# Serving Communion

## Re-thinking the Relationship between Primacy and Synodality

**A Study by the**

**Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group**

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# I. Introduction

For over a decade, the relationship between primacy and synodality has been the focus of theological dialogue between Catholics and Orthodox. Ever since the document of the Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church on "Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church: Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity and Authority" (Ravenna 2007) was released, the ecclesiological discussions between Catholic and Orthodox theologians have revolved around how primacy and synodality, as correlative terms, function at different levels, namely locally, regionally, and universally. The commission's most recent document on "Synodality and Primacy during the First Millennium: Towards a Common Understanding in Service to the Unity of the Church" (Chieti 2016) reconsidered some of these aspects, but is still only one step on the way to a common understanding of the relationship between primacy and synodality.

Nevertheless, the question concerning the relationship between primacy and synodality is not new. It was reflected to a certain extent in the theological and ecclesiological interchanges during the first millennium. In the second millennium, it affected the discussions between Eastern and Western theologians that were often characterized by polemics. Since their separation, Catholics and Orthodox have developed different forms of exercising authority, both individually and collegially. This led to one-sided approaches in teaching and practice on both sides. Still, the relation between the community of bishops and its primate is not static: the diverse forms of exercising primacy in the Catholic Church after Vatican I (1869-70) show that the same idea of primacy can be realized in different ways, while in the Orthodox Church the cooperation of the first hierarch and the local bishops is far from homogenous. In addition, the dialogue between our churches has focused thus far on primacy and synodality as categories used mainly for ecclesiastical hierarchy. Yet it is also imperative to reflect on them within the larger framework of the people of God and their manifold charisms.

A re-thinking of the relation between primacy and synodality is therefore not just a task for Orthodox-Catholic dialogue but a challenge for internal church debates as well, as the Catholic Bishops' Synods in Rome (2015 and 2016) and the Orthodox Council in Crete (2016) have shown. Against this background, the Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group presents this study – hoping that it might give new impulses towards a re-thinking of the relationship between primacy and synodality.

**The self-understanding and objectives of the Irenaeus Group**

The Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group was founded in 2004 in Paderborn, Germany, at a time when the official International dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches was experiencing difficulties. The group comprises thirteen Orthodox and thirteen Catholic theologians from various countries (currently from Argentina, Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, the Netherlands, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the USA). The members of the Working Group are not appointed as delegates by their churches, but are invited on the basis of their theological competence. The Irenaeus Group is therefore not an official dialogue commission, but an unofficial working group of experts, meeting with the intention of supporting Orthodox-Catholic dialogue at the international level.

As an international group with a broad linguistic and cultural diversity, the members of the Irenaeus Group consider it to be their task to investigate the existing differences in mentality and church practices, as well as in ways of thinking and doing theology. They try to understand the current problems and to see how both churches can enrich each other in an "exchange of gifts"[1]. They hope that in this way they will be able to promote mutual understanding in their respective churches, and they commit themselves to personal involvement in this effort.

**The method of our common study**

The present document is the fruit of a common effort carried out by the members of the Irenaeus Group over several years. This work is mainly an inquiry into a wide range of hermeneutical, historical, and systematic issues in the form of presentations, responses, and the formulation of common theses. We are convinced that the still unresolved questions between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches can only be successfully overcome by an interplay of hermeneutics, history, and systematics. In this, we are aware that our study inevitably had to be limited, especially in its historical part.

This document presents considerations according to this threefold grid by way of sixteen common statements. Each of them is accompanied by commentaries that aim to illustrate its main concern with the help of examples, as well as to explain terms, identify developments, and formulate open questions. The present document is inspired by an endeavour to offer a common approach to the relationship between primacy and synodality, and to afford a common description with regard to divergences.

[1] *Lumen Gentium* 13; John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, § 28.

## II. Hermeneutical Reflections

### 1. The significance of hermeneutics for ecumenical dialogue

Common Statement: *The development of hermeneutics has brought to the fore historicity and socio-cultural embedding of concepts as a permanent challenge to theology. Every discourse has a historical setting and is conditioned by social and cultural factors. Hence, every theological dialogue must take account of linguistic differences, the ways of thinking, and specific emphases of each tradition. In our endeavour to increase mutual understanding, we need to situate expressions from the past in their historical context and to avoid reading them anachronistically. In this way, we can come closer to understanding statements as they were intended, and their lasting value can be identified. This requires a constant rethinking of different traditions which in turn express the richness of the faith and are not necessarily mutually exclusive.*

1.1 Hermeneutics refers to interpretation. Christianity may be described as inevitably hermeneutical, insofar as it presupposes an adequate interpretation of biblical texts (cf. Rom 7:6 and 2 Pet 3:16) as well as symbols of faith, patristic writings, and other expressions of Christian faith. More particularly, the critical study of the Bible has challenged traditional approaches to Scripture and opened up new horizons for Orthodox and Catholics alike.

1.2 Both Orthodox and Catholics believe that Holy Scripture must be interpreted within Tradition, which thus serves as a hermeneutical key. This hermeneutical approach becomes concrete in liturgy, spiritual life, and *diakonia*. The hermeneutical dimension of our dialogue implies the endeavour of interpreting together the manifold expressions of Tradition. We are convinced, in turn, that the very comprehension of what Tradition is relies on mutual understanding of how our dialogue partner approaches its various components.

1.3 Complete objectivity is not attainable, since any interpretation is historically conditioned. Nevertheless, a critical consciousness may disclose prejudices and repressed resentments that generate inadequate interpretations. For example, the hermeneutical reflection on the twentieth-century shift from a hierarchy-oriented and exclusivistic ecclesiology to an ecclesiology of communion (cf. chapters 11 and 12) makes it easier to spot and avoid anachronisms in reading past controversies, as well as to identify in them non-theological factors.

1.4 The concept of reception is fundamental for ecumenical dialogue. Reception should take into account the principle that both the whole and the parts interpret each other reciprocally. It is important, for instance, that Vatican I's statements on primacy and infallibility, which still represent a stumbling block in the Orthodox-Catholic dialogue, be integrated into the whole of ecclesiology and tradition of the Catholic Church, particularly in the light of Vatican II (cf. §§ 11.10 – 11.11). On the Orthodox side, it has become widely accepted today that Eucharistic ecclesiology is helpful to understand the ecclesiology of the Early Church.

1.5 The question of how we deal today with our respective identities calls for further explanation, since these have varied considerably and have sometimes been even badly tarnished in the course of history. Here account must also be taken of the images we have of one another, and whether these images correspond to the way our partners in dialogue see themselves.

## 2. Hermeneutics of theological language

Common Statement: *In dialogue we often use terms that have different meanings in our respective traditions. In the course of time the understanding of these terms has changed. They usually have multiple layers of meaning and are frequently interpreted differently by various addressees. Accordingly, the dialogue between Orthodox and Catholics requires sufficient clarity about what is meant by certain terms. Furthermore, when terms are translated into a different language, they may convey a different connotation.*

2.1 Our theological reflection has profited from ecumenical experience which has brought into dialogue various ways of Christian thinking. These in turn have evolved in different directions over time. Keeping this in mind facilitates understanding between different theological mindsets, and helps to overcome present antagonisms and contradictions insofar as they can be attributed to misunderstandings and fallacies in the way different concepts are understood. To clarify the particular way of thinking is one of the most important tasks in ecumenical dialogue.

2.2 Cultural and historical differences often lie behind various theological notions and their reception. Translations of Greek notions into Latin and vice versa were inevitably transpositions into another cultural sphere with different theological priorities. This led to different emphases, as for example the different nuances of the terms *mysterion* and *sacramentum* or of *protos* and *primus* show. The problem of translation still affects modern languages, where for example the notion of "infallibility" is rendered in various languages with different connotations (e.g. "sinlessness" in Russian, "freedom from error" in Greek).

2.3 For the sake of better understanding, we must take cognizance of the fact that the same words sometimes describe states of affairs that differ. Notions used by both sides but pointing to different realities, be it in the course of history or in a particular era, have to be clarified. This is particularly true for well-known ecclesial notions such as catholicity, primacy, synodality, collegiality, and conciliarity. Thus, the notion of *sobornost* can in our days be understood in the sense of catholicity and conciliarity, but it is strongly shaped by the philosophical and theological context of 19$^{th}$- and 20$^{th}$-century Russia. Similarly, one must beware of understanding the concept of primacy in the sense of centralization or the concept of synodality in the sense of decentralization.

2.4 It would be particularly useful to develop together a glossary that defines key ecclesiological notions and draws attention to the different nuances of meaning that arise when a concept is expressed in Greek or Latin, for instance the expressions used by the First Vatican Council of *potestas immediata* and *plenitudo potestatis* or the Greek terms *presbeia tēs timēs* and *taxis*.

## 3. Hermeneutics of dogmas

Common Statement: *A hermeneutics of dogma draws attention to the fact that one must distinguish between the formula of a dogma ("what is said") and the statement intended ("what is meant"). Although dogmas are binding doctrinal statements of the church, they are historically conditioned in the sense that they are reactions to specific theological or pastoral challenges in a concrete context and in a given language. Therefore, dogmatic formulations are limited both formally and in content, because they can never be an exhaustive expression of what they witness to and attempt to interpret. This corresponds to the apophatic nature of theology, which can only approximately perceive and articulate God's mystery and work.*

3.1 The church has never tried to articulate its faith fully and in all detail. Rather, dogmas are to be understood as demarcations (*horoi*) the church felt obliged to draw when questions of truth were challenged, in order better to protect the treasure of faith kept in her bosom. In doing so, many theologians were aware that the contents of revelation are incomparably greater than human comprehension and therefore exceed those notions that try to describe them. As Maximus the Confessor (ca. 580-662) put it: "The great mystery of the divine incarnation always remains a mystery".[2]

3.2 Dogmatic formulations always presuppose a certain framework of understanding and are embedded in a context of interpretation. That is why dogmas are not only to be understood literally but comprehended against the background of the situation in which they originated and the intention of their message (cf. §§ 10.1 – 10.9). The consistent application of this methodology in ecumenical dialogue has proved to be extremely fruitful and has shown that one can come to agree on the subject itself, despite using sometimes different notions. In this way, recent dialogues between Chalcedonians and Non-Chalcedonians[3] have shown that both sides have used different terms and concepts to express essentially the same Christological faith.

3.3 Although the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church may not always share a common understanding of doctrine, both traditions distinguish, in different ways, between dogmas, generally accepted teachings, and non-binding theological opinions. Moreover, Vatican II speaks of a "hierarchy of truths"[4] in order to account for how doctrines relate to the foundation of Christian faith, an idea that corresponds, to a certain extent, to the view of some Orthodox theologians as well, such as Vasilij V. Bolotov (1854-1900). By deepening the common reflection on the nature of doctrinal statements, one can hope to contribute to overcoming difficulties in the appraisal of doctrines held only by one tradition.

3.4 It is the task of the hermeneutics of dogmas to assess the varying articulation and explication (*anaptyxis*)[5] of the apostolic heritage throughout history, taking into account the respective context, and to discern to what extent such new formulations are legitimate expressions of the faith as articulated in the sources.

3.5 Hermeneutical work on the Church's deposit of faith and on dogmatic expressions can lead to new insights. These insights are important insofar as they relate to the salvation of human beings. Consequently, the hermeneutical work on dogmas encompasses not only the theoretical level, but may also help to evaluate Church life and practice.

## 4. Hermeneutics of canons

Common Statement: *Church canons are often applied ecclesiology. Like dogmas they must be interpreted within their respective context. Catholics and Orthodox take different approaches to canon law and have a different understanding of the connection between church law and church doctrine and practice. Consequently, there needs to be an in-depth*

[2] Maximus the Confessor, *Capita* XV,12: PG 90, 1184B.
[3] Cf. J. Gros et al. (eds.), *Growth in Agreement II. Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982-1998*, Geneva 2000, 187-199.
[4] *Unitatis Redintegratio* 11.
[5] At the Constantinopolitan council of 1351 Palamas described his teaching as an "explication" or "unfolding" (ἀνάπτυξις) of the teachings of the Sixth Ecumenical Council on the two energies and the two wills of Christ: cf. A. Melloni et al. (eds.), *The Great Councils of the Orthodox Churches*, Turnhout 2016 (CCCGOD IV.1), 183. See further J. Meyendorff, *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas*, Paris 1959, 142.

*discussion of the hermeneutics of the canons – both within each church as well as between Orthodox and Catholics. The new situation of the church in the third millennium requires further reflection on how the Early Church canons can be applied in a globalized world.*

4.1 In considering our division and the possibility of overcoming it, we should take account of the canonical dimension. Canon law often has a stronger influence on church life than dogma. However, even in the first millennium the canonical ideal did not always match the historical reality. Thus, bishops were transferred from one city to another in spite of canon 15 of Nicaea I. In the second millennium the Orthodox and the Catholic Churches understood and applied canons in different ways. Whereas the Orthodox mostly limited themselves to commentaries on already existing canons and formulated new canonical regulations only on the level of local churches, the Catholics developed a codified system of church law which in part grew independently of ecclesiology.

4.2 One reason for the estrangement between East and West was the loss of a common mental framework in dealing with canons. For example, Emperor Justinian II, by means of the canons of the Second Council in Trullo, known as the *Quinisext* (691-92), aimed, among other things, at bringing Rome's canonical praxis in line with that of Constantinople with little respect for its own long-standing traditions. However, the so-called "anti-Roman canons"[6] were not motivated by hostility towards Rome, but sought to re-establish the ideal of uniformity in one empire. On the other side, the Gregorian Reform in Rome was a factor that led to an increasingly juridical approach to primacy by overemphasizing the role of the bishop of Rome, which was completely incomprehensible to the Byzantines (cf. § 8.4).

4.3 Canons on the whole have great theological weight in the Orthodox Church; nevertheless, due to changed historical conditions, they, or at least some of them, tend to be dismissed as irrelevant in today's world. In light of the need to apply the canons in Orthodoxy today, one may speak of a "hierarchy of canons", not all canons being of the same importance. Nikolaj Afanas'ev (1893-1966) spoke of their abiding message; as he put it: "The underlying dogmatic truth of the canons cannot be changed; only the application and embodiment in a canon can be altered by the historical existence of the Church" [7].

4.4 For the Catholic Church, the canon law now in force is the *Codex iuris canonici* of 1983 (for the Latin Church) and the *Codex canonum ecclesiarum orientalium* of 1990 (for the Eastern Catholic Churches). The canons of the ecumenical councils now serve as *fontes*, that is, sources, on which current canon law draws; canon 4 of Nicaea I (325), which says that at least three bishops have to be present for the ordination of a bishop, is still in vigour.[8] Besides, certain ancient church canons have been included in current liturgical praxis, for example canon 20 of Nicaea I (325) with regard to the "*gonyklisia,*" that is, that one should not kneel in Eastertide or on Sundays. This rule is still observed by Catholics of the Byzantine rite.

## 5. The significance of non-theological factors

Common Statement: *The reasons for the separation of our churches were not only theological, but also had political, social, cultural, psychological, and other dimensions. Indeed, political and cultural factors strongly influenced the development of ecclesiastical*

[6] Cf. Concilium Quinisextum, can. 13, 36, 55 (for example). See further H. Ohme, Die sogenannten „antirömischen Kanones" des Concilium Quinisextum, in: G. Nedungatt / M. Featherstone (eds.), The Council in Trullo Revisited, Rome 1995, 307-321.

[7] N. Afanas'ev, The Canons of the Church: Changeable or Unchangeable?, in: *SVSQ* 11 (1967) 54-68, here 62.

[8] Cf. CCEO, can. 746.1: "A bishop should be ordained by three bishops, except in case of extreme necessity".

*structures in East and West. Therefore, in examining the causes and consequences of schisms, the role of these factors must be considered and assessed theologically. More particularly, this requires a multidisciplinary approach that also takes into account these aspects that have little dogmatic relevance, but nevertheless affect the ecclesiological practice of the churches. Such factors still contribute to the difficulties in the official theological dialogue between our churches.*

5.1 The church is not only divine, but also human. This is why it can be described not only in theological terms in the narrow sense, but also in sociological and other terms. More specifically, in the course of history the church had to take on ever-increasing areas of responsibility that required new organizational structures. Since the social and political context differed in West and East, different ecclesiological models developed that have to be understood as providing a response to the challenges of the corresponding era. Their theological interpretation and canonical determination quite often only came afterwards and have to be seen as historically limited explanations of their time.

5.2 One must neither idealize models of the past by projecting later structures into earlier times, nor totally reject the past by considering everything in it as irrelevant to the present if not detrimental to progress. Towards this aim, the manifold methodologies developed by human sciences such as sociology, anthropology, and psychology can be very useful. Furthermore, the theological and non-theological factors have to be correlated in a well-balanced way, and one-sided positions have to be avoided. In doing so, one's own confessional perspective must not unduly predominate in scholarly work on the history of the church and its doctrines (cf. § 6.3).

5.3 In Orthodox-Catholic dialogue there is a strong tendency to idealize the first millennium. However, in the 506 years between 337 and 843 there were 217 years of schism between Rome and Constantinople[9], so that one cannot simply speak of an "undivided" Church of the first millennium. Nevertheless, the experience of the first millennium can be highly inspiring in re-establishing communion between our churches (cf. chapter 7).

5.4 Though in different ways and to a different extent, the churches in both East and West were often confronted with the temptation of conflating church leadership with secular power and its institutions. At times models were imposed on the church by the state (cf. §§ 9.8 and 10.2). Challenges such as the exercise of worldly power, the tendency to centralize or decentralize, as well as the strong emphasis on national identity, can be observed in both East and West. This has often reinforced primatial authority at the expense of synodal structures. Although synodality at times very much took a back seat, it was never completely absent from the consciousness of the church as a theological principle. Synodal structures of one kind or another were always present in the life of the church.

5.5 Primatial and synodal forms have evolved over the centuries. They will and should continue to change in order to adjust to new developments such as globalization, geopolitical changes, and new political power structures, without conforming to the spirit of this world (cf. Rom 12:2). This means a constant effort to reform and renew church structures, in fidelity to the church's fundamental identity as the Body of Christ and in obedience to its mission under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

[9] Cf. Y. Congar, *After Nine Hundred Years*, New York 1959, 3.

## 6. The importance of history for theology

Common Statement: *The Christian faith is inconceivable without reference to history, because God's revelation in Jesus Christ took place at a specific historical moment. As Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God has a human story. God's saving action for human beings does not occur apart from time and space, but in the midst of human history. Therefore, the self-understanding, theology, and preaching of the church are also marked by history. Research into church history is required to better appreciate the role of historical, social, and cultural factors in the development of theology, especially where divisive issues are concerned. Common research and the common presentation of history resulting from this can offer a framework for understanding controversial theological questions.*

6.1 Church history concerns itself with both general and particular trends in Christianity. This entails probing into church life in its dogmatic, symbolical (creedal), liturgical, canonical, spiritual, and ethical dimensions. Moreover, church history makes use of many of the same methods and sources as other historical disciplines, often in close interchange with them.

6.2 As a discipline, church history has a considerable theological significance. It raises questions about tradition, continuity, and change in the church, its structures and theology, and facilitates a critical elaboration of ecclesial memory. Historical investigation can also help to draw the line between those cases when Christians remained faithful to the gospel and when they, consciously or unconsciously, falsified it. Church history thus makes an indispensable contribution to a responsible ecclesiology.

6.3 Research in church history should not succumb to the temptation of justifying the history of one's own confession and nation, but should rather be concerned with critically discussing one's own tradition and other traditions according to their own self-perception. Rather than going along with certain biases and prejudices, theologians are expected to study what the teachings and practices of the dialogue partner really amount to so as to foster authentic dialogue in a spirit of love and truth.

6.4 Hermeneutically balanced research into the history of church and theology has recently brought about a more nuanced view of the controversial issues dividing the churches. Concrete examples of this include: the work on the Christological controversies over the decisions of the Councils of Ephesus 431 and Chalcedon 451 (cf. § 3.2); a fresh appraisal of the crisis of 1054 (cf. § 8.3); the 1999 agreement between Catholics and Lutherans on basic principles of the doctrine of justification;[10] or the joint presentation of the history of the Reformation in the 2013 document by the International Catholic-Lutheran dialogue commission.[11] These examples show that it is possible to describe history across confessional divides.

6.5 A joint description of history, as is attempted in the present study, is essential for the healing of memories. For the members of the Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group, such an endeavour is an indispensable prerequisite for the restoration of full communion between their churches.

[10] Cf. *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, Grand Rapids/Cambridge 2000.

[11] Cf. *From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017*. Report of the Lutheran – Roman Catholic Commission on Unity, Leipzig/Paderborn 2013.

## III. Historical Observations

### 7. The Early Church period (1st – 8th centuries)

Common Statement: *In the period before the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325), church structures developed, including the monepiscopacy, a three-level hierarchy, and local councils, as well as the acceptance of the canon of Holy Scripture. For this reason, the pre-Nicene era has a preeminent significance for ecclesiology down to the present day. The issues that were controversial at that time (e.g., the date of Easter, the rebaptism of heretics and schismatics) and their attempted solutions can still give us insights for dealing with differences within the church today. In the era of the ecumenical councils (4th - 8th centuries), the church became an imperial church, to a certain extent defined along the lines of civil structures. This had an impact on the process of decision-making within the church. The emperor played a crucial role in convening the ecumenical councils and implementing their decisions. As a general rule, in every province the bishop of the provincial capital presided over the episcopal synod as well as the election of bishops and their ordination. In that period the five ancient patriarchates, which were to be called the "pentarchy", played a significant role, especially in the East. The bishop of Rome had an important function, but his prerogatives were interpreted differently in East and West. Throughout this period, primacy and synodality stood in a creative tension with one another. Although East and West understood them in different ways, the mutual relationship of primacy and synodality nonetheless proves to be a viable model that can inspire us on the way to a restoration of church unity.*

7.1 A number of different forms of primacy or "headship" in local and regional churches emerge in the first several centuries of Christianity. These include the primacy of a single bishop in the local church – usually a city with its surrounding area – which was widely accepted by the mid-third century; the primacy of the bishop of a metropolitan (capital) city among the bishops of a particular province; and later, the primacy of the bishop of a major urban center (Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, for a time other cities such as Carthage, Thessalonica, Milan, and Ravenna) among the churches of a political "diocese" or imperial region (from the time of Diocletian's reforms). Some of these (including Jerusalem as a center of pilgrimage) came to be called "Patriarchates" in a process that started in the mid-fifth century (cf. § 7.8). This metropolitan and patriarchal primacy was exercised through presiding over local and regional synods, as well as over the ordination of local or metropolitan bishops and acting as an instance of appeal in cases involving bishops that had previously been handled locally.

7.2 Rome's fame as the place where Peter and Paul had taught, were martyred, and had their tombs, established an unparalleled prestige for the city from the start, without denying that the two apostles came there because it was the capital of the empire. Ignatius of Antioch described the Church of Rome as the one which "presides in love" (*prokathēmenē tēs agapēs*). Rome's standing is illustrated by Clement's first letter to the Corinthians, read every year in the Sunday liturgy in Corinth, on the testimony of Dionysius (ca. 170), its bishop.[12] By the end of the second century, Rome's status had increased to the point that its bishop Victor I's attempt to excommunicate the Quartodecimans for celebrating Easter apart from the rest took all of the mediatory skills of Polycrates of Ephesus and Irenaeus of Lyons to avert. An inscription, not later than 216, on the tomb

[12] Cf. Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4:331.

of Abercius, bishop of Hieropolis in Phrygia, says that "the chaste shepherd … sent me to Rome, to behold a kingdom and to see a queen with golden robe and golden shoes"[13]. Cyprian (d. 258) coined for Rome the expression as the church "from which all the priesthood takes its origin"[14], and the "*cathedra Petri*"[15], on which, however, all bishops sit, thereby bringing out the interdependence of the Roman bishop and other bishops as a collegium. The canons of Sardica (343) secured bishops the right to appeal to Rome (cf. § 7.3). The idea "*Roma locuta, causa finita*", attributed to Augustine (d. 430)[16], was not followed by the bishops of Carthage in the case of the presbyter Apiarius, twice condemned by them, twice absolved by Rome, until he was definitively condemned by Carthage (418), who forbade a simple priest to appeal to Rome on pain of excommunication. The weightiest appreciation for Rome came from the greatest Byzantine theologian of the 7th century, Maximus the Confessor, who in the context of the monothelite controversy called the "most holy church of the Romans" not only first among all the churches, disposing of the power to bind and to loose[17], but also asserted that all Christians should look up to this church as to a "sun of eternal light"[18].

7.3 One of the more significant and controversial fourth-century attempts to hold a new universal council was the Council of Sardica (or Serdica; today Sofia), called by the Emperor Constantius II in 343 in the hope of healing the widening rift over the reception of the creed of Nicaea. Fearing that they would be dominated by the Latin-speaking Western bishops who were intent on rehabilitating the exiled Athanasius, the Greek bishops eventually declined to meet in a general council, moving instead to Philippopolis in Thrace (today Plovdiv). The Western council issued a set of canons concerning church structure and discipline. Canon 3 of the Greek collection affirmed the right of any bishop who had been deposed by his provincial synod to appeal to the bishop of Rome, who could order that a new trial be held. Although the Council of Sardica was initially not recognized in the East, canon 3 was later taken up in canon 2 of the Second Council in Trullo / Quinisext (691-92), considered by the Orthodox to be a continuation of the 5th and 6th ecumenical councils. Through their reception by the Quinisext, the canons of Sardica became an integral part of the canonical corpus of the Orthodox Church. In fact, there were repeated instances of appeal to the Roman bishop in dogmatic and practical matters during the first millennium, such as in the cases of John Chrysostom (d. 407), Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444), and Theodore the Studite (d. 826). In the second millennium, the renowned Byzantine canonist Theodore Balsamon (ca. 1120-98) recognized in his comment on canon 3 of Sardica the right of appeal to the Roman pope, applying this right however to the Patriarch of Constantinople.[19]

7.4 In recent years, a number of Orthodox and Catholic theologians have pointed to *Apostolic Canon* 34, part of a larger collection of liturgical and disciplinary rules from the Church of Antioch which dates to the 4th century, as a model for the complex interaction of primatial and collegial leadership that characterizes the exercise of church authority at its best. The "Apostolic Canons" are the work of an unknown author or authors (c. 300) and were recorded in various Oriental languages (Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopian and Arabic). Moreover, they gained authority in the West due to the fact that Dionysius Exiguus (d. before 556) included them in his collection of canons. Canon 34, probably written by the compilers of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, of which the eighty *Apostolic Canons* form the final section, represents the widespread concern for balance in episcopal leadership that marked the last decades of the fourth-century Trinitarian controversy. It lays down that "the bishops of each *ethnos*" – presumably meaning each political province – should recognize the authority of "the one who has first place among them" – their metropolitan bishop – and should "not do anything important (*perittos*) without his consent (*gnome*)", but that he also should do nothing "without the

[13] Cf. J. Quasten, *Patrology*, Vol. 1: *The Beginnings of Patristic Literature*, Utrecht/Brussels 1950, 172.
[14] Cyprian, *Ep*. 59, 14.1.
[15] Cyprian, *De unitate ecclesiae catholicae* 4.
[16] Cf. Augustine, *Sermo* 131,10.
[17] Cf. Maximus the Confessor, *Opuscula theologica et polemica* 12: PG 91, 144C.
[18] Maximus the Confessor, *Opuscula theologica et polemica* 11: PG 91, 137D.
[19] Cf. PG 137, 1432-1436.

consent of all". The central focus of every bishop's labor, the canon insists, should be only what pertains to his local church (*paroikia*). Along with the rest of the *Apostolic Canons*, canon 34 was not widely cited by theologians until recently. Apparently dependent on canon 7 of Nicaea (325) and canon 9 of the Synod of Antioch of 341, it reflects the continuing concern of the fourth-century church in the Eastern provinces to prevent the doctrinal and jurisdictional domination by powerful church leaders that underlay much of the fourth century's theological polarization.

7.5 The role of the bishop of Rome must be seen within the different spheres of influence in which he made effective decisions and articulated church tradition. In central Italy, understandably, he was metropolitan bishop of the ancient capital, and called and presided over local synods. In *Italia Suburbicaria* (including Central and Southern Italy, Sicily, Corsica, and Sardinia) he exercised supra-metropolitan or, in later language, patriarchal authority. In the fourth century, especially in response to the Arian crisis, this sphere of influence was gradually extended over the entire Latin-speaking western part of the empire – west of the Rhine, south of the Main and Danube, as far east as Thessalonica and as far north as Scotland; here the bishops of Rome were occasionally represented at regional synods, expected to be informed of their decrees, and could be appealed to in cases of disputed local decisions. From the time of Pope Damasus (366-84), the bishops of Rome began to issue decisions, in the form of juridical rescripts, on doctrinal and disciplinary questions that had arisen in various churches of the Latin West and had been brought to their attention for resolution.

7.6 In the Eastern churches the role of the bishops of Rome was less clearly defined, but grew in importance during the great doctrinal controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries. In 404 John Chrysostom appealed to Pope Innocent I, Venerius of Milan and Chromatius of Aquileia for support in his own struggles in Constantinople. In the run-up to the Council of Ephesus (431), Cyril of Alexandria secured the support of Pope Celestine I in his battle against Nestorius of Constantinople. Flavian of Constantinople and Theodoret of Cyrrhus appealed in strong terms to Pope Leo I, in 449, to overturn the christological and administrative decisions of the synod of Ephesus of that same year, on the basis of his "apostolic authority". The Roman bishops in this period were coming to be seen, especially in times of disruptive tensions between local churches, as preeminent defenders of apostolic tradition, by virtue of their being bishops of Rome. Illustrative of this fact is that the Council of Chalcedon (451) acclaimed Pope Leo as the voice of Peter: "Peter has spoken through Leo". That said, the Council was also careful to underline Leo's agreement with Cyril: "Piously and truly did Leo teach, so taught Cyril".

7.7 The bishop of Rome's significant role in the formation of doctrine in the writings of major hierarchs such as Leo I and Gregory the Great was not seen as competing with the authority of local and regional bishops or synods in the Western Church, but rather as reinforcing, promulgating, and regulating their work. Both Leo and Gregory frequently urged the metropolitans of the West to ensure that local and regional synods met regularly and followed canonical procedure; Gregory held a synod of bishops from *Italia Suburbicaria* (cf. § 7.5) at Rome every five years. Both of them saw the purpose of local and regional synods as consisting of passing authoritative judgment on both disciplinary and doctrinal issues; their own function was to be informed of these decisions, to confirm them, and to intervene only in cases where local authorities could not reach a clear solution. Leo – who identified himself strongly with Peter[20] – saw his own role above all as that of clearly proclaiming the apostolic faith and practice that had been accepted in all the churches since the time of the apostles. During crises, it was the task of regional and ecumenical councils to *define* that faith explicitly; the pope's role was "to make clear what you know and to preach what you believe"[21]. As Leo wrote to the bishops at a local synod meeting in Chalcedon in 453, "Can your holinesses

[20] Cf., e.g. Pope Leo, *Ep.* 156: Pope Leo the Great, *Letters*, E. Hunt (tr.), Washington DC 1986, 243.
[21] Pope Leo, *Ep.* 165.1, to the Emperor Leo: Pope Leo the Great, *Letters*, E. Hunt (tr.), Washington DC 1986, 263.

recognize that I am, with our God's help, the guardian both of the Catholic faith and of the legislation of our ancestors?"[22] His task was not to express his own beliefs, but to ascertain the apostolic faith.

7.8 From an early stage the East approached the question of ecclesial primacy through the prism of the relationship between the great sees. Rome was consistently granted precedence ahead of sees such as Alexandria and Antioch but was not primarily viewed in the East as possessing a special form of authority in all matters. The canons of Nicaea take the province, headed by the bishop of the main city, as the norm, but they recognise and approve of the fact that the sees of Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch have accrued additional authority and prerogatives. Nicaea also grants to Jerusalem, again on the basis of custom, a place of honour after these great sees. Rome and Alexandria are generally recognised as the chief sees of West and East respectively – for instance in Theodosius' decree *Cunctos populos* (380). But a great change was set in motion with the establishment of Constantinople as New Rome, the capital of the emerging Christian empire. The Second Ecumenical Council (381) elevated Constantinople to the next place after Rome on political grounds, an elevation resented and resisted by Rome and Alexandria. Chalcedon goes further in granting additional privileges to Constantinople and defining its status as equal to that of Rome save in the matter of rank – again on political grounds. With the removal of Jerusalem from the authority of Caesarea Maritima, the system of the pentarchy (rule of the five ancient patriarchates) is, in principle, fully formed. The pentarchy is further affirmed in the legislation of Justinian and by the Second Council in Trullo. That said, the operation of this model of pentarchy was undermined by the Chalcedonian schism, which hit Alexandria and Antioch particularly hard. The Arab conquest weakened the pentarchy still further, drastically reducing the capacity of the sees of Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem to offer any practical counterweight to Rome and Constantinople. By the eighth century it was clear that the pentarchy had resolved in practice into a dyarchy including Rome and Constantinople. The ensuing schism between East and West was to some extent the result of the emergence of Rome and Constantinople as competing blocs with different conceptions of ecclesial primacy.

7.9 The fathers of the church provide us with valuable insights on questions of primacy and synodality. For instance, Maximus the Confessor suggests by his personal example that these concepts are in principle not exclusive of each other when it comes to the church on the universal level. He encouraged Pope Martin I to convoke the Lateran Council of 649 which condemned monotheletism and played a major part in shaping the council's decisions. Moreover, as a father of both the Western and Eastern churches, his engagement demonstrates that no one body has a monopoly of truth in the church.

7.10 In the acts of the Council of Nicaea II (787), in the sixth session, we come across a refutation of the Council of Hiereia (754), which, while condemning the veneration of icons, pretended to be ecumenical: "Again, how is this council 'great' and 'ecumenical', since those presiding over the rest of the churches did neither accept nor consent to it but rather dismissed it with anathema? It did not have the collaboration of the Pope of the Romans of that time and his priests, by means of either a representative of his or an encyclical letter, as is the rule in the councils. Nor did it have the consent of the Patriarchs of the East, that is of Alexandria, of Antioch, and of the Holy City, or of their priests and bishops".[23] One sees that the position of the pope is clearly distinguished from that of the other patriarchs and that his approval of a council carries a special weight. Retrospectively, Constantinople I (381) was convoked by the emperor as a regional council and attained ecumenical status because its creed was later "received" by the Council of Chalcedon, whereas the Roman bishops, first Pope Hormisdas (d. 523) after the resolution of the Acacian Schism, also accepted its dogmatic decisions in 519, but not, however, its canons, on account of canon 3 assigning Constantinople a primacy of honor second only to Rome. When Leo I refused to approve Chalcedon because of canon 28, which

[22] Pope Leo, *Ep.* 114.2: Pope Leo the Great, *Letters*, E. Hunt (tr.), Washington DC 1986, 198; cf. PL 54, 1031-1032.

[23] Mansi 13, 208D – 209A; cf. D. Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eighth-Century Iconoclasm*, Toronto 1986, 52.

assigned wide jurisdictional authority to Constantinople, Emperor Marcian nonetheless urged him to ratify the council as a whole, because otherwise its authority would be jeopardised.

7.11 These observations show that up to the 8th century there was no generally accepted formula defining the relationship between primacy and synodality on the universal level. Both primacy and synodality in the Early Church evolved, reflecting the challenges of their times. They were exercised, but not codified. No single model seems to have been universally accepted. Besides the fact that the seven ecumenical councils were all recognised by Rome and the Eastern patriarchates, the correlation between the primacy of the Roman bishop and the authority of an ecumenical council remained undefined. In order to understand how primacy found expression in the ecumenical councils, it is necessary to consider the particular context of each case, including imperial authority, the doctrinal disputes, and cultural differences.

7.12 The absence of a clear definition of the relationship between the primacy of the Roman bishop and ecumenical councils does not mean that there was no creative interaction between primacy and synodality. It was in fact this interaction that often helped the churches to remain faithful to the Gospel. Thus, the fathers of the ecumenical councils – even though they never called the special status of Rome and its bishop into question – barely responded to the occasional western voices that sought to understand this primacy in a maximalistic way, and therefore provided a corrective *a silentio* to these voices.

## 8. The period of estrangement (9th – 15th centuries)

Common Statement: *The break between the Greek East and the Latin West was the result of a long process of mutual alienation that took place between the 9th and 15th centuries. This was, first of all, culturally determined: whilst Latin was understood only with difficulty in the hellenized Eastern Roman Empire, Greek was hardly understood in the West. Secondly, in political terms, the removal of Eastern Illyricum from papal jurisdiction and the loss of the Byzantine-ruled territories in Italy led to a stronger orientation of the bishops of Rome towards the Carolingian Empire and to their growing mistrust of the Byzantine emperors. Thirdly, from an administrative point of view, the bishop of Rome increasingly undertook functions that were originally carried out at the regional level. In the fourth place, theologically, Byzantine iconoclasm deepened the chasm between Constantinople and Rome. Furthermore, the* Filioque *controversy came to be perceived as church-dividing by Patriarch Photius of Constantinople (ca. 810-893). The establishment of Latin hierarchical structures after the capture of Jerusalem by the crusaders in 1099 and the conquest of Constantinople in 1204 caused the chasm between East and West to widen even more. Efforts to restore unity, initially between the Latins and the Byzantines and later including other Eastern churches, could not bridge this gap. Even so, the status of the other as a church was not put into question. Later, the condemnation of conciliarism in the West led many theologians to be suspicious of synodality for a long time.*

8.1 The hostile attitude of several Byzantine emperors to icons and the transfer of the papal territories in Southern Italy and the Eastern Illyricum to the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople contributed to the reorientation of the popes from the Byzantines to the Franks. The crowning of Charlemagne as emperor by Leo III on Christmas Day in the year 800 brought about political tensions between Constantinople and Rome. De facto, there was no longer one empire but

two with two emperors. The political division between Rome and Constantinople was the prelude to later church division.

8.2 After Nicaea II (787), Carolingian theologians – though without seeking the support of Rome – started a controversy with "the Greeks" about the veneration of icons. Reciprocal misunderstanding was increased by the first Latin translation of the *Acta synodalia*, which failed to distinguish properly between "adoration" (*latreía*) and "veneration" (*proskýnesis*). The latter was inaccurately rendered as "adoration" instead of "veneration". Then, as early as 807, the first major dispute about the *Filioque* arose between Greek and Latin monks in Jerusalem. This came to a head under Photius, who became Patriarch of Constantinople in 858. However, not all bridges were burned. For example, the first Latin translations of the works of Pseudo-Dionysius and Maximus the Confessor were made during this Carolingian period by Johannes Scotus Eriugena (ca. 810-77). Furthermore, the Council of Constantinople in 879-80 succeeded in re-establishing communion between Rome and Constantinople by restoring Photius as patriarch.

8.3 The crisis of 1054, often and inaccurately presented as constituting the *definitive* break between Rome and Constantinople, was related to two factors: (a) The advance of the Normans into Southern Italy, which destroyed the political alliance between Rome and Constantinople; (b) Following Byzantine annexation of Armenia in the early 11$^{th}$ century, the dispute over the use of unleavened bread (azymes) in the Eucharist flared up once again, and soon this dispute broadened to include the Roman Church, which also used unleavened bread. A Roman delegation led by Cardinal Humbert of Silva Candida travelled to Constantinople to resolve these two disputed issues. There they encountered the resolute resistance of Patriarch Michael Cerularius. The inability of the parties to reach an agreement led to mutual anathemas which, it should be noted, applied only to specific persons and not to the Churches of Constantinople and Rome as a whole. By that time Leo IX, the pope who had sent the Roman delegation, had already died. Until today it is still debated whether the delegation had a right to proceed. When Bari fell to the Normans in 1071, the Byzantines lost their last military bastion in Italy, and Rome gave up any hope for military help from Constantinople against the Normans. The efforts of Patriarch Peter III of Antioch (1052-56) to mediate during the dispute proved unsuccessful.

8.4 Against this background, the primatial function of the bishop of Rome changed fundamentally during the Middle Ages. The end of the Roman Empire in the West in 476 created a power vacuum which was partially filled by the pope, who was thus able to establish himself as the only point of reference in conflicts in the West. In the investiture dispute (late 11$^{th}$ – early 12$^{th}$ centuries) between the papacy and the German empire, the pope won such a clear victory that the responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the people was largely wrenched from the emperor's hands. The *Dictatus papae* (1075), an unofficial document whose real context is unclear, reflects this development. In its 27 axioms, it attributes to the pope an authority greater than ever before, including the right to depose the emperor. Although the Gregorian Reform (named after Pope Gregory VII, 1073-85) aimed at ending simony, clerical abuse and the emperor's interference in the life of the church, the *Dictatus* is an example of how one-sided certain aspects of this reform were. These developments understandably irritated the Byzantines.

8.5 The crusades were a consequence of Western political, cultural and theological developments during the 11$^{th}$ – 13$^{th}$ centuries that also included the new self-understanding of the Roman popes. Initially intended to render military assistance to the Byzantines under Emperor Alexios I (1081-1118), they soon became a powerful tool to foster the leadership of the papacy and consolidate the collective identity of the Western Church. The establishment of the crusader states and the development of parallel canonical structures, including the appointment of Latin patriarchs in Jerusalem, Antioch, and Constantinople, were connected to an awareness of the opposition between the Byzantines and the Latins. The violent conquest of Constantinople in 1204 during the Fourth Crusade led to a deep-seated hostility of the Byzantines towards Rome. The transfer of the Byzantine

emperors and patriarchs in exile (they resided at Nicaea until the recapture of Constantinople in 1261) and the occupation by Latins (under their own patriarch) of the most important churches and monasteries of Constantinople appeared to make the chasm unbridgeable.

8.6 The greater self-confidence of the Roman popes was also evident in the medieval councils of the Western church. The first four councils which took place in the Lateran (1123, 1139, 1179 and 1215) can be called "papal councils". The bull *Unam Sanctam* (1302) of Pope Boniface VIII reinterpreted the "two-swords" theory to mean that the clergy wielded the "spiritual sword" whereas the state had to wield its "worldly sword" for the church. The bull provoked a military reaction from Philip IV the Fair of France, whose troops attacked the pope in Anagni (1303). In this era, the pope intervened more frequently when there were problems in a local church, without even having to wait for an appeal. His status as "*vicarius Christi*" was supposed to put him above the bishops, but without altering their status as bishops.

8.7 Among the factors that led to the division between Orthodox and Catholics, one should not underestimate problems of ecclesial jurisdiction (cf. § 8.1) in addition to the dogmatic and liturgical differences such as the *Filioque* and the azymes. The Council of Lyons II in 1274, reflecting the fears of the Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos of a new Latin occupation of Constantinople after 1261, did not succeed in re-establishing church unity because it involved no substantive discussion and was not received by the Orthodox Church.

8.8 The Council of Constance (1414-18) can be understood as a reaction to the exceptional condition in which the Western church found itself at the time – torn between three "obediences" where neither saints nor theologians, neither the Catholic princes nor the rank and file of the faithful ultimately knew who the real pope was. So-called "conciliarism" developed as a reaction to the Western schism (1378-1417). It was a theological approach meant to overcome major problems generated by an overemphasis on papal primacy and, therefore, stressed the superiority of councils over popes. Although the deposition of two rival popes (John XXIII and Benedict XIII) by a council, and the resignation of Pope Gregory XII, was never questioned, conciliarism, understood as the fundamental superiority of an ecumenical council over the pope, was condemned in practice. The precise validity of the Decrees of Constance is still disputed today. The pope elected by this council in 1417, Martin V, immediately adopted measures against conciliarism in 1418, and his successor, Eugene IV (1431-47), did so even more strongly. Paradoxically, a boost to papal authority was given by the Greeks, who chose to negotiate with the anti-conciliarist party of Eugene IV at the Council of Ferrara-Florence and not with the Council of Basle. Conciliarism was definitely condemned only in 1516 by the Fifth Lateran Council, which resolved "that only the contemporary Roman pontiff, as holding authority over all councils, has the full right and power to summon, transfer, and dissolve councils".[24] The debate on conciliarism demonstrates that the conception and practice of synodality existed within the Catholic Church; but because of these disputes it was for a long time discredited.

8.9 At the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438-39), Greeks and Latins engaged one another on the same level and in this way recognised one another as churches, without being challenged. A union was agreed upon in July 1439. During the same council ephemeral unions with major Oriental churches such as the Armenians and the Copts were also reached. The promulgation of the Union Decree on December 12, 1452, in Hagia Sophia divided the Byzantines even more and increased the antipathy of the Greek clergy and people towards the Latins. The Greeks expected not only to establish union with Rome, but also to receive military aid against the Ottomans. The big army promised by the pope to meet this challenge was defeated by the Ottomans in Varna on the Black Sea in 1444. Shortly afterwards, Constantinople fell to the Ottomans on May 29, 1453. In 1484, thirty years after the fall of Constantinople, all four Eastern patriarchs formally rescinded the union. Thus, the council failed in its attempt to re-establish the unity of the church. Nonetheless, it was used as a

[24] N. Tanner (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* I, Washington DC 1990, 642.

model for later partial unions with Rome (cf. § 9.10), and for this precise reason it was viewed increasingly negatively by the Orthodox.

## 9. The period of confessionalisation (16th – 18th centuries)

Common Statement: *After the failure of the Union Councils of Lyons II (1274) and Ferrara-Florence (1438/39) and the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans (1453), there was on both sides a gradual hardening of positions, reinforced still more by the Reformation. Orthodox and Catholic disputes with each other and with the Protestants led to the formation of confessional identities, which were characterized by opposition to one another. In the "symbolic books" that were written at this time following the pattern of the Protestant confessions, Orthodox theologians adopted Catholic arguments against the Protestants and Protestant arguments against Catholics. Furthermore, the "synodal model" introduced in Russia by Peter the Great was based on Protestant models. In the Catholic Church, post-Tridentine theology adopted an exclusivistic notion of salvation, which enhanced missionary efforts among other Christians. In some regions, partial unions of Orthodox with Rome (Brest, Užhorod, et al.) were signed. Yet, only in the 18th century was sacramental communion, which had remained in practice in certain regions, finally revoked. This confirmed the de facto break that had already existed for centuries.*

9.1 During the Reformation, Lutherans sought support from the Orthodox as did, somewhat later, some Anglicans. Although the Orthodox rejected these overtures, they also began to produce "confessional books", which drew not only on traditional Orthodox sources, but also on Protestant and Catholic ones. In the 20th century, Georges Florovsky (1893-1979) strongly criticized these developments as a deviation (*pseudomorphosis*)[25] – a point that historians and theologians continue to debate.

9.2 In the wake of the Reformation, which developed differently in various European countries, both Catholics and Orthodox increasingly adopted confessional models of self-understanding. In spite of this problematic reduction of ecclesial identity to confessional formulae, this period also witnessed creative developments in these churches, especially in spirituality, as well as mutual influence between East and West. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), for example, showed a great concern for being faithful to the spirituality of the Greek fathers, and the Bollandists deeply studied the Eastern fathers and saints. Dominicans such as Jacques Goar (1601-53) and Michel Le Quien (1661-1733) contributed much to the promotion of study of the Christian East. On the Eastern side, Nicodemus the Hagiorite (1749-1809) edited such classics as *The Spiritual Combat*[26] of the Theatine Lorenzo Scupoli (ca. 1530-1610). And the *Philokalia*, compiled by Nicodemus the Hagiorite and Macarius of Corinth (1731-1805), first published in Venice (1782), has had a great if uneven impact in the East and the West alike.

9.3 The context in which the Catholics and the Orthodox found themselves led to the development of systems of higher education, such as the Jesuit academies throughout Europe and the academy of

[25] Cf. G. Florovsky, "Western Influences in Russian theology", in: *Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, Vol. 4: *Aspects of Church History*, Belmont MA 1975, 157-182, here 179.

[26] Also known as „The Unseen Warfare": cf. *Unseen Warfare*. The *Spiritual Combat* and *Path of Paradise* of Lorenzo Scupoli, edited by Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain and revised by Theophan the Recluse, Crestwood NY 1978.

Peter Moghila in Kiev. While theology in this period was largely polemical, nevertheless theologians of the stature of the Orthodox Maximos Margounios (1549-1602) and the Catholic Leo Allatius (ca. 1586-1669) openly expressed the substantial convergence of their respective churches.[27]

9.4 Orthodox polemicists typically used Catholic arguments against the Protestants, as in the dispute about the Eucharist, and Protestant arguments against the Catholics, as in their arguments against papal primacy. Similarly, Catholics used Orthodox arguments against Protestants; for instance, Nikolaos Cabasilas' (ca. 1321-92) statement on the real presence in the Eucharist was cited by the Council of Trent.[28]

9.5 Although the authority of the papacy was vigorously questioned by the Reformers, the Council of Trent (1545-63) did not deal directly with papal primacy and thus left open the question of the authority of the pope to define doctrine. In practice, however, the reforms in church life initiated by the Council of Trent and implemented by the popes led to a centralization of doctrinal authority in the Catholic Church and a stronger role for the Roman See. Since then loyalty to the papacy has developed into a distinctive mark of Catholic identity.

9.6 In the 16th century, that part of Southern Italy known as Magna Graecia was home to tens of thousands of Byzantine Christians. After the Council of Florence, this community, which included newly-arrived refugees from Albania, continued to be an autonomous Church fully in communion with the Church of Rome. It lost its autonomous status due to the post-Tridentine disciplinary reforms, which resulted in the 1596 *Perverbis Instructio* decree. Owing to this decree, the community was submitted to the jurisdiction of the local Latin bishop. Although deprived of its bishop, it nevertheless kept its liturgy and its priests. But without its links to Constantinople and losing its autonomy, it was reduced to be a rite tolerated within the Catholic Church (*ecclesia ritualis*). It was granted a titular bishop, known as *ordinant*, who resided in Rome, and whose sole function was to ordain the community's priests and deacons in the Byzantine rite. This development provided a model for uniatism (cf. § 9.10).

9.7 The fact that the Catholic Church was progressively losing ground as a political agent abetted this process. Refusal to deal with the Protestants isolated the representatives of Rome in the bargaining to end the Thirty Years War (1618-48), so that even Catholic states frequently set their own interests before those of the church. The Catholic Church increasingly turned inward, developing new forms of piety such as certain Marian devotions. While huge territories in Europe were lost for the Catholic Church because of the Reformation, Catholic church leaders were quick to stress the importance of evangelizing the recently discovered continents.

9.8 In early 18th-century Russia, Peter the Great tried to modernize the country according to European models, a process that affected the church in many ways. He introduced the "synodal" system of church government and also sought to raise the educational level of the clergy. This led, on the one hand, to the concentration of church administration in synodal structures (patterned after Protestant models rather than those of the Early Church), in which the interests of the state played a decisive role. On the other hand – likewise according to Western church models – theological formation improved, laying the foundation for the achievements of Russian theology in the 19th century.

9.9 In the Ottoman Empire, the structure of the Rum-Millet led to a centralization of the Orthodox Church. The Ottoman era, consequently, witnessed an enhancement of the importance of the Ecumenical Patriarchate at the expense of the other Orthodox patriarchates, which according to

[27] Cf. Margounios' comment on Saint Augustine's *De trinitate* (1588), ed. G. Fedalto, Brescia 1963; Leo Allatius, *De ecclesiae occidentalis atque orientalis perpetua consensione*, Cologne 1648.

[28] Cf. S. Ehses (ed.), *Concilium tridentinum* VIII/5: Acta, Freiburg i.Br. 1919, 912,39 – 913,1. The Council of Trent speaks of Nicholas Cabasilas in the context of its doctrine on the sacrifice of the Eucharist.

Ottoman practice were effectively subordinated to the Ecumenical Patriarch. This would have far-reaching consequences for the church in the 19th century, when national movements within the Ottoman Empire became stronger, especially in the Balkans. Those Orthodox who were not Greek no longer saw in the Patriarch of Constantinople someone who represented them, especially not in their political efforts to achieve national emancipation.

9.10 Throughout this period, all attempts to re-establish unity with Rome in Eastern European countries led only to partial unions, which split up the local communities into Catholics and Orthodox. The first who tried to restore communion with Rome were the Orthodox in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth who were motivated by a wish to attain equality with the Polish nobility. In 1595 they sent two bishops to Rome for negotiations, but, although they signed an agreement with Rome, not all bishops accepted it at the Synod of Brest (1596), because they expected to be treated on the basis of the council of Florence, not that of Trent. Next came the Uskoki, the Orthodox who fled from Ottoman rule in Serbia. In 1611 they formed a small Catholic Eastern Church in Marča in Croatia, retaining their rite and remaining in communion with both the Orthodox patriarchate of Peć (Serbia) and the pope. In 1646, in the same spirit of the Union of Brest, the eparchy of Mukačevo (now in Transcarpathian Ukraine), then divided between Hungary and Transylvania, joined, in the Synod of Užhorod, the Catholic Church. In 1700, a part of the Romanian-speaking believers in Transylvania (as of 1918 part of Romania) joined the Catholic Church, as a reaction to the mounting pressure of the Calvinist princes, but likewise encouraged by Jesuit proselytism. Given the exclusivistic ecclesiology which came to dominate after Trent as a reaction to the Protestant Reformation, both Catholics and Orthodox questioned whether a community in schism could serve as an instrument of salvation.

9.11 In other parts of the Eastern Orthodox world, e.g., in the Mediterranean area, Orthodox and Catholics had, despite undeniable tensions, times of relatively peaceful coexistence. It was only in July 1729 that the *Propaganda fide*, the Roman congregation for the missionaries, decreed an interdiction of any *communicatio in sacris* with Christians who were not in communion with Rome.[29] This decree is important because it indicates that until that time some form of liturgical and sacramental sharing between Orthodox and Catholics was still in practice (otherwise it would not have been necessary to forbid it). The response to the Roman decree from the Orthodox side was published in July 1755, when the patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria and Jerusalem declared that they regarded all sacraments outside the Orthodox Church as invalid and would receive all non-Orthodox converting to Orthodoxy only through baptism.[30] The Russian Orthodox Church, however, continued to receive converts from the Catholic Church by confession alone.

## 10. The period of ecclesiological introversion (19th century)

Common Statement: *In the 19th century the Catholic Church in Western Europe was challenged in three ways: ecclesiologically, especially by Gallicanism; politically by increasing state control of the church; and intellectually by modern scientific developments. A reaction to these challenges was the ultramontanist movement, which would give an exaggerated importance to papal primacy, as expressed in the definitions of the First Vatican Council. However, an adequate understanding of the council's definitions should ensue from a careful reading of its proceedings, and not from its maximalist interpretation.*

[29] Cf. Mansi 46, 99-104.
[30] Cf. Mansi 38, 619.

*In the 19th century, the emphasis on the concept of nation in the political sphere led certain Orthodox peoples to overemphasize the ethnic principle at the expense of the territorial one, thus favoring the formation of national churches. A synod of the Eastern Orthodox Patriarchs in Constantinople in 1872 reacted by condemning ethnophyletism. Nonetheless, the ethnic ecclesiastical principle continues to have an adverse effect on the witness of the Orthodox Church for unity down to the present day.*

10.1 In Gallicanism (from Gaul, meaning France), a concept that goes back to the 17th century, the concept of conciliarism, aiming at subordinating the pope to the council, was revived and transformed in the 19th century by placing an emphasis on the autonomy of national churches. The Gallican ideas, especially widespread in France, took a similar form in Febronianism in Germany (named after Febronius, pseudonym of the auxiliary bishop of Trier, Johann Nikolaus von Hontheim, 1701-90). Against the background of the debate about conciliarism in the late Middle Ages, both Gallicanism and Febronianism were condemned by the popes of the time.

10.2 In the political realm, the Catholic Church found itself confronted by fundamental changes in the relationship between state and church, such as the instrumentalization of the church by the state in France and in the Habsburg empire (as a consequence of "Josephinism", named after Emperor Joseph II, ruled 1780-90), and the threat of losing the Papal States. In addition, the church was challenged by the growing influence of liberalism, which was associated in many European countries with the strong anticlericalism of governments with a secular approach.

10.3 The intellectual challenge consisted in the development of the modern natural sciences, in the criticism of religion in philosophy and the arts, and in the application of the historical-critical method to Holy Scripture. The scientific progress made in archaeology, geology, history, etc., raised questions about the traditional formulations of the faith; there was an urgent need to find a way to express it adequately in a new situation. This challenge called for a reconsideration of the relationship between faith and reason.

10.4 In reaction to these challenges, a movement called Ultramontanism arose in the countries north of the Alps that exaggerated papal primacy. Supporters of this movement were convinced that the leadership of the pope, reigning in Rome "beyond the mountains" (ultramontane), was necessary. However, Ultramontanism was not only a movement of reaction but can also be considered to be an adaptation by the church to the constraints of modern society. Through a re-orientation towards Rome, the church was trying to respond to the French Revolution and its consequences: the disappearance of the Holy Roman Empire, the re-drawing of the map of the French dioceses, and the deposition of all their bishops. Yet, these consequences paradoxically led to a tremendous strengthening of the powers of papacy.

10.5 The ultramontane movement, supported by new forms of communication which made it possible for papal declarations to be received directly by a wider public, strengthened the emotional ties of many faithful with the bishop of Rome. Under Gregory XVI (1831-46) and Pius IX (1846-78) the papacy itself became one of the main actors in the ultramontane movement. In addition, Rome's central role was reinforced by the missionary expansion of that time which relativized the importance of national borders. The pope increasingly became the primary figure symbolizing the Catholic Church, with whom many Catholics worldwide identified.

10.6 Certain ideas of the ultramontane movement were reflected in the definitions of the First Vatican Council. The doctrinal definitions of Vatican I can only be understood correctly by taking into account their historical context, which had a strong influence on the text. The formulation of the dogmas regarding universal jurisdiction and infallibility may plausibly be seen as a response to the challenges of that time, continuing the centralizing tendency of previous centuries and struggling

against inner-church rationalism and the assaults of unbelief spreading throughout Europe. Due to the changes in church structures in the course of the 19th century that resulted from politics, the Catholic Church at the First Vatican Council enhanced the authority of the pope in order to preserve the unity of the church at critical moments.

10.7 Contrary to the prevailing popular understanding of Vatican I, and according to a careful reading of the proceedings of the council, the dogma of universal jurisdiction does not make the pope an absolute monarch, because he remains bound by divine revelation and natural law and has to respect the rights of the bishops and the decisions of the councils. As a matter of fact, Vatican I did not dogmatise the proposition that "the pope is infallible"; rather, in a much longer definition it specified under what conditions the pope can express the doctrine of the church in an infallible way. According to the self-understanding of the council, the statement that papal definitions are irreversible "of themselves and not by the consent of the church" (*ex sese, non autem ex consensu ecclesiae*) does not mean that he can define a doctrine in isolation from the community of the church. The pope does not pronounce a new teaching but only gives a more detailed formulation of a doctrine already rooted in the faith of the church (*depositum fidei*).

10.8 For an adequate interpretation of the definitions of the First Vatican Council it is necessary to know the history of the document (*Textgeschichte*), especially the background that conditioned the choice of terms used. In this respect, it is methodologically necessary to have recourse to the explanations which preceded the vote on those documents. Only in this way is it possible to grasp the exact meaning of the wording intended by the council fathers. In addition, the history of reception, viz. the subsequent interpretation of the resolutions by the Catholic Church's magisterium, is of the greatest significance for an adequate understanding of the council's teaching. Within the history of reception the "Response of the German bishops to Bismarck's Circular Dispatch of 1875"[31] is of crucial importance, because it was received by Pius IX, the pope who convened the council, as its authentic interpretation.[32] According to this document, the jurisdictional primacy of the pope does not reduce the ordinary authority of the bishops, because the episcopate is based on "the same divine institution"[33] as the papal office. Moreover, papal infallibility "covers precisely the same field as the infallible teaching office of the Church in general, and is limited to what is contained in the Scriptures and Tradition and the doctrinal decisions already made by the Church's teaching office".[34]

10.9 The interruption and abrupt end of the council – as a result of the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 and the subsequent annexation of Rome to the Kingdom of Italy – contributed to an imbalance in its ecclesiology: the treatment of papal primacy independently of the episcopate and of the mystery of the church as a whole (cf. § 11.12). Therefore, the First Vatican Council does not provide a complete ecclesiology, especially with regard to the role of bishops, metropolitans, patriarchs, synods, the laity, etc. The council had other limitations as well: first, its use of highly specialized canonical terms often carrying different meanings in everyday life and hence susceptible to erroneous interpretation; second, a theology insufficiently informed by Holy Scripture and church history.

10.10 Historical investigation leads one to observe that many of the ways in which Vatican I was received, especially maximalistic ones, were not faithful to the definitions of the council. For example, the infallibility of the pope is not the source of the indefectibility of the church, but the other way round. Another example is that the doctrinal statements of the pope do not claim

[31] An English translation of this German document has been published as an appendix to H. Küng, *The Council, Reform and Reunion*, New York 1961, 193-99 [Appendix I: "A Declaration by the German Bishops on the Relation between the Episcopate and the Papal Primacy"].
[32] Cf. Pius IX., *Litterae apostolicae ad Germaniae archiepiscopos episcopos etc.*, in: *Irénikon* 29 (1956) 148-49.
[33] Cf. "Declaration by the German Bishops", 196.
[34] Cf. "Declaration by the German Bishops", 198.

infallibility, except for *ex cathedra* definitions. Only if one is conscious of these differences between the original intention and the ensuing reception is it possible to overcome the subsequent apologetic attitudes.

10.11 Although the First Vatican Council was primarily a response to the phenomena in Western society that have been mentioned above, one should not forget its Eastern dimension. The ecclesiological approach of the Christian East, which places more emphasis on the rights of the local churches, was raised at the council primarily by some of the Eastern Catholic bishops present there. But they, like a minority of the Latin bishops, failed to get the council to consider their concerns.

10.12 The teachings of Vatican I embodied in the constitution *Pastor Aeternus* (1870) elicited objections from a significant number of Catholic bishops, priests, and faithful. Within the Catholic Church, it was only after some years that the decisions of the council were accepted by all the bishops in spite of their persisting concerns. Some Catholic priests and laypeople who regarded the council as a deviation from the tradition of the church eventually founded the Old Catholic Church, which in turn had an intensive dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church. During these conversations, for example at the Bonn conferences in 1874 and 1875, it became clear that many differences between the churches in East and West (e.g., the *Filioque* issue) could be solved more easily if they were discussed apart from the question of primacy.

10.13 An increased respect of the popes for the traditions of the Christian East can be observed after Vatican I (cf. the encyclical of Pope Leo XIII *Orientalium dignitas*, 1894). But this remained within a unionist framework that was unacceptable to the Orthodox and, from a contemporary point of view, not suitable for the restoration of communion between our churches (cf. the encyclical of the same pope *Satis cognitum*, 1896). Analogous positions can also be found in official texts of the Orthodox Church of that time (cf. the encyclical of Patriarch Anthimos VII of Constantinople, 1895). These documents are based on an exclusivistic ecclesiology of "return" and illustrate a condescending attitude expressed in the conviction of each church that it alone possesses the fullness of the truth, and that the other church is defective in some way. Neither side at that time was willing to genuinely consider the position of the other.

10.14 Just as in the West, also in the East the Enlightenment challenged established church institutions. The Greek-speaking world had come into contact with the Enlightenment in the 18$^{th}$ century. Initially, there were some positive reactions, and distinguished scholars (many of whom were members of the Orthodox clergy or monks) translated a series of works by Western authors on science, mathematics, astronomy, etc., while others composed similar works themselves. Many of these authors also engaged with the French and German Enlightenment, while some of them went even further back to Descartes (1596-1650) and Leibniz (1646-1716). On the other hand, there was a gradual reaction against some aspects of the Enlightenment, such as autonomy of the individual, resistance to tradition, materialism, and anti-clericalism, which initially emerged within the circles of the admirers of the scientific achievements of the Enlightenment and eventually provoked a negative attitude on the part of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. As a consequence, the Enlightenment became suspicious for many, and some of its supporters were not allowed to teach in higher church schools. Another group of theologians gradually emerged who were hostile to the Enlightenment and Western culture as a whole. Traces of this conflict can be found throughout the Orthodox world even today.

10.15 Russian religious philosophy of the 19$^{th}$ and early-20$^{th}$ centuries became a significant component of the Orthodox spiritual revival of the epoch. It was focused on the discussions between "Slavophiles" and "Westerners" and initiated a broad and creative comprehension of contemporary political, social and cultural phenomena including such important concepts as Khomiakov's "sobornost" or Soloviev's philosophy of "pan-unity". Furthermore, it gave an important impulse to the later development of theological thought in the Russian diaspora.

10.16 On the threshold of the 20th century, the Orthodox in the Near East were actively involved in the cultural and scientific revival of the Arab World, usually referred to with the Arabic term *Nahda* (renaissance). Orthodox intellectuals advocated the idea of an encompassing Arab identity irrespective of religious differentiation and propagated the ideals of the French Enlightenment with regard to education, progress, and science. This pronounced secular orientation was intended primarily to find a common platform with Muslims apart from the religious realm and to pave the way for a societal model based on reason. As far as the church was concerned, the *Nahda* proved to be an ambivalent phenomenon: it contributed, on one hand, to the creation of church councils consisting mainly of lay people and to the implementation of educational and humanitarian institutions such as schools and orphanages, but, on the other hand, it widened the gap between lay intellectuals and a clerical class largely uneducated or deeply absorbed by polemics with Catholic and Protestant missionaries.

10.17 The formation of national autocephalous churches in South-Eastern Europe was closely connected with the establishment of national states in the 19th century. Different but interrelated factors such as territory, ethnicity, state, politics, and language all played a role. Further clarification is needed with regard to the extent of their ecclesiological relevance. The national churches were expected to assist in the formation of the national states and the consolidation of their national identity.

10.18 The development of national autocephalous churches in South-Eastern Europe (Greek, Serbian, Romanian and Bulgarian, as well as the Albanian Church in the 20th century) followed different patterns, but also exhibited several common traits: the majority of South-European ethnic groups lived in more than one country, with the result that several church structures emerged for each of them. Moreover, the governments of the newly-established national states wanted autocephalous churches on their territory, which led to discussions on whether the church in the new state should end its relationship with the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The Bulgarians, however, followed a somewhat different path: in their case, the church autonomy, namely the creation of the Bulgarian exarchate by the Sultan, preceded the independence of the Bulgarian state.

10.19 Concerning the recognition of autocephaly, it should be kept in mind that all these newly-established churches had been under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The Ecumenical Patriarch, together with the Patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, and the Archbishop of Cyprus, reacted to the Bulgarian aspirations for autocephaly by condemning ethnophyletism at a synod in Constantinople in 1872; they refused to accept a separate jurisdiction for Orthodox Bulgarians within the Ottoman Empire because that set the ethnic principle above the territorial. This led to a break in communion that was overcome only after the Second World War. After the complete independence of the new national states, the autocephaly of the new national churches was ultimately recognized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate on the basis of the territorial principle.

10.20 All this led to a change in the understanding of autocephaly during the 19th century. It was no longer considered to be a matter of internal church order but became a sign of independence from the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Ecclesial autocephaly was seen as parallel to state sovereignty. One consequence of this development was confusion between the ethnic and the territorial principles in church structure. This became a problem because the geographic boundaries of ethnic groups and the borders of states did not always coincide.

10.21 Within Orthodox theology there have been ongoing debates about the meaning of the ethnic principle for ecclesiology. This has taken place above all in the context of discussions regarding the method of granting autocephaly to a regional Orthodox church, and there is no agreement to this day. Consequently, the topic was dropped from the agenda of the Orthodox Council in Crete (2016), which dealt only with autonomy within an autocephalous church.

## 11. The period of ecclesiological renaissance (20th and 21st centuries)

Common Statement: *In the 20th century, both Catholics and Orthodox have striven to return to the sources and to foster an ecclesiology that focuses more on the model of the Early Church. The elaboration of Eucharistic Ecclesiology in the Orthodox Church has led to a theological questioning of the influence of ethnic and national principles. The need for a more intensive Orthodox cooperation and a debate over the issues of modernity and post-modernity has been increasingly felt in many Orthodox circles. On the other hand, the rediscovery of the church fathers, the Liturgical Movement, and the reception of Eucharistic Ecclesiology have enabled the Catholic Church to overcome a narrow juridical understanding of the church. This is particularly reflected in the documents of the Second Vatican Council such as* Sacrosanctum Concilium *and* Lumen Gentium*. Both developments contain elements that can help to overcome the ecclesiological divergences between Catholics and Orthodox.*

11.1 The Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church of 1917-18 was a response both to external historical circumstances (democratic upheavals in society, etc.) and to the necessity of reforms within the church. The council consisted not only of bishops, but also of priests and lay persons. The alienation between bishops and parishes seemed to be so great that urgent pastoral questions had to be discussed and decided upon with the participation of priests and lay people. At the same time it was acknowledged, even within the hierarchy, that priests and lay people needed to be involved in the process of church reform. This participation was theologically founded on the concept of *sobornost* and the Pauline image of the church as the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27).

11.2 Against the background of 200 years of state domination of the church (the Synodal Epoch) the Russian Local Council of 1917-18 developed a pattern of church leadership that combined primatial (restoration of the Patriarchate) and synodal elements. Because of the Bolshevik revolution, this pattern could not be implemented in the Russian Church. Nonetheless, it may still serve as a model for the relationship between primacy and synodality.

11.3 The various Orthodox Churches differ in their internal organization, as defined in the statutes of each local church. All have an essentially conciliar structure, with a synod meeting on a regular basis and presided over by a primate. However some churches are highly centralized, with great authority vested in the patriarch, while others give greater authority to a synod. The choice of primates takes place in various ways, sometimes by an episcopal synod alone, sometimes by the convocation of a council involving lower clergy and laity as well. Similarly, the way in which bishops are chosen varies greatly, from election exclusively by a synod of bishops to nomination by a diocesan assembly, composed of clergy and laity, with subsequent confirmation by the synod. In some churches, lay persons have no role in church governance, while in others lay people, together with priests, play an active role.

11.4 Just as there is variety in local structures, so there are differences among the local Orthodox Churches in their views on universal primacy. With regard to this issue, the Orthodox usually refer to the expression "primacy of honor" (*presbeia tēs timēs*)[35], but they differ in how they understand this term. For example, the Russian Orthodox Church tends to understand universal primacy as being purely honorific, while the Patriarchate of Constantinople tends to see it as implying the right to convene councils, grant autocephaly, hear appeals, etc. Significantly, this disagreement has surfaced in the context of discussions on primacy and synodality with the Catholic Church, indicating that it has relevance not only internally for the Orthodox, but also in Orthodox-Catholic discussions on ecclesiology.

[35] Cf. First Council of Constantinople (381), canon 3.

11.5 Personal encounters with representatives of the Western churches – partly as a result of Russian emigration after the Bolshevik revolution and partly in the context of the ecumenical movement – led Orthodox theologians in the 20th century to reflect more deeply on how the Orthodox Church understands itself. One of the most important results of that period is the concept of *Eucharistic Ecclesiology* – among whose major representatives are Nikolaj Afanas'ev (1893-1966), Alexander Schmemann (1921-83), and John Zizioulas (b. 1931) – which sees the local church, gathered around its bishop, as the starting point and central focus of ecclesiological reflection. This vision led to a deeper consideration of the relation between unity and diversity within the Orthodox Church, which in turn contributed to questioning the narrow, 19th-century conceptions of national churches.

11.6 Within the Orthodox Church during the 20th century, the awareness grew of the need for Pan-Orthodox cooperation. The encyclical letter of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the Orthodox sister churches (1902) already gives witness to this. The 16th centenary of the first Council of Nicaea (1925) gave a new impetus to the discussion about whether it would be possible to convoke an ecumenical council in the 20th century. The answer, after intensive debates during the First Congress of Orthodox Theologians in Athens (1936), was negative.[36] The urgent need for Orthodox cooperation was raised again in the Pan-Orthodox Conferences (1961-68) convoked by Patriarch Athenagoras. Here and in a series of other Pan-Orthodox Conferences that followed, an agenda for a future council of all Orthodox Churches was developed. The assembly of primates of the fourteen autocephalous churches of the Orthodox Church, held in Chambésy in January 2016, decided to convoke the "Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church", but shortly before the gathering four churches (Antioch, Russia, Bulgaria, Georgia) withdrew for various reasons. Nonetheless, the other ten autocephalous churches met on Pentecost 2016 in Crete, and the six documents earmarked for discussion at Chambésy were approved with some modifications.[37] While the documents and the encyclical of the council address some of the problems Orthodoxy faces in the 21st century, an obviously important aspect of the council in Crete was the serious effort to exercise synodality in both theory and practice. During the council, suggestions were made to hold this type of assembly every seven or ten years, and this may be one of the most important contributions of the gathering.

11.7 In the Catholic Church, the first half of the 20th century was marked, on the one hand, by increasing centralization based on a maximalist interpretation of the papal dogmas of the First Vatican Council. This was expressed, for example, in the promulgation of the code of canon law (*Codex iuris canonici*, 1917) which was binding for all Catholics throughout the world (and for all Christians from the Roman point of view). On the other hand, new ecclesial and theological tendencies developed in individual local churches (e.g., the *Liturgical Movement* in France, Belgium, Austria, and Germany, or the *Nouvelle Théologie* in France) which led to a rediscovery of the liturgy of the Early Church and of the theology of the fathers. The protagonists of this theological renaissance (e.g., Lambert Beauduin, Odo Casel, Romano Guardini, Pius Parsch for the *Liturgical Movement*; and Yves Congar, Jean Daniélou, Henri de Lubac for the *Nouvelle Théologie*) were stimulated not least by their contacts with Orthodox theologians who had found a new home in the West. The theological stimuli which came from these circles contributed to gradually overcoming the narrow approach to the papacy in Catholic ecclesiology of the 19th century, and thus prepared the ground for the Second Vatican Council.

11.8 The Second Vatican Council was marked by the desire of the council fathers "to impart an ever increasing vigour to the Christian life of the faithful" and "to foster whatever can promote union among all who believe in Christ" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 1). This document, the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy", was the first document adopted by the Second Vatican Council. It took up

[36] Cf. H. Alivisatos (ed.), *Procès-verbaux du premier congrès des théologiens orthodoxes à Athènes*, Athens 1939.

[37] All documents are available on the council's website: https://www.holycouncil.org (February 7, 2018); see also: A. Melloni (ed.), The Great Councils of the Orthodox Churches. Crete 2016, Turnhout 2016 (CCCOGD IV.3).

liturgical concerns which had already been prepared over a longer period and expressed the desire for a renewal of Christian life. In this sense the council understood itself as a pastoral council, not seeking to issue condemnations (*anathemata*) but rather to present church teaching to the modern world in a positive way.[38] While there were no new dogmatic definitions, the council's documents are binding and guiding for the Catholic Church, but beyond that they also have ecumenical relevance.

11.9 One of the major decisions in the context of Vatican II was the so-called lifting of the anathemas of 1054. On the eve of the official end of Vatican II (December 7, 1965), both Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras consigned to oblivion the anathemas in a simultaneous ceremony at the Vatican and the Phanar. This symbolic act, though important, was not sufficient to resolve the schism if only because no final break of church communion actually occurred in 1054 (cf. § 8.3).

11.10 The Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium,* refers back to the early church and emphasizes the sacramentality of the ordination of the bishop and the significance of the collegiality of the bishops, thus leading Catholic ecclesiology closer to the Orthodox position (cf. *LG* 21-22). While insisting that the pope retains all the essential prerogatives of his office, this constitution, by means of structural changes, strengthened the office of the bishop. Nonetheless, the competences of bishops' conferences have not been clearly delineated. This is why many Catholic theologians regard these competences in their current form as unsatisfactory. In addition, the implementation of *Lumen gentium* in canon law only partially corresponds to the ideals of the council. These discrepancies have engendered a continuing discussion within the Catholic Church about the relationship between primacy and synodality.

11.11 In its Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, the Second Vatican Council clearly strengthened their status within the Catholic Church. However, this decree did not succeed in clearly defining the significance of the Eastern Catholic Churches and their relationship to the Latin Church. As a consequence, the wish of the Eastern Catholic Patriarchates and Major Archbishoprics to extend their jurisdiction beyond their territorial boundaries, in order to preserve the spiritual traditions of their faithful who had emigrated, is still controversial today. This is comparable to the difficulties concerning territorial jurisdiction that the Orthodox diaspora is facing in the West. It is notable that *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* indicates the temporary character of its juridical provisions until unity with the Orthodox is regained (cf. *OE* 30).

11.12 Vatican II raised the question of how the episcopate is understood and how it is related to the papal ministry, an issue that was not addressed at Vatican I, and tried to find an answer. In doing so, the fathers of the council took up the definitions of Vatican I on papal primacy and supplemented them by emphasizing the role of bishops.[39] A number of reservations on papal primacy which had been expressed at Vatican I by the minority were also now taken into consideration. This was intended to create a balance between primacy and collegiality.

11.13 The reception of Vatican I by the Second Vatican Council sketches out a new equilibrium that once again values the episcopate and the communion of local churches. The Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio*, which shows great esteem for the Orthodox Churches, encourages a dialogue "on an equal footing" nourished by a historical approach. In addition, the encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* (1995) issued by John Paul II (1978-2005) proposes a "patient and fraternal dialogue" with other churches about the forms that the exercise of Roman primacy could take in a reunited church.[40]

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[38] Cf. Opening address of Pope John XXIII "Gaudet mater ecclesia", in: *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, Vol. I, Bologna 1976, 26-53.

[39] Cf. G. Philips, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. History of the Constitution", in: *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II,* Vol. I, New York 1967, 105-37, here 105; Karl Rahner's comment on *Lumen Gentium* 22: ibid., 195-205.

[40] Cf. *Ut unum sint*, §§ 95 and 96.

11.14 Vatican II, in which Orthodox observers participated and introduced the perspective of Orthodox theology into the discussion of the drafts, was in general welcomed by the Orthodox as a positive step in the direction of conciliarity. However, from the Orthodox viewpoint, it did not go far enough in reconsidering Vatican I's dogmas of the infallibility and primacy of the pope. Vatican II also had the effect of stimulating reflection by Orthodox theologians on the issues their own church was facing, such as the possible convocation of a Pan-Orthodox Council, and eventually made possible an official theological dialogue with the Catholic Church.

11.15 The history of the reception of Vatican II up to now shows that this council has not yet fully succeeded in balancing the existing tendency towards too much centralization in the Catholic Church. Difficulties in embracing a stronger synodality have led Pope Francis to lay insistently more stress on free synodal consultation, especially by recognizing the significant role of bishops' conferences and of the Synod of Bishops. Moreover, we note that the various autocephalous and autonomous Orthodox Churches themselves also face difficulties in their mutual cooperation and in the practical implementation of synodality. Thus, Orthodox and Catholics both face the challenge of integrating primacy and synodality, and it would be useful and productive for both churches to address these issues jointly, so as to reach a mutually acceptable solution.

## IV. Systematic Considerations

### 12. Koinonia/Communio as a basis of ecclesiology

Common Statement: *The rediscovery of the ancient church sources in the 20th century has led Catholics and Orthodox to realize the extent to which the church is fulfilled in the Eucharist. This is reflected in the Greek term "koinonia", referring both to sacramental communion (*communicatio in sacris*) as well as to the communion of saints (*communio sanctorum*). Eucharistic communion is an expression of the nature of the church. In the celebration of the Eucharist, the church shows itself to be the people of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit. When the Eucharist is celebrated, the church is wholly present but it is not the whole church. So the Eucharist also points to the overarching unity of the whole church. This sacramental understanding of church provides the theological foundation for the interrelationship between primacy and synodality as the structural principle of the church on the local, regional, and universal levels.*

12.1 In the New Testament, the church is described as the new people of God (cf. Acts 13:16-39; 15:13-21; Rom 9:24-30), the body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 12:12-27), and the temple of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 6:19). The body of Christ is the Apostle Paul's favorite image for the church and he relates it to the Eucharistic body of Christ: "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor 10:17). In the letter to the Colossians, the term is also applied directly to the church: "He is the head of the body but the body is the church" (Col 1:18). The First Epistle of St John makes the understanding of *koinonia/communio* in the New Testament particularly clear: "that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship (*koinonia*) with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 Jn 1:3).

12.2 The New Testament term *koinonia* has a variety of aspects. It includes both communion with God through Christ by which the faithful become children of God who share the same Spirit, as well as communion with one another. This communion with God and with one another is fulfilled in the Eucharistic *koinonia*. The Eucharistic sharing is the visible expression of the full unity in Christ through the Spirit.

12.3 The mystery of the Church is rooted in the mystery of the Holy Trinity (cf. Jn 17). Communion with the Triune God is the foundation of the life of the church. The Holy Spirit as source and bestower of different charisms for the edification of the community (cf. 1 Cor 12:1-11) is the prime agent of *koinonia*. The Trinitarian roots of *koinonia* are a frequent subject in the writings of the church fathers.[41] The first two of the four marks of the church mentioned in the Nicene Creed (one, holy) are also derived from the church's communion with the Triune God.

12.4 The *koinonia* of the church is nourished by the proclamation of the Gospel and the celebration of the sacraments, under the leadership of the church's ministers chosen to serve both of them. The reality of the church as participation in Christ through the Holy Spirit becomes fully manifest in the light of the Eucharistic mystery in which the *koinonia* of the church is experienced.

12.5 According to the common faith of Orthodox and Catholics, the church is a fellowship of baptized believers gathered in the Holy Spirit around Christ present in the assembly. This requires communion

[41] Cf. Basil of Caesarea**,** *De Spiritu sancto* 15, 30, 38, 59; Gregory of Nyssa, Contra Eunomium III, in: W. Jaeger (ed.), *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* 2, Leiden 1960, 247; John of Damascus, *Expositio Fidei* 8, in: B. Kotter (ed.), *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskus* 2, Berlin 1973, 24.

among all the local churches, presided over by a bishop. Each congregation that celebrates the Eucharist under the presidency of a bishop or a priest in communion with him is ultimately aware that it is within the *koinonia* of the whole church.

12.6 The recognition of the full reality of the Eucharistic mystery is the foundation of the mutual recognition of churches as the Church of Jesus Christ. From a Catholic point of view, "through the celebration of the Eucharist in each of these [the Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox] churches, the Church of God is built up and grows in stature" (*UR* 15). In the Orthodox Church, there are different viewpoints regarding the recognition of the ecclesial status and the validity of the sacraments of the Catholic Church; so far, there is no full agreement about this among the various Orthodox local churches.

12.7 The understanding of the church as a *koinonia* does not only have consequences for the church itself and its inner life, or for inter-church relations. It also implies a relationship with "the world", i.e., with society and with those who are not within the community of the Church. Some Orthodox theologians have adopted the notion of "the liturgy after the liturgy"[42] for this, which means that *koinonia* finds its expression also in everyday life of the Christian, and that the Eucharistic gathering has its continuation – though in a different way – in the life of Christians in the world: The *koinonia* of the Church enables Christians to act as Christians.[43] To live as Christian in the world is not separated from the Eucharistic experience and belonging, but is rather its expansion into God's creation. The Catholic Church has expressed similar views in Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*.

## 13. Authority in the church in service of the community

Common Statement: *Every service for the unity of the church needs authority which can be exercised in both a primatial and a synodal way. Authority of this kind is based on a gift from God, the charism of leadership (cf. Rom 12:3-8, 1 Cor 12:4-11; Eph 4:7-12), and its tasks include the proclamation of the faith, the celebration of the sacraments, the preservation of the doctrine, and the guidance of God's people. The authority of the "First" (*Primus/Protos*) is a personal form of authority in service of the community. Christ himself has given us an example of how authority is to be understood: as a service that includes the willingness to practice self-renunciation ("kenosis", cf. Phil 2:5-11; Mt 23:8-12). Primatial and synodal forms of authority are recognized as such through a process of reception that reveals the authority of the whole people of God* (plērōma) *preserving true doctrine by its "sense of the faith"* (sensus fidelium).

13.1 In every human society, the phenomena of authority and power exist. A distinction should be made between these two phenomena. Authority concerns the influence of a person or an institution that is grounded on tradition or competence and the prestige that accrues from it. Power, on the other hand, has to do with the ability to employ certain means and procedures in order to bring about decisions. Both can all too easily be misused.

13.2 The notions of authority and power acquire a particular significance within the Church. Power (*dynamis*) appears firstly as an attribute of God (cf. Rev 7:12). Scriptural texts present his power over

[42] Cf., for example, Ion Bria, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy*, Geneva 1996.

[43] Cf. the document "The Basis of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church" (2000) and the document of the Council of Crete on "The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today's World" (2016).

all "gods" and over creation (cf. Ps 82:1). In this sense, his supreme power can be identified with God's glory (cf. Ps 63:2; Heb 1:3). This power is always related to his love for Israel and all humanity, his gift of salvation, his forgiveness, and, especially, his mercy (cf. Hos 2:19). The New Testament regards God's power as acting in Jesus (cf. 1 Cor 1:24). The risen Christ, who had received from God full authority (*exousía*), empowered the apostles in and with his Holy Spirit (cf. Mt 28:18-19). Following Jesus' commandment, authority in the Church must not be understood as domination but as service to God's people based on the power of the Cross.

13.3 In the Church, there are persons with different charisms who receive and exert authority in various areas, as Eph 4:11 shows: "And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers." This suggests that authority in the church should always be linked to the community. This applies to the ordained ministry, more particularly to the ministry of the bishop which has acquired a special significance for church life throughout the centuries. However, figures such as Elder Silouan of Mount Athos and Mother Teresa show that spiritual authority does not presuppose ordained ministry.

13.4 As Christ is the head of the Church, he is the source of all authority within the Church, irrespective of whether this is exercised by one (the primate), by some (the synod), or by all (the people of God). The authority of a synod and of the one who presides over it is rooted in the mystery of the Church as the body of Christ in the Holy Spirit. Synodality, as an essential dimension of the Church, reflects her mystery, and, as such, is connected to the authority of the whole people of God who, through their "sense of the faith", aroused and sustained by the Holy Spirit, are able to discern what is truly of God.

13.5 Any use of power in the Church is meaningful only if exercised according to the model of the crucified Christ, as a service and not as a way of dominating over others (cf. Mk 10:42-45 par; Jn 13:1-17). This applies also to the exercise of primacy at its various levels. The means at the disposal of those who exercise primacy are to be employed only in this spirit. This includes the duty of accountability to the community at the different levels.

## 14. Theological interpretation of primacy

Common Statement: *Christ is the sole head of the church. He is the example for all those who exercise the ministry of governance in the church. Holy Scripture testifies that, however fluid forms of governance might have been, they were nonetheless indispensable for the Christian communities right from the beginning. Patristic testimonies from the second century onwards point to the fact that the charism of presiding was entrusted to a person whose particular task was to witness to, promote, and protect the unity of the church. This task is performed at the various levels of ecclesial life in different ways and with different emphases.*

14.1 In the New Testament, a series of passages shows that the Christian communities had leaders from the beginning. In one of the oldest of these texts, the Apostle Paul encourages community members to acknowledge and respect their leaders (*proistamenoi*): "But we beseech you, brethren, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you" (1 Thess 5:12). Other texts illustrate the existence of early forms of ministry exercised by persons called bishops and deacons (e.g., Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1). The New Testament offers no consistent image of these ministries and leaves open many questions concerning their precise functions.

14.2 According to the New Testament, during his earthly ministry Jesus chose as his constant companions the Twelve, gave them power (*dynamis*) and authority (*exousia*) to preach the Gospel, to

heal and to drive out evil spirits (Lk 9:1), and promised that they would be the eschatological judges over Israel (cf. Mt 19:28; see also Rev 21:12). Three of them, Peter, John, and James, held a special position insofar as they were chosen to be with Jesus on special occasions such as the transfiguration (Mk 9:2-10 par), or in the garden of Gethsemane before he was arrested (Mk 14:32-42 par). Paul testifies that James, the "brother of the Lord", as well as Peter and John, were looked upon as the "pillars" of the community in Jerusalem (Gal 2:9).

14.3 Peter functions as a special witness of the resurrection in the context of the oldest Christian creed that can be found in the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians: "and that he (namely the risen Christ) appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve" (1 Cor 15:5). Despite obvious differences, the Gospels agree that a special role was attributed to Peter in the circle of the disciples. Thus, in the Gospel of Luke Jesus instructs him to strengthen his brothers (Lk 22:32) and in the Gospel of John orders him to tend the lambs and the sheep (Jn 21:15-19). In the first passage, Christ's words are set within the Last Supper, and the second passage evokes the Eucharist. At the same time the Evangelists in no way conceal Peter's weaknesses, but even emphasize them: Peter denies the Lord three times and has need of forgiveness (Lk 22:34 and 61-62). In the Gospel of Matthew the dialectic of special status and weakness reaches its climax: Peter, who is appointed to receive the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Mt 16:19), is called "Satan" when he tries to restrain the Lord from going the way of the cross (Mt 16:21-23). Though involved in a debate with Paul over fellowship with non-Jewish Christians (cf. Gal 2:11-21), Peter enjoys special respect and is depicted as a mediator during tensions and conflicts (cf. Acts 15:6-14).

14.4 Very early the Church of Rome came to be associated with Peter and Paul, who witnessed to Christ and suffered martyrdom in Rome (cf. § 7.2). The veneration of their graves in Rome, combined with its importance as the imperial capital, formed the basis for the special standing accorded to the Church of Rome and, as a consequence, to its bishop, from the third century onwards.

14.5 The special standing of Peter within the college of the Twelve, as witnessed by Holy Scripture, is also reflected in the liturgical tradition and usually associated with Paul's exceptional role owing to his mission among the gentiles. Both the Roman and Byzantine rites commemorate the Apostle Peter together with the Apostle Paul on June 29. In the Roman rite it is a solemnity; in the later Byzantine tradition, the feast of the Apostles is preceded by a special period of fasting which emphasizes the prestige of both of these Apostles.

14.6 In the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, which date back to the 2nd century, the bishop appears as a guarantor of the unity of the church. This should probably be understood in light of the author's worry that the generation of the apostles and their immediate disciples had ended. In addition, for Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258) every bishop, as a successor of the apostles, sits on "Peter's Chair". The special status of Peter, to which the Gospel of Matthew testifies, for Cyprian implies the unity of the episcopate.[44] The ministry of the bishops was eventually seen as a way of continuing the apostolic inheritance and making it a present reality.

14.7 The ecclesial status of primacy at a regional level is described in Apostolic Canon 34 (cf. § 7.4). Although the canon itself is formulated in a somewhat vague way, partly because the situation varied from region to region (e.g., the different exercise of primacy in Alexandria and Antioch), it reflects 4th century hopes and aspirations. From Canon 34 we learn something vital about the dynamics of primacy – the interdependence between the *protos* and his synod.

14.8 Maintaining the unity of the church is the responsibility of all its members. However, the "First" among them should take care of it *par excellence*. Such a task of governance includes mediation, preserving a balance between unity and diversity, and giving an account of this. The words of Jesus

[44] Cyprian of Carthage, *De catholicae ecclesiae unitate*, 4-5.

apply to the exercise of this ministry: "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all" (Mk 9:35).

14.9 With the evolution of church structures and differentiation of its various levels, the exercise of primacy also became more demanding. Yet it remains pertinent to every level of the church to this day: local congregation, diocese/eparchy, ecclesiastical province/metropolitanate, patriarchate, and the church universal. The exercise of primacy varies according to the different levels in the church. So, primacy in a regional church is not the same as that of a bishop in his diocese, because, in the diocese, the bishop has a special ministry as the one who guarantees the communion between his church and other local churches.

14.10 It is absolutely necessary to take into account the particular historical context of every statement on primacy, the history of its development, its importance for its own time, and also the history of its effects. For example, with regards to the bishop of Rome, a distinction must be made between the primacy of jurisdiction and infallibility. As a consequence of the definition of jurisdictional primacy, the Roman See increased in importance in the period after Vatican I. Regarding infallibility, it is important to note that, in the period of roughly a century and a half since Vatican I, the Roman popes have resorted only once to a proclamation *ex cathedra*, namely the proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven (1950).

14.11 A better understanding of the Catholic concept of primacy at a universal level could be attained through a clearer distinction between the pope's unique position in the Catholic Church and his possible function as primate within the broader Christian community. The role of the bishop of Rome in the first millennium, as described in chapter 7 of this paper and in the Ravenna and Chieti documents of the International Orthodox-Catholic commission, provides a useful point of departure on this question.

## 15. Theological interpretation of synodality

Common Statement: *Holy Scripture and church tradition bear witness to the fact that church governance is based on a synodal principle as expressed, for example, in the communion of the apostles and the local synods of the early church. This synodal principle must also come to bear on all levels of church life according to the respective area of responsibility.*

15.1 The synodal principle has as its paradigm the apostolic council of Jerusalem (Acts 15). The Book of Acts describes how "the apostles and the elders" (Acts 15:6), confronted with the disruptive problem of circumcision, gathered in Jerusalem with James presiding. There, the problem was openly debated. The final decision that circumcision could not be imposed served to build community (Acts 15:28). One can also see the synodal principle anticipated in the gathering of the "120 brothers" during which Matthias was received into the circle of the apostles to replace Judas (Acts 1:15-26).

15.2 Regional synods can be traced back to the debates on Montanism around the end of the 2nd century. Irenaeus of Lyons sees apostolicity manifest in the agreement of the churches scattered throughout the world. It was expressed by the respective bishops, whom he regarded as successors of the apostles.[45] Cyprian of Carthage switches the emphasis from the tradition safeguarded by the bishops to the collegiate character of the episcopate, whose apostolic office is manifested, when necessary, in councils.[46] For Cyprian, the church is "united and held together by the glue of the

[45] Cf. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haeresis*, III.3, 1-4.
[46] Cf. Cyprian of Carthage, *Ep. 72* (To Stephen, Concerning a Council).

mutual cohesion of the bishops".[47] By the third century in East and West alike, the church council (whether local or regional) is universally recognized as the chief means whereby the unity of the church in the apostolic tradition is to be realized and safeguarded when circumstances demand. And after the defeat of Emperor Licinius at the hand of Constantine, the convocation of an ecumenical council became possible (324).

15.3 The synods of the early church, especially the seven ecumenical councils recognized by Orthodox and Catholics alike, were extraordinary, *ad hoc* events brought about by pressing circumstances, particularly the need to respond to heresy and to address major problems of church unity. Such councils should not be considered primarily in institutional terms, but rather as expressions of the voice or mind of the church on certain very particular issues. Synods in general are deemed authoritative in matters of doctrine, liturgy, and discipline in so far as they express the faith of the Church.

15.4 The synod is the major instance whereby the essential unity of the church may be manifested in particular contexts and in response to specific circumstances. The bishops as successors of the apostles came to be vested with the responsibility to pronounce on matters of doctrine and church order, expressing in particular the faith of their communities. The whole people of God, and the bishops in particular, are charged with the guardianship and transmission of apostolic preaching in accordance with I John 1:3: "that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you".

15.5 The bishops assembled in synod have no warrant to go beyond the apostolic teaching (*depositum fidei/paradosis*). Their task is essentially one of discernment, affirmation, and articulation: discerning the apostolic tradition on a certain topic, affirming that tradition, and proclaiming it.

15.6 The earliest canonical collections (dating from the 4th century) articulate the principle of synodality in manifold ways, for example: the insistence that a bishop must be ordained by at least three bishops[48]; the need for bishops in each locality to recognize the authority of a "First" for unanimity to be maintained between him and the other bishops[49]; or the prescription that regular councils be held within each metropolitan diocese "for the good of the church and the settlement of disputes".[50]

15.7 In the course of time, the churches have also developed other forms of synodal consultation which deal, as occasion arises, with matters of doctrine and church order and should be distinguished from synods (whether local, regional or universal). These include, for example, the standing or resident synod of Constantinople – the *synodos endēmousa* – consisting of bishops present in Constantinople for various reasons and therefore capable of assembling on short notice when a conciliar response was needed. A number of Orthodox autocephalous churches have in the modern era adopted a system whereby the respective churches are administered and directed by a permanent synod of bishops and other appointees.

15.8 Synodal expressions and processes belong to the self-understanding of both the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. In the course of history, despite noticeable variations over time and between our two traditions, the Church has never existed without an awareness of synodality.

[47] Cyprian of Carthage, *Ep.* 66,8.
[48] Council of Nicaea, can. 4; Apostolic Canon 1, which, however, prescribes: "Let a bishop be ordained by two or three bishops".
[49] Apostolic Canon 34.
[50] Council of Antioch 341, can. 20; cf. Council of Nicaea, can. 5.

## 16. Primacy and synodality serving communion

Common Statement: *An ecclesiology based on the Eucharist must be aware of both the equality of origin and the complementarity of the primatial and synodal principles. In the canonical tradition, this is reflected in Apostolic Canon 34, for example. Primacy and synodality are not optional forms of church administration, but belong to the very nature of the church because both of them are meant to strengthen and deepen communion at all levels. Both theologically and canonically, it is therefore impossible either to address the issue of primacy without considering synodality, or to ignore primacy when dealing with synodality.*

16.1 Jesus Christ is the head of the church (cf. Eph 1:22), and therefore "in everything he might be pre-eminent" (Col 1:18). This living, organic unity of the head and the body is expressed in the life of the church in the interaction between the primate and the synod. Every form of ecclesial primacy is, by nature, not power *over* the church, but *within* it as a service subordinate to Jesus Christ its head (cf. § 13.2 and 5).

16.2 Both Eucharistic experience and canonical tradition show that primacy and synodality depend on one another. In the Eucharist, the fundamental expression of the ecclesial life as a whole, the community and the *proestos* presiding over it (the bishop or a presbyter delegated by him) are in an interdependent relationship: the community cannot celebrate the Eucharist without a *proestos*, who, in turn, should not celebrate without a community. In the canonical tradition, a description of the correlation between the "First" and the other bishops is formalized on the regional level in Apostolic Canon 34 (cf. §§ 7.4 and 14.7): the bishops of each province cannot do anything important without the consent of their head, who, from his side, cannot do anything without the consent of all. Primacy and synodality must not be played off against one another. On the contrary, they must be considered as inseparable and as complementing each other in the service of the unity of God's church.

16.3 During the first millennium, all primatial institutions at every level of the church were rooted in synodal structures. Throughout various historical contexts, primacy remained a universal fact that expresses the relationship between an assembly and the one who presides over it, with different foundations and ways of functioning at the different levels at which communion in the church is practiced. Therefore, one cannot legitimately understand primacy without synodality, nor deal with synodality while ignoring primacy.

16.4 There is an analogy but no identity in the relationship between primacy and synodality at the different levels of the church: local, regional, and universal. Because the nature of primacy and synodality differs at each level, the dynamics between primacy and synodality also vary accordingly. For example, primacy and synodality on the regional level are not of the same kind as those on a diocesan level. In diocesan synodality, the diocesan bishop has a special charism, which enables him to be the guarantor of the communion between his church and the other local churches. Similarly, the interrelationship of primacy and synodality at the universal level does not directly mirror those at the local or regional level and thus requires further theological exploration. The lack of a common Orthodox position on primacy at the universal level complicates the Orthodox-Catholic dialogue in this regard, as does the lack of a clear synodical structure in the Catholic Church.

16.5 An important aspect of the relationship between primacy and synodality is the question of how to safeguard a close correlation between the communion of the churches and the collegiality of the bishops. The bishops are witnesses of the faith of their churches, but also bear responsibility for the church as a whole. This charism, expressed in the sacrament of episcopal ordination, makes bishops servants of the whole communion – not just in their own local church, but also among the local churches, as signified by the laying on of hands by the concelebrating bishops.

16.6 Synodality, as a visible expression of the catholicity of the church, is not only related to the church hierarchy but also to the whole people of God. In this way, the unity of the “Firsts” and their faithful can be expressed at different levels in church life, because responsibility for the church resides with all its members. That lay people have been invited as consultants both to the episcopal synods of the Catholic Church on family issues (2015 and 2016) as well as to the Orthodox Council in Crete (2016) is telling evidence of this. Lay people can enrich the synodal deliberations by their spirituality and expertise.

16.7 Church history reveals two ecclesiological trends: primarily, but not exclusively, synodal in the East, and primarily, but not exclusively, primatial in the West; yet these can coexist in a creative tension. Any restoration of full communion between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches will require, on both sides, a strengthening of synodal structures and a renewed understanding of a universal primacy – both serving communion among the churches.

# V. Conclusion

**Summary**

17.1 In their work to date, the Orthodox and Catholic members of the Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group have engaged one another in a spirit of friendship and intellectual exchange. They believe that, in the course of 14 years, they have made much progress in their effort to build mutual trust, to understand one another more clearly, and to see beyond the barriers that have long prevented the re-establishment of full communion between their churches.

17.2 This has also been possible because the members have tried to adopt a methodology according to which historical data are interpreted in a way that takes full account of their context; anachronistic interpretations that read later disputes back into an earlier time are avoided; and the enduring value of expressions as they were originally understood is sought.

17.3 The members have adopted this approach in their study of a wide range of questions that have been grouped together in sixteen common statements, beginning with the importance of hermeneutics for ecumenical dialogue itself. In doing so, they have followed the following basic principles: 1) Language is important, and words take on different meanings at different periods of time; 2) The dogmas that Orthodox and Catholics hold must be studied in their context, in an effort to discern both what is said and what is meant; 3) The different approaches to canon law must also be taken into account, as well as the degree of applicability of certain canons elaborated many centuries ago in today's world; 4) In addition, the role of non-theological factors has to be considered in the study of our divisions; and 5) Indeed, an awareness of history is essential for an adequate understanding of the theological traditions in East and West. The past should be neither idealized nor downplayed, and a proper distinction must be made between the ideals expressed by the churches and the concrete human realities in which those ideals are lived out.

17.4 The Irenaeus Group has employed this same approach both to its study of the history of the growing divergence between East and West in the first millennium and to the different directions each has taken after the loss of full communion with the other. The period before the Council of Nicaea (325) is of particular significance and could provide elements of a useful model for dealing with difficult questions in the churches today. The principles of primacy and synodality were both in play during the early centuries, but no single model of the relationship between the two was universally accepted. The period of estrangement between the Catholics and the Orthodox from the 9$^{th}$ to the 15$^{th}$ century was due in large part to mutual cultural alienation, and the developments they underwent were strongly influenced by the political and social realities they faced. Catholic and Orthodox confessional identities hardened in the period of confessionalisation (16$^{th}$ to 18$^{th}$ centuries), when Catholics and Protestants intensified their missionary work. This process culminated in the 19$^{th}$ century when Catholics and Orthodox had to respond to very different challenges. The Irenaeus Group devoted substantial attention to the historical and theological context of the much debated teachings of Vatican I regarding papal infallibility and universal jurisdiction. During this same period, new autocephalous churches came into existence in the East in response to political upheavals in South-Eastern Europe. It was with the ecclesiological renaissance of the 20$^{th}$ century that the Catholic and Orthodox Churches experienced a process of rapprochement which kept gaining momentum thanks to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and parallel developments in Orthodox theology. The members of the Irenaeus Group believe that the current period of mutual relations is the most hopeful in centuries.

17.5 With these considerations in mind, the Irenaeus Group has reflected on certain systematic questions that touch upon the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. The group acknowledges the centrality of the Eucharist as the primary manifestation of the Church, both in its unity and in the different roles played by its members. The interplay between the presider

and the assembly at the Eucharist also provides the theological foundation for a renewed understanding of primacy and synodality in the Church, and of authority which, whether exercised in a primatial or synodal fashion, must always be at the service of the community. Both Scripture and Tradition attest to the need for a primatial ministry to serve the unity of the Church at various levels. But they also attest to the need for synodality at all levels of church life. The complementarity of these two principles will be central to a deeper theological understanding of the Church that will facilitate Orthodox-Catholic reconciliation.

**Vision for the Future**

17.6 The members of the Irenaeus Group are aware that they have not yet reached a point of making definite recommendations that would form a basis for the re-establishment of full communion. Nevertheless, they believe that Orthodox-Catholic dialogue is on the path towards unity, and that even now it is possible to discern the broad outlines of a fully united Catholic and Orthodox Church. It is their conviction that any vision for the future should elaborate a nuanced model of communion, taking into account that the realization of this model would be gradual. Movement towards reconciliation between Catholics and Orthodox does not necessarily imply the immediate solution of all pending issues, but a shared framework of approaches towards this goal.

17.7 In their reflections they have taken note of the work of the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation, especially its 2010 agreed statement, "Steps towards a Reunited Church: A Sketch of an Orthodox-Catholic Vision for the Future".[51] With the North American Consultation, the members do not believe that any of the differences that have divided their churches for centuries are necessarily insurmountable. All of those differences will require intensive further study with a rigorous hermeneutical approach to determine if they truly prevent the re-establishment of full communion, or if they are examples of legitimate diversity. Above all, the churches will need to strive for a greater balance between synodality and primacy at all levels of church life, with a strengthening of synodal structures in the Catholic Church and the acceptance in the Orthodox Church of a certain primacy within the communion of the churches at the universal level.

17.8 The Irenaeus Group is aware that defining the precise role of the bishop of Rome within a re-established communion between our churches will be the most challenging aspect of this process. The members of our group are convinced that the bishop of Rome can and should play a greater role in expressing the unity of Christians in the world today. In order to do this, a new definition of the relationship between the Church of Rome and the Eastern churches must be elaborated in a way that is both faithful to the tradition of the undivided church and acceptable to Catholics and Orthodox alike. This will require a re-reading of the teachings of the First Vatican Council. In this regard, a distinction should be made between the practice of primacy as it developed within particular historical circumstances, and the very nature of primacy. A way must be found to surmount certain positions of the past and to integrate the essential elements that have been preserved in both traditions into a common understanding of primacy.

17.9 It would also be especially fruitful to examine anew the relationship between the Church of Rome and the Churches of the East during the first millennium, especially in the period before the First Council of Nicaea in 325, and in particular the relationship set forth in the provisions of the Council of Sardica in 343. It established a form of appellate papal right according to which disputes between churches could be referred to Rome, which would then provide for arbitration by another tribunal to which the bishop of Rome may send delegates. Such an arrangement would fully respect

[51] North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation, Steps towards a Reunited Church: A Sketch of an Orthodox-Catholic Vision for the Future, in: *Origins* Vol. 40 No. 23 (November 11, 2010) pp. 353-60; *http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/ecumenical/orthodox/steps-towards-reunited-church.cfm* (March 10, 2018).

the autocephaly of the Orthodox Churches while assuring at the same time an effective universal ministry of unity by the bishop of Rome.

17.10 While our work up to this point has focused primarily on an examination together of historical factors that have brought our churches to the present, we are aware that this historical work, though certainly necessary and important, does not provide all the answers for the future. Our analysis so far clearly demonstrates the extent to which the structural developments in our churches have been conditioned by a variety of factors – theological, historical, and sociological. The challenges faced by the churches today are not the same as those faced during the first millennium – or even the 19th century. Thus we realize that simply turning to the past is not a solution, either for the Orthodox or for the Catholics.

17.11 Together, we affirm that we have much to learn from one another concerning issues of primacy and synodality. The Catholic Church has been able to sustain a strongly functioning primacy, even if some of its manifestations are viewed as problematic by the Orthodox. The Orthodox, on the other hand, have mostly been able to preserve strong synodal structures at local, regional, and more recently, global levels, even if these at times result in difficult situations that give Catholics pause. Thus each side exhibits both strengths and weaknesses, which we can all acknowledge.

17.12 As we seek the unity of the Church, it becomes increasingly clear to us that a common solution, acceptable to both churches, is needed, one that builds on the strengths of both sides. Not only must this solution be mutually acceptable, but it must respond to the needs of the 21st century, an age of instant communication that demands transparency and accountability. This implies, among other things, that ancient imperial or feudal models may no longer have a place. Most of all, however, this calls for good will, the desire to cooperate and to work together in building bridges – not only among academic theologians, but also among priests, who care for daily church life, as well as among all the baptized, who must find their proper voice as members of the Body of Christ. This holds especially true of our bishops, who oversee the life of our churches, and who would therefore be responsible for implementing and realizing the desired unity. The Irenaeus Group therefore supports the implementation of a number of intermediate steps that could be made even before the restoration of full communion, including bishops from both churches meeting on a regular basis, as proposed in the above-mentioned 2010 statement of the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation.

17.13 As members of the Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group we commit ourselves to a continued study of these questions in the hope of making a significant contribution to the process of reconciliation between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. This is currently promoted by a number of initiatives, above all by the official dialogue. We are fully aware that this process can only be successful if mutual exchange is not restricted to theologians, but also engages the faithful on both sides.

**Current members** (2018) of the Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group are:

| **Catholic members** | **Orthodox members** |
|---|---|
| Bishop Dr. **Gerhard Feige** of Magdeburg<br>(from Germany, member and Catholic Co-president since 2004) | Metropolitan Dr. **Serafim (Joantă)** of Germany, Central and Northern Europe<br>(from Romania, member and Orthodox Co-president since 2018) |
| Dr. Johannes **Oeldemann**, Paderborn<br>(from Germany, member and Catholic Co-secretary since 2004) | Rev. Prof. Dr. Nikolaos **Loudovikos**, Thessaloniki<br>(from Greece, member and Orthodox Co-secretary since 2004) |
| Prof. Dr. Dr. Pablo **Argárate**, Graz<br>(from Argentina, member since 2016) | Rev. Prof. Dr. Daniel **Benga**, Munich<br>(from Romania, member since 2008) |
| Prof. Dr. Thomas **Bremer**, Münster<br>(from Germany, member since 2004) | Rev. Dr. Cyril **Hovorun**, Los Angeles, CA<br>(from Ukraine, member since 2008) |
| Rev. Dr. Hyacinthe **Destivelle** OP, Rome<br>(from France, member since 2006) | Prof. Dr. Assaad Elias **Kattan**, Münster<br>(from Lebanon, member since 2006) |
| Rev. Prof. Dr. Edward G. **Farrugia** SJ, Rome<br>(from Malta, member since 2005) | Rev. Dr. Vladimir **Khulap**, Saint Petersburg<br>(from Russia, member since 2012) |
| Prof. Dr. Basilus J. **Groen**, Graz<br>(from the Netherlands, member since 2004) | Prof. Dr. Paul **Meyendorff**, Crestwood, NY<br>(from the USA, member since 2004) |
| Rev. Dr. Michel **Jalakh** OAM, Beirut<br>(from Lebanon, member since 2017) | Rev. Prof. Dr. Grigorios **Papathomas**, Athens<br>(from Greece, member since 2004) |
| Rev. Prof. Dr. Hervé **Legrand** OP, Paris<br>(from France, member since 2004) | Rev. Prof. Dr. Vladan **Perišić**, Belgrade<br>(from Serbia, member since 2004) |
| Fr. Dr. Adalberto **Mainardi**, Bose Monastery<br>(from Italy, member since 2012) | Dr. Evgeny **Pilipenko**, Moscow<br>(from Russia, member since 2014) |
| Rev. Prof. Dr. Rudolf **Prokschi**, Vienna<br>(from Austria, member since 2004) | Prof. Dr. Marcus **Plested**, Milwaukee, WI<br>(from Great Britain, member since 2014) |
| Rev. Dr. Ronald G. **Roberson** CSP, Washington, DC<br>(from the USA, member since 2004) | Rev. Prof. Dr. Mihai **Sasaujan**, Bucharest<br>(from Romania, member since 2012) |
| Prof. Dr. Wolfgang **Thönissen**, Paderborn<br>(from Germany, member since 2004) | Prof. Dr. Mariyan **Stoyadinov**, Veliko Tarnovo<br>(from Bulgaria, member since 2004) |

**Former members** of the Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group were:

| **Catholic members** | **Orthodox members** |
|---|---|
| Rev. Prof. Dr. Brian E. **Daley** SJ, Notre Dame, IN<br>(from the USA, member 2014 – 2016) | Bishop Dr. **Ignatije (Midić)** of Braničevo<br>(from Serbia, member and Orthodox Co-president 2004-2008) |
| Rev. Prof. Dr. Zygfryd **Glaeser**, Opole<br>(from Poland, member 2004 – 2014) | Metropolitan Dr. **Youhanna (Yazigi)** of Western and Central Europe, Paris<br>(from Syria, member and Orthodox Co-president 2009-2012,<br>now Patriarch of Antioch and all the East) |
| Pieter **Kohnen**, 's-Hertogenbosch<br>(from the Netherlands, member 2004 – 2013,<br>† 2018) | Archbishop **Dr. Job (Getcha)** of Telmessos<br>(from Canada, member 2004-2017,<br>Orthodox Co-president 2013-2017,<br>now Co-president of the International Catholic-Orthodox Commission for Theological Dialogue) |
| Rev. Antoine **Lambrechts** OSB, Chevetogne<br>(from Belgium, member 2004 – 2007) | Prof. Dr. Marios **Begzos**, Athens<br>(from Greece, member 2004 – 2011) |
| Rev. Prof. Dr. Lorenzo **Lorusso** OP, Bari<br>(from Italy, member 2008 – 2011) | Rev. Prof. Dr. Viorel **Ioniţă**, Geneva<br>(from Romania, member 2004 – 2007) |
| | Rev. Dr. Andzej **Kuzma**, Warsaw<br>(from Poland, member 2006 – 2011) |
| | Rev. Viktor **Savik**, Smolensk<br>(from Russia, member 2004 – 2007) |
| | Rev. Dr. Vladimir **Shmaliy**, Moscow<br>(from Russia, member 2009 – 2011) |
| | Rev. Prof. Dr. Jan **Zozul'ak**, Prešov<br>(from Slovakia, member 2005 – 2007) |

The **annual meetings** of the Saint Irenaeus Joint Orthodox-Catholic Working Group took place at:

2004: Paderborn (Germany)

2005: Athens (Greece)

2006: Monastery of Chevetogne (Belgium)

2007: Belgrade / Pokajnica Monastery (Serbia)

2008: Vienna (Austria)

2009: Kiev (Ukraine)

2010: Magdeburg (Germany)

2011: Saint Petersburg (Russia)

2012: Monastery of Bose (Italy)

2013: Thessaloniki (Greece)

2014: Rabat (Malta)

2015: Chalki / Istanbul (Turkey)

2016: Community of Taizé (France)

2017: Bucharest / Caraiman Monastery (Romania)

2018: Graz (Austria)

The **communiqués** of the annual meetings are published in five languages
(English, French, German, Greek, Russian) on the following website:

http://www.moehlerinstitut.de/en/texts/kommuniques-irenaeus-arbeitskreis