

The Sixth Nicene Canon and the Papacy

THE SIXTH NICENE CANON AND THE PAPACY by Fr. James F. Loughlin, from the *American Catholic Quarterly Review* (volume 5, 1880), pages 220-239 -- copyright (c) 1997, Classica Media, Inc.

NOTES

APPENDIX: CANONS OF NICAEA

Ta archaia ethe krateito ta en Aigupto kai Liboe kai Pentapolei, hoste ton Alexandreias episopon panton touton echein ten exousian, epeide kai to en te Rome episkopo touto sunethes estin. Homoios de kai kata Antiocheian kai en tais allais eparchias ta presbeia sozesthai tais ekklesiais

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. [1]

"Those holy and venerable Fathers of Nicaea," said St. Leo I the Great, [2] who, after having condemned to eternal infamy Arius and his blasphemies, enacted a series of church canons destined to have force to the end of times are not dead; for, both here at Rome and throughout the whole world they are judged to be still living in their immortal decrees."

We feel this undying influence of the three hundred and eighteen bishops just as vividly today, though nearly sixteen centuries have passed since they met in Bithynia, as St. Leo did fourteen hundred years ago. Of the twenty canons which they promulgated, not one has grown entirely obsolete; for the majority of them relate to things of catholic and fundamental interest, and the few which were enacted for the protection of assailed individual rights or the extirpation of local abuses have in them a germ of immortality.

Canon VI is an instance of this latter class. The main object of the decree is to confirm the time-honored privileges of the See of Alexandria. From time immemorial the bishops of that city had claimed and exercised supreme jurisdiction over the churches of Egypt and the neighboring provinces. They received the appeals of the bishops from the sentence of their metropolitans; convened and presided over provincial synods; they ordained a if necessary, deposed bishops; in a word they were, in the phraseology of a later age, patriarchs. Whatever may have been the source of this authority, there is no record of its having been contested by any of the Egyptian bishops before Meletius of Lycopoli, raised the standard of rebellion.

This Meletius, as we learn from Socrates, [3] having been degraded by St. Peter of Alexandria in consequence of many heavy charges, the most grievous of which was that during the persecution he had denied the faith and sacrificed, would not submit to the sentence of his superior; and not content with renouncing all allegiance to the Alexandrian See, he arrogated

an equal right with the patriarch to ordain bishops and convene synods throughout Egypt. By attaching to his cause all the disaffected elements through the country, he sowed religious dissension in every parish, and soon was leader of a numerous and devoted faction, which obtained quite a formidable accession of strength by coalition with the partisans of Arius. Indeed the desire of putting an end to the Meletian schism was one of the chief motives which impelled Constantine, "with the advice of the clergy," to convoke the Nicene Council.

The great synod decreed "that the ancient order of things in Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis must be maintained, to wit, that the Bishop of Alexandria should have authority over all these provinces." And lest similar disorders might arise in Antioch or elsewhere, the Council enacted furthermore "that all the churches should keep their ancient standing."

The decree thus far is perfectly clear and reasonable; but it is not, to use St. Leo's term, *diaionizon*. Its importance has not survived the ravages of time. Many an age has rolled by since those brilliant luminaries of ancient Christendom -- Alexandria, Antioch, Heraclea, Caesarea, Ephesus -- were extinguished. They were undoubtedly grand and princely in the day of their strength, but their greatness was of men and shared the inevitable fate of human things. Of what importance, save to the antiquary, are now those old patriarchates with their accessories of high prerogatives, august state, and far-stretching boundaries? If it was permitted to those ancient princes of the Church to revisit these mortal scenes, their self-esteem would probably be less mortified by finding that every vestige of their patriarchdoms has been swept away, than by perceiving how wonderfully well the Church of Christ gets along without them. And upon turning their eyes Romeward and beholding the "Bishop of Old Rome" seated upon the Rock of Peter as firmly and serenely as ever, it is possible they might recall St. Leo's prophetic words: "A Church that is built upon any other foundation than that Rock which the Lord hath laid shall sooner or later come to grief." [4]

This canon, therefore, owes its perennial interest to its incidentally alluding to the Roman Pontiff; for any scrap of ancient parchment upon which his name has been written cannot fail to interest Christians so long as the Vicar of Christ shall have friends or enemies. The importance of the document before us is greatly enhanced by the fact that it was the very first utterance by the Universal Church on the subject of the prerogatives of the Bishop of Rome. The Nicene Synod was the first of the Ecumenical councils, and was, consequently, the first occasion which offered itself to the Catholic Church of speaking in a corporate and official manner. Hence the historian and the controversialist turn eagerly to learn what the first of councils had to say about the chief of bishops.

Now if we sincerely desire to know what the Council really said, we must first of all discard translations and comments, and allow the canon to speak for itself. The endless controversies which our canon has given rise would, in great part at least, have been avoided if this course had been pursued. Indeed, one of the main objects of this paper is to convince theological students, by an apt illustration, how necessary it is to study ecclesiastical documents in their authentic source and original dress of language. There is an impression abroad that in this day of elaborate translations there no longer exists a necessity for submitting to the drudgery of acquiring dead languages and poring over barbarous glossaries, and very many prefer the more facile method of transcribing the assertions of their predecessors to the laborious task of hewing their own inferences out of the original text. Now a translation is necessarily a poor

substitute for the original; for if it were faithful and perfect in other respects, it must, like a false diamond, be lacking in weight and lustre. [5]

Besides, whoever quotes from a translation quotes at second-hand, for a translation is nothing but the translator's expressed opinion of the sense of his text; and, in consequence, is essentially an inference. And then, no matter how adequately the translator may have, himself, seized the meaning of his text, there will still remain room for doubt whether the words he has selected adequately embody that meaning. But what assurance have we that the version we are to rely upon is faithful? Will the fact of its being generally received as such vouch for it? Certainly not. An error, be it ever so common, is an error still; and an erroneous translation is all the more dangerous for having obtained universal currency, because one is the less inclined to suspect it.

Now applying these remarks to the subject we have taken in hand, let us put the question to prominent writers: What said the Council of Nicaea regarding the Roman Pontiff?

First. The Protestant historians and controversialists, with a few honorable exceptions, will reply that whereas the Bishop of Rome, from being a simple bishop, like any other, had succeeded, before the date of the Council, in imposing his authority upon the bishops in his vicinity, the Council thought it proper to permit him to retain his usurped dominion; a course which they are free to deplore, since it encouraged the "ambitious Pontiff" to persevere in his fixed design of entralling the Christian world.

Hear Calvin on the subject:

"In regard to the antiquity of the primacy of the Roman See, there is nothing in favor of its establishment more ancient than the decree of the Council of Nice, by which the first place among the Patriarchs is assigned to the Bishop of Rome, and he is enjoined to take care of the suburban churches. While the Council, in dividing between him and the other Patriarchs, assigns the proper limits of each, it certainly does not appoint him head of all, but only one of the chief." [6]

Second. Now turn to those Catholic writers of the Darras and Rohrbacher stamp, who seem to think that the office of the historian is to copy bodily the assertions of his predecessors. According to these slashing authors, the Synod declared, *totidem verbis*, that "the primacy has always resided in the Church of Rome (Canon of the Council of Nicaea). Let the ancient custom, then, be vigorously maintained....for so the Roman Bishop orders." [7]

To tell the truth, I have less sympathy with the second class of unscrupulous writers than with the first. Protestant writers, when they undertake to combat the Papacy, are struggling "with the sun in their eyes." Their position is obviously disadvantageous and paradoxical, and it is not to be marvelled at if they should grow desperate. But a Catholic writer, who is full certain that Truth and Catholicism are synonyms, ought to make every endeavor to find out the truth, and when he has found it to present it to his readers unvarnished; for every victory gained by our adversaries over the indolent stragglers from our ranks is accounted as a triumph over our sacred cause.

II. Now let us approach this famous document, and translate it as we should a passage from Thucydides:

ENGLISH: "Let the ancient usage throughout Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis be strictly adhered to, so that the Bishop of Alexandria shall have jurisdiction over all these; since this is also the custom of the Bishop of Rome. In like manner, as regards Antioch and the other provinces, let each church retain its special privileges." (Canon 6)

GREEK: *Ta archaia ethe krateito ta en Aigupto kai Liboe kai Pentapolei, hoste ton Alexandreias episopon panton touton echein ten exousian, epeide kai to en te Rome episkopo touto sunethes estin. Homoios de kai kata Antiocheian kai en tais allais eparchias ta presbeia sozesthai tais ekklesiais....*

Confining our attention to the clause (*epeide....touto sunethes*), let us at the outset assure ourselves that our translation faithfully represents the original. The term (*sunethes*), according to Hedricus, denotes *consuetus*, *familiaris*, and is translated by Liddell and Scott, *habitual*, *customary*. The phrase (*sunethes tini estin*) is equivalent to the well known Latin expression *familiaire* or *consuetum est mihi*: it is my custom. It cannot be rendered, "It is the custom of others regarding me." Hence Hefele's rendering, "There is a similar custom for the Roman Bishop," is evidently incorrect. (*Da auch für den r-mischen Bischof em gleiches Verhältniss besteht, Conciliengeschichte*, volume i, page 389, new edition).

In fact, Hefele was influenced by the old version of Dionysius the Less, who has rendered the clause thus: *Quia et Urbis Romae Episcopo parilis mos est*. This is unsatisfactory; for there is no equivalent for *parilis* in the Greek text, and there is no equivalent in the Dionysian version for the Greek (*touto*). The earliest Latin version -- that which was read in the Council of Chalcedon -- is more to the point: *Quoniam et Romano Episcopo hinc est consuetudo*; which coincides with our own. Protestant writers have also rendered the text as we have done, though naturally they strive afterwards to blunt the edge of it. Thus Sheppherd [8] translates it: "Since this is also the Roman Bishop's custom." Neander: [9] "Since this is the custom also with the Roman Bishop." Schaff: [10] "Since this also is customary with the Bishop of Rome." We are justified, then, in assuming that our translation is a faithful reproduction of the text; [11] and may safely make it the basis of our further remarks.

III. After having determined with the greatest possible precision what the Council said about the Roman Pontiff, our next step is to investigate the meaning, the scope and bearing, of the words of the canon. "Let the ancient usage throughout Egypt, etc., be adhered to, so that the Alexandrian Bishop shall rule these provinces; because this is also the Roman Bishop's custom." Now it is plain that Bonifacius and Nicolaus, as quoted above, were quite correct in affirming that the Synod made no enactment of any kind in regard to the Roman Pontiff. This canon neither grants new privileges to the Apostolic See, nor confirms any existing ones. For some reason or other, the Council did not think it necessary to legislate upon the Bishop of Rome. It strengthened the hands of the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch, and of the Exarchs of Pontus, Asia, and Thrace. In Canon VII. it conceded a Patriarchate of Honor to the Bishop of the Holy City; but it did not DARE exercise, in any way, a legislative authority over the city of St. Peter. Hence, Calvin's rhetoric evaporates like dew before the sun. The Council

does not "divide between the Roman Pontiff and the other Patriarchs," but adduces the authority of the former as a reason for admitting the claims of the latter. But whence did Calvin derive his information about those "suburban churches" which the Pope was "enjoined to take care of?" There is no trace of this in the canon. The wily heresiarch knew well enough that he was not quoting "the decree of the Council of Nicaea," but Rufinus's corruption of that decree.

Rufinus wrote a History of the Church in continuation of the immortal work of Eusebius, and inserted in it a Latin translation of the Nicene Canons. But his character of rhetorician did not permit him to give the decrees to his readers in the plain, unambitious style of the good Fathers of the Council. He was fain to embellish them and give them a high-sounding, antithetical form. The result of his lucubration upon our canon is the following sententious effusion: "*Et ut apud Alexandriam, et in Urbe Roma vetusta consuetudo servetur, ut vel ille Egypti, vel hic Suburbicarum Ecclesiarum sollicitudinem gerat.*" [12]

Now this "translation" ought to be brushed aside as undeserving of notice, and it is pitiable to see how much time and pains have been wasted by eminent scholars upon the barren task of determining what Rufinus meant by his "suburban churches." What did he mean by his whole translation? Did he understand it himself? As every one knows, Rufinus was the prince of bunglers. He was notoriously ignorant, and just as rash and stubborn as he was unskilful. His knowledge of the Greek was scanty, having been picked up without system or teacher. As for his Latin, the above specimen convinces us that he richly deserved St. Jerome's contemptuous criticisms. [13] It must be remembered, moreover, that shortly before writing his history he had been excommunicated for heresy by Pope Anastasius. Hence, we cannot expect to be assisted by Rufinus in our investigation of this subject. Let us return to the text.

The kernel of the difficulty is the demonstrative (*touto*), this. "This is the custom of the Roman Bishop." What does this refer to? "Let the Bishop of Alexandria retain his ancient sway over these three provinces, for this is also the Roman Bishop's custom." According to Bellarmine and others, (*touto*) refers to the Patriarchate of Alexandria, and is to be expounded thus: "Let the Bishop of Alexandria continue to govern these provinces, because this is also the Roman Pontiff's custom; that is, because the Roman Pontiff, prior to any synodical enactment, has repeatedly recognized the Alexandrian Bishop's authority over this tract of country." [14]

This exposition is unpalatable to the adversaries of Roman supremacy; hence they offer us a different interpretation. They make (*touto*) refer to patriarchates in general and expound the sentence as follows: "Let Alexandria have jurisdiction over these provinces, because the Roman Bishop has also a Patriarchate." "It illustrates the sort of power by referring to a similar power exercised by the Roman prelate in his province." [15]

IV. Although this second exposition might strike the reader at first sight as being possibly, correct, yet I trust I shall be able to prove that it is inadmissible; and that Bellarmine's is the only unexceptionable interpretation.

Let me, at the risk of being tedious, state, first of all, my understanding of the passage. The supremacy of the Bishop of Alexandria had been contested by the Meletian bishops. They

had, asked him, if not in words at least in facts, upon what warrant he based his claim to rule over and depose his fellow-bishops. If he had a title let him produce it. Now the Alexandrian prelate had no written document of any kind to produce. The Council of Nicaea, therefore, came to his assistance, by decreeing that the Patriarch's [16] authority must be respected, and that for two reasons: first, because it was (*archaia*), immemorial, aboriginal; and second, because it was sanctioned by constant recognition on the part of the Roman Pontiff. Two very good reasons.

The first argument in favor of this interpretation is drawn from the grammatical structure of the text. (a) Take the pronoun (*touto*) and see what it obviously refers to. Surely to this subject in hand, to wit, the ancient privileges and boundaries of the Alexandrian Patriarchate. It seems impossible, without quibbling, to refer the (*touto*) to anything else. The only objection which can be urged against this is the (*kai*), also. What is the use of the (*kai*) in this interpretation? This objection is readily answered. The (*kai*) introduces a new and stronger reason why the Patriarch's authority should be respected. "Let the custom prevail, not only because it is ancient, but especially because it has Roman usage in its favor;" or, "Since even the Roman Bishop constantly recognizes it." (b) The word (*sunethes*), customary, is intelligible in our interpretation, but in the alternative it becomes absurd. "It is customary with the Bishop of Rome to recognize the Bishop of Alexandria as Patriarch," is clear and sensible; but, "It is customary with the Bishop of Rome to be a Patriarch," is devoid of sense.

A second argument in support of our interpretation is elicited by considering the logical sequence of the passage. "This is the Roman Bishop's custom," is the Council's reason for supporting the Alexandrian claims. If it is a reason, we must reverentially presume that it is a valid one. The ancient fabric of the Patriarchate was tottering; the Nicene Fathers prop it up with this clause, which, therefore, contains a reason strong enough to sustain a Patriarchate. Now imagine Meletius demanding wherefore Lycopolis should be subject to Alexandria? If the Council be made to answer: "Because Tusculum is subject to Rome," would it not appear a "lame and impotent conclusion?" Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis must obey the Bishop of Alexandria; because this (not Egypt, etc., but Campania and the islands) is the Roman Pontiff's custom! [17] Besides, granting that Rome's possessing a Patriarchate were a valid reason why Alexandria also should have one, would it be a sufficient reason why the Alexandrian Patriarchate should extend just so far and no further? If so, then the following ratiocination must be considered sound: "Let the Alexandrian Bishop have jurisdiction over three provinces, because the Bishop of Rome is also a patriarch." Should any one rejoin that the reason why Alexandria happened to rule three provinces instead of two or four, was that this was the ancient custom, I answer that his reason is different from that of the Council, which tells us that "Alexandria shall rule these three because this is the Roman Bishop's custom."

Now take Bellarmine's view of the canon. "Why shall Meletitis and all the other bishops of Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis acknowledge the supremacy of the Patriarch?" Because the Bishop of Rome has time and again recognized the authority of the Alexandrian Bishop over these provinces. "Where are the documents to prove this?" asks Meletius. "Documents are not necessary," says the canon, "custom has force of law. Has not the Bishop of Rome, ever since he sent Mark to found churches in Egypt, held the Bishop of Alexandria responsible for purity of faith and strict observance of discipline in that part of the world?" [18]

What could Meletius reply to this? If he and the Council admitted the Catholic doctrine of Papal supremacy his mouth was closed. Here was a reason strong enough to sustain not Alexandria merely but, "in like manner, Antioch and the other great eparchies;" their authority was sanctioned by the Vicar of Christ. But if we assume that the Bishop of Rome was, in the opinion of the ancients, a simple bishop, like any other, what weight would his recognition of Alexandrian claims then carry with it? None at all. The Meletian would answer, "What care I for the favor or displeasure of a bishop a thousand miles away? What right has the Roman to recognize any one's jurisdiction in Egypt? Antioch is nearer to me than Rome, and so are Carthage and Ephesus but the bishops of Antioch, and of Carthage and of Ephesus know very well they have no right to meddle with things in Egypt After having thrown off the tyrannical yoke of an Egyptian is it probable that I shall be swayed by the opinion of a Latin?"

We are now led to the threshold of a third argument which I shall forthwith proceed to develop. The Council was evidently desirous of establishing the Patriarchates on the firmest possible foundation. Hitherto the Bishop of Alexandria or of Antioch,

As one secure sat on his throne, upheld by old repute, Consent, or custom. But "old repute" can uphold a throne so long as things go smoothly; but if there be no "strength concealed" within, the throne will fall to the ground at the first touch of a skeptical hand. Now, knowing as we do, that, so far as divine right was concerned, the Bishop of Lycopolis was the peer of the Bishop of Alexandria, upon what principle of ecclesiastical law could the latter base his claim to judge and depose the former? In other words, what was the original source of that patriarchal authority which the Alexandrian wielded? Every Catholic must answer that, whereas, per se, the bishops are mutually independent within their proper jurisdiction, they, of divine right, have no other superior than the successor of St. Peter, and, in consequence, a bishop who shall claim any legitimate sort of precedence or authority over a fellow-bishop, must of necessity found his pretension upon the expressed or tacit consent of the Roman Pontiff.

In the Catholic system, then, "Alexandria, Antioch, and the other eparchies," were exercising prerogatives which belonged, natively, to the chair of Peter, and we are forced to the conclusion that they and the Council were as sensible of this as we are ourselves. Therefore, the clause in question can bear no other interpretation than this: "Alexandria and the other great Sees must retain their ancient sway because the Roman Pontiff wishes it." Understood in this sense the (*epeide*) places the archiepiscopal thrones on the firmest -- and indeed the only firm-foundation. Why should we deem the Fathers of Nicaea either less "Roman" than ourselves, or less capable of comprehending their strongest argument in favor of Alexandria? Suppose a parallel case to happen in our own day and country. Suppose that, ages ago, the Roman Pontiff had dispatched to these provinces a missionary with episcopal ordination and unlimited, unwritten jurisdiction. If in course of time the throne on which "as one secure lie sat upheld by old repute" should be shaken by an unruly suffragan, what might we suppose would be the ruling of a plenary Council? The Fathers would probably enact: That the authority of the Bishop of Baltimore must be respected; that it was unnecessary to apply to Rome for a formal recognition of his primacy, since the custom of the Roman Pontiff, invariably to address himself to the churches in these provinces through his medium, was an ample justification of his claim.

It may be objected that this argument would have no weight with Protestants. What of that? Are we to abandon our old standard of interpretation, our "Catholic analogy," because, forsooth, we cannot induce "those who are without" to view things from our standpoint? Let our adversaries prove that our interpretation is false; for the burden of proof is upon them.

But we have a fourth argument, of which every historian must feel the force. I refer to the establishment of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. In my last argument, I took for granted that the only foundation upon which a Patriarchate could legitimately rest was the consent of the Roman Pontiff. This assertion we are able historically to make good, by observing a Patriarchate in process of crystallization.

Shortly after the date of the Nicene Council, the little town of Byzantium was by the genius of Constantine metamorphosed into Constantinople, the New Rome and Mistress of the East. With the magnitude of the city grew the importance and pretensions of its bishop, who now became the emperor's ecclesiastical adviser, the arbiter of bishops, the chief organizer of missionary expeditions, and the president of politico-ecclesiastical assemblies. A dignitary of such importance seemed to the emperor, the senate, the metropolitan clergy, and the Eastern bishops, [19] to be deserving of the highest honor. Hence the second General Council (AD 381), in its third Canon, decreed that "the Bishop of Constantinople should rank in the Church next after the Bishop of Rome," giving as its reason that Constantinople was a new Rome. [20]

But this canon never obtained the (*bebeiosis kai sugkathesis*) -- the confirmation and consent of the Roman Bishop, without which even the Byzantine was conscious that his authority was founded on the sand. Hence, in the fourth Council, taking advantage, as St. Leo has remarked, of the prostrate position of the churches of Alexandria and Antioch, [21] the Bishop of New Rome, Anatolius, made a desperate attempt to gain a more solid footing for his Patriarchate. Pope Leo, in anticipation of this, had strictly enjoined his legates "not to suffer the Nicene Decree to be violated." The Fathers of the Council, however, -- some no doubt for political motives, others because they were given to understand that Leo was not so much opposed to the innovation as his legates would have them believe, -- granted the Byzantine the desire of his heart. But now the more serious task remained of inducing the Pope to ratify the decision of the Council.

The Council wrote to Leo, so did the Emperor, so did the Patriarch; all begging the same favor, and all acknowledging that the validity of the act depended on his confirmation. "We make known to you furthermore," wrote the Fathers of Chalcedon to the successor of St. Peter, "that we have made still another enactment which we have deemed necessary for the maintenance of good order and discipline, and we are persuaded that your Holiness will approve and confirm our decree.... We are confident you will shed upon the Church of Constantinople a ray of that Apostolic splendor which you possess, for you have ever cherished this church, and you are not at all niggardly in imparting your riches to your children. . . Vouchsafe then, most Holy and most Blessed Father, to accept what we have done in your name, and in a friendly spirit (*hos oikeia te kai phila*). For your legates have made a violent stand against it, desiring, no doubt, that this good deed should proceed, in the first instance, from your provident hand. But we, wishing to gratify the pious Christian emperors, and the illustrious Senate, and the capital of the empire, have judged that an Ecumenical

Council was the fittest occasion for effecting this measure. Hence we have made bold to confirm the privileges of the afore-mentioned city (*tharresantes ekurosamen*) as if your holiness had taken the initiative, for we know how tenderly you love your children, and we feel that in honoring the child we have honored its parent....We have informed you of everything with a view of proving our sincerity, and of obtaining for our labors your confirmation and consent." [22]

Anatolius writes to the same purpose: "The holy Synod and I have submitted this canon to your Holiness in order to obtain your assent and confirmation, which I beseech your Holiness not to withhold." [23]

And in a later epistle he assures the Pope that "the whole efficacy and ratification of the decree had been reserved to the authority of his Holiness." [24]

We have also two letters of the Emperor Marcian to Pope Leo, in which he acknowledges that the Pope's sanction is absolutely necessary to the validity of the canon.

"Since it has pleased the Synod to grant the Bishop of Constantinople the post of honour next after the Apostolic See, I pray your Holiness to give assent to this arrangement." [25] And a few months later he writes endeavoring, with evident anxiety, to hurry on the cautious Pontiff

"I am puzzled beyond measure to know wherefore your Holiness, although fully informed by the bishops assembled at Chalcedon of the proceedings of the Council, has not yet dispatched us that epistle which must be read in every church, so as to reach the notice of all. This delay has afforded an opportunity to the evil-disposed to suggest a doubt whether your Holiness would confirm the acts of the Synod. Deign, therefore, to send a letter which shall certify the churches and the faithful that the decrees of the Council have been confirmed by your Holiness. Very laudably, indeed, and with a constancy worthy of the Bishop of the Apostolic See, your Holiness has resisted the attempt which was made to disturb the ancient order of things as established by the canons. But you have, no doubt, been apprised of the active machinations of the enemies of the faith, against whom I have been unwilling to proceed because the Council's exposition of orthodox faith has not yet received your confirmation. I pray your Holiness, therefore, to send us a decretal with all possible dispatch, so that it may become manifest to all that you confirm the Synod of Chalcedon."

St. Leo readily assented to the emperor's request and ratified all the dogmatic decrees of the Council. But he and his successors resolutely condemned this surreptitious canon in favor of New Rome. [26] In consequence the political Patriarchate of Constantinople lacked ecclesiastical confirmation; and this 28th canon of Chalcedon was not admitted into the Greek synodical code until the Eastern Church had become thoroughly saturated with Byzantinism. [27]

Bring this analogy of a Patriarchate in fieri to bear upon the subject under discussion, and my former argument returns in a new shape. The Nicene Council desired to confirm the Patriarchate of Alexandria. Now the only way of accomplishing this was to show that the

Bishop of Rome had "shed a ray of apostolic splendor upon his favored child." Therefore the clause, "Since this is the Roman Bishop's custom," must mean, "Since this is the Roman Bishop's will as expressed by custom."

Another powerful argument in support of our interpretation of this sixth Nicene canon, is that the ancients saw in it a plain and formal acknowledgment by the Fathers of Nicaea of the primacy of the Apostolic See. Indeed, Pope St. Gelasius proclaims it an *invictum et singulare iudicium*. "By what process of reasoning can you persuade yourselves," he writes to the Eastern bishops, "that the rights of the other Sees will be respected, if due reverence be not paid to the supreme See of Blessed Peter,-that See which has ever been the support and bulwark of all sacerdotal dignity, and to which the unique and irrefragable testimony of the three hundred and eighteen Fathers acknowledges immemorial veneration." [28] Hence, if we believe Gelasius, the Roman Pontiff's name was made use of by the Nicene Fathers to serve as a support and bulwark for the privileges enjoyed by "Alexandria, Antioch, and the other eparchies." The Emperors Theodosius and Valentinian also give expression to this widespread sentiment in their celebrated edict on the subject of the primacy of the Apostolic See. The civil power, they argue, must recognize the Bishop of Rome as Head of the Church, first, because he is the successor of St. Peter, the Chief of Bishops; second, because of the dignity of his city; and third, because his supremacy has been confirmed by the sacred council. [29]

Now the "sacred council," so far as we know, had no other occasion of introducing the subject of Roman supremacy than this Alexandrian question, and to this sixth canon, therefore, as all admit, the Emperors were alluding. True, it may be objected that the Emperors' argument is based not upon the original text, but on the old Latin version, which contained the famous additamentum. "*Quod Ecclesia Romana semper habuit Primatum*." (The Bishop of Rome has ever been head of the Church.) [30] It seems quite probable that such was the case, for the edict emanated immediately from the Western Emperor, and at the suggestion of St. Leo. But we cannot suppose, for a moment, that it was the Pope, or any of his clergy, who drew up the document, because the Roman Church would have vehemently denied that any synod did or could confirm its primacy. A score of years before, Bonifacius, in the epistle already quoted from, had expressed the views of the Apostolic See upon the attitude of the Nicene Council regarding the prerogatives of the Roman Pontiff. "*Non aliquid super eum ausa est constituere*." It follows, that the Latin version had passed the critical examination of the imperial lawyers, who would have been quick to detect an interpolation in the document, had there been one. But they took the additamentum for what it really was -- a title; and their understanding of the clause, *Episcopo Romano hmc est consuetudo*, was the same as the original translator's, the same as Pope Gelasius's, the same as Bellarmine's.

It has, of course, been insinuated by hostile writers, though somewhat timorously, that the Latin variation was a deliberate interpolation by the Romans with a view of extolling their chief; nay, some have even laid the blame of it upon the "ambitious Popes" themselves. I do not propose to enter largely into the uninvestigable question of determining the intentions of people who lived and died ages ago. The Bishops of Rome have ever been distinguished for scrupulous attention to the genuineness of their documents. From the earliest ages, the fact of a text proceeding *ex scriniis Ecclesiam Romanum*, was the best witness to its accuracy. The version of our canon which was read by Parchasinus at Chalcedon, is a faithful reproduction of the original. The words *Quod, Romana, etc.*, cannot be called an interpolation, because they

were not inter; they were ante; which is equivalent to saying, they were the title prefixed to the canon in the Roman Codex. [31]

Now, therefore, the inference drawn from the text by the Latin translator was, that it acknowledged the primacy of the Apostolic See. This is all that we can expect to find in this title, and it is all that we seek to find in it. I have no doubt but the author of the translation considered himself justified in giving the canons what he judged to be the most appropriate headings, for the original had none. And what more felicitous heading than this could a Latin have selected? It was pithy and contained the very soul of the decree. "Let Alexandria, Antioch, and the other great Sees retain their privileges, because this is the Roman Bishop's custom." To a Latin, the particular privileges of the Eastern churches were a matter of slight moment. The only interesting feature of the canon to him was that the Bishop of Rome's authority had been made the common basis and foundation of the various prerogatives of the individual churches. Is it not a strong confirmation of our own interpretation to know that it coincides with that of the contemporaries of the Council?

Dr. Schaff contends that this "interpolation" was rejected by the Greeks at Chalcedon. The only foundation for this assertion is that in the acts of the IVth Council, it is stated that upon the legate's reading the Nicene Canon as it stood in his codex, Constantine, the Greek secretary, read the same canon without the interpolation from the codex preserved in Constantinople. This is a feeble basis to build such an argument upon. For, first, Baluzius, Ballerini, and Hefele contend that this repetition is not to be found in the manuscripts prior to Photius. But, secondly, if Constantine had read the canon again, for the grave purpose of denouncing a Roman forgery, or of resisting Roman encroachments, he would not have contented himself with a quiet re-reading of the canon. If, therefore, he read it at all, it must have been for the sake of preserving the verbal accuracy of the decree, which cannot but have suffered by the process of a double translation, from Greek into Latin, and from the Latin again into the Greek. Indeed this incident of the Council of Chalcedon does but strengthen our argument; for we now may add that the Greeks themselves admitted that the canon of Nicaea acknowledged the supremacy of the Pope.

The question then before the Fathers was whether Constantinople should have a Patriarchate. The Pope's legate maintained that the Nicene Canon forbade any change to be made in the relative standing of the churches. The clergy of Constantinople adduced the Third Canon of the Second Council, which conceded to their master the post of honor next after the Bishop of Rome. "After the debate," Dr. Schaff tells us, "the imperial commissioners thus summed up the result. From the whole discussion, and from what has been brought forward on either side, we acknowledge that the primacy over all (*pro panton ta proteia*), and the most eminent rank (*kai ten exaireton timen*) are to continue with the Archbishop of old Rome; but that also the Archbishop of New Rome should enjoy the same precedence of honor (*ta presbeia tes times*)." I should be happy to see Dr. Schaff make good his point against Hefele, as it would add new strength to my statement that the ancients understood this sixth Nicene canon to be a clear acknowledgment of the primacy of the Apostolic See.

V. These five arguments -- drawn respectively from the grammatical structure of the sentence, from the logical sequence of ideas, from Catholic analogy, from comparison with the process of formation of the Byzantine Patriarchate, and from the authority of the ancients -- seem to

me an overwhelmingly abundant confirmation of our understanding of the canon before us. True, a very formidable array of mighty names can be marshalled against us; but the number of these will be decimated by considering how few of the eminent authors who have interpreted the canon in a different sense from ours had consulted the original text. We are not inquiring in this paper whether our interpretation be the most obvious one on the basis of the Dionysian version.

We started out with asserting the right of investigating the document for ourselves, which, surely, is the most direct method of ascertaining the truth. With Dionysius we are not concerned. His version may have represented to himself the idea which we have extracted from the Greek; in fact, Bellarmine and Baronius have interpreted his translation as we have interpreted the original. But at the outset, not every translator who has seized the true sense of his text embodies that sense clearly in the words he selects. This has probably been the misfortune of Dionysius in the present instance.

As an appendix to our discussion, I beg leave to suggest to those who still cling to the idea that in the clause, "Since this is also the Roman Bishop's custom," the Council meant, "Since it is also the Roman Bishop's custom to be a Patriarch," that there is a grave difficulty inherent in this interpretation. To be frank, I do not believe that, in the age of the Nicene Council, the Pope was a Patriarch. When was his patriarchate founded? What were its boundaries? What special prerogatives did the Pope claim or exercise in virtue of this adventitious dignity? The chief office of the ancient patriarchs was to ordain, judge, and depose bishops and metropolitans, and to convoke and preside over synods.

The Bishop of Alexandria had been, from time immemorial, every inch a patriarch throughout his vast domain. The Bishop of Antioch enjoyed a similar authority throughout the great diocese of Oriens. Their jurisdiction was immediate and ordinary, and there no difficulty in defining its nature and the limits within which it was exercised. If, therefore, the Council had "illustrated the sort of power," which it accorded to the Bishop of Alexandria, "by referring to a similar power exercised by the "Bishop of Antioch, then the term of comparison would be clearly intelligible; because both were patriarchs, with pretty much the same sort of power and the same extent of territory. But who has ever defined satisfactorily the limits and nature of Rome's patriarchal sway?

Protestant writers have circumscribed this "Roman Patriarchate," some with the radius of a hundred miles, others within the confines of the urban vicariate. [32] Catholic writers are more generous, and make the "Patriarch of Rome" a donation of the entire Western World. But, on both sides, there is difficulty; for the Protestants have to explain how it is we find the Pope exercising great authority beyond the boundaries in which they have hemmed him; whilst the Catholics have to explain how it is that the Roman Pontiffs are not found to have ordained Bishops in Milan, or presided over synods in Carthage. In both cases the patriarchal roes they have made for the Pope do not fit him; the first is entirely too small, the second too large. And as neither party will abandon its unproved assumption, that the Pope was, in the technical sense of the word, a patriarch, the Protestants have to fall back upon the easy doctrine of Papal aggression, and the Catholic controversialists are obliged to contend that "the Pope had authority over the whole West, but did not exercise it equally in all places." Surely the Pope had authority over East and West, as Head of the Church; but when we ask

what particular part of the Church he exercised that authority, in immediately performing in person the routine work, it will not do to make distinctions between the having, and the exercising, of authority.

The Egyptian Bishops at Chalcedon protested that "nothing could be done by a Bishop of their country without the consent of the Patriarch of Alexandria." Can anything similar to this be said of the early Western Church? Not by any means. The various provinces of Europe and Africa were governed by their bishops and metropolitans, and whenever the Pope stepped in it was as the successor of St. Peter, "to whom the care of the whole vineyard had been intrusted."

The notion, then, that the Bishops of Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch, like Jupiter and his two brothers, had divided the world among them, was not conceived at that early day, but was the offspring of schismatical brains in Constantinople. The Patriarchates did not enter into the original constitution of the Church, which existed before them, and has survived them. That interpretation of our canon, therefore, which is adopted generally by Protestants and admitted by several Catholic writers, is founded in error. The Council cannot have illustrated the powers confirmed to the Patriarch of Alexandria by referring to a similar exercise of power by the "Roman Patriarch," because this latter personage had no existence. Whatever powers the Bishop of Rome exercised beyond the narrow boundaries of his little province -- which certainly did not constitute a patriarchate -- he exercised in virtue of his "primacy over all." It ought not to be overlooked, moreover, that the Popes intervened more frequently in the East than they did in the West, because in that turbulent quarter of the globe it more frequently happened that knots were to be cut worthy of the Vicar of Christ. But whenever the emergency called for Papal intervention, the Roman Pontiffs did not pause to consider in what patriarchate their authority was needed. A fuller elucidation of this point is foreign to our present purpose.

I hope that my readers will not consider that my investigation of this subject has been excessively minute. Should they be inclined to think so, let them take up any of the heterodox historians who have treated of Papal supremacy, and see how prominently this Nicene Canon figures in their pet theory of the gradual aggrandizement of the Bishop of Rome. To that theory it is essential to assume that at the epoch of the Council of Nicaea the authority of the Roman Pontiff was circumscribed by very narrow limits. Unless Protestants make good this assertion, no force of rhetoric can avail to establish their system.

Never mind, then, their voluminous rhetoric; shake this one column and their oratorical edifice will tumble upon their heads. When the Bishop of Rome first met the assembled Universal Church, was he considered a "Bishop like any other?" Was he a metropolitan "enjoined to take care of suburban churches?" or a patriarch with "proper limits assigned" him by an unsuspecting council? If I have been even moderately successful in my efforts I have demonstrated that the Vicar of Christ at his first emerging from the gloomy atmosphere of the Catacombs into the free open sunlight, had already attained the full measure of his greatness.

NOTES

[1] Translation from NewAdvent.org -- the rest of the canon deals with matters which do not here concern us. [2] Ep. 106, ad Anatolium. [3] Lib. i., c. 6.

[4] Nec prmtter illam petram quam Dominus in fundamento posuit, stabilis erit ulla constructio. Ep. 104.

[5] What a world of wisdom is condensed into that little phrase of St. Jerome's, *Hebraica Veritas* (the Hebrew Text). And if it be permitted to look at the phrase from a different point of view, how much better it would be if we, spiritual children of Abraham, were as tenacious of the original *Veritas* as were the carnal seed of the Patriarch.

[6] Institutes, b. iv., c. 7, Edinburgh version. Dr Alzog (vol. i., p. 664, Cincinnati edition) must have been temporarily laboring under Calvinistic influence, when he informed his astonished readers that this "precedence of rank and authority possessed by Rome was CONFIRMED by the Council of Nicaea (Canon VI.). Not only is this assertion historically false, but it was resented centuries ago by the Roman Pontiffs. The Nicene Synod," said Bonifacius I., "did not DARE make any enactment regarding the Bishop of Rome; well aware that no act of man could add glory to him who had received the fuiness of power from the mouth of the Lord." "Adeo ut non aliquid super eum AUSA sit constituere, cum videret nihil supra meritum suum posse conferri; omnia denique huic noverat Domini sermone concessa." Ep. ad Episcopos Thessaliae. Compare Nicolaus I. ad Michaellem. "Si instituta Nicmnm Synodi diligenter inspiciantur, invenietur profecto quia Romanm Ecclesim nullum eadem Synodus contulit incrementum: sed potius ex ejus forma quod Alexandrim Ecclesim tribueret particulariter, sumpsit exemplum."

[7] Darras, vol. i., p.387. Compare Rohrbacher (livre xxxi.).

[8] History of the Church of Rome, p. 63. It is about the only grain of truth I have discovered in his violent diatribe.

[9] Church History, vol. ii., p. 162. [10] History of the Christian Church, vol. ii., p.275.

[11] There is an untranslatable grace and force in the article prefixed to [Rome]. It breathes the deepest reverence. Observe that the article is not placed before Alexandria or Antioch, nor, as may be seen in the III. Canon of the Second Council, before Constantinople, whilst it invariably occurs before Rome. "Trifles light as air" often times carry with them a great weight. Compare the little shibboleths Our Saviour, the Blessed Virgin, etc., which in the dialect of the modern Ephraimites the Saviour, the Virgin Mary, etc.

[12] Hist. Eccl., lib. i., c. 6. For the benefit of those readers who may find it an arduous task to follow our sublime author through the upper air, I shall attempt a translation, though in the process much of the Rufinian froth must go to waste. The Synod decrees also (the rhetorician expects his readers to supply this) "that as well at Alexandria as in the city of Rome the ancient custom be preserved, that either the former (probably he means the Bishop of Alexandria) shall bear the solicitude of Egypt, or the latter (most likely the Pope) of the suburban churches."

[13] The saint has exhausted his copious vocabulary of vituperation upon his unfortunate adversary. He compliments his style as slovenly, barbarous, unintelligible, solecistic. "Such is thy skill in the Greek and the Latin, that when thou speakest in Greek the Greeks take thee for a Latin, and when thou speakest Latin, the Latins take thee for a Greek." *Apologia adv. Rufinum*.

[14] Vera expositio est, Alexandrinum debere gubernare illas provincias, quia Romanus Episcopus ita consuevit; idest, quia Romanus Episcopus ante omnem Conciliorum definitionem consuevit permittere Episcopo Alexandrino regimen Egypti, Libym et Pentapolis; sive consuevit per Alexandrinum Episcopum illas provincias gubernare. *Bellarmino De Rom. Pont.*, lib. ii., c. xiii. He says there is no other plausible interpretation.

[15] Shepherd ubi supra. " Since this also is customary with the Bishop of Rome (that is, not in Egypt, but with reference to his own diocese)." This is Schaff's clumsy paraphrase of the clause. Many Catholic writers of eminence have interpreted the canon in this sense, but for the most part, they were interpreting, not the text, but the Dionysian version; and Dionysius was, no doubt, biased by the *Prisca*, which had adopted the gloss of Rufinus. The *Prisca* may be found in the Ballerini edition of St. Leo's works, vol. iii., p. 498.

[16] The word Patriarch is of late origin, but must serve in default of an equivalent.

[17] "Since this also is customary with the Bishop of Rome [that is, not in Egypt, but with reference to his own diocese.]" -- Schaff, quoted above.

[18] When Pentapolis was devastated by the Sabellian heresy, Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, exercised his patriarchal authority in extinguishing the evil. He was in consequence accused at Rome by his enemies as having denied the divinity of Christ. He purged himself of the charge, and was commended by the Roman Pontiff for his zeal. This incident, preserved by Athanasius goes to show that there was a constant flow of intercourse between the two Sees and explains the custom alluded to in the canon.

[19] "As to the new honors conferred upon my see by the late Council, let me assure your Holiness that I am not to blame in this matter. A man am I fond of retirement and quiet; from my earliest days content with a lowly station. But my reverend clergy are very eager for the advancement of their Church, and the prelates of the vicinity encourage and abet them." *Anatolius to Pope Leo. Opp. S. Leonis*, Ep. 132.

[20] [Ton mentoi Konstantinoupoleos episkopon echein ta presbeia tes times meta ton tes Romes episkopon, dia to einai auten nean Romen].

[21] Dioseorus of Alexandria had been deposed, and Maximus of Antioch was a creature of Anatolius.

[22] *Opp. S. Leonis*, Ep. 98. [23] Ep. 101. [24] Ep. 132. [25] Ep. 100. 232

[26] *Cunsensiones episcoporum*. . . . in irritum mittimus et per auctoritatem beati Petri apostoli generali prorsus definitione cassamus.-*St Leo to Pulcheria*, Ep. 105.

[27] There is grave reason to suspect that the Acts of Chalcedon have been tampered with by the schismatical Greeks. But since this cannot be fully demonstrated there is no use of making the charge. Even as the documents stand they furnish abundant evidence of the unquestioned supremacy of the Bishop of Rome.

[28] "Qua ratione vel consequentia aliis sedibus deferendum est, si primm Beati Petri sedi antiqua et vetusta reverentia non defertur, per quam omnium sacerdotum dignitas semper est roborata atque firmata, trecentorumque decem et octo Patrum invicto et singulari iudicio vetustissimus iudicatus est honor." Apud Natal. Alexand.

[29] "Cum igitur sedis apostolice primatum sancti Petri meritum, qui princeps est episcopalis coronam, et Romanam dignitatem civitatis, sacrum etiam synodi firmavit auctoritas," etc. Opp. S. Leonis, Ballerini, ep. xi.

[30] This variation is found in all the ante-Dionysian versions, as may be seen by consulting the Ballerini-Quesnel edition of St. Leo's works, vol. 3. Were this the proper place, it would be an instructive and amusing occupation to trace the process of corruption which our canon underwent as it passed through the hands of the successive editors. The additamentum was, doubtless, in the first instance, the title selected by the earliest Roman translator. Next, in the Antiquissima, the Quod was dropped. Then the following editors, thinking it necessary that each canon should have an appropriate title, and believing that the sixth had none, added the words "De Primatu Ecclesie Romanam." The editor of the Prisca, to make confusion worse confused, introduced the Rufinian jargon into the text, making the canon read thus "De Primatu Ecclesie Romanam vel aliarum civitatum Episcopis. Antiqui moris est ut urbis Romam episcopus habeat principatum, ut suburbicaria loca, et omnem provinciam suam, sollicitudinem gubernet. Quam vero apud Aegyptum sunt, Alexandrinum episcopus omnium habeat sollicitudinem," etc. It is important to remember that the only version received by, or emanating from, the Roman Church, was that read by the Pope's legate at Chalcedon. The others were executed without Roman co-operation, by irresponsible parties in various parts of the West. These interpolations, therefore, can with no more semblance of justice be fathered upon the Roman Pontiffs, -as several Protestant writers have done, -than they can be upon the Nicene Council, as some Catholic authors have sought to do. To the Catholic who expresses indignation at Calvin's attempt to substitute Rufinus for the Council, and to the Protestant who is equally indignant at what I have termed the Darras-Rohrbacher substitution of a Latin version for the original canon, I can heartily exclaim, Plus ego!

[31] "Trecentorum decem et octo Patrum Canonis sextus; Quod Ecclesia Romana semper habuit Primatum; Teneat autem et Aegyptus ut Episcopus Alexandrinum omnium habeat potestatem, quoniam et Romano Episcopo hinc est consuetudo. Similiter autem," etc., ap. Nat. Alex., Smc. iv. Prop. ii., Dissert. xx. The canon proper begins manifestly with Teneat. Aegyptus probably represented to a Latin mind that large extent of territory which the Orientals divided into Egypt proper, Libya and Cyrenaica.

[32] Southern and Central Italy and the adjacent islands.

Canon 1: If any one in sickness has been subjected by physicians to a surgical operation, or if he has been castrated by barbarians, let him remain among the clergy; but, if any one in sound health has castrated himself, it behooves that such an one, if [already] enrolled among the clergy, should cease [from his ministry], and that from henceforth no such person should be promoted. But, as it is evident that this is said of those who willfully do the thing and presume to castrate themselves, so if any have been made eunuchs by barbarians, or by their masters, and should otherwise be found worthy, such men the Canon admits to the clergy.

Canon 2: Forasmuch as, either from necessity, or through the urgency of individuals, many things have been done contrary to the Ecclesiastical canon, so that men just converted from heathenism to the faith, and who have been instructed but a little while, are straightway brought to the spiritual laver, and as soon as they have been baptized, are advanced to the episcopate or the presbyterate, it has seemed right to us that for the time to come no such thing shall be done. For to the catechumen himself there is need of time and of a longer trial after baptism. For the apostolical saying is clear, "Not a novice; lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into condemnation and the snare of the devil." But if, as time goes on, any sensual sin should be found out about the person, and he should be convicted by two or three witnesses, let him cease from the clerical office. And whoso shall transgress these [enactments] will imperil his own clerical position, as a person who presumes to disobey the great Synod.

Canon 3: The great Synod has stringently forbidden any bishop, presbyter, deacon, or any one of the clergy whatever, to have a subintroducta dwelling with him, except only a mother, or sister, or aunt, or such persons only as are beyond all suspicion.

Canon 4: It is by all means proper that a bishop should be appointed by all the bishops in the province; but should this be difficult, either on account of urgent necessity or because of distance, three at least should meet together, and the suffrages of the absent [bishops] also being given and communicated in writing, then the ordination should take place. But in every province the ratification of what is done should be left to the Metropolitan.

Canon 5: Concerning those, whether of the clergy or of the laity, who have been excommunicated in the several provinces, let the provision of the canon be observed by the bishops which provides that persons cast out by some be not readmitted by others. Nevertheless, inquiry should be made whether they have been excommunicated through captiousness, or contentiousness, or any such like ungracious disposition in the bishop. And, that this matter may have due investigation, it is decreed that in every province synods shall be held twice a year, in order that when all the bishops of the province are assembled together, such questions may by them be thoroughly examined, that so those who have confessedly offended against their bishop, may be seen by all to be for just cause excommunicated, until it shall seem fit to a general meeting of the bishops to pronounce a milder sentence upon them. And let these synods be held, the one before Lent, (that the pure Gift may be offered to God after all bitterness has been put away), and let the second be held about autumn.

Canon 6: 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. And this is to be universally understood, that if any one be made bishop without the consent of the Metropolitan, the great Synod has declared that such a man ought not to be a bishop. If, however, two or three bishops shall from natural love of contradiction, oppose the common suffrage of the rest, it being reasonable and in accordance with the ecclesiastical law, then let the choice of the majority prevail.

Canon 7: Since custom and ancient tradition have prevailed that the Bishop of Elia [i.e., Jerusalem] should be honoured, let him, saving its due dignity to the Metropolis, have the next place of honour.

Canon 8: Concerning those who call themselves Cathari, if they come over to the Catholic and Apostolic Church, the great and holy Synod decrees that they who are ordained shall continue as they are in the clergy. But it is before all things necessary that they should profess in writing that they will observe and follow the dogmas of the Catholic and Apostolic Church; in particular that they will communicate with persons who have been twice married, and with those who having lapsed in persecution have had a period [of penance] laid upon them, and a time [of restoration] fixed so that in all things they will follow the dogmas of the Catholic Church. Wheresoever, then, whether in villages or in cities, all of the ordained are found to be of these only, let them remain in the clergy, and in the same rank in which they are found. But if they come over where there is a bishop or presbyter of the Catholic Church, it is manifest that the Bishop of the Church must have the bishop's dignity; and he who was named bishop by those who are called Cathari shall have the rank of presbyter, unless it shall seem fit to the Bishop to admit him to partake in the honour of the title. Or, if this should not be satisfactory, then shall the bishop provide for him a place as Chorepiscopus, or presbyter, in order that he may be evidently seen to be of the clergy, and that there may not be two bishops in the city.

Canon 9: If any presbyters have been advanced without examination, or if upon examination they have made confession of crime, and men acting in violation of the canon have laid hands upon them, notwithstanding their confession, such the canon does not admit; for the Catholic Church requires that [only] which is blameless.

Canon 10: If any who have lapsed have been ordained through the ignorance, or even with the previous knowledge of the ordainers, this shall not prejudice the canon of the Church; for when they are discovered they shall be deposed.

Canon 11: Concerning those who have fallen without compulsion, without the spoiling of their property, without danger or the like, as happened during the tyranny of Licinius, the Synod declares that, though they have deserved no clemency, they shall be dealt with mercifully. As many as were communicants, if they heartily repent, shall pass three years among the hearers; for seven years they shall be prostrators; and for two years they shall communicate with the people in prayers, but without oblation.

Canon 12: As many as were called by grace, and displayed the first zeal, having cast aside their military girdles, but afterwards returned, like dogs, to their own vomit, (so that some spent money and by means of gifts regained their military stations); let these, after they have

passed the space of three years as hearers, be for ten years prostrators. But in all these cases it is necessary to examine well into their purpose and what their repentance appears to be like. For as many as give evidence of their conversions by deeds, and not pretence, with fear, and tears, and perseverance, and good works, when they have fulfilled their appointed time as hearers, may properly communicate in prayers; and after that the bishop may determine yet more favourably concerning them. But those who take [the matter] with indifference, and who think the form of [not] entering the Church is sufficient for their conversion, must fulfil the whole time.

Canon 13: Concerning the departing, the ancient canonical law is still to be maintained, to wit, that, if any man be at the point of death, he must not be deprived of the last and most indispensable Viaticum. But, if any one should be restored to health again who has received the communion when his life was despaired of, let him remain among those who communicate in prayers only. But in general, and in the case of any dying person whatsoever asking to receive the Eucharist, let the Bishop, after examination made, give it him.

Canon 14: Concerning catechumens who have lapsed, the holy and great Synod has decreed that, after they have passed three years only as hearers, they shall pray with the catechumens.

Canon 15: On account of the great disturbance and discords that occur, it is decreed that the custom prevailing in certain places contrary to the Canon, must wholly be done away; so that neither bishop, presbyter, nor deacon shall pass from city to city. And if any one, after this decree of the holy and great Synod, shall attempt any such thing, or continue in any such course, his proceedings shall be utterly void, and he shall be restored to the Church for which he was ordained bishop or presbyter.

Canon 16: Neither presbyters, nor deacons, nor any others enrolled among the clergy, who, not having the fear of God before their eyes, nor regarding the ecclesiastical Canon, shall recklessly remove from their own church, ought by any means to be received by another church; but every constraint should be applied to restore them to their own parishes; and, if they will not go, they must be excommunicated. And if anyone shall dare surreptitiously to carry off and in his own Church ordain a man belonging to another, without the consent of his own proper bishop, from whom although he was enrolled in the clergy list he has seceded, let the ordination be void.

Canon 17: Forasmuch as many enrolled among the Clergy, following covetousness and lust of gain, have forgotten the divine Scripture, which says, "He has not given his money upon usury," and in lending money ask the hundredth of the sum [as monthly interest], the holy and great Synod thinks it just that if after this decree any one be found to receive usury, whether he accomplish it by secret transaction or otherwise, as by demanding the whole and one half, or by using any other contrivance whatever for filthy lucre's sake, he shall be deposed from the clergy and his name stricken from the list.

Canon 18: It has come to the knowledge of the holy and great Synod that, in some districts and cities, the deacons administer the Eucharist to the presbyters, whereas neither canon nor custom permits that they who have no right to offer should give the Body of Christ to them

that do offer. And this also has been made known, that certain deacons now touch the Eucharist even before the bishops. Let all such practices be utterly done away, and let the deacons remain within their own bounds, knowing that they are the ministers of the bishop and the inferiors of the presbyters. Let them receive the Eucharist according to their order, after the presbyters, and let either the bishop or the presbyter administer to them. Furthermore, let not the deacons sit among the presbyters, for that is contrary to canon and order. And if, after this decree, any one shall refuse to obey, let him be deposed from the diaconate.

Canon 19: Concerning the Paulianists who have flown for refuge to the Catholic Church, it has been decreed that they must by all means be rebaptized; and if any of them who in past time have been numbered among their clergy should be found blameless and without reproach, let them be rebaptized and ordained by the Bishop of the Catholic Church; but if the examination should discover them to be unfit, they ought to be deposed. Likewise in the case of their deaconesses, and generally in the case of those who have been enrolled among their clergy, let the same form be observed. And we mean by deaconesses such as have assumed the habit, but who, since they have no imposition of hands, are to be numbered only among the laity.

Canon 20: Forasmuch as there are certain persons who kneel on the Lord's Day and in the days of Pentecost, therefore, to the intent that all things may be uniformly observed everywhere (in every parish), it seems good to the holy Synod that prayer be made to God standing.

END

see also Philip Hughes on the [History of the Council of Nicaea](#)

To ALL, Did we not have a good thread going on the 6th canon of Nicaea? In any case, this is now being debated in the Catholic/Orthodox conference I am presently monitoring, and Dave Palm uploaded an interesting piece, written by a priest in the late 1800's. I went to Dave's web site and downloaded the HTML text of this article, converted it to ASCII, and now present it for your interest. There is some Greek and Latin for our language scholars to read!

... Regina Angelorum, ora pro nobis!

God bless all, PAX Bill Putnam (FidoNet RCatholic, 8/22/1997)

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