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**GREAT DACO-ROMAN
THEOLOGIAN
IN THE ETERNAL CITY**

**The Confessional Work of Saints John Cassian,
Dionysus Exiguus and John Maxentius**

by
Ionita Apostolache



St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute (SEERI)
Baker Hill, Kottayam 686001, Kerala, India

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**By: Rev. Dr. Ionita Apostolache,
Associate Lecturer, Faculty of Theology,
University of Craiova, Romania
E-mail: nutuapostolache@yahoo.com**

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All correspondence regarding this publication should be addressed to:
Director, SEERI, Baker Hill, Kottayam - 686 001, Kerala, India
Phone : 0091 481 2564333, 2560856.
E-mail: seerikottayam@gmail.com

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FOREWORD

The Christological Contribution of Scythian Monks after the Council of Chalcedon¹

An important role in the history of the Church after the period Chalcedon Council was played by the Scythian monks who appear to Constantinople in a providential moment. Rome and Constantinople being at loggerheads over Zeno's Henotikon, were now on the verge of a new schism caused by Christological issue. The formulation of the Scythian monks, *one of the Trinity suffered for us in the flesh* is meant to illustrate God the Word as the subject of human acts, which meant that human nature did not work independently and did not exist independently as its own hypostasis². Moreover, this definition drove out the

1 This study is a part from the Chapter: "The Christology of Chalcedon after the Council of Chalcedon", in our work *Iisus Hristos este Acela'oi, ieri 'oi azi 'oi in veac*, Ed. Mitropolia Olteniei, pp. 288-307.

2 This formulation is rooted in St. Cyril's thinking, who teaches that not man by himself, but God Himself in Jesus Christ suffered and died. So if Emanuel is made of two natures, and after the union there is only one nature incarnate of the Logos, it means that He suffered in His own nature. St. Cyril replies: *What necessity is for Him to suffer in His own nature, if it is said that after the union He is one nature incarnated of the Logos? If in the divine reasoning of Ikonomy there were no thing to receive sufferings, they (the opponents) would be right. Since there is no element to suffer it would be absolutely imperative that sufferings go to the nature of the Logos. But the term "incarnated" comprises all reasoning of Ikonom by flesh, since the Logos did not incarnate Logos otherwise, but it was taken from the seed of Abraham, was in all alike his brothers, took the form of a servant. Chatty, so in vain those who say that He must suffer many in His own nature, since the body is the subject of his sufferings, He being able to experience such things whilst the Logos is indifferent. But by asserting these we do not say that He is out of sufferings.* In other words, Christ suffered in His earthly nature. In this sense, the only Son of God had to preserve within His inner nature both situations: 1. not to suffer Godhead-like; 2. to say that He suffers manhood-like. In conclusion, the One who endured the cross with honor for us and tasted death was not a common man and separated from the Logos of God, but the Lord

possibility that the Person of Jesus Christ would have resulted from the merging of the two natures and their work, which was a kind of Nestorianism³.

The formulation of the Scythian monks, *Unus de Trinitate carne passus est*, was based on the inspired words of the Apostle Paul, who said that the Lord of glory was crucified⁴, the teachings of St. Ignatius Theophorus, who taught that Christ suffered⁵, the words of St. Proclus, the Patriarch of Constantinople, who was one of the close friends of St. Cyril of Alexandria and the dogmatic definition of the Council of Chalcedon. Teopashite phrases are what we also find in the theology of St. Gregory of Nazianzus, as for example: *we need a God incarnate and crucified to resurrect* (εδειθημεν Θεου σεσαρκουμενου και νεκρουμενου).⁶ Moreover, the Saint does not hesitate to talk about *blood of God* (αιμα Θεου) and about *God crucified* (Θεος σταυρουμενος).⁷ The very Symbol of Nicaeo-Constantinopolitan faith clearly proclaimed Church's faith *in the Son of God ... who was incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary ... was*

of Glory Himself suffered in the flesh according to the scripture (Pr. Prof. Ioan G. Coman, *And the word became flesh*, Mitropolia Banatului Publishing House, Timisoara, 1993, pg.113). St. Cyril's teophasism is actually a comparison of body suffering to the Logos, the most eloquent expression of the qualities transfer of the two natures, which is undoubtedly based on the hypostatic union. Due to this transfer, the properties mix and take part ones to the others. This is the reason why, divine things can be said about human nature and vice versa. But this only happens in the union state of the two natures, or kenosis state.

3 We will extensively analyze this formulation when we present the Christological teaching of Emperor Justinian and The Fifth Ecumenical Council.

4 I Corinthians 2, 8.

5 St. Ignatius Theophorus, *Letter to the Romans*, VI, 3.

6 St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Homily* 45, 28, PG 36, 661C; *Homily* 30, 5, PG 36, 109A.

7 Idem, *Homily* 45, 19, 22, 28, PG 36, 649C; 653A; 661D.

crucified for us people under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried. Then St. Cyril's chief concern was to preserve the faith of Nicaea, endangered by Nestorius' heresy, of the very fact that it did not regard Virgin Mary as Mother of God and the Son of God suffered in the flesh. As such, the Scythian monks did not bring any Christological news when using this theopashit formulation. In fact, those who doubted the formulation of Scythian fathers were those who attributed the notion of sufferings to unsuffering God. But wasn't it necessary for God the Word to make Himself death in order to defeat it? This was precisely the basis of soteriology of St. Gregory of Nazianzus and the St Cyril of Alexandria. Antiochian theologians, led by Theodore of Mopsuestia, also acknowledged the fact that God had body, becoming a man, but they did not accept to say that God tasted death, since they did not accept to say that the Logos wholly united with human nature. Obviously, it was precisely the eternal and preexisting hypostasis of the Logos which became subject to the death of Christ, since in Christ there is no other personal subject than the Word. St. Proclus in *the Tome to the Armenians*, from which Maxentius quotes, understood this perfectly when he wrote against Theodore of Mopsuestia: *He who confesses that He who was crucified, is God, also confesses that the Father and the Holy Spirit were crucified if the nature of the Trinity is one. As for me, I object and ask you: He who was crucified is one of the Trinity or someone else outside the Trinity? If it is one and the same, confusion is cleared. But if it is someone outside the Trinity, then the Lord is the fourth and He is outlandish of the seraphim's honor ... But if we say that He was crucified in Godhead, we would introduce suffering into Trinity. But if we say that the Logos absorbed suffering within its body, by this we confess that the one who suffered is one of the Trinity, for the nature of Trinity did not suffer... Therefore it was crucified what was incarnated But if crucified what was incarnated, it means*

*that the Father and the Holy Spirit were not crucified; therefore one of the Trinity was crucified.*⁸

According to this formulation, we understand that the Son of God, becoming Himself also the Son of man, through this union, God passed into Christ and Christ passed into God and what Christ suffered also suffered God. In this case, the very reason of Resurrection has its fulfillment in the act of Savior's death on the cross. Then God, being united with man, did not allow that there were any interval between man and Him, that is, to be believed that one is the Son of Man and another is the Son of God. The very words of the Lord testify to this: *No one has ascended into heaven, but He who has come down from heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven.*⁹ All these are meant to illustrate the fact, that, while the Son of God spoke on earth, he testified that the Son of man was in heaven and that the same Son of man, about whom was said that will ascend into heaven, had already descended from the sky. These things are also strengthened by the words of the Symbol of Faith, which teach that the Son of God is united to the Son of Man, meaning that God is united with man, that neither in time nor in suffering can there be a separation between them, which means that teopashit trend derives from the very soteriologic purpose of the Incarnation, the aim that the Son of God pursued from the beginning, in order to truly achieve it. Therefore, the suffering on the cross of the unsuffering One must be understood in the same way in which it is said that *man was deified*, that is not existentially, but by participation or cooperation of the two natures. In this regard, what one of the Scythian monks, John Maxentius asserted, is as follows: Holy Trinity after the incarnation remain Trinity, since the same God the Word, with His very own body, is part of the Trinity. This does not mean

8 Proclus, *De fide*, III, to John Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, IV, 2; X, 17, 18, 19, Schwartz, p. 61.

9 John 3,13.

that His body is part of the being of the Holy Trinity, but because it is the body of God the Word, Who is one of the Holy Trinity; that He Himself and no one else has ascended into heaven, He who has descended from the sky. Therefore, we confess that God the Word suffered in flesh and was crucified in flesh, and was buried in flesh, according to St. Cyril who says: “If anyone does not confess that God the Logos suffered in flesh, was crucified in the flesh, tasted death in the flesh and became the first begotten of the dead, because He is life and life-giving, as God, anathema be it”¹⁰.

Therefore, Scythians’ teaching according to which the incarnate Son of God did not suffer in His Godhead or deity nature, but in his manhood nature or His body was clearly understood and expressed by them in accordance with the Holy Scripture and Fathers¹¹. Christ is one of the Trinity, with his very own body, and suffered for us in the flesh, though, in terms of flesh, He is not one of the being of Trinity, but He is the same with us. This fact point out that Godhead is not suffering like, but it can be confessed that God suffered in the flesh as Jesus Christ is born as true God¹², what St. Paul asserted as: *within Christ dwells, bodily, all the fullness of the Godhead*.¹³

From another point of view, the monks’ formulation aimed at both Nestorianism and Monophysitism. By the fact that they stated that one of the Trinity suffered and not God in general,

10 *Theopaschites*, in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, second edition by F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, London, 1974, col. 1363, 2-1364, 1.

11 Long before the teopashit crisis broke out, they have written about the incarnate Son of God who suffered not Godhead, but in flesh, theologians from Scythia as St. John Cassian in his work *On the Incarnation of the Lord*, Nicetas of Remesiana in his work *About the symbol of faith*.

12 John Maxentius, *Capitula edita contra nestorianos et pelagianos ad satisfactionem fratrum* 4.

13 Colossians 2: 9.

they showed that not the whole Holy Trinity suffered, but only the Son who suffered in the flesh. Therefore, they said *he who does not say that God the Word was connected with the formation of the body and does not teach that He received human nature in his own hypostasis or person considers the hypostasis of the Word as attached to the hypostasis of the body*.¹⁴ Obviously, *the person differs from the nature, since the person means an indivisible unity of nature, and nature is known to mean common material, which more people can subsist from*.¹⁵ By the fact that *One of the Trinity suffered in the flesh* there no longer exists the possibility to assign suffering to human subject, meaning that the phrase become the only singularized mark of the anti-Monophysite and anti-Nestorian Christology. Therefore, the Christological teachings of the Scythian monks, though for some seemed Monophysite¹⁶, it was still pure Orthodox in accordance with the Chalcedonian definition¹⁷. Their middle position testified that the Alexandrian and Antiochian Western definitions had to be balanced, while confirming the teachings of St. Cyril. Thus, the Orthodox divine worship will develop the teaching about God's Son man-alike, doer of human acts, not as in

14 John Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, IV, 2; Schwartz, p. 22.

15 *Ibidem*, IV, 2, p. 23.

16 This formula, *One of the Holy Trinity suffered in the flesh* had been used without the addition *in the flesh* and especially with the exclusion of the two natures, by the Monophysite patriarch of Antioch, Peter Gnafeus. He had added to the Trisagion: *Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, Who you crucified for us, have mercy on us* (Meyendorff, *Le Christ dans la Theologie bysantine*, Cerf, Paris, 1969, p. 41; Pr. V. Sibiescu, *Împăratul Iustinian și ereziile*, București, 1938, pp. 66-71).

17 See *Călugării sciți daco-romani din secolul VI*, trad. Pr. Prof. N. Petrescu, în Revista "Mitropolia Oolteniei" (MO), nr. 3-4/1985, p. 199-244; no. 5-6, p. 391-441; no. 9-10, p. 680-708; no. 11-12, p. 783-793, studiu introductiv pr. prof. D. Staniloae: *Contribuția călugărilor sciți la precizarea hristologiei la începutul sec. VI*, în MO. 1985, no. 3-4, pp. 199-244.

western theology where God the Word alternates works the man Christ.¹⁸

Leontius of Byzantium is undoubtedly the one who explained philosophically the definition of Chalcedon. In order to demonstrate this, he used the Aristotelian notions¹⁹, so that his concern is much more than a concern for the differences between nature and hypostasis, but he makes the next step in his argumentation and illustrates what the differences between them are. Thus, according to him, nature has the meaning of existence and hypostasis, the meaning of self existence. Therefore, Leontius, starting from this difference might assert against the Monophysite that in Christ there was manhood reality, characterized by human genus and specific differences:

18 Father Ioan Coman in his work: *And the Word became flesh*, says that: *Scythian fathers understood that Christianity brought into the world the truth that history and salvation through suffering on the cross are created. God has united heaven and earth through His suffering, through His cross. Life with the aim to heights, to creation and holiness involves permanent suffering and sacrifice. Probably, due to the Scythian monks' tradition, father concludes, Romanians have kept the worship of crosses and triptychs all over the country. Our triptychs on which Christ is crucified in the center and the Father and the Holy Spirit, sometimes even the Mother of God into an icon attached to the to, perfectly illustrate the teopashit formula. Reverent stopping in front of these triptychs is meant to evoke moments of evaluation or new efforts in the rhythm of world or local history interlaced with suffering and hope, here being also the place where Christ gives the traveler's first warning by the example of His own crucifixion.* (Pr. Prof. I.G. Coman, *aj Cuvântul S-a făcut trup*, Ed. Mitropolia Banatului, Timi^ooara, 1993, p. 248).

19 Leontius prepares the concepts of nature, hypostasis and enhypostasis which he will use in Christology, in the study of the definitions and steps of the existences. He deals with being or existence, genus, species, individual, the attributes of being, inseparable or essential accidents, separable or attributive ones (See Loofs, *Leontius von Byzanz*, pgs. 60-63; Tixeront, *op. cit.* III, pgs. 153-154; Grumel, *Leonce de Bysance*, in DTC IX, 1920, col. 405-407).

rational and mortal. There is no doubt that the Savior was Godhead nature, endowed with the attributes of Godhead: incorruptibility and immortality. As we have seen, Severus of Antioch also acknowledged in Christ, after unification, these two categories of specific differences, which emphasized the absurdity of his claim that Christ was composed of two natures, the duality that has been suppressed by the union. In other words, if the general exists only in individual, it means that human nature never existed as such before the Incarnation.²⁰ This proves the fact that the human nature of Christ did not exist without the hypostasis, so it is not self Hypostatic, but hypostasized in God the Word, meaning that it is enhypostasized (*ενυποστατος*)²¹, or has subsistence (*υποσθηαναι*) in the Word.²²

The examples given by Leontius in order to support such teachings remind us of St. Cyril, who gave as example of union of two natures in one hypostasis without a merger or alteration of their, i.e. the soul and body²³, or red hot iron.²⁴ Therefore, the Word has taken from our nature within His Own Hypostasis a

20 PG 86, 1367D.

21 PG 86, 1277D.

22 PG 86, 2, 1944C.

23 Leontius often makes reference to the union of the soul with the body, which have a common hypostasis, but they have their own natures and different reasons (Leontius of Byzantium, *Against Nestorians and Eutychians*, PG 86, I, 1280). Justinian, as we shall see, realized the inconvenience of this example. The image of man, composed of body and soul, was used by the Monophysite, who did not have Origenistic tendencies as happened in Leontius's case, meaning that soul and body form a single human nature. Man's example, of course, can be used only in terms of the hypostatic union in Christ, and not for that of the two natures, that are not either complementary, as the soul is to the body and vice versa or simultaneously created, because the divine nature, uncreated, pre-existed before the Incarnation (J. Lebon, *Le Monophysisme severien: Etudes historique, litteraire et theologique sur la resistance monophysite au Concile de Chalcedoine jusqu'a la constitution de l'Eglise jacobite*, Louvain, 1909, p. 80-82).

24 PG 86, 1304C.

certain self nature, remaining intact as the hypostasis of fire in the oven remains intact after the ignition of the iron. Therefore, within the Hypostasis the synthesis of natures has been carried out, without resulting in a composed nature or any composed hypostasis, but after the Incarnation the characteristic of the Logos' hypostasis has become even more non-composed, crowding more simple characteristics.²⁵ However, when talking about the *Lord we do not know only a particular hypostasis of His, since we do not say that Savior's manhood subsists in its own hypostasis, but in the hypostasis of the Word, from the beginning; we do not even know now simply the hypostasis of the Word as being now only the hypostasis of the Word, since together with manhood subsists in it the Word of the same person after its unspoken union. Hence, we know now that it is common to both of them, one and the same, the hypostasis which pre-existed the human being, which was before particular to the Word within the common being of Godhead, but creating the human nature and uniting it with His own one. As soon as it started to be the hypostasis of the nature of body, it transformed from particular to common and became more complex. Now, the hypostasis of the Word is not only different as it was before, based on its characteristic of being born, by the Father and the Spirit, but also, due to the fact that it is created of several natures and natural characteristics and hence of more personal features ... Therefore, we must righteously know that the nature of the Word is common to the Father and the Spirit and to all the people who are not of the Holy Virgin, being common only to the body taken of the Holy Mother, and again the body taken of the Mother of God. Our own nature is a common one with all of Adam and the particular hypostasis to us and to the Father and to the Holy Spit is common only with the Word.*²⁶ Thus, the

25 Leontius, *Adv. Nest.*, I, PG 86, 1485.

26 *ibidem*, II, PG 86, 1568; 1716; the hypostasis the one, which was previously known through its undone characteristics, now having its hypostatic features completely created out of the reasons and things done. (PG 86, 1596).

Godhead Logos personified human nature (*ενπροσωποποιησεν*), being both one of the Holy Trinity, and one of us humans. Thereby, Leontius states: *as it is One or a hypostasis of the three Hypostases of the Godhead nature, in the same way there is a hypostasis of the many hypostases of manhood nature. It is one of the hypostases of the Trinity after the hypostasis of Godhead and manhood and one of the hypostases of manhood after the hypostasis of Godhead and manhood. Therefore, He, among the Godhead, abounds in human attributes*²⁷ and among the manhood excels due to His divine nature.²⁸

As it is well known, the Monophysite illustrated the fact that the union between the Godhead and manhood nature in Christ is natural, neither the body nor the soul existed in an independent form, but only as part of the unique human nature. Therefore, Christ after the union is a nature whose elements are inseparable. Leontius not only rejects the notion of *physical union*, but he emphasizes the fact that the soul is *an independent incorporeal essence* (*ουσια ασωματος αυτοκινητος*) and that the soul and body are ontologically perfect by themselves (*ουκ ατελη καθ εαυταεαυτα*)²⁹, which means that the analogy goes more to the dyophysite direction than to the monophysite one about the Incarnation. The objection that the opponents immediately formulated against this concept was on the one hand, a union of two hypostases and, on the other hand, the pre-existence of Christ's manhood. Indeed, Leontius defined hypostasis as existence *by itself* (*καθ ὃ ὑ*ῥ*ῶ*ῦ*ῖ*εαυτον*) and therefore he ontologically admitted as possible the pre-existence of Christ's manhood, as a hypostasis that can very well be formed of preexisting entities (e.g. the union of body and soul at the resurrection). But, in the case of Christ the Savior

27 *Ενμεντεςθειαςδιατωνανθρωπινωνιδιωματοςκατα φυσιν πλεονιζουσα.*

28 Leontius, *Adv. Nest.*, VII, PG 86, 1768: *εν ταις ανθρωπιναις τω θειω ιδιωματι υπερεχουσα.*

29 *Idem, Adv. Eutih. et Nest.*, I, PG 86, 1281B.

he could have never existed as *simple man* (*ψιλος ανθρωπος*).³⁰ Thus, Christ's manhood is not un-hypostasized, since it exists, but it is not a hypostasis, since it does not exist for itself. It is en-hypostatical, since it exists within the Logos it belongs to, which gives it the power to exist, self-receiving. St. Cyril of Alexandria, somewhere in the dialogue *That One is Christ* stated: *So after the indissoluble union, which was taken, becomes self possession of the one who takes; it's a rightful way to see that Jesus is God, the Son of the true God, the one and only Son as the Word of God the Father, that He was born on one hand Godhead before the ages, on the other hand the same one is born lately in the flash of a woman, for the face of the servant is not another's, but of Himself.*³¹ From this point of view, the saint submitted to the heresy, which from the two natures made one person, and after that one confused person, a formula and, more important, an explanation that should grant the dogma of one person in Jesus Christ. This formula also existed to St. Cyril's and had as its content the un-hypostasized and en-hypostatical conception as he states: *So we say that the body was the Word's own and not in any case of any man, particularly and separately, as if Christ and Son would mean that is One aside himself. And as our body is said to be in its own particularly for each of us, in the same way we need to understand in the case of Christ, that it is One.*³² In order to get a clearer image, below is what Leontius says about en-hypostasis: *The hypostasis and en-hypostasis are not identical, as something is the essence and something else what is in the essence. The hypostasis indicates someone, while en-hypostasis*

30 Idem, *Epilysis*, PG 86, 1944C; M. Richard, *Léonce de Byzance était-il origéniste?*, in *Rev. des et. byz.*, 5, 1947, pgs. 58-60.

31 St. Chiril, *Că Unul este Hristos*, apud Timotei Sevcicu, *Doctrina hristologică a Sf. Chiril al Alexandriei în lumina tendințelor actuale de apropiere dintre Biserica Ortodoxă și Vechile Biserici Orientale*, Ed. Mitropolia Banatului, Timișoara, 1973, p. 32.

32 Idem, *Apologie pentru cele douăsprezece capitole contra episcopilor orientali*, apud Timotei Sevcicu, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

*indicates the essence. The first defines the person through characteristic features; en-hypostasis proves that there is no accident that has its existence in another and is not self considered. These are all qualities that are called essential and attributive, none of them is essential, meaning things self existing, but all are regarded in relation to the essence, as, for example, color in body science in soul. Therefore, who says “it is not an un-hypostasized nature”, is the one who tells the truth, but does not draw rightful conclusions the one who asserts that what is not un-hypostasized is hypostasis, as if someone speaking truly, would say that there is no body without shape, but then he would wrongly conclude that the shape is a body and it cannot be seen in the body.*³³

Thence, nature not necessarily being hypostasis and person, Leontius proves to the Nestorians the fact that they are not entitled to conclude, from the duality of natures in Christ, the duality of people and hypostases. In turn, the Monophysite wrongly concluded based on the unity of hypostasis and person, to the unity of nature. Definitely, en-hypostasis applies to the qualities called essential and assigned to essence, since they are neither accidents nor essentials. They share the same existence with the being to which they are completing. It is true that those qualities are not independent, as it is the human nature of Christ, which, apart from Christ, is in thousands of other individuals; however, en-hypostatic being and that of the features are presented as being one and the same thing.³⁴ As such, human nature distinguishes by its own existence within the hypostasis of the Logos and thus Christ is not nature anymore, but a Person.³⁵

As for works, they are interlaced with natures, being one piece of work of the flesh and one piece of work of the Godhead³⁶. In order not to be understood as expressions of

33 Leontius, *Against Nestorius...*, PG 86, 1277D, 1280A.

34 Idem, *Against Severus's arguments*, PG 86, I, 1944C.

35 Idem, *Against Nestorians...*, PG 86, I, 1289B – 1292B.

individual natures, Leontius sees them only as presences of features (*ιδιοτητες*) of the two natures made present by the unique hypostasis, not being present due to their very presence.³⁷ In this way, Christ the Savior is the unique subject and the creator of the two works, which means that natures never fall apart in their works.³⁸ However, God the Word, although He assimilates so intimately the human nature and work, yet he does not change after Godhead, and He continues to be the Godhead hypostasis. Thus, we can say about Him that is the subject of nature and human acts, in the meaning given by the formula of St. Cyril, and that His person is made out of the merge of the features of the two natures, as it is illustrated in the phrase of Leon in the definition of Chalcedon, being perfect God and perfect man.

The fact that Leontius refuses to accept Christ's hypostasis composed of the Godhead and manhood nature is closer to Western Christology. However, in his opinion, the hypostasis of the Word appropriates the attributes of human nature, and it is not the human nature that provides them by its own an initiative, as one might understand from the teaching of Pope Leo. Thence, God the Word is the hypostasis of manhood nature and human acts bearer, and not the manhood hypostasis is the bearer of Godhead acts or a complex hypostasis.³⁹ Therefore,

36 *Ibidem*, PG 86, I, 1320AB.

37 *Idem*, *Against Severus's arguments*, PG 86, II, 1932C.

38 Meaning that natures do not divide according to works (PG 86, 1320AB).

39 St. Maximus the Confessor and St. John Damascene use the phrase of complex hypostasis, referring to one and the same person or *Godhead hypostasis*. (*St. Maxim, Opuscula theologica et polemica*, PG 91, 204; *St. John Damascene, Exp. Ort. Fid. III, 5, 7*). Patriarch Photios will highlight this formulation later, saying that the hypostasis before the Incarnation and after the Incarnation, is one and the same, but those around the hypostasis are not the same. Father Staniloae adds to these emphases the following explanation: *We could say more exactly that Godhead attributes which He has before the incarnation are ιδιαι, propers, those received through the incarnation are assimilated (ιδιοποιη)*; (Pr. Prof. D. Staniloae, *Definiþia dogmaticã de la Calcedon*, p. 428).

God is man bearer and not man is God bearer as is the case of the saints, *to be understood*, as Leontius emphasizes, *which is added to manhood hypostasis, meaning Godhead nature; and in Christ to be glorified what is added to Godhead hypostasis, meaning manhood nature.*⁴⁰

Leontius in his Christological thinking severely criticizes relational and voluntary union of the two natures of the doctrine of the Nestorians and praises existential union,⁴¹ although this union is within Chalcedonian orthodoxy limits. Moreover, Leontius did not acknowledge either the hypostatic union in the incarnate Logos, refusing, however, to acknowledge the fact that the Savior Christ could ignore or be unaware of certain things, since He was sinless.⁴²

From the presented ones one could clearly see how the Christological definition of Chalcedon has finally found its theological formulas. It will be further completed with the doctrine of the two wills and two works in one hypostasis presented by Saint Maximus the Confessor, who will apply to works what Leontius stated about natures. However, Leontius' terminology being too abstract did not become part of worship, whereas the teachings of St. Cyril remained dominant in the life and practice of the Orthodox Church. Westerners exclusive love for the Antiochian formulas⁴³ remained linked to the

40 Leontius, *Adv. Nest.*, VI, PG 86, 1753.

41 Idem, *Ad. Aftar. et Nest.*, 41, PG 86, I, 1380D; *Ad. Nest. Et Eutih.*, PG 86, 1304A, 1305CD.

42 The notion of lack of knowledge for the Greek spirit was automatically associated with sin, as seen in Evagrian thinking, (Idem, *Adv. Incor. et Nest.*, PG 86, 1373B).

43 The Catholic Western hardly accepted the decisions of the Fifth Ecumenical Council, which condemned Theodore of Mopsuestia, the writings of Theodoret against Saint Cyrus of Alexandria and the letter of Ibas of Edessa against Cyril. They believed that through these convictions Justinian based even more the position of St. Cyril in relation to the definition of Chalcedon. Moreover, they never considered as heretical the writings of these condemned, their spirit

worship of man Jesus, as a model of moral life, suffering on the cross, glory of man, for which He receives in return as reward, created grace, equivalent to the sacrifice made, without meeting effectively with the son of God manlike. Orthodoxy, however, speaks of God the Word as hypostasis of the assumed manhood which He Godheads. From this point of view, hymnography and iconography imply divine transcendence, descended into immanence, man living the experience of being in Christ and uniting with Christ.

An important chapter in post-Chalcedonian Christology is the acceptance of identity between the union hypostasis and pre-existing hypostasis of the Logos. Through this identification St. Cyril's doctrine with that of the Council of Chalcedon was reconnected. A great merit to the success of this mission was that of another Leontius, this time from Jerusalem. His teaching is radically different from that of his twin in Byzantium. In opposition with Origenism, Leontius of Jerusalem, totally rejects the possibility of pre-existence of Christ's manhood⁴⁴. In this sense, he states: *The Word, in the latter days, clothing with body His hypostasis and nature, pre-existing in relation to human nature and, before all time, bodiless, hypostasized human nature*

being preserved up today in the theology and church life. *How could we explain Catholics' confident humanism, says Father Staniloae or Protestants' tragic humanism, their consciousness about God's inaccessible transcendence, about the distance between God and man, about divine transcendence and human immanence without their attachment to Nestorian and Antiochian rationalistic teaching* (Pr. Prof. D. Staniloae, *op. cit.* p. 432; Karsavin, *Sur le deux natures dans le Christ*, in Logos, Bucharest, no. 1, 1928, p. 94-95).

- 44 Leontius of Byzantium understand soul and body as ontological entities perfect in themselves and hypostasis conceived as a self sufficient existence *κατ' αὐτῆς ἰσότητος ἑαυτοῦ*. This led to the idea of existence in Christ of two hypostases, or three, since he refused to consider the Logos as Christ (Meyendorff, John, *Hristos în gândirea creștină răsăriteană*, trad. de Pr. Prof. Nicolae Buga, EIBMBOR, Bucharest 1997, p. 98).

*in His own hypostasis (τηδιδιαυποστασει ενυπεστησεν).*⁴⁵ Those asserted have as their result the fact that Christ's manhood nature does not possess its own hypostasis and it is only a part of the whole, that is Christ, the incarnate Logos. Therefore, not being individualized as human persons are, it cannot be particularized. In this sense, the Word does not have a manhood hypostasis, as for man, but His hypostasis, common and inseparable in relation to his manhood nature and Godhead nature exceeds His manhood.⁴⁶ As such, the hypostasis of Christ, since it is that of the Logos', is not a particular one (ιδιχη) but is a common one (κοινη)⁴⁷, this being the reason why the Scripture calls the human nature of Christ as a mere body⁴⁸. Obviously, Christ unites through His Godhead all manhood (πασαν την ανθρωποτητα), not only a human individual.⁴⁹

It is understood that Leontius considers the person of Jesus Christ exactly as Apostle Paul did, meaning as a New Adam and also as Prophet Isaiah did, as we noted above, as a collective person.⁵⁰ In this sense, Leontius can speak about the common hypostasis of Christ, as the hypostatic Archetype of all people, through which all are summarized. From this point of view, the Savior's manhood nature is not that of a simple man(ανθρωπου γυμνου)⁵¹, but is a hypostasis beyond

45 Leontius of Jerusalem, *Adv. Nest.* V, 28, PG 86, 1748D; VII, 2, 1761B; VII, 4, 1768A.

46 *Ibidem*, V, 29, PG 86, 1749BC.

47 *Ibidem*, V, 30, PG 1749D.

48 The word "body", as general term designates human nature as a whole; the term is taken from the Saint Cyril of Alexandria.

49 *Ibidem*, PG 1749D-1752A.

50 This is the basis for the teaching about summary in Christ of Saint Irenaeus of Lyon and St. Cyril of Alexandria (*St. Cyril De ador. In Sp. et ver.* 2, PG 68, 244-245). Thus, the Word possesses us in Himself, insofar as He assimilates our nature and makes from our body His body (in John IX, 1).

51 Leontius, *Adv. Nest.* V, 28, PG 86, 1748 D; V, 29, 1749C.

all limits of creation⁵². This nature is not spirited by the Godhead Logos, as Apollinaris claimed, but it has its own manhood soul, which makes that Christ's manhood is real and historical, being an individual nature (*φύσις ἰδική τις*).⁵³

In spite of all these specific references to the Savior's manhood nature, Leontius however, refuses to talk about a hypostasis as such, proving that he is unable to give a metaphysical definition of the hypostasis.⁵⁴ Undoubtedly, his

52 The main problem that arises in terms of the synonymy between nature and hypostasis at St. Cyril leads us to conclude that all mankind is an ideal indivisible reality in platonic sense of contemplation, where individuals are but immanent manifestations, which is not the case for Leontius.

53 Leontius, *Adv. Nest.* I, 20, PG 86, 1485 D.

54 Since Chalcedon, when there was sorted out the distinction between nature and hypostasis in Christology, the defenders of this synod applied to the theology of the incarnation the terminology which the Cappadocian Fathers used to explain the mystery of the Holy Trinity. It is true that this procedure was not without difficulties either, especially because the Chalcedonian did not want to accept it in any way. According to St. Basil, as noted above, God is only one nature in three hypostases, and according to the Chalcedonian, in Christ there is a hypostasis and two natures. In both cases, the hypostasis is for "who" and nature for "what". If nature is assigned some particular characteristics, it is inevitable to reach two hypostases in Christ. If we define hypostasis existence in itself as Leontius of Byzantium thought, it tends to reach a third of gods in the Holy Trinity. And if we considered Godhead hypostases as relations, as it is in Catholic theology, within the divine essence, we would result into the teopashit interpretation where divine nature is subject to suffering. Following this teaching we reach the teaching of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius, who acknowledged in Christ a human being subject to all sufferings and human experiences. However, we must emphasize the fact that the notion of hypostasis to the Cappadocian Fathers cannot be simply reduced either to that of particular or to that of relation. Therefore, hypostasis is not a product of nature, but it is the one where nature exists, meaning the very principle of the existence of nature. Only understanding hypostasis as such can be applied to Christology because it involves the possibility of complete human existence, without being limited within the hypostasis of the Logos. This vision

way of defining hypostasis goes to the right direction, his thinking made progress as compared to the Christology of St. Cyril's. In this sense, Leontius understands the formula *one of the Trinity suffered for us* as part of the work of manhood Logos. This is God who remains unchanged in his Godhead nature, but suffers in His manhood nature, which means that since His conception in the womb of Our Virgin, has completely assimilated manhood nature is His, as His Godhead nature is. This is the reason why we can say that the Godhead Logos, which is self owned hypostasis and not a product of the Godhead nature, but an entity ontologically distinct from the Godhead nature, The Ego possessing Godhead nature and who appropriated manhood nature, has suffered hypostatically in His flesh, died and resurrected: *the Word, thus, Leontius says, suffered because of His hypostasis, since it is in His hypostasis where he appropriated suffering manhood human as an addition to His unchanging nature, therefore what is said about His changing essence can be applied to the hypostasis.*⁵⁵

It is clear the fact that the hypostasis of the Logos pre-exists before the Incarnation and after the Incarnation it also became the hypostasis of manhood nature. In this case, manhood nature, belonging to the hypostasis of the Logos is Godhead and imbued with divine energies, becoming a source of divine life itself. Therefore, Leontius says: *due to the organic union (συμφυσιᾷ) with God, suddenly, through an intimate union (συνανακρατικῆς) according to the hypostasis, the wealth of Godhead entered the man who was in Christ τῷ κυριακῷ ἀνθρώπῳ), His particular manhood nature (εἰς τὴν ἰδικήν*

supposes the fact that God as personal and transcendent being, is in no way the prisoner of His own nature, His existence being capable of Godhead external acts to His nature, which means that He can freely and personally undertake a full human existence while he still remains God (Meyendorff, *Le Christ dans la Theologie byzantine*, pgs. 102-103).

55 Leontius, *Adv. Nest.* VII, 9, PG 86, 1768 A.

φυσιν αὐτου); whereas manhood, those who come from the seed of Adam, body of the Church ... they do not participate than through contemplation of the natural union of man who is the Lord and who was the first of us to receive the benefits such as the leaven lump, as Unique Son⁵⁶, first born⁵⁷, as a member of the body, as head ...,⁵⁸ unique Mediator between God and men⁵⁹, the man Jesus Christ, our Lord.⁶⁰

This latter argument is the basis of the soteriological doctrine of our Godhead, since the manhood nature of the Logos, hypostasized in Him, is penetrated by His divine energies, becoming the leaven that leavens the lump of all manhood itself. As it can be seen, there is no question in this work of connecting any *created grace*. Definitely, this teaching is totally unfamiliar to the Fathers' thinking and to the definition of the Council of Chalcedon, precisely because manhood nature itself is made to achieve real communion with God and participate in the uncreated divine life. Moreover, St. Maximus, as we shall see, through His teaching about the two works and two wills of Christ, will prove that the participation of manhood nature in the Godhead is not in any way marked by passivity, but on the contrary it has a genuine restored activity.⁶¹

† His Eminence Professor Dr. Irineu Ion Popa

56 John, 1:18.

57 Romans, 8:29.

58 Ephesians 1: 22.

59 I Timothy 2:5.

60 Leontius, *Adv. Nest.* I, 18, PG 86, 1468BC.

61 Meyendorff, *Le Christ dans la Theologie byzantine*, p. 106.

Introduction

Daco-Roman Christianity – Particularities and theological perspectives

The emergence of the historical-theological heritage of Daco-Roman Christianity is mostly related to the North-Danubian territories, namely the ancient imperial province of Scythia Minor (or Lesser Scythia). Identified with present Dobruja, on the left or western side of the Pontus Euxinus, this space of cultural-religious interference has become over time “*of a great ecumenical interest.*” The historical journey favoured a rapid development of the Christian element, and the region knew from early ages a thorough church organization, reinforced by Diocletian and Licinius’ fierce persecutions. It is also known the fact that “the Daco-Roman Christians, the ancestors of the Romanians from nowadays, setting up the first Orthodox Metropolitan of the Romanian Church around the year 500, have unquestionably bestowed upon it their ecumenical evangelical and patristic attitude; by spreading and flourishing the Body of Christ in a province, it got integrated into the great ecumenical area of the undivided Church in the first millennium.”⁶²

The theological work of the Daco-Roman saints and fathers on the territory of the Roman Empire thus, generated an “*ecumenical environment and background*”, enriched by influences, ideas, and confessional intercessions. In this respect, we should mention “the correspondence between Saint Basil (Letters 155, 164 and 165) and the illustrious governor of Scythia, Iunius Soranus as well as with Bishop Bretanion of Tomis concerning the sending of Saint Sava’s remains from Gothia to Cappadocia”⁶³, as well as other relations, interactions

62 Rev. Prof. G. Coman, *Theologians and theology in Scythia Minor, between IV-VI centuries*, in “Romanian Orthodox Church” Magazine, (BOR), No. 3-4/1978, p.784.

63 I.G. Coman, *Old-Romanian Church Writers*, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1979, p. 66.

and influences. There are, therefore, several great Daco-Roman theologians, who succeeded in becoming famous even in the Eternal City. Their activity and writings which remained as a testimony in the Church treasury were taken into account by the highest church authorities of those times, their written theological, missionary and apologetical importance being recognized up to the present days. Starting from this point, we could speak about a true theological heritage preserved over the centuries, playing a huge essential role in building up a genuine spiritual and cultural tradition of the Romanian people.⁶⁴

There are, therefore, three confessors from whom we have inherited “authentic theology pages or translations from Greek or into Latin theological works: St. John Cassian, Dionysius the Little and John Maxentius, the latter belonging to the group of Scythian monks. All of them were monks and more than half of their lives, and their works were written outside Scythia Minor, but always within the boundaries of the Roman or Byzantine Empire.”⁶⁵

Over time, there have been several attempts to illustrate this Daco-Roman particularity in the theology of our ancient age fathers. In addition to the translation of the most important writings of the Daco-Roman fathers, Romanian theology brings its contribution due to a comprehensive patristic analysis of this

64 “What makes a nation, says Mircea Vulcanescu, is the reality which lies at the joint between metaphysics and history, a fate unit, a destiny unit over the centuries, unit for which land, blood, past, law, tradition, language, customs, habits, reason, beliefs, virtue, work, settlements, harbour, pain, joy and living signs all together, dominions and oppressions are only assurances, signs of recognition, seals, grounds. A nation’s main background is different according to each epoch, with the main recognition mark of those who create it” (Mircea Vulcanescu, *The Romanian Dimension of Existence*, edited by Marin Diaconu, Romanian Cultural Foundation Publishing House, Bucharest, 1991, p. 15).

65 Rev. Prof. G. Coman, *Theologians and theology in Scythia Minor....*, pp. 784-785.

symbiosis of theology and confession. Beginning with the interwar period, Rev. Prof. Ioan G. Coman, professor of Patristics at the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest, has remarkably succeeded in illustrating the synthesis element of Daco-Roman theology in our country. Moreover, it is I.G. Coman who speaks about *ecumenicity particularity* illustrated in the theology of the Daco-Roman fathers as coalescence between the East and the West. Oltenia's Metropolitan Nestor Vornicescu, in turn, was very much concerned about "The first patristic writings on our territory", a key masterpiece which validates once more the essential and peculiar role of our ancient theologians' works during the first Christian ages. In addition to these synthesis approaches, we must also mention Rev. Prof. Gheorghe Dragulin's thorough research work dedicated to St. Dionysius Exiguus.

Theology and confessional work's synthetical specificity carried out by the Daco-Roman parents in the Eternal City is completed by a great Christological piece of work. This work was illustrated by several important approaches, which are also part of the Romanian theology. These are as it follows: the Theopaschite issue, which is to be identified in the formula of the Scythian monks: "*One of the Trinity suffered in the flesh on the Cross.*" Considered to be a solution of reconciliation in the context of doctrinal disorders in the first centuries, the formula of the monks from Dobruja, led by Saint John Maxentius, is historically-dogmatically analysed by Father Prof. Dumitru Staniloae. In turn, His Eminence Irineu Ion Popa, PhD, the Metropolitan of Oltenia, interprets Scythian monks' Christological importance in a wider context, by particularly using the formulation "Chalcedon Christology after the Chalcedon Synod."

I. "The Confessional School": The Holy Martyr Justin the Philosopher in the Eternal City

The confessional activity of the Church in the Eternal City claims its roots in the apologetic context generated by *the Holy Martyr Justin the Philosopher*.⁶⁶ His writings are of a very

66 "The most prominent second century Christian Greek apologist," St. Justin Martyr and Philosopher (c.100-c. 165) was born in Flavia Neapolis, the old Shechem, his parents were pagans. He had a very rigorous and elevated education in the most important schools of the time, being particularly attracted to philosophy. He thought philosophy to be the science which can offer him the answer about the truth of his personal existence. He tried to find common grounds with his personality in different schools: Stoic, Peripatetic or Pythagorean, but he did not find anything that should satisfy him. He sought for a while to identify himself with the teachings of the Pythagoreans, but this also failed in pleasing his heart. The revelation about "Who is the Truth?" begins in the moment of the mysterious encounter with the wise old man on the seashore. Since that moment on, the fire for Christ's love has begun to burn with power in his heart, discovering in the teaching of Scripture "the only sure and profitable philosophy," calling himself a true "philosopher" and apologist of the Christian Church. Missionary and skilful catechist, St. Justin starts a theology school at Rome, where names as Tatian the Assyrian and, in some critics' opinions, Saint Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon are some of his disciples. Because of the pagan philosopher Crescens' intrigues, ashamed of his words, the Holy Father underwent a martyr's death; he was beheaded in 165 under the rule of Junius Rusticus. His written legacy (among which we distinguish the two Apologies and the Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, which have also been translated into Romanian) is extremely representative for the Orthodox Apologetics, presenting him as "a dynamic and lucid mind, always ready to formulate answers and arguments in favour of Christian faith. He tried to create a bridge between Christian thinking and pagan philosophy, always trying to tip the scales in the favour of the revealed truth" (see: Remus Rus, *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Christian Literature in the First Millennium*, Lidia Publishing House, Bucharest, 2003, pp. 476-479; Rev. Ionita Apostolache, *Orthodox Apologetics confession and apostolate*, Oltenia Metropolitan, Craiova, 2017, p. 111-114).

special charm, bringing together the conceptual nature of Greek philosophy and the mystery of the new theology emerged from the Body of the Church. This beginning of development from philosophy to the authentic apologetic confession of the Church is partly the accomplishment of the great Father Justin. “The practical wisdom of Justin using the rhetoric of his times, and discomfiting false philosophy with its own weapons, is not appreciated by the fastidious Parisian. But the manly and heroic pleadings of the man, for a despised people with whom he had boldly identified himself; the intrepidity with which he defends them before despots, whose mere caprice might punish him with death; above all, the undaunted spirit with which he exposes the shame and absurdity of their inveterate superstition and reproaches the memory of Hadrian whom Antoninus had deified. . . . He wore his philosopher’s gown after his conversion, as a token that he had attained the only true philosophy. And seeing, that after the conflicts and tests of ages, it is the only philosophy that lasts and lives and triumphs, its discoverer deserves the homage of mankind.”⁶⁷

His works are among the most important patristic writings that have been left to us from the second century. He consecrated the apologetic style. His apologetic papers illustrate a strong piety of Christians in the first centuries, best defining the subject of pagan conflicts. Some of them were lost, but the ones which survived divided into three categories:

67 *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, translation of *The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, editors rev. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, vol. I, “The Apologetic Fathers – Justin Martyr – Irenaeus”, WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, p. 160.

(1). The first category includes those which are unquestionably genuine: his two Apologies⁶⁸ and Dialogue with Trypho the Jew.⁶⁹

(2). The second category refers to his half-controversial works, in terms of origin, ascribed to Justin by some critics and ascribed not by others:

- (i). The Discourse to the Greeks;
- (ii). Hortatory to the Greeks;
- (iii). On the Sole Government of God;
- (iv). The Epistle to Diognetus;
- (v). Fragments from A Work on the Resurrection &
- (vi). Other Fragments.

(3). The third category consists of the writings that do not belong to the Holy Father, such as:

- (i). An Exposition of the True Faith;
- (ii). Replies to the Orthodox;
- (iii). Christian Questions to the Gentiles;

68 “There is a curiosity about St. Justin’s two apologies which survived nowadays. Eusebius mentioned the two Apologies, one written under the reign of Antoninus Pius, the other one under Marcus Aurelius. Critics have long debated the fact that there is only one text. Some have claimed that what we call today as the second Apology is the Foreword to the former, and thus that the latter would have been lost. Others have tried to prove the fact that we can talk about two distinct texts from the very beginning, but that Eusebius was wrong, by stating the fact that the second was written under Marcus Aurelius; others too claim that we have in the two Apologies the two mentioned by Eusebius, and that the first is the first and the second is the second one” (*Ibidem*, p. 161).

69 Certain criticisms raised questions about the authority of St. Justin on the Dialogue with Trypho, but they proved to be unsustainable (*Ibidem*, p. 161).

- (iv). Gentile Questions to Christians;
- (v). The Epistle to Zenas and Serenus &
- (vi). A Refutation of Certain Doctrines of Aristotle.

The date of the last two writings is uncertain, whilst the researchers have no doubt that the first were written after the Council of Nicaea. It is also stated that, immediately after the Reformation, Calvin and others appealed to the first as a genuine writing of Justin.

Martyr St. Justin Philosopher was first of all a pioneer. His confessional work was carried on by his disciples, most of them trained in Rome, in the school of theology he himself set up. Here is also the place where he taught others that the Truth, which he himself had found after thorough quests, is Christ, and that through him “the art of living virtuously” is revealed. Rome is also the place where he wrote his apologetic work, by which he proved to the Roman emperors that “the divine project of creation and salvation, which is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the Logos, that is the Eternal Word, Eternal Reason, creative Reason.” Every person created in the “image of God” shares a “seed” and brings fruit in truth. Thus, “the same Logos who revealed Himself as a prophetic figure to the Hebrews of the ancient Law, also manifested Himself partly in “seeds of truth” in Greek philosophy.”⁷⁰ These two prophetic coordinates are highly considered by the Holy Father to be the grounds of his apologetics, helping him to “claim with power and clarity that he had found in Christianity *the only sure and profitable philosophy*.”⁷¹

Given the importance of his thinking from the earliest Christian ages and his role as a confessional teacher of the

70 Pope Benedict XVI, *The Fathers of the Church - from Clement of Rome to Augustine of Hippo*, edited by Joseph T. Linhard, SJ, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Michigan/Cambridge, UK, p. 11.

71 John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, no. 38.

hypostatic Truth school, “Justin, and with him other apologists, adopted the clear stance taken by the Christian faith for the God of the philosophers against the false gods of the pagan religion. It was the choice of the Truth of being against the myth of custom. Several decades after Justin, Tertullian defined the same option of Christians with a lapidary sentence that still applies: “Dominus noster Christus veritatem se, non consuetudinem, conominavit – Christ our Lord said that He is truth/not fashion.”⁷²

The last confession of the great master of the Apostolic School of the Eternal City is accounted in *The Martyrdom*, along with his disciples Chariton, Charites, Paenon and Liberianus, who also suffered at Rome. The text is characterized by a very special beauty, consisting of the Holy Father’s confession before the torture. In addition to the general note, the words of the great apologist are also of a priceless doctrinaire importance, confirming the significance of faith doctrines sorted out during the first Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325). We quote only parts of this text: It is also included in PSB 11, pg. 48 et seq.

“In the time of the lawless partisans of idolatry, wicked decrees were passed against the godly Christians in town and country, to force them to offer libations to vain idols; and accordingly, the holy men, having been apprehended, were brought before the prefect of Rome, Rusticus by name. And when they had been brought before his judgment-seat, Rusticus the prefect said to Justin, “Obey the gods at once, and submit to the kings”. Justin said, “To obey the commandments of our Saviour Jesus Christ is worthy neither of blame nor of condemnation”. Rusticus the prefect said, “What kind of doctrines do you profess?” Justin said, “I have endeavoured to learn all doctrines; but I have acquiesced at last in the true doctrines, those namely of the Christians, even though they do

72 Pope Benedict XVI, *The Fathers of the Church*, p. 12.

not please those who hold false opinions". Rusticus the prefect said, "Are those the doctrines that please you, you utterly wretched man?" Justin said, "Yes, since I adhere to them with right dogma". Rusticus the prefect said, "What is the dogma?" Justin said, "That according to which we worship the God of the Christians, whom we reckon to be one from the beginning, the maker and fashioner of the whole creation, visible and invisible; and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who had also been preached beforehand by the prophets as about to be present with the race of men, the herald of salvation and teacher of good disciples. And I, being a man, think that what I can say is insignificant in comparison with His boundless divinity, acknowledging a certain prophetic power, since it was prophesied concerning Him of whom now I say that He is the Son of God. For, I know that of old the prophets foretold His appearance among men." Rusticus the prefect said, "Where do you assemble?" Justin said, "Where each one chooses and can: for do you fancy that we all meet in the very same place? Not so; because the God of the Christians is not circumscribed by place; but being invisible, fills heaven and earth, and everywhere is worshipped and glorified by the faithful. " Rusticus the prefect said, "Tell me where you assemble, or into what place do you collect your followers?" Justin said, "I live above one Martinus, at the Timiotinian Bath; and during the whole time (and I am now living in Rome for the second time) I am unaware of any other meeting than his. And if any one wished to come to me, I communicated to him the doctrines of truth." Rusticus said, "Are you not, then, a Christian?" Justin said, "Yes, I am a Christian."⁷³

Saint Justin's theology particularity was therefore characterized by dialogue and complementarity fully marked

73 "The Martyrdom of the Holy Martyrs: Justin, Chariton, Cherites and Liberianus", who suffered at Rome, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, pp. 305-306.

by the prophetic spirit of the seminal Logos. His confession was fulfilled in the “Symphony of the Two Testaments.” Therefore, in contrast to Hebrew tradition, the Holy Father’s contribution does not consist in a systematic explanation of the Old Testament in terms of the New Testament, and vice versa.⁷⁴ But he goes beyond the sovereign worth of Law, anchoring himself in the saving hope of the Incarnate. Thus, a strong relation with the prayer tradition of the Church martyrdom has been inherited from the Holy Father, which has been enriched with elements of ancient philosophy. Out of his work we get the idea, that, born out of the desire to “rehabilitate Christians of the allegations according to which they were atheists, he deeply develops a cult of the Father, the Son, the angel armies and the prophetic spirit (*Apology* I, VI, PSB 2, p. 29).” The Holy Father does not separate the cult of the angels from Christ, idea which was later adopted by Christian art. Athenagoras expresses his ideas in a similar way, and Origen, who also recognizes the cult, “warns the believers about exaggerations.”⁷⁵

For that reason, we understand that St. Justin was not concerned only with rejecting the attacks against Christianity and the Jews’ objections in the days of his life. But he had also wanted to prove the fact that philosophy has indeed a “spiritual power”, fulfilled and perfected within Christian faith. In other words, by showing that Christian religion is “the true philosophy,” the Holy Father “made one of the most important testimony to Christianity that has come down from the second century.” On the other hand, historically speaking, the importance of his thinking is due to the fact that the Holy Father “belonged to a generation that was still in touch with those who had known our Lord’s Apostles; but these advanced in years

74 *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, edited by Rene Latourelle and Rino Fisichella, English-language edition edited by Rene Latourelle, Crossroad, New York, 1990, p. 43.

75 Dom Cabrol, *La Priere des premiere chretiens*, Chez Bernard Grasset, Paris, 1929, p. 213.

and everywhere in the Church new men, new thoughts were arising to do battle for the faith.”⁷⁶

St. Martyr Justin Philosopher’s thinking was therefore further continued by the specificity of the theological school established in Rome.⁷⁷ Here he built a true institution of Christian doctrine “*with a claim of method and theological argumentation.*”⁷⁸ Due to this school, an opening of theology to dialogue has developed since the early Christian centuries. It was thus possible for the Church Fathers that based on their martyrly confession of Roman persecution to carry on and be able to give a written form to their own experiences, which later became working in the life of Christian communities all over the world (*oecumen*). In this sense, it must be known the fact that St. Justin is “the first post-apostolic author whose writings are of any considerable size. He was acquainted with the Church at Rome as well as with other Christian centres, at a time when Christian oral and written tradition still existed side by side, although slowly the written documents alone were coming to be held as authoritative.”⁷⁹

This disposition to confession and sacrifice is reflected both by the life and works of the *Daco-Roman theologians* who have preserved and shared through their experiences in the Eternal City a great part of the apologetical ideas of St. Martyr Justin Philosopher. In Saint Justin’s masterpieces, we encounter for the first time “*the image of the Christian philosopher*” and his work is also the place where we witness “the encounter between

76 L.W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr - His Life and Thought*, Chambridge University Press, 1967, pp. 4-5.

77 *Writings of Saint Justin Martyr*, Thomas B. Falls translation, Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1948.

78 *Greek Apologists Saint Justin the Martyr and Philosopher*, translation, introduction, indices, and notes by Rev. Prof. T. Bodogae, PhD; Rev. Prof. Olimp Caciula, PhD; Rev. Prof. D. Fecioru, PhD; IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1997, p. 13.

79 L.W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr His Life and Thought*, p. 53.

Greek culture and Christianity, which produced a synthesis ... influenced the way of thinking that followed ... He makes a great difference in Christian culture This is the reason why, many of the results achieved by his meditation have been preserved through ancient Christianity. Especially, his contemporary successors and theologians (Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus) borrowed from him many doctrinaire elements, and all Greek apologetics, that was structured by Justin, exerted a strong influence over the Latin apologetics (and even over non-apologetic doctrines).⁸⁰

II. St. John Cassian – Scythia Minor’s theologian monk

Saint John Cassian is the universal inspiring model of a complex life experience and ascetic-mystical spirituality. St. Cassian’s birth year seems to be 350 (or 360). There is a debate about his birth place of birth, since there are different opinions. Some of these claim his Daco-Roman origin, coming from Scythia Minor, today Dobruja. The earliest testimony belongs to Gennadius of Massilia, who says that St. John was “Scythian as nation”⁸¹ serving in Constantinople as St. John Chrysostom’s deacon, and then as a priest in Marseilles, where he founded two monasteries, one for men and one for women.⁸² His

80 Claudio Moreschini, *History of Patristic Philosophy*, translated by Alexandra Chesu, Mihai-Silviu Chirila and Doina Ceenica, Polirom Publishing House, Iasi, 2009, p. 73.

81 According to other interpretations, Gennadius’ remark would rather refer to the Scetis Monastery in Egypt, the place where St. John Cassian spent several years (cf. Owen Chadwick, *John Cassian*, second edition, Chambridge University Press, 1968, p. 9).

82 “*Cassianus, natione Scythia, Constantinopolim a Ioanem Magno episcopo diaconus ordinatus, apud Massiliam presbyter, condidit duo id est virorum ac mulierum monasterie, que usque hodie extant*” (*De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis*, c. LXI, PL, t. LVIII, col. 1094-1095); see also: Owen Chadwick, *John Cassian*, Chambridge University Press, 1950, pp. 190-198; Pierre Courcelle, *Late Latin Writers and Their Greek Sources*, Chambridge, MA Harvard University Press,

statement is as reasonable as it can be since he lived in the same time as the Holy Father, and moreover, both of them lived in the same city, Marseilles.⁸³ On the other hand, Patriarch Photios of Constantinople, who had read his work, mentions him in one of his comments, calling him “the Roman”, thus making reference to his Latin origin. This can be easily inferred from his writings, although the Holy Father used Greek language too very well.⁸⁴

The ideas about his “non-scythe”⁸⁵ origin have generally been based on some historical testimonies, his book passages interpretations, or various assumptions. The theologian Theodor Damian adds a logical possibility to understand his relation with Scythia Minor. He speaks about two categories of arguments, which can explain the issue related to the origin of the great patristic teacher: internal and external ones. “The internal ones, he says, could be direct and indirect: direct, related to Cassian’s writings, from which we could clearly see that his origin was not the same as that of the places where he wrote his work, and indirect, related to certain inferences he made, and also general

1969, p. 227; Russeau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church*, 169; Theodor Damian, „Some Christical Considerations and New Arguments Reviewing the Problem of St. John Cassian’s Birthplace”, in *Patristic and Byzantin Review*, nr. 9/1990, p.149-170; Romanian sources: Rev. Alexandru Constantinescu, *About Sf. John Cassian*, in BOR, no. 4-6/1946, p. 219; *Idem*, *Sf. John Cassian the Scythian, not the Roman*, in GB, no. 7-8/1964, pp. 698-705; I.G. Coman, *The Scythians John Cassian and Dionysius the Little and their relations with the Mediterranean world*, in ST, no. 3-4/1975, p. 189-203; Augustine Casidai, *Tradition and theology in Saint John Cassian’s writings*, translation from English by Lucian Filip, Doxologia Publishing House, Iasi, 2015, pp. 22-23.

83 Rev. Alexandru Constantinescu, *About Sf. John Cassian*, p. 219.

84 Photios, in *Bibliotheca code 197*, in Peshening, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (CSEL) 17, p. XCVII; see also Cuper, *Acta Sanctorum*, 463-464A.

85 In *Dictionnaire de Theologie Chatoloque* (DTC) (tome XII, Paris, 1932, p. 1824) P. Godet offers arguments for Saint John Cassian’s Welsh origin.

interpretations of his books' context, which show that his coming to Gaul was not a return home. External arguments are the ones related to other sources and which, in turn, are of two kinds: testimonies and interpretations. These consist first of historical references made by his contemporaries about certain facts of his biography, and secondly, the interpretations and considerations offered by analogies and archaeological discoveries, related to the context of Christianity expansion in the first centuries in different areas of interest for our approach."⁸⁶

“The Scythian Hypothesis” is also confirmed by the famous American theologian, Columba Stewart, a Benedictine monk. He follows the linguistic theory, concluding that “in Cassian’s day, Scythia Minor was a bilingual region where he could have received a classical Latin education in an environment where Greek had a strong presence... Cassian could also have learned Greek when he arrived in Palestine. Whatever his background, he made his way comfortably in the Christian East, where he learned the monastic life and later worked in the Church of Constantinople. Though his destiny lay in the Latin West, he was very much at home in the Greek East.”⁸⁷

The hypothesis of a Welsh origin, as well as other theories, according to which the Holy Father had originated in Syria or Scythopolis, Palestine, were especially fought by Romanian theologians. The Daco-Roman claim of the Holy Father proved to be the closest to reality, with divergent descriptions having the “chance to convince.” Reverend I.G. Coman, a well-known theology professor at the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest,

86 Theodor Damian, *Some critical consideration and New Arguments Reviewing the Problem of St. John Cassian’s Birthplace*, in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* (OCP), Rome, vol. 57/1991, p. 257.

87 Columba Stewart, *Cassian, The Monk, The Ascetic-Mystical Teaching*, translation by Ioan Ica Jr. and Cristian Pop, Deisis Publishing House, Sibiu, 2000, p.35.

illustrates the fact that even since the Saint's time, Scythia Minor, Syria or Palestine developed "close commercial, cultural, etc. relations." Moreover, in some of his *Conferences*, he presents his native places "as some nice regions, with wide uninhabited spaces, covered by deep forests, which would have delighted the monks and provided shelter and existence means as well." The "coldness of unbelief," to which Abba Abraham referred to, is perfectly synonymous to "Cassian's land." On the other hand, Professor Coman argues that "Cassian's reference to the fact that in his province there were almost no monks does not necessarily mean that he refers to the region of Provence in southern Gaul, but as well as to any other region in the Empire. Photios' observation according to which Saint John Cassian was a "Roman by Homeland" does not bring light to our research, but four hundred years after his death, our author was thought to be a genuine Roman by the Orientals, as Cassiodorus would say about Dionysius the Little."⁸⁸

Metropolitan Nestor Vornicescu illustrates his monastic experience, which he unquestionably had contact with during his life spent in the native Scythia. Although, as we have already mentioned, his monastic life here was shyly presented by his contemporaries, "it is known, due to Saint Epiphany, that there were well-organized monasteries here. As a result of the archaeological excavations in Niculitel area, in Dobruja, where the martyrs Zorikos, Attalos, Kamasis and Philipos' remains were discovered, it is necessary, it is a plausible hypothesis, that the basilica of Niculitel became a monastery church even from the fourth century, which has granted this place until recently the name as "the Monastery".⁸⁹ St. John Cassian himself confirms this, clearly mentioning in his writings the fact that he had lived

88 Rev. Prof. Ioan G. Coman, PhD, *Romanian Old Age Church Writers*, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1979, p. 219.

89 Nestor Vornicescu, PhD, *First Patristic Writings...*, p.55.

among monks from an early age “whose exhortations he heard and whose examples he saw.”⁹⁰

II.1. The Oriental Legacy in “Institutes” and Conferences

St. John Cassian’s spiritual experience developed in the same time with his Oriental incursions. The meetings he had with the Oriental parents have presented him as *a true witness of virtue*. His words, kept in the treasury of our Holy Tradition, reveal his practical spirit, warmed by the experiences of the desert fathers. Thus, at the beginning of 380, the Holy Father arrived in Palestine, accompanied by his friend, Saint Germanus.⁹¹ They first arrived in Bethlehem and settled themselves in one of the monasteries near “Church of the Nativity”; one of the monasteries the Holy Emperor Constantine the Great built.⁹² Here they first came into contact with the beauty of oriental monasticism. It is even said that here is the place where the Holy Father and his companion, Germanus, have met here an Abba Pinufius, by name, “who had fled his monastery in the Nile Delta in order to preserve his humility”. He stayed for a while in his cell, but his disciples found out where he was and “track him down and then hauled him home as they had already done once before.” Witnessing all these, in the heart of

90 Migne, PL, tom XLIX, 53-476; CSECL, ed. M. Petschering, tom XVII, 1, 1888, p. 3-231; John Cassien, *Institutions Cenobitiques*, ed. E. Pichery, in col. SC, no. 109, editin de Chef, Paris, 1965.

91 The relationship between the two friends starts in their childhood, when they used to go together “to school, then they joined together the army, and then together again chose the monastic life.” Together still, they went to the desert fathers in the wilderness of Egypt, to Jerusalem and Constantinople. Rome is the place where they are for the last time mentioned together. Here, in 405, Germanus is mentioned for the last time (Prof. Mircea Pacurariu PhD, *Daco-Roman and Roman Saints*, 3rd edition, Trinitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2007, pp. 59-61).

92 Bethlehem monastery, *Inst.* III.4.1.; IV.31; Coll. XI.1&5; XIX.1.3. Germanus, Coll I.1, apud O. Chadwich, *John Cassian*, p. 10.

the two Daco-Roman monks “a thirst for the monasticism to be found only in Egypt”⁹³ unavoidably appeared.

Starting with 390, the two monks arrived in Egypt to visit the monastic settlements of Scetis, Kellia and Nitria and share the mystical experience of the “desert fathers.” Reaching this place, “they were soon converted to Egyptian ideals of the hermit life.”⁹⁴ This period is greatly illustrated in his works, true testimonies and apologies of a complex ascetic-mystical experience.⁹⁵ He offers a comprehensive overview of Palestine and Egypt’s monastic life, as well as priceless insights about the Ascetic-Mystic practices and traditions observed in the monasteries here. The most eloquent proof which confirms his experiences and staying here is represented by his writings.

The importance of the Oriental tradition peculiarity is illustrated by the Holy Father in the text of his *Institutes*,⁹⁶

93 Columba Stewart, *Cassian, The Monk....*, p. 37.

94 Owen Chadwick, *John Cassian*, p. 13.

95 Although there is disagreement about how much time he actually spent in Egypt, no one doubts that we were there...In his monastic writings, Cassian interweaves his direct knowledge with literary sources available to him. Much of the information contained in the *Institutes* and *Conferences* is unique to him and is based evidently on his own experiences. (Columba Stewart, *Cassian, The Monk....*,p.37.)

96 The work “*De Institutis coenobiorum et de octo principalium vitiorum remediis*” (*On The Institutes Of The Coenobia And The Remedies For The Eight Principal Faults*), in 12 books, was composed at the request of Pope Castor in Aptulia (France) in 420. The first four of them, preceded by a note of the bishop Castor and a foreword, offer a general description of the ascetic-mystical life, recalling about chanting, the monks’ clothing, or about those who had been recently received in the community. In his last eight books, the Holy Father insists on explaining the eight evil thoughts, a fourth century Eastern legacy, based on the Evagrius theology formulation. See PSB 57 (in Migne, PL, XLIX, 53-476, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (CSEL), XVII, 1, 1888, p. 3-231; Jean Cassien, *Institutiones cenobitiques*, ed. Pichery, Paris, 1965; *Filocalia I*, Ed. Humanitas, 2008, p. 96; William Harmless, *The New Westminster Dictionary of Church History*, vol. I, Editor Robert Benedetto, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, London, pp. 127-128).

accomplishing the information acquired due to his own spiritual experience. In this regard, he finds appropriate for a monk to wear a certain kind of clothing and “continually”⁹⁷ dip into reading the holy books. “And so, he says, I think it best to set the most ancient system of the fathers which is still observed by the servants of God throughout the whole of Egypt, so that your new monastery in its untrained infancy in Christ may be instructed in the most ancient institutions of the earliest fathers.”⁹⁸ “This first comprehensive writing of St. John Cassian, says Metropolitan Nestor Vornicescu, written around 420, had an overwhelming role especially in what concerns the structure of patristic age Western monasticism. Saint Benedict of Nursia’s well-structured and thorough work as well as that of the other Western monasteries heads were developed basing especially on the organizational and spiritual precepts set up by St. John Cassian. The Cassian works on the organization and monastic life specificity played the same role in the Western Europe as the rules of St. Basil the Great played in the Eastern.”⁹⁹

Beyond the formal aspect of the first part of his *Institutes*, in his second part, thought in the last eight books¹⁰⁰, the Holy

97 Cf. I Tes. 5, 17.

98 Saint John Cassian, *Selective writings: Institutes and Conferences*, in PSB 57, translation by Prof. Vasile Cojocaru and Prof. David Popescu, foreword, introduction and notes by Prof. Nicolae Chitescu, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest 1990, p.121; see also St. John Cassian, “On the eight thoughts”, in col. Philokalia, vol. I, translation from Greek, introduction and notes by Rev. Prof. Dumitru Staniloae, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2018.

99 Nestor Vornicescu, *Our literature’s first patristic writings*, pp. 54-55.

100 A more accurate translation of the title of Cassian’s *Institutes* would be: “About the Way of Life in Monastic Communities and about the Remedies against the Eight Thoughts of Evil”. Its content concerns on the one hand the outer side of monastic life (books I-IV) as we have already illustrated, but also an inner, spiritual dimension, by the reference that St. John Cassian makes to the eight thoughts of evilness: covetousness, fornication, avarice, anger, sorrow, acedia, or “anxiety of heart”, vain glory and anger (Jean-Claude Guy, Jean Cassien, *Vie et doctrine*, p.29.

Father carries out an inner analysis on the theory of *the eight principal faults*, a fourth century Oriental legacy, which had been formulated in the Evagrian theology before.¹⁰¹ Along with this remark, Saint John Cassian succeeded in introducing also the Evagrian mysticism and ascetism later in Southern Gaul.¹⁰² Therefore, in his words addressed to Bishop Castor, he manages to build up a complete analysis of the passions, also indicating spiritual remedies for salvation. In this sense, he emphasises the idea that an increased appetite for food (*greed*) brings the body close to the passion of *fornication*, “For it is not only the quality, but also the quantity of food taken which dulls the keenness of the mind, and when the soul as well as the flesh is surfeited, kindles the baneful and fiery incentive to vice. No one may be overburdened beyond the measure of his appetite, by gluttony.”¹⁰³ On the other hand, the separation from anger, sorrow, vain glory and pride has the role to purge the whole soul as “For it is impossible for a full belly to make trial of the combat of the inner man: nor is he worthy to be tried in harder battles, who can be overcome in a slight skirmish.”¹⁰⁴

Referring to *the spirit of pride and lust*, St. John Cassian says that it looks like a war that goes between soul and body.

101 Saint John Cassian, *On the eight principal faults*, p. 96.

102 In the book “*Conference on Presenting the Eight Principal Faults*”, St. John groups the eight evil thoughts into four pairs: gluttony and fornication – natural vice committed through bodily action; avarice and anger – vices caused by external circumstances, which consume the soul; sadness and boredom – unnatural vices caused by internal circumstances, vain glory and pride – unnatural vices committed in thoughts apart from bodily action. This Greek-Latin original list, has been largely used in Western monastic environments. In reality, it was replaced by Pope Gregory the Great’s seven deadly sins list. The latter (sins) replace faults which dissipate their monastic specificity and thus the ultimate object of their oppression: the accomplishment of inner peace necessary to contemplation and prayer. (Saint John Cassian, *On the eight principal faults*, p. 19.)

103 Saint John Cassian, *On the eight principal faults*, p. 96.

104 Saint John Cassian, *On the eight principal faults*, p. 100.

Not even when it sleeps is the soul allowed to rest by this demon. Fornication demons are compared to the “children of Babylon”, who are presented in the song of the Israelites’ exodus. In this sense, the Holy Father urges: “Let us crush all sinful thoughts on the earth, which is in our hearts according the teaching of the Lord, and while they are still babies, the children of Babylon, that is, cunning thoughts, massacre them by smashing them by the stone which is Christ.” According to his advice, gaining virtue is achieved by purging our soul, which follows the “fear of God.” If the passions of wrath and lust are to be found in flesh ever since our birth, love of money, i.e. covetousness is something outside our own substance. It can be easily cut off, if it there is “struggle and mindfulness”.¹⁰⁵ “For, he complains that what is provided in the monastery is not sufficient and can scarcely be endured by a sound and sturdy body. What is he to do if ill health comes on, and he has no special store of his own to support him in his weakness? He says that the allowance of the monastery is but meagre, and that there is the greatest carelessness about the sick: and if he has not something of his own so that he can look after the wants of his body, he will perish miserably... And so, when he has bamboozled himself with such thoughts as these, he racks his brains to think how he can acquire at least one penny. Then he anxiously searches for some special work which he can do without the Abbot knowing anything about it. And selling it secretly, and so securing the coveted coin, he torments himself worse and worse in thinking how he can double it.”¹⁰⁶

The spirit of anger is a consequence of love for pleasure. The prophet teaches, “Be angry, and do not sin”¹⁰⁷, referring here to the urge to ignite the anger on the passion and the evil

105 Saint John Cassian, *On the eight principal faults*, p. 104.

106 This disease, the Holy Father also points out, has three roots: the monk’s tendency to heap up what he does not have in the world, the regret of the wealth he has renounced, and his fear of poverty. Saint John Cassian, *On the eight principal faults*, p. 104.

thoughts planted by the enemy in the soul. That is why God commands man to break from himself, not only the anger with the thing, but also the wrath of consciousness, precisely in order not to utter angry words. “It cannot possibly be made a temple for the Holy Ghost”, says Saint John Cassian, “while the spirit of anger resides in us. And above all, having before our eyes the uncertain condition of mankind, we should realize daily that we are soon to depart from the body, and that our continence and chastity, our renunciation of all our possessions, our contempt of wealth, our efforts in fastings and vigils will not help us at all, if solely on account of anger and hatred eternal punishments are awarded to us by the judge of the world.”¹⁰⁸

The spirit of dejection is like the worm of the wood which digs into the soul bearing it away from salvation. However, Saint John Cassian also speaks of a good sadness, the long after God. For this reason, the monk “worketh repentance steadfast unto salvation is obedient, civil, humble, kindly, gentle, and patient, as it springs from the love of God, and unweariedly extends itself from desire of perfection to every bodily grief and sorrow of spirit.”¹⁰⁹ Further, Saint John Cassian shows that the spirit of *laziness* is closely related to that of sadness, as they work together on the soul. It appears in the time of fast, especially when reading the Holy Scriptures, says the Holy Father. In order to banish this thought, the Fathers in the wilderness of Egypt did not allow the monks to remain without work. They believed that due to the patience of work, the monk could get rid of laziness, thus earning his food and helping the poor.

According to St. John Cassian, *vain glory* is a spirit that takes many shapes, which can easily be overlooked. It manifests itself in many forms: by voice, by word, by silence, by work, by

107 Cf. Ps. 4:4.

108 Saint John Cassian, *On the eight principal faults*, p. 114.

109 Saint John Cassian, *On the eight principal faults*, p. 115.

vigilance, by prayers, by readings even by long term patience.¹¹⁰ Lastly, *pride* is in the Holy Father's opinion the worry which wears out the perfect ones, the ones who have climbed higher on the scale of virtues. They are the ones that have to collapse.

In his *Institutes*, St. John Cassian is notably thankful to his Alexandrian teachers and especially to Evagrius Ponticus. His thinking is thus enriched by beautiful mystical colours, ranged positively from the cleaning faith of passions to the need and the perseverance in virtue. His mystical theology is thus streamed by the consciousness of a permanent ascendancy in virtue. However, in St. John Cassian's thinking "there is no codified virtue catalogue." Therefore, "God is the One who calls man to perfection and guides him by the voice that he himself chose to follow."¹¹¹

The Holy Father proves the same zeal in his *Conferences*¹¹², where he points out his "*personal encounters with several*

110 "For where the devil cannot create vainglory in a man by means of his well-fitting and neat dress, he tries to introduce it by means of a dirty, cheap, and uncared-for style. If he cannot drag a man down by honour, he overthrows him by humility. If he cannot make him puffed up by the grace of knowledge and eloquence, he pulls him down by the weight of silence. If a man fasts openly, he is attacked by the pride of vanity" (Saint John Cassian, *On the eight principal faults*, p. 118).

111 Jean-Claude Guy, *Jean Cassien. Vie et doctrine spirituelle*, en Collection "Theologie, Pastorale et Spiritualite", IX, P. Lethielleux, Paris, 1961, p. 41.

112 "*Conlationes Sanctorum Patrum XXIV*" (*Collationes patrum in Scithico eremo commorantium* – "Conferences or Discussion with the Fathers XXIV"), written between 420-429, includes *24 spiritual conversations* with the fathers and needers in the wilderness of Egypt (as the number of the 24 elders in Revelation chapter 4, 4-11). For each of them, the author develops a single topic, such as: poverty, prayer, chastity, etc. The text falls in three successive groups, as the number of the three monastic centers which the Holy Father visited, together with Germanus, in Egypt. In his XIII *Conference*, written in 420, St. John Cassian criticizes Blessed Augustine's gift theology. The response comes from Prosper of Aquitaine, an Augustinian disciple who accuses St. John Cassian

spiritual fathers.”¹¹³ In fact, there is a close relation between this work and his *Institutes*. Columba Stewart notes that “while he was writing *the Institutes*, Cassian had already *the Conferences* in his mind.”¹¹⁴ Simply stated, the first Cassian work deals especially with *the outside man*¹¹⁵, whilst the second is dedicated to *the inner man*, along with his preoccupations for spiritual evolution. Therefore, it can be inferred from this point that the two works “are two sides of one coin. They are more than complementary: both were essential reading for Cassian’s entire audience, cenobites and anchorites alike... Both at the beginning of the *Institutes* and at the end of the *Conferences*, his purpose is the same: not to dazzle his readers with tales of wonder-working monks, but to support them in the emendation of their own faults and the pursuit of monastic perfection”¹¹⁶.

At a first glance, we might believe that his work is limited to a simple interface presentation of what he has learnt during this period of interaction with the desert fathers. However, things are not like this at all. Taking into account the context of these notes, the Holy Father creates an important relation between the East and the West. He is thus the apologist of a genuine tradition that he promotes, spreads and shares in the Gaul of his days. That is also the reason why his *Conferences* need a “review interpretation”¹¹⁷, in which to emphasize more their religious dimension, as a result of the mystical experiences experienced by the author.

of “semi-Pelagianism” (Migne, PL, XLIX, 477-1328; Jean Cassien, *Conferences*, I-IV, en SC 42, Edition du Cerf, Paris, 1955; William Harmless, *The New Westminster Dictionary of Church History*, vol. I, p. 128).

113 K. Suso Frank, *John Cassian*, in *Studia Patristica*, vol. XXXIII, Leuven, 1997, p. 427.

114 Columba Stewart, *Cassian, The Monk*, p.69.

115 Cf. Inst. 2, 9, 1.

116 Columba Stewart, *Cassian, The Monk*, p.71.

117 Augustine Casiday, *Tradition and theology in St. John Cassian*, translation from English by Lucian Filip, Doxologia, Publishing House, Iasi, 2015, p. 24.

Saint John Cassian's "ecumenical understanding"¹¹⁸ is actually a result of his mystical experiences lived in Egypt and Palestine. This is the reason why, guided by the grace of the Holy Spirit, the saint meets the fathers to whom he dedicates his *Conferences*: Abba Moses (I-II), Abba Paphnutius (III), Abba Daniel (IV), Abba Serapion (V), Abba Theodore (VI), Abba Serenus (VII-VIII), Abba Isaac (IX-X), Abba Teonas (XXI-XXIII) and Abba Abraham (XXIV). The "24 Spiritual Conferences" are also divided into three groups, by the regions the Holy Father visited: 1. I-X are related to the inhabitants of Scetis; 2. XI-XVII are related to the inhabitants of the salty marshes near Paephysis and 3. XVIII-XXIV are related to the inhabitants of Diolcos and Panephysis.¹¹⁹

Cassian's ascetic-mythical thought is reflected mainly reflected by his *Conferences*' topics. Their foundation is eminently scriptural, fully emphasizing the Holy Father's theological art.¹²⁰ He thus continues the ideal of spiritual ascendancy, going beyond the passions in terms of useful soul counsels, achieved due to fathers' experiences. He confers theological value to virtues such as mercy, peace, or purity and from this point of view he integrates perfectly into the Alexandrian tradition of St. Clement, Evagrius, Rufinus, or

118 Rev. Prof. Ioan G. Coman, *Ancient Age Romanian Writers*, IBMBOR, Bucharest, 1979, pp.217-267.

119 Owen Chadwick, *John Cassian*, p. 15.

120 Monastic theology scriptural grounds promoted by St. John Cassian is highly illustrated by writings. Due to their content, they are in fact "a collection of quotations and biblical experiences." Only in the above-mentioned work we have a number of 1617 references from the Holy Scripture. "The great number of Scriptural quotations in his work thus demonstrate a deep knowledge of the Holy Scripture and the awareness of its necessity for real life along all the journey towards perfection assumed by monks" (Damian Gheorghe Patrascu, *Biblical Sources of Monastic Doctrine in John Cassian's Spiritual Conversations*, Galaxia Gutemberg Publishing House, 2010, p. 19).

Palladius. Inspired by them, he assimilates the concept of *apatheia* as “bodily lust stillness, or more exactly, as absence of outer body opposing actions.”¹²¹

Then he easily identifies the *purpose* (telos) of spiritual life. In order to achieve it, the Holy Father points out the fact that the monk “*must endure all sort of toils cheerfully.*”¹²² As an earthly order perfection, Cassian illustrates the eternal value of the purpose, starting from the words of the Apostle: “*The benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.*” In order to achieve this, the monk must take into account the means ordained: “purity of the heart, holiness, without which the intended purpose cannot be attained.”¹²³

In order to strengthen his argument on the spiritual life purpose achievement, St. John Cassian uses the scriptural example of Martha and Mary.¹²⁴ His teachings also bear a meditative value, the two biblical characters being present twice in his *Conferences* (I and XXIII). From Columba Stewart’s point of view, “He echoes Origen’s interpretation of the story by seeing Mary as the type of the contemplative disciple who sits at Jesus’ feet “intent on spiritual instruction” (Conf. 1.8.1). She has chosen the “supreme” and “principal” good of “contemplation alone” (*theoria sola*, Conf. 1.8.2.).”¹²⁵ From this point on, St. John Cassian illustrates and emphasizes the fact that man’s thought has to be raised to the high and always directed “to God and to the divine ones.” Thus, bearing in mind the example of the two sisters, he considers that *the care* for many, to which Christ the Saviour makes reference, definitely illustrates *the practical side*, which should not be considered as “the chief

121 Dom E. Pichery, Introduction a Jean Cassien, *Conferences I-VIII*, SC 24/1955, p. 45.

122 Conl. 1.2.3. in PSB 57, p. 308.

123 Conl. 1.5.2. , in PSB 57, p. 310.

124 Cf. Lc. 10, 38-42.

125 Columba Stewart, *Cassian, The Monk*, p.95.

good since it consists not in practical work however praiseworthy and rich in fruits it may be, but in contemplation of Him, which indeed is simple i.e., that contemplation which is first secured by reflecting on a few saints.”¹²⁶ Reaching this level, Saint John Cassian considers contemplation as “the highest goal” for a monk. This is the reason why he always seeks to achieve this ideal. For example, in the *Conference with Abba Moses*, he once again reiterates this *thellos* of spiritual life, pointing out that “this then should be our main effort, and this steadfast purpose of heart we should constantly aspire after.”¹²⁷

Starting from the two examples, it is very easy to follow St. John Cassian’s direction and the distinction he draws between the practical (*praktike*) and theoretical (*theoretike*) spiritual life understanding. Even if both ascetic states define the course of a mystical experience, the Holy Father speaks of the climax of the *theory*¹²⁸, precisely to illustrate contemplation as the ultimate step of monastic life, different from a monk’s struggle sin and thoughts.¹²⁹

Out of his spiritual vision, with fine distinction between *praktike* and *theoretike*, one can clearly understand that St. John Cassian remained faithful to intellectual mystics promoted by Evagrius Ponticus.¹³⁰ However, the French theologian Jean-

126 Conf. 1.8.3. in PSB 57, p. 313.

127 Conf. 1.8.1.

128 “Theoretica puritas ... post multa opera ac laborum stipendia iam quasi in praemio.” “Without this that theoretical purity of which we have spoken cannot be obtained...can after much expenditure of effort and toil attain as a reward for it.” (Conf. 14.9.2).

129 He also considers contemplation as a mind exercise, a capacity to concentrate, also part of the work of a monk’s needs (Nghì Dinh, *The Quest for Contemplation in John Cassian’s Monastic Writings*, Disertatio ad Lauream in Facultate S. Theologiae Apud Pontificiam Universitatem S. Thomae in Urbe, Rome, 2008, p. 37).

130 It is very important to mention the fact that spiritual knowledge is formed of two parts in the mystic of Oriental monasticism: active or

Claude Guy identifies the concept of “burning prayer” or “fire”, present in the Daco-Roman father’s thinking. It characterizes the stillness size of contemplation the moment the needer reaches the highest tops of his spiritual meditation.¹³¹ It rather can be reached by a mystical ascendance, based on a rigorous reading of the Holy Books. In order to focus on this idea, St. John Cassian once again illustrates the elevation that can be reached by the monk who has received from God the gift of spiritual knowledge along with treasuring God’s love, without realizing yet this union with God, and what really his deification means.¹³² Therefore, it is all about a first taste of the joy he will fully enjoy in the heavenly kingdom.¹³³

Another Cassian well-explained topic developed throughout *Conferences*, somewhat from an apologetic point of view, is that of *repentance*. Oriental mystic peculiarity defines repentance theology as a practical necessity of monastic life, which undoubtedly brings together divine grace and human will. When explaining repentance, St. John Cassian is particularly concerned with the practical side of spiritual life. Due to his rich Oriental experiences, he had the chance to observe and experience diversified aspects of this issue. Thus, he openly

practical knowledge and theoretical or contemplative knowledge. Since these separation is to be found also in St. John Cassian’s thinking; being absolutely borrowed from the Evagrian mystic, it is often inferred from his notes that “ascetic, active or practical life aims at purifying the soul of passions and enriching it in virtue. Achieving this goal is not yet the final goal of the monk because ... in the second stage there is the contemplation of God, being a new life, a theoretical or contemplative or unifying life” (Leo Christiani, *Jean Cassien. La spiritualite du desert*, vol. I-II, Edition de Fontenelle, Abbaye S. Wandrille, 1946, p. 15).

131 “*That ardent prayer which is known and tried by but very few , and which to speak more truly is ineffable. The mind enlightened by the infusion of that heavenly light describes in no human and confined language*”, says Saint John Cassian (Conf. 9.25-27,31,32).

132 Jean-Claude Guy, *Jean Cassien. Vie et doctrine spirituelle*, p. 56.

133 Conf. 10.7.

declares himself as a fervent opponent against Pelagianism, who claimed that man is due to his own strength and without the help of divine grace is able to do good.¹³⁴ This issue is thoroughly explained by the Daco-Roman saint in *Conference XIII*, which illustrates one of his sympathies for “a theology of grace that took ascetical effort seriously, while avoiding the fatal extreme of total reliance on ascetical means.”¹³⁵

Holy Egypt and Palestine’s desert places have tremendously influenced our Daco-Roman monk’s theological thinking and spiritual vision. In these places blessed by God, “life was going over history, and there is no doubt that Cassian would have stayed here until the end of his life if events would not have forced him to leave Egypt and flee to Constantinople around 400.”¹³⁶

II.2. John Cassian’s apologetic work in Constantinople and Rome

In the context of Origenist controversy¹³⁷, St. John Cassian is bound to leave the Egypt wilderness and find shelter in Constantinople, together with Saint Germanus and the Tall

134 Jerzy Zieba, *La penitenza nelle opere di Giovanni Cassiano*, Paris Dissertationis Ad Lauream in Facultate S. Theologiae Apud Pontificiam Universitatem S. Thomae de Urbe, Rome, 1977, pp. 39-40.

135 Columba Stewart, *Cassian, The Monk*, p.135.

136 Jean-Claude Guy, *Jean Cassien. Vie et doctrine spirituelle*, p. 21.

137 Origen’s ideas in the Oriental monastic environment spread due to through Evagrius Ponticus. He “schlasticized” the great Alexandrian’s thinking, offering it a place in a “preconceived system”, which led to his conviction. From the German theologian, Aloys Grillmeier’s point of view: “the Evagrian Origenism was the one blamed in the sixth century.” The seven Origenist theses condemned in 553 are the following: 1. Eternal creation and parallel worlds; 2. Souls’ pre-existence and their fall, their imprisonment in bodies as punishment for the previous sins body, soul’s prison; 3. The Angels’ flesh; 4. Rejection of the eternity of hell, apocatastasis and devils’ restoration to eschatology; 5. Rejection of body resurrection; 6. Logos’ subordination to the Father; 7. The Holy Spirit’s subordination to the Logos. Origen was also considered to be the author of the

Brothers. Here is the time and place when and where he meets St. John Chrysostom, who at that time served as a patriarch in the St. Constantine's City. Given this situation, the Holy Father appeared to be reserved with the view to the anthropomorphic issue which concerned particularly the Tall Brothers, but he wholeheartedly received the two Daco-Roman monks whom had at once become part of his. Thus, Germanus was ordained priest and Cassian deacon.¹³⁸

St. John Chrysostom's personality had a great impact and influence on the two. This aspect is evoked by Saint John Cassian at the end of his work "*De Incarnatione*", when he dedicates a bright eulogy to his spiritual Father, pointing out "the value of his orthodoxy" and declaring himself as one of "his disciples."¹³⁹ Thus, he exhorts the disciples: "Remember your ancient teachers, and

doctrine according to which "the Logos works only in rational souls and the Holy Spirit only in saints." This is the *anthropomorphic heresy* the result of this Origenist algorithm. Its first opponent was Saint Epiphanius of Salamis. Then the dispute escalated and spread involving Saint Jerome and Rufinus, the latter one of Origen's greatest admirers and translator of *De Principiis* in Latin. Deeply involved in this issue got the Bishop Theophilus of Alexandria, too. One by one, the Eastern Church's great fathers and scholars among whom St. Basil the Great, St. Cyril of Alexandria, or Saint John Chrysostom were bound to take side in the matter of the Origenist doctrine. St. John Cassian and Germanus, who were in the Egyptian monastic communities at that time, were also involved in this conflict and eventually constrained to leave this area and flee to Constantinople (Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the Christian East, edited by Edward G. Farrugia, S.J., Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome, 2015, p. 1400; Leo Cristiani, *Heresies and Heretics*, Burns&Oates, London, 1959, p. 50).

138 Inst., I, II, c. 18; cf. I.12, c.20, apud E. Pichery, *Introduction*, en SC 42, p. 17.

139 Catherine Broc, „Jean Cassien, „disciple” de Jean Chrysostome”, en vol. *Jean Cassien entre l’Orient et l’Occident. Actes du colloques international organise par New Europe College en collaboration avec Ludwig Boltzmann Gesellschaft (Bucharest, 27-28 septembre 2001)*, ed. Cristian Badilita et Attila Jakab, Polirom Publishing House, Bucharest, 2003, p. 36.

your priests; Gregory whose fame was spread through the world, Nectarius renowned for holiness, John a marvel of faith and purity. John, I say; that John who like John the Evangelist was indeed a disciple of Jesus and an Apostle; and to speak ever reclined on the breast and heart of the Lord. Remember him, I say. Follow him. Think of his purity, his faith, his doctrine, and holiness. Remember him ever as your teacher and nurse, in whose bosom and embraces you as it were grew up. Who was the teacher in common both of you and of me: whose disciples and pupils we are.”¹⁴⁰

Being engaged in an older feud with Theophilus of Alexandria, generated by his election on the seat of Constantinople, the Holy Father exposes himself, sheltering the Tall Brothers to his court.¹⁴¹ The latter had been condemned by Theophilus on the grounds of their relations with the Origenist monk Isidor. In order to have an overview of this issue, the British theologian Norman Russell illustrates the fact that “The Origenist crisis was preceded by the “anthropomorphite controversy”. We have Theophilus’ own statement that he had argued against those who conceived of God in human form in an official ecclesiastical letter. This would have been the festal letter for 399. According to Cassian, it was badly received by the majority of monks in Egypt. In Scetis, only one of the priests who presided over the four churches there would allow the letter to be read. The reports in Socrates and Sozomen that there were serious demonstrations in Alexandria against Theophilus are probably true.”¹⁴² Therefore, this clearly demonstrates the fact that Saints John Cassian and Germanus were in Scetis when the anthropomorphic disputes began.

140 Saint John Cassian, *On the Incarnation of the Lord*, Book VII.31.4, in PSB 57, p.881.

141 This is the starting point for Saint John Cassian’s confessional work and as such his later relation with the Eternal City. The subject of his apology is in fact Saint John Chrysostom, his spiritual father.

142 Norman Russell, *Theophilus of Alexandria*, Routledge, London, and New York, 2007, p. 20.

The situation in Constantinople worsened because of the accusations made by Theophilus against St. John Chrysostom. Although, the Holy Father was the author of several conciliatory epistles addressed to the bishop of Alexandria, asking “as if to a parent and brother” to receive back the Nitrians, in turn, also advising the latter to drop the accusations against the bishop, was accused by Theophilus of “violating the ordinances of the Nicaea canons”.¹⁴³ From this moment on, the dispute on the anthropomorphic issue becomes secondary, the bishop of Alexandria’s main desire being that to unseat St. John Chrysostom from the Constantinopolitan seat. The Saint is judged during the Synod of the Oak (September 403), which was attended by 36 bishops. No less than 29 charges had been compiled, mainly formulated by two deacons that the Saint had unfrocked. Sentenced without right to initiate appeal, St. John Chrysostom was arrested three days later and transported by the authorities across the Bosphorus. As a consequence of the people’s protests and riots and after “an accident happened in the imperial chamber,”¹⁴⁴ he was called back and reinstated in the patriarchal seat. On the Sunday of his return, the Holy Father took his seat on the throne of “Hagia Sophia,” preaching a triumphant sermon, “comparing himself to Abraham, when the Egyptian pharaoh had tried to take his wife, Sara, from him.”¹⁴⁵

143 “I believe that you are not aware of the order of the Canons of Nicaea where they declare: “A bishop may not judge a case beyond his boundaries”; if so (and you know it full well), drop these charges against me. For if it were necessary for me to be judged, it should be by Egyptian judges, and not here with you at the distance of a seventy-five days’ journey”. (Palladios, *Dialogue sur la vie de Jean Chrysostome* (Dial.), VII, tome I, en SC, no 341, introduction, texte critique, traduction and notes par Anne-Marie Malingrey, Edition du Cerf, Paris, 1988, p. 155).

144 *Dial.* VII, 9.

145 Saint John Chrysostom, *Homily after his return from exile*, PG 52, col 443-448. - *A priore exsilio omilia*.

Peace for Saint John Chrysostom was not to last. Thus, after a period when he criticized the Empress Eudoxia, he again had to undergo the judgment of the synod, this time being removed on the grounds that “if any bishop who has been deposed by a synod...he shall no longer have any prospect of restoration in another Synod” (cf. of Antioch, 341, Canon IV). Theophilus took care that the Emperor Arcadius recognized the validity of the Fourth Canon of Antioch and submitted a new request asking that the Holy Father be unseated. In turn, Saint John Chrysostom sent the epistles to Rome, to Pope Innocent, to Bishops Venerius of Milan and Chromatius of Aquileia, wanting to prove the invalidity of his conviction in the Robber Synod of the Oak.¹⁴⁶

His teacher’s exile issue convinced St. John Cassian to head towards Rome, where he arrived together with several believers to communicate the injustice made by the Constantinopolitans to Pope Innocent. Saint John Cassian thus, arrived for the first time in Rome in the spring of 405. Accompanied by St. Germanus, he came here to make an apology for his master, unjustly accused by Theophilus of Alexandria, and took out of his chair. Palladius confirms this, by stating that “*After Palladius arrived Germanus, a priest, and with him Cassianus, a deacon, of John’s party, both discreet men, presenting letters from the whole of John’s clergy. They wrote that their Church had been subjected to violence and tyranny.*”¹⁴⁷ In addition to the fact that he met here Saint Leo the Great, the future pope of Rome, Saint John Cassian took advantage for a while of the entourage of Pope Innocent I. It seems that he is the subject of the two letters sent by Pope Innocent I to Alexander of Antioch (about 414-415)¹⁴⁸, where “*priest Cassian*” is

146 In Dial. III.

147 Palladius, *Dialogus de vita Iohannis Chrysostomi*, edition and translation from Frency by Anne-Marie Mailingrey si Philippe Leclercq, Palladios: *Dialogue sur la vie de Jean Chrysistom*, SC 341-342, Edition de Cerf, Paris. 1988, pp. 76.90-78.95.

148 M. Cappunys, Cassien (Jean), dans *Dictionnaire d’histoire et de geographie ecclesiastique*, II, c. 1319-1348.

mentioned. We understand from this formulation that the Holy Father was ordained a priest in Rome and not in Marseilles, as most critics claimed.¹⁴⁹

His apologetic experience in the Eternal City had as its main purpose Saint John Chrysostom's innocence provability and proving the fact that the accusations made by the Robber Synod were false. Thus, Saint John Cassian becomes the emissary of a very interesting correspondence between the two great parents of the Church, between the East and the West.¹⁵⁰ About his friendship with Saint Leo the Great, Saint John Cassian speaks in his work "*On the Incarnation of the Lord.*" (PSB 57, p. 769, Cassian's foreword to *About the Incarnation*,¹⁵¹ first page) Given all this, "though he lived far from his homeland, the Romanian Orthodox Church claims St. John Cassian, both for its Daco-Roman origin, and for his rich cultural and spiritual legacy, although it belongs to all Christian Church."¹⁵²

II.2.1. Controversy and apologies

If the East of fourth and fifth centuries was deeply concerned with the Christological issue, considering it to be of top importance (also witnessing interpretation and specificity dissimilarities between the Alexandrian and the Antiochian school), in the West, especially in Rome, a more theology of the Cross develops. This is why only in 451, at the Council of

149 Dom E. Pichery, Introduction a Jean Cassien, *Conferences*, I-VIII, p. 18-19.

150 See here: Jean-Claude Guy, *Un dialogue monastique inedit*, en „Revue d'ascétique et de mystique" (RAM), nr. 33/1957, p. 171-188.

151 Columba Stewart, *Cassian, The Monk*, pp. 46-48.

152 Rev. Prof. Mircea Pacurariu, *Daco-Roman and Roman Saints*, p. 59.

Chalcedon, Saint Leo the Great decisively interferes in the controversies on the “*Incarnation of the Word*”¹⁵³, revealing profound concerns for Christology in the Eternal City.¹⁵⁴

In 428, Nestorius the Antiochian is the new patriarch of Constantinople. An atypical character trained at the theological school of Antioch, one of Theodore of Mopsuestia’s disciples, he was the one who gave birth to one of the most debated early Christian ages heresies. His language and Christological thinking generated disorder in the city; and it all started from calling the Mother of God “*anthropotokos*” or “at most *hristotokos*”. This is the general way in which Nestorius illustrates his Christology; the Incarnation of the Son of God was only an illusory one, out of which only the man was born who was at most in a “moral” relation with divinity. The heresiarch thus, generated a split in the only Incarnate Logos’

153 This aspect, somewhat insufficient, can be also identified at the Latins’ doctrinal formulations on the Christological issue: “one person and two natures, simple and clear terms, similar to a catechism formulation.” It is obvious the fact that the Western Christology based only on “simple primary teaching elements, faith ordinances, which were helped by apostolic writings, certain principles inherited in the Holy Mass.” From all this it is very clear that “Christology was not yet a part of the Western theology in the form of the Oriental synods definitions, except in a scholastic manner” (D.O. Rousseau, *Incarnation et Anthropologie en Orient et en Occident, en Irenikon*, tome 26/1953, p. 370-373; p. 363-375).

154 Saint Leo the Great affirms himself after 433 in the context of the Eutychius’ heresy which generated the heresy about the Savior’s single nature, under the name of Monophysitism. “*I accept out of two natures, but I do not accept two natures,*” said the heresiarch (ACO, II, 1.1, 120, 14). “In this time, notes His Eminence Reverend Irineu Popa, in the West, on the Rome’s seat was elected Pope Leo, who, during the conflict with Nestorius, was a simple archdeacon. He is the one who asked Saint John Cassian a Christological opinion on the Nestorian heresy. This time, Leo’s intervention in the Christological dispute was crucial” (*Jesus Christ is the Same, Yesterday and Today, and Forever*, Metropolitan of Oltenia Publishing House, Craiova, 2010, pp. 419-420).

Hypostasis, thus, considering that there must be two separate persons, for the two natures: divine and human.¹⁵⁵ In other words, His Eminence, Reverend Irineu Popa says that Nestorius wanted to prove the fact that: “The Logos cannot be born twice, once eternally and once humanly. Therefore, the human being He dwelt into and used as an instrument is the Son of the Virgin. One can clearly notice the total separation between the divine nature and human nature in the person of the Saviour. And, in order not to speak about a real union, he excludes the possibility of calling the Virgin as a θεοτοκος. It seems that his fear of calling the Blessed Virgin Mary as the Mother of God was because of the Apollinarians, who claimed that the Logos’ humanity lacks the rational element, and hence the divine nature intermingles with the flesh, thus being involved in humanlike processes, such as: birth, suffering, and death. In his second letter addressed to Saint Cyril, Nestorius will propose that the Virgin Mary be called the Mother of Christ: “So that the Holy Virgin is more accurately termed, he says, mother of Christ than mother of God, (θεοτοκος)”^{156&157}

At the same time with the spread of his writings, Nestorius’ heresy began to raise concern throughout all Church. The first reactions came from Alexandria, where St. Cyril of Alexandria was, the fiercest opponent to Nestorian heresy. The Church of Rome has understood this issue at once, and Pope Celestine¹⁵⁸

155 See here, our paper: *Christology and mystic in Syriac Theology*, Metropolitan of Oltenia Publishing House, Craiova, 2014, p. 184-201.

156 Cf. *Nestorius’ Reply to Cyril of Alexandria’s Second Letter*.

157 His Eminence, Prof. Irineu Popa, PhD, *Jesus Christ is the Same, Yesterday and Today, and Forever*, pp. 434-435.

158 Pope of Rome between September 10th, 422 and July 27th, 432, Celestine was in his turn Pope Innocent I’s Archdeacon. In 418 he kept a very fruitful correspondence with Blessed Augustine. During his pontificate he fought against the Novatian heresy. He also fought against Pelagianism, and in the late part of his pontificate he intensely confronted with the Nestorian heresy, which he condemned

supported St. Cyril against Nestorius.¹⁵⁹ Thus, in the summer of 429, the Holy Father charged Posidonius with a thorough evidence and documentation on the Nestorian heresy, including: his letters, Nestorius' sermons and other texts, urging to be translated into Latin for the good of the people. Before receiving this correspondence, which reached Rome around 430, Celestin had already found out about Nestorian heresy from other sources. This would be Marius Mercator, who was also in Constantinople at that time, who had too, a fruitful correspondence with Rome.¹⁶⁰

In this context, St. John Cassian's last great paper is written, „*De incarnatione Domini contra Nestorium Libri VII*” (On the incarnation of the Lord against Nestorius, seven books”).¹⁶¹

at the Council of Rome on August 10th, 430. He also got involved in the works of the Synod of Ephesus, June 431. He could not attend the event personally and sent papal messengers who were clearly instructed “to work closely with Saint Cyril and follow his judgment.” He also wrote personally to St. Cyril “urging him to be generous, if Nestorius should show a change of heart.” After the Ecumenical Synod of Ephesus and therefore after Nestorius' condemnation, Pope Celestine expressed his gratitude in a letter, being saddened only by the fact that Nestorius was allowed to go to Antioch. At the same time, also related to his epistles, it was recorded the fact that Celestine had repeatedly and arduously asked to the participants of the synods of Ephesus to recognize his first right (primacy) in the Church, as St. Peter's legitimate successor. he was buried near the “Saint Silvester” Basilica in Rome; his tomb was decorated with scenes happened during the Ecumenical Synod of Ephesus (J.N.D. Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Pops*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1986, p. 42).

159 Leo Cristiani, *Heresies and Heretics ...*, p. 42.

160 Owen Chadwich, *John Cassian ...*, p. 140.

161 Ed. M. Petschnig, CSEL, vol. XVII, Vienna, 1988. The Romanian translation of the text appeared in col. PSB 57, *De Incarnatione Domini versus Nestorium* (translated by Prof. David Popescu after the text of *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (CSEL), vol. XVII, pars I), as well as in the “Metropolitan of Oltenia” Journal, no. 7-8 / 1985, p. 560-606 - Books I-III; no. 1/1986, p. 44-83 - Books IV-VI; no. 3/1986, pp. 71-94 - Cara VII.

Written completely in Latin, the work was created at the request of Saint Leo the Great, at the time he was Archdeacon, later Pope of Rome.¹⁶² In *the seven chapters of this writing*, Saint John Cassian formulates a complete apology of the Orthodox faith teaching, taking sides against the most important heresies of his time, which he mentions and denounces. The greatest merit of his work is “to have presented for the first time to the West Nestorius’ doctrine and to have subjected it to a severe criticism, while he pointed out the importance of the works of the Fathers of the Church, the value of the Christian ideas and

162 He was Pope between August / September 440 – November 10th, 461. He is one of the two Pontiffs who gave up to the attribute “the Great” (the other one is St. Gregory the Great). He was Pope Celestine’s deacon and closest counselor. He was an authoritarian pope who succeeded in imposing himself due to “his apostolic succession legitimacy,” which was later passed on to his descendants from the episcopal seat of Rome. He fought against the Manichaeans, the Pelagians, the Priscillianists, and finally Nestorians. In 448 he receives a notification from Eutyches, of his bishop, Flavian of Constantinople, because of his Monophysite teaching. Thoroughly studying this teaching, Saint Leo the Great wrote to Flavian, condemning Eutychius’ heresy in his so-called “Tomus Flaviani” (Epistola Ad Flavianum). Based on this fact, the Emperor Theodosius called the Synod of Ephesus (August 449), where Leo was represented by three papal legates. The result of this council was Flavian’s condemnation and Eutychius’ rehabilitation. Then, it followed as such the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451), where the Christological teaching on the Incarnate Logos’ two natures of the Only Godhead Hypostasis was set out. Leo’s Tome was thought to be the Synod’s official document, “in Leo’s doctrine, the fathers recognized the voice of Saint Peter.” For his contribution and his doctrinal work, he was declared “a doctor of the Church” by Benedict XIV. He was also an excellent diplomat who dealt personally with the pagan invasion crisis. He personally met Atilla, the leader of the Huns and Gaiseric the king of the Vandals, in 455, convincing them to spare the people of the city of Rome by fire and sword. He was buried in the porch of Saint Peter’s Basilica, his remains being translated to the interior in 688 (JD Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Pops*, pp. 43-44).

the arguments they are built upon. Such a paper is yet another great step for the fifth century Latin theology.”¹⁶³

The work was to be mainly informative, offering rigorous details and accounts on the new disorder that had emerged in the Eastern Church. Saint John Cassian deals with this issue in his work’s preface, where he also mentions the fact that he had written this paper at the request of Saint Leo the Great.¹⁶⁴ The beginning of his work is somewhat linked to June 429, when the Pope receives Eusebius of Dorylaeum’s “*Contestatio*” and Nestorius’ *Second Letter*.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, Saint John Cassian’s

163 Given the fact that St. John Cassian wrote “*De Incarnatione Domini*”, when asked by Saint Leo the Great, who played an essential role in the works of the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451), one might get to believe that he had a great importance in the Western Christology formation process. It is also very important to mention the fact that it is quoted in Eusebius of Dorilea’s “*Contestatio contra Nestorios*” (IG Coman, *Literary Works of St. John Cassian*, in the Review “*Banat Metropolitan*” no. 10-12/1975, p. 565-567; Marie-Anne Vannier, *Jean Cassien et le Simbole de Foi (De Incarnatione Domini VI)*, en *Studia Patristica*, AN, NR., p. 468).

164 “When I had now finished the books of Spiritual Conferences, the merit of which consists in the thoughts expressed rather than in the language used (since my rude utterances were unequal to the deep thoughts of the saints), I had contemplated and almost determined on taking refuge in silence (as I was ashamed of having exposed my ignorance) that I might as far as possible make up for my audacity in speaking by modestly holding my tongue for the future. But you have overcome my determination and purpose by your commendable earnestness and most urgent affection, my dear Leo, my esteemed and highly regarded friend, ornament that you are of the Roman Church and sacred ministry.” (*On the Incarnation of the Lord*, Preface 1, in MO, no 7-8/1985, p.577).

165 “*Frateras nobis invicem*” (in PL 48, col. 173-178; Loofs, *Nestoriana*, Halle, 1905, p. 165-168). In his epistle, Nestorius wrote honestly to the pope about the teaching he was promoting on the Mother of God, while asking for clarifications about several pelagian priests who were in Constantinople. Since there was no answer to his letter he, he wrote the second letter, mainly on the same subject. Both his letters, as well as certain passages of his sermons, were in Rome before the arrival of the papal legate from Constantinople (Owen Chadwich, *John Cassian ...*, p. 141).

work proved to be the most reliable one, given the fact that, as we have already illustrated previously, the information that Celestin was waiting for from Marius Mercator¹⁶⁶ had reached Rome no sooner than 433. In this regard, not only did he enjoy the admiration of the “Saint Victoire” Abbey in the Latin Church, but he particularly brought a rich Oriental experience, mainly related to Constantinople. At once, he “warned Celestin about the danger of Nestorius’ doctrinal opposition and made this heresy known to the Latins.”¹⁶⁷

The Holy Father’s involvement in the fight against Nestorian heresy¹⁶⁸ was an absolute one. Due to its doctrinal argumentation, his work on Christology is the illustration of a priceless apology of the Orthodox teaching, fully inherited from his great teacher, Saint John Chrysostom. From the very preface of his work, St. John Cassian reveals the way this confession was born. He had fully understood St. Leo’s request to “*fight on the good side in the name of faith threatened by a new heresy.*” Far from being a polemist, the Daco-Roman monk was not willing to give up at any cost “*when it comes to protecting the Orthodox faith.*”¹⁶⁹

166 Who had been appointed as an observer of Rome’s to Constantinople.

167 Marie-Anne Vannier, “Le De Incarnatione Domini de Jean Cassien”, vol. *Jean Cassien entre l’Orient et l’Occident ...*, p. 53.

168 The research carried out by Saint Cassian for the study of his work is based on a *list of Nestorian works*, agreed by modern Western theologians. Thus, the Holy Father had as his first source the *Letters* which reached Rome at the beginning of the Nestorian crisis. He certainly knew about the one in 429, sent by Nestorius to Pope Celestin. Secondly, there are *Nestorius’ sermons*: 1. Sermon VIII (Nulla deterior); 2. Sermon IX (Doctrina Pietatis) with reference to *Theotokos*; 3. Sermon XIV (its Greek name: U tais charaugais) and 4. Sermon XVI (Saepe mecum fluctibus) - see: E. Amann, *L’Affaire Nestorius vue de Rome (suite)*, en *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, 23/1949, p. 231, note 2 (pp. 207-244); Lorenzo Dattrino, *Introduzione a Giovanni Cassiano, L’Incarnazione del Signore*, traduzione e note a cura di Lorenzo Dattrino, Citta Nuova Editrice, Roma, 1991, p. 41.

169 E. Amann, *L’Affaire Nestorius vue de Rome (suite)*, p. 227.

The Nestorian heresy gives Saint John Cassian the opportunity to rediscover *Leporius*' wandering, a Northern Gaul monk, in Trevez. Since 415, he expressed his option for a heterodox Christology in writing. The main document of his wandering, a letter, has not been preserved. The text of this letter pointed out the fact that the Saviour Christ was sinless due to of His free will, and He came to bring salvation only by the power of His own example. He also said that Jesus became the Christ at His Holy Baptism and God at His Resurrection from the dead.¹⁷⁰ Because of his ideas, the heretical monk was blamed for Pelagianism, by Saint John Cassian.¹⁷¹ It is highly likely that, this anti-Pelagianist experience was the reason for which Saint John Cassian got so deeply involved in fighting against Nestorian heresy by all means. In his opinion, Pelagianism could have been mainly covered up by the concept of *apatheia*. Leporius had directed his soteriological ideas to the possibility of moral perfection, covered up by *homo assumptus* theology. It was thus, obvious that only by the help of his own forces man could reach perfection, which resulted in *Pelagianism*.¹⁷² Further on, in the case of the Incarnation of the Word, Leporius rejected from the very beginning what would

170 Owen Chadwich, *John Cassian ...*, p. 137.

171 He was later excommunicated to Africa, along with his disciples.

Here is the place where he meets Blessed Augustine who "manages to show him how wrong he was," and "as a testimony of his Orthodox faith, Leporius writes *Libellus emendationis* addressed to the bishops of Gaul." Finally, St. John Cassian praises his repentance. The repented monk remains in Africa until 430, when St. John Cassian publishes "De Incarnatione Domini", being ordained as a priest here. Also, Blessed Augustine uses his example in one of his sermons and mentions him in "Acta ecclesiastica" on September 26th, 426. (Leporii, *Libellus Emendationis*, cura et studio R. Demeulenaere, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina/CCSL, LXIV, Turnholti, Tipographi Brepolis Editionis Pontificii, 1985, pp. 97-98).

172 E. Amann, *L'Affaire Nestorius vue de Rome (suite)*, en *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, 23/1949, p. 230.

have supposed *communicatio idiomatum*, not being able in any way to imagine a “born and crucified God.”¹⁷³

The German theologian Aloys Grillmeier states that the teaching Leporius fervently illustrated “is not necessarily heresy,” since he only wanted to defend in his own way “the traditional dogma of the divinity of Christ against the doctrines that combined the natures.” Moreover, he thinks that Saint John Cassian commits “an injustice in his trial to blame Leporius for Pelagianism.”¹⁷⁴ “Like Nestorius, Leporius stresses the distinction of the natures. In this he is successful but can no more give an adequate expression of the union in Christ than can Nestorius.¹⁷⁵ This was the most acute theological problem of the time.”¹⁷⁶ Unlike the Nestorian heresy, Leporius’ wandering did not affect the Church. Rebuked by his superiors in Gaul he fled to Africa, where he was convinced by Blessed Augustine to return to his true faith, expressing his confession publicly; the famous so-called “*Libellus emendationis*.”¹⁷⁷ The document was read by the Gaul monk in Carthage, in the presence of a

173 This is illustrated by Blessed Augustine’s notations, which state that Leporius: “did not want to confess that God was born of a woman, that God was crucified or suffered in human state, thus believing that Godhead could have turned into humanity or that He could have been corrupted by intermingling with humanity; humble fear, but an unforgivable mistake. In his humbleness he saw that the Godhead could not be changed, but carelessly assumed that the Son of Man could be separated from the Son of God, and therefore each was distinct from the other, and that one of them could be Christ, while the other couldn’t, or that Christ could be double” (Augustine, *Epistolae CCXXIX ad Leppos Galiae*, CSEL 57, p. 431).

174 Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. I, *From the Apostolic Age to Calcedon (451)*, second, revised edition, translated by John Bowden. Mowbrays, London, 1975, p. 465.

175 Nestorius explains the relation between divine and human in a “moral” way.

176 Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. I, *From the Apostolic Age to Calcedon (451)*, second, revised edition, translated by John Bowden. Mowbrays, London, 1975, p. 465.

177 Leporii, *Libellus Emendationis*, CCSL, LXIV, 1985, pp. 97-123.

number of Latin bishops, among them Blessed Augustine. His confession could be seen as “une première ébauche du Tome à Flavien,” stressing very clearly the fact that “*the Incarnation is to be regarded as a conjunction of human nature with the person of the Word and not with the divine nature.*”¹⁷⁸

II.2.2. A Confessing Christology

Although it has been criticized by several modern scholars, especially by the western ones,¹⁷⁹ Saint John Cassian’s Christology remains a true “confession of faith”. His complex thinking, which creates a harmony between the ascetic-mystical Oriental tradition and the Latin’s idea heritage characterized by reason and structure, is again victorious due to the defence of Orthodox faith when confronted with first centuries greatest heresy. Thus, The Holy Father fights in his work against two “frivolous arguments” developed by Nestorian heresy: “1. no one can be born before the one who is born, and 2. the one who is born has to be (homousions) of the same nature with the one who gives birth.” We can say that the Daco-Roman monk proves by using theological arguments a very clear and coherent thing: “that God has the power and will to do what he wills.”¹⁸⁰ His

178 “Thus, the flesh served the Word and not the Word the flesh; and yet the Word was most truly made flesh. But as we have said, this happened only *personally* and not by nature, with the Father or with the Holy Spirit.” (PL 31, I 224; Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. I, pp. 465-466).

179 “Cassian’s Christology has been tried and found wanting on two fronts. The first front is an aggressive defence of Nestorius by modern scholars as against Cassian’s anti-Nestorian polemic; the second is an offensive against the enduring value of Cassian’s Christology.” Several names of modern scholars and researchers are mentioned especially from the West such as: J.F. Bethune-Baker, Friedrich Loofs, Paul Bedjan, Martin Jugie, Ed. Schwartz, but also Aloys Grillmeyer, Vannier sau Columba Stewart (Augustine Casiday, *Tradition and Theology in Saint John Cassian*, pp.323-330).

180 Rev. Prof. Ioan G. Coman, Introduction to Saint John Cassian, *On the Incarnation of the Lord*, translation by Prof David Popescu, in MO, no.7-8/1985, p.561.

whole testimony is based on well-defined Scriptural arguments, strengthened by a steel faith, which goes beyond words.

In all the seven books of his masterpiece, St. John Cassian develops a profound confession, based on genuine arguments of the Orthodox Church teaching treasury. This is systematically emphasized by mentioning the significance of the fathers who have guided and enriched his knowledge and apologetic spirit: Hilarion, Ambrose, Jerome, Rufinus and Augustine (from the West), and also several saints among whom, Gregory the Theologian, Athanasius and John Chrysostom (from the East). Moreover, the Holy Father “does not have any restraints in admitting that his doctrine as it concerns the debated issue was inspired by that of St. John Chrysostom, but more that it even belonged completely to him.” It seems, however, that the Scythian monk did not know Saint Cyril’s anti-Nestorian teaching as well as the former one, this being the reason for which he is not mentioned in this paper. This thing is obvious, since the writing of his paper takes place almost in the same period with that of the Cyrillic documents, for that matter, developing similar ideas and arguments to support the Orthodox truth of faith.¹⁸¹

The work’s apologetic peculiarity results from adding “*Contra Nestorium*”, the Holy Father disclosing from the very beginning his doctrinal position.¹⁸² The fact in itself is confirmed in the *Preface*, where the Scythian monk presents his reason

181 Rev. Prof. Ioan G. Coman, Introduction to Saint John Cassian, *On the Incarnation of the Lord*, p. 562.

182 One can speak here about integrating Cassian work into the category of apologetic specificity, defined by the style of works such as “Adversus” (Marie-Anne Vannier, *Le De Incarnatione Domini de Jean Cassien*, p. 54; see also: L.W. Barnard, „L’intolleranza negli apologisti cristiani con speciale riguardo a Firmico Materno”, nella *Cristianesimo nella storia*, 11/1990, pp. 505-521; J-C Fredouille, „L’apologetique chretienne antique: naissance d’un genre litteraire”, en *Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes*, no. 28/1992, pp. 219-234).

and motivation for having written this confession.¹⁸³ The battle that is going to take place, is a spiritual one; the author is thought to be a defender of the true faith through the eyes of his friend, Saint Leo the Great.¹⁸⁴ He begins his paper in absolute humility; he prays and asks for spiritual help and guidance of the future Pope of Rome.¹⁸⁵

In his **First Book**, St. John Cassian develops in six chapters the topic related to those ages' fiercest heresies. Like a "multi-headed" hydra¹⁸⁶, this wandering could not be defeated because "when its heads were cut off gained by its injuries, and sprang

183 Cf. *On the Incarnation of the Lord*, Preface, 1, in MO, no. 7-8/1985, p. 577.

184 About six months before Rome had an official position on the Nestorian heresy, Saint John Cassian was asked by Saint Leon the Great, who was at that time Pope Celestine's deacon, to get involved in the fight with this wandering as a true "champion" of the righteous faith. Why was he asked this? Because "he was among the few Latin writers of the Roman court who could understand Greek." It was also have been questioned the aspect related to this preface, whether there was or not a written document by which Leon had addressed this request to Cassian. Although, no written proof has been preserved, the context of its creation is stated ever since Father Gennadius' patristic period (in *De viriis illustribus* 62PL). He writes: St. John Cassian "at the request of Leon the Archdeacon, then the bishop of Rome, wrote against Nestorius De Incarnatione Domini in seven books" („Rogatus a Leone archidiacono postea urbis Romae episcopo scripsit adversus Nestorium De Incarnatione Domini libros VII").

185 "For we easily comply with any one's orders, out of your abundance: but his is a great and wonderful work, whose desires exceed his powers. Yours then is this work and business, and yours it is to be ashamed of it. Pray and intreat that your choice may not be discredited by my clumsiness; and that, supposing we do not answer the expectations which you have formed of us, you may not seem to have been wrong in commanding out of an ill-considered determination, while I was right in yielding, owing to the claims of obedience." (*On the Incarnation of the Lord*, Preface, 5, pp. 557-558).

186 He refers here to the famous ancient legend of "*The Lernaean Hydra*", a seven-headed serpent-monster which was killed by Hercules.

up more abundantly: so that owing to a miracle of a strange and unheard-of kind, its loss proved a kind of gain to the monster which was thus increased by death.”¹⁸⁷ Among those who have lost their right path, he mentions: the Ebionites, Sabellians, Aryans, Eunomians, Macedonians, Photinians, Apollinarians, and Pelagians. He gives a particular attention to the last ones, pointing out the fact that its followers claimed that “Jesus Christ had come into this world not to bring redemption to mankind but to give an example of good works, to wit, that men, by following His teaching, and by walking along the same path of virtue, might arrive at the same reward of virtue. ... They declared that men could by their own lives obtain just that which God had wrought by dying for man’s salvation. They added as well that our Lord and Say-four became the Christ after His Baptism, and God after His Resurrection.”¹⁸⁸ The Holy Father had identified this heresy at the monk Leporius, which he considered to be a similar example for the Nestorian later on crisis. He emphasizes the fact that Leporius argued “exactly the same thing which the Pelagians said before him, and allows that it follows from his error that as he asserts that our Lord Jesus Christ lived as a mere man entirely without sin, so he must maintain in his blasphemy that all men can of themselves be without sin, nor would he admit that our Lord’s redemption was a thing needful for His example, since men can reach the heavenly kingdom by their own exertions.”¹⁸⁹ St. John Cassian does not forget to mention the fact that the Pelagian monk had recovered from his wandering, confessing the true faith and returning to the bosom of the Church as a presbyter.

In **Book II**, the Holy Father deals directly with the Nestorian issue. He rather illustrates the sacrilege he commits when speaks

187 *On the Incarnation of the Lord*, I, 1, p.578.

188 *On the Incarnation of the Lord*, I, 3,3, p. 580. Rev. Prof. Ioan G Coman, *Old Romanian Age Church Writers*, p. 244.

189 *On the Incarnation of the Lord*, I, 3,3, p. 580.

about the Mother of God, calling her “Mother of Man” (anthropotokos) or at most “Mother of Christ” (christothokos). The Scythian monk’s argumentation becomes even sharper from this point on, rebuking wandering harshly. He, thus illustrates Nestorius’ narrow-mindedness, who claimed that “No one ever gives birth to one older than herself.” The arguments he offers are firstly based on the revealed Truth of the Holy Scripture, since there is “an abundant supply of witnesses to the holy nativity; to hear witness to it, let us examine in some slight degree an announcement about God even in the Old Testament.”¹⁹⁰

In Book III and IV, St. John Cassian speaks about the Saviour’s Godhead before and after the Incarnation. He proves the fact that Christ is true God born of true God, born out of Mother without father and Father without mother. “Learn then first of all from the Apostle the teacher of the whole world, that He who is without beginning, God, the Son of God, became the Son of man at the end of the world, i.e., in the fulness of the times. For he says: “But when the fulness of the times was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law.”¹⁹¹ Tell me then, before the Lord Jesus Christ was born of His mother Mary, had God a Son or had He not? You cannot deny that He had, for never yet was there either a son without a father, or a father without a son: because as a son is so called with reference to a father, so is a father so named with reference to a son.”¹⁹²

Book V draws a detailed comparison between Nestorianism and Pelagianism. Thus, Saint John Cassian emphasizes the moral glory which the two heresies of the first centuries shared as common element. Nestorius claimed Godhead’s apparent presence in the incarnate Christ, He thus becoming “theodokos”,

190 *On the Incarnation of the Lord*, II, 3, 1, p. 585.

191 Cf. Gal. 4:4.

192 *On the Incarnation of the Lord*, IV, 1 in MO, no 1/1986, p.45.

meaning “the receiver of God”. Therefore, one could conclude that “there is no difference between Him and all other holy men: for all holy men have certainly had God within them.”¹⁹³

The last two books of his work (**VI and VII**) embody a complex analysis of some dogmatic formulas which St. John Cassian strengthens by offering scriptural and patristic counter-arguments in order to illustrate the Orthodox faith. The reference here is to the Nicene Symbol of Faith, also used by the Church of Antioch and invoked by Nestorius in his sermons, too. Thus, the formula “True God of True God” is explained by Nestorius in a Sabellian and Arian sense, claiming that “there were two Christs, one of God and one of the Virgin Mary.”¹⁹⁴ Furthermore, St. John Cassian argues against the Nestorian formulas: “No one gives birth to one older than herself,” and “the one who is born must be of one substance with the one who bears”. In order to advocate convincingly his cause, Saint John Cassian uses paragraphs and texts from the works of “Saints Hillary and Ambrose (Chapters XXIV-XXV) and the works of Blessed Jerome, the “teacher of the Orthodox”, from Rufinus’ exposition to the Creed, from the works of Blessed Augustine, Gregory of

193 Rev. Prof. Ioan G Coman, *Old Romanian Age Church Writers*, p. 246. “You say then that Christ was born a mere man. But certainly, this was asserted by that wicked heresy of Pelagius, as we clearly showed in the first book; viz., that Christ was born a mere man. You add besides, that Jesus Christ the Lord of all should be termed a form that received God (Theodo’chos), i.e., not God, but the receiver of God, so that your view is that He is to be honoured not for His own sake because He is God, but because He receives God into Himself.” (*On the Incarnation of the Lord*, V, 2, 1, p. 55.)

194 “You said in the Creed, “Very God.” Now you say: “ a mere man. ” How can these things fit together and harmonize so that one and the same Person may be the greatest Power, and utter weakness: The Highest glory, and mere mortality? These things do not meet together in one and the same Lord. So that severing Him for worship and for degradation, on one side, you may do Him honour as you like, and on the other, you may injure Him as you like.” (*On the Incarnation of the Lord*, VI, 7, 2, p. 72.)

Nazianzus, “the most grand light of knowledge and doctrine”, from St. Athanasius the Great’s works, finally, from those of St. John Chrysostom.”¹⁹⁵

The Christology illustrated in Saint John Cassian’s masterpiece “De Incarnationi Domine” is unquestionably the “climax of Cassian’s theology”. Beyond its urgent necessity required by its time, the Holy Father’s work is a natural Orthodox approach, revealing the interpretations of a genuine and voluntary confession.¹⁹⁶ This transforms our monk from Dobruja into a remarkable first Christian ages apologist in the Eternal City. Therefore, “this is the crowning virtue of a perfect confession, to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is ever Lord and God in the glory of God the Father.”¹⁹⁷, then the Scythian monk’s work can be considered a “confessing Christology.”

As for his stay in the Eternal City, there is no clear information about how long he lived here. But what is beyond any doubt and is generally acknowledged by critics is the fact that the Holy Father wrote an authentic chapter of his missionary work, starting with his master’s apology so that in the end to give birth to a fundamental work for all Christian West: *On the Incarnation of the Lord*.¹⁹⁸

III. Saint Dionysius Exiguus, Eternal City’s erudite Scythian

Another great Daco-Roman theologian, whose name is unequivocally related to the Eternal City, is that of Saint

195 Rev. Prof. Ioan G Coman, *Old Romanian Age Church Writers*, p. 247.

196 Augustine Casiday, *Tradition and Theology in St. John Cassian*, p.379.

197 *On the Incarnation of the Lord*, IV, 13, 4.

198 From Rome he arrived in Marseilles, where he built a monastery for men and one for women in 415. He lived in this place until his death in 435 (*The rules of monastic life*, Sofia Publishing House, Bucharest, 2005, p. 339).

Dionysius Exiguus, “the Short” or “the Humble.” “Ecumenical Personality”, the Holy Father was born about 470, being raised by monks, in one of the ancient monasteries on the Black Sea Shore. This is illustrated in his writings, where he reverently mentions the name of a certain monk Peter.¹⁹⁹ Like his predecessor, St. Dionysius first contact was that one with Constantinople, reaching Rome in the time of Pope Gelasius (about 500), “who was in need of a good specialist in Latin and Greek.” During his holy rich life, he served here under ten popes and died in 540/545. His Eminence Nestor Vornicescu, PhD, writes a very vivid and fascinating characterization of the Daco-Roman theologian’s personality, intellectual capacity and spiritual finesse. “Dionysius was a very good connoisseur of the Holy Scripture, did not have any match in using Greek and Latin languages, easily and skilfully translating from one language into the other, he was wise and simple in his attitudes, erudite and humble, he spoke little, he was shy and gentle, had a measure in everything, without blaming those who could not be as balanced as he was. “He was a perfect Orthodox and wholly faithful to Church ordinances (set out by the Holy Fathers). He answered wisely to any question he was asked. Some tried to discredit him by accusing him of several things. But whoever reads the Synodal documents of Ephesus and Chalcedon, as well as the epistles by which they were approved, realizes that these attempts have no chance of success.” Dionysius, the humble, was Scythian in terms of nationality, but his manners “were truly Roman”²⁰⁰.

199 “I remember all your good deeds, Venerable Father, and the unique jewel of Christ’s teachings, and I always have before the eyes of my mind the holy zeal for the spiritual food that you used to nourish me with me when I was a child, a zeal that neither space nor time can ever hinder. (Dionysius Exiguus, in *Scriptores „Illyrici Minores”*, *Corpus Christianorum Series Larina LXXXV*, Turnholt, 1972, p. 59).

200 Nestor Vornicescu, PhD, *Our Literature’s First Patristic Writings*, p.67.

His work includes numerous Patristic translations and interpretations. Among the patristic texts translated from Greek, there are: *Vita Pachomii*, *Historia inventionis capitis S. Iohannis Baptistae*, St. Gregory the Theologian's *De officio hominis*, Holy Proclus of Constantinople's *Tomus ad Armenos de fide*, as well as other patristic works. It is the proper moment to mention the translation of *Saint Cyril of Alexandria's Letters*, along with the *12 Anathematisms* written by him against Nestorius. The Holy Father also played a significant role in the translation of some important canonical Byzantine law works. Thus, during Pope Hormisdas' papacy (he died in 523), Saint Dionysius the Exiguus translated into Latin *the Greek Synodikon*, and thus he created the two collections of canons: *Coedx canonum ecclesiarum and Colectio decretorum pontificum Romanorum*. In his review paper of the Greek text, he also used *Collectio Hispana*. His work *Colletio Dionysiana* enjoys great popularity and appreciation; it is considered one of the fundamental sources of canon law in the Catholic Church. On the other hand, his contribution implies important calendar changes related to the Christian era origins (e.g.: *Liber de Paschate, Argumenta pascalia, epistule*). Thus, during Pope Boniface and John I's papacy, St. Dionysius compiled the paschal table with the purpose of correlating Western Church celebration dates with the Eastern ones. He recommended in this respect Saint Cyril of Alexandria's calculations, but these were calculated only by the year 248. He thus continued counting, but this time he did not start with Diocletian, but with the Birth of Christ the Saviour, which represented the beginning of the Christian era.²⁰¹ His thinking develops also an important Christological

201 *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the Christian East*, edited by Edward G. Farrugia, S.J., Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome, 2015, p. 655.

peculiarity, which is highly illustrated especially in his work “Patristic Texts Anthology”²⁰², but also in his Prologues.²⁰³

This first centuries Holy Father’s theological importance offers important ideas about the “Daco-Roman spirituality’s universalism”. It is undoubtedly a strong relation between the Eastern and Western Romanity, creating a true “*highest human osmosis, and mutual spiritual elements exchange between the two wide European areas.*”²⁰⁴ This becomes possible due to his work. Due to the translations carried out, St. Dionysius Exiguus manages to sketch a clear relation between “Scythia Minor, Constantinople and Rome ... strengthening with new elements the relations between the Christian Eastern and Western, already announced in the fourth and fifth centuries by Hilary, bishop of Pictavium, Jerome, Rufinus, and especially by St. John Cassian, as a result of their well-known efforts to offer the West a part of the Eastern Patristic Thinking and the Resolutions of the Ecumenical Councils up to that point,

202 Migne, PL, LXVII, 9A-520, *Scriptores Illyrici Minors*, cura et studio S. Gennaro et Fr. Glorie, Brepols, 1972; Ibidem, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina LXXXV, Turnholti, 1972, p. 133-154.

203 “On Eugippius, the Priest” preface to Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, *De conditione sev opificio hominis*; 2. „On Stephan, the Bishop”, preface to the first Latin translation of *Canonum Graecorum’s* edition; 3. “On Julian, the Priest”, preface to *Collectione Decretorum Pontificium Romanorum*; 4. “On Pope Honorius”, preface to *Canonum Graecorum*; 5. “On Scythian monks John and Leontius”, preface to Saint Cyril of Alexandria, *Epistulam ad Successum Episcopum*; 6. “On Peter, the Bishop” preface to Saint Cyril of Alexandria, *Epistule Synodicalae Contra Nestorium*; 7. “On Felicianus and Pastor”, preface to Saint Proclus of Constantinople, *Tomi Armenios*; 8. “On Gaudentius, the Abbot”, preface to the anonymous paper *Paenitentiae Sancte Thaisi* 9. “On Dominianus, the Venerable”, preface to the anonymous paper *Vitae Sancti Pachomii* (Fr. Glorie, Dionisii Exigui, Prefationes latines genuinae n variis suis translationibus ex graeco, in CCSL, LXXXV, *Scriptores Ilirici Minores*, p. 29-30.

204 Nestor Vornicescu, PhD, *Our Literature’s First Patristic Writings*, p.69.

fundamental elements in order to assure, maintain and strengthen Church unity.”²⁰⁵

III.1. From Constantinople to Rome historical-doctrinal aspects

Like St. John Cassian, Dionysius Exiguus left his native Scythia and headed towards the holy places of the Orient. Together with other Scythian monks, he first stayed in a monastery in Hierapolis (Mabbug), very close to Antioch. In what concerns the Syrian staying of the energetic monks of Dobruja, it is known the fact that in order to protect their Chalcedonian Creed “nothing stopped them from exerting a direct influence on the election of the Patriarch of Antioch”²⁰⁶. No sooner had Philoxenus of Mabbug’s influences begun to appear, an extremely important theological personality, than Saint Dionysius left these places.²⁰⁷ From this place, the Holy

205 Rev. Alexandru Motoc, *The Holy Dionysius Exiguus (the Humble)*, PhD paper, Sibiu, 2008, p.4.

206 In Robert Devreesse, *Le patriarcat d’Antioche. Depuis la paix de l’Eglise jusqu’à la conquete arabe*, Paris, 1945.

207 Philoxenus / Aksenoyo of Mabbug (he died on December 10th, 523). He was born in the Persian Empire at Tahal, a village in the district of Beth Garmaï. According to more recent written biography, before reaching the Persian School in Edessa, he first studied at Mar Gabriel Monastery in Tur ‘Abdin. This is the place where several disciples followed him and his teachings, the same who would later react against the Dyophysitism or the doctrine on the two natures of the Person of Christ the Saviour, part of the Christological tradition (according to some critics among them was also Jacob of Sarug and Simeon of Beth Arsham). In this way, Philoxenus became a fervent opponent to the Chalcedonian doctrine, playing an active role in various disputes of his time. In 485 he becomes Metropolitan of Mabbug (being ordained on August 18th). After Emperor Athanasius’ death in 518, the anti-Chalcedonian bishops were exiled as a result of the pro-Chalcedonian new emperor’s rules, Justinian I. Philoxenus was first sent to Gangra (in Paphlagonia), and then (ca. 520/1) in Philippopolis (in Thrace - Plovdiv), where he died; the official death cause being smoking suffocation owed to the public baths smoke. Philoxenus was the most important Orthodox Syrian

Father bent his steps toward Constantinople. His presence in the Citadel of the Basileis is convincingly illustrated by his translations and prologues which are the mirror of his great and erudite knowledge about the Byzantine culture.²⁰⁸ Here, is also the place where he gains a rich spiritual experience serving in the Monastery of the Sleepless ones (“Acoemeti”) and, from the point of view of some critics, even in the Studium Monastery.²⁰⁹

writer and theologian of his time. Although his knowledge of Greek was not a very impressive and deep, he was aware of the importance of translating key Greek texts, such as the New Testament and Creed, trying to be as faithful as possible to the original texts. Thus, he was the one who financed these texts’ translation revision (Polycarpus, his hierarch was in charge with the revision of the New Testament and he completed his task in 508) see here: Sebastian P. Brock, *Yesterday and today Syriac Father*, introductory study by His Eminence Irineu Ion Popa, PhD, translation from English by arch. Ionita and Prof. Hermina-Maria Apostolache, Metropolitan of Oltenia, Craiova, 2016, 22 *).

208 “Even in his prologues which defied time, says Father Gheorghe Dragulin, one can easily notice the fact that their author had a thorough and complex intellectual training. As for the classic aspect of our Dionysius the Humble’s vocabulary range, this shouldn’t be a surprise for us. At the time, the Latin grammarian Priscianus who was in Constantinople advocated for the cultivation of Atticism in the language. It is true that the stage of his life he spent at the Pontifical Court did not bring his cultural perfection. But his condition as a devoted opponent against heresies to which he has dedicated great part of his activity, effort and energy in Rome had been the result of his youth background and experiences” (Rev. Gheorghe Dragulin, PhD, *The Hieromonk Dionysius the Humble “Exiguus” or “the Little” about 470 -550*), in “Theological Studies” Magazine, no. 7-8 / 1985, p. 525-526).

209 The history of the Acoemeti or Sleepless monks (from Gr. *Akoimetoï* - sleepless) is linked to the monastery of Saint Alexander in Syria. In 425 they arrived in Constantinople and embraced a critical attitude towards the authorities, which led to their banning from the Byzantine Empire shortly after. They crossed the Bosphorus Strait, from that moment being under the protection of Hypatius, abbot of Rufiniane, who got them a place to stay at the Asian border of the empire. The

It is very important to mention a few context elements related to the presence of St. Dionysius in Constantinople. This is the reason why, after the death of Saint Cyril of Alexandria (444) and by the time when the Council of Chalcedon (451) was held, the Eastern Church experienced a severe age of doctrinal crisis. Thus, the episcopal seat of Alexandria was occupied by Dioscorus, who did not accept the resolutions given by the Synod of Ephesus, and as such neither St. Cyril's 12 Anathematisms against Nestorius. The seat of Antioch is occupied starting with 442, by Domus replacing John, and in Constantinople, Flavian replacing Proclus (446). The latter is involved in a doctrinal conflict with Eutychius, a supporter of Monophysitism, who had misunderstood Saint Cyril's formula: "*mia physis to Theou Logou sesarkomene*"²¹⁰. Pope Dioscorus I of Alexandria is on the side of the heretic, being finally called at the local synod of Ephesus in August 449. From Rome, Saint Leo the Great writes "Tomus Flaviani", a document which clarified once and for all the issue on the two natures of Christ

Acoemeti's ascetic particularity was "their constant and uninterrupted choral singing" (*laudas perennis*), according to the words of St. Apostle Paul: "Pray continually" (I Thess. 5:17). In order to accomplish this constant obedience, the Acoemeti had been divided by Abba Alexander into two groups. They were also known for their loyalty to the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon (451) (see: *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Christian East*, pp. 17-18, also in "Vita S. Alexandri Acoimeti", in *Acta Sanctorum*, January 1/1643, 1018-1029, F.S. Pericoli Ridolfini, "Alessandro l' Acemeta", *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, Istituto Giovanni XXIII Lateran University (ed.), vol. 1, Rome, 1961, pp. 766-768 T. Spidlik, "Acemeti", in *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, vol. 1, Rome, 1974, p. 88, A.M. Talbor, R.F. Taft, "Akoimetoï Monastery of" *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, A.P. Kazhdan (ed.), 1:46; A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, translated by P. Allen and J. Cawte, London, 1995, pp. 12-13)

210 Sf. Chiril, *Ep., 46 ad Succens.*, 2, 5: ACO I, 1, 6, 161-162; PG 77, 245 A; Pr. prof. Ioan G. Coman, *Momente si aspecte ale hristologiei precalcedoniene si calcedoniene*, în Revista „Ortodoxia”, nr. 1/1956, p. 55; Dr. Irineu Popa, *Iisus Hristos este Acela?i ...*, p. 283-284.

the Saviour after the Incarnation.²¹¹ Then there is the Ephesus Council (449) chaired by Dioscorus, during which Eutychius' name is cleared, in spite of Papal legates' disagreement. The Eastern Church experiences now a severe crisis, whose main premises are related to the non-acceptance of the Council of Chalcedon's doctrine (451). The new non-Chalcedonian approaches and ideas take root especially in Syrian churches, and they grow stronger and stronger once Leo occupies the royal seat in Constantinople (457).²¹² The main topics were the

211 He thus opposed to Eutyches' teaching, who agreed that the Saviour "had two natures before the union, but after the incarnation He had only one nature" (Mansi, VI, 744). In *Tomus Flaviani*, Saint Leo the Great shows that "Not knowing, therefore, what he was bound to think concerning the incarnation of the Word of God, and not wishing to gain the light of knowledge by researches through the length and breadth of the Holy Scriptures, he might at least have listened attentively to that general and uniform confession, whereby the whole body of the faithful confess that they *believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary*. By which three statements the devices of almost all heretics are overthrown". On Eutychius' error, St. Leo further points out the fact that the Saviour "Thus in the whole and perfect nature of true man was true God born, complete in what was His own, complete in what was ours (*totus in suis, totus in nostris*). And by ours we mean what the Creator formed in us from the beginning and what He undertook to repair. For what the Deceiver brought in and man deceived committed, had no trace in the Saviour. Nor, because He partook of man's weaknesses, did He therefore share our faults. He took the form of a slave without stain of sin... From the mother of the Lord was received nature, not faultiness: nor in the Lord Jesus Christ born of the Virgin's womb, does the wonderfulness of His birth make His nature unlike ours. For He who is true God is also true man: and in this union there is no lie, since the humility of manhood and the loftiness of the Godhead both meet there (*invincem sunt*)."
(Tomus Flaviani, Epistle XXVII, 13th June 449) see: Documents of the Christian Church, Fourth Edition, Editors Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 51-54.

212 Robert Devereesse, *Le Patriachat d'Antioche. Depuis la paix de l'Eglise, jusqu'à la conquete arabe*, Paris, 1945, p. 64.

political and religious ones which transformed into the teaching of the Council of Chalcedon for several years.

Another important moment of this age was the promulgation of Emperor Zeno's Henotikon (482), according to which "Eutychius and Nestorius were sentenced for good as heretics, St. Cyril's Anathematisms were accepted, but making a decision on the issue of the two natures was postponed; however, a generic Christological formula was proposed."²¹³ The document was written out of political reasons. Emperor Zenon had been previously a supporter of Peter Fullo, the Antioch Monophysite Patriarch, but then he called himself a Chalcedonian in a letter to Pope Simplicius. In 482, for fear of a general conspiracy, he wrote the Henotikon, a document which was signed by the Ecumenical Patriarch Acacias of Constantinople, who aimed at reconciling the two parties: the Chalcedonian and Monophysite. Since the document was a very confusing one, it was extremely argued against by Pope Simplicius, who asked for explanations from Constantinople. Acacias did not answer in any way. As a result of all of these, he was excommunicated in 484 by Pope Felix II and thus "the Acacian Schism"²¹⁴ began.

The reconciliation between the East and West, as well as the emergence of a new doctrinal vision takes place under Emperor Justin I, more precisely on March 25th, 518, in the days of Pope Hormisdas and Patriarch John II of Constantinople. This is the very starting point of the dialogue between the Church and non-Chalcedonians and a "*Christology of Chalcedon after Chalcedon*"²¹⁵ is also taken into consideration. It is the moment when *the Scythian monks*, guided by their leader, Saint John Maxentius, stand out in this doctrinal context. They were in favour of and advocated for the Christological formula "*Unus*

213 Rev. Alexandru Motoc, *The Holy Dionysius Exiguus (the Humble)*, p. 4.

214 *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the Christian East*, edited by Edward G. Farrugia, p. 1936-1937.

215 *Jesus Christ is the Same ...*, p. 505, note 1425.

de Trinitate carne passus est” – “one of the Trinity suffered in the flesh.”²¹⁶

Saint Dionysius Exiguus, one of the Scythian monks, arrives in the Eternal City on 21st November 496 and he first stays at “Saint Anastasia” Monastery at the base of the Palatine Hill.²¹⁷ The social and political context in which he begins his confessional work in the Eternal City was not at all a simple one. In the early of the sixth century, Rome, as well as all Italy, were under the occupation of Theodoric’s Ostrogoths (about 493-526). Although, he had nothing in common with Christianity, the new leader adopted a wise attitude towards Romans original values and he became a promoter of religious culture and tolerance. From Ravenna, which was the city chosen to be the capital; he encouraged the construction of new edifices and monuments, revealing a great admiration for the Greek-Roman tradition. Moreover, Theodoric sought for an official recognition from Byzantium and he did not take much interest in the possible influences close to the court of the East Empire.

The issue of the Acacian schism also gave rise to great chaos in Rome. Pope Gelasius I (492-496), Pope Felix III’s successor, firmly demanded that Acacius’ name be removed from all diptychs. Things began to be easier and more balanced in 497,

216 Despite the Acoemeti’s hostility, Emperor Justinian was convinced that this formula is fully Orthodox. Thus, with the bishop Hypatius of Ephesus’ help, who visited Rome in 533, Justinian won the support of Pope John II. He sent the Epistle “Olim Quidem” to the Constantinopolitan Senate. Some understood of this formula, “One in the Trinity would have suffered as God,” considering it heretical. Its true meaning, however, was related to the suffering of Jesus Christ, the crucified, dead and risen, who suffered in the same person of the Logos, the Second Hypostasis of the Holy Trinity. The teaching about “communicatio idiomatum” provides in this way the doctrinal foundation of the Scythian monks’ Christological formula.

217 It was the third as importance, after the two cathedrals in Lateran and after the one of the Virgin Mary (Dragulin, *The Hieromonk Dionysius the Humble...*, p.527)

when Festus the Patrician, as prime senator, was on a delegation along with two other Latin bishops at the court in Constantinople. On this occasion, they submitted the request of recognizing Theodoric as the emperor of the West, as well as the epistle of Pope Anastasius (496-498) by which his election as a Pontiff was being announced as well as Acacius' name removal from diptychs. However, Theodoric's acknowledgment as a ruler in the West was publicly made in 506; also, the dialogue between the two churches restarted during Emperor Justinian's reign.²¹⁸

The fifth century represented for Rome the age of the most important translations of the Eastern Church Fathers. Since Gelasius I's pontificate time (492-496), a significant number of Nomo-canonical Greek synod sources were translated. In this sense, there was a need of intelligent people to work in papal household, who were bright specialists and language professionals. St. Dionysius Exiguus was certainly "the most famous one". Since he was fluent both in Greek and Latin, he succeeded in making various good quality translations, especially the documents related to the Greek synods. Although, he served in this position under ten Pontiffs, the Holy Father is mostly associated with the name of Pope Hormisdas (514-523).²¹⁹ During his pontificate, the Holy Father succeeded in

218 Winrich Lohr, "Western Christians", in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 2, Constantine to c. 600, edited by Augustine Casiday and Frederick Norris, Cambridge University Press, pp. 17-18.

219 He was born in Frosinone, Italy, coming from an aristocratic family. He was one of Pope Symmachus' closest confidants, who also played an important role in his future career as a Pontiff. He was married before being ordained and had a son named Silverius, who would also become a pope. He got deeply involved in the issue of the Laurentian schism, but his most important contribution is the fact that he put an end to the Acacian schism, which had lasted for too many years (484-519) between Rome and the East (J.N.D. Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, p. 52-54; *Dictionnaire Historique de la Papauté*, sous la direction de Philippe Levillain, Fayard Librairie, 1994, pp. 825-827).

completing the third and last canonical collection; the text translated into Latin also included the original Greek version. The Holy Father's canonical corpus was put together in a complete work, thus *Collectio Dionysiana* appeared. It is also worth mentioning his 41 papal decrees collection or papal letters, since Pope Siricius' time (384-399) to Anastasius II (496-498).²²⁰

Thus, Saint Dionysius' reputation as a great theologian preceded him on his arrival in Rome, at a time when the Eternal City "lacked theologians especially Greek specialized ones."²²¹ Both his name and activity are synonyms with the cultural and spiritual directions of the city,²²² becoming one of the great

220 Kenneth Pennington, The Growth of Church Law, in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 2, p. 396.

221 Mihai Diaconescu, *The History of Daco-Roman Literature*, revised and enlarged edition, "Mihai Eminescu" International Foundation Publishing House, Bucharest, 2013, p. 556.

222 Flavius Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus Senator was born at Scylletium, near Catanzaro, in Calabria, Italy (477-490). His father had been one of King Theodosius the Great's court governors. The son enjoyed an elevated education, and he also inherited the interest in diplomatic issues. While he was barely 20 years old he started working for the imperial administration; he spent most of his life in the service of the Ostrogothic King Theodoric. Between 510-520 he became a consul (consul ordinarius), and then he became a senator (magister officiorum). He was very active and completely dedicated to Theodoric's reforms, the glory that the Roman Empire knew being most of it his merit. He chose to spend the last part of his life (540) in his great monastic foundation in Calabria, Vivarium, where he lived as a monk. Here he adopted as a way of living St. Benedict of Nursia's Rule, he ran quite an "urbus propria" for the true "cives religiosi." Vivarium monks' training was essentially directed towards study. A particular stress was laid on reading and intensive translations of the Eastern Fathers' work. This is the context in which St. Dionysius Exiguus makes his presence known since he was one of the great Roman scholar's friends and thus, he brings his great contribution to the enrichment of the Vivarium's library. Cassiodorus' name is also linked to the Scythian monks' confessional work in Rome. In 519, when they reached the Eternal City, requesting an audience with Pope Hormisdas, he was senator and mediated their cause at the court Rev. Stefan Alexe, PhD, Introduction to

Roman chronicler, Cassiodorus' most trustable partners. The two men developed and maintained a beautiful friendship, so that the latter's testimony became an essential proof in illustrating the origin of the Daco-Roman monk of Dobruja: "*scythia natione, professione monachus et abbas romanus*" ("Scythian in terms of nationality, but his manners were truly Roman").²²³

The St. Dionysius Exiguus' theological work, mostly composed of his ten Prologues of the translations he made, reveals a special missionary dimension. From this point of view, his notes create a thinkable and confessional relation between Saint John Cassian and the Scythian monks. Moreover, his theological value can be understood due to its own dynamics,

Cassiodorus, Writings.) *The Tripartite Church History*, collection PSB 75, translation by Lia and Anca Manolache, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1998, p. 7-22; Alain Galonnier, Introduction a Cassiodore, *De l'ame*, en Sources Chretiennes, no. 585, Edition du Cerf, Paris, 2017, p. 14-39; M. Shane Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition Between Rome, Ravenna and Constantinople. A Study of Cassiodorus and the Vasiae, 527-554*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 71, 136).

223 "***Dyonisius Exiguus, natione Scythia, professione monachus et abbas romanus***" Cassiodoris familiaris ejusque in dialectica addiscenda condiscipulus. Claruit ano 5 3. Obiit ante anum 556, quo Cassiodorus Librum De Divini Lectionibus scripsit: ac in eo Dionysium jamjam , uti ait, defunctum impeuse laudat. Generat hodieque, inquit (Cap. 23) Ecclesia chatolica tires illustres probabilium dogmatium decore fulgenies. Fuit enim nostris temporibus et Dionysius monachum – in utraque lingua vale doctissimus, reddens actionibus suis, quam in libris Domini legerat, oequitatem: qui Scripturas Divinas tanta curiositate discusserat atque intellexerat, ut ... Fiu in illo cum sapientia magna simplicitas, cum doctrina humilitas, cum facundia loquendi parcitas. Totus chatolicus, totus paternis regulis prseverater adjunctus; et quidquid possunt legentes per diversos quoerere, in illius scientia cognoscebatur posse fulgere" (Traditio Chatolica, Saeculum VI. Anni 540-549, *Dionysii Exigui, Viventioli, Trojani, Pontiani*, J.-P. Migne, 1865, PL 67, Tomus Unicus, col. 1296).

since its contribution really led to the settlement of some doctrinal and pragmatic issues of the Church life.

Not only his well-known translations²²⁴, but also his dogmatic, spiritual, hagiographical and canonical notes represent parts of the Holy father's masterpiece which best illustrate his character and personality. Related to this issue, Metropolitan Nestor Vornicescu divides methodically our Daco -Roman monk's written legacy.²²⁵

(1). In the first category of notes, our great hierarch includes Saint Dionysius' patristic translations, which he gifted to his countrymen, the Scythian monks²²⁶, "in the context of Christological conflicts to fight against Nestorianism. This is clearly illustrated in the translated prologue of *St. Cyril of Alexandria's Synodal Letters* and of *the 12 Anathematisms*, in which Saint Dionysius considers the Scythian monks John and Leontius as *protectors of Orthodoxy*.²²⁷

224 See: Migne, PL, LXLII, 9A – 520A; CCSL, *Scriptores Ilyrici Minores*, Turnholti, 1972, p. 29-83.

225 Nestor Vornicescu, PhD, *First Patristic Writings...*, pp. 59-60.

226 "The wonderful people of Scythia Minor, whom Dionysius makes reference to, are probably monks, bishops of Tomis, maybe from other centres of this region too, people among whom there are doubtless 'Scythian monks', from all these John and Leontius are the leaders. They are presented as the supporters of the great men of Scythia Minor and especially of their orthodoxy, threatened by Nestorian heresy. Dionysius knew the theological development very well and he strove to send to the Latin Church documents translated from the great theologians, starting with *St. Cyril of Alexandria*" (I.G. Coman, *Church Writers ...*, pp. 71-72).

227 He thus, praises his fellow countrymen's right faith, taking into account only their good deeds and their spiritual life. "They are the ones who have followed steadily and heroically the Orthodox faith' dogmas, for though they were simple in mastering the words, they were not ignorant when it was about science." After this brief but clear description, Saint Dionysius concludes: "Sure of the power of the universal Church, and giving little to no importance to Nestorian dare or angry cunning, which always laid siege to the Orthodox truth not only through open attempts, but also through dirty tricks, I

The Cyrillic translation²²⁸ together with “De Incarnatione Domini” Saint John Cassian’s work represent a genuine and necessary Cyrillic Christology revival in the West. Up to Saint Dionysius Exiguus’ translation, Saint Cyril’s works had been completely ignored in the Eternal City, having as consequences “a misinformation of the Western theological authorities” in the context of Nestorian controversies.²²⁹ Thus, in addition to the actual support offered to the Scythian monks, Saint Dionysius Exiguus’ translation had an essential importance to “*Saint Cyril of Alexandria theology’s original revival*”.²³⁰ In the preface to translation VI of the “Synodal Epistle”²³¹ not only he emphasizes the importance of the Cyrillic work but also offers a true confession of faith, revealing fine theologian and apologist qualities. He therefore, clearly makes the difference between the Orthodox teaching and Nestorian heresy; thus, illustrating

endeavour by virtue of the divine grace to fight back to the iron weapons of this heresy with a redemptional bastion (“Quapropter de uniuersali ecclesiae firmitate securus parique pedens audaciam aut furorem Nestoriae perfidiae, que non solum conatibus manifestis uerum etiam clandestinis semper insidiis stabilitatem catholicae ueritatis opungare molitur, pro facultate, quam diuina gratia suggerit, armis eius feralibus salutare nitor munimen opponere”) Dionysius Exiguus, *Praefatio ad Ioannem et Leontium*, 1-3, in CCL, Seris Latina, LXXXV, pp. 55-56; see also the translation of Prof. David Petrescu, in MO, no. 2/1986, p. 116-117.

228 The translation was made about 519, at the same time when the Scythian monks were present in Rome (cf. H. van Cranenburg, *La vie latine de Saint Pachome, traduit du grec par Denys pe Petit*, Bruxelles, 1969, p. 35.

229 The passing under silence on St. Cyril’s Christology in the West is mostly the result of the Akoimati monks’ plots in Constantinople, since they were “papacy supporters”.

230 Rev. Gheorghe Dragulin, *The Identity between Dionysius Pseudo-Areopagite and Dionysius the Humble (Exiguus) Hieromonk. Orthodox Research of a Controversial Byzantine and Ancient Culture History Issue*, Metropolitan of Oltenia Publishing House, Craiova, 1991, p. 223.

231 *Praefatio Dionisii Exigui ad Patrum Episcopum* in CCL, Seris Latina, LXXXV, p. 63-66.

the threat of the error when speaking about the two natures in the hypostasis of the Incarnate Logos. “Therefore, says Saint Dionysius, the writings of the blessed Cyril cited previously, mention the same Nestorius; because the One-Born Son of God, of the Father born before all eternity and of a being with the Father (*cuius est Patee essentiae*), who for the sake of our salvation has descended, and by the Holy Spirit incarnate of the Virgin Mary, not to dare to divide Him in two (*non audeat in duos duidere*), nor to seek through ordinary guile to profess any unity and companionship between God and man, (*quandam et societatem dei et hominis asseuerare nittur*) words that do not reveal the inseparable unity of both nature (*naturae inseparabilem unitatem*), nor the singularity of the person or essence of the Son of God of one nature with Him (*substantiae filii dei ab eo prolata significat*), but two or more, under these names showing a wandering split, according to the author of the wicked heresy, its despicable partisans, with the help of somewhat effort, authority and relations, seek to spread it as they understand it.”²³²

Also, in order to offer support and help to the Scythian monks, the Holy Father translated from Greek works as: “On the Making of Man”, one of Saint Gregory the Theologian’s thesis²³³ and Saint Proclus of Constantinople’s²³⁴ “Tomo to the

232 *Praefatio Dionisii Exigui ad Patrum Episcopum*, 2, p. 60; Romanian translation. in MO, no. 2/1986, pp. 117-118.

233 St. Gregory of Nazianzus, the so-called “Theologian”, came into the world in 330, outside the village of Arianz, near Nazianzus, in southwest Cappadocia. Just like in the case of St. Basil the Great, the first lessons of Christian behaviour and living were learned under his mother’s guidance, the devout and pious Nonna. He studied at the most important schools of time (Caesarea of Cappadocia, Alexandria, Athens), where he got close to St. Basil the Great. Their friendship was an example that defied time, a model of the perfect union between mind and body, of how much the love of Christ can heal over the love of men. A contemplative and apologetic nature, St. Gregory deplores man’s personal incapacity to overcome his own rational principles’ inability. The one who does not understand

Armenians.²³⁵ Saint Proclus, the Patriarch of Constantinople's work is also meant to strengthen "Felicianus and the Brother Pastorus" in the fight against Nestorian heresy. In his prologue, Saint Dionysius remembers that in the days of Emperor Theodosius, the disciples of Theodore of Mopsuestia, "began to spread the heresy that corrupted the Symbol of faith through Syria and Armenia to the naive people, preaching in light

his own limits does not know that beyond what he sees, there really lies the Mystery of Life. He becomes an idol lover and worshiper and praising the creature (the sun, the stars, the earth, etc.) is unable to discover the Creator (Paul S. Russell, *St. Ephrem the Syrian and St. Gregory the Theologian confront the Arians*, SEERI, Kerala, 1994, p. 3)

234 Saint Proclus became a bishop of Constantinople in 434, and he was one of "the greatest preachers of the fifth century Greek Church". Most of his homilies are dedicated to the great Church feasts and celebrations. Their scriptural specificity had a key contribution dogmatically speaking to the teaching of faith formulation of the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus (431) – see: *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis. The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, vol. II, ed. Charles Kannengiesser, Brill, Leiden - Boston, 2004, p. 873.

235 The Holy Father says in the work mentioned: "Who confesses that the one who was crucified, Christ, is God, also confesses that both the Father and the Holy Spirit were crucified if the nature of the Trinity is one. As for me, I object to and ask you: The one was crucified is one of the Trinity or someone else who is not in the Trinity? If he is one and the same, my confusion is cleared up. But if it is someone else not from the Trinity, then the Lord of glory is the fourth and he is a stranger to the glory of the seraphim ... But if we said that He was crucified in Godhead, we would give access to passion into the Trinity. But if we say that the Logos took the passions in his flesh, we thus confess that the one who suffered is one of the Trinity, for the nature of the Trinity has remained untouched by passions ... Therefore, he was crucified who was incarnate. But if he who was crucified, was incarnate, then it follows that the Father and the Holy Spirit were not crucified; therefore, only one of the Trinity was crucified." His confession is later also adopted by Saint John Maxentius and used as an argument to support the Theopaschite Christology in Rome (Proclus, *De fide*, III, at John Ioan Maxenius, *Libellus fidei*, IV, 2; X, 17, 18, 19, Schwartz, p. 61).

wickedness on the Trinity of the same being in such a way that our Lord, the creator of the world, is not illustrated in any way as the One of the Trinity (*Trinitatis nullatenus faterentur*).²³⁶

In close connection with the work of the Scythian monks in Rome is also the translation “*The Petition (Libellus)*”, presented by the Alexandrians to the Constantinopolitan papal delegates in 496". About this document, the monk of Dobruja states that “I translated it from Greek, Dionysius the Humble in Rome” (“*Dionysius Exiguus Rome de greco converti*”).²³⁷

II. The second part of his work consists of spiritual or hagiographical translations: *The Life of Saint Pachomius the Great, The Great Repentance of the Blessed Thais, The Uncovering of the Head of St. John the Baptist*. These works are enriched by a florilegium which the author included, the *Exempla Sanctorum Patrum*²³⁸, meaning a hundred patristic passages which built up “several bridges between Christian brothers”.²³⁹ All of these have had a tremendous value and significance for the Western patristic literature, taking into account the Latins’ fascination with the Eastern Fathers’ mystical experiences and their frequent rise in the life of the Western monastic communities.

The uncovering of Eastern spirituality and the example of spiritual life in the desert of Egypt had already become a part of

236 Prefatio Dionisii Exigui Interpretis in Procli Constantinopolitani Episcopi Tomi ad Armenos Translatione Latina ad Felicianum et Pastorem, in CCSL, Seris Latina, LXXXV, pp. 63-66.

237 “Libellus quem dederunt apocrisarii Alexandrinae ecclesiae legatis ad urbe Roma Constantinopolim destinatis”, in Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (CSEL) XXXV, *Epistulae imperatorem, pontificium, aliorum inde ab a CCCLXVII usque ad a DLII datae*, Avellana quae dicitur collectio, a cura di Otto Gunther, 1, Prage-Vindobonac-Lipsiae, 1895, n. 102, pp. 468 – 473.

238 *Scriptores Ilyricii Minores*, in CSEL LXXXV, pp. 83-129.

239 I.G. Coman, Romanian Orthodoxy sources, in “Orthodoxia” magazine, no. 33/1981, p.344; Nestor Vornicescu, PhD, *First Patristic Writings...*, p. 71

the Latin tradition due to the effort, activity and works of Saint Dionysius' Daco-Roman predecessor, Saint John Cassian.²⁴⁰ The translation of "*The Life of Saint Pachomius the Great*" by Saint Dionysius Exiguus²⁴¹ was the result of a request he was asked by a Roman aristocrat. It seems that the name of this woman

240 The first example in this way is that of Saint John Cassian, who uses in his monastic rules elements of Evagrian theology, of Pachomian orders, of St. Basil the Great's ascetic settlements, and last but not least of Saint John Chrysostom's teachings, his soul's teacher. His writings would later become normative for Saint Benedict of Nursia and even for Cassiodorus, who would build his famous abbey at Vivarium, Calabria. Due to this important contribution to the spiritual life of Western monasticism, St. John Cassian, one of Saint Dionysius Exiguus' countrymen, is considered by modern theology as "the messenger who brought "the wisdom of the desert" to the West" (Conrad Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from August to Gregory the Great*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2000, p. 36).

241 It is yet unknown for sure what text Saint Dionysius Exiguus used for his translation. In a study on "the fourth and fifth centuries Cenobitic Pachomian tradition", Paulin Ladeuze states that "the only thing he did was to translate the Greek work", as it is also illustrated by his prologue ("Pachomii vitam siquit in greco reperta est, fide translatoris exolvens"). The French researcher also suggests the fact that the work used by the Holy Father would be "different from the versions we know. If Dionysius, he says, changed and shortened his source, our remark should regard the very Latin version" (P. Ladeuze, *Etude sur le Cenobitisme pachomien pendant le IV-e siecle et la premiere moitie du V-e*, Louvain, 1898, p. 3, note 1). On the other hand, there is another hypothesis according to which the text used by Saint Dionysius Exiguus "would have been Alexandrian". This would be explained by the historical context. Constantinople could have been one of the places where St. Dionysius could have obtained the Greek text from. This supposition does not verify and moreover does not uphold, if we take into consideration the fact that the most likely place where he could have got it, would have been the monastery of the Acoemeti, whom he was at odds. Since this theory failed, it was then reconsidered the relation which the Holy Father had with Alexandria. From H. van Cranenburgh's point of view this is a possible and logical supposition; the researcher argues the fact that no less than "fifteen translated works of Dionysius' relate to

aristocrat was Galla of Rome, the daughter of Senator Symmachus, and sister-in-law of the great erudite Boethius.²⁴² In his Prologue, Saint Dionysius does not mention her name, but he only addresses to her: “*Dominae venerandae mihi et in Christo Quoque Magnificentissimi, Dionysius Exiguus*” (*Dionysius Exiguus, To the blessed in Christ, most honourable Lady*). The details on the recipient’s authority and power in the City as well as her noble ancestry are illustrated in the preface of the text. The preface is also a good occasion for the Holy Father to urge the lady comply with the spiritual teachings

the situation in this church; for each of them he became their protector every time the information Rome had with regard to Egypt or Alexandria was fragmentary.” In conclusion, there could have been several versions of the text which might have helped Dionysius carry out his translation. However, “what seems to confirm this hypothesis is the fact that the Greek review Dionysius uses for his translation includes the enlargement (The Angelic Rule and Paralipomena) specific to the Greek version of *The Life of Saint Pachomius*, which developed under the influence of Hellenism, starting all the way from Alexandria. (H. van Cranenburgh, O.S.B, Introduction a *La vie latine de Saint Pachome traduit du grec par Denys le Petit*, edition critique, Subsidia Hagiographica, no. 46, Bruxelles, 1969, p. 48).

- 242 Great Patrician Symmachus’ distinguished daughter is mentioned by Procopius in his work “*De Bello Gothico*” (Book I) and also by Saint Gregory the Great in his Dialogues (Book XIII), where he calls her “*nobilissima puella Symmachi consuli atque patricii filia*” most honourable child of this city and daughter of the consul and Patrician Symmachus”). It is also known the fact that she was a widow while still very young; she decided to retreat and become a nun at a women’s convent near “*Saint Peter’s Basilica*”, where she also had a sister called Proba. It is also worth mentioning the fact that Galla “has an engraving in the Church of St Anastasia, where Saint Dionysius also lived, which means that the respectable lady lived in this area and since her presence here was endorsed by that engraving, she was one of the that holy place’s Maecenas”- see: Aloisius L. Tautu, *Dionysius, the Romanian: a jewel of our Church*, Poliglota gregoriana Printing House, 1967, p. 49; Rev. Al. Motoc, *The Holy Dionysius Exiguus (The Humble)*, p. 118.

mirrored by the text of *The life of Saint Pachomius the Great*.²⁴³

St. Dionysius Exiguus' interest in the Latin translation of the Greek version of "*The Life of Saint Pachomius the Great*"²⁴⁴ emerged notably in the monastic realms of the Eternal City. This aspect can be clearly noticed from the attention Cassiodorus, the founder of the abbey of Vivarium gives to him. He hails the Holy Father as an erudite translator, just as Eugippius the priest, praising and recommending their works to the disciples.²⁴⁵ This means that Saint Dionysius was a

243 "I reply to your respected request, and the valued opportunity it offers, by offering you the Life of Saint Pachomius, faithfully translated into Latin from its Greek source (sicuit in graeco reperta est, fide translationis exsoluens). Your initiative has long been reproaching me for my delay in fulfilling the promise I had made, so it would not be right for me to delay any longer, especially when you are someone who is accustomed to expect a solemn promise rather than a mere good intention. You have eagerly desired to learn more about the disciplines of the blessed Fathers, and by the grace of Christ there is a great number of stories which are there to be read and imitated (per Christi gratiam legenda simul atque imitanda peragentes). Because of the great interest you have shown in gathering together the deeds of each one of them, the credit for this document as a divine gift for future ages is yours (futuris saeculi documentum diuini muneris singulare praestetis)." (*Dionisii Exigui Interpretis in Vitae Sancti Pachomii Abbatis translationae latina Ad Dominam Venerandam*, CSEL LXXXV, Prefatio X, 1, pp. 79-80).

244 Together with the original *Coptic* version (the oldest), *The Life of Saint Pachomius the Great* is also translated into Greek (*S. Pachomii Vitae graece*, Ediderunt hagioraphi bollandiani ex recensione F. Halkin, Bruxelles, 1932); *Arabic (Histoire de Saint Pakhôme et des ses communautés: documents coptes et arabe inédits*, publiés et traduit par E. Amélineau, en Annales du Muse Guiment, Paris, 1889) and *Boharitic* (edited by Luis Theophile Lefort, in *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium (CSCO)*, *Scriptores Coptici*, vol. 89, *Seria Tertia*, t. 7, Lovani, 1925-1936).

245 "*Generat etiam catholica ecclesia viros illustres probabiliū dogmatum decore fulgentes. Fuit enim nostris temporibus et Dionisius monachus*" (PL 70, 1137; Isidorus, *De Vir. Illustr. c.26*, PL 83, 1097; PL 67, 880 and IV).

spiritual master, who played an essential role in the development of the Eternal City's theology. Hence, the great importance of the Latin text of *The Life of Saint Pachomius the Great*, which claims its accuracy in relation to the original Greek one, is given by the fact that it is offered as a model of life and virtue especially for the monastic society of the city.²⁴⁶

To the Latin world, Saint Pachomius the Great was not completely a stranger. In 404, Jerome had already translated "The Monastic Regulation" of the great Abba, thus the first Cenobitic legislation to the West was set out. His translation influenced further principles and rules, *Regula orientalis* ascribed to Deacon Vigilius, being one of the most emblematic example in this way.²⁴⁷ Saint Dionysius Exiguus' translation together with that of the great Latin father, come to perfect and fulfil the heritage of the Oriental ascetic literature in Rome. But he carries on even further and succeeds in offering the Romans two more noteworthy translations for the Eastern tradition. These are the two masterpieces: *The Uncovering of the Head of St. John the Baptist*²⁴⁸ and *The Great Repentance of the Blessed*

246 H. van Cranenburgh, O.S.B, Introduction a *La vie latine de Saint Pachome traduit du grec par Denys le Petit*, p. 40-42.

247 Dom Amand Boon, Preface a *Pachomiana Latina*. Regles et Epitres de S. Pachome, Epitre de S. Theodore et "Liber" de S. Oriesius, *text latin de S. Jerome*, edite par Dom Amand Boon, Bibliotheque de la Revue d'Historie Ecclesiastique, fas. 7, Louvain, 1932, p. V-VII.

248 During his reign, Julian the Apostate ordered that the relics of St. John the Baptist be spread. God, however, had other plans and wanted that they were saved by two monks who happened to be nearby the place they were scattered. The holy remains were housed in the churches near the Mount of Olives; his head was first laid in a church in Jerusalem and then in Alexandria. Here his relics were brought together with those of Saint Elisha, the Prophet; they were received by St. Athanasius the Great himself, "who kept them in an orchard until a church was built to house and cherish them properly, where they were later laid." The sanctum was built only in the days of Patriarch Theophilus, in the place called Karmuz. In 391, the

Thais mentioned above. Therefore, one can understand that Saint Dionysius praises the Egyptian monks and also their father, Saint John the Baptist, when he speaks about the fruits of repentance.²⁴⁹ At the same time, the translations of these hagiographic works have also a double significance: one the one hand we witness the Romanians' piety for the worship of the holy relics and, on the other hand, the "spiritual glory the erudite Eastern monk enjoyed among the naive monks in the West."²⁵⁰

Emperor Valens desperately wanted the holy relic be brought to Constantinople. Cassiodorus says that while the delegation was passing through the Chalcedon, the oxen carriage which transported the holy relics stopped and did not want to move forward. Considering this as a sign from God, the Emperor laid the Head of the Forerunner of Christ in a little church, was named in his honour. The second finding of the Head took place at Emessa in Syria (453). The story translated by Saint Dionysius seems to have as its author Archimandrite Marcel of Emessa (see: J. de Voragine, *La legende doree*, Paris, 1843, p. 284; B.A. Alexadru, *De la Studion la Vlaherne* in "The Voice of the Church" Magazine, no. 5-6/1963, p. 547; Paul Peters, *Orient and Byzances*, Bruxelles, 1950, p. 65; rev. Gheorghe Dragulin, PhD, Preliminary Study to *The Prologues of Saint Dionysius the Humble or Exiguus to some of his translations in Latin*, in MO, no 2/1986, pp. 102-103; Fr. Yacoub El-Maqary, *The Discovery of the Relics of St. John the Baptist and Elisha the Prophet: An Official Account*, The Monastery of St. Macarius, Scetis, 1994, p. 5).

- 249 The idea to translate the work "*The Uncovering of the Head of St. John the Baptist*" belonged to "the very honourable abbot Gaudentius" (ad Gaudentium Abbatem) who transformed it into a request. In the prologue of the work, it is stated the fact that the Forerunner of Jesus appeared in some Palestinian monks' dream as a vision, "who took his holy head from the house of that heathen king Herod, and then they reached Emessa where he remained for a long time unknown, until he appeared again in the monks' dreams, the holy, devout monks who were humble,; St. John was ready to tell his story to the Romans, his story, pushed, I believe, by the obedience to a godly commandment of those who live a solitary life to show his glory in Christ" (*Dionisii Exigui ad Gaudentium Abbatem*, CCSL, LXXXV, Scriptores "Illyrici" Minores, Prefatio VIII, p. 69-71).
- 250 Rev. Gheorghe Dragulin, Introductory Study to *The Prologues of Saint Dionysius or Exiguus to some of his translations in Latin*, in MO, no. 2/1986, p.104.

St. Dionysius Exiguus' theological, cultural, and last but not least, spiritual contribution has fully had an important impact on the ascetic educational process development in the Eternal City. In this regard, he is known to have been a dialectics teacher in the school Cassiodorus founded within the monastery of Vivarium. He continues the work started by his forerunner, St. John Cassian, by facilitating Vivarium's access to the Oriental Fathers' ascetic-mystical experiences. In his view, passions release was an essential condition for "lectio divina". Together his good friend, the erudite Cassiodorus, Saint Dionysius "found a source of inspiration in the spirit which represented all this age's monasticism."²⁵¹

St. Dionysius Exiguus professed an intense canonical work. Among his translations we could also mention: "The Canons of the Ecumenical Councils (Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus and Chalcedon), the canons of local synods, and last but not least, the Pontifical Decrees. He is known in the field of canon law as the first great canonist of the Eastern Church, being also called as "the father of canon law" in the Latin Church. His masterpiece was "*Dionysiana*".²⁵²

The first edition of his canons was written around 500, shortly after his arrival in Rome. The reason that made the Holy Father start this monumental work is illustrated in the Second Preface: "*Dionisii Exigui Interpretis in Canonum Graecorum Translatione Prima ad Stephanum Epsopum.*" The introduction

251 Pierre Riche, *Education et culture dans l'Occident barbare*, VI-VII Siecle, Edition du Seuil, Paris, 1962, p. 205.

252 It is the generic name of the collection of canons translated or compiled by Saint Dionysius Exiguus. In the course of time, the famous work of the scyth monk was completed and added. Thus, in 774 it appears with the name "Collectio Dionysiana – Hadriana", from Pope Hadrian I (772-795), who dealt with her review. Since 802 it appears under the name of "Codex seu Liber caonum" (see: PL 67, col. 315-342; Jean Gaudemet, *Les sources du droit de l'Eglise en occident du lie au VIIe siecle*, Paris, 1985, p. 134).

is mainly addressed “to our beloved brother Laurentius”, whom some believe that we could be the very Archdeacon Laurentius²⁵³, who fought against Pope Symmachus (498-514), giving birth to a true crisis in Rome.²⁵⁴ Due to his theological preoccupations, we think that Saint Dionysius’ involvement in

253 “*Dionysius Exiguus, to the Most Holy Master and Father I. Bishop Petronius, II. Bishop Stephen: Our beloved brother Laurentius, because of an earnest and friendly urge, touched my humility to translate Church canons from Greek (ecclesiasticas de graeco transferre perpulerit imperitia). Even though he was dissatisfied, I believe, by the imperfection of the old translation, I, however, even more conscientiously strove to fulfil my work by the recommendation of Your Blessing, to whom Christ, the Almighty God, out of His usual love for men entrusted you the wisdom of the highest priest (summi sacerdotii contulit dignitatem). Among the greatest ornaments you adorn the Church of the Lord due to customs holiness (morum sanctitate condecoras), preserving unspoilt and holy your rights of the grace of God in the priestly assemblies, you have the power in this way to show the clergy and people the good way, being dissatisfied with the custom of our age – when we rather want to know the right than to do them. But encourages and strengthened being by God’s help, by doing what you yourself order to be done, you become a very emblematic and meritorious parable to the believers” (Prefatio II, in CCSL, Seria Latina, vol. LXXXV, Scriptorum Illyrici Minores, p. 39-42).*

254 *The Symmachian or Laurentian schism* divided the Roman clergy into two parts. Its two leaders, Pope Symmachus, and the Archdeacon, or Antipope Laurentius, fought also for the Holy See, each of them having his own group of supporters. The text known as the *Laurentin Fragment* is a first attempt of *Liber pontificalis*. It all started from the dissatisfaction of the political clergy adopted by the previous Pope Alexander II, who made several concessions related to Acacian schism. The two opponents were appointed on the same day in two different basilicas in Rome: Lateran and Santa Maria Maggiore. This issue reached Theodoric’s ears, Italy’s Ostrogoth king, who preferred Symmachus. After he occupied his seat, the new Pope convoked a council in “Saint Peter’s” Cathedral in Rome (1st March 499), which was purposed to cancel Laurentius’ appointment and offer him the opportunity to sign an obedience document, so that he were later to be appointed as bishop of Nuceria in Campania. Laurentius’ supporters, including some of the senators

this issue is firstly based on canonical reasons and then on the necessity of a broader clarification of Christian chronology. Also, it should be mentioned here that the first two editions of the Scythian monk's canons, as well as an important collection of papal decrees,²⁵⁵ were written during the Symmachian schism.²⁵⁶

In the third and final part of his canons, asked by Pope Hormisdas (514-523), Saint Dionysius offered a bilingual version of the text, bringing together both his translation and the Greek original.²⁵⁷ It seems that this work too, belonging to the Holy Father together with Pope Hormisdas played a great role in the process of reconciliation between the East and the West, in the context of the Acacian schism. This aspect is mainly mirrored by the correspondence exchanged between Pope Hormisdas and Constantinople. With the help of his chancellor, Saint Dionysius Exiguus, the great Pontiff is able to put the basis of a dialogue with the Byzantine emperors, thus creating

led by Festus, accused Symmachus of having celebrated Easter by the old Roman calendar and not by the Alexandrian aggiornamento. This time, Theodoric adopted a direct and military intervention and sent his soldiers to put things in order. Things escalated and ended up in street violence (506). This conflict gave birth to decrees "Depositio Marcelini Papae", also called "Synodus Sinuessana", where it was stipulated that "no Roman bishop can be trialled by anyone not even when he is charged with the sin of apostasy". Symmachian or Laurentian schism historical context and church implications become noticeable based on the wide range of relations, documents and letter exchange between Rome and Constantinople. (J.N.D. Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, p. 50-51; Philippe Levillain, *Dictionnaire Historique de la Papauté*, p. 1609-1611; *Enciclopedia dei Papi*, vol. I, Pietro, santo – Anastasio Bibliotecario, antipapa, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2000, pp. 464-472).

255 The Holy Father is also the author of a collection of papal decrees which include chronological official written between Siricius (384-399) to Anastasius II (496-498).

256 Kenneth Pennington, *The Growth of Church Law*, p. 396.

257 Clarence Gallagher, *Church Law and Church Order in Rome ad Byzantium. A comparative Study*, Ashgate, Varirum, 2002, p. 9-12.

a favourable context for a Christological Chalcedonian reevaluation.²⁵⁸

As a canonist, Saint Dionysius Exiguus does not cease to complete his work of confession in the Eternal City. From the translations and comments on various ecclesiastical canonical issues, one could clearly see his particular interest for the Christological dogma. The interpretations offered are conceived in such a manner that “Christology and Mariology imperishably combine with humbleness, kenosis, worship and salvation creating a comprehensible and deep synthesis to be of service to the Scythian monks, but also to the all theological context of the century. Especially the Canons of the Ecumenical Councils and Local Councils were early researched by our Church, so that probably Saint Dionysius Exiguus’ contribution and value, especially his translations in Latin, were probably known.”²⁵⁹

Saint Dionysius Exiguus’ preoccupations for Christian chronology are slightly related to the Symmachian schism.²⁶⁰ Beyond the context of this issue, the Holy Father got personally and directly involved in solving the first Christian centuries’ absolutely necessary reality. His wish is a living testimony of the fact that the Saviour Jesus Christ is the “*beginning and the end*”²⁶¹ of our existence. His contribution related to the issue of

258 It was Hormisdas the one who received the Scythian monks in Rome between 519-520 (*Enciclopedia dei Papi*, vol. I, p. 478-482).

259 Nestor Vornicescu, PhD, *First Patristic Writings...*, p.71-72.

260 In 501, Pope Symmachus imposed the return to the ancient Roman tradition of Easter holidays on March 25th. Some believe it would have done this out of hostility to Constantinople. Against the background of Acacian Schism, this decision has led to an even greater distortion of diplomatic relations and dialogue between the East and the West. The situation was promptly claimed by the Laurentians at Theodoric’s court (see: Rev. Gh. Dragulin, PhD, Dionysius the Humble or Exiguus, Two Epistles on the issues of the Easter date and the “elements of the calendar and pascal calculations”, in *MO Magazine*, No. 1 / 1987, p. 39).

261 Cf. Revelation 22:13.

Christian computation which he drew up is of a vital importance, and this is illustrated in works such as: “*Book on Easter*”, “*Paschal Arguments*” and the two letters “*De ratione Pasche*”.²⁶²

The strongest argument that gives a reasonable explanation for St. Dionysius Exiguus’ computational work is therefore the desire of “Christening” the calendar year.²⁶³ When he started this work, the Holy Father had in his mind the idea according to which the centre of mankind’s history must be Christ the Saviour’s Person. The events in the life of the Lord, thus became distinguishing marks and examples for the early scholars who tried to define a Christian chronology. For example, Eusebius and Jerome, thought Baptism to be the beginning of preaching the Lord in the world, “in the seventeenth year of Tiberius”, thus contributing to the creation of the “Byzantine Paschal Chronicle.” For Prosper of Aquitaine, the main starting points were Passions and the Resurrection, and Blessed Augustine couldn’t make up his mind between Birth and Baptism as “sixth century beginning.” Therefore, “the idea of a Christian era in which the years were to be counted from the beginning of the last century of the world, either from the moment of Incarnation or that of the Passion of the Christ, emerged in the early of the fifth century in both the East and West. Prosper of Aquitaine, who lived in Rome, introduced in the chronicle an era of Passion, which he wrote basing on of Eusebius and Jerome, shortly after

262 *Liber de Paschale*, in Migne, PL LXVII, 483-498 ; *Argumeta paschalia*, in Ibidem, 497, 514; *Epistola prima de ratione Paschae Prefacio*, Ibidem, 19-22; *Epistola secunda*, Ibidem, 23-28, 513-520.

263 Referring to the fact that before his work the calendar years were calculated “starting with Diocletian”, the Holy Father confesses: “I did not want to base my cycles on the memory of this wicked and persecuting man, but I rather chose to calculate the years starting with the moment of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that the beginning of our hope will be better known to all of us, and that the cause of the redemption of the human race, that is, the passion of our Saviour be brighter and livelier” (*Epistola prima de ratione Paschae Prefacio*, PL LXVII, 20).

the vandals had conquered the city (455). Until the Lord's Crucifixion, which he set as it was the custom in the West during Rufus and Rubellius Gemini's consulships (AD 29), Prosper used Abraham's royal chronology. Then he switched over to another system that doubled: each year was now on counted from the Lord's Passion, and also scheduled according to the Roman tradition with that year's consuls' names ... as, for example, Valentin and Anthemius' eighth consulship (AD 455).²⁶⁴

In the East, the beginning of the Christian era was set up in relation to the moment of the Incarnation of Christ the Saviour. Cyril of Schytopolis, who stayed at the "Saint Sabas Monastery" near Jerusalem, gives the first examples of this calculation in the synaxaria he draws up for Saints Euthymius and Sabas. He mentions here the fact that Saint Sabas met his Maker "in the year 524 of the Incarnation of the Word", following his ideas he offers further details: "the sixth year of Justinian's reign, and the second of Lampadius and Orestes' consulate (AD 534). In the late sixth century is published the Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor, which marks the beginning of the Christian era starting with the year 277 of "the Godly Incarnation and Diocletian's first year of reign (AD 284/85), ending with the year 805 of the Godly Incarnation and Michael's second year of reign." This is the context in which St. Dionysius Exiguus' contribution happens; he was the one who invented the year number of the Christian era starting with the moment of the Saviour's Incarnation in the East too, thus coming up with a uniformized version for all the Church. He therefore, is the creator of a unique and revolutionary change in the European literature, laying the foundation of "our current age."²⁶⁵

264 Georges Declercq, *ANNO DOMINI. The Origins of the Christian Era*, Brepols, Turnhout, 2000, pp. 45-46.

265 Georges Declercq, *ANNO DOMINI*, p. 48. "He laid the foundation of the Christian era calculation ... It is our present era, shared by the

Due to the relation between the Roman Empire and the City of Edessa, the latter has been the beneficiary of a great theological development even since the first two Christian centuries. Since, as a capital it managed the whole area of the small Syrian state Osroene, the Syriac city became famous due to its great theologians and spiritually devoted citizens, such as Saint Ephrem, the Syrian and Aphrahat. This is also the place where one of the controversies which largely foreshadowed the issue of *the Holy Easter celebration* emerged; but is the place too, where this issue after being discussed and debated met its resolution during the meeting of the First Holy Ecumenical Council (325). This is the reason why, during Pope Victor I's papacy (189-198), the Osroene province became the place where a local synod met in order to clarify the paschal controversy. Eusebius of Caesarea does not give many details about this meeting.²⁶⁶ On the other hand, Gerard Rouwhorst argues that in Ephraim and Aphrahat's times, Syriac Christians celebrated Easter in the night from the fourteenth to fifteenth Nisan. Based on this reason, Rouwhorst also speaks about an obvious Jewish influence, explicitly illustrated in Easter theological content of the two Fathers. In this context, the accent falls on "the Passover" and "the slaughtering of the Passover Lamb", estranging from the genuine meaning of the Passion and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.²⁶⁷ These details strengthen the fact that up to the Ecumenical Synod of Nicaea and long after that, most of the Syriac Christians were faithful to the *Quartodeciman*

whole planet. Such a universal value conquest achieved by a humble monk who had left Pontic Dacia, confers on the Daco-Roman literature which he created, a certain kind of splendour and glory that meets no equal in any contemporary European literature on a similar issue" (I.G. Coman, *La litterature patristique au Bas-Danube. La contribution de Jean Cassien et de Denys le Petit*, en "Romanian Orthodox Church News", no. 3/1981, p. 6).

266 McCollough, *History*, 1982, pp. 23-24.

267 Gerard Rouwhorst, *Jewish Liturgical Traditions in Early Syriac Christianity*, in "Vigiliae Christianae" 51/1997, p. 82.

beliefs.²⁶⁸ They based their logic in establishing the date for the Easter celebration on two essential moments: on the one hand, they considered that the feast should be held on the day of the “Red Sea Crossing” according to the Jewish liturgical calendar, and on the other hand that Easter should be celebrated on Saturday, according to those stated in the Holy Gospels. The Jewish liturgical calendar was drafted in accordance with the moon cycle. Every month, the first of which was Nisan’s, was astronomically marked by the “full moon” phenomenon we refer here to the full form of the celestial body. Therefore, the fourteen Nisan 14, which was reserved to the “Passover” feast,²⁶⁹ was in fact the first “full moon” of the liturgical year.

Calculated using the Julian calendar, since the solar year is longer than the monthly one, to the first calculation adding an extra month, the Easter celebration date was to fall on “the next full moon after the spring equinox”, that is, after March 21st. This option was also embraced by the Nicene synodals, who also decided that: 1. The Holy Pascha be always celebrated, by all Christians, on a day of Sunday, since this is the day of the week when our Saviour, Christ the Lord has risen; 2. If the Holy Resurrection were to fall on the same day of the week as the Jewish Passover, the Christian feast would be celebrated on the next following Sunday.²⁷⁰

268 The explanation of this name is a pragmatic one; Quartodecimans were the people who celebrated Easter on the same day: fourteenth Nisan.

269 Cf. Deut. 16:1: “Observe the month of Abib and keep the Passover unto the LORD thy God: for in the month of Abib the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night.”

270 Theophilus of Alexandria is one of the key characters in the relation between Rome and the Oriental Churches on the issue regarding the celebration day of the Holy Easter. His attitude and therefore that of the Church of Alexandria towards this matter materialized in a very interesting and efficient epistle addressed to the Byzantine Emperor Theodosius the Great (see: Norman Russel, *Theophilus of Alexandria*, Edited by Carol Harrison University of Durham, Ed. Routledge, London & New York, 2007, p. 79).

In a synodal letter handed by the Nicene Synodals to the Church of Egypt, the following is mentioned: “We also send you the good news of the settlement concerning the holy Pasch, namely that in answer to your prayers this question also has been resolved. All the brethren in the East who have hitherto followed the Jewish practice will henceforth observe the custom of the Romans and of yourselves and of all of us who from ancient times have kept Easter together with you.”²⁷¹ However, the Paschal issue was far from being settled. “The Nicene ruling, however”, says the Orientalist Norman Russell, “did not end the matter because the great sees of Rome, Alexandria and Antioch each based their calculation on different premises. Rome used an eighty-four-year cycle, devised by Hippolytus, and Alexandria a nineteen-year cycle, devised by the Alexandrian scholar Anatolius of Laodicea. Antioch followed the Jewish calendar, which by then may have been ignoring the spring equinox. Rome and Alexandria both took account of the spring equinox, but in Rome it was held to occur on 18th March, whereas in Alexandria it was calculated with greater accuracy, as occurring on 21st March. On occasion, the three-day discrepancy could result in the correlation of the Pascual moon with different solar months. It is what happened in 387, early in Theophilus’ episcopate, when the Alexandrians celebrated Easter on 25th April, five weeks after the Romans.”²⁷²

After the Symmachian / Laurentian schism, Rome tried to develop a closer relation to Constantinople; its reaction being a positive one in response to Emperor Justinian’s reconciling effort. In addition to the doctrinal issues, largely related to the Acacian schism, the Easter date was also a topic for the debate.²⁷³

271 Norman Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. I, Nicaea I to Lateran, Sheed & Ward and Georgetown University Press, 1990, p. 4.

272 Norman Russel, *Theophilus of Alexandria*, p. 79-80.

273 Luigi Magi, *Le sede romano nella corrispondenza degli imperatori e patriarchi bizantini (VI-VII sec.)*, Leuven, 1972, p. 70.

It is the moment when we can speak about St. Dionysius Exiguus' priceless contribution, due to his three works on Christian chronology and Pascha. In his writings, he firmly underlines his support for the decisions of the Nicene Ecumenical Synod (321), arguing against those who used other methods to calculate Easter's celebration day. His arguments are also based on the Tradition of the Church and in this regard, he makes reference to: "The local synod of Antioch's canons, some statements made by Pope Leo the Great, the Epistle of the Holy Proterius of Alexandria, and the paschal cycle he himself composed, being inspired by the tradition of the Egyptians."²⁷⁴

From all those illustrated above, one can conclude on the Scythian monk's genuine tendency for the Christian Church calendar. It is quite sure that, in addition to a very good knowledge of the Alexandrian chronology, the Holy Father was definitely helped by "astrological knowledge which Deceneus' reform, about 600 years before, had put in the hands of Burebista's Daco-Getae all over the Daco centralized state, including Scythia Minor, teaching them to contemplate the 12 signs of the zodiac, the course of the planets, the rise and fall of the moon, the extent to which the solar disc exceeds the surface

274 His Epistle on "The Elements of Calendrical and Paschal Calculation" answered to the following points: 1. On the years from Christ on; 2. On the indiction; 3. On the epacts; 4. On the concurrent; 5. On the 19-year cycle; 6. On the 14th day in March; 8. On the bisect; 9. On the Easter month in March; 10. On the day of Easter celebration in the Holy Week; 11. On the month of the closest Easter; 12. If you want to know the month of January calends every year, what celebration it is; 13. On the Month of January calends; 14. What month is the fourteenth day of the Passover; 15. On the day of equinox and solstice; 16. On the calculation of the leap year (see here: *Epistola secunda*, in PL LXVII, 23-28, 513-520; Rev. Gh. Dragulin, PhD, *Saint Dionysius the Humble or Exiguus. Two Epistles on the Easter Date Issue, and "the Elements of the Calendrical and Pascal Calculation"*, pp. 41-42).

of the earth, the race of the 346 stars around the celestial pole and the complete astrology.”²⁷⁵

IV. Scythian monks’ Christology and Their Confessional Work in the Eternal City

Church historical-doctrinal context after the Council of Chalcedon was an extremely tense one, which can be characterized by many disputes, disbeliefs and schisms between the East and the West. Christological debates continued even after, since the Nestorian and Monophysite attraction within the Oriental Churches could not be fully understood or cleared up. Therefore, a new chapter of the confessional work of the Scythian monks in Rome begins; best described by Metropolitan Irineu Popa’s phrase: “*Chalcedon’s Christology after the Council of Chalcedon*”.²⁷⁶

The Scythian monks dwelled in an ancient priory in Scythia Minor, best illustrated by the toponym “Monastery,” somewhere in Niculitel-Cocos, Celic-Dere, Saon. Great theologians and followers of Saint John Cassian and Dionysius Exiguus’ tradition they succeeded in making themselves known in short time after the Council of Chalcedon due to a very significant formula: “*One in the Trinity suffered in the flesh.*” Their initiative and

275 Iordanes, *Getica*, ed. Th. Mommen, 1882, XI, 69, 70, apud I.G. Coman, *Old Romanian Age Church Writers...*p.279.

276 “An important role in this period was also played by the Scythian monks who appear to Constantinople in a providential moment. Rome and Constantinople being at loggerheads over Zeno’s *Henotikon*, were now on the verge of a new schism caused by the Christological issue. The Scythian monks’ formula “*One of the Trinity suffered in the flesh for us*” has the role to show God the Word as the subject of our human deeds, which means that the human nature does not work independently nor does it exist on its own as a self-independent hypostasis.” (Irineu Popa, PhD, *Jesus Christ is the Same...*, p. 463, 471-472; Idem, *Christology of Chalcedon, After the Council of Chalcedon*, in *Studia Teologiczno-Historiczne, Slazka Opolskiego*, nr. 36/2016, pp. 15-35)

process were encouraged, supported and promoted by Emperor Justinian, who sent them to Rome as mediators with the goal to restore religious peace in the empire after the Acacian schism. In addition to the diplomatic mission assigned by Justinian, the Scythian thus managed to create a new real possibility for solving the Christological differences, due to their uncounted “opuscules which were meant to protect the decision of the Chalcedon on the hypostatic union of the two natures of the Saviour and fought against the Nestorians.”²⁷⁷

IV.1. The premises of the Theopaschite Christology

The opponents of the Chalcedonian dogmatic decisions understood all Christological context as a rehabilitation of Nestorianism. Thus, aside from the fact that the meaning of unity of the two natures in the singular hypostasis of God, the Word, was misunderstood, the opponents of the synod protested also against the “three chapters of the Antiochian tradition” on which there was yet no clear resolution.²⁷⁸ The crisis of Christological different positions results into a three folded bodies within the Eastern Orthodox Church: the Diophysites (or Nestorians), the Myaphisites (or non-Chalcedonians) and the Chalcedonians (or imperialists). In order to have a clearer picture of the historical and doctrinal context to which we refer, we will try to make a brief description of each of them.

The first group was that of *the Nestorian doctrine supporters*, most of them disciples of the Antiochian theological school, based on Diodorus of Tarsus and Theodor of Mopsuestia’

277 Nestor Vornicescu, PhD, *First Patristic Writings...*, p. 74-75.

278 The Council of Chalcedon had not yet condemned for good: “the person and works of Theodore of Mopsuestia, the first of the great Theologians of Antioch; the polemical works of Theodoret of Cyrhus directed against Cyril of Alexandria and Ibas of Edessa’s “Letter to Maris” in which Ibas also had strongly attacked Cyril.” (Brian E. Daley, in *Encyclopaedia of Christian Theology*, vol. I, Jean Yves Lacoste (ed.), Routledge, New York-London, 2005, p. 346).

Christological heritage. Generally speaking, its representatives valued “the work of Christ’s humanity and understood Scripture in a literary manner.” This is the basis on which they built up their “*homo asumptus*” Christology, which grounded the act of Incarnation on the logic of grace, opposite to St. Cyril of Alexandria’s thinking, who advocated for the *body-soul analogy* in Christ the Saviour.²⁷⁹ Although, most of them separated from the Church after the Third Ecumenical Council (431), in Chalcedon they had the opportunity to read the dogmatic judgments, which they somewhat agreed with, since they did not express a final condemnation of Nestorius’ teaching. Others proposed their reinterpretation, as it is, for example, the case of Mar Babai the Great (551-628).²⁸⁰

279 *Body-soul comparison* is used here significantly different way from that in the letter to the Alexandrian monks. There, the analogy is used to illustrate the fact that, as the body and the soul are together in order to form an individual, in the same way the divine and human natures combine in order to *create* a hypostasis and not two hypostases or a complexity of the natures. In this case, the hypostasis is seen as the basis of being, since it is the one through which the being exists. The hypostasis of the Godly Logos wholly embraces human nature, including human reason, without however, becoming a human hypostasis, or “I am”, but He is the Godly “I AM” (John 8:58). Therefore, the Godly Logos guides the human nature which He acquired, including the human reason in an absolute way towards its *essential* destiny: the communion with God. Human hypostases therefore, are free to receive or reject the gift of salvation (contrary to the doctrine of predestination) since the Godly Logos has not undertaken a human hypostasis that would have resulted into an annihilation of our different identities, but absolute communion with God is truly possible for all the people, for the light of the Divine Logos’ glory was not limited by a human hypostasis, but shared with the whole human nature in His divine hypostasis” (Irineu Popa, PhD, *Jesus Christ Is the Same ...*, p. 550, note 1451).

280 His Christology is representative for the members of the Eastern Syriac Church in this period, on the border with the Persian Empire. He was a monk and then an abbot at the “Mar Abraham” Great Monastery on Mountain Izla, today south-eastern Turkey. His doctrinal contribution is given by the fact that he tried to develop and clarify the Theodore and Nestorius’s position, answering back

The Non-Chalcedonians (or Monophysites) acknowledged only the Godly nature's existence and complete work in the person of Christ the Saviour. They wrongly considered themselves as the followers of St. Cyril of Alexandria, interpreting giving an Appollinarian meaning to the formula “*one incarnate nature of God the Logos*” ((μια φύσις του Θεου λογου σεσαρκωμενη).²⁸¹ However, its meaning proved to be a truly Orthodox one, taking into account the fact that the Chalcedonian Fathers, by to the term “nature” understood that of “person”. Therefore, it is all about a terminological equivalence, often illustrated by the Christological vocabulary and formulation of the Holy Father.²⁸² Since Eastern Dioceses

to those who accused him of Nestorianism. His Christological ideas are clearly illustrated by his work “Liber de Unione” / “The Book of the Union,” where he carries out an apology of the Syriac Christological vocabulary, considering it to be in agreement with the provision of the Nicaean Synod. He thus preaches that “Christ is one, and the Son is one. In His Godhead, Christ is Son by nature, whereas in His humanity He is the son by unity and assumption. He is the same son. One and the same is the Son of the most Glorious in heavens and in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary. The one born of the Virgin Mary is the Son of the most Glorious in unity with the Eternal Son of the Most Glorious. Christ is the Son in His humanity, not by adoption, but by unity. Christ is one and the same in his human and Godly nature. One is Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man.” A double folded Christological explanation can be very easily noticed in the Syrian theologian's, work accounted by his theology's followers, conceptually speaking, who think that “speaking about one and the other, he in fact, brings light upon unity”(G.Chediath, *Christology*, Kpptayam, 2002, pp. 148-149).

281 Sf. Cyril, *Epistolae 46 ad Succens*, 2, 5: ACO I, 1, 6, 161-162; PG 77, 245 A; Rev. Prof. Ioan G. Coman, *Pre-Chalcedonian and Chalcedonian moments and aspects* in Ort, year XVII, no. 1/ 1956, p.55.

282 “It is almost one of modern theologians' preconception, states His Eminence Irineu Popa, PhD, that the Church's present Christological terminology be used in the Holy Father's texts, especially when the terms used by St. Cyril and those of the modern theological language are not the same. If today we understand by φύσις nature, St. Cyril, even if he sometimes used the term of ὁδόεὸ in this sense, conferred

had no representation at the synod (e.g.: Armenia and Ethiopia) their hostility towards the Chalcedon grew and sharpened. On the other hand, the case of the Coptic Church would be justified by the fact that Myaphisite formulations would have been deliberately inserted in certain documents, which were first written in Greek. It is the case of the paper about Macarius, Bishop of Tkôw's life, according to which it would mean that "he supported Dioscorus from Alexandria and would not accepted either Leo's Tome or the decisions of Chalcedon." In this way, by inserting heretic elements especially into the hagiographical texts, the Myaphisites used the monastic centres in Egypt, turning them into citadels of their wander.²⁸³ In turn, Timothy Aelurus, bishop of Alexandria (457-460; 475-477), together with Peter the Fuller and Peter Mongus, claimed that "Christ is indeed *homoousious* with the rest of humanity and *homoousious* with the Father and the Holy Spirit, so that at the crucial point where Christology intersects with soteriology they and the Chalcedonians are at one"²⁸⁴, illustrating the Monophysitism's reasonable side. However, he rejects the existence of human nature in Christ after the incarnation, by this wanting to prove his loyalty towards St. Cyril's Christological formula.²⁸⁵

it slightly different meanings and nuances. Some other times he used the word in the sense of *ὁμοιούσιος, ὁμοίουσιος*, as it seems to be the case with the formula in question. However, the terms are not identical. A careful reading of St. Cyril's writings would lead to the conclusion that the author did not have problems only with Nestorius' heresy but he also argued against all movements which were trying to dim as much as possible the inscrutable mystery of the Son of God's Embodiment" (*Jesus Christ is the Same...* p. 285-286).

283 Frederick W. Norris, "Greek Christianities", in *The Cambridge History of Christianity. Constantine to c. 600*, p 94.

284 The Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Christianity, p. 326.

285 "There is no nature that is not hypostasis, he said, no hypostasis that is not nature. If, then, there are two natures, they are necessarily two persons and two Christs" (J. Lebon, *La christologie de Thimotee Aelure*, in *Revue d'Histoire ecclesiastique (RHE)*, IX, nr. 4, 1908, pp. 677-703).

The third outcome of the Chalcedonian Council was the *synodal Christology*, which was later completed by *the Scythian monks' reconciliation formula*. The theology they advocated for was called Theopaschite, offering a truly Orthodox vision, which had nothing to do with the Monophysite or Nestorian doctrines.²⁸⁶

In order to solve all doctrinal issues and restore peace in the Empire, Emperor Zenon (474-491) drew up a concession document which became compulsory for the Church; but he was helped in carrying out his plan by Patriarch Acacius of Constantinople. His famous *Henotikon* was meant (482), to offer “new principles of reconciliation” to believers. Although, it did not explicitly reject synodal terms, the document was written in such a way that it sought not to affect the Monophysites. The reversal was Constantinople’s separation from Rome and the beginning of the so-called “Acacian schism”.²⁸⁷

The Chalcedonians’ apology began during the reign of the Monophysite king Anastasius I, Zenon’s successor in Constantinople.²⁸⁸ Meanwhile, the crisis of the two churches,

286 Prof. Dumitru Staniloae, “Scythian monks” importance in stating Christology at the beginning of the sixth century, introduction to *Sixth Century Daco-Roman Scythian monks’ writings*, translation by Rev. Prof. Nicolae Petrescu and Prof. David Popescu, Metropolitan of Oltenia Publishing House, Craiova, 2006, p. 7.

287 J.A. McGuckin, “*The Theopaschite Confession*” (*Text and Historical Context*) a Study in the Cyrilline Re-interpretation of Chalcedon, in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, no. 2/1984, p. 241.

288 He married Zenon’s widow at the age of 60 when he was crowned as the emperor of Byzantium by Euphemius of Constantinople, the Patriarch. During his reign he managed to reform the sector of finance, strengthen the empire’s borders and, last but not least, to bring to silence former supporters of Emperor Zenon. He also succeeded in establishing and having a dialogue with the King of the Franks, who had converted to Orthodoxy and who was successful in occupying the Gaelic territories, thus laying the basis for the Franks kingdom. He also recognized the reign of King Theodoric of Italy, who had conquered the peninsula in 453 (Leo

the Eastern and Western worsened. Although, he had sworn before coronation that he would never get involved in the Church's issues and change the teaching of Chalcedon, Anastasius is sought to be responsible for four bishops' deposition; first of them was Euphemius (496). Under the guidance of Severus, who was a Monophysite Bishop, the Emperor "asked to the Patriarch of Macedonia to anathematize Chalcedon, but he was told that this thing could only be possible if a new ecumenical council presided by the Pope were convoked."²⁸⁹ When finding out this, Athanasius' signed the second deposition; that of Macedonius who was replaced by Timothy; the latter helping the emperor to insert the Monophysite formula "crucifixus pro nobis" (Who was crucified for us) into the Trisagion. This abuse of power give rise to a great deal of discontent among believers. General Vitalian took advantage of this situation and not only did he cause a popular uprising, but he also demand that a council attended by the Pope be immediately convened at Heraclea. When having to face up this situation, Anastasius sent epistles to Rome, also asking for the Pope's help.²⁹⁰ The new Pope Hormisdas responded to Constantinople and asked that all Monophysite patriarchs be excommunicated. Furthermore, the Bishop of Rome sent his

Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787). Their History and Theology*, Michael Glazier, Inc, Wilmington, Delaware, 1987, p. 208-209).

289 Ioannis E. Anastasiou, *Relation of Popes and Patriarch of Constantinople in the Frame of Imperial Policy from the Time of the Acacian Schism to the Death of Justinian*, in OCA, no. 181/1968, p. 59.

290 Anastasius' epistle reached Rome on 13th August 516 ("Exemplum Sacre Anastasii Augusti Hormisdæ Papæ. Per Ennodium et Fortunatum Episcopos Uenantium Presbyterum Uitale Diaconum et Hilarum Notarium", 125, in *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (CSEL), vol. XXXV, *Epistulæ Imperatorum Pontificum Aliorum Ide Ab. A CCCLXVII Usque Ad. A. DLIII Datae Avellana Quæ Dicitur Colectio, ex recensione Ottonis Guenther, Pars I*, Bibliopola Academiae Literarum Cesareæ Vindobonensis, MDCCCLXXXV, p. 537-540).

legates to Byzantium and mandated them to sign the formula: “*sequentes in omnibus apostolicam sedem et predicantes ejus omnia constituta*”.²⁹¹ Meanwhile, Anastasius emerged victorious

291 By this letter, summarized in the above formula, Hormisdas wanted the recognition of papal primacy and granting the right to “the Holy See to give sentences in all that is preached and decided” E. Casper, *Geschichte des Papsttums* II B, Tübingen, 1933, p. 407. The answer of the Constantinopolitan court was negative this time, too ((Ioannis E. Anastasiou, *Relation of Popes and Patriarch of Constantinople ...*, p. 59; see also Hormisdas’ letters to Emperor Athanasius and the Patriarch of Constantinople: 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, in (CSEL), vol. XXXV, *Epistulae Imperatorum Pontificum Aliorum*, p. 540-554). The issue of papal primacy emerged also as a consequence of the Acacian schism. The one who developed this issue on “the absolute pontifical power” was Pope Gelasius (492-496). He did not only reject canon XXVIII of Chalcedon (“*And the One Hundred and Fifty most religious Bishops, actuated by the same consideration, gave equal privileges to the most holy throne of New Rome, justly judging that the city which is honoured with the Sovereignty and the Senate, and enjoys equal privileges with the old imperial Rome, should in ecclesiastical matters also be magnified as she is, and rank next after her; so that, in the Pontic, the Asian, and the Thracian dioceses, the metropolitans only and such bishops also of the Dioceses aforesaid as are among the barbarians, should be ordained by the aforesaid most holy throne of the most holy Church of Constantinople*”), but he also refused to recognize the primacy of the Holy see of Constantinople. It was also Gelasius who brought in close relation the power and sacerdotal mission of the episcopal see of Rome to the political one, taking advantage of the unstable context of the revolts in the empire (Francois Dvornik, *Byzance et la Primatue Romaine*, Ed. du Cerf, Paris, 1964, p. 52-53). In his letters to Byzantium, it is very clearly stated the fact that “the bishops of Rome, as successors of St. Peter, are the guarantors of the Orthodox faith.” The Byzantines answer back to Gelasius and reminded him of the incapacity to prevent the Romans from giving up some of the pagan customs (Lupercalia) (see: Robin Cormack, in his *Reviews to The bishop of Rome in late antiquity*, Edited by Geoffrey D. Dunn, pp. xi-273, Farnham-Burlington, Vt: Ashgate, 2015, in „The Journal of Ecclesiastical History”, no. 2/2016, p. 384-386).

in the fight with Vitalian and firmly rejected the pope's requests.²⁹²

Until Emperor Justinian coming to throne, Eastern Roman Empire's political and religious situation was still a dark one. Thus, on the one hand, the bishops of Illyria and Macedonia supported Chalcedon and were in a perfect agreement with the Bishop of Rome. Also, the patriarch John of Jerusalem was a Chalcedonian, too. On the other hand, Egypt still continued to be severely affected by Monophysitism, which had become even stronger among the clergy and people. In Antioch, Patriarch Severus was intensely involved in disputes with neo-Chalcedonians. Constantinople was ruled by Timothy Aelurus, who promoted a reasonable Monophysitism based on the help and support of Athanasius I.²⁹³

IV.2. Emperor Justinian and Scythian monks' Christology

If Emperor Anastasius I wanted to impose by force his predecessor's Henotikon, to abolish Chalcedonian decisions and restore order in Rome by means of his authority, his successor, Emperor Justinian (527-565), chose a much more orthodox path. He greatly based his politics on *the principle of harmony between state and Church*. He strongly believed that these two earthly life forms of reality must never be in opposition: "Church is the soul and state the body."²⁹⁴ Thus, one can understand:

292 Emperor Athanasius' answer was a very pointed one: "You can insult or condemn me, but you will never be able to command me" (L. Duchesne, *L'Eglise au VI-eme Siecle*, Paris, 1925, p. 40).

293 Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787)* ..., p. 220.

294 *The priesthood and the Empire are the two greatest gifts which God, in His infinite clemency, has bestowed upon mortals; the former has reference to Divine matters, the latter presides over and directs human affairs, and both, proceeding from the same principle, adorn the life of mankind.... For if the priesthood is, everywhere free from blame, and the Empire full of confidence in God is administered equitably and judiciously, general good will result (συμφωνία της*

“Historically speaking, states His Eminence Irineu Popa, there are three moments of the Monophysite issue with regard to the emperor’s concern to bring them in the Orthodox Church’s bosom. The first moment is that when Justinian is interested in the controversy on the Incarnate Logos’ passion in the flesh. The solution to put an end to this conflict was offered by the Scythian monks who advocated for the formula “*One in the Holy Trinity suffered in the flesh*” Their confession was related to St. Cyril’s dogmatic formula, “*One Incarnate Nature of the Word*”, which was also accepted by the Monophysites. According to this teaching, both the Chalcedonian confession and the Cyrillite formula could be explained. The definition explained, on the one hand, the communication of the two natures’ attributes, and, on the other hand, their union in the Person of Christ. From this point of view, the second Person of the Holy Trinity suffered not in His Godly nature, but in the flesh, that is, in the human nature, united with the Godly nature of Christ.”²⁹⁵

Also, basing himself on the Cyrillite Christology, Justinian condemned the “Three Chapters” (543) by issuing an edict; his decision was agreed upon by the fifth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (553). Thus, he adopts a very clear position against Nestorianism.²⁹⁶ The opposite extreme was represented by the second major doctrinal

αγαθῆ), and whatever is beneficial will be bestowed upon the human race....We think that this will take place if the sacred rules of the Church which the just, praiseworthy, and adorable Apostles, the inspectors and ministers of the Word of God, and the Holy Fathers have explained and preserved for Us, are obeyed” (Justinian, Novela VI).

295 Irineu Popa, PhD, *Jesus Christ is the Same...*, pp. 499-500.

296 The “Three Chapters” or “Propositions” referred to: 1. The person and teachings of Theodore of Mopsuestia; 2. Certain writings of Theodoret against Saint Cyril of Alexandria; 3. The letter of Ibas of Edessa to Maris.

concern, which was Monophysitism. Because of a misunderstood Cyrillian Christology on the incarnation, the Monophysite heretics “rather generated a terminological, than a theological issue.” At the beginning, the Emperor was confident of the possibility to bring the Monophysites on the Chalcedonian Christology side. He therefore, did all his best to convince them that the formula “two natures, one hypostasis” was in a total agreement with what St. Cyril wanted to express when stated “one nature, one hypostasis.” This was the reason why he organized several debates between 532-536, which, unfortunately for him had no positive outcome.²⁹⁷ Here comes up the formula of the Scythian monks “*One in the Holy Trinity suffered in the flesh*” which the Byzantine Emperor considered to be the solution to reconcile the two parties. And although, it was not finally accepted, Justinian kept on “*believing in this Scythian monks’ confession and protecting their formula.*”²⁹⁸

The Theopaschite or Scythian monks originated in today Dobruja today, on the Danube seaside. Their master was the devout John Maxentius. Their name is associated with that of General Vitalian’s revolt, in the context of the Monophysite commotion generated by Peter Fullo of Antioch’s addition in

297 See: Roberta C. Chestnut, *Three Monophysite Christologies*, Oxford University Press, 1976; John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, Crestwood, New York, 1975, p. 40-45; Kenneth P. Wesche, *On the Person of Christ. The Christology of Emperor Justinian*, translation and introduction by Kenneth Paul Wesche, St. Vladimir Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1991, p. 19-20.

298 Irineu Popa, PhD, *Jesus Christ is the Same...* p.500. He reiterated in this Christology of the Dobrujan monks, the words of Saint John the Evangelist, who thought: “*we shall no longer doubt that his person is in the Holy Trinity, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, for without the person of Christ, the Trinity cannot be wholly understood or faithfully worshiped*” (Iustinian, *Epistolae*, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, vol. XXXV, Collectio Avellana, Viena, F. Tempsky, 1895, pp. 61-62).

the Trisagion.²⁹⁹ They formed the neo-Chalcedonian movement,³⁰⁰ which was to be later shared by important theologians of the age, including John the Grammarian, Ephraim of Antioch, Eulogius of Alexandria, and Theodore of Raithu.³⁰¹

The written Theopaschite formula based on the writings of Saint John Maxentius³⁰² also relied on a rich scriptural and patristic foundation. Thus, in order to illustrate the fact that the Logos suffered in the flesh, the Scythian chose as their starting point the words of the Apostles Peter³⁰³ and Paul³⁰⁴ to emphasize the idea that “Christ suffered in the body.” These words were also developed in the theology of Saint Ignatius Theophorus (God-Bearer), Saint Proclus, the Archbishop of Constantinople and even in the theology of Saint Gregory of Nazianzus.³⁰⁵

299 He added in the Trisagion: “*Holy art thou, O God, Holy art thou, O Strong One, Holy art thou, O Immortal, crucified for us, have mercy on us*” (cf. J. Meyendorff, *Le Christ dans la theologie bysantine*, Cerf, Paris, 1969, p. 41; Rev. V. Sibiescu, *Emperor Justinian and the heresies*, Bucharest 1938, pp. 66-71; Irineu Popa, PhD, *Jesus Christ is the Same ...*, p. 478, note 1374).

300 Among the most famous modern theologians, who termed Dobrujan monks’ Christology as neo-Chalcedonian, are the names of C. Moller and J. Lebon (cf. J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine theology ...*, p. 34-35, 166).

301 J.A. McGuckin, “*The Theopaschite Confession*” ..., p. 244.

302 John Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, IV, 2; X, 17, 18, 19, Schwartz (ed); Iohannis Maxenti, Responsio adversul Epistolam quam Possessorem a romano episcopodicuit haeretici destinatum, in Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum, IV, 2, a cura di E. Schwartz, Berlin-Leipzig, 1914; also, in Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, 85A; Romanian translation by Rev. Prof. Dumitru Staniloae, PhD, *Sixth Century “Scythian” Daco-Roman monks’ writings*, Metropolitan of Oltenia Publishing House, Craiova, 2006.

303 Cf. 1 Pt. 4, 1: “Therefore, since **Christ suffered in his body**, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin.”

304 Cf. 1 Cor. 2, 7-8: “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

305 The Scythian monks’ formula, *Unus de Trinitate carne passus est*, was based on Saint Paul’s wise words, who said that the Lord of

Among the patristic texts used by the Scythian monks to endorse their Christological formula, the most used patristic document is Saint Proclus of Constantinople's "*The Tome to the Armenians*"³⁰⁶ (he found his eternal peace in 448). The text is a true apology of the Incarnation of the Word before the Nestorian heresy. In order to clear up the confusion on the hypostatic significance of the two natures of the Incarnation act, Saint Proclus asks a rhetorical question: "is he who was crucified one from the Trinity, or someone else, outside of the Trinity? And, if he indeed is one from the Trinity, the dispute is solved; if on the other hand he is someone else, without doubt the Lord of glory is the fourth, outside of the Trinity, and due to that glorification, by which the Seraphim glorify him." His

glory was crucified; it was also grounded in Saint Ignatius Theophorus' teachings, who preached that Christ suffered; supported by the words of the Holy Proclus, the Patriarch of Constantinople, one of the closest friends of Saint. Cyril's of Alexandria and it also relied on the dogmatic definition of the Council of Chalcedon. Theopaschite phrases can be as well identified in Saint Gregory of Nazianzus' theology, as for example: "we need a incarnate and crucified God to resurrect"³⁰⁶ (*εδεθημεν Θεου σεσαρκουμένου και νεκρουμένου*). Furthermore, the saint has no hesitation in speaking about "*the blood of God*" (*αιμα Θεου*) and also about "*God who was crucified*" (*Θεος σταυρουμένος*)" (Irineu Popa, PhD, *Jesus Christ is the Same...*, pp. 473-474).

306 The reason why the Holy Father wrote this work was the Armenians' request to receive clarification on "Theodor of Mopsuestia's writings." Its purpose is therefore very clear: it is destined to "the bishops, priests and monks of the Holy Orthodox Church of Armenia." He explains here the Christological issue of the two natures united in the only hypostasis of God the Word. By drawing this clear comparison between nature and person, Saint Proclus anticipated Council of Chalcedon's Christology. Due to this document's peculiar significance, modern theologians have unanimously agreed that St. Proclus' Tome represents "the milestone of the Armenian Orthodox Church" (Schwartz, ACO, IV, 2, p. 187-195; Nicholas Conostas, *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in the Late Antiquity*, Homilies 1-5, text and translation by Nicholas Conostas, Brill, Leiden-Boston, 2003, pp. 105-112).

addition also brings light upon the darkness of Monophysite wandering: “But if we said that He was crucified in his divinity, we would introduce suffering in the Trinity. Whereas if we say that the Word accepted sufferings in his flesh, we confess both that there is one of the Trinity who suffered, and that the nature of the Trinity remained passionless... The one who was crucified is the same who was incarnated. Moreover, if the one who was incarnated is the same who was crucified, neither the Father nor the Spirit was crucified: therefore, **one of the Trinity was crucified.**”³⁰⁷ The logic of this formula, adopted by the Dobrujan monks, is fully explained by the doctrine of “communicatio idiomatum”. Metropolitan Irineu Popa thus emphasizes the fact that when uttering this phrase, we must understand the fact that “the Son of God, becoming also Son of man, due to this union, God passed into Christ and Christ into God, and what Christ suffered God also suffered. In this case, the very reason of the Resurrection has its fulfilment in the act of the Saviour’s death on the cross. Then God, being united to man, did not allow any mediator between man and Him, that is to say that one is the Son of Man and another the Son of God.”³⁰⁸

The Holy Father’s thinking was assimilated and illustrated by Saint Maxentius in his “*Little Book of Faith*”³⁰⁹ (*Libellus fidei*).³¹⁰ The main direction of this work is to demonstrate and

307 Proclus, *De fide*, III, in John Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, IV, 2; X, 17, 18, 19, Schwartz, p. 61.

308 Irineu Popa, PhD, *Jesus Christ is the Same ...*, pp. 475-476).

309 Among Saint John Maxentius’ works we also mention: 1. *Professio Fidei*; 2. *Adunationis Verbi Dei ad propriam carnem Ratio*; 3. *Against Acephalos Libellus* and 4. *Dialogorum contra Nestorianos* (see: CCSL, LXXXVA).

310 *Maxenti Aliorumque Scytharum Monachorum necnon Ioannis Tomitanae Urbis Episcopi Opuscula*, *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*, (CCSL) LXXXV A, cura di studio Fr. Glorie, *Libellus Fidei, Oblatus Legatis Apostolicae Sedis Constantinopolium Quem Accipere Nolverunt Susceptus Est Vero Romae a Beato Papa Hormisdas in Conventu Episcoporum Sive Totius Omnium*

explain the Theopaschite formula. Thus, “the One” who suffered in the flesh is none other than Christ the Saviour, the Son of God the Incarnate and “no other Person of the Holy Trinity.” Therefore, He is Christ, the one Who was born of the Virgin Mary, “One of the Trinity who suffered for us in the flesh and therefore she did not give birth to the Trinity.” “Or, if they do not dare to say that, they should say whence comes this God, who is born from the Virgin – if he does not come from the Trinity as orthodox Christians should not recognize any other God outside of the Trinity.”³¹¹ Father Professor Dumitru Staniloae clearly highlights the fact that by their Christological formula, the Dobrujan monks, under the guidance of Saint John Maxentius, fought against the two absolutely antithetical heresies of that period. “The formula of the Daco-Roman monks was not new, but it had a new, modernized implementation in accordance with the needs of that time. It protected the Chalcedonian definition not only against Nestorian interpretation, but also against new Monophysite interpretations. To assert the fact that the whole Trinity was born of the Virgin and was crucified, it means to identify the Persons of the Trinity in a Sabellian sense, that is, to limit them to the one nature and assert the possibility of identifying the Godly nature with the human one, in a Monophysite or Pantheistic sense, and, thus eliminate salvation, since even to suffer belongs to the Godly nature.”³¹²

Senatorum Lectus Catholicus est per Omnia Approbatus, p. 5-25; Ed. Schwartz, *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum (ACO)*, IV, II, „Ioannis Maxentii Libelli”, p. 3-10; Migne, PG, LXXXXVI-I, col. 79A-86D; Migne, PL, XLV, col. 1771C-1772C.

311 PG 86, I, col. 82.

312 Rev. Prof. Dumitru Staniloae, PhD, Introduction to *Writings of the “Scythian monks”* ...p.9.

IV.3. Scythian monks' confessional work in the Eternal City

Scythian monks' mission in Rome was also a diplomatic one. Saint John Maxentius³¹³, the master of the Dobrujan monks, wished to use the Theopaschite formula in order to put an end to the issue of Acacian schism. Before reaching the Eternal City, he presented the teaching of faith to Patriarch John of Constantinople (517-520). Since the reconciliation negotiations had begun, supported by the new Emperor Justin, the solution offered by the Scythian monks was not taken in consideration anymore. This is also the moment when the pope's legates arrived in Constantinople to discuss with the Patriarch on the issue of the Acacian schism. Taking advantage of the context, the Scythians addressed them directly, but their proposal met a rejection once again; the Latins thought their formula to be "incompatible with the type of Dyophysitism Rome advocated for".³¹⁴ Dobrujan monks protested, claiming that they were in absolute agreement with the faith of Chalcedon, and as a proof of justification "they brought up the subject of the Trinity, and

313 The monastery where Saint John Maxentius and the Scythian monks were ordained is still unknown. Some historical sources present him as a simple priest. Others claim that he was an archimandrite or even the bishop. One thing is clear, however, i.e. that he was devoted to Parternus, Bishop of Tomis, he was one whose signature remained as a proof over the centuries on the documents of the Synod of Constantinople (520): "Provinciae Scythiae Metropolitanus" (Labbe, IV, 1525). Saint John Maxentius becomes famous among the Scythian monks, due to his "valuable actions in the service of post-Chalcedonic theology" (I.G. Coman, *Old Romanian Age Church Writers...*, p. 70; *A Dictionary of Christian Biography, Literature, Sects and Doctrines during the First Eight Centuries*, edited by William Smith and Henry Wace, vol. III, Hermogenes – Myensis, London, 1882, p. 865).

314 "The Neo-Chalcedonian movement only happened as the late but necessary reaction to the realisation that the "faith of Leon" and the "faith of Cyril" acclaimed as synonymous at Chalcedon really represented two significantly different Christological approaches..." (J.A. McGuckin, *The "Theopaschite Confession" ...*, p. 244).

claimed to anathematize all those who opposed that council or thought their decisions wrong.” It was also the moment when they denounced Pelagius and Celestius’ teachings as erroneous and Theodor of Mopsuestia’s disciples were considered as being “in contradictions to the apostolic teaching”.

Since their action in Constantinople was unsuccessful, the Scythian monks decided to send four delegates to Rome, led by St. John Maxentius. The four messengers were: Achilles, Leontius³¹⁵ and Mauritius. It seems that they started their journey towards the Eternal City in May 519, “armed” with recommendation and acknowledgement letters signed by

315 Some Romanian theologians have identified the Scythian monk with Saint Leontius of Byzantium (485-543), the great protector of the Chalcedonian Christology in the dispute with Severus of Antioch, one of Emperor Justinian’s counsellors as regards the aspect of preparing and creating his dogmatic papers (see: Il Russu, *Thracian-Getae Elements in the Roman Empire and Byzantium*, Bucharest, 1976, pp. 89-90, Nestor Vornicescu, PhD, *Romanian Orthodox Church Patristic Writings up to the Eighteenth Century*, Craiova, 1983, p.68; Rev. Vasile Ghe Sibiescu, *The Scythian Monks*, Archdiocese Printing House, Sibiu, 1936, p. 2). As an antithesis, it is claimed that the monk would have originated in Palestine, being the master of the “Origenist monks”. There is also a middle way hypothesis according to which, Leontius the Scythian would have gone to Palestine with the aim to preach here the Theopaschite theology. However, it seems that Pope Hormisdas does not mention anywhere in his notations anything about a Theopaschite mission in Palestine (Deacon Ilie Fracea, PhD, Leontius of Byzantium thirty allegations against Sever of Antioch, in S.T. no. 4 / 1990, p. 42). In one of the most recent PhD theses about the age of Emperor Justinian, Rev. Ciprian Catana, PhD, states that “Leontius, the second famous Scythian monk, was a relative of General Vitalician, a man with great influence at the Imperial Court. There is still a debate on this monk. Some critics and researchers think that he is one and the same person with Leontius of Byzantium, Justinian’s theologian, very fond of Aristotle’s philosophy and the author from whom we have a large number of theological treaties, *Against the Monophysites, Against Sever of Antioch, Against the Nestorians*” (Church and State in the Justinian Age, PhD Thesis, Sibiu, p. 194).

Justinian (who was Emperor Justin's nephew) and General Vitalian. Once reached here they received full support from St. Dionysius Exiguus, who tried to strengthen their confession by translating several *patristic document texts* into Latin.³¹⁶

Scythian monks' mission at the court of Pope Hormisdas was not an easy one at all. They had come here bearing in their mind a distorted image of an illegal group. Dioscorus, one of the papal legates with whom Dobrujan monks had interrelated in Constantinople, later patriarch of Antioch, had written to the Pope about their formula, considering it "in opposition with the definition of Chalcedon."³¹⁷ In spite of all this, Pope Hormisdas received the Scythian monks with great interest and paid all the attention deserved to his guests; he even read Saint John Maxentius' work during a bishops' meeting in Rome.³¹⁸ He was also accompanied by one of the Latin theologians who noticed all the elements of this process and analysed their formula; this was Deacon Victor. Meanwhile, Justinian, who wanted to support his uncle's union actions, urged Pope Hormisdas to get rid of the Scythian monks as soon as possible and send them back to their homeland (June 29, 519).³¹⁹

316 The Holy Father's translations were "testimony texts" for the Romans, who thus became acquainted with: St. Cyril of Alexandria's Synodal Epistles (I-II), "The 12 Anathematisms against Nestorius", or Saint Proclus of Constantinople's "Tome to the Armenians". It is also advanced the idea according to which, Saint Dionysius would have also been the translator of the famous "Exempla Patrum", with the same purpose, i.e. to support Scythian monks' Theopaschite Christology (E. Scwartz, ACO, IV.2.741-96, Berlin, 1959).

317 Dioscorus had a suspicion related to Scythian monks' Christology, fearing that it was 'against Rome'. He even claimed that they were "hunted by the devil and they fight against Christian prayers, and their master, Maxentius, is a hypocrite abbot" (W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement. Chapters in the History of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries*, Cambridge, University Press, 1972, p. 245).

318 *Enciclopedia dei Papi*, vol. I, p. 481; ACO 4, II, p. 3.

319 Rev. Prof Dumitru Staniloaie, PhD, Introduction to *Scythian monks' writings...*, p. 13.

A waiting period followed, Scythian monks being refused several times. Not long after, Justinian re-evaluated his decision, and asked Hormisdas to reanalyse the Theopaschite formula again. Despite all this, Justinian continued to support the Scythian and appointed St. John Maxentius as Bishop in the town of Tomis, Hormisdas decided to once and for all evaluate the Theopaschite formula and make a firm decision on its supporters. On March 26th, 521 Pope Hormisdas sent a final answer to the Byzantine Emperor with regard to the explanations required.³²⁰ He insisted on the fact that “the doctrine of Chalcedon and the Leo’s Tome are enough to define faith” and that the Theopaschite formula is “*antagonistic*” to synodal teaching, as it “shares the attributes of the second Person of the Trinity to the whole Trinity, and that it cannot be credited the fact that the Godly nature can be touched by passions.”³²¹ In August 520, the monks were cast away from Rome; the Roman authorities motivated their decision on the fact that the Scythian cultivated a state of turbulence in their attempt to attract

320 Hormisdas’ letter is to be found in *Collectia Avellana (in CSEL)*, Epistles 236, 237 Hormisdas’ resent was also the result of a regular correspondence which the Pope had with the African Bishop, Possessor, who was living in exile in Constantinople, being accused of Pelagianism. He argued against the Scythian’s formula, which he considered to be “suspected of Monophysitism.” Saint John Maxentius’s reaction was a very prompt and immediate one. He considered the African Bishop’s writings as heretical ones, since “he does not confess the fact that Christ, the Son of the living God, crucified in the flesh for the salvation of the world, is One of the Holy Trinity” (Rev. Vasile Ghe. Sibiescu, *Scythian monks...*, p.17)

321 Christine Fraisse-Coue, „L’incomprehension croissante entre l’Orient et l’Occident (451-518)”, en *Histoire du Christianisme des origines a nos jours*, sous la direction de Jean-Marie Mayeur, Charles et Luce Pietri, Andre Vauchez, Marc Veard, tome III, *Les eglises d’Orient et d’Occident*, Desclee, 1998, p. 195.

followers of their theology.³²² This is the last historical record, from this moment on there is no other piece of evidence about the Scythian monks and Saint John Maxentius until the death of Hormisdas (August 523). Shortly after this moment, the African bishops exiled to Sardica, who were in favour of the Dobrujan monks' formula³²³, received a papal encyclical which stated the rejection of the Theopaschite formula.³²⁴

Beyond the difficulties and hard times, the Scythian monks experienced in the Eternal City, the Dobrujan monks' confessional work and their Christological formula were "officially accepted" by a local council convened in Rome in 534.³²⁵ But the context is a far more complex one; it is related to Emperor Justinian's demand, who stubbornly kept on believing that the Scythian monks' formula is the best solution

322 "The pope had cast away Scythian monks from Rome after he had held them for fourteenth months with against their will because he was unable to make a decision and kept on postponing that moment... he did not want his legates to come and who had always been hostile to these monks, always arguing against Dioscorus, to trouble even more the citizens of Rome, to put pressure on the pope and make him agree with their formula, a thing he obviously did not want to do, since he disagree with the legates" (*Scythian monks' writings...*, p. 16).

323 In the epistle addressed to the African bishops, Daco-Roman monks explain point by point the Theopaschite Christology, emphasizing the fact that they are absolutely true supporters of the decisions of Chalcedon and followers of the Holy Fathers: Athanasius, Gregory the Theologian, and last but not least of Saint Cyril of Alexandria (*Dominis Sanctissimis et cum omni veneratione nominandis, Datiano, Fortunato, Albano, Orontio, Boethia, Fulgentio, Januario et caeteris episcopi set in Christi confesione decoratis exigui Petrus diaconus, Joannes et caeteri fratres in causa fidei Romam directi*, in Migne, PL, 62, col. 83-92).

324 W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement ...*, p. 246.

325 Here Pope John II argued for this doctrine, stating that "it has always been held by Latins in the same form in which they preached to Scythian monks, quoting Proclus, Patriarch of Constantinople, and others."

to bring peace back into the Church.³²⁶ Thus, on “March 15th, 533, Emperor Justinian promulgated a law in which he pointed out to his subjects the true faith in the sense of the Council of Chalcedon, and particularly laid stress upon the confession that the Lord who suffered on the cross was “one of the Trinity”.³²⁷ At the same time it appeared to him necessary to obtain this expression, then so much discussed, the papal approbation as well, particularly as the distinguished Acoemetæ monks rejected it, and even Pope Hormisdas, a short time before, had pronounced it useless and even dangerous. Hormisdas did so, not because he found this formula erroneous in itself, but because the Monophysites then tried to shelter themselves behind it. Now, however, the state of the case was different. The formula was now opposed only by the Nestorians, and therefore it was in the interest of orthodoxy that Justinian requested its confirmation from the Pope, and John II granted this with pleasure.³²⁸ Baronius and others supposed that the Pope, with a view to his approval, summoned a Roman synod, A.D. 534; but there is no mention of this in the original documents, and even

326 “Justinian’s effort was, at the beginning without any success, since the Theopaschite formula was not included in the decisions of any of the four Ecumenical Councils. Later, when he occupied imperial throne, one of his first decrees on the Christological issue concerned the Theopaschite confession. Then Justinian summoned the Orthodox and Monophysite representatives to take part in a dialogue meant to solve the misconception on the dogmatic decisions of Chalcedon. Although, to a great extent, different opinions with regard to the definition of the Synod were eliminated, still the Monophysites stubbornly argued for their point of view” (Irineu Popa, PhD, *Jesus Christ is the Same...*, p. 501)

327 The original Greek and Latin text can be found in lib.6, C. “*De Summa Trinitate*”; in Latin only in Baronius, ad ann.533, n7.

328 The Emperor’s letter to the Pope, John’s answer and a further letter from him on this matter, are in Mansi, t. viii. P.795 sqq.; Hardouin, t.ii.p.1146 sqq.

in the letter of the Pope to the Senate, to which they refer, there is no word of a Synod.”³²⁹

The final decision on this formula was made at the Ecumenical Synod of Constantinople (553) “*anathematizing all those who opposed to this teaching.*”³³⁰ Later on, a great protector of the Theopaschite Christology was Cardinal Enrico Noris (1631-1704).³³¹

IV.4. Theopaschism - an “apologetic Christology”

One thing is sure: that Scythian monks’ Christology enjoyed both the support and promotion of the devoted Emperor Justinian, who basically relied upon this shield like solution, shared equally by both the Eastern and Western Christianity.³³²

329 Cf. Baronius ad aun.534, n.13 sqq; Noris, *Diss in historiam controversiae de uno ex Trinitate passo, Opp. Omnia*, t. iii. P. 862; Mansi, t. viii.p. 816; Walch, *Ketzerhist.* Bd. Vii. S. 328, Anm.3, and S. 314 ff.; Charles Joseph Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church from the Original Documents*, AD 451 to AD 680, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1895, republished in 1972, AMS Press INC, New York, p. 180-181.

330 If anyone shall say that the wonder-working Word of God is one Person and the Christ that suffered another; or shall say that God the Word was with the woman-born Christ, or was in him as one person in another, but that he was not one and the same our Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, incarnate and made man, and that his miracles and the sufferings which of his own will he endured in the flesh were not of the same Person: let him be anathema. (*Anathematism* III, Mansi, tome IX, p. 337, apud Charls Joseph Hefle, *A History of the Councils of the Church from the Original Documents*, p. 330).

331 Scythian monks and St. John Maxentius’s Orthodox apology is given special attention and consideration when analysed in his masterpiece *Historia pelagiana et dissertatio de Synodo V Oecumenica, ... additis Vindiciis Augustinianis*, Louvanii, E. Schelte, 1702, II, 18 (Op. I, p. 474-496).

332 For the Byzantine Emperor, the possibility to restore peace to the Church and Empire seemed a very reasonable solution by agreeing upon the Scythian monks’ formula. It also became a pragmatic opportunity to make things right and also give an answer to anti-Chalcedonian wandering (Patrick T.R. Gray, *The defence of Chalcedon in the East*, Brill, Leiden, 1979, p. 48-50).

Due to its two folded Christological content, the Theopaschite formula generated a dual apology of the Orthodox Chalcedon faith: on the one hand against Nestorian heresy, which wrongly advocated for the Diophysite approach, and against the Monophysite heresy, where the act of salvation is reduced to “*The One Incarnate nature of God the Word*”. This completely innovative apologetic approach is broadly illustrated by John Maxentius’ writings.³³³

St. John Maxentius’ all Christological interest and endeavour were meant to point out the fact that “One” is Christ, the incarnate Son of God, and not another person of the Holy Trinity. He was born of the Blessed Virgin Mary and suffered in His body for us. In conclusion, not all the Trinity suffered, since the Mother of God “did not give birth to the Trinity”. In order to make himself better understood, Saint John Maxentius asks rhetorically: “If God was born of her (of the Blessed Virgin Mary), where is He from if He is not of the Trinity? For except the Trinity, the believers do not know any other God.”³³⁴ Prof. Dumitru Staniloae considers this as the innovative significance of the Theopaschite formula in that age’s context, in the sense that it suddenly offered an answer both to Nestorianism and Monophysitism. “By their formula, says Father Professor, the Daco-Romans acknowledged both Christ’s Godly hypostasis and the fact that He appropriated our nature with everything in

333 1. Little Book of Faith Presented to the Legates of the Apostolic See / *Libellus fidei oblatuſ legatiſ apostolicae ſediſ constantinopolim*; 2. Chapters against Nestorians and Pelagians / *Edita contra nestorianos et pelagianos*; 3. A brief Confession of the Orthodox Faith / *Professio Breviſſima catholicae fidei*; 4. Very Brief Reasoning for Uniting the Word of God to Particular Flesh/ *Breviſſima adunationiſ ratio Verbi Dei ad propriam carnem*; 5. Response against the Ones without a Head / *Responsio contra acephalos qui “post adunationem” stulte “vnam” profitendur „in Christo naturam”*; 6. Dialogue against the Nestorians / *Dialoguſ contra nestorianos* (PG 86, I, col 73-158; Schwartz, ACO, IV, 2, 1914, p. 3-62; CCSL, LXXXVA, p. 5-110).

334 *De Christo professio*, PG 86, I, col. 82.

it, including the passion. Thus, not only Nestorianism was eliminated, which ascribed the human ones to a human hypostasis, stripping them of any value, and non-elevating the human nature from its separation from God and its mortal state, but also Monophysitism, which ascribed them to the very Godly nature, combining the human and divine nature in one, and submitting the divine nature to the same incapacities to which the human one is submitted, and thus not being able to bring its salvation.”³³⁵

Scythian monks’ Christology misunderstanding was owed to unclear understanding of the incarnate Logos’ passions, the “One of the Trinity”, with the whole Trinity’s passions. Thus, for certain groups of the society their theology was identical with the Eutychian heresy, partly slipping into the Patripassian heresy.³³⁶ As a matter of fact, we are dealing with a Monophysite grasp of the Theopaschite formula by associating it with the Cyrillic formula: “*One Incarnate Nature of God the Word.*” The greater confusion of these Dobrujan monks’ teaching as it concerns the Orthodoxy issue appeared in the moment it got close to Zenon’s Henotikon and Peter Fullo’ Trisagion addition (*Qui crucifixus est pro nobis*).³³⁷ This is the confusing and puzzling context in which Saint John Maxentius’s teaching and of those along him emerged and was analysed in the Eternal City. Although, during the fifth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople, Church Fathers acknowledged this formula’s true Orthodox significance, Catholic theology had certain misgivings about it long time after.³³⁸

335 Rev. Prof. Dumitru Staniloae, PhD, Introduction to *Writings of the “Scythian monks”* ...p.10.

336 *Dizionario di erudizione storico-ecclesiastica*, Maroni Romano (ed.), vol. LXXIV, Tipografia Emiliana, Venezia, p. MDCCCLV, p. 63.

337 Aman, *Theopaschite*, Dictionnaire de Theologie Chatolique (DTC) 15A, p. 508.

338 In the seventeenth century, for example, Western theologian Baronius stated that “John Maxentius and his companions, the monks of Scythia, were obviously perfidious Eutychians and as such,

As it concerns *Theopaschite Christology's doctrinal and apologetic specificity*, there are several elements that can one help best define it in terms of place and role in church history. The American theologian Anthony McGuckin synthesizes these Christological coordinates, which we are to develop and explain as it follows.³³⁹

First of all, one must not overlook the consistent “*scriptural, apostolic and patristic argumentation*”. This is the case when, in addition to the texts of the Holy Scriptures, St. John Maxentius and the Scythian monks base their Christology also upon a considerable number of quotations and arguments of: St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Athanasius the Great, or Malchion of Antioch. When they deal with the doctrine of grace, they rely on: Saint Basil the Great, Pope Celestine, and the Council of Milevis (416).

Theopaschite theology's patristic argumentation can be easily illustrated if we mind the historical context in which they carry out their confessional work. If we take into account the relations they had with Rome, we must always bear in our mind Saint Dionysius Exiguus, their brother in need's thorough preparation fulfilled in the Eternal City, precisely with the aim of strengthening their position before the papal see. Thus, we make reference to his translations first of Saint Cyril of Alexandria, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, or of Saint Proclus of Constantinople's work, but also to the prefaces he wrote for these writings, in which he endorses Dobrujan monks as true apologists of the Orthodox faith.³⁴⁰ Taking advantage of this

they were condemned by the Roman Church, and they caused great disorders to the universal Church, both in Constantinople, and in Rome ... They went so far as to pretend that they are supporters of the Council of Chalcedon in a cunning manner, but they spoil it by their heretical guile” (*Annales ecclesiastique*, t. VII, cap. 26, 81-89, 97).

339 J.A. McGuckin, *The “Theopaschite Confession”*, pp. 246-247.

340 Saint Dionysius Exiguus in Migne, PL, LXLII, 9A – 520A; CCSL, *Scriptores Ilyrici Minores*, Turnholti, 1972, p. 29-83.

valuable introduction to the world of the Western theologians, the Scythian monks knew how to exploit all patristic opportunities, thus, giving birth to such an exquisite and profound Christological synthesis in order to protect the “One in the Trinity Who suffered in the flesh,” and as such being able to balance the antagonistic.³⁴¹

If we have a look at the sources they used, it can be said that their Christology is not new, but rather innovative and apologetic related to the historical context in which it was initiated.³⁴² Father Metropolitan Irineu Popa states in this respect

341 Father Professor Dumitru Staniloae states that Scythians monks' Christology is a perfect illustration of balance, since “neither Nestorians nor Monophysites were able to grasp both profoundness and greatness of God the Personal's mystery. They did not see the Son of God as one of the Persons in mutual love of the Trinity, and therefore able to acquire from this love His human nature, whose sensibility to experience as His own and thereby live in loving communion with all those who want. Nestorians imprisoned the Son in a divine nature understood as subject to second-rate laws; Monophysites also saw him as imprisoned in a divine nature that is somehow related to His humanity, which in the moment of union changes Himself accordingly, also submitted to a second-rate law” (Rev. Prof. Dumitru Staniloae, PhD, Introduction to *Writings of the “Scythian monks”* ...p.44).

342 St. John Maxentius and the Scythian monks go beyond the limits of some Antiochian theologians who “did not agree to say that God the Word tasted death, because they did not accept to say that the Word completely united with the human nature.” Thus, relying on Saint Proclus of Constantinople's Christology, Saint John Maxentius clearly states that Christ suffered in the flesh, being at the same time “One of the Trinity”. *If we would say that he was crucified in his divinity, says the Holy Father, in reality we would introduce suffering in the Trinity; whereas if we say that the Word accepted sufferings in his flesh, we confess both that there is one of the Trinity who suffered, and that the nature of the Trinity remained passionless... The one who was crucified is the same who was incarnated. Moreover, if the one who was incarnated is the same who was crucified, neither the Father nor the Spirit was crucified: therefore, one of the Trinity was crucified.* Proclus, *De fide*, III, at John Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, IV, 2; X, 17, 18, 19, Schwartz, p. 61.

that, according to his scriptural-patristic argument, whenever we think about the Theopaschite formula “we understand that the Son of God, Who became also the Son of man, due to this union, God passed into Christ and Christ into God and what Christ suffered also God suffered. In this case, the very reason of the Resurrection has its fulfilment in the act of the Saviour’s death on the cross. Then God, being united to man, did not allow to be any mediator between man and Him, that is, to be thought that one is the Son of Man and another the Son of God. The very words of the Lord testify this: “*No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.*”³⁴³ All this illustrate de fact that while the Son of God was preaching on the land, He testified that the Son of man was in heaven, and that the same Son of man, of whom he had said he would ascend to heaven, had descended from heaven. These words are also emphasized by the words of the Symbol of Faith, which teach that the Son of God is united with the Son of Man, that is, God is united with man, which means that neither in time nor in suffering can there be a split between them; in other words, it means that the Theopaschite theory derives from the very soteriological purpose of the Incarnation, which the Son of God has pursued from the very beginning in order to achieve it. Therefore, the sufferance on the cross of the One untouched by suffering must be understood in the same way as we understand the words when it is said that “*man was deified*”, that is, not by body, but by the participation or collaboration of the two natures.”³⁴⁴

Secondly, *the Scythian monks’ Theopaschism is a “composite” one*, which always advocate for the two natures hypostatically united in the person of God the Word. This makes us realize that Dobrujan monks can be considered “*radical Cyrillines*” and not by far Monophysites, as the Westerners

343 Cf. John 3:13.

344 Irineu Popa, PhD, *Jesus Christ is the Same...*p.476

wrongly accused them. Also, this is the point where, the idea which generated confusion related to any possible connection and similarity between them and Peter Fullo's addition must be eliminated.

Helped by St. Cyril's Christology, Saint John Maxentius reinforces his argument against Nestorianism. He thus makes a very clear delimitation between the two natures, while he points their hypostatic unity in the Person of the Word made flesh. The two books of the *Dialogue against Nestorians*³⁴⁵ are as illustrative as possible in this sense. His work is characterized by an explicit apologetic manner, the author imagining a direct conversation with Nestorius and providing answers to his wandering allegations. One of Nestorianism's fundamental issues was the "double hypostasis", accounted by the logic of the divine-human existence.³⁴⁶ In Book I of His Dialogue, St. John Maxentius clearly states that "The Hypostasis or the Person of the God the Word has taken His human nature, a nature that does not subsist without God the Word, as it generally happens, but by coming through Him and assimilated by Him, he became innerly the nature of Himself, and remains not in its hypostasis, but in the One to Whom it was taken, that is, in the Hypostasis or the Person of God the Word."³⁴⁷

In his paper "*Response against the Ones without a Head*"³⁴⁸, Saint John Maxentius takes a stand against Monophysites. Unlike the Nestorians, they confess the fact that Christ is both God and man, but they consider that after the Incarnation one can only speak of one nature, since there is "no

345 *Dialogus Maxenti Ioannis Servi Dei contra nestorianos* (Libri Duo), in CCSL, LXXXVA, p. 52-110; Migne, PG 86, col. 115-158; Schwartz, ACO, IV, II, p. 14-44.

346 "Nest.: Cum ergo subsistere deum uerbum et hominem dicis: cur unam et non duas subsistentionis proferites?" (*Dialogue Against Nestorians*, I, 11, p. 66).

347 *Dialogue Against Nestorians*, I, 11, CCSL LXXXV, p. 66.

348 PG 87, I, col. 111-116.

nature without person”. Monophysite hypothesis argues against the very “union” between the Word and body and as such the act of the Incarnation, since “if the union of the flesh did not happen, why a union is mentioned? And on the other hand, if the union of the flesh indeed happened, after the union there is in Christ not the divine nature only, but also the nature of the flesh: so, without any doubt “after the union” there are two natures in Christ.”³⁴⁹

Scythian monks’ formula therefore brings light upon the separation between person and nature. Father Professor Dumitru Staniloae explains that by this that it is illustrated the fact that “the person is not only the nature’s material existence, but also its way of existence as a relationship. In God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit realize the inner relations of the divine being. But just as the human being is capable of developing relationships not only with his fellows, but also with those who are of a different nature, even greater the God in the Trinity has this ability, He, who created them all. This idea was pointed out by the Daco-Roman monks when they used terms as *own* or *composite*, when they referred to the Hypostasis of the Word made man.”³⁵⁰ It seems that the terms used at the beginning of this paragraph to characterize Dobrujan monks’ Theopaschite work as *radical Cyrillines* and *composite* refer exactly to this interpretation.

Although their formula is not to be identified in classical texts, since it is considered to be innovative, it can nevertheless be identified at *St. Cyril of Alexandria’s 12th Anathematism*.

”Whosoever shall not recognize that the Word of God suffered in the flesh, that He was crucified in the flesh, and that likewise *in that same flesh he tasted death* and that He is become

349 *Responsio contra acephalos*, CCSL LXXXV, pp. 43-47.

350 Rev. Prof Dumitru Staniloae, PhD, Introduction to *Scythian monks’ writings...*, pp. 82-83.

the first-begotten of the dead, for, as he is God, He is the life and it is He that giveth life: let him be anathema”³⁵¹, preached before them St. Cyril of Alexandria.

This similarity with the teaching of the Holy Father brings the Scythian monks’ thinking even closer to the spirit of the Church. Moreover, due to this confession made before the Holy See of Rome, St. John Maxentius accomplished even more ambitiously his countrymen’s work. Prior to the Theopaschite moment of crisis, Saint John Cassian and Nicetas, Bishop of Remesiana stated in their notes about “The Incarnate Son of God who suffered, not as God, but in the flesh.”³⁵² Furthermore, St. Dionysius Exiguus had warned in his prefaces about the danger of Nestorian heresy. The formula of the Scythian monks, “*One of the Trinity suffered in the flesh,*” thus became a confession of the Godhead of the Word made flesh. They are in total agreement with the teaching of the Church’s Symbol of Faith, which teaches that “the Son of God is united with the Son of Man, that is, God is united with man, which means that neither in time nor in suffering can there be a split between them; in other words, it means that the Theopaschite theory derives from the very soteriological purpose of the Incarnation, which the Son of God has pursued from the very beginning in order to achieve it.”³⁵³ Christ suffering on the cross was necessarily to be understood in the context of *communicatio idiomatum*. That is the reason why St. John Maxentius uses in his writings St. Cyril of Alexandria’s *Twelfth Anathema* as an argument.³⁵⁴

351 *Third Letter of Saint Cyril of Alexandria to Nestorius with the 12 Anathemas*, P. 76, 293-318; ACO 1.1.5, p. Mansi IV, 891, Pusey vol. VI, pp. 240-258.

352 Saint John Cassian, *De incarnatione Domini contra Nestorium Libri VII*, CSEL, vol. XVII, pars I; Sf. Nicetas of Remesiana, *Livellis Instructionis*, PL, Migne, LXVIII, col. 1844-1864.

353 Irineu Popa, PhD, *Jesus Christ is the same...*p.476

354 “But on this matter of the Trinity, even after the mystery of the Incarnation, the Trinity remains intact because the same God the

Dobrujan monks' Christological analogy thus relied on faith of the "descent of God from heavens". Thus, "by stating that God Himself became man and suffered and was crucified for us, the monks have firmly highlighted man's eternal value in God's sight and salvation as a condition, mainly, in defeating death by the Resurrection; in defeating this tragic phenomenon whose stupidity puts pressure on human existence."³⁵⁵

IV. A. McGuckin does not only deal with Scythian monks' Christological teachings but a theology of *divine grace*, similar to Blessed Augustine's thinking. With regard to this issue, the Theopaschites objected to the theology of the Lerins School, best represented by Faustus of Riez. Furthermore, McGuckin underlines the fact that Theopaschite theology takes a great interest in the idea of *knowing God as gift of our free will*, also inspired by the Blessed Augustine's theology.³⁵⁶

The written heritage of the Scythian monks clearly emphasizes the fact that "the Holy Fathers understood the fact that Christianity made known to the entire world the truth according to which history and salvation are achieved by suffering, by the cross." The specificity of their Christology is a

Word even with his own flesh is one of the Trinity. And this is not because his flesh is of the substance of the Trinity, but because it is the flesh of God the Word who is one of the Trinity. For he and no other person, was the one who ascended into heaven, he who had descended from heaven, the Son of man who is heaven. And for this reason we profess that God the Word was crucified in the flesh, and was buried in the flesh, in accordance with the blessed Cyril when he says "If anyone does not confess that God the Word suffered in the flesh, was crucified, tasted death in the flesh and was made the firstborn from the dead, even though as God he is Life and the Life-giver, let that person be anathema" (John Maxentius, , *Capitula edita contra nestorianos et pelagianos ad satisfactionem fratrum*, CCSL LXXXV A, 4, p. 29).

355 Rev. Prof. Dumitru Staniloae, PhD, Introduction to *Writings of the "Scythian monks"* ...p.84.

356 J.A. McGuckin, *The „Theopaschite Confession"*, p. 247.

soteriological one, of a conscientiously assimilated cross in the perspective of a new salvation.³⁵⁷ This is the reason why their formula was so well liturgically welcomed. From this point of view, one can say that their thinking bears genuine characteristics, since they share the same vision as the one advocated for by St. Justin Martyr and Philosopher at the first school of theology founded in Rome.³⁵⁸ The Scythian monks think exactly in the same way as the great apologist of the first centuries did, since for them “One of the Trinity” is the Word of God, “O Only-Begotten Son and Word of God, Who, being immortal, deigned for our salvation to become incarnate of the Holy Mother of God and ever-Virgin Mary, and became man without change. You were also crucified, O Christ, our God,

357 The most practical way to sketch out the peculiarity of Daco-Roman theology and spirituality. From them, father professor states, “Romanians have preserved the cult of crosses and wayside crosses all over the country. Our wayside crosses which have the carved figure of Jesus Christ crucified in the centre and the Father and the Holy Spirit, sometimes the Mother of God also in an icon attached to the top part, are the faithful and visible expression of the Theopaschite formula. A pious stopping in front of these wayside crosses represents moments of balance or new efforts in the rhythm of both universal and local history, associated with suffering and hope, and a first moment when Christ reminds the traveller of his own moment of crucifixion” (Rev. Prof. G. Coman, *And the Word was made flesh*, Metropolitan of Banat, Publishing House, Timisoara, 1993, p. 248.)

358 St. Justin, Martyr and Philosopher’s apologetic Christology has a great significance, not only when related to the context of the apologetic age, but also to all early Church teaching of faith. His thought is a key to understand the teaching on the Logos made flesh, achieving a great approach from the direction of Jewish thinking towards Greek philosophical inspired terminology of (see: Tessa Rajak, “Talking at Trypho: Christian Apologetic and Anti-Judaism in Justin’s Dialogue with Trypho the Jew”, in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire. Pagans, Jews and Christians*, edited by Mark Edwards, Martin Goordman and Simon Pirce in association with Christopher Rowan, Oxford University Press, New York, 1999, p. 65).

and by death have trampled Death, being one of the Holy Trinity, glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit, save us.”³⁵⁹

Last but not least, Scythian monks’ presence and confessional in the Eternal City is a “gem defying time”, which echoes, not only Saint Justin’s Christological and apologetic initiation, but also Saint John Cassian’s asceticism and accuracy and we should never forget also of St. Dionysius Exiguus’ dedication and erudition. They are the ones who complete and achieve a Christological training for almost a century in the West, helping the Bishops of Rome to choose the right path in the fight against the heresies of those times. This is the reason for which, we dare to say that, due to their works that have been left to us as priceless legacy, together with those of their honourable forefathers, our Dobruja monks reasserted “Daco-Roman” theology and spirituality’s specificity in the Eternal City.

V. Theopaschite Christology in the Context of For and Against Chalcedonian Conflicts

Emperor Justinian’s intervention in solving Christological issues after the Chalcedon episode “united for a moment all Mediterranean world in one creed and in one civilization”. But the situation got complicated because of the Arab invasions from the East, which actually divided Eastern Christianity, hindering the access of Syrian churches to the receiving of the Chalcedonian dogma. However, up to this point, it is interesting to notice the doctrinal and historical context, as well as the background details and information that shaped what was called as the “Syrian Perspective of Chalcedon”.

359 We definitely recognize the specificity of the Theopaschite Christology in the Second Antiphon of the Divine and Holy Liturgy: “Only-Begotten Son and Word of God ...” The merit is completely of Emperor Justinian, the great advocate of Theopaschite theology, who decided that this hymn be sung in all the churches, thus achieving an important confession of faith.

Eastern churches divorce occurred at the same time with the dogmatic decisions made during the Council of Chalcedon (451), on the two natures of Christ the Saviour. If Rome and Constantinople agreed on the formula, “two united, harmonious, inseparable, undivided natures in one person, the Person of God the Word”, Alexandria and most of the Syrian churches shared the idea that “there cannot be only one nature, namely the divine one” in the person of Christ incarnate. Therefore, He could be “of two natures” and not “in two natures”, thus, the so-called “Monophysite” movement emerged³⁶⁰. These doctrinal differences deepened became even more profound in the context of the Arab invasions; Monophysitism became later “*a symbol of separatist movements in Syria, Egypt and Armenia.*”³⁶¹

This gap between the two churches hasn't yet been solved up to our present day. In addition to the Christological justification, which we mentioned in those stated above, Oriental churches schism has become even more complicated as a result of the inexistence of “*a solid basis*” which should have existed in the dogmatic dialogue. The result can be seen in the differences that exist between the Copts, Syrians, Armenians, Assyrians, as compared to the Greeks and each other, under the names of Nestorians, Jacobites and others; most of them coming into existence in the seventeenth century”. This dramatic rupture later appeared itself in the life of the Roman Empire, which eventually resulted into its fall.³⁶²

In order to understand better the historical context of the Eastern churches schism after the Chalcedon Council, we must

360 W.H.C. Frend, *The rise of the Monophysite Movement. Chapters in the History of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries*, Chambridge University Press, 1972, p. IX-X.

361 A.N. Stranos, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, Amsterdam, 1968, p. 4.

362 W.A. Wigram, *The separation of the Monophysites*, The Faith Press, London, 1923, p. 4.

take into account the political context in which things happened. The Emperor's interfering in the Church's de facto problems had as its consequences a series of serious problems. Thus, the Byzantine rulers' obsession for peace was born out of their wish to keep peace in the empire, but this, however led them to having imposed some uninspired religious measures. *Chalcedon* was the key element of this political-religious issue. Thus, after Marcianus' death, a passionate protector of Chalcedon, the Byzantine emperors tried hard to bring the Monophysites back into communion with the Church. A first attempt in this way, promulgated after thirteen years of the Chalcedon moment, was that of Zeno's *Henotikon* (July 28th 482)³⁶³. Although he anathematized Eutychius and Nestorius' heresies, by claiming the fact that "the Saviour Jesus Christ is One", the document generated a great schism between Constantinople and Rome³⁶⁴. Zeno's *Henotikon*, which appeared as a result of Patriarch Acacius' advice, was not directly targeting the Holy See, but it was clearly addressed to "bishops, monks and believers in Alexandria, Egypt, and Cyrenaica."³⁶⁵ Its immediate goal was to perfect the reconciliation between Constantinople and Alexandria, including the reintegration of Proterius' former followers." The document represents one of the fundamental decisions of the Eastern Emperors and the Patriarch of Constantinople's ecclesial policy. The text is characterized by a complex structure and it opens with a fragment of Theodosius II and Marcianus' confessions.³⁶⁶ Then, the faith on the Symbol of Nicaea and Constantinople is reaffirmed, and an affirmation

363 Evagrius Scholasticus, *Historia Ecclesiastica (HE)*, ed. J. Bidey and L. Parmentier, London, 1898, III, 14.

364 Irineu Popa, PhD, *Jesus Christ is the Same...*

365 Historic region in the eastern costal region of Libya, also known as Pentapolis.

366 "Taking into account the source and content of our power, and the invincible shield of our empire in the only righteousness and true faith confessed through divine revelation by the mouths of the 318 parents reunited in Nicaea ..." (Evagrius, HE, III, 12).

on the same nature with the Father of the incarnate Logos. It is also stated the fact that the Saviour “*was both true God and true man and becoming flesh out of the Holy Spirit and Mary the Virgin – Theotokos, He is one and not two, for we say that both the miracles and His passions which He suffered in His flesh are of one person.*”³⁶⁷ Although, *The Henotikon* anathematized Nestorius and Eutychius’ heresies, St. Cyril’s Anathematisms were not mentioned. In order to impose him in Alexandria, Zeno tried hard to have Saint John replace from his Holy See with Peter Mongus; in this way, he sent epistles to Rome to Pope Simplicius.³⁶⁸ John Talaja deeply regretted his abusive dismissal of the Holy See. And this was the spark that ignited the flame which resulted into a deep crisis between the East and the West.³⁶⁹ After a long letter exchange period and several local councils, Zeno himself was warned that he had to choose “between Apostle Peter and Peter Mongus.”³⁷⁰

367 W.H.C. Frend, *The rise of the Monophysite Movement ...*, p. 178.

368 Later, this one too, was removed from his position, as a result of his rooted Monophysite beliefs.

369 After the death of Symmachus, Pope Felix convicted Peter Mongus in a local synod convoked in Rome. He also asked Emperor Zeno and Patriarch Acacius not to decide anything without Archimandrite Cyril’ permission, the abbot of the Acoemetes’ Constantinople monastery. Consequently, the Emperor ordered that the two papal legates Vitalis and Miseus be arrested, who had come to Byzantium, forcing them to accept communion with Peter Mongus. Being notified by the Acoemetes, the Pope, summoned a synod in Rome and excommunicated the two legates, anathematized Peter Mongus, and convicted also Patriarch Acacius, taking him out of communion with Rome (July 28th 484). A short fragment of this sentence can be found in *Breviculus Historiae Eutychianistarum* (Mansi, l.c., p. 1065). Pope Felix’s decisions were also supported by Pope Gelasius (Charles Joseph Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church. From the Original Documents*, vol. IV, A.D. 451 to A.D. 680, T&T Clark, Edimburgh, 1895, pp. 28-32).

370 Felix, Epistle VII, in *in Epistolae Romanorum Pontificum genuinae et quae ad eos scriptae sunt a S. Hilario usque ad Pelagium II: tomus 1. a S. Hilario usque ad S. Hormisdam ann. 461-523 / recensuit et edidit Andreas Thie, Brunsbergae: Eduardi Peter, 1868, p. 248*

Scythian monks played an extremely important part in solving this schism between Rome and Constantinople. Supported by both General Vitalian and Emperor Justinian, they came to Rome in order to show their backing for the Christological formula “*Unus de Trinitate passus carne*”, meant to illustrate the fact that Jesus Christ incarnate Who suffered in the flesh and died on the Cross was “*One of the Trinity*.”³⁷¹ Their doctrine, called Neo-Chalcedonian by the Western dogmatists, which came triumphed during the Sixth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (553), was later inspiration for St. John Damascene and even St. Thomas Aquinas. The novelty of this formula was given by the fact that it tried to integrate the Christology of Cyrillic Anathematisms within the formulas of Chalcedon; since they represented “St. Cyril’s only element which the Monophysites wanted to get lost.” On the other hand, there were also conflicting attitudes, which thought Theopaschite Christology as “a polemic reaction, a kind of *ad hominem* argument”, which was more “political than doctrinal.”³⁷² However, the idea found and proposed as a solution for this complicated issue by Scythian monks is yet providential. By their formula, they emphasize the “significance of the Mother of God as Theotokos, which relates to St. Cyril’s statement in Anathematism 12: “God the Word suffered in the flesh.” Also, their Christology bears the distinctive marks of Saint Proclus of Constantinople; being inspired by his Tome to the Armenians, a document which became from now on a norm for the Byzantine Orthodoxy. At the same time, the word of “*enhypostasis*”, a word which was inherited from Leontius of Byzantium, seemed

371 See: ACO 4. II, p. 3ff; E. Amann, *Scythes (moines)*, in DTC 14, cols. 1746-53; Duchesne, *L’Eglise au VI-e siecle*, p. 59-69; Charles Moeller, “Le Chalcedonisme et le neo-chalcedonisme en Orient de 451 a la fin du Vie siecle”, en Grillmeier/Bacht, *Das Konzil von Chalkedon*, I, Echter-Varlang, Wurzburg, 1951, p. 637-720, 676-679.

372 Charles Moeller, *Le Chalcedonisme et le neo-chalcedonisme ...*, p. 666-668.

to be the answer to the Monophysite heresy related to *communicatio idiomatum*. Their confession in the Eternal City was, however, a set of trials and challenges, since at the beginning their attempt was rejected by Pope Hormisdas, after the latter had been advised by Dioscorus to do so.³⁷³

V.1. Neo-Chalcedonian Christology and the Christological Confession of the Scythian Monks

The first clues on a Theopaschite or Neo-Chalcedonian Christology seem to exist in *Codex Encyclius*, a composite paper of several letters of the Eastern Bishops in which they expressed their support for Chalcedon.³⁷⁴ The significance of Theopaschite theology and, implicitly, the Scythian monks' confessional work become relevant only in the sixth century during the critical period of the Chalcedonian crisis, beginning with Zeno's *Henotikon* promulgation. Moreover, during Anastasius' reign, Monophysitism becomes even more aggressive, both in the Antiochian Patriarchate and in Constantinople. In this regard, the Christological dispute between Severus of Antioch,³⁷⁵ who

373 Romans' accusations were so harsh that they even argued against Scythian monks' formulation according to which: "the Son is consubstantial with the Father", which in their opinion seemed to be quite threatening to the unity of Chalcedon. "Quia quotienscumque patres de dei filio dominonostro Iesu Christo disputaverunt, filium dei verbum consubstantialem patri, homousion patri dixerunt. Iste autem sermo ideo numquam est in synodis a patribus introductus, quia procul dubio Catholicae fidei minime poterat convenire" (*Coll. Avellana* 216, 7).

374 Chalcedonian bishops' letters can be found in ACO II, 5, pp. 24-98.

375 This is a part of the preaching uttered by the Alexandrian monk against Sever of Antioch in front of an Alexandrian church. There are some hypotheses according to which Nephalius' sermon would have never been written, but only transmitted orally at that time, the text of his apology later got a written form with the help of the scribes. Severus' reaction (*Ad Nephaliium*) is also a proof of the fact that the text existed. Parts of its content were reconstituted from the fragments which Severus uses in his response (in *Severi Antiocheni, Liber Contra Impium Grammaticum*, t. I, p. 19, 22, 28, 30, 32, 88; t.

reached Constantinople in 508, and Nephalius, a “converted monophysitist”, became famous over the centuries.³⁷⁶ The conflict between the two had started a year before, when Nephalius, the monk attacked Severus who was preaching on “the two natures of the Saviour” “in front of a church” in Alexandria. His “speech” was disagreed upon by Severus, who had come to Constantinople to complain to Emperor Anastasius, he himself an advocate of Monophysites. The Alexandrian monk did not give up so easily, but in turn, he also reached the capital to support his cause. Thus, by 511, the last year of Severus’ staying in Constantinople, “the last stage of Christological conflicts in the East, under Anastasius, who comes to strengthen Neo-Chalcedonism together with John of Caesarea, also named John the Grammarian” takes place.³⁷⁷ Constantinople is also the place where Severus meets Monophysite Bishop Philoxenus

III, p. 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 14, 37, 48, 49, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium (CSCO), Scriptorum Syri, ed. Iosephus Lebon, Lovanii, MDCCCXXIX).

376 A monk of Alexandria, *Nephalius* played a very important role in advocating for neo-Chalcedonian Christology. He became known due to the Christological controversy he had with Severus of Antioch, and thus, this is the reason why he ended up writing an *Apology* (ca. 508), a work preceding the emergence of the notes of a more famous Chalcedonian theologian, John of Caesarea also known as the Grammarian (514-518). He seems to have also had a particularly important contribution as it concerns religious politics between 482-507. His thinking singularizes due to a much simpler approach compared to that of John the Grammarian or Leontius of Byzantium, since it lacks complex scholastic approaches. Although, he was a Monophysite, following a moderate and conciliatory path between the Saint Cyril’s Christology and Chalcedon, Nephalius was charmed with the doctrine of a new Christological perspective. This is the stream that nourishes his *Apology* in the dispute he engaged into with Severus of Antioch (Ch. Moeller, *Un representant de la christologie neochalcedonienne au debut du sixieme siecle en Orient: Nephalius d’Alexandria*, en *Revue d’Histoire Ecclesiastique* (RHE), nr. 40/1944-1945, pp. 79-80).

377 Ch. Moeller, *Nephalius d’Alexandria ...*, pp. 105-106.

of Mabbug, Julianus of Halicarnassus and the two Isaurian bishops, Sergius of Philadelphia and Asterios of Celenderis. The conflict becomes even more acute when Severus initiates a polemic with two papal legates: Petronius of Rome and Renatus of Ravenna.³⁷⁸

The conflict between Severus of Antioch and Nephalius is extremely important in order to understand the Christological context in which the Scythian monks became famous. The historical-doctrinal context in which all these events happen, first and foremost, grounds the certainty of the existence of a dynamic relation between the neo-Chalcedonian Christology and Syriac tradition one, which was partially borrowed by the Monophysite approach. The Alexandrian monk emphasizes throughout his work his unconditional support for the two natures of the Word incarnate. Not only does he agree with the Fathers who were in favour of the two natures but he also looks for arguments in their works which should help him consecrate his phrases: “*dual nature*” – “*missus quidem est, sed ut homo, duplex eniam*” or “*the Word was made flesh*” – “*hominem asumpsit Deus Verbum*”. Furthermore, one can even recreate the patristic origin of the Christological phrases used based on his work³⁷⁹. The most important aspect is, however, the fact that Nephalius claims that St. Cyril of Alexandria has never argued

378 They refused to accept the formula: “*One of the Trinity suffered in the flesh*”. On the occasion of this debate, he pointed out the fact that several passages in the Scripture had been corrupted over time and they had lost their original meaning (Ernest Hinigmann, *Eveques et eveches monophysites d’Asie anterieure au VIe siecle*, en CSCO, vol. 127, Subsidia 2, Leuvain, 1951, p. 9).

379 He creates his quotations being notably inspired by St. Gregory the Theologian (“*Idem Gregorius dicit in prima oratione de Filio*”), by Proclus (“*Ecce Proclus, Episcopus Constantinopolis, dixist in Oratione: In Natalitiam Christi, de Deigenetrice Maria*” by John Chrysostom (“*Utique, sed ecce sanctus Iohannes, qui episcopus Constantinopoleos fuit, explanando effatum: Verbum caro factum est ...*”) (Ch. Moeller, *Nephalius d’Alexandria ...*, p. 129).

against the dogma of the two natures of the Word incarnate in his Christology.³⁸⁰

But Scythian monks' Christology offers much more. It takes a step further, proving a profound interpretation and a new approach on what the Westerners call today “neo-Chalcedonian” Christology. The fact that they succeeded in eradicating two of the fiercest heresies at that time (Nestorianism and Monophysitism), strengthening the Christology agreed upon at Chalcedon by offering clear explanations; all this process had as its outcome the confirmation of their Orthodox position during the Sixth Ecumenical Constantinopolitan Council. Moreover, they became Emperor Justinian’s direct emissaries in Rome, playing one of the most important roles in solving one of the most acute crises between the East and the West, i.e. the Acacian schism. We must clearly understand the fact related to the ambiguity of the formula they advocated for and its rejection at first by Rome since “the inclination towards Nestorianism started to root in Rome.”³⁸¹ That is the reason why Emperor Justinian reconsidered his opinion related to their Christology, helped by the clarification to fight against Monophysitism in order to restore peace in the empire.

Theopaschite Christology becomes one the Byzantine emperors’ concerns, proving to be an appropriate instrument to

380 “Quid ergo terretis vos simpliciores, dicendo: “Ecce sanctus Cyrillus, ad Nestorium, dicit diversas quidem esse naturas quae congregatae sunt ad unionem veram” et producitis iam quae ex corde vestro sunt dicendo: “iaque si ad unionem congregatae sunt naturae, duas naturas unitas oportet eas diacamus” (Ch. Moeller, *Nephalius d’Alexandria ...*, p. 129, note 9).

381 Father Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, PhD, ““Skete’ monks” contribution to emergence of Christology at the beginning of the sixth century, introduction to “*Writings of the “Scythian Daco-Roman monks”*, of the sixth century, translation Fr. Prof. Nicolae Petrescu and Prof. David Popescu, Metropolitan of Oltenia Publishing House, Craiova, 2006, p. 25.

restore peace and religious concord in the empire.³⁸² This is the motivation that lies behind Justinian's prodigious correspondence with Pope Hormisdas, since he greatly longed for an acknowledgement of the Theopaschite formula and eventually he obtained his long-wished agreement.³⁸³ Thus, Scythian monks' Christology, became an essential instrument for Justinian since "its objective was to eliminate Nestorian aspects, according to which the Holy Trinity dwelled in Christ and at the same time made Christ an estranger to the Trinity: "But we believe that God the Word, the Only-Begotten Son of the Father, Our Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered for us in the flesh, is one of the Three Hypostases of the God the One." Maxentius gets that far that he firmly refuses even the concept of *persona* in this context; which, in his opinion is only a Nestorian stratagem (as Dioscorus illustrated) in order to make the difference between the two hypostases in Christ. To the Nestorian objection, according to which "it is preferable to confess not one of the Trinity, but a person, Christ, of the Trinity, since there are Three Persons in the Trinity", he replies, "It is not something secret to the believers of the universal Church that it is said by some that Christ is a Person in the sense that He who was crucified for us in the flesh is not a Person of the Trinity. For they do not believe that the One Person of Christ is of two natures, united naturally, but they add that the One Person

382 In the exchange letters with Pope Hormisdas, Justin emphasizes his wish to "upright" the relation that existed between Antioch and Alexandria. Severe measures against Antiochians are being taken, several bishops, including Severus of Antioch are being removed from their Sees (Carmelo Giuseppe Conticello, *La theologie byzantine et sa tradition*, vol. I/1, Brepols Publisher, Paris, 2015, p. 61).

383 "We agree that the Alive Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, begotten of the Virgin Mary, suffered in His body (cf. I 4: 1), truly confessing that He shares, One of the Trinity, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit" chairs (*Epistle* 196, 6, en Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (CSEL), vol. 35, p. 656).

of Christ is of two persons united by grace. For, by saying *Christ a Person of the Trinity*, they do not want to confess *Christ One of the Trinity* ... Therefore, the right teaching of faith is to confess that God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, the One with His Own Flesh, is One of the Trinity, though He is not, by the flesh, of the divine essence”.³⁸⁴&³⁸⁵

This time getting the agreement of Rome, the Theopaschite formula of the Scythian monks is advocated for by Justinian during his dialogue with Severianus (532)³⁸⁶. In the first instance, the emperor popularizes Dobrudjan monks’ Christological formula by issuing a decree³⁸⁷, and then he succeeds in imposing its full dogmatic sovereignty during the Fifth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (553).³⁸⁸

384 Dialogue against Nestorians II, XXI, p. 185 (trad. Rom).

385 Carmelo Giuseppe Conticello, *La theologie byzantine et sa tradition*, p. 64.

386 See: Inocent de Maronee, *De collat. cum Severianis habita*, ACO, IV, 2, p. 183.

387 Justinian promulgates this decree on March 15th, 533, sending a notification in this regard to the churches of Rome, Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Thessaloniki and Ephesus. In fact, this was indirectly addressed to the Acoemetes monks, “the eternal defenders of Chalcedon in its Dyophysite version and those who are greatly taken into serious consideration at Constantinople during the time when the separation from the moderate Chalcedonians was thought to be a solution in order to achieve reconciliation with the Anti-Calcedonians” (Patrick Gray, *The Defense of Chalcedon in the East (451-553)*, Leiden-Brill, pp. 56-58).

388 “If anyone says that God the Word who performed miracles is one and Christ who suffered is another, or says that God the Word was together with Christ who came from woman, or that the Word was in him as one person is in another, but is not one and the same, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, incarnate and become human, and that the wonders and the suffering which he voluntarily endured in flesh were not of the same person, let him be anathema (Anathema III, Mansi, tome IX, p. 337, apud Charls Joseph Hefle, *A History of the Councils of the Church from the Original Documents*, p. 330).

V.2. Non-Chalcedonian Christology –A Retrospective View

The Council of Chalcedon was shortly disapproved of by most Eastern churches after its main decisions had been promulgated. The most fervent were the Egyptians and Palestinians, the first still maintain their opinion up to the present day. In the Patriarchate of Antioch, in Asia Minor and in the two national churches located outside the empire (including the Armenians), the situation was not that extreme. A small group of the Christians living here disagreed with synodal decisions. On the other hand, the Western Church, by the voice of Rome, maintained its firm position to support Chalcedon, on the grounds that it “was the only Ecumenical Council where the Pope played a prominent and worthy part.”³⁸⁹

Oriental churches’ attitude towards Chalcedon became a very firm one only in 475, when Bishop Timothy Aelurus of Alexandria signed the Encyclion, together with Paul Metropolitan of Ephesus and also with other Bishops, during a local synod convoked at Ephesus. The See of Antioch was occupied by Peter the Fuller, Severus’ predecessor, who had also signed the Anti-Chalcedonian document, together with Anastasius of Jerusalem, Timothy of Alexandria, and Paul of Ephesus. In 482, a first attempt was made to solve this issue offered by Zeno’s *Henotikon*, addressed to “the bishops and peoples of Alexandria, Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis, whom he hoped to unite the two parties that were in a conflict by reaching a compromise.”³⁹⁰

In the context of these disputes, the Oriental *milieu* and, especially, Syriac church are characterized by a real exuberance

389 W.A. Wigram, *An Introduction to the History of the Assirian Church or The Church of the Sasanid Persian Empire, 100-640 A.D.*, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 1910, p. 145.

390 Ernest Hinigmann, *Eveques et eveches monophysites d’Asie anterieure au VIe siecle*, pp. 3-4.

of theological traditions and interpretations. A historical-dogmatic analysis on this specificity sheds more light on understanding the role and significance which Dobrudjan monks' Christology had in the life of the Church in the first centuries. Professor Sebastian Brock, one of the most prestigious Syrians alive, provides an overview of the consequences of the Council of Chalcedon in the Oriental Churches. From this point of view, he thinks that "Syriac language can consider itself lucky due to a unique privilege it has as compared to the other late Antiquity languages, since only in Syriac we are able to read texts belonging to each of the three different churches which during the sixth century emerged as a result of the controversies that followed the dogmatic definition of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, i.e. the Chalcedonian Dyophysite Church (after Justin I and under Justinian, the official Church of the Empire), the Oriental Church, also Dyophysite, which was mainly to be identified in the Sassanid Empire, and the Miaphysite Church (Monophysite) The Syriac Orthodox church (in agreement with the Coptic, Armenian and, at that time, Georgian and also Ethiopian churches). The main objection of these two main groups which had not accepted the council was that to invoke the lack of a logical reason of the Christological formulation."³⁹¹

The polemics among the Eastern peoples were mainly born because of a lack of cohesion in terms of Christological vocabulary. It all started out of fear not to give birth to a new Nestorian interpretation as it concerns the understanding of the person and work of the Word incarnate. Two Christological terms were in fact the reason why consensus was never reached: the one of nature or being (physis / kyana / kyono) and the second

391 Sebastian P. Brock, „Les controverses christologiques en syriaque: controverses reelles et controverses imaginees”, en *Les controverses religieuses en syriaque*, volume editee par Flavia Ruani, Geuthner, Paris, 2016, p. 105.

one is the one referring to the hypostasis (hypostasis / qnoma / qnumo)³⁹². It all became even more complicated when they had to explain the Greek term “*diairo*”, which was translated by “separation”, “division”. The Syriac vocabulary proposed in this regard the two versions “*parš*” or “*palleg*”, susceptible of Nestorianism. Modern theology concluded with regard to this issue in the context of reopening the dialogue with the non-Calcedonians, stating that the main issue was one related to terminological consensus. “In late Antiquity, writes Sebastian Brock, in the heat of controversies, everyone understood technical terms and Christological formulas only from his / her point of view, without even making the slightest effort to understand their significance from the point of view of those they were arguing against. On the contrary, present ecumenical dialogue, due to its wiser consideration, it is better balanced to analyse this issue far more objectively, and, in the case when it tries to understand every and each Christological tradition according to its own kind of thoughts, there is always a possibility to reach an agreement.”³⁹³

392 See more in our paper: *Christology and Mysticism in Syriac Theology*, Metropolitan of Oltenia Publishing House, Craiova 2014, p. 145-157.

393 Sebastian P. Brock, *Les controverses christologiques en syriaque* ..., p. 106. I have also borrowed from Professor Sebastian Brock a terminological system of Greek-Syrian similarities in order to achieve a clearer understanding of the christological specificity of that time. Thus, for the Greek term *esarkoty*, Syrian Christological vocabulary offers the following versions: 1. *lebesh pagra* — “clothed in flesh”; 2. *ethgashsham* — “became body”; 3. *’ethbassar* — “incarnated”. Also, for the term *omoousios*, Sebastian Brock comes up with the following synonyms: 1. *bar kyana* — “of the same nature” (literally: “son by nature”); 2. *bar ’ithutha* — “of the same being”; 3. *shawe b-’ithutha* — “equal in being” and 4. *shawe b-’usya* — “equal in ousia”. Appropriate for the sixth century, we have the following equivalences: *ousia*– *’ithutha*; *fisis* – *kyana*; *ipostasis* – *qnoma*; *prosopon* – *parsopa*. It is also clear that for the Orthodox Syrians, the term *kyana* has a very similar meaning to that of *qnoma*, but in the Eastern Syrian church *kyana* is very similar to *ousial’ithutha*, since *qnoma* can be translated as “peculiarity” (gr. *idiotys*; for the Orthodox

Syrian churches' reaction to Chalcedon resulted in holding several local councils, during which new decisions were made on the Christological vocabulary. At the same time, the context of these meetings served also as a great opportunity to record the Oriental's attitude with regard to imperial churches' decisions. Thus, in 486, under Catholicos Akakios, a local Synod was convened at *Seleukia-Ktesiphon* in order to discuss the doctrinal issue of Zeno's *Henotikon*. The importance of the decisions made here, recorded in an official text, first results from the fact that "it is the first Syrian East Church confession we have in the short time that followed the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon."³⁹⁴ This confession is largely identified with Antiochian Christology tradition and it cannot be even by far considered as Nestorian at all.³⁹⁵ It is also very important the fact that, among the decisions made during this council, *the anathematisms recorded are essentially anti-Theopaschite*.³⁹⁶

Syrians: *dilayta*) – See Sebastian P. Brock, *Towards a history of Syriac Translation Technique*, in III Symposium Syriacum, OCA, No. 221/1981, pp. 1-14; and in *Studies in Syriac Christianity* (1992).

394 Sebastian Brock, *The Christology of the Church on the East in the Synods of the Fifth to Early Seventh Centuries: Preliminary Considerations and Materials*, Atena, 1985, p. 126.

395 W. F. Macomber, *The Christology of the Synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon AD 486*, in OCP, No. 24/1958, pp. 142-154.

396 "Our faith of all of us must lie in the confession of a single godly nature, which exists in three perfect hypostases, in One true and eternal Trinity of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit... Our faith in Christ's *oikonomia* must also include the confession of His both two natures, the divine and human one. None of us should dare to introduce any union, or combination, or confusion in differentiating the two natures. Rather, (confessing) that Godhead remains unaltered in Her attributes and humanity in its also, we confess the diversity of natures alike in one divinity and one glory, based on the perfect and everlasting union between the Godhead and humanity. And if anyone thinks or teaches others that the suffering in the flesh embraced the Godhead of our Lord, and if one does not cherish the unity of our Saviour's *prosopon*, confessing Him as true God and true Man, let him / her be anathema" (J.-B. Chabot, *Synodicon Orientale ou recueil de synodes nestoriens*, Paris, 1902, 54-55/302).

The next Council of the Eastern Syriac Church was the one held under Catholicos Aba in 544. His documents are also a proof of new Christological confessions of faith, but Chabot's *Synodicon Orientale* preserves only "a letter on the Orthodox faith" signed by Aba. Ten years later, in 554, Catholicos Joseph convenes a new council. The document written afterwards is considered to be "almost in agreement with the definition carried out at Chalcedon", including terms such as "natures" or "attributes", but with no reference to terms such as *qnoma* or *prosopon*.³⁹⁷

In 608, after the death of Catholicos Gregory I, the Persian Emperor Shah Khoshrow II forbade Eastern Church Syrian bishops to choose a leader. In 612, advised by Gabriel of Sinjar, the Theologian the Persian emperor ordered a meeting of all Syrian bishops in the Eastern Church and Syrian Orthodox Church and asked them to draw up a confession of faith. Consequently, the document contained several points which focused on the specificity of Antiochian terminology. To a great extent, these are *against the Theopaschite influence*.³⁹⁸

Apart from the issue related to the dogmatic vocabulary, greatly different from the Greek one, Syrian churches' attitude

397 During these local meetings, Professor Sebastian Brock further continues his argument: the Council convened by Catholicos Ezekiel (576), the Council held under Catholicos Isho'yahb I (585), the one under Catholicos Sabrisho (598) and the one convened by Gregory I (695) during which the idea to rehabilitate Theodor of Mopsuestia's work was proposed (Sebastian Brock, *The Christology of the Church on the East ...*, p. 127).

398 "1. Against those who confess one nature and one *qnoma* in Christ; 2. Against those who say that Christ suffered in the flesh and died in the flesh; 3. Against those who wonder whether the Blessed Virgin gave birth to God or to Man; 4. Against those who unfairly accuse us of confessing a change in God, within the Holy Trinity; 5. Against those who accuse us of confessing that there are two Sons" (Synodicum Orientale, p. 586; Sebastian Brock, *The Christology of the Church on the East ...*, p. 127).

towards Chalcedonian Christology and their definite separation from the communion of the Church is characterized by a series of other fundamentals which should be taken into account and analysed. The first is related to the distinct geographic context where these ecclesiastical communities were located. Thus, “since the Eastern Syrian Church was within the Sasanid Empire and therefore beyond Roman Empire boundaries, it was not directly involved in the works of the Ecumenical Councils, convened by royal commandment”³⁹⁹. Then, there is also the political factor, and Syrian Christians in Persia were often suspected of being Romans’ supporters, and as such they had to endure the persecution and martyrdom of the Sasanian emperors. This can very well be the reason why “Eastern Syrian Church decided to follow the direction of Antiochian Christology during the Council of Seleukia-Ktesiphon in 486.”⁴⁰⁰

In order to better grasp and understand both the context and the Christological differences in Syriac churches after the Council of Chalcedon, Professor Sebastian Brock recommends avoiding three folded “Nestorian-Chalcedonian-Monophysite” classification, since this issue is far more profound. He offers a scheme of seven different doctrinal positions, according to the specificity of Antiochian and Alexandrian Christology:

1. Nestorians (two parsopa);

399 “The Canons and Symbol of Faith drawn up during the Ecumenical Synod of Nicaea are acknowledged by the Eastern Syriac Church, but only 85 years later, at the Synod of Seleukia-Ktesiphon in 410, were these accepted with the help of Maruthas, Bishop of Martyropolis. The Ecumenical Council of Ephesus (431) is particularly rejected, but due to a twofold, post eventum attitude, it had been assimilated to the Council of Chalcedon” (Sebastian Brock, *The Christology of the Church on the East ...*, p. 129).

400 Syriac bishops thus, sketched a clear well-designed specificity and interpretation direction, while they pursued a policy of doctrinal independence which to a certain extent ensured Christians’ security in the Persian Empire.

2. Dyophysitism referring exclusively to the one outside the Roman Empire: the Eastern Church;

3. Diophysitism referring exclusively to the one inside the Roman Empire, represented by Theodoret, the Acoemetes, the Church of Rome;

4. Chalcedon in silence, in Zeno's *Henotikon*, and Dionysius the Areopagite;

5. Neo-Chalcedonians: Scythian monks;

6. Henophysites:⁴⁰¹ Timothy Aelurus, Philoxenus of Mabbug and Severus of Antioch;

7. Eutychians (true Monophysites). Therefore, we various possibilities of Christ-ological approaches can also be distinguished.⁴⁰²

The framework drawn up by the British scholar is very important for our research, particularly because, it is also still Sebastian Brock the one who offers a series of precious details on neo-Chalcedonian Christology. From the British professor's point of view, Neo-Chalcedonian Christology represents a solution to solve existing issues. The dynamics of this teaching, especially due to Scythian monks' well known Christological formula, points out the fact that "Orthodoxy in Christology does not necessarily have to confine itself to the adherence of the definition of Chalcedon, but it has to keep on evolving and develop. In other words, a criterion of Orthodoxy other than

401 Precisely to make the distinction between this movement and Eutychius' followers, Sebastian Brock uses this new term.

402 In order to embrace the dogmatic definition of Chalcedon, 3-5 groups are identified; for the specific Antiochian Christology — 1-3 groups; for the Alexandrian Christology tradition — 4-7 groups; Anti-Theopaschite — 1-3 groups; "One Person in Christ" — 2-7 groups; "Christ is *omoousios imin* as well as *omoousios to patri*" — 1-6 groups (See: Sebastian Brock, *The Christology of the Church on the East ...*, p. 132).

that of Chalcedon must apply to the seven points in the suggested pattern.” Therefore, the British researcher highlights the fact that “the so-called Theopaschite controversy was merely a context misinterpretation.”⁴⁰³

As a result, it becomes very clear the fact that Syriac local councils’ attitude, mentioned above, with regard to *Theopaschite Christology* spring from the suspicion of introducing perversion in the person of the Word made flesh by suffering in the body. This results from a different understanding of the term “nature”, to special Christological meaning was assigned. Thus, Syrians never thought of “Jesus Christ *in two natures* but *of two natures*. Obviously, the acknowledgement of the two natures, even after the Incarnation, is perceived only by mind (ἑἰῶ , “Āx, “āđēīīéái áī èđūñéá); after contemplation, the idea of duality vanishes away and the potential of their unity no longer allows them to be two. In other words, the union between the two is no longer a combination, but a synthesis (óđīèāđōīò), without having a separate existence, although unification excludes separation and interference. In this case, although *the Incarnation* becomes *composite*, and humanity does not subsist in itself, but in the Word, yet this nature is not dual, but it encompasses in its existence a new element, which it did not have before.”⁴⁰⁴

V.3. Severus of Antioch, a representative of Syriac Monophysitism

One of the great defenders and advocates of the non-Chalcedonian Christology was Severus of Antioch. He was born in 465 in the city of Sozopolis, Asia Minor. His paternal grandfather, also named Severus was the Bishop of Sozopolis and he had attended The Third Ecumenical Council of Ephesus

403 Sebastian Brock, *The Christology of the Church on the East ...*, p. 132.

404 Irineu Popa, PhD, *Jesus Christ is the Same...*,

(431). He was the lucky beneficiary of highly elevated education, since he prepared to embrace a career in law⁴⁰⁵. But the call to monkhood was however, stronger and he chose to become an ascetic and devote his life to the Lord in a monastery in Palestine under the care and guidance of the non-Chalcedonian monk Peter the Iberian. Later he entered the monastery of Peter of Maiuma, where he succeeded in making a name for himself due to his solid and thorough knowledge of the Scriptures and the Holy Fathers. In Palestine, he came into conflict with Nephalius, an Alexandrian monk. As a patriarch of Antioch (512-538), he developed a rich pastoral and scholarly askesis. Apart from his sermons, he also wrote a polemic treaty “*Contra impium Gramaticum*”, structured in three books in which he argued against John of Caesarea, the Grammarian’s Chalcedonian theology. A leader of the Monophysite movement and fervent non-Chalcedonian, Severus was first supported by Anastasius, the Monophysite emperor of Constantinople. Later on, the Church of Rome condemned him as heretic against the backdrop of General Vitalian’s rebellion. Together with Philoxenus of Mabboug Severus tried to “strengthen forces against Chalcedon”, he convened a Council at Tir, in Phoenicia, in 514. This council was attended by the “representatives of the churches of Alexandria and Jerusalem, together with the bishops of the Syriac provinces of Antioch, Apamea, Eupharatesia, Osroene, Mesopotamia, Arabia and Phoenicia.” Their attempt had as its main goal the enforcement of the *Henotikon*’s theological

405 He was first sent to Alexandria to study grammar and rhetoric. Then he reached Beirut to study Roman law. Here he got into contact with a group of young diligent Christian, thus becoming interested in the study of theology on Saints such as Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian. Shortly thereafter, he received the Sacrament of the Holy Baptism in Saint Leontius Church in Tripolis (See Iain R. Torrance, *Christology after Calcedon. Severus of Antioch ad Sergius the Monophysite*, The Cantembury Press Norwich, 1988, p. 3).

significance but granting it anti-Chalcedonian value.⁴⁰⁶ After Emperor Justin I occupied throne of Byzantium (518-527), Severus had to flee to Egypt and he took shelter at Enaton Monastery near Alexandria. He succeeded in having his name rehabilitated for a short period of time (535-536),⁴⁰⁷ but he was convicted for good by the decision of a council convened in Constantinople in 536.⁴⁰⁸ He died shortly after and he was buried at the Enaton Monastery. The Orthodox Syriac Church has identified itself so much with his theological work that, after Justinian ordered that all his works be burned, it translated his complete works into Syriac.⁴⁰⁹

Severus of Antioch becomes the most prominent representative of the Monophysite movement; his name is also synonymous with Zeno's Henotikon and as such of its advocates, Timothy Aelurus and Peter the Iberian. Following this line of thought, Severus considered himself one of St. Cyril of Alexandria's followers, far from the Eutyches' heresy. This places him on the moderate side of Monophysitism⁴¹⁰. It is very important to remember the element that generated general

406 C. Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon Re-examined. A Historical and Theological Survey*, The Diocesan Oress, India, 1977, pp. 120-122; W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement ...*, p. 233.

407 Severus' hope concerning the revival of Monophysitism sprang from the support he expected to receive from Empress Theodora, an apologist of Non-Chalcedonian cause. During this time, the monks were received back into monasteries, but the bishops who were stripped of their rights and position were not granted rehabilitation (W. Stewart McCullough, *A Short History of Syriac Christianity to the Rise of Islam*, Chico, CA, 1982, p. 82).

408 The Council was endorsed by an imperial decree signed by Justinian issued on August 6th, 536. The document accused him of being an Acephalist, Eutychian and a Manichaeon; his books were burned, and he was sent into exile (ACO 3, 121-129).

409 *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Christian East*, edited by Edward G. Farrugia, Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome, 2015, p. 1670.

410 Iain R. Torrance, *Christology after Chalcedon ...*, p. 10.

confusion as a result of the *Henotikon's* enforcement as an official document of the Eastern Church. This influenced both Severus of Antioch's thought and the Christological path he chose to follow, transforming him into a fervent supporter of non-Chalcedonian movement in Syria.⁴¹¹

Severus' enthusiasm to advocate for the Monophysite movement throughout the empire met an end once Emperor Justin wore the Byzantine crown. He was still in Constantinople when the latter assumed command. Thus, on September 29th, 518, he saw himself forced to flee to Egypt, where he remained until his death. However, he continued his anti-Chalcedonian work and he was always a vivid presence in the monastic and priestly circles of Antioch through his letters and Christological documents. During Justinian's reign, Severus of Antioch's Christological position remained almost unchanged. Thus, guessing the emperor's tormenting wish to restore peace between the East and the West at any cost, the Syrian Bishop "seemed to be more and more convinced that the former's intentions and

411 The Antiochian bishop was not by far a man of peace and he did not seek at all reconciliation with synodal teaching. Rejecting Chalcedon, thus became everything for him, ordering to his diocese that the names of those who had signed for the acknowledgement of the Chalcedonian doctrine to be "forever erased from the Eucharistic communion". All this was the result of "an incitement of a fanatical metropolitan from the border with Euphratensis, a Syrian called Xenias (Hellenised in Philoxenus), who had been made Bishop of Hierapolis (Mabboug) between 485-519, who had oppressed Severus' successor to the See of Antioch, Flavian II, until the latter resigned. In his approach, Philoxenus was supported by the group of monks at the border between Persian and Roman empires. His skills which helped him translate Monophysitism into Syriac, a thing that Severus could not perform together with his so-called morality and life according to the letter of Scripture, had as its result the long-lasting spread of the Monophysite heresy among the Syriac-speaking Christians who lived at the border of the Roman Empire with Persia (W.H.C. Frend, *Severus of Antioch and the Origins of the Monophysite Hierarchy*, in OCA, No. 195/1973, p. 268).

plans could not be trusted and that no fundamental or political change would happen in the time of his reign.”⁴¹² This thing was confirmed by the fact that, striving to at all costs to bring “peace in the Church,” Justinian accepted the Monophysites’ arguments as Orthodox in the first instance, but soon after he imposed restrictions on the anathematization of the dogma of Chalcedon.⁴¹³

The imperial power changed sides rapidly as it concerned the Chalcedonian issue⁴¹⁴, and the only thing it succeeded in achieving was to deepen the rupture and differences between the Eastern churches. In this context, the most prominent representative of Monophysitism remains Severus of Antioch. An opinion leader and fervent defender of this Christological vision, he was extremely successful in creating true masterpieces and monumental work, which became over centuries a standard in defining the main points of the Monophysite doctrine. His polemic writings are focused on fighting against: Nephalius, the Monk, the Dyophysites of Constantinople, John the Grammarian and John of Scytopolis.⁴¹⁵

412 W.H.C. Frend, *Severus of Antioch and the Origins of the Monophysite Hierarchy*, p. 272.

413 “You can anathematize Diodorus, Theodore, Theodoret, Ibas, Nestorius and Eutychius, but you must refrain from anathematizing those who speak about two natures after the incarnation; there is no need to accept the Chalcedonian definition of faith, but it is necessary to stop from anathematizing Leon’s Tome” (Colloque de 532, pp. 116-117 apud Sebastian P. Brock (ed. Engl. trans.), *The Conversation with the Syrian Orthodox under Justinian* (532), in OCP, No. 47/1981, pp. 87-121).

414 From Zeno’s *Henotikon*, to the measures taken by Anastasius, the Acacian schism, and then to the doctrinal rehabilitation imposed by Justin and Justinian.

415 Severus of Antioch’ polemical attitude is thought by many scholars as being a moderate one, unlike that of Philoxenus of Mabbug, illustrated in his famous *Typikon*. Furthermore, he agreed upon the authority of the first three Ecumenical Councils, Zeno’s *Henotikon* and the letter of John Niciotes, Patriarch of Alexandria. He also accepted the patristic authority of the dogmatical formula on one

Thus, the first of his conflicts is the one related to the debate between him and neo-Chalcedonian monk Nephalius. The latter had previously uttered a polemic speech against him “in front of a church” defending the two natures of Christ the Saviour, and as such the dogmatic decisions of the Council of Chalcedon. Severus’ attitude towards him was not a polemical one from the beginning, an aspect that can be easily noticed from the titles of his works “addressed to Nephalius” and not “against” him⁴¹⁶. Hence, he had to provide an answer for the patristic arguments offered by the Alexandrian monk in order to support Chalcedonian doctrine. Thus, Severus stated that “Nestorius’ heresy dangerously generated the Monophysite movement, since the latter did not emerge before, and that, in this way its use in

nature of Christ the Saviour but he does not agree with the existence of the two natures hypostatically united, as Chalcedon had testified. Moreover, unlike *the Henotikon*, he anathematized the Fourth Ecumenical Council, Leon’s *Tome*, the Dyophysites, and all those who opposed the “St. Cyril of Alexandria’s 12 Anathematisms” Robin Darling, *The Patriarchate of Severus of Antioch, 512-518*, Illionis, Chichago, 1982, pp. 27-28).

416 Severus of Antioch’s theological work was recovered by translating it from Greek into Syriac. It includes the following papers: 1. *Theological Works* — here we find the polemics: to Nephalius (508), to Philaret (509-511); *Philaret’s Apology* (510-512); three books “*Contra Gramaticum*” (519); letter exchange between him and Sergius (515-520); letter exchange between him and Julian of Halicarnassus and other writings characterized by a relative genealogy; 2. *The Letters* — out of a collection of 700 letters only 123 have been preserved; 3. *The Hymns* — counting 295 dedicated to several feasts over the year; 4. *The Catechetical Homilies* — a number of 125, written over a six year period, the time he served as the Patriarch of Antioch (512-518) – See: Maurice Briere, *Generalites sur la vie et les ecrits de Severe d’Antioche*, in *Les homelies cathedrales de Sévère d’Antioche*, traduction syriaque de Jaque d’Edesse, introduction generale a toutes les Homelies, Homelies CXX-CXXV, editees et traduites en francais par Maurice Beriere, PO 29, pp. 15-16.

the works of the Holy Fathers does not justify in any way a change in the situation created.”⁴¹⁷

Severus of Antioch's Christology can be mainly interpreted in two directions: the first one is as a fight against the definition of Chalcedon, and the second one is related to the condition and prospects of the Saviour's human nature. The first one sprang from the rooted idea that the Council of Chalcedon “drew up several new interpretations concerning the nature of Christ the Saviour.” The fundament of his system of thought was therefore “the concept of hypostatic union of divinity and humanity in Christ. The key to understand this unity was therefore in the use of the word *hypostasis*, for when this key is used in Monophysite sentences such as *natural union* or *the only nature of God the Word incarnate*, the word *nature* is used as a synonym for *hypostasis*.”⁴¹⁸ He is thus convinced that “Or, if in fact there's only one hypostasis, there will be only one nature incarnate of God the Word, or if there are two natures, there will necessarily be two hypostases, and two persons, and Trinity will be found a three-part composition... this is treacherous and deceitful and is intended to make us approve what is not and state as false what it truly is.”⁴¹⁹

The interaction he had with Theopaschite Christology is revealed by *his thinking's Trinitarian approach*. The relationship between Christ and the Father becomes particularly important

417 Joseph Lebon, *Le monophysisme Sévérien: étude historique, littéraire et théologique sur la résistance monophysite au Concile de Chalcédoine jusqu'à la constitution de l'église Jacobite*, vol. II, Universitatis Chatolica, Lovanii, 1909, p. 121.

418 Roberta C. Chestnut, *Three Monophysite Christologies: Severus of Antioch, Philoxenus of Mabbug and Jacob of Sarug*, Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 9.

419 Severus of Antioch, “Homily 58”, in *Les homélies cathédrales de Sévère d'Antioche*, éditées et trad. en français par M. Brière, in R. Graffin – F. Nau, *Patrologia Orientalis (PO)*, t. VIII, Paris, 1912, p. 225.

from a soteriological point of view, stating the role and importance of the One considered by Scythian monks as “*One of the Trinity*.” “God the Father is the root (ὁ Θεός, ὁ Πᾶσι βίβ) of the Trinity, the origin of the Son and the Holy Spirit, the only and first cause of the Godhead. He is “the great reason” and “the mind above all.” But God and the Father, the living and hypostatic mind, being incorruptible and invariable, and everlastingly the same, consequently begets a living and hypostatic Word. As the Wisdom of God, it is the eternal subject of the contemplation of the Father. But He is also the Messenger of the Father”⁴²⁰. Thus, by the divine Incarnation, the Son becomes “*the Door* to the knowledge of God and the subject of the knowledge of God; in Christ *the invisible becomes visible* and God descends to our level.”⁴²¹

The closeness between humane and divine becomes intimate; it is conveyed a practical size, and rolls on in man’s life, starting with the Holy Sacrament of Baptism. In this context, we notice some Christological clarifications that create a connection between Severus and the Scythian monks’ famous formula. “Since you’ve been called to faith and you are about to be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, then you understand by baptism the great mystery of repentance (piety). For if baptism is performed in the name of the Holy Trinity, and if those who are baptized *are baptized into the death of Christ*⁴²², as Saint Apostle Paul states, what other thing is revealed by this, if not that ***Christ is One of the Trinity***, the Word Who was made man, and Who tasted death in the flesh, therefore the baptism unfolds in Trinity and not in quaternity?⁴²³ It was therefore, necessary to be said on Him who receives the proof of suffering and death; ***the faith about passion***

420 Roberta C. Chesnut, *Three Moophysite Christologies ...*, pp. 36-37.

421 *Letter 65*, in PO 14, p. 9; *Homily 98*, in PO 25, pp. 159-160; *Homily 123*, in PO 29, pp. 124-126; *Homily 51*, PO 12, pp. 62-63.

422 Cf. Rm. 6, 3.

423 From the Latin *quaternitas ...*

and impassion should be exactly the same, so that in the parts in which He might suffer — and definitely, these are related to body / flesh — He would have become vulnerable in battle and would have fallen into the traps of the enemies, and that once he made the plan of fight, He rejects the power of death by His Godhead's dispassion. By this, the corruptibility of the fall was killed by incorruptible death and, by descending to Hell and by the Resurrection on the third day, the tyranny of death was completely defeated and destroyed, as was the kingdom of Hell. The gates of Hell, as it is written, *shook with fear, at the sight of the King*,⁴²⁴ *and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city*⁴²⁵, confessing to all those they encountered on the path of hope we greatly long for, letting us know that we too, after the resurrection of sin, will be welcomed in the heavenly Jerusalem.⁴²⁶

Severus of Antioch thus believes that Christ the Saviour not only restores creation “by resetting it in its primordial state through the gift of incorruptibility”, but by the Mystery of His Incarnation, “confers new value to the fallen man, for, on the one hand, He himself suffered in a humble way, and on the other hand, the Word of God is the One who opens before all things.”⁴²⁷ “For it was necessary for God to suffer to open before us due to his impassionate beginning, the river of sufferings that flow without stop — which the Oppressor flushed — the Son and the Word that was before eternity, he really clothed in flesh exactly like us; and when *without any change He united hypostatically with it* who has a rational soul and who without being divided is one of the two, aware both of Godhead and

424 Cf. Is. 14, 9.

425 Cf. Mt. 27, 53.

426 *Homily 70*, in PO 12, p. 46.

427 Roberta C. Chestnut, *Three Moophysite Christologies ...*, pp. 54-55.

humanity, made for him through the incarnation, accessible and practicable the way that goes to death, He who, albeit before was caught by it in his perishable body, died as a man, remaining both immortal and impassionate / unaffected as God⁴²⁸, since he defeated death for us and not for Him, and tasted it , not in what He was, but in what He was made.”⁴²⁹

In Severus of Antioch’s opinion, *human will* of Christ the Saviour is related to a moral capacity and must not interfere with the divine will, since the latter is always above the former. Furthermore, he understands this human will in the sense of inner unity which strengthens the relation between divinity and humanity in the person of Christ. This sketches the second direction of his Christology, that of the singular man created by God “*without the possibility of turning back to sin.*”⁴³⁰ “You say that it would be appropriate to be immune to all that is evil and impossible to commit sin. You want to be like a stone or a piece of wood, rather than a man, and to worship an insensible building instead of the one who possesses both will and reason. That is immovable in relation to sin, for the stone and the wood, and there are other things incapable of sinning. As for rational creatures God created them for Himself — to share and enjoy His mercifulness. And since He is all-wise, all right and enlightened, and we also, by a rational movement and the fact that we rise above it, and that we are enriched with his knowledge and the light that springs from it, can make us righteous and good, and we shall shine in the knowledge of heavenly things, which shall come upon us. Here, from the wise ones how comes that this definition of philosophy is true: *Philosophy is man’s imitation in what is the best and what is possible.*”⁴³¹

428 Cf. Mc. 12, 43; Lc. 21, 3-4.

429 *Homily 72*, in PO 29, p. 105.

430 Roberta C. Chestnut, *Three Moophysite Christologies ...*, p. 21.

431 Severus of Antioch, *Homily 123, Les homélie cathédrales de Sévère d’Antioche*, traduction syriaque de Jaque d’Edesse, introduction generale a toutes les Homelies, Homelies CXX-CXXV, editees et traduites en francais par Maurice Beriere, PO 29, p. 181.

His Eminence Irineu Popa, PhD offers a complete analysis of Severus of Antioch's Christological thought, noticing in first instance that although, he "was in favor for features pass, but he did not consider them to be inner nature, so that it could not be compared to the Logos, the unique and ultimate subject of various attributes. Thus, the two natures of Emmanuel became one Hypostasis of the Logos. As it was noted, Severus continues St. Cyril's Christological Dyophysite ideas but in a Monophysite language, being always in a continuous contradiction. He stood opposed to any idea of mixing natures in Christ since, for him, there is no distinct human nature. When asked how could it be said that Christ was human, that He assumed human nature, body and soul, Severus replied: due to the fact that the unique nature of Christ possesses all natural qualities (ιδιωματα) of manhood. As for mixing natures within Christ, Severus was the only Monophysite theologian who preached this, making us understand the fact that, he acknowledged two essences (ουσια) in Christ. Then, he thought that υποστασις and φυσις are synonymous terms, since they indicate the way of existence of a specific person, a specific group that has the same ἰδιόέα. When referring to the Savior, υποστασις and φυσις they had to be synonymous, since His being is specifically unique, fully participating to the essence ουσια, of God and the essence, ουσια, of manhood. A consequence of this doctrine is, unfortunately, the birth of the Monothelite movement in the late sixth century."⁴³²

V.4. Oriental Churches after Chalcedon

Byzantine emperors' attempts and trials to restore peace inside the Church after the Chalcedonian Council have most of the time given birth to even greater complications and confusions. One of the most well-known Christological documents was Zeno's *Henotikon*, an imperial edict

432 Irineu Popa, PhD, *Jesus Christ is the Same...*

promulgated in 482, with the help and support of Patriarch Acacius, who tried to impose his authority by means of equidistant mediation. The document “neither proclaimed nor condemned Chalcedon;” its purpose was just that of identifying and finding supporters and followers of both Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian parties.⁴³³ From this point of view, the *Henotikon* was considered as a “true ecclesiastical and theological compromise”⁴³⁴, which eventually, led to a great and complex rupture between Rome and the East, historically known as the “*Acacian schism*.”⁴³⁵

If the estrangement from Rome got more and more severe, the Oriental Patriarchates that had signed the document made a pretense of it. This fact is confirmed by the emergence of a new generation of Monophysite bishops, the most important representatives being the Syrians: Severus of Antioch and Philoxenus of Mabboug. The former of them, Severus of Antioch, was the representative of the Greek-speaking party, advocating for a moderate Monophysitism, whilst Philoxenus, a leader of the Syriac-speaking communities outside the Roman Empire, advocated for a radical type of Monophysitism.⁴³⁶

433 Volker Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 15.

434 Samuel Hugh Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia. Beginnings to 1500*, vol. I, New York 1992, p. 192.

435 Rome’s response regarding the promulgation of the *Henotikon* was first generated by the fact that Leon’s *Tome* had not been mentioned in the document, being replaced by the 12 Cyrillic Anathematisms. Thus, a “symbol of Pontifical authority” was overlooked. Consequently, the document was considered to be a Monophysite one. This didn’t pass without any consequences; on the contrary it was followed by a series of excommunications: in 484, Pope Felix III excommunicated Acacius and Emperor Zeno as advocates of this approach, and Acacius in his turn excommunicated the pope. This schism lasted for 25 years (Volker Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*, pp. 15-16; Samuel Hugh Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, p. 193).

The total rupture from the Oriental Churches occurred after Pope Hormisdas' *Libellus*' promulgation, which was enacted and supported by Emperor Justin I in 518, once he came to power. By the fact that he condemned and had the Monophysite bishops who had signed the adhesion to the *Henotikon* removed from their sees, this document will be the element that led to a real persecution within the Oriental Churches. Moreover, those who refused to sign the *Libellus* were persecuted and their names were completely wiped out of the diptychs. Thus, a new hierarchy was born in Syria, historically confirmed as the "Syriac Orthodox Church."⁴³⁷

A similar situation was also experienced by the *Maronite Patriarchate of Antioch*. His name comes from the Monastery of St. John Maron near Apamea. The monastic community existing here played a very important role in the fight against Monophysitism. Maronites' emergence in the ecclesiastic context of the Oriental churches would materialize later, in 636, against the backdrop of the tense situation generated by the Ottoman invasions. Thus, with Antioch conquered and church administration dissolved at that moment, founding the Maronite Patriarchate of Antioch seemed to be an immediate necessary administrative solution. Later, Maronite Church became an autocephalous church.⁴³⁸

In this extremely complicated historical-dogmatic context, Scythian monks' Christological formula was of a priceless value. It made Emperor Justinian believe that there is a chance of reconciliation between the Oriental churches. Although, he

436 Aidan Nichols, *Rome and the Eastern Churches: a study in schism*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992, p. 96.

437 Volker Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church*, pp. 8-9, 17-18, 102.

438 Cf. Aidan Nichols, *Rome and the Eastern Churches*, pp. 326-327; Mariam De Ghantuz Cubbe, „I maroniti”, nell *Popoli e Chiese dell'Oriente cristiano*, a cura di Aldo Ferrari, Edizioni Lavoro, Roma, 2008, pp. 177-218.

dedicated his first nine years of reign to the attempt and trials to create harmony between the Chalcedonians and Monophysites, the Byzantine Emperor did not ever achieve his long-desired result. What is more, when he had come to believe that Scythian monks' Christological formula gained power and authority enforcing a neo-Chalcedonian movement in the Oriental environment, Justinian got stuck on another issue, as problematic as the previous: "The Three Chapters."⁴³⁹

The abyss created by these Christological controversies on the Chalcedonian issue has still remained a puzzling unsettled concern among Eastern churches up to our present day. For most specialists, understanding context information is closely related to the connection between tradition and Christological vocabulary. Professor Massimo Pampaloni from the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome offers a practical example, in this sense. It is related to the use of the Syriac term *qnoma*, wrongly associated with the Greek meaning of *hypostasis* or even with that of *prosopon*. "The theology of the two *qnome* appears only in the second half of the sixth century; in the official documents of the Syrian Church appears for the first time in 612 ... Until that time, the term was not used in the Christological context, but only in the Trinitarian context, where it had the meaning that the term *hypostasis* has in Trinitarian theology. The obvious conclusion is that, for the fathers of this church, in Christology, *qnoma* did not have the same meaning as when they employed

439 "The second stage of the attempt to try alluring the Monophysites is known as the *Controversy of the three chapters*. This time, the core of disputes was around Origenism. Origen teachings' defenders, Dometianus and Theodor Askidas were welcomed in Constantinople and they were anointed bishops. Due to Patriarch Ephraim of Antioch's intense requests, who condemned the Origenists and because of the recent situation emerged, Justinian issued a decree against the Origenists. His decree, since it was accepted by all the apostolic councils' Sees, enjoyed great approval in the Church and it represented the *coupe de grâce* to the Origenist controversy (Irineu Popa, PhD, *Jesus Christ is the same ...*, pp. 501-502).

the term in discussing the Trinity. Today this question is settled. The documents show us that up to this date, the expression of Christology within the Syro-Oriental context was two *kyane* (nature) and a prosopon, which is what Theodore says and Narsai after him, and so on. With the arrival of the Monophysites (or Jacobites or Miaphysites) who fled from the Roman Empire and poured across the borders of the Persian Empire, the “battle” against this theology which, translating the Cyrillian framework into Syriac, spoke of only one *qnoma* in Christ, became more urgent.”⁴⁴⁰

Professor Sebastian Brock continues this approach in this direction and offers as example the theological interpretation on the *Trisagion* issue. “Given the fact that the debates have reached such a level, degenerating into public fights, there has been a tendency to move this issue into a more visible context, such as the liturgical one. This can also be applied to the controversies that concern the *Trisagion* (“Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal”), a liturgical formula that spread throughout the second half of the fifth century, but whose interpretation remains unclear: at least four versions have been formulated for this and the choice of one or the other varies from region to region. In Syria and Egypt, the subject of this chant was the Son, but in Palestine and Constantinople was the Holy Trinity, or more exactly the Three Persons of the Trinity, each one at a time. Peter the Fuller, Patriarch of Antioch (471-488), tried to shed light on this situation by adding the words: “Who has been crucified for us”. When Syriac believers reached Constantinople and sang the *Trisagion* with these recently added words, the citizens of the capital were outraged. Instantly, since Syria and Egypt were the citadels of Miaphysitism, their

440 Massimo Pampaloni, “The Way to Chalcedon: An Unexpected Journey. There and Back Again”, in *Loneragan’s Anthropological Revisited. The Next Fifty Years of Vatican II*, edited by Gerard Whelan, S.J., Gregorian Biblical Press, Rome, 2015, p. 177.

interpretation of the Trisagion was no longer regarded as a geographical issue, but unfairly as a Christological identity mark⁴⁴¹. Consequently, the British Syriac thinks that in order to get a picture as clear as possible on this Christological issue, “it is essential to try to understand what each author of the late antiquity really understood when he employed certain specialized terms and formulas rather than limit ourselves to what his opponents ascribed him.”⁴⁴²

VI. The Daco-roman Spirituality as an Argument for Romanian Theology, Philosophy and Culture

The existence of a daco-roman Christianity in the carpatodanubiano-pontic areal is confirmed not only by the historians, but also by the Romanian theologians and philosophers. Inspired by the Scripture ὁ Θεός letter and by the teachings of the Holy Fathers, most of them developed this link in the purpose of argumentation of a “Romanian dimension of the existence”. From Nae Ionescu, Crainic, to Vulcănescu, Cioran, Țuțea, and then Ioan Gh. Savin, Dumitru Stăniloae, I.G. Coman or Nestor Vornicescu, the entire Romanian cultural elite makes a very important confession about the Christian foundation of the Romanian existence. With the help of a theological and spiritual heritage, therefore enforced by daco-roman specific, the work of these illuminated people of our nation determinates “the eternal Romanian icon of understanding the world”, finishing in the end with the confessing of “a Romanian dimension of existence”. In their kind of thinking, these “prophets of Romanian nation” “the skyline of Romanian world lays down from *ordinary* as far as *legend*, from *here* to *beyond*, from *presence* to *absence*, from *then* till *now*, from *now* as far as

441 Sebastian Brock, *Les controverses christologique en syriaque ...*, p. 110.

442 Sebastian Brock, *Les controverses christologique en syriaque ...*, p. 114.

eternity, with an entire variety of Romanian modulation of nature, like Constantin Noica named them in his *Romanian Feeling of Essence*. And among these worlds, the passing through comes senseless, in an organic way; through a custom, but custom like place of passing through, not like a forbiddance, personally integrated in the existence like a step, not like threshold. All these words: *beyond, absence & eternity* are for the Romanian people qualities of his own nature.⁴⁴³

From his affirmation like unitary and independent state, Romania grew in the eyes of Europe through a great richness of cultural values.⁴⁴⁴ Through an authentic interweaving between reason and spirit, the valuable inheritance of the history confirmed the natural essence of the Romanian people. What is very important for our research is the fact that at the basis of Great Romania the dialogue between theology and philosophy was in a symphonic concordance, generating true masterpieces

443 Marian Diaconu, „An Ontological Model of Romanian Man”, introductive study at the work of Mircea Vulcănescu, *Romanian Dimension of Existence*, Ed. Fundației Culturale Române, București, 1991, p. 10.

444 Before the communist period, Romanian philosophy developed on three cultural steps, compatible with three great generations of thinkers, who were very devoted to the confession work of the Church. Therefore, the first generation of philosophers stands before the start of the first Mondial war, having a very important contribution through many writhed works and having like representatives on: Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, P.P. Negulescu or Ion Petrovici. The second one had his manifestation in the next three decades after the first Mondial war, being dominated by some important names, like: Nae Ionescu, Lucian Blaga, D. D. Roșca, Mircea Florian, Tudor Vianu, Petre Andrei, Mircea Ralea. Last but not last, the third philosophical current had his beginning at the start of the third Mondial war, having like representatives on: Constantin Noica, Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Mircea Vulcănescu, Petre Țușea, Emil Cioran etc. (Marian Diaconu, “A Spiritual Face of his Time ...”, in Mircea Vulcănescu, *For a New Philosophical Spirituality. The Romanian Dimension of the Existence*, vol. I, forward by Constantin Noica, Ed. Eminescu, București, 1992, p. 11).

of thinking and Romanian spirit. Therefore, we think that the daco-roman specific, on which is built our orthodox spirituality, can a *light-motive* for the Romanian cultural heritage.⁴⁴⁵

To bring an appropriate argumentation regarding this issue, the apologists of our daco-roman roots tried to get answers from the ethnogenesis process of our people.⁴⁴⁶ This aspect is very important for father Dumitru Stăniloae, offering therefore a prioritization of things. He believes that for an authentic understanding of our cultural and ethnical identity we must have in mind “the graft” on which this was created. Moreover, the Christianity has the purpose “to transport the humanity from the stage of wilderness of his natural nationality to the stage of nobility of the unique existence, grounded by God.”⁴⁴⁷ And once signed this seed “grows and bring hundredfold fruit.” Therefore, for father Dumitru Stăniloae the Christianity, in general, and the Orthodoxy, in particular, have meant to work and to be permanently present in “cultural manifestation, in work, in social relationships from the appropriate ethnical classes.”⁴⁴⁸

VI.1. The Historic Argument of Daco-roman Spirituality

One of the fundamental elements of a genesis process of the Romanian people is his Christianization. From this

445 The specific of daco-roman Christianity, particularized through his important confession work of saints John Cassian, Dionysus Exiguul, John Maxanþiu etc., had always a very strong argument in the revindication of a “Romanian dimension of existence”. This is what father Dumitru Stăniloae names “Orthodoxy and Romanity.”

446 The Aurelian retreat from Dacia (271-275) was made gradually and did not include only the army, but also the administrative institutions and a part of politicians. The most part of the daco-roman population stayed in his initial place and therefore we believe could not have been moved so easy from his place (Emilian Popescu, *Christianitas Daco-Romana. Florilegium studiorum*, Ed. Academiei Române, Bucureşti, 1994, p. 43-44).

447 Pr. prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Ortodoxie şi românism*, Ed. Basilica, Bucureşti, 2014, p. 47.

448 Pr. prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Ortodoxie şi românism*, p. 56.

“grafting”, mentioned by father Dumitru Stăniloae, increased a liturgical language in connection with which we can speak about “a Romanian dimension of existence”. For a better understanding of this argument we must analyse the historical element. A very important thing is the approach of Saint Constantine the Great, which inserted in his politics the concept of *pax christiana*, especially for the barbarian nations.⁴⁴⁹ In our country, the Christianity brought by Saint Andrew the Apostle, became a priority in the missionary work of the 15th episcopal sieges across the north side of Danube.⁴⁵⁰

Furthermore, another very important aspect of daco-roman origin was the Latin language. In this concern, the historians invoke the principal formation of words and the grammatical structure, added in the original linguistic foundation of the Daco people.⁴⁵¹ Subsequent in this foundation were added also many Slave influence, received from the migratory people, starting

449 Saint Constantine the Great concludes some kind of armistice in 322 with Goths, demanding them in the change of pace the unconditioned adhesion at the Christian belief (see: Evangelor Chrysos, *Byzantion kai oi Gotoi*, Tessaloniky, 1972). Moreover, the spread of Christianity through barbarians was a desideratum introduced by the Patriarch of Constantinople via 28 Canon from the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (see: Charls Joseph Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church from the Original Documents*, p. 410-411).

450 Emilian Popescu, *Organizarea ecleziastică a provinciei Scythia Minor în secolele IV-VI*, în Revista “Studii Teologice”, nr. 7-10/1980, p. 590-605.

451 “The adoption of Latin Language by getae-daco-moesieni started in the first century d. Hr., from the establishment of the border of the Roman Empire on Danube. This entire perimeter became the apanage of some restrictive circles. After the conquest of Dacia, Latin language entre in all social strata, being therefore the principal element of romanization of the natives. The attestations regarding the progress of the Latin language in the middle of autochthon population comes from the 3000 inscriptions which were founded in this area” (Emilian Popescu, *Christianitas Daco-Romana ...*, p. 53).

with the VII and VIII centuries.⁴⁵² All these elements support themselves through the existence of a powerful Christian community, enforced in the period of the persecution, alive and present in the native element. Although there existed some theories which sustained some slimming of the daco-roman spirit under the influence of migratory people, from eighth century on the roots of Christianity from the areal of our country was very deep buried in the existence of our people, “being unable in no shape to be outdated through no further reading.”⁴⁵³

Starting from the linguistical heritage, the great historian Vasile Pârvan thinks that the daco-roman Christianity has an apologetical specific. In this context he invokes the term „*martur*” or „*martyr*”. Used in the Latin Illyricum, as a matter of fact in all the West of Europe, the term reflects very well the meaning of “*sufferance for the divine through*”. Therefore, it was very present on a numerous inscriptions and epigraphic texts, this term expresses in Pârvan’s opinion the martirical vocation of the Christian Church from here. “In all the important cities from Dalmatia and Pannonia the martyr cult was flourishing: on or at the martyr’s grave – in majority from the time of Diocletian persecution – are being build churches, in which are buried also simple believers, in the sacred proximity of the places where many receive the martyrdom for Christ (*martiribus adscita ctuet*)”. To confirm these historical realities, we also have as argument a very important correspondence of Basile the Great (331-379) regarding the moment on bringing the holy relics of Saint Martyr Sava the Goth from Scythia Minor in Cappadocia. Therefore, it is very important to understand that for the daco-roman Christianity the complete understanding

452 In this concerne, you can see the study of Prof. Univ. Dr. Magda Jianu, *Despre nume*, in Revista “Mitropolia Olteniei”, nr. 1-4/2017, p. 97-109.

453 Dr. Nestor Vornicescu, *Desăvârșirea unității noastre naționale undament al unității Bisericii Străbune*, Ed. Mitropolia Olteniei, Craiova, 1988, p. 18.

of the term “martyr” is the one of “hostage at the stability of through.”⁴⁵⁴

The terminological heritage of daco-roman Christianity was supported and developed in the context of ecclesiastical organization. Therefore, from the first Christian centuries we knew some important names of daco-roman bishops with activity in the first dioceses from the north of Danubius, especially in Tomis.⁴⁵⁵ Moreover, there is some strong evidence about the ascetical and mystical work of the monks from this area. Among them we must especially remember Saints: John Cassian, Dionysus Exiguus and John Maxentius, missionary, apologists and confessors in Constantinople and Rome.⁴⁵⁶

Consequently, “Christianity became a conservation element of the Romanian ethos, active in the structure of our culture, in the process of crystallization of literary language, of national

454 Moreover, our great historian shows that in the period after the persecutions in the entire Roman Empire “martyrs they were not usually remember under this name, unless we can speak about their quality of confessors of faith – therefore they were adored like *sancti*. In the Latin West the word *martir* even disappeared in favour of *sanctus*, keeping only the term of *martyrium* like a mixt concept, religious and laic, describing the sufferance in a real cause” (Vasile Pârvan, *Contribuții epigrafice la istoria creștinismului daco-roman*, București, 1911, p. 135-139).

455 The historian Vasile Pârvan offers here a complete list of the bishops from Scythia Minor. He remembers that from this period where known only the name on the one from Tomis: “Evangelicus from the time of Diocletian, Philius from the time of Licinius (then empty), further Bretanion on the time of Valens, Gherontius from the Second Ecumenical Council from Constantinople in 381, Theotimul on la 400, Thimoteus participant at the Ecumenical Council in Efes in 431, Ioannes from 448, Alexander participant at the council of Constantinople in 449, Theotimus II who was contemporary with the emperor Leon (457-474), Paternus on the time of Iustin, Valentinianus (cca. 500)” (see: Vasile Pârvan, *Contribuții epigrafice la istoria creștinismului daco-roman*, p. 71-72).

456 Pr. prof. I.G. Coman, *Scriitori bisericești din epoca străromână*, Ed. IBMBOR, București, 1979, pp. 59-63.

conscience and, later, of the national conscience, both in Transylvania and in Muntenia and Moldavia. The end of the premedieval period and the beginning of the Middle Age represent the ending of the process of Romanian ethnogenesis, the formation of Romanian people with a Latin roots and unique influences of the oriental tradition in the ethnical and linguistical from south-east of Europe, in carpato-danubiano-pontic area.”⁴⁵⁷

VI.2. A “Romanian dimension of existence”

Our daco-roman spirituality inspired positively Romanian philosophy, generating many exemplifications and arguments in the support of “*a Romanian dimension of existence.*”⁴⁵⁸ Beyond the anachronistic anti-arguments and suppositions in this concern, the Romanian philosophy offers a very interesting overview, underlining some important clarification, more than useful for our research.

The process of particularization of the Christian ethos like a national specific became very present in the dialogue between theology and culture. Therefore, most of the interbelical

457 Dr. Nestor Vornicescu, *Desăvârșirea unității noastre naționale ...*, p. 18.

458 This syntagma is attributed especially to our great philosopher and Christian confessor **Mircea Vulcănescu**. Representative of Romanian intellectuality from the interbelic period, “educated in the school of Dimitrie Gusti and Nae Ionescu”, MV was born at 3 of March 1904 in Bucharest. His parents, Michael and Maria Vulcănescu, both intellectuals, offered him a good education, in the spirit of Christian faith. His predilection for the values of the Romanian people comes from a very intense preoccupation for the “metaphysics of religion”. From here, he discovers the principles of “Romanian man” and “Romanian dimension of existence”. In the virtue of this great gift MV holds numerous conferences and writes many books and studies specially dedicated to this problematic. Moreover, we can discover the apologetic work and confession of MV. Therefore, he was a martyr of the Romanian nation in the communist jails (Marian Diaconu, “Cuvânt înainte” la lucrarea lui Mircea Vulcănescu, *Logos și Eros*, Ed. Paideia, București, 1991, pp. 5-8).

Romanian thinkers encouraged this perspective in the context of the foundation of Romanian state. Starting with Mircea Vulcãnescu, the martyr philosopher, we learn about a “Romanian dimension of existence”. Out of this argumentation cannot be neglected the problematic of *daco-roman Christianity*, which is the most important element of specificity of our people and an opening and preamble for the “*Romanian soul*”. “If we try to define the structure of *our national soul*, affirms Mircea Vulcãnescu, putting it in a relation with the environment in which was developed our nation, in relation with geographical context from a space infinity curled, like sir Lucian Blaga used to say, with life condition from country, like sir Stahl would say, with special type of life of shepherds and ploughmen, as Densusianu says, with the soul of the mountain man, as Mehedinþi and Eminescu think ... and if we will try to put *the name of a daco-roman nation* over all these qualities, we will see that this soul can be characterised through a diversity of qualities, through a series of temptations, through a series of divergent representation about himself, through a series of in actual sentiments which could be united in some personal way of manifestation from the life of another people.”⁴⁵⁹

The Romanian theology offers a very large palette of arguments regarding the daco-roman spirituality. We have in these concern two different directions of interpretation, very important for our present research. The first one offers a systematic perspective and therefore an apologetical approach. We name here Nichifor Crainic, father Dumitru Stãniloae and professor Ioan Gh. Savin. The second one gets support in historicocritical method, being developed by our most known petrologists: I.G. Coman, Nestor Vornicescu and Gheorghe Drãgulin.

459 Mircea Vulcãnescu, *Dimensiunea romãneascã a existenþei*, p. 42.

Nichifor Crainic, the great theologian and Romanian philocalic thinker,⁴⁶⁰ brings a very important contribution to the process of definition of the “*Romanian soul*”. In his conception this syntagma has strong apologetic valences, being

460 An important theologian, writher, poet, journalist and Christian philosopher, Nichifor Crainic (n. 22 of December 1882) absolved the Central Seminary (1904-1912) and the Faculty of Theology from Bucharest (1912-1916). He wished to become priest, but the request of consecrations has rejected by the mitropolit Conon Armănescu-Doinici. He fought in the First Mondial War. In 1920, at Lucian Blaga advice, Crainic started the classed of the Faculty of Philosophy from Vienna. Here he receives also the PhD title in Philosophy. After his studies, Crainic becomes firstly a teacher at the Theological Seminary from Bucharest and then teacher at the Faculty of Theology from Chisinau. In 1940 become member of the Romanian Academy, title which will be retired five years later. In 1994 Crainic will be rehabilitated port-mortem in this position. Beyond the critics generated by his political preferences, Nichifor Crainic remains in the memory of our Orthodox Church like a great theologian, being the promoter of the philocaly translations. This great work was completed by his disciple, father Dumitru Stăniloae. Also, father Stăniloae affirms that “Nichifor Crainic was the first Romanian theologian from the modernity who manage to draw the theology from the circle straightened and bypassed of the specialists, presenting it, in an imposing way, to the general attention of the intellectual world ... Nichifor Crainic renewed through the updating of tradition the theology in an orthodox spirit” (Gândirea, an XIX, nr. 4, apr. 1940). In quality of coordinator of the Periodic “Gândirea”, NC “specifies the terms of the cultural, literal and political opposition, characteristically to the *gândirismului* in pragmatic essays, like “The second independence” from 1926, “Between Apollo and Jesus” in 1927 or “The sense of tradition” from 1929. Against the imitation of the occidental culture and of the unconditioned modernism, sustained by Eugen Lovinescu, Crainic pleads for a modern creation inspired by autochthonism and Romanian traditionalism” – see here: Alexandru Săndulescu, *Întoarcere în timp: memoriali`ti români*, edi`ia a II-a, Ed. Muzeului Național al Literaturii Române, Bucure 2008, p. 254-267; Diac. Ioan Ică jr, *Nichifor Crainic o'i redescoperirea misticii în Ortodoxie în prima jumătate a secolului XX*, studiu introductiv la Nichifor Crainic, *Cursurile de mistică. I. Teologie mistică. II. Mistică germană*, Ed. Deisis, Sibiu, 2010, pp. 5-115.

used like *argumentum princeps* in the dialogue between theology and culture. In his collection of journalistic texts “Cardinal Points in Chaos”, Crainic takes position against the so-called “intellectualized”, who “opposed to the people and made from the Latin legend the argument of their annexation to the French culture”. Therefore, his perspective in this problematic is, in fact, a statement against the danger of “abdication from autochthonism and Orthodoxy”. For Nichifor Crainic the only solution in the combat with the tendencies of “globalization” was related to the “Romanian soul” in the virtue of daco-roman Christian heritage. “This interior image is based on his real name: the resemblance and icon of God. But how do they reject “divine transcendent”, could anybody according to which model can their interior image be made perfect? ... In general, the thirst of knowledge is rather referring to the so-called consuming culture. It is a different attitude from our usual attitude. The traditional wants a creative culture of authentic values, a personal cultural creation. These cannot exclude the cultural consummation, but involve it, giving to himself his subsequent subordination which he possesses. According to the popular expression, the cultural creation is related by the ethos of the people: his from the very his. The mission to create which others cannot create is only in the nature of the people. To know is a way to help the authentic creation. But this creation remains the supreme target!”⁴⁶¹

The key-element of these apologies of “Romanian soul” consists in the fact that exists *an existential link between our national identity and faith of the ancestors*. Through this link we can explain and understand the most important realisations of the Romanian people. “Was thorough the ethnical character of this people, but was ignored the religious character, says also N. Crainic. If we admit that the religious preoccupation was

461 Nichifor Crainic, *Puncte cardinale în haos*, Ed. Timpul, Ia^oi, 1996, p. 125-126

absent from his soul, then how to explain the old Romanian culture almost entirely religious? How to explain all the architectonic monuments, monastery and Christian churches? How to explain the different warrior coalitions in which Christianity fought against Turkish, meaning against paganism? How to explain the many donations from which hospitals were built, donations originating from the religious feeling? How to explain the many donations and contributions for the monasteries, from the monasteries from Saint Month Athos and from all the Orthodox East? How to explain the material sacrifices of Romanian rulers in the purpose to help the Eastern Patriarchal Sieges which where fallen under the Turkish domination? How to explain the categorical rejection of all catholic and protestant attempt all over the years? How to explain the different theological apologies written by Romanian bishops against Catholicism and Protestantism in the defense of our Orthodox faith? But again, the union with Rome of a part of Transylvanian is a proof of the native Orthodoxy of this people. The Union had made in some dogmatical points which the priests already knew, but the united people remained farther in the seen frames of the traditional Church through the eastern liturgical rite, which is nothing else but a poetical form of the Orthodox dogma. Therefore, through this liturgical tradition includes the fragment of united Transylvanians is integrated in the national unity of the Romanian belief. Without this condition the union with Rome cannot be realized in that context. Through it triumph in a way the popular Orthodoxy of Romanian soul. Therefore, in the Romanian multi-ethnic context from today, the eastern rite of both national churches is the conservatoire formula of the Romanian national block.⁴⁶²

The preoccupations for an authentic spirituality of our people, like extension of daco-roman Christianity, are carried

462 Nichifor Crainic, *Puncte cardinale în haos*, p. 132-133.

further by father *Dumitru Stăniloae*.⁴⁶³ Disciple of Nichifor Crainic, he is more involved in the problematic of Romanian Orthodox ethos, justifying his existence and importance through a very complex theological argumentation. In an article, published in '90th in the „Theology and Life/Teologie i viaa” Periodic Review,⁴⁶⁴ father Dumitru Stăniloae demonstrates the

463 Father **Dumitru Stăniloae** was born at 16 of November 1903 in Vlădeni village, district Brasov. Started his primary classes in Vlădeni, the High School “Andrei aguna” from Brasov (1914-1922), the courses of the Faculty of Letter from Bucharest, the Faculty of Theology from Cernăui (1923-1927), where he received also his PhD degree (1928). With the support of the metropolitan Nicolae Bălan, our great theologian perfected his theological knowledge in Athena (1927-1928), Mnchen and Berlin (1928-1929), Paris or Belgrade. As teacher of theology, father Stăniloae started his didactic carrier at the Faculty of Theology from Sibiu (1929-1946). In the period of 1946-1973, he has professor of Dogmatic, Ascetic and Mystique at the Faculty of Theology of Bucharest. Between 1958-1963, father Dumitru Stăniloae has put in jail by the communists, suffering for Christ in Aiud and Gherla. His theological work has a great academic and spiritual quality, being considered “one of the most important theologians and thinkers from all over the world”. We remember here some of his most important researches: *Life and Teaching of Saint Gregorios Palamas* (1938); *Jesus Christ or the Restoration of man* (1943); *Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology* for seminaries – in two volumes (1958); *Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology* for faculties I in three volumes (1978); *Moral Orthodox Theology*; *Orthodox Ascetics and Mystical*; *Orthodox Spirituality* (1981); *Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy* (1992); *The Holy Trinity of in the Beginning was the Love* (1993); *Commentary at the Saint John Gospel* (1993); *Jesus Christ the Light of the World* (1993); *The Living of God in Orthodoxy* (1993) etc. He realized also many patristic translations and published hundreds of studies and articles in one of the most important periodic from all over the world. His entire work is partially translated in many international languages. He passed away at 5 of October 1993, being buried in the graveyard of the Monastery Cernica, near to Bucharest (see here: Pr. prof. univ. dr. Mircea Păcurariu, *Dicionarul teologilor romni*, Ed. Univers Enciclopedic, Bucureti, 1996, p. 418-423).

464 Pr. prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *De ce suntem ortodoci*, n „Teologie i viaa”, nr. 4-8/1991, p. 15-27. The text opens the volume *Napiune i cretinism*, work published postum at Ed. Elion, Bucureti, 2004, p. 1-14.

daco-roman spirituality and implicitly our Orthodox faith is an authentic synthesis element between Orient and Occident. “Through Orthodoxy, father Stăniloae notes, we conserved our Christian belief from beginning or (the trough) believe received from early beginnings of our existence like nation, this belief being a very important part of our spirituality.”⁴⁶⁵

To enforce this theory, father Stăniloae underlines a historical and a biblical interpretation, in the purpose of reevaluation the Christian roots of the Romanian people. He analyses a biblical quotation from *Acts of Apostle (chapter 16, 9-15)*, which speaks about the arrival of Saint Paul, in his second missionary trip, into the parts of Macedonia and Troy. Therefore, father Dumitru Stăniloae thinks that in this missionary trip the Apostle of Gentium brings the Christianity up to our parts, because “these Macedonians where Thracians, named also Betsi”.⁴⁶⁶ On this logic, the Romanian theologian enforces his argument about a daco-roman Christianity in an authentic point of view. The Latin language of our ancestors is “distinct from the one which was spread from Rome in all the Occident, being transposed in the fundamental notions of this belief of this population: we say Maker/ Făcător not Crator, Virgin/Fecioară not Virgo, Anasthesis/ Înviere not Resurrection, Father/ Tatã not Pater, God/Dumnezeu not Deus. That “
•TM, “s why it is important to say that our people, closely related

465 Pr. prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Napiune 9i cretinism*, p. 2-3.

466 Besii dwelling till Bosfor, in Bitinia, was being known also with the name of Beti. Troy was one of their cities. Therefore, they were in fact from the roman seed and like prof in this concern was the fact that Eneas, the nephew of Priam, leaving Troy after it was conquered by Thracians, reach Italy, were he founds Rome. But a real prof about the Roman roots of these Thracians and Besi is also the fact that only them are staying here after the retreat of the roman armies from Dacia and then from the south of Danube, being the only speakers of Latin language. On the other hand, we know that in Greece, Egypt, Middle Asia, this language disappeared (Pr. prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Napiune 9i cretinism*, p. 3).

by the Eastern people, kept the Christian faith as he received it from the beginning, therefore in his original form, specified in the writings of the Eastern Fathers.”⁴⁶⁷

The argumentation of *the daco-roman heritage* in the theology of father Dumitru Stăniloae is therefore related by *the profound identity of the Romanian people*.⁴⁶⁸ In his controversy with the great Romanian philosopher Lucian Blaga,⁴⁶⁹ father

467 Pr. prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Napiune 9i cre9tinism*, p. 3.

468 The orthodox leaving of the incarnated Through entails an authentic *modus vivendi*, something which define the ethos of the historical entity of a people. After father Dumitru Stăniloae, “in Orthodoxy, Christ give us the His divine power or the very His Divine Life through deification, while He has it through nature ... Only the real presence of the Same Christ in all the believers ... works in each of us by our personal powers. This real presence of Christ goes to the maintaining of the people in the same unity, but in a unity of love, not confusion. This is the point of the Orthodox believe and of the original Christianity kept in it in different forms” („De ce suntem ortodoc9i?”, în vol. *Ortodoxie 9i na9ionalism*, Bucure9ti, 2011, p. 307-308). Therefore, through this beautiful synthesis of “the specific of the Romanian Orthodox Spirituality, starting from the relationship between Latinity and Orthodoxy”, father Dumitru Stăniloae “offers a specific character in which the Romanian tradition can represent a veritable link between East and West” (see here: *Apologetica Ortodoxă*, vol. II, *Dialogul cu 9tiin9ele contemporane*, coord. Adrian Lemeni, Diac. Sorin Mihalache, Pr. Răzvan Ionescu, Pr. Cristinel Iojă, Ed. Basilica, 2014, p. 57-62; see also our work: *Apologetica Ortodoxă 9i 9c9i9i 9i m9rturisire 9i apostolat*, Ed. Mitropolia Olteniei, Craiova, 2017, p. 333-338).

469 In his book “The Position of Lucian Blaga towards Orthodoxy” (Ed. Paidea, Bucure9ti, 1997, 189p.) father Dumitru Stăniloae makes a complex apologetic commentary to the affirmation that the philosopher Lucian Blaga had made in his work “Religion and Spirit”. In this dispute were laid face to face two of the greatest Romanian thinkers: father Dumitru Stăniloae 9i 9c9i9i 9i one of the greatest Romanian theologians - and Lucian Blaga 9i 9c9i9i 9i one of the great Romanian philosophers. The way in which they were understood by the contemporary recommends them between the most advised voices in an idea dispute which was more creative than destructive” (Prof. Dr. Remus Rus, „Spre o teologie a religiilor

Stăniloae affirms that the Orthodoxy and the religious feeling come from so called “*stylistically matrix*”. Not only is the style basis of religion, but the religious feeling is the most appropriate way of propagation of style and culture. Moreover, father Stăniloae affirms that “the Romanian spirituality cannot be conceived without Orthodoxy, because it cannot be conceived like style which goes idling, but like style essentially applicated to the religious feeling, having as a resort the Orthodoxy ... Therefore, our Orthodoxy isn’t only an arbitrary product of the Romanian style, which can be divided therefore in production, but it is an element deeper than the style and necessary for the existence and functionality of style. The style needs Orthodoxy for his functionality and manifestation; without Orthodoxy the style cannot be functional and knowledgeable and therefore cannot exist a Romanian style. Consequently, the Romanian spirituality is essentially revealed in Orthodoxy.”⁴⁷⁰

Besides Crainic and Stăniloae, the great professor and apologist *Ioan Gh. Savin*⁴⁷¹ speaks about a *national identity like*

în viziunea Pr. Prof. D. Stăniloae”, în volumul: *Persoană și Comuniune. Prinos de cinstitie Părintelui Profesor Academician Dumitru Stăniloae la împlinirea vârstei de 90 de ani*, Ed. Arhiepiscopiei Ortodoxe Sibiu, 1993, p. 521; Lect. dr. Adrian Boldișor, *Fenomenul religios între filosofie și teologie*, în Revista Teologică, nr. 95/2013, p. 86-87).

470 Dumitru Stăniloae, *Poziția domnului Lucian Blaga față de Creștinism și Ortodoxie*, Ed. Paideia, București, 1992, p. 22-23

471 The teacher **Ioan Gh. Savin** (1885-1973) is one of the most important personalities from the history of the Romanian Apologetic Theology. He taught this discipline and also classes of Ascetic and Orthodox Mystique at the faculties of theology from Chisnau, Iasi or Bucharest. Starting with the establishment of the communist regime, the personality of our great professor and apologist, as well as the Apologetic discipline, was considered inadequate and incompatible with the “dialectical materialism”. Therefore, starting with 1948, professor Ioan Gh. Savin was forced to retire from the department, being also imprisoned (1950-1956). Therefore, because of his anti-communist position, Savin suffered much injustice from apart of

specific of daco-roman symbiosis. He has on this subject two interesting theories.⁴⁷² In this concern he sustains that, after the Aurelian retreat from 256, the daco-roman civilization continues to exist, not only because of a well-defined administrative structure, but because of the communion force of the Christian Church, which was founded here through the preach and teaching of Saint Andrew the Apostol. “Under the sign of the Cross and under the communion of the Church, says professor Savin, these two nations of our ancestors here found in a biological and ethnical unity, Romanian unity, which became deeper as long as the Daco people stayed alone in the front of barbarian invasions, after the Roman retreat over the Danube. The linking element of the people from north of the Danube

state. Among his most important publications, we remember: “*The Apologetic Course*” in two volumes (1935), with the annexes “*The Nature and Origin of Religion*” (1937), “*God Existence. The Ontological Prove*” (1940) and “*The Cosmologic and Teleological Prove*” (1943) and also many interdisciplinary works, like “*Culture and Religion*” (1927), “*The Science and the Origin of Religion*” (1937), “*Christianity and the Contemporary Understanding*” (1940), “*Theology and History*” (1943), “*Christianity and Romanian Culture*” (1943) etc. Therefore, we can say that by example and Christian confession and also by his great work, Ioan Gh. Savin can be appreciated like “one of the most representative exponents of the Romanian culture and spirituality” (†Nicolae, Mitropolitul Banatului, „Cuvânt înainte” la lucrarea Ioan Gh. Savin, *Apologetica*, vol. I, ediție îngrijită de Radu Diac, Ed. Anastasia, București, 2002, p. 7-9).

472 Therefore, we can see that, along the time, existed some interpretation by which *the essence of the Romanian spirit* belonged exclusively to the local side, because of the Daco heroism from which “we would take the intimate and organic structure of our ethnical nature, like a relationship with the earth and sky, on which the immortal Daco were very attached”. On the other side, existed also a laic interpretation which opinion was that everything that is Romanian come from “*the conquerors romans and from the colonizers, from which we took, with civilization and organization, the language and with it the soul and culture of the Romanian people*” (Ioan Gh. Savin, *Creștinismul și cultura română*, București, 1944, p. 5-6).

cannot be the one of their national conscience, still undefined, but the one of religious faith, different from the belief of invaders people. The Christian Church becomes in this way the appropriate institution which defended his new believers from Dacia, and his clerically take the place of the outgoing Roman rulers.”⁴⁷³

VI.3. The daco-roman Christianity - a patristic perspective

Under the historical-critical aspect, the daco-roman spirituality is compatible with the names of three Romanian theologians, consecrated of a laborious research in the patristic issue from the Romanian space. Father Professor I.G. Coman, Metropolitan Nestor Vornicescu and Father Professor Gheorghe Drăgulin offer a very important perspective over the daco-roman spirituality problematic. With them starts the study of the principal *patristic* bio-bibliographic, historical and contextual coordinates on which he lends the most important part of our research.

The first Romanian theologian who puts the specific of daco-roman Christianity in the classical parameters of the historical-critical research is father professor Ioan G. Coman(1902-1987).⁴⁷⁴ His vision about this theological theme

473 Ioan Gh. Savin, *Creștinismul și cultura română*, p. 5-6.

474 Theologian and great patristic researcher, father professor **Ioan G. Coman** was born at 27 of November, in the locality of Dâmbroca, from district Buzău. He passed away at 11 of March 1987, at Bucharest. With a very impressive theological baggage, he has the great merit of being “the founder of the modern Romanian Orthodox Theology.” Was also a prolific writer with an integrative vision, in which he fulfils “an entire life of study and reflection in multiple domain of activity, like: theology, philosophy, history of religion, byzantine culture, classical language, theological history and Romanian spirituality, literature history and Romanian culture.” As a teacher father I.G. Coman was noted at the department of Patristic Theology from the Faculty of Theology from Bucharest, where he served in the period 1944-1970. His *Patristic* in two volumes is still the most normative in the academical study, from his time till our

can be characterized like integrative and synthetic, looking for explanations and answers beyond the usual bio-bibliographical presentations.

Through a very complex research our great professor brings together many archeological materials, literary and historical arguments. His purpose is therefore the underlining of the Christian daco-roman spirituality, of a “great wealth and variety, which had accomplished a very important role in the genesis of the Romanian people in both parts of Danube”. Further on, father professor I.G. Coman remembers the fact that this great heritage of our ancestors wasn’t every time appreciated in his true value. That is why, “we have always the duty to confess the richness and beauty of our country, of the daco-roman people and of the Romanians. We don’t know yet all the beauty and historical values which are hidden yet in the ground of Scythia Minor. This is what we know: inscriptions, archeological sites and especially men who wrote about their beloved country, it’s enough to be aware of the truth which others confess about our country which is the land and the heart of the people from here.”⁴⁷⁵

The love for the ancestral roots was transformed by father I.G. Coman in a new and unique discipline: “Old Romanian/*Strătomână* Patristic”. Starting with him this academic preoccupation was cultivated with great success by his disciples: the metropolitans Nestor Vornicescu and Nicolae Corneanu, father professor ^atefan Alexe. His research and interpretations

days. In conclusion, we can say that “father Coman replied to the Orthodox theology his philosophical and literary coefficient and his irenic substance. He restored the academical lecture and also the preach” (Pr. prof. Ion Bria, “Un mare teolog ortodox și intelectual român: preotul profesor Ioan Coman”, studiu introductiv la lucrarea Pr. prof. dr. Ioan G. Coman, *Despre Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur. Studii*, Ed. Basilica, București, 2015, p. 9-17).

475 I.G. Coman, Cuvânt înainte la lucrarea *Scriitori bisericești din epoca străromână*, p. 5-7.

revealed many important theological and historical things. Forgotten personalities and literary works received brightness under the pen of our great patristic scholar Ioan Gh. Coman.⁴⁷⁶ Through these examples he succeeded in defining the Christian argument of our national identity. “From the documents we find out that the Christians of daco-roman origin from Scythia Minor – whatever their name was: Scythe, Goth, Gate or Dacos – belonged in the beginning to the Mother Church from Constantinople and the bishops from Tomis where under the jurisdiction of Ecumenical Patriarchy from the Byzantine capital, being also members in the Holy Council. The rite had from the start an Eastern character, although the language was Latin or later paleo-Slave which received progressive Romanians elements and, as the language of the people developed, the rite was also growing. In a normal way, the bishops from Scythia Minor and probably from the other parts of roman Dacia know also the Greek language, because they lived in the areas with a strong Greek culture, as it was on the left shore, in permanent contact with Byzantium and with the entire Christian East, as we find out from Saint Basile the Great correspondence (Epistle 155, 164, 165) with Iunius Soranus and with the bishop Bretanion of Tomis ... The Christian inscriptions from Scythia Minor are written also in Latin and in Greek. As the paleo-Slavic language cannot be slaviced and the Greek language cannot be Hellenized the Romanian Orthodoxy therefore the Latin language cannot Latinize it. The Latin language was for the daco-roman Christians and is for the today Romanian Christians a strong confession of our Latinity and a transmission instrument of the spiritual values, starting with the Orthodox faith. It represents for us the power and glory of Traian’s Rome, not of the papal Rome.”⁴⁷⁷

476 Pr. prof. Ion Bria, *Un mare teolog ortodox și intelectual român: preotul profesor Ioan Coman*, p. 14.

477 Pr. prof. I.G. Coman, *Dicționarul Oxfordian al Bisericii Creștine. Prezentare și observatii critice*, în *Ortodoxia*, nr. 3/1978, p. 562-563.

For the importance of our subject we must remember also the metropolitan Nestor Vornicescu.⁴⁷⁸ He left a great theological heritage, mostly materialized in books, studies and articles. His special contribution comes from the original style, the precision and fidelity of expositive data. Therefore, from the historical and critical perspective of his thinking, we are ensured by the certainty and profound knowledge of the exposed truth. Following his disciple (father professor I.G. Coman), the metropolitan Nestor was always preoccupied by the origin of our people. He had in mind the historic value of personalities and places on which he studied from an original point of view.⁴⁷⁹

478 The metropolitan **Nestor Vornicescu** come into the world at 1of October 1927 in the village of Lozova-Vorniceni (district of Lăpu^ona, in Moldavia Republic) and past to heaven in the day of 17 of March 2000, at Craiova. Nestor started his monastic life very earlier, at the Hermitage of "Saint Nechit", near to Neam^b, in Moldavia. Later he became a monk in the Monastery of Neam^b. His theological education started also at the Monastic Seminary from Neam^b (1948-1951). After that, he finished the Orthodox Theological Institute from Bucharest and then the PhD studies at the same academical institution. In 1958 has ordained like priest and in 1962 became the abbe of Monastery "Saint John the New" from Suceava. In 1966 became the abbe of Monastery Neam^b. In the same time, he continued his studies in Switzerland. His academical qualities and organization skill recommended him for the stage of bishop. Therefore, he was allected and ordained in 1970 in the siege of vice-bishop of Craiova, by the Holy Council of Romanian Orthodox Church. In 1978 Nestor became the Metropolitan of Oltenia and Archbishop of Craiova. In the field of patristic and ecclesiastical history, he wrote many books, studies and articles (Pr. Ionipă Apostolache, *Cuvinte de suflet, oameni ̄i locuri din istoria Bisericii Oltenie. Pilde de mărturisire cre^otină din paginile Ziarului Lumina*, Ed. Trinitas, Bucure^oti, 2017, p. 152-153).

479 "Until the 6th century, says IPS Nestor Vornicescu, the Christianity was wide-spread in our parts, being established also the canonical jurisdiction. In the pre-medieval period appears the migrants. The penetration of the Slavs at the beginning of the 7th century, in the north od Danube, influenced the life of the people, but cannot weaken the ethno-cultural unity, being assimilated gradually into the mass of the natives. Having in mind the religious life of our

Nestor Vornicescu analyses step by step the history of our nation to underline “the structure and forms of our spirituality, a people characterized by his capacity of sufferance and generosity, with profound aptitudes for human communication and also for the religious tolerance”.⁴⁸⁰ Through his many patristic research on this issue, as well as the historical evaluation of some events from the life of our people, the Metropolitan scholar shows the way in which the preach of Saint Andrew the Apostle, the Word of our Savior Jesus Christ came in our country. His perspective starts from *the predisposition of the free Daco people for the belief in Resurrection*, therefore establishing the Christian center of intercultural and inter-religious convergence. On this background of the daco-roman spirituality, it was build an appropriate medium of reception and capitalization of some documents and unique writings from the patristic literature of the first ages.⁴⁸¹

Last but not least, according to father professor *Gheorghe Drăgulin*, we find also a generous perspective about the daco-roman spirituality, concentrated especially on the personality of Saint Dionysus Exiguus. His academical preoccupation on this subject reveals a great daco-roman saint and his theological heritage, composite by many Christological, canonical and

ancestors, A.D. Xenopol observed that until the 9th century the influences of the oriental Christianity were well established that cannot be uprooted by any subsequent influences” (Dr. Nestor Vornicescu, *Desăvârșirea unității noastre naționale - fundament al unității Bisericii Străbune*, Ed. Mitropolia Olteniei, Craiova, 1988, p. 18-19).

480 Dr. Nestor Vornicescu, *Studii de teologie istorică. Antologie*, Ed. Mitropolia Olteniei, Craiova, 1998, p. 8.

481 The contribution of our metropolitan father in the recovery of the patristic literature after his spiritual and historical specific was concretized in his monumental research “First Patristic Writings in our Literature. Centuries IV-XVI”, printed at Mitropolia Olteniei Publishing House, Craiova, 1984.

chronological works. We can find a very good presentation about the presence and activity of Exiguus in the Eternal City.⁴⁸²

Conclusion

Daco-Roman Fathers' Theology a synthesis between the East and the West

Daco-Roman parents 'contribution to give birth to a synthetical theology between the East and the West is very well illustrated in and by the work and confession of several erudite Saints: John Cassian, Dionysius Exiguus and John Maxentius. Among early Christian age's complex personalities, our three forefathers had made their first steps in the Eternal City bringing with themselves an impressive treasure of theology, spirituality and oriental culture. From this point of view, broad and witty thinking in fact, represents a synthesis of the ecumenical spirit shared in love of Christ and Church, starting from Pontus Euxinus, to Jerusalem, Egypt, Constantinople, and later shared as a confession to Rome. This perennial availability to mission and confession is due to the "universalism of Greek culture and

482 The interest of father professor Gheorghe Drăgulin about the work and personality of Saint Dionysus Exiguus is unique in our Romanian patristic theology. His studies on this issue are edifying regarding the historical and doctrinal context in which Saint Dionysus activated in the Eternal City of Rome. Moreover, father Drăgulin offers an original overview about the relationship between Saint Dionysus Exiguus and Saint Dionysus the Areopagit. Therefore, he tried to demonstrate that they were one and the same person. Most of his academical theories and idea regarding this hypothesis have materialized in books and studies (for instance: *The Ecclesiology of Areopagitical Treaties and their Importance for the Contemporary Ecumenism/Treated Eclezologia tratatelor areopagitice și importanța ei pentru ecumenismul contemporan* (teză de doctorat), în Revista „Studii Teologice”, nr. 1-4/1979 și în extras la Ed. IBMBOR, București, 1979, 256 p.; *The Identity of Dionysus Pseudo-Areopagite with the Dionysius the Humble (Exiguus)/Identitatea lui Dionisie Pseudo-Areopagitul cu Ieromonahul Dionisie Smeritul (Exiguul)*, Ed. Mitropolia Olteniei, Craiova, 1991, 342 p.).

that of Latinity by Romanization” which Scythia Minor Christianity enjoyed from the very beginning.⁴⁸³

St. John Cassian first made himself known as a great faith seeker and spiritual father. He may be the one who left us the most impressive and complex theological journey from the East to the West. He is for certain the most famous Daco-Roman among those we have focused in our analysis. One of Saint Evagrius and St. John Chrysostom’s disciples, then a friend of Saint Leo the Great, the Holy Father represents a true synthesis of thinking and what is even more important of Orthodox spirit. It is thought to have been the first great theologian who warned the West about the danger of Nestorian heresy. His confession of faith is illustrated in his no less famous and at the same time controversial Christology thesis “*De Incarnationi Domini*”. His ascetic notes are no less treasured. His spiritual living rules have influenced St. Benedict of Nursia’s thinking and instituted Basilian order in the West.

Saint Dionysius Exiguus is historically speaking, the second greatest Daco-Roman personality who was present and took part actively at the religious life in the Eternal City. Educated and trained at the monastic school of Dobruja, in the place called “Monastery”, the saint is the one who anticipates both the courage and theological wit of the Scythian monks, his brothers in terms of religious faith and spiritual life. He was a great chronicler, translator and last but not least, theologian. His contribution to Western theology is also remarkable, being the first to translate into Latin: Saint Cyril’s Synodal Epistles and Anathematism, Saint Proclus of Constantinople’s “Tome to

483 “Hellenistic culture, says I.G. Coman, found in the Latin “*orbis terrarum*” an ally and messenger which made it easy to make itself heard up to thousands of kilometres, also helped in this regard by its his own language. The thing happened every time when Hellenism and Latinity met, but it was particularly obvious in Scythia Minor, this civilization crossroad (I.G. Coman, *Old Romanian Age Church Writers...*, p. 63).

the Armenians”, “The Life of St Pachomius the Great”, “The Great Repentance of the Blessed Thais”. The logic of his translations lies in an absolute unique and extraordinary mission: to popularize the Orthodox theology and fight against heresies. A visionary par excellence, Saint Dionysius the Humble succeeds due to his prefaces in making a way for the Theopaschite theology. He undeniably and steadily believes in his Dobrujan brothers’ confessional work, offering them all his help and unconditional support before the Pope in Rome. Last but not least, St. Dionysius is also known due to his Christian calendar, the creator of Anno Domini. Due to his theological calculation, reasons and arguments the West benefited from the first Christian calendar beginning with the Nativity.

The Scythian monks, guided by *Saint John Maxentius*, represent the third part of the Daco-Roman confessional work in the Eternal City. Their interests related strictly to a doctrinal direction, with the aim to clear up perhaps the most fervent Christological issue of the Ecumenical Councils age. Before making a name for themselves as true protectors of Christian faith, the dogmatic decisions of Chalcedon (451) were in danger of a violent confrontation with two great heresies: Nestorianism and Monophysitism. The Oriental Church was thus divided, without too many solutions of reconciliation. Moreover, Byzantine emperors’ attempts to restore peace to the empire proved to have no result, but furthermore they all ended in intensifying the existing dissensions. Zenon’s Henotikon (482), the so-called “Edict of Union”, failed to reach the expected outcome by far. This is the context Acacian schism emerged which was barely put out during Emperor Justinian’s reign.⁴⁸⁴

484 In a thorough study on the phenomenon of “schism” in the history of relations between “Rome and the Eastern Churches”, the Catholic theologian Aidan Nichols speaks about the beginning, consent and Henotikon’ terrible results in Easter-Western relations (A. Nichols, *Rome and the Eastern Churches. A study in Schism*, T&T, Edimburgh, 1992, p. 66-70.

An essential role was played in this context by the Scythian monks. Their Christological formula, “*Unus de Trinitate carne passus est*”, was agreed upon by the wise Byzantine Emperor as the most appropriate Christological solution meant to balance the two antithetical parties. In this respect, Daco-Roman monks, guided by St. John Maxentius, reached the Eternal City with the purpose to persuade Pope Hormisdas of this neo-Chalcedonian Christology authenticity.⁴⁸⁵ Scythian monks’ writings provided answers both against Nestorianism, which claimed that there are two hypostases in Christ, and against Monophysitism, which misused the Cyrillic formula “*one single nature of the Word made flesh*”. Their confession Orthodoxy was agreed upon during the Fifth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople.

The place where all Daco-Roman theologians’ apologetic and confessional approaches converged was undoubtedly *the Eternal City*. Victorious in spirit and triumphant in faith, Rome of first Christian ages became the place where the highest theological and cultural affirmation aspirations were to be achieved. The church which had recently laid the palms of freedom over the martyrdom stigma since the times of the tyrant emperors, had become the centre of all scholarly interests, intellectual concerns and erudite preoccupations. However, the background of main doctrinal preoccupations was a normal, usual one without any spectacular or extraordinary elements to describe it. Thus, the Christological issue ranked second place; *teologia crucis* being the most important and essential issue at that time. In this context, Scythian fathers’ role was an extremely

485 Based on Dobrujan monks’ Theopaschite formula, Neo-Chalcedonian Christology is synonymous with three great Eastern Church theologians: Leontius of Byzantium (he also a Daco-Roman), Leontius of Jerusalem and Cyril of Scythopolis. We have inherited from them the idea according to which “the humanity of Jesus was “enthypostatized” in the Logos” (A. Nichols, *Rome and the Eastern Churches ...*, p. 71).

important one. Their presence in the Eternal City gave birth to reactions of the heads of the Roman church when confronted with Eastern Christological challenges. Moreover, their spiritual experience represented an eloquent and living monastic life example, sharing the Eastern Christian mystic spirit to the West, often for the first time. What Rome had to offer in return was, however, the apologetic specificity which the Daco-Roman Fathers assimilated to some extent in their confession.⁴⁸⁶

As a conclusion, we could say without any exaggeration or false modesty that the Daco-Roman symbiosis had a great theological and spiritual impact upon Romanian religion and engraved a profound particular confession and genuine Christian experience on the Romanian spirituality and theology. This particularity has taken the shape of an authentic practical way of manifestation and theological expression in the context of the oldest Christian traditions, long disputed between by the East and West. “*Orthodoxy*, says Father Dumitru Staniloae, has kept us as a united and blessed nation, being given an important role among the peoples of the East and West. It has given us the power and strength to defend ourselves against the long Ottoman attacks, building up a defence wall for the peoples of the West, although, on the other hand it has also helped us to defend our specificity against some Western poisonous peoples... We synthetize in our spirituality Latin reason or confidence in the rational understanding of reality, specific to the West with the feeling of the undeciphered experience mystery of the Eastern

486 First centuries key model personality, Saint Justin Martyr, the Philosopher was famous in the Eternal City due to his first theology school which he founded there. His Christological ideas are a successful synthesis between Judeo-Christian thinking and Greek philosophy. His vision thus becomes normative in defining confessional and theological relations between the East and West (see in this sense: *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, edited by Rene Latourelle and Rino Fisichella, Crossroad, New York, 1994, p.41-44).

Europe peoples. But we as Latin people always shed light upon the mystery of things and people more than the Slavic peoples do; however, our light is one that does not limit, but, on the contrary it defines and is specific to the Western peoples; in this respect we are closer to the original Christian spirituality, which is still present in Greek people's spirituality, although the emotional experience of this light is less brighter than that of the Romanian spirituality."⁴⁸⁷

AFTERWORD

The present research work is a well-documented and argumentative dissertation on the lives and works of the most important daco-roman theologians from Scythia Minor, active in Constantinople and Rome, in the fifth century – Saint John Cassian, Saint Dionysus Exiguus and Saint John Maxentius. With a laborious research in the Library of the Pontifical Institute of Oriental Studies from Rome and in the Library of the Faculty of Theology from Craiova, the young author shows that the Christian life from Roman Dacia was extremely fervent, that was grounded on the Christological virtues, efficiently patterned on the daco-roman roots with a very important role in the promotion of moral and religious values.

Saint John Cassian is evoked in the context of his decisive role in the organization of the western monasticism from the patristic centuries. Nevertheless, he remained faithful to the intellectual mystic specific of Evagrius. Through his works: *De Institutis coenobiorum et de octo principalium vitiorum remediis*”, „*Conlationes Sanctorum Patrum XXIV*”, he brought an important contribution to the organisation process of the monasteries with commune life. Therefore, he promoted many means of spiritual healing in the problematic of the eight

487 Rev. Prof. Dumitru Staniloae, PhD, “Why are we Orthodox?” In *Nation and Christianity*, edition, text, introduction and notes by Constantin Schifiret, Elion Publishing House, Bucharest, 2004, pp.1-2.

principal *bad thoughts* and developed some essential themes from the social life, like: prayer, chastity, poverty etc. The relationship with Saint John Chrysostom in Constantinople, evoked in his *De Incarnationem* treaty, is unique, having the emotion of the disciple and being grounded on the Orthodox confession of faith. Saint John Cassian stayed faithful to this spiritual paternity, even after the conflict between Saint John Chrysostom and Theophilus of Alexandria. The last work of Saint John Cassian appeared in the context of the Christological heresy of Nestorius, the patriarch of Constantinople, regarding the name of the Mother of God as: *antropotokos*, *hrisostokos* or *theotokos*. The works of the Scythian monk present him as a great apologist of the Orthodox Christology which he confessed till the end of his life in the Eternal City.

Saint Dionysus Exiguus (the little one, the humble one) came from a monastery situated on the shore of the Black Sea. He expressed the Orthodox belief first in the City of Constantinople and after that in Rome, where he was also a dialectical teacher, in the school of Cassiodorus in Vivarium. He knew Greek and Latin languages and from this position translated for the Romans some of the most important Eastern theological works, like: *Vita Pachomoni*, *De officio hominis*, the *Letters* of Saint Cyril of Alexandria. Moreover, he realized many important notes in: dogmatic, spirituality, hagiography and canon law, being also the author of teen Prefaces at his translations. The present study underlines the place and the importance of Saint Dionysus Exiguus at the evolutionary process of Latin theology. For instance, his patristic translations are very important in the dispute with Nestorian heresy. On the other hand, Saint Dionysus is the author of one of the most important ecclesiastical collection of canons from the first centuries: *Dionysiana*. However, the name of the Scythian monk is well known in the context of Christian chronology. His great contribution is the introduction of a new Christian calendar

starting from the Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. In this concern, he knows very well the Alexandrine chronology and used the astronomical knowledge of Daco-Getae of Burebista, through the reform of Deceneus. 600 years before the activity of Dionysus, Daco-Getae were instructed that, in the calendar evaluation, to contemplate the 12 signs of the zodiac, the month increasing and decreasing process, walking of the planets, the way in which the solar discs exceed the surface of earth, the evaluation of the way of the 346 stars from around the heaven pol. His relationship with the old Daco-Getae astrological tradition, very important in the antique astrology research, implied the contribution of the Holy Father in the reception and use of the “Belaginae Lows” in his chronological work. This was a context which our ancestors have as basis of an ethnical life, mentioned at Iordanes in his *Getica*; the Greek historian mentions it like a real code of *pelasgiorum* – very important nation, identified with the name of *dioi*, meaning *divines*. Although we don’t have real arguments about the presence of these lows in the Archives of Constantinople or Rome (where Saint Dionysus activated like cancelarium) and we don’t know their precise content, however we know that are in number of 45 and make larger references at some moral principles of life, very similar with the evangelical precepts. Therefore, we could integrate them in the great religious literature before the Christian era.

The conciliation between East and West Christianity, in a Christological matter, is approached by the author in the context of confession works of Scythian monks in the Eternal City, especially the contribution of Saint John Maxentius. Also named bishop of Tomis, he sustained the project of Scythian monks in Rome and was their leader. Their Christological contribution was appreciated and sustained by Saint Justinian the Emperor of Constantinople, who thought that their dogmatic formula was the best solution to re-establish peace in the Church. In the

context of the 5th century, when the Church was edifying his doctrine, the contribution of Saint John Maxentius represented *a key* in which we can understand the *real teaching about the Incarnated Logos*.

Lecturing this work one grasps the idea that, through the Scythian monks, apologists of the Orthodox belief in Constantinople and Rome, a revelatory doctrine is built in the use of a daco-roman theology. The element of novelty of this study stays in the process of analysis and interpretation of historical and doctrinal dates and information, exposed in an original point of view. However, all of these show us that the three daco-roman saints had a very important contribution in the beginning of Christian life and organization. Their ideas have an essential contribution to some important decisions taken during the time of the roman emperors. Therefore, the daco-roman theologians generated the *Romanian dimension of existence*, like father Dumitru Stăniloaiu says, and the *Romanian feeling of the Romanian existence*, like Constantin Noica metamorphosed the concept of sacred.

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