

Earthquakes and the Crises of Faith: Social Transformation in Late Antique Cyprus

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Abstract: The fourth century AD marked a watershed change for the development of Cyprus cultural identity. Transformed by external factors, the Cyprus that emerged by AD 400 is recognizably the forerunner of modern Cyprus. A series of earthquakes during the course of that century caused both the traditional pagan religions and the newly visible and vibrant Christianity to undergo crises of faith. The Cypriot pagan response is to reject the temple cult and turn inward following neo-Platonic teachings before quietly fading away. This is inferred from surviving mosaic floors. The Christian response is expressed in a massive campaign of church construction. The theological framework for this expansion is an understanding of the Providence of God as mercy and judgment inseparably together which forms the foundation for the Cypriot church.

Cyprus' Cultural Identity

The fourth century AD marked a watershed change for the development of Cyprus cultural identity. Transformed by external factors, the Cyprus that emerged by AD 400 is recognizably the forerunner of modern Cyprus. Fernand Braudel's concept of *le long dure*, 'a history in slow motion from which permanent values can be detected' helps us to understand this development (Braudel 1972: 23). These 'permanent values' are almost unobservable in the short term, particularly with the shortened attention span of the twenty-first century, but are critical to understanding the island's cultural identity. Such permanent values include *spatial* features and *temporal* features. Dominating Cyprus' spatial features are its island identity, its strategic location, and its abundant natural resources. Dominating Cyprus' temporal features are the twin pillars of language and religion.

Cyprus is the third largest island in the Mediterranean Sea, measuring approximately 225 kms East/West x 95 kms North/South. Located in the northeast corner of the Mediterranean, approximately 70kms south of Turkey and 120 kms west of Syria, Cyprus is enveloped by Asia Minor and the Levantine Coast. Throughout its history, Cyprus' island identity provided a protective shell around Cyprus' cultural identity. In his recent study of Cypriot prehistory, A. Bernard Knapp emphasizes the fluctuating degree of 'openness or boundedness' on Cyprus (Knapp 2008). As an island, Cyprus forced invasions and colonization attempts to be episodic in nature rather than massive population inundations that would have drowned the indigenous culture under a tsunami of new cultural elements. The millennia long process of cultural negotiation between indigenous populations and newcomers produced acculturation rather than annihilation. Additionally, the local Cypriots had no choice about accommodation; they had no easy escape route before the advent of the industrial Age so they had

to come to terms with the latest dominant elite. The fragmentary footprints of this process are found in linguistic and cultural shifts which form signposts in the history of Cyprus.

The fundamentals of self identity and the consequential societal fault lines on Cyprus remain the temporal features (in Braudel's terminology), of language and religion. In the realm of language, Greek speakers first gained cultural ascendancy after the collapse of the Bronze Age World when the Iron Age city kingdoms were established by Greek speaking elites (Iacovou 2006). Other languages used by Cypriots included Phoenician and the as yet untranslated local Bronze Age language using the script labelled by modern scholars as Cypro-Minoan. Against the linguistic rock of Cypriot Greek, other languages would advance and recede such as Latin and French, Arabic, and Italian.

It is the fourth century that witnessed the triumph of Christianity in establishing the baseline of Cyprus cultural identity. In the sixteenth century, the Ottoman conquest brings Turkish and Islam as the opposing pair of temporal values producing modern Cypriot identity. Parenthetically, even today, while most Cypriots are very secular in their daily lives, religious identification remains a major element of communal self-definition. The normal Greek Cypriot, if asked 'Are you a Christian?' will reply, 'Yes, I am not a Turk' and the reverse is true in the Turkish Cypriot Community. Ironically, for all of the nationalistic rhetoric employed by elements in both Greek and Turkish Cypriot Communities, the main facets of Cypriot cultural identity are products of multi-cultural imperialism, not mono-modal nationalism.¹ The Greek language and the Christian faith became permanent fixtures under Late Roman/Early Byzantine rule, and the Turkish language and Islam became firmly rooted under Ottoman rule.

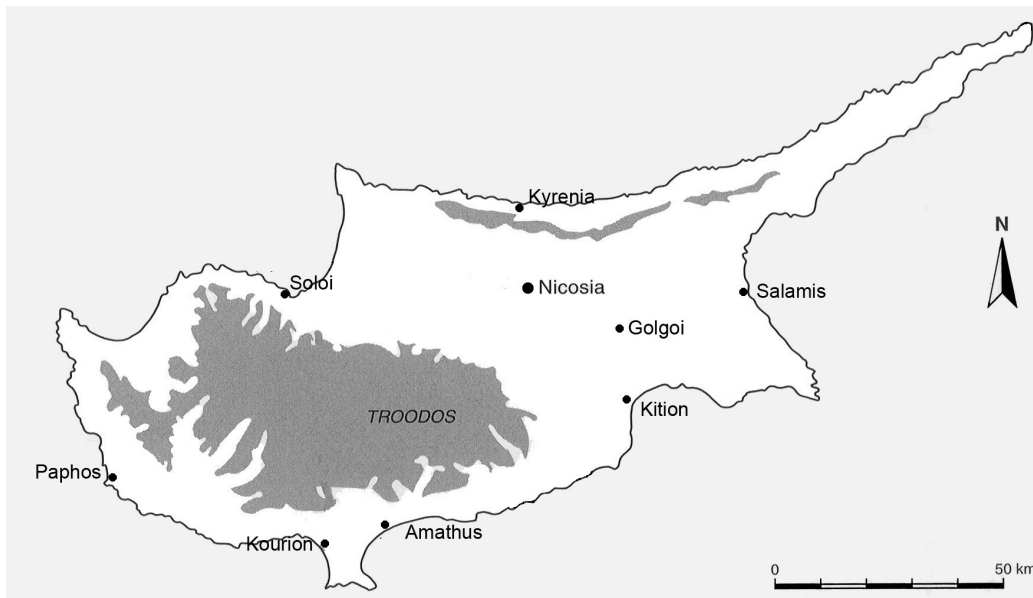


Figure 1: A map of Cyprus showing the places referred to in this paper

Cyprus in AD 300

In AD 300, Cyprus was a backwater in the Roman Empire. The ancient sources are largely silent about the island during the Roman period; In Mitford's words, 'In 22 BC Cyprus entered upon more than three centuries of tranquil

obscurity' (1980:1295). Inscriptions and coins together record only 48 proconsuls from 22 BC to AD 293, less than 1/6 of the total (Mitford 1980:1299). The proconsul served for only a 1 year term; Mitford points out that this short period of office prevented corruption. In consequence,



Figure 2: The Gymnasium complex at Salamis, restored by Trajan and Hadrian following the Diaspora revolt in AD 117. Photo Thomas W. Davis



Figure 3: The Civic Baths at Kourion. Photo Thomas W. Davis

Cyprus probably was not seen as an attractive posting for a young Roman aristocrat who needed to line his pockets to advance his political career; we know of only 6 governors who go on to become Consuls. The reforms of Diocletian in AD 293 placed Cyprus under the rule of a *praeses* who answered to the *Comes Orientis* in Antioch. Bowersock points out that this arrangement gave ‘a privileged position to links with the east, notably Antioch’ (Bowersock 2000:10).

Nor did Cyprus attract ambitious military types; there was little scope for military glory. The only major Roman military action on Cyprus before the fourth century is the suppression of the massive revolt of the Jewish Diaspora in AD 116/117. Legions sent from Syria and Pannonia crushed the revolt, and Dio Cassius records more than 240,000 deaths on the island, particularly in Salamis (Dio Cassius LXVIII.32.2-3.) Following the revolt, there is evidence for the redevelopment of Salamis and the restoration of a part of the gymnasium by the Emperor Trajan (Figure 2). A major inscription praising the Emperor Hadrian (‘Benefactor of the Salaminians and Saviour of the World’) commemorates his important help towards the reconstruction of the city following the revolt (Mitford and Nicolaou 1974). Numerous other imperial dedications are known from Cyprus including two newly discovered Antonine era dedications found in the theater in Paphos (As yet unpublished).

In the year 300 the island may have been politically obscure, but Cyprus was economically integrated into the eastern Roman world. Dimitrios Michaelides has emphasized the importance of Cyprus’ economic role and its outsized contribution the island made to the Roman economy (Michaelides 1996). His survey of the economic role of Cyprus highlights the amount of perishable items that Cyprus may have exported, evidence that has not survived in the archaeological record. A recent study by Anthi Kaldelis of Roman trade amphorae found on Cyprus indicates the complex interchange network Cyprus took part in (Kaldelis 2008). Kaldelis’ analysis shows that Amathous and Salamis traded heavily with Antioch, Cilicia and the Levant, while Paphos looked strongly west with a high percentage of imports from Italy and Rome itself. This bears out the evidence presented by John Lund (Lund 2006) in his studies of Roman fine wares, of an east/west economic divide in Roman Cyprus between Paphos and the eastern half of the island. The Paphos region was the production center for Cypriot Sigillata fine wear while Eastern Sigillata wares produced in Syria dominate the fine ware sub-assemblages of Salamis and Amathus. In Kaldelis’ study, Kourion is an anomaly, involved apparently more in internal trading than directly to the outside. It is possible that this situation arose because Kourion’s main industry appears to be the pilgrim trade to the temple of Apollo Hylates. The guest facilities at the Apollo temple are expanded in the second century (Soren 1987) and so are the civic amenities in Kourion itself, such as the baths (Figure 3).

The Cypriot cities in the Roman period lack the usual sense of strong local identity that most cities in the eastern empire evidenced. Cyprus does not have many urban dedications that exalt the city; for the most part, the inscriptions are dedicated to the imperial family on behalf of an individual, a community, or on behalf of the *koinon kyprian*. A sign of the diminished role of urban identity is that the *koinon* was responsible for minting the coins of Cyprus rather than individual cities. Despite this, urban life flourished in the Roman period on Cyprus. There is a great deal of archaeological and inscriptional evidence for extensive building between the first and third centuries AD in the Cypriot urban centers of Paphos, Salamis, Kourion, Amathus and Soloi. New temples, baths and aqueducts, public spaces and markets are constructed. Although Cyprus shared in the empire-wide economic downturn of the late third century, the cities are still in fair shape at the beginning of the fourth century. Vassos Karageoghis (1980:180) estimates that Salamis could have had a population as large as 350,000 although 120,000 [based on the aqueduct size] is a more credible estimate (Hill 1940:42). The lower estimate still makes Salamis the largest urban center in the pre-twentieth century history of Cyprus. It is fair to say that Cyprus circa AD 300 was an urban world, as it would not be again until the twentieth century.

Following the dictates of its island identity, the large urban centers of Cyprus in AD 300 lay on the coast. This coastal orientation is strengthened on Cyprus by the security situation under the *Pax Romana*, and will continue until the seventh century AD. By AD 300, the Roman road system on Cyprus was essentially complete, linking the major urban centers and featuring a peripheral road along the coast of the island. A few milestones indicate road repair after this date including repair work on the south coastal road between Kourion and Paphos (Mitford 1980, Bekker-Nielsen 2004).

Religiously Cyprus maintained its public attachment to the traditional male and female deities of Cyprus with roots far back into prehistory. The Romans knew them as Aphrodite, Zeus and Apollo. Roman coinage depicts the famous Aphrodite sanctuary in Paleopaphos and the cult statue of the temple of Zeus in Salamis. It is no surprise that the earliest segment of the Roman road system to be completed is the segment joining the temple of Apollo Hylates at Kourion with the temple of Aphrodite at Paleopaphos (Bekker-Nielsen 2004: 108). All three of the great temples saw extensive rebuilding in the first and second centuries (Figure 4).

Christianity arrived on the island in the first century according to the Acts of the Apostles with the visit of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13). By AD 300 the Christian faith had attained a stability that enabled it to take advantages of the opportunities offered by the new century. Martyrologies attest to the presence of believers in the second and third century on the island, although no way of estimating the number of Christians is possible. David Soren

contended that Kourion was in economic decline in the late third century due to the fall off of the pilgrim trade as Christianity gained adherents in the population (Soren and James 1988).

Shaken and Stirred

The stable world of AD 300 Cyprus was transformed by events in the fourth century that came from outside the island, far outside; actually outside the human world itself. I speak of events that the fourth century Cypriots understood as being under the control of divine beings: the military triumph of Constantine and a series of devastating earthquakes. To the ancients, a military victory between adherents of different gods was understood as the human expression of a divine combat, not just the success of one general over another. When Constantine triumphed under the signs of Christ, his victory was universally understood as the earthly expression of a heavenly victory by the Christian God (Stephenson 2009: 7). When the earth quaked it was a direct result of divine action whether it be the trident of Poseidon Earthshaker or the hand of Jehovah.

Constantine's legalization of Christianity was only effective in the west of the empire. It wasn't until AD 324 and his final triumph over his eastern rival Licinius that this protection spread across the entire empire. Licinius, preparing for his final confrontation with Constantine, gathered more than 350 ships from the eastern Mediterranean provinces. Intriguingly, the apparently demilitarized Cyprus provided 20 of them; it must be pointed out that this is the next smallest contingent, while Egypt and Phoenicia contributed 80 each (Bowersock 2001). The later Cypriot church considered the rule of Licinius to be a time of testing. According to the Byzantine *Menaion* (Calendar of Saints Days) for 2 March, Theodatus, the Bishop of Kyrenia, was cruelly tortured by the orders of Licinius, to silence his preaching, but there is no contemporary evidence of this.

The Council of Nicea in AD 325 gives us our first real historical glimpse of the Cypriot Church. The church is organized enough to have at least three bishops whom they send to the Council, Cyril of Paphos, Gelasius of Salamis and Spyridon of Tremithos. Paphos and Salamis are the two most important cities of the island in 325 but Tremithos is more humble, growing around a road crossing near ancient Golgoi. According to accounts, Spyridon made an impact on his fellow clergymen by his open hearted generosity and kindness to all he met. He becomes a favorite for later Cypriot Christians and we have some knowledge of his life. He was a shepherd who maintained his original profession while he served as bishop. He had suffered persecution, losing his right eye and being assigned to work in the mines. Spyridon follows the pattern of ecclesiastical authority presented by Claudia Rapp (2005) where visible suffering (persecution or asceticism) leads to spiritual authority. We know nothing of the other signatories except that Cyril from Paphos signed first for the Cypriots implying his primacy. Spyridon is also present at the Council of Sardica in AD 342, where there are 12 Cypriots bishops in attendance,



Figure 4: Bronze Age walls from the sanctuary of Aphrodite at Kouklia. Photo Thomas W. Davis

but we only have their names not their dioceses (Hill 1940: 250). Either the Cypriot church was already organized before 325, and now fully in the open, or more likely, it was expanding rapidly with 9 new hierarchs.

Despite the explosive expansion of the church, the great temples of Zeus, Aphrodite and Apollo still were maintained and had adherents. The temple of Apollo at Kourion witnessed some repaving work in the second quarter of the fourth century (Soren 1987). The religious divisions do not seem to have led to much internal tension. Papageorghiou (1993:31) points out that ‘In all the lives of the Cypriot saints with the exception of the conflicts between Christian and pagans referred to in the life of St. Tychon in Amathus, the relations between Christians and pagans are even and friendly’. This is very different from the religiously fuelled violence in Egypt or the Levant during this time.

Divine tensions were made manifest, at least in Cypriot eyes, through a series of catastrophic earthquakes in the fourth century. Earthquakes are an endemic feature of life in an active seismic zone such as Cyprus. A devastating earthquake in 15 BC which destroyed Paphos led to imperial intervention and the renaming of the city. An earthquake in the late 70s may have led the Flavian emperors to mint silver coinage on the island immediately after the quake perhaps to act as an economic boost. However the second and third centuries appear to have been a seismically quiet period for Cyprus contributing to the economic health of the island. This terrestrial tranquility changed dramatically in the fourth century. Massive quakes struck Cyprus in AD 332, then again ten years later in 342. Finally a series of quakes struck the south coast between AD 365 and 370.

Ironically the earthquake of AD 332 appears to have led to the first “historical” impact on the Roman state since the Diaspora revolt 200 years before. Calocaerus, based on Cyprus, revolted against the rule of Constantine in AD 333.² He was defeated by Constantine’s nephew Dalmatius and executed in Tarsus. Bowersock (2001) suggests that he may have been a Cypriot nationalist. The only documentation of a military garrison on Cyprus is a second century cohort from a Pannonian Legion (Mitford 1980). If they were still on detached service in 333, then at most we are talking about 500 soldiers. We do know that road repairs were undertaken after the 332 quake (Bekker-Nielsen 2004) so it is certainly possible that additional troops had been brought to the island to help in the recovery. Also, the naval contingent that Cyprus provided for Licinius indicates a naval presence which may have been restored to Cyprus after the combat between Constantine and Licinius. They probably first appeared on Cyprus after the Gothic piracy raids in the eastern Mediterranean in the late 3rd century. However you add it up, we are not talking about a large number of troops, certainly not the troop numbers needed for a successful revolt. Calocaerus is defeated in Cilicia, where Bowersock (2001:12) suggests he was trying to gather more support. Most frustratingly our sources do not tell us why Calocaerus revolted with such military imbalance. Was he a government official about to be called to task for administrative failings or corruption related to the recovery from the quake? Or was it religious in motivation, the actions of a man who knew he would win because he fought for the true gods against the new faith? We simply do not know.

The AD 342 earthquake effectively destroyed Salamis and severely damaged Paphos. Constantius II steps in to aid in the recovery and following the pattern established under the Julio-Claudians, renames the rebuilt city of Salamis 'Constantia', making it the new capital of Cyprus. Constantius, takes advantage of the disaster to the Cypriot cities to impose a new political orientation. By moving the capital to Salamis, Constantius is trying to link the entire island to Antioch, building on the long standing economic and cultural ties of the city of Salamis to the Syrian metropolis; additionally, this political realignment provides an added strategic bonus by placing Cyprus more directly under the watchful eye of the Praetorian Prefect of the Orient in Antioch.

Earthquake Destruction at Kourion

The clearest archaeological evidence of the devastation of the fourth century earthquakes is at the site of Kourion on the south coast of Cyprus where the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania began working in 1934 (Davis forthcoming). The excavations were under the titular direction of Bert Hodge Hill, but the day to day field director was an amateur archaeologist, George McFadden. The quake debris was first identified in McFadden's trench III, where two skeletons, romantically named Romeo and Juliet by his assistant John Daniel, had been found in the first week of their excavations at the site. Although the human remains were carefully delineated and removed, further excavation of the earthquake debris in the domestic quarter was never undertaken by McFadden's team because they were interested in the public spaces of the city such as the theater, forum and basilica. Additionally, McFadden soon turned his personal attention to the excavation of the temple of Apollo Hylates, one km west of the city.

The so-called 'earthquake house' lay undisturbed for another fifty years until 1984 when David Soren, of the University of Arizona, decided to re-examine this part of the city (Soren and James 1988).³ Soren had begun working at Kourion in the late 1970s but had focused on the temple of Apollo. He decided to reopen the former University Museum trench to help answer questions about the date of the quake that his work at the Apollo temple had raised.

The Arizona team began by relocating and reopening one room in McFadden's trench III. The initial excavation quickly showed that the University Museum team had not fully cleared the room which the new team proceeded to do, finding undisturbed material in the corners. After this was cleared, the decision was made to examine completely undisturbed material so an initial 5x5 m square was opened on the other side of the west wall of room 1.

After removing the Penn back-dirt and about a meter of nearly sterile post quake fill (slope-wash and aeolian deposition), the team came down on the intact earthquake debris. The area of the earthquake house was never reoccupied in a substantive way and aside from a post-quake rubble

dumping episode and an ephemeral squatter occupation, the fourth century layer was essentially intact. (Soren and Davis 1985). The collapsed remains of the walls were carefully delineated and the collapse pattern indicated that an earthquake with an epicenter in the southwest, was the most likely cause of the collapse of the house. The field team first identified what appeared to be either a damaged sarcophagus or a water trough on the north side of which they discovered the remains of an iron chain. They excavated along the chain and at the end of the chain, emerging from the unexcavated soil, was the skeletal head of a mule or horse. At this point it was realized that this site might be something special. When the entire room was cleared, an ancient tragedy was illuminated. It was a moment frozen in time.

The excavation of the stable yielded a nearly completely restorable marble table top, a bronze lamp stand with dolphin-headed supports, glass and pottery vessels, a collection of small denomination coins, and the skeletal remains of a young teenage girl. Soren was convinced by the coins found in 1984 that this was the great earthquake described by the Roman historian Ammianus which occurred on 21 July 365, although he had earlier dated the quake to AD 370 (Soren 1981). In his popular book on Kourion, Soren called it 'the earthquake that ended Antiquity' (Soren and James 1988).⁴ The Kourion quake was a deadly one with a high cost in human lives. The Earthquake house and its immediate surroundings yielded 8 sets of human remains, including a family huddled together (Figure 5). The excavators found a ring with a *Chi/Rho* symbol on the finger of the male skeleton; this was a Christian family.

Paganism Shaken

The earthquakes provoked crises of faith on Cyprus. Both the traditional Cypriot pagan religion expressed most visibly through cultic worship at the ancient temples and the newly emergent Christianity of the bishops were challenged by the "divinely ordained" destructions.

For paganism, the effects of the earthquakes are catastrophic. The temple of Zeus at Salamis is badly damaged in AD 342. The Apollo Temple at Kourion is also totally ruined in the same quake that destroyed the earthquake house. These major cult sites never regain their function although some repairs may have been made to the Zeus temple at Salamis. At some point probably the (AD 365/370 quakes), the temple of Aphrodite is destroyed although medieval activity at the site makes the exact date impossible to determine. According to Jerome in his *Life of St. Hilarion*, St. Hilarion arrives on Cyprus in the immediate aftermath of the quake, 'After entering Paphos, the city in Cyprus made famous by the poets' songs, which has on several occasions been destroyed by earthquakes and whose ruins alone now provide evidence of what it once was' he rests (Life of St Hilarion 42). Jerome, not being local has probably conflated the temple site ('made famous by the poet's songs'), with the city.



Figure 5: The remains of the Kourion family huddled together in an attempt to survive the fourth century earthquake. Photo Thomas W. Davis

The destruction of the major pagan sanctuaries strikes at the heart of traditional pagan Cypriot beliefs and practices. Why was this allowed to happen? If the gods in their anger at the loss of worship and the rise of Christianity allowed the total destruction of their own shrines when sacrifices and offerings could be freely offered, what does that mean for the future?

Paul Stephenson (2009), in a recently published study of Constantine, defines a clear difference between pagan and Christian responses to crises.

Where pagan social networks were fractured or destroyed by death and displacement, new Christian networks emerged. And within these circles Christians offered explanations...it was not random, but rather God's means of separating those who worshipped correctly and those who did not. Or: Christians who died would be rewarded, for they had joined their Lord and later be reunited with loved ones who survived. Paganism offered no justifications; no promises (Stephenson 2009: 44).⁵

There are no written sources that give us a specific Cypriot pagan response, but we can infer a response from the archaeological discoveries at Paphos. The excavations, carried on since the 1960s, have uncovered a wealthy urban community. The ruins of one urban villa, named the House of Aion by the excavator, yielded a magnificent triclinium floor mosaic depicting mythological scenes (Daszewski et al. 1984). The theme of the scenes are: Leda and Zeus as a Swan; Dionysus as a child; the beauty contest of Cassiopea and the Nereides; a Dionysiac procession; and, the

judgment of Apollo after the music contest between the arrogant Marsyas and the god of music himself. All the scenes focus around a mostly destroyed central figure of Aion, Father Time.

This floor is an artistic masterpiece, a prime example of pagan religiosity, and according to the Polish excavator Daszewski (1998) dates to the mid-4th century, after the initial quakes.. 'This mosaic, in all probability, was made in the intellectual climate which brought to light the pagan reaction under the reign of Julian the Apostate' (Daszewski 1998)⁶. This would place it after the AD 332 quake but before the 365/370 tremors which destroyed the house. Michaelides (1992:54) places it slightly earlier, into the second quarter of the 4th century based on a recovery of a coin of Licinius in the bedding for the mosaic (AD 314-324). This coin provides a *terminus post quem* for the mosaic which could well be laid after the 332 quake.

Daszewski uses the appearance of Dionysius in two of the panels as the key to unlock a possible meaning to the composition. In his intriguing interpretation, the different scenes from Leda to the central figure of Father Time are to be understood through the lens of the neo-platonic doctrine of the soul. The floor metaphorically depicts the soul and its travels through the material world until it is liberated by death and enjoys a subsequent apotheosis, all under the watchful eye of the master of eternity. Dionysus, being the son of a human woman and the god Zeus, is the symbol of the two elements of humanity, the soul and the body. He is the man who becomes a god and the model of the human soul who after death reunites with the divine soul. This is symbolized in the mosaic by the victory of



Figure 6: *The Judgment of Apollo from the House of Aion, Paphos. Photo Thomas W. Davis*

Cassiopeia over the sea creatures which stand for matter in the neoplatonic world. The punishment of Marysas by Apollo is illustrative of the price the soul must pay on its journey (Figure 6). Suffering has a purifying meaning. This is highlighted in the way the Dionysian procession is shown in the mosaic. Instead of an exuberant bacchic party, it is a solemn procession, signifying that death is only a passage to a different life (Figure 7). The Christian echoes are deliberate, an attempt to refute the new faith. ‘We perceive in the Paphos mosaic, the desire of rich and cultured people, following traditional beliefs, to oppose the new religion by using or changing the ancient schemas which under a similar form are or will be used in the same way by Christians...’ [the pagans of Paphos were] ‘using the myths allegorically to show the neoplatonist way of salvation, while at the same time counterbalancing Christian teaching’ (Daszewski 1998).

I suggest that the neoplatonist way of salvation is the Cypriot pagan answer to the dilemma posed by the earthquakes. The ceremonies and sacrifices in the old temples belong to the world of matter and are no longer necessary. The destruction of the shrines frees the individual to accept the suffering that comes with life as part of the preparation of the soul for the journey to the ultimate apotheosis.

Mythologically themed mosaics continued to be created in Paphos, suggesting that pagan belief may have continued in a quiet way. In the nearby House of Theseus, a mosaic of Poseidon and Amphitrite was created in the last quarter

of the 4th century after the earthquakes. In the fifth century scenes from the Achilles cycle were used in the main audience hall. Of course it cannot be determined from the scenes alone whether the sophisticated owners of the post quake villa were pagan or Christian. Whatever the owner’s personal faith was, the existence of the mosaics witnesses to a tolerant community.

Christianity Stirred

For Christian Cypriots the challenges of the quakes were somewhat different. The documented jump from 3 bishops at Nicea, to 12 organized hierarchs at the AD 342 Council of Sardica suggests that the Church on Cyprus has undergone the shift from a movement to an institution (as defined by North 1990). The organizational structure for a fully institutionalized church is in place before the earthquakes, but the physical infrastructure is not. To date, there is no clear evidence that any major Christian churches were destroyed in the 4th century quakes. It is certainly possible that the earliest phases of some of the late 4th century and early 5th century churches were built on earlier foundations, but we have no clear evidence of this. The great 5 aisled Basilica A at Soloi is certainly built over an earlier structure, probably a domus ecclesiae with a mosaic reading ‘Christ bless the donor of this mosaic’ (Tinh 1985; Neal 2010) This may be the only pre-quake church on the island. The incomplete nature of these excavations leaves the date of this structure unclear.

The first clear Christian structures we can solidly date are post-quake, so the church is not wrestling with the destruction by God of his own houses of worship. They are of course dealing with the death and suffering of fellow believers as the tragic family from Kourion illustrates. A century later the Greek historian Sozomonos writing of the ‘famous calamity’ at the time of Julian the Apostate, says this was a sign of the wrath of God because Julian was trying to reverse the spread of Christianity and restore the worship of the old gods. David Soren (Soren and James 1988) considers this a reference to the Kourion earthquake. Of course, Sozomonos is not a Cypriot. However we do have an oblique response by a Cypriot Christian to the Kourion earthquake preserved in post-quake mosaic inscriptions at the site.

The Kourion inscriptions are from the House of Eustolios, an urban villa with a bathhouse that the owner, Eustolios, gave to his native city. One inscription has been restored to read ‘Eustolios, having seen that the Kourians, although previously very wealthy, were in abject misery, did not forget the city of his ancestors but first having presented baths to our city, he was then taking care of Kourion as once did Phoebus Apollo and built this cool refuge from the winds’ (Christou 2007). At the other end of this mosaic is another inscription saying ‘In place of stone, solid iron, gleaming bronze and even adamant, this house is girt by the much venerated signs of Christ.’ (Figure 8) Apollo could not provide for his city and prevent their abject misery, but now the city places its faith in Christ. Individuals convert to



Figure 7: The Dionysian procession from the House of Aion, Paphos. Photo Thomas W. Davis

Christianity from a variety of motives (MacMullen 1984), but Eustolios points to divine protection as the engine of change at Kourion. This was probably a common motivation in a province recovering from natural disasters. The story of St. Hilarion reinforces the protective aspect of the Christian faith response to natural disasters. Before the saint came to Cyprus, he confronted a tsunami produced by an earthquake and according to Jerome (40), calmed the swirling waters by making the sign of the cross three times in front of the wave.

In a new study of modern Christianity and culture change, James Hunter (2010) persuasively argues that cultural change on the magnitude of a fundamental religious re-orientation on the societal level usually takes generations. Individuals may change, but such changes do not affect the general society until major institutions are influenced enough to be open to transformation. The autocratic power of Constantine, undergirded by his victorious military, begins the process of institutional change by giving preferential treatment to organized Christianity through such means as imperial donations of buildings and patronage (MacMullen 1984). On Cyprus the earthquakes of the 4th century provide the catalyst that solidifies the transition of Christianity from a movement to an institution. After the quakes had literally cleared the scene of the physical pagan institutions, the Cypriot Church emerges from the rubble transformed into a dynamic and expansive, international force which is evidenced by the immediate response of

church building. For example, at Kourion, Demos Christou has excavated a small church built in the earthquake ruins of the Nymphaeum in the forum, which he believes was constructed almost immediately after the quake and went out of use with construction of the grand basilica by Bishop Zeno after AD 410 (Christou 2007).



Figure 8: Mosaic inscription from the House of Eustolios, Kourion. Photo Thomas W. Davis



Figure 9: Destruction debris at the Basilica of Soloi. Photo Thomas W. Davis

The best examples of the Church Triumphant are the great Basilicas in Salamis and Paphos built before the end of the century. St Epiphanius built the Salamis basilica, a seven aisled basilica that at its construction was the largest church on the island. Epiphanius exemplifies the confident, international Cypriot church at the end of the fourth century. He was born between AD 310 and 320 in Palestine at Eleutheropolis, south-west of Jerusalem. He became a monk in Egypt, returned to Palestine and at the age of 20 founded a monastery near his birthplace. His rise to leadership follows Rapp's (2005) model of ascetic authority. At some point he was ordained a priest. According to Jerome he was shipwrecked at Salamis in 367 and was drafted by the local church to be their Bishop although not without opposition. The sources are silent as to why this important see was vacant. Is it just possible that the previous holder had been killed in one of the quakes? Epiphanius is a very popular bishop to his own flock, but a scourge to those he perceives as heretics. In this way he breaks from the pattern established by Spyridon and is instead very confrontational with his fellow bishops, particularly John Chrysostom in Constantinople. He travels all over the eastern empire and even gets to Rome.

The selection of Epiphanius as Bishop of Salamis may be seen as one element of a conscious campaign by the Cypriot church to promote strong links to the church in Palestine, at the expense of the church in Antioch. I suggest that as part of the campaign by the Cypriot church to

gain its independence from the see of Antioch, the church focused on purported links directly to the church in Palestine thereby undercutting the claims of Antioch to be the 'mother church' of the Cypriots. Although the Book of Acts is quite clear that St Paul and St Barnabas visited Cyprus on a mission trip sent out by the Church in Antioch, the text also attributes the beginnings of Christianity in Antioch to Cypriot believers (Acts 11). This biblical attestation became a weapon in the arsenal of the next generation of Cypriot bishops who, confident in their faith and buttressed by an economic boom, began a campaign to gain complete ecclesiastical independence from Antioch at the Council of Ephesus in AD 431. Four traditions in particular point to direct Palestinian connections, bypassing Antioch: 1) the visit of Helen the mother of Constantine with a piece of the true cross; 2) the belief that Lazarus was the first Bishop of Kition (Larnaca); 3) the circulation of the text of the so-called Acts of Barnabas; and, 4) the discovery of the purported body of Barnabas and his handwritten copy of the gospel of Matthew. Although the story of the visit of Helen, Constantine's mother to Cyprus and her gift of a piece of the true cross which led to the founding of Stavrovouni monastery first appears in the Middle Byzantine period and the story of Lazarus is first recorded in the 8th century, the campaign to gain autocephalous status is the right psychological moment for these claimed roots to be first propagated. Some evidence supports this idea. The earliest construction surviving at Stavrovouni may date

to the fifth century (Stewart 2008: 201). Charles Stewart's recent study of early Byzantine domed basilicas on Cyprus suggests a sixth century date for the first church honoring Lazarus in Larnaca.

An inscription found at the basilica of Soloi, from another time of challenge for the Church, the seventh century, best summarizes the theological worldview that provided the Cypriot church with its vision and activism (Figure 9). The Soloi inscription records the aftermath of a major Arab raid in AD 653 when the basilica was burned. 'The goodness of God, the lover of mankind, is great and his forbearance ineffable, His judgment unsearchable because He is long suffering as much as He wills. As being good, he disciplines; again as a loving Father, he shows himself with mercy for a return and amendment; because neither is his judgment without mercy, nor his mercy without judgment' (Neal 2010: 15). This understanding of the Providence of God, mercy and judgment together, hammered into their consciousness in the fourth century, provides the bedrock upon which the church of Cyprus has stood for 1500 years.

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Endnotes

1. In the identity politics of modern Cyprus, Greece and Turkey are celebrated and/or vilified by modern Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities who refer to the island as their 'homelands' and the core of their cultural identity. This is visually emphasized by the flying of Greek national flags at orthodox churches in the areas under the de facto control of the Republic of Cyprus and the flying of Turkish flags at mosques in the area under the de facto control of the Turkish Cypriot Community.
2. Tradition associates him with the importation of cats onto the island to control an infestation of snakes (Runciman 1990:139). If this is true, than his real impact on history maybe the large population of feral cats on the island today!
3. I was privileged to be the field director at the earthquake house in 1984 and 1985 while I was a graduate student at the University of Arizona (although I am not mentioned in the text by Soren and James (1988) beyond the list of field crew). The results of the excavation of the city site remain poorly published (Soren and Davis 1985; Soren et al. 1986; Soren and James 1988), but this will soon be rectified by Benjamin Costello, a Ph.D. candidate at SUNY Buffalo who has made the earthquake house at Kourion his dissertation topic. The discussion above reflects my own interpretation.
4. David Soren always wanted to be a filmmaker and I think his love of the dramatic overcame his scholarly restraint regarding the dating of the quake. During his excavations of the Temple of Apollo, he thought the quake dated to AD 370 based on coin evidence from Apollo (Soren 1981). I think the dramatic nature of the excavation at the earthquake house appealed to his theatrical side and led him to associate the quake with the AD 365 event described by Ammianus Marcellinus. Costello's reexamination of the coinage from Kourion and their find-spots supports a 370 date for the event (Costello forthcoming).
5. Paul Stephenson is here following the lead of Rodney Stark (as Dr. Stephenson politely pointed out in a personal communication).
6. I want to thank my wife, Jennifer Davis, for translating a number of articles written in French which I used in preparing this paper. The quotations from Daszewski (1998) are from her translation.