their influence in Constantius's part through the condemned bishops that had been exiled to the West and were now allowed to return. Athanasius certainly aroused bitter opposition upon his return to Alexandria in November 337.¹⁸ Theodoret¹⁹ reports that Eusebius of Nicomedia, Theognis of Nicaea, and Theodore of Perinthus (Heraclea), who resided near Constantinople, frequently visited Emperor Constantius II, trying to convince him that Athanasius's return was the reason for much trouble in the Church. Their efforts achieved their goal when a synod met in Antioch in the winter of 338/339 and condemned Athanasius again.²⁰ At this synod, Eusebius and his followers installed Gregory of Cappadocia as the new Bishop of Alexandria.²¹ When he entered Alexandria accompanied by soldiers in the spring of 339, Athanasius left the city again and withdrew to the West.²² By the end of 339 or the beginning of 340, he was already in Rome.²³

In such an atmosphere of tension, Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople and his

¹⁷ Eusebius of Nicomedia was initially the Bishop of Berytus, then of Nicomedia, and finally of Constantinople.

¹⁸ Brennecke et al. 2007, 137. As Matthew R. Crawford suggests, Theodore may have taken part in the synod that was probably held in Antioch in the winter of 337/338. The synod assembled at Eusebius of Nicomedia's initiative with the purpose of deposing Athanasius and installing his successor; Crawford 2013a, 232. The synod's attempt proved unsuccessful. Information about it is provided by a letter from the Synod of Alexandria that met in response to the renewed attempts to condemn and depose Athanasius of Alexandria after his return from exile; Ath., *apol. sec.* 3.2.

¹⁹ Thdt., *h.e.* 2.3.8.

²⁰ Socr., *h.e.* 2.8.6–7; Crawford 2013a, 233. Socrates partly confused his report on the synod with the synod that met in Antioch in 341; Barnes 1993, 45–46; Périchon, Maraval 2005, 37, n. 5.

²¹ Socr., *h.e.* 2.10.1. For a brief overview of the broader context, see Brennecke et al. 2007, 137.

²² Socr., *h.e.* 2.11.1–6. See also Crawford 2013a, 233; Brennecke et al. 2007, 137.

²³ For an overview of political and ecclesiastical affairs during the first years after Constantine's death, see Löhr 1986, 4.

followers, the Eusebians, hastened to justify their past conduct and to prove the correctness of their decisions. Theodore of Heraclea was also actively involved in these efforts. His name appears among the signatories of the letter sent to Julius,²⁴ the Bishop of Rome, probably in 341. Information about the letter comes from the report sent by the pro-Nicene bishops assembled at the Council of Serdica (343) to all the churches.²⁵ Apart from Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople, who is listed first, all the members of the commission sent to Mareotis except Macedonius of Mopsuestia are listed as the senders of this letter.²⁶ As can be understood from the report, they presented their reasons for the condemnation of Athanasius of Alexandria and Marcellus of Ancyra. Unlike Athanasius, who was convicted of various disciplinary offenses,²⁷ Marcellus was considered a heretic²⁸ by the eastern pro-Arian bishops. Because he himself defended the doctrine of the oneness of God in a hypostatic union, he was a staunch defender of the Nicene Creed. Consequently, he was initially strongly supported by the Nicene bishops. It is not known exactly when the letter was written. Based on the names of its signatories, however, it can be assumed that it was sent to Julius after the Synod of Rome met at the end of 340 or in the spring of 341,²⁹ and after the bishops gathered at the Synod of Antioch (341) had received Julius of Rome's response to their rejection of his invitation to the Synod of Rome.³⁰ This assumption

²⁴ It seems that Eusebius of Nicomedia and his followers wrote to Julius soon after the Synod of Tyre. Athanasius reports that this letter was delivered by the presbyter Macarius and two deacons, Martyrius and Hesychius, before Gregory's appointment as the Bishop of Alexandria; Ath., *apol. sec.* 22.3, 24.1. See also Brennecke et al. 2007, 137. Glen L. Thompson assumes that the letter was sent to Rome in the spring of 338; Thompson 2015, 28. As Julius writes in his letter to Dianius, Flacillus, Narcissus, Eusebius, Maris, Macedonius, Theodore, and other bishops gathered in Antioch, who had written to him first, Macarius, Martyrius, and Hesychius urged Julius, the Bishop of Rome, to write to Pistus, who was made the Bishop of Alexandria by Athanasius's opponents. It can therefore be assumed that Macarius, Martyrius, and Hesychius set off on their journey to Rome before Gregory, Pistus's successor, was appointed the Bishop of Alexandria. Glen L. Thompson dates the Synod of Antioch, which appointed Gregory as the new Bishop of Alexandria in the spring of 339; Thompson 2015, 28. Hanson 2005, 263, n. 98, and 267–268, assumes that Pistus was probably consecrated by Secundus of Ptolemais soon after the Synod of Tyre.

²⁵ Thdt., *h.e.* 2.8.6; Hil., *coll. antiar.* B II.1.2.

²⁶ The senders of the letter were Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople, Maris of Chalcedon, Theodore of Heraclea, Diognitus/Theognis of Nicaea, Ursacius of Singidunum, Valens of Mursa, Menophantus of Ephesus, and Stephen of Antioch; Thdt., *h.e.* 2.8.6. Hilarius of Poitiers (*coll. antiar.* B II.1.2) does not list the last two bishops. See also Brennecke et al. 2007, 190.

²⁷ Hil., *coll. antiar.* A IV.1.6–8.

²⁸ Hil., *coll. antiar.* A IV.1.2–5.

²⁹ Cedilnik, Moreau, 2021, 450–451, n. 15 and 16, 452, n. 22; Brennecke et al. 2007, 138.

³⁰ In his letter, Julius of Rome explicitly mentions only the letter that was brought to Rome by the presbyter Macarius and both deacons, Martyrius and Hesychius (Ath., *apol. sec.* 26.1). It is certainly not the letter sent by Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople, the members of the Mareotis commission, Menophantus of Ephesus, and Stephen of Antioch, because Stephen was not yet the Bishop of Antioch at the time the first letter was sent. One might assume that Julius would have mentioned the later letter from the Eusebians because he portrays them in his letter as the main culprits for

can be based on the fact that Stephen, who became the Bishop of Antioch after Flacillus's death, was also one of the signatories of this letter. Because Flacillus took part in the Synod of Antioch (341) – and, as the Bishop of Antioch, probably presided over it – it can be assumed that the letter was written after the end of the synod or at least after Julius had sent his letter to the participants of the synod, among whom Flacillus is also listed.³¹ Flacillus died soon after the Synod of Antioch (341).³² This letter that Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople and his adherents sent to Rome did not have the desired effect since the Synod of Rome (341), which rehabilitated the exiled bishops,³³ made them irreproachable in the eyes of the West.

Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople and his group of bishops wanted not only to prove that the banished bishops had been justly condemned, but also to demonstrate that their theological belief was the only correct one. With this purpose in mind, as reported by Socrates³⁴ and Sozomen,³⁵ Eusebius convened the (already mentioned) Synod of Antioch in 340/341.³⁶ Because it was held at the time of the dedication of the great church in Antioch,³⁷ it has been known as the Synod of Antioch *in Encaeniis* (i.e., at the dedication). It was attended by the emperor of the eastern part of the empire, Constantius II.³⁸ According to Socrates,³⁹ 90 bishops participated in the synod. Sozomen gives a slightly larger number: 97. He mentions some of them by name: Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople, Acacius of Caesarea, Patrophilus of Scythopolis, Theodore of Heraclea, Eudoxius of Germanicia, Gregory of Alexandria, Dianius of Caesarea in Cappadocia, George of Laodicea, and Eusebius of Emesa.⁴⁰ Theodore is listed fourth. Although there is no information about his role at the synod, it can be concluded that it was not insignificant, because he is not only mentioned by name but also quite near the top of the list of participants. There were no representatives from

the intolerable situation in the Church (Ath., *apol. sec.* 21–35). However, he mentions a letter he received (maybe already) some years ago and is silent about the more recent letter. Perhaps it could be assumed that the letter by Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople, Maris of Chalcedon, Theodore of Heraclea, Theognis of Nicaea, Ursacius of Singidunum, Valens of Mursa, Menophantus of Ephesus, and Stephen of Antioch was written at the same time as the Fourth Creed of Antioch.

³¹ For the year of Stephen's ordination as bishop, see Hanson 2005, 292, n. 61. Cf. Brennecke et al. 2007, 190, n. a, who suggest that the letter could have been written before the one mentioned in Ath., *apol. sec.* 22.3.

³² Hanson 2005, 292, n. 61.

³³ In addition to Athanasius, the Synod of Rome also rehabilitated the following bishops: Paul of Constantinople, Marcellus of Ancyra (Galatia), Lucius of Adrianople (Thracia), Cyrus of Beroea (Syria Coele), Euphratius of Balaneae (Syria Coele), Hellanicus of Tripolis (Phoenicia), and Asclepas of Gaza (Palestine); Opitz 1938, 111; Barnes 1993, 61; Brennecke et al. 2007, 13.

³⁴ Socr., *h.e.* 2.8.1–7.

³⁵ Soz., *h.e.* 3.5.1–3.

³⁶ For more details on the dating of the synod, see Brennecke et al. 2007, 138.

³⁷ Soz., *h.e.* 3.5.1.

³⁸ Soz., *h.e.* 3.9.1. See also Crawford 2013a, 233–234.

³⁹ Socr., *h.e.* 2.8.3.

⁴⁰ Soz., *h.e.* 3.5.10–3.6.1.

the West at the synod and, apart from Eusebius of Nicomedia, who was the Bishop of Constantinople at the time, Theodore was the only representative from the Balkans known to have participated in the meeting.

Based on the information provided by ancient authors, it is not clear whether the Synod of Antioch took place before the Synod of Rome. It is also possible that the two partially overlapped in time.⁴¹ However, Julius's letter inviting bishops of the East to the Synod of Rome was answered by the bishops that had already gathered at the Synod of Antioch. They understood Julius's writing as an insult, and "called Julius to account for having admitted the followers of Athanasius into communion, and expressed their indignation against him for having insulted their synod and abrogated their decrees, and they assailed his transactions as unjust and discordant with ecclesiastical right."⁴² The letter of the eastern bishops addressed to the Bishop of Rome has not been preserved, but a brief summary of its content appears in the Church histories of Socrates and Sozomen.⁴³ The report of the two historians does not mention the names of the signatories of the letter. This information is preserved in Julius's reply to their letter, written in the spring of 341.⁴⁴ He addressed his letter to Dianius, Flacillus, Narcissus, Eusebius, Maris, Macedonius, and Theodore, who had previously written to him from Antioch.⁴⁵ The Bishop of Heraclea is mentioned last among the addressees. Although Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople is only the fourth among the recipients of Julius's letter, he and his associates were presented in the letter as culprits in all the actions directed against Athanasius and his associates.⁴⁶ Athanasius writes the same in his *History of the Arians*. He singles out Eusebius and his followers as the main initiators of the proceedings directed against himself and his associates under Constantius II.⁴⁷ The letter of the bishops assembled at the Synod of Antioch (341), also failed to convince the Bishop of Rome that Athanasius and his associates had been justly condemned and exiled.

The efforts of the bishops gathered at the Synod of Antioch in 341 to present their theological belief as correct were similarly unsuccessful. As many as three creeds were written during that synod: the First, Second, and Third Creeds of Antioch. The First Creed of Antioch⁴⁸ was partially preserved in a letter sent by the Synod of Antioch to all bishops at the beginning of 341. Only a fragment⁴⁹ of this letter has survived; in

⁴¹ Brennecke et al. 2007, 138.

⁴² Translated by Chester D. Hartranft; Soz. *h.e.* 3.8.6: εἰς ἐγκλήματα δὲ προφέροντες Ἰουλίῳ τὸ κοινωνῆσαι τοῖς ἀμφὶ τὸν Ἀθανάσιον ἐχάλεπαινον ὡς ὕβρισμένης αὐτῶν τῆς συνόδου καὶ τῆς ὀποφάσεως ἀναιρεθείσης· καὶ τὸ γενόμενον ὡς ἄδικον καὶ ἐκκλησιαστικοῦ θεσμοῦ ἀπ᾽ αὐτὸν διέβαλλον. See also Soz., *h.e.* 3.8.4-5, 3.8.7-8; Socr., *h.e.* 2.15.5-6; Ath., *apol. sec.* 22.6.

⁴³ Socr., *h.e.* 2.15.5; Soz., *h.e.* 3.8.4-8.

⁴⁴ Brennecke et al. 2007, 156.

⁴⁵ Ath., *apol. sec.* 21; see also Ath., *h. Ar.* 15.1; Ath., *apol. sec.* 21-35; Socr., *h.e.* 2.17.7-9.

⁴⁶ Ath., *apol. sec.* 22.3 and 5, 24.3, 26.1, 27.1.

⁴⁷ Ath., *h. Ar.* 9.1, 11.2, 15.1

⁴⁸ For more information on the First Creed of Antioch, see Brennecke et al. 2007, 148-150.

⁴⁹ Ath., *syn.* 22.3-7; Socr., *h.e.* 2.10.4-8.

it, its authors reject the accusation of being Arians. It is likely that this creed was also attached to the letter in which the group of bishops gathered around Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople at the Synod of Antioch (Dianius, Flacillus, Narcissus, Maris, Macedonius, and Theodore) declined Julius's invitation to attend the Synod of Rome. However, the sources do not attribute the role of theological declaration of the Synod of Antioch to the First Creed, but to the Second Creed, also called the Dedication Creed. It was also written in early 341. According to Hilarius,⁵⁰ the reason for formulating it was the suspicion that one of the participants in the synod was a heretic. The suspicion probably referred to Theophronius of Tyana, to whom the Third Creed of Antioch⁵¹ is attributed. The most noticeable feature of this creed is its anti-Marcellan attitude, and it could be assumed that its basic purpose was to achieve a consensus on doctrinal issues among the bishops of the East.⁵²

In the spring or summer of 341, another creed was written in Antioch, called the Fourth Creed of Antioch,⁵³ although it cannot be directly linked to the Dedication Synod.⁵⁴ Compared to the Second/Dedication Creed, its goals were more far-reaching and ambitious. It was written with the intention of bringing the theological positions of the bishops from the East and West closer together. Because the pro-Arian bishops from the East failed to convince the bishops in the western part of the empire that the exiled pro-Nicene bishops had been justly condemned, they were considered innocent and unjustly exiled in the eyes of the Western bishops. This is also how the situation was understood by those assembled at the Synod of Rome in 341. Because their opposition to the decisions of the Eastern bishops was supported by Constans, who had been the sole ruler in the larger western part of the Roman Empire since 340, their position posed an increasing threat to the East. The purpose of the creed was therefore to convince the Western bishops that its authors were not Arians. If they could prove to the West that their theological belief was orthodox, the question of the exiled bishops would no longer be a reason for dispute. The authors of the Fourth Creed of Antioch tried to follow the formulation of the Nicene Creed as much as possible in their understanding of theological issues. Although they did not abandon their doctrine of the three hypostases, they did not mention them in the creed because they avoided the most controversial questions in order to create a text that would be as widely acceptable as possible.⁵⁵

It is not known who the authors of the Fourth Creed of Antioch were. However, it is known who was entrusted with the task of taking the creed to the imperial court. In

⁵⁰ Hil., *syn.* 29 (PL 10, 502A).

⁵¹ For more information on the Third Creed of Antioch, see Brennecke et al. 2007, 143–144.

⁵² For more information on the Second Creed of Antioch, see Brennecke et al. 2007, 144–148.

⁵³ For more information on the Fourth Creed of Antioch, see Brennecke et al. 2007, 176–178.

Timothy D. Barnes dates this creed to the summer of 342; Barnes 1993, 230. See also Crawford 2013a, 234.

⁵⁴ Löhr 1986, 5, 17.

⁵⁵ Brennecke et al. 2007, 176; Löhr 1986, 17–18; Hanson 2005, 291–292.

the summer of 341,⁵⁶ a delegation of four prominent eastern prelates travelled to the court in Trier⁵⁷ to introduce the creed to the emperor. In addition to Narcissus of Eire-nopolis/Neronias, Maris of Chalcedon, and Marcus of Arethusa, Theodore of Hera-clea was also a member of this delegation.⁵⁸ The mission did not achieve the desired success because it seems that Bishop Maximinus of Trier, who had already supported Athanasius during his first exile⁵⁹ and was still one of his most committed defenders, did not want to receive the delegation,⁶⁰ and the emperor dismissed them because he did not believe them.⁶¹ Thus, it was impossible for the mission to achieve what it wanted: to prevent the convening of another ecumenical council. At the invitation of the two emperors, Constans and Constantius II, this was held in Serdica in 343.⁶² The council did not resolve anything but only deepened the gap between the East and West. On the side of the Eastern representatives, several of Eusebius's close associates attended the council. Except for Theognis of Nicaea, who had already died, all the members of the commission sent to Mareotis in 335 were there: Maris of Chalcedon, Macedonius of Mopsuestia, two Illyrian bishops, Valens of Mursa and Ursacius of Singidunum, and of course Theodore of Heraclea. According to the sources, there were eighty bishops from the East at the Council of Serdica.⁶³ Important representatives that were present included Stephen of Antioch, Acacius of Caesarea, Menophantus of Ephesus, Narcissus of Neronias, Maris of Chalcedon, Basil of Ancyra, and Eudoxius of Germanicia.⁶⁴ It seems that the Western pro-Nicene bishops at the council – perhaps influenced by Athanasius of Alexandria⁶⁵ – attributed a particularly important role to

⁵⁶ Löhr 1986, 17. Hanson 2005, 293, assumes that the delegation arrived at Emperor Constans's court in Trier in early 342. For the delegation's time of arrival in Trier, see also Brennecke et al. 2007, 179.

⁵⁷ Ath., *syn.* 25.1. Socrates reports that the delegation of four bishops travelled to the West at Constans's request, but he does not specify where they met. Sozomen, on the other hand, states that the delegation arrived in Italy and met with the emperor there; Soz., *h.e.* 3.10.5.

⁵⁸ Ath., *syn.* 25.1; Socr., *h.e.* 2.18.1; Soz., *h.e.* 3.10.4. Among the four bishops, Theodore is listed second by Athanasius and third by Socrates and Sozomen.

⁵⁹ Ath., *apol. sec.* 87.2.

⁶⁰ Löhr 1986, 18; Barnes 1993, 68–69; see also Hil., *coll. antiar.* A IV.1.27.7.

⁶¹ Soz., *h.e.* 3.10.6.

⁶² Hil., *coll. antiar.* A IV.1.16. See also Brennecke et al. 2007, 180; Cedilnik 2004, 93. For more details about the synod, see Simonetti 1975, 167–187; Hanson 2005, 293–306; Barnes 1993, 71–81; Crawford 2013a, 236–238.

⁶³ The list of signatories of the Creed of the “Eastern” Council includes the names of 73 bishops, with Theodore of Heraclea listed tenth; Hil. *coll. antiar.* A IV.3.

⁶⁴ A list relying on Athanasius of Alexandria and compiled by David M. Gwynn presents the following bishops, whom Athanasius usually described as the Eusebians: Eusebius of Nicomedia, Asterius “the Sophist”, Theognis of Nicaea, Athanasius of Anazarbus, Maris of Chalcedon, Patrophilus of Scythopolis, Theodore of Heraclea, Narcissus of Neronias, Ursacius of Singidunum, Valens of Mursa, and George of Laodicea; Gwynn 2007, 115.

⁶⁵ *Quae enim fecerunt maledicae heresis Eusebii successores, Theodorus Narcissus Valens Ursacius et in omnibus pessimus Georgius Stephanus Acacius Minophantus et eorum collegae, nec vos ignoratis, dilecti, nam eorum dementia omnibus patefacta est*; the letter of Athanasius of Alexandria sent to

the Bishop of Heraclea. In their synodical letter, they listed him first among the bishops that, as they write, after the death of Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople and Eusebius of Caesarea, became leaders of those pro-Arian Eastern bishops that worked most actively against the pro-Nicene bishops.⁶⁶ He is followed by Narcissus of Eirenopolis/Neronias, Stephanus of Antioch, George of Laodicea, Acacius of Caesarea, Menophantus of Ephesus, Ursacius of Singidunum, and Valens of Mursa.⁶⁷ Because of their role in the Arian controversy (their pro-Arian theological beliefs, their activities against the Nicene bishops, and their refusal to take part in the council),⁶⁸ they were deposed by the Western bishops at the Council of Serdica. Among the deposed pro-Arian bishops, Theodore of Heraclea is again listed first, although the names of the other bishops do not follow the same order as when they were first mentioned in the same synodical letter as the successors of both bishops named Eusebius.⁶⁹

At the time of the council, Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople was already dead, having died in 341, and Macedonius then succeeded him as Bishop of Constantinople. It is likely that Macedonius had played a crucial role in the efforts that ultimately led to Eusebius becoming the Bishop of Constantinople after Alexander's death in 337.⁷⁰ In any case, Macedonius became the second pro-Arian Bishop of Con-

the presbyters and deacons of Alexandria in Brennecke et al. 2007, 240 (43.8.3); see also ibidem 240 (43.8.4) and 243 (43.8.8). In the letter that the "Western" Council of Serdica sent to the presbyters and deacons in Mareotis in Brennecke et al. 2007, 245 (43.9.7), Theodore is also listed first among those deposed, followed by Narcissus, Stephanus, Acacius, George, Ursacius, Valens, and Menophantus. He is also listed first in the letter that Athanasius of Alexandria sent to the presbyters, deacons, and lay people of the Church in Mareotis, only listing Theodore, Valens, and Ursacius by name among those deposed; in Brennecke et al. 2007, 247 (43.10.4). All the members of the commission sent to Mareotis that were still alive at the time (Theognis of Nicaea was already dead) were explicitly mentioned (although not by name) in the letter written by the Eastern bishops at the Council of Serdica as those who proposed that a new commission, in which the bishops of both parts of the empire should be represented, be sent to Mareotis to reinvestigate the accusations against Athanasius; Hil., *coll. antiar.* A IV.1.18; Brennecke et al. 2007, 263.

⁶⁶ Ath., *apol. sec.* 46.1; Thdt., *h.e.* 2.8.28; Hil., *coll. antiar.* B II.1.7.3.

⁶⁷ The same bishops – only George of Laodicea is missing – are also referred to as the leading representatives of the Arians in the letter that the Western bishops at the Council of Serdica sent to Constantius II; Hil., *ad Const. (appendix ad coll. antiar.* II. B 1.5.2): *nuper didicimus commenta haec fuisse inventa et a duobus Eusebiis et a Narcisso et a Theodoro et ab Stefano et Acacio et Menofanto et imperitis atque improbis duobus adulescentibus Ursacio et Valente.*

⁶⁸ Hil., *coll. antiar.* B II.2.3.2–3.

⁶⁹ Ath., *apol. sec.* 47.3; Thdt., *h.e.* 2.8.33; Hil., *coll. antiar.* B II.1.8.2. Theodore of Heraclea is not listed among the deposed bishops in the letter that the Western bishops at the Council of Serdica sent to Julius of Rome; Hil., *coll. antiar.* B II.3. For the reasons why Ursacius of Singidunum and Valens of Mursa are listed first in this letter, see Cedilnik, Moreau 2021, 452–454. In addition to Ursacius and Valens, the following bishops are also listed: Narcissus of Eirenopolis/Neronias, Stephanus of Antioch, Acacius of Caesarea, Menophantus of Ephesus, and George of Laodicea. See also Ath., *apol. sec.* 40.3. For the important role played by Bishop Theodore at the Council of Serdica, see also Schäferdiek 1996a, 57; Crawford 2013a, 236–238.

⁷⁰ Cedilnik, Moreau 2024, 150–155.

stantinople in 342. At the same time, it is also important that his ordination as bishop was made possible through the support of Eusebius's closest followers (Theognis of Nicaea, Maris of Chalcedon, Theodore of Heraclea in Thrace, Ursacius of Singidunum, and Valens of Mursa),⁷¹ who contributed decisively to his success.⁷²

To sum up, Theodore of Heraclea actively participated in all key events aimed at banishing the most ardent defenders of the Nicene resolutions and formulating the new creed, whose indisputable initiator and executor was – judging from the sources – Eusebius of Nicomedia, who, after 337, became the Bishop of Constantinople. His power and influence laid the foundations for the future Patriarchate of Constantinople.

The concluding events that allowed Athanasius's return to Alexandria in 346

After the Council of Serdica, which did not resolve any of the disputed issues, the eastern Alpine region, northern Italy, and the western Balkans became the scene of important decisions that led to a temporary agreement on the return of the exiled bishops and, for five years (345–350), left the victory in the conflict to the West. Those who were unable to return home after the end of the council also included Athanasius, the Bishop of Alexandria. At least three years had to pass⁷³ before he could return to Alexandria.⁷⁴ According to Athanasius, Bishop Gaudentius of Naissus in Dacia Mediterranea was the first to offer him hospitality during this time.⁷⁵ The available sources do not make it possible to determine more precisely how long he stayed there. However, it seems that he celebrated Easter of 344, which fell on April 15th that year, in Naissus.⁷⁶ In early 345 he

⁷¹ Socr., *h.e.* 2.12.3; Soz., *h.e.* 3.7.4.

⁷² *Historia acephala* is the only source that reports on Theodore of Heraclea's efforts to appoint Eudoxius, the Bishop of Germanicia, as the new Bishop of Constantinople after Eusebius's death; *Historia acephala* 1.4–5. This seems unlikely, because it would mean that the inner circle of Eusebius's followers acted in disagreement under the tense conditions that prevailed in Constantinople after the death of their leader and attempted to install two different candidates, Eudoxius and Macedonius, as Eusebius's successor. Cf. Crawford 2013a, 235. See also Barnes 1993, 216–217, who points to chronological errors in the passage and dates the episode to the year 349, when Paul was banished to Armenia, as is also reported in the same passage of *Historia acephala*.

⁷³ Athanasius returned to Alexandria on October 31st, 346; *Historia acephala* 1.1; Hieronymus, *Chronicon* ad a. 346. For Athanasius's journey back to Alexandria, see Simonetti 1975, 200; Duval 1985, 341; Barnes 1993, 91–92; Martin 1996, 442–447.

⁷⁴ According to Athanasius, his opponents at the Council of Serdica had laws passed calling for the decapitation of him and other priests if they, with the permission of the western part of the synod, attempted to return; Ath., *h. Ar.* 19.4.

⁷⁵ Ath., *apol. Const.* 4.4–5; Ath., *ep. fest.*, a. 344. See also Duval 1985, 341; Martin 1996, 436; Barnes 1993, 82; Bratož 2010, 28. In Hilary's list of signatories of the Council of Serdica, two bishops' names are written one after the other: Athanasius is listed as 31st and Gaudentius as 32nd; Hil., *coll. antiar.* B II.4.

⁷⁶ Ath., *ep. fest.*, a. 344. See also Simonetti 1975, 199, n. 100; Martin 1996, 436; Barnes 1993, 82.

was in Aquileia,⁷⁷ where he was a guest of Fortunatianus, the Bishop of Aquileia.⁷⁸ When he arrived in Aquileia and how long he stayed there cannot be accurately discerned. Without a doubt, however, he spent Easter of 345, which was celebrated on April 7th that year, in Aquileia.⁷⁹ Because Emperor Constans was also in the city during the Easter celebrations, one can be almost certain that the two met there at that time, although Athanasius does not write in detail anywhere when their meeting in Aquileia took place.⁸⁰ As he writes, he was waiting there for the outcome of the talks between Constans and the eastern mission, which was meeting with the western emperor in Poetovio. The leader of this mission was *comes* Thalassius, who is mentioned several times in the sources in the role of Constantius's reliable associate.⁸¹ Perhaps he came to the West in the company of four bishops sent by the Synod of Antioch (344) to inform those gathered at the Synod of Milan (345) of the decisions accepted by the Synod of Antioch and its formula, *Ekthesis macrostichos*.⁸² The members of this delegation were Demophilus of Beroea, Eudoxius of Germanicia, Martyrius, and Macedonius of Mopsuestia. All of them, like Theodore, were members of the Eusebian alliance.⁸³ As in 342, this mission's attempt to convince the West of the orthodoxy of the creed they were bringing was unsuccessful. Because the prevailing theological belief in the East at that time was still considered unacceptable for the West, the issue of the exiled bishops also remained unresolved. However, because the West was militarily and politically stronger than the East at that time, Constans had the ability to put pressure on his brother Constantius II if he did not bow to his demands – and this is exactly what happened. He threatened Constantius II with war if he did not allow the return of the exiled bishops. Although the events are not presented in detail in the sources, it may be assumed that it was in Poetovio that Constans handed Thalassius a letter in which the threat of war was stated.⁸⁴

While Athanasius was in the West during his second exile, as many as two missions

⁷⁷ Barnes 1993, 82; Cedilnik 2004, 141–142.

⁷⁸ Ath., *apol. Const.* 3.5–6.

⁷⁹ Ath., *apol. Const.* 15.4–5; Ath., *ep. fest.*, a. 345. See also Barnes 1993, 225.

⁸⁰ Ath., *apol. Const.* 15.4–5.

⁸¹ Cedilnik 2004, 143.

⁸² Barnes 1993, 88.

⁸³ Bishop Martyrius is otherwise unknown, and one can only speculate whether there is a connection between him and the deacon Martyrius, who was sent to Rome together with the presbyter Macarius and the deacon Hesychius to deliver the Eusebians' letter to Bishop Julius. In Julius's letter to the bishops gathered in Antioch, the deacon Martyrius is sometimes singled out as someone that is particularly closely associated with Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople and that played an important role in the mission; Ath., *apol. sec.* 22.3–4, 24.2–3, 27.4.

⁸⁴ Although Athanasius does not say much about these events, it can be assumed that at the Synod of Milan (345), which took place before Easter 345, the bishops assembled first had to reject the conclusions of the Synod of Antioch (344). Only then could Athanasius and Constans reach a final decision on the exiled bishops at a meeting in Aquileia. At the meeting in Poetovio, Constans ultimately handed Thalassius a letter in which he threatened war if the exiled bishops were not allowed to return. For a more detailed chronology of the events connected with Athanasius's return, see Cedilnik 2004, 141–148.

of Eastern bishops, which brought new creeds (the Fourth Creed of Antioch and the Formula Macrostichos/*Ekthesis macrostichos*) to the West, tried to smooth out the differences in understanding the Trinity among the bishops in both parts of the empire and to resolve disputes regarding the exiled bishops in this way. The authors of both creeds were representatives of the dominant theological orientation in the East, represented by Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople and his group of bishops, the Eusebians. The basis for creating the *Ekthesis macrostichos* was the text of the Fourth Creed of Antioch from 341. Although Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople was no longer alive in 344, his theological beliefs in the Fourth Creed of Antioch thus helped shape the creed of 344. The members of both missions were also part of the same group of bishops. Macedonius of Mopsuestia already cooperated with the Bishop of Heraclea as a member of the commission sent to Mareotis in 335, and Theodore and Eudoxius had known each other since at least 341, when they attended the Synod of Antioch.⁸⁵ The next event at which Theodore met with the members of the mission to Milan was the Council of Serdica. Theodore attended the council, and all the members of the mission (Demophilus, Eudoxius, and Macedonius)⁸⁶ – except for Martyrius – were also there.

Neither of the missions, not the one sent to Trier nor the other sent to Milan, achieved their desired goals, and so in the East, which was weaker than the West at the time, Emperor Constantius II was forced to allow the exiles to return. Nevertheless, the efforts of both missions were not without consequences. In the West, the Church became attentive to the warnings against the heresy of Marcellus of Ancyra. Before returning to Alexandria in 346, Athanasius broke off his contacts with Marcellus and did not renew them later.

Theodore's role in further efforts to implement Eusebius's plans

After Athanasius was given permission to return to Alexandria, the pro-Arian bishops in the eastern part of the empire refused to receive him. Among them, Athanasius⁸⁷ singles out Theodore of Heraclea and the following Eusebians: Leontius of Antioch, George of Laodicea, Acacius of Caesarea, and Narcissus of Eirenopolis/Neronias. Under such circumstances, Athanasius was deposed again at the Synod of Antioch in 349. It is not known whether Theodore took part in the Synod of Antioch in 344, which vigorously warned against the doctrine of Marcellus of Ancyra and his disciple Photinus, because there is no information about the participants in the sources. However, what is known is that he participated in the synod that took place in the same city in 349.⁸⁸ According to Sozomen, around 30 bishops attended this synod

⁸⁵ Cedilnik, Moreau 2021, 450.

⁸⁶ Brennecke et al. 2007, 184.

⁸⁷ Ath., *h. Ar.* 28.1.

⁸⁸ Soz., *h.e.* 4.8.4. Cedilnik, Moreau 2024, 164; Crawford 2013a, 239. For the date of the synod, see Barnes 1993, 98–99.

and, among the five bishops mentioned, Theodore is listed second. The remaining bishops listed by name were Narcissus of Eirenopolis/Neronias, Eugenius of Nicaea, Patrophilus of Scythopolis, and Menophantus of Ephesus. They were all closely connected to the bishops of Constantinople, not only to Macedonius, the bishop of the eastern capital at the time, but the older bishops among them (Narcissus, Theodore, Patrophilus, and Menophantus) already had close ties with his predecessor, Bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople.⁸⁹ In view of their close ties to Constantinople, it could be assumed that George, who was appointed the new Bishop of Alexandria by the Synod of Antioch in 349,⁹⁰ was elected in line with the interests of the Bishop of Constantinople.⁹¹

The result of Theodore's close collaboration with Constantinople is undoubtedly his participation in the synod that also took place in 349, but before the Synod of Antioch. This synod condemned and deposed Paul, the pro-Nicene Bishop of Constantinople, who had returned to his episcopal see in 346 for the third time⁹² with the support of Constans, just as Athanasius had returned to Alexandria with the emperor's support.⁹³ It is not clear from the sources where the synod met. However, it can be assumed, as also highlighted by Timothy D. Barnes, that the synod could have hardly taken place in Constantinople.⁹⁴ Given the riots that broke out in the city over the appointments of new bishops in the past, it is difficult to imagine that the bishop could have been condemned and deposed in the city where his episcopal see was located especially while Emperor Constans, who supported him, was still alive. Matthew R. Crawford's assumption⁹⁵ that the synod met in Heraclea therefore seems very plausible. Before the foundation of Constantinople, the bishops of Heraclea (Perinthus) appointed the bishops of Byzantium. In accordance with this tradition, Theodore's role in selecting the new Bishop of Constantinople is particularly emphasized in the sources, in the case of both Eusebius and Macedonius. It can thus also be supposed that Theodore might have acted as a host of the synod that condemned and deposed Paul. This assumption could be further supported by the fact that he is listed first, before the other two participants mentioned by name in the *Historia acephala*, Narcissus of Eirenopolis/Neronias and George of Laodicea. Bishop Macedonius of Constantinople is not mentioned as a participant in the synod, and no information is given about whether

⁸⁹ Cedilnik 2022, 93–98.

⁹⁰ Brennecke et al. 2014, 364, n. c, date the Synod of Antioch, which appointed George the Bishop of Alexandria, to the year 352.

⁹¹ Cedilnik 2022, 93–102.

⁹² After his exile in 337, Paul first returned to Constantinople after the death of Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople and then once again immediately after the Council of Serdica. He was banished again on both occasions.

⁹³ *Historia acephala* 1.2.

⁹⁴ Barnes 1993, 98. Timothy D. Barnes suggests Nicaea or Nicomedia or another nearby city as a possible meeting place.

⁹⁵ Crawford 2013a, 239.

he attended it. Not much is known about his activities in this period, and it seems that he deliberately avoided conflicts at a time when Constans, the emperor of the western part of the empire, could afford to impose his demands on the East. Under these circumstances, however, he would likely need a trusted representative to promote his interests. Theodore, the Bishop of a city near Constantinople, a reliable collaborator of Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople in the past and a bishop that actively participated in Macedonius's ordination as the Bishop of Constantinople,⁹⁶ would have certainly been a very suitable person for such a role.

The period of dominance of the West did not last long. In 350, Constans was killed, and his death also had a strong impact on the political and ecclesiastical sphere. Already in 351, a synod was held in Sirmium, at which the bishops assembled judged and deposed the local bishop Photinus, Marcellus of Ancyra's disciple. At least 22 bishops attended the synod, including Theodore of Heraclea,⁹⁷ the remaining three still living members of the commission sent to Mareotis (Valens of Mursa, Ursacius of Singidunum, and Macedonius of Mopsuestia), three members of the delegation sent to Trier in 341 (Theodore, Narcissus of Neronias, and Marcus of Arethusa), and three members of the delegation sent to Milan in 345 (Macedonius of Mopsuestia, Demophilus of Beroea, and Eudoxius of Germanicia).⁹⁸

Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople attended events important for strengthening the power of the Constantinopolitan See himself, whereas it seems that, in the 340s, his successor Macedonius preferred to send his representatives to important meetings. Therefore, Theodore may have also taken part in the synods of Serdica in 343, of Heraclea (?), of Antioch in 349, and of Sirmium in 351 as Macedonius's confidant. After the Synod of Sirmium, he is no longer found in the sources,⁹⁹ and it can be assumed that he died sometime before 355.¹⁰⁰ Thus, he did not live to see the moment when Athanasius, during the time of Constantius II's sole rule in the Roman Empire, was condemned again and had to leave Alexandria for the third time. Nevertheless, in his *Encyclical letter to the bishops of Egypt and Libya*, written shortly after his expul-

⁹⁶ Based on the sources, Narcissus of Eirenopolis/Neronias and George of Laodicea did not take part in the appointment of Macedonius as the Bishop of Constantinople.

⁹⁷ Theodore is listed second, after Narcissus of Eirenopolis/Neronias; Hil., *coll. antiar.* B VII.9. Socrates, who confuses the Synod of Sirmium in 351 with a later one in 357, lists Bishop Hypatian as the representative of Heraclea at the Synod of Sirmium in 351; Socr., *h.e.* 2.29.2. Matthew R. Crawford believes that Hypatian could be Theodore's successor; Crawford 2013a, 240.

⁹⁸ Hil., *coll. antiar.* B VII.9.

⁹⁹ For the possibility that he might have participated in the synods of Arles (353) and Milan (355), see Crawford 2013a, 241.

¹⁰⁰ Thdt., *h.e.* 2.16.10–11. In the fall of 355, Liberius, Bishop of Rome, who had been brought to Milan for resisting Emperor Constantius II's plans in the political and ecclesiastical field, speaks of Theodore of Heraclea and Theognis of Nicaea in his conversation with Constantius II as of men who were already dead at the time; Thdt., *h.e.* 2.16.11. See also Schäferdiek 1996a, 59–60; Crawford 2013a, 241–244.

sion from Alexandria in February 356,¹⁰¹ Athanasius counts Theodore among those who, in his opinion, had disturbed and disordered everything.¹⁰²

It can be definitely concluded that between 334 and 355 Theodore of Heraclea – who actively participated in Athanasius's first (335) and second (339) exiles, the trial against Paul and his deposition, and the campaign warning against the dangers of Marcellus's heresy, and who in general took part in important political and ecclesiastical events of his time in the vast area extending from Tyre, Antioch, and Constantinople to Trier, Serdica, and Sirmium – was certainly one of those bishops in the Balkan-Danubian area¹⁰³ who most actively supported the efforts to fulfil the political and ecclesiastical plans outlined by Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople and continued by his successors on Constantinople's episcopal throne.¹⁰⁴

However, the sources do not only highlight Theodore's role in ecclesiastical politics, as Jerome also remembers him as a prolific writer. In his work *De viris illustribus*, he writes the following about him: *Heracleiae Thraciarum episcopus, elegantis apertique sermonis, et magis historicae intelligentiae, edidit sub Constantio principe commentarios in Matthaeum, et in Joannem, et in Apostolum, et in Psalterium*.¹⁰⁵ Later, Theodore's literary activity is also mentioned by Theodoret. In his *Church History*, he reports that the bishop was highly learned and wrote an exposition of the Gospels.¹⁰⁶ Although Theodore of Heraclea was considered a heretic, his works were received with approval and respect by some pro-Nicene authors.¹⁰⁷ This is reflected in the fact that quite a lot of fragments of his works have survived, and his writings also influenced later authors.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ Gwynn 2007, 35–36.

¹⁰² Ath., *ep. Aeg. Lib.* 6.1, 7.3–6. Other bishops that Athanasius mentions in this passage, along with Theodore, are Secundus of Pentapolis, George of Laodicea, Leontius of Antioch, Stephanus of Antioch, Ursacius of Singidunum, Valens of Mursa, Acacius of Caesarea, Patrophilus of Scythopolis, Narcissus of Eirenopolis/Neronias, Eustathius of Sebasteia, Demophilus of Beroea, Germinius of Sirmium, Eudoxius of Germanicia, Basil of Ancyra, Cecropius of Nicomedia, Auxentius of Milan, Epictetus of Centumcellae, and George of Cappadocia. According to Athanasius, they were all made bishops by Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople and his followers.

¹⁰³ In addition to him, Valens of Mursa, Ursacius of Singidunum, Germinius of Sirmium, and Demophilus of Beroea were also very important.

¹⁰⁴ See also Schäferdiek 1996a, 60–61.

¹⁰⁵ Hieronymus, *De viris illustribus* 90.

¹⁰⁶ Thdt., *h.e.* 2.3.8: Θεόδωρος ὁ Περὶνθιος (ἐλλόγιμος δὲ διαφερόντως ὁ Θεόδωρος ἦν καὶ δὴ καὶ τῶν θεῶν εὐαγγελίων τὴν ἑρμηνείαν συνέγραψεν, Ἡρακλεώτην δὲ αὐτὸν ὀνομάζουσιν οἱ πολλοί).

¹⁰⁷ See also Crawford 2013a, 255–256.

¹⁰⁸ Many fragments from his works have been preserved, such as the fragments from his *Commentary on Isaiah*, which are collected in the PG 18, 1307–1378; Crawford 2013a, 244; Crawford 2013b, 543. For an overview of Theodore of Heraclea's exegetical works, the publications of their fragments, the theological emphases recognizable in them, and the reception of his works by later patristic authors, see Schäferdiek 1996a, 61–68; Schäferdiek 1996b, 69–87; Crawford 2013a, 244–257; Crawford 2013b, 543–544. Knut Schäferdiek and Matthew R. Crawford emphasize the significant influence of his writings on Gothic Bible interpreters; Schäferdiek 1996b, 70–71, 78–81; Crawford 2013a, 252. For Theodore's theological orientation, see also Crawford 2013b, 537–567.

Conclusion

To summarize the significance of Theodore of Heraclea's role in representing the interests of Constantinople, his main efforts in all his activities concerning church politics – in line with the conduct of Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople and his followers – were clearly directed against the three important representatives of the church of his time: Athanasius of Alexandria, Paul of Constantinople, and Marcellus of Ancyra. The purpose of these activities was to condemn and depose these bishops after 334, when the Bishop of Heraclea is mentioned for the first time. As far as can be inferred from the sources, Theodore not only took part in these efforts but also played a particularly prominent role. This can be assumed from the fact that in the sources he is usually mentioned at or near the top of the list of bishops who took part in a particular event or were mentioned in the sources for some other reason. This applies both to the time when Eusebius of Nicomedia/Constantinople was the main initiator of the activities directed against the pro-Nicene bishops and to the time when Macedonius became the Bishop of Constantinople after Eusebius's death. It could be assumed that, during the time when Macedonius was the Bishop of Constantinople, Theodore's role was even more significant because it appears that Macedonius remained in the background during the period when the two brothers, Constans and Constantius II, shared power in the empire. It is therefore possible that in the 340s and early 350s, when – judging from the sources – he was most active in the political and ecclesiastical field, Theodore acted as a representative of the Bishop of Constantinople's interests. Theodore was well suited for this task, both as the Bishop of a nearby city and as one who, according to tradition, had the right to appoint the bishops of Constantinople. This possibility is also supported by the fact that Theodore supported Eusebius's plans to strengthen Constantinople's role in the political and ecclesiastical sphere from the outset. It is therefore not surprising that the first activity the bishop was involved in was directed precisely against Athanasius, the bishop of the important see of Alexandria,¹⁰⁹ where Constantinople, it seems, was trying to assert its influence. Despite Constantinople's efforts during the time of Eusebius, Macedonius, and their Homoean successors to install a man of its own in Alexandria, Athanasius kept returning to his bishopric see until, after his return in 366, he was no longer expelled. Theodore was deeply involved in these efforts and in this way influenced the course of events in the eastern Alpine region, northern Italy, and the western Balkans, where Athanasius, while awaiting Constantius's permission to return from his second exile, was staying after the Council of Serdica.

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¹⁰⁹ The highly influential pro-Nicene Bishop of Antioch, Eustathius, was probably deposed as early as 330 or 331; Hanson 2005, 209.

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