



Good day Worthy Knights,

In this part 92, Bishop Macarius

Wikipedia

Macarius of Jerusalem

Macarius was Bishop of Jerusalem from 312 to shortly before 335, according to Sozomenus. He is recognized as a saint within the Orthodox and Catholic churches.

Athanasius, in one of his orations against Arianism, refers to Macarius as an example of "the honest and simple style of apostolical men". The date 312 for Macarius's accession to the episcopate is found in Jerome's version of Eusebius of Caesarea's Chronicle.

About 325 he accompanied Helena Augusta, the mother of Constantine I in her search at Jerusalem for relics of the Passion of Jesus, including the cross on which Jesus of Nazareth was thought to have been crucified.

According to Eusebius, he received a long letter from Constantine with reference to the building of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem:

"Such is our Saviour's grace, that no power of language seems adequate to describe the wondrous circumstance to which I am about to refer. For, that the monument of his most holy Passion, so long ago buried beneath the ground, should have remained unknown for so long a series of years, until its reappearance to his servants now set free through the removal of him who was the common enemy of all, is a fact which truly surpasses all admiration ... And as to the columns and marbles, whatever you shall judge, after actual inspection of the plan, to be especially precious and serviceable, be diligent to send information to us in writing, in order that whatever quantity or sort of materials we shall esteem from your letter to be needful, may be procured from every quarter, as required, for it is fitting that the most marvellous place in the world should be worthily decorated."

Macarius is listed as one of the bishops to whom Pope Alexander of Alexandria wrote warning against Arius. His death must have been before the Council of Tyre, in 335, at which his successor, Maximus, was apparently one of the bishops present.

Macarius and Arianism

Macarius took part in the Council of Nicaea, and two conjectures as to the part he played there are worth mentioning. The first is that there was a passage of arms between him and his metropolitan, Eusebius of Caesarea, concerning the rights of their respective sees. The seventh canon of the council — "As custom and ancient tradition show that the bishop of Ælia [Jerusalem] ought to be honoured, he shall have precedence; without prejudice, however, to the dignity which belongs to the Metropolis" — by its vagueness suggests that it was the result of a drawn battle. The second conjecture is that Macarius, together with Eustathius of Antioch, had a good deal to do with the drafting of the Nicene Creed finally adopted by the First Council of Nicæa in 325.

The vigour of his opposition to the theology of Arianism is suggested by the abusive way in which Arius writes of him in his letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia. In the "History of the Council of Nicæa" attributed to Gelasius of Cyzicus there are several of imaginary disputations between Fathers of the Council and philosophers in the pay of Arius. In one of these disputes where Macarius is spokesman for the bishops he defends the Descent into Hell. This, in view of the question whether the Descent into Hell was found in the Jerusalem Creed, is notable, especially as in other respects Macarius's language is made conformable to that Creed.

Macarius's name appears first among those of the bishops of Palestine who subscribed to the Council of Nicæa; that of Eusebius comes fifth. Athanasius, in his encyclical letter to the bishops of Egypt and Libya, places the name of Macarius (who had been long dead at that time) among those bishops renowned for their orthodoxy

Macarius and the Holy Sites

Theophanes (d. 818) in his Chronography makes Constantine, at the end of the Council of Nicæa, order Macarius to search for the sites of the Resurrection and the Passion, and the True Cross. It is likely that this is what happened, for excavations were begun very soon after the council, and it would seem under the superintendence of Macarius.

The huge mound and stonework with the temple of Venus on the top, which in the time of Hadrian had been piled up over the Holy Sepulchre, were demolished, and "when the original surface of the ground appeared, forthwith, contrary to all expectation, the hallowed monument of our Saviour's Resurrection was discovered".

On hearing the news Constantine wrote to Macarius giving lavish orders for the erection of a church on the site. Later, he wrote another letter "To Macarius and the rest of the Bishops of Palestine" ordering a church to be built at Mambre, which also had been defiled by a pagan shrine.



Bishop Macarius and Saint Helena