

CHRISTOLOGY AFTER CHALCEDON

Severus of Antioch and Sergius the Monophysite

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IAIN R. TORRANCE

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To
Morag

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Preface

This study began life as a thesis submitted to the University of Oxford. My research was supervised by Dr Sebastian Brock, and his kindness and thoroughness were an example which I hope will never leave me. The thesis was examined by The Revd Dr Lionel Wickham and Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia. Their graciousness and careful attention to detail taught me a great deal. Archbishop Methodios of Thyateira and Great Britain encouraged me at every stage, and did me the honour of publishing an earlier draft of my translation of the *Letters in Abba Salama* 9 (1978), and of the theological introduction to them in *Ekklesia kai Theologia* 2 (1981); 3 (1982); 4 (1983) and 5 (1984).

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My wife, Morag, has helped me at every stage, and this study is a part of both our lives. In gratitude and love I dedicate it to her.

Canty Bay, East Lothian, Scotland.
August 1987

Iain R. Torrance

Abbreviations

SEVERUS OF ANTIOCH

- EM *Eiusdem ac Sergii Grammatici: Epistulae Mutuae*, ed. and transl. J. Lebon, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, 119, 120 (Syr. 64, 65) (Louvain, 1949).
- Select Letters* *The Sixth Book of the Select Letters of Severus, Patriarch of Antioch, in the Syriac Version of Athanasius of Nisibis*, ed. and transl. E. W. Brooks, 4 vols. (London, 1902–4).
- Collected Letters* “A Collection of Letters from Numerous Syriac Manuscripts”, ed. and transl. E. W. Brooks, *Patrologia Orientalis*, 12, 14 (Paris, 1919–20), 163–342; 1–310.
- Philalèthes* *Le Philalèthe*, ed. and transl. R. Hespel, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, 133, 134 (Syr. 68, 69) (Louvain, 1952).

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

- Adv. Nest.* *Adversus Nestorii Blasphemias Contradictionum Libri Quinque*.
- Apol. contra Theod.* *Apologeticus contra Theodoretum pro XII Capitibus*.
- Apol. pro XII Cap. contra Orient.* *Apologeticus pro XII Capitibus contra Orientales*.
- Contra Diod. Tars. Episc.* *Fragmenta contra Diodorum Tarsensem Episcopum*.
- Contra Syn.* *Fragmenta contra Synousiastas*
- De Recta Fide ad Theod.* *De Recta Fide ad Theodosium Imperatorem*
- Ep. I, II ad Succ.* *Epistola I, II ad Succensum*
- QUSC *Quod unus sit Christus*
- Pusey edn. Cyril of Alexandria, *Opera*. Text ed. P. E. Pusey, 7 vols. (Oxford, 1868–77), repr. 1965.

JOSEPH LEBON

- Le Monophysisme Chalkedon* *Le Monophysisme sévérien* (Louvain, 1909).
 “La Christologie du monophysisme syrien”,
 in *Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht
 (Würzburg, 1951), I, 425–580.
- ACO *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* (Berlin and
 Leipzig).
- CSCO *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* (Louvain).
- PG *Patrologia Graeca*
- PL *Patrologia Latina*
- PQ *Patrologia Orientalis*
- JSS *Journal of Semitic Studies*
- JTS *Journal of Theological Studies*
- HTR *Harvard Theological Review*
- RHE *Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique*
- The Syriac Chronicle* *The Syriac Chronicle Known as that of
 Zachariah of Mitylene*, trans. F. J. Hamilton
 and E. W. Brooks (London, 1899).
- H. syr. 22 Harvard (Houghton Library) syr. 22.

Part One

A THEOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION
TO
THE LETTERS
BETWEEN
SEVERUS OF ANTIOCH
AND
SERGIUS THE GRAMMARIAN

I Introduction

A. Severus, Antoninus and Sergius

The correspondence between Sergius and Severus comprises three letters from Sergius, three replies by Severus and an apology by Sergius. The first letter from Sergius was addressed originally not to Severus, but to Antoninus, the Bishop of Aleppo, who seems to have asked Severus to reply.

The outline of Severus' life is relatively well known.¹ Apart from his own very numerous letters,² and hints which he gives in his theological writings, there are three ancient "Lives of Severus".³ Though we may doubt their historical value, these lives even attempt to give something of a description of Severus. Thus, Athanasius says that Severus was a man "delicate in body and fine in person".⁴ When he did the work of his brethren in the monastery, the blood used to run from his hands. Athanasius again stresses that Severus was a compassionate man,⁵ and, as we will see, this is an important quality in understanding him. All the early biographers emphasise Severus' asceticism, and Severus himself, writing to Justinian, says that his life was habitually frugal.⁶

Severus was born in Sozopolis in Pisidia about 465. His family was well-to-do, and as a young man, not yet baptised, he was sent to Alexandria to study *γραμματική* and *ρήτορική*. From Alexandria he went to Beirut, to study Roman law. At Beirut Severus came under the influence of a group of Christian students, and began to study Basil and Gregory Nazianzen. At this stage he was baptised, at the shrine of Leontius at Tripoli.⁷

We are told that after his baptism Severus became increasingly ascetic, spending much of his time in church. He qualified as an advocate, and visited Jerusalem, where he decided to follow the monastic life. From Jerusalem, looking for a still more ascetic life, he went into the desert of Eleutheropolis. Here he eventually became ill, and was persuaded to enter the convent of Romanus. At this time he shared out with his brothers the property he inherited from his parents, and after giving most of his share to the poor, bought a convent near Maiuma.

Severus was already actively involved in opposing the Council of Chalcedon. Maiuma had been the episcopal seat of Peter the Iberian, one of the two(?) bishops who consecrated Timothy Aelurus;⁸ and Severus was to follow in this tradition. He already belonged to the more extreme Monophysite party, which rejected the Henoticon of Zeno.⁹ Liberatus, the archdeacon of Carthage, wrote of Severus that “dum sederet prius in monasterio Iberi, non suscipiebat Zenonis edictum, nec Petrum Mongon . . . exinde missus est permanere Constantinopolim . . .”¹⁰ Severus was indeed sent to Constantinople. A Chalcedonian monk, Nephalius, stirred up the bishops in Palestine against the anti-Chalcedonian monks, who began to be harassed. John of Beth Aphthonia tells us that Nephalius even wrote an *Apologia* for Chalcedon, which Severus destroyed as if it had been a cobweb, with his two *Orationes*.¹¹ This was the first important anti-Chalcedonian work of Severus that we have, and it was written around 508.¹² Cobweb or not, Evagrius tells us that Severus was expelled from his own monastery by Nephalius and his party, and thence proceeded to the imperial city, to plead the case of himself and those expelled with him.¹³

Severus spent the years 508–11 in Constantinople. He seems quite quickly to have gained the sympathy of Anastasius, who was already not over-fond of the Patriarch Macedonius, who had definite leanings towards Chalcedon. The Chalcedonians in the capital made a collection of edited excerpts from Cyril, in an attempt to show that Cyril himself supported the Chalcedonian account of the two natures. This work was apparently given to Macedonius, who gave it to the emperor. Severus, in turn, wrote his *Philaletes*, giving the true context of the quotations from Cyril.¹⁴ Relations between Severus and Macedonius steadily deteriorated. Macedonius' position was not strong. He had already undermined his support with the extreme Chalcedonians by promising to uphold the Henoticon.¹⁵ In addition, Anastasius had a personal grudge against him. Euphemius, the previous Patriarch, had withheld his approval from the elevation of Anastasius, unless he wrote an agreement to maintain the faith of Chalcedon inviolate. This document had passed into the hands of Macedonius, and according to Evagrius, Anastasius' objection to the document was largely the cause of Macedonius' expulsion.¹⁶ In 511 he was replaced by Timothy.

The removal of Macedonius was only part of a concerted effort by the Monophysites. While Severus had been in the capital, Philoxenus had been busy in Palestine, undermining the position of Flavian of Antioch. At Anastasius' order, a Synod was assembled at Sidon

in 512. Flavian was presented with a list of seventy-seven anathemas, as well as the request openly to anathematise Chalcedon. Flavian refused, being unwilling to “arouse the sleeping dragon, and corrupt many with his poison”.¹⁷ This was not to satisfy Philoxenus: his monks informed Anastasius that Flavian was a heretic, and they received an order for his ejection. In November 512, Severus was consecrated Patriarch of Antioch in his place.

In his enthronement address,¹⁸ Severus affirmed Nicea, Constantinople and Ephesus. He affirmed the Henoticon of Zeno as “an orthodox confession of the faith”, but explicitly anathematised Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo, as well as Nestorius and Eutyches, and Diodore and Theodore, “the masters of Nestorius”. Added to the list are Ibas of Edessa, Barsumas of Nisibis, and Cyrus and John of Aigai.¹⁹ In a Synod held at Tyre around 514,²⁰ the assembled bishops openly anathematised Chalcedon and the Tome, and Severus joined with Philoxenus in expounding the Henoticon as annulling Chalcedon.²¹ Evagrius also tells us that Severus ceased not daily to anathematise Chalcedon.²²

In Antioch he must have made his presence felt. John of Beth Aphthonia tells us that on becoming bishop, he sent away the cooks from the episcopal palace, and demolished the baths he found there.²³ In his Cathedral Homilies, he warned his people against resorting to the races²⁴ and the theatre,²⁵ and his letters show his energy, and the trouble he had in financial matters. But his time as Patriarch was not to be long.

Anastasius died in July 518, and Evagrius tells us that, many contentions having arisen in the church, Justin, in the first year of his reign, ordered him to be arrested and punished.²⁶ Severus, with a number of the Monophysite bishops, managed to escape to Egypt. Philoxenus was sent into exile at Gangra. In Egypt, Severus lived a harried existence,²⁷ but wrote some of his most important works. As we will see shortly, he completed his correspondence with Sergius from his exile. Lebon dates his great anti-Chalcedonian work, the *Liber contra impium Grammaticum*, to around 519.²⁸ Rather sadly, the exiled Monophysites began to quarrel amongst each other, and Severus’ works against Julian of Halicarnassus also belong to this period.²⁹

Around 530 Justinian relaxed persecution of the Monophysites, and in 532 he summoned the leading Monophysites to a “*collatio*” with the Chalcedonians in Constantinople. Though invited, and promised immunity by Justinian, Severus did not attend this conference.³⁰ He came instead, again at the summons of Justinian, in the

winter of 534/5. At about the same time Anthimus of Trebizond, whom Zacharias tells us would not receive the Synod of Chalcedon into the faith,³¹ succeeded Epiphanius as Patriarch of Constantinople, and Theodosius, a friend of Severus, became bishop of Alexandria.

This unity in the Monophysite camp so alarmed the orthodox Ephraim of Antioch that he sent a special envoy to Agapetus in Rome.³² Justinian was engaged in an operation to regain Rome, and the Goths sent Agapetus to Constantinople to treat with Justinian on their behalf. Agapetus arrived in Constantinople in 536. Zacharias tells us that he perverted the love of the king to Severus and Anthimus. Justinian's interest clearly lay in the West, and Anthimus was replaced by Menas as Patriarch of Constantinople. Though Agapetus died in April 536, the position of Severus and the Monophysites was lost.

Severus, and his friends, were condemned³³ at a *σύνοδος ἐνδημοῦσα* in Constantinople lasting from May to June 536. The synod was confirmed by an edict of Justinian on the 6th of August 536. According to the edict, Severus was guilty of both Nestorianism and Eutychianism,³⁴ his books were to be banned,³⁵ and he was to be banished.³⁶

According to Athanasius, Severus left Constantinople with the help of the Empress Theodora.³⁷ He returned to Egypt, and there, about 538, "the Lord visited him with a light disorder, and . . . he fell asleep".³⁸

Antoninus was Bishop of Aleppo (سلاطية). His predecessor was Peter, one of the bishops who assisted at the consecration of Severus in 512.³⁹ While he was Patriarch, Severus wrote to him several times.⁴⁰ Antoninus was expelled in 519, taking refuge in Alexandria. The Chronicle to the year 846 records that having suffered persecution in various places, Antoninus died in Constantinople.⁴¹

Of Sergius, Lebon notes, "nous ne connaissons ni sa patrie, ni les événements de son histoire, en dehors de la polémique dont nous avons parlé".⁴² We can see from his letters that he was a monophysite of an exaggerated sort. He seems to have remained in the East,⁴³ after Justin became emperor, so it is not unreasonable to assume that though he had a certain prominence, he was not a bishop.

We do not know all the background of the origin of the correspondence between Sergius and Severus, but we can surmise some of it. In the unnamed town where Sergius was living, a severe attitude was taken to converted Dyophysites. Sergius had a brief statement or *κεφάλαιον*, which seems to have been used as a doctrinal test⁴⁴ to

the converted Dyophysites. This was, “We do not speak of two natures or (two) proprieties after the inexpressible union”.⁴⁵ Sergius’ *κεφάλαιον* had been submitted to an assembly, of which Antoninus of Aleppo was a member. The opinion of the assembly corrected Sergius, stating, “We do not speak of divided proprieties”.⁴⁶ Sergius claims to find this judgement difficult to understand, and it is a question of prime importance for the commentator to ask if *κεφάλαιον* is meant in the same way, in both Sergius’ *κεφάλαιον*, and the answer of the assembly. Sergius characterises the judgement as a concession,⁴⁷ rehearses several of his objections to it, and begs the assembled Fathers to help him. The request is passed to Severus and the correspondence begins.

The question of the exact date of the correspondence is not easy. Sergius was clearly addressing an assembly of bishops when he wrote, “O Good Fathers . . .”⁴⁸ Lebon asks, “Etait-ce un synode?”⁴⁹ We cannot say. Was Antoninus at its head? Possibly, as Sergius writes to him, but Severus himself was not available at the time, being, as he says, “Far off”.⁵⁰ If it was a synod, can we deduce more about it? Lebon suggests it was the Synod of Tyre in 514,⁵¹ which would allow a date of perhaps 515⁵² for Sergius’ *First Letter*.

There is easier internal evidence for dating the end of the correspondence, for both Sergius’ and Severus’ *Third Letters* point to a date after 518. To take these points in turn: in Sergius’ *Third Letter*, he speaks of the spark of his feeble tongue being used, “because of the remoteness of bishops in the east”,⁵³ which very probably refers to the expulsion of the Monophysites after the death of Anastasius in 518. Later in the same letter,⁵⁴ Sergius, having prayed that Severus be given long life, says he looks forward to when he will say to the Lord God, “Thou hast turned away the captivity of Jacob . . .”.⁵⁵

Severus, in his *Third Letter*, clearly demonstrates a post-518 date, when he challenges Sergius, “Therefore show (me) when, in the six years I spoke in the Church of the Antiochenes, and wrote many letters, at any time I once said Emmanuel is one ousia, and of one signification and of one particularity”.⁵⁶ Later in the same letter, Severus describes himself as put to flight by enemies in his tracks,⁵⁷ and at the end of the letter, Severus refers to Dioscorus II of Alexandria, who died on 14th October, 517⁵⁸ as if he were already dead.

B. An outline of the events following Chalcedon, as a background to the life of Severus

The ninety to a hundred years following Chalcedon were a highly

involved period of history. Nevertheless, it is possible to derive a little clarification from pointing to certain broad factors which were at work. Wigram,⁵⁹ for example, points to the policy of the emperors, who soon after Chalcedon lost Rome, and in the 6th century tried to recover it; the growing national feeling of certain parts of the empire; and the jealousy of the great sees: Canon 28 of Chalcedon gave patriarchal jurisdiction rather than just an honorary precedence in the East to Constantinople, and Rome unwaveringly held to Chalcedon, which approved the Tome of Leo.

The account which follows in no way attempts to provide a history of the period.⁶⁰ It is intended, rather, to set Severus' life against the background of his times, and to show him as the consistent, though conservative, follower of his predecessors.

After Chalcedon in 451, Dioscorus of Alexandria was exiled to Gangra in Paphlagonia, and Proterius, a Chalcedonian, was appointed in his place. The Alexandrians greeted him with a riot. In Jerusalem, the anti-Chalcedonian monks rejected Juvenal, their Chalcedonian bishop, and in his place appointed Theodosius. Before Marcian, the emperor, was able to replace Juvenal, Theodosius was able to consecrate a number of bishops, among whom were Peter the Iberian, who became bishop of Maiuma near Gaza, and Theodotus, the bishop of Joppa.⁶¹

On the death of Marcian in 457, the people of Alexandria renewed their feud against Proterius. Those who had been expelled by Marcian returned, and though Proterius was still alive and discharging the functions of his office, the people elected a Monophysite, Timothy Aelurus, as their bishop.⁶² Peter the Iberian was one of those who took part in his consecration.⁶³ There was another riot, and Proterius was murdered in the baptistry. The emperor Leo then sent circular letters throughout the empire, asking the bishops to declare their opinion regarding the ordination of Timothy Aelurus, and the Synod of Chalcedon. The bishops expressed their adherence to Chalcedon, and unanimously condemned the ordination of Timothy Aelurus, who was sentenced to banishment at Gangra.⁶⁴ In his place, the Alexandrians elected another Timothy, a moderate Chalcedonian, nicknamed Basiliscus or Salophaciolus.

Zeno became emperor in February 474, but, as a result of a palace conspiracy in which his mother-in-law, the Augusta Verina, took a leading role, he was ousted in 475 by Basiliscus, who reigned for 20 months. Basiliscus recalled Timothy Aelurus from his exile to Constantinople, where he was joined by Peter the Fuller, the exiled Monophysite bishop of Antioch. Timothy, according to Evagrius

and Zacharias, persuaded Basiliscus to send a circular letter to the bishops of the empire, explicitly anathematising Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo. His letter even commanded that such doctrine should be burned.⁶⁵ Zacharias tells us that Acacius, the bishop of Constantinople, was impressed with Timothy's doctrinal arguments, but that he hesitated to sign the Encyclical which anathematised Chalcedon, and so diminished the jurisdiction of his see.⁶⁶ However, Peter the Fuller of Antioch signed, as did Paul of Ephesus, Anastasius of Jerusalem, and five hundred other bishops.⁶⁷

Timothy then went to Ephesus, where he convened a synod, and restored to that see the dignity of the Patriarchate, of which it had been deprived by Chalcedon.⁶⁸ From there he proceeded to Alexandria. Historically, we may notice two points in this: first, Timothy was making it the standard of his party explicitly to anathematise Chalcedon. Secondly, and equally explicitly, the anathematisation of Chalcedon was against the interests of Constantinople, and brought into play the jealousy of that see.

On his return to Alexandria, Timothy showed himself to be a truly remarkable man. Although a Monophysite, he insisted on the doctrine of the double consubstantiality, and from his exile he had written not only against the Chalcedonians, but also against the Eutychians. But even this he did with toleration and restraint: he waited four years before exposing by name the Eutychians Isaiah of Hermopolis and Theophilus of Alexandria.⁶⁹ Again, from exile, he had urged that converted Dyophysites (members of Proterius' party) should be treated with pastoral moderation. He referred explicitly to the regulation of Cyril and Dioscorus, that when a bishop, a presbyter or a deacon is converted, he should have one year of repentance, and after that be re-established in his former rank.⁷⁰ In Alexandria all he required of members of the Proterian party was that they should anathematise the Synod and the Tome.⁷¹ This moderation earned him enemies: Theodotus of Joppa apparently wanted a much more severe attitude to be taken to the converted Proterians, and even practised re-anointing.⁷² He left Timothy's party to form an extreme separatist group. Zacharias, rather interestingly, tells us that Peter the Iberian did not at all agree with this faction, but was warmly attached to Timothy.

Historically and theologically, we can see in Timothy Aelurus and Peter the Iberian a Monophysite position which is clearly Cyrillian, rather than Eutychian.⁷³ Pastorally, it practised moderation. We have already seen that Severus expressed his admiration for Peter the Iberian, and from his letters, we can see that he made a particular

point of following the pastoral practice of Timothy Aelurus. In the case of converted followers of Theodotus,⁷⁴ Severus wrote that they should only be subject to the periods of penance which Timothy recommended,⁷⁵ and in the case of converted Chalcedonians, he wrote that he again followed the example of Timothy, who, when he reached Alexandria, received those who came from the heresy of the Dyophysites, upon their anathematising the heresy in writing, and accepting such a period of separation for penitence as he judged to be good.⁷⁶ He explicitly repudiated re-anointing.⁷⁷ Thus, we can see a consistent line of practice from Cyril, through Timothy, to Severus. We can also see the emergence of a more extreme Monophysite group, marked by its Eutychian leanings and its pastoral severity. It is tempting to see here the theological and pastoral ancestry of Sergius, whom we will study shortly.

While Timothy Aelurus was in Alexandria, Acacius in Constantinople intrigued to bring back Zeno. Basiliscus, now too late, repudiated his Encyclical and restored the rights of the see of Constantinople. Zeno returned in August 476, and Basiliscus was sent to Cappadocia and beheaded. Zeno expelled Peter the Fuller from Antioch,⁷⁸ and but for Timothy's age would have expelled him from Alexandria. He soon died, and in his place the Alexandrian bishops elected, on their own authority, Peter Mongus.⁷⁹ Zeno, in exasperation, expelled Peter and in his place recalled Timothy Salophaciolus, the now aged Chalcedonian successor of Proterius.

The Alexandrians then sent a presbyter, John, to Constantinople, to obtain permission for them to elect as their bishop a person of their own choice, on the death of Timothy Salophaciolus.⁸⁰ However, in Constantinople, John was apparently caught canvassing his own nomination, and only returned under an oath that he would never accept the see. Zeno issued a precept that, on the death of Timothy, that person should be bishop whom the clergy and people might elect. Timothy very soon died, and John broke his oath, and by means of a bribe, procured his own nomination as bishop.⁸¹

When Zeno heard this, he ordered that John should be ejected from the see as a liar, and that Peter Mongus should be restored, on condition that he subscribe to a document which Zeno addressed to the Alexandrians, and admit into communion the party of Proterius. This document was the Henoticon of July 482.⁸² It was a masterpiece of diplomacy and clear-thinking.

In 476 Odoacer had deposed the last Roman emperor, Romulus Augustulus, and proclaimed himself king. With the loss of Rome and the West, there was lost that section of the empire which was

most deeply committed to the theology of Chalcedon. As we saw at the time of Basiliscus, Acacius of Constantinople was impressed by Timothy Aelurus' doctrinal arguments, but hesitated to sign an Encyclical anathematising Chalcedon. His concern was with Canon 28 and the precedence of his see: if this could be safeguarded, he was quite prepared to have monophysite leanings. The time was ripe for an attempt to conciliate the monophysites doctrinally, yet without formally anathematising Chalcedon. This is what the Henoticon set out to do.

It declared the three Councils of Nicea, Constantinople and Ephesus to be standards of the faith, received the Twelve Chapters (Anathemas) of Cyril, and anathematised Nestorius and Eutyches. Doctrinally, the Henoticon avoided the contentious technical phrase (*ἐν δύο φύσεσιν*), and indeed taught a positive doctrine which both sides could accept. Thus, it affirmed the double consubstantiality, stated that Christ is "one and not two", and said that both the miracles and the sufferings are those of a single person.⁸³ Finally, it anathematised any one who held any other opinion, "whether at Chalcedon or in any synod whatever".⁸⁴ This was not an explicit condemnation of Chalcedon, but amounted to a downgrading of it, so that its main importance lay in its condemnation of Nestorius and Eutyches.

Clearly, the *prima facie* purpose of the Henoticon was to create peace in Egypt between the Monophysites and the Proterians, and to provide a reconciliation between Constantinople and Alexandria. However, after some hesitation as it contained no explicit anathema on Chalcedon and the Tome, Peter Mongus subscribed to it,⁸⁵ as did Peter the Fuller of Antioch (who was replaced in his see after the expulsion of Calendio, the Chalcedonian bishop of Antioch who refused to sign and complained to Zeno), and the bishops of Ephesus and Jerusalem.⁸⁶ The Henoticon thus quickly became not just a test for Peter Mongus, but something of a government creed.

Peter Mongus' hesitation in signing was justified: in Egypt the Henoticon soon ran into stormy water. In Alexandria, a sizeable number of Monophysites,⁸⁷ under the leadership of Theodore of Antinoe, seceded from the communion of Peter Mongus, on the grounds that the Henoticon contained no clear and decided anathema on Chalcedon and the Tome. To pacify this faction, Peter explicitly anathematised both Chalcedon and the Tome, which provoked the wrath of Constantinople and Rome, but because he entered into communion with those who had uttered no anathema, the extremists withdrew from him into their monasteries, but with-

out appointing a bishop instead of Peter. They thus became known as the "Akephalists" (ἀκέφαλοι) or the Separatists (ἀποσχίσται).

We should notice several points in this. Evagrius, with justification, called Peter "a double dealer, a waverer, and a time-server".⁸⁸ Zacharias tells us that he tried to show to the Separatists that the Henoticon nullified Chalcedon, by accepting the twelve Chapters of Cyril and anathematising Nestorius and Eutyches.⁸⁹ This interpretation, that the Henoticon by itself annulled Chalcedon, was, as we shall see, one which was to become increasingly popular. Secondly, the Separatists were not all extremists in the Eutychian sense, though without doubt they were intransigently conservative. They were supported, it would seem, in their demand for an anathema on Chalcedon, by Peter the Iberian,⁹⁰ who, as we saw at the time of Timothy Aelurus, was not of the pastorally extreme party. We can argue that some were simply following the Alexandrian tradition which Timothy Aelurus laid down, that converted Proterians would be accepted if they explicitly anathematised the Synod and the Tome. As we have already seen, Severus aligned himself with this group, rejecting both Peter Mongus, and the idea that the Henoticon, by itself and without explicit anathema on Chalcedon, was sufficient to heal disunity in the Church.

Peter Mongus died in 490 and the emperor Zeno in 491. Zeno was succeeded by Anastasius, who continued the policy of trying to unite the eastern empire on the basis of the Henoticon. Evagrius tells us that he was averse to the introduction of change, and that therefore, "during these times, the Council of Chalcedon was neither openly proclaimed, nor yet repudiated by all; but the bishops acted each according to his own opinion".⁹¹ Euphemius, a Chalcedonian, was bishop of Constantinople, but was deposed in 496 and replaced by Macedonius. In 498 Flavian became bishop of Antioch. It was at this stage that Severus began to play a significant role in the history of his time. With the removal of Macedonius and Flavian through the efforts of Severus and Philoxenus, and with the consent of Anastasius, the balance of the Henoticon was lost, and for a short time the Monophysites were supreme.

We have already covered some of this ground, but now see the background against which Severus can be understood. Severus went up to the capital in 508 and gained the sympathy of Anastasius. Though Macedonius signed the Henoticon at the beginning of his episcopacy, Zacharias leaves us in no doubt as to his Chalcedonian leanings. He even tells us that Macedonius used to celebrate the memory of Nestorius every year.⁹² Athanasius of Antioch tells us

that Macedonius was a self-confessed Chalcedonian.⁹³ In addition, he had a personal quarrel with Anastasius. Clearly, the removal of such an extremist could hardly signal the overthrow of the Henoticon cause, which depended on the maintenance of a moderate position by all parties.

The removal of Flavian of Antioch was more significant. As we have already seen, Flavian refused at Sidon in 512 explicitly to anathematise Chalcedon for Philoxenus, though he was prepared to anathematise Nestorius and the school of Diodore.⁹⁴ Evagrius tells us that Flavian admitted the Synod only as far as regards the deposition of Nestorius and Eutyches, and not as a definition of the faith.⁹⁵ Severus himself, in a letter to the monks in the East, after his expulsion from Constantinople in 536, seems to endorse this assessment of Flavian.⁹⁶ Flavian, then, unlike Macedonius, was a true Henoticonist. But this did not satisfy Philoxenus, who insisted on an explicit anathema on Chalcedon, and Flavian was expelled in 512. Severus became Patriarch, and as we have seen, both explicitly condemned Chalcedon, and, at Tyre in 514, expounded the Henoticon in an anti-Chalcedonian way.⁹⁷ The Henoticon compromise was now dead.

We have already seen that the monophysite supremacy was to be short-lived. Anastasius died in 518, and the new emperor, Justin, was committed to healing the breach with Rome. Pope Hormisdas was able to make peace with Constantinople on his own terms, and in March 519 John of Cappadocia, Patriarch of Constantinople, duly anathematised his predecessor, Acacius, who had been the author of the schism.⁹⁸ Severus, as we know, fled to Egypt, but the tide had now turned against the Monophysites. We have already seen in outline the rest of Severus' life, including his final condemnation in 536. Let us, in conclusion, draw together the points which have emerged from his historical background.

We have seen that quite apart from his theological "fathers", Cyril and Gregory Nazianzen, Severus refers to and acknowledges the influence on him of Timothy Aelurus and Peter the Iberian. Both of these men condemned Eutychianism as explicitly as they condemned Nestorianism. Their monophysitism was thus Cyrillian, and as will become clear in the examination of his letters to Sergius, Severus follows them in this.

Timothy Aelurus before the Henoticon, and Peter the Iberian, during the time of Peter Mongus, explicitly anathematised Chalcedon. Yet, we suggest that this condemnation was not fanatical: neither of them was a pastoral extremist, for they were both opposed

to the re-anointing of converted Proterians practised by Theodotus of Joppa. Similarly, Severus insisted on an explicit anathema against Chalcedon, refusing the compromise of the Henoticon, but again, we suggest that his condemnation was that of the conservative, not the fanatic, and this is borne out by his pastoral moderation. The extreme group was that which practised re-anointing, and there is no doubt but that Severus condemned this.

We suggest, then, that Severus was very consciously a member of a particular tradition. He was a conservative, but as we will try to show, the tradition to which he belonged was one of great theological depth, and to it he brought his own subtlety.

C. Earlier studies of Severus, and the orientation of this introduction

Beyond question, the greatest work that has been produced on the Monophysites is that by Lebon: *Le Monophysisme sévérien*. This was published in Louvain in 1909, and Lebon brought it up to date⁹⁹ with his long article, "La Christologie du monophysisme syrien", which was published in 1951. Much of the material of the earlier book is covered by this superb 160-page article, and it is to this that we will mainly refer.

Lebon sets out to give an over-all view of Monophysite theology, and so considers Timothy Aelurus and Philoxenus as well as Severus. His study falls into two parts: the first, entitled "La doctrine monophysite de l'incarnation" is short and descriptive;¹⁰⁰ the second, entitled "La dogmatique monophysite de l'incarnation"¹⁰¹ is far longer and more analytical.

In his first section, Lebon sketches where the Monophysites may be placed in terms of the widely accepted distinction between Alexandrian and Antiochene Christologies. He immediately introduces the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria, showing that this becomes central to the Monophysites.¹⁰² He then gives us an outline description of Monophysite doctrine, picking out particular key concepts. Thus, he stresses the Monophysite exclusion of any type of change from the incarnation.¹⁰³ God the Word was made flesh, but remained who he was. Similarly, the Monophysites go to great pains to deny that the union to one nature involved any mixture or confusion.¹⁰⁴ He shows the Monophysite use of the union of body and soul as a model, with the insistence that this union does not produce an identity of ousia, of such a kind as would be destructive of the difference of the things which have been united.¹⁰⁵

Commenting on this, Lebon writes that, however frequently the Monophysites denied it, they were always suspected of introducing a mixture or confusion into the union. He, however, sees them as terminological traditionalists,¹⁰⁶ who borrowed the vocabulary of the Cappadocians and Cyril, who used "mixture" words to express a very intimate union, but without ever wanting to imply any idea of confusion.

From this we can already see the style of Lebon's study. As a good historian of dogma, he notes for us the Monophysite denials of confusion in the union, and the terminological parallels with earlier writers. In concentrating on just one text, and making use of Lebon's categories, we will try to answer the different question of why any idea of confusion, in Severus, is out of place. This is an attempt to move, in a small way, from questions which are basically historical to questions which are basically theological.

Lebon begins his second section by taking two questions around which the Monophysite quarrel raged:

- (1) The question of whether there are one or two natures in Christ. This is the question raised by the Chalcedonian *ἐν δύο φύσεσιν*.
- (2) The question of whether the *ιδιότης* of the natures in the union is preserved or not. This is the question raised by the Chalcedonian *σωζομένης δὲ μᾶλλον τῆς ιδιότητος ἐκατέρας φύσεως*.

He divides the section into two parts: one to examine each question. To answer question (1), he leads us through a careful and detailed study of the vocabulary of the Monophysites, to show how their terms and usages differed from those of the Chalcedonians.

This study falls into three sub-sections. In the first, "Les éléments de l'incarnation",¹⁰⁷ Lebon shows that the Monophysites use *φύσις*, *ὑπόστασις* and *πρόσωπον* as perfectly synonymous.¹⁰⁸ Thus *φύσις*, like *ὑπόστασις* and *πρόσωπον*, refers to what is concrete and individual. According to Lebon, then, the Monophysites ultimately confused the Chalcedonians with the Nestorians, and reduced all Dyophysitism to the confession of two really distinct beings.

In the second sub-section, "L'acte de l'incarnation", Lebon stresses that to the Monophysites, the incarnation is an *act*, a *ἔνωσις*. The Monophysites never formally define the term, and Lebon tries to illustrate it by considering the conditions required for "un groupement de choses" to merit the name "*ἔνωσις*".¹⁰⁹ *ἔνωσις*, for example, has no more radical enemy than number: if the constituent elements in a *ἔνωσις* could be numbered, it would follow, within the