

Early Christianity

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Martin Meiser

The City of Ephesus in Early Christian Literature

Der Aufsatz beschreibt zunächst die Wahrnehmung griechisch-römischer Religiosität, vor allem des Artemis- und des Kaiserkultes, durch christliche Autoren. In einem zweiten Teil wird die Geschichte der christlichen Stadt dargestellt. Wichtig sind die mit Johannes verbundenen Traditionen, während der Stadt danach bis 431 keine herausragende Rolle zufällt.

Keywords: Greco-Roman cults, emperor cult, Christian history, John the Seer, comments on Acts, commentaries on Ephesians

*Ephesus: Amazonum opus, civitas in Asia ubi requiescat beatus euangelista Iohannes.*¹ Surprisingly, the Venerable Bede combined pagan² and Christian motives in this description. This inspired also the outline of my study. Ephesus was a metropolis of both the time-honored Artemis cult witnessed in archaeology and literature³ and the growing Christian church at least in the early decades of its beginning. The city of Ephesus, called “the light of Asia” by Pliny the Younger,⁴ achieved its zenith in the second and third centuries. After British excavations in the nineteenth century it is Austria with its Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut in Vienna⁵ which is the leading nation concerning the excavations of this rich territory.

How did ancient Christian authors perceive this metropolis of both the emperor cult and Christian faith? Are there differences with regard to the

1 The Venerable Bede, *Nomina regionum atque locorum de Actibus Apostolorum* (CCSL 121, 171).

2 Pliny, *Nat.* 5.115.

3 See Pausanias 7.2.7 etc.

4 Pliny, *Nat.* 5.120.

5 Cf. D. Knibbe, *Ephesus: Geschichte einer bedeutenden antiken Stadt und Portrait einer modernen Großgrabung im 102. Jahr der Wiederkehr des Beginnes österreichischer Forschungen (1895–1997)* (Frankfurt am Main, 1998); M. Kerschner, I. Kowalleck and M. Steskal, *Archäologische Forschungen zur Siedlungsgeschichte von Ephesos in geometrischer, archaischer und klassischer Zeit* (Ergänzungshefte zu den Jahreshften des Österreichischen Archäologischen Institutes in Wien 9; Vienna, 2008).

perception of the non-Christian cults before and after 325 CE? This study will deal with ancient commentaries on Acts, Ephesians, and Revelation. In addition, ancient writings on Christian history also will be studied.

1. Greco-Roman Religiosity of Ephesus in Early Christian Literature

It was Pindar's thesis that the Amazons founded the cult of Artemis. According to Pausanias, however, Pindar was wrong. During the time of the Amazons the cult already existed.⁶ But not only the cult of Artemis and of other Greco-Roman deities was important. The first and second centuries saw some efforts on the part of the Ephesians to promote the emperor cult. After an unsuccessful attempt in 21 CE,⁷ Domitian granted the emperor cult and this is mirrored in Ephesian coins labeled Ἐφεσίων Β / Δ[Ι] Νε]ωκόρων.⁸ Since Hadrian (128/129) Ephesus was three times Νεωκόρος; once for Artemis, once for the Flavians and once for Hadrian. In some inscriptions we find a reference to the cult of only two emperors: τῆς πρώτης καὶ μεγίστης μητροπόλεως τῆς Ἀσίας καὶ δις νεωκόρου τῶν Σεβαστῶν καὶ φιλοσεβάστου Ἐφεσίων πόλεως ἡ βουλή καὶ ὁ δῆμος ἐτίμησεν Ἀλεξάνδρον Διηοῦς [Διης = his father] πατέρα πρυτανέων καὶ ἀσιάρχην γραμματέα τοῦ δήμου.⁹ In later times an inscription was dedicated for the group of silversmiths, for Artemis and for the emperor Antoninus Pius.¹⁰

Christian authors do indeed have the cult of Artemis in mind when referring to non-Christian religiosity but not all Christian authors are interested in this issue. According to Rick Strelan we should be cautious in suggesting reference to Artemis on the part of the author of Ephesians or the author of 1 Timothy.¹¹ Ignatius of Antioch – or an unknown author using “Ignatius” as pseudonym¹² – writes his letters shaped by Asianic rhetoric.

6 Pausanias 7.2.7.

7 Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.3.

8 S.T. Friesen, *Twice Neokoros: Ephesus, Asia and the Cult of the Flavian Imperial Family* (RGRW 116; Leiden, 1993), 54.

9 *Die Inschriften von Ephesos (IEph)*, vol. 3 (IGSK 13; Bonn 1980), 613A; cf. 642 and 696.
10 *IEph* 2.586.

11 R. Strelan, *Paul, Artemis, and the Jews in Ephesus* (BZNTW 80; Berlin, 1996), 153–162.

12 Cf. R. Hübner, “Thesen zur Echtheit und Datierung der sieben Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochien,” *ZAC* 1 (1997), 47–72; cf., however, A. Lindemann, “Antwort auf die Thesen von Reinhard M. Hübner,” *ZAC* 1 (1997), 185–194, and G. Schöllgen, “Die Ignatia-

He greets the Ephesians as σύνοδοι [...] θεοφόροι καὶ ναοφόροι, χριστοφόροι, ἀγιοφόροι.¹³ However, the terms θεοφόροι and ναοφόροι are perhaps not only a matter of Asianic rhetoric, but also allusions to the πομπαί for Artemis, where the θεοφόροι and ναοφόροι and the image of Artemis were main figures.¹⁴ The title θεοφόροι does really exist in inscriptions, albeit not from Ephesus.¹⁵ References to the emperor cult can be found in apologetic Christian literature, but not with reference to the specific situation in Ephesus.

An explicit confrontation between Artemis and Christianity is mentioned in the Acts of John, written in the second century CE. John, judged as μάγος (Acts John 2:7), provoked the ἀμεθάτετος Artemis and destroyed her sanctuary in order to free the people from error, which was manifest in their old cults,¹⁶ and he resurrected one of the priests of Artemis.¹⁷ Of course this is driven by an ideology coming from a group convinced that only its own faith is the true one for all humankind. In fact, it was the Goths who in 262 CE, after an earthquake, plundered the temple and the city.¹⁸ The author of the Acts of John, however, had never seen the sanctuary of Artemis. The use of ἀναβαίνω demonstrates that he did not realize that the temple of Artemis was situated not on a hill but on low lying land.¹⁹ According to the Acts of John the hero complains that the true God has still not been accepted in this city.²⁰ That may be also a rhetorical exaggeration, but in reality pagan religiosity was still alive also in later times. There are hints of veneration of Apollonius of Tyana²¹ and according to Gregory of Nazianzus it was Ephesus where Ju-

nen als pseudepigraphisches Briefcorpus: Anmerkungen zu den Thesen von Reinhard M. Hübner," *ZAC* 2 (1998), 16–25.

13 Ign. *Eph.* 9:2.

14 S. Karwiese, *Groß ist die Artemis von Ephesos: Die Geschichte einer der grossen Städte der Antike* (Vienna, 1995), 98. Cf., however, the critique of Strelan, *Paul, Artemis, and the Jews* (see n. 11), 162.

15 W.R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch* (ed. H. Koester; Hermeneia; Philadelphia, 1985), 67 with n. 25.

16 Acts John 40:42.

17 Acts John 46–47.

18 A. Külzer, "Ephesos in byzantinischer Zeit: Ein historischer Überblick," in *Byzanz: Das Römerreich im Mittelalter*, vol. 2,2: *Schauplätze* (ed. F. Daim and J. Drauschke; Mainz, 2010), 521–539, here 523.

19 K. Schäferdieck, "Johannesakten," in *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung*, vol. 2 (ed. W. Schneemelcher; 5th ed.; Tübingen, 1989), 138–193, here 172 n. 55.

20 Acts John 40:42.

21 J.G. Cook, *The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism* (STAC 3; Tübingen, 2000), 269.

lian the Apostate was initiated by Maximus the sophist into the Chaldaic mysteries.²² It is said that John Chrysostom destroyed the temple again,²³ but it is not sure whether he was ever there.²⁴ Another tradition is more reliable: John Chrysostom travelled to Ephesus and installed Heraclidas of Cyprus, one of the pupils of the monk Evagrius, as new bishop instead of the old one.²⁵ According to Isidor of Pelusium pagans continued to use what remained of this sanctuary.²⁶ Furthermore, perhaps it was the still clandestine veneration for Artemis which inspired some theologians in Ephesus in the fifth century to call Mary not only Χριστοτόκος but Θεοτόκος.²⁷

The Acts of Timothy from the fourth or fifth century name a feast of Catagogies: Masqueraded men assault and kill other persons. It is said that Timothy tried in vain to hinder people, but after an assault against him, he died three days later and was buried near the city.²⁸

In exegetical literature, only in the commentaries of Acts 19 do we find passages with regard to the city, but for the subject under discussion they offer little. Later Christian authors associate the non-Christian religiosity of Ephesus mostly with the cult of Diana, which in their eyes is but δεισιδαιμονία.²⁹ Beyond this commonplace, however, Acts 19:18 sometimes gave rise to the view that there was a specific Ephesian interest in magic.³⁰ Referring to Acts 19:29, John Chrysostom³¹ and Arator rail against the theatre.³² In Acts 19:35 the term Νεωκόρος gave rise to two interpretations. According to a statement which is wrongly attributed to Theodoret of Cyrus³³ this name emphasizes the exorbitant veneration of the “demon” Artemis; to call Artemis a “demon” is in accord with Ps 95(96):5a: “all the gods of the nations are demons.” Isidor of Pelusium,

22 Karwiese, *Artemis* (see n. 14), 127; Cook, *Interpretation of the New Testament* (see n. 21), 278; cf. also Sozomenus, *Hist. eccl.* 5.2.16 (Fontes Christiani 73.2, 570).

23 Külzer, “Ephesos” (see n. 18), 532.

24 Karwiese, *Artemis* (see n. 14), 132.

25 Sozomenus, *Hist. eccl.* 8.6.2 (Fontes Christiani 73.4, 974).

26 Külzer, “Ephesos” (see n. 18), 532.

27 Karwiese, *Artemis* (see n. 14), 137.

28 *Acta S. Timothei* 8 (PG 5, 1366B–C); cf. Hermann von Lips, *Timotheus und Titus: Unterwegs für Paulus* (Biblische Gestalten 19; Leipzig, 2008), 162.

29 John Chrysostom, *Comm. Eph.*, prol. (PG 62, 9); Ps.-Oecumenius of Tricca, *In Act.* 28 (PG 118, 253A).

30 Ammonius of Alexandria, *Fr. Act.* 19 (PG 85, 1576D).

31 John Chrysostom, *Hom. Act.* 42.4 (PG 60, 301).

32 *Non alio decuit causas meritumque Dianae / Lascivos tractare foro; capit area turpis / concilli deformis opus* (Arator, *In Act.* 2.714–716, CSEL 72, 117f.). The Venerable Bede, *Exp. Act.* (CCSL 121, 80), quotes this passage.

33 Oecumenius of Tricca, *In Eph.* (PG 118, 1168B).

however, refers to a question raised by a believer why this anti-Christian term Νεωκόρος is used in the Bible. His answer: this naming is not biblical terminology, but the terminology of the town clerk of Ephesus.³⁴ In the same verse the term Διοσπετές is used. This term, too, is an issue of debate. John Chrysostom relates the reference to the statue of Artemis or another image or sanctuary. According to Ammonius of Alexandria and Ps.-Oecumenius it refers to the statue of Artemis or to the statue of Palladion or to the rotund (στρογγυλοειδός).³⁵ The Venerable Bede does not comment on this issue at all. We can conclude that the church fathers had no clear understanding of the term.

In their commentaries on Ephesians some authors related the distinctive character of this letter to the Greco-Roman religiosity of the city. According to Jerome the Ephesians venerated Artemis as providing food for all living beings. Due to the Ephesians' interest in idolatry and magic, Paul, he argues, referred to many secrets which are hidden until the present age: *qui sint daemones, quid valeant, quid ante fuerint, et quomodo post adventum Christi sint diruti atque destructi*. So – Jerome quotes Eph 6:12 – “our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”³⁶ John Chrysostom refers to the history of the city with regard to famous people living in it. Many philosophers who lived in Asia or close to it were here, e. g., Parmenides, Zenon, Democritus. Pythagoras of Samos lived at least in the region of the Ionic islands. According to Jerome, that is important for understanding why Paul so zealously writes this sophisticated letter to the Ephesians.³⁷ By contrast, Marius Victorinus refers to Judaizing adversaries. Owing to their presence the Ephesian Christians falsely combined Judaism and Christian discipline.³⁸ According to anonymous authors mentioned in Theodoret's commentary,³⁹ Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians when he did not know them personally. Theodoret, however, challenged this view, referring to Acts and to Paul's sending Tychicus from Rome according to Eph 6:21 and 2 Tim 4:12.⁴⁰

34 Isidor of Pelusium, *ep.* 4.206 (PG 78, 1300B).

35 John Chrysostom, *Hom. Act.* 42.2 (PG 60, 298); Ammonius of Alexandria, *Fr. Act.* 19 (PG 85, 1577C); Ps.-Oecumenius of Tricca, *In Act.* 18 (PG 118, 253A).

36 Jerome, *In Eph.*, prol. (PL 26, 470B–472A).

37 John Chrysostom, *Comm. Eph.*, prol. (PG 62, 9f.).

38 Marius Victorinus, *In Eph.* (CSEL 83.2, 1).

39 Cf. Oecumenius of Tricca, *In Eph.* (PG 118, 1165D).

40 Theodoret of Cyrus, *Int. Eph.* (PG 82, 505A).

For most ancient commentators on the Revelation of John local color is not important, and so they do not refer to contemporary history in any way. Andreas of Caesarea gives no comment on the seven cities named in Rev 2–3.⁴¹ He refers to a debate on the identity of the second beast named in Rev 13:11, whether it is the Antichrist, one of the devils, or the pseudo-prophet.⁴² In such discourse the Roman Empire is not in view. Simon Magus is more important for him than the Roman emperor.⁴³ Primasius of Hadrumetum gives attention to the combination of commendation and vituperation and accordingly attempts to offer an etymological explanation of Ephesus: *voluntas sive consilium meum*; similarly the Venerable Bede: *Lapsus magnus, et mea voluntas in ea*.⁴⁴ He interprets the number 666 in Rev 13:18 with regard to giants,⁴⁵ but not to the Roman emperor. In order to explain this fact we should have chronology in mind: Jerome and John Chrysostom wrote in the fourth century whereas the commentaries on Revelation were written in the sixth century or later when Greco-Roman religiosity was not in any way a problem.

2. Christian History of Ephesus in Early Christian Literature

The history of early groups of adherents of Jesus in Ephesus is highly debated. According to Matthias Günther and Rick Strelan, at the end of the first century it was only the group of John the seer which was still alive; the groups of Apollos and Paul had disappeared⁴⁶ as well as the Nicolaitans,⁴⁷ but such views have been disputed.⁴⁸ Werner Thießen's portrait is a very

41 Cf. Andreas of Caesarea, *Comm. Apoc.* 3–9 (PG 106, 231B–252D). The same is true for Arethas of Caesarea, *Comm. Apoc.* 3 (PG 106, 525B–532A), and for the Venerable Bede, *Expl. Apoc.* (PL 93, 137B–D).

42 Andreas of Caesarea, *Comm. Apoc.* 37 (PG 106, 336D).

43 Andreas of Caesarea, *Comm. Apoc.* 37 (PG 106, 340A).

44 Primasius of Hadrumetum, *In Apoc.* 1.1 (PL 68, 799C); the Venerable Bede, *Expl. Apoc.* 1.2 (PL 93, 137B).

45 The Venerable Bede, *Expl. Apoc.* 2.13 (PL 93, 172B).

46 M. Günther, *Die Frühgeschichte des Christentums in Ephesus* (ARGU 1; Frankfurt am Main, 1995), 209; Strelan, *Paul, Artemis, and the Jews* (see n. 11), 297.

47 On this group cf. N. Walter, "Nikolaos, Proselyt aus Antiochien, und die Nikolaiten in Ephesus und Pergamon: Ein Beitrag auch zum Thema: Paulus und Ephesus," *ZNW* 93 (2002), 200–226.

48 P. Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (WUNT 166; Tübingen, 2004), 713.

vivid one, and it is debatable even if the Acts did not originate in Ephesus.⁴⁹ With regard to the deutero-Pauline epistles, Dietrich-Alex Koch assumes an ongoing presence of Pauline groups in Ephesus and in Asia Minor.⁵⁰

For ancient Christian exegetes, modern notions of Johannine vs. Pauline communities were foreign to their way of thinking. Polycrates of Ephesus argues for the date of Passover at 14th Nisan with reference to the authorities who were laid to rest in Ephesus. He mentions John and one of the daughters of Philip, the deacon, named in Acts 21, but not Paul.⁵¹ The apostle Paul, of course, spent some time in Ephesus; the place of his death, however, was not Ephesus, but Rome. Similarly, it was John, not Paul, who, according to the Acts of John, provocatively challenged Artemis,⁵² and it was John, not Paul, whose presence and burial caused pilgrimage to Ephesus.⁵³ In the *Liber de dormitione auctore Pseudo-Johanne* on the dormition of Mary, all the apostles assembled in Jerusalem before her death; John came from Ephesus, Paul from the surroundings of Rome.⁵⁴

Theodoret records a debate about whether it was John or Paul who founded the Christian congregation,⁵⁵ and we can in fact reconstruct some positions. Irenaeus and Theodoret⁵⁶ opted for Paul, whereas Ambrosiaster opted for John.⁵⁷ Theodore of Mopsuestia's argument in favor of Paul was that Paul was beheaded during the days of Nero whereas the apostle John left Jerusalem only after the Jewish-Roman war.⁵⁸ The tradition of two persons called John was well-known, recorded by Papias and Jerome.⁵⁹ The identification of the evangelist with the seer of Revelation is maintained in literature⁶⁰ and text-critical witnesses.⁶¹ Dionysius of Alexandria was not successful in challenging it.⁶²

49 W. Thießen, *Christen in Ephesus: Die historische und theologische Situation in vorpaulinischer und paulinischer Zeit und zur Zeit der Apostelgeschichte und der Pastoralbriefe* (TANZ 12; Tübingen, 1995), 234–236.

50 D.-A. Koch, "Paulus in Ephesus und der Provinz Asia: Die Geschichte eines Misserfolgs?" In *Paulus – Werk und Wirkung: Festschrift Andreas Lindemann* (ed. P.-G. Klumbies and D.S. du Toit; Tübingen, 2013), 391–411, here 409.

51 Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. eccl.* 5.24.2–8 (GCS 9.1, 490–492).

52 Acts John 43.

53 John Moschus, *Pratum spirituale* 180 (PG 87.3, 3052B); cf. the plan of Egeria, *Itin.* 23.10.

54 *Liber de dormitione auctore Pseudo-Johanne* 12, 19 (K. Tischendorf, *Apocalypses apocryphae* [Leipzig, 1866], 99, 101).

55 Theodoret of Cyrus, *Int. Eph.* (PG 82, 505A–508C).

56 Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.3.4 (SC 211, 44).

57 Ambrosiaster, *In Eph.* (CSEL 81.3, 71).

58 Theodor of Mopsuestia, *In Eph.*, prol. (PG 66, 912B).

59 Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 9.5; 18.2–3 (BPat 12, 94; 110–112).

60 Cf. Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 9.5 (BPat 12, 94).

Concerning Paul, there are some legendary enrichments with regard to his staying in Ephesus, e. g., the story of the baptized lion, perhaps an embellishment based on 1 Cor 15:32 (“I fought with wild animals at Ephesus”); but these legends had no influence on commentaries on 1 Cor 15:32 itself. Ancient Christian commentators interpret this verse as referring to struggles against real beasts in the arena⁶³ or metaphorically,⁶⁴ perhaps influenced by 1 Cor 16:9 (“there are many adversaries,” sc. in Ephesus), or relate it to the *στάσις*⁶⁵ in relation to the silversmith Demetrius.⁶⁶ With regard to 1 Cor 16:9 the exegetes refer to the influence of the devil even when the proclamation of the gospel is successful.⁶⁷ 2 Tim 4:17 (“he saved me from the mouth of the lion”) is sometimes related to the emperor Nero who had been regarded as a lion because of his cruelty,⁶⁸ sometimes to the devil, in the light of the comparison in 1 Pet 5:8.⁶⁹ 2 Cor 1:8–10 is interpreted in three different ways: (1) without any reference to real events,⁷⁰ (2) with reference to the silversmith Demetrius,⁷¹ or (3) with reference to information which would be given by Tychicus according to Eph 6:21.⁷²

It was the common view of ancient Christian historians and exegetes that John returned to Ephesus after his exile at Patmos and was still alive in the days of Trajan.⁷³ It is said that he raised someone from the dead in Ephesus.⁷⁴ According to Eusebius of Caesarea and the Acts of Timothy, Timothy was bishop of Ephesus during John’s exile at Patmos,⁷⁵ but

61 Cf. the superscription of Revelation in the majuscule 046.

62 See Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. eccl.* 7.25.1–27 (GCS 9.2, 690–700). According to Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 69.5 (BPat 12, 174), he carefully discussed this problem – Jerome is not the most generous person to offering such praise!

63 Ambrosiaster, *In 1 Cor.* (CSEL 81.2, 176).

64 Ambrosiaster, *In Eph.*, prol. (CSEL 81.3, 73); John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 Cor.* 40.3 (PG 61, 350).

65 Euthalius Diaconus, *Ed. Act.* (PG 85, 660B, following Acts 19:40).

66 Ps.-Oecumenius of Tricca, *In 1 Cor.* 9 (PG 118, 877C).

67 John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 Cor.* 43.3 (PG 61, 371); Ps.-Oecumenius of Tricca, *In 1 Cor.* 9 (PG 118, 900D).

68 Theodoret of Cyrus, *Int. 2 Tim.* 4 (PG 82, 856B); Ps.-Oecumenius of Tricca, *In 2 Tim.* (PG 119, 237C).

69 Ambrosiaster, *In 2 Tim.*, rec. γ (CSEL 81.3, 319).

70 Ambrosiaster, *In 2 Cor.* (CSEL 81.2, 198).

71 Theodoret of Cyrus, *Int. 2 Cor.* 1 (PG 82, 380B).

72 John Chrysostom, *Hom. 2 Cor.* 2.2 (PG 61, 354).

73 Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.22.5 (SC 294, 224); Clement of Alexandria, *Quis div.* 42.2 (GCS 17, 188); Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. eccl.* 3.23.6 (GCS 9.1, 238).

74 Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. eccl.* 5.18.14 (GCS 9.1, 478).

75 Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. eccl.* 3.4.5 (GCS 9.1, 192); *Acta S. Timothei* 3 (PG 5, 1363B).

this belief had no influence on later Christian literature about the city. John 19:35 led to the belief that Mary stayed in Ephesus.⁷⁶

Some aspects of early Christian history are puzzling not only for us but were puzzling also for people long before our time. Why did pupils of John the Baptist stay in Ephesus? According to John Chrysostom and Ps.-Oecumenius of Tricca, they were Ephesians who, during a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, also visited the river Jordan and came back as pupils of the Baptist.⁷⁷ Luke's mentioning of Apollos includes no comment about the city of Ephesus.⁷⁸

Despite its association with the one or two persons named John, Ephesus was not a major Christian city in the first centuries CE.⁷⁹ Epiphanius of Salamis mentions the Nicolaitans and the seer's rebuke of them,⁸⁰ but the localisation of this group in Ephesus is not important for him. In his *De viris illustribus* Jerome mentions only one person before 325, related to Ephesus, namely Polycrates, who flourished during the reign of Septimius Severus.⁸¹ He also named Sagaris of Laodicea, Papyrus and Melito of Sardis,⁸² but no further Ephesian person. Eusebius sometimes records episcopal succession in Jerusalem⁸³ or Alexandria⁸⁴ or Rome⁸⁵ or Antioch⁸⁶ but of Ephesus only in relation to Polycrates.⁸⁷ According to the so-called anti-Marcionite prologues to the gospels and Filastrius of Brescia, Marcion had to escape from Ephesus because John and the presbyters caused him to do so.⁸⁸ According to Gerhard May, however, "no historical kernel can be

76 Karwiese, *Artemis* (see n. 14), 125 (I could not verify the reference to Epiphanius, *Pan.* 11.24).

77 John Chrysostom, *Hom. Act.* 40.2 (PG 60, 284); Ps.-Oecumenius of Tricca, *In Act.* 28 (PG 118, 248B).

78 The Venerable Bede, *Exp. Act.* (CCSL 121, 75f.); *Retr. Act.* (CCSL 121, 154–155).

79 Cf. also Strelan, *Paul, Artemis, and the Jews* (see n. 11), 299.

80 Epiphanius, *Pan.* 25.3.1 (GCS 25, 269). Epiphanius of Salamis does not mention the city in his *Panarion*, see F. Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, vol. 1: *Book 1, Sects 1–46* (2nd ed.; NHMS 63; Leiden, 2009), 398; id., *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, vol. 2: *Books II and III: De Fide* (NHMS 79; Leiden, 2013), 687.

81 Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 45.7 (BPat 12, 146). Jerome's witness concerning the meagre number of Ephesian celebrities, however, is confirmed by Polycrates himself (see above).

82 See Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 45.4 (BPat 12, 144).

83 E.g., Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. eccl.* 3.22; 6.10 (GCS 9.1, 237; 9.2, 541).

84 E.g., Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. eccl.* 4.1.1; 5.22.1 (GCS 9.1, 301; 487).

85 E.g., Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. eccl.* 4.1.1; 5.22.1; 6.21.1–2 (GCS 9.1, 301; 487; 9.2, 567).

86 E.g., Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. eccl.* 3.22; 5.22.1 (GCS 9.1, 237; 487).

87 Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. eccl.* 5.22.1 (GCS 9.1, 488).

88 Filastrius, *Diversarum hereseon liber* 45.7 (CCSL 9, 236).

peeled out of this abundantly fantastic report.”⁸⁹ Filastrius is well known for his inventions of details and stories without any reliability.

During the Trinitarian controversy of the fourth century, two bishops of Ephesus are mentioned who were affiliated with the party of non-Nicene theology: Menophantus, attending the synod of Nicaea,⁹⁰ afterwards removed from his diocese,⁹¹ and Agapius, after the death of Valens (378).⁹² In the following decades we can, however, suppose an increasing importance of the city of Ephesus within the history of Christian church: Two synods were held here (the council of 431 and the infamous robber synod of 449), perhaps in memory of John’s grave or due to the city’s neutrality between Constantinople and Alexandria.

3. Conclusion

The history of reception of biblical texts concerning Ephesus does not offer much material which could be compared with archaeological data. Before 325 CE, Christian authors reflect controversies between Greco-Roman society and the church sometimes in stories of conquering the demonic and idolatry, sometimes in apologetics. Stories of conquering the demonic and idolatry are more important within lower classes in terms of what they can understand; apologetics sought to earn respect for Christianity in the upper classes. In the commentaries on New Testament texts mentioning Ephesus we can observe a decreasing degree of importance of Greco-Roman paganism and the struggle against it, owing to the chronological distance from the first centuries of Christianity.

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⁸⁹ G. May, “Marcion in Contemporary Views: Results and Open Questions,” in id., *Marcion: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (ed. K. Greschat and M. Meiser; VIEG.B 68; Mainz, 2005), 13–33, here 16.

⁹⁰ Sozomenus, *Hist. eccl.* 4.8.4 (Fontes Christiani 73.2, 450); cf. also Anonymous of Cyzicus, *Hist. eccl.* 2.7.43 (Fontes Christiani 49.1, 170).

⁹¹ Sozomenus, *Hist. eccl.* 3.12.3 (Fontes Christiani 73.2, 370–372).

⁹² Sozomenus, *Hist. eccl.* 7.17.13 (Fontes Christiani 73.3, 896).

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