

1700 YEARS SINCE THE FIRST COUNCIL OF NICAIA (325)

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Abstract:

In the first three centuries after the birth of Jesus Christ, the Church experienced a time of severe persecution. The bloody repression forced the early witnesses and martyrs of the faith to hide in the catacombs and to be as cautious as possible. It was practically impossible to convene an ecumenical council addressing all the local churches. Mainly, only episcopal synods at a local level or assemblies covering several local churches were convened. Therefore, the First Council of Nicaea was historically groundbreaking in its very realisation and in the resolution of theological disputes. The fundamental decision of the Council of Nicaea was the unambiguous formulation of the Creed but also the uncompromising rejection of the theological heresies of the time. Important conclusions of this ecumenical Council were also the provisions - canons on church discipline, sacraments and practical liturgy.

Keywords: Bishop, Church, Emperor, Ecumenism, Heresy, Council, Synod, Theology, Faith.

Introduction

In 2025 - the year of the one thousand seven hundredth anniversary of the convocation of the First Council of Nicaea - the memories of the Councils of the Catholic Church, which both formulated and adopted fundamental decisions at the various Councils, are reviving. In thesis-like sketches, a brief historiographical cross-section summarises the significance, the benefits, and the vicissitudes of the Council of Nicaea.

The first Christian but “non-universal” Council of the Catholic Church in Jerusalem in 49 A.D. was apostolic; the Council truly opened up previously unsuspected perspectives of early evangelisation. At this Council, Christianity formulated and adopted one of its basic characteristic principles - *universalism*.¹

This Council clarified the meaning of belonging to Christianity: it is not important whether one is a Jew or a Roman, a proselyte or a God-fearer. The dividing walls were broken down. It is not without historical significance that the first Gentile to convert to Christianity was a Roman baptised in Caesarea Palestrina.²

Doctrinal disputes in the East and the formation of Catholic doctrine

The theological controversies of the 4th and subsequent centuries are far greater in content, significance, and territorial reach than in the preceding period. They lasted throughout this period in the East and did not spare the West. They were concerned with the most important questions of Catholic doctrine. In these disputes, the emperors interfered to such an extent that they issued decrees of a dogmatic character in the following centuries (5th-7th centuries). Therefore, the political opponents of the emperor often belonged to the dogmatic opposition in the Church. These disputes led to the convening of the first general councils. The patristic literature developed remarkably thanks to these disputes, enjoying its “golden period” at that moment.³

The councils led to the dogmatisation of the Church’s doctrine on Trinitarian issues (Arianism, Semi-Arianism, Macedonianism).

The starting point for the councils was also the Christological questions:

- 1 Stott, John R. W. (1999). *Zápas mladé cirkve – Poselství skutku apoštolských*. Praha: Návrat domů. p. 261.
- 2 Bécheau, François. (1993). *Histoire des Conciles*. Toulouse. p. 22.
- 3 Kumor, Bolesław. (1967). *Historia Kościoła. Tom I: Starożytność chrześcijańska*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego. p. 173.

Christ as God, Christ as Redeemer, Christ as man, and the Holy Spirit as God. Dogmatization in the Catholic doctrine of Christ drew the emergence of schismatic national churches in the East (Armenia, Georgia, Egypt, Abyssinia (Ethiopia), Persia (Iran)).

In contrast to the theoretical disputes in the East, the practical Roman West began to deal with anthropological and soteriological questions. These concerned the objective holiness of the Church (Donatism, Priscillianism), the primordial state of the first parents and the effects of original sin (Pelagianism), as well as the relation of grace to human free will (Semi-Pelagianism).⁴

What preceded the First Council of Nicaea

One of the foremost goals of Emperor **Constantine the Great** was political and religious peace. Religious peace was violated by various disputes and schisms among Christians. The ecclesiastical level was mainly stirred up by the schisms of **the Donatists**⁵ and the **Meletians**.⁶

Constantine the Great considered it his solemn duty to bring these heretics back to unity. He was convinced that the condemnation of heresy by individuals, bishops and theologians was insufficient to purify them effectively; therefore, he felt compelled to intervene personally.⁷

Donatus was given the episcopal see of Constantinople in 313 and was overly strict towards Christians who denied the faith during the persecutions.⁸

The heresy of the Donatists was triggered by the persecution under Diocletian when Christians were ordered to hand over sacred books. However, many of them handed over other books to save their faith and lives. The actions of these Christians, who included bishops and priests, may be called compromising, and they were therefore regarded as traitors by the more orthodox Christians.

4 Kumor, Bolesław. (2000). *Cirkevné dejiny – kresťanský starovek*. Preklad z poľského originálu Dluhoš František. Levoča: Polypress. p. 174.

5 The Donatist dispute in Africa broke out in 311 and lasted for a hundred years until the Carthage Conference in 411.

6 The Meletians were named after the overly strict Bishop Meletius, who broke away from the Church because it was conciliatory towards those who had denied their faith in persecution and later asked to be readmitted to the Church. In the struggle against Athanasius, the Meletians made allied with the Arians, their chief enemies.

7 Dluhoš, František. (2005). *Koncily Katolíckej cirkvi*. Spišské Podhradie-Spišská Kapitula: Nadácia kňazského seminára biskupa Jána Vojtaššáka. p. 31.

8 Euzébius. *Vita Constantini II*. p. 64 - 72; cf. Sokrates Scholastik. *Historia kościoła I*; Polish translation: Kazikowski, Stanisław. (1986). Warszawa: Pax.

Such “traitors” were deemed unworthy to receive the sacraments, and the so-called “Church of the Saints” required that they be rebaptised.⁹

Meletius was bishop of Sebaste. His followers acted with equal severity against Christians who apostatised and against sinners in general.

The schism of the so-called Meletians, who dealt very harshly with so-called “fallen” Christians and with those who showed weakness during persecution, also arose under similar circumstances. The Meletians were condemned by the Synods of Alexandria and Nicaea and eventually allied with the Arians.

One of the most widespread heresies in belief was Arianism, mainly because of its social and political implications. The heresy of the priest Arius **denied the deity of Jesus Christ**.¹⁰

Pre-Council situation

The Council of Nicaea was preceded by a heated theological dispute that took place against the spiritual background of the end of the third century. At that time, the philosophy of the Roman-Hellenistic world was dominated by so-called Middle Platonism. This influential philosophical trend strongly emphasised the transcendence of God as well as his absolute inaccessibility. The gap between God and the universe was thus bridged by Middle Platonic thinkers with a multitude of intermediate beings who mediate between heaven and earth. Even the Church’s proclamation of God and Christ could not escape the appeal of this fascinating model of thinking, especially when Christian thinkers at the time were increasingly asked how to understand the concept of three divine persons in one deity.

Moreover, the prominent Christian Alexandrian school of theology advocated so-called subordinationism, i.e., the more or less clear, admittedly far from yet reflected, subordination of the Son of God to God the Father.¹¹

9 Klenowski, Jarosław. (1971). *Historia kościoła, tom 1*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo sióstr loretańek. pp. 171 – 172.

10 Dluhoš, František. (2005). *Koncily Katolíckej cirkvi*. Spišské Podhradie: Nadácia kňazského seminára biskupa Jána Vojaššáka, Spišská Kapitula. p. 32.

11 Available at <https://svetkrestanstva.postoj.sk/23756/ako-cisar-konstantin-viedol-cirkevny-koncil>. Accessed: September 19, 2024.

Convocation and Course of the Council

The First Council of Nicaea was also the first ecumenical, i.e. universal, council because it was attended by bishops from all the regions where Christians lived. It was held at a time when the Church enjoyed permanent peace and could gather freely and publicly. It was held from May 20 to July 25, in 325. It was attended by some bishops who bore on their bodies the marks of the punishments they suffered for their faithfulness during the recent persecutions.

Emperor Constantine's greatest effort was to achieve political and religious reconciliation. Despite the relatively peaceful life of Christians at the time (the most drastic persecutions had abated), contemporary spirituality suffered from divisions of opinion, which were ideologically saturated, especially by the schismatic theories of the Donatists and Meletians.¹²

Emperor Constantine, who had not been baptised until then, provided the bishops with the services of imperial coachmen, thus enabling them to participate. He also offered them accommodation in the city of Nicaea in Bithynia, not far from his seat in Nicomedia. Actually, this gathering of bishops was particularly advantageous for him because, after the reunification of the empire with the victory over Licinius in 324, he sought to unify the Church, which was troubled by the teachings of the priest Arius, who denied the true deity of Jesus Christ. From 318, Arius opposed Bishop Alexander of Alexandria. Unfortunately for the Church, this heretic had remarkable charisma and was able to clothe his delusions in language and style accessible to ordinary people. Despite official criticism from the highest circles, Arius undoubtedly had a significant community of followers.

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Donatus was given the episcopal see of Constantinople in 313; he was overly strict with Christians who had denied their faith under duress during the persecution. The Donatist heresy arose during the persecution of Christians during the reign of Diocletian. At that time, Christians had to hand over sacred books. Many, however, handed over other books in an attempt to save their lives and faith. These Christians, including also both bishops and priests, were called traitors by Orthodox Christians. The Donatist so-called "Church of the Saints" ostracized the Christians who acted compromisingly and, as a matter of fact, reasonably in their own way as unworthy to receive the sacraments and demanded their rebaptism.¹⁴

¹² Špirko, Jozef. (1943). *Cirkevné dejiny, zv. I*. Turčiansky sv. Martin: Neografia. p. 110.

¹³ Available at <https://opusdei.org/sk-sk/article/53-co-priniesol-nicejsky-koncil/>. Accessed: September 19, 2024.

¹⁴ Klenowski, Jarosław. (1971). *Historia kościoła, tom 1*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo sióstr loretańki.

Meletius was the bishop of Sebaste. His followers dealt with Christians - alleged apostates and sinners - with the same exaggerated severity as the Donatists. The Meletians were condemned by the Synods of Alexandria and Nicaea and eventually allied with the Arians. Arianism was the most widespread and most dangerous heresy for the Church, as the spiritual leader of this sect, Arius, based his doctrine on a denial of the deity of Jesus Christ.¹⁵

Arius and his teachings

Arius (Areios) was a priest of the diocese of Alexandria, a city with a venerable tradition and history of both Greek culture and developing Christian theology. He was born around 256 in Libya. His first studies were in Alexandria, where he encountered Neoplatonism. It was an Alexandrian theory of the interpretation of Holy Scripture, theologically strongly influenced by Subordinationism. These theories were based on the traditions of Origen and Dionysius the Great.¹⁶

Arius then studied in Alexandria; he listened to the great master Lucian of Samosata, the creator of the Antiochian school and a zealous supporter of subordinationism. Arius later wrote that he “acquired these truths from erudite and knowledgeable sages in all things.”¹⁷

In 306, he got involved in the schism of Bishop Meletius. He was later admitted to a Christian communion and ordained a deacon by Bishop Peter of Alexandria. Arius, however, did not break contact with Meletius, so Bishop Peter excommunicated him again, but the bishop's successor, Achilles, readmitted Arius even under pressure of public opinion. Arius was ordained a priest in 312 by Bishop Alexander. Arius persistently interpreted the Holy Scriptures according to his theology, both from the pulpit and in conversations with the faithful. He espoused the school, claiming that Christ was not God, but “a creature endowed with the grace of God.” From the beginning of 315, he publicly spread his heresies in sermons, letters, hymns, and in a special treatise, the *Thalia* (Banquet).¹⁸

In the history of theology, Arianism was the last but most formidable trinitarian heresy explaining the dogmas of the Holy Trinity.¹⁹

pp. 171 - 172.

15 Hertling, Ludwig. *Dejiny katolíckej cirkvi*. Samizdat. p. 79.

16 Johnson, Paul. (1999). *Dějiny křesťanství*. Brno: CDK. pp. 59 - 61.

17 Elser, M. - Ewald, S. - Murrer, G. (1997). *Encyklopedie náboženství*. Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství. p. 24.

18 Johnson, Paul. (1999). *Dějiny křesťanství*. Brno: CDK. pp. 59 - 61.

19 Šmálik, Štefan. (1997). *Boží ľud na cestách. Cirkev v 49 pokoleniach*. Bratislava: Lúč. pp. 99-

This was especially true of the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. Arius wanted to resolve this question with an argument appealing to extreme subordinationism. In his sermons, he denied the belief in the deity of Christ. He argued that even Christ was created by God the Father: "Therefore, there was a time when Christ as such did not exist at a certain time. He is, therefore, subordinate to the Father. He does partake in his deity but on a lower level. He is only similar to the Father - homoios."²⁰

In fact, he is created out of nothing, so he has a beginning. Arius called the Son "genetheis", "genitus" – "begotten". However, this adjective belongs to the Son because of grace but not nature. The Son, the "Logos", is God, but only because God the Father accepted him as his. In fact, he is not really "true God". Nor is he identical with the "Logos," i.e. Wisdom, which is the attribute of the Father. Here, again, is a fundamental difference in the theology of Arius and the Fathers of the 2nd century, as the Logos of Arius does not know the Father and is imperfect. As for the Holy Spirit, Arius held that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three distinct and different essences.²¹

Arius even argued that "if the Father begat the Son, then he who was begotten had the beginning of his being, and therefore it is clear that there was a time when the Son did not exist; hence it follows that the Son had being out of nothing (ex ouk ontón, ex nihilo)." That is, he was created, he is not eternal, and therefore he cannot be God. Moreover, and this is rather important, he can cease to exist (if God wanted him to) since he was created "ex nihilo" - out of nothing and thus has no absolute being as God, but only given as a created being.

This heresy had its roots in the first century when some Judaizing Christians were reluctant to accept the revealed truth of the Holy Trinity and tried somehow to modify it along the lines of the Old Testament monotheism. Arius (there is a hypothesis that he was of Jewish descent) tried to solve the problem (or rather, to deceive the faithful) in a sophisticated way, that is, to give the appearance of Orthodoxy and, at the same time, weaken the dogma of the Trinity. He did not claim that Jesus Christ was not the Son of God, but he understood the term to mean something different from orthodox Christians.

His doctrine was acceptable for simple Christians who knew only basic religious terminology because it used terms such as Son of God, Redeemer and the like. The subtle theological contortions were obscure and incomprehensible to the masses. However, the learned Fathers of the Church readily perceived the

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20 Béchau, François. (1993). *Histoire des Conciles*. Toulouse. p. 65.

21 Klenowski, Jarosław. (1971). *Historia kościoła, tom 1*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo sióstr loretańki. pp. 251 - 252.

danger hidden in the doctrine of the distinct essences of the Father and the Son. For if God the Father is of divine essence, and at the same time God can only be one, then if the Son of God has a different essence from the Father (Arius claimed that he did because he was created), logically, he cannot have a divine essence, because then there would be two equivalent Gods with different essences, which is nonsense.²²

Arius's new theological doctrine soon appealed to many Christians, especially among the lower classes of the Alexandrian people. Some bishops, priests, and deacons also sympathised with it.²³

Bishop Alexander spoke out against this doctrine. At first, he tried to influence Arius to recant his heresies, but he was unsuccessful. In 318, he called a synod of bishops from Egypt and Libya to Alexandria. The delegates to the synod excommunicated Arius and his followers from the Church. Arius refused to submit to the punishment; he remained in Alexandria and spread his heresy even more vigorously, creating a dangerous schism. He celebrated services in his church, introduced liturgical changes, and composed hymns. Encouraged by Eusebius of Nicomedia, he wrote the work *Thalia*, which won him more followers.²⁴

The persistence of Arius in the city fuelled further unrest and conflict. The secular authorities decided to take decisive action and forced the heretic to leave Alexandria. Arius went to Palestine and was taken in by Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea.²⁵ Arius began to agitate with renewed vigour among the bishops of the

22 Available at <https://christianitas.sk/i-nicejsky-koncil-a-arianska-hereza/>. Accessed: September 19, 2024.

23 Špirko, Jozef. (1943). *Cirkevné dejiny, zv. I*. Turčiansky sv. Martin: Neografia. p. 111.

24 Judák, Viliam. (1995). *Učebné texty z cirkevných dejín*. Bratislava: Univerzita Komenského. pp. 40 - 42.

25 **Eusebius of Caesarea**, the Father of Church history. Eusebius Pamphilus was born in Caesarea in Palestine in 263. He attended the local school, was a pupil of the famous Pamphilus, and adopted his name out of respect for his teacher. Pamphilus instilled in Eusebius an admiration for Origen and a love of science. When he had to undergo several years of imprisonment, his pupil Eusebius had himself imprisoned with him, and in prison, they wrote the *Apology of Origen*. In the year of the Edict of Milan (313), Eusebius was consecrated bishop of Caesarea and administered that diocese until his death (338). He took part in the Council of Nicaea, and in the dispute between the Church and Arianism, he attempted to mediate between the opposing parties. Although he signed the resolutions of the Council at the request of Emperor Constantine, he never explicitly condemned Arianism. He even stood up for Arius, excommunicated from the Church, and was present at the Synod of Tyre (335), where the Arians deposed the bishop St. Athanasius. The ruler, Constantine the Great, respected Eusebius for his vast knowledge and his more or less neutral position he took in the dispute with Arianism. Eusebius was accused of being too sympathetic to the Emperor, a compromiser, and of some theological strays, especially his uncritical adherence to Origen's teachings. In his relations

East, and they divided into two rival factions. The chaos and division among the bishops escalated to such an extent that the synods of Nicomedia (320-321) and Palestine (321-322) rehabilitated Arius and vouched for the authenticity of his doctrine. Emperor Constantine the Great decided to resolve the crisis.²⁶

Convocation and Course of the Council

Emperor Constantine defeated all rivals, including Emperor Licinius, and became the sole ruler of the Roman Empire from 323 to 324. He granted freedom to Christians and sought the unity of the Church (albeit sometimes in a questionable directive manner). Constantine's efforts ran up against the *Arian* heresy. This heresy became so widespread during the 4th century that it engulfed entire provinces, even the majority of the Church, as well as many of the new Germanic ethnic groups that had been baptised by Arians. The Orthodoxy and unity of the Church were seriously threatened. Constantine sent his ecclesiastical political advisor, Bishop Hosius, to settle the disputes. Hosius summoned a synod to Antioch, which provisionally condemned the Arian bishop **Eusebius of Caesarea**.²⁷

However, the problem of Arian heresy proved so severe for the further development of the Church that, in the end, it was necessary to call a Church-wide general council. Emperor Constantine convened the council in 325 and chose the city of Nicaea in Asia Minor as its venue. The council began on May 20 in the great hall of the ruler's summer residence. The Emperor delivered an opening speech in Latin and laid down the order of proceedings.²⁸ According to the Arabic list, 318 bishops attended; Eusebius mentioned 250, but the nearest to

with the monarch, Eusebius showed a tendency to avoid any conflict. However it also remains true that he never abused the favour of Constantine the Great to obtain personal advantages, such as a transfer to a better diocese. Eusebius was a great orator and an excellent historian but a weaker theologian. He regarded Athanasius' teaching on the *Holy Trinity* as Sabellianism. He also argued that the Son did not come from the essence of the Father, but resulted from the Father's free will to represent him externally, and therefore, the Holy Spirit was created by the Son of God. Eusebius' doctrine of the *Eucharist*, however, is unmistakable.

(Dlugoš, František. (2012). *Vybrané kapitoly z církevních dejín*. Patrológia 5. Ružomberok: VERBUM - vydavateľstvo Katolíckej univerzity v Ružomberku. pp. 43 – 44).

26 Hart, H. Michael. (1978). *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*. USA: Annandal – Virginia. pp. 102 - 104.

27 Available at <https://christianitas.sk/i-nicejsky-koncil-a-arianska-hereza/>. Accessed: September 19, 2024.

28 Kumor, Bolesław, (1967). *Historia Kościoła. Tom I: Starożytność chrześcijańska*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego. p. 181.

the truth was the number of 221 bishops, mostly Eastern ones.²⁹

Pope **Sylvester I** did not attend the Council in person because of his advanced age, but he sent his legates, the Roman priests Vitus and Vincentius, as well as the well-known bishop Hosius of Cordova. The West was less represented at the Council of Nicaea.³⁰

The Council met from May 20 to July 25 in 325. The defender of the Orthodox doctrine was **St. Athanasius the Great**,³¹ only a deacon in Alexandria at that

29 Segert, Stanislav. (1995). *Starověké dějiny Židů*. Praha: Svoboda. p. 240.

30 Pope **St. Sylvester I** – was a Roman by origin. He was elected Pope on January 31, 314. He did not interfere in the dispute with the Arians. He was represented at synods and councils. Emperor Constantine did not give him any room for self-realisation in the papal office. During his pontificate, the seat of the Apostolic See was transferred from Rome to Constantinople. The papacy thus gained a leading position in the Western Church. Pope Sylvester I is associated with constructing the five-nave St. Peter's Cathedral on Vatican Hill in 325. He also had the Basilica of St. Priscilla built. He died on December 31, 335 and was buried in the Basilica of St. Priscilla. (Cf. Jandourek, Jan. (1998). *Svatí a kacíři světových náboženství*. Praha: Portal. pp. 82 – 85).

31 **St. Athanasius the Great** was born in 295 in Alexandria into a Christian family and was brought up in a spirit of Greek culture. In his younger years, he was a disciple of St. Anthony the Hermit and spent some time in the Theban desert among the hermits (anchorites of St. Anthony). He was deacon and secretary to Bishop Alexander of Alexandria from 319 and attended the Council of Nicaea (325) in that capacity. He was the soul of the resistance and battle against the Arians for the Nicene Creed. In 328, he became Metropolitan of Alexandria and held that See for 40 years. During the reigns of four emperors, he was sent into exile five times, where he spent 25 years (Rome, Trier, three times in the Egyptian desert). The exile did not break him; indeed, he defended the Nicene Creed everywhere and won new adherents for it. He peacefully led the diocese for the last seven years. Only a few men were so hated, yet so loved, as he was during his lifetime. He was a man of sturdy backbone, of which, unfortunately, few are born. He died on May 2, 373. He is one of the four great teachers of the Eastern Church. The writings of St. Athanasius bear the marks of his turbulent life. Since he committed himself to the struggle against Arianism, all his writings were directed there. Athanasius is profound, decisive and clear in them, as in every act of his life. The outward form of his writings is not neat; they often repeat the same things, which is also consistent with his turbulent life. The works of Athanasius are divided into apologetic, dogmatic-polemical, historical-polemical, exegetical, ascetical, and festal letters. The teachings of St. Athanasius are most significant in the doctrine of the *Holy Trinity*. It is based on the Nicene statements. His Christology is very distinct. Christ is the God-Man, born of the Virgin Mary, who is the Mother of God. Christ worked miracles based on his divine nature but suffered on the basis of his human nature. However, both of these actions were done by one and the same Christ. (Ep. ad Ser. 4, 14). He derives the *immortality of the soul* from the thesis that the soul moves itself; that is, it has the principle of life in itself. (Contra Gentes 33). Human reason can know God by contemplating the created world and the human soul, although man is heavy-handed in this knowledge because of sin. (Contra Gentes). He claims that *baptism administered by Arians* is invalid because Arians' teaching on the Holy Trinity, in whose name baptism is administered, is wrong. (Ep. ad Ser. 1, 30). Some Protestants have wrongly held (on based on Ep. ad Ser. 4, 19) that Athanasius viewed the Eucharist symbolically. Athanasius, however, writes of the

time. After the sessions, which lasted a whole month, the Council promulgated the Creed, in which the doctrine of the begetting of the Son by God the Father is precisely explained. The expression “being of one substance with the Father” was designated for the Son, which adequately defines the divinity of Christ.³²

During the session on June 19, after heated discussions, all but two of the bishops signed a confession of faith, affirming *“I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten of the Father, i.e., of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father.”*³³

This symbol was promulgated by the Emperor as an imperial law. Constantine did not interfere in discussions and disputes but insisted that the resolutions and theological conclusions of the Council of Nicaea were correctly applied.³⁴

The two bishops, Theonas and Secundus of Libya, who did not sign the Creed, were excommunicated from the Church and deported to exile, along with Arius. Later, however, they all demanded a more concise confession of faith, which was a great mistake.³⁵

There were also efforts to rehabilitate Arius; therefore, a new council was proposed. Thus began an unfortunate political and religious corruption. The worst blunder, however, was the condemnation of Bishop Athanasius, who refused to submit to the Emperor’s despotism.³⁶

In subsequent sessions, the Council discussed other issues. There was an agreement on setting the date of Easter - the Sunday after the first full moon in spring. The Emperor elevated this resolution of the Council to an imperial law.³⁷

The Council took a position on minor issues and ambiguities in twenty short measures. It gave direction to the life of the Church (hence the term canon = rule, standard).³⁸

Eucharist explicitly: *‘This bread and wine simply are what they are before the prayers, but after the great prayers, holy supplications, have been sent up to heaven, the Word will come down into the bread and wine, and these will become his Body and Blood’* (A. Mai, Sript. vet. nov. coll. 9, 625).

(Dlugoš, František. (2012). *Vybrané kapitoly z cirkevných dejín. Patrológia 5*. Ružomberok: VERBUM - vydavateľstvo Katolíckej univerzity v Ružomberku. pp. 51 – 53).

32 Jedin, Hubert. (1978). *Kelne Konziliengeschichte 8. Auflage*. Freiburg im Breispau. p. 15.

33 Němec, Jaroslav. (1997). *Dějiny křesťanského starověku*. Olomouc. pp. 191 - 192.

34 Dlugoš, František. (2006). *Hisoria Ecclesiae Christi. Starovek*. Levoča: MTM. p. 185.

35 Špirko, Jozef. (1943). *Cirkevné dejiny, zv. I. Turčiansky sv. Martin: Neografia*. p. 115.

36 Špirko, Jozef. (1943). *Cirkevné dejiny, zv. I. Turčiansky sv. Martin: Neografia*. p. 113.

37 Jedin, Hubert. (1978). *Kelne Konziliengeschichte 8. Auflage*. Freiburg im Breispau. p. 15.

38 Dlugoš, František. (2006). *Hisoria Ecclesiae Christi. Starovek*. Levoča: MTM. pp. 188 – 189.

Canon II reaffirmed the rule that newly baptized priests are not to be ordained priests or bishops immediately but only after being approved through their faith.

Canon III allows a cleric to live only with his mother, sister, and aunt or with persons who do not arouse suspicion. This regulation is related to the thesis of the Council of Nicaea, which wanted to introduce celibacy for bishops, priests and deacons but finally retreated from this intention after the statement of Bishop Paphnutius, who called this intention too harsh. The Council reaffirmed the Eastern practice that unmarried priests could not marry after ordination; on the contrary, those who had received the sacrament of matrimony before ordination could continue their marriages.³⁹

Canon IV stipulated that bishops should be consecrated to the office by at least three bishops.

Canon VI specified that all metropolitans and bishops of Egypt, Libya, and Thebaida were subordinate to the bishop of Alexandria.

Canon XI stipulated that those who apostatised during Licinius's persecution could be readmitted as full Christians after twenty years of repentance in three stages.

Canon XVII forbade the taking of usurious interest.

Canon XX established that on Sundays and throughout the Easter season, one should stand in prayer.⁴⁰

After the council, Constantine invited the bishops to a banquet, the history of which Eusebius wrote: "One might think that all this is a dream and not a reality." The full splendour and the rebirth of the empire fell to this ecumenical council of the Church that had risen from persecution. It did not, however, bring the desired peace.⁴¹

The Theological Contribution of the Council

The Apostles' Creed was formulated in the language of Holy Scripture in the early period of Christianity. However, the Church lives in the world. It must strive to express the faith in both the everyday and philosophical language of its time.⁴²

39 Jedin, Hubert. (1978). *Keline Konziliengeschichte 8. Auflage*. Freiburg im Breispau. p. 16.

40 Judák, Viliam. (2002) *Dejiny mojej Cirkvi I. diel*. Trnava: Spolok sv. Vojtecha. p. 89.

41 Dluhoš, František. (2005). *Koncily Katolíckej cirkvi*. Spišské Podhradie: Nadácia kňazského seminára biskupa Jána Vojaššáka, Spišská Kapitula. p. 39.

42 Kumor, Bolesław, (2000). *Cirkevné dejiny – kresťanský starovek*. Preklad z poľského originálu

Therefore, even in Nicaea, the new explication of the faith takes into account the Greek philosophy on which contemporary thinking was based. Christian revelation was expressed in the vocabulary of the time. Thus, the sublimity of faith was expressed. If everyone understood it in his own way, it could succumb to devaluation, and the Fathers of the Council were fully aware of this danger.⁴³

It was, therefore, necessary to agree on a basic ecumenical principle. The Council of Nicaea could not make all disputed issues disappear “as if by magic”. The wise Greek ideas expressed at the Council of Nicaea were not equally understood by all the bishops, which complicated the whole matter. Some church dignitaries returned to old tendencies; Bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia, for example, preached Arianism to the end of his life.⁴⁴

In this exceptionally complicated period, theological disputes are of interest to broad social strata, as Gregory Nyssen humorously speaks about them: “*You ask a banker about the denomination of a coin, and he answers with a dissertation on the subject of what is born and unborn. When you enter the bakery, you hear the baker saying: The Father is greater than the Son. When you ask if your bath is ready at the bathhouse, you hear the assertion that the Son has been made out of nothing.*”⁴⁵

The Church puts the deep meaning of the Christian faith above all these superficial discussions, it supports, “canonizes”, and promotes the truth. Unfortunately, the Christian faith, distorted by the Arian heresy, persisted on the peripheries of the then “civilized world” among the barbarians.⁴⁶

The division of Arianism and its defeat

The misfortune of the up to that point triumphant Arianism was its bifurcation and fragmentation into three great creedal groups:

The Anomians, or extreme Arians, taught that the Son is not like the Father, but is a creature, and only as a creature has some similarity to the Father, but is in nature entirely different from him (anomios, hence the name anomians).⁴⁷

Dlugoš, František. Levoča: Polypress. p. 182.

43 Rak, Piotr. (1998). *Historia soborów*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo M. p. 34.

44 Dlugoš, František. (2005). *Koncily Katolíckej cirkvi*. Spišské Podhradie: Vydavateľstvo – Nadácia Kňazského seminára biskupa Jána Vojtaššáka Spišská Kapitula. p. 40.

45 Bécheau, François. (1993). *Histoire des Conciles*. Toulouse. p. 35.

46 Kumor, Bolesław, (2000). *Cirkevné dejiny – kresťanský starovek*. Preklad z poľského originálu Dlugoš, František. Levoča: Polypress. p. 184.

47 Kumor, Bolesław, (1967). *Historia Kościoła. Tom I: Starożytność chrześcijańska*. Lublin:

The founder of this doctrine was Aecius, the bishop of Antioch († 366); therefore, the adherents of this sect were also called *Aecians*. However, the doctrinal leader of the sect was Eunomius, the bishop of Cyzicus († 394). Therefore, the adherents of the sect were sometimes called *eunomians*.

The Semi-Arian (Polarists), who sought an approximation to the Council of Nicaea, argued that “the Son is homoiouios – similar to the Father in substance” but not “of one substance”. Their chief doctrinaire was Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, and after his death, it was Bishop Marcellus of Ancyra.⁴⁸

Macedonians drew the full implications of Arian doctrine and taught that the Son is subordinate to the Father, and the Holy Spirit is subordinate to the Son.⁴⁹

For the Holy Spirit is not God but a supreme spirit serving God. The creator of this doctrine was Macedonius, the bishop of Constantinople. His adherents were called *Pneumatomachians* or *Macedonians*.

The division of heresy into these groups brought about its decline. With the death of Emperor Constantius († 361) and after a brief episode of return to paganism under Emperor Julian the Apostate (361 -363), the frenzy of the struggle over the Creed definitely leaned in the orthodox Nicene direction. The turning point was the *Synod of the Confessors*, held in 362 in Alexandria under the leadership of St. Athanasius, who had returned from his third exile shortly before the synod. This synod decided to admit into communion all those who professed the Nicene Creed and rejected Macedonianism.

A significant achievement in ending the religious struggles was the adoption of the term “hypostasis” into theological terminology to designate a person, and this was due to St. Gregory of Nazianzus. The peaceful and pro-Nicene policies of Emperor Jovian (363-364) and his successor Valentinian in the West (364-375) allowed the Catholic camp in the West to revive. St. Hilary of Poitiers, St. Ambrose of Milan and Pope Damasus I also played significant roles.⁵⁰ Pope

Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego. p. 181.

48 Kumor, Bolesław, (1967). *Historia Kościoła. Tom I: Starożytność chrześcijańska*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego. p. 182.

49 Kumor, Bolesław, (1967). *Historia Kościoła. Tom I: Starożytność chrześcijańska*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego. p. 182.

50 **Pope St. Damasus I** was born around 305 in Rome. His father's name was Antonius, and he carried out spiritual ministry in the church of St. Lawrence, first as a lector and later as a priest. His mother's name was Laurentia. Thus, Damasus was around the church from a young age, where he helped with spiritual activities. He longed for a virtuous and ascetic life and strived for it. In the meantime, he studied. Later, he became a deacon and continued his spiritual ministry. He also served Pope Liberius (352-336), with whom he went into exile in 355, where Emperor Constantine II sent him because he rejected Arianism. It seems that the Pope ordained him a priest there. Their exile lasted for about three years, after which they

Damasus I was mainly responsible for adopting the resolutions of the Second Ecumenical Council of 381, which he did at the Synod of Rome in 382.⁵¹

Meanwhile, in the East, in the maelstrom of the struggle, new theological forces grew up in the persons of the Cappadocian Fathers, who stood by the side of St. Athanasius. These were St. Basil the Great (329-371),⁵² St. Gregory of Nazianzus

returned to Rome. Pope Liberius died in 366, and Damasus was elected Pope the following year. However, some clerics, along with the laity who opposed Liberius gathered in Rome in another place. These elected the deacon Ursinus as pope. When the followers of Damasus learned of this, they immediately ran there. A battle broke out, and some died there. The Roman prefect Viventius, fearing a riot, ordered Ursinus to leave Rome. However, he left only after another bloody battle, which took place in the basilica built by Pope Liberius. Ursinus' followers barricaded themselves inside. Viventius defeated them with military force. After his departure, Ursinus caused problems for St. Ambrose in Milan and repeatedly for Pope Damasus. It was not until 374, after falsely accusing Damasus of adultery, that he was finally exiled to Cologne. Pope Damasus, however, had other problems as well. In those days, there were many sects and various opinion groups in Rome (Arians, Montanists, Novatians, Donatists, and others). In addition, some pagan cults were experiencing their "rebirth". This is attributed to Emperor Julian the Apostate (361-336), who promoted a return to paganism in the name of religious freedom. There were also problems among the bishops in the Church. The bishop of Constantinople longed for primacy among the bishops; other bishops, in turn, leaned towards Arianism, etc. Damasus strove to establish order. He was helped in this by a decree of Emperor Theodosius in 380, by which he ordered all to accept the conclusions of the Council of Nicaea (in 325, condemnation of Arianism), which was also confirmed at the Council of Constantinople in 381 (the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed). Pope Damasus was supported by St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, and also by St. Hieronymus, whom Damasus invited to a synod in Rome in 382. Hieronymus was already then known for his scholarship. The Pope made him his secretary and later commissioned him to revise the Latin translation of the Bible (Itala). At the Synod of Rome, the term Apostolic See was used for the first time, defining the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. For the first time, the direct relationship between the statute of Peter's primacy (Mt 16:18) and the bishop of the city of Rome, who has primacy among all the bishops of the world, was formally recognised. Damasus continued in establishing order. He ordered celibacy for priests and urged married priests to abstain. He wrote a treatise on virginity as a way of life for Christians, which we know mediately from St. Hieronymus. He greatly venerated the martyrs. He was instrumental in preserving their tombs and cared for the Catacombs. He is the author of some 60 epitaphs still preserved on the tombs of the martyrs. Several churches were built in Rome during the instigation of Damasus. The church of St. Lawrence, which he himself consecrated, now bears his name. Pope Damasus died in Rome on December 11, 384.

(Available at: <https://www.zivotopisysvatych.sk/damaz-i-papez/>. Accessed: September 23, 2024).

51 Kumor, Bolesław, (2000). *Cirkevné dejiny – kresťanský starovek*. Preklad z poľského originálu Dluhoš, František. Levoča: Polypress. p. 182.

52 **St. Basil the Great** was born in Caesarea Cappadocia. He was from ten siblings, four of whom are saints (two brothers and two sisters). He received baptism in 356 and went to the desert of Pontus, where he lived as a hermit. In 360, he founded a monastery with St. Gregory of Nazianzus. He became a priest at the age of 34 (364) and a bishop in his native Caesarea and metropolitan of Cappadocia at the same time in 370. He reformed the liturgy of the Eastern

Church and organised monastic life in the East (*Basilian Rule*). He had a significant share in the defence of the faith against the Arians and the Emperor Valens. He was a well-known theological writer, preacher and ascetic. He is one of the four great teachers of the Eastern Church. He died on January 1, 379, and his feast day is January 2. He directed his writings against the *Arians*, *Manichaeans*, and *Macedonians*. He left five books on the Divinity of Christ, many poems, ascetical reflections, and 366 letters. St. Basil was already named **the Great** by his peers. And rightly so. He was a true ecclesiastical prince, unyielding when it came to Church doctrine or the interests of the Church. He was fair to everyone and kind to the poor and suffering. He was also a great thinker, and his reflections determined the direction of an entire generation. He was a man of firm character. He knew what he wanted and always chose the appropriate means to achieve his goals. He had true leadership qualities. Above all, he was a man of action. As a writer, despite having speculative tendencies, he was more inclined to an ethical appreciation of Christian truths. He departed from the speculative-based "Easterners" and was more concerned with the precise articulation of the articles of faith. Although he is not as cordial as St. John Chrysostom nor as poetic as Gregory of Nazianzus, in his writings, there is everywhere a dignified grandeur, a precision of expression, and a particular elevation despite his language being very simple. His writings are divided into polemical, exegetical, ascetical, homilies, and letters. St. Basil wrote on the importance of reading the biographies of the saints: *"When painters paint a picture, they are constantly looking at the original and striving to transfer it as faithfully as possible to the canvas. Whoever seeks to perfect himself in all kinds of virtues should also study the lives of the saints, who are living and practical models of virtue, and then strive to imitate what he has discovered in them."* Besides Holy Scripture, St. Basil identifies the oral tradition as a source of faith, which contains many mysteries that Holy Scripture does not mention. Of the knowledge of God, he writes that we can only know as much about God as the works of God reveal to us. We cannot fully understand Him in this life or the next, for God is infinite. Basil did not formulate a jurisdictional concept of *the primacy of the Bishop of Rome*, although he virtually confessed his primacy by writing frequently and addressing messages to the Pope. Basil tells us that the real presence of the Body of Christ in the Eucharist is proved by the words of Christ: *"This is my Body."* He recommends frequent Holy Communion, which he receives four times a week (Ep. 93). He also acknowledges the original sin which excluded Adam from original grace (Mor. 8). In the Sacrament of Penance he recognises repentance, confession of sins, and penance (Hom. in Ps. 32).

(Dluhoš, František. (2012). *Vybrané kapitoly z cirkevných dejín. Patrológia* 5. Ružomberok: VERBUM - vydavateľstvo Katolíckej univerzity v Ružomberku. pp. 45 - 47).

(330-390),⁵³ St. Gregory of Nyssa (334-394),⁵⁴ St. John Chrysostom – “Golden-

- 53 **St. Gregory of Nazianzus** was born in Kabala, Cappadocia. He befriended St. Basil the Great in Athens, who consecrated him as bishop of the Diocese of Sassima (372). He was a philosopher and theologian and excelled in rhetoric. He became Archbishop of Constantinople in 379. He renounced the episcopal see at Constantinople in 381, returned to Nazianzus, and died there in 390. He is one of the four great teachers of the Eastern Church and one of the best preachers and representatives of Christian humanism. Although he did not establish a theological system, his works contributed to *Trinitarian doctrine* and *Christology*. His feast day is January 2. He devoted his free time to prayer and contemplation. He wrote and composed a lot, especially spiritual songs and poems. More than 500 songs and poems have survived. He also left behind over 200 letters, which stand out for the beauty of their form and for their content, too. St. Gregory of Nazianzus complements his friend Basil in his teachings, especially in the doctrine of the *Holy Spirit*. In *Christology*, he anticipated Basil. He says of the union of divinity with humanity in Christ, two natures unite into one, but they are not two sons. However, he did not bring complete clarity to Christology either. He calls *the Virgin Mary the Mother of God* and says whoever denies this is far from God (Ep. 101). His doctrine of *original sin* is important, but it is not flawless. Gregory of Nazianzus teaches that the sin of the first man was passed on to posterity, and he sees its consequences in the defilement of the spirit, in the disruption of the original harmony in man, in the disruption of the social world, and finally in death. However, *the newborn children* are said to be innocent and not to be punished (Or. 40). When there is no danger of death, there is no need to baptize them until after two or three years of life. Those who desire baptism but do not receive it, either because of insufficient age or because of sudden death, do not indeed go to hell, but neither do they go to heaven. He does not recognize the baptism of desire.

(Dlugoš, František. (2012). *Vybrané kapitoly z církevních dějin. Patrológia 5*. Ružomberok: VERBUM - vydavateľstvo Katolíckej univerzity v Ružomberku. pp. 47-48).

- 54 **St. Gregory of Nyssa** was the younger brother of St. Basil the Great. He was born in Caesarea, Cappadocia, in 335. He was brought up in his parents' house, especially by Brother Basil, whom he calls his father and teacher. He was interested in the priesthood and was ordained a reader (*lector*) at a young age. Soon, however, he married and became a teacher of rhetoric. After being persuaded by brother Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus, he gave up rhetoric and retreated to the desert for solitude for ten years. When his brother Basil became metropolitan of Caesarea, he consecrated Gregory in 371 as bishop for the diocese of Nyssen in Cappadocia. Gregory, however, did not show enough insight into the leadership of the episcopate, so Basil rebuked him several times. Because of a bitter dispute with the Arians under Emperor Valens, he was deposed from the episcopal see and had to go into exile. He returned only after the death of the monarch. He became Metropolitan of Sebaste in 380. He took part in the general council of Constantinople (381). He died in 394. His writings include dogmatic, exegetical, ascetical and homiletical works. As a writer, he was active in every field of theology, but his primary concern was to complete and defend the books of his brother Basil. He taught that man can know God because he possesses something spiritual, that is, God-like within himself. Because, in his knowledge, he is dependent on the senses, he can easily be mistaken. Man is protected from error by the revelation of God - the Holy Scriptures - as well as by the voice of the Holy Spirit and by oral tradition (Eun. 7). He discerns *two natures* in Jesus Christ that are not mixed. Gregory's *eschatological teaching* closely resembles that of Origen. Compared to Arius, though, he affirms that the body that will rise from the dead will retain its identity with the present body. However, he teaches like Origen in his interpretation of *apocatastasis*, i.e., the ultimate reconciliation of the damned with God and, thus, the temporality of the torments

Mouthed" (344-407).⁵⁵

of hell. Hell will cease to exist after the end of the world, for God is merciful and will forgive all indiscriminately. Gregory was very socially minded, which was especially evident in his views on slaves. He says: *"It is nonsense to want to buy for little money the image of God (man) whose soul is worth more than the whole world"* (De anima).

(Dluhoš, František. (2012). *Vybrané kapitoly z cirkevných dějin*. Patrológia 5. Ružomberok: VERBUM - vydavateľstvo Katolíckej univerzity v Ružomberku. pp. 48-49).

- 55 **St. John Chrysostom**, bishop and teacher of the Church, was born in Antioch, Syria in 350. His father was a senior military officer. He died when John was still a young boy. His upbringing was cared for by his mother. He was unusually gifted and bright. He originally wanted to be a lawyer. To the delight of his friend Basil, he began to read the Holy Scriptures. Based on reading the Holy Scriptures, he perfected his life and received baptism from St. Meletius, the bishop of Antioch. When he learned that they wanted to make him bishop to replace the orthodox bishop exiled by imperial power, he fled into seclusion. He stayed in the desert for six years, where he wrote a treatise *On the Priesthood*, in which he evaluates the sanctity and challenges of this vocation. Returning to Antioch, he became a preacher of the Gospel. Twenty-one sermons have survived from this period, which are considered a pinnacle of sacred oratory. He was an excellent rhetorician, which is why the people called him *Chrysostom* – *"Golden-Mouthed"*. In 397, the Patriarch of Constantinople died and John Chrysostom was appointed in his place. He received episcopal consecration, and though he had concerns, he finally assumed office at the time when Constantinople was experiencing a difficult situation. He won over the common people with his sermons but met with the hostility of the imperial court, which he admonished in his sermons for the scandalous life of the Empress Eudoxia. The Emperor's wife took revenge on John Chrysostom, extorting from the Emperor his removal from the episcopal see and banishment into exile. When the people learned of this, they began to rebel and demanded John's return. The Emperor relented, and John was allowed to return to Constantinople, where he did not stay long. He was again deported to the small Caucasian town of Cucusus in just two months. He stayed there for three years and was only in written contact with his believers. In the meantime, Empress Eudoxia had died, but even after her death, John Chrysostom's opponents ensured that he continued to be banished even to a further place, to the Black Sea. Exhausted, he died on the journey to the town of Komena in 407. He lived to be sixty years old. As early as 414, Pope Innocent I recognised him as a saint. By a sacred letter of July 8, 1909, he was made the patron saint of Catholic preachers and rhetoricians. St. John Chrysostom is one of the most prominent figures of the Eastern Church, who dedicated many great men to Christianity in antiquity. Despite his troubled life, we must admire his exceptional literary legacy, which includes ascetical treatises, interpretations of Holy Scripture, homilies and letters. As a writer, St. John Chrysostom is the most prolific of Eastern authors after Origen. He mostly dictated his works. In his exegetical writings, he used the historical-grammatical method. More than 700 of his homilies on the texts of the Old and New Testaments have been preserved. There are 76 homilies on the book of Genesis, 60 homilies on the Psalms, 3 homilies on David and Saul, 2 homilies on the prophets, and 6 homilies on Isaiah. As for the books of the New Testament, he explained the Gospel of St. Matthew in 90 homilies and the Gospel of St. John in 88 homilies. He wrote 55 homilies on the Acts of the Apostles, he devoted 250 homilies to the Epistles of St. Paul and St. John. St. John Chrysostom wrote a number of meditations on moral themes. By the time of St. John Chrysostom, Arianism had almost been conquered, but Nestorianism was only beginning to spread. As a writer, John is not combative. His pen served as a peaceful interpretation of the Christian faith. Although he came from the Antiochian school, he did

In the East, Emperor Valens (364-378) once again leaned toward Arianism and St. Athanasius, the mainstay of Orthodoxy, was sent into exile for the fifth time. However, he could not prevent the retreat of Arianism, which, with his death, lost the last support of secular power.

After the accession of the emperors Gratian (375-389) and Theodosius the Great (379-395), Nicene Orthodoxy gained the support of the state power in the East. Emperor Theodosius the Great issued an edict in 380 in which he obliged all Christians of the empire to “adhere to the faith of Damasus I of Rome and Peter of Alexandria.”

In the East, however, two things made the way for the rapid victory of Orthodoxy difficult: the spread of Apollinarianism and the so-called Antiochian schism. In the history of the Church these matters were dealt with by the Second General Council, which was held at Constantinople in 381.⁵⁶

not succumb to its heresies. Nor did he allow himself to be swept away by Origen's heresies, though he was exposed to Origenistic influences. In almost everything, he teaches doctrine just like today's Church. For his contribution to *the doctrine of the Eucharist*, the Church named him *Doctor of the Eucharist*. The Christology of St. John Chrysostom is clear, especially concerning the union of the two natures in the divine person of Jesus Christ. Although he uses the expression of the Antiochian school, “*The Logos dwelt in Jesus, the man as in the church*,” he insists that Christ is one person. He does not use the expression Theotokos of the Virgin Mary, but neither does he anywhere assert that she gave birth only to a man. St. John Chrysostom is not quite explicit on *original sin*. He writes: “*We baptise even immature children, though they have no sins*,” and hence the Pelagians referred to him. Other writings of Chrysostom indicate that he did not deny the consequences of original sin, although he was silent about sin and its transmission to posterity. He says that *sanctifying grace* is necessary for every saving act, but a man who has free will can withhold grace. The grace of God is an unmerited gift of God (Rom. hom. 16). It is generally said of *the sacraments* that their validity does not depend on the holiness of the one administering them. Through Holy Baptism, a man is cleansed from sins and receives the Holy Spirit. Confirmation is conferred by the laying on of hands. He writes about repentance more often, which is why many refer to him as a witness of private ear confession. In connection with the Eucharist, he is one of the best teachers of Christian antiquity. St. John Chrysostom's teaching on the *Church* is essential. The teaching authority of the Church is infallible (Tim 1:1). The Church is independent of secular power (De sacert. 3,1), is one and universal, and is built on Peter. However, the primacy of the Bishop of Rome is not explicitly stated. It is questionable what to admire more: his inexhaustible talent, his daily dedication to his work, or his gift for winning the confidence of the faithful. John Chrysostom was a tireless apostle, an exquisite confessor, and an unsurpassed moralist.

(Dlugoš, František. (2012). *Vybrané kapitoly z církevných dějín*. Patrológia 5. Ružomberok: VERBUM - vydavateľstvo Katolíckej univerzity v Ružomberku. pp. 59 - 62).

56 Kumor, Bolesław, (2000). *Církevné dejiny – kresťanský starovek*. Preklad z poľského originálu Dlugoš, František. Levoča: Polypress. p. 183.

Conclusion

The Ecumenical Council of Nicaea brought the previous synodal meetings of the Church to their first peak. This episcopal assembly, convened by Emperor Constantine at the beginning of his reign, reflected the incipient link between the Church and the late antique state for the first time. The task of explaining the Christian image of God laid down in Holy Scripture in the light of the Arian challenge was tackled by the Council without falling prey to the currents of contemporary philosophy. At the same time, the Council Fathers took disciplinary measures in the conviction that they were also speaking bindingly for the whole Church in these matters. In the future, these decrees - as opposed to decisions on doctrinal teachings - proved to be subject to change at times. The Nicene symbol, on the other hand, was sooner or later taken up by the various local churches as a “pronouncement of God,” so the Synod of Nicaea was eventually characterised as an ecumenical council.

The process of accepting the Council and identifying with its resolutions was by no means without friction. The solemnity of the imperial farewell agape may have deceived the superficial observer. However, it could not realistically sharpen the edges that persisted in both theological tensions and personal rivalries between the Council Fathers. In daily life and political practice, the Emperor was soon confronted with the fact that the ecclesiastical and imperial harmony he desired was in decay.

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