

TEO, ISSN 2247-4382
75 (2), pp. 112-137, 2018

The Religious Politics of Emperor Heraclius (610-641) in regards to Non-Chalcedonians: Between Reconciliation and Constraint

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Abstract

Our study discusses the religious politics of Emperor Heraclius (610-641), whose main objective was the reconciliation of Chalcedonians with non-Chalcedonians. Heraclius aimed at repairing the unity of the Eastern Church by reconciling Constantinople with non-Chalcedonian churches from the East. The Monothelite heresy was fabricated deliberately in order to bring Monophysites back into the Imperial Church. Patriarch Sergius supported the Emperor's religious policy. The paramount of Heraclius's religious politics was the promulgation of the Ekthesis decree (638), which launched the crisis of Monothelism. This decree is an evident expression of Heraclius's caesaropapism, as he used the Church as a tool to accomplish his political goals.

Keywords

religious politics, Emperor Heraclius, Church, non-Chalcedonians, Monophysites, Monoenergism, Monothelism

I. Introduction

During the first decade of the 7th century, the scene of the Byzantine religious life was dominated by disputes between Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians. Emperor Phocas (602-610) unleashed a series of bloody persecutions against the Monophysites and the Jewish people of Syria, Palestine and Egypt; these oppressions were directly responsible for the downfall of the Byzantine reign over the eastern provinces of the Empire, under the attacks of the Persians. The Persian invasion of the Orient exacerbated the secular hatred between Christians and Hebrews; the latter were accused of helping the Persians, whom they considered to be their liberators from the shackles of the Byzantine rule. In September of year 610, the Hebrews of Antioch revolted against the Christians; they killed Chalcedonian patriarch Anastasios and a few noblemen of the city. The Judaic revolt was repressed with barbarity by Bonosus, “Count of the East” (*comes Orientis*); many Hebrews were killed, and those who escaped death were mutilated or expelled from Antioch¹. The Jewish revolt was intertwined with a series of civil conflicts that started in all Syrian towns, and whose protagonists were members of the local demes (the Green and the Blue). The state of anarchy taking over the Empire was the exposition of an imminent civil war².

¹ THEOPHANES, *The Chronicle*, an english translation of anni mundi 6095-6305 (A.D. 602-813), with introduction and notes by Harry TURTLEDOVE, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1982, 7.21.1.1.1.9., pp. 7-8 (hereinafter referred to as *The Chronicle*); Michel LE SYRIEN, *Chronique*, vol. II, éditée pour la première fois et traduite en français par J.- B. CHABOT, Ernest LEROUX Éditeur, Paris, 1901, X, 25, p. 379, (hereinafter referred to as *Chronique*); see also JEAN, évêque de Nikiou, *Chronique*, texte éthiopien publié et traduit par H. ZOTENBERG, in: “Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale”, XXIV, 1^{re} partie, Imprimerie Nationale, Paris, 1883, 105, p. 420 (hereinafter referred to as *Chronique*); *Chronicon Paschale*, vol. I, ed. Ludovicus DINDORFIUS, in: *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, 11-12, Bonn, 1832, p. 699 (hereinafter referred to as, *Chronicon Paschale*).

² For a description of the political and religious circumstances that led to the Hebrew revolt in Antioch and the civil conflicts in the Byzantine East (Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Mesopotamia) see Gilbert DAGRON, “Introduction historique. Entre histoire et apocalypse”, in: Gilbert DAGRON, Vincent DÉROCHE (coord.), *Juifs et Chrétiens en Orient byzantin*, ouvrage publié avec le concours de la Fondation Ebersolt du Collège de France, Association des amis du Centre d’histoire et civilisation de Byzance, Paris, 2010, pp. 19-22.

The critical state of the Byzantine Empire coincided with the ascension of Emperor Heraclius to the throne (610-641); the new king established the Heraclian Dynasty³. On October 5 610, Heraclius was crowned emperor by patriarch Sergius of Constantinople (610-638). He proved to be the most eminent among the sovereigns to occupy the throne of Byzantium after the death of Justinian I. The new emperor received a “heavy inheritance” from his predecessor, Phocas. In order to overcome the crisis in the Empire, Heraclius initiated an ample series of reforms, perfected by his successors⁴. The Church played an important role in the reforming politics advanced by Heraclius, being one of the supporting pillars of the imperial power. Throughout the 7th century, the Church was an important decision-maker on the Byzantine political and social scene.

From the very start of his reign, Emperor Heraclius had to deal, among others, on a religious front, with the conflicts between Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians (Monophysites and Nestorians), whose settlement was adamant. The main objective of his religious politics was the reconciliation of the Chalcedonians with the Monophysites who lived in the eastern provinces of the Empire (Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia and Armenia); the religious disputes between Chalcedonians and Monophysites were threatening the political unity of the Byzantium. Our study aims to present, based on the analysis of literary sources, the solutions proposed and adopted by Emperor Heraclius in agreement with Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople for the settlement of the serious religious crisis affecting the Empire at a critical point of its history.

II. The state of religion in the Byzantine Orient during the first decade of Heraclius's reign (610-620)

In the Orient, the Persian Empire remained the most imminent danger for Byzantium. The Persian expansion threatened to dismember the Byzantine Empire. Between 611 and 613, the Persian troops conquered the main Syrian

³ Stelian BREZEANU, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, Meronia Publishing, Bucharest, 2007, pp. 95-97.

⁴ Georgije OSTROGORSKI, *Histoire de l'État byzantin*, traduit de l'allemand par J. Gouillard, Payot, Paris, 1996, pp. 121-124; Jean MEYENDORFF, *Unité de l'Empire et divisions des Chrétiens. L'Église de 450 à 680*, traduction de l'anglais par Françoise Lhoest revue par l'auteur, Les Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 1993, p. 353.

The Religious Politics of Emperor Heraclius (610-641) in regards to Non-Chalcedonians...

cities of Antioch, Emessa and Damascus. After occupying Syria, the Persians infiltrated Palestine, which was shortly afterwards occupied with the help of the Judaic communities. The Hebrews perceived the Persian conquest as “a prelude for Messiah’s coming, as well as an opportunity for retaliation against «Romans»”⁵. As the Persian conquest was progressing, the Hebrews were suspected of collaborating with the enemy and were at the center of the uprising propagating in all cities; they took advantage of the situation in order to get even with the Christian population. The complicity of the Hebrews with the Persian conquerors was nowhere more evident and more symbolic than in Jerusalem, in the year 614, during the siege and subjugation of the “Holy City” by the Persians. Patriarch Zacharias of Jerusalem led the resistance against the besiegers. According to the information provided by literary sources, the Hebrews backed Zacharias’s proposal for an immediate surrender of Jerusalem to the Persians without a fight. During the siege and conquest of the “Holy City”, the Hebrews became the Persians’ main allies; the latter allowed them to rob and pillage many Christian churches, commit massacres and have Christian prisoners choose between death or conversion to Judaism⁶. A large number of Jerusalem inhabitants, including the patriarch himself, were taken prisoners. The relic of the Holy Cross fell into the hands of the conquerors and was taken to Ctesiphon as plunder⁷.

After the conquest of Jerusalem, King Khosrow summoned the Synod of Ctesiphon (614), which included the representatives of the three large Christian groups of the Orient: the Nestorians, the Monophysites and the Chalcedonians. The Monophysites, who, until then, played an insignificant role in the Persian Empire, were officially recognized by the “Great King” and their cult was legalized. This way, Chosroes clearly expressed his intention of obtaining the support of the Monophysites in the governing and administration of the old Byzantine territories in which they were the

⁵ Gilbert DAGRON, Pierre RICHÉ, André VAUCHEZ, (coord.), “Évêques, moines et empereurs (610-1054)”, in: *Histoire du Christianisme des origines à nos jours*, vol. IV, Éditions Desclée, Paris, 1993, p. 13.

⁶ G. DAGRON, P. RICHÉ, A. VAUCHEZ, (coord.), “Évêques...”, pp. 71-72; Saint Theophanes the Confessor writes that the Judeans paid ransom for 90,000 Christian prisoners in order to kill them (THEOPHANES, *The Chronicle*, 5.26.6.6.6., p. 11). We are of the opinion that the information provided by Theophanes should be taken with restraint, considering the anti-Judaic polemic engrained into the Christian sources about the events that took place during the first half of the 7th century.

⁷ THEOPHANES, *The Chronicle*, 5.26.6.6.6., p. 11.

majority population: Syria, Armenia and western Mesopotamia. The Synod of Ctesiphon consolidated the positions of Monophysites in Syria and Armenia and considerably diminished the influence of Chalcedonians in these regions, who were attached to the imperial power of Constantinople⁸.

After the conquest and organization of Palestine, the Persians invaded Egypt; in 619, they conquered Alexandria. The entire Egypt fell under Persian occupation. Thus, within the span of approximately ten years, between 608/610 and 619, the Persians conquered Armenia, Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine and Egypt, succeeding in rebuilding the great empire of the Achaemenids⁹. Starting with 619/620, the Persians controlled the richest Byzantine provinces for almost a decade; their authority in the conquered lands was supported by local Monophysite noblemen who, in exchange, were granted numerous benefits and favors by Persian governors¹⁰.

The Persian conquest of the Byzantine Orient was considerably facilitated by the old theological dispute between Constantinople and the Monophysite population from the eastern provinces of the Empire (Palestine, Syria and Egypt). Monophysism was embraced especially by Syrians and Egyptians, the main eastern ethnicities of Byzantium. During the first decade of the 7th century, the Monophysite churches in Syria and Egypt which had refused to accept the resolutions of the Council of Chalcedon (451) suffered violent persecutions from Byzantine authorities, aiming to constrain them to adopt the official Chalcedonian doctrine. These persecutions, far from bringing them back to the imperial church, developed in Syrian and Egyptian Monophysites their "national" spirit and their hatred of the Byzantine regime; they strengthened the separatist aspirations of the Syrians and Copts who tried to remove themselves from the political and religious tutelage of the Byzantium, and rather gravitate

⁸ Chosroes's replacement of Chalcedonian bishops with Monophysite counterparts is presented by Michael the Syrian, who writes: "...bishop seats were occupied by our bishops everywhere (meaning Monophysite bishops), and the memory of the Chalcedonians had disappeared, from the Euphrates to the Orient" (meaning Syria), MICHEL LE SYRIEN, *Chronique*, vol. II, X, 26, pp. 380-381; J. MEYENDORFF, *Unité de l'Empire...*, p. 361; Louis BRÉHIER, René AIGRAIN, "Grégoire le Grand, les États barbares et la conquête arabe (590-757)", in: *Histoire de l'Église depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours*, vol. V, Bloud et Gay, Paris, 1938, pp. 89-90.

⁹ Cécile MORRISSON (coord.), *Le Monde Byzantin*, vol. I: *L'Empire romain d'Orient (330-641)*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 2004, pp. 40-42; S. BREZEANU, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, p. 95; G. OSTROGORSKI, *Histoire de l'État byzantin*, p. 124.

¹⁰ C. MORRISSON (coord.), *Le Monde Byzantin*, p. 42.

towards Asia's political influence¹¹. At the same time, the discrimination against Syrian and Egyptian Monophysites completely annihilated their desire to resist against the Persian attacks¹² and, starting with 634, against Arab invasions.

If, at its origin, the issue of Monophysism was essentially religious, during the 6th century and especially at the beginning of the 7th, it suffered major changes, becoming an ethnic issue. The religious conflicts that started in Jerusalem, Alexandria and Antioch caused by the imposition of the dogmatic resolutions drafted at the Council of Chalcedon, turned into full-blown ethnic revolts; they were repressed violently by civilian and military authorities. In reality, these religious disputes were masking stark ethnic contradictions as well as older aspirations for independence, especially in Syria and Egypt, where the native population had gradually reached the conviction that they had to separate from Byzantium. Therefore, during the first half of the 7th century, the political and religious element had a decisive contribution to the definition of the ethnic identity among the inhabitants of Egypt and Syria¹³.

III. The Monoenergism crisis

The military offensive against the Persians was launched in the fall of 622. The loss of the Eastern provinces and especially Egypt, the "granary of the Empire", as well as the capture of the Holy Cross by the Persians (614), a

¹¹ G. DAGRON, P. RICHÉ, A. VAUCHEZ, (coord.), "Évêques...", p. 411; Aleksandr A. VASILIEV, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, translation and notes by Ionuț-Alexandru TUDORIE, Vasile-Adrian CARABĂ, Sebastian-Laurențiu NAZĂRU, introductory study by Ionuț-Alexandru TUDORIE, Ed. Polirom, Iași, 2010, p. 141, 228 ; G. OSTROGORSKI, *Histoire de l'État byzantin*, pp. 87-90 and note 2 ; Ioan I. RĂMUREANU, "Posibilitatea întoarcerii Bisericii monofizite la ortodoxie. Considerații istorice și dogmatice asupra poziției lor față de ortodoxie", in: *Ortodoxia*, III (1951) 4, p. 590; 593-594.

¹² For instance, the conquest of Syria by the Persians was welcomed by the Jacobite patriarch of Antioch, Athanasius *Camelarius* (595-631), who wrote to his colleague in Alexandria: "the world is enjoying peace and love, because the Chalcedonian night is over", *apud* J. MEYENDORFF, *Unité de l'Empire...*, p. 361 and note 23.

¹³ C. MORRISSON (coord.), *Le Monde Byzantin*, p. 412; G. OSTROGORSKI, *Histoire de l'État byzantin*, p. 87, note 2; p. 90; J. MEYENDORFF, *Unité de l'Empire...*, pp. 41-42; A. H. M. JONES, "Were Ancient Heresies national or social movements in disguise?", in: *Journal of Theological Studies*, 10 / 2, 1959, pp. 288-298.

relic so precious for Christians, were the main reasons that determined the Byzantines to start a war against the Achaemenid Empire.

Emperor Heraclius realized the threat posed by Monophysism against the political unity of the Empire from the times of the military expeditions against the Persians (622-628). This is why, driven by political reasons, the basileus tried desperately, at the peak of his power, to reestablish the religious unity of his subjects by settling the theological disputes between Chalcedonians and Monophysites. During the battles against the Persians, Heraclius discovered the complete lack of loyalty of the population in the eastern provinces, mostly Monophysite, to the Byzantines, considered by them to be enemies of Monophysism. As the Basileus reconquered the territories and cities that had fallen to the Persians, he enforced politics that aimed to reconstruct the political and religious unity of the Empire and eliminate the religious divides of which the Sasanians had taken advantage. Emperor Heraclius renounced the harsh politics of the imperial court against non-Chalcedonians; he adopted a policy of reconciliation and compromise for the latter, alternated with acts of constraint and sometimes force. Heraclius attempted to return the Monophysites to the Imperial Church by theological concessions regarding the *Dyophysite* doctrine, formulated during the Council of Chalcedon (451)¹⁴.

The religious politics of Emperor Heraclius was fully and unconditionally supported by Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople, who drew up the formulas of dogmatic compromise that helped the Basileus bring Monophysites back to the Imperial Church¹⁵. Sergius was Syrian by origin. His parents belonged to the Jacobite Church¹⁶, organized after 543, centered

¹⁴ The saying circulating among Monophysites regarding their observance of the dogmatic decisions formulated by the Council of Chalcedon is telling of their adherence to the dogmatic decisions drawn up by the Council of Chalcedon: "The Jacobites and the Theodosians were boasting, saying: We did not take communion alongside Chalcedon, but rather Chalcedon took communion alongside us, in one single energy (διὰ τῆς μιᾶς ἐνεργείας), confessing to a single nature of Christ (μίαν φύσιν Χριστοῦ)", THEOPHANES *The Chronicle*, 322, p. 32.

¹⁵ THEOPHANES, *The Chronicle*, 329-330, p. 31: "The Emperor was confused; he wrote to Sergios the bishop of Constantinople and also called on Cyrus to bishop of Phasis, who agreed with Sergios that there was one will and one energy. For Sergios maintained there was one natural will and energy in Christ and so wrote...".

¹⁶ THEOPHANES *The Chronicle*, 329-330, p. 31: "... as he [*i.e.* Sergios] was Syrianborn and had Jacobite ancestors"; see also LEO GRAMMATICUS, *Chronographia*, in: *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae* 31, Bonn, 1842, p. 155, r. 5: "...καὶ Σεργίου Σύρου

The Religious Politics of Emperor Heraclius (610-641) in regards to Non-Chalcedonians...

around Antioch. Therefore, it seems that Sergius was raised Monophysite. A series of historians explained Sergius's adherence to Monothelism and his support of this heresy by his Monophysism¹⁷.

Heraclius's attempts to reunite the Eastern Church by reconciling Constantinople with the Monophysite Churches of the East contributed, at first, to the birth of the *Monoenergist Heresy* which, later, turned into *Monothelism*.

“The actual origin of Monothelism is not theological, but political. Monothelism appeared when the rupture of the Monophysite group from the Dyophysites or Chalcedonians endangered the integrity of the Byzantine Empire, threatened by the Persian menace and then the Arab one”¹⁸.

From a theological standpoint, Monothelism appeared in history as an extension of the Monophysite heresy, as a form of compromise with Monophysism. Monothelism was defined as a form of “masked Monophysism”. The Monothelite heresy was fabricated deliberately in order to bring the heretical Monophysite groups back to the Orthodox faith¹⁹. In other words, the Monothelite dispute was nothing but a fight for the dogmatic formula of Chalcedon, with the aim of making it acceptable to non-Chalcedonians.

Patriarch Sergius came up with the idea of formulating Monoenergism as a formula of bringing together Monophysism and the Chalcedonian Dyophysitism. Monoenergism, although recognizing the existence of two natures in the person of the Saviour Jesus Christ, admitted that their

Κωνσταντινουπόλεως...” (hereinafter referred to as CSHB); in his turn, Georgius Monachus confirms the information provided by Theophanes the Confessor regarding the Syrian origin of Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople (*Chronicon*, in: CSHB, p. 673, l. 10).

¹⁷ Jan Louis VAN DIETEN, *Geschichte der Patriarchen von Sergios I. bis Johannes VI. (610-715)*, Verlag Adolf M. Hakkert, Amsterdam, 1972, p. 1 and note 4

¹⁸ Remus RUS, *Dictionar enciclopedic de literatură creștină din primul mileniu*, Editura Lidia, Bucharest, 2003, p. 580; Vladimir LOSSKY, *Introducere în teologia ortodoxă*, translated by Lidia and Remus RUS, preface by Priest Professor - Gh. POPESCU PhD, Editura Sophia, Bucharest, 2006, pp. 139-140.

¹⁹ Pompiliu NACU, *Ereziile primelor opt veacuri creștine și dăinuirea lor la începutul mileniului trei*, Editura Partener, Galați, 2010, p. 270; V. LOSSKY, *Introducere în teologia ortodoxă*, p. 139.

energy (*ἐνέργεια*) remained one²⁰. According to the statements of Saint Maximus the Confessor - who gave us our main information about the beginnings of Monoenergism - the Patriarch of Constantinople used the Monoenergist doctrine in his negotiations for unification carried with the Monophysites in Syria and Egypt. Among the clerics who were converted to Monoenergism by Sergius were Monophysite George Arsas, the leader of the Egyptian Paulianists (cca. 617/618)²¹, Chalcedonian bishop Theodor of Pharan²² and Chalcedonian bishop Cyrus of Phasis, appointed in 630/631 Melkite Patriarch of Alexandria²³. Patriarch Sergius communicated the Monoenergist doctrine to Emperor Heraclius, suggesting that Monophysites could return to the Imperial Church on the grounds of affirming *one single energy* into Christ.

Heraclius prohibited persecutions against Monophysites. Since the beginning of the military campaign against the Persians (622), the emperor negotiated personally with Monophysite hierarchs from the reconquered territories. By means of their joint actions, the Basileus and the Patriarch wished to rally the Chalcedonians and the Monophysite communities in Armenia, Syria, Palestine and Egypt around a formula of faith that recognized the existence of two *natures* in Christ, but only one *energy* (*μία ἐνέργεια*). More precisely, Heraclius was hoping to accomplish the

²⁰ P. NACU, *Ereziile primelor opt veacuri creștine...*, p. 270; V. LOSSKY, *Introducere în teologia ortodoxă*, p. 139.

²¹ SAINT MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, in: Jacques-Paul MIGNÉ (ed.), *Patrologia Graeca; Patrologiae cursus completus, series graeca*, 91, Paris, 1863, col. 332B-333C (hereinafter referred to as PG); J. D. MANSI, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, vol. X, Graz-Austria, Akademische Druck-U. Verlagsanstalt, 1960-1961, col. 741E-744A (hereinafter referred to as Mansi); Venance GRUMEL, *Les Regestes des Actes du Patriarcat de Constantinople*, vol. Q: *Les Actes des Patriarches*, Fasc. Q: *Les Regestes de 381 à 715*, Socii Assumptionistae Chalcedonenses, Constantinople-Istanbul, 1932, p. 113, no. 279; G. DAGRON, P. RICHÉ, A. VAUCHEZ, (coord.), “Évêques...”, p. 40; more recent, see Christian LANGE, *Mia Energeia. Untersuchungen zur Einigungspolitik des Kaisers Heraclius und des patriarchen Sergius von Constantinopel*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2012, pp. 544-545.

²² C. LANGE, *Mia Energeia...*, pp. 540-542.

²³ SAINT MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, “Disputa Sfântului Maxim cu Pyrrhus”, in: *Scrieri, partea a doua. Scrieri și epistole hristologice și duhovnicești*, coll. *Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești*, (PSB), vol. 81, translation from Greek, introduction and notes by Priest Professor - Dumitru STĂNILOAE PhD, EIBMBOR, Bucharest, 1990, pp. 343-344; V. GRUMEL, “Recherches sur l’histoire du monothélisme II”, in: *Échos d’Orient*, no. 27, 1928, pp. 259-265; 273-274.

religious unification of Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians based on the formula of Christ's *single energy*.

Heraclius's first attempt to unify the Chalcedonians and the non-Chalcedonians using the Monoenergist doctrine took place in 622/623 in Theodosiopolis (Erzerum, in Armenia); here, the Emperor met Monophysite Paul the One-Eyed (or Paul of Armenia), the leader of the Cypriot Acephalous group²⁴. The latter probably belonged to the Church of Cyprus, led by Archbishop Arkadios of Cyprus²⁵. On this occasion, Heraclius talked to Paul about "*the unique energy of Christ, our true God*" (,,... καὶ μᾶς ἐνεργείας Χριστοῦ τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν ἐποιήσατο μνήμην")²⁶. Therefore, when meeting with Paul the One-Eyed, Emperor Heraclius knew the Monoenergistic formula that Patriarch Sergius had shared with him. In spite of his insistences and those of patriarch Sergius²⁷, Heraclius could not convince Paul to accept the unification of the Monophysites from Cyprus with the Imperial Church on the grounds of the Monoenergistic formula²⁸.

²⁴ Charles Joseph HEFELE, *Histoire des conciles d'après les documents originaux*, vol. III/1, trad. par Dom. H. LECLERCQ, Éditions Letouzey et Ané, Paris, 1909, p. 325, note 1.

²⁵ Friedhelm WINKELMANN, *Der monenergetisch-monotheletische Streit*, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Peter Lang, 2001, pp. 196-197; Vasile IONIȚĂ, "Sinodul al VI-lea Ecumenic și importanța sa pentru ecumenismul actual", in: *Studii Teologice*, XXX (1978) 5-8, p. 376.

²⁶ SERGIUS, *First Letter to Honorius* (Document 6) in: Pauline ALLEN (ed.), *Sophronius of Jerusalem and Seventh-Century Heresy. The Synodical Letter and other documents*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009, p. 182; V. GRUMEL, *Regestes*, vol. I, p. 117, no. 291; C. J. HEFELE, *Histoire des conciles...*, vol. III/1, p. 319; 343-344.

²⁷ Saint MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR (*Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, in: PG 91, 332C-333A) tells us that in 622, Patriarch Sergius sent a letter to Armenian Paul the One-Eyed, attempting to convince him to join the official church through Monoenergism. Also, Sergius sent to the same Paul the false writing (*libellus*) of Patriarch Mina to Vigilius, as well as his agreement with Theodore of Pharan, who had taken up the Monoenergistic doctrine without any hesitation. In reality, the alleged Mina letter was probably written by Patriarch Sergius, who therefore "fabricated" a solid theological argument in support of the Monoenergistic doctrine, C. J. HEFELE, *Histoire des conciles...*, vol. III/1, pp. 318-319; 331-332.

²⁸ V. GRUMEL, *Recherches sur l'histoire du monothélisme II*, p. 268; see also V. IONIȚĂ, *Sinodul al VI-lea Ecumenic...*, pp. 376-377; J. TIXERONT, *Histoire des dogmes dans l'Antiquité Chrétienne*, vol. III: *La fin de l'âge patristique (430-800)*, J. Gabalda éditeur, Paris, 1922, p. 162; C. J. HEFELE, *Histoire des conciles...*, vol. III/1, pp. 324-325, 334.

Subsequent to the Byzantine Emperor's failed attempt to get Paul the One-Eyed on the side of his unionist plans, in 625 he wrote an ordinance (*keleusis*) to Archbishop Arkadios of Cyprus against the same Paul, "the chieftain of the bishopless"; this ordinance prohibits any talk of two distinct energies in Christ after the union of the two natures in the person of the Saviour: "... (and that You found) the above-mentioned ordinance (sc. *keleusis*) of pious belief forbade speaking of two activities [*i.e.* energies] in Christ our God"²⁹. In his turn, Patriarch Sergius had drawn up a report against Paul the One-Eyed (probably around 623 or 625), to which Bishop Cyrus made a reference in his letter to Sergius in 626.³⁰

During the anti-Persian campaign of 626, while in Lazica province, Emperor Heraclius met pro-Chalcedonian bishop Cyrus de Phasis³¹. After their meeting, at the insistence of Patriarch Sergius, Cyrus converted to the Monoenergistic doctrine. In a letter sent to Sergius, he writes that right after his talks with Heraclius, he stopped confessing two energies into Christ after the union, especially after reading the ordinance (*keleusis*) issued by Heraclius against Paul the One-Eyed. Moreover, Cyrus confesses that, as

²⁹ SERGIUS, *First Letter to Cyrus* (Document 2), in: P. ALLEN (ed.), *Sophronius of Jerusalem...*, p. 164: "... καὶ τὴν εἰρημένην εὐσεβῇ κέλευσιν εὐρεῖν δύο κωλύουσιν ἐπὶ Χριστοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν λέγειν ἐνεργείας..."; G. LANGE, *Mia Energeia...*, pp. 547-548; F. X. MURPHY, P. SHERWOOD, *Constantinople II et Constantinople III*, Éditions de l'Orante, Paris, 1974, p. 142; L. BRÉHIER, R. AIGRAIN, *Grégoire le Grand...*, vol. V, pp. 113-114.

³⁰ CYRUS, "First Letter to Sergius (Document 1)", in: P. ALLEN (ed.), *Sophronius of Jerusalem...*, p. 162 = V. GRUMEL, *Regestes*, vol. I, p. 114, nr. 283; Pauline Allen is of the opinion that Sergius's report against Paul the One-Eyed was written in 623, see P. ALLEN (ed.), *Sophronius of Jerusalem...*, p. 163, note 8; according to F. Dölger, Sergius's report against Paul the One-Eyed was written in 625, cf. F. DÖLGER, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches* (Corpus der griechischen Urkunden des Mittelalters und der neueren Zeit, Reihe A, Abt. I), Teil I: 565 bis 1025, München-Berlin, 1924, p. 114, nr. 283.

³¹ SERGIUS, "First Letter to Honorius (Document 6)", in: P. ALLEN (ed.), *Sophronius of Jerusalem...*, p. 184; Theophanes the Confessor signals Heraclius's presence in Lazica in year 626, THEOPHANES, *The Chronicle*, 316, p. 22; see also *Sfântul Maxim Mărturisorul (580-662) și tovarășii săi întru martiriu: papa Martin, Anastasie Monahul, Anastasie Apocrisiarul. "Vieți" – actele procesului – documentele exilului*, translated and presented by Deacon Ioan I. ICĂ JR., Deisis Publishing, Sibiu, 2004, chap. 8, pp. 66-67 (hereinafter referred to as *Sfântul Maxim și tovarășii săi*). The city of Phasis (modern-day Poti, in Georgia) was located in Lazica province, on the eastern coast of the Black Sea, at the mouth of River Phasis (modern-day Rioni) flowing into the Black Sea.

per the Emperor's request, he had read the report drawn up by Sergius against the same Paul the One-Eyed;³² prompted by the Basileus, Cyrus had requested explanations from Patriarch Sergius regarding the doctrine professing a single energy into Christ³³.

IV. Attempts to unite the Imperial Church with non-Chalcedonian Churches in the Orient on the grounds of the Monoenergistic formula

After the definitive defeat of the Persians (January 628) and the liberation of the former Byzantine provinces from under Persian occupation (Armenia, Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine and Egypt), Heraclius aimed to reestablish Byzantine authority in the conquered territories, and thus to reform the Empire's political unity. Understanding the fact that the recovery of the Empire's territorial integrity was not possible without narrowing the gap between the many divided Christian communities, the Emperor initiated attempts of religious unification with Nestorian and Monophysite leaders. (Fig. 1)

IV.1. Commencement of the religious dialogue between the Imperial and the Nestorian Church in Persia

Famous historian John Meyendorff proposed the hypothesis that in October 628, Heraclius met Nestorian *catholicos* Ishôyabh II at Theodosiopolis; the latter was leading a diplomatic delegation sent by Persian King Kovrad-Schiroes (March - October 628) for carrying out peace negotiations with the Byzantine Emperor. Ishôyabh II was received with high honors by Heraclius³⁴; according to John Meyendorff's hypothesis, on this occasion, the Nestorian *catholicos* celebrated the divine liturgy in an "Orthodox" church, offering the Holy Communion to the Emperor and his

³² CYRUS, "First Letter to Sergius (Document 1)", in: P. ALLEN (ed.), *Sophronius of Jerusalem...*, pp. 160-162 = V. GRUMEL, *Regestes*, vol. I, nr. 283, p. 114.

³³ CYRUS, "First Letter to Sergius (Document 1)", in: P. ALLEN (ed.), *Sophronius of Jerusalem...*, p. 162; J. TIXERONT, *Histoire des dogmes...*, vol. III, p. 162; C. J. HEFELE, *Histoire des conciles...*, vol. III/1, p. 319, 333.

³⁴ NICEPHORUS, *Breviarium Historicum*, in: CSHB, 20, p. 23 apud J. MEYENDORFF, *Unité de l'Empire...*, p. 362, note 28.

court; also, on this occasion, *catholicos* Ishôyabh II is said to have returned to Heraclius the relic of the Holy Cross that the Persians had captured upon conquering Jerusalem (614)³⁵. The Theodosiopolis meeting was a first step in the reconciliation between Chalcedonians and Nestorians. If J. Meyendorff's hypothesis were plausible, we would be talking about the first great success of the unionist politics supported by Heraclius; the sacramental communion between Chalcedonians and Nestorians would thus seal the reconciliation and peace between Byzantium and the Persian Empire³⁶. (Fig. 1)

IV.2. Ecclesiastical union negotiations between Heraclius and Jacobite Patriarch Athanasios "Camelarius" (629-631)

Emperor Heraclius took advantage of his time in the Orient in order to initiate attempts of ecclesiastical union with the hierarchs of the Jacobite church, centered in Antioch; the Jacobites had been strong and well organized as early as the first years of his reign³⁷. During a visit to Edessa, probably around 628/629, Heraclius initiated talks of unification with the Jacobites. The Monophysite chronicler Michael the Syrian writes that Metropolitan Isaiah of Edessa refused to give the Holy Communion to Heraclius; he asked the emperor publicly to anathematize the Council of Chalcedon and Pope Leon the First's *Tomos*. As a response, the Basileus dismissed Isaiah and replaced him with a Chalcedonian bishop³⁸.

In spite of his failure in Edessa, Heraclius did not renounce his plans to unite Jacobites with the Imperial Church. According to the information provided by Michael the Syrian and confirmed by other sources, Heraclius contacted Athanasius, the Camel-Driver (595-631), the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, for negotiations; he was known for his moderate theological

³⁵ This hypothesis was also proposed by Russian researcher V. V. Bolotov, and accepted by J. Meyendorff; to this extent, see J. MEYENDORFF, *Unité de l'Empire...*, pp. 362-363.

³⁶ J. MEYENDORFF, *Unité de l'Empire...*, p. 363.

³⁷ In the year 616, Athanasios *Camelarius* (the "Camel-Driver" 593/595-631), Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, completed the union with the Jacobite Church of Alexandria, ruled by Patriarch Anastasios (604-616), by means of an agreement signed by the two hierarchs at the Ennaton monastery in Egypt, see MICHEL LE SYRIEN, *Chronique*, vol. II, X, 26-27, pp. 381-399; G. DAGRON, P. RICHÉ, A. VAUCHEZ, (coord.), "Évêques...", p. 424.

³⁸ MICHEL LE SYRIEN, *Chronique*, vol. II, XI, 3, pp. 411-412; see also J. MEYENDORFF, *Unité de l'Empire...*, p. 364.

The Religious Politics of Emperor Heraclius (610-641) in regards to Non-Chalcedonians...

views and for his loyalty to the Emperor. Athanasius Camelarius and twelve other Jacobite bishops met Emperor Heraclius in Mabbugh (Hierapolis), Syria, where they carried out talks for 12 days; this meeting probably took place in 629/630. Heraclius promised Athanasius that he would appoint him Melkite Patriarch of Antioch, on the condition that he embraces the resolutions of the Council of Chalcedon. Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople sent missives explaining Monoenergism; bishop Cyrus of Phasis went there in person to support the union³⁹. At the same time, the Emperor presented to the Jacobite patriarch a confession of faith that included the *Monoenergist doctrine*; it is preserved in Michael the Syrian's *Chronicle*:

“God the Word, He who is above passion, suffered in His impassioned body. It is evident that, since divinity remains above all suffering, there are two natures: that of God and that of man, which are united into Christ, God the Word, the sinless Son, in an uncombined and unseparated manner, which means two natures which *are united into one single energy* which is, as Kirill said, blessed: ... [one nature incarnate of God the Word]”⁴⁰.

Patriarch Athanasius dismissed the Emperor's confession of faith, suspecting it of Nestorianism; according to Michael the Syrian, this confession includes *the doctrine of one will and one energy* which was going to be included in the *Ekthesis* decree issued by Heraclius in September - October 638⁴¹.

As a response, Heraclius launched persecutions against Jacobites, trying to impose on them the union with the Imperial Church based on the Monoenergist doctrine forcefully⁴². The death of Patriarch Athanasius (July 631) prevented the enforcement of the union. Faced with persecutions,

³⁹ MICHEL LE SYRIEN, *Chronique*, vol. II, XI, 3, p. 412; THEOPHANES, *The Chronicle*, 329-330, pp. 31-32. F. WINKELMANN, *Der monenergetisch-monotheletische Streit*, pp. 62-63, no. 24 a.

⁴⁰ MICHEL LE SYRIEN, *Chronique*, vol. II, XI, 1-2, pp. 401-403; F. WINKELMANN, *Der monenergetisch-monotheletische Streit*, pp. 61-62, no. 24.

⁴¹ MICHEL LE SYRIEN, *Chronique*, vol. II, XI, 3, p. 412; G. DAGRON, P. RICHÉ, A. VAUCHEZ, (coord.), “Évêques...”, p. 469; V. IONIȚĂ, “Sinodul al VI-lea Ecumenic...”, p. 376; L. BRÉHIER, R. AIGRAIN, *Grégoire le Grand...*, vol. V, p. 115.

⁴² MICHEL LE SYRIEN, *Chronique*, vol. II, XI, 3, p. 412.

many monasteries and communities around Antioch accepted Chalcedon under a “Monoenergistic” interpretation. Those who accepted the union with the Imperial Church included the monks from the “Saint John Maron” (near Emessa), Mabboug and Emessa monasteries⁴³. In 628/629, Emperor Heraclius visited the “Saint John Maron” monastery; the Maronites welcomed the Emperor solemnly; in his turn, he donated vast areas of land to the monastery⁴⁴. Jacobite writer Barhebraeus claims that Heraclius determined Maronites to embrace Monothelism⁴⁵. Heraclius’s success in the war against Persians was crowned by the return of the Holy Cross relic from Ctesiphon. On March 31 630, the Emperor, accompanied by his wife Martina, reinstalled the Holy Cross in Jerusalem, in a solemn procession⁴⁶. Heraclius’s victory was the victory of the entire Christianity, entitling the Emperor to call himself “The New Constantine”⁴⁷. (Fig. 1)

IV.3. Heraclius’s religious politics in Palestine

As opposed to Syria, Palestine was less affected by Monophysism and, consequently, Monothelism. This is why in Jerusalem, unlike in Antioch, the phenomenon of double hierarchy - one Chalcedonian Melkite and the other Monophysite Jacobite - did not take place. After the death of Patriarch Modestus (December 17, 631), Bishop Sergius of Ioppe was installed on the Jerusalem patriarchal chair with the help of Emperor Heraclius; the appointment was not confirmed canonically⁴⁸. From the letters addressed

⁴³ MICHEL LE SYRIEN, *Chronique*, vol. II, XI, 3, p. 412; vezi și L. BRÉHIER, R. AIGRAIN, *Grégoire le Grand...*, vol. V, p. 116.

⁴⁴ EUTYCHIUS, *Annales*, in: *PG* 111, 1039; J. MEYENDORFF, *Unité de l'Empire...*, p. 365; L. BRÉHIER, R. AIGRAIN, *Grégoire le Grand...*, vol. V, p. 116.

⁴⁵ Cezar VASILIU, “Biserica creștinilor maroniți din Liban”, in: *Studii Teologice*, XXVIII (1966) 3-4, p. 163.

⁴⁶ Saint THEOPHANES THE CONFESSOR, *Cronografia*, pp. 320-321; see also A. FROLOW, “La vraie Croix et les expéditions d’Héraclius en Perse”, in: *Revue des études byzantines*, 11, 1953, p. 100; V. IONIȚĂ, “Sinodul al VI-lea Ecumenic...”, p. 374, note 20.

⁴⁷ Jan Willem DRIJVERS, “Heraclius and the Restitutio Crucis: Notes on Symbolism and Ideology”, in: Gerrit J. REININK and Bernard H. STOLTE (eds.), *The Reign of Heraclius (610-641): Crisis and confrontation*, Peeters, Leuven, Paris, 2002, pp. 183-191.

⁴⁸ At the synod of Lateran held in 649, bishop Stephen of Dora declared: “Sergius, who was the Bishop of Ioppe, after the retreat of the Persians occupied [the position of] *locum tenens* of the Jerusalem chair, *not by ecclesiastic authority, but on the contrary, against the canon, by secular power*. He ordained bishops subordinated to the chair of Jerusalem while he himself was not confirmed in any way”; see Christoph VON SCHÖN-

by Pope Martin I to John of Philadelphia and to a certain Pantaleon we can conclude that Sergius of Ioppe, an advocate of Monoenergism, sanctified several bishops who adhered to the unionist politics of Emperor Heraclius and whose ordination was contested at the Council of the Lateran (649) by Bishop Stephen of Dora⁴⁹. Thus, Bishop Sergius of Ioppe laid the foundation of a Monoenergist hierarchy in Palestine, which nonetheless proved to be very fragile. Saint Sophronius, elected Patriarch of Jerusalem in 634, suppressed the “Monoenergist politics” of Heraclius in Palestine and contributed to the consolidation of Chalcedonism. Therefore, the appointment of Sophronius on the patriarchal chair of Jerusalem meant the failure of the unionist religious politics of Emperor Heraclius in this province. After the death of Sophronius (638), the patriarchal chair of Jerusalem remained vacant until 706. During this period of episcopal vacancy patriarchate of Jerusalem was managed successively by bishops Sergius of Ioppe, Stephen of Dora and John of Philadelphia⁵⁰. (Fig. 1)

IV.4. Heraclius's agreement with the Persian Nestorian church

Emperor Heraclius maintained civil relations with the Nestorian catholicosate of Seleucia-Ctesiphon. In 630/631, at Berrhoe (Aleppo), in Syria, the Basileus received the visit of a Persian delegation sent by Queen Boran; the delegation included the Persian church *catholicos*, Ishôyabh II, accompanied by several hierarchs⁵¹. Their successful political negotiations were followed by debates on theological topics between *catholicos* Ishôyabh II and Emperor Heraclius. Ishôyabh II showed Heraclius a confession of faith that he claimed was consistent with the teachings of the Nicene Fathers⁵². Afterwards, the *catholicos* drew up a confession of faith that he handed to the Emperor; its contents are partially Nestorian;

BORN, *Sofronie al Ierusalimului. Viața monahală și mărturisirea doctrinară*, translated by Măriuca and Adrian ALEXANDRESCU, Bucharest, Fundația Anastasia, 2007, p. 102, 104; see also J. MEYENDORFF, *Unité de l'Empire...*, p. 375.

⁴⁹ von Schönborn, *Sofronie al Ierusalimului...*, p. 102 ; 105-106.

⁵⁰ G. DAGRON, P. RICHÉ, A. VAUCHEZ, (coord.), “Évêques...”, p. 394.

⁵¹ *Histoire nestorienne (Cronique de Séert)*, deuxième partie (II), texte arabe publié par S. G. Mgr. Addāi Scher, avec le concours de Robert Griveau, in: R. GRAFFIN, F. NAU (eds.), *Patrologia Orientalis*, Tome XIII, Fascicule 4, no. 65, Turnhout, Éditions Brepols, 1983, p. 557 (hereinafter referred to as *Cronique de Séert*) ; see also G. LANGE, *Mia Energeia...*, pp. 566-567.

⁵² *Cronique de Séert*, pp. 557-558.

although the confession of faith does not mention teachings about one single energy into Christ, it was accepted by Heraclius⁵³. According to *the Chronicle of Seert*, Ishôyabh II and Emperor Heraclius reached an agreement regarding the Monoenergistic doctrine drawn up by Patriarch Sergius, which was considered to be in good faith. *The Chronicle of Seert* reports that the confession of faith drawn up by the Nestorian *catholicos* is in agreement with that of Patriarch Sergius regarding the recognition of a single will and of a single energy in the person of Christ⁵⁴. At the Emperor's request, Ishôyabh II celebrated the divine liturgy and gave Holy Communion to Heraclius. (Fig. 1)

IV.5. Religious union negotiations between Heraclius and the Armenian Church (631-633)

After the return of the Holy Cross to Jerusalem (March 31, 630), Heraclius started taking measures in order to achieve a religious union between Greeks and Armenians. During the time of *catholicos* Komitas (611-628), the Armenian church embraced Monophysism. Komitas commissioned theologian Yovhan Mayragomec'i to translate "books written by Monophysites Timothy Elur, Peter Fullo, Sever of Antioch and other heretics"⁵⁵. After the death of Komitas (628) and a brief occupation of the *catholicos* chair by Christopher II Apahuni (628-630), the Armenian Church came under the rule of *catholicos* Ezras / Ezr (630-641). As soon as Ezras was appointed Patriarch of the Armenian Church (630), it became clear that he would have to renounce the aggressive anti-Chalcedonism advanced by former *catholicos* Komitas; in any case, this became crucial in the new political context marked by the reconquest of Armenia by the Byzantines.

Meantime, Heraclius rebecame the ruler of the entire Armenia (628), which he attempted to liberate from Persian control and political influence. Aware of the unpleasant consequences of the schism of 591 in the Armenian Church⁵⁶, – a schism that contributed to the transformation of Khosrow II

⁵³ *Cronique de Séert*, p. 559.

⁵⁴ *Cronique de Séert*, p. 560; see also G. LANGE, *Mia Energeia...*, p. 567.

⁵⁵ G. DAGRON, P. RICHÉ, A. VAUCHEZ, (coord.), "Évêques...", p. 465.

⁵⁶ Subsequent to the treaty concluded with Persia in 591, Byzantium took control over the entire territory of Armenia, with the exception of the regions located north-east of rivers Hrazdan and Azat, which remained under Persian rule. Due to the fact that *catholicos* Movsēs II Elivardec'i, whose see was beyond the Byzantium border,

into the protector of the Armenian Church and of all anti-Chalcedonian Christians, –Heraclius aimed at accomplishing the religious union of the Greeks and the Armenians, probably based on Monoenergism, trying to find some sort of compromise between peaceful reconciliation and constraint. In his attempt to achieve the religious unification of the Greeks and the Armenians, the Byzantine Basileus relied firstly on the prestige he acquired by “freeing” the Holy Cross from the “Persian captivity”⁵⁷. As soon as he acquired the Holy Cross - the symbol of unity of all Christians - Heraclius continued his journey in Armenia; the Emperor attempted to win the loyalty of Armenian dignitaries and determine them to support his ecclesiastical union plan; he gifted them many fragments from the relic of the Holy Cross⁵⁸.

In 632, after the return of the Holy Cross to Jerusalem, Heraclius ordered the Governor of Armenia, Mizez (Mžēž) Gnouni, to notify catholicos Ezras that he would appoint a second catholicos for the entire Byzantine Armenia unless he entered into communion with him at the Byzantine-Armenian border.⁵⁹ Ezras honored the Emperor’s invitation; accompanied by an entourage of theologists and Armenian princes, the *catholicos* traveled to Theodosiopolis (Karin/Garin) where a council was summoned in 633, gathering 193 Greek and Armenian bishops⁶⁰. The documents of the Council of Theodosiopolis do not exist anymore. According to Armenian historians, at the council there was a brief exchange of lines about the

was refusing religious union with the Byzantines, they elected an anti-catholicos: Yovhannēs Bagaranc’i, who went on to promote the Chalcedonian doctrine in all Armenian churches; this resulted in a schism within the Armenian church that lasted until 610/611; it divided the Armenian clan into two groups: Chalcedonians and Monophysites. Starting with 591, the Armenian Church was divided into the Chalcedonian catholicate, located on Byzantine territory, and the Monophysite center in Dvin, under Persian rule; see J. MEYENDORFF, *Unité de l’Empire...*, pp. 303-304.

⁵⁷ G. DAGRON, P. RICHÉ, A. VAUCHEZ, (coord.), “Évêques...”, p. 468.

⁵⁸ J. MEYENDORFF, *Unité de l’Empire...*, p. 363.

⁵⁹ G. DAGRON, P. RICHÉ, A. VAUCHEZ, (coord.), “Évêques...”, p. 469; Emperor Mauricius had done the same in 591. Because Monophysite *catholicos* Moses II, established at Dvin, in the territory ruled by Persians, he refused religious union with the Greeks, Mauricius appointed an anti-catholicos for the entire Byzantine Armenia as John III, who recognized the Council of Chalcedon and would support Chalcedonism in all Armenian churches, G. DAGRON, P. RICHÉ, A. VAUCHEZ, (coord.), “Évêques...”, p. 462.

⁶⁰ G. DAGRON, P. RICHÉ, A. VAUCHEZ, (coord.), “Évêques...”, pp. 469-470; J. MEYENDORFF, *Unité de l’Empire...*, pp. 363-364; V. IONIȚĂ, *Sinodul al VI-lea Ecumenic...*, p. 386.

Council of Chalcedon; then, catholicos Ezras left, together with his secretary and his entourage, to analyze the written confession of faith that Emperor Heraclius had handed him. The text of this confession ended with a series of anathematisms against Nestorius and other heretics; there was nothing about the Council of Chalcedon. After analyzing the confession of faith handed to him by Heraclius, catholicos Ezras signed it and entered into communion with the Greeks⁶¹. It cannot be stated with certainty whether the unification between Greeks and Armenians was carried out based on the Monoenergist formula. In any case, this religious union was superficial, proving that the religious politics promoted by Heraclius was relatively successful in Armenia. (Fig. 1)

IV.6. Emperor Heraclius's religious union politics in Egypt

In Egypt, same as in the other eastern provinces of Byzantium, Emperor Heraclius did not wait too long to enforce his plan for unifying Monophysites with the Imperial Church based on the Monoenergistic doctrine. In 630/631, the Emperor appointed Cyrus, former Bishop of Phasis, as Patriarch of Alexandria⁶²; he had been converted to Monoenergism after a series of talks with Heraclius in Lazica province (626), as well as because of the insistent pleas of Patriarch Sergius. Cyrus was vested by the Emperor with extended civilian powers. His authority in Egypt was comparable to that of an "Augustal Prefect" especially in the last years of Heraclius's reign⁶³.

Immediately after being appointed Patriarch of Alexandria, Cyrus tried to enforce Constantinople's unionist religious politics. He launched a terrible persecution against Monophysites, in an attempt to force them to accept their religious union with the Melkite Church⁶⁴. The Monophysite Patriarch of Alexandria, Benjamin (626-665), fled the city; he took refuge to Upper Egypt (631/632) in order to escape the violence of Patriarch

⁶¹ F. WINKELMANN, *Der monenergetisch-monotheletische Streit*, pp. 63-64, no. 25; G. DAGRON, P. RICHÉ, A. VAUCHEZ, (coord.), "Évêques...", p. 470; L. BRÉHIER, R. AIGRAIN, *Grégoire le Grand...*, vol. V, p. 116.

⁶² *Sfântul Maxim și tovarășii săi*, cap. 9, pp. 67-68.

⁶³ JEAN ÉVEQUE DE NIKIOU, *Chronique*, 120, p. 455; J. MEYENDORFF, *Unité de l'Empire...*, pp. 365-366; LOUIS BRÉHIER, *Le Monde Byzantin*, vol. II: *Les institutions de l'empire byzantin*, Éditions Albin Michel, Paris, 1970, pp. 96-97, 361; G. OSTROGORSKI, *Histoire de l'État byzantin*, p. 143.

⁶⁴ MICHEL LE SYRIEN, *Chronique*, vol. II, XI, 3.

Cyrus's persecution⁶⁵. Menas, Patriarch Benjamin's brother, as well as other dissident Monophysites were tortured and executed⁶⁶.

On June 3, 633, Patriarch Cyrus succeeded to unite a faction of the Theodosians (moderate Monophysites) with the Chalcedonian Melkite Church, based on the formula of *one single energy of Christ*⁶⁷. The dogmatic support of this union is an *agreement*, consisting of nine articles of faith or anathematisms. The seventh article exposes clearly the Monoenergistic doctrine: "If someone, (...) does not confess (...) that one and the same Christ and Son performed things befitting God and things human *by one theandric activity*, according to Dionysius [now] among the saints (...) let him be anathema"⁶⁸. Coptic sources admit that a large part of the Egyptian population had accepted the Chalcedonian faith in its Monoenergistic interpretation; the same sources admit that the unification of Alexandria caused a deep tear amongst Chalcedonians, and especially amongst non-Chalcedonians. In this sense, Sever of Asmounein shows that:

"These were the years during which Heraclius and Al-Mugaugas (*i.e.* Cyrus, the «Caucasian») were ruling over Egypt: and through the severity of the persecution and the oppression, and the chastisements which Heraclius inflicted on the orthodox [*i.e.* the Monophysites, J.M.] in order to force them to adopt the faith of Chalcedon, innumerable multitudes were led astray, some by tortures, others by promise of honors, some by persuasion and guile"⁶⁹.

⁶⁵ JEAN évêque DE NIKIOU, *Chronique*, 120, p. 464: "Avva Beniamin, Patriarch of the Egyptians, returned to Alexandria 13 years after fleeing to escape the Romans, and visited all our churches".

⁶⁶ J. MEYENDORFF, *Unité de l'Empire*, pp. 366-367.

⁶⁷ C. J. HEFELE, *Histoire des conciles...*, vol. III/1, p. 339.

⁶⁸ CYRUS, "Announcement, Pact of Union. Nine Articles of Faith (Document 3)", in: P. ALLEN (ed.), *Sophronius of Jerusalem...*, pp. 170-172: "Εἴ τις [...] οὐχ ὁμολογεῖ [...] καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν ἓνα Χριστὸν καὶ υἱὸν ἐνεργοῦντα τὰ θεοπρεπῆ καὶ ἀνθρώπινα 'μιᾷ θεανδρικῇ ἐνεργείᾳ' κατὰ τὸν ἐν ἁγίοις Διονύσιον [...] ἀνάθεμα ἔστω"; see also F. X. MURPHY, P. SHERWOOD, *Constantinople II et III*, pp. 149-150; L. BRÉHIER, R. AIGRAIN, *Grégoire le Grand...*, vol. V, p. 118.

⁶⁹ SEVERUS OF AL'ASHMUNEIN (Hermopolis), *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria, Part 2: Peter I - Benjamin I (661 AD)*, arabic text edited, translated, and annotated by B. EVETTS, in: *Patrologia Orientalis*, I, Paris, 1904, XIV, p. 491, *apud* J. MEYENDORFF, *Unité de l'Empire...*, p. 379; cf. V. IONIȚĂ, "Sinodul al VI-lea Ecumenic...", p.

During the last decade of his reign (631-641), Emperor Heraclius launched numerous persecutions against Jacobite Monophysites in Egypt who refused to accept the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon; these oppressions, enforced as per the suggestion of Chalcedonian Patriarch Cyrus, created hostility amongst Monophysites directed against Heraclius, and implicitly their favorable attitude to the Arab conquest⁷⁰. In these conditions, it is not surprising that Jacobites saw Arabs' victory against Byzantines as a divine punishment; they perceived the Arabian conquest as a much-expected liberation from under the Byzantine oppression⁷¹. (Fig. 1)

V. The Orthodox reaction against Monoenergism

The religious union of Theodosians with the Imperial Church - accomplished by Patriarch Cyrus through Monoenergism (June 3, 633) - ignited the protest of Palestinian monk Sophronius, who was in Alexandria at the time. Sophronius disagreed with the Monoenergist doctrine formulated in the 7th article of unification decree. He traveled to Constantinople to warn Patriarch Sergius about the erroneous doctrine hiding behind the Monoenergist formula. Sophronius insisted on the acknowledgement of *two energies* into Christ and not one, the energy being situated within His natures, and not His person⁷². Immediately after his installation on the patriarchal chair of Jerusalem (at the beginning of year 634), Saint Sophronius sent a synodal letter, known as *Sinodikon*, to Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople, Pope Honorius and all the other patriarchs and bishops of the pentarchy. The *Sinodikon* is the first official Orthodox reaction against Monoenergism. Saint Sophronius talks about the unity of the person of Saviour and the duality of Christ's natures. According to him, the duality of nature results in the duality of Christ's energies, each nature having its own natural energy⁷³.

381, who writes that: "the union formula of 633 *did not exit the gates of Alexandria*".

⁷⁰ JEAN évêque DE NIKIOU, *Chronique*, 115, p. 442 and 120, p. 464: "Everybody said that the banishment of Romans and the victory of Muslims had been brought by the tyranny of Emperor Heraclius, and by the indignities brought to the Orthodox [*i.e.* Jacobite Monophysites] and whose instrument had been Patriarch Cyrus".

⁷¹ JEAN évêque DE NIKIOU, *Chronique*, 117, pp. 446-447.

⁷² Mansi 1960, XI 481C.

⁷³ "Epistola Synodica", in: P. ALLEN (ed.), *Sophronius of Jerusalem...*, 2.3.7., p. 96; see also Christoph VON SCHÖNBORN, *Sofronie al Ierusalimului...*, p. 118, 226.

Saint Sophronius put a stop to Heraclius's "Monoenergistic policy" in Palestine and contributed to the consolidation of the Chalcedonian doctrine. Therefore, the appointment of Sophronius on the patriarchal chair of Jerusalem marks the failure of the unionist religious politics of Emperor Heraclius in Palestine.

VI. The synod of Cyprus

After occupying the throne of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Saint Sophronius tried to reach an understanding with the Patriarchy of Constantinople which, for a decade, had been promoting an unionist politics with the Monophysites in the Empire based on the Monoenergist formula. As advised by Sophronius – whose goal was to alleviate the tensions between the Palestine and the Constantinople ecclesiastical hierarchies – Archbishop Arkadios of Cyprus summoned a synod in Cyprus (634/635), with the participation of 46 bishops. According to *The Syriac Life*, whose author is Bishop George of Resh'aina⁷⁴, provides a series of information about the workings of that synod. At the request of Saint Sophronius, Archbishop Arkadios of Cyprus invited the three hierarchs of the Imperial Church: Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople, Cyrus of Alexandria and Pope Honorius⁷⁵.

The theological debates likely focused on the topic of Monoenergism, as we are led to believe by the text of *The Syriac Life*⁷⁶. The participants to the Council sent a letter to the Emperor that contained *the doctrine of two wills and two energies into Christ* of Saint Maximus the Confessor and Saint Sophronius; the Basileus dismissed the doctrine as "alien

⁷⁴ *The Syriac Life* is a biography of Saint Maximus the Confessor, whose author is Bishop George of Resh'aina, under the jurisdiction of Patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem. The document, whose ending is missing, is found in a Syriac manuscript preserved by the British Museum, and dating back to the end of the 7th century - beginning of the 8th; it seems to have been written shortly after the death of Saint Maximus the Confessor and before the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680). This document was discovered and published in 1973, see Sebastian Brock, "An Early Syriac Life of Maximus the Confessor", in: *Analecta Bollandiana* 91 (1973), pp. 299-346; see also *Sfântul Maxim și tovarășii săi*, pp. 209-220.

⁷⁵ F. WINKELMANN, *Der monenergetisch-monotheletische Streit*, pp. 70-71, no. 33.

⁷⁶ *Sfântul Maxim și tovarășii săi*, p. 39; P. ALLEN (ed.) *Sophronius of Jerusalem...*, p. 22 and note 64; G. DAGRON, P. RICHÉ, A. VAUCHEZ, (coord.), "Évêques...", p. 42 and note 160.

from Christian doctrine”⁷⁷; Christian doctrine meant Monoenergism, as Heraclius and Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople had converted to it the previous years; In 634, the Emperor promulgated an imperial decree that officialized Monoenergism in the entire Empire; this decree, which was sent to the Patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, Jerusalem and to the Roman Pope, stipulated that whoever acknowledges the doctrine about two wills and two energies into Christ would be removed from the patriarchal chair⁷⁸.

VII. The promulgation of the *Ekthesis* decree (638)

Constantinople’s response to the Synodical Letter (*Sinodikon*) signed by Saint Sophronius was the publication of the Imperial Decree *Ekthesis* in September-October 638; the *Ekthesis* had been drawn up by Patriarch Sergius in 636, which is confirmed by Heraclius himself in a letter he sent to Pope John IV at the beginning of year 641⁷⁹. Pope Honorius’s intervention in the Monoenergist dispute on the side of the Patriarch of Constantinople encouraged the latter to persevere in the achievement of his plan⁸⁰.

The *Ekthesis* prohibits the use of phrases *one energy* (or “activity”) (μία ἐνέργεια) and *two energies* (“activities”) (δύο ἐνέργειαι) into Jesus Christ, asking in the confession of *one single will* into Christ: “ἐν θέλημα τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ Θεοῦ ὁμολογοῦμεν”⁸¹. By favoring the phrase *one will*, *Ekthesis* “helped the transformation of Monoenergism into Monothelism”⁸². The phrase *one*

⁷⁷ *Sfântul Maxim și tovarășii săi (The Syriac Life)*, cap. 15, p. 215; F. WINKELMANN, *Der monenergetisch-monotheletische Streit*, p. 71, nr. 34.

⁷⁸ F. WINKELMANN, *Der monenergetisch-monotheletische Streit*, p. 72, no. 34a.; see also G. LANGE, *Mia Energeia...*, p. 591.

⁷⁹ As he had been accused of heresy in the West because of issuing the *Ekthesis*, Heraclius exonerated himself before Pope John IV: “The *Ekthesis* is not mine and it was not me who commissioned it; it is the work of Patriarch Sergius, which he drafted five years ago [n.n. in 636]; upon by return from the Orient, he asked me to sign it and issue it”, Mansi 1960, XI, 9.

⁸⁰ J. MEYENDORFF, *Unité de l’Empire...*, p. 374.

⁸¹ “*Ekthesis* of the emperor Heraclius (Document 9)”, in: P. ALLEN (ed.), *Sophronius of Jerusalem...*, p. 214.

⁸² V. GRUMEL, “Recherche sur l’histoire du monothélisme III. Du monénergisme au monothélisme”, in: *Échos d’Orient*, no. 29, 1930, p. 20.

The Religious Politics of Emperor Heraclius (610-641) in regards to Non-Chalcedonians...

will (ἐν θέλῃμα), imposed by Patriarch Sergius in *Ekthesis*, originated from the implications of the doctrine in relation to *one energy into Christ*. Regarding about the purpose of the *Ekthesis* decree, G. Dagron writes:

“Its goal was to defuse the crisis of Monoenergism, yet *Ekthesis* ended up triggering the crisis of Monothelism. In 638, unlike twenty years prior, the stakes were not to get Monophysites to join the Imperial Church, but to restore peace and unity among Chalcedonians, between *Dioenergists* and *Monoenergists*, by getting them to renounce their formulas – *one energy* or *two energies* into Christ”⁸³.

In other words, Monothelism was going to be the price of the reconciliation between Dioenergists and Monoenergists⁸⁴.

In the Orient, *Ekthesis* was accepted by most bishops. Yet Heraclius’s decree was dismissed by the Church of Rome. After the death of Saint Sophronius (638), the patriarchal chair of Jerusalem was occupied by Monothelite bishop Sergius of Ioppe; clearly, he accepted Heraclius’s decree with no reserves, being a loyal supporter of the religious politics of the Emperor since 631, when he laid the foundations of a Monothelite ecclesiastical hierarchy in Palestine. Also, Patriarch Macedonius of Antioch accepted the *Ekthesis*⁸⁵.

The *Ekthesis* decree was signed by Patriarch Cyrus of Alexandria, who was handed by Army Commander Eustatius a letter from Patriarch Sergius accompanied by a copy of the decree⁸⁶. In his turn, Patriarch Pyrrhus (638-641), Sergius’s successor on the patriarchal chair of Constantinople, approved Heraclius’s decree through a dogmatic synodal decree (638/639)⁸⁷.

⁸³ G. DAGRON, P. RICÉ, A. VAUCHEZ, (coord.), “Évêques...”, p. 42; V. IONIȚĂ, “Sinodul al VI-lea Ecumenic...”, p. 405; Hugo RAHNER, *L’Église et L’État dans le christianisme primitif*, traduction du texte allemand de G. ZINCK, Les Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 1964, pp. 277-278.

⁸⁴ G. DAGRON, P. RICÉ, A. VAUCHEZ, (coord.), “Évêques...”, p. 42.

⁸⁵ J. TIXERONT, *Histoire des dogmes...*, vol. III, p. 171; C. J. HEFELE, *Histoire des conciles...*, vol. III/1, pp. 390-391.

⁸⁶ V. GRUMEL, *Regestes*, vol. I, pp. 117-118, no. 293; C. J. HEFELE, *Histoire des conciles...*, vol. III/1, p. 391 and note 4.

⁸⁷ V. GRUMEL, *Regestes*, vol. I, p. 117, no. 292.

VII. Conclusions

Just like his predecessors, Emperor Heraclius attempted to dominate and control the church. He used it as an instrument for achieving his political goals. Aware that he could not restore the Empire's territorial integrity and political unity without narrowing the gap between the Christian communities, Heraclius did not tolerate religious pluralism. From this point of view, he copied the politics of Justinian I, aiming to eliminate any dissidents and religious minorities. Heraclius was an ardent supporter of a firm policy aimed at restoring the unity of the Eastern Church by reconciling Constantinople with the non-Chalcedonian Churches from the East. Yet the frailty of this unionist politics was proven by the Monothelite crisis. The Monothelite heresy was fabricated deliberately in

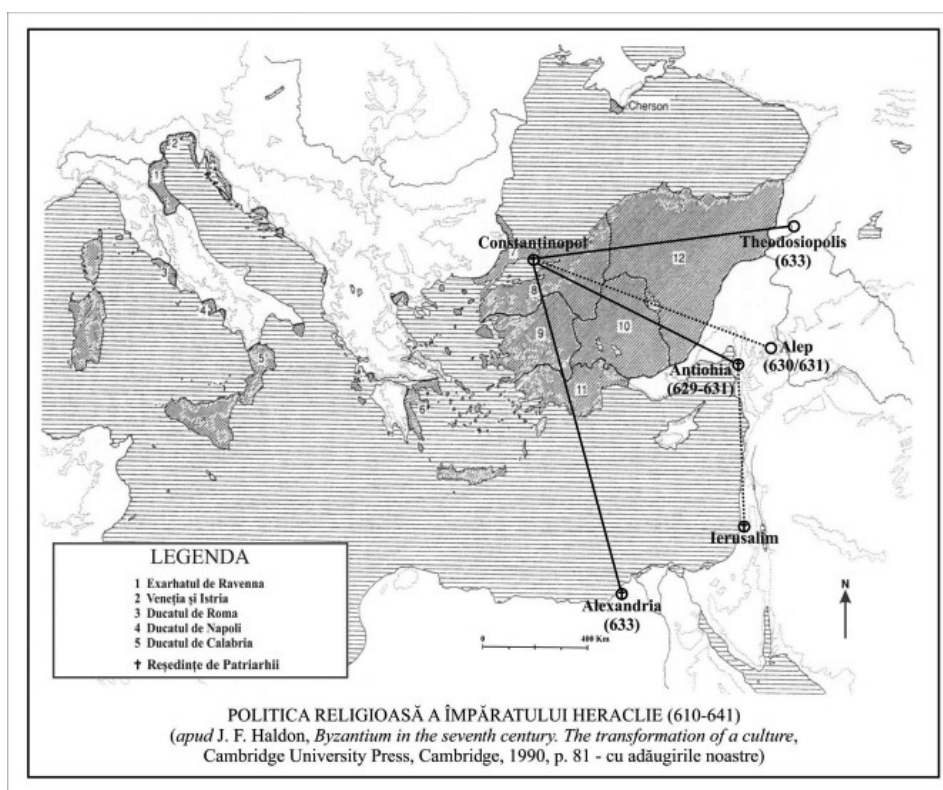


Fig. 1: The Religious Politics of Emperor Heraclius (610-641)
 (apud, J. F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the seventh century. The transformation of a culture*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, p. 81)

order to bring Monophysites back into the Imperial Church. The failure of Heraclius's religious politics could be predicted even before the Arab conquest, proving that the distance separating the Imperial Church from non-Chalcedonian Churches increased to the point where it could not be suppressed anymore. Christians in the Orient were not divided only by a formula of faith, but by considerable cultural and linguistic differences, doubled by the emergence of a "national" sentiment.

Heraclius's religious politics culminated with the issuance of the *Ekthesis* decree, which is an evident expression of imperial *caesaropapism*. By issuing this decree, Heraclius oversteps his role as temporal leader of the Church and defender of Orthodoxy, sanctioning a synod decision by means of an official document. As a matter of fact, the *Ekthesis* did not solve the problem of the theological disputes between Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians; on the contrary, it had negative consequences for the Byzantine State, since it contributed to the aggravation of the religious conflicts in the eastern provinces of the Empire and facilitated the Arab conquest. Moreover, *Ekthesis* helped set off the conflict between Church and State, which reached its peak during the reign of Constans II (641-668); this strengthens our conviction that, on the long run, Emperor Heraclius's religious politics proved to be inefficient and completely uninspired.