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The *Trisagion* Riots (512) as an Example of Interaction between Politics and Liturgy

The masses celebrated by St. Pope John Paul II in Poland enabled the Polish people to regain their faith and to consolidate their overwhelming power, contributing to the downfall of the communist system. This example demonstrates how liturgy can genuinely influence the social and political world. The question must be asked whether it was a one-time case or whether there have been other moments in the history of the Church when liturgy evidently had such an impact on the political life of the society.

To answer this question properly, in the present article I would like to analyse one of the most stunning cases of interdependence between liturgy and politics, namely the so-called *Trisagion* riots[1], which took place in Constantinople AD 512. It was the way Christians responded to changes in Eucharistic liturgy – regarded as heretical – proclaimed by emperor Anastasius I. In order to better understand this phenomenon, we must describe the historical, cultural and political contexts of those times.

The emperor and his Church

It is necessary to begin our deliberations with a few remarks on the role the emperor played in the Eastern Orthodox Church in the 5th and 6th centuries, since the contemporary reader may perhaps be surprised by the fact that the emperor was free to add various expressions to the prayers sung in the official liturgy of the Church. When Constantine the Great proclaimed the Edict of Milan – establishing religious toleration for Christianity – in 313, the situation of Christians in the Roman Empire changed significantly. From that moment onwards, the Church had the support of the imperial state and Constantine called himself *a bishop of those outside the Church*[2].

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[1] Ever more often, one encounters the name *Staurotheis riot*. Cf. J. Dijkstra, G. Greatrex, *Patriarchs and Politics in Constantinople in the Reign of Anastasius (with a Reedition of "O.Mon.Epiph." 59)*, Mil 6, 2009, p. 243sqq.; M. Meier, *Anastasios I. Die Enstehung des Byzantinischen Reiches*, Stuttgart 2010, p. 262sqq.

[2] Eusebius, *Über des leben des Kaisers Konstantin*, III, 54, rec. F. Winkelmann, Berlin 1975 [= *GCS*, 6]. Cf. D. De Decker, G. Dupuis-Massay, *L'épiscopat de l'empereur Constantin*, B 50, 1980, p. 118–157;

Soon, the emperor's influence also became visible in the sphere of doctrine. In the 4th century, during the Arian controversy, the emperor could not afford to let the Church be torn apart by doctrinal disputes, as he expected it to serve as the unifying force within the empire's borders. This explains why he played such an important role during the First Council of Nicaea in 325[3].

The state and the Church entered into a close union, so that Constantine the Great's successors felt obliged to show their interest in religious matters. This fact had certain practical consequences: internal dissensions among believers would bring about problems in the Empire[4].

Furthermore, there were close ties between the imperial court and certain elements of liturgy. The most famous Christian churches from the 4th and 5th centuries – the basilicas – were not similar in shape to pagan temples. Rather, they resembled imperial basilicas, i.e. buildings used by the imperial administration. The 4th-century imperial palace played a decisive role in the development of Christian iconography. It served as a model for the image of Christ on the throne, the ruler of the universe surrounded by angels and saints. Just as the imperial throne gave other officials in the empire the authority to rule, Jesus Christ was portrayed in the act of passing the new law to St. Peter[5].

When the Church became a public institution in the 4th century, all bishops enjoyed the status of high-ranking imperial officials. In the 4th century, members of the clergy wore the same attire as any other Roman officials[6]. On the other hand, we must not forget that a bishop could have the position of a *de facto* imperial official[7]. All this indicates that the relationship between the temporal and the spiritual power was so close that mutual interferences between them were regarded as something usual and familiar.

C. Rapp, *Imperial ideology in the making. Eusebius of Caesarea on Constantine as "Bishop"*, JTS 49, 1998, p. 685–695; Ch. Pietri, *La conversione: propaganda e realtà*, [in:] *Storia del Cristianesimo*, vol. II, *La nascita di una cristianità (250–432)*, ed. Ch. Pietri, L. Pietri, Roma 2000, p. 219.

[3] T.G. Elliott, *The Christianity of Constantine the Great*, Scranton, PA 1996, p. 27–28.

[4] The best example of this phenomenon is, perhaps, the Monophysite conflict, which facilitated the Muslim conquest of the predominantly Monophysite Egypt: the Egyptians preferred the Muslim invaders to Byzantine officials. Cf. *The Chronicle of John, bishop of Nikiu*, ed. R. Charles, London 1916, p. 184; G. Dagron, *La Chiesa e la cristianità bizantine tra invasioni e iconoclasmo (VII secolo – inizi dell' VIII)*, [in:] *Storia del Cristianesimo*, vol. IV, *Vescovi, monaci e imperatori (610–1054)*, ed. G. Dagron, Roma 1999, p. 44.

[5] H. Wybrew, *The Orthodox liturgy. The development of the eucharistic liturgy in the Byzantine rite*, Crestwood, NY 1990, p. 29–31.

[6] *Ibidem*, p. 32; B. Neunheuser, *Storia della liturgia attraverso le epoche culturali*, Roma 1983 [= BEL Subsidia, 11], p. 49.

[7] J. Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, Crestwood–New York 1989, p. 14–19; H.S. Alvisatos, *Die Kirchliche Gesetzgebung des Kaisers Justinian I*, Aalen 1973, p. 52–66; J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Decline and Fall of the Roman City*, Oxford–New York 2001, p. 224.

The greatness of the empire was also expressed through liturgy. It is no coincidence that the most impressive structure of the Empire – built by emperor Justinian – was the Hagia Sophia church, or that a significant part of *De aedificiis* by Procopius of Caesarea is devoted to the description of churches erected by the illustrious emperor[8].

It follows logically from the above-mentioned examples that emperors were evidently involved in the problems of liturgy. It can be seen perfectly clearly in the *Ecclesiastical history* by Evagrius Scholasticus of Antioch[9], specifically in his portrayal of emperor Marcian (convener of the Council of Chalcedon, held in 451). According to Evagrius's account, the emperor's greatest wish was to make all people live in peace and praise God together[10] (i.e., in liturgy). We can assume that Marcian was fully aware of the importance of liturgy in the process of integration (or disintegration) of the society.

The development of the hymn

At this point, it will be useful to take an overall look at the history of the *Trisagion* hymn. Its central and oldest part – Ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος κύριος σαβαωθ, πλήρης πᾶσα ἡ γῆ τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ – stems from the Book of Isaiah (Is 6.3.2)[11]. Hereinafter, it will be referred to as the *Biblical Trisagion*.

During the first centuries, Christians alluded to this hymn very often. Already at the end of the 1st century, a direct reference to the *Biblical Trisagion* may be found in the Apocalypse of St. John – the four living creatures recite day and night: Ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος (Apoc. 4,8). Other references are to be found, for example, in the writings of St. Clement of Rome[12].

In pre-Constantinian times, the *Biblical Trisagion* was conceived of as a direct appeal to God the Father – such an interpretation appears in the works of Origen[13]. In Antioch, on the other hand, it was interpreted as addressing Jesus Christ[14]. While the Patricentric reading of the hymn seems quite obvious to a contemporary

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[8] Av. CAMERON, *Procopius and the sixth century*, London 1985, p. 86: *It could be said to have three main themes – church building (especially as instrumental in advancing the process of conversion to Christianity), fortifications and water-supply.*

[9] *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius with Scholia*, ed. J. BIDEZ, L. PARMENTIER, London 1898 (cetera: EVAGRIUS SCHOLASTICUS), II, 1, p. 38.

[10] EVAGRIUS SCHOLASTICUS, II, 1, p. 38. Cf. S. BRALEWSKI, *Sobór w Chalcedonie w polityce wewnętrznej cesarza Marcjana*, AUL.FH 44, 1992, p. 53–74.

[11] Cf. K. GINTER, *Spór o 'Trisagion'*, ReH 14, 2002, p. 221–231.

[12] CLEMENS ROMANUS, *Èpitre aux Corinthiens*, 34, 6, ed. A. JAUBERT, Paris 1971 [= SC, 167], p. 156. Cf. K. GINTER, *Spór…*, p. 224.

[13] *Origenes vier Bucher von den Prinzipien*, 8, ed. H. GORGEMANNS, H. KARPP, Darmstadt 1976, p. 2sqq.

[14] R. TAFT, *The Interpolation of Sanctus into the Anaphora*, 1, OCP 57, 1991, p. 281–308; 2, OCP 58, 1992, p. 83–121. Cf. K. GINTER, *Spór…*, p. 224.

student, its Christological interpretation may appear somewhat peculiar. This alternative way of understanding the hymn may have been influenced by certain fragments of the Apocalypse, especially the above-mentioned passage (Apoc 4,8), in which the God who arrives (ἐρχόμενος) is in fact Christ[15].

Along with the development of Christian theology, the Patricentric exegesis was transformed – probably in a natural way – into a Trinitarian one. The very triple repetition Ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος invited this kind of reading. According to this construal, each of the three instances of ἅγιος referred to one person of the Trinity. Probably originating in Alexandria[16], this interpretation quickly became the classical one. Moreover, in Italy and in Africa, it had become widespread perhaps even before it entered liturgy[17]. This interpretation is found in the works of certain Fathers of the Church, such as St. Athanasius[18] or St. Gregory of Nazianzus[19], among others[20]. It is hardly surprising, then, that the Church Fathers sometimes resorted to the *Biblical Trisagion* in their anti-Arian polemics. The Antiochene (Christological) reading of the hymn might have also been applied for anti-Arian purposes, as it laid special emphasis on the divine character of Christ[21].

These interpretations, both acceptable to a Christian, existed side by side in the Roman World and shaped the believers' sensitivity. As regards liturgy, even in those parts of the Empire where we know that the *Biblical Trisagion* was understood in the Trinitarian sense, certain liturgical rites of Eastern provenance were also in use; there, the hymn was construed in the Christological manner. Put differently, one interpretation did not exclude the other[22].

It is not entirely clear when and how the *Biblical Trisagion* entered the liturgy. Some scholars, like A. Baumstark, claim that it happened towards the end of the 2nd century due to influence from synagogue worship. The evidence adduced in support of this notion includes the testimony by the 6th-century monk Job, who, in his treatise *De verbo incarnato*, describes how a certain Jew used the *Biblical*

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[15] Cf. Ap 1,7 and Ap 22, 20. A. Gerhards, *Le phenomene du Sanctus adresse au Christ. Son origine, sa signification et sa persistance dans les Anaphores de l'eglise d'Orient*, [in:] *Le Christ dans la liturgie*, ed. A.M. Triacca, A. Pistoia, Rome 1981, p. 68–69.

[16] R. Taft, *The Interpolation…*, 2, p. 111.

[17] A. Grillmeier, *Gesù il Cristo nella fede della Chiesa*, Roma 1982–2001, vol. II.2, p. 331.

[18] Athanasius Theologus, *In illud: Omnia mihi tradita sunt*, ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris 1857 [= *PG*, 25], col. 217, 49: τῇ τρισα γιότητι δοξάζοντα.

[19] Gregorius Nazanensius, *In theophania (orat. 38)*, ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris 1858 [= *PG*, 36], col. 320, 27–32: Οὕτω μὲν οὖν τὰ Ἅγια τῶν ἁγίων, ἃ καὶ τοῖς σεραφὶμ συγκαλύπτεται, καὶ δοξάζεται τρισὶν ἁγιασμοῖς, εἰς μίαν συνιοῦσι κυριότητα καὶ θεότητα· ὃ καὶ ἄλλῳ τινὶ τῶν πρὸ ἡμῶν πεφιλοσόφηται κάλλιστά τε καὶ ὑψηλότατα.

[20] Cf. K. Ginter, *Spór…*, p. 224.

[21] *Les homilae cathedrales de Sévère d'Antioche*, 125, ed. M. Brière, Paris 1961 [= *PO*, 29] (cetera: Severus Antiochenus), p. 249.

[22] Cf. S. Janeras, *Les Byzantins et le Trisagion christologique*, [in:] *Miscellanea Liturgica in onore di sua Eminenza il cardinale Giacomo Lercaro*, vol. II, Roma 1967, p. 469–499, esp. p. 477–485.

Trisagion to protect himself from pagans[23]. As noted by Grillmeier, however, there are far more reasons speaking against such an interpretation; it appears unlikely that the introduction of the *Trisagion* into Christian liturgy was related to Jewish influence[24].

Be that as it may, in Egypt the hymn penetrated the Liturgy of the Eucharist in the 3rd century; soon afterwards, in the 4th century, it was also introduced in other places[25]. A striking example of its popularity in the liturgy in the early 5th century is found in one of the homilies by St. John Chrysostom. This eminent Father, in his interpretation of the Book of Isaiah, testifies to the presence of the *Biblical Trisagion* in liturgy in the capital city of the empire[26].

The New *Trisagion* (*Sanctus Deus Sanctus Fortis*)

In the first part of the 5th century, the *Biblical Trisagion* underwent certain substantial changes. A new, fundamentally changed version of the text appeared – ἅγιος ὁ θεός, ἅγιος ἰσχυρός, ἅγιος ἀθάνατος, ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς – nowadays perfectly well-known in Western culture as *Sanctus Deus Sanctus Fortis*. Spreading across the Christian world, this variant partly replaced the previous version and partly entered liturgy as an independent hymn. The expression ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς (*have mercy on us*) suggests that this version was conceived as a liturgical hymn[27].

We may surmise with a reasonable dose of probability that this version of the hymn arose in the 530s and was included in liturgy thanks to Proclus, patriarch of Constantinople (434–446). This is, at least, the testimony of the Byzantine Orthodox tradition[28]. For this reason, we shall call this hymn the *Trisagion of Proclus*.

John of Damascus († 749) relates the circumstances of the hymn's emergence in the following manner:

> Now, those who have compiled the history of the Church relate how once, when Proculus was archbishop, the people of Constantinople were making public entreaty to avert some threat of the divine wrath[29], and it happened that a child was taken up out of the crowd and

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[23] Jobius monachus, *De Verbo incarnato commentarius*, [in:] Photius, *Bibliothèque*, cod. 222, vol. III, ed. R. Henry, Paris 2003, p. 180–181.

[24] A. Grillmeier, *Gesù…*, II.2, p. 331. Cf. C.W. Dugmore, *The Influence of the Synagogue upon the Divine Office*, Oxford 1944, p. 107sqq.

[25] R. Taft, *The Interpolation…*, 2, p. 120.

[26] Ἄνω τὰ Σεραφὶμ τὸν τρισάγιον ὕμνον ἀναβοᾷ· κάτω τὸν αὐτὸν ἡ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀναπέμπει πληθύς· κοινὴ τῶν ἐπουρανίων καὶ τῶν ἐπιγείων συγκροτεῖται πανήγυρις· μία εὐχαριστία, ἓν ἓν ἀγγαλλίασμα, μία εὐφρόσυνος χοροστασία. Joannes Chrisostomus, *In illud: Vidi dominum*, 1.34, [in:] Jean Chrysostome, *Homélies sur Ozias*, Paris 1981 [= SC, 277].

[27] A. Karim, *The Meaning of the Trisagion in East and West*, MSt 105, 2014, p. 28.

[28] Cf. K. Ginter, *Spór…*, p. 225–226.

[29] The event referred to here is the earthquake of 438. Cf. B. Croke, *The Early Byzantine Earthquakes and Their Liturgical Commemoration*, B 41, 1981, p. 122–147.

by some angelic choirmasters was taught the Thrice-Holy Hymn after the following fashion: 'Holy God, Holy Strong, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.' When the child came back again and told what he had been taught, the whole crowd sang the hymn and the threat was averted.[30]

The same story is transmitted in the *Liber Heraclidis* by Nestorius (although Abramowski claims that this information is a later interpolation)[31]. Job likewise attributes the hymn to Proclus[32]. A few years after Proclus's death, we encounter the new *Trisagion* used as an acclamation at the time of the Council of Chalcedon. During the first session (October 8th, 451), the Eastern bishops rejoiced in the deposition of patriarch Dioscorus I of Alexandria: *Many years to the senate! Holy God, Holy Almighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us*[33].

Although Severus thought that the hymn originated in Antioch[34], and it seems that Grillmeier concurred with this opinion[35], it is much more probable that this *Trisagion* emerged in Constantinople in the time of Proclus. Events such as earthquakes have a profound and lasting impact on the collective memory of a society and it is difficult to imagine how an interpolator could have added blatantly false information concerning such facts. On the other hand, adding new words to the *Trisagion* hymn was a grave matter, which required justification. An event like an earthquake served very well for this purpose. Thus, we can presume that Proclus inserted the hymn at the beginning of the mass, i.e. in a very prominent position[36].

In effect, from the 5th century onwards, the term *Trisagion* denoted two different hymns, which may seem a bizarre situation at first glance. Note, however, that it is nowadays customary to use the word *Creed* to refer to two discrete prayers – the Symbol of the Apostles and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. To the inhabitants of the Empire, the *Trisagion of Proclus* was a kind of elaborated version of the *Biblical Trisagion*; in other words, it was the same hymn with assorted "explanatory comments" added. For this reason, all interpretations and

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[30] Joannes Damascenus, *Expositio Fidei*, [in:] *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, ed. B. Kotter, vol. II, Berlin–New York 1973, p. 130. English translation: John Damascene, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, trans. F.H. Chase, Washington, DC 1958, p. 288–289.

[31] Nestorius, *Bazaar of Heracleides*, trans. O. Driver, L. Hodgson, Oxford 1925, p. 364; L. Abramowski, *Untersuchungen zum "Liber Heraclidis" des Nestorius*, Louvain 1963 [= *CSCO*, 224, Subs. 22], p. 130–132.

[32] Jobius monachus, p. 181.

[33] *ACO*, ed. E. Schwartz, vol. II, *Concilium Chalcedonense (451)*, Berlin ²1962, II, 1, p. 195. English translation in: A. Karim, *The Meaning*…, p. 27–28.

[34] Severus Antiochenus, p. 249.

[35] A. Grillmeier, *Gesù*…, II.2, p. 332.

[36] S. Janeras, *Le Trisagion: une formule brève en liturgie comparée*, [in:] *Acts of International Congress. Comparative Liturgy fifty Years after Anton Baumstark (1872–1948)*, ed. F. Taft, G. Winkler, Roma 2001 [= *OCA*, 265], p. 497–498.

explanations provided by the Fathers to explicate the *Biblical Trisagion* were automatically considered valid for the new hymn as well[37]. A similar kind of ambiguity is observed in the *Expositio fidei* by St. John of Damascus, in which he interprets the words of the *Trisagion of Proclus* by resorting to the teachings of the Fathers of the 4th century, who obviously only discussed the *Biblical Trisagion*[38].

Logically, this had to cause problems: the *Biblical Trisagion* was compatible with a range of interpretations, while Proclus' version could only be construed in the Trinitarian way, significantly divergent from the traditional Antiochene exegesis. Nonetheless, both readings seemed valid: today, we find a vestige of the Antiochene interpretation in the liturgy of Good Friday[39].

As has already been mentioned, the *Trisagion of Proclus* was applied in the liturgy from its inception. In a homily from April 518, St. Severus the Great of Antioch, the most important Greek Monophysite theologian (in the Oriental Orthodox Churches, also considered a Father of the Church and a saint) stated that it was used in liturgy across the Roman Empire and that it had appeared recently. This is perfectly coherent with the information that the hymn arose in the time of Proclus. Nowadays, in the Byzantine rite, it is sung during the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, accompanying the Entrance procession[40].

Trisagion and the Monophysite Conflict

The religious unity within the Roman Empire, visibly present during the rule of Theodosius I, was later destroyed not only in the West (as a consequence of the appearance of the Arian kingdoms), but also in the East (as a result of the Nestorian and later Monophysite crises). The background for both conflicts was the old rivalry between the Alexandrine and Antiochene schools, which vied for influence within the Church.

The Arian controversy led to the Alexandrine school reinforcing its position, owing especially to St. Athanasius of Alexandria. The moment of Alexandria's greatest triumph came at the Council of Ephesus (431): there, Cyril of Alexandria overpowered Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople, who at the same time represented the Antiochene School[41].

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[37] Cf. K. Ginter, *Spór…*, p. 226–227.

[38] Joannes Damascenus, *Expositio Fidei*, 54, p. 131.

[39] S. Janeras, *Les Byzantins…*, p. 477–480.

[40] H. Wybrew, *The Orthodox liturgy…*, p. 77.

[41] J. Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity…*, p. 165–167. However, already in 443, the agreement between Cyril and the Antiochenes introduced an equilibrium between the Alexandrine and Antiochene Christology. Cf. Ch. Fraisse-Coué, *Da Efeso a Calcedonia: "la pace illusoria" (433–451)*, [in] *Storia del Cristianesimo*, vol. III, *Le chiese d'Oriente e d'Occidente (432–610)*, ed. L. Pietri, Roma 2000, p. 30–31.

This conflict rekindled after Cyril's death in 442, when Dioscorus, significant-
ly less far-sighted than his predecessor, became the new patriarch of Alexandria.
This time, the situation changed radically: the patriarch's lending support to the
imprudent and radical Monophysite monk Eutyches and contributing to the death
of patriarch Flavianus during the so-called *Latrocinium* (449) culminated in the
convocation of another ecumenical council in Chalcedon by the new emperor
Marcian. The council condemned Dioscorus; Alexandria suffered a devastating
defeat[42]. But the victor was not so much the Antiochene patriarchy as Rome and
pope Leo the Great, owing to whom the Christological doctrine became obligatory
in the whole Church. The patriarchy of Constantinople grew in importance and
was declared to be the second after Rome[43].

We can presume that, in such a context, the *Trisagion of Proclus* was under-
standably treated as a symbol of the rising power of the capital. It became a token
of the struggle against the Monophysites: as mentioned above, during the first ses-
sion of the Council of Chalcedon (October 8th, 451), the Oriental bishops used
the *Trisagion* to expedite the dismissal of Dioscorus[44]. The Antiochenes, needless
to say, hardly appreciated this. Thus, there is nothing extraordinary in that the
bishops' actions worried not only the Monophysites, but also all other people who
favoured the Christological interpretation of the hymn.

In this fashion, the *Trisagion of Proclus* acquired the reputation of a formula
that could be utilized in theological battles or in conflicts related to Church poli-
tics. Hence, Severus, a leading representative of the Monophysite point of view,
declared that the *Trisagion of Proclus* had developed in Antioch[45]. In this way, he
intended to neutralize its anti-Monophysite message. At that point, the interpre-
tation of the *Trisagion of Proclus* ceased to be a mere question of theology and
became an issue of ecclesiastical politics, simultaneously constituting a source
of discord between the Monophysites and the Chalcedonians and between the
Antiochiene and Constantinopolitan patriarchies.

It is precisely in this context that we must analyse the addition of the phrase
ὁ σταυρωθεὶς δι᾽ ἡμᾶς to the hymn. These words were first included in the *Trisa-
gion of Proclus* around the year 480 in the work of Peter Fullo, patriarch of Antioch
in the years 468–488[46]. Thus, this version will henceforth be called the *Trisagion
of Peter Fullo*.

When, after the expulsion of Peter Fullo, the Orthodox Calendion (479–484)
became the patriarch of Antioch, he introduced the expression Χριστέ βασιλεύ

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[42] Here, I share the view of: L. Duchesne, *Histoire de l'Eglise*, vol. III, Paris 1911, p. 457.

[43] J. Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity…*, p. 179–181.

[44] *ACO*, II, 1.1, p. 195, v. 29–31: Οἱ Ἀνατολικοὶ καὶ οἱ σὺν αὐτοῖς εὐλαβέστατοι ἐπίσκοποι εἶπον· Πολ-
λὰ τὰ ἔτη τῆς συγκλήτου. ἅγιος ὁ θεός, ἅγιος ἰσχυρός, ἅγιος ἀθάνατος, ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς. πολλὰ τὰ ἔτη
τῶν βασιλέων. ὁ ἀσεβὴς ἀεὶ φεύγει· Διόσκορον ὁ Χριστὸς καθεῖλεν.

[45] Severus Antiochenus, p. 249.

[46] A. Grillmeier, *Gesù…*, II.2, p. 333–334.

to the hymn in order to remove the ambiguity found in the supplement added by his predecessor[47]. From then on, the *Trisagion* was sung in Antioch as follows: ἅγιος ὁ θεός, ἅγιος ἰσχυρός, ἅγιος ἀθάνατος, Χριστὲ βασιλεῦ ὁ σταυρωθεὶς δι᾽ ἡμᾶς, ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς. Owing to the judicious emendations implemented by Calendion, the *Trisagion of Peter Fullo* became entirely harmonious with the traditional Christological interpretation born in Antioch, at the same time excluding the possibility of construing the hymn in a theopaschist way. Predictably, with Peter Fullo's return (485–488), this second addition was removed[48]. It must be borne in mind, however, that the problem was not relevant for the Antiochenes, also Chalcedonians.

Notably, Peter Fullo's behaviour shows that at least for some Monophysites, the conflict with the Chalcedonians (Catholics) was more than just a verbal one[49]. The deliberate removal of the expression Χριστέ βασιλεύ cannot be interpreted in any other way than as a suggestion on the part of the patriarch that the whole Trinity suffered in the moment of crucifixion[50]. This explains why, outside Antioch, the *Trisagion of Peter Fullo* was perceived as radically Monophysite. It became popular thanks to two illustrious Monophysites who had no match in the Chalcedonian camp[51], i.e. Philoxenus of Mabbug and Severus, mentioned above as patriarch of Antioch.

Anastasius I

In all likelihood, Peter Fullo's *Trisagion* would never have been considered important had it not been for Anastasius I, who came to power in 491. His predecessor, Zeno, strived to find a compromise to solve the Monophysite problem. To this end, during his reign, he published a new document – the so-called *Henotikon* – in which he attempted to devise a solution intermediate between the Antiochians and the Chalcedonians[52].

When Zeno died, empress Ariadna accepted the marriage proposal from Anastasius I, who reigned in Byzantium between 491 and 518. The new Emperor was a perspicacious ruler. During his reign, the Eastern Roman frontier was significantly reinforced, which included the construction of Dara, a stronghold aimed to counterbalance the Persian fortress of Nusaybin[53]. Anastasius engaged in the Isaurian War against the usurper Longinus[54] as well as in the war against Sassanid

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[47] *Ibidem.*

[48] *Ibidem.* Cf. Theodores Anagnostes, *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. G.C. Hansen, Berlin 1971 [= *GCS*, 54], 427–428, p. 118; *Theophanis Confessori Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, Leipzig 1883, p. 134, 9–11.

[49] K. Ginter, *Spór…*, p. 228. Cf. J. Lebon, *Le Monophysisme sévérien*, Louvain 1909, p. 480–486.

[50] Cf. W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of Monophysite Movement. Chapters in the History of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries*, Cambridge 1972, p. 168.

[51] Ch. Moeller, *Le chalcedonisme et neo-chalcedonisme en Orient de 451 a la fin du VI siecle*, [in:] *Das Konzil von Chalkedon*, ed. A. Grillmeier, R. Bacht, vol. 1, Würzburg 1951, p. 643.

[52] J. Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity…*, p. 199.

[53] F.K. Haarer, *Anastasius I. Politics and Empire in the Late Roman World*, Cambridge 2006, p. 65–70.

[54] M. Meier, *Anastasios…*, p. 75–84.

Persia[55]. Crucially, however, he also happened to be an ardent Monophysite, actively supporting his Monophysite subjects across the empire. Born of a Manichean mother, he had had the reputation of a heretic long before he became emperor[56].

Untill 508, the religious policy of Anastasius was almost the same as that of his predecessor, Zeno[57]. The deposition of the staunchly anti-Chalcedonian patriarch of Constantinople, Euphemius (496), as well as the enthronement of Macedonius (patriarch 495–511, died ca. 517), a moderate Chalcedonian who had signed the *Henotikon*[58], may also be interpreted in this way.

After 508, the aging emperor's policy changed[59]. That year, the fanatical Monophysite monk Severus arrived in Constantinople, accompanied by other monks from Palestine, and lent support to the Monophysite party[60]. That is when the conflict between the patriarch and the emperor erupted. Anastasius did his utmost to force Macedonius to take a stance against the Council of Chalcedon, but all his flatteries and threats were futile. Quite on the contrary, Macedonius convened a council at which the documents signed at the Council of Chalcedon were confirmed in writing. He also supported the Chalcedonians in Syria, and in 510, he refused to enter in communion with the patriarch of Alexandria, who had not accepted the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon[61]. Last but not least, when the emperor demanded a condemnation of the Council of Chalcedon, Macedonius replied that this could only be done by an Ecumenical Council presided over by the bishop of Rome[62].

The conflict grew ever more intense. The followers of Severus added fuel to the fire by singing the *Trisagion of Peter Fullo* in many of the capital's churches, which caused unrest in the city[63]. In the end, Macedonius was accused of plotting against the emperor; soon afterwards, he was deposed (511) and exiled to Euchaita in Asia Minor[64]. In the meantime, we may add, the government had accused him of sexual abuse[65].

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[55] *Ibidem*, p. 174–221.

[56] P. Charanis, *Church and State in the Later Roman Empire. The Religious Policy of Anastatsius the First, 491–518*, Thessaloniki 1974, p. 39–43; *PLRE*, vol. II, p. 134 (*Anastasius IV*).

[57] According to Frend, the change in policy came in the year 510. W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise…*, p. 192.

[58] Cf. F.K. Haarer, *Anastasius I…*, p. 136–139; M. Meier, *Anastasios…*, p. 84–92; P. Charanis, *Church…*, p. 54–60; J. Dijkstra, G. Greatrex, *Patriarchs and Politics…*, p. 223–264 (on Euphemius: p. 227–230; on Macedonius: p. 230–232).

[59] F.K. Haarer, *Anastasius I…*, p. 139–145 – explains the political reasons that influenced this change.

[60] *Ibidem*, p. 141–142; J. Dijkstra, G. Greatrex, *Patriarchs and Politics…*, p. 232–233.

[61] F.K. Haarer, *Anastasius I…*, p. 147; P. Charanis, *Church…*, p. 66.

[62] F.K. Haarer, *Anastasius I…*, p. 147; P. Charanis, *Church…*, p. 66.

[63] F.K. Haarer, *Anastasius I…*, p. 147–148; P. Charanis, *Church…*, p. 67; J. Dijkstra, G. Greatrex, *Patriarchs and Politics…*, p. 235–236.

[64] Cf. G. Greatrex, *The Fall of Macedonius Reconsidered*, SP 44, 2010, p. 125–132; A. Grillmeier, *Gesù…*, II.1, p. 382; F.K. Haarer, *Anastasius I…*, p. 150–151; P. Charanis, *Church…*, p. 70–71; J. Dijkstra, G. Greatrex, *Patriarchs and Politics…*, p. 236–239.

[65] Evagrius Scholasticus, III, 32.

Nevertheless, the people of Constantinople felt loyal to the Council of Chalcedon and to their patriarch. This being the case, it is easy to imagine how the Monophysite emperor's aggressive engagement against the moderate pro-Chalcedonian patriarch provoked vast popular resistance – particularly among the capital's clergy, well aware of the emperor's support for Severus.

The emperor also deposed moderate bishop Flavianus of Antioch (511), replacing him with Severus. Dispatched by Anastasius to occupy the vacant Antiochene patriarchate, Severus inaugurated his tenure by solemnly issuing an anathema against Chalcedon in his church[66].

The *Trisagion* riots

Violent turbulences in the cities of the late Roman Empire were nothing uncommon. In particular, Alexandria was famous for the short temper of its inhabitants. At the close of the 4th century, the citizens burnt down the Serapeum[67]. The famous Neoplatonic philosopher Hypatia[68] was lynched by a mob; twenty years later, the archbishop Proterius suffered the same fate[69]. Antioch witnessed similar acts of violence as well (in 511, the clashes between Chalcedonians and Monophysite monks in the city resulted in a bloodshed[70]), as did Constantinople (the most infamous unrest – the *Nika* riots – erupted on January 11th, 532 at the Hippodrome[71]). Without doubt, the *Trisagion* riots may be included among the most notable of such events as well. Taking into account the proclivity to riot found widely among the citizens of the empire's great metropolises (cf. above), as well as their famous theological passions, it is not difficult to understand the phenomenon. Contemporary authors like Evagrius Scholasticus had no trouble identifying its causes.

When Timothy became patriarch, he was not able to restore order in the capital, as many refused to collaborate with him. At that point, the emperor resolved to take the initiative. On Sunday, November 4th, 512, the *Trisagion of Peter Fullo*[72] was accepted through an imperial edict. Evagrius Scholasticus described the situation as follows:

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[66] F.K. Haarer, *Anastasius I…*, p. 155–156; P. Charanis, *Church…*, p. 72–77.

[67] R. Morgan, *History of the Coptic Orthodox People and the Church of Egypt*, Victoria 2016, p. 94–97.

[68] On Hypatia: M. Dzielska, *Hypatia of Alexandria*, Cambridge 1996.

[69] Cf. T.E. Gregory, *Vox Populi. Violence and Popular Involvment in the Religious Controversies of the Fifth Century AD*, Columbus, Ohio 1979, p. 163–201; P. Maraval, *La ricezione di Calcedonia nell'impero d'Oriente*, [in:] *Storia del Cristianesimo*, vol. III, *Le chiese d'Oriente e d'Occidente (432–610)*, ed. L. Pietri, Roma 2000, p. 124–126; Ch. Hass, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, Baltimore–London 1997, p. 317–319.

[70] Evagrius Scholasticus, III, 32, p. 130–131.

[71] M. Meier, *Anastasios…*, p. 270–271. Cf. *Nika Revolt*, [in:] *ODB*, vol. II, col. 1472–1473.

[72] F.K. Haarer, *Anastasius I…*, p. 156; P. Charanis, *Church…*, p. 78.

And at Byzantium, when the emperor wished to make an addition to the *Trisagion* of the phrase, 'Who was crucified for us', a very great disturbance occurred on the grounds that the Christian worship was being utterly nullified.[73]

The most violent riot took place in the Hagia Sophia. Once the choir began to sing the *Trisagion of Peter Fullo* in accordance with the emperor's edict, the crowd responded with the *Trisagion of Proclus*. A brawl erupted, culminating with the death of many people and the arrest of numerous others. The riots continued on Monday in the church of St. Theodore[74].

On November 6th, the true unrest started[75]:

Since, consequently, the people were carried out of control, those in authority came into mortal peril and many prominent places in the city were burnt. And when the populace found in the house of Marinus the Syrian a certain countryman who pursued the monastic life, they chopped off his head, saying that the phrase had been added at his suggestion; after affixing his head to a pole they contemptuously shouted: 'This indeed is the conspirator against the Trinity.'[76]

Amidst the riots, the rebellious people were searching for a new emperor; on November 7th, 512, Areobindus, the husband of Anicia Juliana, was chosen[77].

And the disturbance reached such a pitch, plundering everything and exceeding all constraint, that the emperor was compelled to come to the Hippodrome in a pitiful state, without his crown; he sent heralds to the people proclaiming that with regard indeed to the imperial power, while he would abdicate this most readily, it was a matter of impossibility that all should ascend to this, since it was quite unable to tolerate many men, but that it would assuredly be a single man who took the helm of it after him. On seeing this spectacle, the populace turned about, as if from some divine intervention, and begged Anastasius to put on his crown, promising to remain quiet.[78]

As soon as Anastasius regained control of the state, he inflicted severe punishment on the instigators. This marked the end of the revolt. Nevertheless, the conflict persisted and continued to escalate. The European provinces were definitely pro-Chalcedonian. In 512, the bishops of Illyricum wrote to the pope to reaffirm their fidelity to the Council of Chalcedon. In the following years, other European bishops joined the pope[79].

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[73] Evagrius Scholasticus, III, 44 p. 146. English translation: *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus*, trans. M. Whitby, Liverpool 2000, p. 195.

[74] M. Meier. *Anastasios…*, p. 272–273.

[75] F.K. Haarer, *Anastasius I…*, p. 156–157; M. Meier, *Anastasios…*, p. 271–284 (with a detailed analysis of the sources); P. Charanis, *Church…*, p. 78.

[76] Evagrius Scholasticus, III, 44, p. 146; trans. M. Whitby, p. 196.

[77] P. Charanis, *Church…*, p. 79.

[78] Evagrius Scholasticus, III, 44, p. 146; trans. M. Whitby, p. 196.

[79] W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise…*, p. 231.

In 514, Vitalian, one of the army commanders, rebelled and occupied Scythia, Moesia and Thrace[80]. Among his demands was the restoration of the *Trisagion of Proclus*[81]. Although suffering a serious defeat in 516 (which brought overwhelming joy to Severus in Antioch[82]), Vitalian remained a permanent menace for the administration as long as Anastasius was alive.

The emperor's death marked the end of the conflict. Justin I, an Orthodox, came to power; Severus was deposed from the patriarchate of Antioch; a festival celebrating the Council of Chalcedon was established in Constantinople under popular pressure (518). During the first celebration, the *Trisagion of Proclus* was solemnly sung[83]. Ever since that moment, it has been sung in the Byzantine liturgy in this version.

On the other hand, the decline of the *Trisagion of Peter Fullo* seemed definitive even among the Monophysites. In 518, Severus IV lamented the lack of acceptance for the addition even in Egypt[84].

Predictably, although it had failed in Constantinople, the rebellion did not vanish entirely. The *Trisagion of Peter Fullo* was still sung in churches in Syria that followed the Monophysite traditions; with time, it also extended to churches in Egypt. The issue of the *Trisagion* made frequent appearances in Monophysite and anti-Monophysite polemical texts. It was commented on by Justinian[85] as well as by St. John of Damascus (who devoted a separate treatise to the hymn[86], along with a chapter in the *Expositio fidei*[87]). On the Monophysite side, it was discussed in the *Chronicle* by John of Nikiû[88], a Coptic bishop from Egypt. The *Trisagion of Peter Fullo* was finally condemned by the Council in Trullo[89].

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[80] F.K. Haarer, *Anastasius I…*, p. 164–179; M. Meier, *Anastasios…*, p. 295–311.

[81] W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise…*, p. 231–232.

[82] Severus wrote a hymn on the tyrant Vitalian and on the victory of the Anastasius-loving Christ. Cf. James of Edessa, *The Hymns of Severus and Others*, *136 a 365*, ed. E.W. Brooks, Paris 1911 [= *PO*, 7], p. 710sqq.

[83] S. Janeras, *Le Trisagion…*, p. 497 ; A. Grillmeier, *Gesù…*, II. 2, p. 334–335.

[84] W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise…*, p. 229–230; Severus Antiochenus, p. 249.

[85] For example: Flavius Iustinianus, *Contra monophysitas*, 192,3–192,6, [in:] *Drei dogmatische Schriften Iustinians*, ed. M. Amelotti, R. Albertella, Milano ²1973, p. 6–78: τῆς ἁγίας τριάδος ἁμαρτάνουσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ αὐτὴν βλασφημοῦσιν τὴν ὁμοούσιον τριάδα. καὶ τοῦτο γὰρ λέγειν Σεῦηρος ἐτόλμησεν ὅτι ὁ τρισάγιος ὕμνος εἰς μόνον ἀναφέρεται τὸν υἱὸν μὴ κοινωνούντων τῇ δοξολογίαι τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος.

[86] Joannes Damascenus, *Epistula de hymno trisagio*, [in:] *Die Schriften des Johannes Damaskos*, ed. B. Kotter, Berlin 1981, p. 304, 332.

[87] Joannes Damascenus, *Expositio Fidei*, 54, p. 129–131.

[88] John of Nikiu, p. 126.

[89] A.A. King, *The Rites of Eastern Christendom*, vol. I, Piscataway, NJ 2007, p. 147.

Conclusions

Let us now reflect on the broader context of the strife. We can see that one and the same prayer implemented in the liturgy in its cultural function may be interpreted as orthodox or heterodox. This entails that the meaning of a formula used in the liturgy cannot be judged without its *Sitz im Leben*. We may consider many of the Monophisite supporters of Peter Fullo heretics; but to the majority of Antiochenes, the formulation of the *Trisagion of Peter Fullo* was fully acceptable, since they were accustomed to interpreting the *Trisagion* as a Christological prayer, not a Trinitarian one.

The conflict surrounding the *Trisagion* in an excellent illustration of the connections between liturgy and politics in late antiquity. Victories and defeats in battles, changes on the imperial throne, conflicts among the empire's cities and patriarchs, popular revolts – all of these elements could influence the form of the prayers used in the liturgy.

On the other hand, we may see how liturgical formulae could play an important role in shaping religious identity (Monophysiste or Catholic). They had the power to unite or to divide society. The famous rule of *lex orandi lex credendi* was more profoundly valid in the Byzantine society than we can imagine today.

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Abstract. This article explores the political and cultural context of the riots provoked by changes in the *Trisagion* (512). Along with the advancing integration of the Byzantine Empire with Christianity, the state's interest in theological problems increased; these problems were also reflected in the liturgy. Worship was used as a tool of imperial policy. This mutual interaction between politics and liturgy can be observed particularly clearly in the history of the *Trisagion*. This hymn, in its primitive form appearing in the book of Isaiah (as the familiar *Sanctus Sanctus Sanctus*), had two interpretations from the first centuries. According to the first one, the hymn referred to God, or – with the development of theology – to the whole Holy Trinity. According to the second interpretation (probably originating from Antioch), it referred to Christ. Already in the 4th century, the *Trisagion* entered the liturgy.

In the middle of the 5th century, we encounter a new version of the *Trisagion* (known as *Sanctus Deus*, *Sanctus Fortis*), which was an elaboration of the above-mentioned hymn. It also found use in the liturgy and originally had a Trinitarian sense. The Monophysites, in order to give the hymn an anti-Chalcedonian sense, added to it the expression *who was crucified for us*; this makes the hymn unambiguously Christological, but it may also suggest theopaschism (all of the Trinity was crucified). In Antioch, where the *Trisagion* first appeared in that form (and where the hymn had always been interpreted as referring to Christ), this addition did not provoke protests from the Chalcedonians. However, when the Monophysite emperor Anastasius decided to introduce this version to the liturgy in Constantinople, the inhabitants of the capital – accustomed to understanding the *Trisagion* in the Trinitarian sense – interpreted the change as an offence against the Trinity. This caused the outbreak of the *Trisagion* riots (512). Not long afterwards, restoring the anthem in the version without the addition became one of the postulates of military commander Vitalian's rebellion against Anastasius. Thus, in the case under analysis, we see theology and liturgy blending with current politics; one and the same hymn could be understood as heretical in one city and as completely orthodox in another.

Keywords: *Trisagion*, liturgy, Antioch, Constantinople, Anastasius I, Monophysitism, theopaschism, state-Church relations, Ecclesiastical politics

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