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## Origenism in the vision of Emperor Justinian I (527-565)

### Abstract

Although it was condemned after several previous local synods and considered a closed case, Origenism soon reappeared with an extraordinary diffusion power. He grew up in the Palestinian monastic milieu, where he successfully revived asceticism. While it managed to penetrate the highest power structures, Origenism disturbed the sixth century for a long time. Finally, following the Fifth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (553), Origenism was condemned, with the critical contribution of Emperor Justinian I, a sovereign with broad theological concerns and a staunch defender of Orthodoxy.



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## Keywords

Justinian I, Origenism, Ecumenical Synod, Monophysitism, Orthodoxy

## 1 Introduction

Emperor Justinian I (527-565) was part of the gallery of sovereigns who considered their first duty to keep the Orthodox faith intact. Under these conditions, he took great care of the situation of the Orthodox Church, exercising its full authority over it. Striving to maintain the unity of the faith, pursuing heretics harshly, being well-educated in religious matters, and endowed with a taste for controversy, Justinian always proved willing to discuss and write on faith. At the same time, his authoritarian spirit could not admit divisions and deviations from the true faith, persecution being a necessity for all those who disturbed the perfect harmony of the Church<sup>1</sup>.

At the beginning of the sixth century, the religious situation of the Empire was very complicated due to the multitude of beliefs that came out of the old unity of Christianity. Despite the persecutions of the emperors of the fourth and fifth centuries, the pagan religion did not disappear. The Jews were numerous in the Empire, and the Samaritans formed a large group of dissidents in Palestine. In the West, Arianism became widespread, protected from vandals and Ostrogoths. There were many Christian sects in the East: Nestorians in Armenia, Monophysites in Syria, and many other heretical groups. It can be said that Justinian's religious policy was very different. He was ruthless towards the Manichaeans, the Jews were tolerated,

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<sup>1</sup> Nicolae Bănescu, Împăratul Iustinian I (527-565), *Mitropolia Olteniei*, XIV (1962), No. 1-2 (January-February), p. 19 (13-22).

and Justinian's policy toward the Nestorians and Monophysites was hesitant<sup>2</sup>.

The ecclesial communion between Old and New Rome, rebuilt by annulling the Achaean schism, failed to bring peace and unity to the Christian Church. On the contrary, the two Churches agreed on accepting the decisions of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, therefore upsetting the Monophysites and leading to the deepening of the gap between them and the Orthodox Church. Thus, of the five patriarchal seats, only three, Rome, Constantinople, and Jerusalem, entered into full communion with each other, while the Monophysites threatened the seats of Alexandria and Antioch<sup>3</sup>.

The definition of Chalcedon provoked a strong reaction among the Monophysites against Nestorianism, the supposed beneficiary of this definition. This reaction started primarily from the very nature of Monophysitism, which had emerged as a reaction against Diophysitism and, especially, against Antiochian Dioprosopism. Up to a point, the reaction was also the expression of the old opposition of method and prestige between the Alexandrian school, whose mysticism favored, at least in appearance, Monophysitism, and the Antiochian school, whose rationalism postulated too great a distinction between the natures of the Savior. The opposition was also fueled by the developing critical spirit, which transformed some parts of theology into philosophy. More than once, the Alexandrian orthodox gnosis was caught in the struggle with Antiochian anthroposophy in terms of exegetical and dogmatic problems. The critical spirit found a vast field of work in Christological matters, where analysis and reasoning were more manageable and effective than in Trinitarian matters. The Monophysite reaction was then due to the indulgence with which the Ecumenical Councils III and IV passed in silence or rehabilitated promoters or leading representatives of Nestorianism such as

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Asterios Gerostergios, *Iustinian cel Mare, Sfânt și Împărat*, Translated in English by Ovidiu Ioan (Bucharest: Sophia Publishing House, 2004), p. 144.

Theodore de Mopsuestia (392-428), Theodoret de Cyr (433-458) and Ibas of Edessa (435-457). The first two, theologians and preachers of great prestige, played a decisive role in the elaboration and orientation of Nestorian doctrine, leaving imposing Christological literature that the Ecumenical Synods III and IV did not touch. This literature, especially that of Theodore of Mopsuestia, had a wide circulation not only in Nestorian circles but also beyond them, favored by its rationalism which quickly coalesced numerous adhesions and, by reaction, due to the protection afforded to repeated Monophysitism formulas of faith, published by emperors. The more or less camouflaged protection afforded by the state to Monophysitism was often even strengthened during the reign of Emperor Justinian I by Theodora, his Monophysite wife, who gave substantial support to her co-religionists<sup>4</sup>. Although the Monophysites rejected the Fourth Ecumenical Council's decisions, they were divided into opposing parties, with different dogmatic teachings, according to different attitudes towards this synod. This did not escape the attention of Justinian, who faced this problem in implementing his religious policy of unification.

The pacifying attitude of the Byzantine state had, first of all, a political motivation. The Monophysites were in the majority in the three eastern provinces of the Empire: Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, and their discontent could compromise the peace and unity of the Empire. Secondly, the care of the Monophysites was due to substantial similarities of their doctrine with the Orthodox one, especially in terms of Christology, especially of the faction represented by Severus of Antioch (512-518). In addition to Justinian, other church and lay personalities campaigned for the unity of the Church. In addition to Justinian, other church and lay personalities campaigned for the unity of the Church. Thus, Pope Hormisdas (514-523) sent letters to Emperor Justin (518-527), Patriarch John II (of Cappadocia) of Constantinople (518-520), to Justinian and others, urging them to seek communion

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<sup>4</sup> Ioan G. Coman, Problemele dogmatice ale Sinodului V Ecumenic, *Studii Teologice*, V (1953), No. 5-6 (May-June), pp. 313-314 (312-347).

and with the seats of Alexandria and Antioch, through which the unification of the whole Christian world could be achieved. He did not consider this unification difficult and unachievable<sup>5</sup>. However, Justinian was aware of the obstacles to unification, so he acted accordingly. A dogmatic formula was sought that could satisfy both the Orthodox and the Monophysites. One solution to the problem could be the movement of Scythian monks, who argued that an agreement could be reached by jointly accepting the well-known confession: "One of the Holy Trinity suffered in the flesh." They linked this confession to the dogmatic statement of Cyril of Alexandria: "The only nature of God - the Incarnate Word," which was accepted by the Monophysites. The Scythian monks also argued that their confession had been used by Patriarch Proclus of Constantinople (434-446) against Theodore of Mopsuestia, but only to the expression "in the flesh." This was added by the Scythian monks, who found it in the theological works of Cyril of Alexandria (370-444). Thus, in its new form, the confession could be explained in both Monophysite and Orthodox meanings. It expresses the communication of the attributes (μεθὰδόσις τῶν ιδιωμάτων) of the two natures of Christ due to their union in the Person of Christ<sup>6</sup>.

The so-called Theopashite movement<sup>7</sup> of Scythian monks caught Justinian's attention, strengthening his hope that the much-desired common ground between the Orthodox and the Monophysites had been found. However, the Theopashite formula was eventually rejected by both sides and generally disapproved in the West and East. Nevertheless, Justinian did not lose hope. He wrote to the pope, expressing his opinion on the Theopashite formula, and asked him to express his opinion on the matter, for he felt their views would be similar. Justinian's efforts, which lasted two years (519-521), did not lead to any

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<sup>5</sup> Johannes Dominicus Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, Tomus Octavus, (Florentiae, 1762), col. 463 and following.

<sup>6</sup> Asterios Gerostergios, *Iustinian cel Mare, Sfânt și Împărat*, p. 147.

<sup>7</sup> E. Amann, Théopashite (Controverse), A. Vacant, E. Mangenot, E. Amann (Eds.), *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique, leurs preuves et les histoire*, t. XV/1: (Tabaraud-Trincarella) (Paris, 1946), col. 505-512.

results. The Theopashite confession was not accepted because it was not among the decisions of one of the four Ecumenical Synods. The meeting in Constantinople in 519, which Emperor Justin attended, Justinian and representatives of Pope Hormisdas, ended without reaching any decision<sup>8</sup>. Pope Hormisdas did not refer to the Theopashite formula in his letters to Emperor Justin or Justinian, although he was asked to do so by Justinian. Finally, on March 27, 521, the pope sent a long letter to Emperor Justin, leaving his position on this controversial confession unclear<sup>9</sup>.

Because of this indifference, Justinian had to stop all correspondence. After 531, he changed his tactics regarding the Monophysites when he became emperor. First, he exiled the Monophysite bishops, but several followers of Severus of Antioch came to Constantinople and, taking advantage of the kindness of Empress Theodora, formed a monophysite solid group. In the so-called palace of Hormisdas, under the protection of Empress Theodora, five hundred monophysite priests and monks found refuge.

After defeating the NIKA rebellion uprising in 532, Justinian resumed the subject of the Theopashite formula. It was decided to convene a meeting in which the Orthodox and the Monophysites' representatives participated to overcome the misunderstandings regarding the dogmatic decisions of the Fourth Ecumenical Council. Six representatives of the Orthodox and six of the moderate Monophysites were present at this meeting, along with the emperor's representative, Strateges<sup>10</sup>. Severus himself was invited, but he refused, still sending a letter

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<sup>8</sup> Augustin Knecht, *Die Religions-Politik Kaiser Justinian I* (Würtzburg: A. Göbel, 1896), p. 76.

<sup>9</sup> A. Thiel, *Epistulae romanorum Pontificum Genuine et quae ad eos Scriptae sunt*, vol. I, nr. 137 (Burnsbergae: Ed. Peter, 1868), p. 96.

<sup>10</sup> Eduard Schwartz (Ed.), *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum, Issu atque Mandato Societas Scientiarum Argentoratensis*, t. IV/2: *Concilium Universale Constantinopolitanum sub Iustiniano habitum (AD 553)* (Berlin: Walther de Gruyter & Co., 1927), pp. 169-184.

to the congregation members asking them to forgive him<sup>11</sup>. Throughout the meeting, discussions were held at a high and dignified level, with a spirit of understanding on both sides. Although, in large part, the misunderstandings concerning the Council of Chalcedon were removed, the assembly ended without a decision being reached. Taking advantage of a moment of calm, Justinian issued a decree for the entire population of Constantinople and Asia Minor, imposing the Theopashite formula of the Scythian monks. Quite unexpectedly, a strong reaction came from the "Watchers" monastery monks in Constantinople. In response to these reactions, on March 26, the emperor approved a new decree addressed to Patriarch Epiphanius (520-535). The same decree was sent to Pope John II (532-535). This decree explained and completed the previous one. The patriarch and the pope accepted it because it did not contradict the Fourth Ecumenical Council. In a letter to Justinian confirming this Theopashite decree, the pope praised the emperor, using flattering words about his Orthodoxy and religious policy, with which he fully agreed. However, due to opposition from the monks of the "Watchers" monastery and some bishops who joined them, Justinian wrote a letter to Patriarch Epiphanius, disapproving of their attitude. The monks were exiled, but the punishment was commuted at the emperor's intervention<sup>12</sup>.

The confirmation and acceptance by the Orthodox of the Theopashite formula by Justinian's decree did not change things much. The Monophysites persisted in their teaching. With the death of Patriarch Timothy III of Alexandria (517-535 / 536) on February 7, 535, they separated into two groups. The most rigorous chose Gaianus as his successor, while the moderates chose Theodosius, the deacon of Severus of Antioch. Justinian supported the moderate Theodosius, hoping that he would be able to achieve his policy of unification. However, Theodosius

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<sup>11</sup> Evagrii Scholastici, *Ecclesiasticae Historiae Libri Sex*, IV, 11, PG 86/2, col. 2721 (2415-2886).

<sup>12</sup> Leontii Byzantini, *De Sectis*, MPG 86/1, col. 1232 (1193-1268).

did nothing to return the Monophysites to Orthodoxy, and when asked to sign the decisions of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, he refused. Therefore, he was exiled to Derka<sup>13</sup>.

Soon, the powerful Monophysite group operating in Constantinople began proselytizing among the aristocracy in the capital, even urging revolt. Their position was much strengthened by the arrival of Severus of Antioch, whom Empress Theodora had invited to continue the discussions begun in 532.

After the death of Patriarch Epiphanius on June 5, 535, Justinian insisted that his successor be a person who could continue the dialogue with the Monophysites. This person turned out to be Antim, the metropolitan of Trabzon, who pastored under Antim I (535-536), known for his tolerant spirit towards moderate Monophysites. Soon, however, he began to favor Severus openly, and the situation turned opposite to what the emperor expected. Pope Agapetus I (535-536), coming to Constantinople in 536, succeeded in having Patriarch Antim resign, to the disappointment of Justinian, who was intrigued by the failure of the dialogue between the Orthodox and the Monophysites. At the suggestion of Justinian, Mina (536-552), an Orthodox, was elected Constantinople's patriarch and ordained by Pope Agapetus himself. The election of the new patriarch was received with great joy by the Orthodox population of the capital<sup>14</sup>. Under his leadership, a local synod was convened in Constantinople in 536, at which former patriarch Antim was allowed to defend himself against the accusation of heresy. Because he did not

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<sup>13</sup> Rhaban Haake, Die kaiserliche Politik in der Auseinandersetzungen um Chalkedon (451-553), *Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. II: *Entscheidung um Chalkedon*, A. Grillmeier und H. Bacht (Eds) (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1956), p. 158 (95-177).

<sup>14</sup> Eduard Schwartz (Ed.), *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum, Issu atque Mandato Societas Scientiarum Argentoratensis*, t. III: *Collectio Sabbaitica contra Acephalos et Origenistas destinata (AD 536)* (Berlin: Walther de Gruyter & Co., 1925), p. 153.



appear before the synod, he was defrocked and anathematized in his absence<sup>15</sup>.

Representatives of the four Patriarchates - Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, and Jerusalem - present at the synod showed full solidarity and again condemned Monophysitism. Although in a problematic situation, Emperor Justinian preferred to accept the synod's decisions by decree of August 6, 536, by which both Monophysitism and those who promoted it were condemned. The representatives of the Monophysites were deposed from their dignities and had to leave Constantinople. Patriarch Mina of Constantinople was commissioned to make this decree known to all church authorities. This synod and the accompanying decree significantly strengthened the situation of the Orthodox, but Justinian did not give up his unifying religious policy.

## **2 The revival of Origenism**

Although condemned to several previous local synods and considered a closed issue, especially after the disputes over the person of Origen (185-254) in the second half of the fourth century, Origenism reappeared after almost 150 years with an extraordinary propagation power. The reappearance of Origenism took place in the Palestinian monastic environment, which was not accidental because Origen himself and some of his writings promoted the idea of ascetic zeal, which became an essential point of monastic life. It is known that Saints Basil the Great (330-379) and Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389) created the ascetic literary genre called Philokalic through extracts from the works of Origen. The great Alexandrian theologian had professed his teachings for more than twenty years at Caesarea in Palestine, where he founded and led a famous theological school, modeled on that of Alexandria. The great Palestinian

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<sup>15</sup> Johannes Dominicus Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, col. 887 and 948.

monasteries fed, in large part, on the sap of the Origenist Philocalium, mixed with foreign elements. These Palestinian monks were not attacked or persecuted until the middle of the fifth century<sup>16</sup>.

Then a bishop of Arabia, Antipater of Bostra, drew attention to the Origenist monks, refusing to receive some of them, initially from Philip's Caesarea, because they supported Origen's errors<sup>17</sup>. His action remained a singular fact, although it came from a neighboring bishop with territories imbued with Origenism. Their heresy continued to evolve, complemented by new ideas, probably under the influence of a mystical and pantheistic Syrian from Edessa, Stephen Bar-Sudaili. († 550)<sup>18</sup>, which brought Origenism back to the forefront in the sixth century<sup>19</sup>.

Around 512, Stephen Bar-Sudaili came to Palestine, trying to organize the monastic world here to receive Origenism<sup>20</sup>. There were two large monastic centers here: the Lavra Monastery, located between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, also called the Old Lavra, founded in 486, and the New Lavra Monastery, located south of Bethlehem and which would become the "focus of Origenism." The former biblical village of Tekoa<sup>21</sup> was founded

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<sup>16</sup> Teodor M. Popescu, *Tratatul împăratului Iustinian contra lui Origen*, *Studii Teologice*, IV (1933), p. 17 (17-66).

<sup>17</sup> G. Fritz, *Origénisme*, A. Vacant, E. Mangenot, E. Amann (Eds.), *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique contenant l'exposé des doctrine de la théologie catholique, leurs preuves et les histoire*, t. XI/2: (*Ordéric Vital-Paul (Saint)*) (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, Éditeurs, 1932), col. 1574 (1565-1588).

<sup>18</sup> Teodor M. Popescu, *Tratatul împăratului Iustinian contra lui Origen*, p. 17.

<sup>19</sup> Adhémér d' Alès, *Origénisme*, A. d' Alès (Ed.), *Dictionnaire Apologétique de la Foi Catholique contenant les Preuves de la Vérité de la Religion et les Réponses aux objection tirées des Sciences humaines*, IV-ème Ed., entièrement refondue, t. III (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, Éditeur, 1926), col. 1232 (1228-1258)

<sup>20</sup> Franz Diekamp, *Zur Chronologie der origenistischen Streitigkeiten im 6 Jahrhundert*, *Historisches Jahrbuch*, Bd. 21 (1900), p. 743 (743-757).

<sup>21</sup> Teodor M. Popescu, *Tratatul împăratului Iustinian contra lui Origen*, p. 18.

around 505-507 by sixty monks from the Old Lavra; this monastery received, around 514, four monks, who supported the ideas of Stephen Bar-Sudaili, better known as Nonnus and Leontius of Byzantium. (c.485-c.543)<sup>22</sup>. Their attitude scandalized the abbot Gelasius, who sought the consent of Patriarch Elijah I of Jerusalem (494-516) and was expelled from the monastery. However, they were repressed in 519, during the abbot Mamas. Once he became abbot of the old Saint Sava Lavra, the original monks could no longer prosecute themselves and kept their heresy hidden until the death of Saint Sava<sup>23</sup>. As a reason for leaving the monastery and settling in the New Lavra, the monks accused the abbot Sava of misbehaving. From this nucleus, the Origenist teachings spread throughout Palestine, making disciples among the scholarly monks. They adopted Origen's teachings on the pre-existence of the soul and the salvation of all created existences (apokatastasis). He considered these teachings neutral and harmless<sup>24</sup>. In defence of their faith, they claimed that St. Gregory of Nyssa (335-395) and Didymus the Blind (313-398) had also received these teachings. Origenist unrest prompted St. Sava to address Emperor Justinian I, especially since A Samaritan uprising also ravaged Palestine. Although the disturbances of the Samaritans were at the forefront of the talks, St. Sava did not forget to report to the emperor on other issues of Palestine, such as Arianism, Nestorianism, and Origenism. All this had to be removed in order to restore peace to Palestine. The emperor did not take too harsh measures at first, and the Origenists had time to strengthen and continue their propaganda. The situation of the Origenists did not improve until after the death of Saint Sava on December 5, 532. They began to spread their heresy at will, converting several monks from the two Lavres.

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>23</sup> Κύριλλος ὁ Σκυθοπολίτης, Βίος τοῦ ὁσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Σάβα, J. B. Cotelerius (Ed.), *Ecclesiae Graecae Monumenta*, Tomus Tertius, (Lutetiae Parisiorum, 1686), p. 360 (220-376).

<sup>24</sup> B. Stephanides, *Ekklesiastike Historia* (Atena: 1948), p. 56.

Moreover, two of their most important representatives: Domitian, abbot of the monastery of the Holy Martyrs and Theodore Askidas († 558), abbot of the new Lavra, went to Constantinople to take part in the local synod of 536. Here they met with Leontius and then, with the help of the presbyter Eusebius, the keeper of the treasure of St. Sophia, a particularly influential person, bishops were promoted: Domitian to Ancira and Theodore Askidas to Caesarea in Cappadocia. Due to this, the Origenists became more numerous and influential, gaining a great pass over Justinian. However, the emperor's attention was more focused on the Monophysite heretics who had invaded the capital and with whom he was in long and endless discussions to attract them to Orthodoxy. However, the abbot Ghelasie of the Great Lavra drove out forty original monks to remove the monastery from their influence. Meanwhile, in Alexandria, the emperor had to intervene to install in place of the Monophysite patriarch Theodosius, the Orthodox Paul of Thebes (537-540), seeking to eliminate Monophysitism from Egypt<sup>25</sup>.

Patriarch Paul received an order from the emperor to close all the Monophysites' churches in Alexandria and put the imperial seal on their doors. However, the Monophysites began to build new ones, showing more and more separatist tendencies towards the Empire. Although he was Orthodox and carried out the king's edict as he had commanded, Paul was replaced because he tacitly approved of the assassination of a deacon. Finding out, the emperor convened a synod in Gaza in 542 to judge the Alexandrian patriarch. The Roman deacon Pelagius, the papal nuncio of Pope Vigilius at the Imperial Court, the presbyter Eusebius, the patriarch Ephrem of Antioch (526-545) and Leontius of Byzantium were invited to come to this synod.

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<sup>25</sup> Jean Maspero, *Histoire des patriarches d'Alexandrie depuis la mort de l'empereur Anastase jusqu'à la reconciliation des Églises jacobites (518-616)*, publiée par Adrian Fortesque et Gaston Wiet (Paris: 1923), p. 138.

The synod decided to depose Paul and replace him with another Orthodox, Zoil (540-551)<sup>26</sup>.

After the end of the Gaza synod, they returned to Jerusalem, where Leontius presented to Eusebius the forty monks expelled by the abbot Gelasius from the Great Lavra. They accused the authoritarian abbot of dividing the community of the monastery in two, and so he was an enemy of peace<sup>27</sup>.

Without knowing anything about the heresy of these monks, who took advantage of his influence at the Court, Eusebius asked the abbot Gelasius to repress them. This displeased the anti-Origen monks of the Great Lavra, who sent a delegation to Patriarch Ephrem of Antioch, to whom they made known the heresy of the Origen monks. He held a synod in Antioch in the summer of 542, in which he condemned the original monks<sup>28</sup>.

This attitude of the Antiochian patriarch put the Origenists in a difficult situation, given that he was on excellent terms with the Imperial Court. At that time, Theodore Askidas, Domitian, and Leontius of Byzantium forced Patriarch Peter of Jerusalem (524-552) to erase the name of Patriarch Ephraim from diptychs. In great secrecy, however, Peter commissioned the abbot Gelasius of the Great Lavra and the monk Sofronie from the monastery of St. Theodosius, to compose a libel (λίβελλος) against the Origenists. This act was reinforced with quotations from the work of Origen. The two had the task of presenting the complaint to the king, accompanied by a report from the patriarch of Jerusalem<sup>29</sup>. On the way, they met with Pelagius, who was returning from Gaza and told him about their mission by presenting to him the texts taken from Origen's work, called

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<sup>26</sup> Vasile Gh. Sibiescu, *Împăratul Iustinian I și ereziile* (Bucharest: "Cugetarea", P. C. Georgescu Publishing House, "Carpați", P. Bărbulescu Printing House, 1938), pp. 96-97.

<sup>27</sup> Κύριλλος ὁ Σκυθοπολίτης, Βίος τοῦ οσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Σάβα, p. 346.

<sup>28</sup> Adhémar d'Alès, Origénisme, *Dictionnaire Apologétique de la Foi Catholique contenant les Preuves de la Vérité de la Religion et les Réponses aux objections tirées des Sciences humaines*, col. 1233.

<sup>29</sup> Teodor M. Popescu, *Tratatul împăratului Iustinian contra lui Origen*, pp. 18-19.

chapters, which they wished to present to the emperor, demanding the condemnation of their author. The document also called for the name of Patriarch Ephraim of Antioch not to be deleted from the diptychs of the Church in Jerusalem. The official attitude of Patriarch Peter of Jerusalem angered the anti-Origenists and caused a cooling of relations between the two patriarchal seats. With the help of Patriarch Mina, Pelagius supported the complaints of the anti-Origen monks before the emperor and asked him to punish both Origen and the incriminating passages in his writings. However, Pelagius' intervention also aimed at discrediting the two influential originators, Theodore Askidas and Domitian<sup>30</sup>.

The emperor, a cultured man and passionate about theological issues, took the issue seriously, approved the libel received, and wrote, in 543, a treatise against Origen, entitled "The Treatise of the Most Pious Emperor Justinian, sent to the holiest and too happy archbishop of the happy city and patriarch Mina, against the wicked Origen and his ruthless teachings"<sup>31</sup>, one of the densest and most passionate ever written. This treaty usually cited as "Liber adversus Origenem", takes the form of an epistle to Patriarch Mina of Constantinople and was sent to him at the invitation of a local synod to condemn Origen on charges of heresy and of the fragments quoted from his work "Περὶ ἀρχῶν"<sup>32</sup>. Attributed to the emperor Justinian and elaborated with the help of the theologians of the Byzantine Court based on the material presented by the anti-original monks, this treatise is one of the most learned and systematic of the ancient Christian literature and the primary source of severe dogmatic problems of Origenism and debated at the local synod of Constantinople in 543 and the Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553. The work combats the errors of Origen with texts from the Holy Scriptures, from the

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<sup>30</sup> Liberatus (Carthaginensis), *Breviarum causae Nestorianorum et Eutychianorum*, XXIII, MPL 68, col. 1046 AB (1044-1052).

<sup>31</sup> MPG 86/1, col. 946-993. See also the Romanian translation of Teodor M. Popescu, *Tratatul împăratului Iustinian contra lui Origen*, pp. 28-66.

<sup>32</sup> Teodor M. Popescu, *Tratatul împăratului Iustinian contra lui Origen*, p. 20.

writings of the Holy Fathers<sup>33</sup>, and with rational arguments chosen and dosed with rare skill. Origen's erroneous teachings were considered the source of many heresies<sup>34</sup>. However, the violent tone and the insulting character of the epithets diminish the beauty and general value of his ideas. According to the treatise's author, Origen is the greatest heretic, Manichaeian, Aryan, pagan, wicked and insane, who deserves to be condemned along with the greatest heretics from Sabelius to the Monophysites of the time. In the end, 27 fragments of the works of the Alexandrian theologian are quoted, in 24 paragraphs, followed by ten anathematisms, 9 condemning the Origenist errors, and the 10-th condemning the person of Origen and those who will follow him<sup>35</sup>.

In all the theological disputes of the sixth century, the Origenist problem was considered less important than the Monophysite and Nestorian. Origen's condemnation was, however, a characteristic fact for the theology of the time, and Justinian's treatise thus acquires a special significance. The work is important from several points of view. First, she quotes excerpts from the Greek original of "Περὶ ἀρχῶν", later lost. Then it offers the most complete list of Origenist errors and is one of the most important documents of its religious policy and Origenist conceptions from the middle of the sixth century<sup>36</sup>. But the treatise is valuable especially by the author's broad orientation in the Origenist system, of profane thought - especially that of Pythagorean, Platonic and Stoic origin - which influenced Origenism, by the masterful mastery of Christian theology at that

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<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, the quoted Fathers are only Easterners, and almost all of them are favourable to Origen. Among them, we mention Peter of Alexandria, Saint Athanasius the Great, Cyril of Alexandria, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Saint John Chrysostom and Theophilus of Alexandria.

<sup>34</sup> Justiniani Imperatoris, *Liber adversus Origenem*, MPG 86/1, col. 949 CD.

<sup>35</sup> Franz Diekamp, *Die origenistischen Streitigkeiten im sechsten Jahrhundert und das fünfte allgemeine Konzil*, (Münster, i. W.; 1899), pp. 88 and following.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 46.

time and by its depth, precision and art. with which Origen's mistakes are notified, defined and combated<sup>37</sup>.

A local synod (σύνοδος ενδημούσα) held in Constantinople in January 543 did not call into question the teaching of Origen, which was widely debated in Justinian's treatise, but the synods only acknowledged and subscribed to the condemnation of the Alexandrian theologian. Patriarch Mina signed the decree of condemnation, the bishops then in Constantinople, Vigilius, the bishop of Rome (537-555), Zoil, the patriarch of Alexandria, Ephraim, the patriarch of Antioch, Peter, the patriarch of Alexandria, and then all the other hierarchs of the Empire, including the originalists Theodore Askidas and Domitian. The latter signed only to retain their influence at the Imperial Court<sup>38</sup>. All were obliged to carry out the emperor's orders, especially in Palestine, where all bishops and abbots had to subscribe. Only Bishop Alexander of Avila, Nonnus and other Palestinian monks refused, excommunicated by a local synod in Jerusalem. The Origenist monks had to leave the New Lavra, but later, through the intervention of Theodore Askidas, they returned to the monastery, some even receiving essential church dignities<sup>39</sup>.

The decree signed by Justinian enjoyed a grand reception in the Church and was a severe blow to Origenism. However, their Imperial Court protectors Domitian and Theodore Askidas did their best to ease the situation. Although the imperial edict forbade Origenism, its followers continued to live in the Great Lavra and even proselytise in the Old Lavra, from where they had been expelled. After the death of the abbot Ghelasie, an Origenist George followed, who started violent persecution against the anti-Origen monks. They had to flee and take refuge in another monastery.

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<sup>37</sup> Ioan G. Coman, *Problemele dogmatice ale Sinodului V Ecumenic*, pp. 318-319.

<sup>38</sup> B. Stephanides, *Ekklesiastike Historia*, p. 212.

<sup>39</sup> Kyrillos von Schythopolis, *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altkirchlichen Literatur*, vol. 49, 2, Eduard Schwartz (Ed.) (Leipzig, 1939), p. 192.



The Palestinian state of affairs could be explained by the fact that this province, being quite far from the capital of the Empire, hardly reached the emperor with news of the turbulent situation there, which was hidden from those interested around it. It is also possible that Justinian's edict was not adequately enforced, having the same fate as the other measures taken against the Monophysites<sup>40</sup>.

After the death of Nonnus, the Origenists split into two opposing parties: the Isochrists and the Protocists or Tetradites. The former were followers of Origen's teaching on the pre-existence, original equality, and final restoration of all souls. They believed that in the next life, the souls of men will be like the soul of Christ and that the human nature of Christ is superior to other creatures. The others, on the contrary, accepted the superiority of the soul of Christ, as this was the first creation, accepted the pre-existence of souls, but did not admit apokatastasis. They were also called Tetradites because they supported four people in the Holy Trinity.

Ten years later, in 553, Emperor Justinian again demanded the condemnation of Origen at the Fifth Ecumenical Council, but not in his official and plenary sessions, but before the opening of the actual works. Although he considered official Origenism liquidated, due to the Origenist unrest in Palestine, he was forced to demand a new condemnation of the Origenists from the synods not yet constituted in the ecumenical synod. In this regard, he wrote an "Epistle to the Holy Synod on Origen and his disciples"<sup>41</sup>. The contents of the letter show that it was addressed to the Fifth Ecumenical Council. In this work, the emperor combats the theories about the soul of Greek philosophers, especially Pythagoras, Plato and Plotinus, "whose

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<sup>40</sup> Vasile Gh. Sibiescu, *Împăratul Iustinian I și ereziile*, p. 143.

<sup>41</sup> MPG 86/1, col. 989D-994B. The Epistle is also found in the works of the Byzantine historians: G. Hamartolos, *Chronicon Syntomon*, MPG 110, col. 780-784 și G. Kedrenos, *Compendium historiarum*, MPG 121, col. 720-724. See also the Romanian translation of Teodor M. Popescu, in *Tratatul împăratului Iustinian contra lui Origen*, pp. 63-66.

evil and destructive theories”<sup>42</sup> were supported by Origen. Proving the connection between Origen and these philosophers, Justinian hoped to obtain a direct and clear condemnation of Origen from the synod. The fact that Origen’s name is not mentioned too often in the letter has led some authors to challenge its authenticity. This view, however, is contradicted by the unmistakable epistolary style of the emperor, who probably wished not to repeat what he wrote ten years ago. As H. S. Alivizatos observes<sup>43</sup>, this letter aims to clarify specific issues in the “Treaty against Origen” for participants in the Synod. It is possible that both were sent to the Synod at the same time. If in 543, Origen and his errors were anathematised, in particular, in 553, the emperor requested, by the letter addressed to the synod, the trial of the Origenists in Palestine and the approval for the 15 anathematisms<sup>44</sup>.

Leaving aside the inconclusive controversies regarding the alleged inaccuracies or confusions that contemporary historians with the Fifth Ecumenical Council would have committed about Origen’s condemnation at this synod, we have the testimonies of two contemporary writers of the events of 553, the priest Cyril of Skythopolis<sup>45</sup>, a monk belonging to the Great Lavra and the church historian Evagrius the Scholastic († to 600)<sup>46</sup>. They tell us precisely and in agreement with each other that Origen was condemned at the Fifth Ecumenical Council. Also, canon 18 of the Lateran Synod from 649 as well as that of the VI and VII Ecumenical Synods are confirmed<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> Justiniani Imperatoris, *Liber adversus Origenem*, MPG 86/1, col. 949 C.

<sup>43</sup> Η Εκκλησιαστικὴ Νομοθεσία τοῦ Αυτοκράτορος Ιουστινιανου, *Νεὰ Σίμων*, vol. XIII (1913), p. 543 (257-275, 563-583, 653-666 ἢ 876-885).

<sup>44</sup> Ioan G. Coman, *Problemele dogmatice ale Sinodului V Ecumenic*, p. 317.

<sup>45</sup> Βίος τοῦ οσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Σάββα, p. 374.

<sup>46</sup> *Historia ecclesiastica*, IV, 38, col. 2777 ABC, 2780 A.

<sup>47</sup> Charles-Joseph Hefele, *Histoire des conciles d'après les documents originaux*, Nouvelle traduction française faite sur la 2. éd. allemande corr. et augm. de notes critiques et bibliographiques par H. Leclercq, vol. 5, t. III/1 (Livre 14<sup>e</sup>: *Discussion sur les trois chapitres et Ve concile œcuménique*; Livre 15<sup>e</sup>: *Depuis le Ve concile œcuménique jusqu'aux premières discussions sur le monothélisme*; Livre 16<sup>e</sup>: *Le monothélisme et*

### 3 The “Three Chapters” Problem

Closely related to the Palestinian Origenist movement was the controversy over the “Three Chapters”. This has produced conflicts among Christendom for many years. As already presented, the monks in Palestine were divided into two parties: the Origenists and the Anti-Origenists. The Origenists had Origen as their supreme authority and condemned Theodore of Mopsuestia, and the anti-Origenists condemned Origen and regarded Theodore of Mopsuestia as their authority. Nevertheless, the Origenists fought against Theodore of Mopsuestia not because the anti-Origenists accepted him but because his writings were an inexhaustible source of arguments against Origen. Cyril of Skythopolis informs us that Saint Sava rejected these extremisms of the Palestinian monks, considering that neither Theodore of Mopsuestia nor Origen should be an authority for the faith<sup>48</sup>.

The issue of the “Three Chapters” - the name under which at first were understood the three anathemas given by the emperor Justinian against Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret de Cyr and Ibas of Edessa, then in the acts of the Fifth Ecumenical Council: his person and work Teodor de Mopsuestia; the writings of Theodoret de Cyr in favour of Nestorius and against Cyril of Alexandria and the Synod of Ephesus; Ibas's letter from Edessa to Maris the Persian<sup>49</sup>- was caused by the Monophysite grievances against the Council of Chalcedon.

The meeting between the Orthodox and the Monophysites at Constantinople in 532 did not lead to the emperor's desired result, for the Monophysites reproached the Chalcedonians for having received in common old Nestorians such as Theodoret of

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*le VI<sup>e</sup> concile œcuménique; Livre 17<sup>e</sup>: Depuis le VI<sup>e</sup> concile œcuménique jusqu'au début de l'icôneclasse*) (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1909), p. 74.

<sup>48</sup> Kyrillos von Scythopolis, *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altkirchlichen Literatur*, p. 194.

<sup>49</sup> Charles-Joseph Hefele, *Histoire des conciles d'après les documents originaux*, pp. 6-7.

Cyrus and Ibas of Edessa. be reproduced the 12 anathematisms of St. Cyril of Alexandria<sup>50</sup>.

The condemnation of Origenism in 543 greatly affected Theodore Askidas, the emperor's favourite adviser and follower of the Alexandrian theologian. He sought to remove the anti-origin group, seeking the condemnation of Theodore de Mopsuestia and his disciples and taking advantage of Justinian himself did not reject the idea of condemning him. Such a condemnation would have satisfied the Monophysites, who had long wanted this<sup>51</sup>. Under these conditions, Bishop Theodore directed the emperor's efforts to the Christological problems he had at heart and in connection with which he was preparing to write a study. Due to the intransigence of the Monophysites, who disliked the Nestorian tendencies of the Chalcedon Synod, he suggested to the emperor that they could be returned to communion with the Orthodox only by condemning the works of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus and Ibas of Edessa. Of these, the last two had been acquitted by the Synod. Bishop Theodore and his relatives asked the emperor to write a decree against the "Three Chapters" not to reconsider the decision. Justinian accepted and elaborated, in 545, a dogmatic edict, now

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<sup>50</sup> Louis Bréhier, *La politique religieuse de Justinien, Histoire de l'Église depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours*, publiée sous la direction de A. Fliche et V. Martin, vol. IV: *De la mort de Théodose à l'élection de Grégoire le Grand*, P. de Labriolle, L. Bréhier, G. Bardy, G de Plinval (Eds.) (Paris: Bloud et Gray, 1937), p. 450 (437-466). The Monophysites made these criticisms before the council of Sidon (511) when the bishops of Cappadocia and Isauria met at a local synod. They anathematised Diodorus of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus, Ibas of Edessa, and other writers with tendencies toward Nestorianism. To these measures of the Monophysites, the Orthodox responded in the same way. When the Orthodox Bishop Sergius of Cyrus returned from exile, he organised a large procession during which the portrait of his predecessor, Theodoret, was carried on a triumphant chariot. Moreover, he even established a special feast in honour of his predecessor and Diodorus of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Nestorius. This led to his defrocking.

<sup>51</sup> Evagrii Scholastici, *Ecclesiasticae Historiae Libri Sex*, III, 31, col. 2661.

lost, which condemned the works of the mentioned authors and which included three anathematisms, hence the expression “Three Chapters”<sup>52</sup>. The decree was sent to the five Patriarchates for confirmation, but it opposed both the East and the West<sup>53</sup>. It is known that the Eastern bishops signed this edict by coercion, and the Westerners, led by Pope Vigilius, refused. Meanwhile, the pope, coming to Constantinople, reversed his decision and gave, on April 12, 548, a “Judicatum” addressed to Patriarch Mena of Constantinople, in which he condemned the “Three Chapters” By the acceptance of his decree by Pope Vigilius. The emperor assumed that the long-awaited condemnation of the “Three Chapters” had become a great success and that the West would follow the pope's example. Even Pope Vigilius believed that his “Judicatum” would strengthen his authority. Both assumptions turned out to be false. The “Judicatum” provoked an actual revolt in the West, not only against the emperor but also against the pope. This put not only the pope in a very delicate situation but also those who signed the decree. The arguments of those who opposed it acquired a significant ecclesiological foundation. It became increasingly evident that a wrong path had been taken so far, and a solution had to be found. A synod was held in Constantinople in 550, presided over by Justinian, attended by several bishops from the East and the West, as well as dignitaries of the state<sup>54</sup>. It was decided to officially cancel the papal “Judicatum”, which had caused so much unrest in the West. The participants decided not to discuss and write neither for nor against the “Three Chapters” until a great convened synod. The final decisions of the synod were also approved by Justinian, although they were against his unifying policy and his theological creed. The emperor was fully convinced of the heretical teachings of the “Three Chapters”, so he continued to act for their condemnation by the Church.

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<sup>52</sup> “Chapters” were called during this period those confessions by which specific ideas and persons were condemned.

<sup>53</sup> Louis Bréhier, *La politique religieuse de Justinien*, pp. 460-462.

<sup>54</sup> Johannes Dominicus Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, Tomus Nonus (Florentiae, 1763), col. 363.

The decisions of the synod of Constantinople forced Justinian to adopt a neutral attitude in the period before the convocation of the Ecumenical Synod. He was worried, however, that things might take a completely different turn. The emperor managed to obtain from Pope Vigilius, under oath, a secret written confession by which he undertook to support Justinian's policy towards the "Three Chapters"<sup>55</sup>. Although the pope and the emperor promised to remain neutral throughout the period before the Ecumenical Council, they did not keep their promise. Secretly, they tried to pursue their interests: the pope was working to regain his authority in the Western Church, and the emperor, to weaken the opposition of the Origenists, convened a synod at Mopsuestia in May 550 to investigate the diptychs of the Church and ask the people when Theodore's name was erased from them. It was discovered that his name had been erased for eight years and replaced with St. Cyril of Alexandria<sup>56</sup>.

At the same time, the emperor focused even more on the "Three Chapters" issue, compiling a new theological treatise. In fact, with the help of theologians who shared his beliefs, he gathered new theological arguments from the works of Blessed Augustine, bishop of Hippo (354-430), and the acts of the synods held in North Africa<sup>57</sup>. Thus appeared the second decree against the "Three Chapters", written between 551-553 and addressed to "the whole flock of believers of the Apostolic Church everywhere"<sup>58</sup>. In this treatise, Justinian confesses his faith in the

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<sup>55</sup> Johannes Dominicus Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, Tomus Nonus (Florentiae, 1763), col. 363 and following. The pope's written oath to the emperor is dated August 15, 550, and was read at the Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553.

<sup>56</sup> Eduard Schwartz (Ed.), *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum, Issu atque Mandato Societas Scientiarum Argentoratensis*, t. IV/1: *Concilium Universale Constantinopolitanum sub Iustiniano habitum (AD 553)*, 117; 5, 130, p. 4.

<sup>57</sup> Ernst Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, vol. II. *De la disparition de l'Empire d'Occident à la mort de Justinien (476-565)*, édition posthume reimpression par J. -R. Palanque (Paris, Brussels et Amsterdam: A. M. Hakkert, 1949), p. 647.

<sup>58</sup> Justiniani Imperatoris, *Liber adversus Origenem*, MPG 86/1, col. 993.

Holy Trinity, then presents the teaching of the Church about the Incarnation of the Word of God and about the two natures of Christ. The teachings of all heretics are combated in 14 anathemas, and especially in the "Three Chapters", by presenting, at the same time, the actual teaching of the Orthodox Church. At first, this treaty was secretly circulated to the bishops of the East. Although the treaty was well-received, Justinian later published it as an imperial decree and ordered copies of his treaty pasted on church doors. This seems to have been the worst mistake of Justinian's religious policy. He appeared before his opponents and the pope as a man not keeping his word. The treaty lacks the terminology specific to other treaties and the imperative and mandatory characters. This shows that Justinian's purpose was not to try to stop the debates but instead to enlighten those who opposed the decree<sup>59</sup>.

The publication of this theological treatise in the form of a theological decree angered Pope Vigilius, who knew that Imperial decrees and theological treatises could not change western theology. He invited to his residence the clergy who opposed the decree and condemned him, considering him against the Holy Gospels. He then demanded his withdrawal, threatening to excommunicate those who accepted him<sup>60</sup>.

In response to the pope's actions and threats, a group of Eastern bishops, under the guidance of Theodore Askidas, came to the doors of St. Sophia Church and celebrated the solemn Holy Mass. Moreover, they deleted from the diptychs of the church the name of Patriarch Zoil of Alexandria, who had opposed the emperor's religious policy, and replaced it with the name of his successor, Apollinaris (551-570), who had supported it. This deed of the Eastern bishops aroused the wrath of Pope Vigilius, who anathematised Theodore Askidas, and after thirty days, drew up

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<sup>59</sup> Eduard Schwartz, *Drei dogmatischen Schriften Justinians* (München: Abhandlungen der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften Philosophisch-historischen Klasse, N. F. 10, 1939), p. 110.

<sup>60</sup> Idem, *Vigiliusbriefe*, 2, 4-5 și 11-13, 13, 2-5 (München: Sitzungberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften Philosophisch-historischen Klasse, 1940), pp. 13 and following.

the document of the catharsis of Theodore Askidas and the excommunication of Patriarch Mina, as well as of all the signatory bishops<sup>61</sup>.

A campaign of pressure and coercion by Justinian on Pope Vigilius followed to get him to accept his religious policy, which outlined a second schism between Rome and Constantinople. Finally, to settle the conflict, the pope sent an encyclical - *Universo populo Dei* - in which, on the one hand, he denounced the violence and pressure on him, and on the other, he expressed his faith in the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon. At the end of the encyclical, the pope proposed to the emperor to send a delegation of two high-ranking officers to meet with a papal delegation, led by Bishop Datius of Milan, to resolve the conflict. This time, Justinian showed a greater understanding and accepted the pope's proposal. The result of the meeting was the elaboration of a "Confession of Faith", which was sent to Vigil. In this confession, the pope was asked to forgive those whom he had ascended and excommunicated. Instead, the emperor undertook to annul the second decree against the "Three Chapters". This pleased the pope, who cancelled the catharsis and excommunication and expressed interest in finding a final solution to the "Three Chapters" controversy. He also proposed a dialogue for the convening of the long-awaited Ecumenical Council<sup>62</sup>.

Leaving aside the details of what happened during the eight plenary sessions, between May 5 and June 2, 553, of the Fifth Ecumenical Council, we note that the Fathers, after carefully researching each of the "Three Chapters", definitively condemned them, adding 14 anathematisms.

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<sup>61</sup> Johannes Dominicus Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, Tomus Nonus, col. 58 and following.

<sup>62</sup> Asterios Gerostergios, *Iustinian cel Mare, Sfânt și Împărat*, p. 188.



## Conclusions

The struggle against Origenism, during the reign of Emperor Justinian I, consists of two distinct moments: the year 543 when the emperor published the treaty - edict against Origen and his teachings, and the year 553, when the emperor wrote to the synods gathered before the Fifth Synod Ecumenical, asking them to anathematise the great Alexandrian theologian.

If we study the two convictions carefully, we notice that the same mistakes of Origen are not attacked. Thus, the treatise-edict and the ten anathematisms from the year 543 present the mistakes in the work "Περί αρχών"<sup>63</sup>.

As for the condemnation of 553 reaches the heart of Origen's heretical teaching, namely, Hellenic philosophy, among whose representatives he cites Pythagoras, Plato and Plotinus. The name of the Alexandrian teacher is placed in line with these pagan philosophers. Interestingly, the 15 anathematisms of the pre-synod of 553 do not even mention the name of Origen, focusing strictly on Greek philosophy, considered the source of Origenist heresy.

Considered after the first phase of the Origenist dispute as a heretic and condemned for his teaching, in the second phase, he was put on the same footing as the pagan philosophers mentioned, from which he was inspired and was anathematized again because he had been part of the Church<sup>64</sup>.

Some claim that in this second phase of the Origenist dispute, Emperor Justinian condemned Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy, producing a rupture between Orthodoxy and Neoplatonism and paving the way for medieval scholasticism.

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<sup>63</sup> Adhémar d'Alès, *Origénisme*, col. 1240. However, there are minor differences between them. Thus, the edict also mentions Subordinationism, which is not done in the ten anathematisms. They insist on the error that the human soul of Jesus Christ pre-existed and united with the Word before the incarnation of the Blessed Virgin. Origen's name is mentioned only once in the last anathematism.

<sup>64</sup> Justiniani Imperatoris, *Liber adversus Origenem*, PG 86/1, col. 991.

However, the cause of the condemnation of Origenism in this second phase remains the unrest caused by the monks of Palestine, which led Emperor Justinian to take the necessary measures to restore peace in the Church and ensure the purity of its teaching. Origenism in Palestine was considered by the emperor how paganism assaults the Church and the Orthodox faith, and therefore he considered himself responsible for taking measures to maintain the peace and unity of the Empire.

Suppose Origen and the Origenists were condemned at the Fifth Ecumenical Council after the issue had been tried at many local synods since the third century. In that case, this demonstrates the significance that the emperor-theologian attaches to the doctrinal issues involved in Origenist disputes.

No doubt the Origenist problem arose in the context of the struggles between the Orthodox and the Monophysites, which claimed roots in the Alexandrian school, of which Origen was a part. Therefore, the Origenists felt closer to the Monophysites, fought for the condemnation of the "Three Chapters" and the Orthodox believed that they would deal a death blow to the Monophysites by resuming the condemnation of Origen and his teaching.

The condemnation of Origen and the Origenists can be considered the work of Justinian. Leaving aside the various appreciations of his Caesar-Papism, we must admit that he brought many services to Orthodox teaching. Justinian intertwined his political and administrative power with the theological mission in order to know and appreciate as well as possible the complex problems of Christian spirituality on which he would rule.

The case of Origen forced the theology of the sixth century and a general recapitulation of Christian doctrine with a special look at anthropology and eschatology, issues not addressed in previous Ecumenical Councils. These problems were naturally integrated into the general atmosphere of the sixth century, a century par excellence Christological.

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