# Justinian's Indecision

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# Justinian's Indecision

## How Social Networks Shaped Imperial Policy

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*To my father, Mitch, and my brothers, Ben and Owen.*
*Ad multos annos.*

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# Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| *ACO* | *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* |
| *CA* | *Collectio Avellana* |
| *CCSL* | *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* |
| *CSEL* | *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* |
| *CN* | Coleman-Norton, *Roman State & Christian Church* |
| *EH* | Evagrius Scholasticus, *The Ecclesiastical History* |
| *ODB* | *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* |
| *PG* | *Patrologia Graeca* |
| *PL* | *Patrologia Latina* |
| *PLRE* | *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* |
| *PO* | *Patrologia Orientalis* |
| *PZ* | Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *Chronicle* |
| *SC* | *Sources chrétiennes* |

# Introduction

From his first actions as advisor to his uncle, the emperor Justin, and later as emperor himself, Justinian approached religious policies in a way many have deemed inconsistent, or at best pragmatically fickle. At one moment, Justinian opposed a group of monks and their confession that 'One of the Holy Trinity was crucified.' Within days he wrote to encourage the pope to receive the very same monks for the sake of the unity of the church. At another moment, the emperor Justinian housed religious dissidents who openly opposed the very doctrines he endorsed for the church. What is more, even the leaders of this opposition would be invited to enjoy the hospitality of the palace. In short order, those same leaders were exiled and the movement they represented were subjected to condemnation by a council held in Constantinople. The emperor raised advisors to powerful bishoprics only to force them painfully to condemn their intellectual heroes. He spent a lifetime demanding that the Council of Chalcedon be recognized as the benchmark of the Christian faith only to secure the condemnation of some of its participants. He spent decades respectfully requesting the presence of popes in the imperial city, only to find himself in a conflict with one that nearly derailed an ecumenical council. Every significant moment in religious policy from the end of the Acacian Schism (519) through the Council of Constantinople (553) seems to be marked by a change in Justinian's mind.

Historical treatments of religious policy under Justinian reflect this impression. Although such an impression comes from the sources themselves, the scholarly pedigree of Justinian's zigzagging

stretches back at least to Eduard Schwartz.[1] And this apparent incoherence became well enough known that by the time W.H.C. Frend wrote *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, a kind of shorthand description could be used.

> The zigzag policy of Justinian towards the Monophysites in the first half of his reign is well known. In this survey we confine ourselves mainly to the efforts made by the sinister and all-powerful monarch to find a formula which would satisfy both Severus and the Chalcedonians, and how this failure led to the establishment of a separate Monophysite hierarchy.[2]

Scholarly discussion of the incoherence of Justinianic religious policy tends to be guided by a few very particular episodes in Justinian's reign. These episodes, which feature Justinian apparently changing position radically in very short order, act as paradigm cases for his policies as a whole. One such case is highlighted by Patrick Gray, who generally tries to treat Justinian's approach as coherent and consistent. In 518, Justinian, then the emperor's nephew, had initially opposed an initiative by a group of Scythian monks to confess that

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[1] 'Iustinian hat nicht, wie es sein Recht und seine Pflicht war, seinse Hand schützend und schirmend über der Kirche gehalten, sondern sie mit der uneingeschränkten Willkür des Despoten behandelt: auf diese These haben Geschichtsschreiber vom Range Diehls und Burys ihre Darstellung aufgebaut und mit Recht Zustimmung gefunden. Aber diese absolutistische Kirchenpolitik steuert einen Zickzackkurs, der zugleich danach verlangt, in einigermaßen begreifbare Zusammenhänge gebracht zu werden, und eine ungeduldige Phantasie zu weltgeschichtlicher Zusammenschau verlockt: abwechselnd wird mit dem Plan des Kaisers, den Okzident wieder in das Imperium hineinzubringen, und seiner Absicht, die sog. Monophysiten zum Anschluß an die Reichskirche zu bewegen, operiert.' Eduard Schwartz, *Vigiliusbriefe. II. Zur Kirchenpolitik Justinians* (München: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1940), 32.

[2] W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement: Chapters in the History of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 255.

'one of the Trinity was crucified.' The monks departed Constantinople to seek support for their confession in Rome, but Justinian had already written the pope in opposition. But within days, Justinian would change positions and speed a letter to Rome urging the pope to welcome the monks and their confession for the peace of the church.

> This about-face is extremely instructive: for one thing, it reveals that Justinian's fundamental agenda was—an emperor could have no other—to restore the peace of the church. It also reveals that Justinian was not concerned about the theological issues per se, since he seems to have been willing to move from one position to its opposite in mere days, and with no sign of a theological justification, simply because he suddenly realized the potential of the monks' initiative. This incident thus shows Justinian to be a pragmatic power broker looking for a deal that would do the job. It would be many years before he found what he was looking for, and by then it would be too late.[3]

In the face of Justinian's apparent flip-flop, Gray preserves a degree of coherence only by making Justinian less concerned with the issues themselves. There is a certain sense to this view—Justinian's desire for unity and his willingness to seek a means of getting there is certainly characteristic of his reign—but, as we will see in chapter two, the instruction one should take from the about-face is not so clear as it might at first seem.

Gray is not alone in his reaction to this case. With reference to the affair mentioned above, Volker Menze offers the following assessment:

> It cannot be excluded that Justinian had become a connoisseur of Christian discourses over the years and tried to force personal persuasions onto his subjects. However, it is more conclusive to regard his treatises first of all as works of a statesman who

[3] Patrick Gray, 'The Legacy of Chalcedon: Christological Problems and Their Significance,' in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian,* edited by Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 228.

> wished to reach a universally accepted dogma for the Christian Oecumene over which he ruled. Within a couple of weeks during the summer of 519, Justinian switched his dogmatic position from opposing the theopaschite formula to strongly encouraging Pope Hormisdas to accept it. Obviously this could mean a speedy personal theological development, but it rather demonstrates Justinian's political far-sightedness that the theopaschite position could be useful. Similarly, political shrewdness should be assumed as the reason why Justinian presented himself as a theologian on the throne.[4]

Menze still finds a unity and coherence, but like Gray he arrives at such coherence by also portraying Justinian as fundamentally unconcerned with the content of any solution and as willing to switch his approach radically.

The theopaschite controversy is not the only locus of such charges against Justinian. The relationship between the condemnation of Origenism and the Three Chapters also inspires complaint, as one follows upon the other and on first sight there is nothing obvious to unify them. The matter is only made worse when one reads the explanation offered in our sources about the connection between these two condemnations. From such an explanation, scholars are almost inevitably led to conclude that Justinian was the victim not only of his own whims but was also drawn about by the will of others. Frend describes the matter in a fashion by no means peculiar to him: 'It is perhaps typical of the twists of Justinian's religious policy that one of the leaders of the defeated Origenists, Theodore Askidas, a Palestinian monk promoted to bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, became his confidant, 'constantly about the person of Justinian', Evagrius states, and that he gradually ousted Pelagius from favour at court.'[5]

More balanced treatments of Justinian's approach may now be found. They tend to focus on the bigger picture, on Justinian's over-

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[4] Volker-Lorenz Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 252.
[5] Frend, 279–80.

all goal of unity in the church, both in the east and in the west, and to recognize the difficulties such a goal entails. A good example of this attitude may be found in the work of Richard Price, who writes:

> Justinian inherited a bitterly divided church in the east, where divisions had been exacerbated by the policy of his predecessors. His initial policy, as expressed in the conference at Constantinople of 532, was to seek reconciliation between the Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians on the basis of a mutual recognition that adherents of the other side were not heretical. Part of the exercise was a development of Chalcedonian Christology in a direction that made clear its loyalty to the teaching of Cyril of Alexandria, to which the non-Chalcedonians professed equal devotion; the formal adoption of theopaschite formulas at Constantinople and at Rome served this purpose. The miaphysites, however, continued to insist that the dyophysite Christology of Chalcedon was irremediably heretical, and as a counter-attack Justinian in his subsequent theological writings, stressed the seriousness of miaphysite error.[6]

I would join with this larger picture approach, as far as it goes, but something is lost when we treat Justinian's policy as coherent only in the most general sense while averring that he deviated in a few major instances.

Recently, Peter N. Bell has offered a new treatment to understand Justinian within his proper political context in his work *Social Conflict in the Age of Justinian: Its Nature, Management, and Mediation*. As one might imagine, the work deals with questions beyond the purely ecclesiastical but religious conflict does play a significant role. Although Bell approaches the matter from a more political and diplomatic perspective, much of what he says is compatible with what will be presented here. For the moment, we should note his objections to the treatment of Justinian's ecclesiastical policy identified above.

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[6] Richard Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 1.40.

> [I]mperial policies have been represented as being all over the place, marking a 'zigzag course'—pragmatic in the worst sense. My hypothesis, by contrast, is that, after Chalcedon, the following themes characterize the generally consistent approach emperors brought to religious conflict resolution.
>
> [...]
>
> If [my] hypotheses are broadly correct, then talk of a 'zigzag' course in imperial policymaking—assuming that means not simply tactical flexibility, but the absence of a constant strategic goal—is nonsense, fuelled by political naivety and not setting that policy in its wider political context.[7]

I concur with this sentiment, although my focus will be placing the 'tactical flexibility' as much within a wider social context as a political one. But Bell's insight into the complexities of the situation stem from his willingness to abandon an idealized view of imperial and ecclesiastical institutions, one with the emperor at the head of a vast, rationalized bureaucracy. Although we too will abandon it, there is value in the idealized view which deserves consideration.

## THE CONTEXT OF IMPERIAL ADMINISTRATION

The eastern Roman empire easily impresses those who study it and its sophisticated legal and bureaucratic systems. This is especially true of the age of Justinian, the emperor responsible for the most important and influential codification and systematization of Roman law. For this reason, it has been tempting to treat the empire of this and later periods almost as a modern state, inasmuch as it appears to possess both ruled based rational-legal authority and the bureaucratic apparatus to carry out directives.[8] Indeed, there is a tradition stretch-

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[7] Peter N. Bell, *Social Conflict in the Age of Justinian: Its Nature, Management, and Mediation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 191, 194.

[8] Concerning rational-legal authority, see Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), Vol. 1, Part 1, Chapter III.

ing back to J. B. Bury to analyze the later Roman empire in just this fashion. In Bury's hands, the emperor becomes an autocrat at the head of a constitutional state.[9] Similar thinking is behind the deliberate use of the term state (*Staat*) in George Ostrogorsky's *magnum opus*, and is reflected in his tendency to focus on institutional structure above all else.[10] This impression is only intensified by the detailed, careful, and important work contained in A.H.M. Jones's *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602*. In Jones's hands, imperial administration was rational and systematic; policy was created through a

[9] 'The constitutional theory which I have delineated is implied in the actual usages from which I have drawn it; but it was never formulated. Constitutional questions did not arise, and no lawyer or historian expounded the basis or the limits of the sovran [sic] power. In fact, the constitution was not differentiated in men's consciousness from the whole body of laws and institutions. They did not analyse the assumptions implied in their practice, and the only idea they entertained, which can be described as a constitutional theory, does not agree, though it may be conciliated, with the theory that I have sketched. If you had asked a Byzantine Emperor what was the basis of his autocracy and by what right he exercised it, he would not have told you that it had been committed to him by the Senate, the army, or the people; he would have said that he derived his sovranty directly from God.' J. B. Bury, *The Constitution of the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), 35–36.

[10] One finds Ostrogorsky treating the emperor as the divinely ordained bureaucrat-in-chief: 'With the disturbances of the crisis the Roman principate went under, and disappeared during Diocletian's absolute rule, out of which the Byzantine autocracy was to develop. The old municipal authorities of the Roman cities were in a condition of grave deterioration. The whole administration of the state was centred in the hands of the Emperor and his administrative officials, and after considerable expansion this civil service was to become the backbone of the Byzantine autocracy. The Roman system of magistrates gave place to the Byzantine bureaucracy. The Emperor was no longer the first magistrate, but an absolute ruler, and his power was derived not so much from earthly authorities as from the will of God.' George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1969), 30.

formal process.[11] Organizational flowcharts would be as helpful to understanding Jones's Roman empire as maps are for a narrative history.[12]

This view of history offers valuable insight into the powerful institutions which shaped the period. It offers the necessary groundwork for anyone who wishes to understand the exercise of power by the emperor. But, as we shall see, it needs to be augmented with modern insights into the social realities in which institutional actors operate. Such realities complicate the picture and help to explain what might otherwise be mystifying behavior on the part of institutional actors. We will return to this social context later.

If the work of Bury, Jones, or even Theodor Mommsen tends to present the reader with ideal schemata of governmental structures, more recent work tends to regard such schemata as somewhat naive. Scholarly focus has long since shifted from such schematic institu-

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[11] See, e.g., A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964), 1.347–57. In one characteristic phrase, Jones typifies his own work: 'Such was the structure of the central administrative machine.' Jones, 373. It would be easy to overstate this case and give a caricature of Jones, since his approach is so consistent. But he does not lack nuance. As Michael Whitby writes; 'Although Jones categorised emperors as possessing absolute powers (321), he accepted some limitations, which might be personal, so that the descendants of Theodosius I could be said to have "reigned rather than ruled the empire" (173), or structural in the form of "powers behind the throne" (341–7). Jones fully recognised that even the most engaged of emperors acted within a particular human context, so that the close entourage was of considerable significance in determining imperial decisions [...]' 'The Role of the Emperor' in *A.H.M. Jones and the Later Roman Empire*, ed. David M. Gwynn (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 89. Such are exceptional cases, however. I will here argue that the informal, human aspects are built into all interactions within the institutions we will examine and thus have a central role in forming the direction actors within those institutions take.

[12] And this is precisely what one finds in John Haldon's 'State Structure and Administration' in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, eds Elizabeth Jeffreys, John Haldon and Robin Cormack (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008): 539–53, for charts see 547.

tional approaches to questions of culture or discourse as the genuine locus of power. Not only this, but even among the more institutionally inclined, there has been an increased emphasis on recognizing the contrast between the ideal forms institutions take and the practical realities in which they operate. Thus, we find H.A. Drake describing the idealized role an emperor can play in historiography:

> In its purest form, the Rational Actor approach presumes that such a figure has complete freedom of action to achieve goals that he or she has articulated through a careful process of rational analysis involving full and objective study of all pertinent information and alternatives. At the same time, it presumes that this central actor is so fully in control of the apparatus of government that a decision once made is as good as implemented. There are no staffs on which to rely, no constituencies to placate, no generals or governors to cajole. By attributing all decisions to one central figure who is always in control and who acts only after carefully weighing all options, the Rational Actor method allows scholars to filter out extraneous details and focus attention on central issues. It is particularly useful for periods like classical antiquity, where little of the documentation for more sophisticated analysis of decision making, such as personal diaries or the minutes of meetings, survives. In the hands of a skilled practitioner, it is a powerful tool. [...]
>
> The problem arises when the method comes to be taken as fact.[13]

One of the consequences of this method can be a tendency to focus on the central figure to a fault. Once all the focus is placed on the emperor, for example, his desire to affect the actions of specific individuals and groups within a larger context becomes obscured. Imperial policies become abstracted from their concrete intent and the inevitable tensions between one decision and another take on the appearance of a contradiction in overall strategy. In short, the more narrowly one looks at an emperor, the more incoherent his policies

[13] H. A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 24–5.

become. The Rational Actor approach Drake criticized only takes us so far in understanding policy under Justinian. To understand Justinian's choices, we will need a model which can take into account the subtleties of his circumstances.

## NETWORKS, SYMBOLS, AND SOCIAL BOUNDARIES

When I speak of Justinian's circumstances, I mean nothing less than his social reality. I mean the people he had to deal with to accomplish his ends, and the people those people had to deal with to fulfill their interests. This is the web of social relations to which all human politics are necessarily tied. The problem with addressing such a context is that it increases in complexity by orders of magnitude with the addition of relatively few actors. Each actor has his or her own concerns, each knows a different subset of people, and each has a unique and imperfect understanding of actors within that subset. To make sense of this complexity requires a model broad and flexible enough to address changing social circumstances, but powerful enough to help explain why those circumstances change. For such a model I have turned to recent advances in social network theory.

### Networked Connections

Network theory has proven especially fruitful over the past few decades. Its antecedents are varied, stretching as far back as the roots of the mathematical field of graph theory in Leonhard Euler's *Seven Bridges of Königsberg* and the early twentieth-century work of psychiatrist Jacob Moreno in producing 'sociograms.' At the heart of network theory is the idea that the specific way connections between elements or 'nodes' in a networked system are structured will shape the behavior of the network as a whole as well the individual nodes within it. These structures can be analyzed, described mathematically, and applied with predictive results to subjects as varied as ecosystems, markets, societies, epidemics, and (perhaps unsurprisingly to the modern reader) the Internet.[14] The limited evidence available to

[14] For a broad overview of network theory, its associated mathematics, and its varied applications, see Albert-László Barabási, *Linked: The New Science*

the late-antique historian makes it impractical to attempt to describe social networks of the period in any sort of comprehensive or mathematical form, but, as I hope this work demonstrates, this does not preclude the profitable use of network concepts in a late-antique context.[15]

Social network theory begins with some straightforward insights. The first of these insights is that human interaction occurs within a networked context. If I pass a message from my friend Andrew to another friend, Ben, I have participated in a network by acting as a bridge between two others. This is obvious enough, but it has some profound implications. In this simple example, we can already see that Ben depends on me to attain information from Andrew. Likewise, Andrew depends on me to relay the information. My feelings or interests toward one or the other may impact how or even whether I deliver that information. The structure of these connections determines the relative effects of my action, leading my individual kindness, cruelty, capability, or incompetence to have direct bearing on the outcome of the interaction. An agent who holds a position between two otherwise unconnected actors has sway over both by virtue of that position. But if we add another agent, Catherine, the dynamics may change considerably. For example, if I know Andrew and Ben may also use Catherine as a conduit for information, I may be encouraged to be more honest in how I relay the message, due to the greater risk of being shown untrustworthy.

As one might imagine in a theory used to describe social structures, the particulars of any given node or agent are less important to this model than the connections that agent has to others and, therefore, the agent's placement within the larger structure. Position is used as a technical term used to describe this placement.

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*of Networks* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 2002).

[15] That being said, Adam M. Schor comes very close to accomplishing just this in his 2011 work, *Theodoret's People: Social Networks and Religious Conflict in Late Roman Syria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011). The wealth of epistolary evidence on which he relies is one of the few late-antique sources on which one might hope to build the kinds of network descriptions which he constructs.

> Positions are a key idea in whole networks. Positions can be social defined statuses, such as father, son, president, or positions can be defined by the observer through network analysis. Both are often called "roles." Instituted or socially defined statuses themselves form networks; they are generally elaborated upon by informal networks. Positions are sometimes arranged in a hierarchy or a tree. The rules for these hierarchies are generally created by the social system in which they are embedded, though further informal interaction can alter the hierarchies and the rules.[16]

A related concept derived from the networked quality of human social relations is that of 'structural holes.' We may conceive of human society as emerging from an aggregate of smaller, more closely related networks of relationships. If we begin to model such relationships as they develop, we find that they constitute a pattern of highly connected hubs at the center of relatively dense groups, along with connectors between those hubs which can serve to bridge the otherwise disconnected groups.[17] Because the subgroups within such networks would be otherwise unconnected, the position which bridges them is referred to as a structural hole. The role of individuals who bridge structural holes will prove one of the most important to the present work. As we indicated above, an individual occupying such a position within a network will control the flow of information between the two subgroups he or she unites. This individual will necessarily have an informal degree of influence over both subgroups which stands absolute of any formal position he might otherwise occupy in associated formal organizations. For this reason, such an individual may act either to support or to disrupt the organizational authority of hierarchical institutions in which he is a part and his actions may have an effect disproportionate to what one might expect given only his formal position.

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[16] Charles Kadushin, *Understanding Social Networks: Concepts, Theories and Findings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 42.

[17] For how this structure emerges from the organic growth of networks see Barabási, 55–64.

The potential influence given by a structural hole may be described in terms of 'betweenness.' Agents often owe their ability to affect events to a high degree of betweenness, which itself is a more concrete way of thinking about the sometimes vague notion of 'influence.' Charles Kadushin defines the term thus:

> *Betweenness* is a measure of a position that serves as a switching point or a gateway between different parts of a network. [...] Persons who have a high betweenness rank are those who mediate between different parts of a network; one has to go through them to get to other positions. A person can be an important bridge between parts of a network yet be directly connected to only a few persons.[18]

Position and betweenness can be a function of formal, hierarchical networks as well as informal, personal networks. They can exist equally in a modern, computerized economy or in a group of ancient villages which trade with one another and the broader region. What matters is that it is the structure of the network which dictates the flow of information.

## Embeddedness

The relationship between formal structures and the informal connections which run both parallel and perpendicular to those structures is an important to emphasize. This relationship is described with the term 'embeddedness.' A schematic and formal approach to the history of institutions can tell us much about how they function in theory, but it misses out on an important part of the human context in which institutions operate. Embeddedness was a developed as a concept by Karl Polanyi in his efforts to describe the contingent qualities of market capitalism in the nineteenth century.[19] In his introduction to Polanyi's *The Great Transformation*, Fred Block offers this helpful definition of the concept:

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[18] Kadushin, 205–206.

[19] See Karl Polanyi, The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time, 2nd. ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), passim.

> The term "embeddedness" expresses the idea that the economy is not autonomous, as it must be in economic theory, but subordinated to politics, religion, and social relations. Polanyi's use of the term suggests more than the now familiar idea that market transactions depend on trust, mutual understanding, and legal enforcement of contracts. He uses the concept to highlight how radical a break the classical economists, especially Malthus and Ricardo, made with previous thinkers. Instead of the historically normal pattern of subordinating the economy to society, their system of self-regulating markets required subordinating society to the logic of the market: He writes in Part One: "Ultimately that is why the control of the economic system by the market is of overwhelming consequence to the whole organization of society: it means no less than the running of society as an adjunct to the market. Instead of the economy being embedded in social relations, social relations are embedded in the economic system.[20]

Polanyi's influence has not been limited to the field of economics and economic history, however. Through the influence of Mark Granovetter, embeddedness has found its way into sociology and had a deep influence on social network theory.[21] The term comes to the present work chiefly through this route. Here, embeddedness should be understood as referring to the complex of formal and informal social relations and boundaries in and through which all formal institutions necessarily operate. Without this context, the behavior of both institutions and the agents within them will remain hopelessly obscure.

## Symbolic and Social Boundaries

The properties of networked structures are useful in describing why and how agents interact within and across boundaries, but in them-

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[20] Polanyi, iv.

[21] See Mark Granovetter, 'Economic Actions and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness,' *American Journal of Sociology* 91 (November 1985): 481–510.

selves networks do not explain how those boundaries are consciously understood and modified by agents. They do much to explain how agents engage and relate to one another, but additional tools are required to explain why they do so, especially within the context of social conflict. For such a detailed understanding, recent work on symbolic and social boundaries has proven useful.

The categorization of other human beings as belonging to in- and out-groups seems to be a hardwired facet of human nature.[22] Conflict between in- and out-groups is inevitable, inasmuch as they compete for the same material and social resources. This is doubly so when the legitimacy of one group precludes the legitimacy of the other. In such a context, the conflict becomes necessary to the maintenance of group identity and cohesion. As constant as this reality is in human history, we must also recognize that the construction of specific in- and out-groups is a historically contingent process. To understand one facet of how these groups come to be it is helpful to make a distinction between symbolic and social boundaries. Michèle Lamont and Virág Volnár offer a clear and concise definition of these terms:

> Symbolic boundaries are conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space. They are tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and come to agree upon definitions of reality. Examining them allows us to capture the dynamic dimensions of social relations, as groups compete in the production, diffusion, and institutionalization of alternative systems and principles of classifications. Symbolic boundaries also separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity and group membership (Epstein 1992, p. 232). They are an essential medium through which people acquire status and monopolize resources.

[22] Steven Pinker, *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature* (New York: Viking, 2002), 39. See also Robert M. Sapolsky, *Behave: The Biology of Humans at Our Best and Worst* (New York: Penguin, 2017), 388–424.

> Social boundaries are objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and nonmaterial) and social opportunities. They are also revealed in stable behavioral patterns of association, as manifested in connubiality and commensality. Only when symbolic boundaries are widely agreed upon can they take on a constraining character and pattern social interaction in important ways. Moreover, only then can they become social boundaries, i.e., translate, for instance, into identifiable patterns of social exclusion or class and racial segregation (e.g., Massey & Denton 1993, Stinchcombe 1995, Logan et al. 1996). But symbolic and social boundaries should be viewed as equally real: The former exist at the intersubjective level whereas the latter manifest themselves as groupings of individuals. At the causal level, symbolic boundaries can be thought of as a necessary but insufficient condition for the existence of social boundaries (Lamont 1992, Ch. 7).[23]

In a modern context, the notion of symbolic boundaries which are 'widely agreed upon [...] tak[ing] on a constraining character and pattern[ing] social interaction' may immediately invoke categories of race, class, ideology, party, and a host of other distinctions. But those familiar with Late Antiquity will recognize how this can be applied to the factions formed in relation to religious controversy. In this period, adherence to or rejection of a given council draws boundaries between individuals and groups of people. Over time, if controversy over a given council persists, it can determine one's legal status, as well as his access to material, political, cultural, and social goods. It becomes a 'social fact,' in the Durkheimian sense. The negotiation of such symbolic boundaries, therefore, is of the utmost importance and represents one of the primary fields of competition between groups in the periods. The marginalization of one's in-group under such circumstances can be costly and even dangerous.

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[23] Michele Lamont and Virág Molnár, 'The Study of Boundaries Across the Social Sciences,' *Annual Review of Sociobiology* 28 (2002), 169.

## An Overview of This Work

It is possible to account for the apparent incoherence of this period. To do so, we must create an account which includes and appreciates the embeddedness of imperial policy within a social context having three key features. First, we must bear in mind the shifting interests and information available to the individual agents through and over whom the emperor hoped to project influence. The circumstances of the sixth century are complex precisely because they are constantly changing. Second, we must identify the shifting and hardening symbolic and social boundaries established through the interactions of these same, competing agents. Third, we must recognize that all agents operate in a condition of ignorance. They hold only a limited knowledge of the motives of other and have a limited grasp on what others know. If this were not complicated enough, an agent attempting to account for the behavior of a single individual must consider the influence of still others on that individual who might be two or three degrees removed from the agent. This fact can make it difficult even for agents who operate within the same social and historical context to understand and predict one another's actions. Once this social context is accounted for, Justinian's approach begins to appear as that of a rational actor, having incomplete information, with consistent policy goals, working within inconsistent constraints to achieve those goals.

The period of 520–553 is a period when clear symbolic boundaries are established between Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian. We cannot say this is the case before, because the boundaries of what it means to be either a Chalcedonian or an anti-Chalcedonian are still contested and remain negotiable at least until the *libellus* of Hormisdas.[24] Justinian enters a situation where matters still seem to be in flux. In this context the networked features whereby information (that is, symbol sets) are transmitted are especially important, since it not always clear who is on which side and even what the sides are can be uncertain. Justinian has a consistent approach and aim: pursue a unity that formally upholds Cyril and Chalcedon and per-

[24] Menze, 58–105.

suades both Rome and the east to offer a positive assent. Yet neither his formal position nor his informal influence mean he can unilaterally determine the options open to him. Other actors are able to shape the options available to Justinian and this fact has a profound impact on the concrete form imperial policy will take. In short, although Justinian consistently chooses the option closest to the aims and approach mentioned above, he has no choice over the options actually available to him. Imperial religious policy is necessary circumscribed by the social context in which it is embedded.

In the first two chapters, we see the negotiation of a common symbolic boundary with Rome and how much this negotiation depends upon the network position of key nodes of information transmission. In the third chapter, we find an attempt to negotiate similarly with the anti-Chalcedonians. To do this, the emperor places key individuals in direct contact with one another to facilitate cooperation and common understanding. There is blow-back with Pope Agapetus's unplanned arrival, however, since he has a much more rigid understanding of these boundaries. Indeed, his presence and the deposition of Anthimus necessitate the definition and hardening of boundaries in Constantinople. 536 is the moment symbolic boundaries harden completely and social boundaries follow shortly thereafter. The fourth chapter sees Justinian's efforts in this new environment. He would like to seek a solution, such as the Three Chapters condemnation (and the concomitant condemnation of Origen), but it is to no avail because of the social boundaries now present. Within this context, Justinian's efforts through the *apocrisarius* Pelagius becomes a matter of power-projection. Pelagius, in his travels about the Mediterranean, is now policing social boundaries, that is the 'objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and nonmaterial) and social opportunities.'[25] The fifth chapter emphasizes the consequences of the unpredictability of agents to one another. Justinian had every reason to expect Vigilius would support his Three Chapters policy. But emperor's inability to account for

[25] Lamont and Molnár, 168.

Vigilius's own circumstances meant that the effort to secure papal consent placed the pope in a double bind, eliminating his ability to be an effective asset.

## A NOTE ON NOMENCLATURE

Nomenclature applied to those who opposed the Council of Chalcedon in this period remains a potentially thorny issue. The motives of those who reject the old term 'monophysite' are worthy and their criticism is solid.[26] But this leaves us in search of a fairer, more accurate, and still useful term. Volker Menze avoids the term 'miaphysite' as his 'book deals mainly with historical and not Christological issues.'[27] This present study follows the same reasoning, but I cannot on these grounds join in his rejection of the term 'anti-Chalcedonian.' Menze's case against the term is that it 'gives the impression that the later so-called Syrian Orthodox defined themselves and established their church against this council'.[28] Unlike Menze's work, however, we do not here take the Syrian Orthodox as our subject, so the risk he identifies is greatly mitigated. Regardless, a similar criticism might be applied to the seemingly neutral and unmodified term 'Chalcedonian.' Were we to base our present terminology on how the various factions of the period self-identify, we would be forced to describe multiple groups with the label 'orthodox.' No one in the period, not even the Chalcedonians, truly thought of themselves as being defined by support of or opposition to that council. For its supporters, Chalcedon merely affirmed the faith held every-

[26] See D. Winkler, 'Miaphysitism: A New Term for Use in the History of Dogma and in Ecumenical Theology,' *The Harp* 10 (1997): 33–40.

[27] Menze, 2.

[28] He also adds that 'it again gives dogmatic discussions more weight than they should have.' *Ibid.* 2–3. I certainly agree that this could be a risk, but it isn't clear how the term 'non-Chalcedonian' avoids this risk. We cannot avoid using either the 'non-' or 'anti-' prefix inasmuch as it's the 'Chalcedonian' part of the label that introduces them. Of course, although we are both dealing in historical matters, perhaps the risk of introducing dogmatic discussions is not so great a danger to ecclesiastical history that we ought to go to great lengths to avoid it.

where and by all since the time of the apostles. For its detractors, Chalcedon denied the faith once delivered to the saints. Both parties reckoned themselves the defenders of the apostolic deposit, and councils were only defensible as conservative reactions to heretical innovations. In such a context, if 'Chalcedonian' means anything other than 'Nicene' or 'Apostolic,' its use is just as delegitimating as 'anti-Chalcedonian,' 'non-Chalcedonian,' or even 'monophysite.' It is unhelpful, therefore, to rely on self-identification among the period's factions (or their descendants) as the standard by which to judge such terms.

The standard used here will be one of respectful practicality. I am not interested in using language which would attack the legitimacy of any group. Indeed, a key idea which will show up in this work is that language can be and often is employed by polemicists to create and police boundaries between groups of people. The labels I do employ are used out of the necessity to identify different groups of actors in the historical context we are here discussing. In this case, both sides agree at the time that Chalcedon is the chief point of contention. While neither formally identifies themselves in relation to that council, their actions relative toward one another justified by support or opposition thereto. Thus, use of the terms 'Chalcedonian' and 'anti-Chalcedonian' here are merely intended as practical descriptors of each group of actors based upon the actions and dispositions which most clearly delineate them.

# Chapter 1.
# Resolving the Acacian Schism

Policies come from people and a present set of circumstances; they are not formed in a vacuum. Policy is the means by which institutions attempt to shape the social reality in which they are embedded. To understand the apparent inconsistencies in Justinian's religious policy we must first understand the context from which those policies were formed. This will ultimately show how the position of specific agents and groups would shape policy. We are fortunate to have available an incident at the inception of the emperor Justin's reign that will clarify the connection between agents in Rome and Constantinople. Justin came to power during a period when communion was severed between the two cities. Given the new emperor's Chalcedonian loyalties, it would be easy to regard the reunion which took place between Rome and Constantinople as a foregone conclusion, but this was not the case. An end to the Acacian Schism was achieved through the careful manipulation of the formal and informal connections between the representatives of Rome and Constantinople during the negotiations.

## The Acacian Schism under Anastasius: An Uncomfortable Conversation

The emperor Anastasius inherited a difficult set of circumstances from his predecessor, Zeno. The doctrinal controversies of the fifth century had intensified with each successive attempt to bring about consensus, compromise, or at least clear victory for one side. By the time Zeno began his reign, the councils of Ephesus, Second Ephesus, and Chalcedon had already divided the *oikoumene*. There seemed

little hope that another council could heal divisions rent by councils. Yet strife among Chalcedonians and anti-Chalcedonians of all stripes threatened an emperor's peace, as the short reign of the reckless Basiliscus would show. To avoid deepening strife, Zeno searched for some practical means to secure peace in his time.

Zeno's dilemma was clear and would persist well after his time. The Council of Chalcedon could not be rejected outright. The bishops of Rome held Chalcedon as the very faith of the apostles, for at Chalcedon the so-called *Tome* of Pope Leo, once excluded altogether from the Second Council of Ephesus, had been formally declared the faith of Peter and the Apostles.[1] The patriarchs of Constantinople and Jerusalem also had good reason to favor the Council of Chalcedon, whose canons ensured their positions among the five great patriarchal sees, later termed the Pentarchy.[2] What is more, both patri-

[1] 'After reading of the aforesaid letter the most devout bishops exclaimed: "This is the faith of the fathers. This is the faith of the apostles. We all believe accordingly. We orthodox believe accordingly. Anathema to him who does not believe accordingly! Peter has uttered through Leo. The apostles taught accordingly. Leo taught piously and truly. Cyril taught accordingly. Eternal is the memory of Cyril. Leo and Cyril taught the same. Leo and Cyril taught accordingly. Anathema to him who does not believe accordingly! This is the true faith. We orthodox think accordingly. This is the faith of the fathers. Why was this not read out at Ephesus. Dioscorus concealed it."' *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, trans. R. Price and M. Gaddis (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 2.24–25.

[2] The patriarch of Constantinople could never forget the rank and prestige granted by Canon 28: 'The fathers appropriately accorded privileges to the see of Senior Rome because it was the imperial city and, moved by the same intent, the 150 most God-beloved bishops assigned equal privileges to the most holy see of New Rome, rightly judging that the city which is honoured with the imperial government and the senate and enjoys equal privileges with imperial Senior Rome should be exalted like her in ecclesiastical affairs as well, being second after her, with the consequence that the metropolitans alone of the Pontic, Asian and Thracian dioceses, and also the bishops from the aforesaid dioceses in barbarian lands, are to be consecrated by the aforesaid most holy see of the most holy church at Constantinople, while, of course, each metropolitan of the aforesaid dioceses, to-

archs knew that rejection of Chalcedon would produce opposition from local monastic communities. The patriarch of Constantinople could also anticipate the ire of his city's people. Neither could the Council of Chalcedon be openly avowed without a price. Many of the richest parts of the Empire, especially Egypt, Syria, and the east, had rejected the council as a betrayal of Cyril of Alexandria's legacy. One gets a sense of the tenor of this age seeing monks and bishops like Philoxenus of Mabbög rise to prominence through vociferous opposition to a council regarded throughout the west as ecumenical. Facing two equally distasteful options, the emperor Zeno sought after a third.

To address this dilemma, Zeno crafted what seemed a clever policy for a time, although it would ultimately run afoul of the very problems he had sought to avoid. In 482, the emperor wrote a letter, drafted on the advice of the Patriarch Acacius of Constantinople, to the bishops, clergy, monks and laity of Alexandria, Egypt, Libya and Pentapolis, a letter known as the *Henotikon*, or *Edict of Unity*. The *Henotikon* is a document consciously constructed either to satisfy or at least to avoid offending as many parties as possible. Zeno bookends the letter with declarations of loyalty to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan confession.[3] This was the common ground of

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gether with the bishops of the province, ordains the bishops of the province, as is laid down in the divine canons.' Price, *Chalcedon*, 3.76. Roman criticism of the Canon 28 notwithstanding, the important point for the moment is the motivation the canon offered to the patriarch of Constantinople to support, or at least not to oppose, the council. Jerusalem's patriarch had like motivation to maintain the council, for although Chalcedon did not rank Jerusalem about any other patriarchate, at least it numbered Jerusalem among the five patriarchs.

[3] After the salutation, he begins, 'We know that the origin and composition, the power and irresistible shield of our empire is the sole correct and truthful faith, which through divine guidance the 318 holy Fathers assembled at Constantinople confirmed it.' Evagrius Scholasticus, *EH*, III.14; trans. Michael Whitby, *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 147. He concludes thus: 'Accordingly, join with the Church, the spiritual mother, enjoying the

orthodox Christianity upon which all parties could unite, or so he hoped. Yet he recognized that this alone would be insufficient. The bulk of the letter takes into account the developments which had occurred since the Council of Constantinople. It anathematizes Nestorius and Eutyches, lionizes Cyril of Alexandria, and confesses the Virgin Mary as Theotokos. All of this, including the rejection of Eutyches, represents a mainstream position acceptable both to those who accept and who deny the authority of Chalcedon.

Offering such an irenic position seemed to have been well calculated. The sees of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem all accepted it, although in some cases not immediately.[4] Yet despite its early victories, the *Henotikon* would prove a sign of contradiction. Most of the document carefully avoids mention of Chalcedon, but the issue had to be addressed. To avoid offense to either Chalcedonian or anti-Chalcedonian, Zeno chose highly ambiguous language.

> We have written this not in order to make innovations in the faith but so as to reassure you. But we anathematize anyone who has thought, or thinks, any other opinion, either now or at any time, whether at Chalcedon or at any Synod whatsoever, and especially the aforesaid Nestorius and Eutyches and those who hold their opinions.[5]

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same sacred communion in it as us, in accordance with the aforesaid one and only definition of the faith of the 318 holy Fathers. For our all-holy mother the Church is eagerly awaiting to embrace you as legitimate sons, and yearns to hear your sweet and long-awaited voice. Therefore hasten yourselves, for in doing this you will both attract to yourselves the goodwill of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ and be praised by our imperial rule.' *EH*, III.14; trans. *ibid*. 149.

[4] F. K. Haarer, *Anastasius I: Politics and Empire in the Late Roman World* (Cambridge: Francis Cairns, 2006), 124. Acceptance in Alexandria had to await the elevation of Peter Mongus as bishop of Alexandria. Likewise in Antioch, Calandion would be deposed to be replaced with Peter the Fuller who would accept the Henotikon. See also *EH*, III.15–16.

[5] *EH*, III.14; trans. Whitby, 149.

The strategy here is fairly clear. A Chalcedonian sympathetic to the cause of unity could potentially accept the above passage. From the Chalcedonian perspective, Chalcedon had added nothing to the faith but had only reaffirmed the unanimous witness of the fathers while anathematizing heretical novelties, such as the views of Eutyches. On this reading, 'any Synod whatsoever' would exonerate the *Henotikon* from singling out Chalcedon while the condemnation of Eutyches and the affirmation of Cyril would be taken as a confirmation of Chalcedon's intent. A sympathetic anti-Chalcedonian could of course take the inverse reading. Although Chalcedon is not itself condemned, the anathematization of Nestorius and anyone who believes contrary to Cyril, which is to say anything contrary to the apostolic faith, gives some assurance that Chalcedon is not used to advance Nestorian heresy. Thus read, the phrase 'whether at Chalcedon' becomes a tacit admission that the council *could* be read as supporting the enemies of Cyril. The studied ambiguity of this excerpt stands in sharp relief with the self-consciously Cyrillian contents of the letter. The practical effect of the letter was to treat Chalcedon as a disciplinary council held to condemn Nestorius and Eutyches, whom Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian alike reviled.[6] 'It was,' Frend says, 'a masterstroke of Acacian diplomacy. [...] It came as near as any other attempt before or afterwards to uniting the theologies of the great churches in the east.'[7]

It was, hindsight shows, an utter failure. The reading offered above, it must be admitted, is very sympathetic. The only party likely to maintain such a reading is one which values unity above all else. But this was not the chief value of most parties involved. The anti-Chalcedonians of Zeno's time were only willing to offer the *Henotikon* the most reluctant support. Peter Mongus, the bishop of Alexandria, was forced to explain publicly that he accepted communion with Constantinople only because he understood the *Henotikon's* endorsement of Cyril's twelve chapters and anathematization of Nestorius, Eutyches, and 'every other who would assert the duality of the

[6] Frend, 179.
[7] *Ibid.*

Natures in Christ' as a nullification of Chalcedon. That this was contrary to the actual intent of the *Henotikon*, which was rather to ignore than to nullify Chalcedon, was obvious to many around Peter. 'When these events had taken place, only a few monks joined with Peter [...]'[8] Yet this was a polite reception compared to how the *Henotikon* fared elsewhere. It was accepted in Antioch only after the deposition of the Patriarch Calandion, who had rejected it as anti-Chalcedonian. Calandion was removed for his collaboration with the habitual turncoat Illus, and replaced in 484 with the sometime Patriarch, Peter the Fuller. Only by such means would the *Henotikon* be accepted in Antioch.

But the *Henotikon* had the most unfortunate consequences for the relationship between Constantinople and Rome. This relationship was already troubled in part, we should note, by failures in communication, but also by mutual suspicion. As Frend succinctly explains:

> Rome meantime had been caught off balance. As we have noted, in the autumn of 477 Acacius had informed Pope Simplicius of the evil ways of Peter Mongus and confirmed his support for the Chalcedonian Timothy in fulsome terms. He had prevailed on Rome to excommunicate Peter [...] A year later, however, Simplicius may have been beginning to suspect that Acacius was coming round to accepting Peter, for he demanded the latter's removal 'far off'. He was not prepared to tolerate him even in his original office as a deacon. [...] [A]nd now Acacius' seemingly complete volte-face with his recognition of Peter Mongus appeared like an act of gross treachery. 'Even if he [Peter] were now orthodox, he should be admitted to lay communion only.' This was written on 15 July 482, a fortnight before the Henotikon. The papacy, however, was out of touch with the situation

[8] *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor: Church and War in Late Antiquity*, trans. Geoffrey Greatrex (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), VI.2.c.

> and it is not known how the emperor's decree was received in Rome.[9]

This suspicion would not be helped during Pope Simplicius's life since he died in early 483. Nor would the issues of communication be addressed. Simplicius had complained of Constantinople's failure to keep him apprised of developments in the east.[10] It cannot have helped suspicions when his successor, Felix III, was informed of recent events, not through official correspondences from Constantinople, but by the Akoimetoi. Failure to communicate breeds suspicion and undermine trust. When the Patriarch Acacius continued to remain out of touch, Pope Felix sent a delegation to Constantinople. It is little surprise, therefore, that all these suspicions should seem justified when one of the papal legates took communion, only to hear the names of Dioscorus and Peter Mongus commemorated in the diptychs. Upon the delegation's return, Acacius was excommunicated by a synod in Rome.[11] The Acacian Schism, as it would be known, would last from 484 until 519. The fruit of Acacian diplomacy was suspicion and the sharpest division between Rome and Constantinople until the ninth century.

This Acacian Schism remained the dominant factor in Romano-Constantinopolitan relations throughout the reign of the emperor Anastasius. During this time, the state of relations did not remain static but continued to deteriorate. The final years of the Acacian Schism saw relations between Rome and Constantinople at the end of Anastasius's reign finally and completely collapse. These years are particularly interesting for anyone wanting to examine negotiations between the emperor and prominent bishops as they were actually practiced in Late Antiquity. Much occurs in this period, as in all periods, behind closed doors. Agreements occurring within the ritualized setting of a council can be placed in minutes as a *fait accompli* and details often suffer more confusion and manipulation once they have been subjected to chroniclers or historians. But the record of

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[9] Frend, 181–82.
[10] *Ibid.*, 182 fn. 4.
[11] *Ibid.,* 182 fn. 6.

this negotiation comes down to us chiefly in the form of letters. Letters are never frank and open conversations, and they are borne by those who likely have more information to convey, yet in them we have better information on the course of a negotiation than we might hope from documents such as council acts.

The letters passed back and forth between Rome and Constantinople in this period provide a vivid record of the collapse in Romano-Constantinopolitan relations. Most importantly for our purposes, they provide a clear contrast with those from the early reign of Justin. Given the souring of trust between the imperial court and the papacy so far, it is perhaps unsurprising that relations should deteriorate to this point. This is particularly true in light of a series of events which quickly prompted a flurry of communication between Old and New Rome.

## VITALIAN AS CHAMPION OF ORTHODOXY

In 513, Vitalian, a *comes* in Thrace, began a revolt against the emperor Anastasius. Vitalian led his *foederati* against Hypatius, *magister militum* of Thrace, on the very traditional grounds that Hypatius and the emperor had failed to give the *foederati* supplies owed to them.[12] This revolt would persist through the remainder of Anastasius's reign. Vitalian would prove an unusually successful rebel in the sense that he survived, but even more in that he was occasionally able to extort concessions from the emperor. The details of the rebellion need not concern us here, but for one important aspect.[13] Vitalian justified his as an orthodox rebellion, supporting this claim by pressing the emperor into new negotiations with Rome. Scholarly reaction to this justification has been mixed but may be divided into two general camps of those who would take it on face value and those who would reject it as a cynical manipulation of Balkan religious sentiments toward political ends. The dichotomy between Vitalian as

[12] *PLRE* 2.1172.

[13] For details on the successes and failures of Vitalian's rebellion, see Bury, 1.447–452 for the most readable account; *PLRE* 2.1171–1176 for helpful references; and Haarer, 164–179 for a recent treatment.

champion of orthodox and Vitalian as champion of his own ambition deserves consideration, as it provides a context for much of what follows.

## Scholarly Perspectives on Vitalian's Motives

Relatively little work has been done on Vitalian himself, since he is most often discussed in the context the more prominent figures of the sixth century. In more general works, his entire career may be covered with scarcely more than a sentence. Even so, such a sentence often reveals much about its author.[14] Therefore, along with the more direct treatments of Vitalian's motivations, we will take a look at some of the more prominent declarations on the matter.

Before doing so, however, I would like to take a moment to address the importance of the topic. First, motive always forms a basic datum of historical narrative, one on which larger causal explanations are built. We know that Vitalian launched a rebellion but understanding conflict within his broader historical context is necessarily built on understanding the causes of seemingly minor events like these. Second, it will become apparent that the explanations given thus far cannot be easily reconciled with the direction scholarship has taken. As old dichotomies between politics and theology have been collapsed for some of the more prominent figures and events in Late Antiquity, it becomes necessary also to reexamine relatively more obscure points in the light of new understanding. Third, understanding human motivation has an intrinsic interest and Vitalian provides an important case study both in motives and how scholars assign them.

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[14] Perhaps the most interesting example of this comes from Edward Gibbon who takes three sentences to cover Vitalian's 'pious rebellion' carried out with an army chiefly comprised of idolaters. In the final of these he concludes with typical declarative irony: 'And such was the event of the first of the religious wars which have been waged in the name and by the disciples, of the God of peace.' *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. II, Chapter 47.

Of the older scholarship, the views of J. B. Bury and Peter Charanis are foundational. Bury presents Vitalian as an opportunist, but a predictable one. Anastasius's religious and economic policies had made him few friends, particularly in the Balkans, and therefore 'it was not surprising that an ambitious soldier should conceive the hope of dethroning him.' [15] Even Hypatius's failure to deliver supplies to the *foederati* is treated as a 'pretext' for Vitalian's revolt.[16] So it is little surprise that Bury should regard the *comes* as merely, 'pretend[ing] to represent the religious discontent, to voice orthodox indignation at the new form of the Trisagion, and to champion the cause of the deposed Patriarch Flavian who was his personal friend, and the deposed Patriarch Macedonius.' [17]

Bury's views concerning Vitalian's motives are shared by others. Charanis presents Vitalian thus: 'Hoping to utilize the religious discontent of the western provinces and of the capital, he declared in favor of the deposed bishops and made himself the champion of orthodoxy.'[18] Although he notes Vitalian's connections to the Patriarch Flavian and the pro-Chalcedonian Scythian monks, whom we shall meet again, these are treated as secondary in importance, for 'the real object of his revolt was nothing less than the deposition of Anastasius and his own elevation to the imperial throne.'[19] Charanis arrived at this explanation because it is offered by the sources themselves, which often attribute Vitalian's rebellion to opportunism.[20]

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[15] Bury, 1.447.

[16] *Ibid.*, 1.448.

[17] *Ibid*.

[18] Peter Charanis, *Church and State in the Later Roman Empire: The Religious Policy of Anastasius the First, 491–518* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1939), 52.

[19] *Ibid*.

[20] Charanis does not himself argue for the point. He states it and footnotes comments made in the sources (sources which we shall discuss below) and moves on, regarding the testimony of ancient commentators as sufficient to prove the point. Doubtless he felt no need to belabor the matter, his focus being chiefly on the policies of Anastasius rather than the psychological state of Vitalian.

Alexander Vasiliev carried the thesis of Vitalian's opportunism into the second half of the twentieth century. Because his focus is on the reign of Justin, Vasiliev's discussion of Vitalian is limited, but it is explicit. Vitalian was 'posing as a ardent champion of orthodoxy and an energetic opponent of the monophysite policy of Anastasius'.[21] He did so because the areas under his control were themselves pro-Chalcedonian. 'But his orthodox championship was only the outward pretext for the revolt. His real object was to dethrone Anastasius and become emperor himself.' [22] One of the few writers from the twentieth century to display any ambivalence on the question is Patrick Gray, who linked Vitalian's Chalcedonianism to his Balkan extraction, but did not find it necessary to link this to any charges of opportunism.[23]

Insistence on Vitalian's cynical opportunism has only increased with the new century. In her careful study of the reign of Anastasius I, Fiona K. Haarer acknowledged that the sources record the both religious and fiscal justification for Vitalian's revolt.[24] Citing Bury, Charanis, and Vasiliev, however, Haarer is able to pronounce upon Vitalian's motives with some certainty. '[T]hat [Vitalian] simply manipulated the religious discord and utilised the dissatisfaction of the foederati under his care and genuine poverty of the rural population in order to bring about the deposition of Anastasius seems indisputable.' [25] For Haarer, Vitalian's later behavior only reaffirms this conclusion.

> Vitalian remained an exile until after the death of Anastasius in 518; but he was recalled to Constantinople under Justin's edict granting pardon to all those banished by his predecessor. If there was any doubt about the sincerity of Vitalian's supposed mo-

[21] A. A. Vasiliev, *Justin the First: An Introduction to the Epoch of Justinian the Great* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950), 108.
[22] Vasiliev, 109.
[23] Patrick Gray, *The Defense of Chalcedon in the East (451–553),* Studies in the History of Christian Thought XX (E.J. Brill: Leiden, 1979), 41–2.
[24] Haarer, 165.
[25] Haarer, 165 fn. 235.

> tives for revolt, it is clear from his behaviour in the early years of Justin's reign that ambition for imperial power had been his ultimate goal. In his negotiations with Anastasius, apart from the first settlement when he demanded the removal of the unpopular Hypatius from office, the financial claims of the foederati are entirely ignored. Instead, Vitalian focused on the theological issues, and it was the promotion of strict orthodoxy which was his main concern under Justin. On his recall from exile, he demanded assurances of faith from both Justin and Justinian. The popularity he gained from his violent persecution of the monophysites made him a dangerous rival to Justinian, who contrived to murder him in July, 520. As under Anastasius, Vitalian's ambition was only very thinly cloaked by his championship of orthodoxy.[26]

This view is not without some difficulties. First, the financial claims of the foederati were hardly ignored. Vitalian's victories in the field made it possible for him to pay his troops directly. In his negotiations with Anastasius, Vitalian was able to secure 9,000 pounds of gold in exchange for the captured Hypatius, as well as Hypatius's newly vacant position as *magister militum*.[27] Together, these are precisely the actions we would expect Vitalian to take to address the fiscal concerns of the *foederati*. It is difficult to see what more Vitalian could have done if paying the *foederati* and taking the office of one who had failed to pay them was insufficient. Second, with the financial concerns of the *foederati* addressed, Vitalian did indeed shift his focus to religious matters. But here, continued religious concerns and even the fact of his assassination are held up as evidence of Vitalian's cynicism toward religion. These events can be read as the deeds of a calculating and power-hungry individual, but only if one begins with the assumption that ambition was his only possible motivation.

Volker L. Menze's recent *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church* offers some discussion of Vitalian's motives as well. Much of this discussion, however, falls within a broader discus-

[26] Haarer, 179.
[27] Bury, 1.450.

sion of the emperor Justin's Chalcedonianism, a topic we will consider shortly. For the moment it is enough to note that Menze says Vitalian 'marched against the city several times between 513 and 517 under the pretext that Anastasius was not orthodox.'[28]

The consensus on Vitalian's cynical opportunism seems overwhelming. Before turning to the sources to consider whether it is justified, however, one final work deserves consideration, if for no other reason than the fact that it takes a different view. In a relatively recent article, Dan Ruscu arrives at this novel conclusion:

> Accordingly, Vitalian must be regarded as a Romano-Gothic national of mixed race from Dobruja, who defended the interests of his native province. In the religious conflict in which he became involved, Vitalian is thus the political instrument of the Scythian monasticism, who defends first Orthodoxy against a Monophysite Emperor, and later becomes a factor of political pressure, defending Eastern tradition against Rome's exaggerated demands.[29]

I will offer some criticism of Ruscu's position below, but before so doing I should like to point out that he takes a unique and even refreshing approach to the question. Up to this point, most authors have treated it as a given that politics and religion are somehow antithetical, that religious convictions can only be genuine insofar as people do not act on them in a way that renders political benefit. But Ruscu never treats political and religious motives as exclusive. Nor really is it self-evident that these two should conflict. We are reminded elsewhere that politics in the eastern Roman empire have a reli-

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[28] Menze, 23. But see also pg. 21 and fn. 29. Though it is stated as fact on pg. 23, here Menze presents it only as a possibility that the conflict over Chalcedon was a pretext. Of course, the issue is not central to Menze's argument inasmuch as the threat of the Chalcedonian Vitalian largely functions to explain Justin's Chalcedonianism. Justin's Chalcedonian loyalties, and Menze's view that they were largely a matter of convenience, are discussed below.

[29] Dan Ruscu, 'The Revolt of Vitalianus in the "Scythian Controversy",' *Byzantinische Zeitschrift,* Bd. 101, Nr. 2 (2009): 785.

gious and even theological quality and that they cannot, therefore, be properly treated as independent.[30] Unfortunately, the standard narrative for many periods of late-antique and Byzantine history has yet to work out the implications of this insight fully.

Because he appears only briefly on the historical stage, it can be easy to overlook the question of Vitalian's motives. Indeed, it is all the easier to do so when Vitalian seems to fit so easily within anyone's preexisting view of human motivation. If one wishes to see him as a cynical opportunist, the opinions of our sources may be cited directly. But if one wishes to see him as a deeply dedicated Chalcedonian, his apparent constancy on this point may be cited, as we will see from looking at the sources.

## Vitalian's Motives in the Sources

The most noticeable thing about the treatment of Vitalian in the sources is how little consideration he is given. Evagrius Scholasticus says remarkably little on the matter considering Vitalian's later importance to the Chalcedonian cause.[31] Of most interest to our ques-

[30] Thus we find in H. G. Beck, *Kirche und Theologische Literatur im Byzantinische Reich*, 1: 'Kirche und Staat bilden nicht zwei nebeneinander stehende selbständige "Gewalten", stehen freilich auch nicht im Verhältnis der Über- und Unterordnung zueinander, sondern bilden eine mystische Einheit, zwei Aspekte desselben Lebens erlöster Christen. Reichsgeschichte ist zugleich Kirchengeschischte, und entscheidende Impulse der Politik sind religiöser, ja theologische Natur.'

[31] The passage dealing with Vitalian's rebellion is so short, it may be conveniently quoted in full: 'There rebelled against Anastasius Vitalian, a Thracian by race, who after ravaging Thrace and Moesia as far as Odessus and Anchialus pressed on to the imperial city with an innumerable horde of Hunnic tribes. The emperor sent Hypatius to meet him. And after Hypatius was betrayed by his own men, taken captive, and released for a large ransom, Cyril undertook the campaign. At first the battle was evenly balanced, and then it experienced various alternations in pursuits and retreats; although Cyril had held the upper hand, a pursuit had to turn back on itself when his soldiers allowed themselves to be defeated. And in this way Vitalian took Cyril captive from Odessus and pushed his advance as far as

tion at the moment is that Evagrius assigns a motivation to Vitalian, claiming that he had 'nothing else in his thoughts than to capture the city itself and to control the empire.'[32]

Marcellinus Comes also offers only a short treatment of events, but this is not unusual for Marcellinus. This chronicler is of special interest, inasmuch as he offers Vitlian's justification for rebellion.

> After arranging his contingents from one sea across to the other he himself advanced up to the Golden Gate (as it is called) without losing a single man, while maintaining ostensibly that he had approached Constantinople on behalf of Macedonius the bishop of the city, exiled without reason by the emperor Anastasius.[33]

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the place called Sycae, ravaging everything, burning everything, having nothing else in his thoughts than to capture the city itself and to control the empire.

'When this man had encamped at Sycae, Marinus the Syrian, whom we mentioned before, was sent by the emperor with a naval force to do battle with Vitalian. And so the two forces met, the one with Sycae astern, the other with Constantinople. And at first they remained stationary, but then, after sallies and exchanges of missiles between the two contingents, a fierce naval battle was joined near the place called Bytharia; after backing water, Vitalian fled precipitately, losing the majority of his force, while his associates fled so quickly that on the morrow not a single enemy was found in the vicinity of Anaplus or the city. They say that Vitalian then remained for some time at Anchialus, keeping quiet. Another Hunnic race also made an incursion, after crossing the Cappadocian Gates.' *EH*, III.43; Whitby trans., 194.

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] '[...] dispositisque a mari in mare suorum ordinibus ipse ad usque portam, quae aurea dicitur, sine ullius dispendio, scillicet pro orthodoxorum se fide proque Macedonio urbis episcopo incassum ab Anastasio principe exulato Constantinopolim accessisse asserens.' Marcellinus Comes, *The Chronicle of Marcellinus Comes: A Translation and Commentary,* Brian Croke, trans. (Sydney: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 2005), a. 514.1.

Macedonius, as noted above, was Vitalian's uncle. Malalas agrees that Vitalian cited the deposition of Macedonius as his motivation for rebellion, saying, 'During [Anastasius'] reign the Thracian Vitalian rebelled, allegedly giving the banishment of the bishops as a pretext.'[34] Malalas goes on to concur with Evagrius that Vitalian, 'wanted to take Constantinople itself', a claim supported by his approach to the city.

Anti-Chalcedonian sources also provide some perspective on the matter. Pseudo-Zacharias discusses the fact that Vitalian, a warlike and cunning general, rebelled against Anastasius, but assigns no particular motive for so doing.[35] John of Nikiu, on the other hand, is insistent upon Vitalian's motives.

> And Vitalian, moreover, who was commander of the troops in the province of Thrace, being a man of perverse heart, hated Severus the saint of God. Now the emperor Anastasius had appointed Severus patriarch of Antioch in the room of the heretic Flavian, whom he had banished, when the orthodox bishops of the east testified in the favour of the former.[36]

Such are the claims of our sources on Vitalian's motives. Both the sources and the scholarly treatments undervalue a key to understanding Vitalian's actions. We are never isolated individuals, abstracted from human relationships. We are, in large part, who we have connections with. It is an odd sort of thing to regard a man as exploiting a situation simply out of imperial ambition when the soldiers under his command, the religious sentiments of many of his countrymen, and indeed some his own personal connections and patrons had suffered under the present emperor's rule. Certainly, we may say that

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[34] John Malalas, *The Chronicle of John Malalas, Books VIII-XVIII,* Glanville Downey and Matthew Spinka, trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940) XVI.402.

[35] *PZ*, 8.13.

[36] John of Nikiu, *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu,* Robert Henry Charles, trans. (London: Text and Translation Society, 1916) 89.72. John reiterates Vitalian's hatred of Severus as a key motive for his character at 90.7–8.

this situation made it possible for an ambitious soldier to indulge in a revolt, but given the duties owed to patrons and clients alike we would be equally justified in saying that the situation made revolt necessary. The commander who does not feed his troops will not long retain their loyalty. The nephew and godson of pro-Chalcedonian patriarchs deposed by Anastasius, Macedonius II of Constantinople and Flavian II of Antioch respectively, can hardly be considered worthy of anyone's loyalty if he does not fight for both them and their creed.[37] Vitalian's actions were shaped by his personal connections. Dichotomies between categories like politics and theology only obscure the powerful motivations implicit in our place within a social system.

## The End of Anastasius

Vitalian demanded what was best for his troops and for his personal connections, the deposed Chalcedonian patriarchs, and thereby became a champion of Chalcedonian orthodoxy. Vitalian's rebellion resulted in an agreement from Anastasius that a council would meet in Heraclea, that the Chalcedonian bishops would be restored, and that communion with Rome would be restored. But Anastasius never held the council and the agreement was not fulfilled. What is worse still for the *magister militum*, the emperor eventually sent his advisor, Marinus, with a fleet which managed to route Vitalian's. Vitalian was able to save his life through flight, but he would not be able to directly threaten Anastasius again.

Judging by the final few letters sent between the pope and the emperor before the latter's death, the council might not have been particularly productive even if it had occurred. The letters become increasingly combative, culminating in a final angry declaration from Anastasius to Hormisdas: 'You may insult and thwart me but you may not command me.'[38] There were no subsequent communica-

[37] On Vitalian's relationship to his uncle Macedonius and his godfather Flavian, see, *inter alia*, *PLRE* 2.1171; Timothy E. Gregory, 'Vitalian' in *ODB*; and Frend, 220.

[38] Trans. here Frend, 233. 'Iniuriari et adnullari sustinere possumus, iuberi

tions from Anastasius. Little further could be achieved once relations had reached such a point and once the threat of Vitalian was marginalized Anastasius had no further incentive to cooperate.

## DELEGATION AND NEGOTIATION UNDER JUSTIN

With such an end to dialogue between the pope and the emperor, it is just as well for the sake of unity that Anastasius's reign would soon draw to a close. There is little chance of returning to negotiations when one leaves them as Anastasius had. After his death in July 519, Anastasius's position was filled by Justin, a speaker of Latin and a reliable Chalcedonian. With Justin's accession, there was new hope for an end to the Acacian Schism and discussions quickly took on a fresh optimism. These negotiations included others besides emperor and the pope, especially Justin's nephew and the undoubted intellectual power behind the throne, Justinian. As we shall see, the tenor of the letters gradually changes as the connections between the imperial and papal courts build. Since the negotiations were ultimately successful in mending the Acacian Schism, it will be especially instructive to examine them in close detail. Such a close look will help us to discover how relationships may be built between individuals and the institutions in which they are embedded through the process of conflict resolution.

The first of the papal letters are dominated by overt enthusiasm for Justin's accession and the hope of imminent peace in the church. Yet, subtle hints and cues are contained within the letters showing more than mere congratulation was intended. Amidst their ritualized well-wishing, both sides are carefully determining how to construct a relationship and indicating their own expectations. As we examine the letters, it will be important for us to bear in mind that reading letters can give us the false impression of a simple, dyadic relationship between the author and addressee. But in letters such as these, the relationship is always triadic, including the bearer of the letter as a party of the conversation, often with explicit acknowledgment,

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non possumus.' *CA*, Letter 138.5.

alongside sender and recipient. This can be of some consequence, as we shall see.

It is little wonder that the accession of emperor Justin, an avowed Chalcedonian and a speaker of Latin, should be welcomed by Hormisdas. The first letter of the new reign was an announcement from the emperor to Pope Hormisdas formally announcing his rise to power.[39] The letter is typical of those written in Justin's name. It is short, formal, and formulaic. Claiming he refused the honor, Justin attributed his election instead to the favor of the Senate, Army, nobles, and above all the Holy Trinity.[40] He proceeded to request the prayers of the pope, whereby the empire would be strengthened. As is usually the case in late-antique literature, however, the ritualized quality of the letter is significant. The attempted refusal of imperial purple is a means of signaling his worthiness to wear it while the announcement and prayer request to the pope showed his desire to reestablish regular communication between old and new Rome.

The response to this very straightforward and unassuming announcement was enthusiastic. Hormisdas declared from the beginning his joy at the news and wasted no time before indicating that Justin's reign would give the church rest after the weariness wrought through controversy.[41] Justin would not only satisfy the west, Hormisdas believed, but would also heal the east.

> You have restored the first fruits of your empire owed to the blessed apostle Peter, which we accept devoutly for this reason, since we believe without a doubt that the concord of the

[39] *CA*, Letter 141.

[40] '[...] per has sacras declaramus epistolas, quod primum quidem inseparabilis trinitatis fauore, deinde amplissimorum procerum sacri nostri palatii et sanctissimi senatus nec non electione fortissimi exercitus ad imperium nos licet nolentes ac recusantes electos fuisse atque firmatos.' *CA*, Letter 141.4–8.

[41] 'Uenerabilis regni uestri primitiis, fili gloriosissime, loco muneris gratulationem suam catholica transmittit ecclesia, per quos se post tantam discordiae fatigationem requiem pacis inuenire confidit.' *CA,* Letter 142.1.

> churches is to be soonest through you. God, who has granted us the wish of speaking to the feelings of your piety, himself will offer his goodwill concerning the pure worship of his religion, just as we desire.[42]

Assuring the new emperor that his refusal of power only proves his election by God, Hormisdas insisted with rhetorical flair that Justin's efforts would restore peace to the church. 'Let them cease,' Hormisdas wrote, 'who oppose [God's] peace; let them rest, who in the guise of shepherds try to disperse the flock of Christ! Their correction establishes the powers of your empire, for where God is rightly honored adversity will be without effect.'[43] It would not be long until Hormisdas would request that specific groups be corrected, using this same kind of language to influence Justin's actions.

This remarkable response to Justin's accession deserves some explanation. The letter sent to Hormisdas is dated August 1, 518. It was borne by a certain *vir spectabilis*, named Alexander, who undoubtedly also brought news of what had transpired in the capital upon the death of Anastasius.[44] On July 15, less than a week after the emperor's passing, a mob assembled in Constantinople rejoicing in the name of the new emperor and the orthodox faith. As it is depict-

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[42] 'debitas beato Petro apostolo imperii uestri primitias red<di>distis, quas hac ratione deuote suscepimus, quia ecclesiarum per uos proxime futuram credimus sine dubitatione concordiam. deus, qui pietatis uestrae sensibus alloquendi nos uota concessit, ipse circa sincerum religionis suae cultum praestabit, sicut optamus, affectum.' *CA*, Letter 142.2.

[43] 'cessent, qui paci eius obsistunt; quiescant, qui in forma pastorum conatur gregem Christi dispergere! istorum correctio uires uestri firmat imperii, quia ubi deus recte colitur, aduersitas non habebit effectum.' *CA,* Letter 142.4.

[44] For what little we know of Alexander, see *PLRE* 2.57, 'Alexander 17'. The events which follow are not recounted in the *CA*. Our source is a document entitled 'Ὅπως ἐκηρύχθησαν ἐν τῇι ἐκκλησίαι αἱ σύνοδοι' quoted in the proceedings of Session V of the Synod of Constantinople (see *ACO* 3.5.27). This reconstruction follows Jakob Speigl 'Synoden im Gefolge der Wende der Religionspolitik unter Kaiser Justinos (518),' *Ostkirchliche Studien* 45 (1996): 3–20.

ed in the sources, the mob had little doubt of the religious loyalties of Justin and demanded the immediate proclamation of Chalcedon.[45] Offered a choice between abdication on the one hand and the confession of Chalcedon and anathematization of Severus, 'the Manichaean' and 'the new Judas', on the other, the Patriarch John gave his confession from the ambo. Thereupon the crowd pressed the patriarch until at last he assembled the bishops present in Constantinople that he might pronounce the verdict against Severus while maintaining canonical form.[46] John charged that Severus had separated himself from the church by his own actions. By the next day, the crowd demanded even more, requiring that the relics of the Patriarchs Euphemius and Macedonius be returned and that their names should be entered into the diptychs along with those of the four councils and the Pope Leo.[47] When after many threats the patriarch complied, the mob turned from agitation to rejoicing and a liturgy was celebrated.

This story, at least as it appears in the official records, is set only a couple weeks before Justin's letter to Hormisdas. It is likely, therefore, that in addition to bearing the official announcement of Justin's accession, Alexander also brought the first word of this change in the official religious position of Constantinople. Such news would

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[45] 'τὴν ἁγίαν σύνοδον ἄρτι κήρυξον· ὀρθόδοξος βασιλεύει, τίνα φοβῆσαι; νικᾶι ἡ πίστις τοῦ βασιλέως, νικᾶι ἡ πίστις τῆς αὐγούστας. τοῦ νέου Κωνσταντίνου τολλὰ τὰ ἔτη, τῆς νέας Ελένης πολλὰ τὰ ἔτη· πολλὰ τὰ ἔτη τοῦ πατριάρχου· ἄξιε τῆς τριάδος· Ἰουστῖνε αὔγουστε ΤVINCAS· [...] τὴν σύνοδον Χαλκηδόνος ἄρτι κήρυξον.' *ACO* 3.5.27.72,10–17.

[46] In addition to unnamed others, the document cites twelve of these bishops are by name: '[...] Θεοφίλου τοῦ θεοφιλεστάτου ἐπισκόπου τῆς Ἡρακλεωτῶν καὶ Θεοδότου [...] τῆς Γαγγρηνῶν καὶ Ὑπατίου [...] τῆς Κλαυδιουπολιτῶν καὶ Ἰωάννου τοῦ [...] Βοσπόρου καὶ Πυθαγόρου [...] τῆς Σινωπέων καὶ Ἰσαακίου [...] Πενταπόλεως τῆς Ἑλλάδος καὶ Ἰωάννου [...] Σεννέων τῆς Παμφύλων χώρας καὶ Ἀμαντίου [...] τῆς Νικοπολιτῶν καὶ Ἀμμωνίου [...] τῆς Ἀβυδηνῶν, Πλάτωνος [...] τῆς Κρατιανῶν, Εὐσταθίου [...] τῆς Φιλαδελφέων καὶ Παλγίου [...] τῆς Αἰζανιτῶν καὶ ἑτέρων θεοφιλεστάτων ἐπισκόπων [...]' *ACO* 3.5.27.74,4–12.

[47] *ACO* 3.5.27.75,1–5.

readily explain Hormisdas's enthusiasm. The Constantinopolitan mob achieved much of what he had long desired and, if we are to believe the account, it may have done so at least partly in the name of reunion with Rome.[48] Hormisdas would have had good reason, therefore, to be optimistic about his chances of influencing Justin's policies. This emphasizes the importance of the bearer himself, who was able to communicate to the recipient information which was not always present in the letter. It also serves to remind us how little we sometimes know about negotiations, as they often involve information or offers best left unwritten.

Justin's announcement, the probable news carried with it, and the response of Hormisdas served both as a formal introduction between the parties and a signal of willingness to work together. This signaling is important, because it opens the possibility of a different kind of relationship than what prevailed, or rather failed, between Hormisdas and the court of Anastasius. This relationship, as we shall see, can develop trust and enable greater cooperation as uncertainty is mitigated.[49]

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[48] The crowd is several times said to have shouted phrases like, 'ἀδελφοὶ Χριστιανοὶ μία ψυχή.' (*ACO* 3.5.27.72,29–30) Speigl seems to interpret this as the crowd's desire for reunion with Rome. 'Eine große Volksmenge empfind den Patriarchen. Sie verlangte von ihm die Kirchengemeinschaft mit Rom, das Bekenntnis der Synode von Chalkedon oder den Rücktritt (27.72,14.20), sie forderte die Exkommunikation des Severos.' Speigl, 'Synoden im Gefolge,' 3. Without the specific references to the demand that Leo be added to the diptychs, these phrases would be more ambiguous.

[49] This statement should not be taken to imply that trust is strictly necessary for or coextensive with cooperation. For 'cooperation cannot be equated with trust. This is because cooperation may emerge where no trust exists (Axelrod, 1984).' Susan Helper and Mari Sako, 'Determinants of trust in supplier relations: Evidence from the automotive industry in Japan and the United States,' *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 34 (1998), 390. Yet the kind of cooperation that prevails where general trust is at low levels is often not desirable to most players involved. For a good example of cooperation under conditions where trust is scarce, see Diego Gambetta, 'Mafia: The Price of Distrust,' in *Trust: Making and*

With a letter of September 7th, 518, Justin began to get to the details of negotiating a reconciliation with Rome. In addition to introducing an attached letter of the patriarch of Constantinople, John II, Justin claimed the bishops requested that he contact the pope for the sake of ecclesiastical unity.[50] Nothing is mentioned in the letter about the mobs forcing the Patriarch's hand, but framing matters this way allows Justin to present the bishops in Constantinople as desirous of unity and himself as essential to secure that desire. For he goes on to say that he consented to this petition gladly as he had himself desired this end.[51] The letter concludes with an important request:

> Moreover, so that the promises of peace, unity, and concord might be more completely disclosed to your Sanctity, appoint some most religious priests, who embrace and desire peace, to come to our most sacred court. Indeed, for this reason we have sent directly Gratus, *vir sublimus*, our *comes sacri consistorii* and *magister scrinii memoriae*, an excellent opinion of whom we have recognized many times before.[52]

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*Breaking Cooperative Relations*, Diego Gambetta, ed. (Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988): 158–75. Under potentially friendlier circumstances, as we have here, trust should be thought of as a catalyst for cooperation.

[50] 'Iohannes uir beatissimus, huius regiae urbis antistes, et ceteri uiri religiosi episcopi de diuersis locis et ciuitatibus hic reperti nostram serenitatem docuerunt pro concordia ueram et orthodoxam fidem colentium proque unitate uenerabilium eius ecclesiarum litteras tuae sanctitati offerendas confecisse ac magnopere postularunt nostras etiam epistolares paginas super hoc ad eam emanere.' *CA,* Letter 143.1; Cp. *CN*, document 549.

[51] 'quorum petitiones, utpote semper unitatis amatores constituti, libenter amplexi hos diuinos apices ad tuam beatitudem sensuimus prorogandos, quibus sesceptis desideriis supra dictorum reuerentissimorum antistitum subuenire proque nobis et re publica [...]' *CA*, Letter 143.2.

[52] 'ut autem tuae sancitati pacis et unitatis atque concordiae iura plenius patefiant, quosdam religiosissimos sacerdotes pacem amplectentes et desiderantes ad sacrissimum nostrum peruenire disponat comitatum. ob hanc etenim causam Gratum u. s. sacri nostri consistorii comitem et mag-

The request that a delegation of priests be sent to Constantinople has several purposes. One might imagine the advantages for Constantinople of having papal representatives at its disposal, as subsequent history demonstrates the willingness of the court to use *apocrisarii* and indeed resident popes to their own ends. Indeed, in a contemporary letter to Hormisdas, Justinian even requests that Pope Hormisdas himself should come to Constantinople, foreshadowing a strategy for exercising influence that would remain constant throughout Justinian's reign.[53] The request was pointedly ignored by the pope. Yet the purpose expressed in Justin's letter is for what we would call transparency in contemporary political rhetoric. The presence of priests who represent papal interests in Constantinople can act, for the pope, as a guarantor of those interests.[54] A guarantee of transparency is a means of encouraging others to cooperate, as it both decreased uncertainty and aids the development of what organizational sociologists have termed 'goodwill trust.'[55] Justin sought to

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istrum scrinii memoriae direximus, cuius praeclaram opinionem multis antea notam habemus temporibus.' *CA*, Letter 143.3

[53] 'ut modis omnibus dignetur Constantinopolim ad reliqua concordiae componenda uenire.' *CA,* Letter 147.3. Agapetus's uninvited arrival, which we will discuss in chapter three, is an exception here that proves the rule. Justinian wanted the pope's presence to accomplish his own ends, but he wanted the pope on his own terms. In this way, Vigilius's presence and Justinian's willingness to lean on him proves the best model.

[54] The significance of this is somewhat obscured by Coleman-Norton's rendering: 'Moreover, that the rights of peace and of unity and of concord may be made more fully clear to your Sanctity, arrange to send to our most sacred court some most religious bishops who embrace and desire peace.' The meaning of *iura* here is best understood in light of the earlier part of the letter. Justin claimed at the beginning of the letter that the court and bishops in Constantinople desired peace and unity, and now he offers a means of seeing this promise fulfilled.

[55] 'Sharing of information facilitates coordination between organizations. But disclosing proprietary or confidential information to the other party, that is, acting as if one trusted the other, exposes one's vulnerability. In this situation, a two-way flow of information is essential for creating and sustaining trust, which feeds on a loose form of reciprocity over time.'

achieve his own goals, but he does so partly by assuring Hormisdas that his goals too will be fulfilled.

The prominence of Gratus in the passage is another element worthy of note. Gratus makes a brief appearance in Letter 142, apparently having borne Letter 141 to Rome along with Alexander.[56] The letters indicate that Gratus was a capable man and had personal qualities which made him effective as an envoy.[57] He is mentioned repeatedly in the letters negotiating the end of the Acacian Schism and seems to have played an important role in the same, though it is largely invisible to us. We may surmise from Justinian's words to Hormisdas in Letter 147 that he was given latitude in negotiating the end of the schism.[58] He is specifically praised by Hormisdas, who thanks God for him 'whose faith and honest belief has stirred our feelings on account of himself.'[59] He is even mentioned later by Justin after the schism has ended, as a reminder to Hormisdas of the efforts undertaken by the court toward unity.[60] Justin clearly believed a reminder of the person of Gratus will help to sway Hormisdas. Even with modern communications, leaders must place

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Helper and Sako, 390, who discuss the concept of goodwill trust at length.

[56] 'hanc gratulationis paginam per Alexandrum u. s. non omisimus destinare, sperantes cum dei nostri adiutorio per Gratum u. s. filium nostrum de singulis, quae ad unitatem ecclesiae pertinent, nos clementiae uestrae praebituros esse responsum.' *CA,* Letter 142.5

[57] For an overview of references to Gratus, see *PLRE* 2.519. The only place he appears outside the *Collectio Avellana* is in the *Liber pontificalis* 54.5.

[58] 'ut autem nihil praetermittatur, propter causam saepius memoratam ad inuistissimum regem religionis quoque negotium filio uestro uiro sublmi Grato est iniunctum fauente domino nostro Iesu Christo.' *CA,* Letter 147.5. It seems he was given missions in Italy in addition to that to the papal court.

[59] 'pro perso<na> quoque filii nostri Grati u. s. deo nostro gratias sine cessatione persoluimus, cuius fides et recta credulitas nostrum circa se excitauit affectum'. Not content with praise of Gratus's orthodoxy and character, he continues praising his efforts: 'dignus re uera, qui tantae curam susciperet actionis et maximi principis ad nos mandata perferret.' *CA,* Letter 145.8.

[60] *CA*, Letter 232.1.

considerable trust in their representatives. In the pre-modern world, their importance grows considerably.

Gratus carried two additional letters on his mission to Rome, numbers 146 and 147. Letter 146, from the Patriarch John to Hormisdas, is shot through with the rhetoric of brotherhood, which serves John well on several levels. To greet the pope (*saluto*) and proclaim greetings (*salutans*) are given because the true faith is safe and sound (*salua est*) and brotherly love is strengthened, is to act in conformity with a pro-reunion policy.[61] Yet Hormisdas would not be content with rhetoric alone, and John makes it clear that he writes 'to give satisfaction.' For this reason, he clearly declares his acceptance of the councils of Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon, and with some emphasis that both Pope Leo and Hormisdas would be entered into the diptychs.[62] In accordance with the request of Justin, John too asks that representative from Rome be sent that they might come to some final agreement.[63]

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[61] 'Saluto uestram sanctitatem, karissime in Christo frater, et salutans praedico, quoniam recta fides slaua est et caritas fraternitatis firmata est.' *CA,* Letter 146.1. One wonders whether the repeated affirmation of brotherhood by John do not have the dual purpose of implying that on some level the bishops of new and old Rome are peers. He speaks of brotherhood thrice, at one point calling the pope his brother and comminister (*fratri et comministro*). It would be easy to make too much of this highly conventional manner of writing, but we do know Hormisdas sought the disavowal of Acacius, any mention of whom is conspicuously absent from this letter. John would doubtless have sought to preserve whatever dignity his seat held even as his predecessor became the target of condemnation.

[62] 'Tantum ad satisfaciendum scripsimus, ut et uenerabile nomen sanctae recordationis Leonis quondam facti urbis Romae archiepiscopi in sacris diptychis tempore consecrationis propter concordiam affigeretur et uestrum benedictum nomen similiter in diptychis praedicetur.' *CA,* Letter 146.4. The councils are affirmed at 146.2.

[63] '[...] rogamus uos pacificos uiros destinare et uestrae dignos apostolicae sedis, qui debeant satisfacere et satisfactionem nostram suscipere, ut et in hac parte Christus deus noster glorificetur, qui per uos pacen hanc mundo seruauit.' *CA,* Letter 146.5.

Letter 147 is the first of many by Justinian we will examine. In elaborate prose, as compared with what was written in his uncle's name, Justinian raises issues neglected by both Justin and John. It is little surprise that Justin should begin to leave the details of the reunion of the churches to his nephew. Justin's education was generally lacking and he is reputed to have displayed little interest in theological subtleties.[64] Justinian, on the other hand, had a solid theological education, an interest in the subject which would persist throughout his life, and the ability, so valued in Late Antiquity, to bury the simplest statement in the most florid and courtly language. He did not merely say that he was assigned to write the pope, but he connected his assignment with the will of heaven, the same will which had placed his uncle upon the throne.[65] When he arrived to the matter of Acacius, however, he turned instead to diplomatic circumspection. 'And, indeed, a great part of the faith has been settled by the authority of God; merely concerning the name of Acacius is it fitting that the consensus of your beatitude begin.'[66] To this end, Justinian explained, Gratus, a friend who shared his heart,[67] was sent bearing letters and 'was charged also with the matter of religion'.[68]

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[64] Vasiliev, 4.

[65] 'Desiderabile tempus, quod summis uotis optauimus, diuina clentia dolores generis humani respiciens largiri dignata est, quo omnes catholici et deo perfecte fideles maiestati eius se ualeant commendare. idcirco has ad apostolatum uestrum libera licentia iam mihi beneficio caelesti indulta direxi. domnus etenim noster inuictissimus imperator orthodoxam religionem semper ample<cte>ns ardentissima fide cupiensque sacrosanctas ecclesias ad concordiam reuocare mox adeptus est caelesti iudicio infulas principales, sacerdotibus hic positis denuntiauit, ut pro regulis apostolicis unirentur ecclesiae.' *CA,* Letter 147.1–2.

[66] 'et magna quidem pars fidei est composita deo auctore; de nomine tantummodo Acacii uestrae beatudinis conuenit ordiri consensum.' *CA,* Letter 147.3.

[67] '[...] Gratum uirum sublimem, unanimum mihi amicum' *CA,* Letter 147.3.

[68] '[...] religionis quoque negotium filio uestro uiro sublimi Grato est iniunctum' *CA,* Letter 147.5.

But Justinian went further than Justin in his request for representatives from the see of Rome. Where Justin had only requested a delegation of priests, Justinian requested this only as a contingency in order to avoid delay.[69] His clear preference, however, was that 'by all means' the pope would 'deem it worthy to come to Constantinople, in order to settle the rest of the agreement.'[70] That John did not request the presence of the pope in his own city is perfectly understandable. The condemnation of John's predecessor was under negotiation. He had personal interests on the line. To have the bishop of Rome, who under normal circumstances would rival John's authority in his own city, come to effect the condemnation would only add insult to injury. But it is not clear at first why it should be Justinian's desire, and thus Justin's as well, that Hormisdas should come to Constantinople. It was not as though the will of Hormisdas in the matter was uncertain, as Justinian himself notes.[71] Yet Justinian tells Hormisdas to 'hurry [...] lest that which should be arranged in your presence be done in your absence.'[72]

A likely explanation for this request is that the court wants the pope in Rome that they might sway him from his position on Acacius. This is supported by the circumspection regarding Acacius, even as the court claims reunion is forthcoming. This offers insight into Justinian's approach to religious disputes that deserves consideration. As we shall see in future chapters, Justinian consistently tried to draw disputants to the court. The reason for this is that he saw already that propinquity, the physical closeness which facilitates personal closeness, leads to influence. Much influence could be achieved by means of the careful selection of messengers, as we may discern

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[69] 'quem si qua tarditas[,] quod fieri non debet, forsitan retinuerit interim uel sacerdotes idoneos destinare festinet [...]' *CA,* Letter 147.3.

[70] 'ut modis omnibus dignetur Constantinopolim ad reliqua concordiae componenda uenire.' *CA,* Letter 147.3.

[71] 'scimus etenim litteras uestrae beatitudinis et antecessorum uestrorum ad Orientum directas, quid super hac eadem causa contineant.' *CA,* Letter 147.4.

[72] 'accelerate ergo, domini sanctissimi, ne uobis absentibus, quae debent presentibus ordinari.' *CA,* Letter 147.4.

from the importance placed upon them. But personal presence in space one controlled would be more effective still. If Justinian were to have any hope of achieving the unity he desired, in the manner in which he desired it, he would need to bring as much influence to bear upon competing parties as may be. Even at this early stage in Justin's reign, it seems this element of Justinian's policy toward controversy is present.

Gratus would later return with two epistles, numbers 144 and 145, dated at the beginning of January, 519. As far as we know, Hormisdas did not respond to Justinian's epistle, choosing instead to write Justin and John. It is possible that Hormisdas saw little reason to respond to the new emperor's nephew but it is just as likely that he did not wish to dignify with a response Justinian's insinuation that Acacius's condemnation was negotiable.[73] His response to Justin, in any case, reads like an encomium as the first letter. The 'utmost joy from the sunrise of [Justin's] empire' has been 'waxing among us', declares the introduction.[74] But for all its panegyrical qualities, Hormsidas left no doubt about why the emperor was worthy of such praise.

> Therefore, oh most merciful emperor, from such a wish [for ecclesiastical unity] you have now a present glory, but from its completion expect an everlasting one. These are the strongest foundations of your empire, which in very beginning of a dawning reign which prefers divine worship with a holy disposition to all other things. Hold fast, therefore, to this care for pious solicitude and for the peace of the catholics; just as you began, press

[73] I would even go so far as to say the former reason is unlikely. In Letter 210, dated September 2, 519, Hormisdas describes Justinian and his cousin as 'illustres et magnificos uiros Iustinianum atque Germanum filios nostros', *CA,* Letter 210.2. In the same dispatch of letters he wrote this Germanus (see *CA,* Letter 211).

[74] 'Sumptam de imperii uestri ortu laetitiam, quam sui apud nos pollentem merito praecedenti quoque geminsatis alloquio [...]' *CA,* Letter 144.1.

> onward because our God, who bestowed this spirit upon you, does indeed choose those whereby he brings it to pass.[75]

The association of the soundness of the empire with divine approval imperial religious policy or, to put it in keeping with the age, imperial protection of correct worship was, of course, perfectly in keeping with contemporary political rhetoric..[76] But as Francis Dvornik demonstrated, it was also part and parcel of contemporary political theory. Ensuring divine favor, by securing the unity of the imperial church, was for political as well as a spiritual benefit in this world. In the calculus to decide who benefited the most at the end of the Acacian Schism, the significance of this fact can be lost. Hormisdas knew the importance of connecting imperial security through divine favor with the specific policy requirement that, in addition to the proclamation of the four councils and the commemoration of Leo, Acacius be condemned.[77] Reunion could go forward, but it would be on his terms.

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[75] 'habes ergo, clementissime imperator, praesentem de tali uoto iam gloriam, sed expecta de perfectione perpetuam. haec sunt ualidissima imperii uestri fundamenta, quae in ipso nascentis regni principio diuinam uniuersis praeferunt sancta dispositione culturam. tenete itaque hanc piae sollicitudinis curam et pro catholicorum pace, sicut coepistis, insistite, quia deus noster, qui uobis hunc tribuit animum, elegit etiam, per quos praestet effectum.' *CA,* Letter 144.2.

[76] Recall 'quia ubi deus recte colitur, aduersitas non habebit effectum' in *CA,* Letter 142.4 above.

[77] It is interesting to note, however, that while Hormisdas clearly implies this is a condition of reunion, he, like Justinian, does not use Acacius's name: 'nam et episcoporum uota precesque uobis effusas gratanter amplectimur, quia tandem loci sui consideratione commoniti ea desiderant, quae dudum sequi uellent sedis apostolicae exhortatio crebra non defuit. et quoniam clementiam uestram id cupere, illos etiam haec <di>dicimus postulare, quae res hactenus ecclesiarum pacem sub intentiosa diuiserit, nec pietatis uestrae nec illorum refugit ueltu latenti causa notitiam. quid igitur facere debeant et litteris nostris et libelli, quem direximus.' *CA,* Letter 144.3–4.

To secure the reunion, Hormisdas sent a delegation which would remain in Rome until July, 520.[78] The delegation, including the deacon Dioscorus (who was later branded antipope), was sent with very strict instructions, detailing to whom they would speak, what they were allowed to say in the Patriarch's presence, and under what conditions the reunion could occur.[79] Some of the elements mentioned in the instructions had already been undertaken by Constantinople, but they did not cease to be conditions for reunion.[80] The issue that stood above all others was Acacius, whose condemnation was the *sine qua non* of reunion.[81] The Patriarch John would sign a *libellus* required of him by the pope, condemning his predecessor and affirming the inviolable faith of the Apostolic See.[82] Thus reconciliation between Rome and Constantinople was at last secured.

So far, I have tried to emphasize how both the court and the pope signaled to one another the potential mutual benefit of their relationship. But I would be remiss if I did not address the question of consciousness, of whether those involved in the negotiation thought about it terms of establishing relationships of reciprocal benefit. In fact, there is a specific vocabulary in use throughout the letters sent between Rome and Constantinople to reinforce the growing relationship. Strong or well-regarded connections tended to take verbal expression in familial and amicable language. As conventional as such language can be, in some cases it represents a ritual, and therefore real, connection between parties. To give but a few examples, the *vir sublimus* Gratus is claimed as Justinian's *unanimus amicus*[83] on the one hand and Hormisdas's on other.[84] Likewise, Justin is

[78] *CA,* Letter 192.2.
[79] *CA,* Letter 158.
[80] It was expected, of course, that Chalcedon be maintained. (*CA,* Letter 158.7) Indeed, from the perspective of Rome all it asked was only the logical extension of maintaining Chalcedon.
[81] *CA,* Letter 158.6–7.
[82] *CA,* Letter 159.
[83] *CA,* Letter 147.3.
[84] e.g. *CA,* Letters 142.5, 144.6, and 145.8.

Hormisdas's *filius gloriossimus*[85] and *domnus filius noster clementissimus imperator*.[86] Though father is the appropriate title for the pope, Justinian takes the role of one speaking to a patron when he entreats Hormisdas: 'Establish for us, therefore, a received work, holy and venerable father, following in this your predecessors.'[87] In this context, one who confers a benefit on another establishes thereby a relationship with concomitant expectations of reciprocity. These expectations remained present and were expressed alongside a parallel language of sacerdotal fatherhood.

An altogether different tone was taken with John in Letter 145. Although the language of brotherhood is conspicuously absent, Hormisdas did praise the love John confessed and those things which he did right.

> [A] better triumph is acquired from this peace than from any battle you please. The glory of that work knows no decline because where God is rightly worshipped the iniquity of the enemies never ascends. We receive joyfully the confession of your love, whereby the holy synods are confirmed, among which you have repeatedly proclaimed the council of those gathered in Chalcedon. And to the number of the catholic [councils] you have declared that the deeply missed name of Holy Pope Leo was added, written in the diptychs. These things ought to be extolled: that you have accepted the Council of Chalcedon and have followed the epistles of Holy Leo.[88]

From Hormisdas's point of view, the approval of Leo's *Tome* held a special place among those things which John managed to accomplish. Even so, John's achievement was taken to be partial at best, hypocritical at worst. John's omission of Acacius's name was no oversight; it was a final attempt to preserve that name by focusing on the coun-

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[85] *CA,* Letter 142.3.
[86] *CA,* Letter 189.3.
[87] 'imponite igitur uobis semel susceptum laborem, sancte ac uenerabilis pater, etiam in hoc decessores uestros sequentes.' *CA,* Letter 188.
[88] *CA,* Letter 145.2–3.

cils. Hormisdas recognized the discrepancy.[89] 'Who, while condemning Dioscorus and Eutyches, could show Acacius to be innocent? Who, while avoiding Timothy and Peter of Alexandria and the other Peter, of Antioch, and those who follow them, does not, as we have said, detest Acacius who has supported their communion?'[90] It seems the Acacian Schism itself had widened the rift between east and west to the point where there was little difference in Hormisdas's eyes between an Acacius, a Peter Fuller, and a Eutyches.[91] The only solution was to 'follow without fear the judgment of the apostolic seat'[92] and 'embrace the faith of the blessed apostle Peter'.[93] In practical terms, this meant signing a *libellus*, the contents of which would be dictated to John.[94]

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[89] 'si perfectionis subsequatur affectus, quia recipere Calcedonense concilium et sequi sancti Leonis epistolas et adhuc nomen Acacii defendere, hoc est inter se discrepantia uindicare.' *CA,* Letter 145.4.

[90] 'quis Dioscorum et Eutychen condemnans innocentem ostendere possit Acacium? quis Timotheum et Petrum Alexandrium et alium Petrum Antiochenum et sequaces eorum declinans, sicut diximus, non abominetur Acacium, qui eorum communionem secutus est?' *CA,* Letter 145.4.

[91] 'Theologically also the papacy had moved further from eastern Christology than was apparent at Chalcedon. Duchesne has pointed out that while Leo had quoted the First and Second Letters of Cyril to Nestorius, Gelasius in his treatise 'On the Two Natures, against Eutyches and Nestorius' had not mentioned Cyril at all among sixty citations from the Fathers. Nor did Hormisdas. [...] Rome appeared indifferent to this outlook and obsessed, as in the time of Leo, with matters of discipline. Great emphasis was laid by Hormisdas on the Petrine claims of the Roman see and need for obedience to it. There had been no change in the basic position of the parties since Chalcedon.' Frend, 235–6. For this reason, purely theological disputes are not at the fore of the dispute in the Acacian Schism. It is important, therefore, to look to reasons why, beyond theology, the schism could be healed.

[92] 'post haec quid restat, nisi ut sedis apostolicae, cuius fidem te dicis amplecti, sequaris etiam sine trepidatione iudicia?' *CA,* Letter 145.6.

[93] *CA,* Letter 145.7.

[94] *CA,* Letter 145.7.

As much as John might speak of brotherhood, as much as Hormisdas might praise the new emperor, as a condition of reunion the pope would accept nothing less that complete capitulation from the patriarch of Constantinople.[95] And, despite the harsh reproof to John, Hormisdas expected that the capitulation would be forthcoming. A certain expectation of reciprocity had already taken hold, evidenced by Hormisdas's own words in Letter 144, based on the positive steps toward Rome's position that Constantinople had already taken.[96] The respect paid to the pope, in the person and actions of Gratus, and to the emperor, in the words of Hormisdas, together showed the first signs of developing goodwill and trust. Hormisdas would indeed send representatives with the expectation that the schism would soon be at an end.[97]

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[95] Thus J. A. McGuckin, 'The "Theopaschite Confession" (Text and Historical Context): a Study in the Cyrilline Re-interpretation of Chalcedon,' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35.2 (1984), 240: 'Pope Hormisdas demanded outright recognition of the Chalcedonian decree (which the Romans had always interpreted in the Leonine Dyophysite sense of the Tome) and practical submission to the judicial authority of Peter's see.' Additionally, McGuckin seems to view the papal demands as rather extreme and unreasonable: 'When Justin succeeded [Anastasius] (518–27), however, he imposed Chalcedon as the test of orthodoxy on the East, and to achieve this end he required the prestigious support of Rome. This was why he was prepared to agree to the papal conditions for establishing communion which Anastasius had wholly rejected in 516. This was to be regard in the following generation as a sell-out to the absolutist claims of the papacy, and the papal gains, so extraordinary at this time, were to be vigorously resisted by Justinian (527–65).' McGuckin, 242. Be that as it may, the situation is complicated by Justinian's early involvement in arranging the end to the schism. Whether he would actively resist papal gains later in his career, and whether he would have seen the papal claims as extraordinary, at this early stage he certainly accepted them as the price of papal cooperation.

[96] '[...] reciproca deuotione testati iam tunc secutura praeuidimus, quae nunc de ecclesiasticae unitatis affectu caelestis gratiae inspiratione signastis.' *CA,* Letter 144.1.

[97] 'haec si deo nostro et clementia uestrae adiuuante suscipiunt et se-

We are fortunate enough to know these legates by name. Among the group sent to Rome were the bishops, Germanus and John; two deacons, Felix and Dioscorus; and a priest, Blandus.[98] The *libellus* John would sign and send to Rome, dated March 28, 519, mentions each,[99] though they would not themselves make the return trip until July, 520.[100] These representatives would not come empty handed. The conditions under which reunion could occur were carefully prescribed, down to whom they were to speak with and what they were to say in the presence of the Patriarch. These instructions are preserved for us in the *Collectio Avellana*.[101] Some of the elements mentioned in the instructions had already been undertaken by Constantinople, but they did not cease to be conditions for reunion.[102] The issue that stands out above all others was Acacius. His condemnation was the *sine qua non* of reunion.[103]

The deacon Dioscorus sent a report back to Hormisdas, recounting the events of their trip, the reception at Constantinople, and the ultimate success of their mission.[104] The success of the mission acts as an excellent illustration of the importance of both the formal and the informal roles of the legates in accomplishing their task. The Patriarch John was understandably hesitant to sign a *libellus* which would condemn his predecessor, however willing he might be to support Chalcedon. Indeed, it seems he refused to sign it unless

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quuntur, poterit ad eam, quam maximo desideramus ardore, perueniri concordiam.' *CA,* Letter 144.5.

[98] Unfortunately, little more is known of them outside these references and the reports they sent to Hormisdas. So little is said of them that they do not merit entries in the *PLRE*.

[99] *CA,* Letter 159.5.

[100] *CA,* Letter 192.2.

[101] *CA,* Letter 158.

[102] It was expected, of course, that Chalcedon be maintained. (*CA,* Letter 158.7) Indeed, from the perspective of Rome all it asked was only the logical extension of maintaining Chalcedon.

[103] *CA,* Letter 158.6–7.

[104] *CA,* Letter 167. The letter was borne 'per Pullonium subdiaconum', thus dating it, following Guenther, along with Letter 160 (April 22, 519).

there be some discussion of the matter, despite it being clear that the emperor wanted him to do so. Yet the careful instructions the pope included forbade any disputation; the delegation was to insist on John's capitulation and was not to treat it as a matter to be negotiated. Yet the deacon Dioscorus was not formally a member of the delegation as the bishops and priest were, but was attached as an interpreter. So he was able to play an informal role as a negotiator, convincing those present to sign off on the *libellus*, leaving John to capitulate begrudgingly after he had an opportunity to voice his reservations.[105] Thus the Acacian Schism came to its end by virtue of Dioscorus's informal role. We will later find this same role can cause as many problems as it can solve.

## THE EXPECTATION OF RECIPROCITY

Reciprocity plays an important role in the period following reconciliation. The court and the papacy would both employ the memory of the reconciliation and language of duty in order to influence one another, and they do so very explicitly. For the court's part, it is difficult to imagine that no one could foresee resistance in the east to Constantinople's new policy. Rejection of the *Henotikon* and reunion with Rome was a clear signal that Constantinople was declaring unequivocally for Chalcedon. Even so, nothing less would mend the Acacian Schism. Therefore, the court secured reconciliation with the assumption in mind that they would be able to exploit the goodwill gained thereby to lessen the severity of Rome's requirements, a fact which shows through in later correspondences. The condemnation of Acacius was certainly not negotiable. But Rome had also required the condemnation of Patriarchs Fravitas, Eusebius, Macedonius II, and Timothy I—the successors of Acacius up to John—as well as the emperors Zeno and Anastasius. Full compliance with these requirements would be difficult but reducing them might signal moderation in the new pro-Chalcedonian policy to the east, where peace yet eluded the church. Repeatedly, but especially in Letters 192, 193, 200, 232, and 235 of the *Collectio Avellana*, Justin or Justinian write the

[105] Vasiliev, 176.

pope to request leniency in the precise application of Hormisdas's requirements while at the same time reminding the pope both of what they had achieved by working together thus far and the obligations implied by his sacerdotal fatherhood. As often as not, they wrote to request that certain staunchly anti-Chalcedonian regions be able to retain the place of certain of their anti-Chalcedonian bishops on the diptychs. Time will only allow a single example, but Letter 235, dated (after reconciliation) September 9th, 520, is representative. Justinian writes:

> Moreover concerning the deceased bishops' names make arrangements mildly and as becomes a pacific father, because your predecessor of blessed remembrance wrote to Anastasius of imperial memory that, if only the name of Acacius would be removed, we should have one communion. Therefore it is not a serious matter which your see has urged us to perform. For you ought to write a perfect and pacific letter to the most unconquered prince, your son, for the Church's sake, that you may be before the tribunal of the future Judge an associate of those whose see you occupy by sacerdotal law.[106]

Justinian will later repeat similar language in the letters exchanged with Hormisdas concerning theopaschism. Again and again, we find Justin and Justinian acting with the belief that their relationship with the pope will permit them a greater degree of influence over his views and decisions than they would have had prior to reconciliation. The relationship itself became a means of projecting influence.

Likewise, Hormisdas attempts to seize upon the goodwill he has cultivated with the imperial court. Hormisdas's desire from the beginning was, of course, to secure reconciliation in terms that would unequivocally reject the *Henotikon* and those involved in its creation and recognize the steadfast commitment of Rome to orthodoxy. But the relationship between the court and the papacy had more to offer than recognition of the Roman bishop and the condemnation of those who had opposed him. It also allowed Rome to

[106] *CN*, 988.

exert influence in the east, beyond its traditional jurisdiction. In immediate terms, the Roman legates were able to influence the appointment of reliable Chalcedonians, including Paul as the bishop of Antioch, by virtue of their presence in Constantinople. Hormisdas would use his newfound rapport with the emperor to try to guide imperial policy *vis-a-vis* the anti-Chalcedonians of the east. We especially see this manifest in a letter of Hormisdas which recognized many things they had accomplished, but reminded Justin that it remained for him to correct further (effectively to persecute) the remaining anti-Chalcedonians.[107] That the pope should regard it as the duty of an emperor whom he approves to correct heretics is an expression of the kind of relationship he expected.

## CONCLUSION: RECONCILIATION AND CONNECTIONS

The negotiation to end the Acacian Schism, like all successful negotiations, involved strengthening the relationship between and among the participants. These ties are best formed through personal contact, wherever possible. Within the social and cultural context of the sixth century, such relationships are often constructed in terms of patronage and familial ties. Yet the expression of these ties is not merely a polite ritual. It carries concomitant expectations of reciprocity, of duties owed on account of benefits conferred. The letters which follow, from both the imperial and papal courts, are shaped by these expectations.

The court's agreement to Hormisdas's terms has been portrayed as a disastrous setback for imperial religious policy and the position of the emperor relative to the church. This offers scholars a contrast to the bulk of Justinian's reign, marked by a more aggressive control over the church. But the issue is more complex than this. The court did not find agreement with Rome because they were cowed into it, and the reconciliation was not a capitulation. Such an adver-

[107] 'quia superest adhuc uobis Alexandrinae atque Antiochenae <et> aliarum ecclesiarum nullo modo neglegenda correctio, in quam si se cura clementiae uestrae demiserit, spes est, quo auctore bona cuncta credimus incipi, eodem celeriter auxiliatore compleri.' *CA,* Letter 168.10

sarial picture oversimplifies matters. Constantinople agreed to the pope's terms because the reunion and the relationship premised thereon was desirable. It offered the court a means of projecting influence in the west which had been lacking and it would at times confer on Justinian's policies the legitimacy of the pope's name.

The end of the Acacian Schism was a step toward the peace of the church. But it developed within a social and cultural context of relationships and reciprocal obligations. This is the context in which church and state relations of the period should be understood. It is easy to read into the tensions between Rome and Constantinople a conflict between discrete institutional actors vying to establish a straightforward hierarchical dominance over one another, of church dominating state just as state might be thought to dominate church once Justinian comes into his own. This kind of reading leaves us with a sense of a winner and a loser, which in turn offers a ready explanation of policy formulation. But seeing the schism's end as a victory for Rome and a reluctant acquiescence on the part of Constantinople obscures the complexity of the situation. Both had much to gain by agreement and expected more still in return.

A final point must be made about the connections established through envoys. Not only were these connections important, they were consciously recognized by actors at the time. The most direct evidence of this fact comes from a somewhat later letter addressed from the emperor. Justin's chief purpose in writing is to inform Hormsidas of the uncomfortable news that certain cities in the east did not approve of all the requirements for reunion with the west. Justin prefaces this problematic news with a reminder of the connection recent shared between Rome and Constantinople.

> With what zeal we ever have been and are for conciliating the sentiments of person practising the Catholic faith, that with the same mind we all should worship the undivided light of the Trinity, we are understood to have made known that at length may be found a remedy for the discord of persons contending over different viewpoints, at one time by sending voluntarily to your Beatitude as envoy Gratus, the noble master of the secretarial bureau, for this very purpose, at another time by receiving with favourable and willing mood the most religious men, whom the apostolic see has believed ought to be sent as media-

> tors of unity. For surely, so to speak, we have looked at peace itself and at them with pleasant eyes and with outstretched hands we have thought them worthy to be embraced [...][108]

Notice here that not only is the importance of the connection through the envoys recognized, even as a symbol of the renewed bond between Rome and Constantinople, but the establishment of such a connection is portrayed as the very remedy for discord.[109]

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[108] *CA,* Letter 232.1–2; trans. *CN*, 984,

[109] Other examples of this recognition can be readily cited. E.g. '[...] qui et ab ineunte nostro imperio sanctitudinem uestram admonendam duximus, quo certos difigeret, ut interuentu eorum remedium aliquod his rebus inueniri possit, et, antequam aduenerint qui destinati sunt, cuncta praeparauimus, quo facilius transigerentur, quae per hanc florentissimam urbem disponenda fuerant.' *CA,* Letter 181.1. 'Summa quidem habenda uobis est gratia, quod alacrem operam non dubitis impendere ad colligendas adunandasque uenerabiles ecclesias, uerum in ea praelucet maxime perfecta sollertia, quod homines adoptatis, qui uoto beniuolo tuae sanctitudinis sincero ac integro possint animo deseruire. Germanus siquidem reuerentissimus episcopus nec non Felix et Dioscorus et Blandus uiri religiousissimi tanta semet praebuerunt adtentos industria ac in tanta sapientia uersati sunt, ut, quantum ad officium eorum pertinet, transactis in plenum et elaboratis omnibus nihil altercationis superesset ulterius.' *CA,* Letter 192.1–2. NB: The letter is addressed thus: 'Iustinus Augustus Hormisdas Papae. Nostros per legatos id est Germanum Iohannem episcopos Felicem Dioscorum diaconos et Blandum presbyterum.' It is unclear whether the copyist of letter understood *nostri legati* from the perspective of the papacy, or whether the sender of the letter now thought of these men as *nostri legati*.

# Chapter 2.
# The Deacon Dioscorus and the Power of Position

## The Theopaschite Controversy as Paradigm of Justinianic Policy Making

Policy must be enacted through people. Without understanding this consequence of the embeddedness of institutions, much appears mystifying. For example, a pair of strange events occurred in 519. This year saw the growth of a theological controversy around a group of monks from Scythia Minor, modern day Dobruja. These Scythian monks had proposed as a solution to the theological ills of the day a common confession that 'one of the holy Trinity suffered' *(unus de trinitate passus est)*. The confession produced a strong reaction. First, the monks faced hostility when presenting their ideas in Constantinople. Seeking some confirmation, they then departed for Rome. There, they were initially welcomed along with their ideas. But this would not remain the case.

With the departure of the monks from Constantinople, dispatches were sent to warn Rome that little good would come from giving them a hearing. Among these dispatches was a letter from the already theologically active Justinian, the emperor's nephew and likely already the heir apparent. Justinian had a decidedly negative view of the meddlesome monks, their confession, and their character and so urged pope Hormisdas to expel them quickly.

And now we come to the strange part. In contrast to Rome's earlier reception of the monks, Hormisdas soon changed his mind and came to reject them, causing them to leave Rome and seek allies

elsewhere. Yet Justinian, within days of sending the initial and hostile letter to Rome, wrote again arguing in the monks' favor and even indicating that the peace of the church itself depended upon their ideas. Neither Hormisdas nor Justinian offer any explanation for their swift reversals. It is under these circumstances that the notion of position, that is the place a given person occupies within a network, will prove particularly helpful. As we shall see, the position of certain actors within the network connecting Rome and Constantinople offered a high degree of informal influence over people who might otherwise appear more powerful and influential.

The importance of this change in opinion may not be immediately evident. After all, although Hormisdas and Justinian changed opinions concerning the Scythian monks and their formula, this need not be more than a curiosity, worthy perhaps of a footnote and little else. Yet the event takes on a significance all its own in the historiography of Justinian's reign and his relationship to the church and theology. Whatever one's view of Justinian's reign as a whole, his approach is often seen as erratic and even capricious. Few events in his reign are more frequently used as evidence for this fact that his sudden reversal on the matter of the Scythian monks. As we saw in the introduction, Patrick Gray chose to highlight this event as a paradigm for Justinian's attitude toward ecclesiastical policy in the *Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*.[1]

Likewise, in a more comprehensive treatment of Justinian's ecclesiastical policy, Volker L. Menze sees something fundamental to Justinian's *modus operandi* in this reversal. After denying that one can really analyze the personal faith of another, at least so long as the other neglected to write a work such as Augustine's *Confessions*, Menze proceeds to consider Justinian's image as a theologian on the throne. This image, as Menze has it, was shrewdly crafted for politi-

[1] Patrick Gray, 'The Legacy of Chalcedon: Christological Problems and Their Significance,' in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, Michael Maas, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 228. This is also roughly equivalent to Gray's earlier statement on the matter in Gray, *Defense of Chalcedon*, 49–50.

cal purposes. As evidence for an ability and willingness to use theological artifice to political ends, Menze cites Justinian's reversal on the Scythian monks.

> It cannot be excluded that Justinian had become a connoisseur of Christian discourses over the years and tried to force personal persuasions onto his subjects. However, it is more conclusive to regard his treatises first of all as works of a statesman who wished to reach a universally accepted dogma for the Christian Oecumene over which he ruled. Within a couple of weeks during the summer of 519, Justinian switched his dogmatic position from opposing the theopaschite formula to strongly encouraging Pope Hormisdas to accept it. Obviously this could mean a speedy personal theological development, but it rather demonstrates Justinian's political far-sightedness that the theopaschite position could be useful. Similarly, political shrewdness should be assumed as the reason why Justinian presented himself as a theologian on the throne.[2]

In a more recent work, Richard Price echoes Gray's interpretation directly as he acknowledges that the 'suddenness of the change may suggest that [Justinian] was a pragmatic broker, indifferent to theological niceties but keen to propitiate miaphysite opinion'.[3] Price does offer some modification of this view, however, suggesting that Justinian would have been motivated chiefly by competition with Vitalian at this stage rather than by interest in conciliating the anti-Chalcedonians.[4]

While these are examples of broader conclusions scholars have drawn from Justinian's sudden change in opinion, some attempts have also been made to explain the change itself. A. A. Vasiliev, for instance, attributes the change to the influence of the prominent

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[2] Menze, 252.

[3] Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 1.9.

[4] Price also cautions against regarding Justinian as a mere politician on religious matters, pointing to the 'consistency with which he subsequently defended Cyrillian Chalcedonianism'. Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 1.9–10.

Chalcedonian and master of soldiers, Vitalian.[5] Regrettably, however, he only offers this attribution as a suggestion and does not propose a detailed argument in its defense. A similar suggestion is made by Aloys Grillmeier who focuses rather on Justinian's first opinion, attributing it to the passing influence of papal legates in Constantinople.[6] These suggestions do not need to be considered mutually exclusive, as we shall see. For now it is most important to emphasize that the matter has been given little attention beyond the suggestions. This leaves us in a position where great significance is placed on a single change in Justinian's opinion, but little detailed explanation is given for the change itself. Indeed, broad conclusions about Justinian's outlook are drawn from this largely unexplained change, conclusions which beg the question when applied to the theopaschite controversy. From a documentary perspective, the theopaschite controversy is the beginning of Justinian's long involvement in theological politics. The reasons for his opinions and his changes in opinion demand examination and explanation on their own merits, avoiding wherever possible arguments which depend on later eras and circumstances. The remainder of this chapter will seek a detailed explanation and, in so doing, will consider a new way of looking at the problem as a whole. But first we must consider some of the background of the theopaschite controversy.

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[5] Vasiliev, 193.

[6] 'Where did Justinian stand? When Pope Hormisdas demanded from his legates a report of success, Vitalian and Justinian seized the opportunity to report to Rome about the monks, concerning whom the papal legates themselves made some very critical remarks. No doubt influenced by the negative attitude of the papal legates, in the heat of the moment Justinian wrote a letter, in which the names of the monks are mentioned and clearly warned against.' Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: Volume 2: From the Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590–603): Part Two: The Church in Constantinople in the Sixth Century,* trans. by Pauline Allen and John Cawte (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 322.

## THE THEOPASCHITE FORMULA

As discussed in the first chapter, ecclesiastical relations between Rome and Constantinople had been strained for the past few decades. The first major schism between old and new Rome began in 484 during the reign of the Patriarch Acacius. Only under the new Chalcedonian emperor Justin did negotiations to heal this schism begin in earnest. To this end, Pope Hormisdas sent a delegation to Constantinople to oversee the reunion which would be effected by 519 with the aid of imperial court. The delegation sent by Rome is already familiar to us, including as it did the two bishops, Germanus and John; a priest, Blandus; the deacon, Felix and, most prominent in our sources despite of his formally low rank, the deacon Dioscorus.

The theopaschite controversy of the sixth century following on the heels of the end of the Acacian Schism was short-lived and in many ways uneventful enough that it scarcely merits the term controversy.[7] Yet we shall see the insight it offers to the development of religious policy is disproportionate to the controversy itself. The theopaschite controversy was a dispute over a formula proposed by a group of Scythian monks as a possible solution to the divisions over Chalcedon which had greatly disturbed the east. The solution was new, clever, and would in spirit become the cornerstone of Justinian's conciliatory approach to unity. Up to this point, several approaches to unity had been tried and found wanting. Outright rejection of Chalcedon, even if Justin and Justinian had considered it an

[7] By 'theopaschite controversy of the sixth century' I mean, of course, to distinguish it, at least for the moment, from the much larger fifth-century controversy surrounding the trisagion and certainly from the unrelated patripassianist controversy of the third century. 'The designation 'Theopaschite' originated as an insult among their enemies (notably the pro-Roman Acometae monks at Constantinople), but it is particularly misleading in so far as it suggests some form of theological connection with the third-century Patripassions, when there is no such relation whatsoever.' McGuckin, 239. The former is related to but distinct from the sixth-century theopaschite controversy.

option, would alienate the Chalcedonians. Papering over the issue as the *Henotikon* had attempted to do had only delivered temporary results when first attempted and would only fare worse now that the strategy was recognized. Yet a straightforward imposition of Chalcedon by the openly Chalcedonian imperial court would only provoke resistance and eventually revolt in the east. A fresh approach came in the form of the Scythian monk's suggestion that all confess together 'Unus ex Trinitate passus est carne.' While the Scythians believed Chalcedon was essentially correct, they thought this confession would assuage the concerns of anti-Chalcedonians that the fourth council was Nestorian.[8] Hereafter, a strategy of seeking to build common ground between Chalcedonians and anti-Chalcedonians based on a mutually acceptable confession would be a constant element of conciliatory negotiations in the court of Justin and Justinian.

Despite the conciliatory intention behind it, the theopaschite formula would be treated with disdain—and its formulators with disgust—by the papal legates. It was be approached with caution and confusion by the imperial court. The pope himself equivocated and rejected it. It would take a decade and the papal condemnation of monks long allied to Rome before the matter would be settled. It is a sign of the times that this should be so, that every new attempt to secure unity should instead produce division. This tendency toward conflict persists even as all parties ostensibly work toward the same goal. For the source of the tendency, we must look to the structures of communication upon which these discussions depended.

[8] Thus Gray, *Defense*, 51: 'In effect, a new type of reconciliation was being proposed. Previous emperors had attempted to reconcile the Chalcedonians to the anti-Chalcedonians and vice-versa by variations on the approach of the Henoticon. Such an approach had always implied an unacceptable by-passing of Chalcedon. Justin and Justinian proposed, instead, to reconcile the anti-Chalcedonians to Chalcedon ; the attempt to reconcile, rather than to correct or neglect, was the new feature of their policy.'

## The Scythian Monks and their Connections

To receive any sort of hearing of in Constantinople, one might expect that powerful connections would be necessary. The importance of 'who you know' remains a perennial theme. In the case of the Scythian monks, this was certainly the case. We have explicit evidence of the connections which elevated their prominence, and consquently, their formula. The monks' access to Constantinopolitan policy makers was furnished by their connection to the *magister militum* Vitalian. The papal legate Dioscorus reveals in Letter 216 of the *Collectio Avellana* that at least one, though possibly more, of the Scythian monks could claim kinship to Vitalian.[9] Dioscorus also makes it clear in another letter that it was the *magister militum* who ensured that the Scythian monks would have ample time to make their case.[10]

The Scythian monks' ability to leverage their informal connections to secure a sympathetic hearing in Constantinople tells us something important about how theological discourse develops. Knowledge of ideas and arguments is necessary to understand the development of theological expressions of a period, and the conciliar and imperial dictates that enforced them, but it is not sufficient. To explain the development of theological discourse and the imperial and ecclesiastical policies associated with it, we need both to understand the arguments and the structures by which the arguments were disseminated. In this case, the connection of blood and geography between the Scythian monks and Vitalian was of crucial importance in shaping discussion of religious matters at court.

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[9] '[...] monachos de Scythia, qui de domo magistri militum Uitaliani sunt [...] isti monachi, inter quos est et Leontius, qui se dicit parentem esse magistri militum [...]' *CA,* Letter 216.5–6. Cf. *PLRE* 2, 673, 'Leontius 26.'

[10] He writes thus concerning the arguments over the monks: 'isti de sua prouincia episcopos accusant, inter quos est Paternus Tomitanae ciuitatis antistes. Petitiones obtulerunt et coacti piissimi principis et domni Uitaliani magistri militum iussione frequenter ad audientiam causae conuenimus, non quasi uolentes in his negotiss nos occupare [...]' *CA,* Letter 217.6.

As much as his prominence in Constantinople was important to secure a hearing, other facts about Vitalian's person and history made him a desirable ally of the Scythian monks.[11] Vitalian himself had a keen interest in maintaining Chalcedonian orthodoxy and in being seen as one of its champions. Yet, Ruscu's article, "The Revolt of Vitalianus and the 'Scythian Controversy,'" presents this fact as a puzzle.

> It remains unclear, however, how a warrior from the outskirts of the Empire became interested in the theological disputes—even more so since there were no major differences between the Chalcedonian theology and Severian Monophysitism like for instance between Arianism and Orthodoxy.[12]

Unable to explain why a military man in the sixth century would be interested in theological rather than strictly political conflicts, Ruscu ultimately settled on what might be fairly described as a nationalist explanation for Vitalian's interest.[13] Such an interpretation is quite

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[11] From what we know, I do not think it too much to call him an ally. As Ruscu, 782, notes: 'The loyalty of the Scythian general to the monastic party led him to oppose the bishop of Scythia himself, Paternus of Tomis, as a letter of the papal delegation of 519 shows.' Ruscu refers here to Letter 217 which indicates only that a division occurred between Vitalian and Paternus on account of the monks, though it does not give details about how the division occurred. Even the fact of the division itself is only deduced from the emperor's intervention in forcing a peace between Paternus and Vitalian. 'et quia nobis diu laborantibus et illis nullam suscipientibus rationem nihil proficiebat, in quo tendebamus, clementiismus imperator in conuentu publico, ubi et nos interesse iussit, Paternum praedictum episcopum et magnificum uirum Uitalianum reduxit ad gratiam [...]' *CA,* Letter 217.7. Given the other remarks Dioscorus makes about the Scythians in this letter (to which we will later attend), one could justly speculate that his silence concerning Vitalian's advocacy was to avoid associating such a credible personage with the monks. Even in his admission of a kinship between Vitalian and Leontius, Discorus sounds reluctant if not skeptical (v.s.).

[12] Ruscu, 775.

[13] This, of course, was discussed in chapter one. 'Accordingly, Vitalian

unfair to Vitalian, who had every reason to be interested in matters theological. Besides positing a division between theology and politics which is untenable—especially in the context of Late Antiquity—this conclusion is built on problematic assumptions. Ruscu never explains why a warrior in general would have no interest in contemporary theological matters, but he does offer some argument about why Vitalian in particular would not.[14] He claims that 'the pontifical

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must be regarded as a Romano-Gothic national of mixed race from Dobruja, who defended the interests of his native province. In the religious conflict in which he became involved, Vitalian is thus the political instrument of the Scythian monasticism, who defends first Orthodoxy against a Monophysite Emperor, and later becomes a factor of political pressure, defending Eastern tradition against Rome's exaggerated demands.' Ruscu, 785.

[14] It is not only Vitalian's military career that makes Ruscu doubt his personal interest in and knowledge of theology. He also holds that Vitalian's national origins make an interest in these matters unlikely. 'Upon reaching the outskirts of the capital, Vitalian began negotiations with the Emperor's envoys. His requests deserve a closer look. First, Vitalian demanded that the subsidies for the foederati be reinstated, thus touching on the revolt's initial reason. The second request, however, is surprising given the fact that it was coming from a general of Barbaric origin, who reached the walls of Constantinople with an army of Huns and Bulgarians, among whom Christian must have been rare—namely that the Emperor should defend the true faith.' Ruscu, 774–75 (emphasis mine). Ruscu footnotes the 'Barbaric origin' claim with a brief discussion of the historiography of Vitalian's ancestry, concluding that the most plausible argument is that 'Vitalian was a Romano-Gothic half-blood.' This is not the place to discuss whether there is any merit in assuming that those of 'Barbaric origin' ought not to be expected to have any interest in the true faith or even in the value of the idea of a 'barbarian' as it appears here. I would, however, note that based upon Ruscu's assumptions, Vitalian's requests should be unsurprising. If a man's barbarian or Roman origins in any way determine his interests, then the fact that Vitalian makes two requests is fitting. The 'half-blood' general requests money and the defense of the true faith, as on these premises ought to be expected of one who is both barbarian and Roman.

correspondence clearly prove the religious motivation of Vitalian's uprising.'[15] This does not indicate an interest in theological disputes, however, because the interest was not Vitalian's own. This claim depends on the premise that Vitalian changed theological positions for non-theological reasons.[16]

> [T]he religious demands did not originally belong to Vitalian—they were concerned with the regulation of doctrinal aspects which he was in all likelihood little familiar with—, but somebody else inspired them. Moreover, as we have seen, within the Theopaschite controversy, Vitalian, who for several years had been the main champion of Papal policy in the East, went over to the monks side and implicitly to the anti-Roman party. This attitude change clearly indicates that the loyalty of the Danubian general to his compatriots was more important to him than the vindication of a certain doctrinal issue.[17]

The claim here that Vitalian changed positions on theological matters, and therefore had no loyalties in these matters, relies on the notion that there was always a theological position that could be described simply as pro-Roman. Based on this notion, Vitalian's change from favoring an end to the Acacian Schism, a pro-Roman position, to favoring the Scythian monks and their formula, an anti-Roman position (though why is unclear), appears to be the act of one who cares little for theology. It is, moreover, from his loyalty to the Scythian monks and his primary concern for his apparent home province that Ruscu produces his nationalist explanation.[18]

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[15] Ruscu, 783.

[16] Incidentally, this is an exact parallel for arguments about emperors, including Constantine and Justinian. Such arguments always begin by assuming a radical and anachronistic division between theology and politics and always end by concluding that the emperor favored one to the detriment of the other. These arguments tell us more about ourselves than our subjects, as they reflect the modern doctrine that religion might be separated from other aspects of culture, such as politics.

[17] Ruscu, 784.

[18] About Vitalian's primary concern for his home province, Ruscu says

In fact, Vitalian was keenly interested in championing Chalcedon and, so long as we do not assume it a 'slight likelihood that a military man [...] was well versed in the theological controversies of the age,'[19] it is not difficult to explain. I rather agree with Ruscu that one 'must not overlook [Vitalian's] links with the circle of the Scythian monks'[20] in seeking an explanation for his loyalty to Chalcedon, but this need not imply that the interest was not also his own. There is nothing about the profession of a soldier that necessarily implies a lack of interest in the nature of God, especially in an age when soldiers look to that God for victory in battle.[21] But one point of Vitalian's biography gave him more than a usual motivation to be interested in theological controversy. His uncle was the Patriarch Macedonius who, though willing to sign the *Henotikon*, was a convinced Chalcedonian.[22] Macedonius's support of Chalcedon may have been what earned him an order of exile from the emperor Anastasius in 511.[23] There is textual evidence that the deposition of Macedonius

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this: 'Vitalian's political outlook was rather narrow: he contented himself with the command of the troops in Thrace at a time when he could have asked for much more, even if only to extort as much as possible from the besieged Emperor. This attitude reveals a military commander whose interests were restricted to his own world, which is a provincial one—Vitalian did not seem to intend to make politics on Imperial level.' Ruscu, 784. Of course, Vitalian's failure to secure lasting victory, his defeats in the field, and his inability to produce a larger revolt or to build a coalition against Anastasius might also help to explain why his concerns remained provincial.

[19] Ruscu, 784.

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] Nor, it should be added, is it enough in this world to worship just any God. A leader's incorrect beliefs about God can lead to military disaster. See the Arian emperor Valens's disastrous defeat and fall at Adrianople in Walter Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Decline of Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 224–28 and also Rochelle Snee, 'Valens' Recall of the Nicene Exiles and Anti-Arian Propaganda,' *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 26 (Winter 1985): 407.

[22] See *ODB*, 'Vitalian.'

[23] As Bury has it, 'The Monophysites represented him as plotting against

precipitated or at least provided an excuse for Vitalian's revolt.[24] The memory of Macedonius would be one of the keys to the restored unity between Rome and Constantinople and by 518 had already become a rallying cry of the Chalcedonian populace of Constantinople.[25] That the nephew of this Macedonius would not himself have a personal stake in Chalcedon is implausible. If this seems to imply a personal rather than a purely theological interest in theological controversy, I would say that it shows rather that theological controversies were also personal.

Whatever his interests or loyalties, circumstances produced in Vitalian a symbol of Chalcedonian orthodoxy. The Scythian monks were well placed, therefore, with their connection to Vitalian, to receive a sympathetic hearing of their claims. Vitalian's prestige offered some protection against doubts about their own orthodoxy, while at the same time lent credibility to the claim that they too were acting in defense of Chalcedon. But as important as this connection to Vitalian was it was insufficient to ensure that the Scythian monks' views were approved. Above all, as we have seen, Vitalian's prestige was inadequate to overcome the strength of Dioscorus's position. It

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the Emperor, while the orthodox asserted that he was deposed because he declined to give up the profession of orthodoxy signed by the Emperor at his coronation.' Bury, 1.438.

[24] Thus the chronicler Victor Tunnunensis, whose entry for this year is both short and important enough to quote in full: 'Boetio v.c. consule, Vitalianus comes Patricioli filius, fidei catholice subuersionem et sinodi Calcidonensis damnationem remotionemque orthodoxorum episcoporum atque successiones hereticorum cognoscens, uirorum fortium ualidam manum congregat et Anastasii imperio rebellat.' *Victoris Tunnunensis Chronicon cum reliquiis ex Consularibus Caesaraugustanis et Iohannis Biclarensis Chronicon*, ed. C. Cardelle de Hartmann. *CCSL* 173A (Turnhout, 2001), a. 510. Cf. Ruscu, 773, fn. 4.

[25] Thus the crowds, clamoring for the restoration of Chalcedon upon the death of Anastasius, had shouted, 'τὸ λείψανον Μακεδονίου τῇι ἐκκλησίαι· ἐν τούτοις ἀεὶ νικήσεις. Εὐφημίου καὶ Μακεδονίου τὰ ὀνόματι ἄρτι ταγῆι. τελείαν ἑορτὴν τῇι ἐκκλησίαι. τοὺς ψευδομάτυρας Μακεδονίου ἔξω βάλε.' *ACO* 3.5.27.74.36–75.2.

may, however, have led to another connection which would eventually effect such approval.

## THE THEOPASCHITE FORMULA REJECTED

The theopaschite controversy itself begins with a group of monks who had arrived in Constantinople before the delegation of Hormisdas.[26] Much of what we know about the beginnings of the controversy, however, must be gleaned from the reports the delegation sent back to Rome contained in the *Collectio Avellana*.[27] In a way, this places us in a situation similar to that of Hormisdas, depending primarily on the witness of the deacon Dioscorus and his colleagues, the main difference being that we have access to later writings of the Scythian monks to compare with Dioscorus's claims.

From his earliest reports on the Scythian monks, Dioscorus is kind enough to the historian to make his biases clear. In Letter 216 of the *Collectio Avellana*, after discussing some advances made in achieving the Roman See's goals with regard to Antioch, Dioscorus mentions the monks for the first time.

> And since these things are being advanced, and in them the catholic church daily prevails, the ancient plotter has stirred up the monks of Scythia, who are of the house of the *magister militum* Vitalian, enemies of the prayers of all Christians, whose disturbance begets not a few obstacles to the unity of the church and a great many to the ordination in the aforementioned Antiochian church.[28]

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[26] 'Uictor diaconus dicitur: quidam cum isto, antequam nos Constantinopolim ingrederemur [...]' *CA,* Letter 224.2–3.

[27] The paucity of primary sources on the subject is bested only by the paucity of secondary sources. The most complete narrative summary of events remains É. Amann, 'Scythes (Moines),' *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* 14/2 (Paris, 1941): 1746–53.

[28] 'et quia ista aguntur et in his cotidie proficit ecclesia catholica, insidiator antiquus excitauit monachos de Scythia, qui de domo magistri militum Uitaliani sunt, omnium Christianorum uotis aduersarious, quorum inquietudo non pauas moras generauit unitati ecclesiarum et magnopere de

That the devil is responsible for the activities of the Scythian monks cannot be doubted if we are to take Dioscorus's word. For when one discusses the Council of Chalcedon, these obscurantist monks, enemies of Christian prayers, only showed it to be 'doubtful and unsound and opened to the error of all heresies.' [29] If we take Dioscorus's word, the monks appear openly opposed to Chalcedon. In his first letter on the Scythian monks, both in tone and in content, Dioscorus does not attempt to report events at Constantinople so much as to shape perceptions in Rome.

The difference in tone can be seen most clearly when it is compared to the report sent at the same time in the name of the bishops, Germanus and John, the priest Blandus, as well as Dioscorus.[30] This report is clearly opposed to the Scythian monks, for reasons we will discuss momentarily, but it is also more detailed and does not engage in the kind of invective we find in Dioscorus's letter. The worst description of the monks is 'impediments' to the unity of the churches, a heavy charge but at least rhetorically not on the level of an outright alliance with the devil.[31]

Recognizing therefore that the earliest reports on the Scythian monks sent to Rome were opposed to them and their activities, we can turn to the specific charges. After mentioning the Scythian monks' opposition to the Antiochian ordination, though not, it should be said, saying why they objected, Dioscorus levels the first of five charges against them. He warns that these monks 'hasten to Rome hoping to have a number of capitula confirmed by your beatitude.'[32] For Dioscorus, the most objectionable of these seems to be

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praedictae ecclessiae Antiochenae ordinatione.' *CA,* Letter 216.5.

[29] 'non, quasi non intellegentes, nisi conantes per subtilitatem ad hoc nos adducere, ut disputetur de synodo Calcedonensi. Quod si factum fuerit, dubia et infirma ostenditur et haereticorum omnium patuit errori.' *CA,* Letter 216.9.

[30] I.e. Letter 217, dated June 29, 519, along with Letter 216.

[31] 'harum tamen tribulationem prouisores et socii et unitatis ecclesiarum impedimenta monachi de Scythia fuerunt [...]' *CA,* Letter 216.5.

[32] 'isti monachi [...] Romam festinant sperantes aliquanta capitula a beatitudine uestra confirmari.' *CA,* Letter 216.6.

the explicitly theopaschite chapter, but it is telling that his objection is not to the theopaschite formula, as such, but to something else. 'It is in these, among other things, where they want to say, "One of the Trinity [was] crucified," which is said neither in the holy synod nor in the letter of holy Pope Leo nor in ecclesiastical custom.'[33] This is telling for several reasons. First, it reminds us that the theopaschite controversy, indeed I would go so far as to say most of the controversies in the sixth century, is not about theology in a narrow sense. What we have here, rather, is a reflection of the phenomenon Patrick Gray explicated in "'The Select Fathers': Canonizing the Patristic Past."[34] By the sixth century, it is not uncommon for the criterion of truth for theological claims to be its verbal inclusion in a text by one of a select canon of patristic texts. Theological argument in this context does not concern itself strictly with the truth or falsity of abstract propositions about God. At heart, most theological arguments in this period are about canon and therefore ultimately about authority. Dioscorus scoffs at the Scythian suggestion not because it is untrue *per se* or even because it is not a natural extension of principles approved in the canon he accepts, but because it does not derive explicitly from a canonical text.

A second reason Dioscorus's complaint is so telling is in how he chooses to describe the canon. The theopaschite formula, thus stated, is 'neither in the holy synod nor in the letter of holy Pope Leo nor in ecclesiastical custom.' The west generally, and Dioscorus acting as representative of Rome particularly, had a peculiar way of viewing the Council of Chalcedon. It was the holy synod, certainly, but statements such as this, so frequent in this material, consistently imply that it was a holy synod *because* it confirmed the letters of holy Pope Leo. Yet as Gray has shown elsewhere, and as the east understood, Chalcedon was in important ways a Cyrillian council.[35] This

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[33] 'est in ipsis inter cetera, ubi uolunt dicere unum de trinitate crucifixum, quod est nec in sanctis synodis dictum nec in epistolis sanctis papae Leonis nec in consuetudine ecclesiastica.' *Ibid.*

[34] Patrick Gray, "'The Select Fathers': Canonizing the Patristic Past,' *Studia Patristica* 23 (1989): 21–36.

[35] Gray, *Defense of Chalcedon*, passim.

fact is most graphically illustrated in how the *Tome* of Leo is ultimately received at Chalcedon. To be sure, the acts famously record that it was greeted with shouts of 'Peter has uttered this through Leo.' But the standards by which the fathers of Chalcedon judged Leo's *Tome* quickly becomes clear.

> Peter has uttered through Leo. The apostles taught accordingly. Leo taught piously and truly. Cyril taught accordingly. Eternal is the memory of Cyril. Leo and Cyril taught the same. Leo and Cyril taught accordingly. Anathema to him who does not believe accordingly! This is the true faith.[36]

Leo is received in this context as teaching the true faith because the *Tome* is judged compatible with Cyril's teaching. This is the way eastern Chalcedonians continued to view Chalcedon and it doubtless shaped the strategy of the Scythian monks when they presented the theopaschite formula which itself derives directly from a Cyrillian text.

Dioscorus's first complaint points us therefore to a fundamental problem in the theological discourse of the age. Gray rightly stated that 'sixth-century theologians conceived of themselves as the organizers and harmonizers of the sacred and intrinsically complete tradition.'[37] While Gray's article was focused on the east, especially the Chalcedonian east, I would suggest his statement applies equally well to the west. But the west's conception of that sacred and intrinsically complete tradition, that is of the canon itself, differed from

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[36] Price trans., *Council of Chalcedon*, 2:24–25. Price and Gaddis point to another equally telling passage as well: 'Theodoret of Cyrrhus, the champion of the Antiochene party, defended Leo by pointing out, 'There is a similar instance in the blessed Cyril which contains the words, "He became man without shedding what was his own, for he remained what he was; he is certainly conceived as one dwelling in another, that is, the divine nature in what is human".' (II.26) Nothing could be more indicative of the mood of the council than the fact that even Theodoret had to defend the Tome by appealing to the authority of Cyril.' Price trans., *Council of Chalcedon*, 1:65–6.

[37] Gray, 'Select Fathers', 35.

the east's. Thus one person's traditionalist claim becomes another's destructive innovation. The Roman delegation's failure to understand Chalcedon as the eastern Chalcedonians had made it impossible for them to understand what was central to the Scythian monks' position: that the theopaschite formula was a defense of Chalcedon. Far from rejecting the Council which had affirmed the *Tome* of Leo, the theopaschite confession was calculated to show that the Council and its supporters were above reproach. Instead of trying to understand this in his role as papal representative, correspondent, and confidant, Dioscorus attempts to guide Hormisdas's view of the theopaschite formula, even as the Scythians monks are *en route* to Rome.

Dioscorus's second complaint against the Scythian monks is that their formula, if approved, 'would produce no small number of dissensions and scandals among the churches.'[38] His complaint again is not primarily concerned with the truth or falsity of the formula. Even so, it is not inappropriate that he, who was sent as part of a delegation to end a schism, should be concerned to avoid anything that might precipitate dissension and scandal. It is somewhat ironic that, outside the dispute with Paternus which began the controversy, the greatest dissension and scandal over the theopaschite formula would be produced in the delegation itself. Even so, seeing the dispute as it played out with Paternus might have led Dioscorus to the conclusion that broader controversy among Chalcedonians would be inevitable should theopaschism become an issue. It is only in light of this that his third complaint can be explained. For the third complaint, if we assume the truth of the theopaschite formula was the primary at issue, is a textbook case of the genetic fallacy.

> The emperor Anastasius hastened particularly to impose this upon the catholics, and the disciples of Eutyches proposed it in the Synod of Chalcedon, since whenever the fathers debated concerning the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son, they

[38] 'quod si permittitur fieri, mihi uidetur dissensiones aut scandala non mediocria nasci inter ecclesias.' *CA,* Letter 216.6.

> said the Son of God, the Word consubstantial with the Father was *homoousios* with the Father.[39]

We should take this complaint to mean that the appearance of the claim, rather than its substance, is objectionable on account of its connection to Anastasius and the 'disciples of Eutyches.' To read this otherwise would be to suggest uncharitably that this Dioscorus regarded a basically Nicene claim as false merely because those he regarded heretics had said something similar. The association of this language with Anastasius and Eutyches, if we read this charitably, is probably meant to reinforce the prior claim that the Scythian monks' formula would lead to dissensions and scandals. Indeed, recalling how the Akoimetoi would oppose the theopaschite formula, much as they had the earlier changes to the Trisagion, we may see that Dioscorus at least sized up the pro-Roman monks of Constantinople well.

Dioscorus's fourth and fifth complaints against the Scythian monks tell us quite as much as the earlier complaints. The hard line Dioscorus takes comes out most clearly when he describes what would in fact be acceptable for the monks to say.

> Whence it seems to me there is no other sound response to give that is both useful and in keeping with the peace of the church except that "The holy synod of Chalcedon suffices, wherein also

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[39] 'istud Anastasius imperator magnopere catholicis imponere festinauit, istud et Eutychetis discipuli in synodo Calcedonensi proposuerunt, quia quotienscumque patres de dei filio domino nostro Iesu Christo disputauerunt, filium dei uerbum consubstantialem patri, homousion patri dixerunt.' *CA,* Letter 216.7. Indicating that there are theological implications to this, Dioscorus proceeds to say, 'iste autem sermo ideo numquam est in synodis a patribus introductus, quia procul dubio catholicae fidei minime poterat conuenire. cuius si subtiliter adtendatur intentio, ad quantas haereses pateat et quae mala per eu possint disputationibus ecclesiasticis introduci, quoniam longum est, praesentes insinuare poterimus.' *ibid*. 216.7–8. Unfortunately, despite his continual implications, Dioscorus never explains to us either how this would lead to heresy or to what heresies it would lead.

> the others synods are maintained; the epistles of Pope Leo suffice, which the synod confirmed; we neither wish nor ought to introduce innovation into the church."[40]

Much of the letter has been building up to this complaint. Dioscorus will quickly contrast his position, that Chalcedon suffices, with that of the Scythian monks. What is evident here, however, is a kind of inflexibility that makes negotiation impossible, perhaps intentionally.[41] A statement such as this may reflect in part of the position of the delegation itself. One recalls what strict instructions they were sent with. Given such instructions, the slightest deviation would undoubtedly seem to risk the project as a whole. Indeed after the fifth and final complaint Dioscorus indicates as much, warning a failure of all they had tried to accomplish.

> Among other things, if after the Chalcedonian synod, if after the epistles of Pope Leo, if after the *libelli* which bishops gave and give and by which they have made satisfaction to the apostolic seat again some new thing is added, so it seems me that whatever was built up is torn down.[42]

Acting under strict instructions from Rome as ambassador to a penitent Constantinople, it is little surprise that Dioscorus should be so hardened in his position.[43]

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[40] 'unde sanum mihi uidetur et utile et ad pacem ecclesiarum conueniens nihil aliud responsum dare nisi 'sufficit sanctum Calcedonense concilium, in quo et aliae synodi continentur; sufficiunt epistolae papae Leonis, quas synodus confirmauit; nouitatem in ecclesiam introducere nec uolumus nec debeumus'.' *CA,* Letter 216.8.

[41] Recall that the delegation was instructed not to negotiate.

[42] 'inter alia si post synodum Calcedonensem, si post epistolas papae Leonis, si post libellos, quos dederunt et dant episcopi et per ipsos satisfecerunt sedi apostolicae, iterum aliquid nouum addatus, sic mihi uidetur, quia quicquid factum est destruitur.' *CA,* Letter 216.10.

[43] That Dioscorus was anxious make clear to Hormisdas how closely he was adhering to the instructions is evident from an earlier passage concerning the choice of Paul for the See of Antioch: 'uolerunt et temptauerunt hic eum ordinare; ego iussionis uestrae non immemor contradixi dicens

Even so, if Dioscorus's fifth complaint has any veracity, he had every reason to believe that negotiation with the Scythian monks would not be a productive use of time. The fifth complaint is a clear contrast with the fourth. Where Dioscorus would say that 'Chalcedon suffices', the monks slyly attacked Chalcedon by saying that it did not suffice against Nestorianism.[44] According to Dioscorus, they customarily proceed to ask that Chalcedon be explained to them only in an effort to point out the council's inadequacies.

This image of the Scythians as meddling, undiplomatic troublemakers, is seconded by the letter addressed to Hormisdas from the whole delegation sent along with Dioscorus's letter. Yet the language of this letter presents us with an interesting comparison, as was hinted above. On the one hand, Letter 217 has less tendency to attach unnecessary invective to its complaints about the Scythian monks and offers more details in its stead. On the other hand, a careful look at the language hints that, although the letter was addressed from the whole delegation, its main author may have been none other than Dioscorus.

The first evidence for this claim comes from Disocorus's habitual use of *magnopere* which also makes an appearance also in 217.[45] Likewise, *intentio* is frequently used in both letters to cover a relatively wide range of circumstances where any number of other expressions could have been chosen.[46] The close verbal parallels between certain passages, however, provides the strongest evidence. One may point, for example, to a semblance in how each letter describes the Scythian monks' immediate plans.

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'iussit domnus noster beatissimus papa secundum antiquam consuetudinem ibi eum episcopum ordinari'. hoc obtinuit, quod praecepistis.' *CA,* Letter 216.4.

[44] 'Est in propositione eorum callida et hoc dicere 'nos synodum Calcedonensem suscepimus; hoc speramus, ut iubeatis nobis eam exponere. Quia non suffcit sic, quomodo est exposita, contra haeresim Nestoriam'.' *CA,* Letter 216.9.

[45] See *CA*, Letters 216.1, 216.5, 216.7, 217.8.

[46] See *CA*, Letters 216.4, 216.8, 217.7, 217.11.

| Letter 216.6 | Letter 217.7–8 |
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| isti monachi, inter quos est Leontius, qui se dicit parentem esse magistri militum, Romam festinant sperantes aliquanta capitula a beatitudine uestra confirmari. est in ipsis inter cetera, ubi uolunt dicere unum de trinitate crucifixum [...] | magnopere praedicti monachi ad Italiam uenientes aliquanta capitula proponere habent, inter quae et 'unum de trinitate crucifixum' continetur, sperantes ita confirmari ex auctoritate beatudinis uestra. |

Some of the similarity can of course be accounted for by the like circumstances each letter describes. Even so, other similar passages may be cited and taken together with the other aspects of the letters mentioned above they build a plausible case that Dioscorus is largely responsible for this letter written in the name of the whole delegation.[47]

If Dioscorus is indeed responsible for drafting reports written in the name of the whole committee, it merely reinforces an image of him and his position that has been building all along. Whatever his formal position within the delegation, the deacon is its most influential member. He speaks for the delegation and, more importantly, he is able to manipulate and control the flow of information. Of those letters sent between the delegation and Hormisdas surviving in the *Collectio Avellana*, the majority are to and from the delegation as a whole. It is only with Dioscorus, however, that we find letters to and from an individual member.[48] The slight change in tone between Letter 216 and 217, whoever may have written the latter, may also reflect the difference between the informal relationship between Dioscorus and Hormisdas, on the one hand, and the official mission of the delegation, on the other.

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[47] For other parallels, cf., e.g., the almost nervous insistence that the papal instructions were followed (at *CA*, Letters 216.4 and 217.6) and the cirumlocuitous manner of naming the Antiochian priest (*CA*, Letters 216.4 and 217.4).

[48] By my count there are seven letters to (170, 219. 221, 226–29) and seven letters from (185, 213, 214, 217, 218, 223, 225) the delegation. There are two letters each to (173, 175) and from (21 224) Dioscorus personally.

Letter 217 offers us further information and complaints that Letter 216 does not. It gives further detail about the dispute involving the appointment of Paul as bishop of Antioch.[49] As we have seen, it details Vitalian's promotion of the Scythian monks and the emperors intervention which was crucial to quelling the dispute developing between Vitalian and Paternus, the bishop of Tomis. It includes also a discussion of the adequacy of Chalcedon and the writings of Pope Leo which closely follows what we have already seen in Letter 216.[50]

Most interesting, however, is an additional and rather damning detail meriting our attention. It is evident enough, both from this letter, Letter 216, and indeed from the Scythian monks' own writings, that they felt the theopaschite formula would prove helpful to exonerate Chalcedon from the charge of Nestorianism. There is every reason to believe that they thought the charge unjust but that for reasons of placating anti-Chalcedonians and preventing Nestorian resurgence the formula was advisable. If, however, we are to trust the delegation's witness we must contend with this odd claim:

> [The Scythian monks] did not put the future judgment before their eyes, openly saying, "All who were communing with the apostolic seat are Nestorians" and more from them that they ought not to believe, who only lately seem recalled to the apostolic seat.[51]

To the eyes of the Roman bishop, a heretical charge pronounced against all in communion with Rome would be worthy of condemnation indeed. I do not call the claim odd, however, simply because it features an accusation against Rome. John Maxentius, at the very least, was perfectly capable of writing against an author whom he

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[49] *CA,* Letter 217.1.

[50] *CA,* Letter 217.9.

[51] 'non posuerunt ante oculos suos futurum iudicium palam dicentes 'omnes, qui sedi apostolicae communicabant, Nestoriani sunt' et magis illis non debere credere, qui modo uidentur ad communionem sedis apostolicae reuocati.' *CA,* Letter 217.3.

had reason to believe was the bishop of Rome.[52] It is an odd claim because it reports in direct discourse a charge of heresy made against Rome, all the while employing one of Rome's preferred legitimating honorifics. It would strain credibility to suggest that this is a literal transcription of the Scythian monks' words. Of course, we ought always suspect speech reported in our sources, doubly when the witness is so clearly hostile. But given what we have seen thus far, it is not unfair to observe how the reports of Dioscorus and the delegation are manipulated to produce an image of the Scythian monks as aggressive heretics who undermine the work of the delegation, the Council of Chalcedon, and the authority of Pope Leo. In the very next letter, Dioscorus goes so far as to make this claim about the monks:

> Yet your beatitude should know that these Scythians say all who accept Chalcedon are Nestorians, saying, "the synod does not suffice against Nestorius," and so the synod ought to be received in the way they have explained it.[53]

This claim, like that we have just seen from Letter 217, is problematic on the face of it. To say categorically on the one hand 'all who accept Chalcedon are Nestorians' and on the other hand that Chalcedon ought to be accepted if it understood correctly is to possess a unique flexibility of mind. The claim Dioscorus makes at the beginning of the sentence, that the Scythians believe Chalcedonians to be Nestorians, is probably best understood as Dioscorus's own explication of the Scythians' belief that Chalcedon is liable to a Nestorian interpre-

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[52] See *CCSL* 85A.7(B), 123–53, 'Responsio Maxenti Ioannis servi Dei adversus epistulam quam ad Possessorem a Romano episcopo dicunt haeretici destinatam'. This was a response to the letter contained in the same volume and tellingly entitled, 'Epistula quae dicuntur esse papae Hormisdae ad Possessorem episcopum Africae qui est Constantinopoli.' *CCSL* 85A.7(A), 115–21.

[53] 'isti tamen Scythae sciat beatitudo uestro quia omnes accipientes synodum Calcedonensum Nestorianos dicunt dicentes 'non sufficit synodus contra Nestorium' et sic debere synodum suscipere, quomodo ispi exposuerint.' *CA,* Letter 224.7.

tation. Likewise, Letter 217 is less about giving the facts of what the Scythian monks did or did not say and more about shaping how the Scythian monks would be heard. With their position as the gatekeepers of information between Rome and Constantinople, the delegation was able to exercise influence through the shaping of information. A reader today, however, has an advantage that Hormisdas did not at first have. We can counter-balance Dioscorus's influence by looking at the actual writings of the Scythian monks and fit their meaning into the broader context of Chalcedonianism.

## The Scythians' Views

Strictly speaking, it cannot be known for certain whether the Scythians accused Chalcedonians generally or Rome particularly of heresy while in Constantinople. We only have Dioscorus's and the delegation's witness to support such an allegation. If they were guilty of this allegation, they were singularly terrible diplomats, hostile to much of what the imperial and papal courts had accomplished when mending the Acacian Schism. The decision of such tin-eared monks to bring their arguments to Rome would also appear inexplicable. One does not travel to sixth-century Rome with the express purpose of informing the pope that all those who subscribe to Chalcedon are heretics and expect to receive a good hearing. Such an account is wholly implausible. But despite his hostility, one cannot dismiss Dioscorus's witness out of hand.

We are not, however, at a loss. For although we cannot have certainty about events in Constantinople, we can build greater confidence about the value of the delegation's witness and the Scythian monks' purpose. We are fortunate to possess the *aliquanta capitula* for which the monks sought Roman approval. Twelve capitula come down to us by the name "Capitula Maxenti Ioannis edita contra Nestorianos et Pelagianos ad satisfactionem fratrum."[54] These are presumed to be the *aliquanta capitula* of Dioscorus's complaint and

[54] The most recent edition may be found *CCSL* 85A, 29–30. They may also be found in *ACO* 4.2 (Argentorati, 1914), 'Iohannis Maxentii Libelli,' 10 and *PG* 86.1, 87a-88b, 'Eisdem contra Nestorianos capitula.'

there is little reason to doubt this presumption. Indeed, there is, as we shall see, some direct correspondence between Dioscorus's complaints and some of the capitula. As Fr. Glorie, editor of the Scythian writings for the *Corpus Christianorum*, explains:

> Sed 'antequam (die 25.III.519) legati Constantinopolim ingrederentur', Scythae monachi 'Victorem diaconum Constantinopolitanum uehementer accusabant' haereticum, et "cum eo habuerunt intentionem de 'uno de trinitate crucifixo' et de 'Christo composito', et de allis capitulis".
>
> Referri uidetur ad Capitula XII Maxentii, in quorum quarto agitur de 'uno de trinitate crucifixo', in nono uero de 'Christo composito', et in secundo de 'Maria dei genetrice'.[55]

It is with some confidence, therefore, that we may compare the capitula with the delegation's complaints to get a better sense of the Scythian monks' manner of argument from their own writings.

Perhaps it is worth pointing out some striking features of the anathemas at the outset. The fact that they are numbered twelve combined with much of their content is an obvious allusion to Cyril of Alexandria's third dogmatic letter to Nestorius. But their purpose is made unmistakable with the first anathema.

> If anyone does not confess in our Lord Jesus Christ two natures united, that is of divinity and humanity, as if one nature of God the Word incarnate, and one nature of the God the Word incarnate as two united in one subsistence and person, according to which the venerable synod of Chalcedon delivers to us, let him be anathema.[56]

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[55] *CCSL* 85A, xxiv.

[56] 'Si quis non confitetur in domino nostro Iesu Christo duas naturas unitas, hoc est diuinitatis et humanitatis, ac si unam naturam dei uerbi incarnatam, et unam naturam dei uerbi incarnatam sicut duas unitas in una subsistentia atque persona, secundum quod nobis ueneranda synodus Chalcidonensis, anathema sit.' *CCSL* 85A, 29–30.

From the beginning the anathemas, including their frequent allusions to Cyril's dogmatic letter, are framed as a defense of Chalcedon.[57] What we have here is a clear and conscious effort of the Scythians to maintain both Chalcedon and Cyril in a single document. Their efforts were successful enough in this regard that one could begin by comparing the Scythian anathemas with those of either Cyril or with Chalcedon. The former option is used here only because the similarity of genre makes it convenient.

Allusions to Cyril's third dogmatic letter abound in the anathemas the Scythian monks would eventually carry to Rome. The second Scythian anathema shows a concern to emphasize Mary's role as Mother of God.

> If anyone does not confess that holy Mary [is] properly and truly mother of God, but because of such honor this name is assigned to her, since she bore a man who is called God according to grace, but not since she bore God incarnate and made man, let him be anathema.[58]

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[57] That the Scythians depend upon Chalcedon and the twelve anathemas of Cyril has been recognized by others. As Fr. McGuckin says, 'The Theopaschites proposed a reconciliation on the Christological basis of Chalcedon, but this was re-interpreted through the originating prism of Cyril's early theology, particularly as demonstrated in the twelve anathemas.' He notes further: 'The twelve anathemas were appended by Cyril to his third letter to Nestorius. [...] The theology manifested in the twelfth anathema owes something to Athanasius, Ad Epictetum 59.2: 'who have been so reckless as to say that Christ who suffered in the flesh and was crucified is not Lord, Saviour, God and Son of the Father?' This latter text was held in great veneration at Chalcedon.' McGuckin, 240. Given how clear this connection is, I do not here set out to prove it again. My purpose is chiefly to give a sense of what the Scythian monks were proposing for the sake of comparison with Dioscorus's reports.

[58] 'Si quis non confitetur proprie et uere sanctam Mariam dei genetricem, sed propter honorem tantum hoc ei nomen tribuit, quia peperit hominem qui secundum gratiam dicitur deus, non autem quia peperit deum incarnatum et hominem factum, anathema sit.' Likewise, Anathema 5 reads, 'Si quis puerum illum quem sancta uirgo Maria genuit, non confitetur natura

This reflects Cyril's well-known insistence on this point, a point which crowns his broader Christological argument, taking first place in his own anathemas.

> Whoever does not acknowledge Emmanuel to be truly God and hence the holy Virgin 'Mother of God' (for she gave fleshly birth to the Word of God made flesh) shall be anathema.[59]

Another important aspect receiving similar treatment occurs in the third anathema of both lists (doubtless itself an intentional parallel). In his third anathema, Cyril emphasized unity of the one Christ as a person (ὑποστάσις).

> Whoever divides the subjects (ὑποστάσεις) in respect to the one Christ after the union, joining them together just in a conjunction involving rank i.e. sovereignty or authority instead of a combination involving actual union (συνόδῳ τῇ καθ' ἕνωσιν φυσικήν) shall be anathema.[60]

The third anathema offered by the Scythians, by comparison, is built from Latin equivalents of Cyril's Greek original.

> If anyone does not confess a substantial or natural unity (substantialem siue naturalem unitatem) according to which, while remaining God by nature, the Word was united with human nature, but he says the actual or personal unity (substantialiem siue personalem dicit unitatem) [is] either according to illumination

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deum et per ipsum fact omnia uisibilia et inuisibilia, cælestia et terrestria, conditoremque omnium, deum fortem, principem pacis, patrem futuri sæculi, anathema sit.' *CCSL* 85A, 29–30.

[59] 'Εἴ τις οὐχ ὁμολογεῖ θεὸν εἶναι κατὰ ἀλήθειαν τὸν Ἐμμανουὴλ καὶ διὰ τοῦτο θεοτόκον τὴν ἁγίαν παρθένον (γεγέννηκε γὰρ σαρκικῶς σάρκα γεγονότα ἐκ θεοῦ λόγον), ἀνάθεμα ἔστω.' *ACO* I.1.1, 41; translation here from Cyril of Alexandria, *Select Letters*, ed. and trans. by Lionel R. Wickham (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1983), 29.

[60] 'Εἴ τις ἐπὶ τοῦ ἑνὸς Χριστοῦ διαιρεῖ τὰς ὑποστάσεις μετὰ τὴν ἕνωσιν, μόνῃ συνάπτων αὐτὰς συναφείᾳ τῇ κατὰ τὴν ἀξίαν ἢ γοῦν αὐθεντίαν ἢ δυναστείαν καὶ οὐχὶ δὴ μᾶλλον συνόδῳ τῇ καθ' ἕνωσιν φυσικήν, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω.'; *Ibid*.; trans. *Ibid.*

> or according to love or according to affection, let him be anathema.[61]

Although instances could be multiplied further, this should give a clear idea of the Scythian monks' dependence on Cyril's anathemas in producing their own. But we still have to look at a key point of comparison, the point most notable for our purposes. Cyril's second and twelfth anathemas both speak in terms of the flesh of Christ. Thus we find the following in the second anathema:

> Whoever does not acknowledge the Word of God the Father to have been substantially united with flesh and to be one Christ along with his own flesh, that is the same at once God and man, shall be anathema.[62]

Humanity, as it is here understood, is not complete without its bodily aspect. Therefore just as Cyril affirmed Christ's united divinity and humanity by calling Mary *theotokos*, so here he affirms that God the Word had has his own flesh. The flesh, however, has many qualities one would not normally attribute to the divinity. Among these, of course, is being born of a human woman, but there are other aspects of humanity that Cyril ascribes to the Word of God. In his twelfth anathema, he does not hesitate even to say that God died and to anathematize those who reject this.

> Whoever does not acknowledge God's Word as having suffered in the flesh, been crucified in the flesh, tasted death in flesh and

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[61] 'Si quis non confitetur substantialem siue naturalem unitatem secundum id quod manens natura deus uerbum naturæ est unitus humanæ, sed substantialiem siue personalem dicit unitatem aut secundum inlustrationem siue secundum dilectionem aut secundum affectionem, anathema sit.' *CCSL* 85A, 29–30.

[62] 'Εἴ τις οὐχ ὁμολογεῖ σαρκὶ καθ' ὑπόστασιν ἡνῶσθαι τὸν ἐκ θεοῦ πατρὸς λόγου ἕνα τε εἶναι Χριστοῦ μετὰ τῆς ἰδίας σαρκὸς, τὸν αὐτὸν δηλονότι θεόν τε ὁμοῦ καὶ ἄνθρωπον, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω.' *ACO* I.1.1, 41; trans. Wickham, 29.

> been made first-born from the dead because as God he is Life and life-giving, shall be anathema.[63]

A Cyrillian confession, in this case, is a theopaschite confession. Following Cyril in this, the Scythian monks offer their confession in the form of the fourth anathema of their list:

> If anyone does not agree to confess that Christ [is] 'one of the Trinity' even with his own flesh, who suffered in the flesh for us, though according to the flesh he may not be of the substance of the Trinity but he may be of the same [flesh] from us, let him be anathema.[64]

The reason for their insistence on theopaschism is further illuminated in the sixth anathema. There they emphasize the unity of subject, of Christ and God, when speaking of his death.

> If anyone says Christ suffered in the flesh, but indeed does not agree to say that God suffered in the flesh, because that very one is understood as Christ who suffered in the flesh let him be anathema.[65]

The unity of subject for both Cyril and the Scythian monks requires that both Christ's miracles and his suffering both be ascribed to one and the same Word. They monks did not innovate on this point; they simply followed Cyril.[66] This makes it even more unlikely that they were so tin-eared as Dioscorus would have us believe.

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[63] 'Εἴ τις οὐχ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν τοῦ θεοῦ λόγον παθόντα σαρκὶ καὶ ἐσταυρωμένον σακρὶ καὶ θανάτου γευσάμενον τε πρωτότοκον ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, καθὸ ζωή τέ ἐστι καὶ ζωοποιὸς ὡς θεός, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω.' *Ibid.*; trans. *ibid.*

[64] 'Si quis non adquiescit confiteri Christum unum de trinitate etiam cum carne propria, qui pro nobis passus est carne, quamuis secundum carnem non sit de substantia trinitatis, sed sit idem ex nobis, anathema sit.' *CCSL* 85A, 29–30.

[65] 'Si quis dicit Christum passum carne, deum uero passum carne dicere non adquiescit, quod id ipsum intellegitur Christum passum carne, anathema sit.' *Ibid.*

[66] It is perhaps also worth noting that even the *Tome* of Leo contains theopaschite language. To give one example: Price, *Council of Chalcedon*,

However, I do not want to leave the impression that the monks did nothing but repeat Cyril. The Scythian monks' anathemas do differ from Cyril's in emphasis and content. Some of these differences are subtle, while others are quite obvious. However clear they are, the differences are not contradictions. If the ultimate purpose of the anathemas was to conciliate Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian, it would not be accomplished by a patchwork of Christological theses aimed alternately at satisfying one group before attending to the other. The monks had to show that Chalcedon and Cyril spoke with one voice, as one would expect of the select Fathers.

Even so, some lines in the Scythian anathemas were obviously crafted to appeal to western readers. Their first anathema, quoted above, could be taken as the central confession of the whole piece. Not only is it included first, but it speaks in the broadest terms of all the anathemas. At the heart of this confession is an insistence that Chalcedon held a diophysite Christology—an obvious enough point to be sure—but a diophysite Christology which could also be understood in terms of one nature. Hence they speak of the two natures united, 'as if one nature of God the Word incarnate, and one nature of God the Word incarnate as two united in one subsistence and person [...] which the venerable synod of Chalcedon delivers to us'.[67]

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2.19: '[...] the impassible God did not disdain being a passible man, nor the immortal one to submit to the laws of death.'

[67] It is interesting to note that later Chalcedonian tradition also held it possible to speak of 'one nature,' if this was understood after a Chalcedonian fashion. Such a question received an important treatment at the hands of St. Maximus the Confessor, especially when he attempted to address the difficulty of Pseudo-Dionysius's formulation, 'one theandric energy.' Likewise, St. John of Damascus dealt directly with Cyril's 'one incarnate nature of God the Word' formula, at once holding it to be orthodox and Chalcedonian if properly understood. See *Saint John of Damascus: Writings*, trans. Frederic H. Chase, Jr. (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1958), 55. We might note also a fact of even more importance, for our purposes: i.e. the declaration in Canon 8 of the Fifth Ecumenical Council of 553 in Constantinople, holds the formula 'one nature of God the Word incarnate' orthodox when it is understood to

The eighth anathema offers another example where the monks want to make their loyalty to Chalcedon abundantly obvious.

> If anyone does not confess two nativities in one Son of God: with the Word God, on the one hand, having been begotten of the Father before the ages, the very same one, on the other hand, having been born in the latter days from his mother, let him be anathema.[68]

No one reading this can have missed the unmistakable allusion to the formula of Chalcedon: '[...] begotten from the Father before the ages in respect of the Godhead, and the same in the last days for us and for our salvation from the Virgin Mary the Theotokos in respect of the manhood, one and the same Christ'.[69] The monks only trouble themselves to put a reference to the 'one Son of God' at the beginning to emphasize further his unity amidst two nativities.

Such are some of the more obvious pro-Chalcedonian claims in the Scythian anathemas. At this point, a curious inclusion bears mention. After proceeding through a list of nine anathemas focused on the kinds of Christological questions that so concerned the east, the final three anathemas take an unexpected detour into questions raised by the debates over Pelagianism. It is clear enough that these would have appealed to a western audience, especially in the final appeal made in anathema twelve to the apostolic seat.

> Likewise we anathematize every thought of Pelagius and Caelestius and of all who think like them, accepting all things which in diverse places have been enacted and written against them, by the prelates of the apostolic seat, i.e. by Innocentius,

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mean 'that from the divine and human natures a union was made according to subsistence, and that one Christ was formed'. Norman P. Tanner, ed. *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 1.117–18.

[68] 'Si quis non confitetur duas natiuitates in uno filio dei, deo uerbo, anta sæcula quidem nato de patre, in nouissimis autem temporibus eodem de matre genito, anathema sit.' *CCSL* 85A, 29–30.

[69] Price trans., *Council of Chalcedon*, 2.204.

> Boniface, Zosimus, Caelestinus, and Leo, and also by bishops, Atticus the Constantinopolitan and Augustine of the African province.[70]

It may be supposed that, at least to some extent, these were included to increase the appeal of a document overwhelmingly concerned with the controversy over natures to a western audience. It may also be supposed that the monks, who spoke and wrote in Latin, were unusually well informed and interested in arguments which would soon precipitate a council in Orange.

Yet another more interesting explanation for the inclusion of these final anathemas suggests itself. The Council of Ephesus in 431 had accepted Cyril's third letter to Nestorius, the letter which included his anathemas. Indeed, the council was largely concerned with the Christological questions which consumed the east. It must also be remembered, however, that the council condemned the Pelagian Caelestius. With Caelestius condemned by an ecumenical council, it was hardly necessary for the Scythian monks to condemn him again. But disputes concerning Pelagianism were again occurring in the west. By including in their anathemas a reference to Caelestius, amidst these several other anathemas derived from a Cyrillian document affirmed at Ephesus, the monks would remind their western readers of an important fact: the same ecumenical council which had once condemned Caelestius had also affirmed the substance of what they now wrote. This was even more reason for the west to consent to these anathemas which would ultimately be aimed at satisfying an anti-Chalcedonian audience of the orthodoxy of Chalcedon.

In short, the Scythian anathemas were no melange of condemnations, but together they made a carefully and diplomatically constructed document. They loudly affirmed Chalcedon and a diophysite Christology. They pointed to the authority of the apostolic seat

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[70] 'IB' Item anathematizamus omnem sensum Pelagii et Cælestii et omnium qui illis similia sapiunt, suscipientes omnia quæ in diuersis locis contra ipsos acta sunt et scripta a præsulibus apostolicæ sedis, id est Innocentio, Bonifatio, Zosimo, Cælestino et Leone, Attico etiam Constantinopolitano et Augustino Africanæ prouinciæ episcopis.' *CCSL* 85A, 29–30

and to Pope Leo by name. They argued that even that most miaphysite sounding formula, 'one incarnate nature of God the Word,' could and even should be understood in a Chalcedonian fashion. The west could consent to the anathemas, only confirming thereby that Chalcedon had been orthodox all along. An anti-Chalcedonian might consent, confirming thereby the orthodoxy had been Cyrillian. This is the kind of conciliatory approach that the Scythian monks had aimed for.

Recalling the complaints made in Letter 216, we begin to find contrast between Dioscorus and the Scythian anathemas on several points. In contrast to the first complaint, we find the monks attempting to establish their claims in the authority of the councils, especially of Chalcedon, of Cyril, and of the bishops of the apostolic seat. Likewise, Dioscorus's fourth and fifth complaints, regarding the adequacy of Chalcedon, contrast with the rhetoric of the anathemas. At no point do the anathemas present Chalcedon as inadequate in any way. One may well argue that they present a different, new Chalcedonianism which would have been foreign to the council itself. For the sake of argument, we could even accept this as correct. But it would remain that the monks never present their views as different or in any way new. For them to claim that the council was inadequate would be to undermine the key claim their list of anathemas could have to legitimacy in western eyes: that it was built upon Chalcedon.

We might further recall the charge leveled by the committee of legates in Letter 217 that the monks claimed, "All who were communing with the apostolic seat are Nestorians' and more from them that they ought not to believe, who only just seem recalled to the apostolic seat.'[71] The fact that in their anathemas the Scythian monks included positive references to the see of Rome. Rather than attacking Rome, as Dioscorus would present it, the textual evidence shows the approach of the monks to be conciliatory and aimed at pleasing and supporting the authority of the west wherever possible.

[71] *CA,* Letter 217.3.

Letter 217 adds a further complaint which could have scandalized an eastern reader if it were subject to too strict a reading:

> We have written what was seen by us; it is in your power to deliberate what God would command of you, seeing that they labor to assert this desiring in that way to satisfy themselves, that thus we might declare and say that one of the Trinity suffered, which neither the fathers nor the synods said.[72]

Of course, the difficulty here is that, as we saw above, the theopaschite claims of the Scythian anathemas were based on what one of the fathers, arguably the most important to debates in the east at the time, had written. What Cyril wrote might not hold as much weight with Dioscorus as with an average disputant in the east, but a denial of Cyril's patristic authority would only confirm to an eastern reader that a papal representative could be a crypto-Nestorian. It is unlikely that this is what Dioscorus meant, but it does reflect his tendency to inflate his charges against the monks wherever possible.

At this point, it becomes especially interesting to return to Letter 224. The monks had already departed when Dioscorus wrote this letter, but his attempts to keep a handle on circumstances had not left. Dioscorus makes no attempt here to discuss the actual content of the anathemas, doubtless knowing they are already in Hormisdas's possession. He prefers other approaches instead.

> You indicated to me a testimony given by them, that the heretics would not be joined to me. Whom they call heretics, I do not know, except perhaps those who accept the Chalcedonian synod, whom I call catholics.[73]

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[72] 'nobis quod uisum est, scripsimus; in uestra potestate est deliberare, quod uobis deus imperauerit, quoniam hoc illi nituntur asserere eo modo sibi satisfacere cupientes, ut ita profiteamur et dicamus unum de trinitate passume esse, quod nec patres nec synodi dixerunt.' *CA*, Letter 217.10

[73] 'significastis mihi ab illis contestationem datam, ut non mihi haeretici iungerentur. quos dicunt haereticos, ego ignoro, nisi illos forte, qui suscipiunt, quos ego catholicos dico.' *CA*, Letter 224.2

Since we do not have the letter written to Dioscorus, we cannot be certain of the contents of this testimony. But Dioscorus's snide comment on the matter is revealing. The first part of the letter gives some details worthy of note concerning Vitalian's intervention on the monks' behalf (which we will discuss later), but the second half of the letter is worth quoting now at length. It is important to bear in mind when reading it that the monks have already arrived in Rome and presented their written claims to the Pope.

> Yet let your beatitude know that the Scythae say all who accept Chalcedon are Nestorians, saying "the synod does not suffice against Nestorius" and so the synod ought to be received in the way they have explained it. What kind of men or what kind of intentions they have and what they want to introduce into the catholic faith, with the aid of God made plain to all Catholics nor does the case require my work, as God revealed it to the light by his own mercy. I, what I have learned from the fathers, what the catholic church always preserved, this I did not pass over in silence, I did not conceal it. God is one, about which Moses has spoken saying, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord God, your God, is One" and in another place he says, "the Lord alone was leading them." We believe the Trinity is of one substance, as I have said already, one deity, three persons, since we neither say many Gods believing that God is one, that is Father and Son and Holy Spirit, nor do we deny the three persons, lest we seem to follow the dogma of Sabellius. Certainly the person of the Son, that is of the Word of God, is consubstantial with the Father: the same [persona] was made flesh, the same dwelled in the womb of Mary, the same took up a human nature without sin, whence the Son of God made man was born of the Virgin Mary. For which reason we say and believe that she is *dei genitrix*, because the unity of divinity and humanity, which began to come to pass from which the angel Gabriel announced to Mary saying, "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Holy Spirit will come upon you" or otherwise, not such that he was divided in the womb but neither in the birth nor in the nourishment nor in the passion nor in the sepulchre nor in the resurrection nor in heaven is he separated since the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, is one, not divided in persons, not separated in natures nor different in power. The

same, on the other hand, supporting the passion, since all heresies either dividing as Nestorius or denying as Eutyches or not quite believing in the incarnation as Apollinarius or introducing a phantasm as Manes are broken off from the catholic faith: workmen of iniquity and enemies of the doctrine of the apostles. These things I have learned, these I have heard from our ancestors and, if perhaps we ought to follow something short of them, I do not know, with your beatitude having explained that it is necessary for me to follow. Yet Maxentius, because under the designation of abbot he says that he has his own congregation, if asked either with what monks he lived or in what monastery or under what abbot he was made a monk, he cannot say. Likewise also if I will have been willing to say the same of Achilles, I will have done a pointless thing; this suffices for him: ever to skulk in concealment, damned on account of his own conscience by all catholics.[74]

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[74] 'isti tamen Scythae sciat beatitudo uestra quia omnes accipients synodum Calcedonensum Nestorianos dicunt dicentes 'non sufficit synodus contra Nestorium' et sic debere synodum suscipere, quomodo ipsi exposuerint. qui homines quales sunt aut quales intentiones habent et quid uolunt in fide catholic introducere, cum dei adiutorio manifestatum est omnibus catholicis nec indiget causa meo labore, quam deus pro sua misericordia produxit ad lucem. ego, quod a patribus didici, quod semper ecclesia catholica seruauit, non tacui, non abscondi. unus est deus, de quo Moyses loqitur dicens: audi, Israel, dominus deus tuus deus unus est, et in alio loco ait: dominus solus ducebat eos. unius substantiae credimus trinitatem, quomodo praedixi, unam deitatem, tres personas negamus, ne Sabellii dogma uideamur sequi. uerum est personam filii, id est uerbi dei, consubstantialem patri: ipsa caro facta est, ispa in utero Mariae habitauit, ipsa naturam humanam suscepit sine peccato, unde filius dei homo factus natus est de uirgine Maria. propter quod eam dei genitricem dicimus et credimus, quia unitas diuinitatis et humanitatis, quae fieri coepta est ex quo Mariae angelus Grabihel annuntiauit dicens: aue Maria gratia pelna, spiritus sanctus superueniet in te uel cetera, non tantum in utero non est diuisa sed nec in partu nec in nutrimentis nec in passione nec in sepulchro nec in resurrectione nec in caelo separata est, quia unus est filius dei domi-

The latter half of Dioscorus's letter is, of course, a confession. But it is not a very challenging one for a Chalcedonian. It is not even a very informative one, for there is no reason to believe that Hormisdas, the intended audience of this confession, doubted Dioscorus's orthodoxy for even a moment. But the purpose here is not to inform. The purpose is to imply without saying that the Scythian monks would not subscribe to his confession. The purpose is to contrast himself, who has kept the Catholic faith and the instructions of the Pope, with John Maxentius, whose very abbacy is questionable. It is a purely rhetorical move, meant to leave a bad impression of the monks now that their works and words were actually in the presence of the pope.

It remains possible that the Scythian monks could have said in person the things about Chalcedon which Dioscorus ascribed to them. We cannot know with certainty, but it is rather implausible. Had the monks condemned all those who commune with the apostolic see, it would have made little sense for them to then have immediate recourse to the same when rejected by Dioscorus. It would have made even less sense for them to take communion upon their arrival. But in comparison with the kinds of things the Scythian monks actually wrote, these letters do tell us much of their own function.

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nus noster Iesus Christus, non in personis diuisis, non in naturis separatus neque in potentia diuersus. idem est namque et sustinens passionem, quia omnes haereses aut diuidens quomodo Nestorius aut negans quomodo Eutyches aut minus incarnationem credens quomodo Apollinarius aut fantasiam introducens quomodo Manes a fide catholica sunt incisae: homines operarii iniquitatis et hostes doctrinae apostolorum. ista didici, ista audiui a maioribus nostris et, si forte citra ista quid debeamus sequi ignoro, exponente beatitudine uestra necesse est me sequi. Maxentius tamen quod sub abbatis uocabulo dixit se congregationem habere, si interrogetur aut cum quibus monachis uixit aut in quo monasterio aut sub quo abbate monachus factus est, dicere non potest. similiter et si de Achille dicere uoluero, rem facio superuacuam; cui hoc sufficit: semper latere propter conscientiam suam ab omnibus catholicis damnatam.' *CA*, Letter 224.7–11.

Taken as a whole, the contrast between the Roman delegation's account of the Scythian monks and the anathemas we have is sharp. Where Dioscorus treats them as the purveyors of heresy, the Scythians offer a careful selection from Chalcedon, Ephesus, and, above all, Cyril. Where the delegation claims the Scythians condemn Chalcedonians as heretical, the Scythians anathematize those who reject Chalcedon as heretics. We cannot know all—indeed any—of what was said between the Scythian monks and the Roman delegation with strict certainty. The witness of the Scythian monks' own writings, however, casts great doubt on the reports of hostility to Chalcedon made by the delegation.

This does not exonerate the Scythian monks of all accusations the delegation makes. How or indeed whether they attempted to obstruct the election of the new patriarch of Antioch cannot be corroborated. Given that they were already engaged in conflicts with their own bishop, and that they proceeded to fight with the Roman delegation, it seems fair to conclude that they could have put more effort into diplomacy than they did. Yet one detail about the Scythian monks contained in Letters 216 and 217 can be confirmed with certainty and I would argue this detail is key to understanding Dioscorus's portrayal.

Both letters are anxious about the fact that the Scythian monks are already on their way to Rome, and there is an aspect of this that is easy to miss. If the Scythian monks had already departed, it is not at all certain that the delegation's letters would precede the monks to Rome. Thus, it is unlikely that the delegation wrote merely to inform Rome that the monks were coming. Again, if the monks were bearing texts it would have been superfluous for the delegation to write to supply Rome with notes on the texts' contents. There are three reasons for the delegation to write, however, all mutually compatible and all likely.

First, the delegation would have been remiss in its duty as representative of Rome had it not informed of affairs that would soon spill over in the west. Of course, this is rather obvious and was doubtless part of the motivation. But the expectation that the delegation should relate relevant information cannot account for much of what we have seen. This is especially true of the invective, the accusations of heresy, and the attempts to explain the possible consequenc-

es of approving the monks' views. Second, the delegation likely believed it their duty also to inform Rome that the monks had been in conflict over the appointment of the Antiochian bishop, a matter which is mentioned but can hardly be said to be the focus of the letters. This still does not explain the elements for which the first reason did not account, but it is suggestive. The delegation is not satisfied merely to report the Scythian monk's objections—indeed it says little about the actual objections the monks made—but it does take the opportunity to portray the monks as unnecessarily troublesome.

This points us to a third reason and possibly the chief goal of the letters. They were written not only to relate some information to Rome, as one expects of a representative, but also to shape the way Rome would receive the monks and their writings. Rather than acting merely as a conduit for information, Dioscorus is working carefully to stay in control of the situation. It is position, situated as the crucial link in a network between Rome and Constantinople, that makes this possible. The means by which information travels, being human, is not neutral. It is active in shaping information and that which depends upon it. This point is especially well illustrated by how events played out upon the arrival of the Scythians in Rome.

## TWO SUDDEN CHANGES OF HEART

The Scythians were fortunate to have preceded Dioscorus's letter to Rome. The delegation's letters were dated June 29, 519 and the monks had already arrived sometime in July or early August.[75] There they seem to have received as strong a welcome as could be hoped, both for themselves and their ideas. The *libellus* which comes down to us thus bears the following title:

> *Libellus* of the faith, which the legates of the apostolic seat would not accept in Constantinople, was received by the blessed Pope of Rome, Hormisdas, and, read in an assembly of the

[75] Thus Fr. Glorie, 'Interea Paulinus et ipsi Scythae monachi Romam aduenerunt mense VII siue VIII ineunte.' *CCSL* 85A, xxix.

> bishops of the whole church and even of all the senators, it was approved as catholic by all.[76]

The Scythian monks seemed, therefore, to have attained the advantage in Rome where they failed in Constantinople. As we have seen above, if taken strictly on terms of their theological proposals and if they successfully presented themselves as defenders of Chalcedon, it is little surprise the Rome should receive them well.

Yet Diosorus's report did arrive in Rome and it seems the mood changed accordingly.[77] John Maxentius later complained of being detained in Rome for nearly four months.[78] It is clear that the monks were detained on account of Dioscorus's influence. For one thing, we know that Hormisdas quickly sought further council from Dioscorus after receiving Letter 216. This may be deduced from Letter 224 of the *Collectio Avellana*, which presents itself as a reply to a papal request for advice.[79] Before we consider the contents of Dioscorus's reply, however, our attention must be given to one of the stranger elements of the theopaschite controversy.

Dioscorus was not the only one who saw it fit to write Hormisdas upon the Scythians' departure from Rome. Justinian wrote two letters, the first of which was carried by Eulogius along with Letters 216 and 217 of the *Collectio Avellana* and is dated with

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[76] 'Libellus fidei quem legati apostolicae sedis Constantinopolim accipere noluerunt, susceptus est Romae a beato papa Hormisda, et, in conuentu episcoporum siue totius ecclesiae necnon etiam omnium senatorum lectus, catholicus est per omnia approbatus.' *CCSL* 85A, 5.

[77] So too Amann, 1748: 'Les dépêches des légats refroidirent les bonnes dispositions d'Hormisdas.'

[78] 'Responsio Maxentii Iohannis servi Dei abversus epistulam quam ad Possessorem a Romano episcopo dicunt haeretici destinatam' *CCSL* 85A, 132.270.

[79] 'Per Eulogium u. c. litteras beatitudinis uestra suscepimus, in quibus significastis intentionem monachorum Scythicorum et quomodo uisum fuerat apostolatui uestro episcopo Constantinopolitano causam delegare, ut ipse inter eos et qui ab eis impetuntur audiret.' CA, Letter 224.1. Letters 189 and 190, which we will soon examine, provide an even stronger indication.

them at June 29, 519.[80] The second followed closely on the heels of the first, being dated sometime at the beginning of July in the same year.[81] The strangeness of these two letters, indeed of the whole situation, lies in the sudden contrast between them.

The first, Letter 187, resembles the contemporary dispatches of the delegation in important ways. Dioscorus had described the Scythian monks as men whose restlessness would put the unity of the church at risk.[82] The same description is found in Justinian's letter.[83] Dioscorus had warned that the Scythians were attempting to introduce novelties not to be found in in the Council of Chalcedon or in the epistles of Leo.[84] Justinian joined in this same complaint.[85] Thereafter, Justinian may even make a direct reference to the opinions of the delegation on the matter. I say 'may' because the text runs into some difficulties here. There is a lacuna in the text directly after what is probably a reference to the delegation, producing the following:

> [...] quam etiam ob rem et a uiris reuerentissimis episcopis et diaconibus diretis ab apostulatu uestro * * ad nos angelus uester destinare dingetur et ipsos digna correctione perculsos, ut superius dictum est, pellere iubeat.[86]

To make an educated guess, based on the contents of the letter and what Justinian elsewhere requests, one may suppose an opinion on

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[80] *CA,* Letter 187.

[81] *CA,* Letter 191.

[82] '[...] quorum inquietudo non paruas moras generauit unitati ecclesiarum [...]' *CA,* Letter 216.5

[83] 'haec nostra est maxima sollicitudinis causa, ne unitas, quam uester labor orationque perfecit, per inquietos homines dissipetur [...]' *CA,* Letter 187.4

[84] *CA,* Letter 216.6

[85] '[...] quoniam uaniloquia ipsorum festinatium nouitates introducere in ecclesia, quod neque quattuor synodi uenerabiles neque sancti papae Leonis epistolae continere noscuntur, in omni loco turbas excitare uidentur' *CA,* Letter 187.2

[86] *CA,* Letter 187.3.

the matter was desired. If this supposition is correct, then the reference before the lacuna may be to view on the part of the delegation that an authoritative and negative opinion of the Scythian formula ought to be sought from the pope. This would be in keeping with their mission and compatible with the letters they wrote.

It is highly probable in any case that Letter 187, sent with Letters 216 and 217, was also drafted under the advice of the delegation. All the letters build the same argument, use similar language, and have the same agenda: to preempt the Scythian monks' appeal to Hormisdas. In addition to warning the pope of the coming monks, Justinian's letter even suggests that they be thrown out of Rome upon their arrival.[87]

The second letter, number 191 of the *Collectio Avellana*, is altogether different. It is so different, in point of fact, that it presents us with a puzzle. Making no reference to his earlier letter or to the Roman delegation, Justinian introduces the subject of this letter with an emphasis on unity and some important references.

> Whatever is more prudent, whatever more constant, so it be carried out for the holy faith and for the concord of the sacred churches, that we desire. Whence our brother, the most glorious Vitalian, through the defender of your church Paulinus, v.s., wrote to your beatitude and by the same man we too have undertaken to indicate that your beatitude ought to bring about those things which would permit the peace and concord for the holy churches. And so to your sanctity we have immediately sent with letters of our most pious emperor him who may bring back a rather more settled answer; for how great a question has arisen in our parts, the aforementioned religious defender can indeed instruct your sanctity.[88]

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[87] 'quos beatitudo uestra praesentibus scriptis causam liuoris eorum cognoscens ita, ut merentur, suscipere et a se longe pellere dignetur' *CA,* Letter 187.2

[88] 'Quicquid est cautius, quicquid firmius, ut pro sancta fide et concordia sacrarum ecclesiarum geratur, optamus. Unde ad beatitudienm uestram et frater noster gloriosissimus Uitalianus per Paulinum u. s. Defensorum

The important question to which Justinian refers, as we will see momentarily, is none other than the status of the theopaschite confession. It is instructive however to notice at once the stress Justinian places on his connection to Vitalian, a connection he shares with the Scythian monks. That Vitalian should be mentioned in the first favorable letter Justinian writes concerning the Scythian monks, and that the same should be excluded from a hostile letter in favor of the delegation, hints that Vitalian himself may be responsible for Justinian's change of heart. The letter continues:

> Whence we ask that, if it is possible, with a swift reply given and religious monks satisfied, you send John and Leontius back to us. For if that question is not solved by your prayers and attentiveness, we fear that the peace of the holy churches will be unable to come forth. Therefore knowing that the reward and risk of that affair is watched over by you, carefully discuss and send back to us a very substantial answer by the aforementioned monks, if it is possible, before our legate reaches your beatitude; for the whole effort depends on this alone.[89]

Within a very few days Justinian had moved from viewing the Scythian monks as a threat to treating them as allies. Indeed, he even goes so far as to imply through his positive treatment of the monks,

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uestrae ecclesiae rescripsit et nos per eundem significare curauimus illa debere beatitudinem uestram perficere, quae pacem et concordiam sanctis concedant ecclesiis. Subinde tamen, qui certius responsum ad sactitatem uestram referat, cum litteris piissimi nostri imperatoris destinauimus; nam quanta quaestio in partibus nostris orta est, potest etiam antefatus uir religiosus defensor sanctitatem uestram instruere.' *CA,* Letter 191.1–2

[89] 'unde petimus ut, si est possibile, celerrimo dato responso et satisfactis religiosis monachis Iohannem et Leontium ad nos remittatis. Nisi enim precibus et diligentia uestra ista quaestio soluta fuerit, ueremur, ne non possit pax sactarum ecclesiarum prouenire. Ergo congnoscentes, quia et mercees et periculum istius rei uobis seruatur, diligenter tractate et firmissimum responsum per antefatos religiosos monachos, si est possibile, antequam legatus noster ad beatidinem uestram perueniat, nobis remittite; in hoc enim solo omnis pendet intentio.' *CA,* Letter 191.3–4

though he does not say this explicitly, that the unity of the church depends on a positive response from the pope. This is the exact opposite of what he had claimed in the previous letter. Accounting for this sudden change is not easy and can never be certain. But we are not without hints.

As we have seen, Letters 216, 217, and 224 all make explicit mention of Vitalian's involvement in the case of the Scythian monks. That he acted as their advocate has already been shown. But where these earlier letters speak of Vitalian's presence at the hearing held for the monks, they are altogether silent about Justinian. It is widely accepted that Justinian was more personally involved in theological controversies than his royal uncle. But it is Justin who appears in Letter 217, involved in the hearing and reconciling Paternus and Vitalian.[90] Justinian's absence from the letter certainly does not indicate his absence from the hearing, but it opens the possibility.

We can say for certain that not all the hearings concerning the Scythian monks involved all those who were part of this controversy. At one point, Dioscorus makes this complaint:

> Afterwards without us, the *vir magnificus* Vitalian, *magister militum*, and the bishop of Constantinople called the aforementioned Victor among themselves; they spoke with him: what they settled among themselves, we do not know. Afterwards, neither Victor came to us nor was the case pled.[91]

Vitalian and the patriarch thought a solution to Victor's objections to the Scythian monks could best be achieved without the presence of the Roman delegation who had come to dislike the monks intensely. Up to that point, we have no evidence of Justinian's involvement in the controversy in any capacity. After this incident, however, we find Justinian writing against the Scythian monks with

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[90] *CA,* Letter 217.7

[91] 'postea sine nobis magnificus uir Uitalianus magister militum inter se et epscopum Constantinopolitanum uocauerunt praedictum Uictorem; locuti sunt cum eo: quid definierunt inter se, nescimus. postea nec Uictor ad nos uenit nec esta causa dicta.' *CA,* Letter 224.6

the very delegation who had fallen so far out of favor with Vitalian and the Patriarch.[92]

This combination of circumstances presents us with an enticing explanation for Justinian's sudden reversal. Justinian's initial hostility to the Scythian monks may be credited to his source of information about them. From what we have seen in Letter 187, Justinian was clearly aware the version of events the Dioscorus and the delegation gives in Letters 216 and 217. Indeed, this seemed to have shaped his view of the monks. If Justinian was not present at the hearing, then it is only the more certain that he would have depended on Dioscorus for information.

Justinian's new-found appreciation for the monks in Letter 191 is, as is noted above, accompanied by an acknowledgment that he was by then aware of the information Vitalian sent to Rome. By the time Justinian writes Letter 191 he has at least two sources of information and he now favors the position of Vitalian. The likeliest explanation for Justinian's reversal, therefore, is that through his contact with Vitalian he was given a perspective on some events that Dioscorus could not have, because of his absence, and a perspective on other events that Dioscorus did not want to give, because of his opposition to the monks.

This is the exact inverse of what we see with Hormisdas. His apparent early acceptance of the Scythian monks was conditioned by his ignorance of Dioscorus's position. As we have begun to see, Dioscorus's letter put that early acceptance in doubt. This shows how very important the control of information was to Dioscorus in his ability to control the views of his ostensible superiors.

Justinian changed his views on the Scythian monks and the preponderance of evidence points to his connection to Vitalian, if as nothing more than a source of information, as the best explanation for this change. Likewise, Hormisdas's changing opinion about the

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[92] After the humiliation of having to condemn his predecessor, the patriarch can have had little love for the Roman delegation. But the delegation had proven themselves poor at making friends generally as Frend, 247, notes.

Scythian monks and their formulations may be attributed to shifting sources of information. As discussed earlier, the Scythians were initially welcomed in Rome. But when Letters 216, 217, and 187 arrived in Rome, they gave Hormisdas reason to doubt. After his change of mind, Justinian wrote Hormisdas requesting a response on the matter of the theopaschite formula but found himself frustrated. Hormisdas's reply in Letter 190, dated September 2, 519, reveals his dependence on Dioscorus. In this letter, Hormisdas avoids giving any direct answer to the theopaschite question. Instead, he claims that the Scythian monks themselves refuse to leave Rome, fearing that they might be ambushed on the road.[93] They had not yet been expelled from Rome, however, because Hormisdas awaited further information from the delegation.[94]

Dioscorus's advice arrived in the form of Letter 224, dated October 15, 519. We have already seen several of the more aggressively anti-Scythian aspects of this letter and need not belabor the point. If Hormisdas had begun to hesitate with the arrival of the delegation's letters, an equally if not more important event was the return of the delegation itself. We know that the Scythian monks had come to Rome sometime in July or early August, 519. Thereafter, they were detained for fourteen months while Hormisdas considered their case. This would place their expulsion sometime around September or October of 520. Despite Justinian's repeated requests for a response on the theopaschite question, we have no evidence of any other changes in this period save one. Letter 192, written by Justin, was carried on the return trip of the delegation to Rome. Its date of reception is September 17, 520. This places the expulsion of the Scythian monks from Rome at precisely the same time when the delegation returned from Constantinople. Having left Constantinople on account of their conflict with Dioscorus, the Scythian monks now found his return made them unwelcome in Rome as well.

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[93] *CA,* Letter 190.2.

[94] 'quapropter necesse habebimus uenientibus legatis nostris inquirere, qua re uera faciente causa inter eos fuerit commota discordia.' *CA*, Letter 190.3

## CONCLUSION: CONNECTIONS AND INFLUENCE

At the center of the apparent indecision of both Hormisdas and Justinian is the influence of Dioscorus. Influence can seem a difficult thing to define. In some cases, it can derive from individual charisma, in others, from a formal and ritualized office. But the case of Dioscorus reveals how a position within a network as gatekeeper of information can grant one an otherwise unexpected amount of control over events. The papacy relied on the delegation to represent its interests in Constantinople. But even as the pope used the delegation to project papal influence, papal attitudes toward the Scythian monks were shaped by the information that delegation could provide and the way in which the delegation chose to spin that information. This could be uncomfortable for historians to accept because it has unfortunate consequences for our ability to reconstruct events. Our sources tend to focus on those who are most obviously able to shape events through their exercise of formal positions of power. But institutional behavior and policy making can often be shaped by the actions of individuals with vastly less formal power. In this case even Justinian, who himself already exercised a great deal of informal influence in the empire, was subject to the sources of information available to him. This also draws one to question any picture of Justinian as capricious or indecisive during the theopaschite controversy. The case as a whole has offered us a rare opportunity to see just how much influence may be exercised by those who could occupy the spaces between acknowledged centers of power.

# Chapter 3.
# The Court's Anti-Chalcedonians

Policy must be developed with people, relying on the input of competing groups, if it is to have a hope of uniting those groups. While the early stage of Justin's reign was marked an attempt to secure the connection between Constantinople and Rome on Chalcedonian grounds, the early stage of Justinian's reign was marked by an attempt to secure a unity with the anti-Chalcedonians which did not directly undermine Chalcedon. Like the earlier reunification with Rome, repairing relations with the anti-Chalcedonians would naturally require communication and would be affected by all the complications thereof. Human relationships would necessarily shape the course and trajectory of these negotiations, both for better and for worse. The period would begin with promising developments, as the emperor consciously cultivated a space at court wherein he could engage the anti-Chalcedonians and draw them closer to his desired ends. Unfortunately for the cause of unity, this very closeness would backfire, resulting in a reaction against the anti-Chalcedonians which made it clear to them that a hierarchy independent of the imperial church would be their only remaining solution. Future efforts toward unity would prove futile with the establishment of this hierarchy, but the emperor never seems to have fully appreciated this fact.

## The Colloquium of 532

We will begin to look at this period by focusing on an unprecedented and largely unrepeated event in the history of eastern Christian doctrinal controversy. The emperor Justinian called a conference of bishops together in 532 to discuss the doubts about Chalcedon and to

seek solutions to the widening schism of the sixth century. In itself, this is unremarkable. What is remarkable is that both anti-Chalcedonian and Chalcedonian bishops were called in equal numbers and that by all accounts their conversations were both civil and, in some ways, even fruitful.

The Colloquium of 532 offers a unique insight into sixth-century doctrinal controversy, inasmuch as we have accounts of the conference from both Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian sources. While there are certainly differences between the accounts in terms of emphasis, the length of time devoted to speakers, and other obvious signs of bias, the basic outline of these accounts bears a remarkable similarity. This similarity makes the differences that do exist all the more important, as they highlight the self-construction of the participants.

The Chalcedonian account which comes down to us was written by one of the participants, a bishop Innocentius of Maronia, as a letter to Thomas, a priest of Thessaloniki.[1] The letter, written in Latin, recounts discussions from all three days of the conference as well as a preliminary meeting held between Justinian and at least some of the Chalcedonians. Fortunately, the account is in its complete form. The Severan account survives in a Harvard Syriac manuscript which was found and published for the first time in 1981 by Sebastian Brock, who also provided a translation.[2]

This account begins with a preliminary meeting, in this case between the Severan bishops and the emperor. Unfortunately, this manuscript is not so well preserved or attested as that of Innocentius. Lacunae abound and authorship remains uncertain. Even so, enough of the three days of meeting remain to make a worthy comparison. In addition to these, there is a copy of the doctrinal statement presented by the Severan bishops to the emperor in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, as well as a very short anony-

[1] *ACO* 4.2, 169–184.

[2] Sebastian Brock, 'The Conversations with the Syrian Orthodox under Justinian (532)' *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 47 (1981): 87–121.

mous summary of the meeting published in the *Patrologia Orientalis*.[3]

> The orthodox bishops said to them: 'Tell (us) now whether you accept the Letter of Ibas?'
>
> The opposing bishops were put out by this too, and said: 'We do not accept what was wrongly said in it'.
>
> In retort the orthodox bishops said: 'Then, in the case of Nestorius or any other heretic, you hold it is only necessary to reject what is wrongly said, and no more. It was in vain, it seems, that the all-wise fighters for the mysteries of the Church anathematized the heretics, in that the latter said a few things that were not wrong, but which are worthy of acceptance.'[4]

To a reader accustomed to the strenuous and even vitriolic denunciations passed between competing parties in the century after Chalcedon, the Colloquium of 532 will come as something of a surprise. The meetings held in 532 were not simple exercises in mutual condemnation at least as far as the evidence shows. Real discussion and even negotiation did occur. One is left with the distinct impression that differences between the Severan party and the Chalcedonians were not altogether insoluble. But the grounds for discussion were not, perhaps, what one might expect. As we shall see, in matters of theological definitions, the parties either stood in agreement or simply talked past one another. However, we will find real grounds for discussion interspersed among the points of concord and contention. In this context, the search for consensus between the two parties shows an attempt to form a common in-group, defined as always against a common out-group. After recognizing this important point, we will come at last to the heart of the negotiations: the centrality of the emperor, influence, and access.

Turning first to the Severan account, we readily discover a willingness to find some common ground, or at least the appearance

[3] *PO* 13, 192–6.
[4] Brock, 'Conversations,' 102.21–22.

thereof. The anonymous author of the Severan account records several items which might have easily turned into stumbling blocks, but were instead resolved or at least set aside for the sake of focusing on more important issues. Perhaps the best example of this is the status of Dioscorus of Alexandria after Chalcedon. In the final analysis, the Chalcedonians refused to make Dioscorus's personal orthodoxy a sticking point.

> The orthodox bishops said: 'Reserve those words and the discussion of them for the proper time; but now tell us, do you hold the blessed Dioscorus to be a heretic?'.
>
> The opposing bishops say: 'We do not hold him to be a heretic, for his opinions were orthodox, but he was neglectful in matters of urgent importance'. After this they added other lines of argument, saying that the synod of Chalcedon had met very usefully on the matter of Eutyches.[5]

Of course, we would expect the Severan account to emphasize any acknowledgment of the justice of their position from the Chalcedonian side, just as we would expect the inverse. At first, the Chalcedonian account goes into far greater detail regarding the discussion wherein Dioscorus's status is raised. This appears to be a chance to highlight the argumentative prowess of the hero of that account. One of the intelocutors, Hypatius, is pictured proceeding step by step from the heresy of Eutyches to broader justification for convening Chalcedon. But the question of Dioscorus's personal orthodoxy is here passed over. The condemnation of Dioscorus does not seem a goal of the Chalcedonian party, whose real purpose is to establish that Chalcedon was called with good reason. The Chalcedonian account includes a canny reply from the Severans to this question, but one which does not deny in principle the Chalcedonian position.

> The bishop said, "It is made clear to you, therefore, that the Chalcedonian Council was justly assembled." Those opposing

[5] Brock, 'Conversations,' 96.8.

> said, "It was justly convened, if it had also undertaken a just goal." [6]

Dioscorus was not the only matter on which both sides were willing to treat peacefully. While the question is neglected in the Chalcedonian account, the Severan account portrays a willingness on the Severans' part to accept the ordinations of their opponents.

> With this the first day's session was dissolved. Other things were discussed there (too), about ordinations (*cheirotoniai*): on these the orthodox bishops said that the ordinations which were transmitted from the synod of Chalcedon were confirmed by true faith and by communion with the orthodox.[7]

If we follow the Severan account further, we might add that the Chalcedonians do not openly reject the position of the Severans.

> The orthodox bishops asked for the statement they had given to the emperor to be read. They straightway provided a copy and it was read out, after which they asked the opponents saying: 'Say if you have anything you find fault with in this statement'.
>
> The opposing bishops replied: 'We hold a moderate opinion about it'.[8]

Of course, it might make sense for the Severans to present the Chalcedonians as submitting to all their demands. But that is not what we see here, nor would it help their cause to distort this record in this particular. For their *plerophoria* was handed over to the emperor, their positions were known, and records of the meeting were kept. It seems likely that the Chalcedonians were, in fact, willing to entertain much of the Severans' position and despite the length of arguments we find in the Chalcedonian account, both sides seem willing to triage many questions to better focus on the few they truly cared about.

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[6] 'episcopus dixit: 'Ostensum ergo uobis est quia iuste est congregatum Chalcedonense concilium.' contradicentes dixerunt: 'Iuste conuenit, si et iustum finem suscepisset.'' *ACO* 4.2 171.20.

[7] Brock, 'Conversations,' 96.9.

[8] Brock, 'Conversations,' 96.12–98.13.

Indeed, there was one point of strong and fervent agreement on both sides: the status of Eutyches. In both accounts, Eutyches is described in terms of disapprobation. This is the common language, the rejection of a heretic, that makes it possible for both sides to communicate. The talks make progress because, within this idiom, they are able to create some consensus concerning a shared enemy. As we shall see, this approach is taken further as our interlocutors work toward constructing a shared in-group identity around the rejection of heretics.

## In-Group and Out-Group Construction

Orthodoxy in the sixth century was understood as the faith of the fathers, as Patrick Gray argued.[9] Yet, if this is orthodoxy, we are still left with the question of who the orthodox are. One might beg the question by replying that they are those who follow the faith of the fathers. But in practice no one considered himself anything other than orthodox, even as he made determinations about the orthodoxy and heterodoxy of his contemporaries. To determine how a group might define itself as orthodox in a world where others claim the same, we must examine more closely the relationship between group identity and orthodoxy. In the context of the Colloquium of 532 we are able to see the dynamics of identity in action as both sides, both reckoning themselves fully orthodox and beginning with the assumption that the other is at least partly mistaken, seek to establish and negotiate the bounds of who is orthodox. Orthodox identity in this context—which is to say in-group identity from the perspective of our interlocutors—is first connected to the common submission not just to the patristic past, but to the correct set of patristic authorities. An important consequence of this fact is that specific claims are best refuted by either side through the use of source criticism.

The way that Innocentius and the author of the Harvard manuscript identify the participants presents an important if somewhat obvious contrast. The Severan account always presents the bishops acting as groups, rather than as individuals, with the Severans de-

[9] Gray, 'Select Fathers,' *passim*.

scribed simply as 'the orthodox bishops' and the Chalcedonians, for the most part, as 'the opposing bishops.'

Innocentius's presentation, on the contrary, treats only the Severans as a group, identifying them either as *Orientales* or, more frequently in describing the debates, *contradicentes*. Though the Chalcedonians had a full delegation of six bishops at the conference, the bishop Hypatius is presented as speaking for the whole group. So exclusive is his role that he is named simply as *episcopus* throughout most of the account. Both accounts dismiss the members of the other side by lumping them together simply as the opposition. Each account affirms the value of its own side, the Severan account by the title 'orthodox' and the account of Innocentius by its exclusive application of personal authority to the bishop Hypatius. I would suggest, therefore, that the very language of each account encodes assumptions about the identity of the participants.

There is one exception in Innocentius's letter that proves this rule. In addition to being simply called 'the bishop', Hypatius is described on several occasions as *vir reverentissimus*. This title, conventional as it is, takes on an important meaning when we compare its other uses in the account. It only appears twice. The first time it is used at the beginning of the conference by the Imperial representative at the conference, the patrician Strategius, as he relates the story of his father's decision to become a Chalcedonian.

> [Y]ou also know that my father Appius, of glorious memory, who descended from the province of the Egyptians and supported your sects as much as that of the Alexandrians, was hesitating to commune with the greater part of the holy church established in this city; but our most pious and faithful emperors convinced him with reason that those very reverend bishops (*reverentissimi viri episcopi*) who were gathered together in Chalcedon handed down to us no other symbol or faith than the very one which was confirmed in Nicaea, in Constantinople, and in Ephesus. Those same men decreed the faith and condemned both Nestorius and Eutyches, who introduced new

> heresies. Persuaded by this reason, my father communed with the holy church.[10]

We may see in the use of this title a verbal identification between the authority of the bishops of Chalcedon and the bishop Hypatius. The identification is strengthened further by the final use of the title. At the end of his account, Innocentius relates that among the Severans a single bishop was persuaded by the arguments of the Chalcedonians. In his list of the bishops present at the beginning of his account, Innocentius merely calls this bishop Philoxenus of Dulichium. Once Philoxenus is persuaded, however, not only does he now merit a position as the subject of a verb, but he even merits the title 'vir reverentissimus episcopus Filoxenus'.[11] Innocentius grants Philoxenus both a personality and an identity with his submission to the authority of Chalcedon.

The elements of orthodox identity which Innocentius finally ascribed to Philoxenus from the main body of the discussion in both major accounts of the conference. But the way orthodox identity is negotiated in this context might be surprising. For the conference did not consist of theologians debating the merits of this or that theological formula in the abstract. The bishops are not presented by either party as rejecting a position primarily because of a consistency with Christological, soteriological, or Trinitarian axioms. The negotiation over who can and cannot be identified as orthodox occurs not over theological positions as such. Instead, it concerns primarily whom to recognize as an authority—and, as we shall see, whom to reject as a heretic. If, in accordance with Gray, Orthodoxy is defined in this age as the faith of the fathers, then it follows that orthodox identity would be a function of which texts of which fathers would be recognized as legitimate authorities.

It is, therefore, no surprise that both major accounts of the conference devote a considerable amount of attention to the criticism of sources. The better part of the second day in Innocentius's account is devoted to the dual question of which texts ought to be accepted as a

[10] *ACO* 4.2, 170.8.
[11] *ACO* 4.2, 184.88.

legitimate witness of commonly recognized authorities and which texts ought to be rejected as little more than authorities for heretics. It is telling, for example, that in Innocentius's account dwells at length on a famous forgery.

Two phrases, now turned partisan slogans, had become items of contention between the Severans and the Chalcedonians. Little debate is recorded at the conference over the acceptability of these phrases from the abstract theological perspective. The debate centered instead on whether patristic witnesses could be cited in their support. As is well known, the Chalcedonian formulae insisted upon the phrase 'two natures' as the touchstone of its Christology. When challenged to present their objections to Chalcedon, the Severans in Innocentius's letter have immediate recourse to the phrase 'two natures', rejecting it as an innovation. Rather than use such a novel phrase, they argued, one ought to adhere to what 'blessed Cyril and his predecessors preached, 'from two natures', one incarnate nature of God the Word after the union'.[12]

We will return to this language of 'one incarnate nature of God the Word' below, but for now it is important to point out that Hypatius's response may have been enough to move the discussion away from patristic prooftexting. For Hypatius, granting that every novelty was alien but adding that not all are blameworthy, asked whether they condemned the phrase 'two natures' merely because it was alien or because it was blameworthy.[13]

One might expect such a question to provoke a discussion on the utility, the dangers, or the limits of theological formulae. What one finds is that the phrase is to be condemned both as alien and as blameworthy. Yet, rather than telling precisely why the phrase ought to be condemned as blameworthy, the Severans are pictured as contenting themselves to objecting to the fact that it is alien to the tradition, apparently regarding this a sufficient proof of its blameworthiness.

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[12] *ACO* 4.2 171.21.
[13] *ACO* 4.2 171.21–172.22.

> For they who dare to preach two natures after the union transgress against Cyril and blessed Athanasius, the bishops of the city of Alexandria, and even Felix and Julius of the city of Rome, and moreover Gregory the Wonder Worker and Dionysius the Aeropagite, since all these determined one nature of God the Word after the union. [14]

One might suspect that the Severans' apparent tone-deafness to this distinction between the alien and the blameworthy was merely a product of the bias of the Chalcedonian account. But Innocentius treats Hypatius himself as though he had forgotten the distinction. In a later generation, St. Maximus the Confessor was willing to take up the phrase 'one incarnate nature of God the Word' and show how it could be best understood in light of Chalcedon, but apparently this is not the solution that suggests itself in the sixth century. Hypatius responds not by attacking the value of the phrase as a theological formula, but by undermining it with textual criticism. He rejects the veracity of the Cyrillian provenance of the letters cited as evidence 'because it seems, I know not from whom, that the opinion of Arius or Apollinarius was imposed upon it; for neither was Arius or Apollinarius ever a confessor of the two natures, but they put forward rather recently the one incarnate nature of God the Word, that they might bring in the divine nature of the Word itself as created and passible. Against those two, all the holy fathers decreed two substances and two natures.'[15]

When the Severans were scandalized by what seemed to be an imputation of forgery against them, Hypatius replied thus: 'We do not suspect you, but the ancient Apollinian heretics who blame him in the epistle he composed to the Orientals on behalf of union and peace concerning the two natures [...].'[16]

Hypatius, it turns out, was correct about this famous forgery. But this is less important, for our purposes, than the fact that theological discourse was in the process of taking a new and interesting

[14] *ACO* 4.2 172.
[15] *ACO* 4.2 172.23.
[16] *ACO* 4.2 172.25.

turn. In this we see evidence in favor of Gray's view forgery had become a tool of theological debate in an age wherein all parties claimed to be legitimate heirs to the faith of the fathers.[17]

A corollary we might emphasize here is that where forgery can be a tool of theological debate, so can textual criticism. The ability to undermine the textual support used by another is the ability to take from them the grounds whereby they identify themselves as the true followers of the fathers. We may even go so far as to say that the possibility of attacking the legitimacy of texts suggests itself in this context. This is an important step to which we will return in one moment.

At the present, we should look at the rather different treatment of what is likely the same day of the conference in the Harvard Syriac text. Here the discussion of the Apollinarian forgery is conspicuously absent. The reason for the exclusion of this embarrassment is obvious enough, but where the accounts differ on the details, they agree in their assumptions about the conduct of theological discourse. In this version, once the Severan bishops have cited a prooftext in favor of the 'single nature of God the Word incarnate,' the Chalcedonians, not to be outdone, offered to defend the 'two natures' in the same manner.

> The opposing bishops said: 'We too (will) introduce the holy fathers and show that they spoke of two natures with reference to Christ'.
>
> The orthodox bishops pressed them, saying: 'Show us the God-clothed fathers who (used) these words and said that it is right to call Christ two united and inseparate natures after the union; just as we have (ourselves) shown that they taught that after the union [it is right to speak of only a single nature of God the

[17] Gray, Patrick. 'Forgery as an Instrument of Progress: Reconstructing the Theological Tradition in the Sixth Century.' *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 81 (1988): 284–289.

> Word incarnate']. The opposing bishops promised: 'We will show this tomorrow.'[18]

Innocentius's account does mention that many such testimonies were prepared at the end of the second day, but it does not explicitly say these testimonies were prepared for the benefit of the Severans.[19] Therefore the account can perhaps be reconciled with the almost gloating statement of the Harvard text.

> [T]he next day, without having yet provided the testimonies of the holy fathers which they had promised—indeed they could not have done so—[the opposing bishops] came together to the emperor and sent for the orthodox bishops to come too.[20]

For both sides, therefore, identity as orthodox was regarded as exclusive to those who could cite textual support, and thus the support of the fathers, in favor of their claim. Since both sides could make such citations, a final defining element was required.

To claim the faith of the fathers may be enough to create a common identity among believers in a time when all agree. For all to claim the faith of the fathers in a time of such great disagreement, especially when all are adept at supporting such claims with textual evidence, presents additional problems. It is difficult to maintain an exclusive identity as orthodox when the standards used are inclusive of those rejected as other. More precise standards were required, and they were to be found not so much in the affirmation of fathers as in the condemnation of heretics.

Within this context of identity, we should return again to the legitimacy of the condemnation of Dioscorus. The issue of Dioscorus was not whether he affirmed the right fathers, so much as whether he condemned the right heretics in the proper manner. In both major accounts of the conference, Dioscorus becomes an issue on the grounds of his acceptance of Eutyches. The status of Dioscorus is treated as an issue from the outset of the Syriac account.

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[18] Brock, 'Conversations,' 106.31–32.
[19] *ACO* 4.2 182.79.
[20] Brock, 'Conversations,' 108.34.

> When they assembled and sat down facing each other, Hypatius began churning over his usual old inanities, blaming the blessed Dioscorus for accepting the wicked Eutyches at the second synod of Ephesus. It is the custom of the upholders of the heresy of Nestorius to collect together empty complaints against the orthodox fathers: since they cannot make a defence for their own flimsy teachings, they hope to cover up their own wicked beliefs and not let them be examined, by means of calumnies against the saints.
>
> The orthodox bishops, however, were well aware of their opponents' cunning, how, by inviting them to make a defence for the blessed Dioscorus, they would go on to accuse them of the heresy of Eutyches. Accordingly, the orthodox bishops began by anathematizing Eutyches, and having thus thrown off from themselves any suspicion of the heresy of Eutyches—(a suspicion) that their opponents wanted to bring upon them—[...] the orthodox bishops began to fight on behalf of the blessed Dioscorus, showing how Eutyches had submitted a *libellus* in which he acknowledged the orthodox faith, anathematizing Valentinus who says that our Lord brought his body down from heaven, acknowledging too the teaching of the fathers and accepting the creed of Nicea, and that it was (only) after this that Dioscorus had accepted him.[21]

The importance of the association between Dioscorus and Eutyches is more essential here than any particular theological position Dioscorus might have held. Consider that the interlocutors treat the accusation that Dioscorus had not condemned a heretic as a threat. The Severans, for their part, defend Dioscorus not by discussing his teachings, but by anathematizing Eutyches all the more loudly. In other words, both sides look more to the condemnation of the proper heretics than to the profession of proper theological principles as a litmus test of orthodoxy.

[21] Brock, 'Conversations,' 94.4–5.

Likewise, we find the assumption that one must condemn the correct heretics in order to be reckoned orthodox built into every question thrown at the Severans.

> The Orientals said, "We have extended the charter of satisfaction composed about our faith to the most pious emperor and we have covered all those things which seemed doubtful to us and were scandalizing us." The very reverend archbishop Hypatius, just as though he'd become our mouth and blessed Peter of the apostles, responded saying, "We have looked over that charter, wherein, as much above as below, you have accused the Chalcedonian council because it was convened against the Eutychian heresy; wherefore tell us what sort of opinion you hold about Eutyches?" The Orientals said, "Just as a heretic, or rather more nearly as the prince of heresy." The man, the very reverend bishop, said, "And about Dioscorus, indeed about the second council in Ephesus which was called by him, what sort of opinion?" The Orientals: "Just as of the orthodox." The bishop said, "If you condemn Eutyches just as a heretic, how do you say that Dioscorus and those who convened with him are orthodox who vindicated Eutyches on the one hand and condemned Flavius and Eusebius on the other?" The Orientals: "Perhaps the penance done vindicated Eutyches."[22]

We can say with a fair degree of certainty, therefore, that when there is general agreement upon whom to praise as a father, whom to condemn as a heretic becomes all the more important. While people may share many particulars, the boundaries of the in-group are not finally settled until the out-group is defined.

But what effect does this have on theological development in the sixth century as a whole? Formulae of reconciliation had been tried in the past and would be tried again in the future, but the major controversy of the sixth century is not about theological formulae so much as the common condemnation of the proper persons. When, in addition to their statement of faith, the Severans are asked what

[22] *ACO* 4 170.9–11.

other problems they have with Chalcedon, their reply is to reject its orthodoxy because it does not reject all the right heretics.

> The orthodox bishops said: 'That is not all; we have many more things to censure in the synod, but above all else, the fact that they accepted Ibas, and again that they accepted the basis of his Letter to Mari the Persian which they accepted when it was read out before them, (despite) its being full of every wickedness; and on its basis they held (Ibas) to be orthodox. They also accepted the wicked Theodoret, without having changed from his evil belief; and they gave him back the priesthood too.'[23]

This response from the Syriac account points to an outcome of the Colloquium of 532 with direct implications for Justinian's religious policy. With commonly acknowledged fathers and some small agreement on the part of each side that the other might not be complete heretics, the question remained how a common in-group identity as orthodox could be established. Innocentius's account spends some considerable amount of time on the question of the Three Chapters, with the emperor clearly interested in the possibility of condemning them to achieve unity with the Severans. Although the Severans present apparently denied that they could themselves produce some common statement of faith, citing their lowliness in the hierarchy, the emperor might have much reason to hope that such condemnations could be a workable solution to growing schism of his age. He was perhaps assured of the usefulness of this approach, for so much of the conference had emphasized that the orthodox not only held in common the right fathers but rejected together the right heretics. In this context one might justly hope that closer relations between the Chalcedonians and Severans could be achieved by the rejection of a common out-group of 'Nestorianizing' writers.

Given the promise of this meeting's results, it is worth reflecting a moment on an element essential to it. A meeting such as this cannot have occurred with even as much practical success as it had without the curated environment in which it occurred. In our previous

[23] Brock, 'Conversations,' 98.13–14.

chapters we saw Justinian pulled to and fro as he attempted to create unity within a context of competing networks over which he had no direct control. His difficulties did not reflect a poorly conceived or uncertain approach, so much as the difficult conditions under which he had to operate. Now we have an emperor working to create a more direct and effective response to the pressing need for unity within the empire. To this end, he begins to draw opposing groups into a space he controls. He uses propinquity to encourage dialogue and dialogue to generate solutions. By bringing others into this space, he places himself at the center not only in the formal sense he occupies as emperor but also in the networked sense of creating and maintaining his own centrality between competing factions. Bringing possible problems closer, where they can be monitored, addressed, and controlled, will play an increasingly important role in Justinian's approach to religious unity over the coming years. Even so, propinquity cuts both ways, and both the Severans and Chalcedonians at the Colloquium were actors in their own rights who constantly attempted to maneuver into more influential positions.

## Access

From the beginning of the Colloquium to its end, the question of access and the influence that comes with it is present. The subject ostensibly under discussion are not the most pressing issue. This is evident from a few points. The first, which we encountered earlier, is the ease with which parties were willing to pass over many potential causes of disagreement. Holding a 'moderate opinion' of an opponent's position does not indicate an overwhelming desire to engage with anything controversial in that position. But we have yet to consider a second reason to see a more pressing issue than what was officially on the docket. Both texts place a heavy emphasis on access to the emperor. Indeed, this question is key to understanding the approach of the Severan party and the interests of the Chalcedonians. But the emperor himself was careful to control that access for reasons that will become apparent.

That the emperor controlled the proceedings is certain. Paradoxically, his control came precisely from not being in the room during the discussions.

> After this the order (came) for the two parties to assemble in the hall known as Beth Hormisdas, which is today joined to the Palace. There the discussion was to take place in the presence of the *synkelloi* of the holder of the (patriarchal) throne of the capital, seeing that he himself did not come. Strategius the patrician was allocated to listen to the discussion and report on developments to the emperor; he took the place of the *Magistros*.[24]

Strategius was an important selection, because he himself represented the possibility of reunion, if only through a conditional acceptance of Chalcedon, since he had come over from the opposing side.[25]

Of course, Justinian's control did not come only in the form of having his own man oversee the discussions. He could certainly have been present, but this would not serve all of his goals. Were he present, one could hardly expect serious discussion to occur and accordingly the focus would not be on narrowing down problems and finding possible solutions. Instead, the focus would have been on swaying him, for persuading the emperor would have been the greatest coup possible. Thus, in those few early instances where the Severans were granted a meeting with the emperor, he chose to defer any discussion of the statements of faith they wished to present.

> Along with it he also gave the statement (*plerophoria*) which the bishops made after they went up to the capital. And the bishops were urging that those documents (*chartai*) be read in the presence of him (*sc.* Justinian) and the (state) officials who were there. But the emperor put off the matter, saying: 'I will read them when I have the time'.[26]

Thus, Justinian was able to control the discussion by controlling access to his own person, while at the same time maintaining the possibility of that access as an enticement to continue in the discussions.

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[24] Brock, 'Conversations,' 92.3.
[25] *ACO* 4.2 170.8.
[26] Brock, 'Conversations,' 92.1.

It should not be thought, however, that the emperor was merely ignoring the Severan documents. Controlling information is, as we have seen, an important form of influence and one Justinian was sure to use. While he may indicate he did not have the time to read the documents, Justinian was certain to make use of them.

> After a certain number of days there arrived at the capital the bishops from the opposing faction who had been summoned by the emperor; their names are as follows: Hypatius of Ephesus, Stephan of Isaurian Seleucia, Innocentius of Amurnia, John of Bizue—these (two) towns are in Thrace—and Anthimus of Trebizond. The emperor sent them the document of the statement which the orthodox bishops had given him; he also sent it to the holder of the see of the capital. (His intention was) that they should read and examine it minutely and prepare themselves for discussion.[27]

It is hardly any wonder that the Severans should be so intent upon having access to the emperor. As noted above, the possibility of persuading the emperor would have been the greatest enticement. This motivation for the Severans is as clear in Innocentius's account as it is throughout the Severan account.

> The easterners said, "We have extended the document of satisfaction concerning our faith, composed for the most pious emperor, and have inserted in it everything which seemed doubtful to us and offended us.[28]

Neither is it unreasonable for the Severans to have hoped for a change in their fortunes. It had been scarcely more than two decades since the Chalcedonians had received reliable imperial patronage and the very invitation to the capital would seem to indicate a friendly overture.

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[27] Brock, 'Conversations,' 92.2.

[28] 'Orientales dixerunt: 'Nos satisfactionis chartulam de fide nostra conpositam piissimo imperatori porreximus et in ea omnia quae nobis ambigua uidebantur et scandalizabant nos, intexuimus." *ACO* 4.2 170.9.

Yet the simple fact is that the Chalcedonians already had access to the emperor, and they clearly wished to maintain it. Access was in part preserved by reference to procedure.

> The next day they gathered again, and first of all the orthodox bishops asked that what was said might be taken down in writing, just as they had asked the previous day, without success. The opposing bishops did not accept this, not [*sic*] did the *locum tenens* for the Magistros, saying: 'I did not receive any such authorization from the emperor'.[29]

Despite this fact, access remained important enough for the petitions to continue. Eventually the Chalcedonians would relent on the question of briefing the emperor.

> The orthodox bishops asked that the emperor should not learn of the conversations from one of the sides (only), as had happened the previous day, but that this should take place with both sides present. They promised (that this should be so). Thereupon the session was dissolved.[30]

As we saw above, the emperor would hold an audience with the Severans, but only after some possible solutions to the outstanding problems were proposed.

It is within this context that we find one further advantage Justinian attains from propinquity. Access to these few Severans raises the possibility of access to others in their network. The Severan party refused to make an attempt to persuade others to a policy of accepting Chalcedon while condemning the Three Chapters, citing their lowly position. Even so, the emperor could not pass up the chance to use them as a means of getting to more influential people.

> The emperor then said: 'Either bring Severus to suggest some means for the peace of the churches, or suggest one yourselves'.

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[29] Brock, 'Conversations,' 96.11.
[30] *Ibid.*, 106.33.

> They said: 'We do not know where the holy Severus is'.[31]

In the long run, Justinian's attempts to get direct access to Severus would succeed. Of course, this success would be attributed—and often still is—to Theodora's patronage of the Severans. The effects are the same, however, and one can hardly miss the fact that what was supposedly Theodora's patronage would achieve precisely the aim Justinian already held and would continue to demonstrate in his frequent invitations to Severus.

One might justly conclude from the Colloquium of 532 that bringing the Chalcedonians and Severans together in the capital under imperial patronage might have a reasonable chance of achieving what neither dictate nor persecution had. After a civil and so at least minimally successful discussion, a proposal was on the table. This was followed in short order by the arrival of Severus and his allies in the capital. But propinquity is not without its risks, especially if other parties grow suspicious, as we find in Pseudo-Zachariah.

> After some time, in [indiction year] thirteen, after many letters from the emperor had reached him, even the holy Severus was received in the palace. He stayed until [the month of] March in [indiction year] fourteen, while the Dyophysite bishops in every place were disturbed, murmuring, and annoyed, especially Ephraem of Antioch, until in their anxiety they informed Agapetus, the head of the priests of Rome, who was of their opinion, and summoned [him] and brought him to the imperial city.[32]

Thus the very closeness whereby the emperor might hope to facilitate understanding carried with it the cause of its own demise. But before we arrive at that demise, we must turn to the period when cooperation seemed most hopeful.

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[31] *Ibid.*, 115.4.
[32] *PZ,* 9.15.k.

## SEVERANS AT THE COURT

As we have seen, the early 530's are marked by a clear strategy of rapprochement, wherein the emperor sought unity between Chalcedonians and anti-Chalcedonians. The emperor would achieve this unity through encouraging cooperation among the competing parties. We will see the great promise of this approach, as it seemed for several years to offer a productive means of ending the rift within the church over Chalcedon, especially in the wake of the Colloquium of 532. Unfortunately, from the perspective of unity, closeness among parties is accompanied by hazards all its own. As we shall see, the promise of this approach is ended in a rapid succession of events which see the final collapse of cooperation and require a new strategy be formulated.

The first thing to understand about the growing rapprochement of the early 530's is that it was the product of conscious imperial policy. A few details make this clear. First, Justinian began his reign with a comprehensive law against heretics. Yet, as broad and general as it is, this law is as significant for what it leaves out as what it includes. One expects the standard affirmation of the Trinitarian, catholic faith with which the document begins. When the emperor defines those heresies which shall be subject to censure, he is selective. The only three heresies explicitly mentioned are those of Nestorius, Eutyches, and Apollinaris—identified of course by the persons of the heretics.[33] These three present a neat package for a sixth-century

[33] 'Since these things are so, We anathematize every heresy and especially Nestorius, the worshipper of man, who divides in two Our One Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Our God, and denies that the Holy, Glorious, Ever-Virgin Mary was really and in truth the Mother of God, but claims that one person is God the Word, begotten of the Father, and another is the one born of the Holy, Ever-Virgin Mary, made God by the grace and affection of God the Word. And We further anathematize Eutyches the deranged, who introduces an apparition and denies the true incarnation, that is our salvation, through Mary the Holy, Ever-Virgin Mother of God; and who does not confess that Christ is consubstantial with the Father in all regards according to his divine nature and consubstantial with us according to his human nature. Likewise, (We anathema-

heresiology, defining between themselves the bounds of orthodoxy. Nestorius is rejected as a man-worshipper, Eutyches as an insane creator of fantasies, and Apollinaris as a soul-murderer. Within these bounds, however, is room enough for both Chalcedonians and anti-Chalcedonians. As we saw at the Colloquium of 532, many anti-Chalcedonians were perfectly willing to count Eutyches among the heretics. Indeed, Severus himself would reject Nestorius as insane, Apollinaris as stupid, and Eutyches as a creator of fantasies within single sermon.[34] To be sure, the emperor certainly wishes to exclude from the church any current adherents of these heresies, but this is only part of his object. The emperor is writing in a manner which can be affirmed equally by Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian alike. He doesn't breathe a word here about Dioscorus or Chalcedon. An edict with which Justinian begins his sole reign is aimed at the possibility of rapprochement. It creates boundaries into which the anti-Chalcedonians could comfortably fit. A subsequent relaxation of persecution, to which we will now turn, only advances this same agenda.

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tize) Apollinarius the destroyer of souls, who claims that Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Our God, did not have a mind, and who introduces confusion or rather chaos to the incarnation of the Only Begotten Son of God; and (We anathematize) all who have followed and now follow the doctrines of these men.' Bruce W. Frier, ed. *The Codex of Justinian: A New Annotated Translation with Parallel Latin and Greek Text Based on a Translation by Justice Fred H. Blume* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 1.1.5.3.

[34] Concerning Eutyches, he says: 'But since they do not tolerate the lowliness (of the incarnate Lord) thus expressed, they run towards and take refuge in the illusions which the filthy Eutyches received and inherited as a paternal heirloom. For they say rather that he appeared in fantasy only [...]' *Severus of Antioch,* Pauline Allen and C.T.R. Hayward trans (New York: Routledge, 2004), Homily 15.11. Concerning Apollinaris and Nestorius, see *ibid.*, Homily 15.14–15.

## The Relaxation of Persecution

Although one should not regard the strategy of rapprochement as some sudden and jarring shift in policy, it is important to emphasize that it was, in fact, a conscious and consistent approach pursued by the court and particularly by the emperor himself. Following Frend, a key feature of Justinian's approach to the anti-Chalcedonians around 530 was an end to their persecution at imperial hands. Frend dates this somewhere in 530–531.

> Elias' *Life* of John of Tella, written sometime after 542, claims that the success of John's mission persuaded Justinian to summon him together with eight other bishops to the capital for discussion concerning their differences over Chalcedon. This would seem to be one of the main factors in Justinian's sudden relaxation in 530 or 531 and the restoration of the scattered communities of monks to their monasteries, but not the bishops to their sees. The war with Persia also required urgent concessions to popular feeling in the frontier area, even though the return of the monks immediately caused a decline in the number of Chalcedonians. Behind this move, however, was in all probability Theodora, even at this stage regarded with suspicion and loathing by Chalcedonians who visited the capital.[35]

We must be careful, however, to avoid overstating the degree of change which this apparent relaxation of persecution really represented. A much later source, like Michael the Syrian, will speak about both the persecution of the anti-Chalcedonians and its abatement early in Justinian's reign in rather sweeping terms.[36] Yet it is difficult

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[35] Frend, 261–62.

[36] Thus we find in Michael the Syrian, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche (1166–1199),* ed. and trans. by J.-B. Chabot. 4 volumes (Paris, 1899–1924), 9.21: 'Ensuite, il vit les maux causés par ceux qui, du temps de son oncle, s'étaient emparés des églises, avaient fait de l'Église une maison de négoce, et avaient excité la persécution contre les églises sous prétexte de religion, en forgeant des accusations contre(les fidèles), en ravissant et pillant leus biens ; et qui tous, grands et petits, marchaient à leur guise. Justinianus comprit tout cela, et il ordonna que la

to construct from earlier sources any sense that large scale persecution of anti-Chalcedonians was a priority on the imperial level. Certainly, ranking anti-Chalcedonians were removed from their sees and would not be restored, and monks were removed from their monasteries only to be restored. In the case of bishops, the question was often the refusal to sign the papal *libellus* following the resolution of the Acacian Schism.[37] We must weigh such actions against the letters of Justin and Justinian seen above which make every practicable effort to resist papal demands in regards to the *libellus* and especially the diptychs. This persecution is best described as reluctant. The examples of general persecution we find are often tied more closely to more local affairs and the actions of a given patriarch than to Constantinopolitan direction. Thus, when John of Ephesus describes the return of the monks of Amida to their monasteries, he is not quick to blame the emperors but he does dub Ephraim of Antioch with the appellation 'the Persecutor.'[38] In other words, we ought not think about the persecution of the anti-Chalcedonians in terms we might apply to the treatment of the Manicheans, the Samaritans in the sixth century, or even Christians under Diocletian. Nevertheless, it is clear from the sources that the anti-Chalcedonians greeted Justinian's—and of course Theodora's—forbearance and invitations with some relief.

## Guests of the Emperor and His Consort

From Justinian's accession through the early 530's, the population of anti-Chalcedonian exiles in Constantinople becomes quite large, numbering easily in the hundreds.[39] Improving the relationship between the court and anti-Chalcedonians was a conscious policy on

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persécution cessât, et que les persécutés revinssent à leurs demeures. Beaucoup revinrent, à l'exception des évêques qui ne rentrèrent pas dans leurs sièges.'

[37] See Menze, 107.

[38] John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints,* ed. and trans. E.W. Brooks, *PO* 18 (1924), 620–21.

[39] Menze, 108–9.

the part of the emperor. Patronizing the anti-Chalcedonian exiles, offering them protection at the Palace of Hormisdas, would potentially have done much to encourage a productive relationship. Besides such encouragement, a potential threat who is kept close is easier to control. Therefore, inviting the anti-Chalcedonians to court would fit neatly within the emperor's overall scheme. But one cannot discuss the reasons for the exiles' presence at court without acknowledging the somewhat mixed account of the matter we find in the sources.

The empress Theodora provides a convenient explanatory apparatus for many of the ecclesiastical questions in this period, including the question of why the emperor would allow so many anti-Chalcedonians a relatively peaceful exile so near the center of imperial power. Any who have read anti-Chalcedonian sources which mention her will quickly notice their high opinion of her. But it is important to understand that these passages represent a later construction of Theodora by anti-Chalcedonians who remembered her as a patroness.[40] The treatment of Theodora as an anti-Chalcedonian influence in the court can cause us to miss what the court was actually doing.

> Since it is generally presumed that she was an ardent non-Chalcedonian, some scholars believe that an actual opposition between her and her husband existed. Concerning Anthimus' installation in Constantinople and Theodosius' in Alexandria William Frend believed—like Eduard Schwartz before him—that the 'years 535–6 were to test the reality of the empress' powers to dominate the religious situation in the empire', and the 'coup' to install Anthimus 'marks the highwater-mark of her influence'. Although scholars still maintain the religious division of the imperial couple, they prefer now to see in it clever policy rather than real opposition. In the words of J. A. S. Evans: 'As long as the Monophysites had a friend in court, they continued to owe their allegiance to the empire.' Foss' statement that 'it suited him [Justinian] to find an unofficial way to placate the

[40] Menze, 227–235, argues this point forcefully.

> followers of a religion that was dominant in his richest provinces' goes in the same direction. It can hardly be doubted that having Theodora as protector of the non-Chalcedonians was a convenient arrangement for a Chalcedonian emperor.[41]

Fortunately, the sources themselves offer support to this latter view. There is, of course, the famous passage from Procopius's *Anecdota*, part of which is granted a degree of plausibility due to how neatly it coincides with the behavior of the imperial couple.

> But now we must sketch the outlines of what she and her husband did in unison, for neither did anything apart from the other to the end of their joint lives. For a long time it was universally believed that they were exact opposites in their ideas and interests, but later it was recognized that this false impression had been deliberately fostered to make sure that their subjects did not put their own differences aside and rebel against them, but all divided in their feelings about them. They began by creating a division between the Christians, and by pretending to take opposite sides in religious disputes they split the whole body in two [...][42]

Of course, the object Procopius here presents for Justinian and Theodora's behavior is to maintain the divisions among the people. Such an interpretation of events is typical of the *Anecdota*, and even if we accept that the two collaborated, with each presenting as a friend and patron of either Chalcedonian or anti-Chalcedonian, we need not accept the negative spin Procopius places upon it. Patronage for each group, rather than being to keep them divided, might just as well be to retain the support of each in hopes of attaining eventual union. Such, at any rate, fits better with the efforts we have already seen from Justinian to achieve such unity. This contention is also supported by Evagrius Scholasticus, who claims the following:

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[41] Menze, 209–10.

[42] Procopius, *The Secret History*, trans. by G. A. Williamson (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966), 10.13–15.

> Now, whereas Justinian most resolutely supported those who had gathered at Chalcedon and what had been expounded by them, his consort Theodora upheld those who speak of one nature, whether because they did in truth hold these views—for when there is a proposal to discuss the faith, fathers are at odds with children, and children in turn with those who begat them, a wife with her own spouse and in turn again a husband with his own spouse—or because they had reached some sort of accommodation, so that he would support those who speak of two natures in Christ our God whereas she would do the same for those who advocate one nature. At any rate, then, neither made any concession to the other: but he most enthusiastically upheld what had been agreed at Chalcedon, while she sided with those on the opposite side and made every provision for those who speak of one nature; she both looked after local people and welcomed outsiders with considerable sums of money. She also persuaded Justinian to have Severus summoned.[43]

Much of what we have seen thus far supports the contention that the emperor both needed and wanted to act through personal connections to effect his ecclesiastical policy. The collaboration with Theodora not only fits this contention but may even be paradigmatic of it. By offering the anti-Chalcedonians a friendly patron, but one over whom he had decisive influence, Justinian could hope to make the court a more inviting place for them. Perhaps he might even stave off the risk of the anti-Chalcedonians creating a separate church, if they retain the hope of influence at court through the person of Theodora. Menze supports this view:

> Part of [Justinian's policy] included the transfer of the non-Chalcedonian problem to Constantinople. Since Justinian had not been able to persuade Severus to come to the debate in 532/3, he needed to convince him and other non-Chalcedonians who potentially might come to Constantinople that he would not harm them, but respect their persuasion. It seems that Theodora

[43] *EH*, 4.10.

> would be the logical person who could assist him in this. As Evans puts it: 'it was an advantage for an autocrat to have a secondary power center in the state so long as it was firmly in the hands of a loyal wife'.[44]

There is a still more positive argument to be made as well. The notion that Theodora was chiefly behind drawing anti-Chalcedonians to the court does not account for Justinian's own actions. According to Pseudo-Zachariah's account, Severus himself had 'been summoned urgently by the emperor,' and although he credits Theodora for predisposing Justinian to accept Severus, he still has Severus 'received lovingly in the palace by the emperor'.[45] Further evidence of the emperor's interest in this approach is provided by an earlier letter of Severus, also preserved by Pseudo-Zachariah, in which Severus rejects Justinian's invitation on the grounds of his age and health. Justinian's original invitation is lost to us, but we can surmise from Severus's reply that it at least included assurances for Severus and was likely friendly in tone: 'And the great proof of your gentleness is that you wrote without reluctance in your letter [addressed] to me with oaths, promising me no harm.'[46] Of course it possible that Justinian was pressured by his consort into making such moves. But the consistency of Justinian's efforts in this regard, the fact that he both knew for years about the anti-Chalcedonian exiles presence in Constantinople and took positive steps to invite them, makes the conscious collaboration between Justinian and Theodora indicated in Procopius and Evagrius Scholasticus seem certain.

There two further reasons to treat the presence of the exiles as a matter of conscious policy, although they would not stand on their own. First, the approach did, in fact, show some signs of success. One recalls the Colloquium of 532 discussed above which was greatly facilitated by the presence of the exiles. The interaction between the two groups demonstrated that cooperation was still feasible and that in itself is a victory, however minor it might be. Second, it makes sense

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[44] Menze, 216–17.
[45] *PZ,* 9.19.a.
[46] *PZ,* 9.16.b.

from an administrative viewpoint. With the anti-Chalcedonian exiles present in Constantinople, the emperor might hope to keep a closer eye on them and perhaps even exert greater influence over them. Severus's ability to encourage the faithful while exiled in Egypt shows clearly the problems with the alternative. Nevertheless, concentrating leaders among the anti-Chalcedonians in Constantinople was not without risks, as we shall see.

Anthimus's conversion to the anti-Chalcedonian position is announced to us in a series of letters involving him, Severus, and Theodosius as recorded in Pseudo-Zachariah.[47] A mythos later grows around these as the 'Three Patriarchs'. The letters themselves are interesting, if as nothing more than an anti-Chalcedonian artifact. I say this not merely in the sense that they were written by anti-Chalcedonians, but that they were in fact fabricated by them. Reading letters containing Anthimus's unequivocal condemnation of Chalcedon and 'the wicked Tome of Leo',[48] one gets the sense that this is what an anti-Chalcedonian would think one of the Three Patriarchs should say. Of course, what one of the Three Patriarchs should say is distinct from what a patriarch elected under the watchful eye of Justinian would say. Thus Price argues the following:

> The text of the letters, transmitted in non-Chalcedonian sources, goes further, and attributes to Anthimus an explicit anathematization of Chalcedon and its teaching. This is not credible: when he was subsequently deposed, it was on the ground that he had only pretended to follow Chalcedon, while in fact 'supposing it necessary to give the same and equal treatment to those condemned [the heretics] and those who had condemned them'. The charge is not that he had himself rejected the council, which would have contributed nothing to what was surely his goal—the reconciliation of the non-Chalcedonians to the imperial Church.[49]

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[47] *PZ*, 9.21–26.
[48] *PZ*, 9.21.b.
[49] Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 1.13.

Although the concrete details of Anthimus's growing relationship with Severus and Theodosius are lost to us, the fact that they were seen as related is certainly not. Such closeness would have been necessary for any further steps toward unity between the Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian factions and therefore it would have been encouraged by the emperor. It is precisely to this closeness that many Chalcedonians reacted.

> After some time, in [indiction year] thirteen, after many letters from the emperor had reached him, even the holy Severus was received in the palace. He stayed until [the month of] March in [indiction year] fourteen, while the Dyophysite bishops in every place were disturbed, murmuring, and annoyed, especially Ephraem of Antioch, until in their anxiety they informed Agapetus, the head of the priests of Rome, who was of their opinion, and summoned [him] and brought him to the imperial city.[50]

Anthimus's election and his close relationship with Severus was in keeping with all Justinian had been working toward for the past half-decade. But it also proved to be a watershed moment. The kind of cooperation which occurred up to this point was possible because it did not directly threaten group boundaries. But the appointment of Anthimus by the Chalcedonian emperor, along with his seeming move toward the anti-Chalcedonian camp, threatened to undermine the stability of the Chalcedonian position. This resulted in a reaction, wherein the Chalcedonians moved to eliminate the threat, and sought to shore up the boundaries between Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian. It was the very effort toward unity which, ultimately, would result in deeper division.[51]

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[50] *PZ*, 9.15.k.

[51] Thus, Menze, 206: 'It is ironic how a situation which possibly could have brought Justinian a tremendous victory actually produced such a serious defeat. The emperor had worked for a policy of rapprochement for years, and even though a unity of the church had not yet been in the air, he had gained control over the disunity and could hope to achieve even more with a loyal patriarch in the capital. An unforeseeable incident, the fact that the

## THE ARRIVAL OF AGAPETUS

Prior tensions between Chalcedonians and anti-Chalcedonians along with the competing interests of individual actors likely made a collapse of cooperation inevitable, at least so long as no acts of reciprocal altruism were forthcoming that could possibly mend the divide. With hindsight, any notion of reunion seems just a fool's hope, inasmuch as a large part of both groups acted as though an admission of guilt from their opponent was a *sine qua non* for unity. While this background is surely the distal cause for the collapse in Chalcedonian/anti-Chalcedonian cooperation that occurred in 536, the proximate cause could not be clearer. It came about in March, 536, with the arrival of Pope Agapetus.

We saw above how the close environment of the court facilitated understanding and cooperation among the several parties present. Had this circumstance continued, one might have hoped at the time to build a trusting relationship between the imperial couple, the patriarch of Constantinople, and the exiles at court. One could reasonably suppose that an agreeable solution to the impasse of Chalcedon could emerge in such an environment. Such a solution would need to affirm the orthodoxy of the imperial church, even while it retained its Chalcedonian confession. Equally, it would need to assure the anti-Chalcedonians that the imperial church would be anti-Nestorian enough to satisfy their concerns. Above all, it could not demand the erasure of the anti-Chalcedonian past through a purge of the diptychs. For both sides to maintain their status and dignity, they would have to be able to continue to recognize their own heroes. With such a consensus in hand, and with all the major players in the east at hand, the emperor might have reasonably hoped to present the solution to the bishop of Rome as a *fait accompli*, much as he did with the theopaschite edict. Such an endgame might take time, but

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Ostrogoth king believed the pope to be the best ambassador, and a minor mistake, Anthimus' uncanonical election, in combination caused Justinian's vision to collapse. The papacy resolutely stopped the emperor's policy of rapprochement.'

all the pieces were in the right places to make it happen. At least they were, until one piece moved.

Around the turn of the year, the Gothic king Theodahad persuaded Pope Agapetus to go to Constantinople as an embassy on his behalf. This embassy did not succeed in preventing the Gothic Wars—indeed preparations for a conflict in Italy must be borne in mind if we are to appreciate every aspect of Justinian's reaction to Agapetus's arrival and his swift acquiescence in the days that followed. Whatever the *casus belli*, imperial activity in Italy would lose some legitimacy if the emperor or his patriarch were declared a heretic by the bishop of Rome.

Both the *Liber Pontificalis* and Pseudo-Zachariah inform us that the pope was received with great pomp.[52] His arrival would certainly have upset the balance at court in any event. But matters were made worse for the court because Agapetus came primed for the meeting. As indicated above, it would have been in the court's interest to present an already agreed upon instrument of reunion to the west. Accepting the emperor's will in this matter might be easier if it entailed a formal and completed agreement to Chalcedon by the anti-Chalcedonians. But when Agapetus arrived, the court was still in the process of building the kind of trust necessary to effect such an agreement. Agapetus's interpretation of the situation was also necessarily colored by the contacts he had received from Chalcedonian monks and bishops of Palestine and Syria.[53] The monks had sent a *libellus* to complain chiefly about the canonicity of Anthimus's elec-

[52] See Raymond Davis, trans. *The Book of Pontiffs* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1989), 54–55; *PZ,* 9.19. Of course, one should not make too much of these statements. In the same chapter, Ps. Zach. informs us that Severus was well received, as was Sabas in Cyril of Scythopolis. It is perfectly natural for an author to highlight the importance of his subject by saying that he was important to the emperor. Besides, it was worth the emperor's while to impress his influential guests. Impressive reception was and remains a key function of the ceremonies which surround the powerful.

[53] *ACO* 3.136–52.

tion, the primary charge which would be used against him.[54] The monks show they know their audience well, however, as they close their *libellus* warning about the threat posed by Severus, Peter and Zooras to Chalcedon and, of course, the *Tome* of Leo.[55] Although it saves its chief complaints against Anthimus until the very end, the episcopal *libellus* to Agapetus offers largely the same warnings about the threat to Chalcedon and the *Tome*.[56] Agapetus would therefore be ready to see Anthimus as a threat and he would have at hand the arguments necessary to eliminate the threat.

The specific sequence of events upon Agapetus's arrival cannot be reconstructed with certainty. Pseudo-Zachariah implies the displeasure of God as signified by earthquakes and darkness upon Agapetus's arrival, accuses the pope of heresy, and then offers the following:

> He abstained from communion with Anthimus and Severus, and they even more from [communion with] him. One of them he called an adulterer and the other a Eutychian, and he changed the love of the emperor towards them and set him against them in a disputation, and [Justinian] drove them out from the city.[57]

Liberatus gives a few more details, but still dispenses with the whole affair of Agapetus, Severus, and the Council of 536 in a handful of lines.

> But the pope, having received an embassy for the same cause, departed for Constantinople. And truly at first receiving honorably those arranged for him by the emperor, nevertheless he spurned the presence of Anthimus, and he was unwilling to receive him in order to greet him. Then, the emperor having seen, he was pleading the case of the embassy undertaken. But the emperor, unwilling to divert the planned army from Italy on ac-

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[54] The formal issue was Anthimus's transfer from Trebizond to Constantinople and the consequent violation of Canon 15 of Nicaea.
[55] *ACO* 3.141.25–28.
[56] See, e.g., *ACO* 3.148.
[57] *PZ*, 9.19.

> count of the great cost to the imperial exchequer, refused to hear the supplications of the pope. But he, because he was himself, performed * the embassy of Christ. Finally, with the princely entreaties that the pope should receive Anthimus in greeting and communion, he said it could be done if he proved himself orthodox with the *libellus* and he returned to his own *cathedra*. He was saying that it was impossible for the man transferred to that seat to remain. Indeed, with the Augusta secretly promising many gifts and threatening the pope on the other hand, the pope endured in this, lest he obey the entreaty. Indeed Anthimus, seeing himself driven from his seat, returned to the emperors the pallium which he had and withdrew where the Augusta might protect him by her own patronage.[58]

Evagrius Scholasticus is just as brief in his presentation of Anthimus's deposition, but in contrast he does not even include the role of Agapetus.[59] A final narrative of events also appears in Marcellinus Comes, but his account of the whole affair is characteristically sparse.[60]

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[58] 'sed papa pro eadem causa legatione suscepta Constantinoplim profectus est. et primum quidem honorifice suscipiens directos sibi ad imperatore spreuit tamen Anthimi praesentiam eumque ad salutandum suscipere noluit; deinde uiso principe causam agebat legationis susceptae. imperator autem pro multis fisci expensis ab Italia destinatum exercitum auertere nolens supplicationem papae noluit audire. at ille quod summum fuit, * Christi legatione fungebatur. denique petentibus principibus ut Anthimum papa in salutatione et communione susciperet, ille fieri inquit posse, si se libello probaret orthodoxum, ut ad cathedram suam reuerteretur; inpossibile esse aiebat translaticium hominem in illa sede permanere. augusta uero clam promittente munera multa et rursus papae minas intentante in hoc papa perstitit ne eius audiret petitionem. Anthimus uero uidens se sede pulsum pallium quem habuit, imperatoribus reddidit et discessit ubi eum augusta pro patrocinio tueretur.' *ACO* 2.5, 135–136.

[59] *EH*, 4.11

[60] 'XIII. Belisarii solius [...] 4 Epifanius episcopus regiae urbis ante aduentum Romani praesulis moritur ; cuius episcopatum contra canones Anthimus Trapezuntena ecclesia relicta inuadit. [...] (536) XIIII. post

These few details leave us with two interesting points. First, Agapetus was predisposed to view Anthimus with suspicion by those peripheral to the circles around the court itself. Thus, again, the court's ability to control circumstances, even the circumstances in its immediate vicinity, was constrained by information flow through broader networks which crossed the empire. Second, it is likely Agapetus viewed the closeness of Anthimus to the anti-Chalcedonians as an immediate threat in its own right, evidenced by how quickly he dealt with it. It is true that the *Liber Pontificalis* offers readers a showdown between the pope and the patriarch in the presence of a hitherto naive emperor.[61] But even if we accept this narrative, events seem to have proceeded with an urgent speed. This was not a time for discussion between Agapetus and Anthimus; it was time for an ultimatum.

With Agapetus's arrival and his swift reaction to circumstances at court, Justinian was put to a decision. Moving forward with either party would require a clear break with the other. Favoring continued rapprochement with Severus and the exiles would almost certainly lead to a papal excommunication against a sitting patriarch of Constantinople, an Acacian Schism redivivus. Favoring Agapetus, however, meant nothing short of washing his hands entirely of Severus, Peter, Zooras, and Anthimus, of whom Agapetus had been warned.

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consulatum Belisarii [...] 10 Agapitus Constantinopolim, ut diximus, episcopus a Roma adueniens, Anthimum pellit, dicens eum iuxta ecclesiasticam regulam adulterum, qui sua dimissa ambierat alienam ; in cuius locum Mennam presbyterum episcopum ordinauit et ipse extremum diem obiit, in nullo tamen, sicut ei a principe imminebatur, sentiens contra fidem.' Marcellinus Comes, a. 535–536.

[61] *The Book of the Pontiffs*, Davis trans., 54–55. The encounters seem about as likely as Pseudo-Zachariah's scurrilous claim that Agapetus would not refer to the Blessed Virgin Mary as *Theotokos.* (*PZ*, 9. 19) Its purpose seems to have been to elevate the heroic importance of Agapetus in his opposition to the heretics. No such meeting is mentioned in Pseudo-Zachariah, or any other narrative, and it is positively disallowed in Liberatus's account quoted above. Besides, the notes of the Council of 536 support Agapetus's refusal to meet with Anthimus. See *ACO* 3.132.

Only this would satisfy the pope, who would suspect any lesser action as waffling or even prevarication. With military affairs proceeding apace in Italy and no certain, tested, and agreed-upon solution to making peace with the anti-Chalcedonians in the east, Justinian took the only real option left to him. He favored the bird in his hand rather than the ones that might be in the bush.

## THE COUNCIL OF 536

The Council of 536, as we shall see, shows just how consistent Justinian could be in his determination to effect detente with the anti-Chalcedonians. In the midst of what was, on the face of it anyway, a great setback to his policy, the emperor solidified the very connections which would prove useful in beginning the next attempt at detente and at the same time guarded the court against a potential threat of schism with the west. Circumstances required certain individuals to be sacrificed. But, judging from the court's actions, an end to working with those individuals did not entail an end to efforts to bring the anti-Chalcedonians back into the fold. The court would emerge from the council with renewed determination to resolve the matter entirely, but it could only do so on account of how the council was carried out and the matters on which the council focused.

Before we turn to the council itself, we must observe a couple of important facts about what preceded it. First, Agapetus had Anthimus's resignation in hand before the council. Agapetus had also personally consecrated Menas as Anthimus's successor.[62] A council was not necessary for Agapetus to achieve these goals. Second, Agapetus died suddenly before the council occurred.[63] It would still take place, but the practical upshot of Agapetus's death is that the court could

[62] 'Anthimus uero uidens se sede pulsum pallium quem habuit, imperatoribus reddidit et discessit ubi eum augusta suo patrocinio pueretur. tunc papa cum principis fauore Menatem pro eo ordinauit pontificem, consecrans eum manu sua in basilica sanctae Mariae.' *ACO* 2.5, 136.

[63] *PZ*, 9.19, unsurprisingly gives Agapetus a rather gruesome death, the sort one expects heretics to suffer in our sources.

more freely control affairs without fear of creating undue tension with the west.

This latter fact permeates much of the council's proceedings. From the outset, the council was focused on what amounts to a procedural question. The archbishop Menas, who chaired the council, would direct his attention to the question of the canonicity of Anthimus's election.[64] It is hard to doubt that the court would have known from the start that transferring Anthimus to Constantinople from Trebizond was in violation of Canon 15 of Nicaea, but it is exceedingly unlikely that anyone would complain about this point of order were there no other reason to be rid of him. This question has the dual advantages of justifying Anthimus's removal while not focusing as much on implicating a recent patriarch of Constantinople in potential heresy. It also does nothing to endanger future attempts to work with the anti-Chalcedonians.

The matter of condemning Severus, Peter, and Zooras was a bit more delicate in this regard. The council had to ratify the move against these men brought on by Agapetus's arrival, but it had to do so in such a way that it would not sabotage later efforts toward bringing the anti-Chalcedonians back into the fold. This explains the focus of the notes on the persons of Severus, Peter, Zooras and, by extension, Anthimus. After the first session, with its various *libelli* written in protest of these, the second is fixated on locating Anthimus himself.[65] Because Anthimus failed to show up despite being given three days to do so, the same question dominates the third session, with an extended discussion of Anthimus's last known whereabouts.[66] Although a sentence is passed *in absentia*,[67] the fourth session is also concerned with seeking out Anthimus himself with all agreeing that he had not been seen for days.[68] Outside the various quoted *libelli* which accuse Anthimus, Severus, Peter and Zooras, it

[64] *ACO* 3.132–3.
[65] *ACO* 3.160.23
[66] *ACO* 3.168
[67] *ACO* 3.168–9
[68] *ACO* 3.175–6

is no exaggeration to say the chief business of the Council of 536, as it is recorded in the acts, consisted of attempting to find Anthimus and to rubber-stamp the desired condemnation.

This contrasts somewhat with the claim which occurs at the beginning of the acts. The first document introduced to the council is a monastic *libellus* which declares that the good work of the council was to scatter (διακεδάσαι) Anthimus, Peter, Severus, and Zooras.[69] In other words, the job of the council was to split apart a set of close connections which had formed at the court. The council left little doubt that these men would be rejected as heretics, but this fact would seem at first to put Justinian's ultimate aim of detente with the anti-Chalcedonians at great risk. At this point, it is important to recall a key statement by Menas in the fourth session of the council: 'without the emperor's will and command nothing could happen in a matter touching ecclesiastical affairs.'[70] If the council would scatter these men, it would do so because the emperor desired as much.

## CONCLUSION: INFLUENCE AND ASSOCIATION

Although a rejection of Anthimus, Severus, Peter, and Zooras might alienate some anti-Chalcedonians, the court had little choice if it was to maintain a healthy relationship with the west. The court could not accept any appearance of undue anti-Chalcedonian influence on account of the association they had hitherto maintained. Once this temporary crisis had passed, the court could return to working with the anti-Chalcedonians. But for now, someone needed to be scattered so the Chalcedonian community could maintain peace. Someone had to be a scapegoat. In this light, the focus on the individual persons makes sense. The more the council concentrates on these individuals, the more it might hope to avoid broader questions which could hazard future relations with the anti-Chalcedonians. It is well to remove these individuals, for they cause tumult, they bring another baptism, they snatch up the simple and do not arrive at a

[69] *ACO* 3.131.59
[70] *ACO* 3.181.130; trans. Frend, 272–3.

knowledge of the truth.[71] Anthimus must be condemned for undermining the ecclesiastical canons and laws.[72] This, after all, is why God sent Agapetus from Rome.[73]

But when it comes to discussing the actual views of Severus and his companions, the acts are content to lob stereotyped accusations which do little more than endorse a Chalcedonian status quo.[74] The council affirms Chalcedon, along with the *Tome* of Leo, and condemns Eutyches and Nestorius, while rejecting one individual on canonical grounds and a few others because they do not affirm Chalcedon.[75] This is the bare minimum one might do to satisfy the west, and it is therefore exactly what one might expect of the emperor if he were planning to continue his efforts toward reconciliation with the anti-Chalcedonians as soon as practicable. Certainly, persecution of anti-Chalcedonians would follow, but the superlative degree of the persecution under Ephraim, as compared to other areas, only shows how much such persecution could depend upon local conditions.[76]

It is unsurprising that the next attempt at reconciliation did not follow immediately on the heels of 536. The Gothic War was in full force and would necessarily have changed the court's priorities. Be-

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[71] *ACO* 3.131.59

[72] *ACO* 3.132

[73] *ACO* 3.132.11

[74] One finds, as a representative example of the reasoning employed, the following: 'ὅ πρῶτον καὶ μέσον καὶ ὕστατον ἐστι Σεβῆρος ὁ ἀλιτήριος ὁ κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ λαλήσας ἀδικίαν ἀεί, ποτὲ μὲν τὰ Ἑλλήνων μυστήρια μυηθεὶς καὶ ταῦτα τιμήσας, ποτὲ δὲ τὰ Εὐτυχοῦς διδάξας καὶ Μάνεντος, ἐν ὅλωι δὲ τῶι βίωι τῆι τῶν Χριστιανῶν ὀρθῆι πίστει φράσας ἐρρῶσθαι καὶ τὴν Νεστορίου τοῦ ἀνθρωπολάτρου προσηγορίαν εἰς ἐφόδιον τῆς ἀπάτης τοῖς ἐξ ἁπλότητος πρὸς ὑποδοχὴν ἔχουσιν ἕτοιμα τὰ ὦτα ἐπινοήσας [...]' *ACO* 3.147.69.34–148.69.1.

[75] The affirmation of Chalcedon and condemnation of Eutyches and the Nestorians are paired frequently in the acts. See, e.g. *ACO* 3.30–31, 134, and 141.

[76] John of Ephesus particularly holds Ephraim responsible for the persecutions. When discussing the matter, however, Menze notes that Pseudo-Zachariah held Ephraim in somewhat higher regard, concluding that John must be read with a grain of salt. Menze, 110–11.

sides, after the emperor's guests so recently found themselves publicly excoriated, it would be some time before overtures to the anti-Chalcedonians could be productive. But the attempts would continue and with this in mind we can even see the Council of 536 as a moment of consolidation. One might reasonably conclude from the relationship the court had with the next two popes that the emperor learned clearly from 536 about the need to keep as much influence over the papacy as possible. In short order, he would ensure that only approved persons held any of the patriarchal sees. Once the formal unity of the church had been achieved, the emperor would again be able to pursue rapprochement with the anti-Chalcedonians, but now from a position of strength.

# Chapter 4.
## Heretics, Living or Dead

Policy is guided by the interests of those who implement it. Selecting the right people to implement policy, and balancing their interests one against the other, is as important as the particulars of the policy itself. Finding talented and reliable agents, a leader must still work to avoid becoming entangled in their conflicts. In the wake of 536, one might look for Justinian to abandon his earlier efforts at reconciliation. Indeed, the decade which follows would seem, at first glance, to provide an optimal example of Justinian's erratic approach to religious policy. During this period, we see the sudden condemnation of Origen, a man dead for three centuries, followed shortly by a condemnation of the so-called Three Chapters, consisting of Theodore of Mopsuestia and his writings, along with certain works by Theodoret of Cyrus and Ibas of Edessa. The connection between these fifth-century writers and Origen is not immediately obvious, but a rather surprising explanation, which we will review shortly, is offered in our sources. In place of this, and other explanations for the condemnation of Origen and the Three Chapters which scholars have proposed, this chapter will offer an account consistent with our approach up to this point. We will take into account the social competition among those on whom Justinian relied. With such a context in mind, it will be clear that Justinian's actions were those of a ruler facing shifting circumstances under which he attempted to fulfill consistent policy goals. Let us now turn to some of the earlier explanations which have been offered for the concurrence of condemnations.

## THE THREE CHAPTERS AND ORIGENISM

> If therefore after this orthodox profession and condemnation of the heretics anyone, while preserving a pious understanding, separates himself from the holy church of God through a love of contention over terms or words or expressions, as if piety consists for us in mere terms or expressions but not in realities, such a one for delighting in schism will have to answer for himself and for those he is deceiving or will in future deceive to our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ on the day of judgement.[1]

Thus Justinian sealed his edict *On the Orthodox Faith* with a stern warning against any who would separate from the Church by defying the imperial edict. The edict, issued in 551, was in reality an effort on the part of the emperor to salvage what had turned out to be a disastrous policy. Therein he attempted to demonstrate the orthodoxy of the Chalcedonian confession, in part by arguing for the heterodoxy of works from three authors, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus, and Ibas of Edessa, known to history as the Three Chapters. Pope Vigilius, then resident in Constantinople, refused to comply with the edict and the emperor was ultimately forced to convene an ecumenical council in order to have his edict confirmed. This was loss for imperial policy in two senses: first, the court shown itself unable to force a confession upon the church without its consent; and, second, the decrees of the council itself did not prevent the sundering of relations among the Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian bishops.

Even so, that the Council managed to preserve some unity among the Chalcedonian bishops was something of a victory. It was perhaps a partial one, however, since it would take the better part of a century for the council to achieve universal recognition in the west. The condemnation of the Three Chapters, treated by Justinian as an antidote to schism in the east, had instead poisoned relations in the west. We are left to wonder, then, why the court would pursue a policy which, having guarantee of success in the east, risked the gains

[1] Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 1.159.

made under Justin in the west. A standard explanation may be found in J. B. Bury's *History of the Later Roman Empire,* although it predates his work by many centuries. Since the explanation had long remained fixed, it will do as well to quote from him as any more recent scholar who says much the same. Bury places the origins of the Three Chapters controversy within the context of the aftermath of the second Origenist controversy in Palestine.

> After the death of St. Sabas (December 5, A.D. 532), the number and influence of the Origenists grew in the monasteries of Palestine. Two of the most prominent, Theodore Ascidas and Domitian, visited the capital in A.D. 536 to attend the synod which condemned the Monophysites, and gaining the favour of the Emperor they were appointed to fill the sees, Domitian of Ancyra and Theodore of Caesarea in Cappadocia. Both Pelagius and the Patriarch Menas were anxious to break the influence which Theodore Ascidas, a man of considerable astuteness and not over-scrupulous, exerted over Justinian ; and they eagerly took up the cause of the monks who desired to purge Palestine of the heresy.[2]

Bury continues:

> Pelagius and Menas convinced Justinian that it was imperative to take action, and in A.D. 543 the Emperor issued an edict condemning ten opinions of Origen. It was subscribed by Menas, and the Pope and the other Patriarchs, including Peter of Jerusalem, signed it also. Theodore Ascidas was in a difficult position. To refuse to accept the edict would have cost him his bishopric and influence at court. He sacrificed his opinions and affixed his signature, but he had his revenge by raising a new theological question which was to occupy the stage of ecclesiastical politics for more than ten years.
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> There was no theologian whose writings were more offensive to the Monophysites than Theodore of Mopsuestia, who was es-

[2] Bury, 383.

> teemed the spiritual father of Nestorianism. He had also written against Origen and was detested by the Origenists. To Theodore Ascidas, who was apparently a secret Monophysite as well as an Origenist, there could hardly be a greater triumph than to procure his condemnation in by the Church.[3]

Bury proceeds to explain how Theodore Askidas then persuaded Justinian that the condemnation of Theodore of Mopsuestia, along with suspect works of Theodoret and Ibas, would demonstrate to the anti-Chalcedonians the Cyrillian orthodoxy of the Chalcedonian position. This explanation has the satisfying quality connected to otherwise seemingly disparate controversies, both later addressed at the Fifth Ecumenical Council. Even so, we will find that this revenge plot thesis is an inadequate explanation. Recently, scholars have begun to question the veracity of this explanation.[4] Richard Price, to take one example, rejects it in clear terms.

> The claim that the condemnation of the chapters resulted from deception and manipulation by an heretical faction is manifestly tendentious; neither Liberatus nor his sources were in a position to know what Ascidas said to Justinian or how much it influenced him.[5]

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[3] Bury, 383–84.

[4] A prime example of this healthy skepticism is Father John Behr, who points out the following: 'It was left to Theodore Askidas to coordinate a response. His influence had grown to such an extent that in Cyril's mind Askidas 'controlled the palace'. [...] This was then followed by the edict issued by Justinian in 544/5 condemning Theodore of Mopsuestia and the other two 'Chapters'. The inclusion of Theodoret and Ibas strongly indicates that it was not simply an act of revenge for the condemnation of Origen instigated by Theodore Askidas, as Cyril asserts, but that the concerns expressed by the miaphysites over the previous decade had indeed been heard, as Liberatus also suggests.' *The Case Against Diodore and Theodore: Texts and Their Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 116.

[5] Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 1.19.

Without this revenge plot thesis, however, we may be left to wonder whether there was any connection between the two condemnations. Here I will argue that the condemnation of the Three Chapters was not a consequence of an Origenist revenge plot. Even so, we might still find a constructive connection between the two condemnations. Justinian was the pawn of neither a pro-Origenist nor a pro-Three Chapters faction. On the contrary, it is more plausible to suggest the condemnation of Origen provided the very opportunity he needed to pursue the his then long held goal of condemning the Three Chapters.

## The Evidence

The evidence from which the revenge plot thesis is constructed is sparse, as is often the case in late-antique history, but it is also rather straightforward. A brief review of it will indicate how the revenge plot thesis became established.

The sixth-century hagiographer of Palestinian monasticism, Cyril of Scythopolis, serves as the starting point for any investigation of the second Origenist controversy. In the *Life of Sabas*, the Sabaite monk Theodore Askidas is consistently portrayed as a villain. Theodore and Domitian are, on Cyril's testimony, hypocritical heretics who secretly conceal their Origenism by ostensibly fighting for Chalcedon.[6] They were forced to sign the edict Justinian issued against the Origenists, but Theodore's hypocrisy became evident due to his persecution of the orthodox. The issue of the Three Chapters is scarcely hinted at in Cyril's lives. Relying only upon Cyril's witness, one could justifiably believe that the Fifth Council chiefly concerned Origenism. One would also believe in a particularly duplicitous and influential Theodore Askidas.

A second source on the matter is the *Breviarium* of Liberatus of Carthage. The importance of this source eclipses by far the actual work that has been done on it. The derivative nature of the first few

[6] Cyril of Scythopolis, *Lives*, ed. Eduard Schwartz in *Kyrillos von Skythopolis, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der alchristlichen Literatur* (Leipzig, 1939), 188,25–189.

chapters of the church history is probably the best explanation of its neglect. Yet the latter chapters form our only narrative for some events of the ecclesiastical history of the sixth century. It is from Liberatus that certain elements of the revenge plot thesis are derived. In the twenty-fifth chapter of the *Breviarium* we are told that Theodore Askidas was an enemy of the aforementioned deacon and Roman *apocrisarius,* Pelagius, and a most bitter defender of Origen. For this reason, having learned that Origen was condemned, contrived with the aid of Theodora to persuade Justinian to anathematize the Three Chapters. Liberatus does not indicate that Theodore himself signed the condemnation.

A third source, the *Defense of the Three Chapters*, was written by Facundus, bishop of Hermiane in North Africa. The work is a lengthy and detailed response to and refutation of Justinian's lost edict against the Three Chapters, promulgated in 544/5. The briefest section near the beginning of Facundus's *Defense* concerns us now. Facundus, discussing how the spirit of heresy came upon the church, asserts the now familiar charge that it was through the agency of certain persons who, hiding the pagan doctrines of Origen under the name of Christianity, sought some means of disturbing the peace of the church. Their opportunity to do so came when Origen was condemned.

> And all this did not escape public notice, particularly when Domitian, bishop of Ancyra [...] who was himself plainly a champion of the Origenist heresy, wrote a letter to the most blessed Pope Vigilius. With God having wrenched it from him, he confessed that the accomplices of Origen, when they saw that they could not defend their own dogmas [...] stirred up these scandals in the church in retribution against the things done against Origen.[7]

[7] Facundus of Hermiane, *Defense des trois chapitres (A Justinien),* ed. by J.-M. Clement, OSB and R. Vander Plaetse; intro., trans., and notes by Anne Fraisse-Betoulieres (Paris: Cerf, 2002), 1.2.4.

While only Domitian is mentioned here, Anne Fraisse-Betoulieres, the author of the notes in the *Sources Chretiennes* edition of the *Defense,* takes those hiding under the name of Christian to include Theodore Askidas, as is the custom.

Between these three sources, it seems we have a fairly strong case to support the revenge plot thesis of the relationship between the Second Origenist and Three Chapters Controversies. On closer examination, however, we shall find that this explanation alone is inadequate and that it misses some important insights.

## Problems with the Revenge Plot Thesis

As it stands, an honest evaluation of the revenge plot presents a rather strange narrative. Theodore Askidas and Domitian of Ancyra made no known attempts to dissuade the court from condemning Origen. This despite the fact that they had both the political access and, certainly in the case of Theodore, the intellectual tools to mount a defense. Instead, Theodore Askidas and Domitian, preserving their influence by signing the condemnation of their secret hero, expended that influence on a project of revenge. This revenge consisted of having the writings of three long deceased men condemned for Nestorianism, although one of the three was the target of this conspiracy chiefly because he had written against another dead man, Origen of Alexandria. Note that this revenge did nothing to harm directly those who had purportedly arranged the condemnation of Origen. Furthermore, we are told that one of the conspirators, Domitian, confessed the whole plot to Pope Vigilius, who was then actively opposing the condemnation of the Three Chapters. The letter in which the confession is said to have occurred does not come down to us. Importantly, Vigilius never refers to the condemnation of the Three Chapters as being arranged by a conspiracy of Origenist heretics, even though it would have greatly bolstered his occasional case against the condemnation and against Askidas himself.

In short, the entire Origenist revenge conspiracy theory rests on the witness of Liberatus, Facundus, and Cyril. These sources, as we shall discuss briefly, are not without their problems. The works of Antoine Guillaumont concerning the sources for sixth-century Origenism were a revelation in this regard. Much of what had long been regarded as sixth-century Origenism was in fact from the works of

Evagrius of Pontus. There are no indisputable contemporary documents written by Origenists able to confirm that those Cyril accuses actually believed the doctrines ascribed to them. As Brian Daley convincingly argued, the writings of Leontius of Byzantium, the one accused author whose works have come down to us, not only do not prove crypto-Origenist but are at times anti-Origenist.[8] We will also see reason to question the strict historicity of the *Life of Cyriacus*, the chief source from the corpus of Cyril of Scythopolis that treats the particular beliefs of the Origenists.

Facundus and Liberatus present us with a slightly different problem. First, one might suppose, given their common cause, prominence, and geographic origins, that they were not many links apart in their social networks. Indeed, it is very likely that they knew one another and therefore the common element of their story may share a common source. If this is the case, we ought not to regard them as separate witnesses. Since they are writing ostensibly to defend the Three Chapters, they have every incentive to suggest that the source of the condemnation of the Three Chapters was a heretic manipulating the innocent and otherwise orthodox emperor under the guise of defending Chalcedon. These reasons alone are sufficient to cast doubt on their narratives. Yet the chief impetus to question the revenge plot lies not so much in its implausibility, great though it is, as in its superfluity. To see why a crypto-Origenist revenge conspiracy is superfluous, we should turn first to how these supposed crypto-Origenists made their way into positions of influence to begin with.

## Sabaites in Constantinople

In 530, in the wake of the Samaritan revolt, the Patriarch Peter of Jerusalem, sent Sabas, the renowned founder of monasteries in Palestine, on an embassy to Constantinople. This would not be Sabas's first trip to New Rome, as he had been sent by the Patriarch Elias on an embassy to the emperor Anastasius a little less than twenty years

[8] Brian Daley, 'The Origenism of Leontius of Byzantium,' *Journal of Theological Studies* 27 (1976): 333–369.

earlier.[9] Peter's task for Sabas was to 'beg the emperor to grant remission of the taxes of First and Second Palestine on account of the murders and destruction perpetuated by the Samaritans.'[10] Sabas's embassy to the Chalcedonian emperor was clearly a great success, as the rich details offered by Cyril of Scythopolis reveal.[11]

For our purposes, however, Sabas's mission was more consequential than just the addition of tax-free status for Jerusalem. The greatest significance of this embassy lies in the connections it creates that will help shape events well after the watershed moment of 536. Upon Sabas's arrival in Constantinople, 'our divinely protected emperor, overjoyed, sent the imperial galleys to meet him; with them went out to meet him the Patriarch Epiphanius, father Eusebius and Bishop Hypatius of Ephesus.'[12] Hypatius is the same influential bishop whom we encountered earlier when discussing the Colloquium of 532. Sabas's reputation is further highlighted by being received in such a manner.

This Father Eusebius, however, is new to our story and this is also his first—though not his final—appearance in Cyril's narrative.[13] He is something of a mysterious figure, inserted into the *vita* without introduction, as though the reader is expected to recognize the name. Yet outside Cyril and ambiguous entries in subscription lists, he rarely appears in other sources. One such source is Novel 40, wherein he is described as a priest and treasurer of the holy church of Constantinople.[14] Nevertheless, the combined evidence of this novel and his

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[9] Cyril, 139,20.

[10] Cyril, 173,6–9.

[11] Cyril, 176–8.

[12] Cyril, 173. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of Cyril's *Lives* are from Richard M. Price, *Lives of the Monks of Palestine by Cyril of Scythopolis* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1991).

[13] Thanks are due to Rod Stearn for drawing my attention to the probable importance of Father Eusebius, a figure whose significance I had overlooked in my readings of Cyril's *vitae*.

[14] '[...] Εὐσέβιος ὁ θεοφιλέστατος πρεσβύτερος καὶ κειμηλιάρχης τῆς κατὰ τὴν βασιλίδα ταύτην πόλιν ἁγιωτάτης ἐκκλησίας [...]' Wilhelm Kroll and Rudolf Schoell, *Corpus Iuris Civilis: Novellae, 4th ed.* (Berlin: Weidmannos,

actions in Cyril show clearly that he was a man of influence. In fact, his influence outweighed his nominal position, as he was able to facilitate significant connections within a Chalcedonian network still growing around the court.

Cyril's narrative of Sabas's embassy naturally includes his hero's appearance and speech before the emperor, along with a detail about which Cyril offers a highly implausible gloss. After requesting tax breaks and aid for Palestine, per the requirements of his mission, Sabas assures the emperor that God will grant victory in Africa and Rome as recompense. The purpose for this victory, Sabas adds, is that the emperor might root out the Arian, Nestorian, and Origenist heresies. Cyril then explains that these heresies were each chosen for a particular reason, of which the Origenist is most relevant to our concerns at the moment:

> He included the destructive heresy of Origen in the rejection of the said heresies, since one of the monks with him, Byzantine by birth and named Leontius, who was one of those admitted with Nonnus into the New Laura after the death of the superior Agapêtus, had been found embracing the doctrines of Origen; though claiming to support the Council of Chalcedon, he was detected holding the views of Origen. On hearing this and remembering the words of the blessed Agapêtus, our father Sabas, acting with severity, expelled both Leontius and those with the views of Theodore and excluded them from his company, and asked the emperor to expel both heresies.[15]

This Leontius, first introduced by Cyril here, will become one of the most prominent figures of the *Vita Sabae* and arguably of Chalcedonian thought in the sixth century. We will leave off the question of his supposed Origenism for the moment, for it is enough now to note the circumstances under which Cyril portrays his return to Constantinople. An intellectual (as he proves to be in the narrative) of Constantinopolitan extraction, he is said to be expelled from the

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1912), 259.10–12.

[15] Cyril, 176.

group while in Constantinople, being rejected by Sabas. Cyril repeats this claim later in his narrative.[16]

Yet for a monk abandoned in disgrace by his abbot, an abbot with the esteem of the emperor, Leontius seems to have done very well for himself. By the time we arrive at Innocentius's account, Leontius is listed along with Hypatius and the aforementioned Father Eusebius as one selected to attend the Colloquium of 532. Here, he is described as a monk and the *apocrisarius patrum constitutorum.* Despite Cyril's distaste for the man, his influence in the *Vita Sabae*, and his close cooperation with Father Eusebius, cannot be denied.[17] This picture of Leontius stands in contrast to Sabas's supposed public rejection of him.

Within a few short years, Leontius exerts his influence to promote other Sabaite monks and place them within the growing court circle. The council held in 536, and the events surrounding it, saw the arrival of many from Palestine and other parts of the empire. Two such individuals, who may be found repeatedly in the subscription lists, were Domitian and Theodore Askidas. Like Leontius, these two are arch-villains of Cyril's narrative. In Cyril's treatment of their arrival in Constantinople, they prove comparable to Leontius in another way as well.

> At this same time Domitian, superior of the monastery of Martyrius, and Theodore surnamed Ascidas, who ruled over those of the New Laura, both of them partaking to satiety of the plague of Origen, sailed to Constantinople, where they pretended to be battling for the Council of Chalcedon. Through recommendation by the above-mentioned Leontius of Byzantium they attached themselves to father Eusebius and through him to our most pious emperor. Veiling their heresy by abundant hypocrisy and enjoying immediate access to the palace, Domitian

[16] Cyril, 179,8.
[17] Cyril, 189–191.

> received the first see of the province of Galatia, while Theodore succeeded to the see of Caesarea of Cappadocia.[18]

Again we find Father Eusebius facilitating connections between the emperor and a growing circle of Chalcedonian intellectuals in Constantinople. The emperor bolsters the institutional authority of this circle by providing them with bishoprics, an embarrassing fact for Cyril. When admitting the influence of this circle, Cyril always injects a conspiratorial subtext, but he cannot avoid the clear signs of the emperor's favor. Cyril assures his reader that the wicked Origenists in Palestine, under the leadership of Nonnus, took strength from such appointments. We will turn later to the question of Origenist identity, but for now it is enough to note the construction of a set of connections between Constantinople and Palestine which would include influential intellectuals and advisers to the emperor.

The Council of 536 saw another influential actor added to our cast, this one coming from a different quarter altogether. One recalls from an earlier chapter the prominence of the deacon and papal *apocrisarius* Dioscorus, who used his position—both in the sense of his formal role and his network placement—to great effect in an effort to serve his own interests. We find a like character in the person of the Roman deacon Pelagius, who was appointed as papal *apocrisarius* to the emperor by Pope Agapetus, just before his passing.[19] This Pelagius would later succeed Vigilius as Pope Pelagius I. Our narrative sources naturally tend to focus on this latter part of his story, along with his involvement in the troubled implementation of the Three Chapters condemnation in the west. At this early stage, however, he already acts as an instrument of both papal and imperial influence, inasmuch as the interests of both coincide. It is essential to remember this dual role he plays as he travels about the Mediterranean.

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[18] Cyril, 188,25–189,6

[19] 'his peractis constituens papa apud imperatorem apocrisarium ecclesiae suae Pelagium diaconum suum, dum Italiam reuerti disponit, Constantinoplim obiit.' *ACO* 2.5, 136.15–17.

## UNITAS FACTA EST ECCLESIARUM

In the wake of the Council of 536 and its condemnation of the Severus and his allies, Liberatus makes a remarkable claim.

> But Severus the Antiochian had already been condemned, and Anthimus the Constantinopolitan by Agapetus, the Roman pope, and Menas the Constantinopolitan, from *libelli* given against them to the Emperor Justinian by the prelates of the monasteries, and by prelates of first and second Syria, and by prelates of the monasteries of Jerusalem and the desert. In this manner, therefore, the unity of the Church was accomplished in the tenth year of the glorious Augustus, the Emperor Justinian.[20]

For the modern reader, knowing that the divisions among Christians in the east were being deepened and institutionalized, this is a striking statement and it can be difficult to know exactly what to make of it. But Liberatus is describing here the purely formal unity Justinian had achieved in the Pentarchy. Of course, Patriarch Peter of Jerusalem had long held the Chalcedonian line, being rivaled in his dedication to the cause by the Patriarch Ephraim of Antioch. With Agapetus's fateful trip to Constantinople, both old and new Rome were now headed by loyal Chalcedonian patriarchs. It is at this juncture, according to Liberatus, that Pelagius would advance a candidate for exiled Theodosius's seat in Alexandria.

> Therefore, after Theodosius the Alexandrian was sent into exile, a certain Paul, one of the abbots of the Tabennensian monks, was ordained bishop for the Alexandrian See, a man clearly orthodox, accepting the Chalcedonian synod, with the Roman *apocrisarius* Pelagius having intervened. He was ordained by

[20] 'Seuerus autem Antiochens iam fuerat condemnatus et Anthimus Constantinoplitanus ab Agapito papa Romano et Menate Constantinopolitano et libellis datis aduersus eos imperatori Iustiniano a praesulibus monasteriorum primae et secundae Syriae et praesulibus monasteriorum Hierosolimorum et eremi. hoc ergo modo unitas facta est ecclesiarum anno x imperii gloriosi Iustiniani augusti.' *ACO* 2.5, 138.29–33.

> Menas of Constantinople, in the presence of the same Pelagius, *responsarius* of Vigilius, and the apocrisarii of the Antiochian Ephraem, and the *apocrisarii* of Peter of Jerusalem.[21]

With the ordination of Paul, a formal unity among the great patriarchates was achieved. Indeed, with the presence of the *apocrisarii*, the ordination of Paul is here portrayed as a common effort of the Pentarchy. Some Chalcedonian optimism might have been justified at this point, were it not for circumstances which would shortly follow and which it must be admitted were outside the court's control.

It seems Paul was not the best choice for the role. His key qualification, that he affirmed Chalcedon, would be overridden by his apparent involvement in the murder of one of his deacons.[22] In the wake of this event, the unity of our narrative and sources suffers, as does the unity of the Chalcedonians who attend the court.

This much is clear: Justinian wanted to rectify the situation with Paul the Tabennesiot and he wanted to do so while maintaining the appearance of unity he had attained at Paul's ordination. To accomplish this, Justinian dispatched a group of prelates to Alexandria to install a replacement. The details of this mission vary in the sources, however, and it will be necessary to look at them separately.[23]

First, we will look at Liberatus's treatment of the matter. In the wake of the murder scandal in Alexandria, Paul had been exiled to Gaza.[24] Justinian sent Pelagius to depose Paul and select a replace-

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[21] 'Postquam ergo Theodosius Alexandrinus in exsilium missus est, Paulus quidam unus abbatum Tabennensium monachorum ad Alexandrinam sedem ordinatur episcopus Pelagio interueniente apocrisiario Romano plane orthodoxus suscipiens Calcedonensem synodum ordinatus est a Menna Constantinopoli praesente eodem Pelagio responsario Vigilii et apocrisiariis Euphraemii Antiocheni et apocrisiariis Petri Hierosolimorum.' *ACO* 2.5, 138.24–29.

[22] A somewhat fragmentary account of this appears in *PZ*, 10.1. Greater detail is offered in Liberatus, 138–39.

[23] Indeed, Evagrius Scholasticus skips this matter altogether, making Zoilus the immediate successor to Theodosius. *EH*, 4.37.

[24] *ACO* 2.5, 139.22–24.

ment. Pelagius included Hypatius of Ephesus in his party, to which he would add Ephraim of Alexandria and Peter of Jerusalem as he stopped at the see of each along the way to Gaza. Upon arriving in Gaza, Paul was deposed and replaced with Zoilus.[25]

From this point, Liberatus has Pelagius return to Constantinople from Gaza, picking up 'certain monks from Jerusalem' along the way who bore chapters extracted from Origen which they desired the emperor to condemn.[26] And here we find the first clear evidence of tension among the triumphant and unified Chalcedonians.

> Therefore, Pelagius, proving to be a rival (*aemulus*) to Theodore, the bishop of Caesarea Cappadocia (who desired to do him harm for the reason that he was a defender of Origen) together with Menas, the archbishop of Constantinople, was demanding from the princeps that he order it to come to pass, as those monks were beseeching, that Origen might be condemned, and those very chapters with such teachings. The Emperor readily agreed, quietly rejoicing to bring judgment on such cases: after he ordered a condemnation of anathema was decreed against Origen and those chapters, which Menas, the archbishop, and the bishops found in Constantinople unanimously subscribed. Thereon it was directed to the Roman bishop Vigilius, Zoilus the Alexandrian, Ephraim the Antiochian, and Peter the Jerusalemite. With these having received it and subscribed, dead Or-

[25] 'Et post haec misit imperator Pelagium diaconum et apocrisiarium primae sedis Romanae Antiochiam cum sacris suis quibus praecepit ut cum Euphraemio eiusdem urbis episcopo et Petrus Hierosolimita et Hypatius Ephesinus venirent Gazam et Paulo episcopo pallium auferrent, eumque deponerent. Pelagius ergo profectus Antiochiam et inde Hierosolimam cum memoratis patriarchis et aliquantis episcopis venit Gazam et auferentes Paulo pallium deposuerunt eum et ordinauerunt pro eo Zoilum [...]' *ACO* 2.5, 139.26–32.

[26] 'sed reuertente Pelagio Constantinopolim monachi quidam ad Hiersolimis, super quibus Pelagius in Gazam transitum habuit, uenerunt ad eum comitatu portantes capitula de libris Origenis excerpta uolentes agere apud imperatorem, ut Origenes damnaretur cum illis capitulis.' *ACO* 2.5, 139.33–140.3.

> igen was condemned who had been condemned once before while living.[27]

There is a fair bit here to unpack, and we will return to elements of this passage later, but the first point worthy of note is the rivalry between Theodore and Pelagius. We will see this rivalry indicated in other sources as well. Here, Pelagius's motivation is an apparent enmity toward Origen, an enmity which had not hitherto been indicated. It may be that the faction of ostensibly anti-Origen Jerusalemite monks put him on to the matter, or it may be that Pelagius stopped to visit these monks with the express purpose of finding a means to undermine Theodore who, one may recall, had come from the Sabaite monasteries. At best, we might draw Pelagius's motives from the utility of his actions. What is clear from this and other sources is that there were two factions of monks around Jerusalem, one associated with Theodore Askidas and Origen, at least rhetorically, and the other opposed to the first. It was this latter group Pelagius chose to aid, as he offered them access to the court. Having Palestinian monks who could displace Theodore's allies could only bolster Pelagius's position. It may be inferred from this that this faction—likely what would become Cyril of Scythopolis's faction—did not have such ready access before Pelagius's arrival. This makes sense when we recall the prominence of Theodore, Leontius, and Domitian at court that began with Sabas's own journey to Constantinople and the introduction of Leontius to Father Eusebius.

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[27] 'igitur Pelagius aemulus existens Theodoro Caesareae Cappadociae episcopo, uolens ei nocere eo quod esset Origenis defensor, una cum Menate archiepiscopo Constantinopolitano flagitabat a principe ut iuberet fieri quo illi monachi supplicabant, ut Origenes damnatur <et> cum ipso capitula talia docentia. annuit imperator facillime, gaudens se de talibus causis iduicium ferre. iubente eo dictata est in Origenem et illa capitula anathematis damnatio. quam suscribentes una cum Menata archiepiscopop * * apud Constantinopolim reppereit et inde directa est Vigilio Roman episcopo, Zoilo Alexandrino, Ephremio Antiocheno et Petro Hierosolimitano. quibus eam accipientibus et subscribentibus Origenes damnatus est mortuus, qui uiuens olim fuerat ante damnatus.' *ACO* 2.5, 140.3–12.

Cyril of Scythopolis's account of these events relies on different and sometimes contrasting details. For reasons Cyril does not explain, Leontius had already returned from Constantinople when he began to gather his Origenist allies to oppose the successors of Sabas. Their efforts were thwarted, however, by the miraculous intervention of God.[28] This is the context Cyril provides for the arrival of the mission to depose Paul the Tabennesiot.

> At this time there arrived in Palestine the patriarch of Antioch Ephraem and father Eusebius on account of the deposition of Bishop Paul of Alexandria. When father Eusebius came to Jerusalem after the dissolution of the council, Leontius presented to him those expelled from the Great Laura, who accused Gelasius of dividing the community into two halves and of expelling them while currying favor with their opponents. Father Eusebius, misled by Leontius' words and knowing nothing of their heresy, sent for Abba Gelasius and, in an attempt to resolve the dispute, pressed him either to receive back those expelled or to expel their opponents. In the face of such pressure the fathers, after deliberation, sent out of the laura Stephen, Timothy, and four others of the brethren, who, putting up with their voluntary exile, went off to Antioch, where they informed Patriarch Ephraem of what had happened and showed him the work of blessed Antipatrus. The patriarch, reading of the blasphemies of Origen in the work given him, and learning from those who gave it of the actions of the Origenists at Jerusalem, was stirred to courageous action, and by a public anathema of synodical authority condemned the doctrines of Origen.[29]

Ephraem and Father Eusebius returning from the deposition of Paul indicates this mission is the same as is described above from Liberatus's account. Pelagius is absent from this account, but it is probable, given what we saw in Liberatus, that Pelagius traveled with the aforementioned Stephen, Timothy, and four other monks to meet

[28] Cyril, 190.
[29] Cyril, 191.

with Ephraem in Antioch before proceeding onward to Constantinople with complaints against Origen. It would appear that Ephraem had left the party in Jerusalem after the deposition to return to his see.

This condemnation of Origen must have caused some panic among the reputedly Origenist monks who then controlled Palestine, for they then made moves which would force Peter of Jerusalem to turn against them.

> When this became known at Jerusalem to the vexation of Nonnus and his party, they, in alliance with Leontius of Byzantium, who had sailed back to Constantinople, Domitian of Galatia, and Theodore of Cappadocia, pressed Archbishop Peter to remove Ephraem's name from the sacred diptychs. At their causing this great discord, the archbishop sent secretly for Sophronius and Gelasius and told them to compose a petition against the Origenists, adjuring him not to remove Patriarch Ephraem's name from the sacred diptychs. When the fathers had composed this petition and presented it, the archbishop of receiving it sent it to the emperor with a letter telling him of the innovations of the Origenists. On receiving this petition, our most pious emperor issued an edict against the doctrines of Origen, to which edict Patriarch Menas of Constantinople and the synod under him appended their signatures.[30]

It should not be surprising that Peter would refuse any request to remove Ephraem from the diptychs. Even if Ephraem were not both influential and, at times, ruthless, for Peter to condemn the patriarch of Antioch unilaterally and risk schism in the newly united Chalcedonian imperial church would be to guarantee his own fall. If Nonnus and his faction did request Peter take such an extreme action, they must have done so in desperation. I would suggest that they were, in fact, desperate and for good reason. To see what drove this desperation, however, we must turn to the question of Origenism.

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[30] Cyril, 191.

## ORIGENISM AND ORIGENISMS

'One of the dangers in talking of Origenism,' wrote Andrew Louth, 'is in thinking that we know what we are talking about.'[31] This danger is a result of a process both historical and historiographical. The term carries much ambiguity, a product of its shifting context and its alienation from concrete referents early in its use. This ambiguity is present in many of the sources and is also reflected in scholarly descriptions of Origenism. A brief taxonomy of scholarly 'Origenisms' will help to clarify matters.

A concise identification of the various scholarly 'Origenisms' is in the work of Polycarp Sherwood. Attempting to find a workable definition of the Origenism opposed by Maximus the Confessor in the seventh century, both Sherwood and Hans Urs von Balthasar were forced to wrestle with different meanings of Origenism. Sherwood noted the distinct way they were employing the same term.[32] As with so many other problems in historical theology, the diversity of Origenisms may be attributed to the richness of Origen's own writings. According to Sherwood, von Balthasar's notion of Origenism derived from a broader understanding of Origen's work, from 'the animus which inspire, the intuition which directs, the whole body of Origen's thought'. The Origenism Sherwood sought from the *Ambigua* of Maximus the Confessor, however, was a different matter. Sherwood's concern was for 'articular definable doctrines,

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[31] Andrew Louth, 'The Collectio Sabbaitica and Sixth-Century Origenism,' in Origeniana *Octava : Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition, Papers of the 8th International Origen Congress, Pisa, 27–31 August 2001 Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium,* ed. Lorenzo Perrone (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 1167.

[32] '[I]n effect von Balthasar and I have been speaking of two diverse Origenisms. I have spoken [...] of the erroneous doctrines, rejected by Maximus, but attributed to Origen; von Balthasar, rather, of Origen's Logos-theology and basic intuition, to which Maximus was always in some way tributary.' Polycarp Sherwood. 'Maximus and Origenism : ΑΡΧΗ ΚΑΙ ΤΕΛΟΣ.' *Berichte zum XI. internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongress* III, 1, 1–27. (München, 1958), 1.

whether of Origen himself or of those extremists who subsequently claimed him as their master.'[33]

Sherwood also points to the three distinct Origenisms identified by Werner Jaeger. There is the Origenism of the 'gymnast', the author of the Περὶ ἀρχῶν who 'set forth a number of tentative explanations of fundamental questions, whose answers were not to be found expressed in Scripture nor in the Church's teaching.' This is the Origen whose work attracted condemnation in the first Origenist controversy and ultimately at Council of Constantinople under the Emperor Justinian. There is Origenism as the hermeneutical approach of Origen of Alexandria, who followed in the tradition of Philo. There is, in the last place, 'the Origen of the ascetico-mystical ideals.'[34]

Sherwood sought a rather narrow definition of later Origenism, assuming Maximus's refutation had a specific, heretical object. The works of von Balthasar, Sherwood, and Jaeger, as perceptive as they are, have not provided scholars with a single and widely applicable definition of Origenism. They have, in other words, not succeeded in providing a description of the nature of Origenism as an historical phenomenon but have left us with a proliferation of Origenisms. This is not a failing on their part, for succeeding generations of scholars have continued to wrestle with the matter and have largely confirmed that the term Origenism cannot be used without careful definition.

Brian Daley brought us closer to a definition applicable to a wide variety of 'Origenists', especially in the sixth century. It was the great difficulty in determining the precise nature of Origenism from the sources that led him to his understanding.

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[33] Already at this juncture, we may do well to note the assumption of a group of people who subscribed to such definable doctrines and claimed Origen's name. As we shall see, however, the historical record indicates more ascription than subscription, as many are accused of Origenism but those who claim it escape us.

[34] *Ibid*., 1–2.

> Perhaps the most puzzling challenge for historical research on sixth-century Origenism, however, is to find its inner identity: an intellectual system, a set of theological methods and doctrines, that Origenists all shared and anti-Origenists all rejected. Since the 1970's, in fact, it has been my contention that "Origenism", in the sixth century at least, signified more a style of religious thinking, and perhaps a set of priorities in living the monastic life, than it did adherence to a body of doctrine which could find its inspiration in the works of Origen.[35]

Thus, Daley could include the likes of Leontius of Byzantium and Theodore Askidas under a quite broad definition. This definition was based upon an 'Origenist' style of thought which included 'a high estimate of the value of the intellect in the perfection of faith, a willingness to speculate, an ability to interpret Scripture, monastic tradition, and even dogmatic canons with flexibility and a predominantly spiritual twist, a conviction of the indestructible dignity and autonomy of the human person and a correspondingly high confidence in humanity's future.'[36]

Daley's understanding of Origenism allowed him to reconcile the assumed reliability of Cyril of Scythopolis's narrative with the apparent orthodoxy of Leontius of Byzantium, a point for which he argued with great vigor in his noteworthy article of 1976.[37] Furthermore, Daley gave solid reasons why any group so defined might come under the suspicions of many in the empire.

> Presumably, too, as Leontius's obiter dicta suggest, they had themselves read classics of earlier Origenist theology, including the more speculative works of Didymus and Evagrius, with excitement and respect, even if they integrated them into their

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[35] Brian Daley, 'What Did 'Origenism' Mean in the Sixth Century?' in *Origeniana Sexta : Origène et La Bible : Actes Du Colloquium Origenianum Sextum, Chantilly, 30 Août-3 Septembre 1993*, International Colloquium for Origen Studies, ed. Gilles Dorival and Alain Le Boulluec (Leuven: Leuven University Press : Peeters, 1995), 628.

[36] *Ibid*., 638.

[37] Brian Daley, 'The Origenism of Leontius of Byzantium,' 333–69.

> own theological convictions to varying degrees, and in very different ways. What made them all "politically incorrect", however, what made them seem dangerous to both abbots and emperors, was probably their intellectual independence, their challenging presence as "gnostics" and λογιώτεροι in a world and a Church desperately seeking to recapture, in concrete institutional ways, the vision of a lost unity.[38]

Since the publication of Daley's article, "What Did 'Origenism' Mean in the Sixth Century?", scholars have tended toward broader definitions of Origenism. Such definitions of Origenism as a more spiritual or intellectual movement without doctrinal specifics are a natural fit for the vague and ambiguous sources. In this vein, Daniël Hombergen says that the Origenists of the sixth century 'represent a rather individualistic current concentrating primarily on the development of the interior life as a way of spiritual progress in the line of the fourth-century Egyptian tradition.'[39] This, Hombergen writes, is to be contrasted with the position represented by Cyril of Scythopolis which he 'characterized as rather collectivist.'[40]

The problem was taken up again by Andrew Louth, who argued that it was the polarization between the intellectual and ascetic that 'we can see in sixth century Palestine, rather than anything more clearly definable.'[41] Louth says of his own conclusion: 'This is by no means a new conclusion. It is very much that reached by Brian Daley more than a quarter century ago in his justly famous article on The Origenism of Leontius of Byzantium.'[42] Louth concludes by pointing with approval to a section from Antoine Guillaumont's study and edition of the Kephalaia Gnostica of Evagrius Ponticus.

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[38] *Ibid*., 638.

[39] Daniël Hombergen, 'Cyril of Scythopolis and the Second Origenist Controversy : Summary of a Critical Study on Cyril's Monastic Biographies Concerning Their Reliability as Historical Sources for Sixth-Century Origenism,' *Studia Monastica* 43, no. 1 (2001): 44.

[40] *Ibid*., 44.

[41] Louth, 1174.

[42] *Ibid*.

> En réalité, il ne faut pas se représenter ces moines comme des hérétiques conscients, cherchant à tenir secretes leurs opinions par l'effet seulement d'une vulgaire prudence. Leur «gnosticisme» était bien plutôt un esprit de libre recherché vis-à-vis de certaines questions qui, n'ayant pas reçu de réponse dans la Révélation, restaient un object d'investigation pour l'intelligence; ainsi en était-il de la pré-existence et de l'apocatastase... Cependant la liberté d'esprit, l'audace intellectuelle qu'ils estimaient légitimes chez le «gnostique» étaient certainement associées en eux à un attachement reel à l'Écriture, aux dogmes, à l'enseignement ecclésiatique traditonnel et à toutes les exigencies d'un christianisme sincèrement professé. Cette attitude n'était pas du tout comprise de leur adversaries, qui n'y voyaint qu'orgueil et vaine gloire.[43]

Concurring with the position of Guillaumont, Daley, Hombergen, and Louth, I will here maintain that the so-called Origenism of the sixth century did not represent a discreet and coherent set of doctrinal positions but something else. On the other hand, many of the sources, both primary and secondary, either assume the existence of a coherent set of beliefs ascribed to Origenists or construct it where it is lacking.

For this reason, one must ask why, if Origenism was no specific theology in its own right, the sources are so concerned to oppose a specific set of doctrines. Granted the sources often describe somewhat different doctrines, hence scholarly confusion on the matter, but the fact remains that all the sources confidently refute positions they believe Origenist heretics to hold. Indeed, if we are to trust the sixth-century monastic biographer Cyril of Scythopolis's reading of events, an ecumenical council was called to address the danger of this heresy. And why, furthermore, did a localized dispute merit an edict from the Emperor himself if, in reality, the disputants were not concerned with doctrinal questions of the sort that would affect the

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[43] Antoine Guillaumont, *Les 'Képhalaia Gnostica' d'Évagre Le Pontique et L'histoire de L'origénisme chez les Grecs et chez les Syriens* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1962), 161–62.

whole Church? If there were no heresy advocated but, rather, an internal monastic conflict in Palestine, it seems that disciplinary action from Jerusalem would be sufficient to deal with the situation. At any rate, questions of local discipline do not often result in lengthy personal doctrinal refutations from the Emperor himself.

To answer these questions, it becomes useful to focus on two aspects of Origenism in this period. First, we will look in detail at how it was constructed in the sources. This, in turn, will make it possible for us to understand how it functioned within its social context. Origenism, I will argue, is a rhetorical construct employed for the purpose of constructing symbolic and, eventually, social boundaries in order to drive those tarred with the term from power, influence, and even the monasteries where they lived and worked. It is a 'devil term'[44] and a 'polemical device of extraordinary potency'[45] paralleling Manichaeanism after the fourth century. Origenism by its very nature cannot have adherents because it was created as a caricature of reviled beliefs and practices, the potency of which lies in its ability to scandalize. Therefore the term Origenist, when used in this sense, need have no concrete referent to a doctrinal system with genuine adherents. Origenism has no stable meaning beyond its social and polemical function. Thus scholars attempting to reconstruct a theology from sixth-century sources face considerable difficulty. Origenism is a product of an historical process of dissociation between the use by polemicists of the language, labels, and texts associated with Origenism and any actual theological positions and concerns of those accused of Origenism. If the Colloquium of 532 demonstrated to us how symbolic boundaries might be manipulated and adjusted to create the possibility of inclusion and cooperation, we will see the exact inverse in the construction of Origenism. To understand this, we will have to turn briefly to the beginning of this process.

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[44] To use the phrase from Richard M. Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1953), 222.

[45] David G. Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 130.

## The Construction of Origenism

It is often enough said that the winners write the history, but an important corollary to this commonplace is that the winners will define the terms in which the history is written. We might well speak of Origenism in a different light if Rufinus were our only source for the first Origenist controversy. In such a case, the term Origenism would not have become so strong a pejorative—perhaps it would not exist at all. But in actual fact, Origenism was to be defined by its self-proclaimed opponents. The defining process is bipartite. On the one hand, anti-Origenist polemicists extended the term Origenist and all associated language to encompass as much negative meaning as possible, increasing its polemical effectiveness. This process largely abstracted 'Origenism' and language associated with it from actual doctrinal positions, the latter remaining at most as mere caricature. On the other hand, those labeled Origenists, once it is clear they are on the losing side of the controversy, are complicit in this process as a matter of self-defense. This may be illustrated well with the early examples of Epiphanius of Salamis, representing an anti-Origenist position.

Epiphanius was an early and influential participant in the first Origenist controversy.[46] Epiphanius's anti-Origenist polemic had aspects which would be typical of the Origenist Controversies. First, Epiphanius, chiefly concerned with contemporary enemies, uses Origenism and his history of it as a means of attacking them. Elizabeth Clark demonstrated how important contemporary questions are in the writings on Epiphanius and his fellow anti-Origenists. Even as Epiphanius, Theophilus, Jerome, and Shenute attack Origenism, they show very little concern for the third-century Alexandrian. 'Although texts of Origen are frequently quoted in these assaults, the attacks center so firmly on issues of concern to the critics' own era

[46] For a treatment of Ephiphanius's heresiological work, see Aline Pourkier, *L'hérésiogie chez Épiphane de Salamie* (Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 1992). Although Pourkier does not devote much of his discussion to Origen or the 'Origenists' as heretics, this volume remains a very thorough treatment of the broader subject of Epiphanius's heresiology.

that they frequently either underestimate or miss entirely the theological problems with which Origen himself grappled.'[47]

Nevertheless, Origenism is made the topic of such assaults, even if his actual thought is not the object. Epiphanius uses opposition to Origenism, for example, as a starting point to attack subordinationism[48] and to address contemporary questions of the body.[49] Such use of Origen's writings and the term Origenist separates both from consideration on their own merits and creates associations with any number of heresies instead. Each time Origenism is used as a stand in for other objectionable positions, it is further abstracted from any definable theological position that could be justly labeled with Origen's name. The final product of such abstraction is a simple association between Origenism and heresy.

Second, Epiphanius uses a selection of stereotyped charges derived from a very particular reading of Origen to create lasting caricature of Origenist beliefs. Such charges amount to a heretical hermeneutic first of Origen's and later of Evagrius's corpus. This set of charges gives the form or template for the rhetorical construct Origenism would become. One charge is that Origen held a subordinationist theology.[50] A second is that souls preexisted and, at the fall, fell into bodies.[51] The third charge, a consequence of the second, is that Origen does not hold the proper teaching on the resurrection of the dead.[52] The fourth charge regards the *apocatastasis*, or the restoration of all in the *eschaton*, and the corollary restoration of the devil.[53] We shall see this set of charges advanced repeatedly.

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[47] Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 85.
[48] *Ibid*., 90.
[49] *Ibid*., 91.
[50] Frank Williams, trans. *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis: Books II and III* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1994), 135.
[51] *Ibid*., 135.
[52] *Ibid*., 135–36.
[53] Clark, 99.

Whether these charges are an accurate representation of the thought of Origen is not particularly important for the purpose of understanding how that representation functions.[54] What happened at this point is that Origenism became a symbolic resource, a tool such as a conceptual distinction or interpretive strategy which may be employed 'in creating, maintaining, contesting, or even dissolving institutionalized social differences'.[55] The charges applied to Origen may now be effectively employed against one's opponents in an effort to construct boundaries between them and oneself. As we will see, such charges may even be employed to take possession of monasteries from one's rivals.

Thus from the early part of the first Origenist controversy, an association was constructed between a list of heresies, the writings of Origen and, later, Evagrius, and the polemical label of Origenist.[56] This understanding could then be applied to those labeled Origenists without reference to anything written by those to whom Origenism had been ascribed. Reference to the writings of latter-day Origenists would be unnecessary since the pernicious doctrines were assumed to be in the writings of the Origenists' heretical progenitors, Origen and Evagrius. When we arrive at the sixth century, this theme will return with force.

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[54] The same may be said of the charges of Cyriacus in the *Vita Cyriaci*. See Hombergen, *The Second Origenist Controversy*, 283.

[55] Lamont and Molnár, 168.

[56] It is probable that such charges, coming to a great extent from Epiphanius, served even as the early template for characterizing the doctrinal positions of 'Origenists'. As Clark notes: '[T]he Ancoratus, dated to 374, and in Panarion 64, dated to 376, indictments that proved central to both Theophilus's and Jerome's polemical constructions. Moreover, if (as has been argued) Epiphanius's Ancoratus was translated into Sahidic in 399 or 400—at the very height of the controversy—even those monks of the Egyptian desert unlettered in Greek could have become familiar with such points of the Origenist debate as the resurrection or nonresurrection of the body. Epiphanius's understanding of Origenism thus was a base for later discussions of the topic among both the learned and the less-than-learned.' Clark, 86.

Epiphanius's purpose was polemic, his method invective, his concern contemporary.[57] The use of Origenism to attack a variety of positions not necessarily related to the actual positions of Origen, the creation of a stereotyped anti-Origenist reading of the texts of Origen by which one could justify an accusation of the Origenist heresy, and the association of Origenism with abhorrent monastic theology and practice are three factors which combined to create the prototypical anti-Origenist approach. In the place of specific theological positions now stood a 'devil word' and a 'devil theology'. Now abstracted from a doctrinal referent, 'Origenist' could only serve the role of a pejorative for subsequent generations and controversies.

## ORIGENISM IN SIXTH-CENTURY SOURCES

By the sixth century, the first Origenist controversy had long passed from living memory. The rhetorical value of Origenism could outlive any identifiably Origenist doctrine because it was able continually to renew and reconstruct itself as a symbolic resource in accordance with the polemical needs of the day. Of course, the desirability of maintaining Origenism as an accusation may be connected with its plausibility. It is apparent that the reading of Origen and Evagrius had not fallen out of fashion, even as certain doctrines which could be derived from them had. It cannot be doubted, for the sixth-century evidence certainly reflects this, that both authors were still read. The heretical doctrines played a relatively small part in the works of Origen and Evagrius, but polemics had stereotyped the image of these two authors according to a heretical template. Furthermore, Epiphanius had connected the notion of Origenism with improper monastic practice. Within the sixth-century monastic world, Origenism remained an obvious label for one's monastic opponents. The popularity of the texts of Origen and Evagrius offered both plausible grounds for the accusation, as many undoubtedly read such

[57] A comparison between the grab bag of accusation, rumor, and paralepsis one finds in Epiphanius, *de Haeresibus* 63 and 64 is revealing of the authors overriding desire to associate the term with every form of scandal and immorality.

texts, and material from which to construct the accusation. The accusation itself, however, followed the pattern created in the first Origenist controversy.

We will set about demonstrating this contention from a few simple yet underappreciated points. First, and most importantly, the descriptions or accusations of Origenism in the sixth century have a very peculiar quality. Reviewing each description of sixth century Origenism, we will discover nothing which has an existence independent of earlier texts. This indicates, not a school of thought inspired by the rich works of Origen and Evagrius, but a polemicist's caricature derived from them.

The second point is that although Origenism is sometimes ascribed to individuals, this seems to be the unverifiable exception rather than the rule. Even the conciliar condemnations of Origenism are against Origen, Evagrius and Didymus. No contemporaries were mentioned by name in the condemnations. This seems an odd thing indeed, given the ferocity of the second Origenist controversy indicated by Cyril of Scythopolis. But it fits perfectly a pattern we saw elsewhere when discussing the Three Chapters. The utility of condemning the Three Chapters was in the possibility that the condemnation could serve as common ground for Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian. It served no sixth-century interest to have contemporaries condemned as supporters of Ibas of Edessa. Neither was there any need to condemn sixth-century supporters of Origen, because such people were not the point, even if they existed.

The final point is something of a curiosity in the history of the Church, especially of the Byzantine Church. Cyril of Scythopolis describes some conflict in the immediate aftermath of the Fifth Ecumenical Council but, after the Origenists were banished from the New Laura in 555, they disappear. A condemnation, even a condemnation from an ecumenical council, does not often result in the condemned abandoning their heresy. It may be suggested that perhaps the Origenists simply did not have the support which other more obstinate heresies had in the past. This is certainly possible, though it would leave us to wonder how so small a sect could cause so large a controversy. For now, however, I would like to suggest that the simplest explanation for this curiosity is that the supposed Origenists

had never subscribed to any Origenist doctrines but were labeled such as part of a now standard rhetorical tactic in monastic polemics.

Several texts remain standards in any attempt to reconstruct the nature of sixth-century Origenism. These include chiefly the anathemas of the Fifth Ecumenical Council, the anathemas penned by Justinian, the *Lives* of Cyril of Scythopolis who provided the foremost narrative of the controversy, and the Letters of Barsanuphius and John. These sources do indeed describe certain theological positions. Yet it is not apparent from this fact that what is described is an Origenism to which anyone in the sixth century subscribed.

## Barsanuphius and John

At first glance, the *Letters* of Barsanuphius and John seem to describe clearly the position of contemporary Origenists. They speak openly about the presence and circulation of the works of Origen, Evagrius, and Didymus the Blind, and point to their use as well. But a careful reflection on the given context of the conversation, the apparent end intended in the reply, and the shape of the response itself undermines the usefulness of the *Letters* to those who would attempt to reconstruct sixth-century Origenism.

Letters 600–607 present an interesting picture. Letter 600 begins with the standard 'A brother asked the holy Old Man, Abba Barsanuphius saying', but it is followed by the telling phrase, 'Father, I do not know how I came upon the books of Origen and Didymus, as well as the *Gnostic Chapters* of Evagrius and the writings of his disciples.'[58] Such a phrase both confirms that a monk of this period was able give his consideration to the doctrines contained in the *Peri Archon* and the *Kephalaia Gnostica* and seems to cast doubt on the presence of any *aggressive* proponents of Origenism. Two reasons

[58] Barsanuphius and John, *Correspondance*, Neyt François O.S.B. Angelis-Noah and Paula de Regnault Lucien, ed. And trans. *SC* 451 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1997), 804.2–3, 'Οὐκ οἶδα Πάτερ πῶς ἐνέπεσα εἰς τὰ βιβλία Ὠριγένους καὶ Διδύμου, καὶ εἰς τὰ Γνωστικὰ Εὐαγρίου καὶ εἰς τὰ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτου.'; trans. John Chryssavgis, *Barsanuphius and John: Letters* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 179.

support such a claim: first, the fact that the monk simply 'came upon' (ἐνέπεσα) the texts rather than having someone encourage his reading of them. When one bears in mind the realities of manuscript transmission, it becomes apparent that to 'come upon' such texts is not at all an unlikely occurrence. Manuscripts were not necessarily apt to be in a form like to the monographs of today. Instead, works by a variety of authors would travel together as consort texts within the same codices, depending upon the interests of the copyists or patrons, the availability of texts to be copied, or practical matters such as the amount of parchment left to a copyist. Thus, of the five earliest extant manuscripts of the *Praktikos*, *all five* are included with a mélange of other monastic texts.[59] While these manuscripts may be dated to several centuries after our period, the realities of manuscript production which led to such practices vary little over the ages. Thus, for example, a later monk may pick up the codex *Casinensis 231* in order to read certain poems of Gregory of Nazianzus or perhaps the *Gnostic Century* of Diadochus of Photikê and he would also come upon a number of Evagrian works. We do not, therefore, need to see the concerned monk's discovery in Letter 600 as a product of pamphleteering Origenists. Instead, this simply reconfirms that a text, once it is on parchment, may have a life independent of partisans advocating its contents.

In Letter 602 the monk presses the point to John. The letter is both short and pertinent enough to quote in full:

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[59] See Evagrius Ponticus, *Traité Pratique, Ou, Le Moine*, ed. trans. and comm. Antoine and Claire Guillaumont, *Sources chrétiennes* 170–71 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1971). For discussions of each manuscript, see the following pages of *Sources chrétiennes* 170: Casinensis Arch. Abbatiae 231, pg. 158; Ath. Protaton 26, pg. 166; Amorgos Chozobiotissis 10, pg. 153; Parisinus gr. 1056, pg. 136; and Parisinus Coislinianus 109, pg. 129. For a more recent treatment of Evagrius and a fruitful reevaluation of Guillaumont's conclusions, see Augustine Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus: Beyond Heresy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

> The same brother asked the same Old Man: "Should we not, then, read even the works of Evagrius?" Response by John.
>
> "Do not accept such doctrines from his works; but go ahead and read, if you like, those works that are beneficial for the soul, according to the parable about the net in the Gospel. For it has been written: 'They placed the good into baskets, but threw out the bad.' You, too, should do the same."[60]

The phrase 'even the works of Evagrius' (καὶ τὰ τοῦ Εὐαγρίου)[61] is a fairly clear indication that certain works of Evagrius, excepting perhaps the *Kephalaia Gnostica* the monk had just happened upon, were commonly considered acceptable reading for the local monastics. But the very assumption that at least some of the works were acceptable would indicate that certain of the texts of Evagrius had retained what were considered orthodox uses.

The persistent monk did not surrender his wonderings at this advice. In Letter 603 we find that these matters have continued to trouble him. Abba John, having revealed the content of the monk's heart to him, spoke thus:

> "Since you said and thought: 'Why is it that some of the fathers accept the *Gnostic Chapters* of Evagrius?' it is true that certain brothers, who regard themselves as knowledgeable, accept these writings; but they have not asked God whether they are true. And God has left them to their own knowledge on this matter. Nevertheless, it is neither my role nor yours to pursue these mat-

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[60] Barsanuphius and John, *Correspondance*, 602 (*SC* 451:812) Ὁ αὐτὸς ἀδελφὸς ἠρώτησε τὸν αὐτὸν Γέροντα· Οὐκ ὀφείλομεν οὖν ἀναγινώσκειν καὶ τὰ τοῦ Εὐαγριου; Ἀπόκρσις Ἰωάννου· Τὰ μὲν δόγματαα τὰ τοιαῦτα, μὴ δέχοι, ἀναγίνωσκε δὲ αὐτοῦ, εἰ θέλεις, τὰ πρὸς ὠφέλειαν ψυχῆς, κατὰ τὴν σαγήνης, ὡς γέγραπται ὅτι «Τὰ μὲν καλὰ εἰς ἀγγεῖα ἔβαλον, τὰ δὲ σαπρὰ ἔξω ἔρριψαν.» Οὕτω καὶ σὺ ποίησον.'; trans. Chryssavgis, 183.

[61] Barsanuphius and John, *Correspondance*, 602.2 (*SC* 451:812); trans. Chryssavgis, 183.

> ters; for our time is given us to examine our passions, as well as to weep and mourn for them."[62]

What follows, in Letters 604 and 605, is a fascinating discussion about the reliability of the Fathers and teachers of the Church. They speak of when and why the teachers of the Church may be mistaken and conclude with this assurance: 'So be calm, and commit yourself to God, ceasing from such idle talk and paying attention to your passions, about which you will be asked to give account on the day of judgment. For you will not be asked about these matters, why you do not understand them or why you have not learned them. Therefore, weep and mourn.'[63] Letters 606 and 607 include a refutation of the Origenist position about which the monk continued to be concerned and conclude with a final exhortation to disregard the heresy and attend to the heart.

Barsanuphius and John's reaction to the question of Origenism stands in stark contrast to the tirade against Origenism in the *Vita Cyriaci* of the hagiographer Cyril of Scythoplis. A mere question and the repetition of a quote are sufficient to drive Cyriacus into a lengthy exposition on the content of Origenism and its danger. But the Old Man, on the other hand, had to be pressed into giving an answer. In Letter 606, he finally gave this telling consent to hear the speculative concerns of the troubled monk: 'Since the devil wants to have you into such useless preoccupations, tell me what you want to

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[62] Barsanuphius and John, *Correspondance*, 603.9–15 (*SC* 451:814) Ἐπειδὴ εἶπας καὶ ἐνεθυμήθης ὅτι Διὰ τί τινες τῶν Πατέρων δέχονται τὰ Γνωστικὰ Εὐαγρίου, τινὲς ἀδελφοί, ὡς γνωστικοί, δέχονται αὐτὰ καὶ οὐκ ἐδεήθησαν τοῦ Θεοῦ εἰ ἀληθῆ εἰσι. Καὶ ἀφῆκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ Θεὸς περὶ τούτου ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ αὐτῶν γνώσει. Ἀλλ' ὅμως οὔτε ἐμόν ἐστιν οὔτε σὸν ταῦτα ζητεῖν, ἀλλ' ὁ καιρὸς ἡμῶν ἐστιν ἐρευσᾶν τὰ πάθη ἡμῶν, τοῦ κλαῦσαι καὶ τενθῆσαι.'; trans. Chryssavgis, 183.

[63] Barsanuphius and John, *Correspondance*, 604.138–143 (*SC* 451:824) Ἡσυχάσατε λοιπὸν καὶ σχολάσατε τῷ Θεῷ, καὶ παυσάμενοι τῆς ἀργολογίας, προσέχετε τοῖς πάθεσιν ὑμῶν περὶ ὧν ἀπαιτηθήσεσθε λόγον ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς κρίσεως. Περὶ γάρ τούτων οὐκ ἀπαιτεῖσθε διὰ τί οὐκ οἴδατε ταῦτα ἢ ἐμάθετε ταῦτα. Κλαύσατε λοιπὸν καὶ πενθήσατε.'; trans. Chryssavgis, 187–8.

say, and may God not grant him any room.'[64] Thus, he proceeded with his refutation of the Origenist position. Such is not the reply of one who fears Origenist usurpations. It is the reply of one who considers the entire discussion a mere distraction. It is important to note that this discussion is dated a little before 543, a time just before the Origenist controversy reaches its climax in Palestine.[65] Yet the Old Men do not see it necessary to volunteer a refutation to what Cyril of Scythopolis would portray as a great threat to the Church.

Lest the Old Men seem inconsistent in their reluctance and eventual acquiescence to answer our monk's inquiries, we should recall that, for Barsanuphius and John, theology is more than a merely intellectual activity divorced from the ascetic struggle. Rather than attempting to denounce heresy at every opportunity, the Old Men seem to follow a procedure they advised in another set of letters. Letter 694 features the following question:

> If I am sitting in the company of certain fathers, and they are discussing the faith of one of them, that perhaps he is not thinking correctly, should I participate in the conversation as well or not? For my thought tells me that if I am silent, I am betraying the faith. And if they are having a simple conversation about doctrinal matters, should I say what I happen to know or should I keep silent?[66]

Bearing in mind that the previous discussion involved one of the 'brothers', we should indeed expect to find some similarities between what is here advised and how the Old Men dealt with the previous discussion. The response reads thus:

> Never take part in conversations about the faith; for God will not demand this of you, but only whether you believe correctly what you have received from the holy church at the time of your baptism, and whether you keep his commandments. So maintain these things, and you shall be saved.

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[64] *Ibid*., 2.190.
[65] *Ibid*., 1.33.
[66] *Ibid*., 2.248.

> Furthermore, it is not necessary to talk about doctrines; for this is beyond you. Instead pray to God for all your sins, and let your intellect spend time on these matters. See, however, that you do not condemn within your heart those who do talk about doctrines; for you do not know whether they are speaking correctly or not; nor do you know how God will judge the matter. So, if you are asked, simply say: "These things are beyond me; forgive me, holy fathers." [67]

Barsanuphius responded in his pastoral capacity as a spiritual father, advising the brother in Letter 600 to remember and mourn his own sins. The above response is completely consistent with Letter 600 as a first step in the questioning. The response again advised the brother to keep silent, in his capacity as a brother, and recall for himself his own sins. Likewise, Letter 695 advises the questioning monk to pray for those arguing for a heretical position and, through prayer rather than speech, to find humility.

Within the same set of letters, all of which concern the propriety of engaging in doctrinal discussion, Letter 699 presents a slightly different situation than that of Letter 694.

> Question: "If someone asks me to anathematize Nestorius and the heretics with him, should I do this or not?" Response.
>
> The fact that Nestorius and those heretics who follow him are under anathema is clear. But you should never hasten to anathematize anyone at all. For one who regards himself as sinful should rather mourn over his sins, and do nothing else. Neither, however, should you judge those who anathematize someone; for one should always test oneself. [68]

One cannot fault the Old Men for inconsistency. Once more, the questioner is advised to avoid such discussions and to recall his own sins. But this letter leads to another, Letter 700, which moves the

[67] *Ibid*., 2.248–9.
[68] *Ibid*., 2.251.

discussion onto a different level and accordingly advises a different procedure.

> Question: "But if someone happens to think, as a result of this, that I believe the same as Nestorius, what should I tell him?" Response by John.
>
> Tell him: "Although it is clear that those people were worthy of their anathema, nevertheless I am more sinful than every other person, and I fear that, in judging anyone else, I may actually condemn myself. For the Lord said: 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments.' And the Apostle says: 'Let anyone be accursed [ἀνάθεμα] who has no love for the Lord.' Therefore, one who does not keep his commandments does not love him; and whoever does not love him is under anathema. So, then, how can such a person [who is already under anathema] anathematize others?" Say these things in response; and if that person still persists in this, then for the sake of his conscience, anathematize the heretic.[69]

Thus, John presents his questioner with a principle: one is to avoid any sort of doctrinal discussion, even as regards those who have already been anathematized by an ecumenical council, *except as it may be necessary to protect another*.

The advised procedure, then, parallels that taken with the questioning monk of Letters 600–607, with differences appropriate to the differing capacities of a spiritual father and an ordinary brother. In Letter 600 we find a brother, having come upon the books of Origen, Didymus, and Evagrius, who is troubled by doctrines he finds therein and so seeks to engage Barsanuphius in a doctrinal discussion. Barsanuphius attempts to recall the monk's mind to his own sins. Only when it becomes apparent that these questions must be answered to quiet the monk's questioning heart do the Old Men address them. When they do speak, the Old Men say only what is necessary to return the monk to a remembrance of his duty to mourn.

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[69] *Ibid*.

The approach of the Old Men toward doctrinal discussion is, at its heart, both ascetic and pastoral. It is ascetic inasmuch as one is always advised to recall the importance of humility before entering upon theological disagreements 'for God will not demand this of you'. It is pastoral inasmuch as one may make a reply only for the sake of the conscience of another.

This, then, provides the key to understanding the doctrinal content within the final response of the Old Men. What we have is less a description of the sort of doctrinal positions that individuals in the sixth century actually hold, and more a description of the sort of beliefs that may be extracted from the works of Origen, Didymus, and Evagrius that the Old Men wish the brother to avoid. The shape of this Origenism bears a remarkable semblance to a template set by the likes of Epiphanius in the first Origenist controversy.

To further emphasize this point, we should turn briefly to the position described as Origenism. The concerned monk cites a number of points as troubling. His first difficulty concerns the resurrected body. 'On the subject of the resurrection of the saints' bodies, tell me whether they will rise in this body that we actually inhabit'.[70] The alternative presented is a spiritual and immortal body which does not require food or drink. This, it is said, is the sort of body that the Origenists charge Jesus possessed after the resurrection. The second difficulty is a quote from 1 Corinthians 15.28 which, it seems, is being used as an allusion to both subordinationism and the *apocatastasis*. At any rate, the verse is preceded by the statement, 'Again they say that the Apostle states about our Lord Jesus Christ'.[71] Since there is nothing heretical or troubling about quoting scripture, it seems safe to assume that the monks thinks the potential heretical reading of the verse is obvious. Barsanuphius's response is directed toward answering both of these possibilities. The third difficulty is

[70] *Ibid*. 2.190.
[71] *Ibid*.

familiar enough to speak of it as 'their theory about pre-existence'.[72] The fourth and final difficulty is the *apocatastasis* itself.[73]

The substance of these accusations follows much the same template used in an earlier age. This could well be the case if aggressive Origenists remained in the sixth century. But it must also be admitted that such would also be the case if the *Letters* show us rather a repetition of an old rhetorical construct. I should point out that this would parallel John Dechow's findings concerning the anti-Origenist anathemas in the works of Justinian and the Fifth Ecumenical Council. While the evidence here might at first seem to support either position equally, the balance falls rather to the idea that we are presented with a construct with the added weight of two considerations. First, recall that Barsanuphius and John, despite their clear concern for the spiritual well-being of the monk in question, did not seem to regard the Origenists as a great enough threat to volunteer a refutation. The monk was forced to go to great lengths to elicit a response on the subject so troubling to him. Second, we must bear in mind that it is a set of texts, not individuals, who were at the core of his difficulties. Specific individuals were not named as responsible for spreading Origenism, although there is a reference to others trying to convince the monk that Evagrius's texts were harmless. Yet there is no indication that anyone took the initiative to encourage this monk to seek the Evagrian texts himself. Regardless of whether there were such aggressive dogmatic Origenists in the sixth century to give encouragement, it remains that the doctrines described in the *Letters* follow a template established in and for an earlier age. While this was sufficient for Barsanuphius and John's purposes, the *Letters* cannot be relied upon as witnesses to the actual beliefs of any sixth-century Origenists.

## Cyril of Scythopolis as a Source for Origenism

Cyril of Scythopolis remains our main source for the second Origenist controversy and so his witness cannot be dismissed lightly.

[72] *Ibid*.
[73] *Ibid*.

Cyril was a skilled author who was able to fit all pieces of the sixth-century puzzle into a single, coherent picture. The consistency of his picture makes for a highly convincing narrative. But the unique position of the work of Cyril of Scythopolis can be a problem for the historian. For this source presents a picture almost too convenient for the hagiographer's ends. If we are to take Cyril of Scythopolis at his word, then the great Christological debate of the age, a debate which would produce the most lasting and disastrous schism to date, must be overshadowed by a Palestinian quarrel over long rejected doctrines to which no one openly subscribed. The story fulfills its author's purpose well, but the historian must approach this narrative more critically.

When scholars attempt to reconstruct the beliefs of sixth-century Origenists, the *Vita Cyriaci* is often used as the chief cornerstone. In the *Vita*, Cyril tells of his mission to carry a letter from Abba John to go to Abba Cyriacus, 'entreating him to strive now in intercession with God to quell the raging of Nonnus and Leontius and their party at the New Laura, who were campaigning against Christ by means of the doctrines of Origen.'[74] Having handed the letter to Cyriacus, and after receiving assurances that the Origenists would be expelled from the New Laura, Cyril chances to ask Cyriacus, 'Father, what of the views they advocate? They themselves affirm that the doctrines of pre-existence and restoration are indifferent and without danger...'[75] Cyriacus responds with his well-known tirade, often cited as a source for the views of the sixth-century Origenists.

> 'The doctrines of pre-existence and restoration are not indifferent and without danger, but dangerous, harmful and blasphemous. In order to convince you, I shall try to expose their multifarious impiety in a few words. They deny that Christ is one of the Trinity. They say that our resurrection bodies pass to total destruction, [sic] and Christ's first of all. They say that the holy

[74] Cyril, 229.10–15; Price trans., 252.

[75] Cyril, 229.30 'τί γάρ ἐστι, πάτερ, τὰ παρ' αὐτῶν πρεσβευόμενα; ἐπείπερ αὐτοὶ διαβεβαιοῦνται ὅτι τὰ περὶ προυτάρξεως καὶ ἀποκαταστάσεως δόγματα μέσα τυγχάνει καὶ ἀκίνδυνα'; trans. *ibid*.

> Trinity did not create the world and that at the restoration all rational beings, even demons, will be able to create aeons. They say that our bodies will be raised ethereal and spherical at the resurrection, and they assert that even the body of the Lord was raised in this form. They say that we shall be equal to Christ at the restoration.
>
> What hell blurted out these doctrines? They have not learnt them from the God who spoke through the prophets and apostles—perish the thought—but they have revived these abominable and impious doctrines from Pythagoras and Plato, from Origen, Evagrius, and Didymus.'[76]

As presented here, the Origenist heresy corresponds directly with Origenism as it had been attacked in the time of Epiphanius. We have pagan Greek intellectual pride, pre-existence of souls, the spiritual form of resurrection, the *apocatastasis*, and perhaps a hint at subordinationism. We have a young monk, Cyril himself, who came to an elder troubled by the Origenists' teachings and the claim that they are harmless. The whole scene has the feel of a monastic topos and the fact that Cyril is using the scene as a means to emphasize the orthodoxy of his own party only intensifies that impression.[77]

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[76] Cyril, 229.30–230.10. 'οὐ μέσα καὶ ἀκίνδυνον τὰ περὶ προυπάρξεως δόγματα, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπικίνδυνα καὶ ἐπιβλαβῆ καὶ βλάσφημα. ἵνα δέ σε πληροφορήσω, ἐν ὀλίγαις λέξεσι τὴν πολυσχεδῆ αὐτῶν ἀσέβειαν στηλιτεῦσαι πειράσομαι. λέγουσι μὴ εἶναι ἕνα τῆς τριάδος τὸν Χριστόν· λέγουσι τά ἐξ ἀναστεως σώματα ἡμῶν εἰς παντελῆ ἀπώλειαν ἐλθεῖν καὶ Χριστοῦ πρώτου· λέγουσι ὅτι ἐν τῇ ἀποκαταστάσει, καὶ γὰρ τὸ τοῦ κυρίου οὕτω φασὶν ἐγηγέρθαι σῶμα· λέγουσιν ὅτι γινόμεθα ἴσοι τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν τῇι ἀποκαταστάσει.'

'ποῖος τοίνυν ἄιδης ταῦτα ἐπεύξατο; οὐ παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ταῦτα μεμαθήκασι, μὴ γένοιτο, τοῦ λαλήσαντος διὰ προγητῶν καὶ ἀποστόλων, ἀλλὰ παρὰ Πυθαγόρου καὶ Πλάτωνος Ὠριγένους τε καὶ Εὐαγρίου καὶ Διδύμου παρειλὴφασι τὰ μυσαρὰ ταῦτα καὶ δυσσεβῆ δόγματα.'; trans. *ibid*.

[77] See Hombergen, *The Second Origenist Controversy*, 286–7, for discussion of several ways in which the scene adds up to a topos.

Of course, one might ask whether we would expect such a similarity in doctrine if the beliefs of contemporary Origenists were actually being described. The sources for the *Vita Cyriaci* offer a response to this objection. In his work on Evagrius's *Kephalaia Gnostika*, Antoine Guillaumont demonstrated how very close to the anathemas of the Fifth Council the tirade of Cyriacus is. Given that Cyril probably began writing in 555[78] and likely wrote the *Vita Cyriaci* in 557 or 558,[79] the question of Cyril's own sources for the content of Origenism becomes obvious. Thus Guillaumont says, 'l'identité est telle, dans les termes memes, que l'on pourrait se demander si Cyrille n'a pas simplement résumé ici les anathématismes'. Yet, Guillaumont rejected this possibility on account of the proposition that rational beings will be able to create aeons.[80] Richard M. Price also pointed out this difference.[81] Because of this proposition, Guillaumont reckoned Cyril's account as a testimony independent of the Council's anathemas. This combination of the Council's anathemas and the independent account from Cyril would seem to confirm the ascription of the condemned doctrines to Origenists in the sixth century.

On this point, however, Daniël Hombergen differed from Guillaumont, arguing that Guillaumont separates this proposition from the phrase 'They say that the holy Trinity did not create the world', even though the structure of the sentence would lead us to do otherwise.[82] The statement is too categorical and founded upon the separation of that 'proposition' from the first part of Cyriacus's charge. Because of this single deviation, Guillaumont rejects the possibility that Cyril derived the series of charges from the fifteen anathemas of 553. However, the deviation is much smaller than Guillaumont suggests, and Cyril could well have been influenced by frequent oral discussions when he simplified and radicalized in a few

[78] *Ibid*., xl.
[79] *Ibid*., 269.
[80] Guillaumont, *Les 'Képhalaia Gnostica*,' 151.
[81] Price, Lives of the Monks of Palestine, 260 note 10.
[82] Hombergen, *The Second Origenist Controversy*, 275–6.

words (ἐν ὀλίγαις λέξεσι) what everyone could read in the official anathemas.[83]

Without doubt, such a proposition could be read into the points anathematized by the Council. For if all rational beings are to become equals of the single unfallen *nous*, Christ, then equality in Christ's ability to create the world is a mere extension of this principle. It was on this and like grounds that Hombergen could argue, 'In any case, if the charges do not directly depend upon the anathemata, they at least derive from an allied document dating from the same period.'[84] As appealing as positing a redaction of the anathemas of the Council is, it is not strictly necessary in order to demonstrate the dependence of Cyril upon the Council. Indeed, Cyril had every reason to put the contents of the conciliar condemnations in the saint's mouth, for thereby his saint represent the epitome of orthodoxy and he would even anticipate the findings of an ecumenical council. Such a literary move on Cyril's part makes it almost seem as though the Fifth Council was endorsing Cyriacus's position. Furthermore, we also find that Cyril himself referred to the anathemas.[85] That he knew them and did not use them under these circumstances is implausible. Finally, the close correspondence between the anathemas of 553 and the content of Cyriacus's tirade is demonstrable.[86]

Beyond these correspondences, the dialogue suffers from anachronism and derivation.

> Cyril relates that, as a young monk around 544, he went to visit old Abba Cyriacus, who gave a tirade against the Origenists and formulated a series of theological charges. A close examination of the passage shows that Cyriacus cannot have delivered that discourse at the time claimed by Cyril. The charges derive from

[83] *Ibid*., 277.
[84] *Ibid*., 269.
[85] *Ibid*., 268–9.
[86] For an extended discussion of Cyril's use of later sources to construct doctrinal statements for his subjects, see Cynthia Stallman-Pacitti, *Cyril of Scythopolis* (Brookline: Hellenic College Press, 1991), 41–60.

> the 15 anathemata of 553 and the speech is full of parallels with other written texts.[87]

The likelihood that Cyril chose to portray Cyriacus giving a summary of the anathemas of the Fifth Council years before it took place is indeed far greater than the notion that Cyriacus should coincidentally state and Cyril accurately record and impartially report the same. The improbability of such a coincidence aside, to take the interaction between Cyriacus and Cyril as some sort of literal transcription would be to miss the point of such hagiography entirely. Cyril was not interested in presenting us with a record conforming to modern standards of historical documentation. Rather, he was providing his readers with materials he would consider far more useful: examples of monastic heroes to be emulated.[88] It is a given for such a writer that the monastic hero, in addition to having extraordinary personal sanctity, should possess the fullness of the apostolic truth without requiring a council to spell it out for him.[89] It is worth adding, however, that the veracity of the exact words of this dialogue need have no general impact on the usefulness or reliability of Cyril's works as a whole. Unless we are to suppose that Cyril took notes and retained them for decades from the time of his meeting with Cyriacus, we should expect that his memory of the dialogue would conform it to whatever seemed to be appropriate for a saint to say. Such a fact need have no bearing, for example, on the accuracy with which Cyril is able to report major events.

Whether the tirade derives directly from the anathemas of 553 or some redaction thereof, the essential point is that Cyril's account does not exist independently of materials from the Fifth Council. As a result, we cannot count Cyril's testimony as an independent source

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[87] Hombergen, 'Cyril of Scythopolis and the Second Origenist Controversy,' 42.

[88] *Ibid*., *The Second Origenist Controversy*, 88–111.

[89] Indeed, the function even of an ecumenical council was merely to reflect the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. A hagiographer like Cyril need have no sense of anachronism as his subject defends the faith, for the eternal verities of the faith are unchanging.

for the beliefs of sixth-century Origenists. Since the Council's Origenism is fashioned from the *Kephalaia Gnostika*, we are placed in a situation where the sources for the details of sixth-century Origenism are compromised.

## Origenism as Condemned

If Cyril indeed depended upon the Fifth Council for his description of Origenism, then one may still hope to find a description of sixth-century Origenist doctrines in the Council anathemas or in an allied document such as the anathemas of Justinian's edict against Origen of 543. However, such a hope is betrayed by the fact the anathemas cannot be regarded as an independent testimony for an Origenism native to the sixth century that was anything other than a rhetorical construct.

The edict of 543, although it may well be argued that it does not describe the actual thinking of Origen, is directed against Origen and his works.[90] Twenty-four fragments of the *peri Archon* appear within the edict itself.[91] The edict of 543, rather than being an attack on a contemporary Origenism, is an attack on a constructed Origenism based on the text of the *peri Archon*.[92] This is precisely what we would expect if the primary function of Origenism was polemical. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to briefly consider Justinian's anathemas of 543. When looking at the anathemas themselves, as well as the document wherein they are found, one certainly finds the textual dependence upon the works of Origen as mentioned above. After all, Justinian cites the *peri Archon* numerous times, providing us with many pieces of the now lost Greek original. If this textual dependence is obvious enough, the question remains as to whether the assumptions Justinian uses in reviewing the text derive from an unbiased reading or a preconceived notion of the nature of Origenism. Here, Andrew Louth's statement is most helpful:

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[90] Indeed, the title of the edict is κατὰ Ὠριγένους τοῦ δυσσεβοῦς καὶ τῶν ἀνοσίων αὐτοῦ δογμάτων.

[91] Hombergen, *The Second Origenist Controversy*, 23.

[92] Louth, 1174.

> This is not an attack on any form of Origenism contemporary with Justinian and Menas; it is rather an attack on Origen, focused on the work in which he expressly gives himself to speculation about matters not defined by apostolic tradition. The one place in the letter where Justinian can find no support in Origen's writings for the heresy he ascribes to him—when he discusses the notion that the resurrection body will be spherical—finds him railing against Origen in these terms: «O the folly and ignorance of this mad interpreter of Hellenic [=pagan Greek] doctrines!» The idea of a spherical body is just what such an addict of Hellenic learning would think! What this letter represents is an attack on what Christians already called the «outer learning», focused on the example of Origen himself. It does not, I suggest, have any clearly defined form of sixth-century Origenism in mind, for there very likely was none, or perhaps there were simply many[...][93]

Louth's conclusions concerning the edict of 543 fit well with what I have argued thus far. But, if Justinian's attack derives not from any contemporary Origenism, as Louth argues, but retains its form despite whether or not justification for its accusations may be found in the text, from where does it derive? We have, I would suggest, already discovered the answer to this question. But an examination of Justinian's anathemas should make the matter abundantly clear.

While Justinian was certainly able to fill in the details based upon his read of the *peri Archon*, the form of the accusations retains a strong similarity to the rhetorical construct we have already seen. One may, for example, find the pre-existence of the souls at the outset of the anathemas.

> If anyone says or holds that the souls of human beings pre-exist, as previously minds and holy powers, but that they reached satiety with divine contemplation and turned to what is worse and for this reason grew cold in the love of God and are therefore

[93] *Ibid*.

> called souls, and were made to descend into bodies as punishment, let him be anathema.[94]

Matters related to the pre-existence may be found also in anathemas 2, 3, 4, and 6. Likewise, the incorporeality of the post-resurrectional body shows up in anathema 5. 'If anyone says or thinks that, at the resurrection, human bodies will rise spherical in form and unlike our present form, let him be anathema.'[95]

The *apocatastasis* is condemned in the final anathema:

> If anyone says or holds that the punishment of demons and impious human beings is temporary and that it will have an end at some time, and that there will be a restoration of demons and impious human beings, let him be anathema.[96]

Subordinationism is not mentioned directly in the anathemas but is attacked early on and at length in the text of the edict itself.[97] Louth and others have given enough reason to doubt the reliability of the anathemas of 543 as a witness to the beliefs of those accused of Origenism. Origenism as a sixth-century commonplace would have guided Justinian's reading of the *peri Archon* as much as any other contemporary who wrote against Origenism. In this, I share the view of John Dechow, who saw the work of Epiphanius as shaping the sixth-century anathemas:

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[94] *ACO* 3.213,13–15. 'Εἴ τις λέγει ἢ ἔχει προυπάρχειν τὰς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ψυχὰς οἷα πρώην νόας οὔσας καὶ ἁγίας δυνάμεις, κόρον δὲ λαβούσας τῆς θείας θεωρίας καὶ πρὸς τὸ χεῖρον τραπείσας καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἀποψυγείσας μὲν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἀγάπης, ἐντεῦθεν δὲ ψυχὰς ὀνομασθείσας καὶ τιμωρίας χάριν εἰς σώματα καταπεμφθείσας, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω.'; trans. Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 2.281.

[95] *Ibid*., 25–6. 'Εἴ τις λέγει ἢ ἔχει ἐν τῇι ἀναστάσει σφαιροειδῆ τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐγείρεσθαι σώματα τῶν καὶ οὐχ ὁμολογεῖ ἡμᾶς ἐγείρεσθαι, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω.'; trans. ibid.

[96] *ACO* 3, 214.4–6. 'Εἴ τις λέγει ἢ ἔχει πρόσκαιρον εἶναι τὴν τῶν δαιμόνων καὶ ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων κόλασιν καὶ τέλος κατὰ τινα χρόνον αὐτὴν ἔξειν ἢ γοῦν ἀποκατάστασιν ἔσεσθει δαιμόνων ἢ ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω.'; trans. Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 2.281.

[97] *ACO* 3, 190.1–10.

> The aftermath of Epiphanius' Panarion 64 in the sixth century may be seen as a further development of its outline of criticism. The relationship of the heresiologist's summary of charges to Emperor Justinian's refutation of Origen in 543, especially the 10 anathemas against him, is like the relationship to Theophilus' polemic. Epiphanius' list as such is not adopted, but its major emphases are covered and continued, but with a Theophilan emphasis. A similar situation obtains, but with added anti-Evagrian features, in the case of the 15 anathemas attached to the letter addressed by the same Emperor to the fathers of the Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553.[98]

Of course, Justinian and the Fifth Council need not adopt 'Epiphanius' list as such' for them to be drawing from a caricature of Origenism which had its roots in Epiphanius's time. Indeed, as we will see, the differences between the anathemas points rather to a common reliance upon a stereotyped image rather than a direct textual reliance upon a source such as the *Panarion*.

Careful comparison shows that the anathemas of 543 and those deriving from the Fifth Council in 553 point to a different set of doctrines.[99] The very fact that the two different sets of anathemas rely without any apparent sense of contradiction upon different texts from the past, and yet purport to condemn a single, contemporary heresy, strongly indicates that a contemporary group of Origenists neither held nor needed to hold 'Origenist' doctrines. But the problem is further compounded by the textual dependence of the anathemas of 553 upon the works of Evagrius.

It was Antoine Guillaumont who established the Fifth Council's reliance upon the *Kephalaia Gnostika* of Evagrius. And it remains that, 'Guillaumont's perspective is currently dominant.'[100] In

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[98] John Dechow, *Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity: Epiphanius of Cyprus and the Legacy of Origen* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988), 449.

[99] Guillaumont, *Les 'Képhalaia Gnostica'*, 136–151.

[100] Evagrius Ponticus, *Evagrius Ponticus: Selections.*, ed. and trans. Augustine Casiday (New York: Routledge, 2006), 28.

comparing the anathemas of the Fifth Council to the works of Evagrius and other sources available from the period and before, Guillaumont concludes that the Origenism condemned in 553 was 'essentiellement l'origénisme évagrien'.[101] Of course, Guillaumont's work establishes the source matter for a sixth-century construction of Origenism, not necessarily the views of Evagrius himself. This is an important distinction to make, for otherwise it might seem as though we read Evagrius according to the hostile standards of sixth-century polemics.[102] Of course there would be little reason to sup-

[101] 'Ces multiples correspondances doctrinales et littérales obligent à conclure que Képhalaia gnostica d'Evagre sont la source principale des quinze anathématismes antiorigénistes de 553, et que l'origénisme qui fut condamné par les Pères du Ve Concile et était, comme l'histoire le montre, la doctrine des moines origénistes de Palestine est dû, au premier chef, à l'influence de l'œvre d'Evagre. Cette conclusion, qui repose sur la comparaison des texts, s'accorde pleinement avec les témoignages que nous avons vus : celui de Barsanuphe sur la lecture des Képhalaia gnostica parmi les moines de Palestine dans la première moitié du VIe siècle et sur les troubles qu'elle y provoquait, et celui de Cyrille de Scythopolis affirmant que c'est d'Evagre, tout comme d'Origène et de Didyme, que les moines origénistes tiraient leurs opinions «impies». Elle permet, d'autre part, de comprendre pourqoi, selon les nombreux témoignages énumérés ci-dessus, à commencer par celui du même Cyrille, les Pères du Ve Concile associèrent, dans leur condamnation, aux noms d'Origène et de Didyme celui d'Evagre, et ce n'est pas là l'effet d'un hasard inexplicable. Bien qu'il soit encore difficile de délimiter exactement la part d'Origène et celle de Didyme, on peut désormais affirmer que la part d'Evagre dans l'origénisme condamné en 553 est prépondérante et que celui-ce est essentiellement l'origénisme évagrien.' Guillaumont, *Les 'Képhalaia Gnostica'*, 158–9.

[102] Thus Casiday says of Guillaumont, 'Evagrius is supposed to have taught that, once creation has been reconciled to God, the qualitative differences between Christ and other rational beings will gradually disappear with the result that ultimately even Satan will be equal to Christ (in Greek, isochristos). The heretical nub of this claim is that Christ is presumed to have been different to all other rational beings only insofar as the human soul of Christ is further along the spectrum of spiritual progress that all rational beings must inevitably make. Now the arguments in support of attrib-

pose that the second Origenist controversy provides us with the best means to understand Evagrius. But that is not the essential point to be taken from Guillaumont. He is arguing that a certain text, the *Kephalaia Gnostika* of Evagrius, provides the source whence the 'Origenists' were drawing their opinions. Indeed it may be said, given the textual dependencies, that it is not a scholar of the twentieth century, Antoine Guillaumont, but rather those living in the sixth century who so configured the disconnected utterances of Evagrius. Guillaumont merely discovered such a connection.

That both Justinian and the Fifth Council had to rely on centuries-old texts to construct an Origenism fit for condemnation is essential to understand. For, if we trust the testimony of Cyril of Scythopolis, we are presented with a most interesting situation. Justinian's 9 anathemas of 543 were taken from the works of Origen. The 15 anathemas of the Council were built primarily upon the *Kephalaia Gnostika* of Evagrius. Although the works of both were still read and inspired many, no one seems to have attempted to defend Origen and Evagrius. Although Cyril names supposed contemporary heretical Origenists, no such heretics are mentioned in the anathemas. Indeed, Cyril's own description of Origenism seems to have been derived from some redaction of materials from the Fifth Council and, thus, cannot be relied upon as independent attestation for the beliefs of the Origenists he so excoriated.

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uting this view to Evagrius are ingenious and Guillaumont has made an unarguably important discovery about where the Palestinian Origenists look for their inspiration. But it must be noted that this view relies on configuring Evagrius' disconnected utterances in a specific way and (perhaps more troublingly) claiming that hostile statements resolving the Second Origenist controversy provide the correct template for this reconfiguration. What justification have we for thinking that the later crisis provides us with the best pattern for Evagrius' beliefs?' Casiday, *Evagrius Ponticus: Selections*, 28. I concur with Casiday's sentiments here. I would suggest, however, that Guillaumont has discovered not the beliefs of Palestinian Origenists so much as the beliefs of anti-Origenists about how Evagrius is read by Origenists. Earlier polemics provided the template according to the later crisis would be constructed.

The claim that proponents of Origenism existed and were active in the sixth century must be made without any direct evidence of their beliefs, inasmuch as we lack genuinely pro-Origenist texts from the sixth century, even surviving as quoted fragments in adversarial refutations. On the other hand, the very dependence of the extant sources upon texts from the fourth and third centuries points less to a group of active and dogmatic partisans in the sixth century, than to the need for sixth-century partisans to construct such a group for its own ends. Even so, the essential point here is not that no one in the sixth century read Evagrius, Origen, or Didymus. They certainly did. Neither is it to show that no one in any province might have taken some of the more esoteric and marginal teachings very seriously. Even if it were possible to prove this negative, it is unnecessary. The essential point is that the evidence does not support any active and organized advocacy for a contemporary Origenism. The condemnations directed against Origenism can be stale precisely because they are not directed against a coherent and organized group of secessionists heretics. Origenism was no real threat to the unity of the imperial church, much less a threat on the level of the controversies over Chalcedon. Yet the emperor still acted against it.

Origenism's years as a pejorative have divorced it from any usefulness in describing a person who holds a particular theological position. At the same time, however, there was a proportional increase in the value of Origenism as a means of drawing symbolic boundaries. Its utility as a 'devil word' has increased. But while such '[e]nchanted words seem so full of meaning, so illuminating'[103] they do not promote understanding. Indeed, such language has the opposite effect. This sort of language has the sum effect of giving 'an appearance of solidity to pure wind'.[104] It may be employed to create or enhance symbolic boundaries which enable social actors to categorize

[103] C. S. Lewis, *The Collected Works of C.S. Lewis* (New York: Inspirational Press, 1996), 474.

[104] George Orwell, 'Politics and the English Language,' in *The Collected Essays, Journalism, & Letters,* vol. 4, eds Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (Boston: Nonpareil Books, 2000), Orwell, 139.

people and practices in such a way that lines of in-group and out-group membership become inevitable.[105]

## FROM SYMBOLIC BOUNDARIES TO SOCIAL BOUNDARIES

Cyril's *Lives* presents readers with a ready-made explanation of the conflicts leading up to the Council of Constantinople of 553. Yet, as we have seen, the explanation rests upon a foundation of sand. If the meaning of Origenism shifts about in the sixth century, it is because the term serves chiefly as a pejorative used to delegitimate those at whom it is directed. If this is indeed the case, then we are left with a problem. It becomes clear enough why one might lob an accusation of Origenism at an enemy. But what purpose does it serve to condemn a heresiological phantom?

To answer this question, we must return to the circumstances which prompted our discussion of Origenism in the first place. Let us recall the situation which obtained in Palestine following the removal of Paul the Tabbenesiot. Pelagius, the papal *apocrisarius*, had traveled to Constantinople with a group of Sabaite monks who had also obtained a condemnation of Origen from Ephraem of Antioch. These, in turn, managed to secure a condemnation of Origen from Justinian. This caused a reaction in Palestine as Nonnus, leader of the 'Origenist' faction in the Sabaite monasteries, who sought to secure a condemnation of Ephraem by the Patriarch Peter of Jerusalem. With this situation in mind, we can now look at each social actor and discover how the actions of each become perfectly comprehensible within the context we have come to understand.

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[105] 'Symbolic boundaries are conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space. They are tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and come to agree upon definitions of reality. Examining them allows us to capture the dynamic dimensions of social relations, as groups compete in the production, diffusion, and institutionalization of alternative systems and principles of classifications. Symbolic boundaries also separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity and group membership (Epstein 1992, p. 232). They are an essential medium through which people acquire status and monopolize resources.' Lamont and Molnár, 168.

## Internal Conflict in Palestine

First, we should look briefly at the internal politics of Palestinian monasticism. Following Cyril's narrative, it seems safe to say that conflict was a frequent occurrence among the Palestinian monks. This, Price suggests, was a natural consequence of diversity one might expect in the laurite life.[106] But despite all the conflict, Sabas, who was even forced to flee the monasteries at times, was ultimately able to hold everything together.

> While our all-praiseworthy father Sabas was still in the flesh, there was one confession of faith in all the monasteries of the desert, and one could see all the children of Jerusalem walking in the house of God in concord, upholding in harmony the inviolable and irrefragable character of the divine doctrines, so as to fulfil the scriptural saying, 'Life up your eyes round about; and behold, your children are gathered together.'[107]

After Sabas's death in 532, however, factional infighting among the monks of his community became more intense. [108] The faction of Nonnus, centered at the New Laura, was naturally in the ascendancy, a fact that we might expect even if Cyril did not assure us that it was the case.[109] The connection to the court provided by Leontius and Father Eusebius, the eventual patron of Theodore Askidas and Domitian, would have ensured their importance. When Gelasius took charge of the Great Laura in 537 he expelled as many of forty of Nonnus's allies.[110] It is little surprise, therefore, that Nonnus would use his court connections to restore members of his faction. Thus we find the following when Father Eusebius was in Palestine with the mission sent to replace the Patriarch of Alexandria:

> When father Eusebius came to Jerusalem after the dissolution of the council, Leontius presented him those expelled from the

[106] Price, *Lives of the Monks of Palestine*, xix.
[107] Cyril, 188,6–13.
[108] *Ibid*., 183.
[109] *Ibid.,* 188,15.
[110] *Ibid.*, 189–90.

> Great Laura, who accused Gelasius of dividing the community into two halves and of expelling them while currying the favor with their opponents. Father Eusebius, misled by Leontius' words and knowing nothing of their heresy, sent for Abba Gelasius and, in an attempt to resolve the dispute, pressed him either to receive back those expelled or to expel their opponents.[111]

It is perfectly natural that those expelled would head off to Ephraem in Antioch, for they could expect to receive little hearing so long as Leontius and Eusebius held influence in Jerusalem. But the strategy used by these expelled monks is absolutely key to understand the succession of events which would quickly follow. We find this in a passage we have already seen, but which now takes on a whole new light.

> In the face of such pressure the fathers, after deliberation, sent out of the laura Stephen, Timothy, and four others of the brethren, who, putting up with their voluntary exile, went off to Antioch, where they informed Patriarch Ephraem of what had happened and showed him the work of blessed Antipatrus. The patriarch, reading the blasphemies of Origen in the work given him, and learning from those who gave it of the actions of the Origenists at Jerusalem, was stirred to courageous action, and by public anathema of synodical authority condemned the doctrines of Origen.[112]

It is very telling that these Sabaite monks, in order to oppose their contemporary enemies in Palestine, brought as evidence to Ephraem the writings of Antipatrus, a fifth-century author who wrote against an early fourth-century defense of the third-century Origen. For this is precisely what we would expect, given the function of Origenism we have seen thus far. By labeling their enemies as Origenists, these Sabaite monks have a reasonable hope of excluding them from access to the monasteries. Such power derives naturally as a symbolic boundary between Origenists, on the one hand, and orthodox Chris-

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[111] *Ibid*., 191.
[112] *Ibid*., 191.

tians, on the other, is widely agreed upon. At this point, established symbolic boundaries become objectified social boundaries.[113]

## The Interests of Pelagius

This all makes sense for Sabaite monks attempting to restore their access to the monasteries they have abandoned, but it is not obvious from that fact alone why any of this should be anything other than an internal Palestinian conflict. But we must recall what we have already seen in earlier chapters: one must always bear in mind the differing interests and motivations of social actors embedded within larger networks. The papal *apocrisarius* Pelagius had every reason to become involved with this Origenist controversy and, according to Liberatus, it was he who brought the matter to court.

> But after Pelagius returned to Constantinople, certain monks from Jerusalem, through whom Pelagius had passage in Gaza, came with him in accompaniment, bearing chapters extracted from the books of Origen, desiring to deliver them to the Emperor, that Origen might be condemned with those chapters.[114]

Again, it is noteworthy that the focus here is on writings 'extracted from the books of Origen', not on any contemporary writings. Pelagius was clearly happy to rely on the symbolic resource Origenism

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[113] 'Social boundaries are objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and nonmaterial) and social opportunities. They are also revealed in stable behavioral patterns of association, as manifested in connubiality and commensality. Only when symbolic boundaries are widely agreed upon can they take on a constraining character and pattern social interaction in important ways. Moreover, only then can they become social boundaries, i.e., translate, for instance, into identifiable patterns of social exclusion [...]' Lamont and Molnár (2002), 168–9.

[114] 'sed reuertente Pelagio Constantinopolim monachi quidam ab Hierosolimis, super quibus Pelagius in Gazam transitum habuit, uenerunt ad eum in comitatu portantes capitula de libris Origenis excerpta uolentes agere apud imperatorem, ut Origenes damnaretur cum illis capitulis.' *ACO* 2.5, 139–40.

had to offer. But to find out to what end, we should recall the motive Liberatus ascribes to Pelagius which we discussed above. As Liberatus would have it, Pelagius's chief motivation was that he was a rival of Theodore Askidas 'for the reason that [Theodore] was a defender of Origen'.[115] Up to this point, Liberatus does not portray Pelagius as having a particular interest in Origen one way or another. But given Pelagius's dual role as one representing the interests of the pope on the one hand and seeking favor at court on the other, a rivalry with Theodore makes perfect sense. Theodore entered court and attained his bishopric due to his connection to Leontius. Leontius had long been an advocate of *detente* with the anti-Chalcedonian. Theodore would also prove supportive of the court's efforts to this end. But the pursuit of some form of *detente* had strained relations between Rome and Constantinople since the end of the Acacian schism and, of course, long before. Rome had never been happy with Constantinople's desire to overlook the matter of the diptychs, it was not easily pleased with theopaschism, and Pope Agapetus had certainly showed his dissatisfaction with the court's efforts upon his arrival in Constantinople. Only a hard-line Chalcedonianism from the court would serve Rome's purposes. For Pelagius, a policy which could be used against the friends of Theodore Askidas, and perhaps even against Askidas himself, would fit his needs exactly.

Of course, it is likely that the monks claimed Nonnus and even Askidas were actually card-carrying Origenists. Whether Pelagius himself believed this is unknown and, for our purposes, is immaterial. Origenism had already demonstrated its power as a label which could be employed effectively to marginalize certain targets. He had in his company a group of monks perfectly willing to make the accusation, and thereby regain their place in Palestine. He had the backing of Ephraem of Antioch. These factors alone might have encouraged him to move against Askidas and hope to marginalize those who had so long advocated *detente* with the anti-Chalcedonians. But

[115] *ACO* 2.5, 140.

one final factor ensured that the controversy weary court would endorse a condemnation directed against these so-called Origenists.

## The Court's Interests

With the exiles and a papal *apocrisarius* securing a condemnation in Antioch to be used against him and his allies, Nonnus must have seen the situation as rather desperate. If both Antioch and Rome were involved in moving against a group of Palestinian monks, it would be only a matter of time before the issue was taken to Constantinople. Ultimately, Nonnus and his compatriots might find themselves exiled from the monasteries they regarded as home. Following Cyril's narrative, Nonnus decided the only option was to try and undercut Ephraem. He hoped to convince Patriarch Peter of Jerusalem to remove Ephraem from the diptychs. If this were done, at least the two sides in this Palestinian monastic controversy would be on more equal footing when the issue was inevitably taken up by a Constantinopolitan synod. Nonnus might have done better, however, to have secured a condemnation of the exiled monks. For Peter, hearing Nonnus's request, clearly realized the danger in such a plan. He could not afford to have a large and influential monastery in his neighborhood picking fights with Antioch and upsetting the new and fragile unity which the emperor had achieved within the church. In Cyril, Peter's response to this potential crisis is an excellent example of creating a paper trail to cover him in the case of any potential accusation. He secretly arranges for the heads of the anti-Origenist faction, Sophronius and Gelasius, to write a petition to him against the Origenists and include an entreaty not to act against Ephraem. This document was then sent to the court along with Peter's personal complaint against the Origenists.[116]

For the court, condemning Origenists would have been an open and shut case, even if there were no substance behind the claim that the monks were adherents to heretical doctrines. A combined request from the papal representative and the patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem would have been enough. But the rather tone-deaf

[116] *Ibid*.

attempt of Nonnus to create a formal division between Jerusalem and Antioch was intolerable. A condemnation had to follow quickly, and any theological justification would do.[117] Besides, Origenism had so long been a theological bugbear that condemning it through an imperial edict, especially after being petitioned by a sizable fraction of the Pentarchy to defend the church from this threat, can only have set a positive precedent in the eyes of the court.

## Theodore Askidas's Response

At this point, we might be left to wonder why the influential allies of the Palestinian Origenists did not act. The status of each in this case confirms the importance of competing networks of agents within a system of social competition. It seems likely from Cyril's account that Leontius and Father Eusebius had only just died before the promulgation of the edict.[118] Pelagius acted just when the most important friends of the supposed Origenists were out of the picture.

Cyril says Nonnus made his move against Ephraem 'in alliance with Leontius of Byzantium, who had sailed back to Constantinople, Domitian of Galatia, and Theodore of Cappadocia'.[119] This is a somewhat ambiguous claim and one could read it to mean that Domitian and Theodore were in Palestine supporting Nonnus's actions. It seems likely, given the larger context, that this was not the case. Nonnus's desperation was spurred in part by the absence of his well-connected allies and need to act quickly in face of impending disaster. For in Cyril's account, when the edict is issued in Constantino-

[117] Of course, this claim fits neatly with the different descriptions of Origenism we might construct out of the variety of condemnations that would ensue. What Origenism was did not particularly matter. What mattered was that this group of monks had to be marginalized.

[118] Cyril, 192.

[119] 'καὶ τούτου ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις γνωσθέντος ἀγανακτήσαντες οἱ περὶ Νόννον συνασπιστὰς ἔχοντες Λεόντιόν τε τὸν Βυζάντιον ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει ἀναπλεύσαντα καὶ Δομετιανὸν τὸν Γαλατίας καὶ Θεόδωρον τὸν Καππαδοκίας ἠνάγκαζον τὸν ἀρχιεπίσκοπον Πέτρον τὴν Ἐφραιμίου προσὴγορίαν τῶν ἱερῶν ἀφελέσθαι διπτύχων.' Cyril, 191,21.

ple, Domitian and Theodore are forced to sign, apparently in the sight of the Patriarch Menas and others present.

Under these circumstances, Theodore Askidas reads the situation and acts to ensure that his influence is maintained and even increased after the death of his patrons in Constantinople and the marginalization of his friends in Palestine. He does this not just by signing off on the condemnation of Origen, but even leveraging it to guarantee both the continuation of a policy of *detente* with the anti-Chalcedonians and his increasing personal influence at court. But to see how this is so, one must appreciate his situation at the time of the condemnation of Origen and recall the revenge plot thesis of how the Three Chapters came to be condemned.

The actions of Nonnus, as we have seen, were desperate and almost certainly doomed to failure. His position had become indefensible. Theodore, therefore, did not attempt to defend it; the condemnation of Origen was a *fait accompli*. He moved instead to make his own position as a close adviser to the emperor unassailable, taking the place once held by Leontius of Byzantium.

Let us recall that Evagrius Scholasticus, Liberatus and a tradition of scholarship going back to Diekamp holds the following: Theodore Askidas was an ostensibly Chalcedonian, secretly Origenist, conspirator, who was bent on getting revenge because his condemned hero, Origen, and attempted to secure his revenge by manipulating the emperor into condemning Theodore of Mopsuestia who had written against his hero in ages long past. As Father John Behr indicates, this account seems improbable if for no other reason than the fact that the Three Chapters, whose condemnation Askidas sought, included more than just the anti-Origenist Theodore of Mopsuestia.[120] What is more, Askidas inspiring the condemnation of the Three Chapters at this juncture does not add

[120] 'The inclusion of Theodoret and Ibas strongly indicates that it was not simply an act of revenge for the condemnation of Origen instigated by Theodore Askidas, as Cyril asserts, but that the concerns expressed by the miaphysites over the previous decade had indeed been heard, as Liberatus also suggests.' Behr, *The Case Against Diodore and Theodore*, 116.

up chronologically. We know Justinian had long been aware that the Three Chapters were an obstacle for relations with the anti-Chalcedonians. But, to offer a positive explanation of Askidas's actions: there is one feature of the condemnation of Origen which Askidas could exploit to get the emperor back on the right track and ensure his own influence did not falter on account of the unhelpful Pelagius.[121]

## ut mortui damnarentur

If we recall the Colloquium of 532 attended by Leontius, the patron of Askidas, one feature of Askidas's Origenist conspiracy theory becomes immediately problematic. A condemnation like that against the Three Chapters had already been floated—indeed by the emperor himself—more than a decade before it was actually promulgat-

[121] Theodore Askidas's willingness to participate in a condemnation of Origen at this juncture, however reluctant he might be in private, renders one speculation by István Perczel somewhat redundant. Perczel sought to explain why Askidas, if his Origenism had been known the emperor as early as 551, had been allowed to continue in a prominent role at the Council of 553. 'It seems to me that Justinian paid back the fraud of his favourite ecclesiastic courtier by another fraud. He used Theodore for the condemnation of the Three Chapters, secretly preparing the next session of the council, keeping these preparations hidden from Theodore. And, when the bishop of Caesarea had duly played his role in the condemnation of the Three Chapters, then only did Justinian proceed to the final condemnation of 'Origenism', which brought about the downfall of the powerful courtier.' István Perczel, 'Clandestine Heresy and Politics in Sixth-Century Constantinople: Theodore of Caesaria at the Court of Justinian,' in *New Themes, New Styles in the Eastern Mediterranean: Christian, Jewish, and Islamic Encounters, 5th-8th Centuries*, eds Hagit Amirav and Francesco Celia (Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 154. Even if we accept that it was only at a late session of the Council that 'Origenism' was condemned, Perczel's suggestion is unnecessary. Askidas had already proven himself perfectly willing to condemn Origen and continue in the emperor's service. Positing that the emperor would hold a secret session expressly to hide it from Askidas only to spring its conclusions on him at the last moment solves no problems.

ed.[122] This was offered as a solution at a point when the relationship between Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian was arguably at its most hopeful. The anti-Chalcedonians demurred at the Colloquium, offering as explanation their lack of authority to rule or offer a concrete response on such matters. Still, it was clear that the Three Chapters were a stumbling-block for many anti-Chalcedonians.

To condemn the Three Chapters, however, would be a dangerous prospect. Despite their sometimes-troubled history, they had died at peace with the church. To condemn someone who had so gone to his rest would smack of novelty, of judging differently and even contrary to how the church had once judged. Such novelty was, quite literally, anathema to the Byzantine mind. Without clear and significant support from all quarters of the Chalcedonian church, the court would hardly have attempted this as means of encouraging detente with the anti-Chalcedonians. The condemnation of the dead had been regarded as inadvisable in the past, and that even in connection to Theodore of Mopsuestia. An account by Richard Price offers these striking examples:

> [A]ll sides in the controversy appealed to the emperor Theodosius II. Cyril severely criticized the stance of the Syrian bishops and urged the emperor to steer well clear of the heresy of Diodore and Theodore, while the Syrians reminded the emperor that both he and his grandfather Theodosius I had expressed admiration for Theodore as a teacher. Theodosius' response was to insist on a restoration of peace to the churches. In a reply to the Syrians he added, 'What could be more useful than that you resolve together with the whole church that no one should presume in future to do anything of the kind against those who died in her peace?"

[122] One also finds Theodoret, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Diodore associated with Nestorian heresy in earlier imperial documents. A law created in 520 under Justin I strongly implies that the three held heretical views and were not to be emulated, although it does not outright condemn them. See *CN* 981, Document 559 (M 9. 364–5).

> An embarrassed Proclus now wrote to John of Antioch, protesting that, despite his concern over the 'anonymous' heretical excerpts, he had no wish to see Theodore or any other deceased person condemned by name.[123]

Askidas was certainly aware of this letter of Proclus, at least by the Council of 553, since he treats it as a forgery.[124] It would not be a great stretch if one were to suggest he may have already been aware of the problem at an earlier time.

A similar case was raised by Justin I in one of his letters to Hormidas concerning the matter of the diptychs.[125] Justin warns Hormisdas that if they were asked to remove past bishops from the diptychs, many of the clergy and laity would 'count life harsher than death, if they shall have condemned the dead, in whose life, when alive, they used in glory.'[126] The risks of condemning the dead would have been clear long before the condemnation of the Three Chapters became policy.

Indeed, once the policy was implemented, the issue of condemning the dead would be a chief complaint among the condemnation's detractors. In Evagrius Scholasticus's narrative, the issue is the first raised when the condemnation of the Three Chapters is proposed by Theodore Askidas. The fact that Eutychius had an immediate answer to the problem instantly places him in Justinian's good graces.

> Now when a first question was raised as to whether it was right for the dead to be encompassed by anathemas, Eutychius was present. He was trained to the highest degree in sacred scripture though, while Menas was still alive, he was not one of the more prominent: for he was serving as apocrisarius to the bishop of Amasea. He looked at the gathering not only with self-

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[123] Richard Price, *Chalcedon in Context: Church Councils 400–700* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 126.
[124] *Ibid*. 127.
[125] As we saw back in the first chapter, it is likely that Justinian had a hand in composing these letters, if he did not compose them himself.
[126] *CA,* Letter 232; *CN,* 984.

> confidence but also contempt, and clearly stated that this did not require any consideration, for Josiah the king had long ago not only slain the living priests of the demons, but had also dug up the tombs of those who had long been dead. This seemed to everyone to have been spoken appositely. When Justinian heard this, he raised him to the throne of the royal city immediately after Menas' death.[127]

When the North African detractor, Fulgentius Ferrandus, wrote to Pelagius and Anatolius of Rome in defense of the Three Chapters, he concluded by offering these principles:

> May therefore your beatitude deign to note with attention the following three rules, communicated in the sequence and expression within our power, and, if you approve our humble urging, to observe them: that no revision of the Council of Chalcedon or of similar councils is to be approved, but what has once been decreed is to be kept intact; that no occasions of offence are to be created among the living over brethren who are deceased; and that no one is to wish through numerous subscriptions to claim for his own book an authority that the catholic church has attributed only to the canonical books.[128]

Likewise, Vigilius raised the matter of condemning the dead in his first *Constitutum*, as one part of the larger defense of the Three Chapters he offers in that document.[129]

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[127] *EH*, 4.38.

[128] Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 1.120–121.

[129] 'All this we investigated with care; and that our fathers, albeit in varying modes of expression yet discoursing with a single current of understanding, preserved unharmed the persons of priests who had died in the peace of the church, and that, as we said above, the same was defined canonically by decrees of the apostolic see, namely that no one is permitted to pronounce any new judgement on the persons of the deceased but that they are to be left exactly as the last day found each one [...]' Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 1.120–121.

Of course, condemnation of the dead was also raised repeatedly at the Council of 553. In Evagrius's account, Justinian asks the council about the writings of the Three Chapters. Their response shows it was not only the status of the texts at stake, but the principle of anathematizing the dead was as well.

> After many writings of Theodore and Theodoret had been read, and it had been demonstrated that long ago even Theodore had been condemned and erased from the sacred diptychs, and that heretics ought to be condemned even after their death, they anathematized Theodore *nem. con.*, as it is said, and the pronouncements of Theodoret against the Twelve Chapters of Cyril and the correct faith, and the letter of Ibas to Maris the Persian [...][130]

In the end, of course, this council called to condemn the Three Chapters does precisely that, speaking 'acclamations and anathemas against Theodore (*as if living and present*)'.[131]

Two final instances of this issue deserve mention. First, a rather mysterious line appears in the edict *On the Orthodox Faith* in 551. In the edict, Justinian sought to defend the posthumous condemnation of Theodore of Mopsuestia. After giving several reasons for doing so, Justinian says the following:

> If some people say that Theodore ought not to be anathematized after death, let those who defend this heretic know that every heretic who persevered in his error until death is justly subjected to a permanent anathema even after death. This happened in the case of many heretics both more ancient and more recent, that is Valentinus, Basilides, Marcion, Cerenthus, Mani, Eunomius, and Bonosus [...][132]

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[130] *EH*, 4.187–8.

[131] Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 2.112. Emphasis mine.

[132] 'Εἰ δὲ λέγουσί τινες μὴ δεῖν Θεόδωρον μετὰ θάνατον ἀναθεματίζεσθαι, ἴστωσαν οἱ τὸν τοιοῦτον αἱρετικὸν ἐδικοῦντες ὡς πᾶς αἱρετικὸς μέχρι τέλους τῇ οἰκείαι πλάνῃ ἐμμείνας δικαιότερον διηνεκεῖ ἀναθεματισμῶι καὶ τοῖς ἐγγυτέρω, τουτέστιν Βαλεντίνωι Μαρκίωνι Κηρίνθωι Μανιχαίωι Εὐνομίωι καὶ

The mysterious part of this excerpt is the line, 'This happened in the case of many heretics both more ancient and more recent'. The heretics who follow, however, are all clearly in the category of 'more ancient.' Here, then, it is reasonable to conclude that this is an allusion to the recent Imperial condemnation of Origen, for there is no other heretic who can fit the description of being a recent posthumous condemnation. One might expect that we would find similar language in the edict against the Three Chapters itself, but unfortunately that edict is lost to us.

Second, the notion that the function of the edict against Origen was to create a precedent for the condemnation of the Three Chapters is reinforced by a letter written by Pelagius, who had become Pope by the time of writing, to the bishops of Istria. The Istrian bishops had separated from Rome on account of the condemnation of the Three Chapters. Pelagius, attempting to convince them of the justice of the posthumous condemnation, writes thus:

> What, therefore, stands in the way, if, so long as he was hidden with regard to his error and hitherto it was doubtful, he was praised by one father, and his faithlessness having become known later, he is pierced through by the judgments of nearly all the fathers, just as a giant beast is pierced through, as it were, by increasing numbers of darts? Or have we not sometimes found the bad praised by the good nor yet defended by the same praises? For who can be discovered among heresiarchs worse than Origen and who among the writers of history more honorable than Eusebius? And who of us does not know in how many of his own books that Eusebius extols Origen with praises? But because the holy Church considers the heart of his faith more merciful than his words severe, it also condemned more in the heretical [teachings] of [Origen's] own thought than could be acquitted by the witness of Eusebius. Or does not also Gregory, bishop of the city of Nyssa, when he explains the Song of Songs, as is

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Βονόσωι·' *ACO* 3, 102.16–20; trans. Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 1.152.

> wont to be found in a good many books, present Origen with great praises?[133]

Thus we find Pelagius using the condemnation of Origen in precisely the manner described above. What makes this particularly interesting, however, when we recall the notion that it was Pelagius who had suggested the condemnation of Origen to Justinian in the first place.

Seeing, therefore, that the condemnation of the dead both was and would be a contested issue, we may now appreciate the position of Theodore Askidas. Pelagius's move against his allies could have removed him entirely from influence, as it had Nonnus and his followers in Palestine. Askidas revealed himself too shrewd to be so entrapped. One might recall that our sources place the blame for the Three Chapters controversy on Askidas's shoulders, averring that he did this to get revenge on Origen's detractors. A simpler explanation now presents itself. Since Theodore was in a position to recognize that the condemnation of Origen was inevitable (for reasons we discussed above), he chose rather to endorse it and leverage it, increase his own influence, and keep the possibility of detente with the anti-Chalcedonians open. The condemnation of Origen, as we have said, had an important feature in common with the condemnation of the Three Chapters. Like the Three Chapters, Origen was to be condemned while already deceased. Origen was, in many ways, the perfect precedent for the condemnation of the Three Chapters. As we

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[133] 'quid itaque obstat, si dum de eius errore occultum adhuc et dubium fuit, ab uno patre laudatus est, et innotescente post perfidia, paene omnium magnorum patrum sententiis uelut inmanis bestia quasi crebrescentibus iaculis est confossus? An non et malos a bonis aliquando laudatos nouimus nec tamen eisdem laudibus defensos? Quid namque in haeresiachis Origene deterius, et quid in historiographis inueniri Eusebio honorabilius potest? Et quis nostrum nesciat in libris suis quantis Origenem Eusebius praeconiis adtollat? Sed quia sancta ecclesia suorum fidelium corda benignius quam uerba districtius pensat, et plus in haereticis sensum proprium <reprobauit> quam testio Eusebii absoluere potuit, nec rursus Eusebium laudati Origenis culpa damnavit. An non et Gregorius Nysae urbis episcopus cum canticorum canticum exponit, sicut inueniri in plerisque codicibus solet, magnis Origenem laudibus praefert?' *ACO* 4.2, 131.

have already seen, he had become an heresiological hobgoblin. By suggesting Origenism could act as a stalking horse and a precedent for the condemnation of the Three Chapters, Askidas could ensure Justinian's continuing favor, just as we saw Eutychius gain favor above.

Several factors come together to offer further support to the notion that Origenism was a stalking horse. First, it is clear from the acts of the Council of 553 that Askidas himself would later become a major force pushing for the condemnation of the dead. His dedication to arguing for the emperor's consensus and his prominence was even sufficient to earn him the ire and excommunication of Vigilius. Much of Askidas's activity at the council was directed toward source critical questions, largely in terms of rejecting sources which could be used to undermine the consensus the council was called to establish. He employed these tools to attack the authenticity of any authority which might be used to argue against condemnation of the dead, including the letter of Proclus alluded to above.[134] He even went so far as to cite the condemnation of Origen as a precedent for condemning the dead, charging that those present had been perfectly willing to go along in that instance.

> And we find indeed many others who were anathematized after death, including also Origen: if one goes back to the time of Theophilus of holy memory or even earlier, one will find him anathematized after death. This has been done even now in his regard by your holinesses and by Vigilius the most religious pope of Elder Rome.[135]

Thus we can say with certainty that Askidas was capable of making this connection, and indeed that he did. Of course, it does not follow from this fact that he suggested the connection to the emperor in 543, but it does make such an event more plausible. Here we can also

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[134] Theodore also attacks a letter attributed to Cyril of Alexandria which held 'that Theodore should not be reviled because he was already deceased [...]' and that '[...] it is a serious matter to revile the dead'. Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 1.325.

[135] Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 1.338.

turn to Facundus of Hermiane, one of the defenders of the Three Chapters.

> For the holy brother, Abba Felix, among the very many other evils which he wrote to us about that man, even reported this: that he had become a friend to Theodore of Cappadocia and he often showed him to the emperor since he furnished for him certain chapters for the postmortem condemnation of those who died in the peace of the church.[136]

One finds in Askidas a pattern of behavior. He acts as a scholar, or even a legal researcher, seeking the grounds to justify the emperor's policy and thereby ensuring his influence at court. Thus we find Cyril of Scythopolis complaining that Askidas 'controlled the palace' in the immediate wake of the condemnation of Origen which, if Cyril's narrative were accurate, should have decreased his influence.[137] Askidas is pictured as even being able to lean on Peter of Jerusalem, forcing him to accept chancellors of Askidas's choosing, and to intimidate Peter enough that he was willing to strike a deal with Nonnus and his exiled allies.[138] This quick reversal of fortune is not fully explained by Cyril, who tends to pass over the affair of the Three Chapters in an almost embarrassed silence. But it does fit neatly into context where Askidas is happily using the recent condemnation of Origen to his own benefit.

Liberatus, who appears to have lost little love on Origen, did not particularly blame Pelagius for his actions. This is, one will recall,

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[136] 'Nam sanctus frater abba Felix, inter alia mala quamplurima quae nobis de illo scripsit, etiam hoc retulit, quod amicus fuerit Theodoro Cappadoci et eum saepius praesentauerit imperatori, quia capitula ei quaedam subministrauit pro damnandis post mortem in Ecclesiae pace defunctis. Sed et Carthagine similiter, ut aduertimus, astruebat quod praedictus Mopsuestenus Theodorus iuste ac regulariter post mortem fuerit condemnatus.' Facundus of Hermiane, *Contra Mocianum*, J. M. Clement, ed. in *Facundus Hermianensis: Opera Omnia. CCSL* 90A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1974), 6.

[137] Cyril, 192,21.

[138] Cyril, 193.

one of the authors who portray Askidas as the author of an Origenist revenge plot. If the foregoing explanation of Askidas's actions is correct, it makes better sense of these closing remarks from Liberatus than does his own narrative:

> I believe this clear to everyone: through the deacon Pelagius and Theodore, bishop of Caesarea Cappadocia, this scandal has come into the church. For even Theodore himself publicly proclaimed he and Pelagius, through whom this scandal came into the world, ought to be burned alive.[139]

## CONCLUSION: ASSOCIATION AND CONDEMNATION

When we fully understand this context, Justinian's actions become coherent. He was not the mindless victim of an Origenist conspiracy against Theodore of Mopsuestia. Neither was he without solid reasons to condemn Origen. If he is understood within the social landscape he operated in, he acted rationally and consistently to ensure that the imperial church remain a Chalcedonian church, while always seeking an effective means of *detente* with the anti-Chalcedonians. But unity, like all social goods, can only be secured through persons. Divergent interests proved too much for the fragile coalition Justinian had assembled. Networks and individuals competing for legitimacy and dominance means that Justinian's efforts to achieve unity continually shifted the grounds on which the competition would occur. Justinian relied on agents and advisors, like Askidas and Pelagius, but he also had to balance their interests one against the other in order to maintain their usefulness. The condemnation of Origen was promoted by a papal representative seeking the marginalization of those who seemed likely to compromise Chalcedon. It was effected as part of an effort to thwart possible tension between Jerusalem and Antioch. It was supported by a court advisor who wished to se-

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[139] 'illud liquere omnibus credo per Pelagium diaconum et Theodorum Caesare Cappadociae episcopum hoc scandalum in ecclesiam fuisse ingressum, quod etiam publice ipse Theodorus clamitauit se et Pelagium uiuos incendendos, per quos hoc scandalum introiuit in mundum.' *ACO* 2.5, 141.7–11.

cure his own position and provide a means of defending the condemnation of the Three Chapters and a policy of *detente*. Far from being pulled about by these advisors, the emperor managed to direct their conflict to advance his own goals while still maintaining a relationship with each.

Ultimately this was a policy formulated in the east to answer eastern problems. In the east, the condemnation of Origen could have served as an acceptable test case for the condemnation of the dead, establishing an association between the two concepts. But no similar preparation was made for the west. Without ever achieving buy-in from the west, the condemnation of the Three Chapters was a policy doomed to failure from its inception. It also represents a watershed moment in Justinianic religious policy. Henceforth, the court will be forced to engage in damage control, forsaking any real hope of unity with the anti-Chalcedonians.

# Chapter 5.
# To Loose and to Double Bind

Policy is complicated by people. The affair of the Three Chapters should have been a simple one, at least from the emperor's perspective. As we have already seen, he had long known that the status of Theodore and Theodoret was a stumbling block for anti-Chalcedonians. No objection to their condemnation could be expected from that quarter. The emperor held sway over the patriarchs of the great sees in the east, and a Cyrillian reading of Chalcedon served as the touchstone of orthodoxy there. Of course, there had been a history of western resistance to anything that smacked of tampering with Chalcedon, but Justinian had three marks in his favor before he issued his now lost edict of 544/5 on the Three Chapters. First, the condemnation of Origen in 543 by imperial fiat had gone off without a hitch. This condemnation tested the church's willingness to accept direct condemnation of the deceased, and that by imperial edict alone. The results were promising.

Second, although the reconquest of Italy had proven more difficult than the reconquest of North Africa, there was reason to believe that imperial troops would encourage the residents of Italy to accept the emperor's will. A truce in the east enabled Justinian to commit more resources to Italy and, although with hindsight we know the whole affair would consume the next decade, an observer in the period would have reason to be bullish about the empire's prospects.

Third, and most importantly for our purposes, was the bishop of Rome. Pope Vigilius was a known quantity for the court. He had served as a papal representative to Constantinople. He now held the

see of Rome thanks to imperial support. He had signed off on the condemnation of Origen. The very tumult with the Arian Goths in Italy would help to ensure the pope's loyalty to the orthodox emperor; the memory of 410 was more salient then. Doubtless there would be complaints in the west about the condemnation of the Three Chapters, but with the advocacy of Pope St. Leo's successor, now was the right moment to seek a policy which might at last see the end of tensions over Chalcedon in the east.

But a practicable solution to the split over Chalcedon would elude the emperor once more. With Severus of Antioch dead, and much of the anti-Chalcedonian clergy having suffered following the arrival of Agapetus in Constantinople, new proposals could not expect a friendly hearing in the east. Still, if tensions in the east were not lessened by the condemnation of the Three Chapters, one could hope that at least matters would not be made worse. But the condemnation would lead to full blown schism in the west which would last for decades. That a solution was eventually found to the schism may give reason to believe it was avoidable in the first place, although this not a strong argument. Yet the details of the Three Chapters controversy and the resulting Council of Constantinople of 553 do point to mismanagement. More than this, however, they show the difficulty of implementing policy when the social context of agents makes them unpredictable to one another. The circumstances surrounding the condemnation of the Three Chapters placed Vigilius in an extremely awkward position, which will be discussed here in terms of a 'double-bind,' resulting in his desperate and doomed attempts to find a workable solution. When the emperor's decision leads to the indecision of others, conflict follows.

## WHO WAS VIGILIUS?

Justinian had three strong reasons to believe Vigilius would be an asset to secure the condemnation of the Three Chapters. The first had to do with Vigilius's background. As mentioned above, Vigilius was a known quantity. Scion of a prominent Roman family, he had already been proposed as successor to the papal throne by Boniface II. Then serving as a Roman deacon, Vigilius had arrived in Constantinople around the same time as Agapetus. When Agapetus died unexpectedly in Constantinople, Theodora is said to have offered the

papacy to Vigilius.[1] Before Vigilius could return to Rome, Silverius had already been placed upon the throne by the Goths. Within months, however, Belisarius's efforts in Italy would place Rome under imperial control. In short order, Silverius would be removed from the throne and sent into exile. With Silverius out of the way, Vigilius could be made pope. Between Vigilius's lengthy stay in Constantinople and the repeated attempts to make him pope, it seems clear enough that the court felt it could trust that he would advance its interests.

Arguably more important than this the fact that Vigilius depended upon the empire. Although Vigilius was himself a Roman, his later reputation as the first of the so-called Byzantine popes may be justified by this dependence. Vigilius and Agapetus had come from a Gothic controlled Rome to Constantinople, and Agapetus would have the patriarch of the latter deposed. Vigilius would go to a Rome in the hands of an eastern army and would take a throne granted him by those who had just deposed his predecessor. At no point can Vigilius have been so foolish as to think himself immune from similar treatment. In order to stay pope, to say nothing of being an effective pope, he would have to remain at least tolerable to both his western allies and to the court. Justinian could be assured, therefore, that Vigilius would not act as presumptuously as Agapetus once had.

The third reason Justinian could rely on Vigilius's compliance was his actions prior to the condemnation of the Three Chapters. As mentioned above, Vigilius consented to and signed the condemnation of Origen, a condemnation which was primarily designed to serve as a stalking horse for the condemnation of the Three Chapters.[2] By showing himself willing to support an imperial decree condemning Origen, Vigilius had publicly admitted that in principle the emperor could condemn the dead by his own decree. He could not show any resistance to the Three Chapters condemnation on the

[1] *ACO* 2.5, 136.

[2] See the fourth chapter, above. For Vigilius's signature on the condemnation of Origen, see *ACO* 2.5, 140.8–10.

grounds of condemning the dead or the propriety of the emperor's involvement without being justly accused of hypocrisy.

Additionally, there is some small and debatable reason to believe that Vigilius knew the role he was being called to play by the court and had assented to it. Liberatus tells us that Vigilius gained the support of the empress Theodora by secretly promising to support Theodosius, Anthimus, and Severus. Liberatus then tells us that Vigilius would fulfill this promise by writing the following letter:

> To the lords and most beloved by Christ, the bishop Vigilius:
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> I know indeed that the ready belief of my faith has formerly reached your sanctity, with God's aid. But since just recently my glorious daughter, the most Christian patrician Antonina, fulfilled my desires, that I might send the present composition to your fraternity. Therefore greeting with the grace by which we are joined in our God, Christ the Savior, I indicate that that faith which you hold, with God's aid, I both have held and hold, knowing on account of what we proclaim and read among you, that there might be both one spirit and one heart in God. I have hastened to announce to you with joy from my heart my promotion, which is yours, with God's aid, knowing your fraternity which desired also to embrace freely. It is proper therefore that these things, which I write to you, no one may discern, but rather as though your wisdom might hold me suspect before others in these circumstances, so that I might more easily be able to work on and complete these things which I began.
>
> And the subscription: Pray for us, lords and brothers joined to me by love in Christ our Lord.[3]

[3] 'Dominis et Christ<oamantissim>is Vigilius. Scio quidem quia ad sanctitatem uestram ante fidei meae credulitas deo adiuuante peruenit, sed quia modo gloriosa filia mea patricia Antonina Christianissima desideria mea fecit impleri quod fraternitati uestrae praesentia scripta transmitterem, salutans ergo gratia qua nos <in> deo nostro Christo saluatore coniungimur, [et] eam fidem quam tenetis, deo adiuuante et tenuisse et tenere significao, scients quia illud inter nos praedicamus et legimus, ut et anima

In Liberatus, this letter is followed by a lengthy and damning postscript confession:

> Under this epistle, Vigilius wrote his own faith, wherein he condemned two natures in Christ; and abolishing the *Tome* of Pope Leo, he spoke thus:
>
> "We do not confess Christ as two natures, but one Son, one Christ, one Lord, composed from two natures."
>
> And again: "He who asserts two forms in Christ, each agent in communion with the other, and does not confess one person, one essence, let him be anathema.
>
> He who asserts that this one was indeed doing the miracles, yet this one was succumbing to the sufferings, and not confessing the miracles and sufferings of one and the same, which he sustain by his own will, in flesh consubstantial with us, let him be anathema.
>
> He who asserts that Christ is deemed as if a man by mercy and does not assert that he himself is God the Word and was crucified, so that he might have mercy upon us, let him be anathema. Therefore, we anathematize Paul of Samosata, Dioscorus, Theodore, Theodoret, and all those who have honored or honor their judgments."[4]

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una sit et cor unum in deo. prouestus mei, qui uester est, deo adiuuante <nuntiare> uobis gaudia maturaui ex meo animo sciens fraternitatem uestram quae optat, et libernter amplecti. oportet ergo ut haec uobis scribo, nullus agnoscat, sed magis tamquam suspectum hic me sapientia uestra ante alios existimet habere, ut facilius possim <in> his quae coepi operari, perficere.
'Et subscriptio: Orate pro nobis, domini mihi fratres in Christo domini nostri caritate coniuncti.' *ACO* 2.5, 137.27–138.5.

[4] 'Sub hac epistola fidem suam Vigilius scripsit, in qua duas in Christo damnauit naturas et resoluens tomum papae Leonis sic dixit
"Non duas naturas Christum confitemur, sed ex duabus naturis conpositum unum filium, unum Christum, unum dominum.

So obviously problematic is this passage that it is rejected out of hand by most scholars. The passage seems so calculated to rouse the ire of any Chalcedonian in the west that it can only have been fabricated for this purpose. In the *ACO* version of the text, Schwartz dismisses it with this footnote: 'ceterum et epistulam et excerpta ex fide ficta esse cuiuis perito manifestum'. Concurring with Schwartz, Price says that the '*Liber Pontificalis* purports to quote the actual text of Theodora's secret messages. This is pure fiction, as is the miaphysite profession of faith which Liberatus attributes to Vigilius.'[5]

Not all are so quick to dismiss the authenticity of this letter. George Every offered a series of points in support of it. The strongest of these is perhaps that the letter assumes an ongoing exchange of letters that Liberatus makes no pretense of having access to. [6] Beyond this, however, Every's defense of the authenticity of the letter focuses on the post-script. He describes it as bearing 'a resemblance to the opening passage of Justinian's edict in Three Chapters, approved afterwards, with some amendments, at the Fifth Ecumenical Council

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"Et iterum: Qui dicit in Christo duas formas unaquaque agente cum sua communion et non confitetur unam personam unam essentiam, anathema sit.

"Qui dicit quod hic quidem miracula faciebat, hoc uero passionibus succumbebat, et non confitetur miracula et passiones unius eiusdemque, quas sponte sua sustinuit carne nobis consubstantiali, anathema sit.

"Qui dicit quod Christus uelut homo misericordia * dignatus est, et non dicit ipsum deum uerbum et crucifixum esse, ut misereatur nobis, anathema sit. anathematizamus igitur Paulum Samosatenum Diodorum Theodorum et Theodoritum et omnes qui eorum statuta coluerunt uel colunt."' *ACO* 2.5, 138.6–18.

[5] Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 1.44.

[6] 'To [Vigilius] is ascribed a letter to Severus, Theodosius, and Anthimus, preserved by a hostile critic, Liberatus. The authenticity of this is commonly denied, but I see no reason why he should not have written it, and much reason to believe it explains the support that he received at the imperial court. The first part of the letter assumes that he has received a communication from them. This Liberatus does not give, may not have read, and would not have understood if he had.' George Every, 'Was Vigilius a Victim or an Ally of Justinian?' *Heythrop Journal* 20 (1979), 261.

of 553.'[7] In support of this view, Every offers a somewhat problematic claim.

> The confession of faith in the letter ascribed by Liberatus to Vigilius consists of one positive statement and four anathemas. The statement *Non duas Christum confitemur naturas, sed ex duabus naturis compositum unum filium, unum Christum, unum Dominum* corresponds closely to the eighth anathema in Justinian's edict of 551 against 'anyone who, confessing two natures in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate, does not admit in the divine composition a difference that is not destroyed by the union, but believes that there really is a numerical division between the parts.[8]

There is one major and one minor problem with this claim. The major problem is that this passage differs in a very important way from the edict of 551. Although they have some superficial similarity in language, a similarity which might be attributed entirely to sharing subject matter, the importance of the inclusion of *ex duabus naturis* seems to have been overlooked. These three words alone would merit the offhand rejection Schwartz gave the whole. For a pope to speak of *ex duabus naturis* in this context strikes the reader as implausible since it would be perceived as a direct attack on the *Tome* of Pope St. Leo. Compromise is one thing, but this would be utter capitulation. The definition of Chalcedon very intentionally uses the locution 'in two natures' contra the 'from two natures' preferred by detractors.

The minor problem has to do with texts, but itself suggests a new possibility. Every relied on the version of the text present in the *Patrologia Latina*.[9] The supposed letter of Vigilius presents a different aspect in the *ACO* than it did in the *PL*. Most pertinent for our purposes is the opening line. Where Schwartz offers us, 'Dominis et

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[7] *ibid*. Every treats the edict *On the Orthodox Faith* of 551 as a second edition of the lost edict against the Three Chapters from the previous decade.
[8] Every, 262.
[9] Of course, Every cites the *PL*. Additionally, compare the word order, 'Non duas Christum confitemur naturas [...]' to the *ACO*'s 'Non duas naturas Christum confitemur [...]' cited above.

Christ<omantissim>is Vigilius',[10] Migne reads, 'Dominis et in Christi Dei Salvatoris nostri charitate conjunctis fratribus Theodosio, Anthimo et Severo episcopis, Vigilius episcopus.'[11] Where the *ACO* is amended to the anodyne 'Christo amantissimis,' an explicit address is added to the *PL* which seems calculated to scandalize the reader. Such an introductory line might also influence the modern reader in way that Schwartz's version would not.

The reason for the *PL*'s emendation becomes clear when we realize that Liberatus is not our only witness to this letter ascribed to Vigilius. The letter is also attested by Victor of Tunnuna, and a comparison of the texts suggests a new interpretation.[12] The main body of the letter contains a number of minor differences of the sort one would expect and which do not impact the meaning of the text. But there are two noteworthy differences. First, the introductory line addressed to Theodosius, Anthimus, and Severus is present in Victor. The *PL* clearly used the versions of this letter in Victor and Liberatus to emend one another. Second, the post-script confession is entirely absent from Victor. Admittedly Victor, as a chronicle writer,

[10] *ACO* 2.5, 137.27.

[11] *PL* 86a, 1041a.

[12] The letter in reads, in full: ' 'Dominis et in Christi Dei Saluatoris nostri karitate coniunctis fratribus Theodosio, Antimo et Seuero episcopis Vigilius episcopus. Scio quidem quia ad sanctitatem uestram ante fidei mee credulitas deo iuuante peruenit sed, quia modo gloriosa domina et filia mea patricia <Antonina> christianissima desideria mea fecit impleri, ut fraternitati uestre presencia scripta transmitterem, salutans ergo gratia qua nos in Deo nostro Christo Domino Saluatore coniugimur, eam fidem quam tenetis Deo iuuante et tenuisse me et tenere significo, scientes illud inter nos quod praedicamus et legimus, quia anima una et cor nobis sit unum in Deo, profectus mei, qui est uester, Deo iuuante nunciare uobis gaudia maturaui ex meo animo, <sciens> fraternitatem uestram que obtat libenter amplecti. Oportet ergo ut hec que uobis scribo nullus agnoscat, sed magis tanquam suspectum me sapientia uestra ante alios estimet se habere, ut facilius possit Deus que cepit operari perficere', et subscriptio: 'orate pro me domini mei fratres in Christi Dei nostri Saluatoris karitate conexi'.' *CSEL* 173.A, 130.752–771.

tends to minimize most entries. But in this case, he went to the trouble of including the full text of this letter. The post-script puts such a significant spin on the body of the letter that it seems unlikely he should have excluded it if his version of the text had it. All this points to the conclusion that there were at least two redactions of the letter in North Africa, one used by Victor and another used by Liberatus. The former included an opening line which painted Vigilius in a bad light by having him address Theodosius, Anthimus, and Severus. The latter did not have this line but included instead a post-script that paints Vigilius in an even worse light. In both cases the body of the letter is substantially the same and this body is itself subject to an innocent reading.

It is possible to make sense of this once we consider one additional detail. We will discover below, in the case of the deacons Rusticus and Sebastian, that Vigilius had a problem with leakers. This fact lends credibility to the notion that the core of the letter is authentic and may have been leaked to North African opponents of Vigilius. That these readers should augment the letter to create two different and more damning redactions fits this picture well. Thus we need neither accept Liberatus's version of the letter, as Every does, nor wholly reject it, as most scholars do. There is a more moderate approach which fits what we know about the circumstances of the period. What we have here is an authentic letter of Vigilius that announces his accession, reflects his connections to those linked to the court, such as Belisarius's wife Antonina, and offers the implicit guarantee that he will continue to be a good team-player. It would be surprising if such a letter did not at one time exist and the fact that North African redactors felt it necessary to change it and make it look still worse only bolsters the argument for the authenticity of its innocuous body.

Even without resorting to Liberatus's accusations of Vigilius accepting bribes, we can say that Justinian had reason to take comfort in Vigilius becoming pope given the available information.[13] Vigilius had worked with the court before, he had added his signature to im-

[13] The bribery accusation is detailed in *ACO* 2.5, 137.

perial condemnations before, and had likely even offered personal assurances that he would continue his cooperation. On the eve of the edict against the Three Chapters, the future must have looked bright for the emperor's policy.

## THE THREE CHAPTERS CONDEMNATION BECOMES A CONTROVERSY

Given the information available to Justinian's court and allies in 544, the time was right to effect the condemnation of the Three Chapters and finally show the anti-Chalcedonians that no taint of Nestorianism existed among the Chalcedonians. The emperor who was making bold moves to restore the Roman Empire would be just as bold in restoring the church. And so, in 544/5, Justinian promulgated his now lost edict against the Three Chapters. It is important to emphasize that this was a sensible move, given the information available to the emperor. Hindsight might otherwise rob us of this perspective, since we are now able to recognize variables that the emperor could neither see nor control for: namely, the network of Vigilius.

We are told that Vigilius was in the midst of celebrating liturgy in November of 545 when he was taken to a ship on the Tiber by imperial soldiers.[14] Although this incident is presented as an abduction in the sources, later scholars have regarded Vigilius as perfectly willing to leave.[15] One might surmise that the image of Vigilius being dragged off by soldiers had become so salient that it was retroactively applied to events in 545. In any case, there is good reason to suppose that Vigilius would have gone willingly. His initial trip was not to Constantinople, but to Sicily, where he would spend a year. More importantly, the bishop of Rome had every impetus to leave the city as a Gothic attack was imminent.

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[14] Qui Anthemus scribon veniens Romae (invenit eum in ecclesia sanctae Ci(ciliae) X kal. Decemb., erat enim (die natalis eius) : et munera eum erogantem ad populum tentus et deposuerunt eum ad Tiberim; miserunt in navem. *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Mommsen, 151, 6–8.

[15] Bury, 2.385.

The time Vigilius spent in Sicily was, I would argue, crucial to the sorry state of affairs that would develop over the next decade. North African opposition to the edict against the Three Chapters had been immediate, as evidenced by letters sent to Rome and Constantinople in short order. One letter, sent by the North African bishop Pontianus to Justinian, may even indicate that it had been sent before the actual text of the edict against the Three Chapters was circulated.[16] This letter of Pontianus and the letter of Fulgentius Ferrandus to the deacons of Rome already contain the heart of the argument that would be used against the condemnation of the Three Chapters. The condemnation of the dead was inadmissible.[17] It risked a return of Eutychianism.[18] It was, above all, a threat to the integrity of Chalcedon.[19]

Vigilius would have encountered such arguments against the condemnation of the Three Chapters during his stay in Sicily, for he received representatives from much of the western church. As the heir to Pope St. Leo, Vigilius would already have been disposed to distrust anything that might undermine the western reading of Chal-

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[16] 'In extremo itaque epistolae vestrae cognovimus, quod nos non mediocriter, debere nos Theodorum, et scripta Theodoreti et epistolam Ibae damnare. Eorum dicta ad nos usque nunc minime pervenerunt.' *PL* 67, 996–997. Price argues, contra Schwartz, that Pontianus is indicating that the works of the Three Chapters themselves, rather than the text of the edict, had not yet reached him. This is probably correct, since it would be otherwise unclear exactly what the North Africans were reacting to. See Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 1.111, n.11. But if Schwartz is incorrect and the North African bishops had seen the text of the lost edict, it is equally telling that one would reflexively defend the Three Chapters without having seen their full works. The Three Chapters, after all, may well have been as bad as the emperor claimed. Yet even the appearance of tampering with Chalcedon was enough to elicit a swift response.

[17] Pontianus, *PL* 69.997; Fulgentius Ferrandus, *PL* 67.926.

[18] *PL* 69.998.

[19] 'Totum concilium Chalcedonense, cum est totum concilium Chalcedonense, verum est : nulla pars illius habet ullam reprehensionem ; quidquid ibi dictum, gestum, judicatum novimus atque firmatum , sancti Spiritus operata est ineffabilis et secreta potentia.' *PL* 67.923.

cedon. This was bolstered by the apparent consensus he found among the western churches during his stay in Sicily. As the leader of the western bishops, Vigilius would have felt an imperative to defend their common position before the emperor. The impact these meetings had on Vigilius became obvious upon his arrival at Constantinople.

## Vigilius's Judgment

Vigilius arrived in Constantinople on January 25, 547. We are told that he condemned the Patriarch Menas and all who signed the edict against the Three Chapters immediately upon his arrival.[20] This fits the picture of a Vigilius made firm in his convictions through his extended meetings with western bishops in Sicily. He must have seen himself as the heir to Agapetus, ready to bring Constantinople to repentance by the excommunication of the patriarch. Given the swiftness of the action, one might even see Vigilius as fulfilling guarantees made during his consultations with the western bishops. Whatever the ultimate outcome for the Three Chapters, this move

[20] For this, Schwartz, 62, cites Malalas, 486.6. Other references to this event is found in Theophanes, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History, AD 284–813*, trans. Cyril Mango and Roger Scott, with the assistance of Geoffrey Greatrex (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 225–227. Regarding these Cyril Mango says, 'Theophanes appears to have combined several scattered references in Mal., though the narrative of neither Theophanes nor Mal. is satisfactory.' Theophanes, 328, fn. 2. I will follow the standard narrative here, but I should register doubts about it. The excommunication of Menas at this point is not mentioned in Evagrius Scholasticus or Liberatus. The letter from the church of Milan to the Frankish envoys, Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 165, discusses the arrival of Vigilius but, despite its relevance to the subject of the letter, makes no mention of the event. Of course, absence of evidence outside of the Malalas tradition is not itself reliable evidence that the excommunication of 547 did not happen. But given the certainty that Vigilius excommunicated Menas in 551, and the apparently confused narratives in Malalas and Theophanes, it is possible that the excommunication of 547 is an interpolation.

would assure that such decisions were no longer made without the consent of the west and its leading bishop. The pope had publicly opposed the emperor's effort to unilaterally condemn the Three Chapters.

Of course, the emperor cannot have been pleased if he faced any genuine opposition from Vigilius. An extant letter from the church of Milan to Frankish envoys goes to great lengths to describe the glories Pope Vigilius suffered on account his resistance to the emperor. The letter tells us much about how Justinian's policy and Vigilius's reaction were being framed in the west.

> When the most blessed pope arrived here six years go [*sic*], or rather (to speak more truly) when he was brought almost violently, they began there to look to him to condemn some chapters, and thereby bring it about that the holy Synod of Chalcedon, which defended the catholic faith against various heresies at the insistence at that time of the most blessed Pope Leo, might be completely annulled. But when Pope Vigilius refused to give his consent in the matter, such violence was then perpetrated against him that he cried out publicly at a meeting, 'I attest that, even if you keep me a prisoner, you cannot make the blessed apostle Peter a prisoner.'[21]

For the most part, Vigilius is treated in this letter as a heroic figure, defending Chalcedonian orthodoxy despite the acts of obsequious

[21] 'ueniens enim ibi ante sex annos istos beatissimus papa Vigilius, magis autem, ut quod uerius est dicatur, prope uiolenter deductus, coeperunt ibi ipsum expectare, ut damnationem alicorum capitulorum faceret, per quam sancta synodus Calchidonensis, quae fidem catholicam insistente tunc beatissimo papa Leone contra diuersas haereses uindicavit, modis omnibus solueretur. sed cum papa Viligius in hac parte non uellet adhibere consensum, iam tunc ei talis uiolentia facta est, ut publice in conuentu clamaret: contestor quia etsi me captiuum tenetis, beatum Petrum apostolum captiuum facere non potestis [...]' Schwartz, 19.10–19; trans. Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 1.165–66.

and worldly Greek bishops.[22] But even the author of this letter cannot pass over an event which complicates the picture of Vigilius considerably. Immediately after Vigilius's protestations of Petrine freedom, the letter's author adds the following:

> Subsequently, after a discussion, the aforesaid holy Pope Vigilius, acting under divine guidance, settled the matter by anxiously admonishing that the above-mentioned synod must not through misadventure suffer any harm; and although the priests of Africa, Illyricum and Dalmatia did not agree to accept even this action of the pope, yet the oft-mentioned most blessed Pope Vigilius began again to be driven to this—to issue an unqualified condemnation of the chapters without any mention of the Synod of Chalcedon. But the pope did not agree to do this and, seeing that he was being subjected to extreme pressure, said at that time to the most serene prince, 'May five or six of our brother bishops come here from each province, and let us peaceably decree whatever seems good to all, after holding a discussion in all tranquillity, for I will in no way agree, on my own and without the consent of all, to take steps that call the Synod of Chalcedon into doubt and create a cause of offense to my brethren.'[23]

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[22] 'sunt Graeci episcopi habentes diuites et opulentas ecclesias et non patiuntur duos mensas a rerum ecclesiasticarum dominantione suspendi, pro qua re secundum tempus et secundum uoluntatem principum, quidquid ab eis quaesitum fuerit, sine altercatione consentiunt.' Schwartz, 20.15–19.

[23] '[...] postea tamen tractatu habito praedictus sanctus papa Vigilius sub aliqua dispensatione ipsam causam ordinauerit sollicite monendo ne per occassionem aliquam supra dicta synodus pateretur iniuriam. et quamuis nec hoc quod papa fecereat adquieuetunr Afri et Illyriciani atque Dalmatae sacerdots recipere, tamen coepit iterum saepe dictus beatissimus papa Vigilius ad hoc conpelli, ut absolute ipsa capitula sine synodi Calchidonensis mentione damnaret. sed papa non adquiescens hoc facere et uidens se nimium ingrauari, dixit tunc serenissimo principi: ueniant hic fratres nostri ex omnibus prouinciis quini aut seni episcopi, et quicquid

This is a very delicate presentation made necessary by an embarrassing set of circumstances. For by this time, Vigilius, the pope whom the letter would present as a champion of Chalcedon and opponent of the condemnation of the Three Chapters, had issued his *Iudicatum*. This document, now lost, was Vigilius's written condemnation of the Three Chapters, sent to the Patriarch Menas on April 11, 548.[24] The letter here spins the *Iudicatum* primarily as a defense of Chalcedon, but it certainly was not taken as such in the west at its issuance. This letter to the Frankish envoys was sent in 551, by which point significant work was necessary to present the pope in a favorable light to a western audience. To understand how this sorry state came to pass, we need to turn to the period that led up to the creation of the *Iudicatum* itself.

The Fifth Ecumenical Council of 553 took a course which inadvertently gives us insight into how ecclesiastical politics works behind the scenes. The acts are dominated by three topics: the excoriation of the Three Chapters; the question of the propriety of condemning the dead; and the relationship between Vigilius and the Council. The proceedings may have gone more smoothly had Vigilius attended, but his refusal to attend means much of the material is devoted to the attempts to summon him and, when he remained steadfast in his refusal, to building a case against him. As part of this case, documentary evidence was presented to demonstrate Vigilius's former position on the the Three Chapters prior to and immediately after the circulation of the *Iudicatum*.

The document presented was written by Vigilius to Justinian. No real context is given for this short piece, but its contents implies something of the circumstances of its creation.

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sub tranquillitate tractatu habito omnibus uisum fuerit, cum pace disponemus, quia sine consensu omnium ista quae et synodum Calchidonensem in dubium uenire faciunt et scandalum fratribus meis generant, solus facere nullatenus adquiescam.' Schwartz, 19.19–20.1; trans. *Price, Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 1.166.

[24] Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 1.47.

> We always by the power of the holy Trinity were never, and are not, heretics. I demand the rights that were given by God to my see. Let this therefore not make your piety think that I defend heretics. For mark this: to satisfy your invincible rule, I anathematize the letter of Ibas that is said to have been sent to Mari the Persian, I also anathematize the doctrines of Theodoret, and I anathematize Theodore who was bishop of Mopsuestia, [holding] that he was always a stranger to the churches and an enemy of the holy fathers.[25]

The claim present on the rights of the Roman see hints at the context here, as does the apparent fact that Vigilius felt it necessary to reject any implication of heresy. So it is clear Vigilius wrote the letter under some pressure and out of a need to defend his position. Another letter is included immediately after this with markedly similar wording and tone.[26] But this letter, sent as it was to the empress Theodora, gives us a *terminus ante quem* in 548, the year of her death. A letter

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[25] 'Nos semper per uirtutem sanctae trinitis haeretici numquam fuimus neque sumus. iura uero quae a deo donata sunt sedi me<ae>, exigo. hoc ergo ne faciat existimare uestram pietatem quia haereticos defendo. ecce enim satisfaciens uestro inuicto imperio, anathematizans epistolam Ibae quae dicitur ad Marim Persam missa, anathematizans et dogmata Theodoreti, anathematizans Theodorum qui fuit episcopus Mopsuestiae, sicut alienum semper illum fuisse ab ecclesiis et sanctorum patrum aduersarium [...]' *ACO* 4.1, 187.25–31; trans. Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 2.80.

[26] 'Nos semper per uirtutem sanctae trinitatis haeretici numquam fuimus aliquando neque sumus, absit, sed ex infantia et Christiani et orthodoxi et fuimus et sumus. iura uero, quae a deo donata sunt nostrae sedi, neque concessi neque concedo, sed quamdiu uiuo, quae iusta sunt iura sedis meae, exigo. hoc ergo ne faciat existimare pietatem uestram quia haereticos defendo. ecce enim ad satisfactionem uestro inuicto imperio subscripsi in hac charta anathematizans et epistolam Ibae quae dicitur ad Marim Persam directa, anathematizans uero et dogmata Theodoreti, anathematizans autem et Theodorum qui fuit episcopus Mopsuestiae, sicut alienum semper ecclesiae et sanctorum <patrum aduersarium> [...]' *ACO* 4.1, 187.5–13.

like this also would have been rendered unnecessary after the *Iudicatum* was sent to Menas, so it should also be antedated before April 11 of that year. And so, we see that between the time of his arrival in January of 547 and the spring of 548, Vigilius had already agreed to the condemnation of the Three Chapters. If Vigilius had come to Constantinople with the intention of opposing the Three Chapters policy, if he had intended to be a second Agapetus, this resistance had already evaporated, likely before the end of 547. And we should not be surprised by this fact, knowing that the *Iudicatum* would soon be produced. Alternatively, we may suppose that resistance to the policy of Justinian had never really been Vigilius's intent. According to this reading, much of Vigilius's behavior before and after the release of the *Iudicatum* becomes a matter of seeking the right strategy to make the condemnation acceptable to a western audience.

Whatever the case may be, it does not seem that Vigilius was alone among the westerners in Constantinople who publicly advocated the condemnation of the Three Chapters. For the next document presented against Vigilius at the Council of 553 is one of the most important for understanding the obstacles Vigilius and Justinian faced in controlling the narrative concerning the Three Chapters. This document, dated March 18, 550, nearly two years after Vigilius sent the *Iudicatum* to Menas, is an extended and detailed deposition of the Roman deacons Sebastian and Rusticus, the latter being the pope's own nephew. The tone of the letter is furious, a product of betrayal. We will address the details of this betrayal momentarily, but for now I would note that Vigilius claims his deacons approved the condemnation of the Three Chapters loudly and encouraged Vigilius to send the *Iudicatum* on to Menas with all due haste. Against Rusticus, Vigilius writes:

> It is a known fact that you so strongly insisted upon this case that you exclaimed to our sons the deacons Sapatus and Paul and also to Surgentius the *primicerius* of the notaries that we should condemn not only the name and writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia but even the very ground where he is buried, adding that you would be gratified if someone were to seize his bones, eject them from the grave, and together with the earth itself consign them to the flames.

> And when it was necessary that the matter, after being brought to our court, be concluded by a verdict (which, it is known, was done), with the assent of yourself in particular as well as others both in consecrated and in minor orders, there is no doubt over what you did about the same *Iudicatum*, and how even in the palace you insisted that it should be speedily transmitted to our brother Menas, to whom we had addressed it.[27]

Vigilius writes that Sebastian also offered his open and public approval of the text of the *Iudicatum* and the condemnation of the Three Chapters.[28] Therefore the pressure from the court to condemn the Three Chapters was reinforced by at least some of Vigilius's confidants in Constantinople.

But the timing and presentation of this condemnation would have been essential. After the meetings held in Sicily, Vigilius would have been keenly aware of the resistance the policy would face in the west. The benefit of hindsight shows us the same, since Benenatus was deposed in 549 as bishop of Justiniana Prima by the bishops of Dacia after he recommended they adopt the *Iudicatum*. More to the

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[27] 'quae te etiam instante certum est flagitata ita ut filiis nostris Sapato et Paulo diaconibus, sed et Surgentio notariorum primicerio clamitares dicens non solum nomen et scripta Theodori Mopsuestini a nobis debere damnari, sed et territorium ipsum ubi positus est, et si ossa eius euulsa quispiam de sepultura eiceret et cum eodem territorio incenderet, gratanter acciperes. et cum necessa esset, ut negotium quod fuerat in iudicio nostro perductum, te etiam quam maxime inter alios tam sacrati ordinis quam sequentis consentiente sententia finiretur, (quod constat effectum), et quid de eodem Iudicato feceris, quomodo etiam in palatio ut fratri nostro Menae, ad quem scripseramus, celeriter traderetur, institeris [...]' *ACO* 4.1, 189.12–21; trans. Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 2.82.

[28] 'sed tu omnia praetermittens ad Constantinopolitanam urbem pro solo faciendo uenire scandalo festinasti, quantum et sequens exitus declarauit. relegens tamen Constituti nostri seriem quam de praefatis capitulis ad Menam huius ciuitatis antistitem dedisse relegimur, in conspectu diaconorum subdiaconorumque uel uniuersorum clericorum publica uoce clamabas, ut de caelo Iudicatum nostrum ordinatum atque prolatum omnibus, sicut praefati sumus, clericis loquereris.' *ACO* 4.1, 191.22–27.

point, Vigilius himself eventually faced excommunication by the bishops of Carthage in early 550 on account of the document.[29] So if the need to curate the narrative around the Three Chapters would have been clear to both the court and to Vigilius, we are left to consider how they lost control to the point where North Africans would so quickly resort to condemning a pope.

It seems that the North Africans had received word of Vigilius's plans before official communications could reach them. What is more, the informal manner through which they were informed also served to shape their understanding of the news. The parallel to the way the deacon Dioscorus had once manipulated the narrative concerning the Scythian monks is striking. All this is revealed in the letter Vigilius wrote to depose the deacons Rusticus and Sebastian. The letter of deposition makes it clear that Rusticus had leaked the *Iudicatum*, withholding it for a time from the *primicerius* Surgentius, to whom it was meant to be given, and circulating copies of it among North African priests and laymen.[30] Rusticus also secreted the document to the deacon Pelagius and others who would not be sympathetic, 'without our knowledge written on parchment, and for the sake of compactness doubly folded and written in tiny letters, out of caution lest someone might perchance find it.'[31] According to Vigilius, the leak occurred even as Rusticus praised the contents of the *Iudicatum*.

The leak alone would not have been quite so subversive, as Vigilius says Rusticus was encouraging him to circulate the document generally. Even so, receiving an official document through a leak, as so many of the North Africans did, cannot help but make it seem as though the individuals formally in charge had something to hide. While the *Iudicatum* was being circulated, Vigilius says he learned through a rumor that Rusticus had suddenly changed 'by a

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[29] *CCSL* 173A, 46.

[30] *ACO* 4.1, 189.17–26.

[31] '[...] nobis etiam ignorantibus, in membrana conscriptum et in breuitate quadruplicatum, litteris scriptum minutissimis, destinasti.' *ACO* 4.1, 190.5–7; trans. Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 2.83.

certain fickleness of mind.'[32] Of course, if Rusticus suddenly changes then Vigilius cannot be faulted for a failure of judgment regarding his character. However that might be, Vigilius accuses Rusticus of joining with the enemies of the church who opposed the *Iudicatum* without regard for the anathemas it threatened.[33] It was at this time that Rusticus and Sebastian achieved their greatest subversion through how they framed Vigilius's actions to their correspondents.

When writing to correspondents 'through all the provinces,' the deacons charged Vigilius with teaching contrary to Chalcedon and, therefore, contrary to the three ecumenical councils which had preceded it.[34] Vigilius blames this campaign for so many believing he had attempted to undermine Chalcedon: 'In consequence the minds of all who were ignorant of your malice, and who on receiving letters as from the Roman deacons believed them in all simplicity [...]'[35] Whatever Vigilius and Justinian had intended for the *Iudicatum*, the ground was prepared for its rejection before it had even reached all provinces. Vigilius himself was unable to see that an individual as close to him as Rusticus would betray his confidence, and this alone demonstrates the kind of difficulty the emperor and court would have faced in directing the implementation of their preferred policies.

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[32] '[...] te subito post haec quadam animi leuitate uulgante opinione comperimus [...]' *ACO* 4.1, 190.14–15.

[33] '[...] et cum aduersariis ecclesiae, qui contra Iudicati onstri seriem nitebantur et a nobis sunt per Iudicati ipsius tenorem a communione suspensi, secrete tractare.' *ACO* 4.1, 190.15–17.

[34] '[...] et per omnes prouincias fallaciter scribentes nos aliquid commisisse quod reperiatur aduersum definitioni sanctae Calchedonensis synodi quae praecedentium se trium, id est Nicaenae, Constantinoplitanae atque Ephesenae primae, concordat fidei synodorum.' *ACO* 4.1, 190.30–33.

[35] 'ita ergo cunctorum animos qui uestram malitiam nescierunt, sed tamquam a Romanis diaconibus suscipientes scripta simpliciter crediderunt [...]' *ACO* 4.1, 190.33–34; trans. Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 2.87–88.

## VIGILIUS IN A DOUBLE BIND

Allowing the deacons access to the *Iudicatum* was a lapse in judgment which would put Vigilius in an impossible position. But his judgment was only the proximate cause for the situation in which he found himself. Deeper, structural problems made these conflicts almost unavoidable. Vigilius found himself in a double bind. To understand the nature of this problem, it is useful to consider Kadushin's definition.

> Simply put, a double bind is an overt imperative to do something, and at the same time, a covert imperative not to do it. The essence of a double bind in an organization is fourfold: first, there is an inherent contradiction embedded within the system or structure of an authority relationship; second, the contradiction is not apparent and therefore cannot be examined; third, the double bind transcends its origin and becomes a pattern for new situations; and fourth, none of the parties can escape from the situation.[36]

If we look at the four features of a double bind here described, we find every one reflected in Vigilius's circumstances. First, volumes could be written on the clear and numerous contradictions embedded within the structure of the authority relationship between the emperor, the pope, and other bishops. For now, it is enough to recognize what Vigilius faced. The emperor had already decreed his position on the Three Chapters. His edict of 544/5 would have made abundantly clear the position the bishops were expected to take. But the emperor's *de facto* power to compel the signatures of the episcopacy on his edicts ran up against the *de jure* authority of the pope and other bishops to rule on matters of the faith. Vigilius faced a certain inevitability. If he did not defend his prerogatives as bishop of Rome, defending Chalcedon and Leo's *Tome* in a manner acceptable to the western bishops, he would be rejected and excommunicated by the west. If he failed to arrive at the conclusions ex-

[36] Kadushin, 99.

pected of him by the emperor, he would no longer be bishop of Rome.

Of course, no one could openly acknowledge this reality. To do so would be to deny the theoretical *symphonia* which existed between church and state. Since the empire and the church were both reflections of God's will on earth, any contradiction between the two could only have been an appearance. And yet this contradiction had long bedeviled church and state relations and would continue to do so for centuries to come. From the Trinitarian controversies through iconoclasm, the clashes which led to ecumenical councils (or led some councils to miss out on ecumenical status) necessarily involved contradictions concerning who had the ability to determine the teaching of the church. If the emperor held authority in these matters which was generally recognized as legitimate, his decrees would have been sufficient to settle all questions. But it was not, and the emperors were consistently compelled at least to create rubber stamp synods in order to give their commands legitimacy. The inability to see these contradictions makes it impossible to address. Thus the double bind proves inescapable for those, such as Vigilius, who are most directly involved.

Understanding the double blind makes Vigilius's subsequent behavior more intelligible, inasmuch as it had exhausted the options available to him. The limitations are built into the circumstances.

> The rational responses to a recognized dilemma or contradiction would normally be: (a) "This is impossible"; (b) to try to resolve the cognitive complexity; and finally, (c) to quit. The pernicious aspect of the double bind is that none of these options can work.[37]

In private, Vigilius doubtless had moments where he contemplated the impossibility of meeting all of the demands placed upon him. But these are the kinds of contemplations which rarely make it into our written sources. What we can say, however, is that Vigilius did

[37] Kadushin, 99.

respond by attempting to resolve the cognitive complexity and, when that failed, he did the nearest equivalent to quitting.

## Attempting to Resolve the Cognitive Complexity

The cognitive complexity here lay in the contradiction between two imperatives. On the one hand, Vigilius had to give every appearance of defending Chalcedon in the way that was expected of him by the western bishops. The betrayal by Rusticus and Sebastian made this task vastly more difficult. On the other hand, Vigilius had to find his way to the answer required of him by the emperor. Regarding Vigilius's actions from 550–551 as unprincipled trimming of sails explains nothing. Instead, we can understand Vigilius as a failure to balance these two imperatives, an understandable failure since they are arguably impossible to balance.

The need to placate the west made the immediate withdrawal of the *Iudicatum* necessary. Vigilius followed this with a letter writing campaign to control the damage wrought by the leak and framing of the *Iudicatum*. We have already considered parts of the letter written to depose Rusticus and Sebastian. The letter was made public enough that it was preserved and presented during the seventh session of the Council of 553. Taken as a whole, it not only attempts to indict the deacons for their disobedience and underhandedness, but also to justify Vigilius's actions by claiming the deacons had willfully misrepresented the purpose and contents of the *Iudicatum*.

Vigilius also wrote letters to Valentinian, bishop of Tomi, and Aurelian, bishop of Arles. Both bishops were in regions which had reacted negatively to the word of the *Iudicatum*. Both letters are clearly damage control. They retract nothing and blame everything on lies and rumors spread by faithless subordinates. Vigilius requests that Valentinian 'summon and exhort ceaselessly those whom you have reported to be ensnared by various rumours, lest perchance they be seduced by those who with a most pernicious spirit and under a catholic veil attempt to deceive with their falsity the hearts of simple

Christians'.[38] He warns of an attack on the harmony of the gospels 'by the opponents of the holy Council of Chalcedon, among whom we discovered that Rusticus and Sebastian were the originators of this cause of offense [...] who under the cloak of a false defence endeavour to prove that the same synod contradicted the aforesaid three synods (perish the thought!).'[39] He instructs Valentinian not to receive letters from Rusticus and Sebastian in the future, to reject their allies, and to require his subordinates to do likewise.[40]

In defense of his own actions, Vigilius attempts to make a careful distinction. He rejects the notion 'that the persons of Bishops Ibas and Theodoret were condemned in our *Iudicatum* (perish the thought!).'[41] Instead, he claims that he wrote about 'the blasphemies of Theodore of Mopsuestia and his person and about the letter that is said of have been written by Ibas to Mari the Persian and the writings of Theodoret against both the orthodox faith and the Twelve

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[38] '[...] et conuocatus eos quos scandalizari diuersis rumoribus retulisti, incessanter hortari, ne per hos forsitan seducantur, qui sub praetextu catholico nequissimo spiritu simplicium Christianorum corda fallacia sua decipere moliuntur [...]' *ACO* 4.1, 195.8–11; trans. Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 2.91.

[39] 'quod nunc quoque sancti Calchedonensis concilii aduersarii, inter quos etiam Rusticum et Sebastianum comperimus istius auctores scandali, quos olim pro meritis suis a sacra communione suspendimus, in quibus nos, si non resipuerint celeriter, fraternitas tua cognoscat canonicam sententiam prolaturos, qui sub praetextu falsae defensionis student, ut eandem synodum contra praedictas tres synodos dixisse, quod absit, ostendant.' *ACO* 4.1, 196.4–9; trans. *ibid.*, 92.

[40] 'hoc quoque fraternitatem tuam credimus abhortandam, ne ulterius praedictorum Rustici et Sebastiani aut illorum qui prauae eorum praesumptionis probantur esse participes, scripta suscipiat, sed et uniuersos ad tuam pertinentes ordinationem commoneas, ne uel ipsi a praedictis relegant aliquid destinatum uel falsitati eorum ulterius animum suae credulitatis adcommodent.' *ACO* 4.1, 196.28–32.

[41] '[...] quod personae episcoporum Ibae atque Theodoreti in nostro, quod absit, fuissent Iudicato damnatae [...]' *ACO* 4.1. 195.27–28; trans. Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 2.92.

Chapters of the Holy Cyril'.[42] By targeting the writings of Theodoret and Ibas, Vigilius cannot be said to reject persons whom Chalcedon received. Furthermore, the implication of 'the letter that is said to have been written by Ibas', is, of course, to cast doubt on the authenticity of the document. This would later serve as a strategy for those who wished to affirm the condemnation of the Three Chapters without admitting the slightest hint that Chalcedon was defective.

Vigilius's letter to Aurelian follows a similar template, claiming that he would never do anything in opposition to the ecumenical councils, but his criticism of Rusticus and Sebastian are relatively understated. Here, Vigilius limits himself to a more general warning about rumors and dissensions, communicated as much through scriptural references as anything else.[43] But Vigilius also makes the difficulty of position clear by including an explanation of why he had not yet returned to Rome. 'The reason why we have not done this is because the severity of the winter and the plight of Italy, which does not escape you, have impeded it, until such time as the most serene prince, as he desires, with God's help gives us assistance.'[44] Having abandoned Rome on account of the impending Gothic inva-

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[42] 'credimus enim catholicis ecclesiae filiis ea quae tunc ad fratrem et coepiscopum nostrum Menam scripsimus, id est de blasphemiis Theodori Mopsuestini eiusque persona uel de epistola quae ad Marim Persam scripta ab Iba dicitur, et scriptis Theodoreti quae contra rectam fidem et duodecim capitula sancti Cyrilli facta sunt [...]' *ACO* 4.1, 196.14–19.

[43] 'fraternitas ergo tua, quem apostolicae sedis per nos constat esse uicarium, uniuersis episcopis innotescat, ut nullis aut falsis scriptis aut mendacibus uerbis aut nuntiis qualibet ratione turbentur, sed potius primi apostolorum, siceut conuenit, uerba sectentur dicentis: aduersarius uester diabolus ut leo rugiens circuit quaerens quem deuoret; cui resistite fortes in fide, et quod item doctor gentium dicit apostolus: rogo autem uos, fratres, ut obseruetis eos qui dissensiones et offendicula praeter doctrinam quam uos didicistis, faciunt, et declinate ab illis [...]' *ACO* 4.1, 197.26–32.

[44] '[...] quod ideo adhuc nos fecimus, quia et hiemis asperitas et Italiae quae uos non latet, necessitas praepediuit, donec serenissimus princeps, sicut desiderat, domino auxiliante subueniat.' *ACO* 4.1, 198.8–10; trans. Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 2.95.

sion, the pope now found himself wholly dependent upon the emperor.

The emperor's satisfaction was, therefore, a second imperative Vigilius faced. Doubtless Justinian recognize the necessity of withdrawing the *Iudicatum*, given the circumstances. But he still sought assurances that Vigilius would continue his support. To this end, Vigilius was forced to swear an oath for Justinian on the gospels and the very nails of the cross.

> [I swear] to intend, attempt, and act, as far as we can, with one mind and will with your piety, to ensure that the Three Chapters, that is, Theodore of Mopsuestia with his writings and the letter attributed to Ibas and the writings of Theodoret against the orthodox faith and against the Twelve Chapters of the holy Cyril are condemned and anathematized, and [I swear] to do or speak or secretly devise nothing against the will of your piety in support of these chapters, either by myself or through those in the clerical order or the lay state to whom I could entrust the matter.[45]

This oath is dated August 15, 550. Much of the document gives the impression that Vigilius had become completely compliant with the will of the emperor. But it would be a mistake to see the pope as wholly prostrate here, for it implies that Vigilius also attainted one of his desires. We discussed two letters above which Vigilius wrote to Justinian and Theodora, likely in the year leading up to her death. In both letters, Vigilius had demanded the rights of his see before he proceeded to anathematize the Three Chapters. This oath, performed in the presence of Theodore Askidas and the patrician

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[45] 'quod cum pietate uestra uno animo, una uolente hoc uelle, hoc conari, ita agere, quantum possumus, ut ista tria capitula, id est Theodorus Mopsuestinus cum scriptis suis et epistola dicitur Ibae, et conscripta Theodoreti contra orthodoxam fidem et contra duodecim capitula sancti Cyrilli dicta condemnentur et anathematizentur, et nihil pro his capitulis neque per me neque per eos quibus credere possum ex ordine clericatus aut laicis, contra uoluntatem pietatis uestrae aut agere aut loqui aut consilia dare secretius.' *ACO* 4.1, 199.1–7; trans. *ibid.*, 2.96.

Cethegus, includes the guarantees Vigilius had sought: 'If I observe this, you have promised that your piety will protect my honour in all respects, and also guard and defend with the help of God my person and my reputation, and also protect the privileges of my church.'[46] Now that the emperor and pope held mutual assurances, Vigilius might have hoped that he had successfully balanced the two competing imperatives placed upon him.

It seems, following the narrative of the Letter of the Church of Milan to the Frankish Envoys mentioned above, that at this juncture it was agreed a council would be necessary. The letter puts these words into the mouth of the pope:

> 'May five or six of our brother bishops come here from each province, and let us peaceably decree whatever seems good to all, after holding a discussion in all tranquillity, for I will in no way agree, on my own and without the consent of all, to take steps that call the Synod of Chalcedon into doubt and create a cause of offence to my brethren.'[47]

Following this request, invitations were sent out to bishops in North Africa and Illyricum. The bishops of Illyricum did not agree to attend but bishops from Africa had already departed for Constantinople, perhaps with plans to protest how matters had developed.[48] One might have reasonably hoped some genuine discussion would develop upon their arrival.

Unfortunately, the controversy that had erupted over the *Iudicatum* on account of Vigilius's leaky and unpredictable network

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[46] 'et me ista custodiente pietatem uestram honorem meum in omnibus seruare promisisti, sed et personam opinionemque meam custodire et cum dei adiutorio defendere, sed et priuilegia ecclesiae meae peruare.' *ACO* 4.1, 199.10–12; trans. *ibid.*, 2.96.

[47] 'ueniant hic fratres nostri ex omnibus prounciis quini aut seni episcopi, et quicquid sub tranquillitate tractatu habito omnibus uisum fuerit, cum pace disponemus, quia sine consensus omnium ista quae et synodum Calchidonensem in dubium uenire faciunt et scandalum fratribus meis generant, solus facere nullatenus adquiescam.' Schwartz, 19.28–20.1.

[48] Schwartz, 20.

must have made Justinian wary. This would explain his aggressive behavior upon the arrival of the African bishops. His actions seem targeted at controlling the people Vigilius would have around him, an understandable need in light of prior experience.

> When the African bishops mentioned above reached the imperial city, they began to press them, now by blandishments and now by threats, to give their assent to the condemnation of the chapters. But when this pressure failed utterly, a charge was concocted against the holy Reparatus bishop of Carthage that six years before he had induced the usurper Guntarith to have the *magister militum* Areobindus murdered; and on this pretext he was deported into exile.[49]

The letter goes on to mention the sufferings endured by others among the African party, the orders to encourage the most pliable bishops in Africa to make the journey to Constantinople, and the replacement of Reparatus as bishop of Carthage.

Justinian had overplayed his hand. Certainly, attempting to control the people around Vigilius is understandable, but exiling a close ally like Reparatus and taking actions that would lead to the death of the African bishop Verecundus of Junca was too much.[50] Despite, or rather because of the clear threat the emperor posed, the African, Illyrian, and Dalmatian bishops became even less cooperative. To cooperate with Justinian, Vigilius would have been forced to act without their support. This he could not do, and when Vigilius

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[49] 'cum Afri episcopi, de quibus supra dictum est, in ciuitatem regiam peruenissent, coeperunt eis nunc blandimentis, nunc terroribus extorquere, ut praeberent in capitolorum damnatione consensum. Sed cum nullatenus eis extorquere potuissent, concinnata est causa sancto Reparato episcopo Carthaginiensi <quod ante s>ex annos Areobindam magistrum militum a Guntharit tyranno in Africa fecisset occidi et sub hoc colore in exilio deportatus est.' Schwartz, 20.19–26.

[50] *CCSL* 173A, 47.

failed to persuade the westerners to act the emperor decided to force the matter, issuing his edict *On the Orthodox Faith* in July, 551.[51]

## Vigilius Quits

The edict of 551 brings the internal contradictions in the authority relationship between the pope and the emperor to a head. By issuing an edict on his own authority concerning a matter which was ostensibly under review by the pope, the emperor claimed a right to which the pope could not possibly assent. Vigilius had expended great effort to secure his position. He had attempted to placate both the western bishops and the emperor and had attempted to establish some *modus vivendi* for the two. But allowing this edict would undermine the position he had fought so hard to defend by calling into question its very relevance. Neutrality on this issue was untenable.

On August 14, 551, Vigilius issued a letter of excommunication against the Patriarch Menas and Theodore Askidas, also deposing the latter as bishop of Caesarea.[52] This counter-move would allow Vigilius to reject Justinian's edict while leaving open the possibility that the emperor could quickly recognize the pope's authority and reverse his course. Vigilius had written the letter from a church dedicated to St. Peter in the Hormisdas Palace, and it was not well received. Soldiers were sent to persuade the pope to abandon his refuge, leading to a famous scene involving the altar nearly toppling upon Vigilius as the soldiers tried to drag him away.[53]

Of course, it was in Vigilius's interests to share the story of this scene and his sufferings as widely as possible. Perhaps he had come to Constantinople to be a second Agapetus, to place the wayward capi-

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[51] 'Constantinopolim uero coeperunt iterum beatissimum papam Vigilium conpellere, ut, si Afri atque Illyriciani uel Dalmatae episcopi nollent, ipse cum Graecis episcopis eadem capitula condemnaret. sed beatissimo papa Vigilio nullatenus adquiescente edicta ex nomine imperiali tam in ecclesia Constantinopolitana quam in diuersis locis suspendi fecerunt, per quae eadem capitula damnarentur.' Schwartz, 21.13–20.

[52] Schwartz, 10–15.

[53] Vigilius recounts the circumstance in his encyclical *Dum in sanctae Euphemiae*, in Schwartz, 1–10.

tal on the right path. But the leaks revealing his cooperation with that same capital made this impossible. Now, at least, he might hope to secure his legitimacy in the west through his sufferings for their faith. Now the letter written to the Frankish envoys could treat him as a confessor.

But none of this solves the central problem which still remained. Vigilius was now doing all that one might hope to defend Chalcedon in a manner acceptable to the west. But he still could not return to the west, rest secure in his position, or even leave Constantinople until he had satisfied the emperor. The cognitive complexity had proved insoluble, and therefore Vigilius took the nearest option to quitting: stonewalling.

The acts of the Fifth Ecumenical Council are, of course, chiefly devoted to the case against the Three Chapters. But an especially large share of sessions 1, 2, 3, 7, and 8 are devoted to the status of Vigilius. Numerous attempts are made to convince Vigilius to attend and give his weight to the council. Vigilius's response is to make novel demands, such as requesting a meeting between equal numbers of eastern and western bishops.[54] Although such an arrangement would have resembled the Colloquium of 532, that very fact is telling. This arrangement would have given a formal recognition to the east/west division that an ecumenical council would have needed to deny. The request was a poison pill. Likewise, the repeated requests Vigilius makes for extensions can only be seen as delay tactics.[55] Vigilius had no way remaining to fulfill the emperor's wishes without completely undermining his position in the west. He therefore engaged in endless and fruitless delay as the sessions of the council moved toward their inevitable conclusion. With no other moves available, Vigilius took the only rational option remaining to him.

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[54] *ACO* 4.1, 25.22–30.

[55] One begins to sense frustration building in the council's representatives as they recount a further request for a deferment after the matter had already been argued over for years. See *ACO* 4.1, 26.6–7.

## CONCLUSION: CONDEMNATION AND CHARACTER

Refusing to participate in the council, Vigilius had no real impact on its outcome. He must have known that this would be the case. The verdict was a *fait accompli* from the moment the bishops received imperial instructions at the council's beginning, and Vigilius was not in any position to affect the matter since his relationship with the west now depended upon his opposition. When, under the advice of the clergy who remained with him, Vigilius issued the *Constitutum*, twenty days had elapsed since the council's inception. At this point, his response cannot have been other than a rejection of the Three Chapters condemnation.

The council met again on May 26, the day after Vigilius issued his *Constitutum*, for a session that would be dominated by a discussion of Vigilius. Indeed, much of the evidence addressed in this chapter derives from a dossier built against Vigilius and transmitted from the emperor to the council in that session. Doubtless the material had even been arranged in advance, awaiting the kind of response Vigilius made in the *Constitutum*. The material, as we have seen, would have given its western readers, already uneasy about Vigilius after the *Iudicatum*, the impression that he had been a mendacious turncoat all along. Secret oaths of loyalty to the opposition and demands of personal security do not befit a confessor. Meanwhile, Justinian ordered Vigilius removed from the diptychs, effectively suspending the pope from his position, at least as far as the council was concerned.

We have nothing from Vigilius for months following this. The council arrived at the conclusions for which it was convened, and Vigilius now found himself isolated from all parties. Doubtless the long months after his public humiliation would have made him realize that little of his reputation among western bishops could be recovered by further resistance. When at last Vigilius reappears in the documentary evidence, it is in a letter to the Patriarch Eutychius, dated December 8.[56] When Vigilius writes this time, it is to condemn the Three Chapters and, importantly, to insinuate that his advisors,

[56] *ACO* 4.1, 245–47.

likely Rusticus, Sebastian, and Pelagius, were to blame for his earlier resistance.[57] Vigilius followed this with a much longer document, the second *Constitutum*, issued on February 23, 553.[58] which, rather than just offering what amounted to a cursory repetition of the council's conclusions, advanced its own case against the Three Chapters. With these documents, the bishop of Rome had assented to the decrees of the Fifth Ecumenical Council. Vigilius was at last in a position to request privileges for Rome and permission to return home, but he would die in Syracuse, June 5, 555, on the return trip.

Looking at the actions and legacy of Vigilius, one cannot but raise questions of sincerity, cynicism, and character. Indeed, it is easy to draw rather negative conclusions about all of these. But even a balanced assessment, such as one finds from Price, draws on such.

> [Vigilius's secret declarations to Justinian and Theodora were] but the first of several zigzags in his stance on the chapters. Baronius attributed them to a sound and shrewd judgment, shifting with the changing circumstances, as to whether the greater good of the Church required him to side with the western churches or the eastern ones. Another possible interpretation is to see him as a sincere but weak character who was worn down by whoever's voice was the more trenchant at the time, whether that of Justinian or his own clergy. His moments of real courage, narrated below, exclude the view that he was at all times a weathervane without moral or intellectual principles.[59]

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[57] 'Τὰ σκάνδαλα ἅπερ ὁ τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου ἐχθρὸς τῶι σύμπαντι κόσμωι διήγειρεν, οὐδεὶς ἀγνοεῖ, οὕτως ὡς τὸ οἰκεῖον βούλημα πρὸς τὸ ἀνατρέψαι τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκλησίαν ἐν ὅλῃ τῇι οὐκουμένῃι διακειμένην ἕκαστον φαύλου σκοποῦ τυγχάνονα πληρῶσαι, οἵωι δήποτε τρόπωι σπουδάζοντα οὐ μόνον ἐξ ὀνόματος ἰδίου, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐξ ἡμετέρου και] ἐξ ἄλλων διὰ τοῦ λέγειν ἢ τοῦ γράφειν διάφορα πλάσασθαι, πεποίηκεν εἰς τοσοῦντον, ὅτι ἡμᾶς μετὰ τῶν ἀδελφῶν καὶ συνεπισκόπων ἡμῶμ ἐν τῇι βασιλίδι πόλει διάγοντας [...]' *ACO* 4.1, 245.10–15.

[58] *ACO* 4.1, 138–68.

[59] Price, *Acts of the Council of Constantinople*, 1.46.

I am not certain, however, that questions of character are the best way to frame most historical matters. Character is an explanation that does not explain. One may judge historical figures as good or bad, sincere or cynical, and associate all actions with such a judgment. But this tells us very little about *why* agents make the choices they do. There are many ways to be principled and many ways to be a weathervane, but if we find that circumstances allow an agent only particular ways to act, then we must refer our explanation not so much to the character of the agent as to the circumstances.

Vigilius's actions and legacy cannot be separated from the social context in which he operated. As with Justinian, we are at a loss to explain the zigzagging path of his decision making until we understand his social topography. If we can accuse Vigilius of anything, it is this: he may or may not have been a bad man, but he was certainly a bad manager. After the leaks from Vigilius's circle, leaks which revealed his inability to control his subordinates, he was left attempting to defend his position. Given the contradictory imperatives he had to fulfill in order to defend this position, he was left with ever fewer options until, at last, he had alienated all potential allies. His is a cautionary tale about the power of a double bind and its potential to limit the choices available to an agent.

# Conclusion. Justinian's Decision

The period stretching from the beginning of Justin's reign to the inception of the Three Chapters controversy is not the happiest in ecclesiastical history. Even if we were to take for granted that all the parties who claimed to seek a common understanding in the church were speaking in good faith, the emperor's efforts in the sixth-century context seems doomed. Chapter one established that it was possible for the Chalcedonian court to make peace, but only with the Chalcedonian patriarch of Rome. Chapter two demonstrated how even that peace could be threatened and nearly destroyed by the activity of an agent whose formal role was minor relative to that of his interlocutors. Chapter three argued that even in the midst of promising discussions held in Constantinople, the symbolic boundaries between Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian could not be negotiated away without threatening the legitimacy of either faction. Chapter four showed that within the now consolidated Chalcedonian church, the contrasting interests of relatively minor actors could have an impact on ecclesiastical politics throughout the empire. Chapter five revealed the difficulty in predicting the behavior of another agent's network and the impossibility of negotiating the structural tensions in the relationship between the papacy and court.

In such a context, the emperor is not wholly powerless. He has informal influence of his own, as well as formal and legal authority. He can force bishops from their sees or monks from their monasteries and can patronize his favorites with imperial largess. In the end, an individual with an army and a tax base will have an impact on events. But he cannot act as some world-historical figure, determin-

ing the course of affairs by the force of his intellect, acumen, will or ruthlessness. Justinian had all these in spades, but even he was unable to effect the desired unity. He stood at the top of a vast imperial, military, and ecclesiastical bureaucracy, but by that very fact he depended upon the actors within those systems for his power. The individual interests of individual agents—whether Justinian, Vitalian, Dioscorus, Leontius, Eusebius, Theodore Askidas, or Pelagius—within complex networks must always be accounted for to give a complete picture. If we have difficulty determining why Justinian behaved as he did in a given context, it is often because we forget that he could never act alone.

As obscure as these details can be, the fact remains that Justinian had made a decision and had pursued that decision from the beginning. He would advance any instrument that was at once able to affirm a clearly Cyrillian understanding of Chalcedon, and that could receive the formal assent of bishops in the east and the west. He would promote individuals who would help him advance this end and remove those who resisted it. When one combines this very clear policy goal with the shifting constraints and incomplete information inherent to social networks, one understands that an appearance of zigzagging inconsistency is inevitable.

For a book that is ostensibly about Justinian's ecclesiastical policy, it may seem as though we have spent the bulk of our effort considering everyone but the emperor. But this is precisely the point. The difficulty in making sense of Justinian's ecclesiastical policies is a consequence of the complexities inherent in the networks of agents around him. Only by devoting our attention to those around the emperor and their concerns can we have an adequate understanding of his decision-making process.

It is worth considering, in conclusion, to what extent Justinian's approach might be considered successful. On a formal level, one might have reason to affirm its success. Although the condemnation of the Three Chapters would produce a regional schism in the west that would last until the seventh century, even that schism would eventually be healed. Unity between Rome and Constantinople had been preserved despite the strain in the relationship the successor of Vigilius, the former deacon Pelagius, would transform into an ally of Constantinopolitan policy. Constantinople also maintained official

unity with the patriarchs of the other great sees. The Pentarchy of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem was formally preserved.

But, as we have seen, a formal reality may conceal a powerful and contradictory informal reality. Justinian achieved a formal assent of the Pentarchy to the condemnation of the Three Chapters. But the means by which he pursued this end left the connections between Chalcedonians and anti-Chalcedonians so deeply damaged that this condemnation could have no real influence among the latter. If Three Chapters had been condemned in Constantinople and Rome in 533, while anti-Chalcedonians were still patronized in Constantinople and relations were relatively friendly, the condemnation might have had a real chance of providing the grounds for unity. But after the purges of 536, after the distractions caused by subsequent wars, and after nearly two decades of mutual alienation, the boundaries between Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian had become too fixed. The Fifth Ecumenical Council became a council for Chalcedonians; it no longer concerned those outside the Chalcedonian communion. Maintenance of informal relations with the anti-Chalcedonians had been so stigmatized in the west that Constantinople neglected it in the decades following 536. The ultimate failure of Justinian's policy is that it was premised on the attainment of a formal unity even as the informal connections were abandoned. True reconciliation is impossible without real human connections.

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