



**The Interaction of Ambrose of Milan with the Emperor Theodosius *the Great*
over the Dignity of Human Life**
**La interacció d'Ambrós de Milà amb l'emperador Teodosi *el Gran* per la dignitat
de la vida humana**
**La interacción de Ambrosio de Milán con el emperador Teodosio *el Grande*
sobre la dignidad de la vida humana**
**A interação de Ambrósio de Milão com o imperador Teodósio, *o Grande*, sobre a
dignidade da vida humana**

Eirini ARTEMI¹

Resumen: Cuando Teodosio el grande se convirtió en emperador, la influencia del cristianismo se había expandido por todo el Imperio Romano. Los cristianos ganaron la delantera en el Imperio principalmente después de la muerte de Juliano y cuando se convirtieron en mayoría. Este poder llevó al emperador Teodosio a comportarse con los paganos con una crueldad que no correspondía a un emperador cristiano. Fue responsable de la masacre en Tesalónica de la provincia de Macedonia griega bizantina. Allí murieron 7000 mil personas. En este artículo, examinaremos cuál fue la actitud de Ambrosio de Milán hacia el emperador, cuando el obispo pensó que la Iglesia solo se usaba como apoyo político o como hoja de parra. ¿Cuál es la importancia de la carta de Ambrosio que le fue escrita a Teodosio? ¿Cómo esta crítica de Ambrosio a Teodosio por su despiadada matanza, prohibiendo al emperador entrar a la iglesia o tomar la comunión durante varios meses, y ordenarle hacer penitencia durante varios meses antes de que pudiera volver a entrar y recibir la hostia, cambió el comportamiento de Teodosio como cristiano? ¿Tuvo la carta de Ambrosio a Teodosio un papel catalizador para la santidad posterior del emperador? La penitencia de Ambrosio no debe aceptarse como una victoria de la iglesia sobre el emperador, sino solo como una demostración del poder de expiación sobre el pecador penitente. Este poder no debe discriminar a las personas según su poder político, sino según sus acciones como cristianos.

Palabras clave: Ambrosio de Milán – Teodosio *el Grande* – Masacre en Tesalónica – Macedonia griega bizantina.

Abstract: When Theodosius *the Great* became emperor, the influence of Christianity had expanded throughout the Roman Empire. The Christians gained the upper hand in the Empire mainly after the death of Julian and when they became in majority. This power

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led the emperor Theodosius to behave to pagans with cruelty that didn't match to a Christian emperor. He was responsible for the massacre in Thessalonica of the province of byzantine Greek Macedonia. There 7000 thousand people were killed. In this paper, we will examine which was the attitude Ambrosius of Milan to the emperor, when the bishop thought that the Church was just be used as a political prop or fig leaf. Which is the importance of the letter of Ambrose that was written to Theodosius? How did this Ambrose's criticism to Theodosius for his ruthless slaughter, barring the emperor from entering church or taking communion for several months, and ordering him to do penance for several months before he could enter again and receive the host, change Theodosius' behaviour as Christian? Did the letter of Ambrose to Theodosius have a catalytic role to later sanctity of the emperor? Ambrose's penance should not be accepted as a win of the church over the emperor but only as a demonstration of the power of atonement over the penitent sinner. This power should not discriminate people according to their political power but according to their actions as Christians.

Keywords: Ambrosius of Milan – Theodosius *the Great* – Massacre in Thessalonica – Byzantine Greek Macedonia.

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Introduction: The relations of the Christian Church with the emperors in the early period of the Byzantine Empire

Christianity began in the 1st century AD after Jesus died and resurrected. After the Pentecost, His disciples and people who believed in Him preached that Christ was the Messiah, the incarnate Word of God. Soon the new religion², although Christianity is not thought as a religion but a revelation, was spread throughout the Roman Empire and the apostles proclaimed the good news in many places besides India. Soon Christians had to face persecutions and the threat of the death penalty. The hostile attitude of Pagans and Jewish against Christians created a dangerous environment for them.

² SALER, B. "[Religio and the Definition of Religion](#)". In: *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 2, no. 3, (1987), pp. 395-399, esp., p. 396: "Religion comes from the latin word «religio» which «may have derived: *legere*, "to gather together", "to arrange" a proposed derivation that we associate with Cicero, and *ligare*, "to tie together", "to bind", a possibility entertained by Lucretius and favored by the Christian writers, Lactantius and Tertullian. Occasionally one encounters alternative suggestions. Thus, for instance, Henry Wilt... rejects the *re-* compounds of both *lego* and *ligo* and hypothecates "a *re-* compound of a simplex verb etymologically identical with the Greek verb *alego*, meaning "care for, have regard for".



The first official organized persecution against Christians took place in Nero's reign. The Emperor Nero (54-68 AD) was the first Roman emperor who persecuted Christians³. The Roman historian Tacitus (56-120 AD) referred that Nero accused the Christians as responsible for the *Great Fire of Rome* in 64 AD, although he was not a witness to the events⁴.

However, Christians were not condemned to death as responsible for the fire in Rome, but they were though that they hated all people who were not Christians:

ergo abolendo rumor Nero subdidit reos et quaesitissimis poenis adfecit quos per flagitia invisos vulgus Christianos appellabat. auctor nominis eius Christus Tiberio imperitante per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio adfectus erat; repressaque in praesens exitiabilis superstitio rursus erumpebat, non modo per Iudaeam, originem eius mali, sed per urbem etiam quo cuncta undique atrocita aut pudenda confluunt celebranturque. igitur primum correpti qui fatebantur, deinde indicio eorum multitudo ingenshaud proinde in crimine incendii quam odio humani generis convicti sunt⁵.

In the reign of Domitian (81-96 AD) there was another persecution against Christians according to the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea⁶: «finally became a successor of Nero in his hatred and enmity toward God. He was in fact the second emperor that stirred up a persecution against us, although his father Vespasian had undertaken nothing prejudicial to us»⁷.

Later, the emperor Trajan (98–117 AD) did not perpetuate persecution on the scale of Nero and Domitian, he was responsible of the execution of many Christian leaders including Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, and Simeon, Bishop of Jerusalem. Of course, many other emperors after Trajan were responsible for the execution of many

³ CORNELIUS TACITUS. [Annals, 15: 44](#).

⁴ CORNELIUS TACITUS. [Annals, 15: 44](#).

⁵ CORNELIUS TACITUS. [Annals, 15: 44](#), transl. from latin to english by W. J. Brodribb, ed. M. Hadas, The Modern library, 1942: «Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired».

⁶ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA. [Church History, 3.17⁵⁻⁷](#). BARDY, G. "Eusèbe de Césarée. Histoire ecclésiastique". In: *Sources Chrétiennes* 31, (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1952) (=PG 20, 250BC-252A).

⁷ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, [Church History, 3.17⁵⁻⁷](#), Transl. from ancient greek to english by A. C. McGiffert, *From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 1, edited by P. Schaff and H. Wace. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890, revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight.



Christians. The latter had denied worshipping pagan gods and sacrificed into idols and they were accused for high treason against the imperial sovereign «*crimen laesae majestatis imperatorum*»⁸. This was a serious accusation, as the worship of the emperor was recommended in the unity of the empire, not only at the political level but also in religious⁹.

The worst Empire – wide expanded persecution took place in the years of Decius' (249-251 AD) and Diocletian's reign (284–305AD), who organized and led *the Great Persecution* to destroy and vanish Christianity. Eusebius of Caesarea underlines that Decius felt hate for the previous Emperor, Philips who was Christian¹⁰. The result of this hatred was that on 3 January 250 he issued the edict¹¹ against Christians and this was the cause of the beginning of their persecution¹².

On the other side, during the reign of Diocletian, there was the worst persecution against Christians. It could be said that there was the final struggle between paganism and Christianity. The first of Diocletian's edicts against Christianity was published on 24th February 303¹³. It prohibited all Christian to assemble for worship and commanded the destruction of churches, liturgical books, and the books of Holy Scripture¹⁴.

Additionally, two further edicts were ordered and announced clergy to be arrested unless they converted into paganism, and they should sacrifice to pagan deities¹⁵.

⁸ BASILEIOS STEFANIDES. *Church History*, (Athens, 1998), p. 131-133.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA. *Church History*, 6, 39.1; BARDY, G. "Eusèbe de Césarée. Histoire ecclésiastique". In: *Sources Chrétiennes* 31, Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1955 (=PG 20, 600B).

¹¹ See WORBOYS, K. *Emperor Decius' 249 CE edict commanding sacrifice to the gods*. Sydney: Macquarie University, 2019.

¹² FRENCH, W. H. C. *The Rise of Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984, p. 319.

¹³ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA. *Church History*, 8.2, 1-3, BARDY, G. "Eusèbe de Césarée. Histoire ecclésiastique". In: *Sources Chrétiennes* 31, Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1955 (=PG 20, 758DA-760A): «It was the nineteenth year of Diocletian's reign [AD 303] and the month Dystrus, called March by the Romans, and the festival of the Saviour's Passion was approaching, when an imperial decree was published everywhere, ordering the churches to be razed to the ground and the Scriptures destroyed by fire, and giving notice that those in places of honour would lose their places, and domestic staff, if they continued to profess Christianity, would be deprived of their liberty. Such was the first edict against us. Soon afterwards other decrees arrived in rapid succession, ordering that the presidents of the churches in every place should all be first committed to prison and then coerced by every possible means into offering sacrifice» (transl. by G. A. Williamson. Penguin Classics, 1989).

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.



Persecutions against Christians were ended by Galerius in 311 with the Edict of Serdica, also called Edict of Toleration¹⁶. Galerius' edict granted Christians the right to practice their religion without causing any troubles «Ut denuo sint Chrsitiani et conventicula sua componant, ita ut ne quid contra disciplinam agant» but did not restore any property to them¹⁷.

The official end of any persecution against Christians took place in 313 with the Edict of Milan¹⁸ which was signed by Licinius and Constantine *the Great*. On the contrary, the Edict of Milan consisted of many clauses which stated that all confiscated churches would be returned as well as other provisions for previously persecuted Christians¹⁹. Neither Constantine nor Licinius proclaimed Christianity as official religion²⁰.

Finally, under Constantine's *the Great* authority, Christianity was made legal in the whole Roman Empire. The Empire adopted Christian ethic into its legislation. Church Fathers developed their theology against heretics. Ecumenical Councils sealed the orthodox dogmatic theology of the Church against any heresy. By this way, in 4th century during the reign of Theodosius *the Great*, Christianity was proclaimed the official church and the established religion of the Roman Empire.

I. A synoptic presentation of the political and historical environment of the period of Theodosius *the Great* and of Ambrosius of Milan

Theodosius I (345-392 AD) or the «Great» was the last Emperor who governed the whole Roman Empire, both the East and West. Theodosius was a very good-looking man, but his health was fragile, and this had results to his character. He very often became nervous and angry²¹. Despite his stability on Christianity and Christian Church, he used the Gentiles as official public officers of his Empire.

¹⁶ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA. *The History of the Church*, 8, 17.6-10; BARDY, G. "Eusèbe de Césarée. Histoire ecclésiastique". In: *Sources Chrétiennes* 31, Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1955 (=PG 20, 792AB).

¹⁷ LACTANTIUS. *De mortibus persecutorum*, 24, PG 7, 233-234; ARTEMI, Eirini. "[Emperor Constantine and the theology of Christianity from on his autocracy to the Second Ecumenical Council](#)". In: *De Medio Aevo*, vol. 6, 2 (2014), pp. 139-150, esp. p. 140.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA. *Church History*, 10, 5.2-14; BARDY, G. "Eusèbe de Césarée. Histoire ecclésiastique". In: *Sources Chrétiennes* 31, Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1955 (=PG 20, 880-881); LACTANTIUS. *De mortibus persecutorum* 28, PG 7, 239-240.

²⁰ ARTEMI, Eirini. "[Emperor Constantine and the theology of Christianity from on his autocracy to the Second Ecumenical Council](#)". In: *De Medio Aevo*, vol. 6, 2 (2014), pp. 139-150, esp. p. 140-141.

²¹ AIKATERINI, Christophilopoulou. *Byzantine History*, I, 324-610AD (Thessaloniki: publ. Vaniias, 1996), p. 167 (in greek).



During the reign of Theodosius there was an incredible acceleration the Christianization of the Roman Empire. The emperor officially enforced Orthodox Christianity. He managed great achievements in his military missions when the frontiers of the Byzantine Empire were threatened by the wars of the Migration Period²². He tried to avoid the wars which he was not obliged to do. He pursued unremittingly a policy and tactic of conciliation and friendship with Goths. Finally, in two successive destructive civil wars, he defeated two rival emperors²³.

In his reign, the Byzantine Empire and the Christian Church flourished. Many important Church Fathers were contemporaries to the emperor as the great Ambrose, Augustine of Hippo, Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory Nyssa, and many others. These Fathers had friendly relations with the emperor. In his day the Church obtained a power quite equal to the political one. A bishop had more influence and more than a senator and a general.

The fact that the Christian church had become powerful and was under the protection of the Byzantine Emperor, it had as a result many people, poor, wealthy, well-educated, uneducated, to dedicate them into Church and to choose the monastic life²⁴. Also, Theodosius assembled a general council of one hundred and fifty bishops, the Ecumenical Council in Constantinople²⁵, which condemned the heresies of Eunomius²⁶, Marcellus of Ancyra²⁷, Macedonius²⁸.

In this environment, Ambrosius of Milan became bishop of Milan in 374. He was only a catechumen when the citizens drafted him to become the leader of the Milan Church in 374 AD. For this reason and because that he was humble and modest, he considered himself unworthy, and tried to refuse. The emperor Valentinian *the Elder* (364-375)

²² HALSALL, G. *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376-568*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

²³ AIKATERINI, Christophilopoulou. *Byzantine History*, I, 324-610AD, (Thessaloniki: publ. Vantias, 1996), p. 169-174 (in greek).

²⁴ AIKATERINI, Christophilopoulou. *Byzantine History*, I, 324-610AD, (Thessaloniki: publ. Vantias, 1996), p. 174 (in greek).

²⁵ Cf. ARTEMI, Eirini. "[Emperor Constantine and the theology of Christianity from on his autocracy to the Second Ecumenical Council](#)". In: *De Medio Aevo*, vol. 6, 2 (2014), pp. 139-150.

²⁶ Cf. VAGGIONE, R. P. *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

²⁷ Cf. ARTEMI, Eirini. "[The 'Logos' in the teaching of Marcellus of Ancyra and Sabellius](#)". In: *Volynskyi Blahovisnyk*, № 7, (2019), pp. 99-121.

²⁸ Cf. ARTEMI, Eirini. "[The divine personhood of the Holy Spirit in the teaching of Gregory Nazianzen](#)". In: *Vox Patrum*, 68, (2018) pp. 179-192.



insisted on Ambrosius' becoming bishop of Milan. Soon he was baptized from an Orthodox priest and, passing through all the ranks of the Church clergy in just seven days. On 7th December 374, he was consecrated Bishop of Milan or Mediolanum²⁹.

He studied theology under Simplician, a wise presbyter of Rome. Then, he shared his money and all his property to poor people and arranged everything about his family. When he felt free from his duties and needs, he dedicated himself into the service of His Church³⁰.

Ambrosius followed the decisions of the First Ecumenical Council and was influenced by Athanasius' *the Great* theology. He fought Arianism and His followers and supporters. His preaching of Saint Ambrose in defense of Orthodoxy managed the show the inaccuracies of Arian and Eunomian theology for one more time³¹. As a bishop, following the steps of Athanasius *the Great* and Basilus of Caesarea, he actively participated not only in religious problems but in civil matters too³².

These two dynamic personalities, Ambrosius the bishop of Milan and Theodosius I, *the Great* had interacted over the dignity of human life, as we will develop in the other paragraphs. Ambrosius, the bishop of Milan rebuked the emperor Theodosius I, *the Great* because of the massacre in Thessalonica in 390AD.

In 390, in the city of Thessalonica, a mob of citizens rebelled and lynched Butheric, the garrison commander of Thessalonica. The cause was a terrible disagreement about the imprisonment and the murder of a charioteer. Especially, Butherich or Botheric was a Gothic *magister militum* – «Master of Soldiers» in the Emperor Theodosius' army. He gave the order that a popular charioteer to be arrested. The accusation against this charioteer was pederasty.

²⁹ BARNES, TIMOTHY D. "The Election of Ambrose of Milan". In: LEEMANS, Johan; NUFFELEN, Peter Van; KEOUGH, Shawn W. J.; NICOLAYE, Carla (eds.). *Episcopal Elections in Late Antiquity*. Walter de Gruyter, 2011; W. H. C. FRENCH. *The Rise of Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984, p. 645, n. 10 for references; RUSCH, W. G. *The Later Christian Fathers*. London: Duckworth, 1977, p. 48. Cf. SAINT-LAURENT, G. E. "St. Ambrose of Milan and the Eastern Fathers". In: *Diakonia*, Vol. 15.1 (1980), pp. 23-31.

³⁰ RUSCH, W. G. *The Later Christian Fathers*. London: Duckworth, 1977, p. 48-52.

³¹ WILLIAMS, D. H. *Ambrose of Milan and the end of the Nicene-Arian conflicts*. Oxford, 1995, pp. 38, 53ff.

³² DI BERNARDINO, Angelico (ed). *Patrology: The Golden Age of Latin Patristic Literature. From the Council of Nicea to the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 4. Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics Inc., 1991, p. 145-147.



He seduced and tried to have sex with a servant of the emperor or even the *magister militum* himself. The charioteer was put in jail, but the citizens of Thessaloniki demanded to be released, considering him necessary to the celebration of the contest. As their demand was not attended to, they rebelled and finally killed Buthericus³³.

Theodosius decided to punish many people of Thessalonica to show his wrath with a clear way. This decision was made up in the Emperor under the pressure of the new governor of Thessalonica. This is the opinion that G. T. Kollias adopts after very detailed research in the historical sources. So, the massacre of those people was not based only on the decision of Emperor because of his wrath. It had to do with political causes and how the Emperor would satisfy his allies Goths³⁴.

So, in April 390, when the citizens of Thessalonica had gathered in the circus of their town, the emperor's troops were let loose to kill innocent people. The slaughter was frightful; 7.000 men, women, and children, rich and poor, guilty of the murder of Goth and innocent people were massacred in three hours³⁵.

On the other hand, the chronographer Ioannis Malalas had a different opinion about the causes of massacre³⁶. He believed that the uprising to the popular indignation caused by the presence in the city of imperial troops with the emperor. The soldiers of the troops became rude and making troubles to Thessalonica. These soldiers provoked public sentiment with their violent and arrogant behavior. The imprisonment of the driver -based on a recent decree of Theodosius against homosexuals- apparently gave rise to the bloody incidents.

Also, Theophanes the Confessor supported the opinion that the city revolted because of the brutality of the military, the seizure of the goods of the citizens and to the arrest of the driver was just the simple reason and not the real cause³⁷.

³³ SALAMINIUS, Hermias Sozomenos. *Church History*, 7, 25. BIDEZ, J. and HANSEN, G. C. *Sozomenus. Kirchengeschichte* [Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller 50. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1960]: 1-408 (=PG 67, 1496AB). THEODORETUS OF CYRRUS. *Church History*, 5, 17, PG 82, 1232A-C. NICEPHOROS KALLISTOS, *Church History*, PG 146, 88AB.

³⁴ KOLLIAS, George T. *The probyzantine Thessalonica and the rebellion of 390*. Athens, 1935, pp. 26-27.

³⁵ CURRAN, John. "From Jovian to Theodosius". In: CAMERON, A., GARNSEY, P. (eds.). *The Cambridge Ancient History*, XIII: *The Late Empire, A.D. 337-425*. Cambridge, 2007, pp. 78-110, esp. 108.

³⁶ MALALAS, Joannes. *Chronography*, PG 97, 518-520.

³⁷ THEOPHANIS THE CONFESSOR. *Chronography*, PG 108, 208AB.



When the bishop of Milan Ambrosius was informed about this massacre, the killing of too many people, he became too angry with the Emperor. Additionally, he avoided meeting the Emperor when the latter was in Milan. Ambrosius sent an epistle to the Emperor who called to have repentance. Also, the bishop of Milan rejected any demand of the Emperor to enter in the Church, although eight months had passed from this awful event.

Ambrosius clarified to Theodosius that he would not take part in Holy Communion until the emperor would show public penance. During this period of his repentance, the Emperor should put aside his royal garments, don and publicly plead for God's mercy through the Bishop.

II. The letter of Ambrosius of Milan and the repentance of the Emperor

This epistle 51 of St. Ambrosius is very important as an example of the behaviour of a bishop against the emperor himself and generally against any politician who created something awful. In this letter Ambrose explains to the Emperor why he had avoided meeting him on his return to Milan. He advises him with respectful and most affectionate, but firm remonstrance, to follow David in repentance as he had followed him in crime and tells him that in a vision of the bishop, God Himself had forbidden him to offer the Sacrifice of the Eucharist in his behalf while he remained impenitent. The Letter is quite important. It should «be regarded as a model of dignified remonstrance, well befitting an eminent prelate addressing a great earthly Sovereign»³⁸.

Ambrosius starts the letter with compliments to the Emperor. He tries to remind Theodosius of their friendship. By this way the bishop tries to succeed the best and the calmest attitude of the Emperor to him. He knows very well that his life is in the Emperor's hand. Despite this, Ambrosius chooses to speak against the Emperor and to condemn his actions about the massacre. He prefers serving the divine orders and truth than telling lies and forgetting that Theodosius was responsible of the death 7000 people or according to other historians of the death of 15.000 people.

Ambrosius tries with a strict way but at the same time with a way which reveals the love and the care of the bishop to a faithful, to explain the mistakes of the Emperor to his highness in order making him to have repentance. He doesn't want to humiliate the Emperor because of his action; for this reason he writes: « his vehemence of yours I have preferred secretly to commend to your consideration, rather than run the risk of

³⁸ AMBROSIUS OF MILAN. [Epistle 51](#).



rousing it publicly by my acts, And so I have preferred to be lacking somewhat in duty rather than in humility, and that others should complain of my want of priestly authority, rather than that you should find any want of respect in me, who am so devoted to you; and this in order that you may restrain your emotions, and have full power of choosing what counsel to follow. I alleged as my reason, bodily sickness, which was in fact severe, and not to be mitigated but by more gentle treatment; still I would rather have died than not have waited two or three days for your arrival. But I could not do so»³⁹.

Generally, in this epistle Ambrosius shows to the later bishops and priests how they should separate the friendship of a powerful political man or a wealthy man with their duty to criticize a sinful work. The letter of Ambrosius to Theodosius has as goal to inspire to the Emperor the necessity of his repentance. This spontaneous repentance would appear as very important attitude of the Emperor.

The thing that should be underlined is that the Bishop doesn't advice the Emperor how the latter should have repentance. He believes that the Emperor could find the best way for his repentance. Finally, it is completely amazing that Ambrosius doesn't remind the Emperor of the punishment that the church laws support. The significant for him is to have repentance instead of remembering the divine laws about any sin big or little which can disappoint him and to become the cause of avoiding the repentance and confession.

Conclusions

In Byzantine history there are a lot of reasons which have been assigned for some roman emperors' hatred of Christianity, «some seeing in it an evidence of innate cruelty, others a desire to be avenged on the friends of his predecessor; but there can be little doubt that the main motives for his hostility were political, conceived not in the form of fanaticism but in purposes of political expediency»⁴⁰.

Christianity is the religion of forgiveness and real love for all people. If anyone wants to be part in Christianity, he will be obliged to put into practice the orders of Christianity, to struggle against any sin that was done because of the pride and wrath of people. In the teaching of Christ people are not punished by God because of a theodicy.

³⁹ AMBROSIUS OF MILAN. *Epistle 51, 5*.

⁴⁰ HEALY, Patrick. "[Decius](#)". In: *The Catholic Encyclopedia* Vol. 4. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908.



God waits our repentance as he did with the prodigal son. Jesus wants all people to be saved.

Ambrosius shows with his behaviour how a spiritual father must behave against any authority of a country. He shows to the Emperor that he must convert his heart back to God; he must change his inner world; he must repent. The Emperor's act of doing penance, which is an external behaviour, flows from the true repentance of the Emperor. Only this, it is going to bring inner peace and calmness to Theodosius and to lead him to sanctification with the grace of God.

In the end, we would like to underline that the real repentance and confession can forgive all the sins and can give the believer the key to Paradise which is a gift of the grace of God.

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