

The Petrine ministry at the time of the first four ecumenical councils: relations between the Bishop of Rome and the Eastern Bishops as revealed in the canons, process, and reception of the councils

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**BOSTON COLLEGE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY
WESTON JESUIT DEPARTEMENT**

The Petrine ministry at the Time of the First Four Ecumenical Councils

**Relations between the Bishop of Rome and the Eastern
Bishops as revealed in the canons, process, and reception
of the councils**

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the S.T.L. Degree
Of the School of Theology and Ministry**

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May 2010

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Abstract

The Petrine ministry of the bishops of Rome and relations with the eastern bishops at the time of the first four ecumenical councils are the focus of this thesis. It places the Church in the complex historical context marked by the public recognition of Christianity under Constantine (312) and the great novelty of the close interactions of the emperors with the bishops of the major sees in the period, Rome, Alexandria, Antioch and Constantinople. The study examines the structures of the church (local and regional synods and ecumenical councils) and the roles of bishops and emperors in the ecumenical councils of Nicaea (325), Constantinople I (381), Ephesus (431), and Chalcedon (451), including the “robber” council of 449. Attention is given to the most important and sometimes contested canons of those councils regarding the relationship of the eastern bishops and their sees to the bishop of Rome and his claims to exercise a Petrine ministry and authority for the whole Church: canon 6 (Nicaea), canon 3 (Constantinople), canon 7 (Ephesus) and canon 28 (Chalcedon). The method of the study is historical and draws on the contributions of major Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran and Catholic scholars. The concluding synthesis and ecclesiological reflection finds that no Roman bishop was present at these councils, but at all but Constantinople, where there was a western observer, he sent legates. Sometimes the bishop of Rome played an important role in the ecumenical councils, i.e., Leo in relation to Ephesus 449 and Chalcedon; Celestine and recognition of Ephesus 431, and in both cases, the emperor also supported the final decisions. Moreover, the bishops of Rome played a minor role in relation to Nicaea and Constantinople. Finally, in regard to canon 3 of Constantinople and 28 of Chalcedon they consistently asserted that their apostolicity and foundation on Peter was the source of the Roman bishop’s authority and precedence.



At the name of Jesus
Ev'ry knee shall bow,
Ev'ry tongue confess Him
King of glory now;
'Tis the Father's pleasure,
We should call Him Lord,
Who from the beginning
Was the mighty Word.¹

With gratitude and fraternal affection in the Lord to:

Fr. Tata, S.J., Fr. Casalone, S.J., Fr. Barretta, S.J.,

Fr. Schaeffer, S.J., Fr. Sullivan, S.J., Prof. Cardman,

Fr. Bado, S.J. and my brethren of St. Edmund's House.

¹ Hymn taken from *the Liturgy of the Hours* of evening prayer I of the second Week. Text: C. Noel, d. 1877, alt.

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Introduction

The Petrine ministry in the first two millenniums is the main obstacle to the unity of the one Church of Christ. Many attempts were made by Catholics and other Christians of the mainline traditions (Lutherans, Anglican communion, Methodists, Orthodox, etc.) to clarify this question. Pope John Paul II with his Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*” (see n°95) asked all Christians to figure out new ways to practice the Petrine ministry today. With the theological reflections of other Christian traditions on that topic, and also with our engagement it is possible to continue on the right path that leads to the unity that God is willing.

In this research it is my intention to examine canons, process, and reception of the first four ecumenical councils that pertain to structures of episcopal authority and jurisdiction in order to understand the way in which the Petrine ministry was understood and practiced among the early churches. On the one hand, this work will lead me to study relevant and particular canons. It will also study how the bishop of Rome understood his pastoral service for the Church. On the other hand, it will be important to look at which kind of authority the eastern bishops recognized in the bishop of Rome. That itinerary will allow me to see the trajectory of the Petrine ministry as it develops through most of five centuries.

In this work it will be necessary to look at the relations between the bishop of Rome and the eastern Bishops at the time of the undivided Church. For that reason the method that I am going to use will help me to focus on the structure, and canons of the first four councils on which there is “a common understanding” between East and West, studying some important aspects of each council and the reception of the canons and decrees of the councils. From the canons we can learn something about the actual practice of relationships among bishops, the way structures of the church reflect those relationships and also shape them, the

way levels of jurisdiction and authority and mechanisms of governance emerge over the course of conciliar history - provincial synods, metropolitan bishops, the emerging patriarchates. From the process of each council we can learn how the bishops related to each other and sometimes we can learn something about the role of the bishop of Rome and how he was regarded; other times we cannot. This includes contributions such as Leo's *Tome* at Chalcedon, as well as appeals for assistance. From the reception of the canons and the councils, we can learn more about the actual relationships between the eastern bishops and the bishop of Rome. Especially I want to understand how the bishop of Rome saw his service and his authority among the other bishops in the context of the church of their time. It will also be important to look at the eastern bishops, and discover which authority they recognized in the bishop of Rome.

The method that I am going to use will be strictly historical for the approach to sources and scholarship, choosing outstanding authors from the different Christian traditions. I discovered that it is possible to grow in communion and unity by searching for a common understanding of Church history. Scholars such as Henry Chadwick, Peter L'Huilier, Wilhelm De Vries, and many others will help me to have a serious account of the main events of the period of the Church that I am going to study here.

In the first chapter I will provide a focus on the events that prepared the council of Nicea (325). With the first council, the Church started to develop its faith, to answer seriously the heresies, to issue disciplinary decrees, and to be a sign of contradiction in the world. In the second chapter, with the council of Constantinople (381) the Symbol of faith of Nicea will be integrated with a more complete faith understanding of the Fathers gathered in Constantinople. Especially it will be necessary to keep the focus on the canons, the process, and the reception of the councils, not their doctrinal content as such. I will especially study canon 3 of Constantinople, the "new Rome," and the Roman reaction to that assertion. In the

Synod of Rome (382) the formulation of the “Petrine principle” was completed (Rome, Alexandria, Antioch). I will also look at other canons from the council/s about episcopal structure. In the third chapter I will provide a study of the council of Ephesus of 431, the “robber” council of 449 and Chalcedon (451). I will look at the significant doctrinal issues, and at the same time I will focus on some canons of the councils, in particular I will study canon 28 of Chalcedon and the Roman response. In the last chapter I will provide a synthesis of the Petrine ministry, and of the other significant issues studied in almost the first half of the first millennium. I apologize now that I will not be able in this work to consider the most relevant points of the ecumenical dialogue in light of the results of this research. It was my intention to do that, as it also was my will to study all the first seven ecumenical councils. In agreement with my mentors I decided to follow the Ignatian motto: “*Non multa sed multum.*”² Following that criterion I discovered a great treasure in studying the first four ecumenical councils. However, from those considerations I will attempt to do some ecclesiological reflections at the end, focusing on the main points and significant questions that emerge from this historical study.

² Quintilian, *Instit.*, X, I, 59.

Chapter 1: The Petrine ministry and the structures of the Church at the time of Nicaea

1. Introduction

In this chapter I will focus on the Petrine ministry and the structures of episcopal collegiality at the time of the council of Nicaea (325). With the first “ecumenical” council, the Church started to make formal doctrinal decisions and issue disciplinary decrees intended for all the churches. Although Nicaea represents a new moment for early Christianity, it is necessary to see it in the context of a developing practice and understanding of episcopal collegiality and synodal decision-making that preceded it.¹ I begin by looking at several important events and characters of the third century in regard to these developments. Then I discuss the context and characteristics of the council of Nicaea, and the role of the Roman bishops by an examination of the canons relating to structures of episcopal ministry and relationship. I will also discuss the questions of its authority, divine inspiration, and reception as an ecumenical council in the fourth century.²

¹ See Wilhem De Vries, *Orient et Occident: Les Structures Ecclésiales Vues Dans L’Histoire des Sept Premiers Conciles Oecumeniques* (Paris: Les Édition Du Cerf, 1974), 13. Wilhem De Vries asserts that consciousness of the episcopacy existed already, but the historical circumstances made it impossible for the totality of the episcopacy of the universal Church to meet together in a specific place. For a clear idea of how many councils and synods the Church had from the first part of the third century until the ecumenical council of Constantinople II of 553, see Ramsay MacMullen, *Voting About God in Early Church Councils* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 2-4.

² For the history of the context and content of the Petrine ministry in the Church of the first three centuries see: Henry Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society: From Galilee to Gregory the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1-200; Bernd Moeller (a cura di), *Storia Ecumenica della Chiesa: Nuova edizione: 1. Dagli inizi al Medioevo* (Brescia: Queriniana, 2009), 5-112; Oscar Cullmann, *Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr: A historical and Theological Essay* (New York: Meridian Books, 1958), 17-238; Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, John Reumann, (Edd.), *Peter in the New Testament: A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1973), 1-168; Francis A. Sullivan, S.J., *From Apostles to Bishops: The Development of the Episcopacy in the Early Church* (New York: The Newman Press, 2001), 1-236; Klaus Schatz, S.J., *Papal Primacy: From Its Origins to the Present*

2. Synods, councils and main characters before Nicaea

2.1 Context

In the pre-Constantinian period, and before Nicaea, early councils and synods dealt with local or regional issues, and were a collegial exercise of episcopal responsibility. Significant elements of those meetings were later incorporated by the Fathers at Nicaea. The intention of the bishops was to make with authority some delicate decisions. For example in the Synod of Carthage in 252, the Fathers of the council understood that in discerning and making deliberations it was important to recognize the role of the Holy Spirit. Here, Cyprian prepared a written summary of the synod for bishop Cornelius of Rome. He insisted that the decision was taken under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to offer peace to the *lapsi*.³ Another example of the authority of synods is the synod of Elvira in 306. Its canon 53 decreed that any bishop who will not respect the determinations taken will be responsible to the provincial synod.⁴ The resolutions of these councils usually were communicated by the Fathers to churches of other regions, in order to confer a more universal value on them, as happened at the synod of Antioch in 268 which announced its decisions to the churches saying: “à tous les évêques, nos collègues de l’univers entier, aux prêtres et aux diacres et à toute l’Eglise catholique qui est sous le ciel.”⁵ Synodal deliberations were concerned with theological issues and disciplinary measures taken in regard to clerics and the faithful.

In the third century, regional synods took place in North Africa (Carthage), Egypt (Alexandria), and Syria (Antioch). There were also local synods in the western churches as well, but it does not seem that there were regional synods in the third-century west. Because

(Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 1-21; Giovanni Falbo, *Il Primato della Chiesa di Roma alla luce dei Primi Quattro Secoli* (Roma: Coletti, 1989), 5-325; Veselin Kesich, *The Church in History: Formation and Struggles: The Church AD 33-450, Part I. The Birth of the Church Ad 33-200*, vol. 1 (Cretwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2007), 1-189.

³ See Cyprian, *Letter 57* to Cornelius of Rome: “And so, prompted by the Holy Spirit and counselled by the Lord through many explicit visions, we came to the decision....” (5.2), *The Letters of St. Cyprian*, trans. and annotated, G.W. Clarke, Ancient Christian Writers, no. 46 (New York, Newman Press, 1986), 59.

⁴ See De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 15-16.

⁵ See De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 13-14.

synods were particular to their region, neither the Roman bishop nor other bishops participated in synods beyond their region. At these councils and synods, the main discussions were about “disciplinary and liturgical regulation of the communities of the province, the examination of the legality of episcopal elections that had taken place, and the erections or division of bishoprics.”⁶ According to Hubert Jedin, among the churches of East and West, the most mature form of synodality belonged to the bishops of North Africa. They met in the plenary council of that area, in which several provinces were represented, under the presidency of the bishop of Carthage. In Alexandria, the synods which the bishop of Alexandria convened were for the whole church of Egypt, Lybia and Pentapolis. Antioch also knew of interprovincial synods. Among such councils the synod of Rome had a unique place, meeting under the guidance of the bishop of Rome, who was the single metropolitan of *Italia suburbicaria* (central and southern Italy, Sicily, Sardinia). That synod dealt not only with questions of the bishops of this territory, but intentionally discussed and made decisions that were regarded as binding for other churches outside its own metropolitan sphere. Other important interprovincial councils were held under the guidance of the metropolitans of Milan, Aquileia, and later Ravenna. There was no similar ecclesiastical center in Gaul in this period for councils of this sort.

A new form of ecclesiastical gathering emerged with the synod of Arles in 314. For the first time in history a Roman emperor convoked a church council. At the request of Donatists who were appealing against judgments made against them by synods in North Africa and Rome, Constantine directed the bishop of Rome to hear their case (see below, section 3). He and later the other emperors understood that they had the right to do so, and they expected obedience and gratitude for their support of the churches. They created “the technical presuppositions” for the councils, facilitating the logistics and offering to the bishops

⁶ Karl Baus et al, *The Imperial Church From Constantine to the Early Middle Ages*, vol. 2, *History of the Church*, ed. Hubert Jedin (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980), 241.

hospitality and all the necessary means to achieve their plans. No ecclesiastical or civil law defined the emperors' right to enter in ecclesiastical questions, and the convocation of councils, but no council or bishop of Rome denied that claim, rather it was expressly confirmed.⁷

2.2 Victor I of Rome and the date of Easter

In the pre-Nicene period, one of the most significant bishops was Victor I. He was born in Africa and was bishop of Rome from 189 to 199. His episcopacy accelerated the Latinization of the Church in the West, which was still using Greek in its official texts. He was at the center of a controversy about the date of Easter. Before the Council of Nicaea, there were two main Christian traditions concerning the day on which Easter should be celebrated. Since the time of bishop Soter (c. 160), when the regular celebration of Easter was introduced at Rome, relations between Rome and some eastern communities were challenged by that question.⁸ The churches of the Roman province of Asia (Ephesus, Smyrna, etc.) celebrated Easter on the fourteenth day of the lunar month of Nisan that corresponds at the Jewish day of Passover. Often, that day was not a Sunday. The church of Rome celebrated Easter on the Sunday after Passover, as did Alexandria and many other churches.

At Rome, where communities of Christians from the province of Asia Minor were following their own tradition, there was confusion about the Easter observance. During Victor's episcopacy a Roman synod attempted to impose uniformity of practice not only in Rome but elsewhere. The synod recommended that the bishops of every region gather in synods, discuss the question, and adhere to his proposal if they did not already follow it. But, the bishops of Asia were determined to keep their tradition of celebrating Easter on the 14th of Nisan. The bishop of Ephesus, Polycrates, with the authority of those who claim - as Rome

⁷ See Karl Baus et al, *The Imperial Church From Constantine to the Early Middle Ages*, 244.

⁸ See Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 84-85.

also did- apostolic origins, sent a letter to Victor in which he explained the firm position of the Asians bishops' in keeping unchanged the date of Easter. Victor received that explanatory letter with great disfavor, and his answer was strong. He threatened to break communion with the churches of the province of Asia. Irenaeus of Lyon, who was a native of that province, felt the necessity of responding to Victor. He based his arguments on the fact that Victor's predecessors had maintained communion with those who kept the tradition of celebrating Easter on the day of Passover, and he invited Victor to tolerate those traditions.⁹ Thus, in his letter Irenaeus traced the history of the "presbyters" of Rome before Victor, and showed that they tolerated differences in practice, as Polycarp of Smyrna's discussion with bishop Anicetus (154) had earlier demonstrated.

Another question was solved by Irenaeus who had a high regard for the tradition of the Roman church. In his work *Against Heresies* he had cited the succession of bishops in Rome – "that greatest, and most ancient church known to all, founded and established at Rome by the two most glorious Apostles, Peter and Paul" – as best and most easily illustrating the tradition of all the churches that prove the teachings of Gnostic groups wrong. In that same passage, Irenaeus also asserted that:

But since it would be extremely long in a book such as this to give succession lists for all the churches (we shall take just one), the greatest and most ancient church, known to all, founded and established at Rome by the most glorious Apostles, Peter and Paul. We shall show that the tradition which it has from the Apostles and the faith which it has preached to men, comes down to us through the successions of bishops. Thus we shall confound all who, in whatever way, either through self-satisfaction or vainglory, blindness or doctrinal error, form communities they should not. For every church, i.e. the faithful who are in all parts of the world, should agree with this church because of its superior foundation. In this church the tradition from the Apostles has been preserved by those who are from all parts of the world.¹⁰

Irenaeus meant, according to Sullivan, that "as every church must be in agreement with the teaching of Peter and Paul, so every church must agree in faith with the church that has inherited the teaching of those greatest of Apostles and handed it on in an unbroken

⁹ See Sullivan, S.J, *From Apostles to Bishops*, 151-152.

¹⁰ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III.3.2, as quoted in Sullivan, 146-147, where Sullivan quotes the letter preserved in Eusebius, *History of the Church V*

succession of teachers.” Now, as Sullivan observes, Victor apparently thought they must be in agreement with Rome’s practice as well.¹¹ In the controversy over Easter, however, Irenaeus argued for diversity of practice, even though he held to observing Easter on Sunday. Other bishops who supported that practice also argued for tolerance and not causing divisions in the church. Influenced by these arguments, Victor changed his position and withdrew his threat. The church of Alexandria and other eastern churches were observing Easter Sunday well before it became a regular practice to observe Easter every year.¹² This question would only finally be settled at the Council of Nicaea, as the letter from that council to the Egyptian bishops reports.

We also send you the good news of the settlement concerning the holy Pasch, namely that in answer to your prayers this question also has been resolved. All the brethren in the East who have hitherto followed the Jewish practice will henceforth observe the custom of the Romans and of yourselves [Egyptians] and of all of us who from ancient times have kept Easter together with you. Rejoicing then in these successes and in the common peace and harmony and in the cutting off of all heresy....¹³

Here there is a clear statement which attributes the practice to the Romans and to the Alexandrians and others who have kept Easter with the Egyptians.

2.3 Cyprian of Carthage and Stephen of Rome

Cyprian (200/210 - 258), was born in North Africa, probably at Carthage. He became Christian about the year 245 and a member of the clergy shortly afterward. Four years later Cyprian was elected bishop of Carthage. Less than one year after his consecration as bishop, the emperor Decius decreed that all should offer sacrifices to the gods and get a certificate to prove they had done so. Cyprian went into exile in a safe place outside the city. During the persecution that lasted one year, a great number of Christians, including members of the clergy, were not able to resist the pressure of the emperor, and they offered sacrifices to the

¹¹ See Sullivan, S.J., *From Apostles to Bishops*, 153.

¹² See Chadwick, *The Early Church*, 84-85.

¹³ See the end of the letter of Nicaea to the Egyptians, in Norman P. Tanner, S.J., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Nicaea I to Lateran V*, vol. 1 (London: Sheed & Ward and Georgetown University Press, 1990), 19.

idols or they bought false certificates attesting that they offered sacrifices. Others had died as martyrs, which still others had suffered in prison. The latter were regarded as confessors and were thought to have spiritual authority to forgive sins, while the former were seen as apostates. When Cyprian returned at the end of the persecution, he encountered opposition from the confessors, who had been receiving the lapsed into communion again, in defiance of his explicit instructions to wait until the North African bishops could meet in synod to decide on a common policy in regard to the lapsed.¹⁴

Cyprian's famous treatment of Matthew 16:18-20, the "Petrine text," occurs in his treatise *On the Unity of the Catholic Church*, written during this period when there was schism in Rome and the threat of schism in Carthage over forgiveness of the lapsed. In chapter 4 of the treatise Cyprian discusses the role of Peter as symbol and source of the unity of the Church and its episcopate. Complex textual issues and scholarly debates regarding the two editions of chapter 4 in that treatise are beyond the scope of this thesis.¹⁵ But it must be noted here that Cyprian had high regard for the Petrine role and that in the mid-third century the question of whether it applied to all the bishops equally or especially or solely to the Roman bishop was just beginning to emerge.¹⁶

Cyprian and Stephen (254-257), bishop of Rome, came into conflict over the validity of baptism by schismatics and heretics, specifically those who had been baptized by Novatianists, who were unwilling to forgive the sin of apostasy, and now wanted to become Catholic Christians. The question is whether they had been truly baptized or not. Should they be baptized (or rebaptized) when they joined the Catholic church? Cyprian and the North African bishops said they had to be baptized, as that was the theology and practice of the church there. Stephen said they were already validly baptized, as that was the traditional

¹⁴ See Cyprian, *Letter 55.4-5*, Clarke, *Letters of St. Cyprian*, 4.

¹⁵ – See Cyprian, *De Lapsis* and *De Ecclesiae Catholicae Unitate*. Text and translation by Maurice Bévenot, S.J. (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1971), 61-65. For the context of the treatise and the question of chapter 4, see Bévenot's introduction, X-XV.

¹⁶ For a brief discussion of ch. 4 and related texts, see Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops*, 192-199

Roman theology and practice, and they only had to be received into the church with the laying on of hands for the forgiveness of the sin of schism. Despite invoking his Petrine authority and Roman tradition, Stephen was not able to persuade Cyprian and the North African bishops to abandon their theology and practice. The two churches remained in communion; both Cyprian (258) and Stephen (257) died in the revival of persecution under the emperor Valerius.¹⁷ Although Stephen was not able to impose his will on Cyprian, he had not doubt about his authority:

Pur non prendendo in considerazione che le prerogative di Pietro siano state trasmesse ai soli vescovi di Roma [2nd. edition], tuttavia essa associa strettamente la figura dell'Apostolo Pietro alla Chiesa romana e al servizio dell'unità del corpo episcopale...¹⁸

Minnerath is finding the truth, namely that Cyprian did not recognize in the bishop of Rome a special gift that he continues to have from Jesus' time, but according to Minnerath, Cyprian closely associates Peter's figure to the Roman church, and at the service of unity of the episcopal body. It is also important to look at Stephen's view on his mission as bishop of Rome.

Quanto a Stefano, egli rivendicava per sé il *primatus* che Cipriano aveva riconosciuto a Pietro nel *De unitate* 5TP, nel senso di primo chiamato, rispetto al quale gli altri apostoli e vescovi saranno dei secondi.¹⁹

Stephen understood his *primatus* as power to impose the Roman faith on the whole Church. Therefore his ministry shows the beginnings of a claim for a primatial jurisdiction. Minnerath notes that the first known of the use of Matthew 16:19 belongs to pope Callistus I (217-222.)²⁰

¹⁷ See Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops*, 193.212-214. Another significant text is related with bishop Firmilian of Caesarea. Pope Stephen tried to impose the Roman tradition on the Church of Asia Minor, not only of North Africa, See Ibid, 214-216.

¹⁸ Roland Minnerath, "La Tradizione Dottrinale del Primato di Pietro nel Primo Millennio," Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede. *Il Primato del Successore di Pietro nel Ministero della Chiesa. Considerazioni della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede. Testo e Commenti.* (Città del vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002), 55.

¹⁹ Minnerath, "La Tradizione Dottrinale del Primato di Pietro nel Primo Millennio," 57-58.

²⁰ Minnerath, "La Tradizione Dottrinale del Primato di Pietro nel Primo Millennio," 56-58.

2.4 Dionysius of Alexandria, Dionysius of Rome, and Paul of Samosata: homoousios and the Logos theology

In this section I will briefly present two theological disputes in the 260s that anticipated the trinitarian controversies that would preoccupy the East for most of the fourth century. Both disputes demonstrate the role of synods in addressing theological controversies. Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria (247-c. 263), was called on to deal with a clash among churches in Libya over the Logos theology of Origen, which held that the Father and the Son (*Logos*) each had a distinct person or *hypostasis*. That theology was challenged by those holding a modalist view, which regarded Father and Son as essentially the same, so that the names only referred to different characteristics or aspects of God rather than any internal distinctions in God's being. Dionysius was so opposed to modalism that he claimed the Father and Son were completely different from each other and *not* "of one substance" (*homoousios*; the term that would become a key word in the Nicene creed). The modalists appealed for support to Dionysius, bishop of Rome (258-268), who, like many westerners, put great emphasis on the unity of God. He replied by holding a synod in Rome and then writing to the church in Alexandria, without naming anyone specifically, censuring "those who divide the divine monarchy into three separate *hypostases* and three deities." Dionysius of Alexandria held to his views, however, and there does not seem to have been any break in communion between the two churches.²¹ The conflicting approaches to trinitarian theology would characterize East and West in the next century.²²

In another dispute, Paul of Samosata, bishop of Antioch (260-272), was a critic of the Logos theology and disliked the idea of three distinct *hypostases* in the Trinity. He asserted

²¹ In this controversy, Dionysius of Alexandria rejected the term *homoousios*, later the keyword of the creed at Nicaea, while Dionysius of Rome sided with the modalists, a position also rejected in the fourth century, but which the East continued to suspect the West of holding.

²² As quoted in Chadwick, *Early Church*, 114; see also Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 161-165.

without any nuance that God and his Word or Wisdom are one (*homoousios*) without distinction. Unity of substance (*homoousios*) was heard in this context as numerical identity of Father and Son, hence taken to be modalism. A synod in Antioch condemned and deposed Paul in 268, but he was not removed from his see until 272 when the emperor Aurelian conquered the kingdom of Palmyra which had controlled the eastern provinces since 260. Aurelian then had to decide whom to recognize as the legitimate the bishop of Antioch. He chose the bishop in communion with Rome: whomever “the bishops of Italy and Rome should communicate in writing.” Aurelian’s decision was fateful: “It was the first time that an ecclesiastical dispute had to be settled by the secular power.”²³

3. Miltiades, Sylvester and Council of Arles

3.1 Pope Miltiades

Miltiades (died c. 314) was of African origin and became part of pope Marcellinus’ clergy in Rome. He was elected bishop of Rome in 311 after a vacancy of the see of one or two years. His pontificate was characterized by his intervention in the Donatist controversy. In Africa that intransigent movement was dividing the church. The emperor asked Miltiades’ mediation, because the contested election of Caecilian as Catholic bishop of Carthage in 311-312 provoked a strong reaction from the Donatists who protested to the proconsul of Africa, Anulinus, identifying the new bishop as a *traditor*. Donatists usually gave the appellation *traditores* to bishops or clergy who surrendered the Scriptures to Roman officials during the persecution of Diocletian. Therefore, according to this rigorist group, sacraments administered by Caecilian were invalid and, since the Catholic Church was in communion with Caecilian, it shared his state of apostasy, so that the Donatists believe that they alone

²³ Chadwick, *Early Church*, 114-15; see also Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 165-69.

were the true church. Thus, Anulinus referred to the emperor Constantine the Donatists' request to have the arbitration of bishops from Gaul. But the emperor was annoyed by the case and asked the pope to resolve it. Constantine sent a letter to Miltiades that is the first letter that an emperor sent to a bishop of Rome, and included a copy of the documents that the proconsul gave him about the question. Constantine defined the quarrel as "of very little importance," and at the end of the letter to the bishop of Rome he wrote: "I bear so much respect for the legitimate catholic Church that I do not wish you to tolerate any public schism or dissension, wherever it may be."²⁴ Constantine commissioned Miltiades, together with the bishops of Cologne, Autun, and Arles, to judge the matter in Rome after hearing the bishop Caecilian and Donatus. The synod was held at the *domus Faustae in Laterano* on October 2, 313, and pronounced a judgment in favor of Caecilian and excommunicated Donatus. The bishops also suggested measures to reconcile both sides in accordance with the imperial will. But the Donatists were not satisfied with that judgment and they sent an appeal to the emperor.²⁵

3.2 Pope Sylvester I and the council of Arles

Pope Miltiades died in 310 or 311, and Sylvester I (?-335) was elected bishop of Rome. Sylvester was born in Rome, son of the priest Rufinus, and became priest himself under the episcopate of Marcellus. He was bishop of Rome for 22 years, and his pontificate is one of the longest in Church history. Sylvester served the Church in a period of great changes. The "innovations" began during Miltiades' episcopate with freedom of worship, and found their realization during Sylvester's time. In Rome, Sylvester continued to deal with the Donatists, who had appealed for the emperor's help. Constantine convoked a council at Arles, in August 314, which 33 bishops and several lower-ranking clergy attended from all over the West.

²⁴ See Élisabeth Paoli., "Miltiades," *The Papacy: An Encyclopedia.*, general ed. Philippe Levillain, vol. 2 (New York: Routledge, 2002), 993.

²⁵ J. Chapin, "Miltiades, Pope, St." *New Catholic Encyclopedia.* 2nd ed. Vol. 9. (Detroit: Gale, 2003), 640. *New Catholic Encyclopedia Complete.* Web. 3 May 2010. <http://go.galegroup.com.proxy.bc.edu>.

Sylvester himself did not participate, either because of his recent consecration or because he was reluctant to attend a council convened by the emperor. However, he was represented by two priests and two deacons who at the council were more observers than representatives. The Fathers sent a “highly deferential letter (*dilectissimus papa, gloriosissimus*)”²⁶ to the bishop of Rome in which they regretted his absence and communicated the decisions taken, sure of his agreement. In particular, they informed the pope about some decisions taken regarding the date of Easter, communion, and baptism, and they were confident in the pope’s will to make these rules known to the churches. By asking the bishop of Rome to fix the date of Easter in a “global letter,” the bishops at Arles were acknowledging his authority and primacy in the West. Sylvester established a precedent by not attending the council of Arles. It became customary that the bishop of Rome did not take part in a synod which did not meet in Rome. That situation remained unchanged for all of the first millennium.²⁷ At Arles, finally, the Fathers again condemned the Donatists and recognized the legitimacy of bishop Caecilian of Carthage. According to Chadwick, Constantine’s expectation of the Christian East was soon disappointed because he discovered that, as the West was afflicted by Donatism, the eastern bishops were split in two by the Arian controversy. During his long pontificate Sylvester had to confront Donatism and Arianism, two heresies which continued for a long time to disrupt the peace of the Church.²⁸

4. The Council of Nicaea

4.1 The Arian Controversy

In Alexandria the legacy of Origen’s Logos-theology became a source of conflict between Alexander, bishop of that city, and Arius (250 or 256-336), one of his presbyters.

²⁶ Paoli, “Sylvester I,” *The Papacy: An Encyclopedia*, Levillain, vol. 3, 1418.

²⁷ See Moeller (a cura di), *Storia Ecumenica della Chiesa*, 126.

²⁸ Paoli, “Sylvester I,” *The Papacy: An Encyclopedia*, Levillain, vol. 3, 1418-1420.

Expounding on the relationship of the Son to the Father, Alexander stressed the eternal generation and the equality of the Word (*Logos*) with the Father. In opposition, Arius asserted that the Son was neither equal to the Father nor eternal, but had a beginning; if he had a beginning, then, “there was when he was not,” hence the Son was among the things created and not truly God. The conflict rapidly escalated and divided the episcopate in the East, with most Egyptian bishops supporting Alexander and others, including Eusebius of Caesarea (the church historian) and Eusebius of Nicomedia (seat of the imperial residence before Constantinople became the capital), supporting Arius. Constantine was dismayed by the controversy, finding the matter insignificant but the divisions undesirable, and wanted it resolved quickly. To that end he sent the bishop Hosius of Cordova, his ecclesiastical advisor, to mediate and to announce a council for Ancyra in 325. In Alexandria Hosius sided with Alexander, after which he traveled to Antioch to estimate the support Arius was receiving. While there, Hosius presided at a council (324/ early 325?) that produced an anti-Arian statement of faith. This council condemned Arius in anticipation of confirmation by the council at Ancyra, and also excommunicated Eusebius of Caesarea and other two bishops who supported Arius.²⁹ Constantine responded by moving the council to Nicaea (near Nicomedia), “so he could personally control the proceedings.”³⁰ As we shall see, the bishops gathered at Nicaea condemned Arius’ theology and produced a creed affirming that the Son is “of one substance with the Father” (*homoousios*), which all but two of the bishops signed.

4.2 Constantine and the Church

Before the council of Nicaea, regional and provincial synods had taken place during times of persecution. But, the reason why the Council of Nicaea became possible is to be found in emperor Constantine’s Edict of Milan of 313, because that imperial act established

²⁹ See Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 196. Chadwick writes Ankyra, but Peter L’Huillier, Archbishop, *The Church of the Ancient Councils. The Disciplinary Work of the First Four Ecumenical Councils* (New York: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1996), 67, and Jedin (*History of the Church: Vol.II*, 62) write “Ancyra.”

³⁰ Chadwick, *The Early Church*, 130.

peace that allowed the Church to express more freely her faith. Constantine commanded that the bishops of the Council of Nicaea (325) meet and arrive at a decision. He also offered hospitality to the Fathers of that meeting. Thus, he played an important role in calling the bishops to meet together and to figure out the right way to solve very delicate and problematic issues.³¹ Among the bishops that Constantine invited to the imperial Council of Nicaea were those who had suffered during Diocletian's persecution and with the signs on their bodies were continuing to witness to the faith that sustained them in the past Roman persecution. They were happy to meet in a time of peace with no fear of imperial authority, for Constantine treated them as friends and brothers. He was determined to do right in his concrete political actions, sustained by divine will. In a noteworthy way, Constantine in that period was exercising a certain type of leadership for the entire Church while the role of the bishops of Rome in the same context remained relatively obscure and undetermined.³²

4.3 Convocation, composition, process

On 20 May 325, at the solemn opening of the council of Nicaea the emperor emphasized the importance of achieving peace and unity. At the council about 220 bishops were present, almost all Greek.³³ The western delegates were represented by Hosius, the Spanish bishop, the bishop of Carthage, two Roman presbyters representing Sylvester of Rome, and perhaps three other western bishops. Chadwick writes that the western representatives who attended the council were not so many, but few and influential.³⁴ Pope Sylvester was not consulted by the Emperor about the calling of the council. He was invited, as were all the bishops, but did not attend. His delegates did not preside at the council, Hosius

³¹ See De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 15. A legend reports that pope Sylvester had baptized Constantine, see Antonina Harbus, *Helena of Britain in Medieval Legend* (Suffolk: St Edmundsbury Press, 2002), 23. Web. 5 May 2010, <http://books.google.com/books>.

³² See Robert B. Eno, S.S., *The Rise of the Papacy* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1990), 48.

³³ See Chadwick, *The Early Church*, 130; For a broad panorama of informations see also Karl Baus et al, *The Imperial Church From Constantine to the Early Middle Ages*, 23-24; L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 18.

³⁴ See Henry Chadwick, , *East and West: The Making of a Rift in the Church: From Apostolic Times until the Council of Florence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 14.

of Cordova, advisor to Constantine presided. He knew well the debate on the Arian controversy in the East (see above.) However, the participation of the Latin representatives was relevant for at the end of the council, they were the first to sign the decrees after Hosius, and their signing in the name of the pope was understood as the papal confirmation of the decrees. Constantine as emperor had great influence upon the Fathers, often expressed his kindness to the members of the council, and was helpful at the gathering in many ways, even giving banquets at the beginning and end of the council, which coincided with the thirtieth anniversary of his accession.

4.4 Doctrinal decisions and the Creed

At the council, Constantine deplored the censure of Eusebius of Caesarea and declared his support for him.³⁵ This did not mean the emperor agreed with Arius' theology. The creed was astonishingly signed by 218 out of 220 bishops, i.e., except 2 bishops from Lybia. In the formula the Fathers approved, there is the affirmation that the Son is "of one substance [*homoousios*] with the Father;" which clearly contradicts the doctrine of Arius. In the creed's concluding anathema, the council also condemned propositions such as "the Son is metaphysically or morally inferior to the Father and belongs to the created order." A fact that will be the beginning of a real problem is the different understanding of the crucial term *homoousios* by the bishops who signed the conciliar text (see next chapter). Indeed, the assertion "consubstantial" (*homoousios*) is a declaration of identity, i.e., that the Father and the Son are "of the same substance." But this definition was found ambiguous, because some thought that sameness was "personal or specific identity," but for others it meant "a much broader, generic identity."³⁶ In addition to this doctrinal issue, the council helped the

³⁵ See Chadwick, *The Early Church*, 130.

³⁶ See Chadwick, *The Early Church*, 130. ; L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 19; Karl Baus et al, *The Imperial Church From Constantine to the Early Middle Ages*, 24-25.

churches of Syria to join Egypt and Rome in their calculation of the date of Easter, and issued twenty canons (see the coming section.)³⁷

5. Canons of Nicaea on episcopal order and metropolitan bishops

There are no extant authentic acts of the council, but there are texts from it that doubtlessly are genuine. The Fathers at Nicaea felt that they were assisted by the Holy Spirit in producing the symbol of faith, 20 disciplinary canons and a letter from that synod to the Egyptians.³⁸ In this section, I will briefly consider some significant canons of Nicaea. The canons that I will discuss reflect and confirm previous practices of episcopal order, collegiality, and synods. With the canons at Nicaea the council meant to recognize these practices and to give them a more explicit foundation and structure. The 20 canons which the council approved deal with significant issues: canons 1-3, 9-10, 17, 18, 20 deal with clergy; 4-7 with conflict in jurisdictions; 15-16 with the translation of bishops from one see to another; canon 8 and 19 deal each with cases of apostasy. Here, I will focus my discussion particularly on canon 6.³⁹

5.1 Canons 4, 5, 7.

Canon 4 deals with the number of bishops needed to appoint a bishop, and the procedure to be followed.

It is by all means desirable that a bishop should be appointed by all the bishops of the province. But if this is difficult because of some pressing necessity or the length of the journey involved, let at least three come together and perform the ordination, but only after the absent bishops have taken part in the vote and given their written consent. But in each province the right of confirming the proceedings belongs to the metropolitan bishop.

The Fathers with this canon tried to avoid abuses in the ordination of bishops and to insure that their ordinations would be recognized by their fellow bishops.

³⁷ See Chadwick, *The Early Church*, 131.

³⁸ L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 21.

³⁹ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1-19. See Chadwick, *The Early Church*, 3, 130.

Canon 5 concerns the excommunicated, who must not be received by others. Moreover, it establishes the duty of bishops to hold synods twice a year.

Concerning those, whether of the clergy or the laity, who have been excommunicated, the sentence is to be respected by the bishops of each province, according to the canon which forbids those expelled by some to be admitted by others. But let an inquiry be held to ascertain whether anyone has been expelled from the community because of pettiness or quarrelsomeness or any such ill nature on the part of the bishop. Accordingly, in order that there may be proper opportunity for inquiry into the matter, it is agreed that it would be well for synods to be held each year in each province twice a year, so that these inquiries may be conducted by all the bishops of the province assembled together, and in this way by general consent those who have offended against their own bishop may be recognized by all to be reasonably excommunicated, until all the bishops in common may decide to pronounce a more lenient sentence on these persons. The synods shall be held at the following times: one before Lent, so that, all pettiness being set aside, the gift offered to God may be unblemished; the second after the season of autumn.

This canon is about clergy and laity, whereas later councils will deal mainly with conflicts arising between a metropolitan and bishops under him, or between bishops. The situation in which a bishop is accused by a brother bishop may have been one case that the legislators had in mind. That certainly was an issue later in the canon of Serdica, but canon 5 itself only talks about clergy or laity who have been excommunicated.⁴⁰

In upholding the authority of bishops who have excommunicated either clergy or laity, canon 5 also provides a mechanism for appealing decisions that were due to capriciousness or ill will on the part of a bishop. In such cases, appeal may be made to a synod of all the bishops of a province gathered at the twice-yearly meetings that the canon requires. Until an excommunication has been reversed by a provincial synod, other bishops are not to receive that person into communion. Later, in the doctrinal and political disputes that continued after Nicaea, the right of appeal from unjust excommunications would focus on the deposition of pro-Nicene bishops (most notably Athanasius) and appeals to Rome on their behalf.⁴¹

⁴⁰ At the western council of Serdica (342-343), which the eastern bishops had refused to attend, they had rejected the notion of Roman primacy (jurisdiction) in these cases. In turn the western bishops had declared, separately, that “to honour the memory of the most holy apostle Peter,” that the bishop of Rome could receive appeals and appoint bishops from a neighboring province to hear them.

⁴¹ See Chadwick, *East and West*, 15-16; also see Karl Baus et al, *The Imperial Church From Constantine to the Early Middle Ages*, 35-40.

Canon 7 concerns the bishop of Aelia, i.e. Jerusalem. It held that Jerusalem should be seen as having a chair of honor by reason of the ancient tradition.

Since there prevails a custom and ancient tradition to the effect that the bishop of Aelia is to be honoured, let him be granted everything consequent upon this honour, saving the dignity proper to the metropolitan.

The see of Jerusalem should be honored, but not to the detriment of the metropolitan of the province, the bishop of Caesarea. This canon deserves attention here because it anticipates an issue that will arise explicitly at the council of Chalcedon, namely the patriarchal status of Jerusalem in relation to the other four patriarchates as they had evolved since Nicaea.

5.2 Canon 6

Now, let us study the debated and important canon six:

The ancient customs of Egypt, Libya and Pentapolis shall be maintained, according to which the bishop of Alexandria has authority over all these places, since a similar custom exists with reference to the bishop of Rome. Similarly in Antioch and the other provinces the prerogatives of the churches are to be preserved. In general the following principle is evident: if anyone is made bishop without the consent of the metropolitan, this great synod determines that such a one shall not be a bishop. If however two or three by reason of personal rivalry dissent from the common vote of all, provided it is reasonable and in accordance with the church's canon, the vote of the majority shall prevail.⁴²

There are several issues in regard to canon 6 that I will try to identify clearly and treat in a logical order: 1) the ecclesiastical and civil provinces and the jurisdiction of bishops in the major metropolitan cities; 2) the meaning of the analogy to Rome's jurisdiction in the West; 3) the reference to Antioch and the lack of specification in regard to the territory over which it has (or will later have) jurisdiction.

5.2.1 Ecclesiastical and civil territories

Both canon 6 and canon 5 presuppose the assimilation of the ecclesiastical district with the civil district arrangement of metropolises, provinces, and dioceses.⁴³

⁴² Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 8-9.

⁴³ See De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 19; see Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 203.

According to Chadwick⁴⁴ and L’Huillier,⁴⁵ the primary point of canon 6 is that it clarifies the rights of the bishop of Alexandria to function as a super-metropolitan bishop by assigning Lybia and Pentapolis to his jurisdiction in addition to Egypt, the province of which Alexandria is the metropolis. Chadwick considers this the most important canon of the council, and observes that Alexandria Rome and Antioch “were held to be the three senior cities of the empire.”⁴⁶ He also argues that Libya and Pentapolis were particularly important because Arius and many of his supporters were associated with Libya, including the two bishops who did not sign the Creed.⁴⁷

L’Huillier offers an additional perspective on the purpose of the canon. He claims that the “the principle of territorial accommodation was not yet considered as normative”⁴⁸ and that the purpose of canon 6 was to recognize officially “the rights of Alexandria over several civil provinces.”⁴⁹ He adds that Diocletian’s reforms had removed Lybia and Pentapolis from Alexandria’s metropolitan jurisdiction politically, so canon 6 is going beyond the civil district in this regard.⁵⁰ Also L’Huillier observes:

We see in this canon the legal charter forming the basis for the existence of higher ecclesiastical jurisdictions.

This accords with Chadwick and what I suggested earlier in these comments about Nicaea giving a foundation to arrangements of ecclesiastical administration and jurisdiction. Minnerath basically agrees with these interpretations.⁵¹

5.2.2 Rome and canon 6

L’Huillier⁵² sees the reference to Rome as simply an analogy to the way Rome exercises authority and jurisdiction over other areas (unspecified in the canon) in the West that

⁴⁴ Henry Chadwick, “Faith and Order at the Council of Nicaea: A Note on the Background of the Sixth Canon,” *Harvard Theological Review* 53 (1960), 175-79.

⁴⁵ L’Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 46-48.

⁴⁶ See Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 203.

⁴⁷ Chadwick, “Faith and Order at the Council of Nicaea...,” 175-79.

⁴⁸ L’Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 47.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 46.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 48.

⁵¹ See Minnerath, “La Tradizione Dottrinale del Primato di Pietro nel Primo Millennio,” 59-61.

correspond to the civil territory of the *vicarius urbis* – central and southern Italy, Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica. He argues that the canon does not refer to the much broader area that would later be part of the Roman patriarchate.⁵³ Moreover, he asserts that it is important to read this canon in its historical context and not in light of later understandings of patriarchates that come to clearest expression at Chalcedon. Hefele argues that this canon is not about the primacy of the Roman bishop “but simply his power as a patriarch.”⁵⁴ L’Huillier disagrees with Hefele’s identification of Rome as a patriarchate at this time and so does Chadwick. Chadwick argues convincingly that canon 6 is not at all about Roman primacy, but that it came to be used that way by Roman bishops from Siricius (384-399) onwards.⁵⁵

Now, I will report the two most important points on which other scholars also agree with Chadwick. First, the Nicene canons became attached to the Serdican canons, which include appeal to Rome, and the resultant text is regarded in the West for a long time as the canons of Nicaea. Secondly, later Roman summaries and translations of canon 6 drop references to Lybia and Pentapolis and also omit reference to Antioch, turning the canon into primarily a statement about Roman patriarchal authority.⁵⁶ At the council of Chalcedon the Roman legate quoted a version of canon 6 current in Rome in the early fifth century, which began with the assertion: “The Roman church has always had a primacy” (*Ecclesia Romana semper habuit primatus* [sic]).⁵⁷ As Chadwick observes: “It was an exegesis [of canon 6] much favored at Rome between Damasus and Leo, where the question of precedence was a

⁵² L’Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 46-48.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 47.

⁵⁴ Charles Joseph Hefele, D.D. *The Christian Councils, From the Original Documents, to the Close of the Council of Nicea, A.D. 325*. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1894), 394.

⁵⁵ Chadwick, “Faith and Order at the Council of Nicaea...,” 187. See also *Ibid*, 189: “At Nicaea in 325 the Roman primacy was not an issue, and it would be anachronistic to expect any reference thereto. Nor were the bishops interested in defining Rome’s patriarchate in Italy....The issue of Rome’s supra-provincial standing in Italy is simply taken for granted because it justifies the continuance of comparable powers in the see of Alexandria.”

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 188.

⁵⁷ Chadwick, “Faith and Order at the Council of Nicaea...,” 188; see also See Chadwick, *East and West*, 16. Chadwick also asserts that in the East the western canons about Roman appellate jurisdiction were understood to refer to the Latin patriarchate, not to the East (17).

major preoccupation. The original context is quite different.”⁵⁸ This is the form of the canon to which Ratzinger refers when he states: “The word *primates* appears for the first time related with the function of the Roman See at the Council of Nicaea in canon 6.”⁵⁹

5.2.3 The reference to Antioch

L’Huillier writes that the mention of Antioch, like the mention of Rome, is for the sake of comparison or analogy and is likewise not speaking of Antioch as a patriarchate.⁶⁰ Furthermore, for Antioch, too, the territory is not specified and, unlike Rome, there is no contemporary information to know what it might have included; we only know that there were considered to be precedents from Syria similar to those in Italy for Rome.⁶¹

6. Nicaea as a new kind of council

There are important historical questions in understanding the significance of the Council of Nicaea. Here I consider three key issues: whether the council consciously intended to speak with authority to and for the whole church; its claim to be a “great and holy council” guided by the Holy Spirit; and what it means to call Nicaea an ecumenical council.

6.1 The authority of Nicaea

As we will see in the next chapter, it took more than 50 years for the authority of the Council of Nicaea to be widely accepted. It is only with the council of Constantinople in 381 that the symbol of Nicaea became the *de facto* norm of faith for the Universal Church. Canon 1 of that council recognized the faith of the “318 Fathers” gathered at Nicaea, and soon afterwards the emperor Theodosius I ordered his subjects to “confess the religion that the

⁵⁸ Chadwick, “Faith and Order at the Council of Nicaea...,” 181-182.

⁵⁹ See Joseph Ratzinger, *Le Nouveau Peuple de Dieu* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1971), 43-45. Here Ratzinger appears to have in mind the Latin version of canon 6 read at the council of Carthage in 419, and perhaps also mistranslates or misinterprets *primatibus* in the Latin title of canon 6 (*proteiōn* in the Greek).

⁶⁰ L’Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 46 and 48; Chadwick, “Faith and Order at the Council of Nicaea...,” 182.

⁶¹ Chadwick, “Faith and Order at the Council of Nicaea...,” 182; see 182-187 for subsequent issues about Antioch’s jurisdiction.

apostle Peter... taught and which is confessed today by Damasus, the bishop of Rome...and Peter, the bishop of Alexandria.”⁶²

In regard to the authority of the council, it is important to address the question whether the Fathers of Nicaea were conscious of their authority as a gathering of the universal church. De Vries argues that in their dogmatic definition and canons the bishops at Nicaea claimed an authority for their decisions in ways that previous synods had not.⁶³ In regard to the authority of the council’s Creed, Grillmeier asserts that at the time of Nicaea “there is no distinction yet in regard to the theological assessment of synods.”⁶⁴ Ortiz de Urbina claims that something completely new occurs at Nicaea: the proclamation of the first dogmatic definition. A *posteriori*, with today’s categories, we can recognize the Nicene symbol as a dogmatic assertion, but we cannot use the same language in the context of the fourth century.

In regard to the authority of the canons, there are differences in scholarly opinion about their intended authority and their effectiveness. De Vries demonstrates from the council’s manner of speaking in its documents that it intended the canons to be observed by the whole church for the sake of its good order. But he also acknowledges that it is not possible to know whether they thought the canons were to be held in perpetuity. Ortiz de Urbina argues that the canons were meant to apply definitively to the whole church,⁶⁵ while Bardy asserts that they were meant to address the necessity of the time and to apply only to the East.⁶⁶ Scholars disagree as well on the effectiveness of the canons. De Vries claims that for the most part the canons of Nicaea were observed, while Bardy argues that they remained nearly a dead letter

⁶² I. Ortiz De Urbina, S.J., *Nicée et Constantinople* (Paris: Éditions De L’Orante, 1963), 166, De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 29.

⁶³ See Ibid, 15-22.

⁶⁴ See Ibid, 15.

⁶⁵ See Ibid, 20.

⁶⁶ See Ibid.

in the West⁶⁷ and Jalland holds that the later belief in the universal value of the canons was totally unknown in the fourth century.⁶⁸

6.2 Holy Spirit and holy council

Fourth-century synods regularly attested to the important role of the Holy Spirit in their deliberations. The councils of Arles and Ancyra in 314 both mentioned the guidance of the Spirit, and Ancyra also referred to itself as “holy.” In 324 the unauthorized synod of Antioch called itself a “great and holy (*hieratike*) council.” Therefore, it is not something new that the Council of Nicaea calls itself “holy.” De Vries notes that canons 14 and 18 of Nicaea refer to their directives as the work of a “holy and great council.”⁶⁹ Batiffol stressed that the Fathers at Nicaea saw themselves as constituting a “holy (*hagia*) and great council,” which was a way to emphasize the new element in the council’s understanding, namely its intention of addressing the whole Church.⁷⁰

6.3 Nicaea as an ecumenical council

Did the Council of Nicaea consider itself an ecumenical council? This has been examined by some scholars. Congar affirms that only Nicaea can be called “ecumenical” in the fourth century because only at this Council were all parts of the Church, East and West, represented. He stresses that the Fathers of the fourth century acted almost unanimously (two bishops refused to sign the Creed) in their decisions.⁷¹ De Vries reminds Congar that the term “ecumenical” was also applied to the first Council of Constantinople. Only 150 bishops were present; none of them from the west, not even papal legates. So it was not, strictly speaking, ecumenical - even though it was later recognized as such. For Athanasius the term

⁶⁷ See Ibid.

⁶⁸ See Ibid.

⁶⁹ De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 15-18.

⁷⁰ P. Batiffol, *La Paix Constantinienne et le Catholicisme* (Paris: 1914), 364, De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 16.

⁷¹ See Yves Congar, "Bulletin d'Écclésiologie (1939-1946)," *RSPT* 31 (1947), 289; De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 25.

“ecumenical synod” means that “the whole universe is represented” (through the bishops) at the Council. Furthermore, he insists that unanimity is a requisite in order to claim that a synod is truly ecumenical. In addition, the decree of an ecumenical synod must conform to the Holy Scripture, the teaching of the Apostles and the Tradition of the holy Fathers. For Athanasius, the participation of the bishop of Rome is not necessary to assure the ecumenical character of a synod.⁷² Here, it would seem that Athanasius does not recognize the idea of a universal Roman or Petrine primacy in this period. De Vries did not add other comments on Athanasius’ thought. It seems that the most significant thing is not the participation of the Roman bishop at a council, but his later recognition of a certain council. No councils before Nicaea were, strictly speaking, “universal” in character nor, as we shall see in the next chapter, were the many synods between Nicaea and Constantinople I ultimately recognized as ecumenical.

⁷² See *Ibid.*

Chapter 2: The Petrine ministry and the Structures of the Church at the Time of Constantinople I

1. Context: Developments between Nicaea and Constantinople I

In this chapter I will give a view of the Council of Constantinople I (381) and of the structures of the Church of the late fourth century. I will start with a rapid description of the context of the Church after the Council of Nicaea, and the role played by the bishop of Rome, Damasus, in that period. Then, I will continue presenting the Council of Constantinople I, especially looking at canon 3 through the comments of some scholars, and adding also my reflections on it.

1.1 A Half-Century of Conflict after the Council of Nicaea

The Council of the 318 Fathers defined the dogma of the divinity of the Word (*Logos*), the Son of God by declaring him to be of the same being or substance as the Father, using the Greek term *homoousios* (of one substance or being) to express this, but without specifying its meaning. After the Council of Nicaea finished its work, it soon became clear that many eastern bishops were not convinced of the orthodoxy of this term, since it seemed to them to obscure or threaten the real distinction between Father and Son. In addition to the problems with *homoousios* and the theological work necessary to clarify its meaning, there were also political complications that arose from the desire of Constantine and later his son Constantius II to bring the continuing controversy after Nicaea to an end.

By 328, Constantine was unhappy about the ongoing disputes. Influenced by Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia (the imperial residence at the time), who was a strong supporter of

Arius, Constantine ordered Athanasius to receive Arius into communion in Alexandria. Athanasius refused, explaining his position so effectively when called to Constantinople that the emperor let the matter drop. Eusebius engineered the deposition of prominent Nicene bishops in these years, including Athanasius, who was banished to Trier at the synod of Tyre in 335, the first of five exiles he would endure. After Constantine's death in 337, Athanasius was restored to the see of Alexandria. A series of eastern councils during the reign of Constantius II attempted to resolve the question of *homoousios* in ways that brought them into growing conflict with the West. During the 340s and 350s those councils became increasingly Arian in the confessions of faith they produced. In 340 Athanasius was again deposed and exiled and an Arian bishop, George of Cappadocia, was installed in Alexandria.

Conflicting understandings of *homoousios* led many eastern bishops to accuse the West of holding a modalist or Sabellian understanding of the term which took it to mean the numerical identity of Father and Son, hence that Father and Son were simply modes of divine being with no permanence in themselves. The eastern bishop Marcellus of Ancyra was condemned for such views at the council of Antioch in 341. Alternative interpretations emerged from the eastern synods of the 340s and 350s and from Arian theologians, which asserted that the Son was simply "like" (*homoios*) the Father without mentioning substance or *ousia* at all; that he was neither *homoousios* nor *homoiousios* (of like substance) with the Father; and, finally, that he was "unlike" (*anomoios*) the Father (the view of Aetius, a layman, which was supported by Eudoxius of Antioch). By 357, more moderate eastern bishops, led by Basil of Ancyra (who succeeded Marcellus) had proposed that the term *homoiousios* (of like substance) would counter unacceptable interpretations of the key Nicene term. Although Athanasius was initially opposed to *homoiousios* and its main proponent Basil of Ancyra, by 360 he had come to see that its intention was in accord with Nicaea: "Those who accept the Nicene creed but have doubts about the term *homoousios* must not be treated as enemies; we

discuss the matter with them as brothers with brothers; they mean the same as we, and dispute only about the word.”¹ The homoiousian bishops have often been labeled “semi-Arians,” but their position helped create an alliance of “new Nicenes” who would ultimately prevail at the Council of Constatinople I.

1.2 Pope Julius and Athanasius

After the Council of Nicaea it became evident that a great many eastern bishops had not really accepted the doctrine of Nicaea that the Word who became incarnate was of the same substance as the Father. This led to their mounting an attack on Athanasius who, having been a deacon at the Council, was now the bishop of Alexandria, and was the most ardent defender of the conciliar doctrine. After Athanasius had been condemned by an eastern synod and deposed from his see, he took refuge in Rome in 340. Here during Athanasius’ long second exile in the West, Julius received him into communion, and also Marcellus of Ancyra. Pope Julius (337-352) held a synod that completely cleared Athanasius of any doctrinal error, and supported his defense of the doctrine of Nicaea. The pope also protested strongly against the judgment that had been passed against the bishop of Alexandria without any consultation of the bishop of Rome. Julius, along with a Roman synod, rejected the *homoiousian* theology, holding fast, as did most western bishops, to the Nicene doctrine, with the support of the western emperors.²

1.3 The consequences of the Synod of Tyre

The position of pope Julius I regarding the Council of Nicaea is not so clear. In his discussions with Eusebius of Nicomedia, Julius seems to put Nicaea on the same level as the synod of Antioch and the Roman synod. In rejecting the synod of Tyre, however, he does seem to consider synods to be reformable. DeVries argues, however, that although Julius

¹ See Chadwick, *The Early Church*, 144.

² See Chadwick’s descripton: “The many bishops who belonged to the ‘central’ conservative tradition represented by the *homoiousios* formula...,” Ibid, 141-142.

does not clearly articulate the singularity of Nicaea, there is nothing in his writings that suggests he thought the Nicene symbol was subject to revision and hence not definitive.³

Indeed, in a letter addressed to the Eusebians, Julius writes that the Fathers of Nicaea had acted “as if God were present.”⁴

In regard to the synod of Tyre, Julius argued that its judgments did not have universal force because the council had not followed the customary practice of circulating them to all the churches.

S'il y a eu, comme vous dites, faute de leur part [Athanasie et Marcel], alors il fallait juger l'affaire selon les canons de l'Eglise et non pas comme cela s'est fait. Vous deviez nous écrire à tous, afin que soit décrété par tous ce qui était juste. Il se trouva des évêques qui eurent à souffrir (injustement) et qui avaient été pasteurs non pas d'une Eglise parmi d'autres mais de ces illustres Eglises fondées par les apôtres eux-mêmes. Au sujet de l'Eglise d'Alexandrie, en particulier, pourquoi ne nous a-t-on pas écrit? Ignorez-vous donc que la coutume veut qu'on nous écrive pour commencer et que de ce lieu soit proclamé ensuite ce qui est juste?... Ce n'est pas là ce que Paul a recommandé, ce n'est pas là ce que nous ont transmis les Pères: c'est là plutôt un procédé étrange et un usage tout à fait nouveau. Si je vous écris ces choses, c'est en vue du bien commun et je vous conjure de les accueillir sans amertume. Car ce que je veux vous signifier, c'est ce que nous avons reçu du bienheureux apôtre Pierre.⁵

Erich Casper notes that here Julius is referring to the ancient understanding that synodal decisions have the strength of law in the whole Church primarily because of their reception through a reciprocal exchange of information among the churches. In the case of Tyre, its decisions should have been communicated to the western churches and the position of Rome taken as representing them all.⁶

1.4 The canons of Serdica

Pope Julius strongly defended the right of Athanasius to appeal to the Bishop of Rome against the decree of an eastern synod, and the right of the bishop of Rome to hear such an appeal and to act on it. The council of Serdica (342-343) was called by Constantius II

³ DeVries, *Orient et Occident*, 22-23; here De Vries is arguing against H.J. Sieben.

⁴ Athanasius, *Apologia Contra Arianos* 24: PG 67, 492 B.; De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 26.

⁵ As quoted in De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 31.

⁶ E. Caspar, *Geschichte des Papsttums von den Anfängen zur Höhe der Weltherrschaft* (Tubingue: 1930), 150-151, as cited in De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 30-31.

(eastern emperor) and Constans (western emperor) in the hope of preventing a schism as tensions grew between East and West. Instead, the council quickly split into separate eastern and western synods which anathematized each other and broke off communion. The Greek bishops produced an anti-Arian creed. The western bishops, with some eastern guests, such as Athanasius present, wrote a number of canons to which, later, the canons of Nicaea would be attached in western canon collections. The most significant was probably canon 3c, which provided that in cases where bishops felt unjustly treated by their metropolitans or provincial councils, they might appeal to the Roman bishop, who would decide if the appeal had merit and if so, would assign neighboring bishops to hear the case. Eastern bishops tended to ignore the canons of Serdica while the West maintained their validity and welcomed the precedent canon 3c⁷ set for appeals to Rome.

1.5 Pope Liberius

In 352 Julius was succeeded by Liberius (352-366), who likewise held the Nicene doctrine, but had to deal with Constantius II, who was emperor of both East and West, and was determined to bring about religious peace by getting all the bishops to agree to a compromise formula. He first summoned a council at Arles (353), and then one at Milan (355), at both of which the bishops were obliged to condemn Athanasius. When Liberius refused to condemn him, insisting that this would mean condemning the doctrine of Nicaea, he was exiled to Beroea in Thrace. There, weakening under the pressure put upon him, he condemned Athanasius and signed the *homoiousios* formula, upon which he was allowed to return to Rome. Then Constantius, in order to get all the bishops to agree to a common

⁷ “If sentence should be given against a bishop in any matter and he supposes his case to be not unsound but good, in order that the question may be reopened, let us, if it seems good to your charity, honor the memory of Peter the Apostle, and let those who gave judgment write to Julius, the neighboring provinces and let him appoint arbiters; but if it cannot be shown that his case is of such a sort as to need a new trial, let the judgment once given not be annulled, but stand good as before.” *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 14, ed. P. Schaff and H. Wace (Reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 417, William J. La Due, *The Chair of Saint Peter: A History of the Papacy* (New York: Orbis Books 1999), 44.

formula, summoned the eastern bishops to Seleukia and the western bishops to Rimini in 359. Under imperial pressure, the western bishops accepted the formula of the Arianizing bishop, Valens of Mursa, that, the Father and Son are “alike (*homoios*) according to Scripture.” The following year in Constantinople a council called by the Arian bishop Eudoxius made the same affirmation in the creed it issued. Liberius, now back in Rome (358), but sharing the episcopate with Felix who had been made pope in his absence, was not summoned to the council of Rimini and did not sign its decree. He subsequently proved himself again faithful to the Nicene doctrine.

Constantius II died in 361, two years after the councils of Seleukia and Rimini, and was succeeded by Julian, known as “the Apostate,” who was not interested in obtaining unity among Christians, but in restoring pagan religion. He allowed the eastern bishops loyal to Nicaea who had been exiled to return to their sees, which strengthened the Nicene position in the East. Julian was succeeded by Valens (364-78), who favored the homoiousians but did not persecute the bishops who were loyal to the Nicene doctrine. During this period three bishops of the Cappadocian region of Asia Minor who were theologians, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus, opened the way to agreement on the Nicene dogma by providing a better understanding of it by the distinction between the *ousia* (being), which is the same in Father and Son, and their *hypostases* (persons) which are distinct. However, as the conflict over the Nicene dogma was easing, two new disagreements arose: on the questions whether the Holy Spirit was truly divine and whether Jesus had a rational human soul.⁸

1.6 The Heresies of Macedonius and Apollinaris

Macedonius had been a homoiousian bishop of Constantinople who was deposed by the

⁸ For some history of this period see: Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 201-445; Karl Baus et al, *The Imperial Church From Constantine to the Early Middle Ages*, 16-90.

Arians in 360. He was known as the founder of the heresy that denied the divinity of the Spirit, but the main promoters of that heresy were Eustathius of Sebaste, Eleusius of Cyzicus, and Marathonius. The Fathers at the Council of Constantinople (381) called them “Pneumatomachians,” i.e. those who fought against the Spirit.⁹ The creed issued by Nicaea had stated only that the Fathers believed “in the Holy Spirit”, nothing more. Controversy about the divinity of the Holy Spirit started when Macedonius and his followers who held that the Son was of like being with the Father, asserted that the Spirit was “only a superior creature.” None of the heretical works of Eustathius of Sebaste, Eleusius of Cyzicus, and Marathonius, have come down to us. For that reason we have no first hand knowledge of their argumentations.¹⁰

Athanasius and Basil of Caesarea were very important in developing theological arguments for the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Athanasius was prominent with his *Letters to Serapion*, and Basil of Caesarea was notable with his work *On the Holy Spirit*.

The history of Gregory of Nazianzus, also known as Gregory the theologian, may be significant for us to understand better the intricate history of his time and the connection between the doctrine on the Holy Spirit and his very difficult life as a bishop. He was made “bishop of an insignificant little town called Sasima (372),” but he never exercised his office there.¹¹ In 379 he was asked to lead the Christian community of Constantinople, and in that last city there was already Demophilus, the Arian bishop.¹²

The orthodox answer came soon through these theologian-bishops, who clarified the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Thus, Athanasius and Basil of Caesarea prepared and

⁹ See L’Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 102.

¹⁰ See Ibid.

¹¹ He assisted his father in Nazianzus and he undertook an ascetic life in Seleucia.

¹² That see since the exile of Paul in 342 had been continuously occupied by Arians. It was only in 378 the emperor Gratian confirmed of the decision taken by Valens before his death to allow the return of pro-Nicene bishops to their sees. Thus, in Constantinople the little group of orthodox hoped to overturn the situation in the capital, and they approached Gregory the Theologian, probably with the support and suggestion of St. Basil and other orthodox bishops in the East. See L’Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 103-104.

simplified the path that Gregory the Theologian traversed. The fruit of that heritage from Athanasius and Basil was offered in an outstanding way by Gregory in this text:

The Old Testament clearly showed the Father, but only dimly showed the Son. The New Testament revealed the Son and hinted at the divinity of the Spirit. Today the Spirit lives among us, and is making himself more clearly known. As long as the divinity of the Father had not been recognized, it was dangerous to preach openly the Son; in the same way, as long as the divinity of the Son was not admitted, it was dangerous to impose, if we dare to use such words, the belief in the divinity of the Spirit as an added burden. You see the order in which God is revealed, an order that we must respect in our own turn: not revealing everything in a rush and without discernment but also not keeping anything hidden until the end of time. The one tendency risked injuring those who were outside and the other one would have separated us from our own brothers.¹³

Gregory the Theologian through that text helps us to appreciate and recognize how God freely and gradually revealed Himself as one God in three Persons in the history of salvation. L'Huillier asserts that from this period on, the dogma of the Trinity had found its definitive expression in Holy Tradition.¹⁴

In the fourth-century, Apollinarianism was a Christological heresy that denied the human soul in Christ. It took its name from Apollinaris, bishop of Laodicea. He was a friend of Athanasius of Alexandria, and both had been champions of Nicene orthodoxy. That heresy “signalized the point of transition from the Trinitarian to the Christological heresies”¹⁵. Apollinaris’s error was that he did not see how Christ could be one person if he had both a divine intellect and will, and a human intellect and will. He concluded that for Christ to be one person, the Divine Word must take the place of a human rational soul. Apollinaris with his attempt wanted to affirm the faith of Nicaea and protect the integrity of the incarnate Word, but despite his good intentions, he failed in doing that. Prior to the Council of Constantinople, Apollinaris’s proposal had already been condemned by synods of Rome, Alexandria and Antioch, because it contradicted the soteriological principle, articulated by

¹³ Gregory of Nazianzen, Oration XXXI, as cited in L’Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 103.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ See F. Chiovaro, "Apollinarianism." *New Catholic Encyclopedia*. 2nd ed. Vol. 1. Detroit: Gale, 2003. 559-560. *New Catholic Encyclopedia Complete*. Web. 11 Mar. 2010, <http://go.galegroup.com.proxy.bc.edu>.

Gregory of Nazianzus, that “what was not assumed by the Word was not healed.”¹⁶ They insisted that for Christ to redeem humanity he must be fully human, having both a sensitive and rational soul.

1.7 Damasus

Damasus was the bishop of Rome (366-384) at the time of the Council of Constantinople. He was born c. 305 A.D., probably of Spanish background, and grew up in Rome, where his entire family served the church of that city.¹⁷ Before his episcopal election, we do not know much about Damasus’ career. Certainly, he served as a deacon of Liberius,¹⁸ and he followed his bishop into exile. The difficulties that arose with the election¹⁹ of Damasus were a direct consequence of the lack of unity in the Roman community. That division was caused “by the meddling of Constantius II in church affairs, and by his policy favoring the Arians.”²⁰ Damasus became the bishop of Rome after a massacre “in a church where 137 lost their lives,” and with the help of the city prefect he won possession of his see, “but at a fearful price in public discredit to his church.”²¹ For a while Jerome was Damasus’ secretary, and later Damasus asked Jerome to produce a new Latin translation of the Bible, which became known as the Vulgate.²²

Four aspects of Damasus’ pontificate are in many ways significant for my research. The first is that since his election as a bishop of Rome, we realized that it was very important for the other bishops to have a better comprehension of his service toward the whole Church at a universal level as a successor of Peter. In the terrible events he faced in Rome, he came to

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ For more biographical information see Françoise Monfrin, “Damasus I,” Levillain, *The Papacy*, Vol. 1, 477.

¹⁸ On Liberius and Felix II see John W. O’Malley, *A History of the Popes: From Peter to the Present* (Lanham: Sheed & Ward Book, 2010), 35.

¹⁹ See Paul C. Empie and Austin T. Murphy, Eds., *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church. Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue* (V. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974), 80-83.

²⁰ See Monfrin, “Damasus I,” Levillain, *The Papacy*, 477. See also See O’Malley, S.J. *A History of the Popes*, 34-35.

²¹ See more See Chadwick, *The Early Church*, 160-161.

²² See O’Malley, S.J. *A History of the Popes*, 35-36. Damasus wanted all 46 traditionally-used books be included in the Old Testament.

see that the only way to exercise his ministry was “by stressing the exalted spiritual dignity of his office as St Peter’s successor.”²³ Therefore, as well as defending Roman orthodoxy against its opponents by allying himself with imperial authority of Theodosius I, which allowed him to gain the support of the Italian episcopate,²⁴ Damasus often referred to Rome as the apostolic see, and was indefatigable in promoting the Roman Primacy.²⁵ For Damasus that primacy was not based on human will, like synods, and councils, but exclusively on his being the direct successor of Peter and so the rightful heir of the promises made to him by Christ (Matt. 16:18).²⁶ He believed that this succession gave him a unique juridical power to bind and loose, and the assurance of this infused all his rulings on church discipline.

Second, it is important to note the development of the exercise of papal government in the West at the time of Damasus, which can be called his petrine exercise of authority. His care for the church of Rome, the tradition of the presence of the apostles Peter and Paul in Rome, the martyrs, and many other juridical and practical matters may seem secondary or related only to the West, but those traditions represent a treasure for the universal Church, not only the Roman church and the West. Moreover, not secondary for a better understanding of the role of the successor of Peter, will be to report the process of evolution of the Roman see.²⁷

Third, in regard to doctrinal controversies, it is necessary to point out that when the heresies of Macedonius and Apollinaris came on the scene, Damasus wrote letters defending

²³ See Ibid.

²⁴The synods of Rome between 368 and 372 which repeated the condemnation of Auxentius, the Arian bishop of Milan, helped “to spread the confession of Roman faith in the Trinity throughout Illyricum and the East (it was communicated to Athanasius of Alexandria by the deacon Sabinus of Milan), and to affirm the responsibility of St. Peter’s see for the entire Church.”See Ibid

²⁵ See *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*. “Damasus I, St.” By J. N. D. Kelly. Oxford University Press Inc. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Boston College Libraries. 3 March 2010, <http://www.oxfordreference.com>.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷ See also: the exaltation of the burial of the martyrs; control of popular devotion or heresies; inscriptions of verses engraved in large letters; elaboration of a Roman theology of the *renovatio Urbis*; affirmation of the Roman Primacy; developing of means of episcopal government; synodical institutions and basis for Church law; reinforcement of some previous functions; Church archives; decretal *Ad Gallos*. See Monfrin, “Damasus I,” Levillain, *The Papacy*, 478-480.

the divinity of the Spirit and the full humanity of Christ.²⁸ Moreover, the eastern churchmen also turned to Rome “as a countermeasure against the pro-arian policy of Valens and to put an end to the division created, among others, by the schism of Antioch.” Then, in 377 Damasus gathered a synod to address the doctrinal conflicts of the East. He published a syllabus, the *Tomus Damasi*, containing 24 anathemas against various heretical groups. That publication became in some ways the western formulation of Nicene orthodoxy, insisting particularly on the unity of power, will, and action in God.²⁹

Fourth, with regard to his relations with the eastern episcopate, it is important to note that he was adamant in his support of Paulinus, one of the two claimants to the see of Antioch, while the majority of the eastern bishops favored Meletius, and resented the involvement of Damasus in what they considered an affair to be handled by themselves.

1.8 Theodosius

On January 19, 379, Theodosius I (379-395), “a general from Spain and convinced partisan of Nicene orthodoxy,” was raised by Gratian to the rank of emperor of the eastern part of the empire. He enacted stringent antipagan laws. He thought to solve the tensions which were present through another imperial council which would focus on the trinitarian creed, finding a better definition for the divinity of the Holy Spirit.³⁰ On February 28, 380, the same eastern emperor issued the edict *Cunctos populos* commanding all to practice “that religion which the divine Peter the apostle transmitted to the Romans” and which was taught by Damasus bishop of Rome and Peter of Alexandria.³¹ According to Françoise Monfrin:

The edict of Thessalonica that was addressed to the people of Constantinople (*Cth* XVI, 1, 2; *CJ* 1, 1, 1), recognized officially, for the first time (and in the East) the exemplary value of Roman communion and Roman primacy, justified by apostolic tradition (already recognized by the council of Antioch of 379, which subscribed to the Tome of Damasus). It indeed defined orthodoxy as communion with Damasus.³²

²⁸ See Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum: Definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*: Edizione bilingue, a cura di Peter Hünermann (Bologna: EDB, 1996), 144-47 and 149.

²⁹ See Monfrin, “Damasus I,” Levillain, *The Papacy*, 479.

³⁰ See Karl Baus et al, *The Imperial Church From Constantine to the Early Middle Ages*, 68.

³¹ See Chadwick, *East and West*, 20.

³² Monfrin, “Damasus I,” Levillain, *The Papacy*, Vol. 1, 479-480.

Furthermore, it imposed civil sanctions on those who would refuse it. Theodosius was concerned to reestablish public peace in the part of the Empire that he had governed.³³

2. The Council of Constantinople I

2.1 Convocation of a General Council for the East

By 380 it was evident that another council was needed to bring the continuing Arian controversy to a close and to reaffirm Nicaea, as well as to address the new issues raised by Apollinarians in regard to Christology and Macedonians in regard to the Holy Spirit. In 381 Theodosius convoked a general council in Constantinople, the first since Nicaea that would later be recognized as such. That council opened in May of 381, and closed on July 9. On 30 July of the same year, at the request of the council fathers, the emperor Theodosius “ratified its decrees by edict.”³⁴ There were about 150 eastern members in attendance. From the fifth century on, this number has often served to designate the council itself. The members came from the civil dioceses of Egypt, of the East (Syria and Palestine), of Pontus (Northern and western Asia Minor) of Asia (eastern and Southern Asia Minor) and of Thrace. Timothy of Alexandria, Dorotheus of Oxyrhincus and Ascolius (or Acholius) of Thessalonica arrived later, because they had not been invited at the same time as the others.

2.2 The Bishop of Constantinople and the Presidency of the Council

It is known that one of the first acts of Theodosius in Constantinople was to depose the Arian bishop Demophilus. To take his place, Peter, bishop of Alexandria sent a group of Egyptian bishops to Constantinople with orders to appoint a man known as Maximus the Cynic as its bishop. Pope Damasus, when informed of this, protested that this was contrary to the canon of Nicaea that prescribed that bishops should be elected by the bishops of their own

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 23.

province. Thus, in addition to the doctrinal disputes, one of the reasons that led Theodosius to convoke the council was to settle the question about the legitimacy of the election of Maximus. The council soon deposed him, and in his place chose the theologian, Gregory of Nazianzus, as bishop of Constantinople, even though they knew that he had been elected bishop of the little town of Sasima, but had not taken possession of that see. As president of the council they chose Meletius, the rival for the episcopate in Antioch whom they favored over Paulinus. Meletius died during the council, and Gregory took over as president. The council then took up the question of the successor to Meletius at Antioch. A pact had been made some years earlier that when one of the rival bishops died, the other should be acknowledged as the rightful bishop, thus ending the schism. Although Gregory, like most of the eastern bishops, had favored Meletius over Paulinus, he now proposed that Paulinus should be confirmed by the council as the bishop of Antioch. The council rejected his proposal, and elected Flavian to succeed Meletius, thus prolonging the schism.

At that point Timothy, bishop of Alexandria, arrived at the council, and declared the appointment of Gregory as bishop of Constantinople invalid, as a violation of the canon that forbade the transfer of a bishop from one see to another. Without waiting for a judgment on this issue, Gregory resigned his see and left the council after preaching a poignant farewell homily. To take his place Theodosius proposed an elderly imperial official named Nectarius, who was not even baptized. Respecting the wishes of the Emperor, the council elected Nectarius as bishop of Constantinople. He then also served as president for the rest of the council.

2.3 Ascolius and Damasus

Although Ascolius was also the personal confidant of pope Damasus, it was not as a papal legate that he attended the council. In fact, Ascolius' name does not appear at all in the

list of signatories of the council.³⁵ At the time of the Council of Constantinople, Thessalonika, of which Ascolius was bishop, belonged to the West both civilly and ecclesiastically. In fact, Ascolius was bishop in a territory that no longer belonged to the emperor Theodosius, since Gratian, the western emperor, had taken over the provinces of the eastern part of Illyricum in September of 380. Ascolius was invited to the council because he had baptized Theodosius, and because of their personal relationship.³⁶ De Vries writes, “Ascolios accomplit donc fidèlement, à Constantinople, la mission que lui avait confiée Damase... Ascolios ne fut, certes, en aucune manière le légat de Damase au concile, mais il s’y comporta toutefois comme son homme de confiance et selon ses directives.”³⁷ Thus, in that way the bishop of Rome “ne fut pas totalement absent” at the Council of Constantinople I. Ascolius does not appear among the Fathers who signed the decrees at the council. De Vries agrees with A.M. Ritter who says “Ascolios a peut-être refuse de signer en raison des canons 2 et 3, mais il est possible aussi qu’on ne lui ait pas du tout demandé sa signature puisqu’il venait de l’«Occident».”³⁸ Moreover, “Damase n’a, d’aucune façon, confirmé le concile.”³⁹ Thus, for many reasons it is possible to assert that the letter which the synod of Constantinople of 382 sent to Rome about the council can in no way be understood as seeking its confirmation by the pope.⁴⁰

2.4 Constantinople I: an eastern council

De Vries, along with many other scholars, writes that Damasus was not invited to attend the Council of Constantinople because Rome did not belong to Theodosius’ eastern territory. Moreover, De Vries says that the eastern bishops were “décidé à régler ses propres affaires par lui-même en toute indépendance, sans aucune immixtion de l’Occident, que ce soit de

³⁵ See Ibid.

³⁶ See L’Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 106.

³⁷ De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 50-51.

³⁸ Ibid, 51.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 51-52.

l'évêque de Rome ou d'autres évêques occidentaux."⁴¹ At the end of their deliberations, the conciliar Fathers sent to Theodosius, the eastern emperor, a synodical letter. They did not send that letter to Gratian, emperor of the West, nor to Damasus or other western bishops. "Ils concevaient leur assemble comme un concile de l'Orient qui ne concernait pas l'Occident."⁴² They requested from the emperor a written confirmation of the decisions the council had made, knowing that without his confirmation they would have no effect. Theodosius issued his confirmation, and gave orders that his subjects "de s'en tenir à la foi de Nicée et à la divinité du Saint-Esprit."⁴³

No Acts of the council have been preserved. The best information about it is in the synodical letter of 382, which was sent to the synod being held in Rome at that time. This letter speaks of a "tome" (evidently sent to Rome) that was issued by the ecumenical synod of 381, in which they had confessed the faith and issued written condemnations of the heresies that have recently erupted. However, in this letter there is no mention of canons.⁴⁴

2.5 Doctrinal Decisions of the Council

The Council of Constantinople reaffirmed Nicaea and produced a creed, probably based on a current baptismal symbol, that in some aspects revised the Nicene Creed - the profession of faith of 318 Fathers – and added a section on the Holy Spirit. It is that formula that is still recited today in the Catholic Church, and in other Christian churches.⁴⁵ It is known as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed or profession of faith of the 150 Fathers.⁴⁶ From the same council of 381, I want to stress the importance of Canon 1 which says:

The profession of faith of the holy fathers who gathered in Nicaea in Bithynia is not to be abrogated, but it is to remain in force. Every heresy is to be anathematised and in particular that of the Eunomians or Anomoeans, that of the Arians or Eudoxians,

⁴¹ See De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 46.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ See Ibid, 46-47.

⁴⁴ See Ibid, 25-30.

⁴⁵ See O'Malley, S.J. *A History of the Popes*, 37.

⁴⁶ See the original Greek, and translated version of Latin and English texts in: Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 24.

that of the Semi-Arians or Pneumatomachi, that of the Sabellians, that of the Marcellians, that of the Photinians and that of the Apollinarians.⁴⁷

This canon affirms the faith of Nicaea. The Council of Constantinople sees itself in continuity with Nicaea. Indeed, canon 1 confirms the validity of the decrees passed at Nicaea and the anathematizing of heretics. The Fathers of Constantinople tried to have more and more unity for the Church.

The synodical letter of 382, sent to Damasus and the western bishops meeting in synod at Rome, expounded in summary form the doctrinal decisions taken by the Fathers at the council of 381. These decisions followed the lines defined at Nicaea, namely, “the consubstantiality and coeternity of the three divine persons against the Sabellians, Anomoeans, Arians and Pneumatomachi, who thought that the divinity was divided into several natures; and the *ἐνανθρώπησις* (taking of humanity) of the Word, against those who supposed that the Word had in no way taken a human soul.”⁴⁸ All those doctrinal decisions were issued by “the ecumenical synod” of 381, in which the Fathers “had confessed the faith” and “issued written condemnations of the heresies that have recently erupted.” However, in this letter there is no mention of canons.⁴⁹ The eastern bishops did not communicate with the western brethren about the canons issued at Constantinople in 381, nor did they ask them for formal recognition of the council as a whole. In that council of 381 “no new symbol was framed, but the Nicene Creed, with some nonessential changes and important additions respecting the deity of the Holy Ghost against Macedonianism or Pneumatomachism was adopted.”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 31.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 21.

⁴⁹ See *Ibid*, 25-30.

⁵⁰ Schaff writes that this modification and enlargement of the Nicene Creed seems not to have originated with the second ecumenical council, but to have been current in substance about ten years earlier (see note 2 on Schaff’s publication). See P. Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 639. According to Chadwick at the Council of Constantinople in 381 the momentous revision of the creed (assuming the attribution to this council in 451 is correct) combined some of the terms of the Nicene creed of 325, especially “of one substance” with phrases more familiar in the Roman baptismal creed. Then, the creed’s third article set out to deny that the Holy Spirit belongs to the creaturely order. The Spirit “proceeds from the Father” (John 15:26). The Word of God (Scripture

3. The Canons of the First Council of Constantinople

3.1 *The Three Disciplinary Canons*

Canon 1 is a doctrinal canon, and has already been treated, and what are given as canons 5,6, and 7 were not actually enacted by the council. Therefore, in this section I will present and explain canons 2, 3, and 4, which are the disciplinary decisions enacted by the Council and treated in later eastern collections as the canons of Constantinople I.

Canon 2 declares:

Diocesan bishops are not to intrude in churches beyond their own boundaries, nor are they to confuse the churches: but in accordance with the canons, the bishop of Alexandria is to administer affairs in Egypt only; the bishops of the East are to manage the East alone (whilst safeguarding the privileges granted to the church of the Antiochenes in the Nicene canons); and the bishops of the Asian diocese are to manage only Asia affairs; and those in Pontus only the affairs of Pontus; and those in Thrace only Thracian affairs. Unless invited, bishops are not to go outside their diocese to perform an ordination or any other ecclesiastical business. If the letter of the canon about dioceses is kept, it is clear that the provincial synod will manage affairs in each province, as was decreed at Nicaea. But the churches of God among barbarian peoples must be administered in accordance with the custom in force at the time of the fathers.⁵¹

Here, “diocesan bishops” have a very different meaning than they have in modern Catholic usage. Today a diocese consists of a territory with a major city and the surrounding area, whose size depends on the density of the population in that area. There are several such dioceses in an ecclesiastical province. In modern usage a diocesan bishop has the pastoral care of a local diocese. By the fourth century, the eastern half of the Roman Empire had been divided into five civil dioceses, each of which was a large region containing a number of provinces. The term “diocesan bishops” with which this canon begins, means all the bishops whose sees are located in a particular civil diocese. It forbids them to intervene in the affairs of the churches in any other diocese than their own. Unless invited, they are not to go outside their own diocese to perform an ordination or any other ecclesiastical business.

and Tradition) vindicated the equality of the three hypostases in the divine Trinity. See Chadwick, *East and West*, 26.

⁵¹ Ibid, 31-32.

De Vries writes that canon 2 was issued mainly to stop the interventions of the bishop of Alexandria in the church of Constantinople, especially after the abusive election of Maximus the Cynic as bishop of Constantinople. Moreover, De Vries asserts that the principle defined in canon 2 may “très bien être interprété également contre une immixtion indésirable de l’Occident dans les affaires de l’Orient.”⁵²

Here, I will postpone the presentation of canon 3, and I will continue in this section by presenting and explaining canon 4. I will do this since that canon is an application of canon 2 to the case of Maximus the Cynic.

Canon 4: Regarding Maximus the Cynic and the disorder which surrounded him in Constantinople: he never became, nor is he, a bishop; nor are those ordained by him clerics of any rank whatsoever. Everything that was done both to him and by him is to be held invalid.⁵³

As I mentioned above, one of the first acts of the Council of Constantinople was to depose Maximus the Cynic from the episcopate of Constantinople. His election and ordination by Egyptian bishops sent by Peter of Alexandria for this purpose was clearly a violation of the canon of Nicaea that prescribed that bishops were to be elected by the bishops of the province to which the Church needing a bishop belonged. The significance of canon 4 is that it decreed that the ordination of Maximus was not merely illicit but was altogether invalid, with the result that any ordinations that he performed as bishop of Constantinople were also invalid.

Canon 3 asserts:

Because it is new Rome, the bishop of Constantinople is to enjoy the privileges of honour after the bishop of Rome.⁵⁴

This canon has very important implications for the relationship of the bishops of Rome and Constantinople, and for the understanding of the Petrine ministry. I will present a discussion of three key questions regarding this canon. First, what was the meaning in that context of the

⁵² See De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 58.

⁵³ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 32.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 32. L’Huillier’s translation differs: “As for the bishop of Constantinople, let him have the prerogatives of honor after the bishop of Rome, seeing that this city is the new Rome.” In L’Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 119.

Greek term: “*presbeia tes times*” or its Latin translation: “*honoris primatum*”? In his investigation of this question Brian Daley concludes that: “...the primacy that these canons ascribe to the bishops of both Rome and Constantinople among their episcopal colleagues must be understood in their original context as having clearly practical, even juridical implications.”⁵⁵ Therefore, those terms did not mean a mere precedence in ecclesiastical processions, or other things of that kind, but something far more serious.

The second question is the following: What is implied by the reason given: “because it is the new Rome”? Here, the implication of the phrase: “because it is the new Rome” is that just as Constantinople has its ecclesiastical status as a result of its being now the capital city of the Roman Empire, so the ecclesiastical status of the old Rome is likewise to be attributed to its having been the original capital city of the Empire.

The third question is: How is the phrase: “after the bishop of Rome” to be understood? The term means that the old Rome is still recognized as having the first place among all the churches, and that the new Rome must be recognized as having the first place among the churches of the East.

3.2 Roman Response to Canon 3

In this section I will present some points that I think should be treated carefully. First let us investigate the reasons for thinking that Rome was informed unofficially, but not officially, about canon 3 and other canons of Constantinople I. There are two arguments for that thesis. The first is that Ascolius, bishop of Thessalonika, though from the West, was present at the Council by personal invitation from Theodosius, and surely was well informed about what the council had done. It can hardly be doubted that he would have informed Damasus about canon 3 and the other canons. The other argument for holding that Rome was not informed officially about canon 3 and the other canons is the fact that there is no mention of canons in

⁵⁵ Brian Daley, S.J., “Position and Patronage in the Early Church: The Original Meaning of ‘Primacy of Honor.’” *Journal of Theological Studies* 44 (1993), 531.

the synodical letter of 382. In that letter the eastern bishops invited the western bishops to consult a “tome” that was issued by the “ecumenical synod” of 381, in which they “confessed the faith and issued a written condemnation of the heresies which had recently erupted.” No mention is made of canons as having been included in that “tome,” nor is there any mention of canons in the rest of that letter, which speaks of the doctrinal decisions of the council, and names the bishops who have been ordained for the churches of Constantinople, Antioch and Jerusalem. Additional evidence is found in a letter that Leo I (“the Great”), sent to bishop Anatolius of Constantinople on May 22, 452, in which he declared that “l’Eglise romaine n’avait eu aucune connaissance de ces canons.” De Vries’ comment on this is: “Cela ne peut vouloir dire qu’une chose, à savoir qu’ils ne lui avaient pas été transmis officiellement.”⁵⁶ The last significant point is that there is good reason to believe that the synod of Rome in 382 not only was aware of canon 3, but also responded to it. The reason is that many scholars judge it solidly probable that the first part of the “*Decretum Gelasianum*” is actually a document composed by the Roman synod of 382 as its response to canon 3 of Constantinople I.⁵⁷

The following statements from the *Decretum Gelasianum* favor the hypothesis that it was composed as a response to canon 3 of Constantinople I:

The holy Roman church has been set before the rest by no conciliar decrees, but has obtained the primacy by the voice of our Lord and Savior in the Gospel: “Thou art Peter and upon this rock...”⁵⁸

This is clearly the Roman response to what is implied by the phrase: “because it is the new Rome,” i.e. that just as Constantinople has its ecclesiastical status as a result of its being now the capital city of the Roman Empire, so the ecclesiastical status of old Rome is likewise to be attributed to its having been the original capital city of the Empire.

The first see of the apostle Peter is therefore the Roman church ...But the second see was consecrated at Alexandria, in the name of blessed Peter, by his disciple

⁵⁶ See De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 51.

⁵⁷ The “*Decretum Gelasianum*” is generally understood to be a collection of earlier documents, compiled in the early part of the sixth century. See De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 57.

⁵⁸ E. Giles, ed., *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority A.D. 96-454* (London: S.P.C.K., 1952), 131.

Mark the evangelist... And the third see of the most blessed apostle Peter is Antioch, which is held in honor because he lived there....⁵⁹

This is the Roman response to the claim that because it is the new Rome, that is, because of the civil status of Constantinople as the imperial city, the church of Constantinople ranks first among the churches of the East. Here, probably for the first time, a Petrine apostolic foundation is attributed not only to Rome, but to Alexandria and Antioch as well, and is given as the reason for the latter two having been recognized by canon 6 of Nicaea as the principal churches of the East. The unspoken point is that Constantinople has no apostolic foundation to justify its being the first church in the East.⁶⁰

3.5 Reception of Constantinople I as an ecumenical council

Another controversial characteristic of this council is that, in reality, it was not strictly speaking an ecumenical council. As mentioned above, there were only eastern bishops present (150), with the intention to treat just eastern problems; secondly, only in the synodical letter of the synod which met at Constantinople one year later (382), was the Council of Constantinople given the title of “ecumenical,” i.e. general and plenary council.⁶¹

Gregory of Nazianzus criticized and censured that council and in subsequent years it was hardly mentioned. At the time of pope Felix III (483-492), the Roman Church recognized only three councils: Nicaea, Ephesus and Chalcedon.⁶² Constantinople I acquired a “special status” only when the Council of Chalcedon in its definition of faith “linked the form of the creed read out at Constantinople with the Nicene form, as being a completely reliable witness of the authentic faith. In the East, the Fathers of the Council of Chalcedon recognized the

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ «La théorie des trios”sieges pétriniens”, don’t naturellement Rome est le premier, remonte très vraisemblablement au synode romain de 382 et constitue précisément la réponse au canon 3...alors que, selon ladite théorie, seule compte pour le rang ecclésiastique l’origine pétrinienne du siège» De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 51.

⁶¹ See Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 23.

⁶² See De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 52. The North Italian bishops, with Ambrose as their metropolitan were more interested in the Council of Constantinople than Damasus was.

authority of the canons during their sixteenth session.”⁶³ Henry Chadwick observes, “Damasus is not known to have been invited to send legates to Constantinople for the council and was not officially represented, though Gregory of Nazianzos vainly pleaded with the council to risk no breach with Rome and the west.”⁶⁴ Nevertheless, although no western bishop other than Ascolius of Thessalonica attended the Council of Constantinople I, and pope Damasus did not send official delegates, this council is now indisputably considered as “ecumenical” by both East and West.⁶⁵

In the West, Constantinople I’s dogmatic authority was accepted only at the time of Hormisdas (514-23) when Rome acknowledged it as the second ecumenical council.⁶⁶ Then, from the words of Pope Gregory I (c. 590-604), we can assert that there was another level of recognition: “I confess that I accept and venerate the four councils (Nicaea, Constantinople I, Ephesus and Chalcedon) in the same way as I do the four books of the Gospel...”⁶⁷ Gregory’s approval was not extended to the canons, because they were never brought to the knowledge of the apostolic see.⁶⁸

The *Decretum Gelasianum* names four councils whose writings the holy Roman church receives “for edification.” (Denz. 352)⁶⁹ The second of these is the “holy synod of Constantinople in which the heretic Macedonius received his deserved condemnation.” The editor notes that “without doubt this was not inserted before the end of the schism of Acacius (a. 519).” The decree does not call these four councils ecumenical, but it is significant that Constantinople I was named along with Nicaea, Ephesus and Chalcedon, which were

⁶³ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 23.

⁶⁴ Chadwick, *East and West*, 22.

⁶⁵ “Les décrets dogmatiques du première Concile de Constantinople furent finalement reconnus comme règles de foi par l’Eglise universelle....” See De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 52.

⁶⁶ See *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Gregory I, *Reg. epist. (Register of letters) I 24 (MGH Epist. I 36)*; see *Le Concile 73*, as cited in Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 23. See also De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 52.

⁶⁸ Leo I, *Epist. (Letters) 56 (106)*, ACO II IV 61; Gregory I, *Reg. epist. (Register of letters) VII 31 (MGH Epist. I 479)*, as cited in Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 23.

⁶⁹ Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 197-198.

recognized as ecumenical by both East and West.⁷⁰

It is important to stress explicitly that, although Constantinople I was not really ecumenical in its original intention or composition, nor was it initially recognized by the West, it came to be recognized and *received* as an ecumenical council by both the East and the West. The crucial step toward the recognition of Constantinople I as ecumenical was taken by the Council of Chalcedon in 451, when it gave the same doctrinal weight to the creed of “the 150 saintly fathers assembled at Constantinople” as it gave to “the creed of the 318 fathers at Nicaea.” It then went on to describe the creed of Constantinople I in the following terms:

This wise and saving creed, the gift of divine grace, was sufficient for a perfect understanding and establishment of religion. For its teaching about the Father and the Son and the holy Spirit is complete, and it sets out the Lord’s becoming human to those who faithfully accept it.⁷¹

When one recalls that the original creed of Nicaea had as its third article only the words: “And in the holy Spirit,” one can hardly doubt that the creed of Constantinople’s “complete teaching about the Father and the Son and the holy Spirit” accounts for the reception of this creed, rather than the one of Nicaea, as the liturgical creed of the churches of both East and West. This surely made a strong contribution to the recognition of Constantinople I as an ecumenical council.

⁷⁰ However, canon 3 of Constantinople I remained unrecognized in the West until the thirteen century when “on the foundation of the Latin patriarchate at Constantinople, 1204, the Lateran Council of 1215 allowed that see the second rank in Christendom.” See Document 99-Council of Rome, A.D. 382, *Post has omnes*. (P.L. 13. 374.), in Giles (Ed.), *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority A.D. 96-454*, 130.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 84.

Chapter 3: The Petrine ministry and the structures of the Church at the time of Ephesus and Chalcedon

1. Context: Developments from Constantinople I to Ephesus

In this section I will present the complex era between the end of the Council of Constantinople and the convocation of the Council of Ephesus.

1.1 Chrysostom in Constantinople, conflict between bishop and empress

After the first council in the “new Rome” in 381, the bishop of Constantinople was Nectarius, who reigned until 397. The Roman emperor Arcadius (383-408) then appointed as bishop of Constantinople John of Antioch, who was known later as John Chrysostom or *Golden Mouth*. He was forced by the emperor to accept the bishopric, despite the fact that the bishop of Alexandria, Theophilus (385-412), had presented another candidate, Arsacius.¹ John Chrysostom was a monk and a great preacher, but he was not prepared to face the very difficult ecclesiastical context of the imperial city. As metropolitan, he was shocked by the behavior of some bishops. He forced six bishops of Anatolia out of office for simony, i.e., purchasing their offices. He chose to do the right thing, but the other bishops of Asia Minor resented his interference in their dioceses.

John also criticized the empress Eudoxia whom he called Jezabel for he thought she was responsible for the court’s immoral life. Eudoxia and Theophilus of Alexandria worked together to get John removed from office. In 403, they sent a group of twenty-nine Egyptian bishops to Constantinople for a council that deposed John, and ordered him to go into exile. The day he left an earthquake occurred and people interpreted that event as a signal of divine displeasure over John’s exile. Thus, he returned to the city. That victory was a short one, for empress Eudoxia had not changed her plan to eliminate Chrysostom. Faced with the reality of

¹ See Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 430-432.

imperial and episcopal power arrayed against him John appealed to the West for help, writing to Innocent in Rome and to the bishops of Milan and Aquileia for support.² Innocent's representations were ignored. Finally, Chrysostom was sent into such harsh exile that he died afterward in 407. John's death produced a reaction. pope Innocent I did not accept the sentence of deposition of Chrysostom by Theophilus and all those involved in that affair, and "he assumed a breach of communion" with all the great sees of the East, i.e., Constantinople, Antioch, and Alexandria, but apparently without a formal act. This schism ended completely in 417.³ In 412 Theophilus died, and his nephew Cyril became the new bishop of Alexandria (412-444).⁴

1.2 Rome, the Pelagian Controversy, and the Petrine ministry

In Rome in 410, during Innocent's episcopate, Alaric sacked the city, creating a political vacuum in the West which enhanced the political and ecclesiastical significance of the see of Rome. Alaric tried to conquer North Africa, but he fell ill in Calabria and died near Cosenza.

In that same year, Pelagius, a British monk, and Celestius, a lawyer and advocate of his teachings, brought to Rome Pelagius' doctrine about the ability of men to keep the law of God even without God's grace. A synod in Carthage in 411 declared his theology unorthodox, but Pelagius held fast to his position and the controversy soon involved bishops and synods in Gaul, Rome, and Carthage. In response to a Gallic synod in 415 that declared Pelagius orthodox, synods met at Mileve and Carthage in 416 and again condemned both Pelagius and Celestius. The African bishops transmitted their resolutions to Rome and asked pope Innocent to ratify the sentence of condemnation, in particular for two propositions, i.e., "that prayer for God's help against sin is needless, and that baptismal grace is not required for infants to attain eternal life."⁵ In Rome Innocent without ambiguity judged and excommunicated Pelagius and

² See Ibid, 497-498.

³ See Ibid, 498-501.

⁴ See Ibid, 524-525.

⁵ See Ibid, 451-453.

Celestius and asserted a strong claim to Roman jurisdiction in doctrinal matters in the West,⁶ declaring that:

Especially as often as questions of faith are to be ventilated, I think all our brothers and fellow bishops ought to refer *to none but Peter*, that is the author of their name and office, even as your affection has now referred [to us] a matter which may benefit all churches in common throughout the world.⁷

Then, the bishops who attended the synod of Carthage in 417 sent a letter to Zosimus (417-418), the new bishop of Rome. Initially Zosimus declared Celestius and Pelagius innocent, but later the African bishops informed him of their will to confirm the sentence against Pelagius and Celestius issued by Innocent. Zosimus replied with an agitated letter writing that the tradition of the Fathers accords to him such a great authority, that:

...no one would dare to dispute its judgment. For canonical antiquity, by the consent of all, has willed such power to this apostle [Peter] so that the promise of Christ our God, that he should loose the bound and bind the loosed, is equally given to those who have obtained, with his assent, the inheritance of his see. For he [Peter] has a care of all churches, especially for this where he sat, nor does he permit any of its privileges or decisions to be shaken by any blast, since he established it on the firm and immovable foundation of his own name, which no one shall rashly attack, but at his peril.⁸

About the same text Zosimus writes that Peter also is “the head of so great authority, and has confirmed the devotion of all the Fathers who followed him, so that the Roman church is established by all laws and discipline, whether human or divine.” Then, the pope defined his mission saying that “In his place [Peter] we rule, and we inherit the power of his name; you know this, dearest brothers, and as priests you ought to know it. Such then being our authority, that no one can revise our sentence.”⁹ Finally, after many exchanges of documents with the African bishops, with their help Zosimus understood how he had been deceived by the heretics. Thus, in his *Tractoria* he declared the founders of Pelagianism guilty of heresy, thereby revising his previous sentence.

⁶ See Ibid, 451-453.

⁷ Doc. 180, Giles (Ed.), *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority A.D. 96-454*, 202.

⁸ Doc. 189, Ibid, 212.

⁹ See Doc. 189, Ibid, 212.

1.3 Celestine

When Zosimus died in 418, the election of his successor was contentious. Two parties elected two different clerics as bishop of Rome: the elderly priest Boniface and the archdeacon Eulalius. Imperial intervention and a synod composed of African and Gallican bishops were needed before the schism was resolved in favor of Boniface (418-422). During his pontificate Boniface worked to halt the spread of Pelagianism and the divisions it was causing in North Africa. He obtained from emperor Theodosius II the return of Illyricum to western ecclesiastic jurisdiction. And he was as “zealous for papal authority as Zosimus had been,” arguing that judgments made by the Apostolic See were not subject to debate.¹⁰ Celestine (422-432), a cleric from Campania who had served as a deacon in Rome under Zosimus, was unanimously elected to succeed Boniface. In keeping with his predecessor, Celestine continued to promote the authority of the Roman bishop. Galla Placidia, mother of the four-year old emperor Valentinian III, directed the imperial court in Ravenna, restoring some clerical privileges revoked after Honorius’ death and ordering the prosecution and exile of heretics not in communion with the bishop of Rome. Celestine, too, took action against heretics, especially supporters of Pelagius, but was not able to realize completely his plan to expel them from Italy. Several instances in which clerics from Africa sought Celestine’s intervention in appeals from the decisions of synods in Carthage illustrate the close and sometimes difficult relationship between Rome and North Africa. In one case Augustine of Hippo dissuaded Celestine from attempting to restore the deposed bishop Antony of Fussala. In another case Celestine twice received and affirmed the appeal of Apiarius, a priest who was twice excommunicated for immorality. A synod meeting in Carthage in 419 wrote to Celestine to protest his interventionist policy and the attitude of his legate toward them. They reminded the pope that their council had the necessary jurisdiction to handle Apiarius’ appeal

¹⁰ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 459.

of his excommunication.¹¹ In Arles, Potiers, and Aquitaine, however, where his developing role as super-metropolitan or patriarch was more firmly grounded, Celestine's interventions were more successful.¹²

Later in his pontificate, Celestine became involved in the theological controversy between Cyril, bishop of Alexandria, and Nestorius, an Antiochene who was bishop of Constantinople, that would lead to the council of Ephesus in 431 (see section below). As their dispute about the title *Theotokos* and other issues related to the union of humanity and divinity in Jesus Christ intensified, Cyril sought support from Celestine in his opposition to Nestorius and Antiochene influence in the see of Constantinople. Celestine regarded the statements each bishop had sent him as an eastern appeal to Rome. At a Roman synod in August 430 he condemned Nestorius' views, demanding that he recant within ten days or be excommunicated. Nestorius did not receive this letter, sent via Cyril, until the end of November. Less than two weeks later Theodosius II called a council for Ephesus in June 431.¹³ During his pontificate, Celestine was largely successful in the West in affirming and often ensuring the oversight of Rome. He was less successful in his relationships with the churches of Alexandria and Antioch. But, as Kelly observes, "In his letters and through his legates at the council [Ephesus] Celestine repeatedly asserted, with an unprecedented insistence, the pope's claim, as successor and living representative of St. Peter, to paternal oversight of the entire Church, eastern no less than western."¹⁴

¹¹ See "Celestine I, St" *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, Kelly, 3 May 2010 <http://www.oxfordreference.com>.; See also Christiane Fraisse-Coué, "Celestine I," Levillain, *The Papacy*, Vol. 1-3, 273.

¹² Fraisse-Coué, "Celestine I," Levillain, *The Papacy*, Vol. 1, 273.

¹³ Chadwick, *The Early Church*, 196-197; See "Celestine I, St" *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, Kelly, 3 May 2010, <http://www.oxfordreference.com>.; There are also reference in L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 144-145; De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 63-68.

¹⁴ See "Celestine I, St" *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, Kelly, 3 May 2010, <http://www.oxfordreference.com>.

2. The theological issues leading to Ephesus

At this time, other theological questions continued to arise, especially Christological questions. It became clear that a council was needed to discuss and resolve these problems. In 431, at Ephesus in modern Turkey, a council took place to deal mainly with the problems of Christology and the title *Theotokos*.

2.1 Theological issues leading up to Ephesus

After the precise dogmatic definition of the Trinity at the first two ecumenical councils, theologians felt the necessity to deepen the understanding of the mystery of Christ's person. They were dealing with the question raised by Apollinaris, whose answer was rejected at Constantinople I, namely how divinity and humanity are joined in Jesus Christ. Since the second part of the fourth century the two theological traditions of Antioch and Alexandria had produced two different argumentations on that question. The parties engaged in that Christological debate were moved by a long-standing opposition, and it surely did not help their dialogue that personal and ecclesiastical rivalries mixed with the theological issues.

Antiochene Christology insisted strongly on both the true divinity of the Word against Arianism, and on the full humanity of Christ against Apollinarianism. In its exegesis of the Gospels it carefully distinguished between what is appropriate to the divinity, and therefore can be predicated of the Divine Word, and what is appropriate to the humanity, and therefore can be predicated of the man Jesus. The question that this procedure raised was: Is there in Christ one subject, of whom both what is appropriate to divinity and what is appropriate to humanity can be predicated?

The answer of the Alexandrian school to this question was that this one subject is the Divine Word, who has assumed a human nature into his own Person, so that one can correctly predicate of the Incarnate Word not only what pertains to his divinity but also what pertains to his humanity. This means one can say that according to his divinity, the Word was begotten of

the Father before all ages, but that according to his humanity the Word was born of the Virgin Mary. Therefore it is correct to say that Mary is the Mother of God.

Nestorius, the Antiochene Archbishop of Constantinople, did not see how one could predicate human birth of the Divine Word without denying his true divinity and thus falling into the Arian heresy. For this reason he forbade his clergy, monks and laity to call the Virgin Mary “Mother of God,” as they were accustomed to do in their prayer. Needless to say, this raised a storm of protest.

Therefore, when word of Nestorius’ preaching and theology reached Alexandria, Cyril, without actually naming Nestorius, opposed his views in letters he wrote to the bishops and monks of the region defending the traditional title of *Theotokos* for Mary.¹⁵ Then, Cyril wrote Nestorius a letter (known as his Second Letter) in which he asked him for a clarification of his thought and insisted that he accept both the union according to *hypostasis* and the title *Theotokos*.¹⁶ Not receiving support from the emperor Theodosius in his campaign against Nestorius, Cyril sought an alliance with Celestine, bishop of Rome. Nestorius had already offended Celestine by receiving several Pelagians excommunicated by Rome into communion in Constantinople. Although Nestorius had acknowledged in a letter to Celestine that *Theotokos* was an acceptable term, Celestine sided with Cyril, and a Roman synod in 430 demanded that Nestorius retract his views or be excommunicated.¹⁷ Celestine entrusted Cyril with carrying out the synod’s decision. Nestorius appealed to the emperor Theodosius II, who summoned a general council to be held at Ephesus in 431 to decide the issues.

Finally, it is important to note that, in addition to the different theological traditions of Alexandria and Antioch and the specific issues that gave rise to this phase of the Christological controversies, a further factor affected the course of the controversy and made the conditions for the council’s work very difficult. That factor was the personal and

¹⁵ Chadwick, *Church in Ancient Society*, 528-529.

¹⁶ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 44-50.

¹⁷ L’Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 144-145.

ecclesiastical rivalry between Cyril and Nestorius and their sees, Alexandria and the younger imperial see of Constantinople, in the background of which was always the influence of Rome and Antioch.

3. The Council of Ephesus

3.1 Context and decisions

The council began on June 22, with about 150 bishops present. Theodosius had appointed an official of his court to preside at the council, but Cyril assumed the presidency on the grounds that he was acting on behalf of the bishop of Rome in this case. Unfortunately he presided in a dictatorial fashion, and began the proceedings against Nestorius without waiting for the arrival of bishop John of Antioch and the other bishops of that diocese who would defend Nestorius, or the arrival of the three delegates sent by the pope. The judgment against Nestorius was based on the reading of the letter that Cyril had sent to Nestorius defending the title *Theotokos* as orthodox, and the letter of Nestorius rejecting it as heretical. The question put before the council was: which of those two letters is in conformity with the doctrine of the Nicene Creed? Since the Creed says that the Son of God, true God from true God, came down from Heaven and was born of the Virgin Mary, which means that she is rightly called “Mother of God,” the council declared the letter of Cyril orthodox, and condemned that of Nestorius as heretical.

A few days later John of Antioch arrived with about 50 bishops, who rejected what the council had done in their absence, formed their own council, and condemned Cyril. When informed of this, Theodosius declared the proceedings thus far to be null, but forbade the bishops to leave Ephesus. When the papal legates arrived in early July the council resumed under Cyril leadership. The papal letter condemning Nestorius was read, and the council accepted it, declaring that the bishop of Rome was in agreement with the decision of the council. The eastern bishops certainly did not recognize the papal judgment as having decided

the case independently of the council. Ultimately, it was Cyril's council that was recognized as the ecumenical council of Ephesus, an outcome that owes much to the support of Theodosius II and Celestine of Rome. Two years later, under pressure from the emperor, Cyril and John of Antioch agreed to a common statement of Christological faith, the Formula of Union, which, however, brought peace to the eastern Church for only a few years.¹⁸

3.2 Canon 7 of Ephesus

Among the documents of the Cyrilline council, the Fathers of Ephesus issued a synodical letter about the decisions of the eastern bishops. That letter of the council advised "the bishops, clergy and people in every city and province" about the deposition of John of Antioch and the excommunication of those bishops who had joined with his synod at Ephesus. In this document there are seven paragraphs which deal with disciplinary actions against the Nestorian party. Later Greek collections regarded these paragraphs as the canons of the council. Here, I will present only canon 7, which is significant for the role it will play in the politics and intrigue leading to the 449 council of Ephesus and ultimately to Chalcedon. For convenience I will use L'Huillier's text of canon 7 and his translation.¹⁹

At a late session of Cyril's council that included the Roman legates as well as the bishops who had been present at the opening session,²⁰ the bishops adopted by acclamation a resolution that was regarded in later collections as canon 7 of the Council of Ephesus. This canon states that:

Therefore, after their reading of these things, the holy council decreed that no one is permitted to produce, to edit, or to compose another faith than that set out by the holy Fathers gathered in Nicaea with the Holy Spirit. As for those who would dare to compose another faith, present it, or propose it to those who might want to be converted to the knowledge of the truth (whether coming from Hellenism, Judaism, or from any other heresy) these persons, if they are bishops or clerics, will be set

¹⁸Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 530-537. For the events of the council; that the council made no formal declaration about *Theotokos*, 536.

¹⁹ See L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 159-163. See also Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 65, for the Greek text and English translation of the councils decrees and disciplinary decisions.

²⁰ See *Ibid*, 159-160.

aside; the bishops separated from the episcopate and the clerics from the clergy; if they are laymen, they are to be excommunicated. In the same way, if any bishops, clerics or laymen are found to admit or to teach the doctrines contained in the statement presented by the priest Charisius on the subject of the incarnation of the only-begotten Son of God, or, what is more, to admit or to teach the impious and perverse dogmas of Nestorius which are joined to the statement, let them fall under the sentence of this holy and ecumenical council: that is, a bishop should be separated from his episcopate and deposed, a cleric equally deposed from the clergy, and a layman excommunicated, as was said above.

The circumstances which occasioned this decision arose from an appeal to the council by Charisius, a presbyter of Philadelphia, who had been excommunicated by his bishop, Theophanes. Charisius had objected to the Antiochene Christology in a baptismal symbol that Theophanes had used as a profession of faith in reconciling some heretics. The author of the symbol most likely was Theodore of Mopsuestia.²¹ At the council Charisius read a creed very similar to Nicaea's but with some small differences. In the context of that time the Fathers were worried about the formulation of many symbols of faith that might contain errors and be a cause of confusion for believers by taking "unacceptable liberties with the Nicæan text."²²

It seems clear, taking into account the circumstances of the redaction of this decree that the Fathers of Ephesus, following Cyril of Alexandria, found it necessary to prohibit all individuals (bishops, clerics and laymen) from creating and spreading "written formulas of faith." From that assertion, however, we cannot say that the council wanted to prohibit "competent organs of the Church from publishing, if it was felt necessary, new symbols and dogmatic decrees; this is effectively what happened in later history."²³

However, according to L'Huillier, the main problem with canon 7 is its later misinterpretation, and use for "questionable polemical purposes where it is taken out of its historical context and the council Fathers intent.

²¹ See Ibid, 160.

²² See Ibid, 161-162.

²³ Ibid, 163.

4. From Ephesus to Chalcedon

4.1 Context

After the Alexandrian victory at Ephesus and the deposition of Nestorius, there was continued controversy and animosity between Alexandria and Antioch. In 433 Theodosius II insisted that the two parties reach agreement on a *Formula of Union* which was drafted by Theodoret, and it represented a real effort at reconciling the two points of view. The Formula is an important step toward the Chalcedonian Definition which would speak of “the unconfused union of two natures.”²⁴ The *Formula of Union* affirms the confession of:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the unique Son of God, perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and body; begotten of the Father before [the] ages according to the Godhead, the same in the last days for us and for our salvation [born] of Mary the Virgin according to the manhood: the same consubstantial with the Father in Godhead, and consubstantial with us in manhood, for a union of two natures took place; therefore we confess one Christ, one Son, one Lord.²⁵

Here the *Formula of Union* draws on the Antiochene Christology in asserting that Christ is perfect God and perfect man, “of one substance with us in his humanity.”²⁶ This significant document for a while eliminated the conflict between the parties for it was “considered as an official dogmatic definition of the Church and thus the final act of the third ecumenical council.”²⁷ Cyril’s acceptance of the Formula’s understanding of the two natures dismayed his followers and weakened his position with them. But, the Formula also affirmed Mary as *Theotókos*:

According to this understanding of the unconfused union we confess the holy Virgin to be *Theotokos*, because God the Word was made flesh and lived as man, and from the very conception united to Himself the temple taken from her.²⁸

Later in the letter in which he quotes the Formula of Union, Cyril addresses John of Antioch saying: “For you must surely clearly understand that almost all our fight for the faith was

²⁴See Edward R. Hardy, and Cyril Richardson, Ed., *Christology of the Later Fathers* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954), 355.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 356.

²⁶ See Chadwick, *East and West*, 41.

²⁷ L’Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 152.

²⁸ Hardy and Richardson, Eds., *Christology of the Later Fathers*, 356.

connected with our declaring that the holy Virgin is *Theotokos*.”²⁹ Here, Alexandria won its victory, while on this point Antioch distanced itself somewhat from Nestorius and immediately received that definition.

In some ways the Formula recognized that the Nicene Creed still required further clarifications, but that document “made no claim to replace Nicaea.”³⁰ Agreement on the *Formula of Union* was not without consequences. From both parts there were critics who attacked Theodoret and Cyril, saying that they were traitors. Cyril defended himself by attacking Theodore of Mopsuestia’s memory. But Theodore’s defenders answered “by citing letters in which Cyril had apparently deplored the assault on Theodore’s memory, arguing that the dead should be left in peace.”³¹ Cyril of Alexandria died in 444.

4.2 Leo the Great: the Petrine ministry and relations with other bishops

Leo I, was the bishop of Rome from 440-461. He lived through the long historical period that we are studying, and looking at him, we will be more able to understand the Church history of that time. Leo had been a deacon during Celestine’s pontificate. As bishop of Rome (440-462) he understood and “carried Damasus’s claims for the papacy to a new level.”³² It is in this period that those claims of the bishop of Rome reached their zenith.³³ Leo was regarded as a great preacher and in his homilies and catechesis “hammered home Peter’s mystical presence in Rome,” and clearly presented himself as a successor of Peter’s authority.³⁴

Blessed Peter... has not given up the helm of the Church which he received... Therefore if anything is rightly done and rightly decreed by us, if anything is obtained from God’s mercy by daily petitions, it is due to his works and merits whose power lives in his see and whose authority prevails there.” In the successors

²⁹ Ibid, 357.

³⁰ See David Gwynn, “*The Council of Chalcedon and the Definition of Christian Tradition*,” Richard Price and Mary Whitby, Eds., *Chalcedon in Context: Church Councils 400-700* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 13.

³¹ Richard Price, “*The Second Council of Constantinople (553) and the Malleable Past*,” Ibid, 124-125.

³² O’Malley, S.J. *A History of the Popes*, 38.

³³ See Piepkorn, “The Roman Primacy in the Patristic Era,” Empie and Murphy, eds., *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church*, 92.

³⁴ O’Malley, S.J., *A History of the Popes*, 38.

of Peter he is being honored “in whom the concern that all shepherds have for the care of the sheep entrusted to them continues and whose dignity sustains no loss even in the case of an unworthy heir.”³⁵

Wilhelm De Vries sees Leo as providing “a more precise juridical definition for the idea of succession.” But, not all scholars agree that Leo operates with a “juristic theology.”³⁶ In another text Leo writes:

Peter is “not only the president of this see, but also the primate of all the bishops. Therefore... believe that he is speaking to you in whose stead we act” (MPL, 54, 146-147). The most blessed Peter... does not cease to preside over his see and obtains an abiding partnership with the eternal Priest.” The stability that Peter received from Christ “he conveyed also to his successors.” “All parts of the Church are ruled by his care and enriched by his help.”³⁷

As bishop of Rome, Leo acted with his spiritual authority and “availed himself of the enforcement power of the imperial government, to which he attributed a concern for the true religion equal to his own.”³⁸ In his relations with the bishops Leo claimed as his task the issues of faith and communion, for which above all, he believed the bishop of Rome has jurisdiction in the whole Church.³⁹ His understanding of the Roman primacy is already well developed. He claims rights over the whole Church, but is not an autocrat, because the most important decisions were taken in agreement with the Roman synod. He usually asked advice from the bishops, priests, and deacons,⁴⁰ thus in the exercise of his doctrinal authority, he did not proceed arbitrarily, but in common agreement with his brothers in the episcopacy, and with all the Church. He wanted to teach only what the Church believes, and what all Catholics believe.⁴¹ In his relations with the bishop of Antioch, Leo gave him precise indications and recommendations. He made recommendations also to the patriarch of Alexandria. Because that church was founded by St. Mark, disciple of Peter, Leo concluded that it has a special relationship with the church of Rome and consequently, ought to model itself on Rome’s

³⁵Piepkorn, “The Roman Primacy in the Patristic Era,” Empie and Murphy, eds., *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church*, 92.

³⁶ Ibid, 236, note 22.

³⁷ Ibid, 92.

³⁸ See Ibid.

³⁹ See De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 133.

⁴⁰ See Ibid, 135.

⁴¹ See Ibid, 136.

image.⁴² It seems that a concept that would belong to the second millennium is already present here in germ. With Leo as bishop of Rome, the correlation between the bishop of that church and the image of Peter, which had already been proposed by Damasus I and others before Leo, now became fully explicit.⁴³ Leo believed that “Peter continues his task in the bishop of Rome.” Therefore, Rome’s predominance over the other churches is to be explained “from Peter’s presence in his successors,” i.e., the bishops who occupy the Chair of Peter.⁴⁴ Leo exercised his pastoral care writing letters to the bishops of all the West, i.e. Africa, Gaul, Spain, and Italy. He did so especially by “admonishing them, settling disputes, and letting them know he expected them to follow Roman customs.”⁴⁵ When Hilary the bishop of Arles “began to behave as if his see were a patriarchate independent of Rome,” Leo asked for and obtained a rescript from emperor Valentinian III confirming that he had jurisdiction over all the western provinces. That case ended with Leo’s decision to split Hilary’s bishopric into the two sees, of Arles, and Vienne, thus decreasing Hilary’s power and increasing Leo’s.⁴⁶

4.3 Dioscorus, Eutyches, and Leo’s Tome

After Cyril’s death, the bishop of Alexandria was Dioscorus (444-451), a leader among those who resented Cyril’s concession. Dioscorus formed an alliance with Eutyches (ca. 358-454), a monk of Constantinople who was the superior of a large monastery, and had a great reputation as a spiritual advisor.⁴⁷ Eutyches detested Theodoret’s “two natures” Christology,⁴⁸ and admired the theology of Cyril of Alexandria. In contrast to Cyril, Eutyches maintained

⁴² See Ibid, 134-135.

⁴³ See “Common Statement”: In Paul C. Empie and Austin T. Murphy , eds., *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church*, 17.

⁴⁴ Thus, according a common understanding among Lutherans and Catholics, we can define the Petrine function of the bishop of Rome as “nothing less than the care for all the churches. It imposes upon other bishops the duty to obey his authority and apply his decisions. Thus, western theological affirmations of papal primacy found an early expression in the teaching of Leo I.” See Ibid.

⁴⁵ O’Malley, S.J. *A History of the Popes*, 38.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ See Joseph F. Kelly, *The Ecumenical Councils of the Catholic Church: A History*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2009, 42.

⁴⁸ See Chadwick, *East and West*, 41.

that when the Word became flesh the divine and human natures were merged into one nature. Eutyches used the term “one *phýsis*,” a word that Greek theologians used often for “nature,” but Cyril had used *phýsis* to mean “person.” Eutyches stressed Christ’s divinity, preaching that the divine nature swallowed up the human after the incarnation: “one nature, that God made man, became flesh,”⁴⁹ and argued that “this teaching was in accordance with the faith of Nicaea confirmed at Ephesus and with the faith of the Fathers, especially Athanasius and Cyril.”⁵⁰

By 447, Eutyches’ thought became well known, and other theologians started to write against him. They accused him of eliminating the divine-human distinction (Apollinarianism). Eutyches accused his opponents of denying the divine-human union in Christ (Nestorianism). At that time in Constantinople the bishop of the city was Flavian (446-449). He understood the complex reality there and in 448 convoked a local synod which condemned Eutyches’ teachings. From that moment Dioscorus’ defense of Eutyches began because Dioscorus claimed that Eutyches’ enemies were also Cyril’s enemies. Both Dioscorus and Eutyches conspired to destroy Flavian. Eutyches protested to Theodosius II of Flavian’s treatment against him, and the emperor supported him.⁵¹ Flavian of Constantinople sought support from Rome, and Leo condemned the heresy of Eutyches. In response to Flavian’s appeal and Theodosius’ announcement of a new council to meet in Ephesus in 449, Leo sent to Flavian a formal letter which became known as the *Tomus ad Flavianum* or Leo’s *Tome*, a lengthy exposition of the faith as taught in the West. Through the letter he asserted a claim to a “teaching authority even over the churches of the East” and, at the same time brought the bishops of Gaul into line by demanding their consent to it as well.⁵²

Initially Leo had been cool toward Flavian and favorable toward Eutyches, but when

⁴⁹ See Kelly, *The Ecumenical Councils of the Catholic Church*, 42.

⁵⁰ Gwynn, “*The Council of Chalcedon and the Definition of Christian Tradition*,” Price and Whitby, Eds., *Chalcedon in Context*, 13.

⁵¹ See Kelly, *The Ecumenical Councils of the Catholic Church*, 42.

⁵² See Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 560.

he read the documents Flavian had sent him, he soon realized that if Eutyches could not affirm the real humanity of Christ as having redemptive value, he was not orthodox:

When you cross-examined Eutyches and he replied, "I confess that our Lord was of two natures before the union, but I confess one nature after the union," I am amazed that such an absurd and corrupt declaration of faith was not very severely censured by the judges; and that an extremely foolish statement was disregarded, as if nothing whatever offensive had been heard. It is just as wicked to say that the only-begotten Son of God was of two natures before the incarnation as it is abominable to claim that there was a single nature in him after the Word was made flesh.⁵³

As Chadwick notes, in the *Tomus ad Flavianum* "Leo's aversion to Eutyches' language could not have been concealed."⁵⁴ In fact, he described Eutyches as "very rash and extremely ignorant," someone "in whom knowledge of the truth is blocked by a kind of dimness."⁵⁵

In refutation of Eutyches and the eastern bishops who had accepted his views, Leo instructs the readers of his *Tome* about the two-natures Christology of the West and the scriptural texts that support it. Prominent among those texts was the hymn in Philippians 2.

... So the one who retained the form of God when he made humanity, was made man in the form of a servant. Each nature kept its proper character without loss; and just as the form of God does not take away the form of a servant, so the form of a servant does not detract from the form of God....⁵⁶

Leo defends the integrity of each nature while also holding their union in one person.

So the proper character of both natures was maintained and came together in a single person.... So it is on account of this oneness of the person, which must be understood in both natures, that we both read that the son of man came down from heaven, when the Son of God took flesh from the virgin from whom he was born, and again that the Son of God is said to have been crucified and buried, since he suffered these things not in the divinity itself whereby the Only-begotten is co-eternal and consubstantial with the Father, but in the weakness of the human nature.⁵⁷

To his dismay Leo's *Tome* was not read at the 449 council, but two years later it was read and approved at the council of Chalcedon and contributed to the council's Definition of Faith.

4.4 "The robber council"

In response to Eutyches' appeal against his condemnation by the synod of Constantinople, Theodosius II called a council to be held at Ephesus in 449, at which the ally

⁵³ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 81-82.

⁵⁴ See Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 560.

⁵⁵ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 77.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 77-80.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 77-79.

of Eutyches, Dioscorus, bishop of Alexandria, presided. Dioscorus had brought with him a large number of bishops from Egypt and Palestine, who formed the majority at the council. Pope Leo did not attend, but he sent his *Tome*, to the council through his legates. The reading of Leo's letter was twice refused by Dioscorus and the council. Instead, Eutyches arrived to give his profession of faith. Then, the Fathers read the decrees of the local synod which condemned Eutyches, but "the bishops denounced these and overwhelmingly (111 to 19) voted to rehabilitate Eutyches."⁵⁸ Moreover Flavian of Constantinople was deposed for violating canon 7 of Ephesus (431) which prohibited adding to the Nicene Creed because he had quoted from Leo's *Tome* the standards he used to judge and condemn Eutyches' theology at the home synod in 448. After Flavian was deposed, the monophysite doctrine of Eutyches was approved. According to the Acts of the Council of Chalcedon, "Flavian on hearing the sentence against him immediately disclaimed the authority of the council, in which he was backed up by one of the papal legates."⁵⁹ Rapidly, he sent an appeal to the bishop of Rome, and three days after the sentence he died from ill treatment, as a martyr of faith. Other bishops were also unjustly deposed, namely the leading bishops Domnus of Antioch and Theodoret of Cyrus. Theodoret appealed to the "right and just tribunal" of the bishop of Rome, saying he was willing to obey whatever verdict Leo would issue. Furthermore, in a letter Theodoret sent to Rhenatus the presbyter, he presented "many reasons for the hegemony of Rome, chiefly the fact that it has remained free from all heretical stench and that no one holding false opinions has ever sat upon its [episcopal] throne, but it has kept the grace of the apostles undefiled."⁶⁰ But the most explicit appeal to the bishop of Rome and to his jurisdiction was that of Eusebius, bishop of Dorylaeum, for he asked Leo to restore him to his office.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Kelly, *The Ecumenical Councils of the Catholic Church*, 43.

⁵⁹ See Doc. 254, Giles, Ed., *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority*, 300.

⁶⁰ As cited in Piepkorn, "The Roman Primacy in the Patristic Era," Empe and Murphy, eds., *Papal Primacy and the Universal Church*, 94.

⁶¹ See De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 138.

When Leo learned about the council's actions from his legates, he condemned the council as a *latrocinium*, or "robber council," describing it also as "no court of justice but a gang of thieves." Furthermore, at once he dispatched letters of protest to the emperor Theodosius II,⁶² who "calmly assured the westerners that all was fine,"⁶³ and that "peace reigned and pure truth was supreme."⁶⁴ But, in July of 450 things changed suddenly. Theodosius II had a fatal accident in which he fell from his horse and a few days later died from his injuries. After Theodosius' death the only person who could succeed to the throne was his sister Pulcheria. She married Marcian, an ex-general, and they ruled as emperor and empress. Pulcheria was a supporter of Flavian and established an alliance with pope Leo. Anatolius was elected bishop of Constantinople. The emperor convoked a council at Chalcedon in 451.

5. The Council of Chalcedon

5.1 The preparation

Now, the problem was how to deal with the "robber" council of Ephesus of 449. Could it just to be ignored, rejected or annulled as heretical? Was it necessary to call another council that would overturn it? We know that this is what happened in regard to the Arian councils after Nicaea, which were overturned by Constantinople of 381. Then, who has the authority to convoke the council and where should it be held? Should there be Roman representation? It was clear that Pulcheria was among those who were opposed to the council of 449 and thought that this council should be repealed. But, according to the imperial church's understanding at that time, this could be done only with another council.⁶⁵ In 451 Pulcheria and Marcian decided to have a new council at Nicaea, but before it opened it was moved to

⁶² Ibid, 288.

⁶³ Kelly, *The Ecumenical Councils of the Catholic Church*, 43.

⁶⁴ Freeman, *A New History of Early Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 303.

⁶⁵ See De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 104.

Chalcedon, close to the capital, just across the Bosphorus in the martyr church of St Euphemia. Leo was determined not to repeat what happened at Ephesus in 449, and insistently asked the imperial couple to hold a council in the West. They refused, asserting that this was an eastern affair. Leo sent his legates to Chalcedon, three clergy from Italy, headed by bishop Paschasinus of Lilybaeum (Marsala) in Sicily. Leo presumed that the senior papal legate at Chalcedon would chair the council; in fact, he chaired only the third session. The imperial commissioners presided over the council, and their presence and mediation were crucial for its success.⁶⁶ With those solutions, Dioscorus' control of the council was no longer a possible problem.

The fourth great and ecumenical council began on 8 October and the Fathers worked there for almost one month. They met under “the firm control of Pulcheria and Anatolius of Constantinople.”⁶⁷ A significant number of court dignitaries were present to guarantee imperial influence, and there were probably about 600 bishops present.⁶⁸ The papal representatives in the East had limited power. They demanded that the council's Fathers exclude Dioscorus from the synodical participation, but the imperial court proposed a formal trial. Dioscorus listened to the reading of the acts of the robber council and the synod of Constantinople. An increasing number of Fathers began to desert Dioscorus, and at a certain point, the Egyptian bishops did also. There was a declaration from the imperial commissioners who demanded that “the Alexandrian to be condemned, pending imperial

⁶⁶ See De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 110-111. See also R. Price and M. Whitby, eds., *Chalcedon in Context*, 73. I agree with those who say that Paschasinus led just the third session of the council. L'Huillier is the only one who writes that Paschasinus presided at the second session of the council. See L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 188. There does not seem to be sufficient historical evidence to affirm, as Meyendorff and O'Malley do, that the Sicilian bishop presided over the whole council. But, I found significant Meyendorff's distinction, i.e., he distinguishes between the ecclesiastical president and the lay imperial commissioners who led the council. See John Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions: The Church 450-680 A.D.* (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), 168. See also O'Malley, S.J. *A History of the Popes*, 38. Finally, it seems not as precise as H. Chadwick in his presentation of that case for he writes that “no bishop was to preside at most of the sessions. That task was entrusted by Marcian and Pulcheria to a high-powered lay body” (officials of the empire). See Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 571.

⁶⁷ Chadwick, *The Early Church*, 203.

⁶⁸ It is difficult to present the correct number of participants.

approval of the sentence.”⁶⁹ The bishops met two days later and ordered the reading of the decrees of the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople I. For the council of 381 this was the initial formal recognition of its ecumenicity. The Fathers also ordered the reading of other documents including the *Formula of Union* (433) and the *Tomus ad Flavianum*.

5.3 Creeds

At the beginning of the synod’s work, one of the questions for the council Fathers to resolve was whether they needed to produce a new confession of faith. On 10 October the presiding officials asked that each bishop sign a written statement of belief, since they knew that the emperor accepted the Nicene creed, the creed of Constantinople I, and the traditional teachings of eminent Fathers, such as Athanasius, Cyril, Celestine, Hilary, Basil, Gregory (Nazianzen), and Leo, who was added to that list.⁷⁰ Marcian and Pulcheria wanted a fresh statement of faith. But the problem was that according to the Council of Ephesus, canon 7, it was not permitted to have any other symbol of faith than the Nicene Creed. Thus, the bishops at Chalcedon fully agreed that it was necessary to follow the example of the great Fathers who wanted to adhere to the Nicene creed and no more. They knew also that “pagans laughed at the Church for a continual succession of synods creating new creeds.”⁷¹ Eventually, they figured out the best way to solve the question concerning the creed of Constantinople I. The only possible and reasonable way to seriously continue their work according to the spirit of Nicaea was to recognize the creed associated with the 150 Fathers of Constantinople of 381 as a legitimate and necessary supplement to the creed of Nicaea. They did so, especially acknowledging that symbol of faith as “consonant” with the Nicene Formula. The Alexandrians had some problems in receiving the creed approved at Constantinople, but the bishops at Chalcedon were determined to reach agreement on the issues before them. Their work followed a precise order: first, the metropolitan of Nicomedia read the Nicene creed

⁶⁹ See De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 110-111.

⁷⁰ See Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 573-574.

⁷¹ See *Ibid*, 574, quoting Evagrius.

with its anathema dated 19 June 325; second, the lay presidents asked the archdeacon of Constantinople to read the creed of the 150 Fathers (of 381), Cyril's second letter to Nestorius, and the letter of John of Antioch with the Formula of Union; third, the authoritative secretary of the imperial consistory read a Greek version of Leo's *Tome*. After listening to the above creeds, letters, and authors, the bishops expressed in many ways their veneration toward them. However, the majority of the bishops were against drawing up a new statement of faith on the Christological question, arguing that this was forbidden by canon 7 of the Council of Ephesus. Because the emperor insisted that the council must produce a statement of faith about the natures in Christ in order to settle the question for the peace of the Church, the council agreed to have such a statement drawn up. The session ended with the instructions of the lay presidents to Anatolius. They asked him to select a committee and to return in five days with a statement of faith.⁷²

5.2 Definition of Chalcedon

The work that was given to the “doctrinal” committee was essential for the next step in the council’s work. An important question to raise is why the council wrote a “definition” and how it avoided violating canon 7 of Ephesus (431). The Council of Chalcedon had fifteen sessions, and the famous statement now known as the Chalcedonian Definition was produced during the fifth and sixth sessions which discussed the central doctrinal question regarding Christology. A committee of bishops was directed to draft a new statement of faith that included Leo’s two-natures formula, which was not very different from the Antiochene insistence on two natures. When the committee accomplished their work with a long declaration of faith, they were “greeted with shouts of approval on 25 October” by the full assembly. The key statement of that text is:

...We all with one voice teach...one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, acknowledged in two natures [*en duo physisin*] which undergo no confusion

⁷² See Ibid, 573-574.

[*asunkutōs*], no change [*atreptōs*], no division [*adiaretōs*], no separation [*achōristōs*].⁷³

In this passage we can recognize Leo's contribution especially in the words: "in two natures."⁷⁴ Also included is a statement from Leo's *Tome* regarding one person and one *hypostasis*; key passages from the Formula of Union regarding the completeness of the divinity and humanity in Jesus Christ, *homoousios* with God and with us respectively; and a statement on the distinctiveness of each nature, taken from Cyril's Second Letter to Nestorius.⁷⁵

5.4 Leo's Tome

Leo's letter was found to be "in line with established orthodoxy" and was received with cordial approval.⁷⁶ That *Tome* in some ways helped the "corrective council"⁷⁷ to systematically reverse most of the acts of the *latrocinium* of 449. After his deposition (not on doctrinal questions) Dioscorus went into exile to die in 454, and Nestorius was again condemned as a heretic. The council condemned Dioscorus for having excommunicated the pope, to whom "le Saveur a confié la garde de la vigne."⁷⁸ The Fathers recognized that:

Le siege épiscopal de Rome est d'origine apostolique et demandent (ayant en vue le canon 28) qu'un rayon de son apostolicité brille sur le siege de Constantinople, car de cette manière, la seconde Rome, Constantinople, ne ferait qu'une avec la première puisqu'elle participerait de la meme apostolicité.⁷⁹

To what extent did the council take into account the *Tome ad Flavianus* and the primacy of the pope? The Fathers said that Peter spoke through Leo, that is, through his letter. Here, we can understand that Leo's doctrine agrees with Peter's confession of faith. The emperor's commissioners asked the Fathers if there was a perfect agreement between the faith of Nicaea-Constantinople and Leo's letter. Thus, the *Tomus ad Flavianum* was officially

⁷³ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 86. I have inserted the bracketed phrases.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 81-82

⁷⁵ For further studies see Aloys Grillmeyer, S.J., *Christ in Christian Tradition*, Volume One, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*. Translated by John Bowden (London: Mowbrays, 1975).543-550.

⁷⁶ Chadwick, *The Early Church*, 203.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 42.

⁷⁸ De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 140.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 140.

submitted for discussion; it was not accepted *a priori*.⁸⁰ De Vries writes that the letter was approved by the Fathers, but in a context in which “toute cette affaire prouve qu’un nombre important d’évêques ne reçut le *Tome* de Léon que sous l’effet d’une forte pression (empereur).”⁸¹ Hence, the authority of Leo’s letter found its strength and reception in the council, but the eastern bishops did not consider Leo’s verdict as definitive, because they took a decision in full freedom, without being bound by the judgement of the bishop of Rome.

5.5 Canons of Chalcedon

Here I will present several canons of the Council of Chalcedon. The council issued 27 disciplinary canons, and what we call canon 28 is a resolution that the council approved at the 16th session. That canon, however, was not accepted by the Roman representatives because they knew it would not be accepted at Rome, since it implied that the primacy of Rome was due to its being the imperial city rather than to the fact its bishop was the successor of Peter. Many of the canons are about matters of governance and church order, among which canon 1 is about observing all the canons of previous synods; they are still authoritative. It states that:

We have deemed it right that the canons hitherto issued by the saintly Fathers at each and every synod should remain in force.⁸²

Canons 9, 12, and 19 are significant in regard to disputes between clerics, and their bishop, or between a bishop and the metropolitan (9)⁸³; the appointment of metropolitan bishops, the geographical integrity of dioceses, not permitting metropolitans to be appointed by imperial decrees, and not dividing dioceses (12)⁸⁴; and twice-yearly provincial synods (19.)⁸⁵

5.6 Canon 28 of Chalcedon

This canon was definitively adopted on November 1, at the 16th session near the end of

⁸⁰ Ibid, 141.

⁸¹ Ibid, 145.

⁸² Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 87.

⁸³ Ibid, 91.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 93.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 96.

the council.⁸⁶ It is not clear how many Fathers were present for the discussion and approval of that canon, as many seem already to have returned home. The meeting was tense and began with a protest from the Roman legates about a session the night before at which neither they nor the imperial commissioners were present. However, the Roman representatives had declined to participate in the deliberations because they said they had not received instructions on the matter. The bishops discussed the problem. According to L’Huillier, the session had not been furtive.⁸⁷ The council then adopted the text that had been presented that evening. Their resolution, with its famous reference to canon 3 of Constantinople regarding the new Rome, became known as canon 28 of Chalcedon. Its full text follows.

Following in every way the decrees of the holy Fathers and recognizing the canon which has recently been read out – the canon of the 150 most devout bishops who assembled in the time of the great Theodosius of pious memory, then emperor, in imperial Constantinople, new Rome⁸⁸ – we issue the same decree and resolution concerning the prerogatives of the most holy church of the same Constantinople, new Rome. The Fathers rightly accorded prerogatives to the see of older Rome, since that is an imperial city; and moved by the same purpose the 150 most devout bishops apportioned equal prerogatives to the most holy see of new Rome, reasonably judging that the city which is honoured by the imperial power and senate and enjoying privileges equaling older imperial Rome, should also be elevated to her level in ecclesiastical affairs and take second place after her. The metropolitans of the dioceses of Pontus, Asia and Thrace, but only these, as well as the bishops of these dioceses who work among non-Greeks, are to be ordained by the aforesaid most holy see of the most holy church in Constantinople. That is, each metropolitan of the aforesaid dioceses along with the bishops of the province ordain the bishops of the province, as has been declared in the divine canons; but the metropolitans⁸⁹ of the aforesaid dioceses, as has been said, are to be ordained by the archbishop of Constantinople, once agreement has been reached by vote in the usual way and has been reported to him.⁹⁰

Different from the other canons, here “the language is polished and the terminology precise.” L’Huillier analyzes the two parts of the canon. The first part is a preamble that expresses the canonical situation of the new Rome, and “it constitutes a whole in itself, in that it seems to be an interpretation and restatement of canon 3 of the council of Constantinople of 381.”⁹¹ The second part has three points: the supermetropolitan rights which belong to the see of new

⁸⁶ See L’Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 285. In the seventeenth session in the *Acta Graeca* and the sixteenth in the *Versio a Rustico edita*.

⁸⁷ See *Ibid*, 285. See also Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 585.

⁸⁸ Who assembled... new Rome omitted in variant reading in CCO.

⁸⁹ Along with... metropolitans omitted in variant reading in CCO

⁹⁰ See Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 100.

⁹¹ See L’Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 270.

Rome in regard to the dioceses of Pontus, Thrace and Asia; the right of the archbishop of Constantinople to ordain bishops among the barbarians nations; and a clarification about the “promotion of the bishops and metropolitans of the three dioceses.”⁹²

5.7 Interpretation of Canon 28

Only 185 of the bishops at the council signed the resolution that became canon 28, and many of these signatures were made by proxy.⁹³ It is not easy to know what understanding the Fathers had of canon 28. It is sure that many bishops did not sign or were absent, but others signed because, according to L’Huillier, “unquestionably, they found nothing in the motion that could undermine the authority or dignity of the see of Rome.”⁹⁴ L’Huillier argues from an orthodox perspective that this canon has the purpose of defining the primatial prerogatives of the see of Constantinople, not those of the see of old Rome, and therefore that the Fathers at Chalcedon had no intention of minimizing the importance of the apostolicity of Rome.⁹⁵ L’Huillier understands the rationale behind canon 28 to be securing the rights of the see of Constantinople against the see of Alexandria, which had tried in many ways to undermine the stability of the new Rome and the position of its bishops since the inception of the see. Nevertheless, L’Huillier acknowledges that in later centuries Constantinople had ambitious tendencies, believing that the city had the first place before the old Rome, because Constantinople “is the only capital.”⁹⁶ It is precisely this kind of political rationale and its consequences that Rome objected to in the reiteration and affirmation of canon 3 of Constantinople in Chalcedon’s canon 28.

The proceedings at Chalcedon demonstrated the ambivalence of the eastern bishops toward Rome’s authority and claims to primacy. Anatolius, bishop of Constantinople,

⁹² See *Ibid.* For further studies on that second part of the canon I suggest to refer to the same study of Peter L’Huillier (278-282).

⁹³ See *Ibid.*, 285.

⁹⁴ See *Ibid.*, 286.

⁹⁵ See *Ibid.*, 282.

⁹⁶ See *Ibid.*, 282-283.

expressed to Leo the submission of the church of Constantinople to the church of Rome: “le siege épiscopal de Constantinople a celui de Rome pour père”.⁹⁷ Furthermore, Anatolius asked the pope to confirm the council. The Council of Chalcedon recognized that “Peter spoke through Leo.” If we want to be more exact, however, we have to assert that the Fathers at Chalcedon recognized Leo’s doctrine to conform to the faith of Peter. The council’s praise of Leo recognized the accordance of Leo’s letter with the doctrine of the Apostles. But, we have to remember that during the Council of Ephesus of 449, the Fathers spoke of Dioscorus saying: “C’est là la voix de l’Esprit-Saint!... Par toi revivent les Pères!” Or, there is the case of the emperor’s commissioners: “Dieu a parlé par votre bouche!” Or to the emperor: “Docteur de la foi!”⁹⁸ As noted above, the council approved Leo’s Tome only after discussing it.⁹⁹ Therefore, Leo’s *Tome* acquired authority because was received by the council.¹⁰⁰

5.8 Roman response to Canon 28 and the Council

At Chalcedon the papal legates objected to canon 28, and pope Leo I rejected it, because it attributed the prerogatives of Rome to its being the imperial capital, rather than to its bishop being the successor of Peter. Further reasons for rejecting it were that canon 6 of the Council of Nicaea had put Alexandria in the first place among eastern churches and that the church of Constantinople had no apostolic foundation. But eventually Rome had to deal with Constantinople as the leading church in the East.

There are several issues in regard to canon 28. What were Rome’s arguments against canon 28?¹⁰¹ Did Leo and the Roman legates already know of canon 3 of Constantinople, which was reiterated and affirmed in canon 28 of Chalcedon? How did the legates (and Leo) deal with the precedence of the sees during the council? Despite their objections, canon 28 does not seem to have been a surprise to the Roman legates or to Leo. The legates had refused

⁹⁷ See De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 139.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 141

⁹⁹ See p. 73 above on the council of Ephesus, and De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 140-141.

¹⁰⁰ See Ibid, 144.

¹⁰¹ I have already discussed this issue of apostolicity in the previous paragraph.

to attend the night session at which canon 28 was first discussed, claiming they had no instructions on that matter. But the next day they read from a document in which Leo had urged them (with Alexandria or perhaps Constantinople in mind):

Do not allow the constitution promulgated by the holy fathers to be violated by any rash move, reserving in every way the dignity of our person which you represent; and if perhaps any, relying on the splendor of their cities, attempt any usurpation, repel this with the determination which this merits.¹⁰²

Eusebius of Dorylaeum, who had been a refugee in Rome shortly before Easter 451, reported that he was present when envoys arrived from Constantinople, evidently to discuss the matter ahead of time, and he himself had quoted canon 3 of Constantinople to Leo, who raised no objection to it.¹⁰³ This may account for the surprise with which Anatolius, bishop of Constantinople, greeted the legates' rejection of the proposed reaffirmation of canon 3 in Chalcedon's canon 28.

Another reason for Anatolius' surprise may have been that the legates had been deferential to him throughout the council, regularly granting him precedence after themselves in the proceedings. When the dogmatic definition was signed, the legates signed first, followed by Anatolius. Concern for the precedence of the patriarchal sees was voiced by many of the Fathers, who were indignant that at the "robber council" of Ephesus in 449, Dioscorus had treated Flavian as the least of the patriarchs before the council deposed him.¹⁰⁴

The Roman delegation made a final attempt to defeat the canon, declaring that the apostolic see must not be humiliated in their presence, and for this reason they asked to abrogate everything that was done during their absence

...to the detriment of the canons and the rules; if it is not abrogated, let our protest (*contradictio*) be inserted into the Acts so that we may know what we must carry to the knowledge of the apostolic man, the pope of the universal Church, so he can make a judgment on the undermining of his see and on the violations of the canons.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 585, citing ACO II.iii.548.13. See also L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 287-289.

¹⁰³ See L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 121, 287.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 287. See also Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 586.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 292.

Nevertheless, the imperial commissioners accepted a motion to approve the canon and then officially closed the session. In a clarification they affirmed that to “the primacy of the see of Old Rome was given its proper recognition and value,”¹⁰⁶ On this point De Vries writes that the foundation of the succession of the primacy of Peter is of divine law and is not put into question by canon 28 even though it follows the political principle which recognizes the dignity of the episcopal sees as dependant on the civil rank of the city.¹⁰⁷ The council had clearly ignored the arguments of the Romans legates when it approved the canon. Nevertheless, efforts were made at the council and after to get Leo’s confirmation of canon 28, but to no avail.

In the three years following the council, pope Leo had a very delicate exchange of letters with the emperor Marcian, the empress Pulcheria, and bishop Anatolius of Constantinople,¹⁰⁸ contesting canon 28 and the territorial principle, defending the “metropolitan system and the rights considered to be Petrine,” and reproving Anatolius for ambitions to extend his authority throughout the East.¹⁰⁹ In these letters Leo expressed a clear theme, i.e., “the lasting and unchangeable character of the rulings of Nicaea,” especially canon 6: which had been made under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁰

Finally, in 453, pope Leo approved what had been decided at Chalcedon but “*in sola... fidei causa.*”¹¹¹ Leo does not seem to have considered that delaying his acceptance of the

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., moreover according to L’Huillier, they used “the interpolated version of canon 6 of Nicaea, τα πρωτεια, stronger than the normal Greek expression τα πρεσβεια.”

¹⁰⁷ See De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, 147.

¹⁰⁸ See L’Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 293-294.

¹⁰⁹ See Ibid.

¹¹⁰ See Ibid, for the complex question of the interpolated form of canon 6; for its later interpretation, see above, in chapter one. Moreover, according to F. Dvornik, Pope Leo’s argument on the apostolic origin is weak because with that criteria Antioch ought to have the second place and not the third, since Peter founded an episcopal chair there. Dvornik insists that already at Nicaea there was used the principle of accommodation to the political context of the time was in use: Alexandria was more important than Antioch. See F. Dvornik, *Byzance et la Primauté romaine* (Paris, 1964), 48.

¹¹¹ See Ibid, 294

council and its dogmatic definition because of his objection to canon 28 threatened to undermine the council's work and increase tensions between East and West.¹¹²

The council of Chalcedon had the task of restoring peace in the Church which was troubled by the "robber" council of Ephesus of 449. But the peace achieved by Chalcedon was imperfect. After the council the controversy continued in the East without interruption, mostly in Egypt, but also in Syria and Asia Minor. The emperor Zeno (425-491) began to question openly Chalcedon's doctrine, which gave rise to the Acacian schism. Official Roman recognition of Constantinople as the second see in the church's hierarchy happened during the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, but in a completely different context, i.e., "Constantinople was in the hands of the crusaders, who had created a Latin Patriarchate."¹¹³

¹¹² See Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 587.

¹¹³ See *Ibid*, 295.

Chapter 4: Synthesis and ecclesiological reflections on the Petrine ministry in the communion of the first five centuries

1. Introduction

In this chapter I will proceed in the following manner. First, I will present a synthesis of the most significant points of the history of the bishops of Rome and their relations with the eastern bishops, from the end of the second century (c.180) until the council of Chalcedon that I investigated in this thesis. I will look also at other structures of the Church, i.e., synods, and councils. Second, I will concentrate my reflection on the main points met in my ecclesiological research. Third, I will briefly present some points related to current ecumenical discussions.

2. The bishop of Rome and the other bishops at the time of the first four ecumenical councils

In this section it is my intention to briefly present the most relevant points of the long itinerary of the history of the bishops of Rome and the other bishops, especially the easterners, from the end of the second century until the council of Chalcedon.

2.1 From the end of the third century until the council of Nicaea

1. In the first chapter I presented a rapid view of the Petrine ministry and other structures of the Church of the late second, third and early part of the fourth century, especially focusing on the great and unique event of the council of Nicaea. I also focused on the main structures of the Church of that long period (180-325), giving a plausible and objective picture, in particular looking at the relation of the bishops of Rome and the western

and eastern bishops with the beginning of synodality, conciliarity, and doctrinal and disciplinary questions. Those local, provincial or regional meetings were beginning to occur in many parts of the Church, but the most advanced regional councils in the third century were in North Africa (Carthage) and under the bishop of Rome, who was the single metropolitan of *Italia suburbicaria*. There were similar meetings also in Egypt (Alexandria) and in Syria (Antioch), and by the early fourth century other local synods were taking place in the West too. A new form of ecclesiastical gathering emerged with the synod of Arles in 314. For the first time in history a Roman emperor created the “technical presuppositions” to convoke a church council, and here also for the first time a Roman bishop did not attend such an event. In this manner Constantine was exercising a certain type of leadership for the entire Church, while the role of the bishop of Rome, at that time remained relatively obscure and undetermined.

Some bishops of Rome left a significant witness to the way in which they understood their ministry as bishop of the see that was most closely associated with Peter. At the end of the second century, Victor I (189-199) confronted the controversy about the date of Easter, which came to his attention because of different observances at Rome. He asked all the bishops to conform in practice with the church of Rome, which was also the practice of Alexandria. But Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon, was able to persuade him that the other way of dating Easter was ancient and that the churches could remain in communion without uniformity of practice. In this case the bishop of Rome raised a significant question that was not resolved according to his will. However, as we saw, that question was resolved at Nicaea in 325. Irenaeus had great respect for the see of Rome, which he called “the greatest and most ancient church” and whose succession of bishops he cited as the best illustration of the apostolic succession in all the churches.

Another important development was the conflict between Cyprian and Stephen (254-257) over the validity of baptism by schismatics and heretics. They had different positions on that issue, and local synods played an important role in dealing with it. Here, too the Roman bishop was not able to impose his will and differences in practice continued without a break of communion between the two churches. In the fourth century, however, the Roman view on sacramental validity would prevail as a consequence of the Donatist controversy. Cyprian in his writings recognized the importance of Peter as the source and symbol of the unity of the Church that Christ intended. Stephen understood to have for himself the *primatus* that Cyprian recognized in Peter.

Other questions troubled the Church as well in the third century. Councils in Alexandria, Rome, and Antioch had to grapple with questions of trinitarian theology that foreshadowed issues in the fourth-century Arian controversy. Here we saw Rome and Alexandria apparently remaining in communion despite large differences in their teaching about the relationship of Father and Son. In Antioch it would take the Roman army to remove Paul of Samosata from his see four years after the council that had deposed him. This was the first time an emperor intervened directly in church affairs to resolve an internal issue. The criterion Aurelian used to recognize the legitimate bishop of Antioch was the one with whom “the bishops of Italy and Rome should communicate in writing,” i.e., with whom they were in communion.

In 314 an emperor for the first time corresponded with the bishop of Rome when Constantine asked Miltiades (309-314) to settle a dispute between the Donatists and Caecilian, the newly elected bishop of Carthage. A Roman synod met to consider the matter and Miltiades recognized Caecilian. The dispute continued and Constantine asked Sylvester (314-335) to convoke a synod of western bishops to resolve it. The council of Arles in 314

also decided against the Donatists and recognized the authority of the bishop of Rome and his primacy in the West.

Soon a huge question arose about that was destined to affect the Church for most of the century. The Arian theology of the relationship between the Father and the Son spread rapidly from Alexandria and divided the eastern churches. Constantine took a major role in attempting to settle the controversy and convoked a council at Nicaea in 325. The novelty of that council was that the emperor had made it possible for the bishops to meet together in a new expression of collegiality to address an issue affecting nearly the whole Church. Moreover, the bishops present were conscious that they constituted a “great and holy council.” There were few western bishops at Nicaea; the Roman bishop sent his legates. The Fathers believed that their doctrinal decisions were definitive and irrevocable in character, but it is not clear whether they had the same sense about the canons issued by the council.

Canon 6 is the central and most debated canon that concerns the forms of authority pertaining to some cities that were the metropolis of their provinces (Rome, Alexandria and Antioch). This canon would play a significant role in the work of later councils (Constantinople I and Chalcedon) as they continued to give a canonical basis to structures of jurisdiction and precedence among the churches.

The symbol of Nicaea would become the *de facto* norm of faith the universal Church, but it would take half a century of continued controversy before that occurred.

2.2 From Nicaea until Constantinople I

The council of 318 Fathers at Nicaea defined the dogma of the divinity of the Word (*Logos*), the Son of God, by declaring him to be of the same being or substance as the Father, using the Greek term *homoousios* (of one substance or being) to express this but without specifying its meaning. That definition continued to provoke divisions among bishops, especially in the East. Synods and councils took place everywhere in the Church. Emperors

were influenced by some Arian bishops, and some very important bishops were exiled, most notably Athanasius, who was exiled five times. The role of the bishops of Rome was significant in the time between Nicaea and Constantinople I. Pope Julius (337-352) received Athanasius into communion and a Roman synod declared him to be innocent. The pope defended him and judged strongly those who had deposed the bishop of Alexandria without consulting him first. Julius defended the right of Athanasius to appeal to the bishop of Rome against the decree of an eastern synod and the right of the pope to hear such an appeal. Furthermore, Julius and the Roman synod firmly rejected the homoiousian theology, holding fast to the Nicene doctrine. Julius gave a criterion for judging synods and councils when he evaluated the synod of Tyre as not having universal force because it had not followed the customary practice of circulating its decisions to all the churches.

The emperors Constantius and Constans convoked the council of Sardica (342/3) in the hopes of avoiding a schism between East and West. The council split into separate eastern and western synods which anathematized each other and broke off communion. The western synod issued the famous canon 3c that states the right of appeal to the Roman bishop, who would decide if the appeal had merit and assign neighboring bishops to hear the case if necessary.

Liberius (352- 366), faithful to Nicaea, did not recognize the work of some councils that emperor Constantius II gathered to compel the bishops to condemn Athanasius. Thus, the pope was exiled by the emperor and forced to declare Athanasius guilty and sign the homoiousian formula. When he returned to Rome, he refused to sign the decrees of the council of Rimini, proving himself faithful once again to the doctrine of Nicaea.

Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus, with their theological competencies, helped deepen insight into the Nicene faith. They were able to distinguish

between the *ousia* (being) which is the same in Father and Son, and their *hypostases* (persons) which are distinct. But solving a huge problem, others came to existence, i.e., the questions whether the Holy Spirit was truly divine and whether Jesus had a rational human soul. Macedonius, a homoiousian bishop, held that the Son was like in being with the Father and asserted that the Spirit was “only a superior creature.” On this topic, Athanasius and Basil of Caesarea with their eminent writings on the Holy Spirit, paved the way for Gregory the Theologian’s unique work. About the same time Apollinaris, bishop of Laodicea, in order to provide for the personal unity of the divinity and the humanity in Jesus Christ, proposed that the Divine Word must take the place of a human rational soul. That doctrine contradicted the soteriological principle, articulated by Gregory of Nazianzus, that “what was not assumed by the Word was not healed.” Both Macedonianism and Apollinarianism were condemned at the Council of Nicaea in 381.

Damasus (366-384), after a controversial election, took possession of the see of Rome. He understood that the only manner to exercise his ministry was by stressing the exalted spiritual dignity of his office as a “direct successor of Peter, and so the rightful heir of the promises made to him by Christ (Matt. 16:18.), and he believed that this succession gave him a unique juridical power to bind and loose, and the assurance of this infused all his rulings on church discipline. The pope wrote letters defending the divinity of the Spirit and the full humanity of Christ. Damasus published a syllabus (*Tomus Damasi*) that became the western formulation of Nicene orthodoxy. Thus, often the bishop of Rome convoked a Roman synod to discuss doctrinal and disciplinary questions of the West as far of the East.

The eastern emperor Theodosius (379-395) was a convinced partisan of Nicene orthodoxy who enacted stringent anti-pagan laws. In 380 he issued the edict of Thessalonica, known also as *Cunctos populous*, commanding all to practice “that religion which the divine Peter the apostle transmitted to the Romans” and which was taught by Damasus bishop of

Rome and Peter of Alexandria. That edict was addressed to the people of Constantinople, and recognized officially, for the first time the exemplary value of Roman communion and Roman primacy as justified by apostolic tradition. It also defined orthodoxy as communion with the bishop of Rome. In 381 Theodosius convoked the council of Constantinople, the first general council since Nicaea, which later would be recognized ecumenical, and at the end of the council he ratified its decrees by edict. One of the important issues at the council was the illegitimate election of Maximus the Cynic as the bishop of Constantinople after a council of Egyptian bishops deposed the Arian bishop of that see. The bishop of Rome reproached the Egyptians and reminded the Alexandrian bishop to observe the canons of Nicaea in regard to the election of metropolitan bishops by the bishops of their own province.

There were no western bishops present at Constantinople I as members of the council. Ascolius, bishop of Thessalonika, then under western civil jurisdiction, was invited by the emperor Theodosius I to attend the council. He was also a person whom Damasus trusted. Surely, he informed the pope about the decisions taken by the 150 bishops present. The council made some crucial doctrinal decisions. In addition to condemning Macedonianism and Apollinarianism, it reaffirmed the faith of Nicaea, and produced a creed that in some aspects revised the Nicene Creed and added a section on the Holy Spirit. No acts of the council have been preserved. The best information about it is in the synodical letter of 382, which was sent to the Roman synod, but does not contain the canons approved at the council. For this reason historians think that Rome was not informed officially of the existence of these canons. The synodical letter expounded in summary form the doctrinal decisions of the Fathers at the council of Constantinople, namely, the consubstantiality and coeternity of the three divine persons, and the Word's taking of humanity.

The most important canon of the council was canon 3, which asserts that "because it is the new Rome, the bishop of Constantinople is to enjoy the privileges of honor after the

bishop of Rome.” That canon needs to be understood in its original context as having clearly practical, even juridical implications. There was much disagreement at the time about the intention and meaning of canon 3, and Rome rejected its reasoning about the basis of the primacy of old Rome in the West and new Rome in the East. It seems likely that Damasus was informed unofficially of canon 3 by Ascolius. Scholars now think that the Roman synod of 382 was aware of canon 3 and responded to it, because they find it solidly probable that the first part of the early-sixth century *Decretum Gelasianum* is actually a document composed by the 382 Roman synod in response to the canon. In this text we find that “the holy Roman church has been set before the rest by no conciliar decrees, but has obtained a primacy by the voice of our Lord and Savior in the Gospel: ‘Thou art Peter and upon this rock....’” The Council of Constantinople would later be recognized as ecumenical by the council of Chalcedon and by western bishops in the sixth and seventh centuries, but without accepting its canons.

2.3 From the end of the fourth century until the council of Chalcedon

In this chapter we saw the role of many bishops of Rome in the doctrinal and disciplinary controversies and the councils of the fifth century. At the beginning of the century pope Innocent I (401-417) intervened in the East’s issues because he did not accept the deposition of Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople, by Theophilus of Alexandria and all those involved in that affair, and “he assumed a breach of communion” with all the great sees of East. Innocent asserted a strong claim to Roman jurisdiction in doctrinal matters in the West, declaring that especially in questions of faith all his brothers and fellow bishops ought to refer *to none but Peter* (himself) so that all the churches might benefit from the decisions that were made. Also pope Zosimus (417-418) asserted that the traditions of the fathers accorded to him a great authority, so that “no one would dare to dispute [his] judgment.” Moreover, he claimed that from canonical antiquity and by the consent of all, the authority

given to Peter by Christ our God that “he should loose the bound and bind the loosed, is equally given to those who have obtained, with his assent, the inheritance of his see. For he [Peter] has a care of all churches.”

Leo the Great through his *Tomus ad Flavianum* asserted a claim to a teaching authority, not only in the West, but even over the churches of the East. pope Leo also expressed his condemnation of the *robber* council of 449, and he protested its actions to emperor Theodosius II. Leo is especially to be remembered for bringing a new and higher level to Damasus’s claims for the papacy, because he consistently emphasized Peter’s “mystical” presence in Rome and he clearly presented himself as a successor of Peter’s authority. Leo regarded himself as the first of all the bishops, with a jurisdiction over all parts of the Church. His decisions were not autocratic because the most important deliberations were taken either by asking advice from bishops, priests, and deacons or in agreement with the Roman synod. Moreover, Leo exercised his pastoral care writing letters to the western bishops of Italy, Gaul, Africa, and Spain, and obtained from emperor Valentinian III confirmation of his jurisdiction over all the western provinces. Leo was also in communication with the eastern bishops. He made recommendations to the bishops of Antioch and Alexandria, and he sent a letter to Anatolius, bishop of Constantinople, whom he reproached severely for his ambitions. As with earlier councils, the popes did not participate at the councils of Ephesus of 431 and 449 or Chalcedon in 451, but they sent legates, trusted clerics, to represent the bishop of Rome at those meetings. Some fifth-century authors recognized the Roman bishop as the successor of Peter and acknowledged that “the care for all belongs to him, because of the dignity of the see” and that no ordinances should be made “contrary to the mind of the bishop of Rome.”

On the issues regarding the relationships between the eastern bishops and the bishop of Rome prior to or during a council and in response to the councils and their later reception, we

treated the question of Innocent I who was invited by the African bishops to ratify a sentence against Pelagius and Celestius, which he did, unambiguously judging and excommunicating them. Pope Zosimus, after being deceived by Pelagius and Celestius, in dialogue and in a true confrontation with his African brothers in the episcopate, declared in his *Tractoria* that the founders of Pelagianism were guilty of heresy. Another example is the conflict between Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius of Constantinople. They represented different theological traditions, but personal rivalry between the two bishops and their sees made things worse. Both Cyril and Nestorius appealed to Celestine of Rome for support, and he soon took Cyril's side. After the council of Ephesus in 431 had begun without John of Antioch and the other Syrian bishops and supporters of Nestorius, Celestine recognized Cyril's council and rejected the council held by John when he arrived. Celestine's approval contributed to the acceptance of Cyril's council, which was also recognized by the emperor Theodosius II.

In the disputes leading to the Council of Chalcedon, Flavian, bishop of Antioch and Theodoret, an Antiochene whose theology was condemned at the "robber council" of 449, appealed to the "right and just tribunal" of the bishop of Rome to overturn the council's judgments. When the emperor Marcian and the empress Pulcheria wanted to overturn Ephesus 449, Leo helped persuade them that the decisions of a council could only be overturned by another council. At the council of Chalcedon the bishops recognized the *Tome* that Leo had sent to Ephesus in 449 but never read there. The council Fathers accepted Leo's letter only after carefully considering it and making a judgment that it was in accord with the teaching of the apostles, the faith of Nicaea, and the tradition. They then declared that "Peter spoke through Leo," but as I discussed in the chapter, bishops had on other occasions used similar forms of speech in regard to clerics who later were considered heretics. Phrases from the *Tome* were used in the council's Definition of Faith, as were several from the 433 *Formula of Union* and one from Cyril of Alexandria.

At Chalcedon (451) the Roman legates were at times unable to impose their views, indeed, they had to accept the decisions taken by the eastern bishops, especially for canon 28. Another significant point to remember is the strong influence that the see of Alexandria exercised in the eastern Mediterranean, and on the see of Constantinople. The councils helped to regulate those relations among bishops and episcopal sees.

The most important canons of Ephesus and Chalcedon that we discussed pertain to the relationship between the eastern bishops and the bishop of Rome.

In all the councils there are canons that connect the later councils with Nicaea and regard it as the foundation of later conciliar decisions. At Ephesus (431) canon 7 declared that no one is permitted to produce, to edit, or to compose another faith than that set out by the holy Fathers gathered in the Holy Spirit, otherwise, they would be separated from communion and deposed. Canon 1 of Chalcedon decreed that all the canons of previous synods were to be observed. In a similar way canon 6 of Ephesus was meant to ensure that that no one would be able to set aside what was done at that council.

Canon 28 of Chalcedon recognized a new ecclesiastical situation in the Church. Through that controversial and not completely “official” canon, the Fathers confirmed the decision of canon 3 at the Council of Constantinople in 381, and elevated the see of Constantinople over Alexandria and Antioch, thus creating an eastern counterpart to Rome’s role in the West. Constantinople remained in second place after the old Rome, while “old” Rome retained its prerogatives and privileges. There does not seem to have been any intention by the council Fathers to deny the apostolicity of the Roman church. Nevertheless, the Roman legates at Chalcedon unsuccessfully objected to canon 28 and Leo the Great rejected it because it did not take into account the Petrine foundation of Rome and the apostolic succession of its bishops.

The role of the emperor, empress, or both, and the imperial commissioners was influential in the relations of the bishops of the *Oecumene* at that time and efforts to resolve controversies. Thus, it was emperor Theodosius II who convoked the Council of Ephesus of 431. The same emperor in 433 insisted with the two parties of Antioch and Alexandria to reach an agreement on a Formula of Union. Again, Theodosius II gathered another council at Ephesus in 449 in response to Eutyches' appeal of his condemnation by bishop Flavian and the synod at Constantinople. At Ephesus Dioscorus of Alexandria and Eutyches overturned the decisions of the synod. After Theodosius' death, the emperor Marcian, at the urging of the empress Pulcheria and Leo of Rome, convoked a council of nearly 600 bishops that met at Chalcedon and they appointed commissioners who presided at the council. The imperial couple pressed the Fathers at Chalcedon to issue a "fresh" definition of faith, and they obtained it, with the bishops declaring their statement to be "following the holy fathers." As with earlier councils, it took time for Chalcedon's decisions to be received, with some eastern churches rejecting it for centuries to come.

3. Ecclesiological reflection: The Petrine ministry in the communion of churches at the time of the first four ecumenical councils:

3.1 Conciliarity and synodality

Local and regional synods and councils were a regular form of decision-making in regard to teaching (doctrine) and practice (discipline and order) from the late-second century through the fifth century.

Ecumenical councils were intended to speak to and for the whole Church. The first instance was the Council of Nicaea in 325. We saw that for Athanasius the definition of an ecumenical synod means that "the whole universe is represented." We know that the council

as Constantinople I is a council *sui generis*, because it was formed only by eastern bishops, with no western representatives, not even papal legates. Athanasius insisted also that a council needed unanimity in order to claim that it is truly ecumenical. Moreover, at least for the West, it seems that the most significant thing is not the participation of the Roman bishop at a council, but his later recognition of it. Thus the West only formally recognized Constantinople I at the time of Hormisdas (514-523.)

The role of the emperor was essential in calling ecumenical councils. The first instance of an emperor calling a council was when Constantine commanded the western bishops to meet at Arles in 314. That council, however, was only an expanded local council to address the western controversy over Donatism. More than ten years later the same emperor convoked the council of Nicaea (325) to deal with the Arian controversy in the East. Constantine's interest in these matters centered on reestablishing peace in the empire.

Another important point is the necessary *reception* of councils. For instance, it took more than fifty years before the council of Nicaea was widely received and affirmed at Constantinople I. The creed of the council of Constantinople was not effectively recognized until it was quoted at Chalcedon and recorded in its acts just before that council's definition of faith. Ecumenical councils could not claim *de facto* authority; they had to be received.

The bishop of Rome was not present at the councils of Nicaea, Constantinople I, Ephesus, and Chalcedon. He usually sent legates to those important meetings, As I showed above, the first time that the bishop of Rome did not take part in a council but sent his representatives or observers was the council of Arles in 314. The only general council in which the bishop of Rome did not have official legates was at the council of Constantinople in 381; Ascolius was his unofficial representative, but he did not sign the decrees of the council. Although the pope never participated in such meetings, he had the possibility to be

well represented by his clergy, and many times his legates were able to set conditions to be taken seriously into account by the Fathers of the council. One example of this is from Chalcedon, where the papal legates demanded that the council's Fathers exclude Dioscorus of Alexandria from synodical participation. The imperial court proposed a formal trial, Dioscorus was abandoned by the great part of the bishops, and was finally excluded by the council. Another significant influence on a council by the Roman bishop is the case of Leo the Great at the council of Chalcedon with his *Tomus ad Flavianum*. The Fathers recognized that his doctrine was orthodox, asserting "Peter has spoke through Leo." But there is also the opposite result at Chalcedon when the Roman legates were not able to stop the approval of canon 28.

The eastern bishops are, along with the bishop of Rome, the main characters throughout this thesis. On many occasions they appeared in a very impersonal way, namely, as "the eastern bishops." On other occasions the bishops of the most important sees emerged and spoke directly, and were either accused as heretics or recognized as champions of the orthodox faith. If we had the great and general councils, it is only because they were the soul of those unique meetings. We had not the time to investigate their histories, but I think a lot more can be done to discover their personalities and contributions.

3.2 Super-metropolitans and metropolitans

This section makes no claim to be exhaustive, but is simply an attempt to be more conscious of the growth that took place from the council of Nicaea (325) until the council of Chalcedon (451). In the context of the late Roman empire the word "metropolis" indicated the chief city of a civil province, but also an ecclesiastical see of a metropolitan bishop who had jurisdictions over suffragan bishops. At Nicaea, in canon 6, the geographical territory of the see of Alexandria is determined for the first time, and the canon refers to the great cities of Rome and Antioch as models for Alexandria, but without mentioning the extent of their

territory. Above I discussed the context that led the Fathers to approve canon 6. Two criteria are important to note in regard to this issue. The first is the territorial principle, according to which the ecclesiastical territories correspond to the civil territories (as we saw, with canon 6 this was no longer the case for Alexandria). The three cities mentioned in canon 6 were also the most important cities of the Roman empire at the time. This system was accepted at the council of Nicaea, but at Constantinople I and Chalcedon critiques were raised, especially by Rome's strong disagreement in regard to the precedence of Constantinople in canon 3 of that council and in canon 28 of Chalcedon. In these canons the new Rome received a place of honor after the old Rome (Constantinople, 381), with "equal prerogatives," and "enjoying privileges equaling older imperial Rome" (Chalcedon, 451). The second criterion was presented by the bishop of Rome and the western bishops at the synod of Rome of 382. Here they stressed the importance of the apostolicity of the churches. With this principle the Roman council recognized the apostolicity of the three Petrine sees (in the order) of Rome, Alexandria and Antioch.

3.3 Relations between the bishop of Rome and the eastern bishops and vice versa

The bishop of Rome in all the cases reported expressed in different manners special care for his brethren. He was welcoming of unjustly exiled clergy, e.g., Athanasius, or he was available to listen the delicate doctrinal or disciplinary questions related by brother bishops, priests, or lay people, e.g., the appeal of the modalists against the bishop Dionysius of Alexandria, or the many cases of emperors who asked the bishop of Rome to take care of a particular issue. He enters into communication with the eastern bishops through letters, e.g., *Tomus ad Flavianum*, or through legates, namely, papal representatives at the councils, and in other ways. But only on few occasions did the pope leave Rome, sometimes due to forced exile, as with the terrible experience of Liberius who was constrained by the emperor to adhere to his demands.

The eastern bishops often individually or collegially expressed their high esteem for and recognized a unique authority of the bishop of Rome. This happened on occasions when individual bishops or councils informed him about their deliberations, or asked him to help them resolve a particular case, e.g., Flavian's appeal to Rome after he was unjustly deposed at Constantinople, or when the Fathers of the council sent Leo its decrees to receive his approbation. Sometimes it is not so clear what motivations moved the bishops in their interactions with the bishop of Rome. It is possible "in time of peace" to observe the public profession of esteem and recognition of the authority of the bishop of Rome. At such times bishops had personal relationships with the bishop of Rome and were sometimes asked to obey him and to conform themselves to the faith and practice of the Roman church. Many of them, facing personal difficulties with the pope, changed their position. It is true that sometimes the bishop of Rome threatened his interlocutors with breaking off communion if they did not agree with him, as in the case of the debated date of Easter with pope Victor. On other occasions it seems quite strange that the bishop of Rome and the western bishops are not taken in consideration. Sometimes, the silences of eastern bishops seems to imply that they were wary of being overly influenced by the bishop of Rome and or other metropolitans, such as the bishop of Alexandria.

3.4 Conclusion: Ratzinger Formula and recent ecumenical agreements

In my research I was motivated by years of personal interest and study. But, here I have to recognize that two other facts recently gave me the desire to continue to study and to know better the church history of the first millennium. One was the original assertion made by Prof. Ratzinger, now pope Benedict XVI, who some decades ago in one of his important publications declared: "Rome must not require more from the East with respect to the doctrine of primacy than what had been formulated and was lived in the first millennium . . .

Rome need not ask for more.”¹ Thus, after my ecclesiological and historical research, with another spirit I looked again at that insightful proposal.² The second thing that I want to share before ending my research, is to present the last update on the delicate and important aspect of the relations between East and West, especially in regard to the controversial topic of the Petrine ministry. In October 2007 the *Ravenna Document* was published and in October 2009 there was a meeting in Cyprus of the International Mixed Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church.³ That dialogue has progressed in its reflection on the role of the bishop of Rome. The commission gathered in Paphos issued a joint communiqué reporting on its progress at the end of its 11th plenary session. The document is titled "The role of the bishop of Rome in the communion of the Church in the first millennium." But now, the latest good news arrived some months ago in a letter that pope Benedict through Card. Walter Kasper sent to the Patriarch of Constantinople telling him:

The theme of the plenary session, *the role of the bishop of Rome in the communion of the church in the first millennium*, is certainly complex, and will require extensive study and patient dialogue if we are to aspire to a shared integration of the traditions of East and West. The Catholic Church understands the Petrine ministry as a gift of the Lord to His Church. This ministry should not be interpreted in the perspective of power, but within an ecclesiology of communion, as a service to unity in truth and charity. The bishop of the church of Rome, which presides in charity (Saint Ignatius of Antioch), is understood to be the *Servus Servorum Dei* (Saint Gregory the Great). Thus, as my venerable predecessor the Servant of God pope John Paul II wrote and I reiterated on the occasion of my visit to the Phanar in November 2006, it is a question of seeking together, inspired by the model of the first millennium, the forms in which the ministry of the bishop of Rome may accomplish a service of love recognized by one and all (Cfr. *Ut Unum Sint*, 95). Let us therefore ask God to bless us and may the Holy Spirit guide us along this difficult yet promising path.⁴

Finally, in my study I took seriously into account the “Ratzinger Formula,” and also those last updates on that issue. Thus, in my thesis I had the possibility, with all the limits that

¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology* (San Francisco, Ignatius, 1987), 199.

² In 1997 an official letter of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, co-signed by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, in effect retracts what he had earlier said. He asserted that the doctrine regarding the Primacy of Peter, both of the first and second millennium of the Magisterium, cannot be ignored.

³ This year, 2010, there will be another meeting in Europe that has the scope to publish a common document on that topic.

⁴ Benedict XVI. *Message of His Holiness Benedict XVI to His Holiness Bartholomaios I Archbishop of Constantinople, Ecumenical Patriarch*. Vatican City: 25 November 2009. Web 10 May 2010, <http://www.vatican.va>.

still remain, to study the church history of the first centuries and gain insights for my ecclesiological research, and thus make a small contribution to the discussion on the Petrine ministry. Although the difficulties and challenges will be always with us, the church history of the first four ecumenical councils can teach us that now is the time to keep in mind seriously the will of God to be one in Him, and that “by this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”⁵

⁵ John, 13:35.

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