



Summary :

Paul of Samosata was bishop of Antioch between 260 and 268 and a *pronoetes* (procurator ducenarius). His theological views were condemned by two councils, because he advocated only the human nature of Jesus. He was forced to leave his see in 272, by imperial intervention.

Date and Place of Birth

first half of 3rd c., Samosata

Date and Place of Death

Main Role

bishop of Antioch

1. Biography

Paul was born in [Samosata](#), but any other information about his family is rather uncertain. Some believe that his family was very poor, but the opposite view has also been suggested. In any case, he managed to amass a great personal fortune and ascend the episcopal throne of Antioch as Demetrianos' successor.

2. Activity – Views

The most detailed account of Paul's activities is provided by [Eusebios](#).¹ Paul is presented as a leader abusing his power. In 260 he was consecrated bishop of Antioch. Throughout his tenure he maintained a personal guard defending both him and the cathedral. Apart from this guard, Paul also employed secretaries for his correspondence and altered the interior of the cathedral with a large episcopal throne, a *bema* and the *secretum*, a small private room for his personal meetings. The portrait of Paul by the bishop and historian Eusebios reveals not only his Machiavellian character but also the interest of the early Church in attracting educated and influential members from upper social classes.

Paul's innovations and attitude towards liturgical issues were provocative, but so were his theological views. He developed his own Christology maintaining that Christ was only of human nature and interpreting the term of "consubstantial" in his own way as regarded the relation between God and Christ within a definition of the Holy Trinity.

These views were fiercely opposed by one of his priests, Malchion, the then head of the theological school of Antioch. Two councils were convened in Antioch to deal especially with this issue under Dionysios of Alexandria and Phirmilianus of Caesarea. The first, in 264, was fruitless, but the second, held in 268, obliged Paul to officially formulate his doctrine before it deposed him and appointed Domnus as his successor. Paul's denial to abandon the episcopal residence prompted his rivals to send a letter to Emperor [Aurelian](#) (270-275) asking for his intervention.

At this point a rather political issue emerged, but its details are quite uncertain. Apart from his clerical capacity, Paul also held a political dignity, that of *procurator ducenarius*.² It seems that he used this post as an excuse, under the protection of his guard, to refuse to abandon the episcopal residence. This title had allegedly been awarded to him by [Zenobia](#), queen of Palmyra, when she had extended her power to [Antioch](#). However, Zenobia did not manage to capture Antioch before 269, a year after Paul's deposition. It is most likely that his opponents resorted to writing to Aurelian because Paul was an official of the Roman state. He took advantage of the gap of power resulting from [Valerian's](#) defeat by the Sāsānid Dynasty and the extension of the sphere of influence of Palmyra to the region of Antioch, before he was finally removed from the episcopal see in 272, when Aurelian recaptured the city.

3. Impact – Evaluation



Paul's theological views and his interpretation of the term "consubstantial" are considered the forerunners of [Nestorianism](#). Some theologians support that Paul's views were the forerunners of Adoptionism, a heresy widely spread in the eastern provinces of Asia Minor and very popular with the Armenian Church. On the other hand, Paul represented the native "Syrian" element in the theological thought of Antioch opposing those who supported the Alexandrian views and the antecedence of the Greek language and culture, which was probably the reason for his alliance with Zenobia.³

1. Eus., *Hist. Eccl.* 7.28-30. Apart from Eusebios, the personality and theological views of Paul also preoccupied Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Haeret. Fab. Comp.* 2.11 and Epiphanius, *Panar.* 65.

2. Procuratores/Proneotes were administrative officials from the class of the equestrians, who served mainly in the provinces and were directly subjected to the emperor (his subordinates in his attempt to control the provinces pushing aside the aristocratic senators). Depending on their fees they were divided into sexagenarii (annual fees of 60,000 sesterces), centenarii (annual fees of 100,000 sesterces) and ducenarii (annual fees of 200,000 sesterces). The financial standing and importance of Paul's office is thus revealed. However, researchers are divided as to whether this office was granted by the Roman emperor or Paul was given the title during the short life of the state of Palmyra. See Norris, F.W., "Paul of Samosata: Procurator Ducenarius", *JThS* n.s. 35 (1984), pp. 50-70.

3. See Millar, F., "Paul of Samosata, Zenobia and Aurelian: the Church, local culture and political allegiance in third-century Syria", *JRS* 61 (1971), pp. 1-17.

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Webliography :

	Homily on Colossians http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf113.iv.iv.iii.html
	Paul of Samosata http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11589a.htm



Glossary :



bema

The area at east end of the naos in Byzantine churches, containing the altar, also referred to as the presbetry or hierateion (sanctuary). In these area take place the Holy Eucharist.



procurator

Administrator of a roman Province deriving from the class of equites. He was controlled directly by the Emperor and his legati Augusti pro praetore.