



**ULBS**

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## DOCTORAL THESIS

**JUSTINIAN THE GREAT.  
HIS INPUT IN DEFENDING TRUE FAITH  
(SUMMARY)**

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**KEYWORDS:** Justinian, Politics, Wars, Theology, Synods, Faith, Legislation

## **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

The topic addressed, “Justinian the Great and his contribution to defending the true faith”, comes to satisfy a personal curiosity about the great image of the Byzantine world, Emperor Justinian, and his position towards the Church.

The subject is seen from the perspective of two poles, one, the historical one, the character, the circumstances of the time, the geopolitical background of the period in question and the second one from the theological perspective, the religious disputes of the time, the interventions for solving them but also the results obtained from all these processes.

Justinian the Great, as his name also says is cataloged superlatively, being an integral part of the great coryphaei of Byzantine history, not only with the name but also with the deeds. The emperor leaves a deep imprint on the thread of history and the fact that after centuries researchers from all scientific fields are still analyzing his life denotes his contribution to the inexhaustible cycle of historical events.

The contribution of Emperor Justinian to the defense of the true faith cannot be challenged by any historian. His methods of getting involved can be analyzed, but his attempt and work for religious peace and for crystallizing the true faith cannot be overlooked. The contribution must be regarded as coming not necessarily from an external source, from the highest level but coming from a sincere desire to calm and reconcile the spirits already disturbed by the existing terminological and religious conflicts.

Therefore, the topic is expected to be particularly interesting with many analyzations and information coming to shed further light on the two directions previously announced, the personality of Emperor Justinian the Great, his deeds and his contribution in the area of Theology.

The purpose of the present paper is to illustrate aspects of the life of the great Justinian, the work of rehabilitation and development, acts of war but especially to present the emperor's contribution to the steps undertaken in those times for the crystallization of the Orthodox teaching.

The work aims at developing two ideas: that of Justinian's life with all its aspects, including the controversial ones, but also the long interventions in the life of the Church to repair the problems that were troubling at that time the ecclesiastical life. The attention given during the research to the primary objective of the analysis of the two levels did not distract our attention from the more delicate aspects of the time or the more sensitive issues of the life and deeds of the character pursued. Also, presenting the research most accurately, presenting the issues identified without any partiality has been part of the goal proposed since the beginning of the present paper.

Another objective pursued was that of presenting, analyzing and elucidating all the philosophical factors and currents that could influence the period to which we refer. The different theological visions of the scholars of the time were exposed, making at the same time an analysis and a comparison with the “freshness” brought by Justinian. The comparative analysis of the opinions issued by the theologians of the time, opinions approved by the Church or rejected and fought, represented the goal pursued by this paper.

We tried to prove the overwhelming role of Justinian, with all its positive or negative aspects, in the good functioning of the administrative apparatus, in increasing the prestige of his empire, in the well-being of the inhabitants of the empire, but most importantly in keeping the ancestor's faith unaltered, faith for which he militated and deployed powerful forces to keep it on the path of truth.

The purpose of our work was also to demonstrate that the contribution and fruitful collaboration of the State with the Church can only bring beneficial results for those on whom it is focused, namely on people.

## PART A.

### EASTERN ROMAN EMPIRE UNDER EMPEROR JUSTINIAN THE GREAT

#### A. I. INTERNAL POLICY

Emperor Justinian I (527-565) - Flavius Petrus Sabbatius Justinianus, was born in 483 in the village of Tauresium, in Bederiana Dardania, where he lived his childhood, but we do not have too many information regarding his youth. Unlike his uncle, Justin, who embarks on his life experience on the way to the empire's capital, Justinian knows a much easier way, benefiting from his support. Under his guidance, he would be trained and promoted quickly in the important offices of the empire<sup>1</sup>. Justinian studies Philosophy, Art, Law, Mathematics but also Theology, which he will delve into later<sup>2</sup>, thus becoming a well-trained person. The inclination for Theology arose from the instruction which a true Byzantine had to acquire at the imperial court<sup>3</sup>. At the same time he had received religious training from the monk Theophilus, who initiated him into prayer and meditation<sup>4</sup>.

The descriptions of his life, as well as the facts, are often divergent and can serve as the imagination for various fictions. But whatever be the case, Byzantium did not know another ruler who came close to his achievements, maybe from here the well-deserved name of “the Great”.<sup>5</sup>

Emperor Justinian was noted for his unlimited desire to propel himself and assume the title of Emperor of the Roma. Declaring the autocrator *ισαπόστολος*, that is “equal to the Apostles”, he ranked him above the people, the state and even the church, legalizing the impossibility of the secular but also ecclesiastical judgment of the monarch. Taking this title the emperor reached the highest level that could be accessible to man. Until Justinian, the Patricians, greeting the emperor they kissed him on the chest according to the Roman custom, and the others

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<sup>1</sup>Ioan I. Russu, *Elementele Traco-Getice în Imperiul Roman și în Byzantium (veacurile III-VII)*, Publishing House of the Academy of the Romanian Socialist Republic, Bucharest, 1976, pp. 104-105, from now on we will use the abbreviation *Elementele Traco-Getice în Imperiul Roman și în Byzantium*...

<sup>2</sup>A. Knecht, *Die Religionspolitik Kaiser Justinians I*, Würzburg 1896, p. 4, apud Vasile Sibiescu, *Împăratul Justinian I și ereziile*, Bucharest 1938, p. 12, from now on we will use the abbreviation *Împăratul Justinian I și ereziile*.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Hans von Schubert, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Kirche im Frühmittelalter*, Erster Halbhand, Tübingen, 1917, p. 124, apud Vasile Sibiescu, *Împăratul Justinian I și ereziile*, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup>After H. Leclercq, art. Justin, in D. A. L., Vol. VIII, col. 508, apud Vasile Sibiescu, *Împăratul Justinian I și ereziile*, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup>S. B. Daskov, *Dicționar de împărați bizantini*, translation by Viorica Onofrei and Dorin Onofrei, Enciclopedic Publishing, Bucharest, 1999, p. 71, from now on we will use the abbreviation *Dicționar de împărați bizantini*.

were bowing on one knee, but starting with him, all citizens, without exception, were obliged to bow before the basileus. In this way, the followers of the Romans adopted the servile ceremonies of the Barbarian East<sup>6</sup>. After 38 years of rule of the empire, Emperor Justinian dies on November 14, 565, at the age of 83.<sup>7</sup>

His wife, Empress Theodora, played an important role in the emperor's life. She came from a modest family, being a circus artist. She was the daughter of Acacius, the guardian of the bears in the racecourse, of confusing origin, born in Constantinople or Cyprus in the last years of the 5th century (497?). Like the sisters Comito and Anastasia, she had a stormy youth, surrounded by tense adventures, from which she had a son, John<sup>8</sup>, (Researcher S. B. Daskov claims that Theodora was born in 580 and had a daughter), in the thirteenth century a new legend appeared regarding her descent from a pious monophysite senator<sup>9</sup>.

The influence of his wife was pregnant in the monarch's life. She created a favorable environment for the flatterers, but not always the influence was negative, in the difficult moments of her husband's life, she showed intelligence and energy<sup>10</sup>. However, she could not persuade the emperor to alter his religious beliefs, Justinian remaining a convinced Orthodox, while Theodora was sympathetic to the monophysites.

*Secret History* of Procopius paints in exaggerated colors the perverted life of Theodora in her youth<sup>11</sup>. A. A. Vasiliev says that all these things must be viewed with some skepticism, for they come from Procopius, whose purpose was to defame the imperial couple.<sup>12</sup>

Justinian owes his universal celebrity to his legislative work, remarkable for its breadth. Besides, he believed that God had ordained the kings with the right to legislate and interpret the laws. The basileus was to be a lawmaker, a right that is sanctioned by divinity. But, of course, apart from these theoretical foundations, the emperor was also led by practical considerations, for he understood perfectly that the Roman legislation of his time was in a chaotic situation.

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<sup>6</sup>S. B. Daskov, *Dicționar de împărați bizantini*, p. 73.

<sup>7</sup>Lazăr Iacob, *Împăratul Justinian I ca legislator bisericesc*, in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, No. 10-12, Bucharest, 1947, p. 218, from now on we will use the abbreviation *Împăratul Justinian ca legislator bisericesc*.

<sup>8</sup>Ioan I. Russu, *Elementele Traco-Getice în Imperiul Roman și în Byzantium...*, p. 105.

<sup>9</sup>S. B. Daskov, *Dicționar de împărați bizantini*, pp. 97-99.

<sup>10</sup>Lazăr Iacob, *Împăratul Justinian ca legislator bisericesc*, p. 216.

<sup>11</sup>*Historia Arcana*, 9, 25; ed. J. Hauray, 60-61. [Rom. Ed. H. Mihăescu, 87 – translator's note], apud A. A. Vasiliev, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, translation and notes by Ionuț-Alexandru Tudorie, Vasile-Adrian Carabă, Sebastian-Laurențiu Nazâr, introductory study by Ionuț-Alexandru Tudorie, Polirom Publishing, Iași 2010, p. 166, from now on we will use the abbreviation *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*.

<sup>12</sup>A. A. Vasiliev, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, pp. 165-166.



In the era of the pagan Roman Empire, when the legislative power was totally in the hands of the emperor, the only form of legislation was the publication of imperial constitutions, called laws or legislative regulations (leges). In contrast, all the laws created by the previous legislation and developed by the lawyers of the classical period were called *jus vetus* or *jus antiquum*. Beginning with the middle of the 3rd century AD the caselaw entered a very fast process of decay. The legal publications were limited only to compilations intended to help those judges unable to study the entire legal literature, offering them collections of extracts from the imperial constitutions and works of the old, universally recognized jurists. But these collections were private and had no official value so that in actual practice a judge had to search in all imperial constitutions and all classical literature, a burden beyond the powers of any man. There was no central body for publishing imperial constitutions. Growing in quantity every year, scattered in various archives, they could not be easily used in practice, especially when new edicts often canceled or modified old ones. All this explains the acute need for a single collection of imperial edicts that is accessible to everyone who used them. In his legislative work, Justinian has made great use of older codes: *Codex Gregorianus*, *Codex Hermogenianus*, and *Codex Theodosianus*. These codices contained only the imperial constitutions published in a certain period and did not refer to the legal literature. Justinian undertook the colossal mission to compile a codex of imperial constitutions dated to his time and to revise the legal writings. His main assistant in this mission and the soul of the whole enterprise was Tribonian<sup>13</sup>. He was originally from the Mediterranean port Side, in Pamphylia. He had multiple training, a true encyclopedic, a good writer in both prose and verse. Not meaningless, the historian of his time, Procopius, called him “the greatest teacher of his time”. Standing out thanks to his qualities rather quickly, he climbed up to the rank of consul. Knowing both Latin and Greek, with a rich legal culture, Tribonian was, without doubt, the most capable jurist of his time, showing at the same time an impeccable devotion to the emperor.<sup>14</sup>

All the legal works published during Justinian's time have acquired from the lawyers of the University of Bologna, starting with the twelfth century the name of *Corpus Juris Civilis*<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> A. A. Vasiliev, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, pp. 174-175.

<sup>14</sup> Vladimir Hanga, *Mari Legiuitori ai Lumii*, Scientific and Encyclopedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 1977, p. 113, from now on we will use the abbreviation *Mari Legiuitoriaii Lumii*.

<sup>15</sup> Alain Ducellier, *Byzance et le monde orthodoxe*, Paris, 1997, pp. 40-43, apud Emanoil Băbuș, *Bizanțul istorie și spiritualitate*, Sofia Publishing, Bucharest, 2010, p. 215, from now on we will use the abbreviation *Bizanțul istorie și spiritualitate*.

He who was often called the “last Roman emperor” and “the first Byzantine basileus” remains in history also through his numerous laws, both through his well-known code of laws and through the other works *Digeste*, *Institutiones* or *Novelae* which, moreover, shows his concern for the order and the smooth running of society. Multiple passages of these addressed issues related to discipline and morals, highlighting the Byzantine and medieval views on the Church and society. Although the primary visions of this legislation came from Constantine the Great and Theodosius I, Justinian's contribution remains a decisive one.<sup>16</sup>

Justinian's policy, with all the successes achieved, involved exorbitant costs. The reserves left in the treasury of the empire since Anastasius' time (considered by Procopius to be fabulous) were quickly spent. As a result, Justinian, for lack of funds, uses a series of economic measures to increase the balance of the empire: increase of taxes, of tribute and emasculation of the provinces, the emergence of the strong Nika rebellion in 532 being the natural consequence of these oppressions imposed on the people from the empire's head.<sup>17</sup>

So one of the things for which Justinian was severely attacked was the burden of the people with many taxes, but the wars required huge financial resources. The army consisted entirely of mercenary barbarians (Goths, Huns, Gepids), for whom the citizens of the empire paid huge sums. The economic measures aimed at a full and rigorous state control over the activity of any producer or trader.

Another large amount of money was directed towards the construction work, a very complex one. Justinian covered with a complex network of cities and fortified sites renewed and recently raised the European, Asian and African parts of the empire.

As far as art is concerned, Justinian's period bears the name of “the first golden age” and this due to the numerous constructions made during this period, from fortifications to the erection or restoration of some cities or churches.

The cities of Daras, Amida, Antioch, Theodosiopolis, destroyed after the wars, were rebuilt, as well as the Thermopylae in Greece and Nicopole on the Danube, which were deteriorated by time. Cartagena, which had now been enclosed by new walls, changed its name to Justiniana Secunda (Justiniana Prima became its native village, Tauresium), and the city of

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<sup>16</sup>Emanoil Băbuș, *Bizanțul istorie și spiritualitate*, p. 215.

<sup>17</sup>Vladimir Hanga, *Mari Legiutoriaii Lumii*, p. 119.

Bona, in Northern Africa, rebuilt in the same way, would be called Theodorida<sup>18</sup>. New cities were lifted from the emperor's command in Asia to Bithynia or Cappadocia. Against the incursions of the Slavs, a strong line of fortifications was built along the Danube.

Justinian raised fortifications on the line of defense of the empire to ease the mission of his soldiers, but also to keep the borders intact. He also arranged for hundreds of works to be reconsolidated or built throughout the empire, from fortresses to simply castles.<sup>19</sup>

The history of the city of Constantinople, as well as of the Byzantine Empire, is closely linked to the history of a church that accompanied the city in both glory and decadence. Justinian is no longer content to repair the ravages of fire and decides to build in the honor of Divine Wisdom a monumental church that raises above all the churches of that time. Hagia Sophia will exceed all the other 25 Justinian-built churches, being the Byzantine Empire's bead, surpassing in greatness and splendor even Solomon's Temple<sup>20</sup>. This was what the emperor himself wanted, who at the end of the project exclaimed: "Thank God, who has entrusted me to perform such work. I defeated you, great Solomon!"<sup>21</sup>The new church was built in only 5 years, a relatively short time, much hurried also by the eagerness of the emperor to see his work completed, but also to ensure that other tastes do not damage its architectural unity of style.<sup>22</sup>

## A. II. EXTERNAL POLITICS

Considering himself to be a faithful follower of the great Caesars and seeking to restore the unity of the great Roman Empire during the period of ascension, Justinian organized numerous battles: in the West against the Germanic peoples with the thought of expelling them from the territories of Rome under their control, and in the East and North to preserve the territories as they existed in the glorious times of Rome. The two conflict zones also represented two outbreaks of the Christian crisis, namely the West had to be guarded against the oppression

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<sup>18</sup> S. B. Daskov, *Dicționar de împărați bizantini*, p. 80.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Lemerle, *Istoria Bizanțului*, translation by Nicolae Șerban-Tanașoca, Teora Publishing, Bucharest, 1998, p. 63.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. S. Lambrino-G. Lazăr, *Istoriamedieșimodernă*, Bucharest, ed. «Adevărul», p. 39 sq., 1934. K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantineischen Literatur von Justinianus bis zum Ende des oströmischen Reiches*, II Aufl. München, 1897, p. 936, apud Petru Rezuș, *Sfânta Sofia, Biserica cea mare a Ortodoxiei*, in *Ortodoxia*, No. 4, Bucharest, 1953, p. 516, from now on we will use the abbreviation *Sfânta Sofia*....

<sup>21</sup> Nicolae Bănescu, *Împăratul Iustinian I (527-565)*, in *Mitropolia Olteniei*, No. 1-2, Craiova, 1962, p. 19.

<sup>22</sup> Petru Rezuș, *Sfânta Sofia*..., p. 516.

of the Germans who embraced Arianism and the East and the North parts, from the threatening of the pagans<sup>23</sup>. Another possibility to divide Justinian's wars is to catalog them in aggressive and defensive wars. The first category were against the barbarian Germanic states of Western Europe and the latter against Persia, in the East, and the Slavs in the North<sup>24</sup>. In 38 years of reign, Justinian fought with all of them, without participating in any campaign or battle, ending the wars quite successfully.<sup>25</sup>

In his decrees, the emperor named himself Caesar Flavius Justinian, Alamannicus, Gothicus, Francicus, Germanicus, Anticus, Alanicus, Vandalicus, and Africanus. But this outward glow had its reverse. The success was obtained with a price too expensive for the Empire because it had as a consequence the economic exhaustion of the Byzantine state. As the army was transferred to the West, the East and the North remained open to the attacks of the Persians and the Huns.

The main enemies of the Empire in Justinian's vision were the Germans. Thus, the German issue reappeared in the Byzantine Empire in the 6th century, with the difference that in the 5th century the Germans were attacking the Empire, while in the 6th century the Empire was the one that put pressure on the Germans.

Justinian ascends the throne with the ideals of an emperor both Roman and Christian. Considering himself a successor to the Roman Caesars, he understood as a holy duty the restoration of the unity of the old empire<sup>26</sup>. From the position of Christian Basileus, he had the mission to spread the true faith among unbelievers, whether they were heretics or pagans. From this principle begins the whole mission of Justinian to conquer the known world and to establish a Christian unity everywhere.

An important thing must be specified, that the visions of a great empire were not only personal, they seemed positive also for the population occupied by barbarians, the natives fallen on Arian domination saw Justinian as the only savior. Another thing worth mentioning is that the barbarian kings themselves supported the emperor's ambitious plans. They continued to express their deep respect for the Empire, showing in many ways their servility towards the emperor,

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<sup>23</sup> Vladimir Hanga, *Mari Legiutoriai Lumii*, p. 116.

<sup>24</sup> A. A. Vasiliev, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, p. 166.

<sup>25</sup> S. B. Daskov, *Dicționar de împărați bizantini...*, p. 74.

<sup>26</sup> Procopius, *De bello gothico*, I, 5, 8; ed. J. Haury, II, 6, apud A. A. Vasiliev, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin...*, p. 167.

striving to obtain by any means high Roman ranks, printing the emperor's image on their coins, etc.<sup>27</sup>

The offensive wars were waged against the Vandals, the Ostrogoths, and the Visigoths, while the defensive wars targeted the Persians, Slavs, German Gepids and Kutrigurs, branch of the Huns.

As regards the Byzantine relations with the Romanian territories, it must be mentioned that Athanasius I himself through his policy increased the finances of the empire and proceeded to erect numerous cities on the territory of nowadays Dobrogea<sup>28</sup>. Many cities mentioned by Procopius of Caesarea in his writing *De aedificiis* and ascribed to Justinian are Anastasius<sup>29</sup>. According to the researchers, most of the works have now been performed in the cities of Capidava, Dinogetia, Ulmetum, Tropaeum Traiani, Histria, Tomis, and Callatis<sup>30</sup>. But the most important works were done at Tomis, which denotes the Byzantine concern for this outpost of the kingdom, ie the province of Scythia Minor. It is important to mention that the most valuable lead seal, belonging to Anastasius I, was discovered in Constanța.<sup>31</sup>

The imprint of the Justinian era was also present in the Romanian culture. For centuries, the legislations from “Corpus Juris Civilis” were the basis of the organization and management of the Romanian society. A connoisseur of Theology, Justinian gives a confession of faith, included in the ancient Slavic and Romanian tales, such as the one from the Govora Monastery.<sup>32</sup>

Under Justinian I and his predecessors, the Empire experienced a great economic development enjoyed by the northern Danube regions, as evidenced by the large number of numismatic discoveries found on the territory of our country: Sărățeni, Horga-Epureni (Vaslui County), Bacău, Botoșana (Suceava County), Vameș (Galați County)<sup>33</sup>, Unirea (Călărași County),

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<sup>27</sup> A. A. Vasiliev, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin...*, pp. 167-168.

<sup>28</sup> Marius Telea, *Bizanțul și Spațiul Proto-Românesc*, Reîntregirea Publishing, Alba Iulia, 2008, p. 61.

<sup>29</sup> Emilian Popescu, *Organizarea ecleziastică a provinciei Scythia Minor în secolele IV-VI*, in *Studii Teologice*, No. 7-10, Bucharest, 1980, pp. 599-600.

<sup>30</sup> Adrian Rădulescu, Ion Bitoleanu, *Istoria Românilor dintre Dunăre și Mare: Dobrogea*, Scientific and Encyclopedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 1979, p. 128.

<sup>31</sup> Vasile V. Muntean, *Bizantinologie*, 1<sup>st</sup> volume, Învierea Publishing, Timișoara, 1999, p. 81.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 90.

<sup>33</sup> Dan Gh. Teodor, *Teritoriile est-carpatic în veacurile V-XI E.N.*, Junimea Publishing, Iași, 1978, p. 23.

Prisaca (OltCounty)<sup>34</sup>, Săcălaz, Giarmata (TimișCounty), Orșova (MehedințiCounty), Dorobanți (AradCounty)<sup>35</sup>, etc.

For us Romanians, Justinian I is important because he was the last emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire who intended to regain Dacia Traiana<sup>36</sup>, otherwise, the old age and the power of the faith “in Christ” in the ancestry of the Romanians made the basic Latin terminology to continue even after the adoption of the Slavonic language within the church in the 9th-10th centuries<sup>37</sup>.

All these endless wars carried out both offensively and defensively were exhausting and failed to achieve the proposed purpose, on the contrary, they created fatal effects for the empire. The costs incurred were gigantic, Procopius in *Secret History* estimated (probably with some maximization) that Emperor Anastasius left a huge reserve at that time, totaling about 320,000 pounds of gold (approximately 65.000.000 or 70.000.000 \$<sup>38</sup>) and Justinian seems to have spent it even during his uncle's reign<sup>39</sup>. According to another source from the sixth century, the Syrian John of Ephesus<sup>40</sup>, Anastasius' reserve was not completely spent until the time of Justinian II, after Justinian's death, this information, being in any case wrong. Surely the campaigns initiated by the emperor needed a considerable budget (perhaps not at the level disputed by Procopius), evidenced also by the imposition of taxes over the already burdened population. The renunciation of the future emperors to the number of soldiers, with the thought of financial saving, led to the insecurity of the provinces.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Idem*, *Romanitateacarpato-dunăreană și Bizanțul în veacurile V-XI E. N.*, Junimea Publishing, Iași, 1981, p. 38.

<sup>35</sup> Nicolae Dănilă, *Izvoare Literare, Epigrafice, Arheologice și Numismatice privind prezența bizantină în Banat în secolele IV-VI*, in *Mitropolia Banatului*, No. 3-4, Timișoara, 1984, pp. 160-161.

<sup>36</sup> Vasile Muntean, *Cultură în epoca iustiniană*, in *Altarul Banatului*, No. 7-9, Timișoara, 1996, p. 25.

<sup>37</sup> *Idem*, *Contribuții la Istoria Banatului*, Publishing House of the Metropolitan of Banat, Timișoara, 1990, p. 52.

<sup>38</sup> La valoarea din perioada interbelică (translator's note), apud A. A. Vasilev, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin...*, p. 173.

<sup>39</sup> Procopius, *Historia arcana*, 19, 7-8; ed. Haury, 121. [In the edition of H. Mihăescu, 157. Procopius speaks about 3.200 cantars of gold (διακόσια καὶ τρισχίλια χρυσοῦ κεντηνάρια). Unkenτηνάριον was a Roman unit of measure (centenarium) and was the equivalent of 100 *logarikai*, Litrai = 32kg. 102.4 t gold is an exaggerated quantity for that time. For more details, see E. Schilbach, *Byzantinische Metrologie*, München, 1970 109 and 174; G. Dagron, C. Morisson, *Le Kentenarion dans les sources byzantines*, *Revue numismatique*, XVII (1975), 145-162 – translator's note], apud A. A. Vasilev, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin...*, p. 173.

<sup>40</sup> *Ecclesiastical History*, V, 20; translation by Engl. Payne-Smith, 358; translation by Engl. Brooks, 205, apud A. A. Vasilev, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin...*, p. 174.

<sup>41</sup> A. A. Vasilev, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin...*, p. 174.

## PART B.

### CALCEDONIAN, NEO-CALCEDONIAN AND NON-CALCEDONIAN CHRISTOLOGY

#### B. I. SAINT CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

One of the most important personalities of the Eastern Church, who had an overwhelming contribution to the establishment of the Orthodox doctrine regarding the Person of the Savior, was St. Cyril of Alexandria<sup>42</sup>.

The historical period analyzed is one with a multitude of theological problems and with a wide range of events that were meant to analyze and give resolutions for the situations discussed.

Christological problems come to the fore only at the end of the Arian dispute. When it was established who Christ is in relation to the Father, that is, after clarifying the fact that He is of a being with the Father, so true God, the attention was turned to the other question concerning Jesus Christ, which is essential for our salvation, namely what is the relationship of the Son of God with our humanity?

The Antiochians did not support Christology with soteriological arguments, as did the Alexandrians who supported the deity of the subject who incarnated and died for us, claiming that only in this way could our nature be lifted from corruption and death. The Antiochians saw salvation legally and morally, as an elevation of human nature to a higher level through Christ. They spoke in particular of salvation through the effort of the free man, who imitates Jesus. Therefore, they are closer in soteriology to Catholics and Protestants, being the precursors of nineteenth-century Protestantism<sup>43</sup>. If the merit of the Antiochians was that they accentuated the full humanity of Christ, their mistake was that they separated the two natures so much that they attributed to each their bearer. In this way, the subject of the saving acts of Jesus Christ was no longer the Word of God and with this, our salvation became a problem. This tendency is opposed by the Alexandrian school through the most important representative, St. Cyril. He saves the fullness of both natures, but also the unity of the Person, realizing that his Christology which fully unites and fully distinguishes divinity and humanity in Christ, is a Christology of the

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<sup>42</sup> Lucian Turcescu, *Hristologia Sfântului Chiril al Alexandriei*, in *Studii Teologice*, No. 4-6, Bucharest, 1994, p. 49.

<sup>43</sup> A. Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, II, Band, 5 Aufl., Mohr., Tübingen, 1931, p. 328: μιὰ φύσις τοῦ λόγου σεσαρχωμένη, apud Dumitru Stăniloae, *Definiția Dogmatică de la Calcedon*, in *Ortodoxia*, No. 2-3, Bucharest, 1951p. 297, from now on we will use the abbreviation *Definiția Dogmatică de la Calcedon*.

mystery, as long as the Apollinarian Christology, which sacrifices duality at the expense of unity, and the Antiochian which sacrifices unity at the expense of duality, are Christologies of a one-sided simplification, and cannot comprehend the complexity of this essential teaching of Christianity.

Except for some inappropriate expressions, St. Cyril correctly interpreted the essence of the teaching of Christianity, his Christology remaining valid until today in the Orthodox East.<sup>44</sup>

## **B. II. COUNCILS AND CONFESSIONS OF THE THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF THE TIME**

The Third Ecumenical Synod condemns the heresy of Nestorius, also called dioprosopism or Nestorianism, which supported the existence in Jesus Christ of two persons: the divine person of the Son of God and the human person of Jesus Christ, each person having his nature. The consequence of this erroneous teaching is that the Virgin Mary did not give birth to the Son of God, and cannot be named thus Θεοτόκος (Theotokos), but gave birth to Christ-the man, therefore she must be called ἄνθρωποτόκος (Mother of man), or more appropriate Χριστοτόκος (Mother of Christ)<sup>45</sup>.

Father Ioan G. Coman talking about the outcome of the synod says: We note that the incarnation of the Logos did not mean a simple adventure, like other gods or heroes in the mythology of the ancient and sometimes contemporary peoples, but a positive work for defending people of the evil one and escaping death. Christ the man, the brother of the people, the friend of the people died for their good and happiness: «Greater love has no man than this: that a man lay down his life for his friends» (John 15:13). The synod's specifications that the divine and the human nature remained intact, without mixing and without alteration, show the

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<sup>44</sup>Dumitru Stăniloae, *Definiția Dogmatică de la Calcedon*, pp. 297-303.

<sup>45</sup>Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, t. IV. Florentiae, 1760. Reproduction, Paris-Leipzig, 1901, col. 1260-1277 and 1372-1422; F. Loofs, *Nestoriana, Die Fragmente des Nestorius, gesammelt, untersucht und herausgegeben*, Halle, 1905; Nestorius, *Le livre d'Héraclide*, I, Syrian text by P. Bedjan, French translation by F. Nau, Paris, 1910; E. Amann, *Nestorius*, in «Dictionnaire de Théologie catholique», t. XI, 1, Paris, 1931, col. 76-157; R. Devresse, *Les actes du concile d'Ephèse*, in «Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques», t. XVIII (1929), pp. 222-242; 408-431; P. de Labriolle - G. Bardy - L. Bréhier, G. de Plinval. *De la mort de Théodose à l'élection de Grégoire le Grand (Histoire de l'Eglise depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours*, publiée sous la direction de A. Fliche et V. Martin, t. 4), Paris, 1937, 163-186. A. du Manoir, *L'argumentation patristique dans la controverse nestorienne*, in «Recherches» de science religieuse, XXV (1935), pp. 441-61; 531-559; M. Quera, *Un esbozo de la historia del concilio de Efeso*, in «Analecta Tarraconensia», VII (1931), Barcelona, 1931, pp. 1-53, apud Ioan I. Rămureanu, *Evenimente istorice...*, p. 180.



special appreciation He gives to each of them and the prospect of immortalizing the human one”.<sup>46</sup>

The confession of faith in 433 is judged differently. It is said that it would contain more Antiochian elements and that St. Cyril would have given up too much and made too many sacrifices<sup>47</sup>. Indeed, the formula does not contain some Cyrilline terms such as “a single nature” and “physical union”, but the Antiochians also made concessions by eliminating the term “bond”, although they kept several expressions. However, the main ideas were Cyrilline and the most important is that this symbol is the most authentic and precious bridge between pre-Chalcedonian and Chalcedonian Christology, being a summary of the Christological Theology up to the Council of Chalcedon.<sup>48</sup>

Through the definition of Chalcedon, the fairest expression of the gospel teaching was given, that through Christ, God became man and man became God and that the maximum approximation between man and God was achieved. This definition was the work of the Holy Spirit, Who enlightened in such a way the participants that the right teaching was protected from heresy.<sup>49</sup>

The consequences of the Fourth Ecumenical Council did not have the desired effect and did not fully correspond to the wishes of the episcopate and the emperor, but its work was necessary. The decisions taken were not fulfilled throughout the Church. The condemnation of Dioscorus only for the deeds in Ephesus, and not for reasons of heresy, and the delay of the pope to approve the decisions of the synod served as a pretext for arousing monophysite agitations in Egypt. The opponents of the synod distorted the meaning of its decisions, claiming that the synod condemned Cyril of Alexandria and approved the heresy of Nestorius to raise the people and the monastic world against the synod.

Regarding the appreciation of historians, we can say that they are varied. Some lay historians consider the synod to be a real misfortune, “«maybe the worst misfortune» of the

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<sup>46</sup>Ioan G. Coman, *Sinoadele Ecumenice și importanța lor pentru viața Bisericii*, in *Ortodoxia*, No. 3, Bucharest, 1962, p. 306.

<sup>47</sup> Ad. V. Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, V Aufl., 1931, zweiter Band, pp. 366, 367 and note 3 from p. 366; J. Tixeront, *Histoire des dogmes dans l'antiquité chrétienne*, III, p. 51, apud Ioan G. Coman, *Momente și Aspecte ale Hristologiei...*, p. 47.

<sup>48</sup> Ioan G. Coman, *Momente și Aspecte ale Hristologiei...*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>49</sup> Dumitru Stăniloae, *Definiția Dogmatică de la Calcedon*, p. 439.

Eastern Empire” according to H. Gelzer<sup>50</sup>. In the same vein, historian G. Ostrogorsky says: “The Council of Chalcedon deepened the gap between the Byzantine center and the Eastern provinces of the empire”<sup>51</sup>, others that it offended the conscience of the Orient<sup>52</sup>. Others regard the synod only as an act of imperial policy and consider it a success of Emperor Marcian<sup>53</sup>, of his government or just of the “Byzantine party”<sup>54</sup>. For Adolf Harnack, the synod represents only a moment, when Pulcheria and Marcian strengthened the power of the State again, but after which they spiritually enslaved the Eastern Church, which was then handed over to the emperor, united with the supreme Western Bishop, namely Pope Leo I in the most controversial issue of faith<sup>55</sup>.

### B. III. SEVERUS OF ANTIOCH

Severus, originally from Sozopolis, in Pisidia, claimed to be a disciple of St. Cyril of Alexandria, and therefore felt entitled to fight the Synod of Chalcedon, but also Eutychianism. It seems, however, that he presented only the systematized doctrine of St. Cyril, being a mediator between Nestorianism and Eutychianism. He confuses the terms φύσις, υπόστασις and πρόσωπον.<sup>56</sup>

The theological terminology cannot express the truth as a whole but only in part. It is a means of communication, a tool used by the Church to transmit the teachings. Synodal definitions are essentially ad-hoc statements that can be understood only based on the

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<sup>50</sup> Comp. Adolf Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, II, ed. 4, Tübingen, 1909, pp. 370-371, apud Teodor M. Popescu, *Importanța istorică a Sinodului al IV-lea Ecumenic*, p. 284.

<sup>51</sup> La Karl Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Litte tur von Justinian bis zum Ende des oströmischen Reiches (527-1450)* ed. 2, München 1897, p. 919. The historian Ernst Stein, who quotes (*Vom römischen zum byzantiniachen Staate (284-476 n. Chr.)*) p. 470), does not agree, apud Teodor M. Popescu, *Importanța istorică a Sinodului al IV-lea Ecumenic*, p. 284.

<sup>52</sup> *Geschichte des byzantinischen States (Byzantinisches Hatbuch im Rahmen des Handbuchs der Altertumswissenschaft)*, München 1940, pp. 35-36, apud Teodor M. Popescu, *Importanța istorică a Sinodului al IV-lea Ecumenic*, p. 284.

<sup>53</sup> Charles Diehl et Georges Marçais, *Histoire de moyenâge Tome III: Le monde oriental de 395 à 1081*, ed. 2, p. 32, apud Teodor M. Popescu, *Importanța istorică a Sinodului al IV-lea Ecumenic*, p. 284.

<sup>54</sup> Auguste Bailly, *Byzance (Les grandes etudes historiques)*, ed. 6, Paris 1939, p. 45, apud Teodor M. Popescu, *Importanța istorică a Sinodului al IV-lea Ecumenic*, p. 284.

<sup>55</sup> Albert Dufourcq, *Histoire ancienne de l'Eglise*, t. IV, *La christianisme et l'empire, III-e siècle - VII-e siècle*, ed. 5, Paris, p. 27. La signification de Chalcedoine ne tient pas tout à la condamnation d'un hérésieu qu'un decisive triomphe du parti «byzantin», apud Teodor M. Popescu, *Importanța istorică a Sinodului al IV-lea Ecumenic*, p. 284.

<sup>56</sup> Constantin Voicu, *Patrologie*, Vol. III, Basilica Publishing of the Romanian Patriarchate, Bucharest, 2009, p. 69-71, from now on we will use the abbreviation *Patrologie III*.

condemned heresy, they show an unchangeable truth that exists in the organic continuity of the one Church of Christ.<sup>57</sup>

Severus of Antioch as other theologians of the non-Chalcedonian Church affirm that during the time they defended the Orthodox confession of St. Cyril in his Christological vision, but the comparative research shows something else, namely that Severus and his followers took from this father of the Church only some ideas that could be used in monophysite benefit. In any case, we can say that Severus stayed close to the teachings of Saint Cyril except that he emphasized more than his teacher the Alexandrian Christological terminology and sometimes interpreted it differently, thus damaging the orthodox doctrinal content. In this way, it can be explained that the Synod of Chalcedon although based on the teaching of St. Cyril is not accepted by the Severinians because it does not respect the Christological terminology of St. Cyril. The Synod rejects the statement “One incarnate nature of God the Word” because it initiated great discussions in the Church and it belonged to the heretic Apollinarius. The Synod establishes that Christ is “in two natures, unmixed, unchanged, undivided, indivisible. The distinction of the natures was not suppressed because of the union, but on the contrary, the property of each one was preserved, they are united with one another in a single person and a single hypostasis...”<sup>58</sup>

The Severians accused him of Nestorianism and even Saint Cyril because he had given diophysical explanations to his formulas, both on the occasion of reconciliation with the Antiochians in 433, and also on other occasions. Patriarch Timothy, Severus' great supporter, said: “Cyril explaining in many ways the wise teaching of Orthodoxy and showing himself to be unstable is accused of learning contradictory things. After claiming that we have to say a single incarnate nature of God the Word, he now dissolves his dogma and is caught talking about two natures in Christ. Having claimed that God the Logos suffered in the body, he now says, on the contrary, that He did not receive the passion for us. Contrary to his own words, Cyril sowed a tyrannical and unrelenting struggle in the churches as if he had set fire to a violent flame, ignited the teaching of pure faith. Only that the well-known Patriarch Severus healed through his holy writings Cyril's unworthiness, as a loving son of his father, covers with his clothes the dishonor

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<sup>57</sup>Dumitru Stăniloae, *Posibilitatea Reconcilierii Dogmatice între Biserica Ortodoxă și Vechile Biserici Orientale*, in *Ortodoxia*, No. 1, Bucharest, 1965, pp. 11-12.

<sup>58</sup>Mansi, «*Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima colection*», Florence, 1761, Paris, Leipzig 1901, VI, 116 ABC; Evagrie Scolasticul, *Istoria Bisericească*, III, 33, P. G., 86, 2, 2508 BCD - 2509 A.

of this father”<sup>59</sup>, observing from the aforementioned that Severus takes from Saint Cyril only the information that arouses his interest.

Looking heavily on St. Cyril's formulas, Severus refuses to understand that the Fourth Ecumenical Synod, although using other terminology, expresses in it the same dogmatic background advocated by St. Cyril. He is for the expression “of two natures”, thus marking the moment of union of the two natures. The Chalcedon formula emphasized that the moment continues to exist incessantly in the Person of Christ since the natures did not mix and did not change. Severus had the impression that the Council of Chalcedon revived Nestorianism and did not accept that there was decided the existence of the two unified natures, real or physical, in one person. This real union cannot be interpreted as admitting two persons. Severus, however, goes on saying that “if Christ is known in two natures after the union, the union is split into two and the mystery will be broken; we will attribute to the divine nature immortality and the human one, death”<sup>60</sup>. Severus omits, however, that the Fourth Ecumenical Council had approved the enhypostatic theory of St. Cyril by which human nature manifests itself through the divine hypostasis.<sup>61</sup>

Viewed as a whole, the theology approached by Severus is closer to the Chalcedonian one than he thought, his monophysitism being considered a formal one, although he never accepted this<sup>62</sup>. Having in its composition an (unconfessed) diophysism, the Severinians struggled to create formal monophysitism<sup>63</sup> to deny by form what they confessed<sup>64</sup>. Diophysite Christology starts from the reality of the two natures in Christ, while the Severinian one from the contemplation of the eternal Logos, to look only at Him in the new state of incarnation, approaching at this point the teaching of Saint Cyril<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>59</sup>Timotei III, *Fragmentedogmatice*, 5, 86, I, 276 BC, apudIoan G. Coman, *Momente și Aspecte ale Hristologiei Precalcedoniene și Calcedoniene*, in *Ortodoxia*, No. 1, Bucharest, 1965, p. 65, from now on we will use the abbreviation *Momente și Aspecte ale Hristologiei*.

<sup>60</sup>Eustatie Monahul, *Scrisoare despre două firi contra lui Sever*, (Către Timotei Scolasticul), P. G. 86, I, 932 A. B.

<sup>61</sup>Marin Sava, *Hristologia lui Sever de Antiohia și importanța ei pentru dialogul cu Bisericile Vechi-Orientale*, in *Glasul Bisericii*, No. 7-8, Bucharest, 1968, pp. 844-848.

<sup>62</sup>Constantin Voicu, *Patrologie Vol. III*, p. 72.

<sup>63</sup>J. Tixeront, *Histoire des dogmes*, t III, p. 127, apudVasileSibiescu, *ÎmpăratulIustinian I...*, p. 61.

<sup>64</sup>Joseph Lebon, *Le Monophysismesévérien. Étudehistoriquelittéraireetthéologiquedesur la résistencemonophysite au concile de Chalcedoinejusqu'à la Constitution de l'Eglisejacobite*, Louvain 1909, p. 183, apudVasileSibiescu, *ÎmpăratulIustinian I și erezziile*, p. 61.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibidem*, in introduction, p. 21, J. Lebon says that it seems that the Severinian Christological doctrine may be *terminus ad quem* of St. Cyril's theology. The monophysite teaching on incarnation, in the scientific form given by Severus, is nothing more than the Cyrilline Christology, apudVasileSibiescu, *ÎmpăratulIustinian I și erezziile*, p. 61.

Severianism is only an effort to motivate a schismatic and heretical attitude in the Church, that is, a counter-opposition to the Christological decisions from Chalcedon because of the condemnation of Nestorius and Eutyches by this synod was accepted.<sup>66</sup>

#### B. IV. LEONTIUS OF BYZANTIUM

We could say without mistaking that Leontius is the official theologian of Emperor Justinian the Great, otherwise a regular participant in the theological debates of the time and a mediator for maintaining the peace and unity of faith in the empire.<sup>67</sup>

The Leontinian contribution to the interpretation of the Christological doctrine is a categorical one. He is the one who philosophically explained the definition issued at the Council of Chalcedon. For its interpretation, he resorted to Aristotelian notions<sup>68</sup>, so thus his concern goes beyond the assertion of the differences between nature and hypostasis, continuing to demonstrate what the differences between them consist of. Therefore, according to him, nature has a sense of existence, and the hypostasis, the sense of self-existence. Starting from this distinction, Leontius can affirm, against the monophysites, that in Christ there was a human reality, characterized by the human gender and by the specific differences: rational and mortal. There is no doubt that the Savior also had a divine nature, having the attributes of divinity: incorruptibility and immortality. Severus of Antioch also admitted in Christ, after the union, these two categories of specific differences, which emphasized the absurdity of his claim that Christ was made up of two natures, duality that was suppressed by the union. In other words, if the general exists only in the individual, it means that human nature did not exist before the Incarnation<sup>69</sup>. This fact shows that the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ did not exist

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<sup>66</sup>Vasile Sibiescu, *Împăratul Justinian I și ereziile*, pp. 61-62.

<sup>67</sup>R. Devreese, *Le florilège de Léonce de Byzance*, in *Revue des sciences religieuses*, 10-a an, no. 4, (1930), p. 547, apud Ion Caraza, *Doctrina Hristologică a lui Leonțiu de Bizanț*, in *Studii Teologice*, No. 5-6, Bucharest, 1967, p. 321, from now on we will use the abbreviation *Doctrina Hristologică a lui Leonțiu de Bizanț*.

<sup>68</sup>Leontius prepares his notions of natures, hypostasis, and enhypostasis, with which he will work in Christology, by studying the definitions and the levels of existence. He speaks about being or existence, gender, species, individual, the properties of the being, inseparable or essential accidents and separable or attributive accidents. (See Loofs, *Leontius von Byzanz*, pp. 60-63; Tixeront, *Histoire des dogmes*, III, pp. 153-154; Grumel, *Leoncede Byzance*, in D. T. C. IX, 1920, col. 405-407), apud Irineu Ion Popa, *Contribuția hristologică a monahilor sciți după Sinodul de la Calcedon*, Cuvânt înainte la cercetarea Ioniță Apostolache, *Teologidaco-romani de seamă în cetatea eternă: lucrare mărturisitoare a Sfinților Ioan Casian, Dionisie Exiguul și Ioan Maxențiu*, Publishing House of the Metropolitan of Oltenia, Craiova, 2018.

<sup>69</sup>P. G. 86, 1367 D.

without hypostasis, so it is not self-hypostatic, but hypostatic in God the Word, that is, it is enhypostasis (*ενυποστατος*)<sup>70</sup>, or has subsistence (*το υποσθηναι*) in the Word<sup>71</sup>.

By the contribution of Leontius following the thought of St. Cyril, the Chalcedonian duality of the natures did not suppress the unity of the subject in Christ<sup>72</sup>. Leontius even emits a Cyrilline conception of Chalcedon, including the formula preferred by Saint Cyril, “an incarnate nature of God-Logos”, seems to Leontius susceptible to a diophysite interpretation<sup>73</sup>. The Council of Chalcedon could only be finalized by a Cyrilline interpretation, this being done with an admirable achievement in the time of Emperor Justinian, giving him considerable help in the action of returning those lost to the right faith. The literary stage of the Christological disputes that have influenced, one way or another, Chalcedon begins and ends with Leontius of Byzantium, being a stage of analysis of the synod's formula. His Christology is not always very lucid, being perhaps natural, as he uses Aristotelian conceptions to explain Chalcedon. What Leontius does is a creation of reconciliation and systematization<sup>74</sup>.

His great merit is to have succeeded in achieving a unitary whole from the teaching of the Holy Fathers about Incarnation and to have achieved a beneficial agreement between the Cyrilline and Chalcedonian theologies<sup>75</sup>. His successors, St. Maximus the Confessor and St. John of Damascus, and also others take his ideas and deepen them<sup>76</sup>.

Saint Maximus the Confessor, starting from the teaching of the two works and wills in one hypostasis, does nothing but apply to the works, what Leontiu said about the natures. However, the terminology is too rigid in the cult of the Eastern Church, the Cyrilline formulas remained dominant and in the Western faith, the formulas of the tradition there, included in Leon's epistle and confirmed by the Fourth Ecumenical Synod<sup>77</sup>.

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<sup>70</sup>P. G. 86, 1227 D.

<sup>71</sup>P. G. 86, 2, 1944 C.

<sup>72</sup>Ioan Mircea Ielciu, *Hristologia lui Sever al Antiohiei și importanța ei în contextul dialogului cu necalcedonienii*, in *Ortodoxia*, no. 4, Bucharest, 1988, p. 87.

<sup>73</sup>Leontiu de Bizanț, *Contra Nestorienilor și Eutihienilor*, Migne, P. G. 86, I, col. 1277 AB.

<sup>74</sup>Ioan G. Coman, *Hristologia Post Calcedoniană: Sever de Antiohia și Leontiu de Bizanț*, in volume *Și Cuvântul trup S-a făcut, Hristologie și mariologie patristică*, Publishing House of the Metropolitaqn of Banat, Timișoara, 1993, pp. 217-218.

<sup>75</sup>Fr. Loofs, *Leontius von Byzanz und die gleichnamigen Schiftsteller der griechischen Kirche, Erstes Buch: Das Leben und die polemische Werke des Leontius von Byzanz*, Leipzig, 1887, p. 304, apud Ion Caraza, *Doctrina Hristologică a lui Leontiu de Bizanț*, p. 332.

<sup>76</sup>Ion Caraza, *Doctrina Hristologică a lui Leontiu de Bizanț*, p. 332.

<sup>77</sup>Dumitru Stăniloae, *Definiția Dogmatică de la Calcedon*, in *Ortodoxia*, No. 2-3, Bucharest, 1951, p. 430.

His special contribution is that he analyzed in detail the Christological dogma enunciated by the Fourth Ecumenical Synod, but using new explanations, such as the theory of enhypostasis, thus blocking the way for non-Chalcedonians to return to Orthodoxy<sup>78</sup>.

The actuality of the Christological doctrine of Leontius of Byzantium is seen through its extensive use, especially in the dialogues between the Orthodox Church and the Old Oriental Churches. The Leontian opera and doctrine offers the Christian world essential points for understanding the Chalcedonian Christology, as well as well-founded ideas for analyzing the true teachings.<sup>79</sup>

## B. V. SCYTHIAN MONKS

The formula of the Scythian monks “One of the Trinity suffered in the Body” is based on the distinction they did between person and nature. The person is not only the concrete existence of the nature but also the mode of its existence as a relationship. In God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit fulfill the inner relations of the divine being. But as a human person can have relationships not only with those of a being with it but also with those who are not of the same being, the more God has this capacity, the Creator of all. This idea was brought forward by the Daco-Roman monks through the terms “proper” or “compound”, referring to the hypostasis of the Son of God made man.

This formula was admitted and recognized by Emperor Justinian in 533, to be introduced in the liturgy in Constantinople. The novelty in the cult had as repercussion the so-called theopashite dispute, in which the akimitos monks<sup>80</sup> played an important role<sup>81</sup>.

The Scythian monks marked the belief in the “descent of God from heaven”, but claiming that God Himself became man, suffered and was crucified for us. They marked so very much the eternal value of man before God and the salvation of death through resurrection! God takes upon Him the suffering of death for us, suffering as we suffer, but He turns this suffering into the way

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<sup>78</sup>*Idem, Posibilitatea reconcilierii dogmatice...*, p. 26

<sup>79</sup>Ion Caraza, *Doctrina Hristologică a lui Leonțiu de Bizanț*, pp. 332-333.

<sup>80</sup>Akimitos monks (ἀκοιμητοί or those who do not sleep), who for the first time founded a monastery of those who do not sleep on the banks of the Euphrates in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. They were condemned together with Nestorius, apud Dimitrie G. Boroianu, *Istoria Bisericii creștine de la începuturile ei și până în zilele noastre*, Edited and scientifically updated by Daniel Benga, Anastasia Foundation Publishing House, Bucharest 2007, p. 154, from now on we will use the abbreviation *Istoria Bisericii creștine de la începuturile ei și până în zilele noastre*.

<sup>81</sup>Dimitrie G. Boroianu, *Istoria Bisericii creștine de la începuturile ei și până în zilele noastre*, pp. 153-154.

of our escape from death. Christ has come close to us as we can stand close to Him. He confirms this maximum closeness to us by accepting our humanity, even receiving our passion and death, but not to remain in them but to defeat them. That is why through the Holy Communion we receive Him as a hypostasis, but we receive Him in our humanity where He has become accessible to us, in our concrete, corporeal humanity, but transfigured by divinity. By this, the Scythian monks emphasized the value and mystery of the human body<sup>82</sup>.

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<sup>82</sup>Dumitru Stăniloae, Introductory study for *Scrieri ale Călugărilor știțidaco-români din secolul al VI-lea*, translation by Nicolae Petrescu, in *Mitropolia Olteniei*, No. 3-4, Craiova, 1985, No. 3-4, pp. 242-244.



**PART C.**  
**THE THEOLOGY OF EMPEROR JUSTINIAN**

**C. I. THE CHRISTOLOGICAL THEOLOGY OF EMPEROR JUSTINIAN**

The fact that Emperor Justinian presents his theological treaty in front of two councils, a local one (543) and an ecumenical one, but not constituted in plenary sessions (553), proves the significant place that he gave to the Origenist problem which held the floor during those times. The condemnation of Origen and the Origenists is especially the result of the contribution of the Emperor-Theologian Justinian. Going over some of the characterizations related to Caesar-Papism attributed to Justinian, we must admit that he brought great support to the Church. He combines political and administrative actions with theological ones, his great contribution being the *Treaty against Origen*, even though he is not himself the complete author of the work.<sup>83</sup>

The offensive against the Origenism knows two distinct moments: the year 543 when the edict-treaty against Origen is published and the year 553 when Justinian addresses the hierarchs gathered in the pre-synod to condemn Origen<sup>84</sup>. From the two convictions, it appears that Origen's mistakes are not the same. In the Edict-treaty from 543 and the 10 anathemas, the highlighted errors are from Περὶ ἀρχῶν<sup>85</sup>, and in the conviction from 553 the sources of the

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<sup>83</sup>Ioan G. Coman, *Problemele dogmatice ale Sinodului V Ecumenic (May 5 – June 2, 553)*, in *Studii Teologice*, No. 5-6, Bucharest, 1953, pp. 327-328.

<sup>84</sup>The documents that show us Origen's mistakes are for the year 543 the edict-treaty and the 10 anathemas; For the year 553 we have: Justinian's letter to the synod (pre-synod); the 15 anathemas, Theodore of Skythopolis' Libellus and the opinions of Leontius of Byzantium, P. G. 86, I, col. 1264. Theodore of Skythopolis anathematizes Origen and his teaching on pre-existence and apocatastasis. There is a concern to remove the misconception of Christ, under the influence of Greek philosophy, after which He is descended among rational human beings and different from God the Word, cf. F. Prat, *Origene, Le Théologien et l'exégète*, ed. II, Paris, 1907, LII. In general, the errors of Origen, exposed by Teodor Skythopolis, resemble those from the 15 anathemas. According to Leontius, *ibidem*, col. 1264, B-C. Origen was forced into idolatry. His mistakes are: pre-existence, apocatastasis, subordinationism and metempsychosis. It seems, however, that Leontius, with great heartbreak, shows the errors of Origen, but only because they were also known by the imperial edict of 543. But he couldn't help but say that it was μέγας παιδευμένος, γραμματικὸς. This would prove that he may be the Origenist monk he was talking about. To this can be added a Libellus of Domiziano from Ancira, to Pope Vigiliu, in which it is said that Origen's mistakes are: pre-existence and apocatastasis, in M. Lequten, *Oriens Christianus*, t.I, pp. 466-467, Domiziano from Ancira. See also Facundus de Hermiane, *Prodefensione*, P. L. 67, col. 632, apud Vasile Sibiescu, *Împăratul Justinian I și erezile*, p. 149.

<sup>85</sup>Cf. A. D'Atès, art. *Origenisme*, col. 1240. However, there are small differences between them. Thus, in the edict is mentioned the subordinationism, which is not present in the 10 anathemas. In these, it is emphasized the mistake that the human soul of Jesus pre-existed and that He united with the Word before the incarnation from the Virgin Mary (Anathema II). Origen's name is mentioned only once, in the last anathema, apud Vasile Sibiescu, *Împăratul Justinian I și erezile*, p. 150.

teaching of Origen are condemned, namely the Hellenic philosophy with its great teachers. The 15 anathemas of the pre-synod in 553 differ from the 10 anathemas of Justinian in 543.

If in the first stage Origen was regarded as a heretic like Nestorius, in the second stage he is seen as the pagan philosophers Pythagoras, Plato, and Plotinus. However, he is again anathematized for erroneous views<sup>86</sup>.

Emperor Justinian was aware that the unity of his empire could not have continuity if the people of the empire did not confess the same faith, which is why he often intervened in religious and theological issues trying to remedy the arisen problems. This mixture of imperial authority in ecclesiastical matters was not meant to interfere with the good conduct of the Church, because in the end, it had the final decision in the disputed issues. The main theological problem of Justinian's time was that of harmonizing the Christology of the Third Ecumenical Synod, where St. Cyril had a separate place and that of the Fourth Ecumenical Synod, where was decided the teaching of the two natures in the person of the Savior Jesus Christ<sup>87</sup>.

By concentrating Justinian's theological and religious direction and analyzing whether this was or was not beneficial, the answer would be without a doubt a negative one. The supporters of Chalcedon and its opponents, the monophysites did not reconcile. They continued to exist with all the imposed forbiddance, Nestorians, Manichaeists, supporters of Judaism, but also pagans. A religious fraternity could not be realized, and Justinian's zeal may be considered to some extent as bearing no fruit<sup>88</sup>.

Not all voices are positive for Emperor Justinian. Eduard Schwartz, speaking about Justinian and his church policy, says that the 5th Ecumenical Synod was very different from the first four councils. The purpose of each one was for the emperor, the one who convened the synod, to help clarify the disputed controversy, a controversy that troubled the Church at that time. Justinian, however, introduced the dispute in the Church as he was not the protector of the Church as his forefathers, but he wanted or believed himself to be its teacher. As he dealt with alleged dilettantes, Justinian was underestimated and did not realize that he was the victim of treacherous intruders.

One can even notice certain degradation concerning the emperor (perhaps because of old age?) of his spiritual powers, but this couldn't be used as an excuse in history. The values that the

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<sup>86</sup>P. G. 86, 1, col. 991.

<sup>87</sup>Vasile Sibiescu, *Împăratul Justinian I și ereziile*, pp. 188-191.

<sup>88</sup>A. A. Vasilev, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, p. 184.

Church and the culture lost because of him are invaluable. On the other hand, the Church is not without fault because it left itself at the mercy of the “regiment of imperial dilettantes” (at least in the East), almost without opposition, but a stronger opposition was registered in the West<sup>89</sup>.

Regarding the accusation of Caesaropapism due to the acute involvement in religious issues, things must be seen with some openness and maybe under another interpretation. Of course, some voices support a subjugation of the Church by the imperial power and an exaggerated mix in the internal affairs of the Church, but it must be specified that Justinian did not issue laws for the Church but offered political authority and raised the church canons to the statute of laws in the entire Empire. Wishing for a good State-Church collaboration, Justinian used this so-called *involvement* in the life of the Church for the protection and support of its actions, so the teaching declared true by the Church acquired the qualification of law of the whole State. The Church received nothing from the State other than what it already possessed by divine right. Justinian becomes a promoter of the fruitful collaboration between the State and the Church and any opinion regarding his relation to the State-Church relationship may well be viewed from the perspective of his efforts to remedy the religious problems faced by the Empire<sup>90</sup>.

However, no leadership has been able to solve as many religious problems as that of Emperor Justinian. The Nestorians, the Monophysites, the Aryans, the pagans, the Jews, the Samaritans created great disturbances in the people and even risked breaking the religious unity. That is why Justinian often reacted harshly towards them. The documents that refer to him can be divided into two categories: some that call him *christianissimus* and others catalog him as a promoter of hatred and a lover of power. “Few sovereigns are so hard to judge. History has exhausted all formulas of admiration and blaming”<sup>91</sup>. Positive arguments are accompanied by many negative ones, so establishing an objective position is difficult<sup>92</sup>, the fact is that Justinian's reign was crowned by two clear goals, the imperial and the Christian one<sup>93</sup>.

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<sup>89</sup>Eduard Schwartz, *Zur Kirchenpolitik Iustinians*, Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, München 1940, pp. 71-72.

<sup>90</sup>Asterios Gerontios, *Justinian cel Mare, Sfântul Împărat*, translation from by English Ovidiu Ioan, Sophia Publishing, Bucharest, 2004, digital edition, pp. 39-40.

<sup>91</sup>A. Gasquet, *De l'autorité impériale*, p. 39, apud Vasile Sibiescu, *Împăratul Justinian I și ereziile*, p. 10.

<sup>92</sup>Ch. Diehl, *Figures byzantines*, in *Revue de deux Mondes*, Janvier 1900, p. 118, apud Vasile Sibiescu, *Împăratul Justinian I și ereziile*, p. 10.

<sup>93</sup>*Idem*, *Byzance, Grandeur et décadence*, Paris 1930, p. 6, apud Vasile Sibiescu, *Împăratul Justinian I și ereziile*, p. 10.

## **C. II. COMPARATIVE THEOLOGICAL VIEWS ON THE CHRISTOLOGY OF THE 5TH-6TH CENTURIES**

Comparative Theological Views of the Christology of the 5th-6th centuries compress the directions of the main emitters of the punctuated period by symmetrically exposing their opinions on different analyzed or disputed topics of the time we refer to. The topics are analyzed regarding: the Divine Logos, the incarnation of the Logos and the consequences of the hypostatic union at Saint Cyril, Severus of Antioch, Emperor Justinian, Leontius of Byzantium and the Scythian monks.

## FINAL CONCLUSIONS

At the end of an assiduous research work completed with the writing of the facts, events, and circumstances, it is appropriate to conclude with a series of expositions of ideas that have not necessarily completed the above but rather draw some conclusions regarding the researched topic.

The follow-up of the red thread of the treated topic, the documentation, comparison and study of the information referring to the character pursued and to his deeds have determined that at the end of each part but especially at the end of the present thesis, to emphasize some main lines that we have followed during documenting, analyzing and preparing the paper.

The topic, extremely complex and delicate, was divided into three parts, which according to the information presented were divided into 9 chapters, each bringing important elements so that in the end it is a whole. The contribution of all the constituent parts to the preparation of the work *Justinian the Great. His Contribution to the Defense of True Faith* is essential as each one deals with one aspect of the whole and only together do they give meaning to this whole, which, viewed only in a section, cannot create an overview. So the contribution of each part is defining in order to see and perceive the thread of the events and especially their consequences.

Justinian's reign is characterized by some very special aspects. The modification of the civil legislation and the realization of the *Corpus Juris Civilis* meant a premiere for the time we refer to. With the help of knowledgeable lawyers, the emperor elaborated, following a titanic work, a project that would consecrate him and make him last over time. The model of his law would also become a basis for others, which is why his laws, but especially his manner of thinking, systematizing and composing them made Justinian a pioneer of Scientific Law.

The great struggles carried out, but especially the projects of construction and reconstruction of the buildings required huge amounts of money that were obtained following a well-organized policy and often also with many cases of abuse. Excessive taxation of the population, the measures taken against the large landowners but also the administrative reforms would collect the necessary amounts for the administrative apparatus. If there is another aspect for which Justinian has lasted over time, it would be the founding of the great imperial buildings, defense walls, churches but especially the masterpiece of his creation, the Sofia Cathedral of Constantinople at the end of which he exclaimed: "I have defeated you, Solomon!"

Justinian was certainly great also because he had impressive people around him, the jurists Tribonian, Theophilus and Dorotheos, the architects Artemius of Tralles and Isidore of Miletus, but also the great generals Belisarius, Tzitta, Germanus and Narses.

Justinian remains in history also through his great war campaigns, his purpose being to create a stable, powerful and secure empire. For this, he fought both conquest and defense wars against those who represented a menace to the empire. The desire for expansion and enlargement of the territorial borders led him to basileus in fierce battles against the Vandals, Ostrogoths, and the Visigoths, but he also defended his territories in front of the Persians, Slavs but also against other invaders who were eager for the Byzantine wealth. All these actions involved great human and financial resources, which is why imperial treasuries were often drained by the needs of his armies.

It is important to note that the historical research shows that Justinian had links with the Romanian territories, the imperial interest being present often at the Danube border.

Over time, various problems related to his teaching, his confession, his creed, and organization arose within the Church. To solve these problems the church leaders issued different resolutions, but when these problems degenerated a synod was convened within which the problem was debated and analyzed by the hierarchs present. Many times, however, until a synod was convened to give a spin on a certain problem, the spirits became heated and conflicts erupted, risking even the unity of the Church. Such problems were also those related to different Christological aspects of the 5th-6th centuries. The unanimous acceptance of the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils would lead to ruptures and cracks within the Church.

The Third Ecumenical Synod of 431 chaired by St. Cyril of Alexandria condemns the teaching of Nestorius and affirms that the Virgin Mary is the Mother of God. Theology of St. Cyril of Alexandria must be viewed in relation to the times in which he lived but especially with the person who determined him to issue different teachings, namely his opponent Nestorius. He is especially noted for the effort to identify the most appropriate linguistic means so that he can speak about unity and distinction in God. His teaching on the Eucharistic doctrine, Mariology and Christological aspects include the following: introduction of the expression “two natures” in the Alexandrian Christology; emphasizing the mystery of the union of the two elements; systematizing the theory of language communication; the manner of thinking regarding the progress of the human nature of Christ makes Saint Cyril the greatest theologian of his time.

As for Severus of Antioch, he was the greatest monophysite of his time, the most important representative of the opposition to the Council of Chalcedon from 451. Through him, monophysitism took on a new form, so that it was no longer a mere opposition to the Chalcedonian teaching but a well-established doctrine that could easily rival the theology of the Church. His mode of presentation did not bring anything new concerning Chalcedon, Severus resuming only the Cyrilline Christology with a background of Dyophysitism and a language borrowed from Monophysitism. Severus follows the teachings of St. Cyril, adhering to Alexandrian terminology and sometimes understanding it separately and distinctly, which leads him to depart from the Orthodox truth. He rejects the Synod of Chalcedon (although it is based on the Cyrilline thought) precisely because he does not use the terminology of St. Cyril. Severus of Antioch did not wish or could not understand the fact that the Synod of Chalcedon, although using a different terminology, transmits the same teaching as St. Cyril. The core of Severus' Christological errors, as of all monophysites, is the identification of the concept of φύσις with ὑπόστασις. For this reason, Severus, although he accepts the duality of natures before union as well as during their unification, refuses to accept it even after unification in order not to reach the duality of hypostasis.

Sever is for the expression “of two natures”, thus marking the moment of union of the two natures. The Chalcedon formula emphasized that the moment continues to exist incessantly in the Person of Christ since the natures did not mix and did not change. Severus had the impression that the Council of Chalcedon revived Nestorianism and did not accept that there was decided the existence of two hypostatically unified natures, real or physical, in one person.

Leontius of Byzantium, the greatest theologian during the time of Emperor Justinian the Great, issued a new clarification of the Christological problems, his opinion being that the Synod of Chalcedon was the middle road between the two opposing teachings, Nestorianism and Eutychianism.

His activity had to do with the action of the Scythian monks and aimed at harmonizing the Cyrilline thinking with the Chalcedonian judgments, with Leontius being the first writer giving a philosophical explanation to the existing theological problems. Until him, the Holy Fathers have affirmed the revealed truth by the Holy Scriptures and Holy Tradition, according to which Jesus Christ is one person in two nature. However, this statement was not well established and explained, a fact that led to the emergence of heresies and different conflicts on the subject.

Analyzing in-depth the term of hypostasis, Leontius of Byzantium shows that Jesus Christ, the unique hypostasis, could assume an individual, concrete human nature, without this being a person.

The Leontian contribution to the deciphering of the idea of a person is that using the Aristotelian categories of substance, gender, aspects, individual, accident, gave a particular expressiveness with rational theological foundations to the idea of person and nature, notions that before him had no clarity. Exactly the vagueness and instability of the terms of person and nature up to him led to the emergence of so much heresy. He is the first to issue the notion of “enhypostasis” in an attempt to clarify the Christological issues. This meant that the human nature was enhypostasized in the pre-existing hypostasis of the Word, so in Christ, the human nature received the concrete existence, not as in a proper center, but in pre-existing center, in the unity of the divine hypostasis of the Logos.

The Scythian monks have an important role in the Christological disputes of the sixth century, most of the controversies appearing in the monastic environment. They propose the theological formula: “One of the Holy Trinity suffered in the body”, trying to get the Church's approval. After long analyzes and controversies, the Scythian expression triumphed by claiming that Jesus Christ incarnating for our salvation suffered only in the body, and this suffering was also inflicted on His person, due to the communication of the idioms. The Scythian monks influenced the vision of Emperor Justinian regarding the approach of monophysites, through the theology of St. Cyril of Alexandria and keeping the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon. This represents a great contribution of these monks from the distant Dobruja who managed to contribute to the peace and church unity.

Emperor Justinian the Great had an impressive contribution to the Theology of his time, aware that only a Church in peace can create an environment favorable to the population and the empire.

The desire of Emperor Justinian was certainly one of preserving and maintaining the ancestral faith alive, for this he did everything in his power to defend it, from engaging in dialogue with those who were troubled, namely the monophysites, when issuing laws and edicts for the good functioning of the Church until the convening of the 5th Ecumenical Council.

Emperor Justinian tries to prove to the monophysites that they erroneously support their teaching on St. Cyril's writings, which was not easy because of the language, not always clear.



He tries to show that the Alexandrian father has always supported the duality of natures and the unity of hypostasis, contrary to Nestorius, who starting from the duality of natures, reached two hypostases, namely two Sons. Through his efforts, the emperor strives to create a Cyrilline-Chalcedonian image of Orthodoxy.

A special contribution to Theology, Justinian brings also through his writings, all of which coming not necessarily to constitute a personal testimony but rather to serve the will to complete the restoration of the empire. His theological writings but also the church legislation complement the imperial efforts to create a church unity. To submit to the synodal debates the problems that created the disorder, the emperor even convened the great Ecumenical Synod of 553, a meeting that would analyze the issues that caused restlessness and issue resolutions to remedy them.

The trials performed by Justinian did not have the expected effect. From the 6th century, Monophysite churches broke away from the Orthodox Church and formed independent monophysite national churches. In this case, they developed free of the influence and tradition of Orthodoxy but could not exist in complete distance from it.

The theology promoted by Justinian, more or less supported by the theologians of the court, was not a new one, but it was one that tried to bring a glimmer of light on the tense situation that was hovering over the whole Church. Through his contribution, the emperor brings his obolus to the theology of the time and the consolidation and maintenance of the true faith.

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