

The Church in Crisis: A History of the General Councils: 325-1870

CHAPTER 4. The General Council of Chalcedon, 451

“What Nestorius had endangered by his rash sermons and his erroneous formulae ... was the central doctrine of the Christian religion. This fact is enough to explain the intensity of St. Cyril.”[1] And the bishop’s belief about the Antiocheans, as he made his way home to Alexandria, was that they still stood by Nestorius. Their excommunication by the great council the pope did not, however, confirm, despite an increasing severity of tone towards Nestorius himself, and despite a real uneasiness about the situation at Antioch. So long as there was hope that John of Antioch would conform, the Apostolic See would follow its practice of careful patience. “In cases of this kind,” the pope wrote to the bishops who had assembled at Constantinople for the consecration of Nestorius’ successor, “there are many things to be taken into consideration, which the Apostolic See always has had regard to.”[2] And the policy--the traditional Roman habit, *parcere subiectis*--brought its reward, though not in Celestine’s time, for on July 27, 432, he died, a bare four months after this letter.

How to reconcile John and Cyril? John no less fervently believing that Cyril was a heretic, an Apollinarian, who had striven, in his twelve theses, to insinuate, or impose, on the Church a heresy as grave as that which Nestorius had patronised. Both parties, luckily, really desired an understanding. And there was an intermediary whom both could trust, whom all the world venerated, the aged bishop of Boerea, Acacius. To him both sides had recourse. The emperor also begged him to undertake the peacemaker’s part, and the new pope, Sixtus III, sent him a letter of encouragement. John and Cyril interchanged letters whose tone revealed to each the truly apostolic spirit of the other, and on April 12, 433, eighteen months nearly after the dissolution of the council, the accord was complete. John made an explicit declaration that Nestorius was a heretic, and that he had been rightly deposed and was no longer bishop of Constantinople. He also signed a statement of his belief in the Incarnation of Christ the Divine Logos, an explanation in which he used the terms

traditional in the region dominated by his see of Antioch. And Cyril accepted the statement as wholly orthodox, as the belief of the Catholic Church. John was not asked to make a similar statement about Cyril's twelve anathemas. They were never so much as mentioned, by either side. And why should they have been? In the intention of the theologian who had framed them they had never been meant as a public statement of doctrine. They were merely a special formula, drawn up for a special occasion, the testing of the meaning of phrases used by a notoriously slippery controversialist.

To the agreement of 433 Theodoret of Cyrrhus sent in his adhesion in the following year; and, after much hesitation, he too consented to anathematize Nestorius and to admit that he was rightly and lawfully deposed. And now once again, after six years of tumult, there was peace-- among the chiefs, at any rate. The bickering did not however cease altogether, and one incident calls particularly for notice because it was the beginning of a dispute that was seriously to harass the Church in later years, and to be the occasion of the summoning of the strangest of all the General Councils, that which met at Constantinople in 553. This skirmish arose from the fact that, in the schools of the kingdom of Armenia, there had developed a keen interest in the teaching of two Antiochean theologians--both of them now dead--who had been the (unconscious) first- begetters of the Nestorian heresy. These were the bishops Diodore of Tarsus (370-?92) and Theodore of Mopsuestia (392-428). Their works were now translated into Syriac, and a certain amount of enthusiasm was growing for their ideas, when two neighbouring bishops, of an Alexandrian cast of mind, intervened. The Armenians sought counsel at Constantinople and the bishop, Proclus, after some study of the texts of Theodore, condemned his (undoubtedly) erroneous teaching, but set out his own exposition of the orthodox teaching in a terminology that threatened to undo the work of the Union of 433. Moreover, Proclus sent round a letter for the bishops of the East to sign, in which they explicitly, by name, condemned the dead Theodore, and he, furthermore, procured

from the emperor a letter which transformed this into an imperial order. John of Antioch, in return, flatly refused to condemn as a heretic a man who had died in the peace of the Church. This was a thing never done before. And the flames would, no doubt, have spread as rapidly as in 428 but for the intervention of Cyril, who pointed out to Proclus that the Council of Ephesus had left the memory of Theodore of Mopsuestia in peace, never so much as mentioning his name although it had condemned a creed attributed to him. Proclus ceased to urge his demands, and now there was really peace (437). John of Antioch died in 440, Cyril in 444, Proclus in 446. Of the great figures of the council of Ephesus, Theodoret survived--with Nestorius; and with one who had played his part behind the scenes at Rome, Celestine I's deacon, Leo, who was now, since 441, pope. Theodosius II was still emperor. Such was the personal setting when, in 448, the theological controversy about the true meaning of the mystery we call the Incarnation broke out afresh, and more violently than ever. It was this crisis that led to the General Council of Chalcedon, held in 451.

The protagonists in the new controversy were a monk of Constantinople, Eutyches by name; the bishop of the capital, Flavian; and the bishop of Alexandria, Cyril's one-time deacon, Dioscoros.

The disputes arising from the theories now to be brought before the judgment of the bishops were destined not only to survive the condemnation of the next council, Chalcedon, but to be the occasion of the most serious defection from Christian unity which the Church had yet experienced, a defection that still endures in organised form after fifteen hundred years. The history of this, and other defections, is in no way the subject of this present book. But the account of the council would be untrue as to the facts if it were told without reference to this history. It must also again be said that the theological questions raised were far from simple, hardly to be understood without some training in technical theology. Finally, truth demands that we make clear that the human beings

on the orthodox side, in the course of their fight to protect the traditional faith against the new errors, made mistakes in their attitude to the innovators.

From the beginning, to instance one major theological complication, the party of Eutyches claimed to be nothing more than loyal disciples of St. Cyril, one of whose favourite theological dicta became, as it were, their watchword and (for them) the touchstone of orthodox belief about the Incarnation of the Divine Word--"There is only one physis, since the Incarnation, of God the Word"; where (for St. Cyril) the Greek word italicised stands for what the Latins call "person"; but, the old trouble all over again, to a vast number of the Greek-speaking theologians of this time, the word meant not "person" but "nature." Cyril himself, in the settlement of 433, had recognised that the Antiochean way of expressing the doctrine--that spoke of two physes--seemingly the contradictory of his own, was just as orthodox as his: that the other side was using the same word to mean something else. But, to the men who claimed to be carrying on Cyril's work, the Antiocheans held the heresy that there were two persons in the Word Incarnate.

What now began, within two or three years after Cyril's death, was a movement, at Constantinople, on the part of a highly influential monk, of great austerity of life, to spread a doctrine--seemingly based on the Cyrillian formula--that made heretics of all but the Alexandrian party, the one-physis (Monophysite) party as they came, eventually, to be called. Popular sermons on any of these fundamental doctrines, that condemned as heresy other ways of expressing them, could very soon (as the events of twenty years before had shown) bring great cities to a state of chronic disorder. And so it was to prove yet once again.

The pope, St. Leo, was to say that Eutyches went wrong from his lack of skill in these matters rather than from malice.[3] Newman notes[4] that the early writings of the party "display ... unction," rather than logic; that the Eutychians "write devotionally, rather than controversially," and that

“Eutyches in particular refused to argue, out of reverence, as he said, towards our Lord. Whenever his inconsistencies were urged upon him, he said the subject was beyond him.” His first leading idea, it would seem, was that Christ was not, as man, man in the fullness of what we mean when we use the word of the rest of the human creation. Christ, he said, was not of the same substance (homo-ousion) as we are. What made Him different was that He had not a human soul (i.e., a spiritual, intellectual soul; a human mind). In Christ our Lord it was the Divine which functioned, where, in us, it is the mind.[5]

Eutyches was an old man, close on ninety, but very influential--he was the head of a monastery of three hundred monks, the leading personage, after the bishop, in the religious life of the capital; he was friendly with, and in constant touch with, like-minded followers of St. Cyril in Asia, in Syria, and in Egypt; the emperor venerated him for his long ascetic life, and the emperor's chief minister, Chrysaphios, was his godson. Eutyches saw himself as fighting a revival of Nestorianism, and he said this, in so many words, in a letter to the pope, sometime in the spring of 448.

As the new teaching spread, opposition grew among those who saw this activity as an attack on the settlement of 433. Soon, from the bishops of Antioch, there came complaints to the emperor, and from Theodoret, in 447, a popular kind of dialogue called *The Beggarman* (Eranistes), between a “Eutychian” and a Catholic, in which, however, Eutyches was never mentioned by name. The emperor's reaction to the accusations was an edict (February 16, 448) which renewed all the laws enacted against the Nestorians, and a law against all books which did not conform to the faith of Nicaea, and Ephesus, and of Cyril's twelve anathemas. As to Theodoret, he was bidden never to leave his diocese for the future, not even to come to the council which the emperor had it in mind to summon. The appeals against such bishops as Theodoret had also gone to Alexandria as well as to Constantinople, and a bitter correspondence passed between the two bishops. Then in November, there came an

unexpected flash of lightning to clear the sultry atmosphere. A synod of bishops, at Constantinople, was considering some local problem when one of them, Eusebius, bishop of Dorylaeum,[6] producing a dossier of evidence, denounced Eutyches as a heretic, and demanded that he be summoned before the synod to explain himself.

The bishop of the capital city, Flavian, was very reluctant to credit the accusation. In the end, however, the accuser carried the day, and a summons was duly sent. It was fourteen days before it was obeyed--fourteen days spent in arguments and pourparlers. Meanwhile the synod put out a declaration of belief--a repetition of that of 433--accompanied by such works of St. Cyril as the letter to Nestorius demolishing his heretical theses, and the letter of 433 making his peace with John of Antioch. The declaration stated that since the Incarnation there are two natures [of the Divine Word] in one single person, the one only Christ, one only Son, one only Lord.

When Eutyches finally consented to appear, he arrived with a high official of the court, sent by the emperor, as his protector, and with an escort of hundreds of monks. He was heard, there was a vast amount of argument, and even the court dignitary did his best to win the old man over. But he would not agree that there are two physes in God incarnate. The synod proclaimed him a heretic, deposed him from his post in the monastery, forbade him to exercise his priesthood, and ordered that none should have any access to him for the future. Thirty-two bishops put their names to this sentence, and twenty-three heads of monasteries endorsed it.

There were two highly placed personages, however, who did not accept the synod's deposition of Eutyches--the emperor, and the bishop of Alexandria. When the monk appealed to Rome against his sentence, the emperor sent a letter supporting him. Dioscoros, to whom also an appeal had been sent, called a synod of his own and annulled the deposition. The pope's reply (February 18, 449) was a complaint that from the bishop of Constantinople he had not yet had a word about these proceedings,

regarding which he ought, long since, to have notified the Apostolic See. And, as well as to Theodosius, Leo wrote that same day to the bishop, saying he was astonished that no information about the Eutychean affair had been sent, whereas Rome should have been the first to be told. “We desire to know the reasons for your action, and that all the documents should be sent... Would you then, beloved brother, hasten to tell us the whole story as fully and as lucidly as possible, as you ought to have done already ... to say what this new thing is that contradicts the old belief, and which you have seen fit to punish with so severe a sentence.”[7]

Sometime after this--we do not know exactly when--Flavian's report arrived at Rome. It left the pope in no doubt that Eutyches was in the wrong, and he confirmed the sentence passed on him. Then, on March 30, the emperor summoned a council--in his intent a General Council of all his own states[8]--to meet, once again, at Ephesus, on August 1. The pope was invited to be present. He agreed to be represented by three legates (as Celestine had been represented in 431), and in this reply to the emperor, he stated his view that Eutyches had been justly condemned, and said that in a letter to Flavian, written that same day,[9] he had set out “that which the Catholic Church universally believes and teaches about the mystery of the Incarnation of our Lord.”

This letter to Flavian[10] is a different kind of production altogether from the writings whether of Cyril or Theodoret, or any of the contending theologians. It is not, in tone or form, a work of theology at all, but a judgment, a decision, an authoritative statement that “this is the Catholic faith.” Incidentally it is a model of Latin style, of the way the Latin language can be used to set out Christian doctrine. The pope also wrote to the council itself, accrediting his legates, a letter which makes it clear (while he left it to the council to decide the fate of Eutyches) that the doctrinal issue has been decided in his letter to Flavian, and that he expects the council to accept this. From this last letter it would seem that the pope expected Eutyches to submit, and he urges that he be treated mercifully.

Leo, nevertheless, had no great hopes that the council would bring peace, nor had Theodoret, safely locked up at Cyrrhus, seven hundred miles away. But neither can ever have anticipated what actually was to take place, proceedings such that the pope was moved to say, in a phrase that has stuck, *non iudicium sed latrocinium*. [11]

The council opened on August 8, with some 130 bishops [12] present, Dioscoros (by the emperor's command) presiding. After the edict summoning the council had been read, the legates called for the pope's letter to the council, but Dioscoros passed to the emperor's letters authorising the presence of the monk Barsumas. Eutyches then appeared, to read his appeal against the sentence of the synod of the previous November, and the legates made a second effort to have Leo's letter read. They were again ignored, and after Eutyches had read a statement of his belief, the votes were taken amid great uproar. The name of his accuser, Eusebius of Dorylaeum, was greeted with cries of "Burn him alive," "Cut him in two, the man who wants to divide Christ," "Anathema," and so forth, while 114 bishops agreed that Eutyches' theory was good Christian doctrine. By the emperor's orders no bishop who had taken part in the condemnation of Eutyches was allowed to vote. This decision of the council was thus quasi-unanimous, of those with votes.

Dioscoros had already done what little needed to be done to excite his brethren, and now he passed to propose the punishment of Flavian and Eusebius--deposition. After an inflammatory harangue, which provoked reprisals from the supporters of these two, with Flavian interjecting an appeal and the Roman legate Hilarius protesting also, Dioscoros cried out that his life was in danger, and on his appeal the imperial officials threw open the doors of the church, and a mob of soldiers, seamen, monks, and the general rabble poured in. Flavian took refuge in the sanctuary, and clung to the pillars of the altar. In the end he was dragged away, and taken to prison. The bishops then voted his condemnation, 135 of them signing the decree, many of them through sheer fear, and unable to escape.

Flavian was exiled, and after three days on the road he died, apparently from shock or from injuries received in the dreadful scene.[13] But he managed to draft an appeal to the pope, and to get this into the hands of the all but helpless legates.

Two weeks went by, while the emperor considered the reports sent him and then, August 22, the second, final session of the council took place--the papal legates not present: they had, by this time, made their escape. The business was simple enough, the deposition of a number of bishops, leading members of the Antiochean party, some of whom had been under fire since the first stirrings of Eutyches. They were Ibas of Edessa, Irenaeus of Tyre (the close personal friend of Nestorius), Domnus of Antioch (who had been pliability itself in this latrocinium), and Theodoret. The bishops solemnly accepted the twelve anathemas of Cyril, and then, with acclamations that should be remembered--"Hail Dioscoros," "God has spoken through Dioscoros," "the Holy Ghost has spoken through Dioscoros"--the council of 449 came to an end.

Between the end of the Latrocinium and the meeting of the General Council of Chalcedon there is an interval of two years and two months nearly. The period is fairly evenly divided by the death of Theodosius II, and because his successor, Marcian, a man who knew his own mind, was a loyal Catholic also, the religious history of the two halves of the period is as unlike as may be.

The situation could not have been more serious than the scandal of Ephesus left it. Except that Dioscoros had not excommunicated the pope, he had all but arrayed the East in open opposition to Rome and the West, the dividing line being the principle that the only true exposition of the Christian faith was not Leo's Tome, but the Alexandrian formula of Cyril as used by Dioscoros. A faction of bishops, powerful because it had the full support of the state, dominated all the churches of the East, as, one hundred years earlier, in the worst days of the Arian terror.

To Rome the inevitable appeals came in, as soon as the victims found a means to make contact; very moving letters from the now dead Flavian, from Eusebius, and from Theodoret, who, fifteen hundred miles away from Rome, managed to send two of his priests to support his case. And the pope had the story from his legates also. He now wrote a protest to the emperor, saying that what had happened at Ephesus was “an insult to the faith, an injury to all the churches of the world.” A more authoritative council was needed, to which the bishops of the whole church should be invited, and it should meet in Italy. The fact of Flavian’s appeal to Rome, made at Ephesus and brushed aside, is the basis of this demand, and brings from Leo a strong reminder that the right of bishops to appeal to Rome is something fundamental in the church; recognised by Nicaea and by a decree of the whole body of the bishops, it is a custom of the church universal.

From the emperor there came not a word of reply, and he left unanswered also the letters sent by the pope on December 25, in which the request for a new council was repeated, and in which the emperor was warned not to allow himself to be the tool of intriguers, a reference to the corrupt regime of Chrysaphios, the real patron of Eutyches. In February 450 the emperor’s western partner, Valentinian III, left Ravenna to reside in Rome. With him came his mother, the empress Galla Placidia, and his wife Eudoxia, the daughter of Theodosius. The pope promptly enlisted the prestige of these imperial personages, and once more letters went to Constantinople. All three stress the same point: this is a case (i.e., Flavian’s appeal, which is the foundation of the pope’s demand for a new council) where all law and all precedent demand that the pope shall be judge. Is he not Peter’s successor? they say, tenant of the see in which he to whom the heavenly keys were given set up the supreme episcopal authority? The pope also wrote to the sister of Theodosius, Pulcheria (driven from the court these ten years by Chrysaphios), and to the clergy of Constantinople, encouraging them to stand firm despite the manoeuvres of the wicked minister.

To his imperial equals Theodosius had no choice but to reply. In April he blandly explained that the excellent work done at Ephesus, and especially the deposition of Flavian, had brought peace at last to the religious world. What need was there of another council?

Meanwhile, Theodosius had appointed new bishops in place of those deposed. The successor of Flavian was Anatolios, who had been the agent of Dioscoros in the capital. This appointment was the occasion of the pope's last letter to Theodosius. It is an explanation that he has not yet acknowledged the new bishop, because he is not sure of his orthodoxy. In order to remove all doubts, Anatolios is to make a written acceptance, in the presence of his clergy and the people, of the decrees of Ephesus 431, and of Leo's own doctrinal letter to Flavian, the Tome. It was on July 16, 450, that this was written. The letter crossed the news from Constantinople that Theodosius had died (July 28) after an accident with his horse, that Pulcheria had taken the throne, and that her first act had been the execution of the wicked Chrysaphios. She also offered her hand to the senator, Marcian, and on August 24 had him proclaimed emperor. Overnight, as it were, a new world came into being, a world in which religion could again breathe freely, and the private fancies of "mystics" and the feuds of theologians no longer tyrannise over the ordinary believer.

It was, then, Marcian who replied--towards the end of August--to the last of Leo's letters to Theodosius, announcing now his own elevation. It was fitting, he said, that he should begin his reign by writing to the man who "held the supreme place [principatus] in the episcopate of the divine law"--the writer knows well what principate means, he is the holder of that principate in the temporal order to describe which this term was first coined, centuries before. As to the council Leo has asked for in Italy, Marcian[14] would prefer it in the East, with Leo presiding in person. Should the distance seem too great, let the pope suggest some other place, and Marcian will summon to it all the bishops of the East, of Thrace and

Illyricum.[15] Other news from Constantinople strengthened the good impression thus created. At the new emperor's command the body of Flavian had been brought back to the capital and buried alongside his predecessors in the church of the Holy Apostles. Anatolius had duly signed his acceptance of the Tome. The bishops exiled after the Latrocinium had been recalled.

What of the bishops who, through sheer fear, had submitted to the usurpation of Dioscoros, and voted all this iniquity? They now desire to be readmitted to the communion of Rome. At Constantinople, with the approval of St. Leo's legates,[16] a partial reconciliation has been allowed, to be followed by a restoration to full communion later. This the pope confirms (April 13, 451). But he excepts from this boon Dioscoros, and also the bishop of Jerusalem.

And now (June 9) the pope announced a change of plan. Sending a new delegation to the emperor, with powers to settle finally, in consultation with the bishop of Constantinople, the fate of the repentant bishops, he writes that these measures will, he thinks, suffice. The council asked for is not really necessary. But the pope was too late.[17] Already by the time he had come to this conclusion, the emperor had acted, and sent out the summonses for the council (May 17). It was to meet on September 1, and at Nicaea. On June 26 the pope wrote accepting the arrangement. He asked one thing only, that none should be allowed "to call in question the belief which our fathers received from the Apostles, as if there were any doubt what this is." The pope will not come to the council, but be represented by his legates; and of these, Paschasinus, bishop of Lilybaeum,[18] in Sicily, "it is fitting, shall preside over the council in my place."

The pope also wrote to the council,[19] a blend of good wishes, information, and authoritative instructions. The emperor has called the council but "with due regard to the rights and honour of St. Peter," as shown by his invitation "to us also to lend our presence" to the venerable assembly. But neither the critical situation at the moment,[20] nor

precedent allows us to accept. The presence of the legates will be a reminder that it is really the pope who is presiding. Passing to the business before the bishops the pope reminds them that he has already stated, in his letter to Flavian, what is to be believed about our Lord's Incarnation. As to the question of reconciling, and reinstating, the repentant bishops, the pope leaves this entirely to the council, and the question also about restoring the exiled bishops to their sees, now provided (thanks to the late emperor) with "successors." But--no bishop is to be degraded from his episcopal character. It is in this letter that the famous phrase is found that has for fifteen centuries blasted the council of 449 as the Latrocinium.[21]

By the appointed September 1 the bishops had assembled at Nicaea, but matters of state kept the emperor occupied, and he finally decided that it would be more convenient if the council took place, not at Nicaea, forty miles away, but at Chalcedon just across the Bosphorus from the capital. And it was there that on October 8 the opening session was held. The delay at Nicaea, with the papal legates still at Constantinople--they did not leave until the emperor left[22]--gave Dioscoros his last opportunity to manoeuvre, and he used it to arrange an excommunication of the pope--his last fling, as it turned out. Something like five hundred bishops had come to the council, an attendance never seen again at one of these assemblies for another seven hundred years. To keep order during the debates, to see fair play, and to be the emperor's channel of communication generally, Marcian had appointed a body of no less than eighteen commissioners, various high officers of state. The council met in the great church of St. Euphemia, the commissioners and the legates and such principal figures as the bishops of Alexandria and Constantinople sitting in line before the sanctuary balustrade, the bishops placed on either side of the nave, probably in two blocks facing each other, as in the English parliament.

It was the pope's senior legate, the bishop Paschasinus for whom Leo had demanded the actual presidency of the council, who opened the proceedings, explaining as he said, the instructions sent to the council by "him who is the head of all the churches." And, in the first place, Dioscoros was not to be given a place among the bishops. If he resists this ruling he must be expelled. Such are our instructions, and if Dioscoros is allowed to sit as a bishop, we leave. Dioscoros, said the second legate, is here only to be judged. To treat him as a father of the council would be to insult the rest. Dioscoros then left his seat and was given a place in the nave of the church. And another bishop with him, Eusebius of Dorylaeum, to whom fell the role of formally reciting the Alexandrian's alleged offences. Next the commissioners demanded that Theodoret--freed by the new emperor from his confinement--should be given a place, and his entry was the occasion of the first "scene" at the council, the "Orientals" and the bishops from Asia Minor applauding and crying, "Out with Dioscoros the murderer," the Egyptians shouting anathemas to Theodoret and acclaiming the emperor who had destroyed Nestorius. It was a storm that only the lay commissioners could have controlled, with their guards in support. At their suggestion, Theodoret, for the sake of peace, also took his seat in the nave, but as a member of the council. The commissioners had already made clear his rights, "because the most holy chief-bishop Leo has restored his episcopal rank, and the most divine emperor has commanded that he take part in the council."

Eusebius then opened the case against Dioscoros, by readings from the minutes of the Latrocinium, and of Flavian's synod that had condemned Eutyches in 448, in Greek and again in Latin. Dioscoros interrupted to say that it was at the command of Theodosius II that he had presided at Ephesus, and to name the two other bishops who had shared the responsibility with him. At Ephesus, he said, the bishops had unanimously agreed to all that was done, and the emperor had confirmed their decisions. Whereupon tumult again, reminders from all sides of the

violence used to extort consenting votes, and a strong intervention from the commissioners.

The day ended before the readers had got through to the full tale of the doings at Ephesus. It was concluded two days later. And then a message from the emperor interrupted the business. Marcian, hoping to end, once and for all, the theological conflict, proposed to the council that it should put out a solemn definition of the church's belief about the Incarnation, something that both Alexandrians and Antiocheans would accept. The council, however, thought another creed unnecessary. In the earlier session they had acclaimed Flavian's statement of 448 as orthodoxy itself. Not a voice had protested that the truth lay with Eutyches.[23] And now, when one bishop said, "The pope has given us a ruling about Eutyches, we follow the pope, we have signed the letter," the rest called out in agreement. And to clinch the matter the classic documents were again read out, the bishops applauding each: the creeds of Nicaea and of the council of 381,[24] the letters of Cyril to Nestorius (on his heresy) and to Antioch at the conclusion of the peace of 433, and (this time) the letter of Leo to Flavian, the Tome. And at this last the bishops called out, "It is Peter who says this through Leo. This is what we all of us believe. This is the faith of the Apostles. Leo and Cyril teach the same thing." And so went by the second day of the council.

On October 13 the bishops returned to the case of Dioscoros. He did not, this day, come to the council. Though three times formally summoned he kept away. He was judged contumacious, and the council asked Paschasinus to pronounce the sentence.[25] And this he did, saying explicitly that he was acting in the place of the pope. What Dioscoros had done was recalled: the reinstatement of the heretical Eutyches, despite the just sentence of the monk's own bishop and his persistence in the condemned belief; the holding up at the Latrocinium of the Tome of Leo; the excommunication of Leo; the refusal to stand his trial. Wherefore the pope, "through us and through this holy council, in accord with the thrice

blessed apostle Peter, who is the foundation stone on which the Catholic Church is built, the foundation of the orthodox faith, has stripped him of his rank of bishop and of all his episcopal functions.” Then the bishops began, turn by turn, to stand up and deliver their judgment. They had got as far as the 187th, each of them declaring his agreement, in a variety of phrases, when (seemingly) a block vote was taken. Not a bishop opposed the sentence, not even the terrified Egyptians (who were, however, to make a great scene a few days later).

Dioscoros was immediately notified of his fate, and the reports went off to Rome and to the emperor, not an hour’s distance from the scene. Marcian confirmed the sentence and promptly banished the Egyptian to Gangra, a town 250 miles away[26] in the mountainous country of southern Paphlagonia.

On October 17, the council took up the case of the five bishops who had been the principal aides of Dioscoros at the Latrocinium. It was decided, unanimously, to reinstate them in their sees. Then the commissioners revived the emperor’s demand for a creed. Paschasinus replied. He went once more through the classic list, Nicaea--Leo’s Tome, and said, once more, nothing need be added to this; and, once again, the council unanimously agreed--or all but unanimously. For a group of thirteen Egyptian bishops now demanded to be allowed to say no more than that they accepted “their traditional faith,” meaning by this “the faith of St. Mark, of Nicaea, of Athanasius and Cyril.” The bishops shouted them down. “It’s a trick,” they cried. “Let them sign Leo’s letter.” But the Egyptians threw themselves on their knees. “When we get home we’ll be murdered,” they protested, “if we have done anything else than be faithful to our own chief bishop. It is our custom that we obey the bishop of Alexandria, as Anatolios knows well.[27] And at this moment we have no chief bishop. We do not want to seem to disobey the council. But kill us here if you like. We are willing; rather than to return to be killed at home, for betraying the chief see of Egypt.”

The council persisted in its demands that the Egyptians sign. The Egyptians persisted in their refusal. It was the commissioners who solved the problem. The Egyptians should wait at Chalcedon until the successor to Dioscoros was appointed. “C’est une comedie!” is a modern historian’s comment.[28] But was it not rather a foreshadowing of the bloody scenes presently to be enacted at Alexandria, once the council had broken up?

In the next session, October 20, various disputes between bishops and metropolitans, appeals from sentences, were heard and settled, and the useful principle was voted that no imperial interference with the canons regulating episcopal elections was valid. It was the new emperor himself who was the cause of this unlooked for bold independence among the bishops. “The emperor’s will,” said the commissioners, “is that in all business between bishops, the pronouncements of the court shall have no force if they are contrary to the canons laid down by the councils.”

And then, two days later, quite unexpectedly it would seem, the plan for a new statement of belief made its appearance yet a third time. In the interval since its rejection on October 17, there had been busy work behind the scenes, the centre of which was the (Alexandrian) bishop of Constantinople, Anatolios. The commissioners, this time, came forward with a creed already prepared. What it contained we can only surmise from the ensuing dispute, for the text did not survive. It seems to have been yet another attempt to state the doctrine in terms that would offend neither of the extreme parties, terms that (experience surely shows) will not have sinned through any excessively clear meaning. When the formula was read, the majority of the bishops were in favour, a minority (Antiocheans) were opposed, and the papal legates would have nothing to do with it. Their instructions were simple. The Tome of Leo had been set for the council’s acceptance as the official teaching about the Incarnation, the final word for Alexandrians and Antiocheans alike, the Catholic Faith. And now Paschasinus said, “If you will not accept the letter of the blessed

pope, Leo, make out our passports, that we may return to Italy and the General Council be held there.”

Here was a crisis indeed, before an ultimatum evidently meant.

The commissioners proposed that a committee be chosen to revise the formulary. “No! down with Nestorians,” from the bishops. “Mary is Theotokos, Christ is God.” Then the commissioners, “Do you accept Leo’s letter?” “All of us; we have signed it.” “Then add to the formulary what Leo has written.” “No! no change in the formulary. The formulary is sufficient; it confirms the letter. Leo says what Cyril says. Celestine, Sixtus, agree with Cyril.” And the baffled officials sent for direction to the emperor.

Marcian came down on their side--and the side of the legates. If the bishops refused to have the formula amended, the council should go forward in Italy. Even now a nucleus still clung to the text as it stood. “Those who don’t like it can go back to Rome,” bishops from Illyricum cried; “they are Nestorians.” The commissioners cut to the root of the matter, asking point-blank, “Do you follow Leo, or Dioscoros?” “We believe what Leo believes” was the answer. “Then add to the formula what Leo says, namely [we believe] that, according to the decision of our most holy Leo, in Christ there are two natures united, inconvertible [natures], inseparable [natures].” The bishops agreed. The committee was chosen. A new formulary was written.

It is a lengthy statement, for, acknowledging belief in the teaching of Nicaea and the council of 381 it repeats these two creeds verbatim; it passes to the two famous letters of Cyril, and then to the Tome, which it greets with a world of compliment enshrining the statement that the letter “is in harmony with the confession of the great apostle Peter,[29] and is for all of us a landmark against ill thinkers, a protection for orthodox teaching.” And then the formulary comes to the point, a statement of faith on the point in dispute. It is written in the terminology of Leo’s Tome.[30]

To the next session (October 25) the emperor himself came. He spoke words of praise to the bishops. Thanks to them all the peoples of his empire would henceforth have no other belief about the Incarnation but what the Holy Apostles had taught, the faith of Nicaea and of Leo, beloved of God, who rules the Apostolic See. And the bishops applauded, and then all set their names to the formulary, the three legates in the first place.

What remained to be done, in the week that followed, was the enactment of twenty-eight canons, or disciplinary laws.[31] The first of these is very important for it gives universal force to an existing collection of 104 canons, the work of five previous councils, of which only Nicaea was a General Council.[32] Bishops, clerics, and monks are the chief objects of the new legislation. One only of the new canons has reference to the laity--prescribing penalties for all those concerned in abductions.

Bishops are given authority over all the monks of their diocese, and their permission is needed for new foundations. They are not to receive clerics who have left the diocese to which they belong. They are to appoint a priest to administer the temporalities of their sees. Disputes between bishops are to be decided by the synod of the bishops of the province--which synod, they are reminded, is to meet twice a year; this last rule is too often neglected, says the canon. Disputes between a bishop and his metropolitan are to be settled either by the exarch,[33] i.e., by the bishop of the chief city in the (civil) diocese, or by the bishop of Constantinople. Bishops are to be consecrated within three months of their election, and those who ordain for money are to be deposed. Bishops must not ordain candidates not provided with a livelihood.

As to the clergy: they can belong to one diocese only, and must not leave it on their own authority; they are not to take up any secular employment, or join the army; in those places where certain orders of clergy are allowed to marry they must not marry heretics, nor give their children in marriage to heretics, Jews, or pagans; strange clergy who arrive without appropriate introductions are not to be allowed to officiate; in disputes between

themselves clerics are not to seek remedies in the civil courts without first consulting the bishop; accusations brought against the clergy are not to be listened to until the bishop is satisfied of the accuser's good character; clerics fall under the penalty of deposition if they have any part in an abduction.

Monks are warned that they are not to wander about outside their monasteries, nor are they to marry--both classes of offenders are to be severely punished. Like the clergy, secular employments are forbidden them, and they must not become soldiers--or they risk excommunication. About both the monks and the clergy it is stated that far too many of them drift to Constantinople, and spend their lives there in disedifying idleness. To end this, such desoeuvres are now handed over to the officials of the see of Constantinople, who are to arrange their expulsion from the city.

No woman is to be accepted as a deaconess before the age of forty. And if, later, she marries she is to be deposed from her office. If a nun marries she, too, is to be excommunicated.

In canon 12 there is an indirect reference to the state. Some bishops desiring to achieve metropolitan status have gone so far as to induce the state to divide the civil province where they live, so that their see-city is now the metropolis of the new province. The civic authority treats the bishop now as metropolitan and he acts as such towards the other bishops of the province. Such successful adventurers on the high seas of clerical ambition are now reduced to their real status, although allowed to keep the honorific title they have procured.

Much more serious than the nonsense thus proscribed in canon 12 is the new place in the ecclesiastical firmament contrived at Chalcedon for the bishop of the capital. At Nicaea when, for the first time known to us, the bishops faced the situation that not all sees were equal in dignity or powers, there is reference to two eastern sees by name, Alexandria and Antioch. Nicaea does not add anything to whatever it is that distinguishes these sees. It records--and records as traditional, as "the ancient custom"-

- their present status, as super-sees; their bishops have rights over the other bishops of the (civil) diocese of which these two cities are the capitals. By the time of the second of these General Councils, 381, the eastern bishops had before them the experience of half a century of trouble caused largely by bishops of every rank crossing the frontiers of their neighbour's jurisdiction. Moreover, a new city had come into existence in 330. The small town of Byzantium had been transformed into the imperial capital, Constantinople--a town which, from its unique geographical position in the empire and its wonderful harbour, was as inevitably destined to outstrip all other cities, as ever, from its foundation, was New York. And the bishops of this eastern council of 381 were determined to give the new city a kind of practical blessing, an ecclesiastical recognition of the marvellous place it had already become after a mere fifty years' existence. Constantinople, they said explicitly, is New Rome; and, in the church, it shall have the second place, shall come next after Rome, with a "primacy of honour." Now, after another seventy years, the bishops at Chalcedon take up the matter once more.

There are two incidental references to the capital in these canons, and one canon deals with nothing else. In the new law about disputes between a bishop and his metropolitan, and in that about disputes as to which see rural parishes belong, it is said that the case must go for judgment to the exarch of the (civil) diocese or to the bishop of Constantinople. Was this meant to the detriment of the jurisdiction of Alexandria and Antioch? Apparently not. The bishops whom it concerned are those of the two (civil) dioceses, Asia and Pontus, that took in the whole of Asia Minor, and that called Thrace,[34] in Europe.

If the option to choose Constantinople were usually taken, it would mean that this bishop now enjoyed (as a judge of appeals) a jurisdiction akin to Alexandria and Antioch, but over a still larger territory, over four (civil) dioceses, whereas theirs extended, in each case, over one alone.

The 28th canon of the council carries the matter much further. And all this seemingly petty squabbling for place between prelates, in the excited atmosphere of a General Council in 451, fifteen hundred years ago, still matters. What we are considering is, in fact, one of the fundamental acts from which derive the divisions to consider which the coming General Council seems principally summoned. Here is one beginning of troubles that have lasted for a thousand years or so, to the great detriment of religion, and of our common civilisation.

In this 28th canon the bishops begin by recalling the act of the council of 381, and they confirm it. They then speak of the see of Rome, and of how “the Fathers” always recognised its special privileges, as something due to that city’s imperial state. “We therefore define and declare the same about the privileges of the see of Constantinople, New Rome. The city now honoured with the presence of the emperor and the senate, and which enjoys the same [state] privileges as the old royal Rome, should be as great as she in what relates to the church, and rank second to her.” And for the future, all the (26) metropolitans of the three (civil) dioceses of Thrace, Asia, and Pontus are to be consecrated by the bishop of Constantinople--he is to be definitely their overlord. And likewise it is he who will consecrate the bishops of the churches among the barbarian peoples beyond the frontier.

The legates were not present at the session of October 31 when this canon was voted, nor the imperial commissioners. But the next day, Paschasinus protested strongly. He was answered that these were domestic affairs, in which it was thought the legates were not interested. Another of the legates said that the bishops had voted the canon under duress. But they denied this violently. He then said--it was the bishop of Ascoli, Lucentius--the canon went contrary to the relevant law of Nicaea. Upon which he was asked whether this matter came within the legates’ mandate. To which the third legate replied trenchantly, by reading out the passage that bade the legates not to allow anything that violated what the holy fathers

decreed (i.e., Nicaea) or that lessened the dignity of the Roman See. Should any bishop, relying on the importance of the capital, attempt any usurpation, he was to be opposed.

The commissioners decided that the previous declarations now in conflict should be produced. Paschasinus read the canon of Nicaea--in a text which opens with the words "That the Roman See has always held the first place." It was then read in Greek by one of the emperor's officials, and with it the canon of 381. The bishops were formally asked by the commissioners whether their votes had been forced. They unanimously answered they had been free, and various speakers explained that the new arrangement about the consecration of bishops merely stated in law what had been the practice now for some years. Eusebius of Dorylaeum--the "prosecutor" of Dioscoros, it will be remembered--then told of how he had read the canon of 381 to Leo when he was a refugee at the papal court, and that the pope had assented to it. (And, of course, in this very council Paschasinus had given the first place after the legates to Anatolios of Constantinople.) When the commissioners turned to the bishops who had not voted for the new canon, to ask their views, the metropolitan of Ancyra said that not wanting to do any more consecrations he had left it to the bishop of Constantinople to consecrate his suffragan the bishop of Gangra, but for himself he suspected that money played too great a part in consecrations done at the capital. Whereupon, as may be guessed, there was a really hot discussion, which the commissioners broke up by declaring the canon carried. The rights of the bishop of old Rome, they said, have been safeguarded, but it is only right that the bishop of New Rome should have the same rights and honours, and also these rights to consecrate in the three civil dioceses mentioned. And the bishops again applauded.

But the last word fell to the legates. "The Holy See," said Lucentius, "ought not to be basely treated while we look on. And therefore, all that was done yesterday, in our absence, to the prejudice of the canons and

laws, we demand of your highnesses [this to the commissioners] to order that it be annulled. Otherwise, let this our appeal in law against the canon be attached to the minutes, that we may know what it is we must report to the apostolic bishop who is the first personage in the whole church, so that he may be able to pronounce sentence on the unjust act against his see, and on this overthrowing of the canon law.” One of the bishops called out to the presiding officials, “We still agree with you.” And they said, “The whole council approves our position.” And with this rupture between the bishops and the pope the council came to an end.

And the end of the story?

The bishops, before they separated, addressed a letter to the pope. They were grateful, they said, that he had been faithful to the command given to the Apostles, “Teach ye all nations ... to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”[35] Five hundred and twenty of us were at the council, “and you led us as the head guides the limbs of the body.” Dioscoros has been punished as a man deserved who in his madness had struck at him to whom the Lord had confided the care of His vineyard, the one whose mission it is to give unity to the church. They make the smoothest of references to their “confirmation of the canon” of 381; enacting their new canon, they say, in the persuasion that “since in you the apostolic light shines in all its splendour, you will often, with your customary care, see that Constantinople benefits from that brightness.” They beg the pope to confirm this arrangement which they have presumed to think would please him, being confident that the head will allow to his children what is for their good.

The bishops, in this letter, have dropped the language about the imperial importance of the new city, and about recognition of the pope’s primacy as related to the like importance of Rome. It is to him as primate because Peter’s successor that they address their plea--the one sure concrete reality beneath their wealth of insinuating compliment.[35a] And with their letter they send the minutes of the council’s proceedings. The legates also

brought with them letters from the emperor and the bishop of Constantinople--a somewhat uneasy production, this last, from "the see of Constantinople to its father, your own Apostolic See." [36]

Leo's reply to Anatolios is grave. This council called to strengthen the faith seemed to you, he says, a useful opportunity to cause Alexandria the loss of its traditional second place, and Antioch its rank as third, so that, these put below you, all metropolitan bishops would lose their special privileges. As to the canon of 381, "this vote of some bishops or other, given (as you brag) sixty years ago now, and never notified to the Apostolic See by your predecessors--this affords no support to what you are doing." ... Dioscoros may have disgraced Alexandria, "but the bishops of a see are one thing, the see itself another." [37]

The emperor, congratulated on his share in bringing about this triumph of the true belief, is told of the sorrow felt at the news of Anatolios' usurpation. How prosperity has fanned his ambition! That the sacred guarantees of Nicaea should be jettisoned, and this new rank created, all to increase the importance of a single see, and that not an apostolic see. Let Anatolios be content with his see's imperial importance, for it is not possible to turn it into an apostolic see. Let him not covet more than his predecessors enjoyed. And let him keep to the rules, [38] if he does not wish to find himself cut off from the church universal. Everything done in contravention of the Nicaean rules "we dismiss as without legal effect.... By the authority of the blessed apostle Peter we quash it utterly by a general sentence." [39]

Finally the pope replied to the council, March 21, 453. He renews, by this letter, the approbation already given by the legates to the council's execution of the task for which it was called--the case concerning the faith, the case for which alone the council, he reminds them, was called. As to the work which the bishops then took it upon themselves to do--the reorganisation of sees--the pope says he prefers not to know anything

about it. For it violates “the inviolable canons of Nicaea.” Whatever is not according to these is null and void.[40]

The emperor, distressed at the evident breach between the pope and the bishop of his capital, wrote to Rome, some months later, pleading for Anatolios (? November or December 453). Leo replied, and Marcian read the reply to the bishop. The pope’s letter said that a reconciliation would be welcome, but that Anatolios must first “make satisfaction to the canons.”[41] The only way to a peace and charity that are genuine is “by keeping to the Catholic faith and the canons of Nicaea.” And Anatolios, after his interview with Marcian, wrote his submission to the pope (April 454). He declines all responsibility for the new canon which has exalted his see. He himself is a lover of peace and lowliness of life. It was the zeal of the clergy of Constantinople, it was the eastern bishops who worked this for their own profit. And, he goes on to say, “Whatever was thus done, all its worth and the confirmation of it was reserved to the authority of your holiness.”[42] All this is so much hot air until you choose to ratify it!

The pope took the reply as made in good faith, and the matter closed with his writing to Anatolios that he looked to find in him a worthy successor of his great predecessors, and to find him a useful guardian against all attempts against the Catholic faith or the laws of Nicaea (May 29, 454). This was two years and seven months almost since, at Chalcedon, the bishops had voted the canon in the teeth of the legates’ protests. The crisis was really closed that opened with the speech of Eusebius of Dorylaeum at the synod of November 448.

NOTES

1. Bardy, 196.

2 Batiffol, 397; the letter, dated March 15, 432, is in Jaffe, no. 385. A more familiar fact, to most of us, about St. Celestine I is that he was the pope who commissioned St. Patrick for the conversion of Ireland.

3. Epistles, no. 31.

4. The Heresy of Apollinaris (1835), printed in Tracts, Theological and Ecclesiastical (1874), p. 260. The notes in square brackets to this “tract” were seemingly added in the 1870s.

5. To quote Newman once again, this was equivalent to saying that for the sacred purpose of the Incarnation of the Divine Word, there was brought into existence a unique creature, a human body animated with an animal soul: “That He had united Himself to what, viewed apart from His presence in it, was a brute animal.” Tracts, as before, p. 270.

6. It was he who, in 429, had made the first open move, at Constantinople, against Nestorius.

7. Batiffol, 503-4, quoting Jaffe-Wattenbach, no. 420.

8. I.e., not of all the bishops of the Church.

9. June 13, 449.

10. Always known by its Greek name the Tome of St. Leo (tomos, i.e., “volume”). Barry, no. 19, prints a translation of it.

11. “Not a council at all, but a ‘get together’ of bandits.”

12. As so often, authorities are not agreed as to the figures.

13. The accounts of what happened in the church are conflicting. According to one story Flavian was set upon by Dioscoros himself and the monk Barsumas. At the ensuing Council of Chalcedon, Dioscoros was greeted with shouts of “Murderer!”

14. This is his letter of November 22.

15. Three of the civil dioceses that make up Marcian’s imperial jurisdiction.

16. Sent June 16, 450.

17. Letter sent June 16, 450.
18. The modern Marsala.
19. As in 431 and 449. This is the third time we see the system at work. Did the legates to Nicaea in 325 go uninstructed, and without any word for the council? No record survives certainly.
20. It is the year, of course, of Attila's famous invasion of the West.
21. *In illo Ephesino non iudicio sed latrocinio* are the pope's actual words. Jaffe-Wattenbach, 473.
22. For his palace at Chalcedon.
23. Nor any, one may add, had cried, "Cyril rather than Flavian."
24. It is now, at Chalcedon, that we first hear this council spoken of as though regarded as of the same class as Nicaea and Ephesus, 431.
25. From this session, whose business was the trial of a bishop, the commissioners were absent.
26. That is, as the crow flies. It is the modern Cankiri, fifty miles N.E. of Ankara (Turkey).
27. This successor to Flavian being himself an Alexandrian cleric.
28. Batiffol, as before, p. 546, n 1.
29. "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." Matt. 16:16.
30. For the text, Greek and Latin, see Denzinger, no. 148. Barry, no. 20, prints a translation.
31. For the text and a translation of these, see Schroeder.
32. The others were Ancyra (Ankara) 314, New Caesarea 315, Gangra 334 and Antioch 341; all Eastern councils, it will be noted.
33. The exarchs for the three (civil) dioceses concerned, Thrace, Asia, and Pontus, were the bishops of Heraclea, Ephesus, and Caesarea.

34. Thrace meant, roughly, European Turkey, Bulgaria, and the strip of Greek territory to the east of the island of Thasos. The bishops of Greece (the civil diocese of Achaia) and of the western Balkan lands (the civil diocese of Macedonia) were still directly subject to Rome. The pope's local agent for these sees was the bishop of Thessalonica.

35. Matt. 28:19.

35a. The bishops' letter is no. 98 in the collection of St. Leo's letters.

36. Anatolios' own words in this letter.

37. *Aliud enim sunt sedes, aliud praesidentes*. For the letter, Jaffe, no. 483. The date is May 22, 452.

38. An allusion to the fact that Anatolios had gone so far as to consecrate one who is his superior in rank, the new bishop of apostolic Antioch, the third see in the church.

39. These last two quotations are from Leo's letter, of the same date, to the empress Pulcheria, joint ruler with Marcian, her husband. *Ibid.*, 482.

40. *Ibid.*, 490.

41. *Satisfaciat canonibus*, Jaffe, 504.

42. The letter of Anatolios is in the collection of St. Leo's letters, no.