

Michael Whelton

TWO PATHS

Papal Monarchy—Collegial Tradition

Peter and the Papacy ; The Council of Jerusalem ; Rome's claim to universal jurisdiction ; The seven ecumenical councils ; The filioque and schism ; The Papal revolution against Collegial Tradition ; The Donation of Constantine ; Papal Infallibility ; The new Mass of Vatican II versus the Orthodox Liturgy ; The problems of the modern Roman Catholic Church, and much more ...

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Kimberley Patton,

Assistant Professor in the Comparative and Historical Study of Religion

Harvard Divinity School.

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Papal Monarchy—Collegial Tradition

MICHAEL WHELTON **TWO PATHS** is the most convincing argument for the claims of the Orthodox Church in regard to the Roman Catholic Church ever written **TWO PATHS** is the perfect gift for Roman Catholic family and friends. **TWO PATHS** combines scholarly fact with easy to understand style. **TWO PATHS** sets out, in non-polemical style, the Orthodox argument for the Orthodox Church being the historic church of the ages. **TWO PATHS** has been edited to facilitate group study, (ages 16 and up)

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Rome's Claims of Papal Supremacy in the Light of Orthodox Christian Teaching

dedication To Marguerite for her boundless love and loyalty

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1998

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CHAPTER I

An Insistent Call

The years following the Second Vatican Council, 1963-1965, were years of tremendous upheaval in the church for Roman Catholics. When all the changes were made to the mass in 1968, my wife and I, like many Roman Catholics at the time, were uneasy with some of these innovations. Mass in the vernacular we thought was a good idea; however, the priest celebrating mass facing the people seemed like a major departure from liturgical tradition, turning the priest into a sort of "master of ceremonies," while we found the new prayers dull and pedestrian, lacking the poetical quality of the older ones.

By the mid-nineteen-seventies, it was obvious that something had gone terribly wrong. Defections both lay and clerical were increasing in alarming numbers; for example, during the thirty years following the Council, 1965-1995, some twenty-five million Roman Catholics had left the Church in North America alone, while hundreds of thousands of religious world-wide had abandoned their vocations. The cause of this debacle, I believe (which is a belief shared by many), is the new mass which Pope Paul VI foisted on the church in 1968.

Christianity is a liturgical religion, i.e., the very centre of our spiritual lives is the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist. As with any religious worship, an implicit theology is always reflected in prayers, incense, gestures,

music, dress and in style of architecture. Dramatically change this and you will change the faith. This is a truth reflected in the ancient law of the Church - *lex orandi, lex credendi* - the law of prayer is the law of belief. In his book, *Histoire des Variations des Eglises Protestantes*, Catholic historian Bishop Bossuet describes how liturgical experimentation denied Protestants doctrinal cohesion,

shattering them into numberless different denominations. Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury under Henry VIII, understood this very well when he destroyed the Roman Catholic Church in England by changing the liturgy. Many of the changes he introduced are frighteningly similar to the new mass, as brilliantly analyzed by Catholic author Michael Davies in his book, *Cranmer's Godly Order*.¹

Most Roman Catholics do not read Papal Encyclicals or Papal Addresses; the Church speaks to her faithful as she always has, through the liturgy. Thus Rome's foremost liturgical scholar, Monsignor Klaus Gamber, explains in his book, *Reform of the Roman Liturgy*,² (warmly endorsed by Cardinal Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Faith), that liturgy and faith are interwoven and together form a fabric of belief. The old mass that reflected the traditional truths of the faith in its rubrics and piety had been suppressed. In its place, as a concession to the ecumenical movement, we were given a new rite with scripture readings that pointedly eliminated any passages warning us that, while we have a loving

¹ *Cranmer's Godly Order* - Michael Davies, Angelus Press, Dickcson, TX, 1976.

² **The Reform of the Roman Liturgy - page 100, Monsignor Klaus Gamber, Una Voce Press, San Juan Capistrano, California, 1993.**

God, He is also a God who will judge us. In the same vein, the traditional prayers and hymns that once reminded us in majestic prose and lyrics that we have a soul which we could lose, have been replaced with new ones that, lacking any reference to our eternal outcome, are vapid and vacuous.

Monsignor Gamber³ also claims that the new liturgical rite has diluted the sacrificial aspect of the mass and has reduced mystical and dramatic ritual to an absolute minimum - just enough, no more - to ensure validity. Particularly scandalous for him was Paul VI's changing the words "Pro Multis" [for many], uttered by Christ at the Last Supper, to "For All" during the consecration - a crass concession to modern theology. On the wider implications of the new liturgical rite, Monsignor Gamber has this to say:

...the liturgical reform welcomed with so much idealism and hope by many priests and lay people alike has turned out to be a liturgical destruction of startling proportions - a debacle worsening with each passing year. Instead of the hoped-for renewal of the Church and of Catholic life, we are now witnessing a dismantling of the traditional values and piety on which our faith rests. Instead of a fruitful renewal of the liturgy, what we see is the destruction of the forms of the Mass which had developed organically during the course of many centuries.

Added to this state of affairs, is the shocking assimilation of Protestant

ideas brought into the Church under the guise of the misunderstood term ecumenism, with a resulting growing estrangement from the ancient Churches of the East, that is, a turning away from the common tradition that has been shared by the East and the West up to this point in our history.⁴

The Protestant ideas that so shocked Monsignor Gamber had their origins in the highest authority of the Roman Catholic Church - the then-reigning pontiff Pope Paul VI, as Gamber points out:

Neither the persistent entreaties of distinguished cardinals, nor serious dogmatic points raised about the new liturgy, nor urgent appeals from around the world not to make the new Missal mandatory could stop Pope Paul VI - a clear indication of his own, strong personal endorsement. Even the threat of a new schism - the Lefevre case - could not move him to have the traditional ritus Romanus at least coexist with the new rite - a simple gesture of pluralism and inclusiveness, which, in our day and age, certainly would have been a politic thing to do.⁵

This view was made clear in a nationally broadcast radio programme, "Ici Lumiere 101," in France on December 13, 1993. The guests were Eyves Chiron, author of the book *Paul VI, le pape ecartele*, and Jean Guitton, a member of the French Academy, author and close friend of Paul VI. During the radio interview the following conversation took place:

GUITTON: ..but I can only repeat that Paul VI did all that he could to bring the Catholic Mass away from the tradition of the Council of Trent towards the Protestants' Lord's Supper.... In other words, we see in Paul VI an ecumenical intention to wipe out or at least to correct or soften everything that is too Catholic in the Mass and to bring the Catholic Mass, again I say, as close as possible to the Calvinist liturgy.

CHIRON: Clearly that is a revolution in the Church.

GUITTON: Clearly so.⁶

Some years ago, when we were living in California, we watched a movie called *Catholics* written by Brian Moore, a lapsed Irish Catholic. This prophetic story concerns a monastery in Southern Ireland that continues to celebrate the Old Mass of the Tridentine Rite in defiance of the Vatican and the World Ecumen Council, and since this is the only place left in the world that still celebrates the Old Mass, it is an international pilgrimage centre. The Vatican sends a young priest named Fr. Kinsella, played by Martin Sheen, to close them down. As a practicing Roman Catholic at the time, this movie really depressed me for the simple reason that there was more than a grain of truth in it.

Artists like Brian Moore understand very well the importance of symbolism in ritual. In her book *The Desolate City*, Anne Roche Muggeridge discusses this

⁴ Ibid. - page 9,

⁵ **Ibid. - page 45.**

⁶ **The Latin Mass - vol. 4, no. 1, Winter 1995, Foundation for Catholic Reform, Fort Collins, Colorado.**

Irish playwright and his prophetic novel *Catholics* in which he dealt with the destruction of the old Mass:

Brian Moore is a lapsed Catholic but his instructive imagination remembers what it all meant and he has the great artists' understanding of symbol. Explaining why he wrote *Catholics*, he offered the inimitably Irish explanation that after a long absence he went to Mass and found that the thing he had stopped believing in was no longer there.⁷

As the years rolled by, the liturgical innovations increased, as foretold by Monsignor Gamber, making the traditional church a more distant image, a mirage that was more rapidly receding beyond our reach. As traditional Roman Catholics, we became more and more like orphans in our church. One of the problems with the Mass is that it is seen as the "fruit of development" as opposed to the Orthodox who, according to Cardinal Ratzinger, do "not see liturgy as developing or growing in history, but only the reflection of the eternal liturgy, whose light, through the sacred celebration, illumines our changing times with its unchanging beauty and grandeur." The only consolation we received from the few traditional priests we knew was, "stick with the Pope, the Church has been through this before." However, the defections and loss of faith both in Europe and North America were unprecedented and the very institutions for

⁷ **The Desolate City - page 134, Anne Roche Muggeridge, McClelland & Stuart Limited, Toronto, 1986.**

⁸ **The Latin Mass - vol. 2, no. 1, page 21, Jan/Feb. 1993.**

transmitting the faith, i.e., schools, colleges, universities, and seminaries, were collapsing.

Our spiritual journey to Orthodoxy began in 1992, when my wife took a course in iconography from a Russian icon master in Vancouver, British Columbia. The icon is not only a window to the spiritual world, it is also a

reflection of the traditions of the Orthodox Church. It is interesting that iconographic art always struck us as a more mature religious art form; that partly explains why we always had icons in our home. During this time we also attended some lectures on iconography organized by the Orthodox Church and were impressed by the humility, kindness, and depth of spirituality of those present.

In 1993 we attended Easter Mass at our local parish church where, as with most Catholic churches today, the usual Protestant influence was very present. There were the familiar felt banners hanging in and around the sanctuary and the guitar group was belting out those dreadful songs from the Glory and Praise Hymn Book. Musical instruments were thoroughly condemned by the Church Fathers⁹ and whenever I heard those twanging guitars, I would inwardly genuflect to their wisdom. Yes, as with many traditional Catholics, we were receiving our weekly dose of what psychologists call cognitive dissonance, i.e., a feeling of alienation from the church's liturgy.

On our way home from mass, we visited a small Orthodox Church which had recently taken over the premises from an unused Protestant Church. Most of the

⁹ Encyclopaedia Britannica - vol. 15, page 1065, 1972.

parishioners were English-speaking converts. A small untrained choir chanted the liturgy and some icons hung from a makeshift iconostasis - the difference was stunning - in these somewhat meager surroundings they had captured a sense of transcendence, reverence, mystery, and a vibrancy that we had lost. Despite our admiration for their liturgy, there was also a reaction to the unfamiliar - a feeling of alienation that would be more strongly felt when we visited the ethnic Orthodox Churches. We had always been aware of the Orthodox Church and her splendid witness to tradition, but today in this little bare bones church, the difference was especially striking and the questions started to gnaw at us. Why have they been able to maintain what we have lost? Some of the initial questions were typically those coming from Roman Catholics. How can they do this with a form of church government that is so decentralized? How can they manage their church organization without an authority figure like that of the Pope? Who is in charge? We contacted several Orthodox priests with whom we had many discussions, and they were very helpful in steering us towards some Orthodox historians. Being keen students of history, we had read about the Early Church but mostly from a Catholic point of view. Here for the first time we were reading books where the Orthodox Church was speaking for herself. As most people know, both Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches were one church for the first thousand years. It should be pointed out that the Orthodox Church during those first thousand years of union always recognized Rome as having a Primacy of Honour, i.e., *primus inter pares* - first among equals. It was the ancient seat of Roman government and was the resting-place of Peter and Paul which for many hundreds of years proved to be a steadfast witness to the true faith. The Orthodox Church believes that Rome erred in attempting to turn this Primacy

of Honour within the Church to a Supremacy over the Church. Reading these Orthodox scholars was like having a long-lost relative showing up on your doorstep and filling in details of family history, thereby offering a fresh perspective.

This new perspective challenged our most deeply held beliefs concerning the Papacy and the development of the early church. Like most Roman Catholics, we took the triumphant, monarchical Papacy of the high middle ages like that of Gregory VII, Innocent III, and Boniface VIII and attempted to carry this concept of the Papacy back to the very early church. Like most Roman Catholics our view of the Church was more picturesque than real.

For non-Roman Catholics, it is almost impossible to comprehend the attachment a Catholic has for the Papacy, and our reaction was highly defensive. In the past, when we came across serious works of history contradicting the Roman Catholic position, we were skeptical, and if we found that the author was Protestant, or the book came from a Protestant publishing house, it was given scant attention. If it contradicted a dogmatic belief, it was dismissed immediately. Only Roman Catholic historians have a pure line to objectivity, especially when it concerns articles of faith. This is what Catholics are taught and it is this belief that will keep their faith inviolate. This teaching is best exemplified by Pope Leo XIII in his celebrated *Letter to the Prelates and Clergy of France* (September 8th, 1899). While encouraging them to the study of history, he reminds: "Those who study it must never lose sight of the fact that it contains a collection of dogmatic facts, which impose themselves upon our faith, and which nobody is ever permitted to call in doubt." Cardinal Manning of England is even more blunt: "The appeal to antiquity is both a treason and a heresy. It is a treason because it rejects the divine voice of the Church at this hour, and a heresy because it denies that voice to be divine."¹⁰ At another time Cardinal Manning wrote, "The appeal from the living voice of the Church to any tribunal whatsoever, human history included, is an act of private judgment and a treason because that living voice is supreme; and to appeal from that supreme voice is also a heresy because that voice by divine assistance is infallible."¹¹

Thus for Catholics, that the Bishops of Rome have always exercised immediate and supreme jurisdiction and infallible judgment over the entire church and that these prerogatives were transmitted by Peter are dogmatic beliefs beyond dispute. However, we took the momentous step to allow our position to be challenged to close scrutiny; thus, we sought out good, competent non-Catholic, non-Orthodox scholars and spent the next two years reading all aspects of church history, contacting distant libraries and universities, verifying quotes, translating Latin documents, and holding discussions with several Roman Catholic priests. What we found was that contemporary scholarship and early church writings confirmed the Orthodox position. We have always

¹⁰. *Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost* - 4* edition, page 238.

¹¹. *Daily Telegraph* - 8th October 1875, page 5.

striven to confront difficulties without prejudice **and** problems without sentiment, and these values were sorely tested when we looked at the Orthodox Church. There were times when we were praying for a good argument to stay with Rome.

Some of our Roman Catholic friends attempted to persuade us to remain with Rome by appealing to Rome's numerical superiority, "but how can one billion Roman Catholics be wrong?" Of course, one cannot prove truth by force of numbers; after all, by the year 2,000 Moslems will outnumber Christians - what then? Besides, this line of reasoning was justly condemned by Pope Pius IX in his *Syllabus of Errors* number 60, (1864): "To one who says, 'Authority is nothing else but numbers and the sum total of material strength,' let him be anathema."

A number of times during our two years of praying, reading, and research, we attended Russian and Greek liturgies only to walk out halfway, feeling completely alienated. Our emotional side desperately wanted to stay with what was familiar and comfortable; however, after a short period of time we would say, "but the Orthodox are right." Our intellect would always deny us the luxury of giving in to our emotions. When we look back it was only the grace of God that urged us on like an insistent call because, when we started to investigate the Orthodox Church, we did not have a warm circle of Orthodox friends gently prodding us in the right direction. It was a painful, lonely journey, but at least the pain kept our motives pure.

In a beautiful moving ceremony amidst the flickering candles, warm hues of the icons, and the lingering fragrance of incense, we were received into the Orthodox Church by Chrismation on Lazarus Saturday, 1995. We were orphans no longer. The traditional church that we loved and longed for was here. The sacraments, of which Rome has always recognized the validity and which are so important in our spiritual lives, were all there and conferred in an unchanged manner. For instance, leavened bread for the Eucharist was also used by Rome for the first 800 years,¹² following Christ's command: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14). Granting communion to infants Rome practiced until the 12th century.¹³ It was amazing to discover that all the rich traditions and practices gradually shed by Rome over the centuries were still very much part of the Orthodox Church.

During those two years of prayer and study, we frequently attended the Divine Liturgy which we grew to love, gradually losing our sense of alienation. On one occasion, during a visit from the Bishop, I witnessed the Orthodox rite of confession. This took place before the iconostasis, and at the end the Bishop embraced the penitent; I remember being truly struck by the love and tenderness displayed. Like any church, the Orthodox Church is not without her problems. Controversies and problems have been with the church from the beginning; one

only has to read the Pauline Epistles for evidence of that. However, in spite of it all, she has remained a

¹². *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development - vol. 1, page 84, Joseph A. Jungmann, S.J., Christian Classics, Westminster, Maryland, 1992.*

¹³. *Ibid. - vol. 2, page 385.*

splendid witness to Christian tradition and zealously guards all her traditions and liturgy against change, thus affording her faithful an enormous sense of permanence and tranquility in their spiritual lives.

The Orthodox Church has retained the essential character of the catholicity of the early church echoed by St. Ignatius of Antioch (martyred circa A.D. 110), "Where the bishop is to be seen, there let all his people be; just as wherever Jesus Christ is present, we have the catholic Church." Saint Jerome describes it thus:

It is not the case that there is one church at Rome and another in all the world beside. Gaul and Britian, Africa and Persia, India and the East worship one Christ and observe one rule of truth. If you ask for authority, the world outweighs its capital. Wherever there is a bishop, whether it be at Rome or at Engubium, whether it be Constantinople or at Rhegium, whether it be at Alexandria or at Zoan, his dignity is one and his priesthood is one. Neither the command of wealth nor the lowliness of poverty makes him more a bishop or less a bishop. All alike are successors of the apostles. (Letter CXLVI to Evangelus)

The local church with its bishop contains the totality of the universal church. This model is far removed from the Roman Catholic concept, whereby the local church is Catholic only because it is a segment of a greater corporate body and where the glory of the universal church is spotlighted with glaring intensity on the office of one bishop. Hence, Pope Pius IX could exclaim,

"Witness of tradition, there is only one; that's me."¹⁴ In fact, the Church of the Seven Ecumenical Councils called for an equilibrium that we find in Canon 34 of the Apostolic Canons. These canons date from the first half of the fourth century and mirror the practices of the pre-Nicean Church where Rome enjoyed a primacy of honour - first among equals (*primus inter pares*). These canons were translated into Latin by Dionysius Exiguus in the late 5th century and were widely accepted in the West. Canon 34 reads as follow:

The bishops of every nation must acknowledge him who is first among them and

account him as their head and do nothing of consequence without his consent; but each may do those things which concern his own parish and the country places which belong to it. But neither let him who is the first do anything without the consent of all. For so there will be oneness of mind and God will be glorified through the Lord in the Holy Spirit.¹⁵

In many ways western Christians live in a world where their sole points of reference are Roman Catholic

¹⁴ The Vatican Council 1869-1870 - page 355, Dom Cuthbert Butler, Collins and Harvill Press, London, 1962. Archbishop Felix Dupanloup of Orleans and Archbishop Georges Darboy of Paris both recorded this famous remark in their diaries a few hours after the Pope uttered it on June 18, 1870.

¹⁵ Byzantine Theology - page 80, John Meyendorff, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, New York, 1974.

or Protestant. The Protestant revolt that ignited Western Europe and the Roman Catholic counter-Reformation defines the boundaries of our religious experience. When we look outside these religious boundaries, many of us are constrained by our culture. With these cultural blinkers the Orthodox Church can look very ethnic or very different - in fact, many of these so-called differences were once common practices in Western Churches.

What follows is the result of two years of study. It is difficult to enter into controversial issues without arousing disagreement and resentment. There were times when I was intimidated into thinking that perhaps I should not write this book lest I would be considered anti-Catholic - which I am certainly not. As an Orthodox Christian, I share with Roman Catholics the belief that the three cornerstones of the Protestant Revolt, i.e., Sola Scriptura, Sola Fide and Imputed Righteousness, are totally wrong, but this belief does not make us anti-Protestant. All Christians believe that the Jewish people were wrong in rejecting Christ as the Messiah, but this does not make us anti-Semitic.

The Bishops of Rome invite close scrutiny from Orthodox Christians because they are claiming prerogatives of supreme universal jurisdiction over the Orthodox Church. Pius XI explains this in his encyclical *Lux Veritatis*, when together with the Blessed Virgin Mary he pines for Orthodox Christians who have been "unhappily led away from the unity of the Church, and therefore from her Son, whose Vicar on earth We are. May they return to the common Father, ...may they all turn to Us, who have indeed a fatherly affection for them all, and who gladly make them Our Own." When Rome makes such claims, however warmly made, she must risk suffering the proverbial lot of the claimant by occasionally having his claim rejected and more so if his claim appears especially exalted.

In this book I have relied on the best scholarship available on early church history to illustrate Rome's role in the early church, specifically in the ecumenical councils and how she was perceived by the Church at large. Also, I have relied heavily on Roman Catholic historians as they comment on the major issues such as Papal Infallibility. It may come as a surprise to some Catholics that before the defining of the definition in 1870, many of the church's most respected historians roundly denounced it as untenable.

It should be stated that the liturgical revolution within the Catholic Church was only the catalyst, certainly not the reason for moving to the Orthodox Church. Rather, it was that the claims of the Papacy did not stand close historical analysis, which ultimately called into question the doctrine of Papal Infallibility. Especially significant and revealing for me was Rome's role and place in the Seven Ecumenical Councils and how those councils through their documents and actions perceived Rome's position.

Even though she has veered both in her structures and traditions from the Early Church, the Roman Catholic Church's enormous contribution to Western Society must be recognized and appreciated. She founded the first universities, e.g., Oxford, Cambridge, and the University of Paris, countless thousands of hospitals and orphanages, and inspired the building of the great gothic cathedrals. Special tribute must be paid to the thousands of missionaries who toiled in the New World to spread the Gospel, leaving place names like San Francisco, San Diego, Corpus Christi, and Santa Barbara as a perpetual testament of their piety. We remain grateful to the Church of Rome for the many spiritual truths she passed on to us and maintain a close relationship with her, since many friends and members of our family, both lay and clerical, are within her fold.

CHAPTER II

Peter and the Papacy

Inscribed in Latin around the base of the giant dome in the interior of St. Peter's in Rome are the words: TU ES PETRUS ET SUPER HANC PETRAM AEDIFICABO ECCLESIAM MEAM ET TIBI DABO CLAVES REGNI CAELORUM - Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My church.. .and I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. In this brief passage from St. Matthew's gospel 16:18-19 lies the very basis, the seminal seed for papal supremacy and for the vast majority of Roman Catholics the first and main line of defense in supporting the Papacy. This is the very basis of all Catholic dogma, for everything rests on this claim of Christ's commission to Peter where he is said to have been appointed ruler of His Church.

Such a momentous empowerment on the person of Peter by Christ Himself should have resonated throughout the entire Church, the enormity of the commission sweeping away any ambiguity and reflecting complete unanimity among the Fathers of the Church as to its meaning. As Pope Leo XIII writes in his encyclical *Satis Cognitum*, it is "the venerable and constant belief of every age" recognized "always and everywhere and by all." This encyclical insists that the papal claims based on the Petrine text from Matthew's gospel *are jure divino* (by Divine law), which means that the Bishops of Rome enjoyed universal jurisdiction and the charism of infallible teaching from the very beginning. *Satis Cognitum pointedly excludes the theory that papal power was a result of gradual development, for it states that "in the decree ,of the Vatican Council as to the nature and authority of the primacy of the Roman Pontiff, no newly conceived opinion is set forth, but the venerable and constant belief of every age," i.e., it was all there from the beginning, or it wasn't there at all.*

The Orthodox Church has always maintained, however, that the Early Church saw no theological basis in Matthew 16:18-19 to support the claims of Rome, stating rather that most of the Early Church saw in this passage that Christ was building His Church, not on the person of Peter, but on Peter's confession of faith and, therefore, was not declaring him to be the sole foundation of His Church. A much-quoted survey compiled by Roman Catholic scholar Jean de Launoy¹⁶ finds that seventeen Fathers thought of the rock as Peter, forty-four thought it referred to Peter's confession, sixteen thought Christ himself was the rock, while eight thought the rock represented all the apostles; i.e., 80% of the Fathers did not recognize the person of Peter as the rock. Archbishop Kenrick of St. Louis used this argument in vain when he opposed the defining of Papal Infallibility at the First Vatican Council.¹⁷ The following is a sample of what some of the Church Fathers

had to say regarding Peter's confession being the rock:

See what praises follow this faith. "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build this Church." What meaneth, "Upon this rock I will build My Church"?

¹⁶ *Epist. Vii., Opp. vol. V., pt. 2. p. 99, Geneva, 1731.*

¹⁷ *Documenta - vol. 1, page 195 f., Friedrich.*

Upon this faith; upon this that has been said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Upon this rock," saith He, "I will build My Church." St. Augustine, Homily X on John V. 1-3.

"And I say unto thee, Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church," that is, on the faith of his confession. St John Chrysostom, Homily LIV on Matthew XIV. 13.

Faith is the foundation of the Church, for it was not of the person but of the faith of St. Peter that it was said that the gates of hell should not prevail against it; it is the confession of faith that has vanquished hell. Jesus Christ is the Rock. He did not deny the grace of His name when He called him Peter, because he borrowed from the rock the constancy and solidity of his faith. Endeavor then, thyself to be a rock - thy rock is thy faith, and faith is the foundation of the Church. If thou art a rock, thou shalt be in the Church for the Church is built upon the rock.... St. Ambrose, On the Incarnation.

Rock is the unity of faith, not the person of Peter. St. Cyprian, De Catholicae Ecclesiae Unitate, cap. 4-5.

It should be pointed out that the famous epigram attributed to St. Augustine, "Roma locuta est; causa finita est" (Rome has spoken, the case is closed), is completely untrue. Augustine made no such statement. The origin of this remark is supposedly drawn from sermon 131:10 which is as follows: "Already two councils have sent to the Apostolic See concerning this matter, and rescripts have come from hence. The case is concluded; would that error soon cease...." Augustine is stating that two African Councils have rendered a judgment against the Pelagians and they were sent to Rome, "from thence rescripts have come; the cause is finished." The African church and Rome have condemned Pelagius and that is the end of the matter.

When Pope Zosimus restored Pelagius, Augustine and the African church did not hesitate to vigorously oppose him by calling a council at Carthage where Pelagius was anathematized. The council then appealed to the tribunal of the Roman

Emperor Honorius who issued an imperial edict banishing the Pelagians from Rome. Pope Zosimus ultimately backed down and issued his own condemnation. Catholic scholars uncovered this error over 100 years ago and Catholic historians like Warren H. Carroll are in full concurrence.¹⁸ The popularity of this mythical remark (*Roma locuta est; causa finita est* -Rome has spoken, the case is closed) is that it is so neat, so concise, and so conclusive. It even has a nice ring to it - like a worn cliché - that slides effortlessly into our consciousness and distorts our perception of history.

St. Augustine had ample opportunity in his actions and vast literary works to express his belief in the supreme jurisdiction of Rome. Of all the Fathers of the Church, St. Augustine wrote the most on church unity and authority. He wrote 75 chapters to the separated Donatists on the *Unity of the Church*, using all sorts of arguments to urge them to return to communion. Of the necessity of communion with Rome, or Rome as a centre

¹⁸ The Building of Christendom - vol. 2, pages 99-100, Warren H. Carroll, Christendom College Press, Front Royal, Va., 1987.

of unity, or Rome's supreme authority, there is not one single word. It should be mentioned that when St. Augustine refers to Rome as the "Apostolic See," he is not conferring any special power or authority in the title, for "The Christian Society is diffused by the propagation all over the world by the Apostolic Sees and the succession of bishops in them."¹⁹

As with the Fathers of the early church, St. Augustine recognized the General Councils as the supreme authority of the church. In his dispute with the Donatists about re-baptism, he does not condemn Cyprian for refusing to submit to the Bishop of Rome, for he writes that a General Council has not issued a judgment on the subject and that St. Cyprian would "undoubtedly have yielded if at any time the truth of the question had been placed beyond all dispute by the investigation and decree of a General Council."²⁰ With respect to the correct baptismal formula, Augustine says: "We ourselves would not dare to assert anything such unless we were supported by the most harmonious authority of the universal Church."²¹ We can "declare with the confidence of a fearless voice that which under Government of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ has been ratified by a Council of the universal Church."²² In response to one of its deposed priests appealing to Pope Zosimus for reinstatement, the North African Church asserted its independent

¹⁹ Retractationes, 1:21. P. L. 32: 618.

²⁰ De Bapt. Contra Donatistas, lib ii. Patrologiae Latinae Cursus Completus, 43:129, J.P. Migne, ed., Paris, 1844-66.

²¹ Ibid.

²² DeBapt. Contra Donatistas, lib, vii. P.L. 43:242, 243.

jurisdiction at the Synod of Carthage on the 1st of May, 418, by passing the following canon:

If priests, deacons and inferior clerics complain of a sentence of their own bishops, they shall, with the consent of their bishop, have recourse to the neighbouring bishops, who shall settle the dispute. If they desire to make a further appeal, it must only be to their primates or to African Councils. But whoever appeals to a court on the other side of the sea may not again be received into communion by anyone in Africa.²³

For St. Augustine, appealing a judgment from Rome to a universal Council of the Church was perfectly legitimate, as he admits in his Epistle 43: "Supposing those bishops who judged at Rome were not good judges, there remained still a plenary Council of the universal Church where the cause could be sifted with the judges themselves, so that if they were convicted of having judged wrongly their sentence could be annulled."²⁴

Some Church Fathers regarded the word "rock" as referring to Christ or the faith of the Apostles, not Peter alone.

Therefore Peter is so called from the rock; not the rock from Peter; as Christ is not called Christ from the Christian, but the Christian from Christ.

²³ Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio, G.D. Mansi, III, 726, Florence, 1759-63.

²⁴ Patrologiae Latinae Cursus Completus, 33:169, J.P. Migne, ed., Paris, 1844-66.

"Therefore," he saith, "Thou art Peter; and upon this Rock" which thou hast confessed, upon this Rock which thou hast acknowledged, saying, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, will I build My Church:" that is upon Myself, the Son of the living God, "will I build My Church." I will build thee upon Myself, not Myself upon thee. For men who wish to be built upon men, said, "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas," (1 Cor. 1:12) who is Peter. But others who do not wish to be built upon Peter, but upon the Rock, said, "But I am of Christ." And when the Apostle Paul ascertained that he was chosen, and Christ despised, he said, "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Cor. 1:13) And, as not in the name of Paul, so neither in the name of Peter; but in the name of Christ: that Peter might be built upon the Rock, not the Rock upon Peter. Saint Augustine, Sermon XXVI Matt. XIV, 25.

Christ is the Rock Who granted to His apostles that they should be called rock. God has founded His Church on this Rock, and it is from this Rock that Peter has been named. St. Jerome, 6th Book on Matthew.

I believe that by the Rock you must understand the unshaken faith of the apostles. St. Hilary, Second Book on the Trinity.

The word "Rock" has only a denominative value - it signifies nothing but the steadfast and firm faith of the apostles. St. Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, Of the Trinity, 4th Book.

Peter and John were equal in dignity and honour. Christ is the foundation of all - the unshakable Rock upon which we are all built as a spiritual edifice. St. Cyril of Alexandria, in his letter to Nestorius.

Furthermore, the power of binding and loosing is also given to the other apostles in Matthew 18:18, so that all share the same power as Peter. While Peter was undeniably the first among the Twelve, he never acted or spoke alone but always in union with them. Thus the Early Church's understanding of Matthew 16:18-19 and the Petrine Primacy was that all bishops shared in the Petrine power. The idea that the Church is built solely on the person of Peter and that he enjoyed a supremacy over the Apostles and hence the Church is explicitly denied:

He had not the primacy over the disciples (in discipulos) but among the disciples (in discipulis). His primacy among the disciples was the same as that of Stephen among the deacons. St. Augustine, Sermon 10 on Peter and Paul.

As soon as Peter heard these words, "Whom say ye that I am?" remembering his place he exercised this primacy, a primacy of confession, not of honour; a primacy of faith, not of rank. St. Ambrose, De Incarnationis Dominicae Sacramento 4:32.

But observe how Peter does everything with the common consent; nothing imperiously. St. John Chrysostom, Homily III on Acts 1:12.

To all the apostles after His resurrection He gives equal power (parem potestatem) and says, "As the Father sent Me so I send you." St. Cyprian, De Unitate 4.

For neither did Peter, whom first the Lord chose... when Paul disputed with him afterwards about the circumcision, claim anything to himself insolently, nor arrogantly assume anything, so as to say that he held a primacy, and that he ought to be obeyed by novices and those lately come. St. Cyprian, Epistle LXX concerning the baptism of Heretics.

St. Cyprian also says: In the administration of the Church each bishop has the free discretion of his own will, having to account only to the Lord for his actions. None of us may set himself up as bishop of bishops, nor compel his brothers to obey him; every bishop of the Church has full liberty and complete power; as he cannot be judged by another, neither can he judge another. (Opening address to the Council of Carthage)

Here Cyprian reminds us that the collegial structure of the Church (all bishops sharing power) is based on Divine Law, with a pointed reproof to those bishops who would set themselves over their peers:

...through the changes of times and successions, the ordering of bishops and the plan of the Church flow onwards; so that the Church is founded upon the bishops, and every act of the Church is controlled by these same rulers. Since this, then, is founded on the divine law, I marvel that some, with daring temerity, have chosen to write to me as if they wrote in the name of the Church.... Cyprian to the Lapsed, Epistle XXVI, (2).

If the Bishop of Rome was everywhere regarded as the supreme head of the church, where were the cries of heresy to such statements as those of St. Cyprian?

It has been claimed that Rome enjoyed her preeminence among the Patriarchal Sees because of her senior apostolic foundation, i.e., St. Peter had been martyred there. This system of apostolic ranking, however, is not reflected in the positioning of the Patriarchal Sees. As the British Byzantine historian Sir Steven Runciman observes, Alexandria was senior to Antioch in spite of the fact that the Antiochene Church had St. Peter as its founder and the Alexandrian Church was founded by St. Mark. "It could not therefore be said that precedence depended upon the apostolic foundation." Furthermore, Jerusalem "the Mother of all Churches"²⁵ was not constituted a Patriarchal See until the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Rome's senior ranking was due primarily to political considerations, as we shall see reflected in the canons of the Ecumenical Councils. "Alexandria came next because she was the second city in the Empire, the equal in size and wealth to Rome itself." The fact that SS. Peter and Paul were martyred there gave Rome a "special prestige" and a "purely

²⁵ Mansi - III, 588.

honorary primacy,"²⁶ certainly not a universal jurisdiction.

Many Roman Catholic apologists ignore the writings of the Early Church Fathers, who were equally well versed in scripture, and focus solely on their interpretation of Matthew 16:18-19. "And I say unto thee: That thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church.... And I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven...." To them it is so clear, what else could it mean? They will even delve into the Old Testament to find supporting evidence for the imagery of the "keys." In doing so they lapse into the practice of "Sola Scriptura" (by scripture alone) that they accuse Protestants of committing - by ignoring the mind of the Early Church in favour of their own subjective judgment. In addition, they anticipate their own conclusion in their initial premise when they associate any reference by Early Church Fathers to Peter as head of the apostles, the seat of Peter, Peter and the keys, etc., as pointing to evidence of Rome's supreme

universal authority.

THE COUNCIL OF JERUSALEM - THE BIRTH OF CONCILIAR TRADITION

At the Council of Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 15, we see the beginnings of the conciliar nature of the Church. Upon their return to Antioch from their missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas brought up the

²⁶ The Eastern Schism; A Study of the Papacy and the Eastern Churches during the XIth and XIIIth Centuries - pages 12-13, Steven Runciman, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1955.

persistent problem of Gentile converts and circumcision. A serious controversy erupted between Paul and Barnabas and "certain men from Judaea". The question of whether Gentile Christians should submit to the rite of circumcision only led to a deeper question as to how much, if any, of the Mosaic Law Christians should be compelled to accept. A council was called in Jerusalem to hear Paul and Barnabas and to issue a declaration. As Bishop of Jerusalem it was James who presided and who rendered the Council's final judgment - not Peter. After hearing Peter, James addressed the Council:

Simon hath related how God first visited to take of the Gentiles a people to his name.... For which cause I judge that they, who from among the Gentiles are converted to God, are not to be disquieted. But that we write unto them... (Acts 15:14-20).

As a result of this Council a declaration was issued by the "Apostles, elders and the brethren" that absolved Gentile Christians from undergoing the rite of circumcision as a condition of entering the Church. However, more important was the decision that the imposition of the Mosaic Law as a whole was not to be made as a requirement for Gentile converts to Christianity. These declarations saved the Church from embarking on the false Pharaical road of salvation by works.

Understandably, the Roman Catholic Church has always taught that Peter presided at the Council but James held the Episcopal See of Jerusalem. As we see in Acts 15, as befitting his role he (James) summed up the discussion and rendered the judgment. Hence, the obvious conclusion is that St. Peter's fellow Apostles and leaders of the Jerusalem Christian community did not view him as the sole foundation stone of the Church. James' pivotal role at this Council was recognized by early Church Fathers such as John Chrysostom:

"Then all the multitude kept silence," etc. (v.12.) There was no arrogance in the

Church. After Peter, Paul speaks, and none silences him: James waits patiently, not starts up [for the next word]. Great orderliness [of the proceeding]. No word speaks John here, no word the other apostles, but held their peace, for James was invested with the chief rule, and I think it no hardship. So clean was their soul from love of glory. "And after that they had held their peace, James answered," etc. (v.13.) Peter indeed spoke more strongly, but James here more mildly: for thus it behooves one in high authority, to leave what is unpleasant for others to say, while he himself appears in the milder part. (Upon the Acts of the Apostles, 33d Homily).

The famous early church historian Eusebius wrote: "This James, whom the early Christians surnamed the Righteous because of his outstanding virtue, was the first, as the records tell us, to be elected to the episcopal throne of the Jerusalem church. Clement, in *Outlines* Book VI, puts it thus: 'Peter, James, and John, after the Ascension of the Saviour, did not claim pre-eminence because the Saviour had specially honoured them, but chose James the Righteous as Bishop of Jerusalem.'" Eusebius, *The History of the Church?*²⁷

Contemporary scholarship confirms that the use of Matthew 16:18-19 as a theological basis for Roman Primacy is not found in the records of the Infant Church. In the book *The Early Church*, which has become almost a standard text on the subject, Henry Chadwick, who has been Regius Professor of Divinity at both Oxford and Cambridge Universities, states that:

But before the third century there was no call for a sustained, theoretical justification of this leadership. All were brethren, but the church in Rome was accepted as first among equals. The "Petrine text" of Matt. xvi:18, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church", cannot be seen to have played any part in the story of Roman leadership and authority before the middle of the third century when the passionate disagreement between Cyprian of Carthage and Stephen of Rome about baptism apparently led Stephen to invoke the text as part of his defence against Cyprian. But it was not until Damasus in 382 that this Petrine text seriously began to become important as providing a theological and scriptural foundation on which claims to primacy were based.

From Damasus onwards there is a marked crescendo in the expression of the claims made by the bishops of Rome.²⁸

²⁷ The History of the Church - II. 1, Eusebius.

²⁸ The Early Church - pages 237-238, Henry Chadwick, Penguin Books, London, Revised Edition, 1993.

Colin Morris, Professor of Medieval History of Southampton University, England, puts it this way:

The title deeds of the Roman Church were the familiar Petrine texts, but these were not interpreted as applying solely to the Pope. Thus the declaration of Matthew 16:18, "on this rock I will build my church," was usually regarded as a reference not to Peter, but to Christ or to the confession of faith, and it was held that the powers of binding and loosing belonged to all the apostles (Matt. 18:18) while being given principally to Peter, as Matthew 16:19 implies.

Many historians have remarked that it was Paul rather than Peter who established Rome as a major Christian city and therefore should be regarded as its founder.³⁰ For many centuries Rome was always known as the city of SS. Peter and Paul, recognizing an equal debt to both; however, as the papal claims to Petrine power became more insistent, Paul's name as a co-founder faded.

ROME'S CLAIMS TO UNIVERSAL JURISDICTION IN THE EARLY CHURCH

The usual evidence produced to prove Rome's supremacy in the immediate post-New Testament Church

²⁹ The Papal Monarchy, Oxford History of the Church - page 208, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991.

³⁰ Jerusalem and Rome - pages 23-36, Henry Chadwick, Hans von Campenhausen, Philadelphia, 1966.

is the letter of Clement, Bishop of Rome, to the Corinthians. The purpose of this letter, written in the last decade of the first century, was to address the trouble in the Church of Corinth where they had deposed their leaders and had installed others in their place. The letter, rather than being issued from Clement personally, is presented corporately, "From the colony of the Church of God at Rome, To the colony of the Church of God at Corinth." The letter is written with a fraternal exhortation and does not appeal to any Petrine texts or claim any extraordinary jurisdiction. Had it done so, the letter would have been written in a very different style.

Another evidence which Rome uses to support her claims of universal jurisdiction in the early church is a passage from the work *Adversus Haereses* - Against Heresies by St. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons (circa A.D. 140-202). All we

have of this Greek work is a Latin translation. The translation of this passage (Adv. Haer. III, 3, 2.) has been hotly debated over the centuries. This Latin passage reads as follows:

Ad hanc ecclesiam propter potentiolem principalitatem necesse est omnem convenire ecclesiam, hoc est, eos qui sunt undique fideles, in qua semper ab his qui sunt undique, conservata est ea quae est ab apostolis traditio.

A typical Roman Catholic translation of this famous passage is as follows:

For with this Church, because of its superior origin, all Churches must agree, that is, all the faithful in the whole

world; and it is in her that the faithful everywhere have maintained the Apostolic tradition.

Other translations read:

For it is necessary that every church come together with this church on account of its greater antiquity.

Much of the controversy centres on the Latin word *convenire* - the root of our word "convene" - which the Roman Catholic source translates as "must agree," supporting its claim of supreme jurisdiction. The other translation puts it as "come together," while some sources translate it as "all churches must turn to," "all churches must have recourse to," or "must be in harmony with." It should be pointed out that the word "agree" in the hierarchy of possible meanings of the word *convenire* in the Latin dictionary - mine is Cassell's - the translations "to come together," "collect," "who belong," "to visit," "to meet," are more immediate. The translation "to agree with" is more metaphorical and is listed with "be congenial," "to harmonize," "be fitting." The use of the imperative word "must" in "must agree" in the Roman Catholic translation gives an imperative mood that is not there.

The exact meaning of this passage will continue to be debated until, if ever, the original Greek text surfaces. As

³¹ The Faith of the Early Fathers - vol. 1, page 90 (210), ed. & trans. W.A. Jurgens, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1970.

Nicholas Afanassieff states in *The Primacy of Peter* ^ "The sense of the remark would be, 'every local church should have recourse to the Church of Rome.'" F.

W. Puller, in his book *Primitive Saints and the See of Rome*, states that the words *convenire ad* occur in 26 passages in the Jerome Vulgate Bible, and the meaning in every case is "to come together" or "resort to." "It would perhaps be rash to lay down a universal negative, and to say that *convenire ad* never means 'agree with'; but as far as I am aware no such passage has ever yet been produced."³³ Irenaeus himself confirms this sense of '*convenire*' (Adv. Ilaer. Ill, 4,1.) in explaining what he had said about the Church of Rome and other churches apostolically founded:

If at any time some simple question of detail should happen to provoke a dispute, surely the oldest churches, and those in which the Apostles lived, are the ones we should have recourse to [recurrere], and they will give us something very certain, and very clear, on this case in question.

This fits the picture of the pre-Nicene Church of Rome enjoying a Primacy of Honour due to its Pauline and Petrine tradition with a jurisdiction limited to its own surrounding area, as evidenced by the letter written by Ignatius of Antioch on his journey to martyrdom in Rome (circa A.D. 98-117). In his letter to the Roman Christians he writes "to the Church that is in charge of affairs in

³² The Primacy of Peter - page 132, ed. John Meyendorff, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1992.

³³ Primitive Saints and the See of Rome - page 26, F.W. Puller.

Roman quarters." Over two hundred years later, we still see Rome as a church enjoying a primacy of honour with a limited geographical jurisdiction as evidenced in Canon 6 of the First Council of Nicea:

Let the ancient customs in Egypt, Libya and Pentapolis prevail, that the Bishop of Alexandria have jurisdiction in all these, since the like is customary for the Bishop of Rome also. Likewise, in Antioch and the other provinces, let the Churches retain their privileges.

Ruffinus, a 4th century writer who wrote the *Ecclesiastical History*, using the term "Suburbicarian" for what was "customary for Rome," recognized Corsica, Sardinia, and Southern Italy.

We now come to the famous Easter controversy in which Roman Catholics purport to show Pope St. Victor (A.D. 189-199) exercising his supreme universal authority for the first time. The Church in Asia Minor celebrated Easter at the same time as the Jewish Passover, i.e., on the 14th day of the Jewish month Nisan. This practice, they claimed, was

given to them by the Apostles and was therefore of ancient origin. Other Churches, Rome included, celebrated Easter on the Sunday following the full moon after the Spring Equinox. These Churches sought uniformity; therefore, the early church historian Eusebius (A.D. ca. 260-340) tells us that "synods and conferences of bishops were convened" in an effort to achieve uniformity. This was initiated by Pope St. Victor, who sent letters to the various Metropolitans, requesting them to convene synods in order to discuss the question. That these synods were convened by request and not by command is evidenced by Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, in his letter to "Victor and the Roman Church."³⁴ These "synods and conferences" issued a "decree of the Church, in the form of letters addressed to Christians everywhere, that never on any day other than the Lord's Day should the mystery of the Lord's Resurrection from the Dead be celebrated, and on that day alone we should observe the end of the Paschal fast." Eusebius goes on to tell us:

There is extant to this day a letter from those who attended a conference in Palestine presided over by Bishop Theophilus of Caesarea and Narcissus of Jerusalem; and from those at Rome a similar one, arising out of the same controversy, which names Victor as bishop. There are others from the Pontic bishops, presided over by Palmas as the senior; from the Gallic province, over which Irenaeus was archbishop, and from the bishops in Osroene and the cities of that region. There are also personal letters from Bishop Bacchylus of Corinth and very many more, who voiced one and the same opinion and i judgement and gave the same vote. All these laid [down one single rule - the rule already stated.³⁵

Therefore, the decree came from these councils, not from Pope St. Victor. Furthermore, we see Pope St. Victor's name listed matter-of-factly along with all the others - he doesn't even get first mention but is listed

³⁴ Eusebius - V. 24. " Ibid. - V.23.

after the bishop of Palestine. Most unlikely if he commanded the convening of the council.

The Asian bishops headed by Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, refused to heed the decree and a dispute broke out between him and Pope St. Victor, who demanded submission. The Churches of Asia also had Apostolic origins, as Polycrates reminded Pope St. Victor in a measured, dignified response:

We for our part keep the day scrupulously, without addition or subtraction. For in Asia great luminaries sleep who shall rise again...Philip...John who leant back on the Lord's breast.. Polycarp.... All of these kept the 14^l day of the month as the beginning of the Paschal festival in accordance with the Gospel...and going carefully through all Holy Scripture, [I] am not scared of threats. Better people than I have said: "We must obey God rather than men."

Eusebius writes, "Thereupon Victor, head of the Roman Church, attempted at one stroke to cut off from the common unity all the Asian dioceses, together with the neighboring churches, on the ground of heterodoxy...." The key word here, of course, is the word attempted. If we decide to do something and it is within our power to do it, it is done. If, however, it is not in our immediate power and we still wish to do it, then we make an attempt. This is what Pope St. Victor did when he attempted to excommunicate his fellow bishops. As with all attempts, we sometimes succeed and sometimes fail - Pope St. Victor failed. As Eusebius tells us:

But this was not to the taste of all the bishops: they replied with a request that he would turn his mind to the things that make for peace and unity and love towards his neighbours. We still possess the words of these men, who very sternly rebuked Victor. Among them was Irenaeus, who wrote on behalf of the Christians for whom he was responsible in Gaul.³⁶

The crisis abated with the Asian Churches keeping their Easter calendar. It is interesting to note that Irenaeus relates that St. Polycarp of Smyrna had visited Rome some 40 years earlier. At that time, Pope Anicetus had tried to persuade the great bishop to adopt Rome's Easter calendar to no avail. "Though the position was such, they remained in communion with each other." Note that Irenaeus does not say that Polycarp remained in communion with Rome but rather that they "remained in communion with each other." Ultimately, the uniformity in the Easter observance that Rome and her sister churches sought was gradually enforced by the general councils of the Church.

Most Roman Catholics, when they think of the Early Church, think of Rome, the Popes, the Martyrs, the Catacombs and the Colosseum. This view is perfectly understandable, because for Roman Catholics or Protestants their spiritual genesis lies in Rome, i.e., Rome was the centre of Western Christianity. The Early Church, however, was overwhelmingly Eastern and Greek. They had the greatest population density and its people were better educated and more sophisticated than

³⁶ Ibid. - V.24.

their western brethren. The East could claim forty-four churches of apostolic origin versus one for the West. The West was not the centre of Christianity, but for many hundreds of years it was a missionary field. With the barbarian incursions it had become a cultural backwater. The East held four of the five patriarchates, i.e., Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem; two of these, Alexandria and Antioch, contained the first schools of biblical interpretation. The Seven Great Ecumenical Councils were all held in the East, with an overwhelming presence of eastern bishops, as we shall see in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

The Seven Ecumenical Councils

Summoned by the Roman Emperor Constantine in the year 325, the Bishops converged on the town of Nicea -modern day Iznik - just outside Constantinople, for the first great Ecumenical Council, with many of them bearing the wounds of persecution. There were men such as St. Paphnutius and Potoman, Bishops of Egypt, both of whom were blinded in one eye and crippled from torture, and Paul of Neo-Caesarea, unable to use his burned hands. Also, great luminaries of the Church, such as St. Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, and St. Athanasius the Great, made their way to the council. Of the 270-300 bishops in attendance, only five were from the west - Caecilian of Carthage, Domnus of Pannonia (Austria), Nicasius of Gaul (France), Mark of Calabria (Italy), and Osius of Cordoba (Spain), who was an imperial councilor. Sylvester, Bishop of Rome, excused himself on account of his old age and sent two priests, Vito and Vincent, as observers. Some Roman Catholic books such as *The Story of the Church*³⁷ claim that the Emperor Constantine only summoned the council with the consent of Pope Sylvester. As Catholic historian Leo Donald Davis, S.J., points out in his book, *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*,

³⁷ *The Story of the Church* - page 87, Reverend George Johnson, Reverend Jerome D. Hannan, Sister M. Dominica, Tan Books, Rockford, Illinois, 1980.