

CHIARA O. TOMMASI MORESCHINI

BETWEEN DISSENT AND PRAISE, BETWEEN  
SACRED AND SECULAR: CORIPPUS AGAINST  
THE AFRICAN BACKGROUND OF THE THREE  
CHAPTERS CONTROVERSY

ESTRATTO

da

RIVISTA DI STORIA E LETTERATURA RELIGIOSA

2017/2 ~ a. 53



Leo S. Olschki Editore  
Firenze

Anno LIII - 2017 - n. 2

# Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa



diretta da  
G. Dagron†, C. Ossola  
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GILBERT DAGRON† - CARLO OSSOLA - FABRIZIO A. PENNACCHIETTI  
MARIO ROSA - BRIAN STOCK

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Periodico quadrimestrale  
redatto presso l'Università degli Studi di Torino

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BETWEEN DISSENT AND PRAISE,  
BETWEEN SACRED AND SECULAR:  
CORIPPUS AGAINST THE AFRICAN BACKGROUND  
OF THE THREE CHAPTERS CONTROVERSY

In recent decades, a considerable array of invaluable researches has provided a thorough investigation of, and cast a definite light on the so-called Three Chapters controversy, which, in spite of its origin in Justinian's attempt at regaining ecclesiastical and political unity, was fated to provoke one of the most serious and long-lasting schisms of the early Middle Ages. This involved an intricate web of relationships between East and West, between the empire and the papacy, and enabled the emergence of a thrust for autonomy on the part of the newly established Germanic kingdoms and the local churches.<sup>1</sup> Such a dense pe-

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<sup>1</sup> As stated in the preface of the volume recently edited by C. CHAZELLE – C. CUBITT, *The Crisis of the Oikoumene. The Three Chapters and the Failed Quest for Unity in the Sixth-Century Mediterranean*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2007, which contains an extensive discussion of the subject; most of all, the magisterial essay by Y. MODÉLAN, *L'Afrique reconquise et les Trois Chapitres*, pp. 39-82, which is of particular concern for the present study. In addition to the classic and seminal inquiry by W. PEWESIN, *Imperium, Ecclesia universalis, Rom. Der Kampf der Afrikanischen Kirche um die Mitte des 6. Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1937, pp. 150-158, the issue is also debated by J. HERRIN, *The Formation of Christendom*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1989, pp. 119-125; C. SOTINEL, *L'Echec en Occident: l'affaire des Trois Chapitres*, in L. PIETRI et alii (eds.), *Histoire du christianisme des origines à nos jours*, vol. 3, *Les Églises d'Orient et d'Occident (432-610)*, Paris, Desclée, 1998, pp. 427-455 (mainly concerned with Italy); EAD., *Le concile, l'empereur, l'évêque*, in S. ELM – É. REBILLARD – A. ROMANO, *Orthodoxie, christianisme, histoire: Orthodoxy, Christianity, History*, Rome, Ecole Française, 2000, pp. 275-299; A. PLACANICA, *Teologia polemica e storiografia ecclesiastica nella controversia dei tre Capitoli*, in A. QUACQUARELLI (ed.), *Res Christiana. Temi interdisciplinari di patrologia*, Rome, Città Nuova, 1999, pp. 129-254; P. MARONE, *La difesa dei Tre Capitoli portata avanti dagli ecclesiastici africani tra il 545 e il 565*, in *La teologia dal V all'VIII secolo fra sviluppo e crisi. XLI Incontro di studiosi dell'antichità cristiana (Roma, 9-11 maggio 2013)*, Rome, Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2014, pp. 283-298. Further bibliography will be mentioned *infra* (nn. 11, 16, 24, 31). Although less cited (in all probability because of the Italian language), the long study by C. ALZATI, "Pro sancta fide, pro dogma patrum": *La tradizione dogmatica delle chiese italiciane di fronte alla questione dei tre capitoli. Caratteri dottrinali e implicazioni ecclesio-logiche*

riod therefore represents the ideal setting for elucidating the complex relationship between imperial power and ecclesiastical hierarchy, which, as clearly attested to by the vicissitudes in the aftermath of Chalcedon, balances the subtleties of the theological formulas with diplomatic manoeuvres and sudden changes of position.<sup>2</sup>

However, in order to differentiate from the aforementioned investigations, the present study will approach the question from a different perspective – namely, how the events were reshaped in different sources and what reasons are implied in these choices – and, in particular, it will take into account some authors that have so far been neglected in research.

It seems worth quoting at the beginning a passage from Corippus' *Iohannis* (7,480-94), for the so-called Three Chapters controversy takes place in the very years when the poet moved from Carthage to Constantinople, because of the fame gained by the deliverance of his *Iohannis*, an epic poem that celebrates the victory of the Byzantine general John Troglite over the rebellious Moors in a recently reconquered Africa:<sup>3</sup>

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*dello scisma*, in *Ambrosiana Ecclesia. Studi sulla chiesa milanese e l'ecumene cristiana fra tarda antichità e medioevo*, Milan, NED, 1993, pp. 97-130, is quite significant in order to understand the theological and doctrinal concerns which were at stake during the controversy. These studies are the basis for some of the following reflections.

<sup>2</sup> On the council of Chalcedon and its legacy see (mainly from a theological perspective) A. GRILLMEIER – H. BACHT (eds.), *Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Würzburg, Echterverlag, 1951-54; W.H.C. FREND, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement: Chapters in the History of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries*, Cambridge, CUP, 1972; A. DE HALLEUX, *La définition christologique à Chalcédoine*, «Revue théologique de Louvain», VII, 1976, pp. 3-23, 155-170 (= *Patrologie et oecuménisme: Recueil d'études*, Leuven, Peeters, 1990, pp. 445-480); P.T.R. GRAY, *The Defense of Chalcedon in the East (451-553)*, Leiden, Brill, 1979; H.M. DIEPEN, *Les Trois Chapitres au Concile de Chalcédoine: Une étude de la christologie de l'Anatolie ancienne*, Oosterhoud, Éditions de Saint Michel, 1953; A. GRILLMEIER, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, 1, *Von der Apostolischen Zeit bis zum Konzil von Chalcedon (451)*, Freiburg, Herder, 2004 (1990<sup>3</sup>), pp. 637 ff.; C. DALL'OSSO, *Cristo e Logos: il calcedonismo del VI secolo in Oriente*, Rome, Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2010. For a general survey of the historical vicissitudes of the period see cfr. P.T.R. GRAY, *The Legacy of Chalcedon: Christological Problems and their Significance*, in M. MAAS (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, Cambridge, CUP, 2005, pp. 215-238. Generally speaking, as correctly remarked by S.P. BROCK, *The 'Nestorian' Church: a lamentable misnomer*, «Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester», LXXIX, 1996, pp. 23-35, the threefold representation of heretical Nestorian, orthodox Chalcedon, and heretical Monophysite (on the opposing side) is to be rejected in favour of a multi-faceted and broadened spectrum, which can be divided into seven different positions ranging «from the Antiochene pole, with its emphasis on duality, arising from a keen desire to maintain the transcendence of the divinity and a soteriology based on the assumed humanity in Christ, to the opposing Alexandrine pole, with its emphasis on unity and the desire to stress the full reality of the incarnation» (25).

<sup>3</sup> See the seminal considerations by Av. CAMERON, *Corippus' Iohannis. Epic of Byzantine*

Illic magna tamen miracula vidi.  
 namque iacent nullis circumdata moenia muris,  
 praesidio munita dei. non turribus illam  
 ardua pinnati defendunt culmina tecti.  
 mansuescit gentes verbi virtute sacerdos.  
 sic parat indociles caelestis gratia mentes.  
 ille potest monitis rabidos lenire leones  
 et placare feras. mansuescunt corda luporum,  
 atque avidis teneros non laedunt morsibus agnos.  
 hortaturque simul, iubeas properare sequendo  
 proelia Romanis confidens prospera rebus,  
 si venias: lacrimis non desinet ille precando  
 pro populis armisque tuis castrisque Latinis  
 exorans iugiter, nostros ut conterat hostes  
 omnipotens, humilesque tua virtute superbos.

There to my surprise, I beheld great miracles, for their dwellings lay open, circled by no fortifications, protected only by the aid of god. The lofty peaks of its pinnacled roofs provided no turrets for its defense. A single priest soothed the people with the power of this word alone and so, in that way, a heavenly grace, made ready their simple minds. This man could really tame ravenous lions and placate fierce beasts with his words. Indeed the heats of wolves are soothed by them and they refrain from harming tender lambs with their hungry jaws. The priest urges you at the same time to order a quick pursuit, for he is confident that the Roman cause will triumph if you come. One thing is certain: he will never give up his tearful prayers for your men and arms and for the Latin force, for he begs the Almighty continuously to crush our enemies and make the proud humble with his power. (transl. G.W. Shea)

Although theology was not Corippus' main interest, as his text belongs to a completely different genre, some modern scholars 'rebuked' him for overtly filo-Byzantine propaganda,<sup>4</sup> which led to his avoidance

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*Africa*, «Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar», IV, 1983, pp. 167-180 (= EAD., *Changing Cultures in Early Byzantium*, London, Variorum Reprints, 1996, n. IX); Y. MODÉLAN, *Corippe et l'occupation byzantine de l'Afrique: pour une nouvelle lecture de la Johannide*, «AntAfr», XXII, 1986, pp. 195-212. A general reassessment of Corippus, together with an updated bibliography, is provided in the miscellaneous volume edited by B. GOLDLUST, *Corippe, un poète entre deux mondes*, Lyon, CEROR Diff. De Boccard, 2015. Recent debate on the name has not been taken into account here (Corippus vs. Gorippus, on which see P. RIEDLBERGER, *Again on the name 'Gorippus': State of the Question – New Evidence – Rebuttal of Counterarguments – The Case of the Suda*, in GOLDLUST, *Corippe*, cit., pp. 245-271).

<sup>4</sup> CAMERON, *Corippus*, cit., p. 169, summarising the attitudes of previous critics. For an example of this negative attitude see also S. D'ELIA, a review of Flavii Cresconii Corippi *Iohannidos liber III*, ed. C.O. TOMMASI, Firenze, Le Monnier, 2001, «Koinonia», XXV, 2001,



of taking sides in the Three Chapters affaire – a charge that sometimes affects courtly poets and which did not spare, about a century earlier, those who in the same North African region celebrated the Vandal sovereigns, without mentioning the persecution of Catholic clergy.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, such a judgment does not take into account the considerable range of personality-types evident in the different writers, the literary forms in which they expressed themselves, or the fundamental dichotomy between sacred and secular, even though Corippus ably achieves a successful blend of secular subject matter and Christian interpretation.<sup>6</sup>

Nonetheless, in the aforementioned passage, which is also remarkable for its attention to local elements and ambiance,<sup>7</sup> Corippus, alludes to a holy man, a mild and reverent pastor, who is able to tame ferocious beasts (a clear Biblical intertext) and, with his prayers, impetrates victory over the Moorish enemies. In all likelihood this character may be identified with Verecundus of Iunci, among whose works is also recorded the *Carmen satisfactione paenitentiae*, a short poem of 220 hexameters that shares many stylistic parallels with the *Iohannis*.<sup>8</sup> Although highly hypo-

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pp. 108-110, who explicitly opposes the cases of Corippus (charged with dullness and meanness), and that of Facundus (whose theological subtlety is praised), without noticing, however, that their work is completely different in structure and purpose. A general discussion of Corippus and Christianity is offered by P. MATTEI, *Présence du christianisme dans la Johannide*, in GOLDLUST, *Corippe*, cit., pp. 169-188.

<sup>5</sup> C.O. TOMMASI, *La rhétorique face aux nouveaux maîtres: Manifestes littéraires et idéologie en Afrique vandale*, in P. GALAND HALLYN – V. ZARINI (eds.), *Manifestes littéraires dans la latinité tardive: Poétique et Rhétorique. Actes du Colloque de Paris, 23-24 mars 2007*, Paris, IEA, 2009, pp. 145-161; EAD., *L'Africa tra Bizantini e Arabi. La prospettiva storico-letteraria*, in L.A. GARCÍA MORENO – M. J. VIGUERA MOLINS (eds.), *Del Nilo al Ebro. Estudios sobre la fuentes de la conquista islámica*, Alcalá de Henares, UAH Servicio de Publicaciones, 2009, pp. 93-115.

<sup>6</sup> On which see R. MILES, *The Anthologia Latina and the creation of secular space in Vandal Carthage*, «AntTard», XIII, 2005, pp. 305-320, who, in turn, draws on R.A. MARKUS, *The Sacred and the Secular. From Augustine to Gregory the Great*, «JThS», XXXVI, 1985, pp. 84-96 (= *Sacred and Secular*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 1994, n. II).

<sup>7</sup> As is well known, Corippus has a predilection for African elements and ethnography: see C.O. TOMMASI, *Realtà della storia e retorica dell'impero nella Iohannis di Corippo*, «Athenaeum», XC, 2002, pp. 161-185, with further references. Since the passage shows a deep understanding of the city of Iunci, some scholars surmised that the poet could have been from there, or, more in general, from Byzacena: cfr. Av. CAMERON, *Byzantine Africa. The Literary Evidence*, in J.H. HUMPHREY (ed.), *Excavations at Carthage 1978 conducted by the University of Michigan*, ed. by J.H. Humphrey, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1982, pp. 29-62 (= *Changing Cultures*, cit., n. VII, 20).

<sup>8</sup> According to the hypothesis suggested by V. TANDOI – M.G. BIANCO (ed.), *Verecundi Iuncensis Carmen de paenitentia*, Naples, D'Auria, 1984, and subsequently reprised by TOMMASI, *Realtà*, cit.; Y. MODÉLAN, *Les Maures et l'Afrique*, Rome, Ecole Française, 2003, p. 331; ID., *L'Afrique reconquise*, cit., p. 72; P. BLAUDEAU, *Normalisation africaine? Retour sur les appréciations*

thetical, it is nonetheless fascinating to surmise that the two may have been acquainted, and that in this brief portrait Corippus may have wanted to pay homage to his friend; but, even more than this, by means of the final insertion of a stereotype theme like that of the *bellum iustum*,<sup>9</sup> he may have wanted to make evident to a Byzantine audience the loyalty of Verecundus (or, conversely, represent mild and concealed dissent towards the emperor and his African agenda concerning religious issues).

If one considers that traditionally the recitation of the *Iohannis* in front of the noblemen of Carthage and the Byzantine generals is set in 548, it is worth noting that these same years also saw the first foreshadowing of the opposition on the part of the African Church to the religious politics of Justinian, an opposition that would become sharper and sharper in subsequent years, especially after the excommunication with which Pope Vigilius was threatened following the publication of his *iudicatum* in the same year 548.<sup>10</sup> Yet, initially the Catholic Church had welcomed the reconquest of Justinian, as it followed a century of oppressive Vandal domination, during which the clergy had suffered hostility and persecution, along with a drastic reduction in its members, notwithstanding the milder attitude displayed by Thrasamund and

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*de la politique justinienne respectivement développées par Corippe et par Liberatus*, in GOLDLUST, *Corippe*, cit., pp. 123-140 (131). Verecundus, a sixth-century bishop of Iunci (or Iunca) in the African province of the Byzacena, is a shadowy figure, except as far as his last years are concerned. His personal vicissitude is essentially related to the final phase of the controversy of the Three Chapters, in which he played a crucial role. As may be reconstructed from Victor of Tunnuna (*Chron.*, ann. 551-552), he was already in Constantinople by 551, together with Primasius of Hadrumetum (another bishop from Byzacena). He was eventually able to escape in December and to reach Chalcedon, but he died soon afterwards. According to some scholars, the *Carmen* was written during his sojourn at Constantinople, for it is pervaded with melancholic accents and nostalgia for the past, but this seems to be mere speculation. If Isidore is to be credited (*De vir. ill.*, 7), Verecundus wrote another poem about the resurrection and the final judgment, but there is no evidence of it (some scholars attempted to identify this work with the pseudo-Tertullianean or pseudo-Cyprianean *Carmen ad Flavium Felicem de resurrectione mortuorum et de iudicio Domini*). In addition, Verecundus gained certain renown as an exegete, for he is the author of a commentary on the nine Old Testament Canticles (*Commentarii super cantica ecclesiastica*), with clear liturgical purpose. For a recent reassessment see C.O. TOMMASI, *Verecundus of Iunci*, in K. POLLMANN – W. OTTEN (eds.), *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, Oxford, OUP, 2014, pp. 849-850.

<sup>9</sup> As to be expected, this theme is a *Leitmotiv* in the *Iohannis*: see now G. CARAMICO, *Corippo (o Gorippo) poeta della guerra*, in GOLDLUST, *Corippe*, cit., pp. 141-168.

<sup>10</sup> MODÉRAN, *L'Afrique reconquise*, cit., p. 49, quoting Vict. Tunn., 141: *Post consulatum Basili v. c. anno X, Affricani antistites Vigilium Romanum episcopum dannatorem trium capitulorum sinodaliter a catholica communione reseruatō ei penitentie loco secludunt et pro defensione memoratorum trium capitulorum litteras satis idoneas Iustiniano principi per Olimpiū magistrīanum mittunt.*

Hilderic. This is confirmed by a council held in Carthage in 535, which was followed by some privileges granted by Justinian and by the renewal of the title of Metropolitan See for the city.<sup>11</sup> A letter written on this occasion testifies to the widespread sense of harmony and happiness.<sup>12</sup> The confirmation of the rank of primacy in 541-42 for Byzacena is also noteworthy, mainly thanks to the efforts and the diplomatic ties established by its bishop Primasius.<sup>13</sup> Among the relevant production of the period, the *Instituta regularia divinae legis* written by Junillus, soon to be appointed imperial questor at Constantinople, deserve at least a mention.<sup>14</sup> Such a favourable attitude is to be acknowledged in the first decade after the Byzantine reconquest, before Church became aware of the fact that the price to pay for such privileges was confirmation with the emperor's will, even on theological matters.<sup>15</sup> Although seeming odd to Western clergy, such a prerogative, however, was considered natural in the East and was advocated by Justinian as a natural derivation of the perception of the role of the emperor as warrantor and defender of the Christian faith.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, one must be aware of the political

<sup>11</sup> *Novell.* 37 and 131. Cfr. R. DEVREESE, *L'église d'Afrique durant l'occupation byzantine*, «Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire», LVII, 1940, pp. 143-166 and, more recently, MODÉRAN, *Les Eglises et la reconquête byzantine*, A. *l'Afrique*, in *Les Eglises d'Orient et d'Occident*, cit., pp. 699-717; S. PULLATTI, *I privilegi della Chiesa africana nella legislazione di Giustiniano e di Giustino II*, in J. ROSET (ed.), *Estudios en homenaje al profesor Juan Iglesias*, Madrid, Universidad Complutense, 1988, pp. 1577-1597.

<sup>12</sup> *Collectio Avellana*, 85 (CSEL, 35,1), p. 328.

<sup>13</sup> Little is known about his life and works, except for the final part of his life, when, like most of the African clergy, he was involved in the Three Chapters controversy. The only extant work is a five-book Commentary on the Apocalypse, which displays a good knowledge of previous exegetical literature (especially Victorinus of Poetovium, Augustine and Tyconius) and is informed by a strong allegorical perspective: according to some scholars, the work is undoubtedly the most original Apocalypse commentary after Tyconius'. According to Victor of Tunnuna (*Chronicon* 143), Primasius was one of the African clerics summoned to Constantinople by the emperor Justinian to justify themselves. While initially he shared the common position, standing against the condemnation of the Three Chapters (see *infra*), once in Constantinople he accepted Justinian's edict. According to Victor, this sudden change was due to his ambition, as the emperor had promised to make him bishop of Hadrumetum. For this reason he was considered a traitor by the Chalcedonians and his sudden death in 552 was interpreted as a divine punishment for his greed and treason: cfr. S. PETRI, *Primasius*, in K. POLLMANN – W. OTTEN (eds.), *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, Oxford, OUP, 2014, coll. 1604-1605.

<sup>14</sup> M. MAAS, *Exegesis and Empire in the Early Byzantine Mediterranean: Junillus Africanus and the Instituta regularia divinae legis*, Tübingen, Mohr, 2003.

<sup>15</sup> Cfr. CAMERON, *Byzantine Africa*, cit., p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> As for the direct involvement of Justinian in religious matters see R.A. MARKUS, *Carthage – Prima Justiniana – Ravenna: Aspects of Justinian's Kirchenpolitik*, «Byzantion», XLIX,

responsibilities involved in the duties of a bishop, which were set down precisely in legislation.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, it is worth considering the role of the African Church in close connection with that of the secular authors in the middle of the sixth century: a period, that is, which seems tied up with Corippus' own experiences (when he moved to Constantinople, probably thanks to the successful performance of the *Iohannis*), and, conversely, with that of the African bishops who, due to pressure from the emperor, were to a greater or lesser extent compelled to remain in the capital as 'hostages'. And so, it appears that on account of migration to the East, the long-standing era of Latinophone Africa drew to a close and Rome's fate becomes that of Constantinople.<sup>18</sup> This is the 'new' Rome, whose reign had been established by providential will, as Justinian himself states in the famous and rhetorically elaborate *Novella 37* as well as in *Cod. Iust.* 1,27, both dated in 535 – two passages in which the reconquest of Africa is explained as the result of a crusade.<sup>19</sup> It ought to be remembered that

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1979, pp. 277-306; P. MARAVAL, *La politique religieuse de Justinien*, in *Les Eglises d'Orient et d'Occident*, cit., pp. 389-426; M. SIMONETTI, *La politica religiosa di Giustiniano*, in G.G. ARCHI (ed.), *Il mondo del diritto nell'epoca giustiniana: caratteri e problematiche*, Ravenna, Edizioni del Girasole, 1985, pp. 91-111 (= *Studi di cristologia postnicena*, Rome, Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2006, pp. 459-477); K.H. UTHEMANN, *Kaiser Justinian als Kirchenpolitiker und Theologe*, «Augustinianum», XXXIX, 1999, pp. 5-83; M. ANASTOS, *Justinian's Despotism Control over the Church as Illustrated by his Edicts on the Theopaschite Formula and his Letter to Pope John II in 533*, in *Mélanges Georg Ostrogorsky*, vol. 2, Belgrad, Institut d'Études Byzantines, 1964, pp. 1-11; E. CHRYSOS, *Η εκκλησιαστική πολιτική του Ιουστινιανού κατά τον έριν περί τα Τρία Κεφάλαια και την Ε' Οικουμενική Σύνοδο*, Diss. Thessaloniki, 1969 (*non vidi*). Cfr., more in general, G. DAGRON, *Empereur et prêtre: Etude sur le 'césaropapisme' byzantine*, Paris, Gallimard, 1996.

<sup>17</sup> S. PULIATTI, *Omnem facultatem damus sanctissimis episcopis. Rapporti tra gerarchia ecclesiastica e gerarchia statale nella legislazione di Giustiniano*, «Diritto@SToria», VI, 2007, [http://www.dirittoestoria.it/6/Memorie/Scienza\\_giuridica/Puliatti-Gerarchia-ecclesiastica-legislazione-Giustiniano.htm](http://www.dirittoestoria.it/6/Memorie/Scienza_giuridica/Puliatti-Gerarchia-ecclesiastica-legislazione-Giustiniano.htm) (January 2016).

<sup>18</sup> The question was approached at greater length in C.O. TOMMASI, *L'Africa tra Bizantini e Arabi*, cit., with further bibliography, among which is worth quoting Av. CAMERON, *Byzantine Africa*, cit.; EAD., *The Byzantine Reconquest of North Africa and the Impact of Greek Culture*, «Graeco-Arabica», V, 1993, pp. 153-165 (= *Changing Cultures*, cit., n. VII and X). See also the recent thorough examination by W.E. KAEGI, *Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa*, Cambridge, CUP, 2010, together with the survey provided by K. VÖSSING, *Africa zwischen Vandalen, Mauren und Byzantinern (533-548 n. Chr.)*, «ZAC», XIV, 2010, pp. 196-225. As for religious matters in particular cfr. M. HANDLEY, *Disputing the End of African Christianity*, in A. MERRILLS (ed.), *Vandals, Romans and Berbers. New Perspectives on Late Antique North Africa*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004, pp. 291-310, who relies on (and partly modifies the views of) M. TILLEY, *The Collapse of a Collegial Church: North African Christianity on the Eve of Islam*, «Theological Studies», LXII, 2001, pp. 1-20 (retrieved at <http://cdn.theologicalstudies.net/62/62.1/62.1.1.pdf>, January 2016). See also W.E. KAEGI, *Arianism and the Byzantine Army 533-546*, «Traditio», XXI, 1965, pp. 25-53.

<sup>19</sup> A general evaluation is provided by S. PULIATTI, *Concordiam dabimus qua nihil fit pul-*

the same idea, namely that Byzantine rule, coming after a century of Vandal oppression, was a blessing, is the *Leitmotiv* of the *Iohannis*, where Corippus emphasises the proto-medieval, almost Manichaean, dichotomy between good (the Byzantine) and evil (the Moors), repeatedly stating that the land of Africa is now able to recover and flourish thanks to the providential intervention of Belisarius and John Troglite.<sup>20</sup>

As already stated, genuine Latin African literature, either secular or ecclesiastical, vanished after the second half of the sixth century, a period which is to be considered crucial also in the relationship between the Church and political authority. Furthermore, this period represents the point of arrival for some tendencies that had been already developed in the previous century and, at the same time, was a foreshadowing of those fated to happen in the following one. Indeed the African Church, which from its beginnings had been strongly characterised by a sense of loyalty and the defence of orthodoxy linked to the Roman See, yet conversely, was in conflict with the Eastern bishops, in particular those of Alexandria (with the problematic legacy of Cyril) and of Constantinople (which was exposed to imperial pressure), would take the main role as opponent of imperial religious policy, as it had already been during the conflict between the (Arian) Vandals and the Catholic clergy,<sup>21</sup> and as would happen in the seventh century in the even harsher Monothelite controversy. On the other hand, autonomist tendencies and local elements were not smoothed out,<sup>22</sup> if one takes into account the rich array of documents concerning local saints and if one has to interpret in this

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*chrius: l'idea di pace nella legislazione di Giustiniano*, in U. CRISCUOLO – L. DE GIOVANNI (eds.), *Trent'anni di studi sulla Tarda Antichità: bilanci e prospettive. Atti del Convegno internazionale, Napoli, 21-23 novembre 2007*, Naples, D'Auria, 2009, pp. 311-328.

<sup>20</sup> The idea, originally discussed in CAMERON, *Corippus*, cit., is now a commonplace in the study of the *Iohannis*: see, e.g., V. ZARINI, *Rhétorique, poétique, spiritualité. La technique épique de Corippe dans la Johannide*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2003; ID., *Les forces du bien et du mal dans la poésie de Corippe*, in Y.-M. BLANCHARD – B. POUDERON – M. SCOPELLO (eds.), *Les forces du bien et du mal dans les premiers siècles de l'Église*, Paris, Beauchesne, 2010, pp. 91-103. See also MODÉLAN, *L'Afrique reconquise*, cit., pp. 40 ff.; ID., *Les églises*, cit.

<sup>21</sup> On the Arianism professed by the Vandals see the different stances taken by researchers: according to French scholarship and Y. MODÉLAN in particular, they were radical Arians (*Une guerre de religion: les deux Eglises d'Afrique à l'époque vandale, «AntTard»*, XI, 2003, pp. 21-44), whereas German scholars prefer to speak of semi-Arians. For a recent reassessment see S. FIALON, *Arianisme 'vandale' et controverse religieuse: le cas du Contra Maximinus de Cerealis de Castellum*, in E. WOLFF (ed.), *Littérature, politique et religion en Afrique vandale*, Paris, IEA, 2015, pp. 137-55; B. POTTIER, *Les Donatistes, l'Arianisme et les royaumes vandales*, *ibid.*, pp. 109-125.

<sup>22</sup> MODÉLAN, *Les Maures*, cit. Cfr. also E. FENTRESS, *Romanizing the Berbers*, «P&P», CXC, 2006, pp. 3-33.

way the testimonies of Gregory the Great on the alleged survival of Donatism.<sup>23</sup> It is as well also to remember that the charge of 'Donatism' had been employed some decades earlier against the excommunication of Pope Vigilius by an African council, because of his alleged docility in connection with the Three Chapters.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, on the eve of the seventh century, the ancient traditions of autonomy and the strong local roots of the African Church resurfaced against the authority of Rome (as can be inferred from Gregory); most importantly they reappeared in the seventh century, when African clerics and lay officials placed themselves at the head of the fight against the Byzantine emperors.

It is well known that the Three Chapters controversy, which derives its name from Justinian's condemnation of three Antiochene theologians and of their works,<sup>25</sup> charged with having inspired, or followed, Nestorius, in order to regain the favour of the Miaphysite party without a radical abolition of Chalcedon, emphasised the autonomist aspirations of the African Church and reinforced, at least in its earlier phase, the axis with Rome.<sup>26</sup> Leaving aside the colourful and partisan accounts of some

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<sup>23</sup> CAMERON, *Byzantine Africa*, cit., p. 31, and, most of all, R.A. MARKUS, *Donatism: the Last Phase*, «Studies in Church History», I, 1964, pp. 118-126; ID., *Country Bishops in Byzantine Africa*, «Studies in Church History», XVI, 1979, pp. 1-15; ID., *The Problem of 'Donatism' in the Sixth Century*, in *Gregorio Magno e il suo tempo. XIX Incontro di studiosi dell'antichità cristiana in collaborazione con l'École Française de Rome, Roma 9-12 maggio 1990*, Roma, Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1991, pp. 159-166 (= *Sacred and Secular*, cit., n. XIII); Y. DUVAL, *Gregoire et l'église d'Afrique. Les 'hommes du pape'*, *ibid.*, pp. 129-158, with a fuller scrutiny of the epistulary dossier, comprehensive of letters 1,72, 74; 2, 46, 52; 4,7, 35; 5,3; 7,8, 9, 12. MODÉLAN, *L'Afrique reconquise*, cit., p. 58, partly disagrees with this position.

<sup>24</sup> See the considerations put forward at the beginning by R.A. MARKUS, *Reflections on religious dissent in North Africa in the Byzantine period*, «Studies in Church History», III, 1966, pp. 118-126. The same counter-accusation appears to have been employed by Pelagius or Gregory the Great in his letter to the Italian schismatics some years later (see Pelagius I, *Ep.* 10,3, and Gregorius I, *Ep.* 3, MGH, *Epp.*, 2, *Appendix*, III, 466, line 44 ff. respectively, together with the considerations of C. SOTINEL, *The Three Chapters and the Transformations of Italy*, in CHAZELLE – CUBITT, *The Crisis*, cit., pp. 85-120 [98]).

<sup>25</sup> It is interesting to note the switch in meaning of the word 'chapter' (*kephalaion*), which was originally used to mean the structure of Justinian's decree, then it switched to indicate the three anathematized works and, eventually, the theologians themselves (the condemnation affected Theodore of Mopsuestia, some writings by Theodoret of Cyrrihus and a letter written by Ibas of Edessa to the Persian bishop Mari). We do not possess the original edict of condemnation, dated 543 or 544, but only a second redaction, delivered in 551 (*PL*, 69, 226-267).

<sup>26</sup> According to TILLEY, *The Collapse*, cit., p. 16, Arianism was the most pressing and urgent problem in North Africa (together with Donatism), therefore «the complication of a thoroughly foreign Christological problem» could have represented an obstacle towards the re-integration of Arians in the Church. Moreover, African bishops «did not see the writings of the Three Chapters in the same light as the East. In fact, they refused to condemn

historians such as Victor of Tunnuna<sup>27</sup> who, writing in exile, openly accuses Theodora, Antonina and other court dignitaries of being responsible for Justinian's decisions, it is true that this shift was essential in order to regain the sympathies of the Miaphysite party in a crucial (and, in some respects, tendentially turbulent) region such as Egypt.<sup>28</sup> This decision by Justinian, who on the one hand, tried to avoid the spread of radical forms of monophysism and, on the other, was compelled to quell the expansion of dyophysite positions that resented Nestorianism, showed itself to be a cause of division.<sup>29</sup> The emperor tried to appease the anti-Chalcedonian faction without abrogating the council itself, but in the end, the Monophysites were dissatisfied and considered his decision insufficient, whereas the Chalcedonians saw in it a danger for the council's authority (in particular because the three anathematized theologians had been condemned posthumously, notwithstanding their full rehabilitation at the council of 451). These events, which overlap to some extent with the Origenian question which took place in the Forties<sup>30</sup> are well known and will therefore be referred to only in passing, limiting the area of analysis to a consideration of the initial phases of the controversy, which, in Africa, can be considered to have died out by

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posthumously men whose works they had accepted as orthodox within their lifetimes. They saw a condemnation of the Three Chapters as a betrayal of Nicaea whose doctrines differentiated them from Arians». It seems, however, that African bishops were not totally uninterested in Christological subtleties: in this sense the case of Vigilius of Thapsus, who wrote cogently against Eutyches, is a clear demonstration of their awareness.

<sup>27</sup> Bishop of the small city of Tunnuna in Byzacena, and often confused with a homonymous writer from Cartenna, Victor was the author of a chronicle reassuming the events from 444 to 565: A. PLACANICA (ed.), *Vittore di Tunnuna, Chronica. Chiesa e Impero nell'età di Giustiniano*, Florence, SISMEL, 1997.

<sup>28</sup> Quite opportunely SIMONETTI, *La politica religiosa*, cit., compares Donatism and Monophysism as phenomena that find their roots also in discontent against the central power.

<sup>29</sup> In addition, one should not forget that, as an Illyrian, Justinian naturally tended towards an alignment with the Roman See, and his faith was uncompromisingly Chalcedonian.

<sup>30</sup> See especially L. PERRONE, *La Chiesa di Palestina e le controversie cristologiche. Dal concilio di Efeso (431) al secondo concilio di Costantinopoli (553)*, Brescia, Paideia, 1980, pp. 213 ff.; GRAY, *The Legacy*, cit., pp. 232-3. See also F. CARCIONE, *La politica religiosa di Giustiniano nella fase iniziale della "seconda controversia origenista" (536-543). Un nuovo fallimentare tentativo d'integrazione tra monofisismo e calcedonianesimo alla vigilia della controversia sui Tre Capitoli*, «StRicOrCr», VIII, 1985, pp. 3-18; ID., *La politica religiosa di Giustiniano nella fase conclusiva della "seconda controversia origenista" (543-553). Gli intrecci con la controversia sui Tre Capitoli*, «StRicOrCr», IX, 1986, pp. 131-147. Quite recently, a new reassessment of the Origenian controversy has been provided by A. CAMPLANI, *La percezione della crisi religiosa calcedonese in alcuni testi storici e agiografici prodotti negli ambienti dell'episcopato di Alessandria*, «Adamantius», XIX, 2013, pp. 240-255.

the beginning of the Sixties, and did not produce the same relapses that would affect northern Italy for more than a century.

Justinian's edict of 543 (or 544) had immediate repercussions in the West, where Chalcedonian doctrines were held in great esteem and were not marred by dissension.<sup>31</sup> In this first phase, the reaction of the African Church is expressed by Pontianus' diplomatic response,<sup>32</sup> which, in spite of his profession of little knowledge of the facts, at the same time reasserts the inopportunity of condemning long-since dead theologians. This is the same path later followed by Facundus and it can be read either as an elegant means to cutting off the discussion or as a reiteration of the decisions taken at the Council of Chalcedon. More importantly, such an assertion involves the idea of fidelity towards the tradition and the authority of the councils, which had been current in the West at least since Ambrose.<sup>33</sup>

Events, however, took a turn for the worse, for Pope Vigilius himself, after initial opposition to the imperial decrees, was compelled to come to Constantinople and kept there as a *de facto* prisoner until his eventual capitulation, which culminates with his adherence to the condemnatory formula:<sup>34</sup> it must be noted, however, that the situation was not as straightforward as it appears in Western sources, for it is not clear whether the pope, who had also been elected with the open support of the Byzantines and of Theodora in particular, was actually abducted

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<sup>31</sup> Cfr. R.A. MARKUS, *La politica ecclesiastica di Giustiniano e la chiesa d'Occidente*, in G.G. ARCHI (ed.), *Il mondo del diritto nell'epoca giustiniana*, cit., pp. 113-124 (Engl. transl. *Justinian's Ecclesiastical Politics and the Western Church*, in *Sacred and Secular*, cit., n. VII); C. SOTINEL, *Emperors and Popes in the Sixth Century: The Western View*, in M. MAAS (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, Cambridge, CUP, 2005, pp. 267-290; P. GALTIER, *L'Occident et le Néochalcedonisme*, «Gregorianum», XL, 1959, pp. 54-72; A. GRILLMEIER, *Die Justinianische Revision des Konzils von Chalcedon und die theologische Reaktion des Westens*, in GRILLMEIER – BACHT, *Das Konzil von Chalcedon*, cit., pp. 806-834.

<sup>32</sup> *Ep. Ad Iust. Imp.*, PL, 67,998a. MODÉRAN, *L'Afrique reconquise*, cit., p. 46. The author is currently identified with Pontianus of Thena, who was probably an old man (his name is attested to since 523) and the letter is considered the first quasi-official response of the African clergy to the emperor.

<sup>33</sup> This concept is the core of ALZATI, *Pro sancta fide*, cit., and of his reading of the controversy.

<sup>34</sup> F. CARCIONE, *Vigilio nelle controversie cristologiche del suo tempo. La lotta contro Giustiniano per la libertà della Chiesa (551-555)*, «StRicOrCf», XI, 1988, pp. 11-32; R.B. ENO, *Papal Damage Control in the Aftermath of the Three Chapters Controversy*, «Studia Patristica», XIX, 1989, pp. 52-56 (on Vigilius' successors); C. SOTINEL, *Autorité pontificale et pouvoir impérial sous le règne de Justinien: le pape Vigile*, «MEFRA», CIV, 1992, pp. 439-463; P. BLAUDEAU, *Différentes évaluations d'une crise: considérations de l'empereur Justinien et du pape Vigile sur la situation ecclésiastique à la veille de la controverse des Trois Chapitres (540)*, «Adamantius», XIX, 2013, pp. 314-323.



from Rome in 545, or decided to reach Constantinople of his own free will, perhaps also because of the terrible Gothic siege.<sup>35</sup> After spending two years in Sicily, he eventually reached the Eastern capital, where he was to remain for the next seven years, until the aftermath of the Fifth Council, fated never to see Rome again. Only the Africans were resilient and led strong opposition to the emperor, even after the death of Ferrandus, Fulgentius' disciple, who from the very beginning had taken a decisive stance in defending the Chalcedonian party, heading the African synod that excommunicated the pope.<sup>36</sup> It seems that this first phase was marked by a certain freedom in debates, although the emperor explicitly asked all the bishops to sign the condemnation.

Indeed, as can be reconstructed from the fragmentary and confused documentation, Vigilius wavered between the two opposite positions, the harshest one supported by the Africans,<sup>37</sup> especially because his resistance appears "to have been strengthened by the forcible maltreatment at the hands of the imperial government to which he was now exposed." Therefore, "responding to the widely felt disquiet, [he] rallied to resist – discreetly – a new edict on the subject issued by the Emperor in 551 ... and in 552 he published an encyclical letter excommunicating the principal supporters of the imperial condemnation of the Three Chapters." The same attitude characterized him during the council, which had been called in May 553: at first the pope "refused to participate and issued on his own authority a *Constitutum de tribus capitulis* as a definitive statement by the apostolic see", but in the end, because of his age and feebleness, "under heavy pressure, [he] gave way to the imperial demand

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<sup>35</sup> This second option is favoured by modern scholars such as C. SOTINEL, *Autorité*, cit.; EAD., *Emperors*, cit.

<sup>36</sup> This position is mainly expressed in letters 5 and 6, to Severus of Constantinople and to the Roman deacons Pelagius and Anatolius respectively. See R.B. ENO, *Doctrinal Authority in the African Ecclesiology of the Sixth Century: Ferrandus and Facundus*, «REAug», XXII, 1976, pp. 95-113; MARONE, *La difesa*, cit., pp. 287-288; MODÉLAN, *L'Afrique reconquise*, cit., pp. 44-47.

<sup>37</sup> MODÉLAN, *L'Afrique reconquise*, cit., p. 47, dealing with the crucial and obscure years 547-48: «Tout se joua alors à Constantinople, et les Africains n'y intervinrent directement que par l'intermédiaire de leurs clercs présents dans la capitale. Mais ceux-ci écrivirent beaucoup, et il est peu douteux que dans leurs provinces d'origine, malgré les développements tragiques de la guerre contre les Maures, on ne continua pas à débattre des initiatives impériales et à se mobiliser contre elles. Par Facundus d'Hermiane, nous savons que Vigile, désormais convaincu par Justinien depuis l'été 547, réunit, probablement dans l'hiver 547-548, soixante-dix évêques jusque-là hostiles à la condamnation des Trois Chapitres pour leur faire approuver son propre revirement, avant d'apporter officiellement son approbation au texte impérial. Parmi ces soixante-dix se trouvaient des Africains, dont Facundus lui-même, le seul dont le nom soit indiqué explicitement».

to endorse the council's condemnation of the Three Chapters. Vigilius's submission secured him the return to Rome, but this was prevented by his death en route, in Sicily (555). As his successor the emperor chose his deacon, Pelagius, the author of a ferocious pamphlet against the condemnation of the Three Chapters, who was now ready to realign himself with imperial policy and was to become a staunch upholder of the settlement of 553."<sup>38</sup>

Besides the bare events narrated in colourful detail by Victor of Tun-nuna (such as the imprisonment of the pope in a fortress near Constantinople, the summoning of some African bishops to justify themselves in front of the emperor and their unswerving resistance; the treason of the bishop of Hadrumetum, Primasius who, however, having yielded, was punished by heaven for this feebleness), the controversy of the Three Chapters is a meaningful testimony to the vitality of the African Church and the theological consistency of her representatives, who set themselves to following in the footsteps of Augustine.<sup>39</sup> It is important that the earliest and strongest opposition to the emperor's policies was concentrated in North Africa, a region that had a vital and unbroken theological tradition, which had not vanished even under the Vandals; on the contrary, it is possible to surmise that the persecutions endured under the Vandals contributed to strengthening and reinforcing a sense of identity of many of the figures involved in the Three Chapters controversy. In addition, the peculiar conciliar structure, with the pre-eminence it gave to the collegiality of bishops seems particularly noteworthy. In this sense it is possible to read the lead taken by African bishops against Justinian as a repetition of the experience of oppression and persecution endured under the Vandal regime, "which provided them with

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<sup>38</sup> R.A. MARKUS – C. SOTINEL, *Introduction*, in CHAZELLE – CUBITT, *The Crisis*, cit., pp. 1-14 (5). The circumstances of Pelagius' accession to the pontifical see are examined by SOTINEL, *Autorité*, cit.

<sup>39</sup> Such is the case of Facundus (see, *infra*, n. 41), especially when he rejects the usual charges against the Chalcedonians, namely that, by acknowledging two natures, they divide Christ into two. As stated by S. PETRI, «Facundus stresses that Christ's humanity has never had a separate existence from the Word, pointing out the strong connection between Christological and Trinitarian issues and clarifying his theological language to prevent misunderstandings. Augustine's reflection could provide him with a suitable Christological model to participate with authority in the Eastern theological debate of his times. Though he lived before the rise of Christological controversies, Augustine's Christology played a great part in providing later Latin (and especially African) theologians, such as Facundus, with the cultural means to face them» (*Facundus of Hermiane*, in K. POLLMANN – W. OTTEN (eds.), *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, Oxford, OUP, 2014, pp. 969-970).

the spiritual and intellectual resources for resistance to interference by the secular power in the Church's doctrinal development. In the years leading up to the Council of Carthage in 550, the outlines of a radical case against the condemnation became fixed."<sup>40</sup> On a more practical level, it is possible that the oppressive "fiscal burden and the Byzantine army's inability to guarantee the Africans' security" (with reference to the Berber revolts) were responsible for a progressive undermining of loyalty to the Emperor and the growth of larger strata of opposition, which, in the final analysis, provoked brutal official repression.

Recent studies devoted to Facundus, whose work has been republished and commented on, together with a re-evaluation of a character that had remained in the shadows until a few years ago, have also contributed to highlighting the historical aspects of the controversy.<sup>41</sup> As for Liberatus, the deacon of the Carthaginian bishop Reparatus, whom in all likelihood he followed in exile, his *Breviarium*, written after 555 and probably before 566 (for he is aware of the death of Vigilius, while the Alexandrian patriarch Theodosius is mentioned as still alive), represents a dossier and a summary of the previous events, starting with the Council of Ephesus, which had taken place more than a century earlier.<sup>42</sup> The question of the so-called Three Chapters is discussed only at the end, so it is possible to surmise that Liberatus wanted to retrace the roots of the

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<sup>40</sup> R.A. MARKUS – C. SOTINEL, *Epilogue*, in CHAZELLE – CUBITT, *The Crisis*, cit., pp. 265-278 (268).

<sup>41</sup> M. SIMONETTI, *Haereticum non facit ignorantia. Una nota su Facondo di Ermiane e la sua difesa dei Tre Capitoli*, «Omphéus», I, 1980, pp. 76-105; A. PLACANICA, *Facondo Ermianense e la polemica per i Tre Capitoli*, «Maia», XLIII, 1991, pp. 41-46; A. SOLIGNAC, *Un auteur trop peu connu: Facundus d'Hermiane*, «REAug», LI, 2005, pp. 357-374. The work has been recently edited in French: Facundus d'Hermiane, *Défense de Trois Chapitres (À Justinien)*, introduction, traduction et notes par A. Fraïsse-Bétoulières [Sch 471, 478, 479, 484, 499], Paris, 2002-2006 (4 volumes, the fourth of which also contains *Contre Mocianus, Épître de la foi catholique*, introduction, traduction et notes par A. Solignac); see also S. PETRI (ed.), *Facondo di Ermiane, Difesa dei tre Capitoli*, Roma, Città Nuova, 2007.

<sup>42</sup> Besides the Italian annotated translation (F. CARCIONE [ed.], *Liberato di Cartagine, Breve storia della controversia nestoriana ed eutichiana*, Anagni, Pontificio Collegio Leoniano, 1989), which is sometimes not devoid of historical inaccuracies, for a general reassessment of this shadowy figure, see P. BLAUDEAU, *Liberatus de Carthage ou l'historiographie comme service diaconal*, «Augustianum», L, 2010, pp. 543-565; ID., *Adapter le genre du bréviaire plutôt qu'écrire une histoire ecclésiastique? Autour du choix retenu par Liberatus de Carthage pour rapporter le déroulement des controverses christologiques des V<sup>e</sup>-VI<sup>e</sup> s.*, in G. GREATREX – H. ELTON (eds.), *Shifting Genres in Late Antiquity*, Farnham-Burlington, Ashgate, 2015, pp. 69-80. A monographical issue of the «ZAC» has been recently devoted to a thorough re-examination of Liberatus and his context: see V.H. DRECOLL – M. MEIER (eds.), *Das 'Breviarium' des Liberatus von Karthago*, «ZAC», XIV, 2010.

present conflict (regarded as the result of ‘cunning frauds’ and intrigues, and openly charged with being a ‘scandal’), in order to produce a sort of ‘memorial’ for Justinian. This is testified to by its conciseness, which follows the pattern employed by Ferrandus in the *Breviatio canonum*, and perhaps is a way of distinguishing it from the long doctrinal speculation elaborated by Facundus of Hermiane.

In the final chapter of his work,<sup>43</sup> Liberatus connects the intrigues of the Acephalites (i.e. the Eutychians) and their archbishop, Theodorus Askidas, who, together with the empress, persuaded a far too ingenuous Justinian (originally filo-Chalcedonian and inclined to prosecute the Acephalites) that there was a simple and painless way to let the Acephalites re-attain communion with the Catholics, namely by emending the articles of the council of Chalcedon concerning the authors suspected of Nestorian sympathies: Theodorus of Mopsuestia, Theodoret and Ibas. After having repeated that the emperor had been caught in the Acephalites’ snare, Liberatus offers an abrupt end to his treatise, stating that the events that followed the condemnation of the Three Chapters are well known, and perhaps too painful to be narrated in detail. What is more, he twice repeats that the scandal entered the world because of scheming bishops, among whom he also counts Vigilius’ deacon (and soon-to-be successor), Pelagius. This is, however, the only polemical point in a work that otherwise presents a ‘neutral’ point of view: in this sense, the text of the *Breviarium* has been compared to Corippus’ *Iohannis*, as a means, that is, to making the emperor sensible of the African cause, the former from a religious perspective, the latter from a secular one.<sup>44</sup> These

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<sup>43</sup> Lib., *Brev.* 24: «Haec audiens imperator, et dolum dolosorum minime prospiciens, suggestionem eorum libenter accepit, et hoc se facere promptissime spondit. Sed rursus illi callida fraude rogaverunt eum, ut dictaret librum in damnationem trium capitulorum: quo libro eius edito, et toti mundo manifestato, dum emendare princeps erubescit, irrevocabilis causa fieret; sciebant enim principem solita levitate, scandalo emergente, sententiam suam posse corrigere, seseque ad periculum pervenire. Annuit eis princeps, et hoc se laetus implere promisit, et relinquens operis sui studium, unum in damnationem trium capitulorum condidit librum, pro delictis nostris, nobis omnibus notissimum. Caetera vero quae subsequenter in episcopis et catholica Ecclesia ab eodem principe facta sunt, quomodo consentientes episcopi in trium damnationem capitulorum muneribus ditabantur, vel non consentientes depositi in exilium missi sunt, vel aliqui fuga latitantes in angustiis felicem exitum susceperunt, quoniam nota sunt omnibus, puto nunc a me silenda. Illud liquere omnibus credo, per Pelagium diaconum, et Theodorum Caesareae Cappadociae episcopum, hoc scandalum in Ecclesiam fuisse ingressum: quod etiam publice ipse Theodorus clamavit se et Pelagium vivos incendendos, per quos hoc scandalum introivit in mundum».

<sup>44</sup> BLAUDEAU, *Normalisation africaine?*, cit., p. 124, who supposes that the two may have been acquainted. Conversely M. MEIER’s reading, *Das Breviarium des Liberatus von Karthago*.

works present a narration of the causes that led to the present status and show, to varying extents, a certain local pride in the African region.

It seems sound, however, to offer a reading of the sources that encompasses both chronicles and theological treatises, because the accounts in chronicles are quite scanty and ideologically biased, resulting in a somewhat 'Manichaean' presentation. In this respect it is possible, I think, to compare the works and the narrative patterns of Victor of Tunnuna and his homonym Victor of Vita, for they both share a similar genre and both are concerned with the oppression of the Catholic clergy.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, the theme of a gruesome death as a heavenly punishment for evil or blasphemous deeds is a stock motif from Lactantius' *de Mortibus Persecutorum* onwards. Therefore, just as Victor of Vita emphasises the painful illness and death of Huniric as the just reward for his tyranny, so too does Victor of Tunnuna link the cancer that consumed the empress Theodora to her opposition to the Chalcedonian faction; significantly, the choice of an adverb like *prodigiose* points to a sort of heavenly or supernatural intervention:<sup>46</sup>

Theodora Augusta Calcidonensis sinodi inimica canceris plaga corpore toto perfusa uitam prodigiose finiuit (140).

Similarly, a cruel and sordid death punished the bishops who apostatised (in some cases after having been bribed by the emperor):

Firmus concilii Numidie primatus donis principis corruptus damnationi eorundem capitulorum assensum prebuit, sed ad propria remeans in nauis morte turpissima interiit ... Primasius quoque Aquimetens[is] monasterio religatus, sed Boetio primate Biza[n]ceni concilii morte preuento, ut ei succederet, memorate damnationi protinus assensit reuersusque ad sua, que prius defendebat,

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*Einige Hypothesen zu seiner Intention*, «ZAC», XIV, 2010, pp. 130-148, namely, that the work was to be intended as filo-Justinian propaganda, seems far too paradoxical and, in the final analysis, is not convincing.

<sup>45</sup> For the *Historia persecutionis Africanae provinciae* as a 'jardin des supplices' see recently D. SHANZER, *Intentions and Audiences: History, Hagiography, Martyrdom, and Confession in Victor of Vita's Historia Persecutionis*, in MERRILLS (ed.), *Vandals, Romans and Berbers*, cit., pp. 271-290. See also H. INGLEBERT, *Les interventions divines dans les textes narratifs catholiques à l'époque vandale*, in WOLFF, *Littérature, politique et religion*, cit., pp. 127-137. Although an explicit comparison between the two Victors is not put forward, MODÉLAN, *L'Afrique reconquise*, cit., 64 ff., insists on the parallel situation between the persecution suffered by the African Catholics under the Vandals and under the Byzantines.

<sup>46</sup> S. ADAMIAK, *La narrazione storica come mezzo della polemica teologica da Liberato di Cartagine e Vittore da Tunnuna*, in *La teologia dal V all'VIII secolo fra sviluppo e crisi. XLI Incontro di studiosi dell'antichità cristiana (Roma, 9-11 maggio 2013)*, Rome, Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2014, pp. 273-281.

ualidissimis persecutionibus impugnauit, fidelibusque calunnias generando, eorumque substantias auferendo (145).

Conversely, 'good' or heroic bishops are regarded as martyrs, as in the case of Verecundus, Reparatus,<sup>47</sup> and, most of all, Facundus, who is introduced into the narration by stressing his merits and drawing on 'bright' imagery:

Eo tempore duodecim libri Facundi Hermianensis ecclesie episcopi refulescere, quibus euentissime declarauit tria sepe fata capitula in proscriptione fidei catholice et apostolice Calcidonensis que concilii fuisse damnata (142).

This latter reference is a clear allusion to Facundus' main work, the twelve books on the *Defence of the Three Chapters (Pro Defensione Trium Capitulorum)*, published in 550, which undoubtedly represents the culmination of the African theology of that period, its argumentation being solid and consistent, especially as far as Christology is concerned. Having taken an active part in the controversy since its very beginning, Facundus had been in Constantinople since 547, where he started the redaction of his work, which is directly addressed to the emperor and which, after discussing theological issues, considers the legal aspects.<sup>48</sup> Facundus insists on the unlawfulness of a posthumous condemnation, for it implies the revision of what has been sanctioned in a Council (namely, the orthodoxy of these three theologians), adding that even if some of their statements now seem questionable, Theodore, Theodoret and Ibas are entitled to a milder interpretation. This indeed is what Augustine did, whose attitude is set against the ambition, fondness for intrigue, and quarrelsomeness of the Eastern clergy, regarding the errors of the monk Leporius. The last book is also particularly significant, where Facundus approaches the question concerning the relationship between Empire and Church: adhering to the traditional Western position, he states that the emperor, as

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<sup>47</sup> «Verecundus uero ecclesie Iuncensis episcopus, in defensione memoratorum perdurans capitulorum, Calcidona, ubi refugium fecerat, in diuersorio gloriose martyris Euphymie de hac uita migravit ad Deum; Reparatus archiepiscopus, plurimis calumniis impetit, pro eo quod damnationi trium memoratorum capitulorum assensum non prebuit, officio sumtibus que priuatus Eucayda exilio religatur et Primosus diaconus apocrisarius eius, postquam damnauit que sunt sinodaliter atque uniuersaliter defensata, eo superstite contra uota cleri simul que et populi episcopus Cartaginensis ecclesie ordinatur» (145).

<sup>48</sup> V. MONACHINO, *Uno speculum principis in Facondo di Hermaine*, in *Kirche und Staat in Idee und Geschichte des Abendlandes. Festschrift Ferdinand Maas*, Vienna-Munich, Herold, 1973, pp. 55-80; MODÉLAN, *L'Afrique reconquise*, cit., p. 60, with reference to Gelasius' famous twelfth letter sent to the emperor Anastasius in 494.

a layman, must not usurp his prerogatives by deliberating on theological issues or attempting to rule the Church, despite being endowed with the authority to enforce by legal means any decisions taken by the bishops.

Little is known about Facundus' activity in the following years: in all likelihood he went back to Africa, but he kept a low profile, probably because of repression. Notwithstanding this, a short time before the Council of 553 he was able to write another treatise, *Against Mocianus* (an otherwise shadowy figure), with the intent of denouncing the culpable weakness of many bishops, including the pope, as well as the arrogant behaviour of the emperor.

Indeed, if at first the Chalcedonian party seemed to be pre-eminent, managing to excommunicate Theodore Askidas and the patriarch of Constantinople, Mennas, soon after this, however, events took an unexpected turn. During this time, a shift between the initial years (544-51) and the period following the council (553) can be observed: whereas, as has been noted, the earliest phase and even the obscure years 550-552,<sup>49</sup> are marked by frank debate and an attempt at mediation, subsequent events took a turn for the worse. After the council and the capitulation of the pope himself, African resistance lost its effectiveness, fading to nothing in the space of a decade, on account of both internal divisions and imperial repression, as emerges from both the sad picture of Africa presented by Victor of Tunnuna and, to a lesser extent, from the more reticent account by Liberatus. Reparatus, the authoritarian bishop of Carthage, was exiled to the Pontic city of Euchaita in 551-52 with the political accusation of treachery and conspiracy.<sup>50</sup> The revolt that followed was suffocated in blood and his see was taken by the deacon Primosus, an acolyte of the emperor;<sup>51</sup> Verecundus fled from Constantinople but died soon afterwards. The abbot Felix was imprisoned in Sinope and there he died. Like Primasius, Firmus, the primate of Numidia, was first persuaded to sign the condemnation, but he withdrew his support subsequently, dying on the return voyage to Africa. With the leaders of the

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<sup>49</sup> An interesting document (the anonymous *Ep. 4*, MGH, *Epp.*, 3, p. 439) is quoted by MODÉLAN, *L'Afrique reconquise*, cit., pp. 49-50, namely a letter mentioning the summons issued by the pope of some bishops from Africa and Illyricum to Constantinople in order to discuss the question. This document appears to date from 552 and testifies to the existence of a dense web of diplomatic relations.

<sup>50</sup> MODÉLAN, *L'Afrique reconquise*, cit., pp. 51-53. Surprisingly enough an official historian like Procopius tries to disculpate Reparatus: *ibid.*, 72, with the mention of *Bell. Vand.* 2, 26, 23-6; 31.

<sup>51</sup> These events are recorded in the afore-mentioned *Ep. 4*, MGH, *Epp.*, 3, p. 440.

North Africans detained, in exile, or dead, Justinian was free to put pressure on North African Christians more directly. He exiled any bishops and abbots who refused his will. He deposed still others and installed new bishops by force, jailing some clergy and forcing others to flee for fear of exile among the Berbers or in other inhospitable places.”<sup>52</sup>

Once again, the grounds for the Byzantines’ easy victory may lie in different causes: the divisions between the primatial see of Carthage and the other ecclesiastical provinces (mainly Byzacena), which were exploited by the government;<sup>53</sup> the need for protection against renewed threat from the Moors in the 560s, which undoubtedly contributed to dissolving the hostility towards the imperial government; and, finally, the tolerance towards dissent adopted by Justin II, in a reversion of his predecessor’s policies. Thus, Byzantine Africa was characterised by a cohesive and independent Church, aligned with local governing élites, whose loyalty and localism seem to have been strengthened by Justinian’s interventions.<sup>54</sup>

As a conclusive remark, Corippus may be mentioned once again, for he offers some interesting and, so far, unnoticed information. Little is known about the experiences he went through after his move to Constantinople: he discreetly alludes to his misfortunes at the beginning of his panegyric poem for Justin II, written soon after 565 to celebrate the accession to the throne of Justinian’s nephew,<sup>55</sup> a disgraceful event

<sup>52</sup> TILLEY, *The Collapse*, cit., p. 17.

<sup>53</sup> MODÉLAN, *L’Afrique reconquise*, cit., pp. 55-6, and 76-7, relying on the chroniclers. Such a division can be even configured as a schism, although without the same implications of the division that would have affected in the same circumstances the bishoprics of Northern Italy. Moreover, according to the *Epistula fidei*, 7 (attributed to Facundus, its authenticity being contested by Solignac), it was composed after few years.

<sup>54</sup> MARKUS, SOTINEL, *Epilogue*, cit., p. 269.

<sup>55</sup> *Praef.* 37-48: «Senio dextram, pie, porrige fesso. / Tu mihi materiam dicendi carminis aptam, / ingenium studiumque dabis. Cui vincere fas est / indomitas gentes et barbara subdere regna, / vince meae saevam fortunae, deprecor, iram. / Vincere fortunam plus est quam vincere bella. / Nudatus propriis et plurima vulnera passus / ad medicum veni, precibus pia pectora pulsans, / ad medicum, verbo pestem qui summovet uno / et sine composito medicamine vulnera curat. / Huic ego sananti, si qua est fiducia servis, / grates semper ago, et pro munere carmina porto». («Pious one, stretch out your right hand to a weary old man. You will give me fit material for the poem which I must compose, you will give me the power and the energy. You for whom it is right to conquer unvanquished peoples and to lay low barbarian kingdoms, conquer, I beseech you, the fierce anger of my fate. To conquer fate is greater than to conquer in war. Bereft of my possessions and after suffering many wounds I have come to a doctor, beating on his pious breast with my entreaties, to a doctor who removes illness with one word and who tends wounds without any manufactured remedy. To him, if subjects have any loyalty,



which, if it actually happened and was not simply a literary stereotype, some scholars are inclined to link with an involvement in the Three Chapters affair: this may have taken the form of a despoliation of his goods in his native province of Byzacena, in the aftermath of the repression of the ecclesiastical rebellion.<sup>56</sup> In any case, this is mere speculation, for there is no trace of anything of the kind, apart from the link with Verecundus. On the contrary, the importance of a commission such as that of the *Laus Iustini*, where he deals with court ceremonial with the confidence of an insider, presupposes that he had high-ranking patrons who may have introduced him at court.

As far as the Three Chapters controversy is concerned, two points seem significant. Following the same laudatory pattern of the *Iohannis*, Corippus pays attention to the providential aspects of political power, endowing court ceremonial with a deep symbolic meaning by stating that the sovereign is God's vicar on earth, as well as presenting the

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I give continual thanks for his cure, and in place of payment I bring my poetry»). Similar tenets are expressed as well at the end of the panegyric to the *quaestor and magister* Anastasius, which follows this preface and which contains the much debated passage (*infra*, n. 56) on the *sacri apices*. For a seminal commentary on the poem and on the passage see AV. CAMERON (ed.), Flavius Cresconius Corippus, *In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris libri IV*, London, Athlone Press, 1976, whose translation we employ.

<sup>56</sup> BLAUDEAU, *Normalisation africaine*, cit., p. 133 ff. Some of the commonly accepted suppositions on Corippus' life have been questioned (although, we think, more for the sake of speculation than on solid ground) by B. BALDWIN, *The Career of Corippus*, «CQ», XXVIII, 1978, pp. 372-376. On the same question see also the reply of AV. CAMERON, *The Career of Corippus Again*, «CQ», XXX, 1980, pp. 534-539. The major dissent between the two is about the interpretation of lines 41-51 of the panegyric for Anastasius, with the obscure reference to the *sacri apices*, probably a commendation from the emperor or from some high dignitaries. Corippus, indeed, is celebrating Anastasius and the imperial couple for the restoration of Africa and immediately adds: «me quoque gaudentem, quaestorum maxime, redde. / quod labor indulsit, quod fessis provida Musis / alma per insomnes meruit vigilantia noctes, / hi sacri monstrant apices. Lege, summe magister, / et causam defende meam. Tibi sanctio vestrum / commendat famulum. Vestro de fonte creatur / rivulus iste meus, sub cuius nomine gesto / principis officium. Fessae miserere senectae, / vulneribusque meis solita pietate medere, / ut grates tibi laetus agam, sacrosque triumphos / principis invicti felici carmine dicam». («Make me rejoice, best of quaestors. This holy decree shows what my labour has given me, what blessed farsighted vigilance has earned me by sleepless nights even when my Muse was weary. Read, honoured magister, and plead my case. The decree commends to you your servant. From your fountain springs that stream of mine, you under whose name I perform my duty for the emperor. Pity my weary old age and heal my wounds with your habitual piety, so that I may thank you in happiness and proclaim the holy triumphs of the unconquered emperor in my happy song»). Even though the idea of Baldwin, that in this passage *apex* must mean the panegyric itself (by which Corippus is trying to obtain the imperial favour) sounds plausible, it is more appropriate referring the word to some honour that had already been conferred to him (perhaps as a reward for the poem to be delivered).

kernel of late antique and early Medieval theocracy: namely, that the Roman Empire is decreed by God, or indeed, is the property of God (*Res Romana Dei est*, 3,333). This also affects religious rites and rituals, which Corippus chooses to represent in great detail, as part of an official ceremonial supported by Justin. In particular, the poet inserts two prayers that precisely reflect the theological issues at stake in his age, which aimed at demonstrating the emperor's orthodoxy:<sup>57</sup> for instance the invocation to the Virgin Mary, pronounced by the empress Sophia before her coronation (2,52-69). The source for this is to be found in the flourishing of devotional or homiletic literature in the aftermaths of the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, with their long-lasting debates on Mary as Mother of God, together with the discussion of Christ's natures, in particular in the sermons of Proclus of Constantinople or in the poetical production (Romanos the Melodos, the *Akathist Hymn*).<sup>58</sup> The prayer summarises some epithets of traditional Marian worship (such as *regina caeli*,<sup>59</sup> mother of the Saviour,<sup>60</sup> eternally virgin,<sup>61</sup> believer [*credula*],<sup>62</sup> blessed [*benedicta*]<sup>63</sup>); moreover, the text clearly recalls some New Testament passages, in particular the reference to *kenosis* and the

<sup>57</sup> We already discussed the passage in C.O. TOMMASI, *Aspetti cletici e aretologici nelle preghiere corippee*, «Koinonia», XXVIII-XXIX, 2004-2005 (= U. CRISCUOLO [ed.], *Forme della cultura nella Tarda Antichità*, I. Atti del VI Convegno dell'Associazione di Studi Tardoantichi, Napoli e S. Maria Capua Vetere, 29 settembre - 2 ottobre 2003), pp. 217-244, with further references. See also V. ZARINI, *L'éloge de l'empereur Justin II et de l'impératrice Sophie chez Corippe et chez Venance Fortunat* (Poèmes, Appendice, 2), «Camenae», XI, 2012, pp. 1-13 ([http://www.paris-sorbonne.fr/IMG/pdf/4Zarini\\_Camenae.pdf](http://www.paris-sorbonne.fr/IMG/pdf/4Zarini_Camenae.pdf), retrieved January 2016).

<sup>58</sup> N. CONSTAS, *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin Mary in Late Antiquity: Homilies 1-5, Texts and Translations*, Leiden-Boston-Köln, Brill, 2003; L.M. PELTOMAA, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn*, Leiden-Boston-Köln, Brill, 2001, with further references. The dating of the *Akathistos Hymn* in the fourth century is proposed by C.A. TRYPANIS, *Fourteen Early Byzantine Cantica*, Vienna, Böhlau, 1968, pp. 17-39, but see the reservations of L.M. PELTOMAA, *The Image*, cit., pp. 40 ff. For a general perspective on Mariology see S. BENKO, *The Virgin Goddess. Studies in the Pagan and Christian Roots of Mariology*, Leiden-Boston-Köln, Brill, 2004, whereas the period of Justin II is investigated by AV. CAMERON, *The Theotokos in sixth-century Constantinople. A City Finds its Symbol*, «JThS», XXIX, 1978, pp. 79-108 (= *Continuity and Change in Sixth-Century Byzantium*, Aldershot, 1981, n. XIII).

<sup>59</sup> BENKO, *The Virgin*, cit., pp. 87 ff. with references to the astral motifs in the fertility goddesses of Asia Minor.

<sup>60</sup> The expression *quam deus elegit matrem sibi* is a reference to the *Theotokos*, on which see PELTOMAA, *The Image*, cit., pp. 74 ff., 135 ff.

<sup>61</sup> This image relies on the prophecy of Isaiah, 7,14, but it is worth noting the official (since 527 and 533) epithet *ἀειπάρθενος*, on which cfr. PELTOMAA, *The Image*, cit., pp. 126 ff.

<sup>62</sup> The expression probably relies on Prud., *Apoth.* 580, *virgo concepit credula Christi*.

<sup>63</sup> Cfr. the 'Hail' offered to Mary by the angel in Lk 1,28.

incarnation in Philippians 2,7, which is central in the *Akathist Hymn* as well,<sup>64</sup> and presents some ‘paradoxical’ imagery, such as the Virgin as Mother of her creator (l. 58), or the idea of generation without the aid of a man (*sine semine patris*), to be paralleled with *Hymn. Akath. 2,5* and Roman., *Cont. 1,11*:<sup>65</sup>

virgo, creatoris genetrix sanctissima mundi,  
 excelsi regina poli, specialiter una  
 vera parens et virgo manens, sine semine patris  
 quam deus elegit matrem sibi, credula verbum  
 concipiens nostram genuisti feta salutem.  
 o pietas miranda dei dictuque tremenda!  
 caelorum factor dominus deus, unica patris  
 forma dei, verae sese velamine carnis  
 induit, et servi formam de virgine sumpsit.  
 quos tibi, quos genito dignos solvemus honores  
 pro tantis, benedicta, bonis? te, gloria matrum,  
 auxiliumque inploro tuum: te semper adorem,  
 te fatear dominam servatricemque novarum  
 Iustini rerum.

Most holy Virgin, mother of the creator of the world, queen of high heaven, at once and uniquely truly mother and ever virgin, whom God chose for his mother without a father’s seed, and who believed and conceived the Word and became pregnant and gave birth to our Redeemer. O wondrous piety of God, terrible at the utterance. Our Lord God the maker of the heavens, the one form of God the Father, took upon Himself a clothing of real flesh and took the shape of a subject from a virgin. What honour shall we pay you and your Son, blessed one, worthy of such great gifts? You, glory of Mothers, I beseech and ask for your aid: may I always worship you and confess you as our Lady and the preserver of Justin’s new rule.

What seems important, in the present context, is the fact that Corippus offers testimony of the official veneration of the Theotokos in sixth-century Byzantium, which allows us to surmise that the worship was introduced earlier than usually supposed, namely after the defeat of the Avars in 626.<sup>66</sup> Finally, it is surely significant that Corippus highlights

<sup>64</sup> *Prooem. 1,6* (ὄν καὶ βλέπων ἐν μήτρα / σου λαβόντα δούλου μορφὴν) and strophe 9,3.

<sup>65</sup> For a comparison with Latin antecedents such as Claud., *carm. min. 32 (de Salvatore)*, Ausonius (*Griphus*), and Merobaudes (*de Christo*) see TOMMASI, *Aspetti cletici*, cit., p. 237.

<sup>66</sup> CAMERON, *The Theotokos*, cit., p. 94 ff. See also V.M. LIMBERIS, *Divine Heiress. The Virgin Mary and the Creation of Christian Constantinople*, London-New York, Routledge, 1994.

the divine nature of Christ and in particular the Incarnation: this detail is probably to be related to the fact (attested to in John of Ephesus) that the empress Sophia had recently converted to Catholicism, abandoning Monophysism.<sup>67</sup>

Thus, Corippus undoubtedly stands as the 'port parole' of the official line in theological matters: the following example, namely, the long poetical paraphrase of the Creed (4,292-311), which stands almost alone in Latin, is even more striking and should be read in the same direction. These lines are meant to provide an allegorical representation of the newly inaugurated basilica of Saint Sophia and by means of this prayer the poet chooses to make explicit the symbolic meaning of the Trinity, which is to be praised for its precision in rendering the theological subtlety of the dogma. At first glance, in fact, this is presented in the form of a description of the mosaics adorning the basilica of St. Sophia, which had been praised in the previous lines as more imposing and marvellous than the temple built by Solomon. If so, this passage would be very close to Paulinus Nolanus' *Carmen* 27, which describes the Basilica in Nola and its frescoes, not to mention other Greek descriptions of churches and sacred buildings, among which the most notable one is that of Paul the Silentiary, which is roughly contemporary with Corippus.<sup>68</sup> However, despite some attempts at identifying the scenes depicted on the mosaics, it is safer to conclude that Corippus is not actually describing the mosaics.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Cfr. *Hist. Eccl.* 2,10: CAMERON, *In praise*, cit., p. 152.

<sup>68</sup> After the classic study by P. FRIEDLÄNDER, *Johannes von Gaza, Paulus Silentiarius und Prokopius von Gaza: Kunstbeschreibungen justinianischer Zeit*, Leipzig-Berlin, Teubner, 1912, see the new edition by C. DE STEFANI, *Paulus Silentiarius, Descriptio Sanctae Sophiae. Descriptio Ambonis*, Berlin-New York, De Gruyter, 2011, together with the studies of M. WHITBY, *The occasion of Paul the Silentiary's Ekphrasis of S. Sophia*, «CQ», XXXV, 1985, pp. 215-228; R. MACRIDES – P. MAGDALINO, *The Architecture of Ekphrasis: Construction and Context of Paul the Silentiary's Poem on Hagia Sophia*, «BMGS», XII, 1988, pp. 47-82. See also the important inquiry by M.L. FOBELLI, *Un tempio per Giustiniano: Santa Sofia di Costantinopoli e la "Descrizione" di Paolo Silenziario*, Rome, Viella, 2005.

<sup>69</sup> In *The Role and Function of Ekphrasis in Latin North African Poetry (5th-6th century)*, in V. ZIMMERL-PANAGL – D. WEBER (eds.) *Text und Bild*, Wien, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010, pp. 255-287, we argued that the section conveys the same propagandistic function as contemporary ekphrasis of public buildings and churches. Indeed, «these passages as a whole offer a tangible demonstration of the sometimes ambiguous relationship between description and narration sketched out in all the literary theorizations of ekphrasis. Furthermore, reading the poem as a whole makes clear that descriptions are almost omnipresent, sometimes as such, sometimes linked to similes, and, finally, sometimes merging into the narrative passages. Though meant as a continuous narration, the poetic matter itself offers the opportunity to show some details in slow motion,

The whole passage is an open tribute to the decree issued by Justin immediately after his accession, namely the Creed formula of 533, which was to be publicly recited in all churches.<sup>70</sup> By means of this declaration, Justin aligned himself with the Fifth Oecumenical Council held in Constantinople: together with the condemnation of the Three Chapters, the council ratified the so-called Neo-Chalcedonian theology. As a court poet, Corippus extols the emperor's piety and orthodoxy, which he directly links with heavenly protection. It is no coincidence that the work celebrates Justin II, the emperor who put an end to the controversy in Africa and, at the same time, supported Neo-Chalcedonism against the Monophysites:<sup>71</sup>

internis oculis illic pia cernitur esse  
 indivisa manens patris genitique potestas  
 spiritus et sanctus. substantia creditur una,  
 tres sunt personae, sub quis tria nomina fulgent.  
 utque pater deus est, genitus deus aequus honore,  
 spiritus et sanctus pariter deus. ex tribus una  
 e caelo veniens mundi persona redemptrix  
 humani generis formam de virgine sumpsit.  
 sponte sua venit, factorque et conditor orbis  
 factus homo est, verusque deus non destitit esse.  
 natus, non factus, plenum de lumine lumen,  
 una in naturis extans persona duabus,

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thanks to a clever use of ekphrastic passages, often linked to similar devices like catalogues, enumerations, and similes. This kind of ekphrasis inserted in a larger context has been often understood by modern scholars as interventive, for it disrupts the narrative structure of the text, pauses or varies the pace, or provides a self-reflexive and metatextual reflection on the entire work» (p. 273). To the bibliography quoted in the study should also be added G. AGOSTI, *Immagini e poesia nella tarda antichità. Per uno studio dell'estetica visuale della poesia greca fra III e VI sec. d.C.*, in L. CRISTANTE (ed.), *Incontri Triestini di Filologia Classica 4, 2004-2005*, Trieste, Edizioni Università di Trieste, 2006, pp. 351-374.

<sup>70</sup> IOH. BICL., *Chron.* a. 567. Cfr. also EVAGRIUS, *Hist. Eccl.* 5,4, who cites the text and is the sole Greek source for the text (which is also very similar to the one proclaimed by Justinian in 551). The following quotations from Evagrius are taken from M. WHITBY (ed.), *The Ecclesiastical History*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2000, p. 257, who dates the edict, seen as «the culmination of a series of protracted discussions between different Monophysite groups, and between Monophysites and Chalcedonians» to 571 (if so, Corippus would have been unaware of it, for the *Laus Iustini* was composed between 566 and 567; he could, however, have relied on the previous Neo-Chalcedonian formulas).

<sup>71</sup> AV. CAMERON, *The Early Religious Policies of Justin II*, «Studies in Church History», XIII, 1976, pp. 51-67 (= *Continuity and Change*, cit., n. X). ZARINI, *L'Eloge*, cit., p. 4, also remarks that Anastasius, the afore-mentioned quaestor and patron of Corippus, was one of the strongest opponents of the Monophysites.

consimilis deitate patris, hominique profecto  
 consimilis, sine peccato peccata relaxans,  
 plurima per populum faciens miracula Christus.  
 calcavit mortem moriens, vitamque resurgens  
 vita dedit cunctis in se credentibus. ipse  
 in caelum ascendens a dextris sedit honoris  
 aequaeui patris, iudex venturus in orbem  
 et regnum sine fine tenens.

there with the eye of the mind is seen the pious and undivided lasting power of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. There is believed to be one substance, but three persons, under which three names are shining. And as the Father is God, so is the Son God with equal honour and the Holy Spirit equally God. From three one person came down from heaven as the redeemer of the world and took human form from a virgin. He came of His own accord, the maker and creator of the world was made man and did not cease to be truly God. He was born, not made, full light of light, one person in two natures, like the Father in Godhead, and fully like man, forgiving sins without sin, Christ performing many miracles among the people. In death He trampled down death and as life, rising again He gave life to all who believe in Him. He ascended into heaven and sat in honour at the right hand of the Father, equal to Him in age, to come as a judge for the world, and holding a kingdom without end.

These lines represent an accurate poetical paraphrase of the Neo-Chalcedonian formula decreed by the Oecumenical Council of 553 and can be easily compared to its final anathemas (which are the object of a *Kontrastimitation*), or to the afore-mentioned edict issued by Justin, with substantial and effective abridgements.

The profession of three Persons in one substance (ll. 293-7) appears undoubtedly traditional, as it is the usual Latin rendering of ὑπόστασις by *persona*, which (l. 294) introduces the reference to the consubstantiality. This follows the first anathema of 533:

If anyone does not confess that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are one nature or essence, one power or authority, worshipped as a trinity of the same essence, one deity in three hypostases or persons, let him be anathema. For there is one God and Father, of whom are all things, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and one Holy Spirit, in whom are all things.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> It is also explained at greater length in Justin's decree, as referred by Evagrius, *Hist. Eccl.* 5,4: «we trust in Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a consubstantial Trinity, a single Divinity or nature and substance in word and deed, believing in a single force and power and

The most interesting aspect, however, concerns Christology, which was the core of the fifth-century controversies. In particular, Corippus insists on the idea that, in the Incarnation, Christ did not abolish his divinity, nor is it possible to suppose that Christ as God is separated from Christ as human. This is clearly stated in the second and third anathema, which condemn those who do «not confess that God the Word was twice begotten, the first before all time from the Father, non-temporal and bodiless, the other in the last days when he came down from the heavens and was incarnate by the holy, glorious, God-bearer, ever-virgin Mary, and born of her» and those who say «that God the Word who performed miracles is one and Christ who suffered is another, or says that God the Word was together with Christ who came from woman, or that the Word was in him as one person is in another, but is not one and the same, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, incarnate and become human, and that the wonders and the suffering which he voluntarily endured in flesh were not of the same person». Interestingly, Corippus presents all these statements in the form of the deeds performed by Christ during his life.

The crucial passage, however, is represented by line 303, «una in naturis extans persona duabus», a statement that is comparable to the seventh and eighth anathema, where the distinction into two natures is interpreted in order to outline the distinction of the two components without separation (a doctrine which was accepted by Severan monophysites as well and which sought for a mediation with Cyril's theology),<sup>73</sup> but previously also with the Credal formula of Chalcedon:

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energy in three hypostases or persons: ... For we worship a unity in trinity and a trinity in unity ... a unity in respect of essence or divinity, but a trinity in respect to its characters or hypostases or persons. For it is separated inseparably, so to speak, and is separably united. For the Divinity is one in three, and the three are one, those things in which the Divinity is, or to speak more precisely, which are the Divinity. We worship the Father as God, the Son as God, the Holy Spirit as God».

<sup>73</sup> The two passages are directed against those who deny that the ineffable union took place without confusion, a union in which neither the nature of the Word has changed into that of the flesh, nor that of the flesh into that of the Word or those who make use of the number two to divide the natures or to make of them persons properly so called. Furthermore, another anathema blames those who try to introduce one nature or essence of the Godhead and manhood of Christ. «For in saying that the only-begotten Word was united by hypostasis personally we do not mean that there was a mutual confusion of natures, but rather we understand that the Word was united to the flesh, each nature remaining what it was. Therefore there is one Christ, God and man, of the same essence with the Father as touching his Godhead, and of the same essence with us as touching his manhood. Therefore the Church of God equally rejects and anathematizes those who

ἓνα καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν Χριστόν, υἱόν, κύριον, μονογενῆ, ἐν δύο φύσειν ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαίρετως, ἀχωρίστως γνωριζόμενον· οὐδαμοῦ τῆς τῶν φύσεων διαφορᾶς ἀνηρημένης διὰ τὴν ἔνωσιν, σωζομένης δὲ μᾶλλον τῆς ιδιότητος ἑκατέρας φύσεως καὶ εἰς ἓν πρόσωπον καὶ μίαν ὑπόστασιν συντρεχούσης, οὐκ εἰς δύο πρόσωπα μεριζόμενον ἢ διαιρούμενον, ἀλλ' ἓνα καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν υἱὸν καὶ μονογενῆ, θεὸν λόγον, κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν.

one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ (transl. H. Bettenson).

Likewise the *consimilis deitate patris, hominique profecto / consimilis* (l. 304-5) may be traced back to the Chalcedonian formula, where one finds that «our Lord Jesus Christ» is «of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood», although the adjective *consimilis*, strictly speaking, is not precise (the exact term would be ὁμοούσιος, *consubstantialis*), but which seems to be echoed by some other almost contemporary works,<sup>74</sup> to say nothing of contingent metrical reasons.

Thus the open reference to Justin and his Neo-Chalcedonian faith carries a precise political significance and shows, once again, Corippus' alignment with imperial politics and his development of a consistent

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divide or cut apart or who introduce confusion into the mystery of the divine dispensation of Christ».

<sup>74</sup> Cfr. Procl., *de Incarn.* 54; *Hom.* 39, PG, 85,445C and *Hymn. Akath.* 18,3: «καὶ ποιμὴν ὑπάρχων ὡς θεὸς δι' ἡμᾶς ἐφάνη καθ' ἡμᾶς ὁμοῖος / ὁμοίω γὰρ τὸ ὁμοιον καλέσας ὡς θεὸς ἀκούει», together with the considerations of PELTOMAA, *The Image*, cit., pp. 90 ff. The passage in Evagrius introduces the idea according to which implying that Christ as a human is not another (i.e. fourth) person, «we confess Him as the Only-begotten Son of God, God the Word, who before the ages and outside time was begotten of the Father, not created, but at the end of days for us and for our salvation came down from the heavens, and was made flesh of the Holy Spirit, and of our Lady, the holy, glorious, Mother of God and ever-Virgin Mary ... For the Holy Trinity did not accept an addition of a fourth person, even when God the Word, one of the Holy Trinity, was made flesh ... For it was not some man who gave himself on our behalf, but God the Word Himself who, without change, became man and accepted in the flesh the voluntary suffering and death on our behalf». One wonders whether in the expression *sponte sua venit* (l. 300) there is an allusion to τὰ πάθη ἄπερ ἑκουσίῳν ὑπέμεινε σαρκί, which also appears in the afore-mentioned passage by Evagrius and *Hymn. Akath.* 18,1 ff.: «σῶσαι θέλων τὸν κόσμον ὁ τῶν ὄλων κοσμήτωρ / πρὸς τοῦτον αὐτεπάγγελτος ἦλθε».



theology of power.<sup>75</sup> It also confirms his desire to appease a twenty-year controversy, the end of which was dependent, as has been seen, on many causes and, most of all on Africa's need for a powerful and effective army against the Berbers.<sup>76</sup>

More in general, the poem is also quite interesting for its repercussions on Western literature. Although it is still controversial whether the *Laus Iustini* directly inspired Venantius Fortunatus, as I am in any case inclined to believe,<sup>77</sup> the Italian poet inserts some passages that come very close to Corippus into his stylistically well-structured encomium for Justin and Sophia (*Append. Carm.* 2), as he does in his prayer for the Virgin (*In Laudem Sanctae Mariae* – whose authorship, however, is still disputed). In particular the opening lines offer a paraphrasis of the Credo formula:<sup>78</sup>

Gloria summa patris natique ac spiritus almi,  
 Vnus adorandus hac trinitate deus,  
 Maiestas, persona triplex, substantia simplex,  
 Aequalis consors atque coeua sibi,  
 Virtus una manens idem, tribus una potestas  
 (Quae pater haec genitus, Spiritus ipsa potest),  
 Personis distincta quidem, coniuncta uigore,  
 Naturae unius, par ope luce throno,  
 Secum semper erat trinitas, sine tempore regnans,  
 Nullius usus egens nec capiendo capax.  
 Gloria summa tibi, rerum sator atque redemptor,  
 Qui das Iustinum iustus in orbe caput.

May the highest glory be to the Father, Son and bountiful Spirit, a single God to be worshipped in this trinity, majesty, of three Persons but one substance, partaking equally and of equal age, a single virtue abiding the same, a single power to the three (what the Father can do, so can the Son and the Spirit,

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<sup>75</sup> V. ZARINI, *Théologie du pouvoir et poésie latine dans l'Antiquité tardive (IV<sup>e</sup>-VI<sup>e</sup> s.)*. De la conversion du messianisme virgilien à la distance critique envers le pouvoir, in M. CUTINO – F. GASTI (eds.), *Poesia e teologia nella produzione latina dei secoli IV-V*, Pavia, Pavia University Press, 2015, pp. 1-13.

<sup>76</sup> CAMERON, *Byzantine Africa*, cit., pp. 31-33, who also takes into account the probable disagreement between the ecclesiastical elites, the populace, and the Byzantines.

<sup>77</sup> Cfr. CAMERON, *The Early Religious Policies*, cit., p. 58. On the contrary, ZARINI, *L'éloge*, cit. seems quite dismissive in this regard.

<sup>78</sup> For a commentary of this poem see ZARINI, *L'éloge*, cit., and J.W. GEORGE, *Venantius Fortunatus: personal and political poems*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1995, pp. 111 ff., whose translation is used here. It seems appropriate to remember here that Fortunatus is the author of some prose commentaries on the Creed, dating from the later phase of his career.

distinct in persons indeed, united in strength, of a single nature, alike in might, light, and throne, existing ever as a Trinity amongst Themselves ruling time without end, lacking no function nor powerful by receiving power. May the highest glory be to Thee, Creator and Redeemer of the World, Who in Your justice establish Justin as head over the world.

What is interesting for the present purpose, however, is the fact that, together with the main theme of the poem, namely the expression of gratitude for their gift of a fragment of the True Cross sent to Rade-gund,<sup>79</sup> Fortunatus aims at celebrating the orthodoxy of the Byzantine emperors – just as Corippus did. This is achieved by an explicit reference to the faith of Chalcedon professed by the newly-crowned sovereign (l. 25-6):

Reddite vota deo, quoniam nova purpura quidquid  
concilium statuit Calchedonense tenet.

Offer your prayers to God, for the new purple holds fast by what the Council of Chalcedon decreed,

and, even more so by the explicit mention of the indulgence accorded to the bishops involved in the Three Chapters controversy (39-46):

... Exilio positi patres pro nomine Christi  
tunc rediere sibi, cum diadema tibi.  
Carcere laxati, residentes sede priore  
esse ferunt unum te generale bonum.  
... Thrax Italus Scythia Phryx Dacia Dalmata Thessalus Afer  
quod patriam meruit nunc tibi vota facit.

The Fathers set in exile in the name of Christ returned home when you received your crown. Released from prison, living in their former abodes, they declare you a single blessing all above. ... Thracian, Italian, Scythian, Phrygian Dacian, Dalmatian, Thessalian and African now offer prayers to you because they have won their homeland.

The poem represents therefore a further attempt at conciliation, along the lines already followed by Corippus. In addition, it is worth remarking that in his youth Fortunatus had been a pupil of the schis-

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<sup>79</sup> The adoration of the cross was another important tenet in neo-Chalcedonian theology: in this context mention should be made of the cycle of the so-called hymns for the cross, for a recent reassessment of which see S. FILOSINI, *Tra poesia e teologia: gli Inni alla Croce di Venanzio Fortunato*, in CUTINO – GASTI (eds.), *Poesia e Teologia*, cit., pp. 107-131.

matic tricapitoline bishop Paul of Aquileia, and that some passages in his poetical production allude to the controversy which, however, did not affect Gaul as much as it did other regions in the West.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, asserting the validity of Chalcedon and stating that the condemnation of the Three Chapters on the part of Justinian did not impact of the Chalcedonian dogma had been a constant concern of the popes that had succeeded Vigilius, in attempting to bring back the Western schismatics to orthodoxy. It seems likely that Fortunatus' insistence on Justin rather than Justinian, together with the celebration of the clemency shown to the dissidents (whose purport is not emphasised in other sources), is part of a skilled propagandistic agenda meant to stress the reconciliation between the two factions.

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ABSTRACT – The present study approaches the so-called Three Chapters Controversy from a literary perspective – namely, how the events were reshaped in different sources and what reasons are implied in these choices – and, in particular, it will take into account some authors that have so far been neglected in research, such as the African poet Corippus.

Although theology was not Corippus' main interest, his overtly filo-Byzantine propaganda led to his avoidance of taking sides in the Three Chapters affaire (which opposed the African clergy and the emperor Justinian). In the *Iohannis*, however, the poet alludes to a holy man, who impetrates victory over the Moorish enemies, a character that in all likelihood may be identified with Verecundus of Iunci. In his second poem, the *Laus Iustini*, he undoubtedly stands as the 'port parole' of the official line in theological matters, as demonstrated by the long poetical paraphrase of the Creed (4,292-311), which is an open tribute to the alignment of Justin II with the Fifth Oecumenical Council that, together with the condemnation of the Three Chapters, ratified the so-called Neo-Chalcedonian theology.

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<sup>80</sup> R. BRATOZ, *Venanzio Fortunato e lo scisma dei Tre Capitoli*, in *Venanzio Fortunato e il suo tempo. Convegno internazionale di studio (Valdobbiadene, Chiesa di S. Gregorio Magno, 29 novembre 2001)*, Treviso, Fondazione Cassamarca, 2003, pp. 363-401; I. WOOD, *The Franks and Papal Theology*, in CHAZELLE – CUBITT, *The Crisis*, cit., pp. 223-241.

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Direttore Responsabile: MARIO ROSA - Registrazione del Tribunale di Firenze  
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Pubblicato nel mese di maggio 2018

