

THE ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

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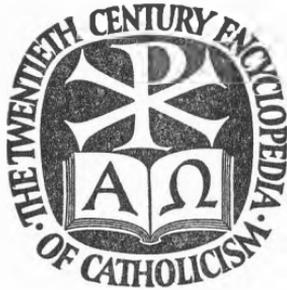
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THE ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

By *FRANCIS DVORNIK*

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INTRODUCTION

The decision of the Holy Father, John XXIII, to convoke an Ecumenical Council has been greeted with joy and satisfaction by all Catholics who see in this initiative new evidence of the Church's vitality. It met with a favourable reception also among the Eastern Churches not united with Rome and among other Christian bodies. The need for closer collaboration of all Christians against new and dangerous movements hostile not only to Christianity but to any kind of religion, is increasingly felt, and any reaffirmation of religious strength and determination to face these dangers is welcomed.

The Fathers, gathered around the supreme head of the Catholic Church, will, above all, have to solve problems facing their own Church in doctrinal and disciplinary matters. Many of these problems, however, are the concern of all Christians, and it is hoped that the discussions will prepare the way for a *rapprochement* between the Christian Churches.

The Holy Father, in convoking this new General Council, is reviving an ancient tradition originating from the early days of the Church, as is shown in the first chapter of this study. This tradition was fully developed by the Eastern Church during the first seven Ecumenical Councils. In these Councils, the Eastern Fathers, united with Rome, defined the fundamental dogmas on the Holy Trinity and on our Saviour, doctrines which are common to all Christians. These Councils form the bond which ties Eastern Christianity to that of the West, and it is for this reason that I have drawn attention to their history.

The Councils of the ninth century which deal with the Photian Schism are controversial both in the East and the West. Because of the difficulties which this problem still presents to the Church historian, I have tried to explain how it came about that Western canonists added to the seven General Councils, an eighth

Council (869–70) which the Eastern Church does not hold as ecumenical.

The conciliar tradition was continued by the Western Church during the Middle Ages and up until the nineteenth century, but differed in many ways from that of the first General Councils. This can best be understood when studied within the framework of European history, which accounts for the several short historical sketches in this book, broadly outlining the often stormy and violent atmosphere in which the Fathers of the Western General Councils, gathered around the popes, endeavoured to solve the new doctrinal and disciplinary problems facing them.

The definition of papal infallibility pronounced by the last Western General Synod, the Vatican Council, was the culmination of the work of Western theologians and canonists who, in the past, had continually stressed the need for a central authority in the Church embodied in the pope who, in his final decisions on matters of faith and morals, by the will of Christ, cannot err.

Because this definition is looked upon as the main obstacle to a *rapprochement* between the Churches, I have added a short chapter in which I have tried to make clear how very close this definition is to the belief of Orthodox Christians in the infallibility of the Church.

I hope that this brief study will contribute to a greater understanding and appreciation of the conciliar tradition in the Church.

Dumbarton Oaks, Washington
June 24th, 1960

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

ORIGIN OF THE COUNCILS

Discussion of the origin of the Councils recalls the assembly of the apostles in Jerusalem in 52 and the letter starting with the words (Acts 15. 28): "It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us . . .". This document announced to the faithful the decision of the assembly not to impose on the pagan converts all the prescriptions of the Old Testament. These words were often recalled in the gatherings of bishops during the first centuries when urgent matters brought them together to make decisions in accordance with the principles outlined by our Lord and by the apostles.

Such meetings took place in the capitals or major cities of Roman provinces where the apostles had found important Jewish communities which had become centres from which Christianity spread through the rest of the provinces. This explains why the letters of Peter and Paul were addressed to the Christians of Eastern and Western provinces of the Roman Empire or of their capitals—Rome (Italy), Ephesus (Asia), Corinth (Achaea), Thessalonica (Macedonia)—and why the decision of the apostolic assembly was made known to the Christians of Antioch, capital of Syria, and of the province of Cilicia. This practice influenced the organization of the primitive Church along the lines of the political divisions of the Roman Empire. It was thus natural that to the bishops residing in the capitals of the provinces

were left the initiative of convoking the councils and the privilege of presiding over their debates. This gave them a kind of superiority over other bishops of the districts. They were called metropolitans because they resided in the capitals (metropolis) and this status of superiority over other bishops of the provinces was sanctioned by the first Ecumenical Council, that of Nicaea (325).

We have little information on such assemblies in the eastern part of the Empire. It is St Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, the main city of Roman Africa, who gives us, however, the most complete information on how such assemblies were organized. He was convinced, as were the apostles, that the deliberations of the bishops were guided by the Holy Spirit. He announced the decision of the African Council of 252 with the words: "It has seemed good to us on the suggestion of the Holy Ghost." On the other hand, however, from his letters we can be certain that such gatherings of bishops gradually modelled themselves on the rules under which the sessions of the Roman Senate were held. The presiding bishop assumed the rôle of the Emperor or of his representative in the Senate. He used the same words for the convocation of the Council as were used in the imperial summons for the meeting of the Senate; and the conduct of debate, the interrogations of the bishops, and their responses also imitated the procedure of the Senate. The same rules were observed at the Roman council held in 313, in the house of Fausta. There was nothing unusual in this development. The meetings of the local senates or municipal councils in the provincial capitals were also modelled on the procedure followed by the Roman Senate, and this procedure was thus familiar to the bishops, who were Roman citizens.

It is important to state that the conciliar or synodal practice was already fully developed in the Church before the conversion of Constantine the Great, the first Christian Emperor. Contrary to what has been often thought, Constantine was neither an agnostic nor a sceptical despot, exploiting religion for reasons of State. His conversion was sincere, and he was a firm believer in the spiritual and divine. Of course, he knew only one political

system, that of the autocratic monarchy into which the Roman Republic had been transformed under the influence of the Hellenistic political philosophy. This philosophy had deified the ruler and had given him absolute power over the material and spiritual interests of his subjects. The first Christian political philosophers, especially the Church historian Eusebius of Caesarea, adapted this political system to Christian teaching. The Emperor was thus deprived of his divine character, but made to be the representative of God on earth, who had been given by God supreme power in things material and spiritual. He was told that, as a representative of the Eternal King—Jesus Christ—his foremost duty was to lead men to God.

Constantine accepted this transformation of Hellenistic and Roman political thought and took his duties in religious matters very seriously. We find in his official decrees many declarations which reveal his sincerity and zealous interest in the purity of the Christian faith and the unity of the Church. This he showed, for example, when, on the invitation of bishops, he intervened in the quarrels provoked by the African Donatists. These rigorists refused to accept bishops and priests who, during the persecutions, had been guilty of some weakness, but had performed penance for their lapses.

In the letter he sent in 314 to Aelafus, his representative in Africa, who was also a Christian, Constantine declared why he regarded it as his duty to stop this agitation:

- [These quarrels] might well rouse God not only against the human race, but also against me, to whose rule and care his holy will has committed all earthly things, and provoke other measures. I shall never rest content or expect prosperity and happiness from the Almighty's merciful power until I feel that all men offer to the All Holy the right worship of the Catholic religion in a common brotherhood.

These words express very clearly not only Constantine's political creed, but also his sincerity in promoting the true worship of God and peace within the Church. In order to end the African schism, Constantine appointed five bishops from Gaul (modern France) as judges, including the Bishop of Rome.

He was apparently not yet acquainted with ecclesiastical practice, and when this first case was submitted to him by the contending bishops, he applied the Roman judicial procedure to its solution by setting up a court of investigation and judgement. The pope, Sylvester I, accepted the Emperor's invitation, but followed Church practice by transforming the court into a council to which he invited fourteen Italian bishops.

Once Constantine had learned of the Church method—decision of religious affairs by bishops meeting in synods—he adopted it, and when the Donatists repudiated the decision of the Roman synod presided over by the pope, he decided to summon another council at Arles in Gaul.

The letter which Constantine sent to the assembly of Arles reveals the true sentiments of the Emperor and refutes the often expressed opinion that Constantine treated the bishops only as his counsellors in ecclesiastical affairs, reserving the final decision to himself. He expresses his indignation over the refusal of the Donatists to accept the decision of the Roman synod and their new appeal to his judgement. "They claim judgement from me, who am awaiting the judgement of Christ; for I declare, as is the truth, that the judgement of bishops ought to be looked upon as if the Lord himself were sitting in judgement. . . . What is to be said of these defamers of the law who, after rejecting the judgement of Heaven, have thought that they should demand judgement from me?"

It seems evident from these words that Constantine accepted the current ecclesiastical practice regarding the decision of the bishops in a council as final. On the other hand, he also thought that it was his imperial duty to support the decision, as he said in another letter in which he deplored the stubbornness of the Donatists: "I believe that I can in no way escape the heaviest guilt, save by bringing wickedness to light. Is there anything more consonant with my fixed resolve and my imperial duty that I can do than to destroy errors, extirpate all vain opinions and to cause men to offer to the Almighty a genuine religion, a sincere concord and a worship that is his due?" He finally confirmed the decision of the Council of Arles against the Donatists.

*THE ECUMENICAL COUNCIL OF NICAEA (325):
THE RÔLE OF THE EMPEROR AND THE RIGHTS OF
BISHOPS*

This investigation of the origin of the councils helps us to understand better the rôle of the Emperors in the first Ecumenical Councils. Here too the initiative must be ascribed to Constantine who convoked the first Ecumenical Council, that of Nicaea, in 325.

The Donatist movement was limited locally to the African Christian community which had suffered greatly for a considerable time from the troubles caused by this first major schism. Far more dangerous for the Church was another movement which had originated also in Africa, and was of a much more serious character because it attacked the traditional teaching on the Holy Trinity.

The first task of theological speculation among the Christians was a clearer definition of the relation of Father, Son and the Holy Ghost to each other with regard to their common divine nature. This was not an easy task for the first Christian thinkers and apologists living in a pagan atmosphere, permeated with belief in the plurality of divine beings. When trying to stress the oneness (singleness) of God, some of the Christian thinkers of the second and third century fell into error by subordinating the Second Person in the Holy Trinity to the First, explaining this subordination in different ways, minimizing the divine character of the Son, or admitting only three non-simultaneous manifestations of the one God. Rome was most active in the rejection of such errors, but only local synods or councils were assembled in order to condemn them.

These methods, however, proved ineffective when Arius, a learned priest of Alexandria, had developed this teaching into a dialectical system, subordinating the Son to the Father in the most outspoken way, calling him the Father's creature, who at one time had not existed and who can be called God only in an indirect way because through his will he was united with God the Father. Arius' teaching was condemned first by Bishop

Alexander of Alexandria and then by an Egyptian council of one hundred bishops in 318. Arius defended his doctrine very stubbornly, composing a popular apology in verses called *Thalia* or “Spiritual Bouquet”, which appealed to the simple people, and he won some influential bishops to his teaching.

In the meantime, Constantine had defeated his opponent Licinius, the ruler of the eastern part of the Roman Empire, and had become master of East and West. Alexandria was the most important city in the Empire after Rome, and Egypt was the granary of Italy. Therefore the troubles provoked by Arius’ agitation attracted the attention of the Emperor who sent to Alexandria his counsellor Hosius, Bishop of Cordoba in Spain, with the task of establishing harmony. His mission did not succeed and he therefore took steps to convoke a synod in Antioch, which condemned Arius’ teachings (325). However, because the agitation had spread and some other religious problems claimed attention, Constantine decided to convoke a council of bishops from the whole Empire, and so the first Ecumenical Council gathered in 325 in Nicaea in Asia Minor.

The acts of this first Ecumenical Council are not preserved, but Eusebius of Caesarea has left us a minute description of the conciliar proceedings in his “Life of Constantine”. We gather from his report that the procedure of the Council was the senatorial procedure which the Church in Africa and in Rome had also adopted. The Emperor convoked the bishops to the Council as he used to summon the senators to their meetings. The bishops obtained the senatorial privilege of travelling at public expense and using the official stage post, which was well organized in the Roman Empire. As in the Senate, the problems to be decided were first debated by the most prominent bishops and the Emperor, in private meetings, and it was concluded that the Council should define the identity of the divine nature of the Son with the Father. The Greek word *homoousios* (of the same nature) was proposed as explaining best the Catholic doctrine on the relation of the Son to the Father.

The Emperor himself presided over sessions of the Council. In the place of the statue of Victory, which stood in the front of

the presidential tribune in the Roman Senate, the Bible was placed between the bishops and the Emperor. As in the Senate, the Emperor explained why he had convoked the Council and the subject the bishops had to discuss before making their definition. Then followed the individual interrogation of the bishops, who made known their views.

The 318 prelates declared that the formula, proposed by the Emperor, expressed the true belief of the Church. Then the Creed, including the accepted formula, was read and signed by the bishops. It is one of the most treasured symbols of the whole of Christianity and forms part of the eucharistic liturgy.

After this dogmatic decision, the Fathers deliberated on certain disciplinary problems. It was decided that Easter, the date of the celebration of which was in dispute, would always be on Sunday, but not at the same time as the feast of the Jews. In twenty canons, clerical discipline was regulated, the consecration of bishops was ordered to be performed by three bishops, and it was approved that Church organization should follow the civil divisions of the Empire. Thus, the privileged position of the metropolitans—in the West they were also called archbishops—over the bishops of the civil provinces was confirmed and the foundation laid for what were later called patriarchates. The bishops of the capitals of civil dioceses, which included several provinces, were to be called exarchs with special privileges over the bishops in each exarchate. Specially singled out were Rome (diocese of Italy), which was given first place, Alexandria (diocese of Egypt), which came second and Antioch (diocese of the Orient), which was third. Jerusalem was given only an honorary precedence over its metropolis Caesarea.

It is evident from the accounts of the first Ecumenical Council that the Emperor had played a prominent rôle in its convocation and procedure. This appears dangerous and contrary to the autonomy of the Church in religious affairs. It was the result of the adaptation of the primitive Church to the only political philosophy accepted at that time and to the political organization of the Empire, for practical reasons. Providence, however, watched over the Church and her sacred rights. There was one

item which providentially saved the autonomy of the bishops in doctrinal matters: the Emperor never had the right to vote in the Senate. This was the privilege of the senators, a survival of their independence and supreme legislative function in the Roman Republic. The position of the senators suffered a setback after the transformation of the Republic into a principality, a disguised monarchy, but not even the most autocratic emperors dared to discard the Senate or to deprive the senators of their privilege of voting. There is no indication in the accounts of the Council of Nicaea that Constantine voted with the bishops. So a compromise was achieved between the imperial and episcopal rights. The compromise saved the privileged position of the bishops, and proved unobjectionable to the Emperor, since he was respecting a historical precedent—the privilege of the senators, whom the bishops in the councils in many ways resembled.

But what about the supreme position of the Roman See? Even here, Providence had provided a precedent which guaranteed to the representatives of the Roman See the first place in conciliar proceedings. The most influential position in the Roman Senate was occupied by the first senator, called in Latin *princeps senatus*. He enjoyed in high degree the respect and trust of the Emperor and of the other senators. He was the first whose opinion on the subjects discussed was asked, he voted first and, through his declarations and votes, exercised a profound influence on the other senators, most of whom simply followed his lead in their judgement and voting.

This principle appears to have been observed also in the Council of Nicaea, although not as clearly as in the following Ecumenical Councils. This is due, probably, to the fact that Pope Sylvester I was too old to undertake the long journey to Asia Minor and delegated as his representatives not bishops but two priests. The western part of the Empire was represented by only four bishops, the most prominent among them being Hosius of Cordoba in Spain. He was the Emperor's trusted counsellor and confidant and probably the principal agent in the formulation of the Creed. Because of that, he was asked to sign the Creed first, before the two priests who represented the Bishop of Rome.

Later, from the fifth century onwards, he was classed together in the lists of signatories with the Roman legates as being one of them. We can thus see that the principle of the preeminence of the Roman See in an Ecumenical Council was laid down and safeguarded as early as 325.

The letter in which Constantine informed the bishops who could not attend the Council of the decisions made by the assembled bishops, shows that he was well aware of the function of the bishops in ecclesiastical matters and that he respected it, although watching jealously his own imperial prerogatives. He made there the following declaration: "Be willing to accept this heavenly favour and an order so manifestly from God. For whatever is decided in the holy councils of the bishops must be attributed to the divine will."

THE AFTERMATH OF NICAEA AND THE SECOND ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

We can understand why the early Church had accepted the Emperor's leadership even in spiritual things. The notion of the Hellenistic kingship was widely held among the first Christians and its adaptation to the teaching of the Church seemed a good barrier against imperial abuses.

In spite of that, the Hellenistic political philosophy, even in its Christian adaptation, soon proved most dangerous to the Christian faith. It is known that Constantine, although he had contributed so much to the definition of the true faith and had signed the condemnation of Arius, later abandoned his unequivocal attitude and tried to compromise between the Catholics and the Arians. In pursuit of this policy, he exiled to Trier the intrepid defender of the Nicaenum, St Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, who had been condemned by the synod of Tyre, and supported the "Semi-Arians", who claimed that the Son was only similar (*homoiousios*) to the Father. The reason for this change seemed more political than religious. The followers of Arius did not give up after Nicaea, and Egypt continued to be the field of fierce antagonism between the two factions. The Emperor was naturally anxious to pacify Egypt, then the most

important province of the Empire, and was inclined to favour a watering down of the unequivocal definition made at Nicaea.

There may be also another reason for his hesitant attitude, which was rooted in the political philosophy then generally accepted. The Arians very cleverly exploited its main notions for themselves. Declaring that the Empire was a mirror of the heavenly Empire governed by the Eternal King, God the Father himself, they claimed that in accepting the divine nature of the Son, the Christians were endangering the existence of the terrestrial monarchy, image of the Heavenly One, which should be ruled only by one emperor, representing God on earth.

It is possible that already Constantine was influenced by this reasoning. His son Constantius was almost completely under its spell. Owing to his sympathy with the Arians, the heresy spread more and more over the East. When Constantius II became the sole ruler over the whole Empire (350–61) after the tragic death of his brothers, the agitation of the heretics spread to the West also. In spite of his desire to make Arianism the official religion of the Empire, Constantius did not dare to impose his creed on his subjects. The principle that the definition of faith was the prerogative of the bishops gathered in synod was already too deeply imbedded in the mind of the Christians, and Constantius had to respect it.

On his initiative many synods were convoked, often dominated by heretical bishops; Constantius, respecting the principle of the rôle of synods, which he used for the promotion of a heretical doctrine, pretended to be enforcing the will and decision of ecclesiastical synods rather than his own. The principle was right; unfortunately the synods were wrong. The synods convoked by the Emperor were so numerous—Antioch in 341, Sardica (modern Sofia in Bulgaria) in 343, Sirmium in 351, Arles in 353, Milan in 355, the second and third synods of Sirmium in 357 and 358, Rimini and Seleucia in 359—that the pagan writer Ammianus Marcellinus complained that the bishops, by moving from one synod to another and by using the public transport service too freely, disorganized it and made themselves a burden to the exchequer.

During this troublesome period, Pope Julius I made an important declaration which marks another stage in the history of the Councils. When the Arians objected to the Roman synod which had rescinded the decision of the Synod of Tyre (335), condemning Athanasius, although this synod had been convoked by the Emperor Constantine and thus should be regarded as a General Council, Julius argued that it was not the Emperor's convocation, but the recognition of the synodal decisions by the whole Church, that gave the Council its general and binding character. Such was the case only with the synod of Nicaea.

The most important of these local synods was that of Sardica of 343. It was convoked by the Western Emperor Constans with the consent of his brother Constantius. It did not succeed in winning over the heretical opposition, which held a meeting in the town. But the orthodox prelates, mostly from the West, voted some important canons, which became laws in the Western Church. Among them were the third and fifth canons, recognizing the See of Rome as the highest tribunal in disciplinary matters for the whole Church, to which any bishop deposed by a council could appeal.

In their efforts to find a formula compromising with the clear-cut definition of Nicaea, the Arians split into several sects which, naturally, weakened their position. Deprived of imperial support after the death of Constantius (361) and of the Eastern Emperor Valens (378), they shrank to a minor community. The great Greek Fathers—Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa—with St Athanasius played a most important rôle in defeating the heresy in their theological writings, and forged the formula "one divine substance in three Persons".¹

These Fathers contributed also to the defeat of another heresy which originated during the struggle with Arianism and which degraded the Holy Ghost to a creature of the Second Person in the Trinity. The main propagator of this heresy was Macedonius,

¹ Arianism survived among Germanic tribes, especially the Goths, Vandals and Langobards, thanks to their missionary Bishop Ulphilas, translator of the Bible and liturgy into Gothic († 383). During their migration Arianism became their national religion. The remnants of these tribes became Catholic in the sixth and seventh centuries.

bishop of Constantinople. After several local synods of Alexandria and Rome had condemned this false doctrine, the Emperor Theodosius the Great (379–95) decided to convoke a Council of all the bishops from the Eastern part of the Empire in order to manifest the triumph of the Church over Arius and his followers, and to condemn the new heresy that denied the divine nature of the Holy Ghost. Because this doctrine was spreading mainly in the East, the Western bishops were not invited to the Council, which gathered in Constantinople in 381. One hundred and fifty bishops, present at the Council, solemnly condemned the new heresy and added to the Creed of Nicaea the words defining the divine nature of the Holy Ghost which are today recited in the Creed (often called the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed).

The Council of 381 was thus originally not an ecumenical synod. It obtained its ecumenical character only because of its dogmatic decision concerning the Holy Ghost, and because of its addition to the Nicene Creed. The ecumenical character of this Council was recognized by the Council of Chalcedon (451) and, at the beginning of the sixth century, Rome and the whole West accepted it as the Second General Council.

The canons voted by this Council were also meant only for the Eastern Church. The most important of these was canon three which confirmed to Rome the first place in the Church, but stipulated that the second place should be occupied, not by Alexandria, but by Constantinople, the city in which the Emperor resided. Because the principle of accommodation to the political status was generally accepted in the East, the bishops of Alexandria and of Antioch accepted this canon, although they had to occupy lower places in Church organization.

It should be stressed that this measure was not directed against Rome. On the contrary, the first place in the Church was once more assigned to Rome and there was no hostile intention in the promotion of Constantinople. The measure was rather directed against Alexandria, because the bishops of this city during the Arian struggles had tried to impose their heretical teaching on the rest of the Church and gave the impression that

they desired to obtain primacy over the whole East. It seems, moreover, that, at the beginning, Constantinople had only honorary precedence, without an increase of jurisdiction over other Churches. Rome was not even informed of these measures because they only concerned the situation in the Eastern Church. Pope Damasus apparently was aware of the results of this Council, but there is no evidence of a protest by Rome against this elevation of Constantinople in the Catholic hierarchical order because the principle of accommodation to the political status was recognized also in Rome, although not as in the East, and because this elevation was regarded as involving only a precedence of honour.

*RIVALRY BETWEEN ALEXANDRIA,
CONSTANTINOPLE AND ANTIOCH: THE THIRD
ECUMENICAL COUNCIL (431)*

Alexandria's pretensions to the leading position in the Eastern Church became especially manifest under the Patriarch Theophilus (385–412), who came into conflict with St John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople. Chrysostom had offered refuge to some Egyptian monks, persecuted by Theophilus because they disagreed with Theophilus' hasty condemnation of Origen, who was one of the greatest theologians of the third century. When Chrysostom, the most eloquent preacher of his time, offended the Empress Eudoxia by his criticism of her worldly manner of life, Theophilus made an alliance with Chrysostom's enemies, convoked a synod and deposed him. The Emperor confirmed the deposition and exiled the intrepid reformer (403). A popular upheaval induced the Emperor to rescind his judgement, but a further conflict with the Empress brought about a new condemnation and Chrysostom died on the way to his second exile (407).

Although Chrysostom was an innocent victim the unjust condemnation of a bishop of the residential city was a degrading humiliation for the See of Constantinople. This tragic incident made it clear that there was open rivalry between the two most prominent sees in the Eastern Church. The rivalry continued,

however, under Theophilus' successor, his nephew Cyril (412–44), and became even more embittered, because it was aggravated by troubles of an important doctrinal nature.

The doctrine that all three Persons were of the same one divine nature had triumphed by 381. But there was another doctrinal question which engaged the attention of theologians. How should the union of the second divine Person with human nature be understood? The problem had already been raised by the Arians, who denied not only the divine character of the Son, but also taught that the created Logos or Son assumed a soulless body. The soul in Christ was the Logos. This doctrine was condemned by the Council of 381 and by Pope Damasus in the following year at a Roman synod. It was, however, partly revived by the Syrian Bishop Apollinaris. Following the Greek philosopher Plato, Apollinaris distinguished between the animal and rational soul in man, and taught that the Logos or the Son of God was to be identified with the rational soul (or mind) in Christ.

This doctrine did not have much success, but it spurred the theologians to a clearer definition of the union of the divine and human natures in Christ. At that time, the Eastern Church could boast two theological schools of prominent thinkers and teachers. The school of Alexandria was anxious to stress the divine nature in Christ and its theologians spoke on the intimate union of both natures after the incarnation of the Son. The school of Antioch saw a danger in the wording used by the Alexandrines in their definition, for in the Alexandrian formula the human nature in Christ seemed to be absorbed by the divine nature. Some of the theologians of Antioch, namely Diodorus of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia were accused of having gone too far in stressing Christ's human nature, and of postulating the existence of two persons in the incarnate Word or Logos. The logical consequence of this teaching was that Christ's virginal Mother could not be called Mother of God, but only Mother of Christ.

The ordinary faithful were perhaps unable to follow the learned arguments of the Antiochene theologians, who claimed to be influenced by Aristotle's philosophy, but they instinctively reacted sharply against those preachers who denied to Mary the

title of Mother of God. A tumultuous protest arose in Constantinople against one preacher from Antioch who had dared to make such a declaration publicly. The indignation increased when Nestorius, Bishop of Constantinople, a monk educated at the school of Antioch, began to defend the preacher and, in doing so, used expressions which to some indicated that he was a follower of this new heresy.

Cyril of Alexandria reacted very sharply, for he saw in Nestorius' teaching not only an attack on the true Catholic faith, but also an opportunity to humiliate the See of Constantinople once more, and to increase the prestige of Alexandria in the Church. This explains why he manifested so much zeal in seeking the condemnation of the bishop of the capital. When Pope Celestine I, to whose judgement both bishops appealed, rejected Nestorius' teaching, Cyril, pretending to act in the name of the pope, presented to his rival a list of errors which Nestorius had to abjure under threat of excommunication. Nestorius' supporters protested, and, in order to clarify the situation, the Emperor Theodosius II convoked a General Council to Ephesus in 431.

The sessions of the Council were turbulent because of the rivalry between Alexandria and Constantinople. John, Bishop of Antioch, sympathized rather with Constantinople, although not sharing Nestorius' interpretation. With a desire to hasten the condemnation of Nestorius, Cyril refused to wait for the arrival of the Antiochenes and of the papal legates, and opened the Council of 153 bishops, acting as representative of the pope. The Fathers defined the Catholic faith of two natures and one person in Christ, and condemned and deposed Nestorius. When the papal legates reached Ephesus, they sided with Cyril and confirmed the condemnation.

Offended by the hasty opening of the Council, convened in his absence, John, Bishop of Antioch, refused to join the bishops assembled by Cyril and, in a conclave of his own, condemned Cyril. Both parties having censured each other, the Emperor was in an unpleasant dilemma and, after confirming the decision of both assemblies, tried to mediate between Cyril, John and

Nestorius. Cyril used all his diplomatic skill in order to convince the Emperor and his court that his followers were defending the true doctrine of the Church. He was aided to a large extent by the wealth of his see, and did not hesitate to send expensive presents to courtiers close to the Emperor, but mainly by the Emperor's older sister, the pious Pulcheria. Nestorius was deposed and sent to his monastery in Antioch. He died in exile in 451. Cyril and John of Antioch came to an agreement in 433. These events, however, left bitterness on both sides, because the Antiochenes saw in the condemnation of Nestorius a defeat by the school of Alexandria. This rivalry between the two schools of Antioch and of Alexandria, and between the two most important sees of the Eastern Church, explains not only the heated debates at and after Ephesus, but also, as we shall see, the further evolution of the theological definitions concerning the nature of Christ.

The case of Nestorius, who expounded his doctrine in a learned treatise which is preserved in a Syriac translation, is still debated by theologians. There are many who think that Nestorius' teaching was basically orthodox but that, in explaining his views, he used words which could easily be explained in a heretical way.

The doctrine called that of Nestorius soon disappeared in the territory of the Roman Empire. Many Nestorians, however, migrated into Persia, where they founded a new theological school at Nisibis and their own Nestorian Church Patriarchate with its see at Seleucia-Ktesiphon. There they were favoured by the Persian kings, rivals of the Roman emperors, and developed a zealous missionary activity and penetrated as far as India and China.²

² The Christians of St Thomas in India, now mostly united with Rome, are an interesting survival of Nestorian missions. The invasion of Persia by the Mongols in the thirteenth century caused, however, a rapid decline of the Nestorian Church. Owing to other persecutions, only a small number of the Nestorians still exists in Syria and in Cyprus. More numerous are the so-called Chaldaean Christians, former Nestorians united now with Rome, with their own patriarch residing in Baghdad.

*THE TRIUMPH OF MONOPHYSITISM AT THE
"ROBBER SYNOD"*

The Council of Ephesus was the triumph of Alexandria over Constantinople and Antioch, and the prestige of the Egyptian Patriarch in the East rose considerably. In fighting the false doctrine of the school of Antioch, however, the theologians of the Alexandrine school went too far in stressing the divine nature of the incarnate Son. They taught that the divine nature absorbed the human nature in Christ so that, after his incarnation, the Son of God possessed only one nature, the divine. Christ's body was deified. This doctrine of one nature in Christ, called Monophysitism, became very popular in Egypt.

It appealed to Alexandrine theologians, who were far more influenced by Greek philosophy than were the scholars of Antioch. Plato's concept of the deification of man through his own effort of strict moral discipline, taught also by the last great Alexandrian philosopher, Plotinus, the founder of Neo-platonism, impressed many Christian thinkers also. They pointed out to their pagan confrères, however, that this deification was possible because of the love and condescension of God himself, who had assumed human form and thus had deified it. The incarnate Word is therefore the source of true life, and the man who is in Christ will be re-elevated into and commingled with the Divine. This explains why the doctrine of absorption of human nature by the divine in the incarnate Word appealed to Alexandrine and other theologians.

The simple Egyptian people might still have been under the spell of the old pagan belief in the divine character of their kings. Even this crude concept expressed the human desire to come as close to the divine as it is possible for man. This might help to explain why the Alexandrine approach to the problem of man's deification, based on Greek notions, appealed also to the native non-Greek population, the Copts, and why the Coptic monks became such fanatic defenders of Monophysitism.

The first clash of Monophysitism with orthodoxy took place in Constantinople when the Patriarch Flavian condemned the

archimandrite (abbot) Eutyches, an exponent of Monophysitism, as a heretic. Flavian communicated his condemnation to other bishops, especially to Pope Leo I. Unfortunately, the Monophysite doctrine had a great following in Constantinople also, and Eutyches with his friends succeeded in finding sympathy at court. The Patriarch of Alexandria, Dioscorus, an ambitious and unscrupulous man, did not hesitate to use the great resources of his patriarchate, and, after winning the support of the Emperor's principal advisers, he obtained from Theodosius II the convocation of a new Ecumenical Council. It gathered in 449, again in Ephesus. Pope Leo I sent a long dogmatic letter to the Patriarch of Constantinople in which he attacked Monophysitism, and strongly defended the doctrine that Christ had two natures. Dioscorus, however, accompanied by a great number of fanatical Egyptian monks, took control of the Council. Supported by his monks and the imperial police, he terrorized the assembled bishops. The papal legates were denied the position of prominence they claimed, the dogmatic letter of the pope was not even read; and Flavian, with other prominent supporters of the Orthodox doctrine, was deposed. They all turned to Pope Leo I with touching appeals. Flavian, who suffered injuries from Dioscorus' men, died on his way to exile.

THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON (451)

But this triumph of Monophysitism was of short duration. Leo I protested against the sentences of deposition, pronounced the synod of Ephesus a "Robber Synod", and asked the Emperor for the convocation of a new Council to confirm the true doctrine. Theodosius refused to accede to this request, and the new Council was not convoked until after Theodosius' death when the latter's sister Pulcheria married Marcian (450-7), and thus had him elevated to the throne. Nevertheless the new Emperor rejected Leo's plea for a Council in Italy or in Gaul, and summoned the bishops to Nicaea and then to Chalcedon, near Constantinople.

How profoundly the whole Christian East was perturbed by the Monophysite struggles is illustrated by the large number of

bishops—about 600—who took part in this Council. The Western part of the Empire was represented by only five bishops, two of whom—with two priests—represented the pope, one was from Spain, and two were from the African provinces. The Fathers examined the Acts of the Robber Synod, which they condemned, and then deposed Dioscorus. The dogmatic letter sent by Leo I to Flavian was read and unanimously approved as expressing the true Catholic doctrine. Although the papal legates opposed the composition of a new dogmatic formula, a committee of bishops was appointed to prepare one, and this was solemnly accepted during the sixth session: “We all confess unanimously one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, made known in two natures [which are] without confusion, change, separation or division and which both meet in one person.”

The acts of the Council of Chalcedon are very important, since they show how the General Councils functioned and how they were organized. The actual direction of debates and the presidency belonged to the eighteen imperial officials delegated by the Emperor. The sixth, most solemn session was even presided over by Marcian and Pulcheria. It is evident from the acts that the sort of presidency at the councils which popes and legates claimed was the function once exercised by the *princeps senatus* of the Roman Senate, who may be compared to the Speaker of the House. The Gospel was set in the centre of the council as the altar of Victory used to be set in the Senate, and the members who attended were placed in the same order as the senators, the metropolitans corresponding to the praetors, the bishops to senators of *aedile* rank, the abbots—who stood and had no right to vote—to the knights.

The bishops adopted also the senatorial practice of acclaiming the Emperors. The acclamations which greeted the imperial pair at the end of the sixth session are particularly significant because they manifest the main ideas of the christianized hellenistic political philosophy, as then understood by the Church: “To Marcian, the new Constantine, the new Paul, the new David . . . You have the faith of the apostles . . . You are the light of the

orthodox faith . . . Lord, protect the light of peace . . . Many years to the priest-emperor. You . . . have set the Churches right, . . . doctor of the faith . . . Be your empire eternal.”

In spite of the priestly character which the Fathers and also Leo I seemed to attribute to the Emperor, Marcian respected the exclusive right of the bishops in proclaiming the true faith. This is clear from his announcement of the conciliar decisions to the people of the capital: “Saintly priests came from various provinces to Chalcedon by our command and accurately defined what should be preserved. So let there be an end to all vain controversy. . . .”

After the doctrinal definition, the Fathers dealt with disciplinary questions, rehabilitated the two leaders of the Antiochene school, Theodoret of Cyrus and Ibas of Edessa, and promoted Jerusalem to patriarchal rank. In the sixteenth session, in the absence of the papal legates, they voted the so-called twenty-eighth canon, which confirmed to Constantinople the second place in the Church and conferred on its bishops direct jurisdiction over the dioceses of Thrace, Pontus and Asia. The papal legates protested against this vote at the last session, and Leo I rejected this canon with sharp criticism, stressing the principle of apostolic and Petrine origin of the position in ecclesiastical organization enjoyed by Rome, Alexandria and Antioch, but not by Constantinople.

The fears of the pope are quite understandable. Rome could accord Constantinople an honorary precedence over the other Eastern patriarchs, but the submission of all Asia Minor and of European Thrace to the direct jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople was another matter. Rome had lost her great prerogative as the centre of the Empire and the residential city of the emperors, and had retained, as justification for her claim to the primacy in the Church, only her apostolic character and her successorship to St Peter. Leo the Great feared that the new status of the See of Constantinople might endanger in the future the rightful claims of Rome.

In reality, however, the Fathers of Chalcedon had no intention of denying the primacy of the Roman bishop. When the apostolic

legates quoted the Latin version of canon six of Nicaea—"The Roman Church always possessed the primacy"—the Fathers did not protest, although the Roman version did not correspond to the Greek version voted at Nicaea. Moreover, the Fathers, the Patriarch of Constantinople and the Emperor, asked the pope to sign the canon, indicating that they saw in its wording no offence against Rome. They had still in mind the principle of the adaptation of the Church to the political division of the Empire and were determined to deprive Alexandria of its leading position in the Eastern Church, because this see had become again the hotbed of heresy.

Since the Easterners did not understand the principle of apostolicity, they overlooked the apostolic and Petrine character of the Roman See, although they respected it as the first see with primatial rights in the Church, and even called Rome an imperial city. Had they respected the apostolic and Petrine character of Rome in the drawing up of the contested canon, the pope might have been induced to accept it.

To give the pope satisfaction, the contested canon was not included in the collection of Eastern canon law. It appeared there only in the ninth century. Constantinople continued, however, *de facto* to use the rights of jurisdiction accorded her bishops by the Council.

ATTEMPTS AT COMPROMISE WITH THE MONOPHYSITES

In spite of the imperial support of the Chalcedonian decision and the deposition of Dioscorus with his followers, the agitation of the Monophysites continued unabated in Egypt. National and political antagonism added more fuel to the fire. The native Copts, always jealous of the Greeks and resenting the leadership of Constantinople in the Empire and in the Eastern Church, began to regard Monophysitism as their national religion and called the adherents of Chalcedon "the imperials" (Melchites). For a short time even the patriarchal sees of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem were occupied by Monophysite prelates.

Marcian's successor, Leo I (457–74) put an end to this. But, although he was a supporter of the faith as defined at Chalcedon, the Emperor Leo considered summoning a new council to make some concessions to the Monophysites. Pope Leo dissuaded him from making such a move, and the Emperor adopted instead the new practice of the *referendum*. He asked the bishops to send him their opinion on Chalcedon in writing. The answers of the pope and of the bishops represent an imposing manifestation of the Christian hierarchy in the East and in the West, in favour of the true faith as defined by Chalcedon. Although their declarations show clearly that the bishops were well aware of their right and duty in doctrinal definitions, they disclose also that all the hierarchy, not excepting the pope, recognized the Emperor's right to assist them in defining the faith, legalizing their definitions, removing reluctant bishops from their sees, and checking heresy.

In spite of Emperor Leo's intervention, Monophysitism persisted, and when the usurper Basiliscus (475–6), anxious to get the support of the Monophysites, condemned Chalcedon and Pope Leo's doctrinal letter, 500 Eastern bishops signed his circular letter. The Emperor Zeno (474–91) defeated the usurper and restored the Creed of Chalcedon. However, because the defection of Egypt from Chalcedon threatened to have political repercussions also, Zeno favoured the compromise concluded by the Patriarch of Constantinople Acacius and the Monophysite Patriarch of Alexandria Peter Mongo, expressed in a Creed, which declared only the Niceno-Constantinopolitan profession of faith and the decisions of the Council of Ephesus as binding. Hoping to unite the Orthodox and the Monophysites through this compromise, Zeno issued it as an imperial law, which he called the *Henoticon*—band of union.

The imperial decree was accepted in Egypt only by the moderate Monophysites called Severians, followers of Severus of Antioch. But it was rejected by the diehards who seceded from Peter Mongo. Pope Felix III declared the formula to be a violation of the decision of Chalcedon, and very outspokenly defended the exclusive right of the bishops to define the true

doctrine. He excommunicated Acacius and Peter. The result was the so-called Acacian schism, which lasted from 484 to 519. Because Zeno's successor Anastasius I sympathized with the Monophysites, the reconciliation was not effected until the reign of Justin I (518–27) on the initiative of his nephew Justinian and Pope Hormisdas (519–23). The letter of reconciliation which the pope sent to the Eastern prelates and which they all had to sign, not only proclaimed the definitions of Chalcedon as binding on all Christians, but also stressed very clearly the prominent position of the Roman See in matters of faith, based on the promise given by our Lord to St Peter (Matt. 16. 18).

Justinian's efforts to win over the Monophysites for orthodoxy were hampered by the sympathies of the Empress Theodora in their regard. Her attempt to place in the see of Constantinople a prelate who favoured Monophysitism was frustrated by the intervention of Pope Agapitus, who himself appeared in the capital. The Empress, undiscouraged by this setback, obtained from the Emperor the promotion of Vigilius, papal nuncio in the capital, to the See of Rome, in the hope that the ambitious young prelate would show favour to the Monophysites. Agapitus' successor, Silverius, was deposed. But after his death, the next pope, Vigilius, refused to yield to the Empress' wishes and sent to Mennas, patriarch of Constantinople, a letter approving the dogmatic decisions of Chalcedon.

EMPEROR JUSTINIAN AND THE FIFTH ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

Justinian (527–65) took his rôle as defender and propagator of the true faith very seriously. He was himself well versed in theology, and liked to discuss theological problems with bishops. He initiated a discussion with the Severians, the moderate Monophysites, and, hoping to induce them to a union with the orthodox, he approved the formula, introduced by some monks, "One of the Blessed Trinity has been crucified" (533). Pope John II found that his action was "true to apostolic teaching" and confirmed it with his authority.

As his hope for winning over the Monophysites had remained fruitless, Justinian accepted the suggestion that the Monophysites could be won over if he condemned the writings of certain theologians of the Antiochene school to which the Alexandrines principally objected. The Emperor published an edict condemning the Three Chapters, namely: the person and the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Nestorius' teacher, the writings of Theodoret of Cyrus against St Cyril and the Council of Ephesus and thirdly, a letter of Ibas of Edessa, in which Theodore was defended, and St Cyril's objections refuted. Although these writings, in their partly falsified versions, deserved to be condemned, this most glaring intrusion into theology on the part of Justinian provoked a storm of opposition. Moreover, Theodoret of Cyrus and Ibas had been rehabilitated at Chalcedon. The real reason for this was that the Emperor issued the condemnation without convoking a synod and without a *referendum* to the bishops. It was a break with the traditional practice, and the African theologians were most outspoken in condemning the edict. Even Pope Vigilius, who was brought to the capital, was induced to side with the opposition.

In the end, Justinian had to yield and convoked a council in Constantinople. The pope was in a very difficult position. The Africans were going too far in their opposition and were writing treatises in defence of the Three Chapters, and the Emperor insisted on absolute submission. Vigilius saw himself forced to seek asylum in the Church of Chalcedon and refused to appear at the synod. The Council was opened in May 553 without the pope. In the fifth and sixth sessions, the 165 Fathers condemned the Three Chapters and threatened their defenders with deposition and anathema.

Impressed by the opposition to the condemnation, manifested by many Western prelates, the pope first forbade the condemnation, but later on, under heavy pressure from the side of the Emperor, accepted (December 8th, 553) the decisions of the Council. The next year (February 23rd), after a more thorough study, convinced that the condemnation did no prejudice to the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon, Vigilius confirmed the

condemnation of the Three Chapters, thus recognizing the Council of 553 as the Fifth Ecumenical. Broken in health, he died on his way back to Rome.

Although his former secretary and successor Pelagius I (556–61) also confirmed the ecumenical and binding character of the Council of 553, the African bishops did so only after some years. The bishops of the metropolis of Milan abandoned their opposition only after 570. The ecclesiastical province of Aquileia-Grado remained in open schism until 607. The metropolitan of Old Aquileia, however, refused to join his colleague of Grado and, in order to show his independence, assumed the title of patriarch. In recognition of his submission, the pope granted the same title to the Bishop of Grado also.³

THE SIXTH ECUMENICAL COUNCIL (680)

The Persian invasion of Syria and Palestine revealed to the Emperor Heraclius (610–41) the danger that the Syrian and Egyptian Monophysites might on future occasions side with the enemies of the Empire. This spurred him and Sergius, Patriarch of Constantinople, to new attempts to reconcile the heretics with orthodoxy. This could be achieved only by a compromise, involving a concession to Monophysitism. Sergius came forward in 619 with a doctrine that, after the Incarnation, Christ had not two wills and energies—the divine and the human—but only one will and energy. This doctrine, an evident concession to Monophysitism, appealed to the Severians, the moderate Monophysites, who concluded a union with the Church of Constantinople.

In order to stifle the opposition of some orthodox prelates, Sergius sent Pope Honorius a letter explaining his theological ideas with great subtlety. Although he himself believed in two wills in Christ, Honorius failed to see the astuteness of the Patriarch's exposition and, in two letters, expressed his general consent, declaring that one should abstain from speaking of one or two energies in Christ.

³ The patriarchal title of Grado was transferred in 1451 to the see of Venice, that of Old Aquileia was transferred, after the destruction of the city by an earthquake in 1348, to Udine. It was cancelled in 1751.

This sounded like a rejection of Monoenergism, but seemed to open the way to the belief in one will—Monothelitism. In 638, anxious to give more satisfaction to the Monophysites, Heraclius published his *Ekthesis*, a creed composed by Sergius, which expressed the view that the Incarnate Word had only one will. It found general acceptance in the East.

The expected political benefit from this innovation in the orthodox Creed did not, however, materialize. The Islamic Arabs invaded the Eastern provinces and the split among the Eastern Christians, on account of the christological controversies, facilitated the Arab advance. The Patriarchate of Antioch came under Arab domination in 637, Jerusalem in the following year, and in 642 the Egyptian Monophysites greeted the Arabs in Alexandria as liberators from the imperial yoke.⁴

The bitterness which recent imperial interference with religious teaching had created in the West—all successors of Honorius rejected the *Ekthesis*—provoked the threat of even Italy being alienated from the Empire. Constans II therefore revoked the *Ekthesis* and, in a new declaration, called the *Typos*, forbade any discussion of the question as to whether there were one or two wills in Christ (648). Pope Martin I protested against this, clearly defined the orthodox doctrine on the two wills and two energies in a Lateran synod and excommunicated all authors of the heretical teaching. He was arrested by the Emperor's police, brought to Constantinople, maltreated and condemned to exile in the Crimea, where he died (655). A similar fate befell other defenders of orthodoxy like the abbot Maximus, who died a martyr's death.

⁴ In spite of many attempts at winning the heretics over to the Creed of Chalcedon, Monophysitism, organized in National Churches, continues to exist in our days in Egypt, Syria, Armenia, Mesopotamia and Abyssinia. A group of Egyptian Copts (60,000) united with Rome, but the great majority (over a million) still professes Monophysitism. The Orthodox Melchites, mostly Greeks in Egypt, Syria and Palestine, are still in majority schismatics (about 320,000); only about 150,000 of them accepted the union with Rome. The Syrian and Mesopotamian Monophysites are called Jacobites after Jacob, Bishop of Edessa, who did much for the organization of their Church, in the second half of the sixth century.

This naturally increased the discontent in Italy, and the Emperor, Constantine IV, saw the danger. The Eastern provinces were definitely lost, and it seemed necessary to pacify the West and the Church. This could be achieved only by the convocation of a new Ecumenical Council, which Pope Agatho greeted with joy.

The Sixth Ecumenical Council, the Third of Constantinople, with its 170 bishops, met from November 680 to September 681 in the Cupola hall (in Greek, *Trullos*) of the imperial palace. It is therefore called also the Trullan Council, *Concilium Trullanum*. All the defenders of Monothelitism, including Pope Honorius, were condemned and the creed accepted at Chalcedon was completed by the words: "We profess, according to the teaching of the holy Fathers, two natural wills and two natural energies (in Christ), undivided, unseparated and unmixed, two wills . . . in such a way that the human follows the divine (will) and is subordinate to it."

Honorius' letters to the Patriarch of Constantinople cannot be regarded as an authoritative decision on matters of faith. Agatho's successor, Leo II, when confirming the decision of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, was well aware of this and, in his letter to the Emperor, blamed Honorius only for neglect of his duty to prevent the spread of heretical teaching. Honorius was blamed for this neglect of duty also in the profession of faith which, until the eleventh century, the Roman pontiffs had to recite and sign before their enthronement.

Because the Fifth and Sixth Ecumenical Councils had not voted any disciplinary regulations, Justinian II decided to convoke another council, which met in 692 in the same hall as the Sixth Council. This synod is called the Second Trullan Council or, because it was meant to supplement the Fifth and Sixth General Councils, the Quinisext Synod (*Synodus Quinisexta*). Although convoked as a General Council, the synod was pre-occupied exclusively with disciplinary affairs of the Eastern Church. Many of the 102 canons voted by the Fathers were directed against some practices in use in the Western Church, and canon twenty-eight of Chalcedon was again approved.

Therefore, Pope Sergius refused to accept the decrees and the Emperor's attempt at forcing him to obedience was frustrated by the militia of Rome and Ravenna, which rescued the pope from the hands of the Emperor's envoys. The Easterners still consider this synod as a complement of the Fifth and Sixth Ecumenical Councils and so does the Western canonist Gratian, who quotes it.

IMAGE WORSHIP AND THE SEVENTH ECUMENICAL COUNCIL (787)

The estrangement between the two Churches was even more accentuated during the so-called iconoclastic struggle, provoked by the direct intervention of the Emperor, Leo III (717–41), into the doctrinal field. His edict of 726, in which he warned the faithful against the veneration of images of saints, is believed by many to reflect the situation of the Empire after the appearance of the Arabs in world history and after the spread of Islam over the former Eastern provinces of the Empire. Leo III succeeded in stopping the advance of the Arabs at the gates of Constantinople, but the Empire faced a mighty political and religious enemy in Asia Minor, which now, after the loss of Egypt and Syria, became the granary of the reduced Empire. This region had always been under the influence of Semitic ideas coming from Palestine and Syria. Many shared the abhorrence of the Jews for pictorial representation and this attitude may have been strengthened by the adherence of the Mohammedans to the same principles. Leo III grew up in Isauria, a province permeated by this spirit, and his opposition to images as idols was undoubtedly influenced by the environment of his youth.

In spite of the excitement provoked by his first edict, Leo III published in 730 another forbidding all pictorial representation of the Lord and saints, and the veneration of images.

In order to vindicate this intrusion into the doctrinal field, the Emperor, when announcing his decision to the pope (Gregory II), stressed the priestly character of the imperial dignity. Also in the introduction to his new law book, the *Ecloga* (in 740), Leo III made a similar claim, declaring that the Lord bade him

“as he bade Peter, the supreme Head of the apostles, to feed his most faithful flock”.

In his answer, the pope did not deny this imperial claim, but pointed out that such a title could rightly be given only to the emperors who, in perfect accord with the priests, had convoked councils in order that the true faith be defined. “Dogmas,” the pope wrote, “do not concern the Emperors but the priests . . . The priest has no right to supervise the affairs of the palace and to propose the distribution of imperial dignities, so also the emperor has no right to supervise the Church and to judge the clergy, or to consecrate and to handle the symbols of the holy sacraments . . . We admonish you to become a true emperor and priest.”

The Emperor, however, appointed an iconoclastic patriarch, replacing Germanus, the orthodox defender of image worship, and in answer to the excommunication of the iconoclasts by Gregory III (731–41), confiscated the revenues of papal patrimonies in Calabria and Sicily, then under Byzantine sovereignty, and detached from Rome not only these provinces, but also the province of Illyricum, comprising the whole of Greece together with the papal vicariate of Thessalonica, submitting them to the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Constantinople.

This latter measure had most serious consequences because it enforced the isolation of the West from the East, strengthened the position of Constantinople in the Church, and destroyed the last arches of the bridge between East and West in Illyricum. Illyricum became, for two centuries to come, a territory where Constantinople and Rome were to meet in passionate conflict.

Leo III's successor, Constantine V Copronymus (741–75), went even further. He convoked a council (in 754) in Constantinople and allowed the 338 assembled bishops, mostly from the eastern parts of the Empire, to excommunicate anti-iconoclasts, especially John of Damascus, the most outspoken of them, and to sanction the decrees against pictorial representation of saints and against image worship. Although no patriarch was present at the synod—the see of Constantinople was vacant and other patriarchs declared themselves for image worship—the synod

was called the Seventh Ecumenical. Prelates opposing these decrees were deposed, monks were persecuted, and some of them became martyrs.

Only when the Empress Irene, the widow of Constantine V's successor Leo IV, became regent in the name of her minor son (780–90), could the orthodox faith triumph. Supported by the patriarch Tarasius and with the consent of Pope Hadrian I, the Empress convoked a council to meet in Constantinople. The assembly was disbanded by the iconoclastic guard, but the Empress transferred it in the next year (787) to Nicaea. After eight sessions the 350 Fathers, mostly from the western part of the Empire, condemned the decisions of the iconoclastic assembly and ruled that through the veneration of holy images the persons represented by them were honoured. Adoration was due only to God.

The decrees of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, the Second of Nicaea, were confirmed by the pope and accepted in the East. The acceptance of the Council in the West was, however, postponed. Charlemagne, the founder of a mighty Empire that included modern Germany and France with a part of Spain, was not willing to accept the decisions of a Council at which he himself and his prelates had not participated. Unfortunately, the inaccurate translation of the conciliar Acts suggested a false interpretation as if the Fathers were speaking of the adoration of images. Charlemagne's theologians subjected the Acts to very sharp criticism in the official publication called *Libri Carolini*, rejecting both councils, and stressing only the educational importance of pictorial representations. The pope defended the Council of 787, but abstained from any measures against the Frankish hierarchy, which rejected its Acts at the synod of Frankfurt (794). It was not until the ninth century, when a better translation of the Acts was made, that the Western distrust of this Council disappeared.

In spite of the orthodox victory, the iconoclasts did not surrender. The Emperor Leo V, of Armenian origin, renewed the decrees against the veneration of images, and his initiative was welcomed by the superstitious iconoclasts, who attributed the

military defeats suffered by Leo's two orthodox predecessors in the wars with the Bulgars, to God's punishment for image worship. Many monks were again persecuted. The traditional teaching of image worship was vigorously defended by the deposed patriarch, Nicephorus, and Theodore, Abbot of Studios, who directed eloquent appeals to the pope.

The iconoclasts ruled in the Eastern Church for over thirty years. Only when the pious Theodora, the widow of the Emperor Theophilus, had taken over the regency in the name of her minor son Michael III (842), could the orthodox teaching on image worship triumph once more. Theodora did not dare, however, to convoke a new council after replacing the iconoclastic patriarch with the orthodox Methodius. Image worship was restored only by a local synod confirmed by an imperial decree (843). This victory is still commemorated by the Eastern Church every year by the feast of Orthodoxy, on the first Sunday of Lent.

The iconoclastic controversy has left profound vestiges in the evolution of Byzantine art. No Byzantine artist dared to represent God the Father, because, as the iconoclasts had taught, Divinity cannot be circumscribed. Also, from the eighth century onwards, there was no sculpture in the round (statues) in Byzantium, and sculptors produced only reliefs. The defeat of iconoclasm promoted the production of icons, representations of Christ and his Saints, and these became a characteristic feature of Byzantine art. The victory over this last important heresy is expressed today in every Orthodox church by the iconostasis, a panel decorated with pictures of saints, which separates the altar from the rest of the church.

The final liquidation of iconoclasm did not take place at once. Because the mistrust of image worship was still felt in influential circles of Byzantine society, the Empress' advisers recommended moderation in the restoration of images and in dealing with former iconoclasts. This restrained attitude was sharply criticized by intransigent monks who had suffered most during the persecutions, and who advocated severer treatment of the remaining iconoclasts and of the more or less sincere converts.

The Patriarch Methodius, a partisan of moderation, was obliged to excommunicate the monks of the Studios monastery, the most outspoken critics of his ecclesiastical policy.

This accentuated the tension between the moderates and the intransigents in ecclesiastical circles, so that, when Methodius died, Theodora thought it necessary to discard the traditional procedure, and instead of giving the synod the opportunity of presenting to her the chosen candidate, she appointed the pious monk Ignatius as Patriarch of Constantinople.

THE PHOTIAN CONTROVERSY AND THE SYNODS OF 869 AND 879

The hopes that the new patriarch, who had not been involved in the rivalry of the contesting parties, would act as a peacemaker were not realized. He sided with the intransigents and suspended the bishops who criticized him for abandoning Methodius' policy of moderation. The bishops he disciplined appealed to Rome. This is the first appeal to the pope in disciplinary matters made by Eastern prelates.

Each party was invited to present its case, but before Rome could come to a definite decision, the situation in Byzantium underwent a radical change. Theodora's brother, the ambitious, but able, Bardas, with the connivance of his nephew Michael III, first got rid of the Empress' prime minister Theoctistus and, supported by the moderates, deprived Theodora of the regency. The attempts of the intransigents to change this political situation were in vain. However, Ignatius, believing the ill-founded accusations of Bardas' immoral private life, spread by his enemies, publicly refused to give Holy Communion to the regent. Soon afterwards when the patriarch intervened in favour of a leader of the rebels, he was banished to an island on suspicion of treason.

In order to save his Church from further complications, Ignatius accepted the advice of his bishops and resigned the patriarchal dignity. On the insistence of the bishops, a synod was assembled to elect a new patriarch. After rehabilitating the

bishops censured by Ignatius, who had appealed to Rome, the Fathers elected Photius, a layman, the learned professor of philosophy at the imperial university and head of the chancellery. Even the most intransigent bishops recognized him as a legitimate patriarch, after Photius had given them assurances regarding the person of Ignatius. Photius was consecrated by the rehabilitated Bishop Asbestos, leader of the moderates, and two Ignatian bishops chosen by the synod.

Peace lasted only two months. The reasons for the revolt of the intransigents against the new patriarch are unknown. It was engineered by extremists. Political complications must have been involved, because the synod convoked by Photius in order to settle the dispute ended in an uproar, and was followed with a demonstration that had to be disbanded by the imperial police. Photius protested against the persecution of his opponents but, in order to prevent them from using Ignatius' patriarchal status to widen the schism, another synod pronounced Ignatius' patriarchate and his ordinations illegitimate because he had not been canonically elected.

There are indications that the policy of intransigence, which Ignatius followed, hardened the opposition of the remaining iconoclasts and led many to fear a revival of iconoclasm. Because the re-introduction of image worship had not been so far confirmed by a synod, the Emperor Michael decided to convoke a new synod in Constantinople for a renewed condemnation of iconoclasm, and asked Pope Nicholas I (858-67) to send legates to participate therein. The envoys also presented to the pope a letter of Photius announcing his election to the patriarchal see after Ignatius' resignation.

The pope sent to Constantinople two bishops, Radoald and Zacharias, ordering them to investigate the circumstances of Ignatius' resignation and reserving to himself the decision as to the legitimacy of Photius' promotion. Fearing new agitation from the intransigents before the pope's definite decision should reach Constantinople, the Byzantine authorities were willing to reopen the case of Ignatius, if the legates would pronounce judgment at the synod, although they regarded it as an internal affair

which had already been settled. Thinking that such an action would strengthen the position of the Roman See in the East, the legates consented, and after examining the case in the synod, confirmed the decision made previously concerning Ignatius' status. Ignatius declared that he did not appeal to Rome and had no intention of doing so. Then the synod condemned iconoclasm and voted canons on monastic and Church reform.

The Acts of the synod of 861 are preserved only partially in a canonical collection of the eleventh century, and have remained unnoticed by specialists. They are, however, very important because the declarations of the legates and of the Byzantine bishops should be interpreted as a recognition of the right of appeal to the pope, voted by the Council of Sardica (343) but not accepted in the East.

Nicholas I was misled by a refugee monk who gave him a biased report of the events, falsely pretending to have been charged by Ignatius to appeal to the pope. Offended by a refusal of the patriarch to present more evidence for his legitimacy, and annoyed because Byzantium ignored his demand for the return of jurisdiction over Illyricum, which he had requested in his letter to the Emperor, Nicholas I declared Photius' promotion uncanonical, excommunicated him, condemned his legates, and proclaimed Ignatius as legitimate patriarch (in 863). Michael III protested violently in 865.

Photius made no reply until 867, when he had learned of the activity of papal missionaries in Bulgaria, which had been converted by Byzantium in 864, but had turned to Rome. He invited the Eastern patriarchs to a synod, complained about Rome's intrusion into Bulgaria, and accused the Latin missionaries of condemning Greek practices and preaching the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son (*Filioque*). The synod, presided over by the Emperor Michael and the co-Emperor Basil, condemned these practices and Nicholas I. An embassy was dispatched to the Western Emperor Louis II promising him the recognition of his imperial title if he deposed Nicholas I.

The offer of the imperial title to Louis II, the third successor

to Charlemagne, is very important because it reveals that the Byzantines still believed in the possibility of saving the unity of the Christian world in one commonwealth, ruled by the Roman Emperor residing in Constantinople and a co-Emperor in the West.

In addition this fact disproves the general belief that this synod of 867 made decisions against the Western Church and against the papal primacy as such. As long as the Byzantines regarded themselves as Romans, they could not deny the primacy to the Bishop of Rome. Such negotiations with Louis II would have been senseless if the Acts of the synod which were sent to him had contained attacks against the Western Church and the primacy of Rome.

The envoys, however, were intercepted on their way, when Basil I, soon after the synod, murdered the Emperor Michael III and, needing support from the intransigents and from Rome, reinstalled Ignatius on the patriarchal throne, and asked Pope Hadrian II for legates to a new Council. The pope confirmed in a Roman synod all the decisions of his predecessor against Photius and sent three legates to the new Council with the instruction that the Fathers of the synod, the Fourth of Constantinople (869–70), had only to sign the decision of the Roman synod which, among other things, contained a very outspoken affirmation of papal primacy.

This alienated the Emperor and also the bishops. The first session of the Council, which called itself the Eighth Ecumenical, was attended by only twelve prelates (October 5th, 869) and at the last session, the tenth (February 28th, 870), no more than 102 prelates were present. On the Emperor's insistence Photius was given the opportunity of defending himself. Although he very courageously proclaimed his innocence, and denied the legates the right to judge him, he was excommunicated with many of his adherents.

Because the great majority of the clergy had remained faithful to Photius, Ignatius encountered great difficulties in the administration of his patriarchate. Moreover, he came into further conflict with Pope John VIII because he defended his rights in Bulgaria, whose ruler Boris had defected from Rome, rights

which were also confirmed by the Eastern patriarchs at the Council of 870, in spite of the protest of the papal legates.

When Photius was recalled from exile by the Emperor, Ignatius was reconciled with him, and asked Rome to send legates for a new council, which would confirm the pacification of the Byzantine Church. The legates arrived in Constantinople only after Ignatius' death (October 23rd, 877), and found Photius on the patriarchal throne. The pope sent them new instructions, which contained the recognition of Photius' elevation, under the condition that he should ask pardon for his former behaviour.

But Photius convinced the legates that he had been canonically elected and that he deserved an unconditional rehabilitation. Therefore, the papal letters were read at the council in a new version, which omitted the pope's condition. It should, however, be stressed that in the Greek version Photius left the quotation of the famous passage of Matt. 16. 19, on which Pope John VIII in the Latin original had based the papal "power to bind and loose, and in the words of Jeremias, to uproot and to plant". This is the more significant when we consider that, at the Seventh Ecumenical Council, when papal letters were also changed, the argument for the papal primacy was left out in the Greek version of the papal letter to the Empress Irene, though it was retained in the papal letter to the Patriarch Tarasius. In the latter, however, the primacy was not expressed as categorically as in the passage suppressed in the letter to Irene.

The Council of 869-70 was cancelled, and is not counted by the Eastern Churches in their list of Ecumenical Councils. However, not even the Photian Council of 879-80, called Council of Union, is regarded as ecumenical, because it did not make any dogmatic decision. The Eastern Churches count only seven Ecumenical Councils.

John VIII expressed his astonishment at the changes made in the text of his letters, but he confirmed the rehabilitation of Photius. Contrary to what has been believed, the peace between the two Churches was not disturbed after this reconciliation. The Emperor Basil I gave the pope important concessions, and Photius surrendered jurisdiction over Bulgaria to Rome. Boris

of Bulgaria, however, profited by this jurisdictional quarrel between East and West, and established the first national Church in the Balkans. Photius had to resign on the request of the Emperor Leo VI, but he died in communion with Rome (February 6th, 891).

By an interesting coincidence, it happened that the Acts of the councils of the ninth century, so far overlooked in the West, were discovered during the reign of Gregory VII, and their interpretation began to exert a profound influence over Western canonists and theologians. In order to find more cogent documentary evidence for his definition of papal primacy, Gregory opened the pontifical archives to the canonists charged with the compilation of new collections of canon law. What the canonists needed most was a conciliar decision which could be used against the interference of laymen with the appointment of bishops. They discovered such a canon (the twenty-second) in the Ignatian council of 869-70, which called itself ecumenical. Overlooking the fact that this council had been cancelled by another—the Acts of which were also kept in the pontifical archives—they set up the council of 869-70 as one of the most important General Councils. This council was designated by canonists in their collections as the Eighth Ecumenical. But previously, as is clear from declarations by the Popes Marinus II and Leo IX, of St Peter Damian and Cardinal Humbertus, the Romans, like the Greeks, counted only seven Ecumenical Councils.

Together with the Acts, the canonists discovered the letters of Nicholas I relating to the Photian affair. Impressed by the pope's courageous attitude against the Emperor Michael III and by his excommunication of a patriarch, from these documents they constructed a firm basis for the defence of all claims set forth in the *Dictatus Papae*. Some went even so far as to conclude from them that Nicholas I had excommunicated an Emperor, Michael III—which was untrue—and saw in this, a justification for Gregory's excommunication and deposition of the Emperor Henry IV. Only one of the Gregorian canonists, Cardinal Deusdedit, preserved some extracts from the councils of 861

and 879–80, because he deemed them useful for the justification of certain papal claims. His collection, however, was not disseminated so widely as the other collections, and so it happened that the Photian legend was born and became a new obstacle to the *rapprochement* of the two Churches.

CHAPTER II

THE MEDIEVAL COUNCILS OF THE WESTERN CHURCH

THE REFORMISTS AND THE ROMAN SYNODS

The Photianist Council of 879–80 was the last synod held in the East to which the Roman See sent legates. In order to guarantee peace between the Western and Eastern Churches, the same synod voted a canon confirming to each Church her own usages, and this seemed to be favourable ground on which good relations between the two Churches could develop. In reality, the peace between Constantinople and Rome was not disturbed in the following period and the right of appeal to Rome, as the highest tribunal in disciplinary matters, was recognized in Byzantium also in the tenth century. The Emperor Leo VI's appeal to the pope on Patriarch Nicholas Mysticus' refusal to allow his fourth marriage should be interpreted in this sense, and possibly the request of the Emperor Romanus Lecapenus for papal confirmation of the election of his young son Theophylactus to patriarchal dignity.

In spite of this, however, the two Churches were growing further apart. The restoration of the Western Roman Empire by the Saxon King Otto I (962) and his successors, who appointed their own popes, brought to a definite end Byzantine influence in Rome and increased the estrangement. At that time, also, the unwelcome effects of the introduction of Germanic features into Church organization were becoming increasingly apparent in the West. The Germanic tribes had a different

concept of ownership from the Romans and the Greeks, and being unable to conceive of any property being vested in a society or organization, they continued to regard the churches as the property of the founders, who also claimed the prerogative of appointing the priests. This system of proprietary churches extended to abbeys and bishoprics, and the abuses which accompanied this practice—simony, investiture by laymen, married priests—were responsible for the sad decadence of the Western Church in the tenth century.

Moreover, the idea of priest-king found its way from the East to the West and the combination of Germanic ideology and Romano-Byzantine theocracy gave the Western princes almost absolute control over the Churches and the hierarchy in their realms. This also influenced the development of conciliar practice in the West. The synods of the bishops were transformed into national assemblies presided over by the kings. Not only bishops, but also the lords participated, and not only Church affairs, but also measures serving the interests of the State were debated. In the Frankish Kingdom the decisions of the assemblies were published as “orders of the ruler” (*capitularia*). Besides the Frankish assemblies, the eighteen Spanish synods of Toledo convoked from 589 to 702 by the Visigothic kings who had been converted from Arianism to Catholicism, are the most important.

National interest superseded that of the universal Church, and this explains why neither the pope nor the Emperor succeeded in summoning a general synod.

In order to save Western Christianity from becoming a conglomerate of national Churches ruled by kings and princes, zealous reformers from Lorraine and Burgundy advocated strengthening the power of the papacy and gave the fullest definition to the idea of the Roman primacy. During the reign of Leo IX (1049–54) the reform movement also reached Rome, and it was from among the reformers that the pope chose his envoys to Constantinople in an effort to reach an understanding with the Emperor against their common enemy, the Normans, who had occupied southern Italy.

Unfortunately, instead of achieving a *rapprochement* between Rome and Constantinople, the negotiations, conducted by the papal legates in Constantinople, ended in a rupture. The responsibility for this should be attributed, not only to the haughty and ambitious Patriarch Michael Cerularius and his dislike of the Latins, but also to political complications with the Normans, and to the impetuous leader of the papal legates, Cardinal Humbertus. In his missives and in the excommunication bull placed on the altar in St Sophia in 1054, the overzealous cardinal disclosed to the Byzantines all the ideas of the reformists. He placed all the bishops directly and immediately under the only supreme head, the pope, accused the Greeks of heresy because they allowed their priests to marry, and also because they left the *Filioque* out of the Creed, thus showing poor knowledge of Byzantine customs and of Church history. The Easterners were shocked by these accusations that implied the denial of their autonomous position, and so it happened that the action of 1054, although directed only against the person of the patriarch, became a landmark indicating the separation of the Eastern Churches from the Western.

On the other hand, the activity of the reformists had a most salutary effect on the development of Western Christianity. The growth of the prestige of the papacy affected the conciliar idea. From the third century onwards, the popes were accustomed to gather their Roman clergy and Italian bishops in synods whenever there was an important matter to be discussed. The popes were the instigators and masters of these assemblies and the decisions of such synods deeply influenced Church life in the whole of the West. However, when the papacy had concluded its alliance with the Franks, the representatives of the Frankish kings appeared at these synods with the Frankish bishops. The decadence of the Carolingian Empire gave back to the popes their freedom and this is particularly evident in the synods convoked by Nicholas I. The influence of German emperors at the Roman synods was strengthened after the restoration of the Western Roman Empire by Otto I (962), and

was particularly marked during the reign of Henry III, who put an end to the schism in Rome (1046) and installed one of the reformists, Leo IX, in the Roman see. The reformists, although enhancing the importance of the Roman synods in which they proclaimed their ideas on the liberation of the Church from lay interference, were opposed to any influence of the emperors on these synods and on ecclesiastical affairs.

They succeeded in eliminating this interference under Gregory VII (1073–85), who, in his determination to break the dangerous Germanic system of proprietary churches and to end the influence of monarchs and lords on ecclesiastical affairs, entered into a violent conflict with the Emperor Henry IV. Thus started the so-called Investiture contest about the rights of the Church to appoint bishops and abbots and on the feudal claims of the princes who conferred lands and privileges on the appointed hierarchs.

In his *Dictatus Papae*, Gregory VII set out his programme of reform, claiming the right to depose the emperors and to absolve his subjects from obedience to bad rulers. Among these claims, which amounted to a proclamation of the superiority of spiritual power over the temporal, is the declaration that the pope alone has the right to convoke a General Council. This was directed against Henry IV and his supporters who, basing their claim on the theory of the priestly character of the kingship, reserved to the Emperor the right of convoking a General Council.

Gregory's zeal for Church reform prompted him to invite to his Roman synods bishops and also abbots, not only from Italy, but from France, Germany, and Spain, from Poland and Bohemia, and other countries. Many of them participated in his synods which were gradually acquiring a more universal character. The invited princes and lords, however, had no influence on synodal decisions, but their presence enhanced the growing prestige of the papacy. No wonder that Gregory was the first pope who planned, for the year 1083, a General Council of all Western Christianity, but the occupation of Rome by Henry IV's army shattered his plan.

*THE COUNCILS OF THE LATERAN (1123, 1139, 1179, 1215)
AND THE FIRST COUNCIL OF LYONS (1245)*

During the reign of Gregory's successors, the papal synods continued to be held outside Rome, as the city was occupied by the imperial anti-pope, Clement VI. This contributed to the popularity of synodal practice in Italy and in France. The most famous of these synods were those of Piacenza and of Clermont, held in 1095. Although the latter is called a general synod, it was really only a synod of Gaul under papal presidency. The response of the French knights to Urban II's call to a Crusade to liberate the Holy Land proved that the reformed papacy was the uncontested leader of Western Christianity. The pope's invitation to help the Greeks against the Turks makes clear, at the same time, that the idea of reunion with the East was his foremost consideration.

The Lateran synod of 1112, at which Pope Paschal II, at the demand of the bishops, was forced to cancel the privilege of investiture with ring and crozier before the candidates' consecration, conceded by him to the Emperor Henry V the year before, manifested how much support the popes had gained outside Germany, and especially in France. This was even more apparent at the Lateran synod of 1116, when 427 participants—bishops, abbots and noble laymen—excommunicated Henry V.

This presaged the final victory of the papacy in the Investiture Contest. It was sealed by the conclusion of the Concordat of Worms in 1122, at which the Emperor Henry V renounced his claims to investiture with ring and crozier, contenting himself with the presentation of the sceptre, symbolizing the acceptance by the candidate of feudal obligations connected with the lands and privileges conferred on him by the Emperor. In order to express the relief felt by Western Christianity, now that the long struggle with temporal power was ended, the pope assembled a General Council to confirm the agreement. The Council met in the Lateran in 1123, probably between March 18th and April 6th. Over 300 bishops and many abbots are said to have come to the synod from all parts of the West.

Unfortunately, no Acts of the synod were preserved. Some of

the twenty-five canons prohibited simony and extended privileges and protection to the crusaders and their families. Pope Paschal II had only intended to convoke a major synod of the West, but because this synod marked the beginning of a new era in the relations between Church and State and because of the great number of participants from the West, in later tradition it was given an ecumenical character and is called by Western canonists the Ninth Ecumenical Council.

The end of the schism in Rome resulting from a double election in 1130 gave Pope Innocent II the idea of convoking another "plenary" synod at the Lateran in 1139, after the death of the anti-pope Anacletus II. The great number of prelates from all the West—the chroniclers speak of 500 and even 1,000 participants—shows how popular the practice of General Councils had become. Besides bishops, many abbots and noble laymen were present.

The Council, opened on April 4th, lasted to the end of the month and the Fathers deposed all supporters of the anti-pope. Most of the thirty canons voted by the Council were inspired by the ideas of the Gregorian reform. Canon seven declared that the marriage of a monk or of a clergyman, after reception of the subdiaconate, and hitherto regarded as illicit, was invalid. Canon 28 which confirmed to the members of the cathedral chapters the privilege of episcopal elections, enhanced the importance of these chapters in the medieval Church. For the first time, a Western General Council found it necessary to condemn certain heretical movements. Unfortunately, only the canons voted by the council are preserved.

In spite of the hopes which the confirmation of the Concordat of Worms by the First Lateran Council had evoked, the struggle between the spiritual and temporal power was reopened by the Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa. Frederick revived the tradition of royal theocracy initiated by Charlemagne and defended passionately the divine origin of secular power and its ascendancy over the spiritual. He succeeded in gaining a complete hold over the German Church and in securing his royal rights against the German princes.

His attempts to re-establish imperial authority in Lombardy and the rest of Italy were thwarted by the resistance of the papacy and the expanding Lombard cities. Frederick tried in vain to break the opposition of Pope Alexander III (1159–81) by establishing three successive anti-popes. At last, defeated by the Lombard League, Frederick renounced his imperial pretensions over Italy, abandoned his last anti-pope and returned all confiscated Church property. The peace, concluded at Venice in 1177, was to be confirmed by a new General Council of the Western Church, the Third Lateran, counted as the Eleventh Ecumenical Council.

For the first time, an incomplete official list of the bishops present at a Western General Council is preserved. It contains 291 names, mostly from Italy, but also from France, Germany, Spain, England, Scotland, Ireland and the Latin Near East. Besides many abbots, the representatives of many rulers were also present.

Again, no Acts of the three sessions, held from March 5th to 19th, 1179, are preserved. Several of the twenty-seven canons accepted by the Fathers are still valid. In order to avoid another double election, the Council completed the rule decreed by Nicholas II at the Roman synod of 1059, which gave the electoral rights to the college of cardinals, with the stipulation that a two-thirds majority of votes was required for a valid election. Another canon, which declares that no person should be consecrated bishop who had not reached thirty years of age, is also still valid. Besides numerous disciplinary canons, some measures were voted for the protection of the Crusaders. The Albigensian and other heresies were condemned and armed interventions against them were given the character of Crusades.

The Third Lateran Council marks a certain progress in the development of the conciliar idea. It was better prepared and, for the first time, the example of the "Fathers of old" is stressed. The disappearance of the regular Roman synods—their functions having been taken over by the papal consistory—enhanced the importance of general synods convoked by the popes. However, although the three Lateran Councils are called

General Synods in the papal letters of convocation, they represent only the first step towards a true General Council, the Fourth Lateran, convoked by Innocent III in 1215 "according to the ancient custom of the ancient Fathers".

These words express the intention of the pope to convoke a truly Ecumenical Council of equal rank to the first Eastern Ecumenical Councils. In reality, Innocent III not only ordered all the Western bishops to attend or to send a representative, he addressed himself also to the Latin prelates of the Near East, to the Armenians, Maronites and to the schismatic Greeks. Heads of major Orders were invited and representatives of the Christian laity. The objects of the deliberations were also of general interest to Christianity—the purity of faith and morals and a new Crusade.

The number of the participants at the Council was imposing. Among the 404 bishops were prelates from Bohemia, Poland, Hungary, Livonia and Estonia, countries which had, so far, never been represented at a council. Besides the abbots, about 800 representatives of Chapters were also present, invited for the first time to participate. The Emperor Frederick II, kings and many cities were represented by envoys.

In spite of his efforts, Innocent III did not succeed in persuading the Greeks to attend. Only the Latin patriarchs of the East were represented. However, two of the seventy canons prepared by the pope and accepted by the Council, dealt with Greek affairs. Canon four forbade the rebaptism of Latins by the Greeks and canon five confirmed the decrees of the Second and Fourth Ecumenical Councils which gave second place, after the pope, to the patriarch of Constantinople. From 1204, after the capture of Constantinople by the Latin crusaders, the patriarchal see of that city was in the hands of the Latins.¹

Canon 21, obliging every Catholic to yearly confession and

¹ However, already canon twenty-one of the Ignatian Council of 869–70 gave precedence to the Patriarch of Constantinople before Eastern Patriarchs, and Hadrian II did not repudiate it. Also some Italian collections of canon law from the tenth and eleventh centuries give to the Patriarch of Constantinople the second rank.

Holy Communion during Easter time, is still valid. Other canons laid down the procedure to be followed during the vacancy of bishoprics, stressed the appointment of preachers and teachers to metropolitan churches and restricted the obstacles to a valid marriage. Decisions regulating the political development of Europe were made, illustrating the height of the prestige the papacy had reached during the reign of Innocent III. Frederick II was confirmed in the imperial dignity, and the *Magna Charta*, "extorted by force and dread" by the nobles, was condemned at the request of John of England, and Toulouse, infected with Albigenses (Cathars), was made over to Simon de Montfort.

In one way, the Council followed the example of the first ecumenical synods. Its first canon is a profession of faith directed against the heresies of the Albigenses (Cathars) and the Waldenses, emphasizing the Church's doctrine on the Trinity and the Sacraments, and giving, for the first time, ecclesiastical sanction to the term "transubstantiation" of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. Unfortunately, no Acts of the three meetings, held on November 11th, 20th and 30th, are preserved.

The Crusade directed against Egypt, which was to be financed by a levy of twenty per cent. on the income of the clergy for three years, though well-prepared, ended in disaster.

Frederick II's father, Henry VI, had planned to rebuild the Mediterranean Empire of ancient Rome, based on Sicily—which he had inherited from the Normans—embracing Italy, Syria, Palestine and even Constantinople. His sudden death gave Innocent III a welcome opportunity as supreme head of Christianity and "Vicar of Christ" to dispose of the imperial crown. The claim that the papacy was supreme over all things, spiritual and temporal, was however soon challenged by Frederick II, who began to follow in the steps of his father.

His attempts to unite Italy with Sicily and Germany and to introduce an absolutist régime in Italy again endangered the existence of the papal state. Pope Gregory X made an alliance with the Lombard cities and, using his spiritual powers, excommunicated Frederick, thus releasing his subjects from

allegiance to the Emperor. The anti-imperial campaign in Germany failed, and only an appeal to Western Christianity made in a General Council seemed to promise success. But the General Council convoked in 1240 was frustrated by the emperor, who forbade the Germans to attend, gave instructions to stop all those on their way to the Council and ordered his fleet to capture the Genoese vessels which were carrying over one hundred bishops to it. The Emperor's army was standing at the gates of Rome when Gregory IX died in 1241.

Frederick II was the last Western Emperor to come under the spell of the old Roman and Byzantine ideas of kingship. In this spirit he allowed himself to be called "Vicar of Christ," "image of God," "saviour," "divine," and "holy," and also claimed the right, once exercised by Byzantine emperors, to convoke an Ecumenical Council. This was the last echo of such claims to sound in the West.

However, it was a General Council convoked by the pope which broke the backbone of Frederick's pretensions. When the Emperor learned that Innocent IV intended to follow the determined policy of Gregory IX, he kept the pope in isolation, and surrounded his residence with troops. The pope succeeded in escaping to his native city of Genoa and convoked a General Council in Lyons. In spite of the Emperor's effort to deter the bishops from attending, about 150 of them, mainly from France and Spain, and a few from England, Italy and Germany, gathered in Lyons on June 28th, 1245. In his inaugural address, the pope spoke of the five sorrows which afflicted him, comparing them to the five wounds of our Lord. These were the signs of demoralization amongst the clergy, the growing Mohammedan danger after the loss of Jerusalem (1244), the threat to the Latin Empire by the Greek advance towards Constantinople, the Mongolian invasion which had destroyed Hungary, and the persecutions of the Church by Frederick II, who was accused of heresy and sacrilege.

Frederick II sent the Sicilian Thaddaeus of Suessa to the Council, who defended his lord against the papal accusations, but was unable to find an excuse for the Emperor's high-handed

action against the bishops on their way to the Council in 1240. The case against the Emperor was continued on July 5th and Frederick's advocate secured a delay of twelve days in order to collect evidence in favour of his client.

In the following session, the Fathers deliberated on purely ecclesiastical matters. They confirmed the reform of the ecclesiastical lawsuit in which the pope, himself an experienced canonist, was particularly interested. Other canons contained recommendations for better defence against further Mongol invasions, for the recapture of the Holy Places, aid to the Latin Empire, and certain disciplinary statutes against current abuses.

At the third session of July 17th, the Council sanctioned all the measures proposed in the twenty-two canons or "chapters" and continued the case against the Emperor. Frederick was accused of perjury, suspicion of heresy, sacrilege, and cruelty towards both clergy and laymen alike. The pope proposed to excommunicate him afresh and to depose him. The majority of the bishops signed the decree of deposition. Frederick's subjects were released from their allegiance to him and the Prince-Electors were invited to choose a new king and Emperor. This severe measure inaugurated the final downfall of the Hohenstaufen dynasty. It is one of the greatest triumphs of the medieval papacy.

The First Council of Lyons, the Thirteenth Ecumenical Council on the conciliar list of Western canonists, also has a certain importance in the history of Western canon law. Innocent IV, a former professor of canon law at Bologna, recommended the canons of this council to the professors of canon law at the universities. He added eleven of his own decrees and incorporated them all into his collection of canon law, published in 1253.

THE ABORTIVE UNION AT THE SECOND COUNCIL OF LYONS (1274)

The decadence of the Hohenstaufen dynasty enabled the Church to pass through a dangerous crisis without great harm. The long vacancy of the Roman See lasted from November 29th,

1268, the death of Pope Clement IV, to September, 1271, when the quarrelling cardinals, forced by public opinion, had at last elected Tedaldo Visconti. The new pope, Gregory X, was well acquainted with the situation in the Near East. The news of his elevation reached him in Akkon, the last fortress in Palestine still in Latin hands. It was to be expected that the intelligent, zealous and pious pope would direct his efforts to the improvement of Church interests in the East.

The union of Churches had always been one of the foremost preoccupations of the papacy. This was intimately connected in Urban II's mind with the idea of a Crusade, which he initiated. Unfortunately, the regrettable incidents which took place during this and other Crusades further alienated the Greeks from the Latins. The Fourth Crusade ended with the conquest of Constantinople (1204) and the foundation of the Latin Empire. The atrocities perpetrated by the Latins in the conquered city and the desecration of Greek sanctuaries further widened the gap between Latins and Greeks.

It was in 1204 that the schism—so far latent—was definitely consummated, which explains why all the attempts at reunion previously made by Innocent III and his successors had failed. Gregory X, undismayed by these failures, was determined to make a new attempt and the political situation seemed more favourable. The Greeks, having recovered from the blow, started an offensive against the Latins from their base at Nicaea in Asia Minor, and in 1261 Emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus reconquered Constantinople. Although successful in the extension of his empire, he was well aware of the dangers threatening him from the new ruler of Sicily and Southern Italy, Charles of Anjou, brother of the French king, St Louis IX. In order to frustrate Charles' plans for a reconquest of Constantinople, he began to negotiate with Rome, promising union and help in the recapture of the Holy Places, two of the main preoccupations of the papacy.

But not content with promises, Gregory X made it clear to the Emperor that he could not restrain Charles and his allies in their hostile policy towards the Greeks, unless the Emperor

made a decisive step towards reunion. Faced with no alternative, Michael Paleologus promised to send a delegation to the Council and was able to persuade some of his hierarchy to accept the union.

The pope again chose Lyons as the most appropriate place, as he could expect the much needed help for the reconquest of Jerusalem only from lands on the western side of the Alps. Letters of invitation were sent to the Western hierarchy in April 1273, to chapters, abbots and princes. Besides the Emperor Michael and his patriarch, the leader (Catholicos) of the Armenians and the Mongolian Khan were invited.

Over two hundred bishops responded to the invitation, and the number present, including abbots and procurators, is evaluated by contemporary chronicles at over one thousand. It was the most imposing assembly since that of the Fourth Lateran Council. Unfortunately, St Thomas Aquinas, asked by the pope to bring with him his treatise in which he rejected the errors of the Greeks, died on his way to Lyons.

In his opening address on May 7th, 1274, the pope disclosed that the main objects of conciliar deliberations would be the organization of a new Crusade, reunion with the Greeks, and the reform of the Church. The pope presided, but he entrusted the moderatorship of the debates to St Bonaventure of the Friars Minor, recently made a cardinal. He, however, died in Lyons on July 15th. The first and second sessions were devoted to the planning of a new Crusade. The pope succeeded in obtaining the consent of the prelates to contribute a tenth of their income to the enterprise for six years.

On June 24th the representatives of the Byzantine Emperor arrived—the former patriarch Germanus, Theophanes, metropolitan of Nicaea, the chancellor George Acropolites and two other dignitaries. On the feast of SS. Peter and Paul, during the Mass celebrated by the pope, the Nicene Creed was sung with the *Filioque* in Latin and in Greek. In this way, the Greeks accepted the *Filioque*, but were permitted to continue using their own text of the Creed without this addition. The union was proclaimed rather hastily, without long discussions, at the fourth

session, on July 6th. The imperial representatives signed a creed expressing recognition of the primacy, the *Filioque*, belief in purgatory, and in seven Sacraments. The pope intoned the *Te Deum* in thanksgiving to God and in a discourse stressed the importance of this achievement.

The fifth and sixth sessions on July 16th and 17th were devoted to debates on Church reform. One of the most important canons is the second, regulating the procedure concerning papal elections. In order to prevent long vacancies, such as happened before the election of Gregory X, it was stated that within ten days of the death of the pope, the cardinals must convene and proceed to the election in strict isolation from outside (conclave). If the election was not made in three days, their food supply should be curtailed and five days after that, they should be given only bread and water. During the conclave, the electors should not touch any income from ecclesiastical benefices. These regulations, with some modification, are still observed in papal elections.

Gregory X, a saintly man who has been beatified, took the problem of Church reform very seriously. Before convoking the Council, he asked the bishops for their recommendations in this respect. Only three of these proposals are preserved, one by the famous General of the Dominicans, Humbert de Romanis, another by the Bishop of Olomouc (Olmütz) in Moravia, and a third by an unknown author. Thirty-one disciplinary canons were voted to prevent current abuses. Canon 23 touched on a delicate problem, namely, the jealousy in cities between the Mendicant Orders and the secular clergy.

As at the Fourth Lateran Council, some political problems were solved at Lyons, illustrating once more the prestige of the papacy in the thirteenth century. The pope again intervened in the struggle for the imperial crown, proclaiming himself as a supporter of Rudolf of Habsburg thus inducing his rival, Alfonso of Castile, to abandon his claim. The King of Aragon, James I, the only monarch present at the Council, was not given the honour of being crowned by the pope, as he refused to become a vassal of the Holy See, a condition required of him

by the pope. Among other political affairs, the proposal of the Mongol Khan to form an alliance against the Egyptian Mamluks who were on good terms with the Byzantine Emperor, was rejected, although the pope was eager to keep up his friendly relationship with the Khan, as he was believed to be favourable to the Christians. It should be stressed that the canons voted by the Council were approved by the pope only after he made some additions and changes.

It was not Gregory's responsibility that the achievements of the Council, regarded as gigantic by his contemporaries, did not last. The Crusade, so well prepared by him, could not be organized in time. Before help could come, Akkon, in 1291, the last place in Christian hands in the Near East, fell into the hands of the Turks.

The union with the Greeks, concluded for political reasons, was accepted by only a minority of the Greek clergy. Nevertheless, it had some chance of survival for it found staunch supporters in the new patriarch John Veccos and his followers. Unfortunately, memories of the Latin occupation were still too fresh in Greek minds, and the Emperor himself compromised the union by his harshness towards its adversaries. Moreover, the intemperate demands of Gregory X's successors injured Greek national feeling. Martin IV (1281-5) completely abandoned Gregory's policy and supported the plans for the conquest of Byzantium prepared by Charles of Anjou and his allies, broke with Michael VIII, declared him schismatic and deposed him. Michael VIII thwarted the disaster which menaced him by inducing Peter III of Aragon to invade Sicily, and raised a revolt which ended in the bloodbath of Charles' supporters in the famous Sicilian Vespers.

The reaction in Greece against Michael VIII's religious policy was so violent that he was denied a decent burial. His successor, Andronicus II (1282-1328), in order to curry favour with his subjects, became the leader of the anti-Latin movement, and was excommunicated in 1307 by Clement V.

The Council of Lyons failed also to win back to Rome the Serbians and the Bulgarians. Their rulers had asked Innocent

III for royal crowns and both countries, in spite of some reverses, continued to maintain relations with Rome. But as these countries were supporting Charles of Anjou, the astute Michael VIII proposed to suppress the patriarchate of Bulgaria and the autonomous archbishopric of Serbia, and their submission to the patriarchate of Constantinople. He argued shrewdly that both were created without the pope's consent. The erection of these autonomous bodies curtailed the rights of Ochrida, heir of Justiniana Prima, founded by the Emperor Justinian with the consent of Pope Vigilius. The Latins were completely deceived by this astute move and the pope lost any possibility of a renewal of the union with Serbia and Bulgaria.

*THE GENERAL COUNCIL OF VIENNE AND THE
SUPPRESSION OF THE TEMPLARS (1311, 1312)*

The downfall of the Hohenstaufen dynasty in Germany and in Sicily, followed by a long interregnum, made the lofty imperial title almost meaningless. It seemed that only the papacy was capable of realizing the idea of political universality which had been so intimately connected with the Roman Empire. Very soon, however, papal theocratic claims were challenged by another secular ruler, the king of France. During the struggles of the papacy with the emperors, the French kings had consolidated their monarchy and laid a solid basis for a well-organized state. Thus, France reached its medieval golden age under St Louis IX (1226-70), whose brother Charles, after accepting the crown of Sicily from the pope, was bold enough to conceive the grandiose plan of a revival of the Latin Empire in the East.

France's leading position in the West became manifest under Philip IV the Fair (1285-1314). The latter had the highest conception of his royal power. His ideas on the absolute authority of a ruler and on an autonomous state, independent of spiritual power, were elaborated by his legists on the basis of Roman law and successfully propagated in France. So it happened that when Philip IV defied Boniface VIII's pro-

hibition against taxation of the clergy, he found support in French public opinion. When, however, Boniface published his famous Bull *Unam Sanctam* (1302) in which he set out, quite uncompromisingly, his claim to superiority over all national states and rulers, Philip protested vehemently, launched the most absurd accusations against the pope, ordered his arrest, and threatened him with judgement by a council in France. Death saved Boniface from further humiliations.

Not satisfied with the concessions granted by Boniface's successor, Benedict XI (1303-4), Philip obtained, after the latter's death, the election of a Frenchman, Clement V (1305-14), but he continued to threaten the pope with the opening of a process against the memory of Boniface VIII. As the new pope preferred to stay in France, finally choosing Avignon for his residence, he and his successors were strongly influenced by the French kings, during this so-called Babylonian captivity (up to the year 1376).

The threat of opening a process against Boniface prompted Clement V to grant the king a very costly concession, namely, the suppression of the Knights Templars, a most important military Order. Philip probably saw in the Templars a possible danger to his position in France, where the Order disposed of great wealth and could muster fifteen thousand knights in case of emergency. During the king's controversy with Boniface VIII, the Templars appeared to be on the side of the pope. Moreover, the confiscation of the Order's property seemed to be the most satisfactory answer to Philip's constant need of money.

As a pretext for his action against the Templars Philip used the rumours common among the people, of pagan and immoral practices in the Order, probably caused by the extreme secrecy observed by the Templars in their meetings and proceedings. The rumours were mostly untrue, though some members may have given grounds for suspicion because of their immoral behaviour. Philip allowed his informers to disclose the accusations to the inquisitor and, on the latter's demand, he gave the order to arrest all French Templars. He then presented to the

pope their confessions, extorted by torture, requesting the suppression of the Order. The pope, placed in jeopardy, decreed the arrest of all Templars, and appointed a special tribunal to examine the accusations. At last, in order to avert the threat of a process against the memory of Boniface VIII, he consented to the convocation of a council at Vienne, after having heard the confessions of some of the Templars at Poitiers, where he had met the king in 1308.

Because of the procrastination of the investigations inaugurated by the tribunal, the pope postponed the council till October 1st, 1311. Among the 132 bishops, mostly French and Italian, were prelates from Spain, England, Ireland and Germany, which gave the council an ecumenical character. Besides the 38 abbots present, many bishops and abbots sent their procurators as representatives.

The pope announced as the main objects of the discussions the affair of the Knights Templars, dogmatic questions, Church reform and the reconquest of Palestine. Adopting a new procedure, he created several committees which were ordered to prepare material for the plenary sessions in which the final decisions would be made. The examination of the affair of the Templars met with difficulties. In the December session, the majority of the bishops voted against the abolition as they found the evidence of the Order's guilt insufficient. Under pressure from the king, Clement V chose a middle way, issuing a Bull in which he declared the suppression of the Order, not by penal sentence, but as a "provision", ordered by the Supreme Pontiff, solicitous for the general good of the Church. The Bull was read and officially accepted by the Council during the second session on April 3rd, 1312. The rich properties of the Order were to be transferred to the Order of St John or other military Orders still to be founded. In spite of this decision, the king kept a great part of the property for himself.

The organization of a new Crusade was confined to the private negotiations of the pope with secular rulers. Although certain rulers had made vague promises, and although a tithe for six years was imposed on all churches, it was evident that the idea

of a Crusade had lost its attraction. No practical result was achieved.

Among the questions concerning Church reform, the most important was the ending of the bitter controversy dividing the Order of Friars Minor into two hostile camps. The radical minority of the Friars, called Spirituals (later *Fraticelli*), was giving the strictest interpretation to their vow of poverty, accusing the majority of having abandoned the ideals of St Francis. The controversy was longstanding and called for immediate consideration, the more so as certain ideas in the writings of John Peter Olivis, one of the leaders of the Spirituals, were regarded as heretical by their opponents.

The pope entrusted the examination of the controversy to a special committee, and confirmed its decision, which was read at the third and last session, on May 6th. The interpretation of the vow of poverty, given in the decision, coincided with that of the majority. However, a more rigorous observation of the rule was recommended in practice. Three doctrines attributed to Olivis were condemned without mentioning his name.

In the same session, other disciplinary canons were approved. Following the example of Gregory X, Clement V, when convoking the council, had invited the bishops to send him their observations. In their replies and in some of the canons prepared by the committee and read during the third session, one already observes a criticism of the abuses which were later to become the chief causes of the decadence of the Church. This was caused by the growing self-consciousness of the national states—denial of clerical immunity, restriction of other privileges—and by the papal policy of centralization. Already at the First Council of Lyons, the English barons had protested against the appointment of Italian prelates to English benefices. This practice of the papal curia in appointing to ecclesiastical offices continued in spite of complaints.

Of special interest is the eleventh canon directing that chairs for teaching Hebrew, Greek, Arabic and Chaldean should be created at the main universities. The suggestion was Raymond Lull's, who advocated learning Arabic as the best means for the

conversion of the Arabs. Although the canon remained almost without effect as there were few teachers of Oriental languages, its acceptance indicates the growth of the missionary idea in the West. Gregory X had already hoped for the conversion of the Mongols, and Franciscan friars had penetrated into the depths of Asia in their missionary zeal. Although these hopes were not fulfilled, the missionary spirit continued to develop.

It is impossible to say with precision how many canons were accepted at the Council, as several measures proposed by the pope or by the committees were not finally drafted. Therefore, the pope established a special commission for postconciliar work on them, reserving to himself the right to give to them definite form. The work was unfinished at Clement's death, and Pope John XXII, probably after further revision, published them in 1317 under the name of *Clementines*. They were sent to the universities and became an integral part of ecclesiastical legislation.

CHAPTER III

THE SHADOW OF THE CONCILIAR THEORY

WESTERN SCHISM: ORIGINS OF THE CONCILIAR THEORY

The alarming consequences on Church life of the growing curial policy of centralization were vividly described by a keen observer, Durandus, Bishop of Mende, in his *Treatise on the General Councils*. He proposed radical reforms consisting mainly of restrictions on papal centralization, respect of the rights of the bishops, revival of the old synodal practices and better education of the clergy. None of his proposals were seriously considered at Vienne, although he had written his treatise for that Council.

During the reign of Clement V's successor John XXII (1316-34), the harmful effects of the curial practice on Church life became even more evident. He completed the centralizing system, and extended to all Western lands the curial practice of conferring ecclesiastical benefices. Thus he created a kind of absolutist state, to which all Christians were subject, through the government of a hierarchy completely subordinate to the judicial power and fiscal rights of its head. He is to be credited with having been among the first to realize the importance of sound finances for any political power in a world rapidly changing over to a money economy.

All this, however, resulted in the debasement of the spiritual forces which the papacy was bound to protect and provoked fanatical opposition, particularly in the ranks of the Spirituals,

who, in spite of the decision of the Council of Vienne, continued to demand the absolute poverty of monastic institutions. William of Occam, a famous English Franciscan philosopher, was one of the fiercest opponents of John XXII.

The pope's plans in Italy where, with the help of the Angevin kings of Naples, he hoped to restore papal political authority in Lombardy and Central Italy, and thus make possible his return to Rome, brought him into violent conflict with the German king Louis IV. When threatened with excommunication, Louis accused the pontiff of usurping the rights of German Prince Electors, launched against him the charge of heresy, because he had rejected the doctrine of the Spirituals and finally appealed to a future General Council.

The change in the political and ideological atmosphere of Western Christianity is illustrated in Rome by the elevation of Louis to the imperial dignity, not by the representative of the pope, but in the name of the rebellious people of Rome. All this echoed the revolutionary ideas which Marsilius of Padua had expressed in his *Defensor Pacis*, a most daring treatise of medieval political thought. He stressed the sovereignty of the people against papal theocratic principles as the foundation on which the State is built. The authority of the hierarchy was limited, according to him, to providing for spiritual needs under the surveillance of the State, and the pope's actions should be controlled by General Councils in which laymen and States would be represented.

These were dangerous ideas, hitherto unheard of, but if Marsilius and his associate John of Jandun hoped that the excommunicated Emperor would accept them, they were mistaken. With the help of France, the papacy once more won the struggle against the emperors. It was John's second successor Clement VI, who chose Charles IV, future king of Bohemia, to supplant the rebellious Emperor, Louis IV.

It was the Emperor Charles IV who prepared the way for Urban V to return to Rome, at least temporarily. However, the Emperor died that same year (1378), when the Great Schism of the West had begun. Some of the cardinals, offended by the

haughty attitude of Urban VI, declared invalid his election, made under pressure from the people of Rome, and elected a new pope, Clement VII, who established himself in Avignon.

It was during this period of the Western Schism which lasted until 1415, that the so-called conciliar theory, proclaiming the superiority of the council over the pope, was formulated. Although similar ideas had been put forward by William of Occam and Marsilius of Padua, the canonists of the fourteenth and fifteenth century, who had developed this theory, do not seem to have been inspired by these radical writings. The canonical basis of the conciliar theory was the medieval concept of a corporation, according to which the head of a corporation is the executive of a power residing in all members of the corporation and which has been delegated to him by them. Should the head of the corporation cease to exist or when it failed to promote the interest of the body corporate, the delegated power reverted to its members.

It should be stressed that even the staunchest defenders of the superiority of spiritual power over the temporal, which is embodied in the pope, accepted the medieval principles governing a corporation and did not hesitate to apply them to the Church. For example, Hugaccio, teacher of Innocent III, in the spirit of these ideas, taught that a pope can personally fall into error, but the Church cannot, meaning not only the Roman Church, but also the universal Church. The Church, thus represented in a council, is empowered to state the error of a pope who, at that same moment, ceases to be pope. From these premises also originated the thesis that a council with a pope is superior to the pope alone.

From such reasoning it was not difficult to conceive the principle—this was done by John of Paris who died in 1306—that the plenitude of power is given by God to the Church composed of all the faithful. The community of the faithful transferred this power to the pope through his election by the cardinals. The community can, however, take back this transfer should the pope fall into error, or if he uses his power to the detriment of the Church. Once this principle had been accepted,

there remained only the controversial question as to whether this recall of the power given to the pope should be effected by the cardinals alone, or by a council representing all the faithful.

The first denials of the plenitude of power invested in the pope, the appeals to a council made by the cardinals of the House of Colonna, and by King Philip the Fair against Boniface VIII, and by Louis IV against John XXII, were based on this reasoning of the canonists. The idea of the superiority of the council would, however, hardly have been fully formulated and so widely accepted had the schism not occurred in 1378. The situation appeared more serious as the schism was not caused by a secular ruler, but by the cardinals themselves. In the opinion of many, schism was tantamount to heresy.

The fact that the schism originated from a double election deprived the cardinals of their judicial rôle over the pope, and the responsibility for the removal of the scandal returned to the faithful, as represented by a General Council. This was propounded in 1379 by two German theologians from the University of Paris, Henry of Langenstein and Conrad of Gelnhausen. However, such a thesis was still too new. It was only when all hope of any other solution had vanished and when the disorders created by two rival curias, in Rome and in Avignon, became too glaring, that the conciliar idea was accepted generally as the only possible remedy. So it happened that in 1409 thirteen cardinals withdrew their obedience to both Benedict XIII of Avignon and Gregory XII of Rome, and convoked a Council in Pisa.

Although the convocation was based on very slender authority, the general desire for an ending of the schism was so great that the Council promised to be a success. Nearly 100 bishops and abbots were present. Moreover, following the practice introduced at the Council of Vienne, 100 bishops, 200 abbots, many chapters and thirteen universities sent their procurators or representatives.

The two popes, having refused to appear, answered the challenge by convoking their own councils. They were deposed and the council empowered the cardinals to elect a new pontiff. The

new pope, Alexander V, died the following year and the unscrupulous and ambitious Baldassare Cossa was elected and took the name of John XXIII. Since the two previous popes refused to resign, Western Christianity thus became even further divided. The new pope, elected in Pisa, had the largest following, although Benedict XIII was recognized in Spain and Scotland, Gregory XII by Germany, Naples, Venice and the Duke of Rimini.

THE COUNCIL OF CONSTANCE (1414-18)

Thus, the first attempt to suppress the schism, through the application of the conciliar theory by the cardinals, miscarried. There remained one last possibility, the intervention of the Emperor-Elect, King Sigismund (1410-37), Protector of the Church. The times when an Emperor could intervene with armed forces to pacify the Church had gone long ago, and Sigismund could attempt pacification only by resorting to the conciliar idea. He offered obedience to John XXIII on the condition that the latter would agree to the convocation of a Council of Union at Constance. Sigismund announced the convocation in 1413 and was followed in this by John XXIII.

The latter regarded the new Council as the continuation of that of Pisa, expecting to be reconfirmed by the Italian bishops who held a majority at the Council. The Council was opened on November 5th, 1414. The non-Italian prelates demanded that the voting should be carried out not according to the number of prelates present, but according to the system adopted by medieval universities. All present were divided into four nations—the Germans, comprising prelates from the whole of central and eastern Europe together with Scandinavia; the French and English with the Irish and Scots; and the Italians. Later, when Spain had joined the Council, she obtained the fifth vote.

Seeing that his hopes for reconfirmation had vanished (his private life was not without blame) John XXIII escaped to his friend, the Duke of Tyrol. But again, the expectation that his disappearance would wreck the Council was frustrated by the energetic intervention of King Sigismund, who forbade the members of the Council to leave Constance. This treacherous

action of Pope John's resulted in the conciliar theory being officially accepted and applied by the members of the Council in its fullest sense. Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris, took the initiative in his speech on March 23rd and the Council made it a law in the famous decree *Sacrosancta*, voted on April 6th. In this decree, the Council declared itself an ecumenical assembly with full jurisdiction given it by Christ. Therefore, all Christians, even the pope, must obey its decisions in matters of faith, of union, and of Church reform.

The cardinals saw in this decree a curtailment of their own rights, but they protested in vain against its acceptance. In execution of the powers which the Council gave itself, an order was issued to arrest the fugitive pope. He was taken prisoner, incarcerated and deposed.

It was during this period when the Council, now without a pope, pretended to function as the supreme authority in all ecclesiastical matters, that the assembled Fathers, anxious to show their solicitude for the pure Catholic faith, hastened their condemnation of the heretical doctrines of the English reformer Wyclif and of his Czech follower John Huss. In his zeal for Church reform, Wyclif overstepped himself, demanding the absolute poverty of the Church, whose wealth should be taken over by the State. He regarded the Church as an invisible society, composed of souls predestined for salvation. Its head was Christ and the papacy was instituted by Antichrist. He rejected all those religious practices which gave occasion to the abuses he criticized, declaring the Bible to be the sole source of faith.

These doctrines were condemned by the Council (on May 4th, 1415) which then devoted all its attention to the doctrine and person of John Huss. The latter, a pious and virtuous man, was a zealous reformer in Bohemia, but he incurred the displeasure of the Archbishop of Prague by criticizing abuses too sharply. It is the irony of fate that it was the least legitimate pope, John XXIII, who provoked Huss' most violent criticism. When John promised indulgences to all who would contribute to his Crusade against the King of Naples, who refused to accept his obedience, Huss protested against the preaching and "sale" of indulgences.

It was after this incident that he put into writing his teaching on the Church inspired by Wyclif's ideas.

Huss had a large following among the Czech people and the nobility. Excommunicated and suspended, he was willing to appear at Constance after Sigismund promised to provide him with a letter of safe conduct. Although still under suspension, he began preaching in Constance and was imprisoned. It is questionable how far Huss believed all the thirty theses extracted from his works, often regardless of the context, in face of his frequent protests that he was unjustly accused of heretical teaching. He stubbornly refused to recant the heretical doctrines of which he was accused, and was condemned as an obstinate heretic. Sigismund made no attempt to save him from extradition by the Council and from burning at the stake on July 6th, 1415. A similar fate befell Huss' friend, Jerome of Prague, in 1416. By condemning heretical teachings, the Council gained respect, but the execution of John Huss provoked a new storm in Central Europe which disturbed the peace in the Church for many years to come.

After the deposition of John XXIII, the way for the liquidation of the schism was made easier by the voluntary abdication of Gregory XII (July, 1415), after he had published a Bull formally legitimizing the Council. Benedict XIII of Avignon, although abandoned by France, refused to abdicate and took refuge in Peniscola in Spain. Even though both Spain and Portugal abandoned his obedience, he refused to resign and was deposed by the Council on July 26th, 1417.

The German and English nations insisted on postponing the election of the new pope until after the vote of all the decrees on Church reform. After protracted negotiations, a compromise was reached. The most important of the five decrees, called *Frequens*, promulgated on October 9th, 1417, transformed the conciliar organization into a permanent institution, which would exercise a certain control over the papacy. The next council was to be convoked in five years, to be followed by another after seven years. Thereafter, a council should convene every ten years. Then, the collegium of fifty-six voters, cardinals and six

representatives of each nation, assembled in conclave and elected Pope Martin V on November 11th, 1417.¹

Unfortunately, the much desired reform of the Church was not seriously attempted. The seven decrees voted at the forty-third session in March, 1418, only tried to remedy certain consequences of the schism and curtailed certain fiscal prerogatives of the curia. The pope himself concluded individual concordats with each nation, giving them certain concessions as to the choice of cardinals and also in fiscal and administrative matters. Martin V, whose authority had grown considerably in spite of the anti-papal atmosphere created by the conciliar theory, closed the Council on April 22nd, 1418, after its last and forty-fifth session. He did not officially approve the decisions made and in forbidding appeals from the pope to a council he indirectly condemned the conciliar idea. Only in 1446 did his successor Eugenius IV declare that he accepted the decrees of Constance in so far as they did not curtail the authority and primacy of the papacy.

THE COUNCIL OF BASLE-FERRARA- FLORENCE (1431-45)

Although the papacy continued to recover its rightful position in the Church, the conciliar theory did not die without a struggle. Martin V, respecting the decisions of the Council of Constance, after five years convoked a new council in Pavia. The assembly was transferred to Siena, but, as only a few bishops had arrived, he dissolved it. In spite of this failure, the bishops insisted on the convocation of a new synod after seven years, as had been decreed at Constance. Martin V was therefore forced to summon a new synod at Basle (1431), appointing Cardinal Julian Cesarini as director of its debates.

It seemed likely that the Council of Basle would end in the same way as had the synod of Pavia-Siena. Cesarini, confirmed

¹ The Council prescribed a special profession of faith for the newly-elected pope. In the formula of the profession only one Lateran Council—probably the Fourth—and the Councils of Lyons and Vienne were added to the eight Ecumenical Councils enumerated in Gratian's collection of canon law. The practice was soon abandoned.

in his presidential function by Martin's successor Eugenius IV, thought that it was more important as papal legate to direct the Crusade against the Hussites, and so sent only his representatives to Basle, who opened the Council on July 23rd, though not one bishop had yet appeared. The Crusade against the Hussites ended in disaster, and Cesarini, who had barely escaped being taken prisoner, appeared in Basle in September. Because the number of delegates increased very slowly and because Martin V had already reached agreement with the Greeks to hold a Council of union in Italy, the pope, discouraged by exaggerated reports of the situation in Basle, dissolved the Council.

Before the papal decision had reached Basle Cesarini, after his sad experience with the last Crusade against the Hussites, had invited their representatives to appear in Basle for peaceful negotiations. The papal Bull of dissolution was greeted with dismay. The Fathers refused to obey and renewed the decree *Sacrosancta* of Constance, defining the superiority of the Council over the pope.

Because Sigismund was interested in pacifying the Hussites, who refused to recognize him as King of Bohemia, the Council continued its negotiations with the moderate party of the Hussites and induced them to accept, on November 30th, 1433, the so-called *Compacts of Prague*, which gave them the privilege of Communion under both species and other concessions concerning free preaching, punishment of public sinners and limitation of Church property.

This was a great success for the Council of Basle and it was greeted with relief, especially in Germany, whose crusading expeditions had all ended in defeat and whose lands, bordering on Bohemia, had been plundered by the victorious Hussites. The pope, already in a difficult position in Rome, was himself forced to revoke the Bull of dissolution and to legitimize the Council of Basle.

The pope's decision came too late, for in the meantime the Council had put into practice the conciliar principles. The Council was divided into four nations—French, Italian, German and Spanish—and any procurator or doctor, accepted as a member,

had full voting rights on a par with the cardinals and bishops who were in a hopeless minority. In spite of this, the Council endeavoured to act as the supreme authority in the Church.

Apart from the reconciliation with the Hussites, Church reform was the main preoccupation. Many useful decrees were voted, especially in matters of clerical life, organization of local synods, and the celebration of the liturgy. In other decrees, however, the anti-papal tendency predominated. Right of appeal to the pope was curtailed and all taxes demanded by the curia suppressed. This would have deprived the popes of most of their incomes, thus putting the papacy at the mercy of a Council whose composition did not correspond with Church tradition. Eugenius IV protested against such decrees, but without success.

The Council of Basle was also interested in promoting union with the Greeks. This was in the interest of Sigismund, who was wearied of the progress of the Turks against Byzantium, in Serbia and Bulgaria, in the vicinity of Hungary. The defeat which he suffered at Nicopolis (1396) showed him the magnitude of the Turkish danger. He therefore encouraged negotiations with the Greeks, which had been begun already by Martin V and which Eugenius IV had successfully concluded. The Emperor John VIII Palaeologus, menaced on all sides by the Ottoman Turks, saw clearly that without the help of the West he could not save the remnants of his empire or even the city itself. From past experience it was evident that the Greeks could be led to union only by a decision made in an Ecumenical Council. If the council could not be held in Constantinople, a possibility which was discussed, the Greeks favoured an Italian city more accessible to them.

It was over this question about the location of such a council that Basle made a definite break with Eugenius IV. The majority of the conciliar members—Basle had sent her own delegates to Constantinople—favoured Avignon or Basle. Cesarini and the minority sided with Eugenius IV who, according to the wishes of the Greeks, preferred an Italian city. Encouraged by the split at Basle, Eugenius IV dispatched a hired fleet to Constantinople to transport the Emperor, the patriarch and the delegation of

700 Greeks to Italy. Although Basle also sent boats to Constantinople for the same purpose, the Emperor sided with the pope who had proposed Ferrara as the seat of the Council. On September 18th, 1437, the pope transferred the Council from Basle to Ferrara, but the majority of the members revolted, refusing to obey the papal order.

The Council for the union with the Greeks was opened at Ferrara on January 8th and is regarded as the legitimate continuation of the Council of Basle. The Greek delegation, headed by the Emperor John VIII Palaeologus (1425–48) and the ecumenical patriarch Joseph, with delegates from the three other Eastern patriarchates arrived in March. The Emperor asked for postponement of the debates hoping in the meantime that the envoys of European princes, from whom he expected military help, would appear. Only few princes sent representatives. Others still favoured the Council of Basle or declared their neutrality in the controversy between the pope and Basle.

The discussions on purgatory began in June, but were fruitless, and they revealed that the Greek theologians had no clear ideas on this subject. After the arrival of Isidor, Metropolitan of Kiev, the addition of the *Filioque* to the Creed was debated, but no agreement was reached.

The pope, finding himself unable to entertain the large Greek delegation and the many Latin theologians, was obliged to accept the offer of the city of Florence which was willing to bear the financial burden. Because the plague was raging in Ferrara, he transferred the Council to Florence on January 10th, 1439. The dogmatic discussions on the procession of the Holy Ghost—the main obstacle to union—began in February and lasted till June. Bishop Mark Eugenicus of Ephesus stubbornly refused to accept the Latin explanation, but owing to the intervention of the learned Bessarion, Metropolitan of Nicaea, and other Greek prelates, the Greeks finally accepted the formula that the Holy Ghost derives in essence and in being at the same time from the Father and the Son and that he proceeds eternally from both, as from one principle and through a single spiration.

This accord was reached two days before the death of the

patriarch (June 10th). The discussions on purgatory, the Eucharist and the Roman primacy were long and interspersed with dangerous crises, but at last common agreement on the teaching of purgatory and the Eucharist—with leavened or unleavened bread—was reached. Finally it was defined that “the holy apostolic See of Rome had (spiritual) primacy over the whole world. The Roman Pontiff himself, as the successor of St Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, is the true Vicar of Christ, the head of the whole Church and the Father and teacher of all Christians. To him—in the person of Peter—has been given by our Lord Jesus Christ, full power to feed, rule and govern the Church universal, as it is also expressed in the Acts of the Ecumenical Councils and in the holy canons.” The decree of union was signed by all the Greeks present with two exceptions, and by the pope and the Latin prelates on July 6th, 1439.²

The conclusion of union with the Greeks was a great success for Eugenius IV and helped him, not only to vanquish the Council of Basle, but also to stop any further development of the conciliar movement which was trying to introduce radical changes into the constitution of the Church. In vain had the rebellious members of Basle declared the superiority of the Council over the pope as dogma. Not even the deposition of Eugenius IV and the election of the Duke of Savoy (Felix V) as anti-pope made the desired impression. Eugenius IV answered by an excommunication of the rebels and continued his work for union with the other Churches. On November 22nd, 1439, the Armenian Church concluded a union and the Copts from Egypt followed on February 4th, 1442. After the transfer of the Council to Rome, in September 1443, union with the Syriac Church was concluded, and in August, 1445, some Chaldaeans and Maronites from Cyprus joined the Church of Rome. The date of the final closing of the Council is not known.

² The translator of the Greek Acts of the Council, the Uniate Bishop Abraham of Crete, with the permission of the Curia called the Council of Florence the Eighth Ecumenical, following the Greek tradition. His contemporaries Cardinals Reginald Pole and Contarini, also regarded this Council as the Eighth Ecumenical. This “error” was “corrected”, in the collections of councils in the seventeenth century.

In the meantime, Eugenius IV continued to win over to his obedience those princes still hesitating between the papacy and the rebels in Basle. Through the conclusion of concordats he won over Aragon, Scotland, the German princes and the Emperor Frederick III. Frederick evicted the conciliar members from Basle in 1448. They moved to Lausanne, and after their pope had resigned in 1449, the Council met its inglorious end. The victory of the papacy over the dangerous and erroneous doctrine was achieved finally with the help of the Greeks.

The disunity among the European princes was one of the many reasons why the union with the Greeks and other Churches concluded at Florence and Rome did not last. Eugenius IV did not forget his promise to bring military help to the Greeks for the defence of their city. He himself entertained a small contingent of bowmen in Constantinople during the absence of the Emperor and, in 1442, he sent Cesarini to Central Europe to help Ladislas, King of Poland and Hungary, to organize a Crusade against the Turks, with the help of John Hunyadi of Transylvania, Serbia, Venice and Genoa. The crusaders had some success, and penetrated into Bulgaria. The battle of Varna, however, on November 10th, 1444, in which the Christian army was defeated, King Ladislas and the legate Cesarini killed, sealed the fate of Constantinople and the Union in Greece.

The Greek Uniats had a dangerous antagonist in Mark Eugenicus who arrived in Constantinople before the Emperor and began to spread his anti-unionist ideas among the monks and the common people. But the Emperor did not intervene, and this encouraged Mark and his friends. Distrust of the men who had concluded the union grew. As no substantial help was forthcoming from the West, the cause of the union was weakened. The pope sent Isidore, now a cardinal, who had been expelled from Moscow, and who had failed to enforce the union in the Russian lands under Poland-Lithuania—the leading Polish bishops favoured the rebel Council of Basle—to the Greek islands and to Constantinople to help the Uniats. His reports contain interesting details showing that the union had some chance of survival. Yet, although John VIII's successor Constantine XI remained

faithful to the union and encouraged the Uniats, dislike of the Latins was so deeply rooted in the Greek populace that his efforts were vain. Almost no help came from the West and the last Emperor of Constantinople died heroically on May 29th, 1453, defending his city which became the capital of the Ottoman Empire. A new patriarch, Gernadius Scholarius, once in favour of the union, later its fiercest enemy, was installed in Constantinople by the victorious Mohammed, and in 1484 the union of the Council of Florence was officially repudiated in a synod held in Constantinople.

*SURVIVALS OF THE CONCILIAR THEORY: THE FIFTH
LATERAN COUNCIL (1512-17)*

There was, however, one enduring result of the Union Council from which the Western Church profited immensely, namely the growth of the prestige of the papacy. The Greeks had kept the traditional concept of a council opposed to the Western conciliar idea. According to this concept, a council was ecumenical only when all five patriarchs were represented. The Roman patriarch, the first, was not represented at Basle. Moreover, the composition of this Council did not correspond to the old orthodox teaching that only bishops had the right to vote. These considerations, among others, influenced the decision of the Greeks, although Basle offered important concessions.

The rôle of the papacy in the Church, further enhanced by its victory at Basle, was stressed by many canonists, in particular by Cardinal Torquemada. Unfortunately, the popes neglected the clamour for reform of the Church in her head and members. The ideas of the Renaissance had penetrated the college of cardinals and the papal court. The discovery of classical treasures stimulated enormously the cultural development of Europe, but the re-emphasis on the rights of individual thought and action, expressed in literary and artistic classical works, created a wave of hedonism which led to acute moral decadence, especially in Church life. Serious reform could not be expected from the Renaissance popes, cardinals and bishops, and be-

cause of this, claims for the convocation of a new council of reform were repeated.

The attempts to revive the Council of Basle in 1482 ended in fiasco, but many princes used the conciliar idea as a weapon with which to threaten the popes. On the other hand, the popes whose authority had increased, were reluctant to convoke a council which might degenerate into another schism. In opposition to this possible danger, Julius II was forced to convoke the Fifth Lateran Council (1512–17). Its main goal was to defeat the revolutionary attempts made by Louis XII, the French king, to convoke an antipapal synod at Pisa in 1511, transferred in 1512 to Milan. The renewed threat of the theoretical superiority of a Council over the pope was, however, quickly dispelled by Julius' successor Leo X who, in 1516, concluded a concordat with Louis XII's successor, Francis I, advantageous to both, and approved by the Council of the Lateran.

Although many suggestions on how to reform the Church were presented to the pope by zealous reformers, the Council of the Lateran failed to attack the most crying abuses, namely, pluralism (the accumulation of benefices in the hands of one person), non-residence of incumbents of benefices and others. The decrees, voted in the four sessions before the twelfth and final meeting (March 5th, 1517), and published in pontifical Bulls, were well-meant attempts to amend the taxation practice of the curia, to recommend the choice of worthy bishops, to insist on religious instruction and preaching, to approve the pawnshops (*montes pietatis*) and the censorship of religious works. They were, however, not enforced. Leo X, with his worldly curia, was far from becoming a reforming pope. The splendour of the papal court, with its many great artists and newly-acquired cultural treasures, gave the impression that the old days of superiority of the spiritual power had returned.

So it happened that the warnings given by the radical teachings of Wyclif and John Huss, followed by social and religious strife in England and Bohemia, stayed unheeded, although all this was provoked by decadence in Church life and by a misguided desire for reform. Victory over these revolutionary

attempts appeared so decisive that the popes refused to confirm the concessions called Compacts, given by the Fathers of the Council of Basle to the moderate Hussites. The latter, although fundamentally Catholic, were refused the consecration of their elected archbishop. King George Podebrad was excommunicated by Paul II and threatened with new Crusades. These failed to attain their religious aim and increased the bitterness against the papacy in Central Europe.

CHAPTER IV

THE COUNCILS OF TRENT AND OF THE VATICAN

BEGINNING OF THE REFORMATION

In spite of appearances, the papacy was shaken in the eyes of many because no serious effort was being made to check the decadence. The evil was so deeply imbedded in Church life that only a radical shock could arouse the conscience of the authorities and spur them to action. The shock proved to be more radical and dangerous than could have been expected and it was provided by one man, a friar and professor at the University of Wittenberg, Martin Luther (1483-1546).

The close connection between Luther's revolutionary action and previous manifestations of the sort was revealed by the fact that he was impelled into open conflict by an incident similar to that which had spurred John Huss, namely by abuses in the preaching of indulgences for the construction of St Peter's Church in Rome. It is characteristic that the first printed edition of Huss' treatise on the Church was made on Luther's initiative. And it was Luther also who declared in his disputation with Eck that Huss' condemnation at Constance was unjust. Wyclif's declaration that the Bible is the only authority for Christian teaching was repeated by the German reformer.

The example given by the two condemned reformers was not, however, the main incentive in Luther's revolution. Sharing with many of his pious contemporaries the anxiety of how it is possible to save one's soul in view of the immensity of the Absolute, as revealed in the writings of Christian Humanists,

and because of the sinfulness of human nature, Luther found his answer in St Paul's Epistle to the Romans (1. 17): "It reveals God's way of justifying us, faith first and last; as the scripture says, It is faith that brings life to the just man." In his interpretation, only a firm faith in God's promises assured man's salvation. Thus, it seemed logical to him that there was no need for good works and for those ritual and sacramental means—Mass, sacraments, indulgences—which the Church recommended as helpful or necessary for salvation. The means were compromised in the eyes of many by flagrant abuses. The mediation of the clergy, necessary for the administration of these means, was rendered vain by Luther's teaching of the priesthood of all believers. His doctrine that human nature is wholly corrupt as a consequence of original sin, and destitute of free will, justified his conviction that man can be saved by faith alone. This, however, provoked the protest of many Humanists, who were in favour of reform and sympathetic to Luther's efforts, and the greatest of them, Erasmus of Rotterdam, spoke out in glowing defence of man's freedom.

But in spite of these protests, Luther's revolutionary doctrine continued to spread, helped by social disorders, national sentiments against the curia's intervention in German political and religious life, by the desire of the nobility to control the riches of the Church, and by the general feeling of the necessity for radical reforms. Voices were heard on all sides calling for the convocation of a new council. Luther himself appealed against condemnation by a legate, to a better informed pope, and to a General Council in 1518, and again in 1520.

Although Pope Leo X condemned the forty-one theses, extracted from Luther's writings, as heretical or false (June 15th, 1520), many regarded this condemnation as not final, as long as it was unconfirmed by a Council. The Protestant Estates in Germany claimed the convocation of a free council in German lands. Pope Clement VII (1523–34) was opposed to the idea, fearing a new Basle, the more so as the German Estates imposed conditions on its convocation which he could not accept.

The situation was also complicated by political entanglements.

The Emperor Charles V (1519–66), master of Spain, the Low Countries and Germany, was laying the foundations of a universal Empire governed by the House of Habsburg of which he was the head. France, fearing encirclement by the Habsburgs, tried to take hold in Italy, but Francis I was defeated and captured at Pavia in 1525. Charles' success provoked, however, a reaction on the part of the papacy, which feared a Spanish encirclement in Italy, and of England, which also aspired to maritime expansion. France saw herself forced to conclude an alliance with the Turks, a fact which buried for ever the principle of the unity of Christendom and of Europe.

It was, of course, in the interest of France that Germany should not be pacified, as this would increase the power of the dangerous Habsburg rival. On the other hand, the pope was afraid of imperial predominance at any council held in Germany. So it happened that many years were lost and Luther's revolutionary reform spread from Germany to Scandinavia and Bohemia. The Protestant Estates formed the League of Schmalkalden for their defence against the Emperor.

THE COUNCIL OF TRENT (1545–63)

A change came when Paul III was elected pope (1534–49). Ceding to the pressure exercised by the Emperor and by public opinion, he convoked a General Council in 1537 in Mantua. It was transferred the same year to Vicenza but, on account of the opposition manifested by France, the Protestant Estates and, finally, also by the Emperor, the Council was suspended in 1539 without having accomplished anything.

The Emperor hoped to come to an understanding with the Protestants in public discussions but they were fruitless. The mission of Cardinal Contarini in Germany failed, and there was left only one last resort, namely, the renewal of a conciliar convocation. This was done in 1542, and the pope accepted Trent as its seat. However, new political complications suspended its opening for three years. The Emperor, again at war with France, was forced to grant certain concessions to the Protestant Estates, in spite of papal protest, and only after the conclusion of the

peace of Crespy (1544), could the Council be reconvoled in November 1544 for March of the next year. Having overcome further complications, it started its work in December.

The Emperor insisted on the deferment of dogmatic discussions until after the voting of reforms. The pope, of course, regarded the condemnation of heretical teaching and the definition of Catholic dogmas as the first duty of the assembled Fathers. Although he himself was guilty of nepotism and indulged in worldly pleasures, he was well aware of the necessity for more thorough reforms, and the Reform Committee, created by him and composed of learned and highly respected prelates, and led by Cardinals Contarini and Carafa, prepared a well-designed programme aimed in the first place at the reform of the papal Curia.

In mutual agreement, it was decided to treat dogmatic problems and Church reforms together. The principles adopted at Constance and Basle on the composition of the Council and its agenda were rejected. Only cardinals, bishops and heads of religious Orders were given the right to vote. All questions were first studied in committees composed of theologians, and their recommendations were then discussed in general congregations by the prelates entitled to vote. They elected deputies charged with the wording of the decrees and canons which were then approved in solemn assembly. The sessions were presided over by papal legates, Cardinals del Monte, Cervini and Reginald Pole.

It was logical to concentrate first on the basic teachings rejected by the Protestants. In the fourth solemn session, therefore, it was defined that not only the Bible, but also tradition is the source of Catholic faith. The canon of the inspired writings was established, the Latin translation of the Bible, the Vulgate, declared as authentic, and norms for the interpretation of Scripture were given. Then followed the Catholic definition of original sin and, in the seventh session, the dogma of the justification of man was formulated. Against Luther's doctrine of faith in Christ's merits as the only means of justification, the importance of man's free will in cooperation with God's grace

was stressed, the result being the interior sanctification of the soul through sanctifying grace. Then, the Catholic doctrine on the sacraments was studied, and in the seventh solemn session was defined with special emphasis on baptism and confirmation.

At the fifth, sixth and seventh sessions, a number of reform decrees were published concerning theological studies with emphasis on scriptural exegesis. Others stressed the duty of residence by incumbents of benefices, and on the need for preaching. The number of prelates—mostly from Italy—increased from thirty-one to sixty-four together with seven heads of religious Orders.

The pope gave his consent to a council being held on imperial territory very unwillingly, and his legates and bishops resented the interference of the Emperor exerted through the prelates from Spain. When, in the spring of 1547, an epidemic broke out, during the eighth session, the legates took advantage of this opportunity to transfer the Council to Bologna. The Emperor took offence at this decision and ordered thirteen of his prelates to stay at Trent.

The transfer of the Council appeared to be premature. The emperor, at war with the Schmalkaldic League, won the battle of Mühlberg (April 24th, 1547), and, having a free hand in Germany, insisted on the return of the Fathers from Bologna to Trent, since the participation of Protestants in a Council held on papal territory was out of the question. He secured the concession that the decisions arrived at during the ninth and tenth sessions at Bologna would not be published.

Exploiting his military victory, Charles V endeavoured to reach a kind of *modus vivendi* with the Protestants, granting them certain concessions in the so-called *Interim* of Augsburg. These were the granting of the chalice to the laity and the non-celibacy of the clergy, both of which should be binding till the council should restart its work. Paul III, dissatisfied with this, suspended the Council on September 13th, 1549. He died two months later and the new pope, Julius III (1550–55), who as Cardinal Del Monte had been the former president of the conciliar assemblies, was more agreeable to the Emperor's demand, and recalled the Council (November 14th, 1550).

The six sessions of this second period of the Council of Trent (from May 1st, 1551, to April 28th, 1552), were of quite a different character to the previous sessions. Because of further warlike complications with the Emperor, no French prelates were present, and the Spanish bishops maintained their independent attitude. The three German archbishops, Prince Electors of Mainz, Trier and Cologne, arrived, followed by ten other bishops, and the Emperor insisted on the presence of the Protestant representatives. Before they arrived, the Fathers continued the discussions on the sacraments, elaborated at the two sessions at Bologna, and published in the thirteenth session the decrees on the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. They defined the Catholic doctrine on the sacraments of penance and of extreme unction. The reform decrees, accepted in these sessions, concerned the discipline of the clergy and their appointments to ecclesiastical benefices. They did not include, however, certain demands made by some of the bishops, the legates being anxious to prevent curtailment of some practices of the curia.

The discussions with the Protestant delegates lasted from October 1551 to March 1552, but were fruitless. The Protestants presented conditions unacceptable to the conciliar Fathers, such as fresh discussions of all controversial matters already defined by the Council; declaration of the superiority of the Council over the pope; and absolute freedom of the conciliar members from obedience to the pope. Again, political developments put an end to the debates. The Prince Elector of Saxony, formerly on the side of the Emperor, changed his allegiance and, in alliance with France, declared war, marching towards the Tyrol. The Emperor, unprepared for this change of events, barely escaped from Innsbruck, and the Council, without the guidance of its president, the Cardinal-legate Crescenzo, now on his death-bed, adjourned for two years.

Not two, but ten years passed before the Council could assemble in Trent for the third time. Charles VI was forced to come to terms with the Protestants, and the Peace of Augsburg (1555) established equality between the Protestant and Catholic Estates, making definite the acceptance of the unchristian prin-

ciple, *Cuius regio illius et religio*, which meant that subjects must follow the religion of their sovereigns. Disillusioned and convinced of the fruitlessness of his efforts to restore religious unity in Germany, Charles V abdicated (1556) in Germany in favour of his brother Ferdinand I of Austria, and in Spain, Italy and the Netherlands, of his son Philip II (1556–98). Paul IV (1555–9), fully convinced of the plenitude of his power over men and kingdoms, turned a deaf ear to all requests for the convocation of a synod. Although energetic in carrying out reform of the Church, especially by means of the Inquisition, he was guilty of nepotism and came into conflict with Philip II and Ferdinand I.

His successor Pius IV (1559–65) changed his attitude towards the Habsburgs, although he followed apprehensively Philip's pretensions to the rôle of protector of the Catholic Church and the papacy. Assisted by his nephew, Charles Borromeo, whom he made cardinal and Archbishop of Milan—a case of papal nepotism for which the Church should be thankful—he was not opposed to true reform. Moreover, the rapid progress of Calvinism in France—Calvin's doctrine spread also from Switzerland to Hungary and Poland—made imperative the reopening of the Council as the only way to save Catholicism in France. In his bull of November 29th, 1560, Pius IV thus reopened the third period of the Council of Trent (from January 18th, 1562 to December 4th, 1563, sessions seventeen to twenty-five). Delay in the opening was caused by more complications. Although the Protestants refused the invitation to be present, Ferdinand I hoped that they might change their attitude if the assembly was declared to be a new Council and was convoked in another German city. The French king also preferred to call the Council a new one, but wanted it to meet in Trent. The pope left this question open in the convocation, although he was in favour of regarding it as the continuation of the two previous assemblies. This difficulty was solved by the fact that the German bishops stayed away, fearing to be accused of not respecting the Peace of Augsburg.

The pope appointed Cardinal Gonzaga as president, assisted by four other cardinals. There were new difficulties to overcome.

Ferdinand I, fearing more defections to Protestantism, asked for the legalization of priestly marriages and the granting of the chalice to the laity. The Spanish and French bishops, wishing to be more independent of the papacy, asked for a definition stating that episcopacy was of divine right. These requests came to the forefront after the twenty-first and twenty-second sessions, in which the Catholic teaching on the sacrificial character of the Mass was defined. Ferdinand's request for the "lay chalice" was left to the decision of the pope, who granted it for some German and Habsburg lands. The concession failed, however, to produce the desired effect, and was soon withdrawn.

The situation was saved after the death of Cardinal Gonzaga by the new president of the Council, Cardinal Morone. He succeeded in pacifying the Emperor, came to an understanding with the French and Spanish bishops, and opened the twenty-third session on July 14th, 1563. The Catholic doctrine on the sacrament of Orders and of the hierarchy was proclaimed, the obligation of residence was more strictly decreed, and the erection of seminaries for the education of the clergy was ordered.

Morone succeeded also in coordinating the many proposals for Church reform, submitted by the Emperor and other princes, by the French episcopate, Italian bishops and prelates, and presented forty-two reform articles to the Council for approval. The last two sessions were devoted to the debates on these proposals. They regulated the appointment of bishops, designating their duties, especially the visitation of their dioceses, ordered yearly diocesan synods and every third year, provincial synods, reformed the cathedral chapters and gave prescriptions for the appointment of rectors of parishes, emphasizing the duty of preaching. Some decrees were also voted concerning monastic life.

In the twenty-fourth session, the sacramental character of marriage was emphasized, and the decree *Tametsi* defined that only a marriage concluded in the presence of the parish priest and at least two witnesses was valid. In the last session, the Catholic doctrine on purgatory, indulgences and the veneration of saints, their relics and images, was proclaimed. The decrees

were signed by 199 bishops, and fourteen abbots and generals of Orders. All the conciliar decrees were confirmed by the pope on January 28th, 1564.¹

In order to guarantee the authentic interpretation of these decrees Pius IV instituted a special congregation of cardinals which still functions today. His successor Pius V sent the decrees to all the bishops and published the Roman catechism summarizing the conciliar dogmatic decrees, for the use of the parish priests. A reformed Breviary and Missal were published at the same time.

The Council of Trent did not succeed in abolishing the religious differences provoked by Luther, Calvin and other Reformers. It proved, however, that the Church was still able to reform herself and her spiritual life was unimpaired. It is the most important council of the Western Church. It gave clear definitions of Catholic truths and, with the decrees for Church reform, adapted ecclesiastical life to the exigencies of the new age, so different from the life of the Middle Ages. The renewed confidence of the hierarchy and the faithful in the future of the Catholic Church was manifested in the Counter-Reformation and in zealous missionary activity in the new lands, organized mainly by the Jesuits. The last echoes of the conciliar theory were silenced by the pronouncements of the Fathers on the position of the papacy in the Church. The fact that all decisions were presented to the pope for confirmation indicated that the pope was indeed supreme over a Council.

¹ During the debates the French and the Spanish bishops refused to recognize the Fifth Lateran Synod as an Ecumenical Council. Two specialists in conciliar matters of the sixteenth century, Jacobazzi and Ugoni, omitted the First and Second Councils of the Lateran and that of Basle in their list of Ecumenical Councils. In the seventeenth century, Cardinal Bellarmine introduced the practice which is followed by modern canonists, counting the Council of Trent as the Nineteenth Ecumenical, to which the Vatican Council was added at the present day as the Twentieth Ecumenical. It should be stressed that this number was not fixed by any papal decree. As already mentioned, the designation of a Council as ecumenical has not yet been thoroughly investigated. It should be noted that the editors of the Acts of Councils generally stop giving a number to a General Council after the Synod of 869-70, called by them the Eighth Ecumenical.

FROM TRENT TO THE VATICAN COUNCIL

This strengthening of the supreme position of the pope in the Church was revealed also by the fact that almost three hundred years went by before a new Ecumenical Council was convoked. In the meantime, after the conclusion of the Thirty Years' War (1648), it was clear that the division of Western Christianity into two separate bodies was to remain. The Counter-Reformation stopped the progress of Protestantism in Austria, Hungary, Germany and Poland, and the influence of Luther's and Calvin's teaching on Catholic doctrine as it was manifested in Jansenism was limited to a small circle of *dévots* in France and Holland. Religious tension diminished, minds became increasingly tolerant, but also increasingly indifferent to religious problems.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are characterized by the growth of absolutism in all European realms and by the secularization of the idea of the State. This new utilitarian trend in political philosophy was inclined to regard the Church as useful only in helping the citizens to fulfil their duties to the State. The consequence of this was the tendency to set up established Churches and to limit interference by Rome in them. French Gallicanism, German Febronianism and Austrian Josephism furnish striking illustrations of this development.

These new tendencies became the more dangerous as they were supported by ideas of enlightenment which had spread from England over the whole of Europe and which deepened the gulf between reason and faith, opened up by the Renaissance and the Reformation. Progress in philosophy and material sciences accentuated this evolution which reached its peak in France in the second half of the eighteenth century, sowing the seeds from which grew the French Revolution, which convulsed the world.

The French Church paid a heavy price for the mistakes of the absolutist era, and the secularization of ecclesiastical principalities (1803) definitely shattered the traditional constitution of the German Church. The new ideas of democratic and con-

stitutional governments, which led to the revolution of 1848, gave more freedom to the Church in many countries, but new progress in science and increase in material welfare had for its consequence the origin of new doctrines dangerous to religious life, such as liberalism, positivism and materialism. Social problems created by the progress of industry gave birth to socialism and communism, both hostile to the Church.

In spite of this, the Church, although unable to stop the flood of new and dangerous ideas, stood firm throughout these storms. A new hierarchy was established in England, Holland and America. On the other hand the Church suffered serious reverses. Clement XIV had to sacrifice the Jesuit Order (1773), Pius VI (1782) and Pius VII (1804) had to humiliate themselves before Joseph II and Napoleon I, but the supranational position and authority of the papacy was recognized more and more as the most important factor in Church life. A renaissance of Catholic scholarship in France and Germany in the nineteenth century strengthened this tendency.

Pope Pius IX (1846-78) was well aware of the danger which the new doctrines presented to the purity of the Catholic faith. He was also conscious of the supreme position of the papacy in doctrinal affairs. He made use of this prerogative in 1854 when, after consulting all bishops in communion with him, he proclaimed as revealed dogma the Immaculate Conception of Mary. At the same time, a committee established by him was classifying the principal erroneous doctrines of the time, the so-called *Syllabus*, which was sent with an Encyclical to all the bishops on December 8th, 1864. Eighty of the most important erroneous doctrines were condemned, among them rationalism, pantheism, indifferentism, naturalism, false views on moral matters, especially matrimony, communistic ideas and false conceptions of the relations between Church and State. The *Syllabus* was received with bitter criticism by the liberals, who quite wrongly looked upon it as a threat to modern culture. It was in reality a defensive effort to prevent the spreading of false doctrines among Christians.

When publishing the *Syllabus*, the pope was already pre-

occupied with the idea of assembling a new Ecumenical Council. After considering the opinions of some of his cardinals and bishops, he announced his intention publicly to 500 bishops present in Rome, in June 1867, for the celebration of the anniversary of St Peter's and St Paul's martyrdom, and convoked the Council in his Bull of June 29th, 1868 for December 8th of the next year, in St Peter's Basilica in Rome. His intention to make it a union council was thwarted, however, by the refusal of the Orthodox patriarchs to attend. Also his open letter to Protestants and non-Catholics to return to the Church found no favourable echo.

In order to prepare the way for the smooth working of the Council, the pope formed a special central commission of cardinals in 1865, under whose control six subcommissions worked on such subjects as dogma, Church discipline, religious Orders, Oriental Churches and missions, politico-ecclesiastical affairs, and the ceremonial to be observed during the Council. Prominent theologians were invited to participate in the preparatory work in the subcommissions. The pope appointed five cardinals as presidents, headed by Cardinal Reisach, who fell ill and was replaced by Cardinal De Angelis, a secretary (Bishop J. Fessler of St Pölten), and other officials. All members of the Council could propose motions which had, however, to be examined by the Congregation of Petitions and to be approved by the pope before being included in the *schema* (draft). The printed drafts submitted to the Synod were to be examined by general congregations of all conciliar members presided over by a cardinal.

If the drafts were not approved, special subcommittees, called deputations—on matters of faith, Church discipline, religious Orders, Oriental Churches—elected by the Council had to examine the objections and propose amendments to the original drafts to the general congregations. The final votes were then made in public conciliar sessions, presided over by the pope. Only cardinals, bishops, including titular bishops, abbots *nullius*, i.e. exempt from diocesan jurisdiction, abbots, heads of Congregations and generals of Orders were authorized to vote. No special invitations were addressed to Catholic rulers.

THE VATICAN COUNCIL (1869-70)

When advising the pope to convoke a new Council, many bishops voiced their hope that the Council would proclaim the doctrine of the infallibility of the pope as dogma. Although this was not mentioned in the Bull of convocation, it was known that many so-called "ultramontane" bishops (mostly from Italy and Spain) desired it. An anonymous article published on February 6th, 1869, in the Jesuit review *Civiltà Cattolica* disclosed that the main object of the Council would be the condemnation of the doctrines indicated in the *Syllabus* and the proclamation of papal infallibility by acclamation.

The revelation provoked vehement protests on the part of liberal Catholics, and the leading German Church historian, Döllinger, answered with a violent attack against ultramontanism. The dean of the Sorbonne in Paris, Mgr Maret, was also apprehensive, but the opposite view was defended by the French writer Louis Veuillot, Archbishops Manning of Westminster and Déchamps of Malines. The Bavarian Prime Minister Hohenlohe in a circular note even invited the secular powers to common action against the proclamation of papal infallibility, but none of the European powers was willing to be involved in a step that would provoke sharp conflict with the Church.

Two French prelates, Archbishop Darboy of Paris and Bishop Dupanloup of Orleans, without denying papal infallibility, voiced their concern about the consequences of such a definition among Orthodox and Protestants. The majority of German and Austrian bishops expressed similar concern, regarding such a definition as "less opportune".

The Council was opened on the date announced by the pope in St Peter's Basilica.² Altogether, 774 bishops attended the

² The ceremonial opening of the Vatican Council revived some traditional customs introduced at similar occasions in the past. After the solemn Mass at which the pope and all bishops assisted, the secretary placed the open Gospel on the altar. This reminded them of the ceremonial observed at the First Ecumenical Council, when the Scriptures were set in the place of the statue of Victory, which stood in the front of the presidential tribune in the Roman Senate. After the official sermon pronounced by one of the bishops, all present rendered homage to the pope, presiding at the

meetings. The proposed draft "On the Catholic Faith" had already encountered sharp criticism when first discussed in the general congregation on December 28th. It was completely revised by the subcommission in the following months, and the new version was accepted during the third session on April 24th, 1870, by 667 votes.³ This first dogma decree was divided into four chapters with eighteen canons, which dealt with the existence of a personal God, the necessity of divine revelation, the substance of the faith and the relation between faith and science.

In the meantime, the Fathers devoted their time to debates on Church reform. Many proposals were presented and discussed. Criticisms of the curia and the college of cardinals were voiced, complaints about the excessive centralization of Church affairs in Rome were heard, certain bishops pointing out that the drafts spoke only of their duties but not of their rights; the Oriental bishops asked that their privileges and traditions be respected, and a reform of the Breviary was proposed⁴; and the

session. Then followed a prayer to the Holy Ghost and the Litany of the Saints. This was observed already at the Council of Vienne. Then the Gospel on the sending of the seventy disciples (Luke 10. 1-16) was read as was done already at the Second Council of Lyons, at the Councils of Vienne and Trent. After his allocution in which he announced the aims of the Council, the pope intoned the hymn to the Holy Ghost—the same was done at Vienne—and recited the prayer invoking the help of the Holy Spirit. Similar ceremonial will be followed at future councils.

³ During the sixth general congregation (January 3rd), Verot, Bishop of Savannah, then of Florida, regarded as the *enfant terrible* of the Council, when discussing the *schema* on man's origin proposed an addition declaring that Negroes also had a soul, being equal to the white man. This sounded like an echo of the American Civil War.

⁴ During the seventeenth general congregation (January 27th), Bishop Verot asked that all legendary accounts should be removed from the lessons in the Breviary, quoting as an example the story of Constantine the Great's baptism by Silvester I. He also recommended a wiser selection from the writings of the Holy Fathers, and was rebuked by the Chairman, who asked him to speak with more reverence of the holy Fathers. The most turbulent meeting was the thirty-first general congregation, on March 22nd, when Bishop Strossmayer asked for the removal of a phrase in the *schema* attributing the origin of all modern heresies to Protestantism, declaring that many Protestants love Christ sincerely and err "in good faith". When he tried to bring in the matter of "moral unanimity", at the Council, he had to leave the ambo under protest. Voices were heard: "He is another Luther, let him be cast out." This was the only turbulent "scene" which occurred at the Council.

problem of drawing up a short catechism for all Christians was debated. The drafts were returned to the subcommittees, were rewritten and discussed again in May. Unfortunately, none of them was regarded as ready for the vote or for publication. Some of the drafts and the results of the debates were, however, used by the canonists charged with compiling the new Canon Law.

Even during the debates "On the Catholic Faith", the conciliar Fathers were mainly preoccupied with the question of papal infallibility, which was to be decided during discussions of the second dogmatic theme or *schema*, "On Christ's Church". Very few bishops denied the truth of papal infallibility, but one fifth of them felt that its proclamation as dogma would be inopportune, fearing the apostasy of many liberal Catholics, a widening of the gulf between Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants, and, remembering the step taken by the Bavarian Prime Minister, a worsening of the relations between governments and the Church. The leaders of the minority were prominent and learned prelates, bishops of large dioceses. In France, the Archbishops of Paris and Lyons, Darboy and Ginoulhiac; Bishops Dupanloup of Orleans and David of St Briec; in Germany, Bishops Hefele of Rottenburg, Ketteler of Mainz; in Austria-Hungary, Cardinals archbishops Rauscher of Vienna and Schwartzberg of Prague, Archbishop Haynald of Kalocza and the high-spirited Croat bishop, Strossmayer of Diakovo; in the United States, Archbishops Kenrick of St Louis, Purcell of Cincinnati and Bishop Verot of Savannah, later of Florida; in Canada, Archbishop Connolly of Halifax; in England Bishop Clifford of Clifton; and in Ireland, Archbishop MacHale of Tuam. In general, most of the German and Austro-Hungarian prelates were opposed to the definition, as were also one third of the French conciliar members; about one half of the American Fathers, three from Canada, and about seven Italian prelates, among them the Archbishop of Milan. When those prelates in favour of the definition, led by Cardinal Manning and the Belgian Archbishop Dechamps, started agitating among the conciliar members, they collected 380 signatures

to their petition. The opposing minority was able to rally only 140 prelates.

The debates on the first dogmatic draft and on the disciplinary proposals had shown that the rules for the debates needed altering in the interests of the better progress of the proceedings. Therefore, on February 22nd, a new conciliar procedure was issued by the pope. It specified that proposals for amendments to the drafts were to be presented to the subcommittees before the debates in the general congregations. When at least ten of the Fathers had petitioned for the closing of the debates, the chairman of the congregation should submit the petition to a vote and close the debates, if the majority prevailed. The minority protested, fearing a considerable shortening of the debates, but in vain.

Although the proceedings at the Council were held in secret, news of the intentions of the majority of the Fathers to proclaim papal infallibility as a dogma reached the public outside Italy. The stormy protests which it provoked seemed to justify the fears of the minority. Even Newman of England voiced his apprehensions in a letter to Ullathorne, Bishop of Birmingham; in France, the dying Catholic leader Montalembert published a passionate warning, but the sharpest criticism was again voiced in Germany by F. Döllinger. Protests were heard from many governments, and Austria sent a warning to Rome, threatening that the projected definition would alter the relations between Church and State in the Empire.

The pope and the majority of the Fathers remained firm, however, and the debates "On Christ's Church", after the preparatory work in the subcommission, started on May 13th. They lasted until June 3rd. The main subject of the debate was, naturally, the question of primacy and infallibility. Altogether, thirty-nine speakers recommended the definition, and twenty-six spoke against it. Forty more prelates were about to take the rostrum. But 150 Fathers having proposed the closure of the debate, the majority voted in its favour, ignoring the protests of the minority. Among the most prominent speakers were the bishops Verot and Connolly of the United States and Canada,

who spoke against definition, and Spalding of Baltimore, who pleaded for definition, but tried to find a wording more acceptable to the minority. Archbishop Kenrick of St Louis, one of the forty who could not speak, published his prepared plaidoyer in a pamphlet.

After the debates on the draft as a whole, there followed special debates in a general congregation on the wording of the different chapters. The wording of the definition of papal primacy, in the three first chapters of the draft, which was debated from June 6th to June 14th, was accepted without difficulty. It was based on the definition already accepted by the Greeks at the Council of Florence, even with the ending of the canon, inserted at that time on the insistence of the Greeks: "as it is also expressed in the Acts of the General Councils and in the holy canons."⁵ The many amendments presented to the sub-commission were concerned mostly with the relationship between plenitude of papal power and jurisdiction of the bishops. In order to give satisfaction to some of the bishops, it was defined that "this power of the supreme pontiff far from being any prejudice to that ordinary and immediate power of episcopal jurisdiction by which bishops, who have been set by the Holy Ghost to succeed and hold the place of the Apostles, feed and govern each his own flock, as true pastors, is really asserted and protected by the universal Pastor".

More closely debated was the question of infallibility, contained in the fourth chapter of the draft. For the amendments in the sense of the minority twenty-two prelates spoke, and against them thirty-five. The subcommission rejected 144 proposals for changes. On July 13th, the fateful vote in the General Congregation disclosed that 451 Fathers voted for the definition (*placet*), eighty-eight against it (*non placet*) and sixty-two for it, under certain conditions (*placet iuxta modum*).

The minority was anxious to insert in the definition a statement making it clear that the pope's infallibility was conditioned by the infallibility of the Church. As the pope refused to propose to the Council any new wording, fifty-five prelates decided to

⁵ See above, p. 78.

abstain from further voting and left Rome. So it came about that the definite wording of chapter four was accepted in the last general congregation on July 16th, by almost all of the 552 Fathers present.

The fourth public conciliar session was held in the presence of the pope on July 18th. The constitution starting with the words *Pastor aeternus*, which contained the definition of infallibility, was accepted by 533 votes. Only bishops Fitzgerald of Little Rock and Riccio of Cajazzo voted against, but submitted to the decision of the majority. The pope confirmed the decision of the Council.

With this definition, the work of the Council was not yet finished. Unfortunately, political events made the continuation of the debates impossible. On the day after the fourth session of the Council war between France and Germany broke out, and many prelates left Rome. Because the French army protecting the papal state had to leave Italy, the Piedmontese troops invaded the Papal States and on September 20th occupied Rome. The pope became a prisoner in the Vatican, and issued a Bull a month later proroguing the Council indefinitely. Archbishop Spalding's and Cardinal Manning's proposal to continue the Council at Malines in Belgium could not be carried out.

The bishops of the minority, who considered the definition as inopportune, accepted it, bowing to the decision of the Council, as confirmed by the pope. Bishop Strossmayer was the last to submit. Thus the unity of faith in the Catholic hierarchy was clearly manifested.

The decisions of the Council were accepted everywhere by the clergy and the faithful with the exception of some circles in Germany. Professor F. Döllinger refused to accept them and, supported by some of his colleagues, denied the ecumenical character of the Council, declaring that the bishops had been deprived of freedom of action. He was excommunicated, and his followers founded the Old Catholic Church, whose first bishop was consecrated by a Dutch Jansenist prelate.

In spite of the support which the Old Catholics were given by the Prussian government during the anti Catholic *Kulturkampf*,

the new Church did not spread as much as was expected by its supporters. Their number had diminished to about 80,000 in 1957. A similar movement in Switzerland—the Christian-Catholic Church—found support in the Protestant government of the Canton of Berne, which also erected an Old Catholic theological faculty at the University, which still exists today. The Church has about 30,000 followers and a bishop.

The fears of the minority at the Council that the definition would alienate certain governments from the Church were not unfounded, but they were exaggerated. Bavaria declared the definition as hostile to the State, and Prussia used it as an excuse for launching the *Kulturkampf*, which, however, could not break the solidarity of the German Catholics. Austria found this a welcome opportunity to denounce the Concordat concluded in 1855, but no State forbade the proclamation of the conciliar decrees in its territory.

THE VATICAN DEFINITION AND ORTHODOX BELIEF IN CHURCH INFALLIBILITY

The hesitation of the minority at the Vatican Council to vote for the definition of the pope's infallibility was caused mostly by the fear that it would alienate the Orthodox Christians and be an obstacle to reunion. In order to understand the Vatican atmosphere, we should bear in mind that the conciliar Fathers were in a dilemma, as they had to deal with two extremes. On one side were the Neo-Ultramontanes, who wanted the definition to be interpreted in its widest sense. The protagonist of this attitude, in England, was W. C. Ward, editor of the *Dublin Review*. Although intransigent in this matter, Ward, being a theologian, did not go as far as the French Neo-Ultramontane Louis Veuillot, editor of the *Univers*, who wanted to see in the proclamation an affirmation of the quasi-omnipotence of the pope who should be looked upon as the source of all authority, both spiritual and temporal. In this spirit, the *Univers* spoke of the pope in a manner which was regarded by more theologically-minded Catholics as almost bordering on blasphemy. Similar utterances could be read in the Italian review *Civiltà Cattolica*.

On the other hand, there were in France survivals of Gallikanism, although few bishops were still under its spell. The Gallicans wanted to limit papal infallibility, making it conditional upon the consent of the Church, after the pronouncement of a doctrine by the pope.

The Fathers wisely avoided both extremes when, approving at last, the following form of the canon: "The Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, namely when exercising the office of pastor and teacher of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, is, through the divine assistance promised to him in St Peter, possessed of that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed his Church should be endowed in defining doctrine regarding faith or morals; and that, therefore, such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church, irrefrangible."

The minority at the Council did not oppose the doctrine, but was anxious to link the pope more closely with the Church in the canon to make it quite clear that the pope, when making a definition, was acting not only as the head of the Church, but also as its mouthpiece, embodying the infallibility of the Church. They proposed several amendments in this sense, which were rejected by the subcommission as vague and unnecessary.

Their effort was not, however, in vain. Although refusing any addition to the canon, the delegation added an historical introduction to it which satisfied, at least, some of the irresolute Fathers. This is the main passage of the introduction:

The Roman Pontiffs have as times and circumstances warranted sometimes by summoning Ecumenical Councils, or by asking for the opinion of the Church throughout the world, sometimes by particular synods, sometimes using other means which divine Providence supplied, defined that those things should be held which, with the help of God, they had recognized as conformable with the Holy Scriptures and apostolic traditions. For the Holy Spirit was not promised to the successors of Peter, that by his revelation they might make known new doctrines, but that by his assistance they

might inviolably guard and faithfully expound the revelation of the deposition of the faith delivered to the apostles.

The secretary of the deputation, Mgr V. Gasser, Bishop of Brixen, one of the first theologians of the Council, in his report to the General Congregation on July 11th, offered proposals as to how the canon should be interpreted.⁶ When replying to the objection that the definition of papal infallibility would make future councils unnecessary, he said:

They will be as necessary in the future as in the past. . . . Whenever errors were so widespread that the Christian world was in danger, the Catholic Church opposed to them her most solemn judgement in a General Council. But the most solemn judgement of the Church in matters of faith and morals is, and always will be, the judgement of an Ecumenical Council, in which the pope pronounces judgement, the bishops of the Catholic world sitting and judging along with him.

[While justifying the wording of the canon, he linked the infallibility of the Church to the Pope:] It is certain that the infallibility promised by God, be it in the universal teaching Church defining truths in Councils, or be it in the supreme Pontiff, reaches to absolutely the same range of truths, those namely which belong to the deposit of faith. . . . Almost all Catholic theologians agree that the Church in her authentic propounding and defining of such truths (which do not belong to the deposit of faith, but safeguard it), is infallible, so that to deny this infallibility would be a most grave error. . . . The Roman Pontiff in defining *ex cathedra* is possessed of that infallibility with which Christ wished his Church to be endowed.

In this part of his exposé, Mgr Gasser made it clear that theological questions concerning truths not belonging to the deposit of faith, but safeguarding it, were not affected by the definition: "In those things in which it is theologically certain, though not yet certain by faith, that the Church is infallible, by this decree of the Council the pope's infallibility similarly is not defined to be believed of faith."

⁶ His speech is published in Mansi's *Collection of Councils*, Vol. 52, col. 1209-30 and our quotation occurs in cols. 1211, 1226. English analysis and excerpts in C. Butler's *The Vatican Council* (London, 1936), pp. 134 ff.

Another authority, the conciliar secretary, Bishop J. Fessler, stressed very clearly that the Vatican definition of the pope's infallibility should not be extended, but interpreted in the strictest legal sense. The German scholars, attacking the dogma, extended its application to all papal legislation and all public official actions of the popes in the past and in the future. The famous canonist J. F. Schulte, professor at the German University of Prague, in his anti-conciliar tracts included in the definition the depositions of kings and the disposing of territories of condemned rulers in the Bulls of the medieval papacy. Provoked by these assertions, Bishop Fessler published a special treatise,⁷ rejecting Schulte's absurd interpretation and giving the proper meaning to the conciliar definition.

First, he limited the dogmatic definition of the Vatican only to the words following the formula *Definimus*—we define. All which precedes must be regarded as a very important introduction to the definition, but is not part of the dogma (pp. 38, 44). Then he specified clearly that the subject-matter of the definition must be only the doctrine of faith and morals. Moreover, the "pope must express his intention . . . to declare this particular doctrine on faith and morals to be an integral part of the truth necessary for salvation revealed by God . . ., he must publish it, and so give a formal definition in the matter" (p. 57). Thus "the pope has the gift of infallibility . . . only as supreme teacher of truth, necessary for salvation revealed by God, not as supreme priest, not as supreme legislator in matters of discipline, not as supreme judge in ecclesiastical questions, not in respect of any other questions over which his highest governing power in the Church may still in other respects extend" (p. 43). And in such a definition, "only that portion of it is to be looked upon and accepted as an *ex cathedra* utterance which is expressly designated as 'the Definition'; and nothing whatever is to be so regarded which is only mentioned as accessory matter" (p. 65). Schulte pretended that the Council wished to extend papal infallibility to social and political matters as well. Fessler, however, declared authorita-

⁷ *The True and The False Infallibility of the Popes*, English edition, London, 1875.

tively: "The pope cannot according to his own will and fancy extend his infallible definition to matters relating to the *jus publicum*, to which divine revelation does not extend" (p. 53).

Fessler's treatise was approved by Pius IX who ordered it to be translated into Italian. This is important, the more so as Fessler's explanations do not favour the interpretations which strong infallibilists, particularly Ward and Cardinal Manning, were giving to the decree. The latter extended it to all dogmatic declarations and censures of not strictly heretical doctrines, and to all papal legislation and judicial acts. This does not reflect the ideas which the two great conciliar authorities, Bishops Gasser and Fessler, had expressed in their explanations; because of their functions, they were in a position to know the minds of the great majority of the Fathers.

Bishop Ullathorne set forth in his pastoral letter on the Council the same ideas as Bishop Fessler. Important in this respect also is the pastoral letter of the Swiss bishops. They expressed their view in a more popular manner and limited papal infallibility in the following way⁸:

It in no way depends upon the caprice of the pope or upon his good pleasure to make this or that doctrine the object of a dogmatic definition. He is bound by and limited to the divine revelation, and to the truths which that revelation contains; he is bound and limited by the divine law and by the constitution of the Church; lastly, he is bound and limited by that doctrine, divinely revealed, which affirms that alongside the ecclesiastical hierarchy there is the power of temporal magistrates, invested in their own domain with a full sovereignty and to whom we owe in conscience obedience and respect in all things morally permitted, and which belong to the domain of civil society.

The last sentence excludes papal infallibility from the matters of *jus publicum* as Fessler has it, that is, from purely social and political subjects. Pius IX congratulated the Swiss bishops on their clear explanation of the limits of the infallibility.

It has been already said that the canonists who prepared the composition of the new canon law used the material in matters

⁸ Quoted in Fessler's book, p. 63.

of Church life collected by the Vatican Fathers, but not regarded as ready for definition. Also in the section dealing with the magisterium of the Church (canons 1322–9) they were inspired by the dogmatic decision of the Council and defined it in a very clear, legal way:

Christ the Lord committed to the Church the deposit of faith, that she, by the constant assistance of the Holy Ghost, might inviolably preserve and faithfully expound revealed doctrine.

All those things are to be believed by divine and Catholic faith which are contained in the word of God, written or handed down by tradition, and are proposed by the Church, either by solemn judgement or by her ordinary and universal magisterium, to be believed as having been divinely revealed. Such solemn judgement is pronounced either by an Ecumenical Council or by the Roman Pontiff, speaking *ex cathedra*.

Nothing is taken as declared or defined dogmatically, unless this fact is manifestly certain (Canon 1323).

Fessler, in his treatise against Schulte's extension of infallibility, declared (p. 53) that he knew of only a few papal declarations corresponding to the Vatican definition of infallibility. Some modern theologians find only twelve such declarations, of which six concern Catholic doctrine—the first, Leo I's letter to the Patriarch Flavian before the Council of Chalcedon, and the sixth, Pius IX's definition of the Immaculate Conception. The remaining six condemn heretical doctrines (that of Luther, Jansenism, Molinos, Fénelon, Quesnel and of the Council of Pistoia in 1799). The only infallible definition pronounced after the Vatican Council is that by Pius XII on the Assumption of our Lady. Papal encyclicals and Bulls—even that on the validity of Anglican Orders by Leo XIII—are to be accepted as right and expressing Catholic truth, but are not definitions *ex cathedra*. This judgement is extended generally also to Pius IX's *Syllabus* and to Pius X's Bulls on Modernism.

As concerns the relations between the infallibility of the Church and that of the pope, Bishop Gasser had already declared as unacceptable the view expressed by some strong infallibilists that infallibility resided primarily in the pope from

whom it is communicated to the Church. This relationship between the infallibility of the Church and that of the pope was very plainly stated by a prominent English theologian, the Dominican Fr Vincent McNabb. In his treatise, *Infallibility* (London, 2nd ed., 1927), he says (on p. 52):

It should be noted that infallibility is primarily given for the Church, and in some sense resides primarily in the Church. Neither the pope nor General Councils are ends in themselves: they look towards the Church. . . . So may it be said in a very true sense that the gift of infallibility resides primarily in the Church rather than in the popes or General Councils. . . . Though popes and General Councils may be looked upon as the proximate principles or organs of the Church's infallibility, yet it is true to say that in a certain sense infallibility resides primarily not so much in popes or General Councils as in the Church. When, then, it is recognized that Faith demands objective infallibility, and that conciliar and papal infallibility, though not subordinate to the infallibility of the Church, are yet referred on to it, matters are seen in their true light.

Dom Cuthbert Butler comments on Father McNabb's interpretation in the following way in his *History of the Vatican Council* (Vol. II, p. 231):

This seems to be sound interpretation. The infallibility of the Church is taken as the basic idea, the thing known and accepted by all Catholics as of Catholic faith, a charisma or gift that Christ willed His Church to be possessed of and promised to her: "Go teach all nations . . . and behold I am with you all days to the end of the world." Then it is said that the pope teaching *ex cathedra* is possessed of this same infallibility; as a General Council with the pope is a recognized organ whereby the infallible teaching of the Church is brought to authentic declaration, so the pope alone *ex cathedra* is another organ whereby the infallible teaching of the Church is authoritatively declared.

But even when the pope alone should proclaim a doctrine *ex cathedra* he can do so only after having examined the mind of the Church in this matter. After declaring that "infallibility is a divine assistance enabling the teaching Church to declare or expound the deposit of faith possessed by her," Fr McNabb

(p. 92) compares such a declaration of the pope, the head of the Teaching Church, with a judge sitting in the judgement seat. Before making his declaration *ex cathedra* on the case in process, the judge is bound to hear all the witnesses. His judgement is binding only after he has examined all the witnesses. "In the same way, the *ex cathedra* judgement of the pope (or Council) needs the *mind* of the Church as its necessary preliminary material."

These interpretations of the Vatican decree come very near to the Orthodox belief in the infallibility of the Church. Even the stipulation that a declaration *ex cathedra* does not need confirmation by the Church should not be irreconcilable with Orthodox belief. The comparison with the judge's definition after hearing the witnesses again helps. "It would be false to say that the official *ex cathedra* judgement of the judge's," says Fr McNabb, "needs the consent of the witnesses to make it binding. The evidence of witnesses gives the necessary *material* for the official judgement, but does not give the necessary *sanction*." In the case of the pope's definition, the witnesses are Scripture and tradition guarded by the infallible Church which have to be examined to find out what is the mind of the Church. The best and most natural means to do so should be an assembly of bishops in a Council, but even the Orthodox tradition accepts, instead of a convocation of a Council, the practice of a *referendum*, a consultation of the bishops by writing. It was done by Byzantine emperors because they were regarded as guardians of the Orthodoxy. The place of the emperors is now taken by the First Patriarch, the Bishop of Rome. In the two instances in modern times when such a definition was made, namely the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, a *referendum* to bishops in communion with Rome was chosen in preference to a Council.

On the other hand, none will deny that heresies may result not only from the denial or the excessive restriction of the meaning of a dogmatic definition, but also from too wide a connotation. Church history supplies many instances of this kind and the same principles must be applied to the Vatican definition.

The Neo-Ultramontane opinions and suggestions found no official support, but the tendency to attribute all sorts of things to the vague formula "the spirit of the Vatican Council" still exists and may, if pushed to extremes, prove as dangerous as the opposite excess.

In conclusion of this short review of the Ecumenical Councils of the Church, we add a short evaluation of what both the Eastern and Western Churches have accomplished for the definition and clarification of the deposit of the Christian faith. We should not forget that every principle and every truth had its own growth and was clearly valued and defined only after centuries of evolution. This is applicable to the principle of supreme leadership in the Church as well. The Roman Church developed this principle more effectively than did the Eastern Church, not only because, from apostolic times, the successor of St Peter in Rome has been held in special veneration by the Church, but also as a result of special political and ideological developments, different from those in the East, which made the emphasis on a central authority as easy as it was necessary.

To the Eastern Church fell the task of substantially helping to define the revealed truths bearing on the Blessed Trinity and to build up the dogmatic system of Christology. This was done by the Eastern Fathers in the first Seven Ecumenical Councils, with the assistance of the popes, represented by their legates. The Western Church, always more interested in practical matters and having benefited from the Roman genius for organization and administration, concentrated on another field of Christian thought and considered it her special mission to develop the principle of universality, of supreme and central leadership. Events in the nineteenth century accelerated this development, with the definition of infallibility by the Vatican Council as its final stage. This natural growth should be taken into consideration by those Churches and bodies which did not experience the same evolution.

In many ways, though not in all, the Christian world finds itself in a position similar to that which characterized the Trini-

tarian and Christological struggles, when a General Council proclaimed a doctrine and all Churches were invited to accept the decision. This acceptance was rarely achieved without a good deal of preliminary explanation and much display of firmness on the part of the Church which had done most for the final definition of a revealed doctrine. The Seventh Ecumenical Council is a case in point, since it was finally listed among the Ecumenical Councils of the Western Church many decades after its convocation. This does not apply precisely to the Vatican Council, so far the last in the series of councils, but the fact should be noted.

It will be the Church historian's work to bring into the lime-light the historical background of this century-old development and facilitate the theologian's explanatory work on the definition. The decision of the Holy Father, John XXIII, to convoke a new Vatican Council confirms Bishop Gasser's categorical affirmation that, even after the definition of papal infallibility, Ecumenical Councils will be as necessary and profitable to the Church as before. With the guidance of the Holy Ghost, the Fathers of the new Council will find ways which will lead to a better understanding with other Christian Churches and bodies.

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