

extract

Eastern
**Theological
Journal**

8/2
2022

The Liturgical Reception and Commemoration of the First Council of Nicaea

Daniel GALADZA

Introduction; 1. Nicaea I and Liturgy; 2. The Liturgical Reception of the Canons; 3. The Liturgical Commemoration of the Council; 4. The Byzantine Rite Akolouthia for the Council of Nicaea I; Concluding Remarks

Introduction

The commemorations of centenaries are opportunities to revisit events of the past and reflect upon their circumstances and their reception, and to understand their meaning for today. With regard to the First Council of Nicaea, it goes without saying that the extant authentic texts of this first ecumenical council had a direct impact on Christian worship and liturgy in the early Church.¹ Whether by regulating the posture of the faithful during worship or imposing a date for the communal celebration of Pascha, the influence of the Council of Nicaea on liturgy was felt in the decades following 325, up

1 For example, the interest in the Council of Nicaea during its last centenary resulted not only in liturgical celebrations commemorating this event, for example at St Peter's Basilica in Rome in 1925, but also in a flurry of publications dedicated to the convocation of Nicaea I. See *Bollettino per la commemorazione del XVI centenario del concilio di Nicea*, Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, Roma 1925.

until the present day.² And yet, despite the importance of this council as the first council that gathered representatives from all corners of the *oikoumene*, every local church received and commemorated this event and its decisions differently. Some celebrate it liturgically and annually, while others reserve its decisions and memory less for present-day liturgical implementation and veneration, and more for theological treatises and handbooks.

Because much has already been written on early Christian worship before Nicaea,³ rather than looking at the background of the Council of Nicaea, my aim here is to look at the council itself and its reception and commemoration. After an overview of the impact of extant documents of the First Council of Nicaea on liturgical practice in the years after the council, this paper turns to the reception of the council itself through celebrations of the liturgical year, providing an updated synthesis of more recent scholarship on the question over the last century.

1. Nicaea I and Liturgy

The official texts of the council of Nicaea I are limited because the acts of the council have not survived and the only extant authentic

- 2 See, for example, the discussions around a common date of Pascha in D. P. Ogitsky, “Канонические нормы православной пасхалии и проблема датировки Пасхи в условиях нашего времени”, in *Богословские Труды* 7 (1971), 204-211; Idem, “Canonical Norms of the Orthodox Easter Computation and the Problem of the Dating of Pascha in our time”, in *SVTQ* 17/4 (1973), 274-284; World Council of Churches/Middle East Council of Churches Consultation, “Towards a Common Date for Easter” (Aleppo, Syria, 5–10 March 1997), Online: <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/towards-a-common-date-for-easter>.
- 3 See, for example, Paul F. Bradshaw, *Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*, second edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2002.

texts are the Creed, the Synodal Letter, and 20 canons.⁴ Although the questions of reception and commemoration are the focus of this paper, two details from the conciliar context require some examination, namely the date of the council and the number of participants at the council.

With regard to the date, there seems to be some confusion in the historical record. According to some accounts, such as that of the historiographer Socrates, the council opened on 20 May.⁵ However, as we shall see from liturgical calendars, the date of 29 May is frequently mentioned as the date of the council. In the year 325, Pascha fell on 18 April,⁶ which would place 29 May exactly 41 days after Pascha, near the date on which it is celebrated today in the Byzantine Rite, on the sixth Sunday after Pascha. However, Eduard Schwartz believes that the date of 20 May was a misinterpretation of some copies of the history of Socrates of Constantinople, and that in fact the council opened on 19 June 325.⁷ How long it lasted is not clear, but some have

4 For the texts of the Creed and canons, see Norman P. Tanner, SJ (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1: *Nicaea I to Lateran V*, Sheed & Ward, London 1990, 1-19; G. Alberigo, *Concilium Nicaenum I–325*, in *The Oecumenical Councils from Nicaea I to Nicaea II (325–787)*, Corpus Christianorum Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Generaliumque Decreta 1, Brepols, Turnhout 2006, 3-15.

5 Καὶ ὁ χρόνος δὲ τῆς συνόδου, ὡς ἐν παρασημειώσεσιν εὐρομεν, ὑπατείας Παυλίνου καὶ Ἰουλιανοῦ τῆ εἰκάδι τοῦ Μαΐου μηνός· τοῦτο δὲ ἦν ἔτος ἑξακοσιοστὸν τριακοστὸν ἕκτον ἀπὸ Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ Μακεδόνων βασιλέως, ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς Κωνσταντίνου βασιλείας ἑννεακαίδεκατον ἔτος ἦν. Socrate de Constantinople, *Histoire Ecclésiastique, Livre I*, trans. P. Périchon SJ and P. Maraval, ed. P. Maraval, SC 477, Cerf, Paris 2004, 164 (Book 1, XIII, 12).

6 Venance Grumel, *La chronologie, Traité d'Études Byzantines 1*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1958, 311.

7 See *Die Anktenbeilagen in den Athanasiushandschriften*, in Eduard Schwartz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 3, Walter De Gruyter, Berlin, 1959, 78-81. Maraval explains that the date of 20 May was arrived at by Socrates from his misreading of the notes that indicated the kalends of July (i.e. three days before the kalends of July would be 19 June), and not the kalends of June (i.e. three days before

speculated that it ended on or around 25 July.⁸ In any case, it seems that some aspects of the exact convocation and chronology of the council are not firmly established.

With regard to the number of participants, liturgical texts, such as the Synaxarion of Constantinople, mention that there were 232 bishops and 86 presbyters, deacons, and monks, for a total of 318 participants.⁹ This number coincides the number of trained servants from the house of Abraham that he employed in his battle to free his nephew Lot (Genesis 14:14). Pseudo-Barnabas, Clement of Alexandria, and Pseudo-Cyprian all commented on the number 318 well before the Council of Nicaea, noting that its form in Greek (ΤΙΗ) bears similarities to the Cross of Christ (Τ) and the first letters of the name of Jesus (ΙΗ). This combination was further theologized to suggest that the 318 servants of Abraham were bearers of salvation to the captives, themselves saved by the sign and name of Christ.¹⁰ Around 358–359 Hilary of Poitiers (d.c.367) appears to be the first to connect the 318 servants of Abraham in Genesis to the number of fathers gathered in Nicaea.¹¹ By 372, Basil of Caesarea refers to the “318 Fathers of Nicaea” as if it were common knowledge, and from then on the number continues as the standard reference to, and shorthand

the kalends of June would be 20 May). See Socrate de Constantinople, *Histoire Ecclésiastique, Livre I*, trans. P. Périchon SJ and P. Maraval, ed. P. Maraval, SC 477, Cerf, Paris 2004), 164-165 n. 1. For the history of this question, see Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1, 1 n. 4.

8 See, for example, G. Alberigo, *Concilium Nicaenum I*, 6.

9 Πεντηκοστάριον χαρμόσυνον, (Athens, Αποστολική Διακονία, 1959), 182. See also the entry for 29 May in Hippolyte Delehaye, *Propylaeum ad Acta Sanctorum Novembris. Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, Apud Socios Bollandianos, Brussels 1902, col. 716.

10 M. Aubineau, “Les 318 Serviteurs d’Abraham (Gen XIV, 14) et le Nombre des Pères au Concile de Nicée (325)”, in *Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique* 61 (1966), 5-43, here 11-12.

11 Aubineau, “Les 318 Serviteurs d’Abraham”, 14-16.

for, the participants of the Council of Nicaea.¹² As Ambrose of Milan later notes, the symbolism of 318 as the sign of the Cross and of Jesus means that Christ acts to place the conciliar assembly under the sign of his passion and his name (*signum suae passionis et nominis*).¹³

Attempts to verify the number of participants at Nicaea has proved extremely difficult, if not impossible. Ernst Honigmann conducted a detailed study of the manuscript sources to arrive at a list of the council fathers of Nicaea. He concludes that there is consensus among the ancient authors that there were about 300 participants, although the number of known names in the lists appears closer to 200.¹⁴ However Michel Aubineau, whose goal was to understand when and how the precise number of 318 fathers at Nicaea was established, shows that there is no independent evidence for this number, with the theological symbolism and exegetical significance obscuring interest in historical reality.¹⁵ Be that as it may, what is important for our interest here is that already within a few decades of the Council of Nicaea, the number of Fathers was set at 318.¹⁶

12 Aubineau, “Les 318 Serviteurs d’Abraham”, 18.

13 Aubineau, “Les 318 Serviteurs d’Abraham”, 20. For other numerology regarding Chalcedon (i.e. 630 or 636 Fathers of Chalcedon, exactly double the number of 318 Father of Nicaea), see Aubineau, “Les 318 Serviteurs d’Abraham”, 25. See also the anti-Chalcedonian reference to the double number of the Fathers of Chalcedon in *Extraits de Timothée Ælure*, in F. Nau (ed.), *Documents pour servir à l’histoire de l’église nestorienne*, PO 13.2, Firmin–Didot, Paris 1919, 204-205 and 222-225.

14 E. Honigmann, “La liste originale des Pères de Nicée”, in *Byzantion* 11 (1936), 429-449; 12 (1937), 323-347; 14 (1939), 17-76; 16 (1942/1943), 20-28; 20 (1950), 63-71.

15 Aubineau, “Les 318 Serviteurs d’Abraham”, 41-43.

16 See also J. Rivière, “«Trois cent dix-huit» Un cas de symbolisme arithmétique chez S. Amroise”, in *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 6 (1934), 361-367; H. Chadwick, “Les 318 Pères de Nicée”, in *Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique* 61 (1966), 808-811; E. Lucchesi, “318 ou 319 pères de Nicée”, in *Analecta Bollandiana* 102 (1984), 394-396.

2. *The Liturgical Reception of the Canons*

Before turning to the decisions of Nicaea, a caveat from liturgical history: even when councils regulate liturgical matters, their influence on liturgical practice is rarely immediate. Whether dealing with modern councils such as Trent or Vatican II, or ancient councils such as Ephesus or Trullo, the changes they impose are not adopted universally overnight.¹⁷ Thus, identifying specifically Nicæan influence on liturgical practice and liturgical reception can be difficult to assess. As Paul Bradshaw notes, “the apparent conversion to Christianity of the emperor Constantine early in the fourth century is usually portrayed as marking a crucial turning-point in the evolution of forms of Christian worship; and it is undoubtedly true that a very clear contrast can be observed between the form and character of liturgical practices in the pre- and post-Constantinian eras.”¹⁸ And yet Bradshaw — and even Alexander Schmemmann — warn against seeing a clear-cut distinction in liturgy before and after the “Constantinian turn.”¹⁹ In fact, more scholars have recently shown that the “Constantinian turn” may in fact not be as clear a division as previously believed. Stefano Parenti, relying on the work of Maxwell Johnson and Bryan Spinks, notes that the “prayer ‘coordinated’ to the Father, to Christ, and to the Holy Spirit, is not a consequence of Nicaea but precedes the Trinitarian doctrine defined there.” Parenti continues that “this would not be the first time that the *lex orandi* anticipates the *lex credendi*”, providing several pre-Nicene examples that call into question the “relation of cause–effect” between the dogmas of Nicaea in 325 and developments of, or modifications to, liturgical prayers.²⁰

17 See Anton Baumstark, *On the Historical Development of the Liturgy*, trans. Fritz West, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn. 2011, 230-243.

18 Bradshaw, *Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*, 211.

19 Ibid., 211 n. 1. Bradshaw references Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, The Faith Press Ltd., London 1966, 76.

20 Stefano Parenti, *Lanafora di Crisostomo. Testo e contesti*, Jerusalem

Apart from these interpretative considerations, there is also the problem of the absence of major sources of liturgical texts from the period around Constantine and Nicaea I. As Bradshaw notes again, “virtually all our substantial sources for the pattern and practice of the Eucharist in the fourth century date only from the second half of the century, and thus leave a gap of a hundred years or more from the time of Cyprian [AD 258], our previous major witness. In that intervening period Christianity had undergone major changes”.²¹ Thus, the only references to the Council of Nicaea in liturgical scholarship are to the aftereffects of the condemnation of Arianism (i.e. the adoption of the 25 December feast of Christmas)²² and the “general process of assimilation and liturgical standardization that is characteristic of orthodox Christianity after the Council of Nicaea in 325”.²³

With these consideration in mind, let us turn to the canons of Nicaea I.²⁴ How exactly did they impact liturgical worship? Canons 1, 2, and 3 regulate the life of the clergy and requirements for, or

Theologische Forum 36, Aschendorff, Münster 2020, 143-144. Parenti also presents the work of Maxwell Johnson who lists the prayer of Polycarp (2nd/3rd cent.), the letter of Pope Dionysius of Alexandria (190–265) to Pope Dionysius of Rome, and the Anaphora of Addai and Mari as examples of Trinitarian formulae in liturgical prayer before Nicaea. See *The Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer: Christology, Trinity and Liturgical Theology*, Bryan D. Spinks (ed.), Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn. 2008.

21 Paul F. Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004, 139.

22 Paul F. Bradshaw, *Early Christian Worship: A Basic Introduction to Ideas and Practice*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn. 1998, 87. For the history of the Christmas feast, see also Paul F. Bradshaw and Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Origins of Feasts, Fasts and Seasons in Early Christianity*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn. 2011, 123-130.

23 Bradshaw, *Early Christian Worship*, 50.

24 For a bibliography of studies on each of the canons, see Pr. Răzvan Perșă (ed.) *Canoanele Sinodului I Ecumenic de la Niceea (325)*, in *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe*, vol. 1, Basilica, Bucharest 2022 135-162.

impediments to, admission to ordination and ministry. Canons 4 and 6 specify that other bishops (at least three in total) of the province must take part in ordinations of new bishops, which suggests that this was not the norm in the fourth century.²⁵ Canon 5 makes reference to Lent (τεσσαρακοστῆς) as a time for holding one of two annual synods.²⁶ Canons 6 and 7 acknowledge local traditions (i.e. Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis) and their connections to local bishops (i.e. Alexandria, Rome, Antioch, and Aelia — Jerusalem).²⁷ Canons 8 and 19 deal with readmission of apostate or heretical clergy to the Catholic Church, while canons 9 and 10 regulate the procedures of the ordination of presbyters. Canon 11 regulates penitence and limits participation in the Eucharist to prayer and not communion for two years (δύο δὲ ἔτη χωρὶς προσφορᾶς κοινωνήσουσι τῷ λαῷ τῶν προσευχῶν), with a similar programme repeated in canons 12 and 14. Canon 13 expresses concern for access to the Eucharist (ἐφόδιος, *viaticum*) for those who are dying. Canon 15 and 16 regulate clergy mobility, ordinations, and service in different cities or churches. Canon 17 deals with financial aspects of clergy life, while canon 18 is concerned with order in the Eucharist, particularly the giving and receiving of communion and maintaining respect for the proper order of the clerical hierarchy.²⁸ Canon 19 discusses the state of deaconesses and mentions that they are counted as lay people because they do not receive the imposition

25 Ibid., 207. See also Paul F. Bradshaw, “The Participation of Other Bishops in the Ordination of a Bishop in the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus”, in *Studia Patristica* 18/2 (1989), 335-338.

26 Sévérien Salaville, “La τεσσαρακοστή du V^e canon de Nicée (325)”, in *Échos d’Orient* 13 (1910), 65-72.

27 These cities and regions are repeated in the letter of the synod in Nicaea to the Egyptians. See Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1, 16-19.

28 See Robert F. Taft, *A History of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, vol. VI: The Communion, Thanksgiving, and Concluding Rites, OCA 281, Pontificio Istituto Orientale, Roma 2008, especially 80-84.

of hands at ordination.²⁹ Canon 20, which discusses kneeling on Sundays and the season of Pentecost, regulates not only lay piety but also gives insights into the liturgical year.³⁰ Overall, we see that almost each of the canons has some impact on the order of the liturgical worship of the Church.

Turning to the Symbol of Faith of Nicaea, the recitation of the Creed in liturgical practice was not immediate and its beginnings are unclear. The first reliable witness of the use of the Creed in the liturgy was in the Great Church of Constantinople in the sixth century, introduced by Patriarch Timothy (511–518).³¹ The relevant passage from the history of Theodore Anagnostes (d. before 550) reads as follows:

Τιμόθεος τὸ τῶν τῆ̄ πατέρων
τῆς πίστεως σύμβολον καθ'
ἐκάστην σύναξιν λέγεσθαι
παρεσκεύασεν ἐπὶ διαβολῆ
δῆθεν Μακεδονίου, ὡς αὐτοῦ μὴ
δεχομένου τὸ σύμβολον, ἅπαξ
τοῦ ἔτους λεγόμενον πρότερον
ἐν τῇ ἀγία παρασκευῇ τοῦ θείου
πάθους τῷ καιρῷ τῶν γινομένων
ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐπισκόπου κατηχήσεων.³²

Timothy gave the order that the Symbol of Faith of the 318 Fathers should be recited at every synaxis in order to counter Macedonius, because he did not accept the Symbol. Previously it was recited only once a year, on the Holy Friday of the divine passions, during the catechesis of the bishop.

29 See Robert F. Taft, “Women at Church in Byzantium: Where, When-And Why?,” in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 52 (1998), 27-87, especially 63-70.

30 Bradshaw and Johnson, *The Origins of Feasts, Fasts and Seasons in Early Christianity*, 72.

31 See Robert F. Taft and Stefano Parenti, *Storia della liturgia di S. Giovanni Crisostomo. Il Grande Ingresso. Edizione italiana rivista, ampliata e aggiornata*, Ανάλεκτα Κρυπτοφέρρης 10, Monastero Esarchico, Grottaferrata 2014, 638. An earlier account that introduces the Creed in Antioch around 489 by Peter the Fuller is considered a later interpolation.

32 *Theodoros Anagnostes Kirchengeschichte*, ed. G. C. Hansen, GCS, Akademie-Verlag, Berlin 1971, 143, 16-19 (501B).

The background to this account is as follows: in the fifth and sixth century, opponents of the Council of Chalcedon, such as Patriarch Macedonius II of Constantinople (d. c. 517), emphasized their faithfulness to the first three ecumenical councils and thus attempted to paint the Chalcedonians as opponents to Nicaea. One of the ways the anti-Chalcedonians did this was to recite the Symbol of the 318 Fathers of Nicaea as a sign of their faithfulness to tradition and claim their position to be in continuity with orthodoxy. Once Macedonius was ousted as patriarch of Constantinople in 511 and replaced by the pro-Chalcedonian Patriarch Timothy, the Chalcedonians did not dare to be seen as opposing Nicaea and, in the interests also of political unity, continued the practice of reciting the Symbol of Faith at each eucharistic Synaxis. As Taft and Parenti note, the reference to the Creed as that of the “318 Fathers of Nicaea” is most likely shorthand to refer to the Creed in its developed form after Constantinople I, and not to the text as it would have been composed in 325.³³

The recitation of the Symbol of Nicaea is also found in certain prayers of the Liturgy of the Hours.³⁴ Caesarius of Arles (r. 503–542), in his Sermon 6,3, recommended the Creed, among other prayers and psalms, to be learned by heart to counter the diabolical and lascivious songs they do know by heart.³⁵ Both the Byzantine Rite Horologion originating in Palestine and prayer rules from Braga include the

33 Taft and Parenti, *Il Grande Ingresso*, 639–641.

34 See Robert F. Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West: The Origins of the Divine Office and Its Meaning for Today*, 2nd revised edition, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn. 1993, 119, 151, 199, 253–254, 256, 263, 265, 267, 270–271, 274, 324–325.

35 Sermo VI, in *Sancti Caesarii Arelatensis Sermones*, ed. Germanus Morin, CCSL 103, Brepols, Turnhout 1953, 32; Taft, *Liturgy of the Hours in East and West*, 151.

recitation of the Creed during Compline, as a preparation for sleep.³⁶ The Creed could also be a concluding element of the *agrypnia*, as witnessed by John and Sophronius on Sinai in the seventh century,³⁷ a practice which bears similarities to the Creed as a concluding element in the Ethiopian office.³⁸ Perhaps related is the Coptic practice of including the Creed in the morning office, similar to the Byzantine *mesonyktikon* and the Armenian Night-Office.³⁹

While the presence of the Creed in the Liturgy of the Hours is not explained in Greek sources,⁴⁰ its use there could be an expression of faith in response to a concern for orthodoxy. This was an issue among Palestinian monks involved in Christological controversies (as well as Origenism) in the wake of Chalcedon, during the formative period of the Liturgy of the Hours. In the Divine Liturgy, various

36 Taft, *Liturgy of the Hours in East and West*, 119. For the place of the Creed in the Byzantine Rite Liturgy of the Hours, see Job Getcha, *The Typikon Decoded: An Explanation of Byzantine Liturgical Practice*, trans. Paul Meyendorff, Orthodox Liturgy Series 3, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Yonkers, N.Y. 2012, 67-70 and 92-97.

37 Augusta Longo, "Il Testo Integrale della «Narrazione degli abati Giovanni e Sofronio» attraverso le «ΕΡΜΗΝΕΙΑΙ» di Nicone", in *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici* 12-13 (1965-1966), 223-267, here 252; Taft, *Liturgy of the Hours in East and West*, 199 and 274.

38 Taft, *Liturgy of the Hours in East and West*, 263, 265, 270-271.

39 Taft, *Liturgy of the Hours in East and West*, 253; Gabriele Winkler, *Über die Entwicklungsgeschichte des armenischen Symbolums. Ein Vergleich mit dem syrischen und griechischen Formelgut unter Einbezug der relevanten georgischen und äthiopischen Quellen*, OCA 262, Pontificio Istituto Orientale, Roma 2000, 203-211.

40 In general, there are few commentaries on the Liturgy of the Hours in the Byzantine Rite, although this is not the case for other Churches, such as the Armenian tradition. For such a commentary, see Michael Daniel Findikyan, *The Commentary on the Armenian Daily Office by Bishop Step'anos Siwnec'i († 735). Critical Edition and Translation with Textual and Liturgical Analysis*, OCA 270, Pontificio Istituto Orientale, Roma 2004, although here only the Creed within the Eucharistic synaxis is commented upon.

Byzantine commentators explain the recitation of the Symbol of Faith in diverse ways: according to St Maximus the Confessor it is a sign of thanksgiving for salvation;⁴¹ in the *Protheoria* it is seen as a kerygmatic proclamation for the ignorant;⁴² Nicholas Cabasilas explains it as a simple profession of faith;⁴³ and St Symeon of Thessalonika views it as a sign of unity with the angels in heaven.⁴⁴

The information from canons 5 and 20 on the liturgical year — namely the reference to 40 days before Pascha and the 50 days after — is also invaluable. The earliest witness to a fifty-day period after Pascha comes in the second century.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the understanding of the period after Pascha was not universal in the early Church. For some ancient writers, “Pascha” referred to the immediate days of fasting before Pascha and to the feast itself. In the fourth century, Aphrahat and Ephrem only mention a week-long celebration after Pascha.⁴⁶ The development of a fifty-day period after Easter also had an impact on the consolidation of the forty-day period of fasting before Easter (as opposed to after Theophany).⁴⁷ Yet even once a fifty-day post-Paschal

41 Saint Maximus Confessor, *On the Ecclesiastical Mystagogy*, trans. Jonathan J. Armstrong, Popular Patristics Series 59, St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Yonkers, N.Y. 2019, 91. Here the Creed is explained together with the closing of the doors, the entrance of the holy mysteries, and the kiss of peace.

42 Currently the only text is that edited by A. Mai and published by Migne as Theodorus Andidensis, *Commentatio liturgica*, PG 140, 417-468, here 445.

43 Nicolas Cabasilas, *Explication de la Divine Liturgie*, tr. Séverien Salaville, ed. René Bornert, Jean Gouillard and Pierre Périchon, SC 4bis, Cerf, Paris 1967, 168-169.

44 For a summary of these texts and explanations regarding the Nicene Creed, see Taft and Parenti, *Il Grande Ingresso*, 644-645.

45 Robert Cabié, *La Pentecôte: L’évolution de la Cinqantaine pascale au cours des cinq premiers siècles*, Desclée & Co., Tournai 1965, 35-45.

46 Bradshaw and Johnson, *The Origins of Feasts, Fasts and Seasons in Early Christianity*, 69-74, especially 72.

47 Bradshaw, *Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*, 182-184; René-Georges Coquin, “Une réforme liturgique du concile de Nicée (325)?”, in *Comptes Rendus, Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres* 111/2 (1967), 178-192.

period had been optimistically prescribed by Nicaea, this did not mean that it was immediately and universally adopted.⁴⁸

Along with regulating the liturgical year, the council attempted to bring uniformity to liturgical piety. The main purpose of canon 20 was in fact to prohibit kneeling on Sundays and the fifty days of Pascha as a sign of the resurrection. Irenaeus, Origen, and Tertullian explicitly state that the submissive nature of kneeling is incompatible with the joy that is to be expressed on Sundays and the days from Easter to Pentecost.⁴⁹ Although certain monastic observances in both East and West began to permit kneeling and prostrating in private, outside of common liturgical worship, during the aforementioned days and season, the practice of not kneeling on Sundays was generally observed and respected until the thirteenth century.⁵⁰ At that point, however, particularly in the West, Franciscan piety began to see kneeling not primarily as penitential, and thus incompatible with the day of resurrection, but as reverential towards the Eucharist, and thus necessary for every encounter with the Eucharist regardless of the day or season.⁵¹

48 See the letter of the synod in Nicaea to the Egyptians in Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1, 19; Bradshaw, *Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*, 225.

49 Gabriel Radle, “Embodied Eschatology: The Council of Nicaea’s Regulation of Kneeling and Its Reception across Liturgical Traditions”, in *Worship* 90 (2016), 345-371 and 433-461, here 348.

50 Radle, “Embodied Eschatology: The Council of Nicaea’s Regulation of Kneeling”, 357.

51 Grigorios Papathomas and Gabriel Radle have assembled the dossier on this question. See Grigorios Papathomas, *Comment et pourquoi l’Église exclut l’agenouillement lorsqu’elle proclame la Résurrection et la vie du siècle à venir selon la Tradition canonique de l’Église*, in Job Getcha and André Lossky (eds.), *Θυσία αἰνέσεως. Mélanges liturgiques offerts à la mémoire de l’archevêque Georges Wagner (1930–1993)*, Analecta Sergiana 2, Editions Saint Serge, Paris 2005, 247-292; Radle, “Embodied Eschatology: The Council of Nicaea’s Regulation of Kneeling”.

With the conclusion of Constantine's banquet offered for all the council participants, the "long, bitter, and controversial" period of reception began, which, as Alberigo notes, involved the council of Constantinople and Chalcedon as well.⁵²

3. *The Liturgical Commemoration of the Council*

Not only did the canons of Nicaea have an impact on worship, but the event of the council itself was commemorated in liturgical worship in various ways, more than just annually.

The first example of the commemoration of the council in the liturgy comes in the form of the remembrance of councils in Diptychs, the eucharistic prayers of the Anaphora. An account in the *Collectio Sabbaitica* describes how on Monday 16 July 518 the pro-Chalcedonian population of Constantinople demanded to hear the public proclamation of the Council of Chalcedon from the lips of Patriarch John, successor of Timothy. Thus, during the liturgy that was celebrated, everyone listened for the recitation of the Creed and then the mention of the Council of Chalcedon in the Diptychs.⁵³

One can indeed find mentions of these church councils in the Diptychs of liturgical books. Many liturgical texts from Jerusalem, such as the eucharistic prayer of the Liturgy of St James, make reference to the 'six synods' in the diptychs of the Anaphora. In Greek, the text is as follows:

52 G. Alberigo, *Concilium Nicaenum I*, 13-14.

53 Cited from Taft and Parenti, *Il Grande Ingresso*, 640-642.

Μνήσθητι, Κύριε, τῶν ἁγίων
μεγάλων καὶ οἰκουμενικῶν
ἕξ συνόδων. Τῶν ἐν Νικαίᾳ
τριακοσίων δέκα καὶ ὀκτὼ καὶ
τῶν ἐν Κωνσταντίνου πόλει
ἑκατὸν πενήκοντα καὶ τῶν ἐν
Ἐφέσῳ τὸ πρότερον διακοσίων
καὶ τῶν ἐν Καλχηδόνι ἑξακοσίων
τριακοντα καὶ τῶν ἐν τῇ ἁγίᾳ
πέμπτῃ συνόδῳ ἑκατὸν ἐξήκοντα
τεσσάρων καὶ τῶν ἐν τῇ ἁγίᾳ ἕκτῃ
συνόδῳ διακοσίων ὀγδοήκοντα
ἐννέα καὶ λοιπῶν ἁγίων συνόδων
καὶ ἐπισκόπων, τῶν ἐν πάσῃ
τῇ οἰκουμένῃ ὀρθοδόξως
ὀρθοτομησάντων τὸν λόγον τῆς
ἀληθείας.⁵⁴

Remember, O Lord, the six
holy, great, and ecumenical
Councils: the 318 [fathers] in
Nicaea, the 150 [fathers] in
Constantinople, the 200 [fathers]
at the first [Council] in Ephesus,
the 630 [fathers] in Chalcedon,
the 164 [fathers] at the holy fifth
Council, and the 289 [fathers] at
the holy sixth Council, and the
remainder of the holy Councils
and bishops who throughout the
inhabited world rightly proclaim
the word of truth.

The Georgian version of this text is virtually identical, except that the Georgians perhaps had a better knowledge of history and geography, because they specify that the fifth and sixth councils took place in Constantinople:

54 Basile-Charles Mercier (ed.), *La Liturgie de Saint Jacques. Édition critique du texte grec avec traduction latine*, PO 26.2, Firmin–Didot et Cie, Paris 1946, 216-218; Alkiviades K. Kazamias, *Ἡ Θεία Λειτουργία τοῦ Ἁγίου Ἰακώβου τοῦ Ἀδελφοθέου καὶ τὰ νέα σιναιτικὰ χειρόγραφα*, Ἴδρυμα Ὁρους Σινᾶ, Thessalonike 2006, 206.

მოიკსენენ, უფალო,
წმიდანი და დიდინი
სოფლისა ექუსნი კრებანი:
ნიკიას სამასათრვანეთნი,
კოსტანთინეპოლის
ასორმეოცდაათნი,
ეფესოს პირველად
ორასნი, ქალკიდონს
ექუსასოცდაათნი, მეხუთე
კრენად ასამეოცდაოთხნი
და მეექუსე წმიდად კრებად,
მუნვე კოსტანტინეპოლის
ორასოთხმეოცდაცხრანი,
და ესე წმიდანი კრებანი. და
ყოველთა ადგილთა ღირსნი
მამანი ჩუენნი, რომელნი
მართლმადიდებლობით
ეპისკოსობდეს და
რომელთა მართლ
წარუმართებიეს სიტყუად იგი
ჭემმარიტებისად.⁵⁵

Remember, O Lord, the six holy and great ecumenical councils: at Nicaea — 318 [fathers], at Constantinople — 150; at the first [council] in Ephesus — 200, at Chalcedon — 630, at the fifth holy council — 164 and at the sixth holy council, again there, in Constantinople — 289. And these are the holy councils; and our worthy fathers in all places who officiated in orthodoxy as bishops and who have rightly promoted the word of truth.

Also noteworthy is that the seventh council is not mentioned in these manuscripts from the ninth and tenth centuries and is only added to these lists after the fourteenth century.⁵⁶

Although Jerusalem was known for praying and preserving prolix lists of saints and events in the Holy City's Diptychs, several Greek manuscripts of the Divine Liturgy from other regions also mention

55 *Sinai Geo. N. 58* (10th c.), fol. 29r-29v; *Liturgia Ibero-Graeca Sancti Iacobi. Editio – translatio – retroversio – commentarii* Jerusalem Theologisches Forum 17, Aschendorff Verlag, Münster 2011, 96-97.

56 Daniel Galadza, *Liturgy and Byzantinization in Jerusalem*, Oxford Early Christian Studies, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2018, 294-296.

church councils. The Euchologion Grottaferrata Γ.β. XV (11th cent.) includes an expansive list of saints in the Diptychs that includes the mention of groups of saints as well. In this case, the only council mentioned is that of Nicaea and its 318 fathers, inserted between various categories and lists of saints. The same is the case with the Euchologion Vatican gr. 1554 (12th cent.) and Milan Ambrosiana F 3 sup. (13th cent.). Each of them mention only the “318 holy God-bearing Fathers” and no other ecumenical council.⁵⁷

Apart from the commemoration of the Council of Nicaea at every celebration of the Divine Liturgy, commemorations of the council also entered liturgical calendars, to be celebrated as commemorations during the year.

Armenian Tradition

One of the liturgical calendars believed to be the most ancient, the Armenian lectionary of Jerusalem, dated to the fifth century, does not include any commemorations of church councils. It does, however, include the feast of the Enkainia (Dedication) of the Church of the Anastasis (Holy Sepulchre) in Jerusalem on 13 September, which took place in 335, ten years after the Council of Nicaea, and followed on the next day by the feast of the Cross.⁵⁸ Other, later Armenian calendars indicate that the Council of Nicaea is commemorated on the Saturday that precedes the feast of the Cross (*Barekendan*) on 14 September (5 Hori).⁵⁹ Although the Armenian Synaxarion does not provide a text for

57 Parenti, *Lanafora di Crisostomo*, 401-402.

58 See Michael Daniel Findikyan, “Armenian Hymns of the Church and the Cross”, in *Saint Nerses Theological Review* 11 (2006), 63-105.

59 Placido de Meester, “Il concilio di Nicea nella liturgia e nell’iconografia dell’Oriente Cristiano”, in *Bollettino per la commemorazione del XVI centenario del concilio di Nicea*, 128-132. This also appears to be the Saturday of the third week after the feast of the Dormition. See C. Tondini de Quarenghi, “Notice sur le calendrier liturgique de la nation arménienne”, in *Bessarione* 3/1 (1906-1907), 87.

this commemoration, its short hagiographic accounts make frequent mention of the Council of Nicaea in the days around the Exaltation of the Cross, whether the Enkainia of the Church of the Resurrection on 13 September, which praises patriarch Macarius of Jerusalem as one of the principle actors at the council, or the 15 September commemoration of Sts Constantine and Helen, together with the martyr Nicetas the Goth, who is connected to the blessed Theophilus, bishop of the Goths and one of the 318 fathers at the Council of Nicaea.⁶⁰

Early Jerusalem Tradition

In the later Jerusalem tradition from the sixth to eighth centuries, the lectionary of Jerusalem in Georgian translation includes a commemoration of four ecumenical councils on 26 September, after the conclusion of the octave of the Enkainia feast.⁶¹ The feast, entitled “commemoration of the four councils of the holy bishops” prescribes readings that emphasize the service of priesthood (Isaiah 61:6–11), obedience to and prayer for leaders (Hebrews 13:7–16), and the service for the sake of the kingdom of God through the parable of the labourers in the vineyard (Matthew 19:27–20:16). While the texts may draw clear lines between those who follow Christ and those who do not, nowhere are there any texts in the lectionary that delve into the theological controversies or debates surrounding Nicaea, as could be the case through additional non-scriptural readings or hymnography.

Other calendars describing the tradition of Jerusalem, such as the Arab polymath al-Bīrūnī’s Melkite calendar, indicate that six

60 *Le Synaxaire arménien de Ter Israël*, vol. 2: *Mois de hori*, ed. G. Bayan, PO 6.2, Firmin, Paris 1910, 212–239. The English edition and translation of the Synaxarion has not yet arrived at September.

61 Michel Tarchnishvili, ed., *Le grande lectionnaire de l’Église de Jérusalem (V^e-VIII^e siècle)*, CSCO 188–189 and 204–205, Secrétariat du CSCO, Louvain 1959–1960, par. 1256f.

ecumenical councils were commemorated on 21/22 April. Al-Bīrūnī also gives a detailed account of the councils' history, with similar numbers of participants to those of the Diptychs, as well as a summary of their major doctrinal disputes. A similar commemoration of councils is repeated on 15 September, although it is unclear if this refers to all six councils or only to the Sixth Ecumenical Council, which is commemorated on 15 September in the Synaxarion of Constantinople.⁶² Unfortunately it is difficult to identify any commemorations of councils in other important liturgical manuscripts from the region of Jerusalem, such as in Sinai Geo. O. 38 (AD 979) and Vatican Syr. 19 (AD 1030), because of either incomplete information or lacunae on the days, when one would expect to find the commemorations of these councils.⁶³ In general, however, the first four or six ecumenical councils in Jerusalem were celebrated together, and Nicaea did not receive its own commemoration in Jerusalem.

Constantinopolitan Tradition

In Constantinople, the Synaxarion of the Great Church of Constantinople provides significant information on the commemoration of councils.⁶⁴ This calendar shows that many were

62 See Daniel Galadza, "Liturgical Byzantinization in Jerusalem: Al-Bīrūnī's Melkite Calendar in Context", in *Bollettino della Badia greca di Grottaferrata* 3/7 (2010), 69–85; Juan Mateos, *Le Typicon de la Grande Église. Ms. Sainte-Croix n° 40, Xe siècle*, 2 vols., OCA 165-166, Pontificio Istituto Orientale, Roma 1962–1963, vol. 1, 34.

63 For more on these sources, see Galadza, *Liturgy and Byzantinization in Jerusalem*.

64 See Séverien Salaville, "La fête du concile de Nicée et les fêtes de conciles dans le rit byzantin", in *Echos d'Orient* 24 (1925), 445-470. Mateos, *Le Typicon de la Grande Église*, vol. 2, 130, where six councils are commemorated on the Sunday before Pentecost. For an overview of the Synaxarion of Constantinople, see Cyril A. Mango, "The Relics of St. Euphemia and the Synaxarion of Constantinople", in *Bollettino della Badia greca di Grottaferrata* 53 (1999), 79-87.

connected to the commemoration of Saint Euphemia of Chalcedon (d. 16 September 303) on 11 July and 16 September, whose relics featured prominently at the Council of Chalcedon.⁶⁵ In both the calendar of Iovane Zosime and in various Greek Constantinopolitan sources, the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon is often celebrated near the commemoration of Saint Euphemia, between 11 and 16 July, and the Fifth Ecumenical Council on the Sunday after 16 July (Τῆ μετ' αὐτῶν κυριακῇ τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων τῶν κατὰ Σεβήρου τῆς ε' συνόδου).⁶⁶ In fact, Salaville believes that the celebration of the fourth ecumenical Council of Chalcedon was the first liturgical celebration of the commemoration of a church council, and this took place on 16 July 518.⁶⁷

Over time, the main Constantinople calendars celebrated each of the ecumenical councils on their own specific days, with a certain preference for the First, Fourth, and Seventh Ecumenical Councils. One of the main manuscripts of the *Typikon* of the Great Church, codex Patmos Gr. 266, has the following indication on 29 May: “Memory of the holy father of Nicaea of the first synod and concerning the blessed Alexander, Pope of Alexandria, and the impious Arius who began heresies”.⁶⁸ However, the eighth-century calendar in Vatican Gr. 2144,

65 Alexander Kazhdan and Nancy Patterson-Ševčenko, *Euphemia of Chalcedon*, in Alexander P. Kazhdan et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 2, Oxford University Press, New York – Oxford 1991, 747-748.

66 Gérard Garitte, *Le calendrier palestinogéorgien du Sinaiticus 34 (Xe siècle)*, *Subsidia Hagiographica* 30, Société des Bollandistes, Brussels 1958, 276; Delehaye, *Synaxarium*, col. 811-813 and col. 826; Sévérin Salaville, “La fête du concile de Chalcédonie dans le rite byzantine”, in Aloys Grillmeier and Heinrich Bacht (eds.), *Das Konzil von Chalkedon. Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. 2: Entscheidung um Chalkedon, Echter Verlag, Würzburg 1962, 677-695.

67 Sévérin Salaville, “La fête du concile de Nicée et les fêtes de conciles dans le rit byzantin”, 455.

68 κθ'. Μνήμη τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων τῶν ἐν Νικαίᾳ τῆς πρώτης συνόδου καὶ περὶ τοῦ μακαρίου Ἀλεξάνδρου πάπα Ἀλεξανδρείας καὶ περὶ τοῦ δυσσεβοῦς Ἀρείου καὶ

edited by Morcelli, joins the celebration of the first four councils in one commemoration on 16 July.⁶⁹ The prescribed Gospel reading for this day is Matthew 5:14–19, where Christ reminds his followers that they are the light of the world, that their light must continue to shine, and that even the least of the commandments of the law must be observed because Christ came to fulfill — and not abolish — the law. This 16 July commemoration is immediately followed by another indication for the commemoration of the Council of Constantinople of 536 that condemned Patriarch Severus of Antioch (d.538) on the following Sunday in July.⁷⁰

As was seen with the Diptychs of the Liturgy of St James, none of the calendars from Jerusalem examined here commemorates more than six councils. In general, the local commemorations of councils that were once commemorated by a simple procession in Constantinople eventually became part of the universal Byzantine calendar.⁷¹

ὁπως ἤρξατο τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν αἰρέσεως. Dmitrievskii, *Opisanie liturgicheskikh rukopisei, khranящихся v bibliotekakh pravoslavnaго востока*, vol. 1: Τυπικά, Τυπογραφία Γ.Τ. Κορчакъ-Новицкаго, Kyiv 1895, vol. 1, 75. Mateos, *Le Typicon de la Grande Église*, vol. 1, 300, does not give this information in the apparatus.

69 Μηνὶ τῷ αὐτῷ 1ς εἰς τὴν μνήμην τῶν ἁγίων χλ' πατέρων τῶν ἐν Χαλκηδόνι, καὶ τῶν τῆς τῶν ἐν Νικαίᾳ, καὶ τῶν ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει, καὶ τῶν ἐν Ἐφέσῳ. See Stefano Antonio Morcelli, *Μηνολόγιον τῶν εὐαγγελίων ἑορτακτικὸν sive Kalendarium ecclesiae constantinopolitanae*, Giunchi, Roma 1788, 60; Sévérien Salaville, “La fête du concile de Nicée et les fêtes de conciles dans le rit byzantin”, 449.

70 Καὶ τῇ κυριακῇ εὐθέως μετὰ τὴν εἰρημένην μνήμην τῶν ἐν Χαλκηδόνι ἁγίων πατέρων εἰσερχομένη, μνήμη τῆς ἁγίας ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει συνόδου τῆς κατὰ Σευήρου τοῦ δυσσεβοῦς. See Morcelli, *Μηνολόγιον τῶν εὐαγγελίων ἑορτακτικὸν sive Kalendarium ecclesiae constantinopolitanae*, 61; Salaville, “La fête du concile de Nicée”, 449.

71 Miguel Arranz, *Les fêtes théologiques du calendrier byzantin*, in A. M. Triacca and A. Pistoia (eds.), *La liturgie, expression de la foi. Conférences Saint-Serge XXV^e semaine d'études liturgiques, Paris, 27–30 juin 1978*, BELS 16, C.L.V.

Let us examine some other liturgical traditions to see how they compare in their celebrations and commemorations of the Council of Nicaea.

Coptic Tradition

In the Coptic Church, the Council of Nicaea I is commemorated annually on 9 Hatūr (5/18 November), but there are also commemorations of the Council of Ephesus in 431 celebrated on 12 Tut, St Cyriacus who was present at the Council of Constantinople on 3 Hatūr, the Council of Constantinople I of 381 on 1 'Amshīr (26 January/8 February), and the Council on the island of Bani-Omar (Djésireh bein 'Omr) on 4 Baramhāt (1/14 March) which was convoked against the Quartodecimans.⁷² The general readings for the commemoration of Councils emphasize themes of recompense for fidelity (Matthew 25:14–23), blessedness for those persecuted for the sake of righteousness (Luke 6:17–23), and faith in confessing Christ (Matthew 16:13–19).⁷³ There are also two hymns on the council of Nicaea found in the Sahidic antiphonary that praise the 318 bishops gathered in Nicaea who fight heretics through their prayers and reveal the true worship of the Trinity, quoting the Apostle Paul (Hebrews 13:7) who calls the Church to pray for her leaders.⁷⁴

Edizioni liturgiche, Roma 1979, 29–55. See also Ioannis M. Fountoulis, “Ἡ μνήμη τῶν Ἁγίων Πατέρων τῆς Β' Οἰκουμενικῆς Συνόδου στό Ἑορτολόγιο καί στήν Ὑμνογραφία,” Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς (Thessalonike) 66 (1983), 61–79.

72 See Coptic Synaxarion, Online: <https://st-takla.org/books/en/church/synaxarium/07-baramhat/04-paramhat-baniomar.html>.

73 Maurice de Fenoyl, SJ, *Le sanctoral copte*, Recherches publiées sous la direction de l'Institut de lettres orientales de Beyrouth 15, Imprimerie catholique, Beirut 1960, 44.

74 See Maria Cramer and Martin Krause, *Das koptische Antiphonar (M 575 und P 11967)*, Jerusalemer Theologische Forum 12, Aschendorff, Münster 2008, 108–111 (hymns 75 and 76). My thanks to Agnes Mihálykó Tothne for these references.

Ethiopian Tradition

In the Ethiopian Church, the 318 Fathers of Nicaea hold a prominent place in various aspects of liturgical life. The monthly cycle, particular to the Ethiopian tradition, has the 318 (literally 300) Fathers of Nicaea (*Šalastu me'et*) on the ninth day of every month, showing the importance and frequency of their memory in the regular life of their church.⁷⁵ An Anaphora of the 318 Fathers of Nicaea is known in the Ethiopian tradition,⁷⁶ and other liturgical rubrics explicitly mention the Council of Nicaea when indicating that there must be a gathering of the hierarchy twice a year.⁷⁷ The *Zəmmare* hymns sung for these commemorations fuse the 318 fathers into the narration of Old Testament figures, the works of the apostles, and the commemoration of other individual bishops.⁷⁸

Syriac Traditions

The broad and rich Syriac tradition presents a variety of commemorations of the Council of Nicaea.⁷⁹ Maronites have a general celebration of councils on 15 September, which perhaps has the same origins as the Armenian celebration. The Syrian Orthodox

75 Emmanuel Fritsch, *The Liturgical Year of the Ethiopian Church: The Temporal Seasons and Sundays*, Ethiopian Review of Cultures 9–10, Capuchin Franciscan Institute of Philosophy and Theology, Addis Ababa 2001, 70–71.

76 *Ibid.*, 265.

77 *Ibid.*, 273.

78 Bahlebbi Idris Shekai, *The Zəmmare Hymns: A Historical, Literal, Liturgical and Theological Study of the Communion Rite in the Gə'əz Liturgy*, Unpublished doctoral thesis, Pontificio Istituto Orientale, Roma 2023, vol. 2, 176 (“of the feast of the Three Hundred” on 1 October), vol. 2, 238 (“the Council” on 1 Yākatit, no. 419), vol. 2, 288 (“of the Council [of the Apostles]” on 16 August, no. 714), and vol. 2, 343 (“of the Council”, no. 1008).

79 See F. Nau, *Un Martyrologe et douze Ménologes syriaques*, PO 10.1, Firmin–Didot, Paris 1912, 47 (3 November) and 138–139 (index).

commemorate the 318 Fathers of Nicaea on 21 February and 29 May,⁸⁰ as well as Mar Sila, one of the 318 Fathers of Nicaea, on 3 November.⁸¹ However, these feasts are not celebrated with particular solemnity, since they do not have their own hymns in the collections of hymnography for church festivals.⁸² Nevertheless, modern church councils may at times enter the liturgical calendar. For example, the Syro-Malabar Church also does not have any commemorations of church councils, although their contemporary calendars do include recent events, such as the Inauguration of the first Syro-Malabar Bishops' Synod in 1993, celebrated on 20 May.⁸³

Latin Tradition

There are, surprisingly, no commemorations of church councils in the liturgical books of the Latin West.⁸⁴ The Pope reigning during the Council of Nicaea, St Sylvester I (313–335), is one of the very first confessors to be venerated as such in the West, and one of the most widely diffused, but of the popes involved in ecumenical councils, the councils themselves figure very small in their hagiography. For example, Sixtus III, who was the Pope of Rome during the Council of Ephesus, did not

80 Stefano Rosso, *Il rito siro-antiocheno. Sacramenti e sacramentali, tempi e feste, libri liturgici*, Monumenta studia instrumenta liturgica 78, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Roma 2018, 1018–1036, here 1024 and 1028.

81 *Ibid.*, 1019.

82 *Ma'de'dono: The Book of the Church Festivals according to the Ancient Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch*, trans. Archdeacon Murad Saliba Barsom, ed. Metropolitan Mar Athanasius Yeshue Samuel, n. p., Beirut 1985.

83 Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Commission for Liturgy, *Syro-Malabar Liturgical Calendar 2019–2020* (n.p., n.d.), 35. Online: <http://www.syromalabarchurch.in/pdf/2020Eng.pdf>. This is the same in the liturgical calendars for preceding years.

84 See Aubineau, “Les 318 Serviteurs d’Abraham (Gen XIV, 14) et le Nombre des Pères au Concile de Nicée (325)”, 39. I wish to thank Gregory DiPippo for his assistance with this question regarding the Latin West.

have a widely diffused cultus. Likewise, despite the popularity of his Tomos at Chalcedon, Pope Leo I entered the general Roman calendar relatively late.⁸⁵ Pope Agatho who reigned during the sixth ecumenical Council of Constantinople III is in the Byzantine Rite calendar, but not the Roman.⁸⁶ Pope Adrian I reigned during the Council of Nicaea II and was canonized, but there was no diffuse or distinct cultus.⁸⁷ One can, thus, state that in the West there just are no feasts which commemorate such events. Rather than commemorating an earthquake, as is the case with the great earthquake of 740 on 26 October in the Byzantine Rite, the Latin West would perhaps commemorate such an event through a miraculous icon that survived the event, if at all.

4. The Byzantine Rite Akolouthia for the Council of Nicaea I

Of all these traditions, it is the Byzantine tradition that expressed the greatest concern for the reception and commemoration of the Council of Nicaea as a liturgical celebration. This becomes all the more apparent when one examines the specific texts and hymnography composed for the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours on the Sunday after Ascension as part of the moveable cycle in the *Pentekostarion*.⁸⁸

The Synaxarion reading at Matins on the Sunday morning explains why the date of the commemoration was chosen. Rather than its proximity to 29 May, a theological meaning is given to placing this commemoration on the Sunday after the feast of the Ascension of

85 Guglielmo Zannoni, *Leone I, Magno*, in Filippo Caraffa et al. (eds.), *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, Istituto Giovanni XXIII della Pontificia Università Lateranense, Roma 1966, vol. 7, col. 1232-1278, especially col. 1272-1274.

86 See Delehaye, *Synaxarion*, col. 475-484 (19–21 February).

87 Pope Adrian is mentioned in the entry for the Council of Nicaea II on 11 October. See Delehaye, *Synaxarion*, col. 132.

88 Πεντηκοστάριον χαρμόσυνον, n.p., Roma 1883, 331-361. See Nicolas Egender, *Pâques. Grandes fêtes byzantines*, Nouvelle Cité, Bruyères-le-Châtel 2020, 343-366.

Christ: the Fathers of Nicaea confessed Christ to be true God who ascended in the flesh to the Father and sat at his right hand.⁸⁹

These hymns can be traced back to the eighth century. The older rite of Constantinople does not include any of these variable hymns except for a troparion.⁹⁰ In general, the authorship and precise origin of the hymnography is unknown, but manuscripts of the Pentecostarion dated to the ninth and tenth centuries already contain many of these hymns.⁹¹ Placide De Meester identifies three themes in the hymnography: victory of virtue over error, the glory of the teachers of the Church who declare the divinity of the Redeemer, and an admonition to believers to remain faithful to the Symbol of Faith of the Church.⁹² To these themes, Ephrem Lash adds their “denunciatory” character, which is a “peculiarity of the Byzantine Orthodox tradition,” sung by the Monks of Mount Athos to “lively and cheerful melodies denouncing leadings heretics from Arius in the fourth century to John the Grammarian in the ninth”.⁹³ As Archimandrite Ephrem Lash notes regarding the use of catchy melodies for the hymnography commemorating church councils,

89 See Πεντηκοστάριον χαρμόσυνον, Αποστολική Διακονία, Athens 1959, 181-182.

90 See the recreation of this service in 2001 organized by Alexander Lingas: *Vespers According to the Rite of the Great Church of Hagia Sophia, Constantinople for the Vigil of the Feast of the Fathers of the 1st Ecumenical Council at Nicaea. The Rt. Rev. Dr. Kallistos Ware, Presiding* ([S.l.] : [s.n.], 2001).

91 See Mariafrancesca Sgandurra, *Per la storia di un libro liturgico della Chiesa bizantina: il Pentecostarion*, Unpublished doctoral thesis, Università degli Studi di Roma Tor Vergata, Roma 2015.

92 Placido de Meester, “Il concilio di Nicea nella liturgia e nell’iconografia del’Oriente Cristiano”, 128-132, here 130-131.

93 Archimandrite Ephrem Lash, *Byzantine hymns of hate*, in Andrew Louth and Augustine Casiday (eds.), *Byzantine Orthodoxies. Papers from the Thirty-sixth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Durham, 23–25 March 2002*, Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies Publications 12, Ashgate, Aldershot 2006, 151-164, here 151.

“The Church may have rejected Arius and Bardaisan, but it certainly learnt from them the pedagogic usefulness of a good tune”.⁹⁴

In any event, these specific hymns, which meditate upon the mystery of the incarnation of Christ, are interwoven into the Sunday service along with hymns glorifying the resurrection of Christ (the usual theme for Sundays), the Ascension of Christ (as part of the post-festive period following the Ascension on the preceding Thursday), thereby adding even more layers to the contemplation of Christ’s divinity and his humanity — begotten of the Father before all ages, born in the flesh, crucified, buried, risen, and ascended to the Father.

The first sticheron for the Fathers at Great Vespers presents the main theological controversy of Nicaea, namely Arianism, as well as a simple explanation of this heresy:

Ἐκ γαστρὸς ἐτέχθης πρὸ
ἑσφόρου, ἐκ Πατρὸς ἀμήτωρ πρὸ
τῶν αἰώνων, κἂν Ἄρειος κτίσμα
σε, καὶ οὐ Θεὸν δοξάζῃ, τόλμη
συνάπτων σε τὸν κτίστην, τοῖς
κτίσμασιν ἀφρόνως, ὕλην πυρὸς
τοῦ αἰωνίου, ἑαυτῷ θησαυρίζων·
ἀλλ’ ἡ σύνοδος ἡ ἐν Νικαίᾳ, Υἱὸν
Θεοῦ σε ἀνεκήρυξε, Κύριε, Πατρὶ
καὶ Πνεύματι σύνθρονον.⁹⁵

Before the morning star from
the womb you were begotten
from the Father motherless
before the ages, though Arius
calls you created and thus does
not glorify you as God, boldly
and mindlessly identifying you,
the Creator, with things created,
thus storing up as treasure for
himself the fuel of the eternal
fire. But the Council in Nicaea
preached that you, O Lord, are
the Son of God, reigning with
the Father and the Spirit.⁹⁶

94 Lash, *Byzantine hymns of hate*, 157.

95 Πεντηκοστάριον χαρμόσυνον, n.p., Roma 1883, 333.

96 See Lash, *Byzantine hymns of hate*, 154.

The hymn is grounded in the theology of the Incarnation stemming from an exegetical interpretation of Psalm 109 LXX.

The next sticheron in the series presents a dialogue with Christ himself, asking him:

Τίς σου τὸν χιτῶνα Σῶτερ
διεῖλεν, Ἄρειος, σὺ ἔφης, ὁ τῆς
Τριάδος, τεμῶν τὴν ὁμότιμον
ἀρχὴν εἰς διαιρέσεις, οὗτος
ἠθέτησέ σε εἶναι, τὸν ἓνα τῆς
Τριάδος, οὗτος Νεστόριον
διδάσκει, Θεοτόκον μὴ λέγειν·
ἀλλ' ἡ Σύνοδος ἡ ἐν Νικαίᾳ, Υἱὸν
Θεοῦ σε ἀνεκήρυξε, Κύριε, Πατρὶ
καὶ Πνεύματι σύνθρονον.⁹⁷

Who has torn your garment,
O Saviour? “Arius,” you said,
who cuts asunder the authority
equal in honour of the Trinity,
denying that you are one of
the Trinity, thereby teaching
Nestorius not to say Theotokos.
But the Council in Nicaea
preached that you, O Lord, are
the Son of God, reigning with
the Father and the Spirit.⁹⁸

The reference to the seamless garment of Christ (John 19:23–24) – which itself references the same psalm Christ was praying on the Cross (cf. Psalm 19:21) – is interpreted by Ephrem the Syrian as a sign of his undivided divinity because it was not composite,⁹⁹ “divinity from above” by John Chrysostom,¹⁰⁰ and the heavenly-given unity

97 Πεντηκοστάριον χαρμόσυνον, n.p., Roma 1883, 333.

98 See Lash, *Byzantine hymns of hate*, 154.

99 Carmel McCarthy, *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron. An English translation of Chester Beatty Syriac MS 709 with Introduction and Notes*, Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement 2, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1993, 307–308 (20.27).

100 See Philip Schaff (ed.), John Chrysostom, *Homily 85.2*, in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of St. John and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 14, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Mich. 1978, 317.

of the Church by Cyprian of Carthage,¹⁰¹ with the garment divided into four, symbolizing the Gospel and the Church spreading over the whole world.¹⁰² The image of Christ's torn garment is itself from a vision by Peter of Alexandria (d. 311) of a young Christ, who answered Peter that Arius had torn his garment.¹⁰³

The next hymn once again borrows imagery from the accounts of the Synaxarion and presents a gruesome picture of Arius' death with parallels to that of Judas:

Κρημνῶ περιπίπτει τῆς
ἀμαρτίας, Ἄρειος, ὁ μύσας τὸ φῶς
μὴ βλέπειν, καὶ θεῖω σπαράττεται,
ἀγκίστρῳ τοῖς ἐγκάτοις, πᾶσαν
ἐκδοῦναι τὴν οὐσίαν, καὶ τὴν
ψυχὴν βιαίως, ἄλλος Ἰούδας
χρηματίσας, τῇ γνώμῃ καὶ τῷ
τρόπῳ· ἀλλ' ἡ Σύνοδος ἡ ἐν
Νικαίᾳ, Υἱὸν Θεοῦ σε ἀνεκήρυξε,
Κύριε, Πατρὶ καὶ Πνεύματι
σύνθρονον.¹⁰⁴

Arius fell into the precipice of sin, keeping his eyes shut, that he might not see light. His bowels were rent asunder by a divine hook, such that he violently gave up all his essence and his soul, and in this manner was named another Judas, through his ideas and manner. But the Council in Nicaea preached that you, O Lord, are the Son of God, reigning with the Father and the Spirit.¹⁰⁵

101 Cyprian, *Treatise* 1.7, in *Fathers of the Third Century: Hippolytus, Cyprian, Caius, Novatian, Appendix*, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe, Ante-Nicene Fathers 5, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Mich. 1978, 423.

102 Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 118.4, in *Augustine: Homilies on the Gospel of John; Homilies on the First Epistle of John; Soliloquies*, ed. Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* 7, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Mich. 1978, 431.

103 See Delehay, *Synaxarion*, col. 256-258 (25 November).

104 Πεντηκοστάριον χαρμόσυνον, n.p., Roma 1883, 333-334.

105 See Lash, *Byzantine hymns of hate*, 155, who notes the wordplay with *ousia* — both of Christ and of Arius.

The final sticheron in this series at Psalm 140 praises the zeal of the Fathers of Nicaea and compares them to Elias who battled against the priests of Baal:

Ἄρειος ὁ ἄφρων, τῆς
Παναγίας, τέτμηκε Τριάδος τὴν
μοναρχίαν, εἰς τρεῖς ἀνομίους
τε καὶ ἐκφύλους οὐσίας· ὅθεν
Πατέρες θεοφόροι, συνελθόντες
προθύμως, ζήλω πυρούμενοι,
καθάπερ, ὁ θεσβίτης Ἡλίας, τῷ
τοῦ Πνεύματος τέμνουσι ξίφει,
τὸν τῆς αἰσχύνης δογματίσαντα
βλάσφημον, καθὼς τὸ Πνεῦμα
ἀπεφήνατο.¹⁰⁶

Mindless, foolish Arius once divided the all-holy Trinity's sole dominion thus making three essences, dissimilar and foreign. Hence, the God-bearing Fathers fervently gathered together, burning with zeal like Elias the Tishbite, cutting down with the sharp sword of the Holy Spirit the vile blasphemer who taught blasphemous doctrines, as thus the Spirit revealed unto them.

Another sticheron, the Doxastikon at the Aposticha of Vespers, nicely summarizes the activity of the Council of Nicaea, including references to the texts it promulgated:

106 Πεντηκοστάριον χαρμόσυνον, n.p., Roma 1883, 334.

Τὴν ἐτήσιον μνήμην σήμερον, τῶν θεοφόρων Πατέρων, τῶν ἐκ πάσης τῆς οἰκουμένης συναθροισθέντων, ἐν τῇ λαμπρᾷ πόλει Νικαέων, τῶν Ὁρθοδόξων τὰ συστήματα, εὐσεβοῦντες πιστῶς ἐορτάσωμεν. Οὗτοι γὰρ τοῦ δεινοῦ Ἀρείου τὸ ἄθεον δόγμα, εὐσεβοφρόνως καθεῖλον, καὶ τῆς Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας συνοδικῶς τοῦτον ἐξωστράκισαν, καὶ τρανῶς τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὁμοούσιον καὶ συναΐδιον, πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων ὄντα, τοῖς πᾶσιν ἐδίδαξαν ὁμολογεῖν, ἐν τῷ τῆς πίστεως Συμβόλῳ, ἀκριβῶς καὶ εὐσεβῶς τοῦτο ἐκθέμενοι ὅθεν καὶ ἡμεῖς, τοῖς θείοις αὐτῶν δόγμασιν ἐπόμενοι, βεβαίως πιστεύοντες λατρεύομεν, σὺν Πατρὶ τὸν Υἱόν, καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ πανάγιον, ἐν μιᾷ Θεότητι, Τριάδα ὁμοούσιον.¹⁰⁷

O assemblies of the Orthodox, let us celebrate today with faith and piety the annual memorial of the God-bearing Fathers who, in the illustrious city of Nicaea, came together from the whole inhabited world. For with pious mind they refuted the godless dogma of the grievous Arius, and by synodal decree banished him from the Orthodox Catholic Church. And they instructed all to openly confess the consubstantial and co-eternal Son of God, Who existed before the ages. This, in exactness and piety, did they set forth in the Symbol of Faith. Wherefore, following their divine doctrines and believing with assurance, we worship, in One Godhead, the Father, Son and all-holy Spirit, the Trinity one in essence.

The Sessional Hymn after the Kontakion before the Fourth Ode of the Canon also refers to the gathered assembly as the 318 Fathers:

107 Πεντηκοστάριον χαρμόσυνον, n.p., Roma 1883, 337. The text is also found in Sinai Gr. 758, where it is attributed to George of Nikomedia.

Τῶν Νικαέων ἡ λαμπρὰ πόλις
σήμερον ἐκ πάσης γῆς πρὸς
ἑαυτὴν συνεκάλεσε τριακοσίους
δέκα καὶ ὀκτὼ Ἀρχιερεῖς κατὰ τοῦ
λαλήσαντος βλασφημίαν Ἀρείου,
καὶ κατασμικρύναντος τῆς
Τριάδος τὸν ἕνα, Υἱὸν καὶ Λόγον
ὄντα τοῦ Θεοῦ· ὃν καθελόντες,
τὴν Πίστιν ἐκράτυναν.¹⁰⁸

Today the brilliant city of
the Nicaeans has called together
to herself from the whole
world three hundred eighteen
hierarchs against Arius, who
uttered blasphemy and made
little account of the One of the
Trinity, the Son and the Word
being of God; having deposed
him, the Fathers strengthened
the Faith.

And this number is alluded to in another troparion of the Third Ode of the Canon to the Fathers: which connects it to the account of Abraham and his servants from Genesis 14:

Ὡς πάλαι θεῖος Ἀβραάμ,
στρατεούμενοι πάντες, οἱ σεπτοὶ
θηγόροι, τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου
ἀγαθέ, τοὺς μανιώδεις τῆ σῆ,
δυναστεία κραταιῶς ἀπώλεσαν.¹⁰⁹

The holy heralds of God, all
marching like godly Abraham
of old, mightily destroyed your
raving foes, O Good One, by
your sovereign power.¹¹⁰

Elsewhere in the service, for example at the Doxastikon at Litē, there seems to be a misunderstanding of the historical events, participants, and theological controversies of the First Council of Nicaea:

108 Πεντηκοστάριον χαρμόσυνον, n.p., Roma 1883, 347.

109 Πεντηκοστάριον χαρμόσυνον, n.p., Roma 1883, 346.

110 See Lash, *Byzantine hymns of hate*, 156.

Αποστολικῶν παραδόσεων, You became strict guardians
ἀκριβεῖς φύλακες γεγονάτε, of the apostolic traditions, O
ἅγιοι Πατέρες· τῆς γὰρ holy Fathers: for by teaching
ἀγίας Τριάδος τὸ ὁμοούσιον, the orthodox doctrine that the
ὀρθοδόξως δογματίσαντες, holy Trinity is consubstantial,
Ἀρείου τὸ βλάσφημον, συνοδικῶς you overthrew in council the
κατεβάλατε, μεθ' ὃν καὶ blasphemy of Arius; after
Μακεδόنيον, πνευματομάχον him you refuted Macedonius,
ἀπελέγξαντες, κατεκρίνατε opponent of the Spirit, you
Νεστόριον, Εὐτυχέα καὶ condemned Nestorius, Eutyches
Διόσκορον, Σαβέλλιόν τε καὶ and Dioscorus, Sabellius and the
Σεβήρον τὸν ἀκέφαλον, ὃν τῆς leaderless Severus. Ask, we pray,
πλάνης αἰτήσασθε ῥυσθέντας that, delivered from their error,
ἡμᾶς, ἀκληίδωτον ἡμῶν τὸν we may guard our life unsullied
βίον, ἐν τῇ πίστει φυλάττεσθαι in the faith.¹¹²
δεόμεθα.¹¹¹

As is clear from the mentions of Macedonius, Nestorius, and others, this hymn imagines the “holy Fathers” as a general collective that is responsible not just for the decisions of Nicaea but also of subsequent councils combatting other, later heresies after Arianism. In fact, this is a general sticheron for commemorations of church councils and is reused here from the commemoration of the Fathers of the Council of Chalcedon, pointing to the common trend of fusing the first four — if not more — ecumenical councils into one celebration and commemoration.¹¹³

111 Πεντηκοστάριον χαρμόσυνον, n.p., Roma 1883, 336.

112 See Lash, *Byzantine hymns of hate*, 155-156.

113 For the later Slavonic reception of the Council of Chalcedon, hymns related to the Sixth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople III have been inserted. See Lash, *Byzantine hymns of hate*, 156. For the ecumenical implications of these hymns, see Gregory Tucker, “Byzantine Hymnography and the Quest for Orthodox Unity: Notes on the Liturgical Commemoration of the Council of

Concluding Remarks

Recent scholarship on early Christian worship has confirmed that in many respects, the Council of Nicaea in 325 authorized already existing liturgical practices and attempted to standardize them for the universal Church, rather than introduce something new to the liturgy. With regard to certain historical details, such as the date of the council and the number of participants in attendance, these remain open questions that may never be sufficiently resolved. However, the survey here of the reception and commemoration of the Council suggests that these historical questions were understood to be of secondary importance to a theological understanding of the event of the Council of Nicaea itself and its doctrinal decisions. The exegesis of Abraham's 318 servants already before Nicaea made the connection with the number of Fathers at Nicaea more of a theological statement than a fact of history. While many liturgical calendars – whether Greek or Syriac – indicate the end of May as the date of the council, its celebration between Ascension and Pentecost, as it is celebrated today in the Byzantine Rite, can be interpreted as a theological statement regarding the full divinity and full humanity of Christ.

In the work that remains towards investigating the details of the liturgical reception of the Council of Nicaea, one should keep in mind that the earliest liturgical commemorations of the First Council of Nicaea were celebrated in the East together with the first four ecumenical councils, without concern for their conflation and confusion. On the contrary, the emphasis on seeing ecumenical councils together, and not individually, was apparent in their reception in the sixth and seventh centuries. St Theodosius the Cenobiarch (d. 11 January 529) responded vehemently to the anti-Chalcedonian Patriarch John III of Jerusalem (r. 516–524) with the statement that,

Chalcedon, Towards the Reconciliation of 'Eastern' and 'Oriental' Churches", in *Review of Ecumenical Studies Sibiu* 11/3 (2019), 473-488.

“if someone does not accept the four councils as the four Gospels, let him be anathema!”¹¹⁴ This was echoed in the letter of the monks of the monasteries of St Sabas and St Theodosius to the emperor, stating that they “gladly accept the four holy councils equal in glory and bearing the venerable imprint of the Gospels, assembled by divine inspiration at various times and places against the multifarious errors of the heresies in question, yet differing only in expression and not in meaning, like the image and meaning of the Gospels engraved by God”.¹¹⁵ The monks continue to explain that, “of these holy councils, surpassing is the radiance of the above-mentioned choir of the three hundred and eighteen holy fathers that assembled at Nicaea against the most godless Arius.” In their opinion, “this council was followed in all respects by the three other holy councils”, emphasizing the unity of the first four ecumenical councils in an attempt to justify the Chalcedonian position.¹¹⁶ St Gregory the Great (d. 12 March 604) expressed similar views, comparing the four holy Gospels to the honour to be given to the four councils,¹¹⁷ even after the fifth ecumenical council, the second council of Constantinople (AD 553), had already convened.

Even in the depictions of ecumenical councils, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish one council from the other in early representations from illuminated psalters and frescos. A case in point is the depiction of the Council of Nicaea II on 12 October in

114 εἴ τις οὐ δέχεται τὰς τέσσαρας συνόδους ὡς τὰ τέσσαρα εὐαγγέλια, ἔστω ἀνάθεμα.

Eduard Schwartz (ed.), *Life of Sabas* 56, in *Kyrrillos von Skythopolis*, Texte und Untersuchungen 49.2, Hinrichs, Leipzig 1939, 152.

115 Eduard Schwartz (ed.), *Life of Sabas* 57, in *Kyrrillos von Skythopolis*, Texte und Untersuchungen 49.2, Hinrichs, Leipzig 1939, 155.

116 Ibid.

117 Sancti Gregorii Magni, *Epistula* 25, PL 77, 478A.

the “Menologion of Basil II”, codex Vatican Gr. 1613.¹¹⁸ The scene depicts an emperor and bishops seated before an unnamed heretic being condemned. In fact, as Christopher Walter has shown, the depiction here is that of the First Council of Nicaea and the heretic is Arius, but the scene has been adopted as a generic representation of the seventh ecumenical council and applicable to all councils.¹¹⁹ On top of that, an increased concern in artistic representations after the seventh ecumenical Council of Nicaea II is not icon veneration but the heresy of Arianism, regardless of the fact that the heresy was already dealt with several centuries earlier. This raises the question: can theologians and historians living today speak of the first Council of Nicaea without taking into consideration the other, later councils, such as Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon, that influenced the liturgical commemoration and reception of Nicaea?

Abstract

This paper looks at the Council of Nicaea of 325, its texts that relate to liturgy, their reception, and the commemoration of the council in various liturgical traditions. Both the date of the council and the number of participants is not completely clear from the historical record, leading to later hypotheses and symbolic interpretations of the timing and the number of those in attendance. Byzantine

118 See the “Menologion of Basil” in codex Vatican Gr. 1613 (Diktyon 68244), fol. 108. Online: <https://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/notices/cote/68244/>. See also A. Zakharova, “The miniatures of the Imperial Menologia”, in *Νέα Πρόμη* 7 (2010), 131-153.

119 S. Salaville, “L’iconographie des «sept conciles œcuméniques»”, in *Échos d’Orient* 25 (1926), 144-176; Christopher Walter, *Le souvenir du IIe concile de Nicée dans l’iconographie byzantine*, in F. Boespflug and N. Lossky (eds.), *Nicée II 787–1987. Douze siècles d’images religieuses*, Cerf, Paris 1987, 167-183, especially 179-182.

historians believe the council likely took place at the end of May, after Pascha but before Pentecost, and the number of participants was first proposed by Hilary of Poitiers as 318, coinciding with the number of Lot's servants (cf. Gen. 14:14). Each of the twenty canons of the council regulated aspects of liturgical life to varying degrees, with certain liturgical practices being not a consequence of Nicaea but preceding the doctrine defined there. The council's Symbol of Faith also entered liturgical practice, first attested in the Eucharistic liturgy in Constantinople in the sixth century, coinciding with the liturgical commemoration of the Council of Nicaea both annually as a feast day and within the context of the diptychs of the Anaphora in the Eucharistic liturgy.

After a survey of the early Jerusalemite, Constantinopolitan, Coptic, Ethiopian, Syrian, and Latin traditions, the paper analyses the hymnography of the Byzantine Rite *akolouthia* for the Council of Nicaea I. These hymns reveal a fusion of various ecumenical councils in their historical narration of the events and doctrines of Nicaea that make it difficult to distinguish one council for another and to speak of the first Council of Nicaea without taking into consideration the other, later councils, such as Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon, which themselves influenced the liturgical reception and commemoration of the first Council of Nicaea.



HU ISSN 2416-2213

ISSN 2416-2213



9 772416 221003 >