



ON THE ORIGINS OF THE *UNUS DE TRINITATE* CONTROVERSY

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In 518, a group of monks, whose leader was Maxentius and whose protector in Constantinople was the *magister militum* Vitalianus, came to Constantinople from Scythia Minor, claiming that the phrase *Unus de Trinitate passus est carne* should be added to the decisions taken in Chalcedon in 451 *pro ipsius defensione*. Given its history and its possible heretical echoes, the formula was bound not to attract many supporters to the Scythian cause in Constantinople. The entire situation was rendered still more complicated by the presence in the capital, from the beginning of 519, of a papal delegation sent from Rome in order to discuss the terms of a reconciliation between Rome and Constantinople. The addition proposed by the Scythians was not well received by the papal legates either. As J. A. McGuckin puts it, not only were the legates “unlikely to side against the patriarch in his own capital, but they undoubtedly recognised the incompatibility of the formula with the type of Dyophysitism supported in Rome.”¹ Seeing that their chances to have the formula sanctioned in Constantinople were practically non-existent, the monks left for Rome (in June, 519) and submitted their initiative to the consideration of Pope Hormisdas. A sudden change in the Constantinopolitan attitude towards the *Unus de Trinitate* formula occurred at the end of 519; a long process of legitimation followed, which was to culminate in the official acceptance of the formula in the Fifth Ecumenical Council (553). The monks returned to Constantinople in 520, presumably continuing their actions. The Scythians sent a second delegation to Rome, sometime before 523. Not much is known regarding the historical context of this second visit to Rome; it appears that, on this occasion, the monks tried, without much success, to gain recognition for their cause from the African bishops (among them Fulgentius of Ruspe) exiled in Sardinia by the Vandal King Thrasamund.

This study is intended as a small initial contribution—consisting essentially of some historical clarifications—towards a more substantial investigation of the controversy. Rather generously dealt with in early twentieth-century scholarship, the question of *why* the Scythian monks considered it necessary to bring in and vigorously defend a (historically rather than Christologically) controversial

¹ John A. McGuckin, “The ‘Theopaschite Confession’ (Text and Historical Context): a Study in the Cyrilline Re-interpretation of Chalcedon,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35 (1984): 239–255, here 244. For designating the Roman interpretation of Chalcedon, McGuckin uses the term “Leonine Dyophysite” (see *ibid.*, 240–241).



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formula has hardly ever been dealt with from the perspective of a primary source-based insertion of the monks in the Christological, and, more generally, ecclesiastical context of Scythia Minor. Although, as will be seen, the sources contain explicit references to the Scythian controversy as having originated in a regional context, namely in a conflict of the monks with some of the bishops from their region, those references have been by and large dismissed by modern scholars as insignificant or unreliable. Such an enterprise has never been justified with compelling arguments.

É. Amann places his explanation of how the controversy originated in the realm of the mysterious, stating that “nous ne savons ni quand, ni comment ils [the Scythian monks] rentrèrent dans leur pays. Ils disparaissent *aussi mystérieusement qu'ils étaient apparus*.”² When contextualised with more scholarly precision, the origin of the controversy is unconvincingly inserted in the Constantinopolitan context. Thus, É. Amann remarks that Maxentius, probably the leader of the monks, was reacting to a resurgence of Nestorianism in Constantinople.³ Going in the same direction, Marcel Richard states that the citations from the Greek fathers included by Maxentius (in their Latin translation!) in the *Libellus fidei*, the first (or, at least, presently known as the first) text he produced, were provided to him by his connections in Constantinople.⁴ A more elaborated explanation is formulated by Aloys Grillmeier, who identifies the existence of a Constantinopolitan tradition initiated by St. Proclus and claims that the Scythian controversy should be seen as a development of this tradition. Grillmeier believed that the intention of the monks was to find a *via media* between the one-nature and the two-nature variants of Christology. This opinion is to a certain extent shared by J. A. McGuckin, who, ascribing to the Scythians a sound Cyrilline descent, asserts that:

they hoped to effect a reconciling position between the orthodox (Cyrilline) easterners and the Monophysites, while at the same time achieving a reconciliation with the Roman see under Hormisdas (514–523) with its more markedly Dyophysite conception of Chalcedonian orthodoxy.⁵

² É. Amann, “Les moines Scythes,” in *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, 14, 2, ed. É. Amann (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1941), 1746–1753, here 1750, emphasis mine.

³ É. Amann, “Les moines Scythes,” 1750.

⁴ Marcel Richard, “Les florilèges diphysites du Ve et du VIe siècle,” in *Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart* I, ed. Aloys Grillmeier and Heinrich Bacht (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1962), 721–748, here 737.

⁵ McGuckin, “The ‘Theopaschite Confession’ (Text and Historical Context): a Study in the Cyrilline Re-interpretation of Chalcedon,” 243.



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Granting the sources an initial presumption of innocence, the following analysis is an attempt to examine whether the disparate pieces of information contained in various primary sources can be put together in such a way as to form a justification for placing the origins of the *Unus de Trinitate* controversy in the otherwise peripheral historical and theological context of Scythia Minor.

The Scythian Ecclesiastical Context before the *Unus de Trinitate* Controversy

The first historical attestation of an *episcopus Tomitanæ urbis* is dated to 368 or 369. A story retold by Sozomenus mentions Bretanion, bishop of Tomi, who apparently resisted Emperor Valens' attempts to impose the Arian confession in Scythia.⁶ Sozomenus further mentions a speech Bretanion addressed to the emperor and to his community, in which he defended the Council of Nicea and the decisions taken on that occasion by the Fathers.⁷ Bretanion seems to have died before 381, since Scythia Minor was represented at the Council of Constantinople by a certain Gerontius or Terentius.⁸ The activity of the latter came to an end before 392; beginning with this year, the sources place the Bishopric of Tomi under the authority of Theotimus I. As Socrates reports, Theotimus I was actively engaged in 403 in defending St. John Chrysostom against accusations of Origenism.⁹

So far, one may infer that the Tomitan bishops attested until the beginning of the fifth century were well aware of the main theological developments of the time, and that, actively involved in the major disputes of their period, they appear to have made their views manifest in a self-reliant manner. Moreover, one can hypothesise with a reasonable degree of probability that there was an

⁶ For the narration of this event, see Sozomenus, *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἱστορία*, VI, 21, 4–7, *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller* 50, ed. Joseph Bidez and Günther Christian Hansen (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1960), 263–264.

⁷ Bretanion and his orthodoxy are also mentioned by Theodoret, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἱστορία*, IV, 35, *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller* 44, ed. Léon Parmentier and Felix Scheidweiler (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1954), 273.

⁸ See Nicolae Șerbănescu, “1600 de ani de la prima mărturie documentară despre existența Episcopiei Tomisului” (One thousand six hundred years from the first documentary attestation of the Bishopric of Tomi), *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 87 (1969): 965–1026, here 1008.

⁹ See Socrates, *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἱστορία*, VI, 12, ed. W. Bright (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893).



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early and thoroughgoing implementation of the Council of Nicaea in Scythia Minor.

The involvement of the Scythian bishops in the fifth-century Christological controversies, and their respective positions—in whichever cases this can be assessed at all—though not providing sufficient elements for the historian to put forth a coherent reconstruction of a presumed Scythian Christological tradition, can still be legitimately pieced together in a hypothetical reconstruction of what could have been the general Christological line of the bishopric of Tomi in the fifth century.

In the Council of Ephesus, convened in 431 to judge the Christological ideas held by Nestorius, Scythia Minor was represented by Bishop Timotheus of Tomi. At an early stage, Timotheus sided with the dissident bishops who drew up the *contestatio directa* in reaction to Cyril of Alexandria's opening the proceedings of the council without waiting for Patriarch John of Antioch and the Syrian bishops, Nestorius' main defenders.¹⁰ However, he eventually signed the *acta* of the council, which stipulated the condemnation of Nestorius for heresy. There is not much evidence on which one could argue that Timotheus' hesitation was more than purely circumstantial. Yet there is a non-negligible possibility that all this may have been symptomatic of a contemporary oscillation between the one-nature and the two-natures Christological positions within the province of Scythia Minor. If this was indeed the case, Timotheus' official acknowledgement of Ephesus must have brought about both enthusiastic approval and contestation within the Scythian ecclesiastical circles.

Concerning the Scythian participation in the Council of Chalcedon, the name of Bishop Alexander of Tomi¹¹ appears only in the *acta* of the third session. Though Charles Auner, among others, saw this situation as unexplainable,¹² I consider that a sound *argumentum ex silentio* could be made here. The third session was the one during which several passages in Pope Leo's *Tome*, when compared to Cyril's teachings, were found problematic.¹³ At the end of the session, the bishops were granted five days to verify whether the *Tome*

¹⁰ See Jacques Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces danubiennes de l'Empire Romain* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1918), 353–357.

¹¹ He was also the one who represented Scythia Minor at the Council of Constantinople in 448; there is no evidence for Scythian participation in the “latrocinium Ephesinum,” in 449.

¹² See Charles Auner, “Dobrogea,” in *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie*, ed. Dom Fernand Cabrol and Dom Henri Leclercq (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1920), 1231–1260.

¹³ For further information, see Patrick Gray, *The Defense of Chalcedon in the East (451–553)* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), 9–10.



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agreed with what were considered to be Cyril's canonical writings, and, subsequently, whether it was to be declared authoritative. The absence of Bishop Alexander's name from the *acta* of the following sessions might appear as a refusal to sanction the orthodoxy of the Tome. The logical consequence of this argument would be the existence of a strongly Cyrilline Christology in Scythia, one that did not allow Alexander to situate the kind of dyophysitism supported in Rome within Cyrilline lines. Although a straightforward connection with the previously discussed Scythian developments can be neither established nor rejected with compelling arguments, still one has to note that from the sources examined hitherto a clear pattern of strong support in Scythia Minor for Cyrilline Christology seems to emerge.

In an effort to put an end to the numerous conflicts stirred throughout the Empire by the Chalcedonian formula of faith, Emperor Leo I sent a *Codex Encyclicus* in October 457 to consult the bishops from the different regions of the empire in the following matters: whether the decisions taken in Chalcedon were to be maintained and whether the uncanonically ordained Patriarch of Alexandria—Timotheus Aelurus—was to be granted official recognition. The response letters, whether reflecting the bishops' personal views or their desire to comply with the imperial policy, almost unanimously express consent to the Council of 451. However, a more detailed examination of the texts shows that they almost unanimously saw Chalcedon as a mere "disciplinary synod;" it was to be sanctioned as being in conformity with Nicea, Constantinople, and Ephesus. The letter of Bishop Theotimus II of Tomi, as reproduced in Schwartz's *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* II, 5 or in Mansi's *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio* VII, appears to follow this paradigm:

*Et quoniam sacratissimis vestris syllabis admonuistis ut quae sapimus de sancto Chalcedonensi concilio nostris litteris referamus ad vestrae notitiam pietatis, cognoscat vestra serenitas quoniam nihil amplius, nihil minus quam quae in 'Chalcedonensi sicut in Nicaeno et in centum quinquaginta et in' Epheseno concilio a sanctis patribus integre atque perfecte definita sunt, credimus aut consentimus; neque enim aliud nos ultra sapere quam ea quae tantorum patrum termino sanctus spiritus erudit.*¹⁴

¹⁴ *Epistola Theotimi Scythiae episcopi*, in *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* II, 5, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: W. de Gruyter, 1936), 31. Mansi does not even mark the conjecture for "Chalcedonensi sicut in Nicaeno et in centum quinquaginta et in" (see *Epistola Theotimi ad Leonem imperatorem*, in *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio* VII, ed. Joannes Dominicus Mansi (Florence: A. Zatta, 1762), 607).



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Judging by the reconstruction proposed in the aforementioned text editions,¹⁵ the text of the manuscript probably reads *cognoscat vestra serenitas quoniam nihil amplius, nihil minus quam quae in *** Epheseno concilio a sanctis patribus*, etc. A comparative textual analysis of the extant response letters shows that only a few letters incorporate the full paradigm of the “disciplinary synod”—that is, references to all three councils before Chalcedon—and that, when this happens, the discourse is organised around the following logical pattern: “we accept Nicea, Constantinople, and Ephesus; Chalcedon is in accord with those three councils; therefore we accept Chalcedon.” Theotimus’ text, as reconstructed by the modern editors, conveys a different message: “we only believe in and agree with what was established, justly and perfectly, by the blessed fathers in the Council of [Chalcedon, in the same way as in the Council of Nicea and in the Council of Constantinople and in that of] Ephesus—*nothing more, nothing less.*” Given that none of the other response letters contains a so straightforwardly pro-Chalcedonian attitude, and that none of the other bishops expresses his agreement to Chalcedon through this particular pattern of logical organisation, the conjecture appears to be suspicious. Moreover, it is noteworthy that, rhetorically speaking, the aforementioned conjecture does not fit well in Theotimus’ text, since it introduces a disturbing repetition. The only fact which is clear and beyond speculation, literally extant in the text, is that Theotimus respected the decisions taken at Ephesus. Two additional observations can be made here. First, bearing in mind that the mere presence of Ephesus in the response letters is not axiomatic, it is more pertinent to interpret it as an important signifier rather than a simple, conventional text detail. Second, if the conjecture is rejected, the *nihil amplius, nihil minus* ought to be seen as highly momentous, making explicit a strongly Cyrilline Christological orientation of the Bishopric of Tomi, one that would not be in disagreement with the scenario previously put forth in this study as a putative reconstruction of the Scythian participation in the Fourth Ecumenical Council.

While the previously analysed evidence cannot provide irrefutable arguments for the historian to posit an unquestionable Scythian background of the *Unus de Trinitate* controversy in terms of Christological doctrine, it at least demonstrates that the strongly Cyrilline ideas underlying the position of the Scythian monks are historically not at all unlikely to have originated in this context. Before putting forth any reconstruction of the contemporary historical and doctrinal context which determined the monks’ insistence on the *Unus de Trinitate passus est carne* formula, one ought to analyse carefully the sources related

¹⁵ Unfortunately, for the time being, I have not been able to examine the manuscript tradition of the text.



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to the early phase of the controversy. It is those sources which ought to be the least modified by the unavoidable (once the initial—presumably regional—conflict developed into a large-scale controversy) reactions to the ever-mounting number of accusations formulated against the monks and against their Christological “innovation.”

The Origins of the Scythian Controversy: a Reconstruction

According to the papal legate Dioscorus’ letters to Pope Hormisdas, the monks came to Constantinople because of a conflict which had occurred between them and some of the bishops from their region, whom they were accusing of heresy.¹⁶ Among those was Paternus, the Bishop of Tomi. The monks’ solution to the conflict posed, as previously seen, the use of the controversial “Theopaschite” formula as a *sine qua non* for protecting the Chalcedonian orthodoxy against heresy.

For the period of time discussed in the first part of this study (from the fourth century to the 460s), Tomi appears to have been the only bishopric in the whole province of Scythia Minor. Dioscorus’ reference to more than one bishop within the province was interpreted as a misunderstanding, derived from his alleged lack of knowledge concerning the Scythian ecclesiastical organisation.¹⁷ Yet there is evidence to assume that a change occurred in the ecclesiastical organisation of Scythia towards the end of the fifth century, or, at the latest, at the beginning of the sixth century, when several other bishoprics were instituted in the province.¹⁸ The original concentration of normative authority within the

¹⁶ “isti [monachi] de sua provincia episcopos accusant, inter quos est Paternus Tomitanae civitatis antistes.” *Collectio Avellana* 217, 6, in *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 25, 1–2, ed. Otto Guenther (Prague: F. Tempsky, 1895, 1898), 678.

¹⁷ See, for example, Zeiller’s remark in *Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces danubiennes de l’Empire Romain*, 383–384, footnote 9: “Ils disent ‘des évêques de sua provincia’ et citent Paternus de Tomi, comme s’il avait eu dans la province de Scythie d’autres sièges épiscopaux que Tomi. Mais les légats romains ne devaient pas être très au courant du détail de l’organisation ecclésiastique en Orient, et ils ont pu confondre deux ou trois circonscriptions voisines.”

¹⁸ A law issued by Emperor Zeno in 480 makes it clear that, by that period, Tomi was the only bishopric in Scythia Minor. A sixth century inscription from Callatis reads: “hic facta est oratio episcoporum Stefani ... ” (the rest of the text is missing); Bishop Paternus’ title appears in the list of signatures of the letter which the participants in the Synod of Constantinople (520) sent to Pope Hormisdas, announcing the ordination of Patriarch Epiphanius, as “misericordia Dei episcopus provinciae Scythiae metropolitanus” (see *Collectio Avellana* 234, 714); a seventh-century text, *Notitia episcopatum*, considered to



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Bishopric of Tomi underwent a structural change. The distribution of ecclesiastical authority between different episcopal sees in Scythia Minor was likely to have become a source for plurality in the sphere of theological discourse, especially in the period that immediately followed this change, which, apparently, coincided with the outburst of the Scythian controversy.

To round out the picture, one ought to mention the existence of monastic life in Scythia from as early as the fourth century. From this perspective, the main actors of the Scythian controversy should not be presented as if a *Deus ex machina* brought them from nowhere to Constantinople in 519, where, purely out of a litigious spirit, they provoked a scandal with ill-fated consequences for Christological thought. One can reasonably argue that the early establishment of monastic life in Scythia could not have remained without modifying the theological thought of the province. If, until 519, the sources do not attest any dissension between the monastic circles and the official ecclesiastical authorities, this could signify that there was a consensus between the two, one which was probably effected by the existence of a common theological discourse. The question is, therefore, what occurred to disrupt this consensus and provoke a sense of grievance in previously quiescent monastic communities.

Given all the previously analysed material, and the conclusions I reached in the previous section of this study, it would be preposterous to dismiss Dioscorus' statement from the start as based on a misunderstanding or as due to insufficient acquaintance with the Scythian ecclesiastical organisation. *Isti [monachi] de sua provincia episcopos accusant, inter quos est Paternus Tomitanae civitatis antistes*: as already stated, I consider that an examination of the sources related to the early phase of the controversy is likely to bring to light a number of elements which would contribute to a hypothetical reconstruction of the context in which the controversy originated—more precisely to a deeper understanding of the two parties of the initial conflict and of the Christological matters which must have constituted the background for this conflict. For the purpose of this study, I have chosen to look at two of Dionysius Exiguus' *Praefationes* (introductions to his translations)—*Praefatio ad Ioannem et Leontium* and *Praefatio ad Petrum*. The addressees are Scythian characters (two monks and a bishop, respectively) and the content makes, as will be seen, various references to what I have called the “initial conflict.” I will also compare the way Dionysius identifies this conflict with the identification made by Maxentius in the *Libellus*, the first

be a copy of the *Notitia* of Patriarch Epiphanius of Constantinople (520–535) mentions the existence of 15 bishoprics in Scythia Minor, having Tomi as a metropolitan see. For deeper insights into this subject, see Emilian Popescu, “Organizarea ecleziastică a provinciei Scythia Minor în secolele IV–VI” (The ecclesiastical organisation of Scythia Minor from the fourth to the sixth century), *Studii Teologice* 7–10 (1980): 590–605.



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text written by the Scythians in the context of the *Unus de Trinitate* controversy, in order to see whether the images shaped by the two authors are convergent.

The two *praefationes* leave no doubt as to the identification of the Christological discourse which provoked tension in Scythia Minor: it is designated as *Nestoriana labes* and *Nestoriana perfidia*. What is even more interesting, Dionysius provides details on how the heretical teachings—although officially condemned by an imperial decree of Theodosius II in 435—were still circulated in Scythia Minor. In the *Praefatio ad Ioannem et Leontium*, Dionysius mentions *audaciam aut furorem Nestorianaef perfidiae, quae non solum conatibus manifestis verum etiam clandestinis semper insidiis stabilitatem catholicae veritatis oppugnare molitur*.¹⁹ The same idea is even more strongly and clearly expressed in the *Praefatio ad Petrum*; there, Dionysius states that he translated St. Cyril's *Synodal Letter to Nestorius*

*ut Nestoriana labes evidenter agnoscat ab hominibus et pro sua malignitate merito respuatur, quae, sub praetextu fidei, perfidiam insinuare non desinit, etc.*²⁰

In other words, Dionysius points to the existence of a milieu within the Christian community from Scythia Minor in which the acceptance of Chalcedon was only formal, and that this acceptance was actually a cover. This information is strikingly convergent with the designation of the heretics in Maxentius' *Libellus fidei*. Maxentius claims that the *Unus de Trinitate* formula is a necessary addition for an efficient fight against “the recent arguments of [this] depravity” (*novis pravorum argumentationibus*). And again, a suspect interpretation of Chalcedon is explicitly formulated:

*... qui errorem propriae impietatis quasi ex autoritate synodi confirmare nituntur, et verba simpliciter atque integre a sanctis patribus edita ad suam pravitatem conantur retorquere*²¹

Regarding the characterisation of the Christological background of the seditious monks, a first remark could be that this background is somehow implicit in the choice of translations which Dionysius puts at their disposal, as the internal evidence of the *praefationes* shows, in the early phase or already in the pre-history of the controversy: the translation of St. Cyril's *Synodal Letter to*

¹⁹ Dionysius Exiguus, *Praefatio ad Ioannem et Leontium in Cyrilli Alexandrini Epistulam secundam*, 3, in *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina* 85, ed. S. Gennaro and Fr. Glorie (Turnhout: Brepols, 1972), 55–56, here 56, emphasis mine.

²⁰ Dionysius Exiguus, *Praefatio ad Petrum episcopum in Epistulam encyclicam Cyrilli Alexandrini*. *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina* 85, 59–60, here 59, emphasis mine.

²¹ Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, III, 4, in *Corpus Christianorum* 85A, ed. Fr. Glorie (Turnhout: Brepols, 1978), 3–25, here 7.



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Nestorius and of the anathematisms, and the translation of the two *Letters to Succensus*. As for the indications included in the *Libellus fidei*, the different patristic fragments quoted there reflect the familiarity of the monks with at least those parts of the patristic literature which justified, in their opinion, the doctrinal necessity of the *Unus de Trinitate* formula. In addition to this, it is interesting to note that the *Libellus*, as a whole, receives a particularly emphatic legitimation, which ought to be seen as relevant for the identification of the monks' theological background: legitimation which brings in the officially accepted authorities. Maxentius claims—against the opinion of those who *augmentum aliquod nos in fide facere indicant aut certe contra statuta venire concilii*²²—that their enterprise is not meant to make any addition of meaning to the perfect faith, but is rather intended to explain it. Further on, he writes that he is aware that an addition of words²³ can constitute either an explanation or a corruption of the faith. The former is perfectly acceptable, Maxentius argues, given St. Cyril's example, who

*ad destruendam Nestorii impiam interpretationem sancti symboli, in concilio Epheseno tam multa[s] sanctorum patrum sententias proferens, nullum reprehensionis dignum fecis[se] augmentum creditur.*²⁴

What comes immediately after is more debatable: Maxentius notes that it is legitimate to use the authority of the fathers *pro ipsius defensione* (that is, for the defence of Chalcedon), since Pope St. Leo himself had done that.²⁵ At least three hypotheses could be formulated here. The first, which cannot be supported with any kind of information coming from the sources, would be that Maxentius considered Pope St. Leo a chief authority in his own right for the Christological doctrine. Secondly, one can assume that the reason why Pope St. Leo is present in the text might be connected with the simple fact that the *Libellus* was meant to be read and accepted by a Latin audience (first, by the papal legates in Constantinople and, some months later, by Pope Hormisdas himself), in which case the actual acceptance of Leo as an authority by the monks cannot be assessed. Finally, the third hypothesis could be founded on one particular (and well-known) detail included in the *acta* of the Council of Chalcedon, which clarifies the way in which Pope St. Leo's writings were recognised and accepted as orthodox, and, therefore, authoritative. Asked to

²² Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, I, 1, 5.

²³ Maxentius distinguishes between *intellegentia fidei* and *verba fidei*: from the perspective of this distinction, he states that an *augmentum fidei* is impossible, whereas an *adiectio verborum* can be justified. See *Libellus fidei*, II, 2, 6.

²⁴ Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, II, 3, 6.

²⁵ Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, II, 3, 6–7.



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formulate their opinion on Leo's Christology, the bishops answered that Leo's letter should be accepted because "Leo spoke like Cyril."²⁶ This last hypothesis would imply that Maxentius' recognition of Leo's authority actually reinforces the reverence paid to Cyril.

The *Praefatio ad Ioannem et Leontium* contains, in the first half, an interesting reference to possible political factors which might have engendered contention in Scythia Minor. The fragment in question²⁷ identifies the opponents of the monks as being those who, in a *flexa fides* and *erga divinum cultum foeda mobilitas*, had changed their beliefs and teachings *pro voluptatibus principum* because they put preoccupation with the present above divine things.²⁸ The reference is obscure. I believe that the *principes* refers to the secular authorities. And if one corroborates this with the fact that the *metropolitanus* himself, Paternus, was among those accused by the monks, it may mean that the party considered as heretical by the monks was indeed a strong one, counting among its supporters the Scythian authorities, both lay and ecclesiastical. In the same *praefatio*, Dionysius writes that, contrary to those who had "adapted" their faith to the will of the rulers, the monks were struggling *pro integritate fidei*, on the path of their lawful ancestors.²⁹

It thus appears that the monastic circles reacted, probably in order to preserve the status quo, against the mounting—apparently unprecedented—popularity of a dyophysite community in their region, a community which, on the doctrinal level, claimed its legitimacy from the Council of Chalcedon. The monks, educated in a Cyrilline spirit—not surprisingly, bearing in mind the Christological developments which took place in the fifth century in Scythia Minor—saw this as unacceptable, and it is in this light that their presence in 518 in Constantinople should be envisaged.

²⁶ See *Actes du Concile de Chalcédoine. Sessions III–VI (La Définition de la Foi)*, in *Cahiers d'Orientalisme* IV, ed. André-Jean Festugière (Geneva: Patrick Cramer, 1983), 60 (fifth session, 15–20).

²⁷ Dionysius, *Praefatio ad Ioannem et Leontium*, 2, 55, "Horum studia vestra sanctitas aemulata pro integritate fidei summis viribus elaborat, inertiam quorundam varietatemque despiciens, qui utilitatem praesentium rebus caelestis anteponunt—quorum nos flexa fides et erga divinum cultum foeda mobilitas valde maestificat—, qui pro voluptatibus principum suas sententias plerumque commutant—quasi divina religio humanis umquam possit altercationibus immutari, cum dominicae promissionis ex apostolica traditione fixa maneat et inconcussa soliditas."

²⁸ See Dionysius, *Praefatio ad Ioannem et Leontium*, 2, 55.

²⁹ See Dionysius, *Praefatio ad Ioannem et Leontium*, 2, 55.