CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION:
COMMUNITIZATION AND THE SEARCH FOR A STANDPOINT

Even without reconstructing detailed scenarios, it is obvious that the Christian churches of the Lycus Valley found themselves confronted with a fundamental change over the centuries. The sense of a new departure in the Pauline era, which proclaimed a new humanity and played subliminally with the idea of a new order of society, gave way to a growing disenchantment brought about by the constraints of adaptation and tendencies toward assimilation, but also by existential affliction when fellow citizens and officials sought to bring the religious minority into line by force. Finally there was a new departure under Constantine, who gave the Christians carte blanche and promised them worldwide recognition, until the church became entangled and demoralized in the intrigues of power politics and theological wrangling. The great developments initiated repeatedly by Rome and Constantinople also had their impact in the Lycus Valley and left their stamp on this account. But explanation and interpretation of these processes cannot be undertaken in a study with a regional focus; they await studies on a higher level, transcending the narrow horizon of a small region. The internal perspective, however, limited by the hills and mountains surrounding the Lycus Valley, has its own unique hermeneutical potential, which opens our eyes to the concrete everyday world of the early Christians through vivid details and ambiguous phenomena that are specific and exemplary. This everyday world was the reality of the average Christian, even though it could be influenced by the theoretical concepts of individual independent thinkers, like the author of Colossians, Papias, and Apollinarius.¹

In the introduction, we developed the idea that two aspects of that everyday world can be illuminated through the diverse facets of the source material: community formation and the search for a defining position, a standpoint.² After the presentation of the material in the preceding chapters, a brief concluding summary will address each of these themes.

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¹ Following Berger / Luckmann 2000, p. 21.
² See pp. 5–7 above.
The concepts of socialization ("Vergesellschaftung") and communitization ("Vergemeinschaftung") cannot be sharply distinguished. In the following discussion, socialization will be understood as a process that tends to reflect purposively rational and mechanical principles, while communitization is explained on the basis of an affective consensus. Since early Christianity was a communitarian religion, which prevailed as a voluntary association in a world of civil religions standardized by the state, communitization plays a special role vis-à-vis socialization.

The ability of the early Christian communities to assert themselves in the Greek cities and against power of Rome can be explained in part through their organization—a distribution of functions, especially leadership function, that followed a fixed set of rules and led to a hierarchical structure. Rudiments of that organization appear already in the texts of the Epistles to Philemon and the Colossians, even though a regular institutionalization is not yet visible: Archippus, Onesimus, Epaphras, and even Paul himself are described as "servants," διάκονοι, in their function within the community, although it would be wrong to conclude automatically that identical labels indicate identical obligations. The status and prestige of an Epaphras, who enjoyed enormous respect as the éminence grise of the Lycus Valley churches, is not comparable to the status and prestige of Onesimus, whom Paul had taken under his wing as his disciple and protégée. How the functions and hierarchies finally crystallized in the decades following the earthquake until the earliest prominent episcopal figures emerged with Papias and completely with Sagaris and Apollinarius remains unclear.

The increasing elaboration of organizational structure was accompanied by a growing network of churches; it can already be seen in nuce in the time of Paul: the Pauline correspondence itself and later the Epistle to the Laodiceans in the Apocalypse of John are evidence of this networking. The development continued in the convening of the great councils, which are an especially vivid token of the tightly organized hierarchical system of governance into which the churches of the Lycus Valley were incorporated in the 4th and 5th centuries: the bishop of Laodicea served as primary authority for the ecclesiastical province; the bishops of Hierapolis, Colossae,