

## The Spread of Doctrines and the Ecumenical Councils within the Byzantine Empire

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### ABSTRACT

*With the rise of Christianity in the middle of the first century A.D, a new type of religious educational institution began to appear. At the end of the second century, the first catechetical school was founded in Alexandria (Egypt). Episcopal schools and schools for exegetes (interpreters of the Holy Scriptures) were established in Jerusalem, Rome, and other cities of the Roman Empire. A system of religious educational institutions gradually developed, including bishops' (Episcopal), catechetical, and pastoral monks' schools, as well as boarding schools at monasteries. During the Byzantine period, religious seminaries were founded by the Armenian-Gregorian and Georgian churches. Catholic religious educational institutions differed little from Orthodox religious schools, and had a strictly expressed religious and professional tendency. Councils were two types: Ecumenical Councils (ecumenical worldwide pertaining to ecumenical lands) and local or spatial councils. Ecumenical councils were held many times in the first centuries and witnessed them representative from all over the world. The main reason for holding these councils was the rise of bizarre doctrines which must be investigated and examined and making decisions about them and their innovators. 19th councils, of the Ecumenical councils were held starting with the first council of Nicaea in 325 A.D until council of Basel, Ferrara, and Florence in 1431-1445 A.D. The orthodoxies did not admit any decisions, but of the first- seven councils whose last one of them was in Second Council of Nicaea in 787 A.D.*

**Keywords:** The byzantine empire, doctrines, the bishops, catholic, orthodox, ecumenical councils

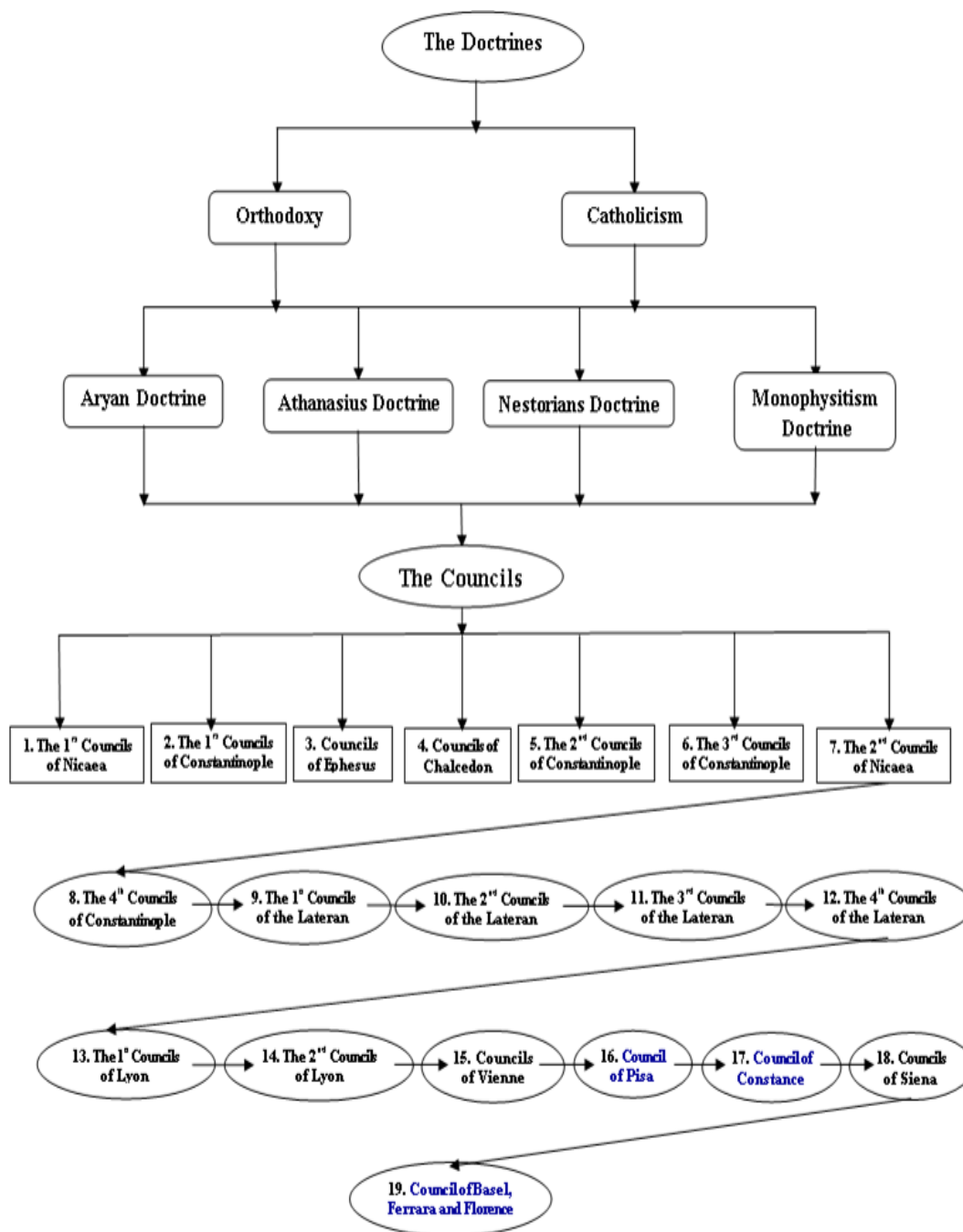
### INTRODUCTION

The dangers that threaten the Byzantine Empire in the beginning of its rise were religious disputes and conflicts as well as the different doctrines. It is noted that these disputes succeeded to harm the Byzantine East dangerously while the gothic Berbers failed to do that. There were no religious differences and conflicts among doctrines in the Byzantine West. In addition, it is known that the great Constantine's profession of Christianity helped much in its spread. In the century following Constantine's death, all emperors were Christians except Julian. Yet, spread and of Christianity and growth of the church led to the rise of huge churches in the east besides the Church of Constantinople. These were the churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria. Each of these churches had its own claims which were different from others in terms of sovereign and so on. It, thus, was difficult to achieve harmony, equality and union among them theoretically as some of these churches were more important than others. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D, competition among these churches increased when bishops of Alexandria and Rome condemned of the high position of Constantinople bishops. Therefore, the bishops of Antioch tried carelessly to ruin the claims of popery of

Jerusalem. Besides, the conflicts and competition between the Church of Rome and Constantinople took place. Regarding that, the bishops of Ancient Rome enjoyed a high religious position and Rome was the capital of the Empire. However, bishops of Constantinople claimed the positions. To know surely the claims of Constantinople Church, in the late of 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D, Pope Damasus explained how Peters' church in Rome had a superior position.(Vryonis:1967)

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A conceptual framework helps to focus the study toward the problems and issues in the context of the spread of doctrines and councils within the Byzantine Empire. The overall framework of this study is shown in a diagrammatic form of a flow chart as shown in figure (1).



## THE DOCTRINES

The religious conflicts among doctrines got increased when the Byzantine society established a religious society, and theology was the most favourite topic to be discussed among public inhabitants of Constantinople. Gregory (340-400 A.D) the bishop of Nyssa, referred when he went to the capital Constantinople to that he found its inhabitants talked about theology cleverly, however,

*"if you ask someone of them about the price of some commodity, he answered you asking about the born and the unborn, and if you ask him about the price of bread, the bakery owner told you that the father is greater than the son and the son should be inferior than the father, and if you ask the person in charge of toilets to prepare you the toilet, he answered you that the son was created from nothing."(Vryonis:1967)*

Among the doctrines spread in the Byzantine Empire, Orthodoxy, Catholic, Arianism, Athanasianism, Nestorianism and Monophysitism about determining the relation between the Christ (the son) and God (the father). In addition, the argument about the nature of the Christ took theologians and emperors around half a century. Consequently, this argument led to disputes between the teachings of the main churches in the Byzantine Empire. Also, competition between them led to the increase in disputes between them about their bishopric as well as, led to the division of religious unity inside and outside of the Byzantine Empire. We will define these doctrines as the following:

**The Orthodox**, the Formative Age if the early fourth century marks the end of the period of persecutions and the Church's formative age, it also marks the dawn of the medieval period. With the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D, in fact, we are standing on the threshold of a new civilization - the Christian empire of medieval Byzantine. Clearly, Constantine's recognition of Christianity was decisive. Equally momentous, however, was his decision to transfer the imperial residence - the center of Roman government - to Constantinople in 330 A.D. The importance of this event in the history of Eastern Christianity can hardly be exaggerated. For this capital, which was situated in the old Greek city of Byzantine, soon became the focus of the new emerging Orthodox civilization. Historical opinion, it is true, is divided on the question of Byzantine's contribution to civilization. Still, its lasting legacy lies primarily in the area of religion and art; it is these which give Byzantine culture its unity and cohesion. The new cultural synthesis that developed was profoundly Christian, dominated by the Christian vision of life, rather than the pagan. We need only turn to Justinian's "Great Church" of the Holy Wisdom - the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople - to understand this. But if Constantinople, the "New Rome," became the setting for this new civilization, it also became the unrivalled center of Orthodox Christianity itself.(Coppa:1998)

The Orthodox is the second largest body of Christians, with an estimated membership between 250 million and 350 million people. The Orthodox understands them to constitute the original Catholic Christian Church founded by Jesus Christ. The Orthodox faith is notable for its use of icons, candles, incense, relics of saints, and beautiful vestments during her rich liturgical services. It is often confused with the Byzantine-rite Catholics who are in communion with the Pope of Rome. The Orthodox is not in communion with the Roman Catholics, whom they view as holding several false doctrines. While in the West the Orthodox may be thought of as the Church in Russia, Greece, and other Eastern European countries, they are present on all inhabited continents and in most countries of the world.

**The Catholic** is a denomination of Christianity. The Catholics believe in the divinity of the person of Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God, and worship the God of Abraham. The Catholic has a single leader, the Bishop of Rome, also known as the Pope. Present day

governance of the ministries of the Catholic is divided hierarchically into Dioceses overseen by a Diocesan Bishop, who in turn oversees Diocesan priests and deacons on the level of the individual Church.(Brown:2002)

The Catholic asserts that the Pope is the divinely-chosen successor of St. Peter, upon whom Jesus built his church. The Catholic Church consists of those Christians who are in full communion with the Pope, including "Uniate Catholics" in Eastern Europe who, strictly speaking, are not part of the Roman Church. The term "Catholic Church" is, literally, the Universal Church of Jesus Christ "from the Greek *katholikos*, meaning universal."(Coppa:1998) The Catholic has suffered several schisms over its history; most notably that with the Church of the East following the First Ephesians in 431 A.D Council, the several Oriental Orthodox churches following the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D, the Eastern Orthodox Church following the Great Schism of 1054 A.D.

**Arianism** is the theological teaching attributed to Arius, a Christian presbyter from Alexandria, Egypt, concerning the relationship of the entities of the Trinity "God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit" and the precise nature of the Son of God. Deemed a heretic by the First Council of Nicaea of 325 A.D, Arius was later exonerated in 335 A.D at the First Synod of Tyre, and then, after his death, pronounced a heretic again at the First Council of Constantinople of 381 A.D. The Byzantine Emperors Flavius Julius Constantius II (337-361 A.D) and Flavius Julius Valens (364-378 A.D) were Arians or Semi-Arians. The Arian concept of Christ is that the Son of God did not always exist, but was created by-and is therefore distinct from and inferior to-God the Father. (Harnack:1900)

Arianism is defined as those teachings attributed to Arius which is in opposition to mainstream Trinitarian Christological doctrine, as determined by the first two Ecumenical Councils and currently maintained by the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Churches and some Reformation Protestant Churches. "Arianism" is also often used to refer to other nontrinitarian theological systems of the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D, which regarded Jesus Christ-the Son of God, the Logos-as either a created being, or as neither uncreated nor created in the sense other beings are created (as in Semi-Arianism). (Kelly:1978)

**Athanasianism**this creed is named after Athanasius (293-373 A.D), the champion of Orthodoxy against Arian attacks on the doctrine of the trinity. Although Athanasius did not write this creed and it is improperly named after him, the name persists because until the seventeenth century A.D it was commonly ascribed to him. It is not from Greek "Eastern", but from Latin "Western" origin, and is not recognized by the Eastern Orthodox Church today. Apart from the opening and closing sentences, this creed consists of two parts, the first setting forth the Orthodox doctrine of the trinity, and the second dealing chiefly with the incarnation and the two-nature doctrine.(Pelikan:1971)

Thus began Catholic Christianity's fight against the heresy of Arianism. Athanasius fought consistently against Arianism all his life. He accompanied Alexander to the First Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D, which council produced the Nicene Creed and anathematized Arius and his followers. On 9<sup>th</sup> May 328 A.D, he succeeded Alexander as bishop of Alexandria. As a result of rises and falls in Arianism's influence, he was banished from Alexandria only to be later restored on at least five separate occasions, perhaps as many as seven. This gave rise to the expression "Athanasius contra mundum" or "Athanasius against the world". During some of his exiles, he spent time with the Desert Fathers, monks and hermits who lived in remote areas of Egypt. (Robertson:1957)

**Nestorianism** was an ancient Christian heresy associated with Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, who taught that Christ consisted of two distinct persons "human and divine Logos", rather than a unified person. Nestorius' view of Christ was condemned at the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. The Christological debates surrounding his teachings led to the Nestorian schism, separating the Assyrian Church of the East from the Byzantine Church.

Nestorianism originated in the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D out of an attempt to rationally explain and understand the incarnation of the divine Logos, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity as the man Jesus Christ. It taught that the human and divine essences of Christ were separate and that there were two persons, the man Jesus Christ and the divine Logos, which dwelt in the man. Consequently, Nestorians rejected such terminology as "God suffered" or "God was crucified," because the humanity of Jesus Christ that suffered was separate from his divinity. Likewise, they rejected the term Theotokos "Giver of birth to God/Mother of God" as a title of the Virgin Mary, suggesting instead the title Christotokos "Giver of birth to Christ/Mother of Christ", because in their opinion Mary gave birth to only the human person of Jesus and not the divine.(Baum &Winkler:2003)

**Monophysitism**, "from the Greek Monos meaning one, alone and physis meaning nature", or Monophysitism, is an error concerning the nature of Christ that asserts Jesus had only one nature, not two as is taught in the correct doctrine of the hypostatic union: Jesus is both God and man in one person. In Monophysitism, the single nature was divine, not human. It is sometimes referred to as Eutychianism, after Eutyches 378-452 A.D, but there are slight differences. Monophysitism arose out of a reaction against Nestorianism which taught Jesus was two distinct persons instead of one. Its roots can even be traced back to Apollinarianism which taught that the divine nature of Christ overtook and replaced the human one. Monophysitism and its antithesis, Nestorianism, were both hotly disputed and divisive competing tenets in the maturing Christian traditions during the first half of the fifth century A.D; during the tumultuous last decades of the Western Empire, and marked by the political shift in all things to a center of gravity then located in the Eastern Roman Empire, and particularly in Syria, the Levant, and Anatolia, where Monophysitism was popular among the people.(Robertson:1957)

Monophysitism was confined mainly to the Eastern Church and had little influence in the West. In 451 A.D, the Council of Chalcedon attempted to establish a common ground between the Monophysitism and the orthodox, but it did not work and divisions arose in the Eastern Church which eventually excommunicated the Monophysitism in the 6th century.(Baum &Winkler:2003) The denial of the human nature of Christ is a denial of the true incarnation of the Word as a man. Without a true incarnation there can be no atonement of sin for mankind since it was not then a true man who died for our sins. It was condemned as heresy at the third Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 680-681 A.D. Monophysitism, the Christology of the Oriental Orthodox churches, is considered by Chalcedonian churches as a variant of Monophysitism, but these churches view their theology as distinct from Monophysitism and anathematize Eutyches.(Lembke:2010)

Through the definition of doctrines spread in the Byzantine Empire, therefore, we must examine the relationship between these doctrines. The issue of trinity, that Alexandrian priest Arius claimed and called for, took up and busied theology scholars besides emperors for more than half a century. Arius denied the godhood of the Christ and denied the similarity between the son and the father, and First Council of Nicaea his views in 325 A.D. Then, Arianism played an important role during the govern of the emperor Valens, however his death in 378 A.D in front of the Gothic ruined the Arianism as when Theodosius I became the emperor, he straightened it for the heathenish heterodoxy Arians, and enacted a law in 380

A.D, in which he declared that any Christian has the right to believe in the triple; the father, son , and the Holy Spirit as evangels have reported about them and monitories of messengers, and any others are heterodoxy and mad and have no right to call their worship places churches besides they are exposed to severe punishment and tyranny. In the following year 381 A.D, Theodosius I called for to The Ecumenical councils in Constantinople, it's the second The Ecumenical councils "First Council of Constantinople". This is council re-emphasized on doctrine of Athanasianism and recommended to consider Arianism heterodoxy, and assured decisions the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. This way, emperor Theodosius I was acting as if he was the responsible for the church's affairs. (Daoud:n.d)

The emperor Theodosius I took the first steps to against the heathenish, thus he prevented them from making offerings to their gods, and ordered to close many of their temples. Besides, he made a decision in 392 A.D according to which the heathenish were prohibited and banned to make offerings to their gods or burn incense in their temples and so on, and considered that anyone who did these actions committed a crime against the emperor and religion, thus must be punished severely. Then, the decision of the empire abated the existence of heathenism as a professed religion and referred to it as heterodoxy and superstition. (Vasiliev:1952)

Then, the emperor Theodosius II, (408-450 A.D) the son of Arcadius stroke fiercely Athena's heathenish school, the same as what Theodosius I did before. In 425 A.D, the emperor made a decision to establish a scientific Christian institute in Constantinople to compete through its teachers and students the heathenish institute of Athena which was still teaching the Greek philosophy. In fact, since Constantinople became the capital of the Empire in the era of Constantine, many eloquence and philosophy scholars came to it from Africa and Levant and other places, till it became in the era of Theodosius II the second largest cultural center in the empire. In 425 A.D, emperor Theodosius II made a decision regarding organizing and establishing a high school, which was established in Constantinople, in which 31 teachers were teaching syntax, eloquence, law, and philosophy. Despite Latin was still the formal language in the Empire, the decision of Theodosius II(Vasiliev:1952) ordered to organize courses for Greek which became a common language in the eastern part of the Empire. This led to the increasing attention paid to Greek language in Constantinople University more than attention paid to teaching Latin. Then, the educational center in Constantinople became a dangerous competitive to Athena's heathenish school which started at that time to fall down and decline due to Christianity victory. Soon, the University of Theodosius II became the root or stone of culture and a center of Byzantine civilization. (Vasiliev:1952)

Arianism got abashed in the East gradually, but instead raised a new churchly argument affected more on current events at that time in the Byzantine Empire than the impact of Arianism. This churchly argument rose as a result of the great difference in instructions of both religious schools in Antioch and in Alexandria. So, if Arianism denied the godhood of the Christ, the new argument was about the relation of human character of the Christ with his character as a God. Antioch religious school, in the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D that the Christ has two separated characters, the first his human nature, and the second his godlike character, and both of the characters live together. Accordingly, Christ is the container Allah chose to place godlike character in, at the same time Christ is the son of Mary the virgin. So, the Christ is a human inside him a godlike character, and Mary is not a god but she is the mother of the Christ. Alexandria school led by the patriarch Cyril I (430-463 A.D) was the first one to stand against this view and say that Allah created a human and placed inside him two characters, godlike and human character, and both of these characters combined together in

the Christ. Thus, the Christ became one single hypostasis and one single character after combination without any difference, merge or impossibility.(Vryonis:1967)

In 428 A.D, Nestorius became the patriarch of Constantinople Church. Thus, he exploited his great religious position to call for and invite to views and thoughts of Antioch school which said that there are two characters in the Christ, godlike and human character, and both are different from each other. This at the time when monks in Egypt supported Alexandria bishop Cyril I, like religion men in Rome who supported him also. Consequently, the issue of Christ nature and character became with important role in history of Byzantine Empire, in its relation with Rome's Church, and in its relation with the eastern states in which the one character doctrine got spread and strengthened more and more.

In 431 A.D, in Ephesus city, the third Council of Ephesus was held to investigate this great argument around the character of Christ. This Council decided that Nestorius the bishop of Constantinople is heterodox and pagan because he insisted that the Christ is human, besides, it charged him of dividing the character of the Christ into the holy word and Christ the human. Thus, Cyril achieved great victory as he triumphed over the patriarch of the capital of the Byzantine Empire itself. Then, the church of Alexandria reached a great degree and looked forward to leading the Eastern Church. After the death of Cyril in 444C.E, his successor Dioscorus followed his steps and kept the high position and degree Alexandria church reached. Besides, Eutyches, one of the Church men in Constantinople who was dear and close to the emperor, helped him in doing that. (Ostrogorsky:1956, Daoud:n.d)

This way, Alexandria Church men of those who were following Cyril omitted the human character of the Christ, and declared that despite there are two characters of the Christ, theology and manhood combined together completely. Then, this became the Monophysitism which made the Christ with one character with characteristics and qualities of two characters. The Church of Rome and Constantinople disagreed with the one character doctrine, and when disputes and conflicts got increased, Dioscorus drove the emperor Theodosius II to hold a council in Ephesus in 449 A.D. The council was under the chairmanship of Dioscorus, then they decided that the doctrine of Eutyches, Monophysitism, in which he denied the manhood (human character) of the Christ completely. Soon, disorder and indiscipline prevailed in the Christian world, for example, the Pope Leo I broke out a war against this council till it was abated from the number of the Ecumenical councils and it was known as Latrocinium, the council of thieves. (Baynes:1926)

In the following year from the Council of Ephesus, 450 A.D, the emperor Theodosius II died without leaving a crown price, so Marcian. Finish that religious dispute which threatened the unity of Byzantine Empire and its position, so he invited in 451 A.D to hold The Ecumenical council in Chalcedon to investigate the affairs of the religion. The council condemned of decisions of Latrocinium or the council of thieves in Ephesus, besides, Dioscorus condemned of Alexandria bishops, and decided to depose and sending him into exile. Also, he blamed Eutyches. Also, the council denied and refused Monophysitism, doctrine of the one single character. Then, the council decided that the deliverance of human will come through the saver who is a god at the same time and has all characteristics and qualities of godhood, besides, he is a human and has all characteristics of humans (two characters without change or separation). In addition, the council allowed the form that was refined by the pope Leo I and cited in his believing monitory called Tomos, in which he condemned of views of Eutyches and Dioscorus, besides, in which he replied to those who said that,

*"There are two characters of the Christ and it is important to differentiate between them, they are the godlike and human characters. Difference between both characters still existed although the person is one."*

Then, his form became the educational religious rule for the Orthodox Church. Consequently, disputes between the two characters doctrine in which Constantinople believes, and the one character doctrine in which Eastern state of the Byzantine Empire believe, were the point around which churchly differences were cantering, and from which started Copts and Syrians rebelled and protested against Byzantine govern and showed their desire to get rid of it firstly by welcoming Persians, then, by welcoming the Muslim Arabs later on. (Vasiliev:1952, Vryonis:1967, Ostrogorsky:1956)

Then, the religious problem in the Byzantine Empire aggravated over time that the one character doctrine got strengthened in the Eastern regions, which in turn led to enlarging the dissenter between Constantinople and the Eastern State following it. Then, the emperor Zinon (474-491 A.D) tried to conciliate between Christians in the Eastern states, the followers of the one character doctrine, and the followers of the double characters doctrine, the followers Council of Chalcedon, and he tried to find a mediating solution, so he published in 482 A.D, after the permission of the patriarch of Constantinople, his known decision called "Henoticon", the decision of unity. This decision approved decisions of the first-three The Ecumenical councils (First Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D, First Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D, and Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D). Besides, the decision avoided mentioning anything condemning any of both doctrine or mentioning the words "one characters, two characters". Also, the decision abated cleverly what ChalecodonCouncil decided about the two characters of the Christ, however, this decision did not satisfy any of both parties, it did not satisfy the followers of two characters doctrine due to concessions granted to Monophysitism, besides, the followers of Monophysitism saw that the decision was not clear and decisive and contained inadequate concessions. Thus, the unity decision did not unite parties but increased dissenter and conflicts between both parties. So, Rome's pope interfered onto this new dispute and declared his refusal of unity decision, and made the decision of deprivation against the Patriarch of Constantinople, Acacius, in a council in Rome. The patriarch reacted to that by not mentioning the name of the Pope in practicing fetishes. Then, a new leaf of popery conflict started and lasted for 30 years.(Vasiliev:1952)

The problem got aggravated over years. When the emperor Zinon died in 491 A.D, Anastasius I was chosen to be the emperor. The new emperor found that dispute was fierce among followers of both doctrines, so, at first, he declared that he belonged to the supporters of Orthodoxy "the two characters doctrine" in an attempt to satisfy the patriarch of Constantinople, and then he converted to supporting Monophysitism "the one character doctrine". Copts in Egypt and Syrian were very glad about this conversion in the emperor's attitude, however, his policy in treating Monophysitism followers led people to whimpering and annoying, thus, disorders and turbulences broke out in Constantinople till breaking out fires into public buildings, destroying the statue of the emperor, demonstrating against him, abusing him and throwing him with bricks. Anastasius I religious policy resulted in that the general chief, Vitalian, broke out turbulences in Thrace, and then he led an army consisting of the Hunnish and Bulgarians, and probably from Slavs too, and advanced towards Constantinople by the help of a big navy. Doubtlessly, his objective was deposing the emperor politically; however, he declared that he wanted to defend the Orthodox Church. Then, Anastasius I could not stop that turbulence except after scathing strife, but, Vitalian in doing what he did, showed and uncovered weaknesses of the Empire and wealth of Constantinople in front of Berbers.(Vasiliev:1952)

In 518 A.D the emperor Astasius I died leaving no crown prince, so the Empire witnessed a period of turbulence and disorder ended up to Justin I becoming the emperor in that same year, Justin I the chief of the imperial guards. As soon as he became the emperor, he tried to



get of religious disputes, so declared his support and provision to decision Council of Chalcedon, and persecuted the followers of the one character doctrine fiercely, and declared resuming friendly relations with Rome's Church finishing by that the disconnect between Rome's Church and Constantinople's Church that started since the decision of unity was enacted by Zinon.(Vasiliev:1952)

Although Justin I supported the two characters doctrine which is the doctrine the Council of Chalcedon and launched fighting and getting rid of Monophysitism inside the Empire, he followed the policy of helping Christianity outside the empire against any danger threatening it. This could be evidenced through that the Empire supported and enhanced Axum kingdom in Ethiopia in its invasion of Yemen although the Axum kingdom followed the one character doctrine (Monophysitism). For Monophysitism, the one character doctrine, it's roots well-grounded over years in Egypt and the Levant till patriarchs in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D followed the policy of persecution and sometimes used the policy of accord, and all these attempts failed to attract the followers of the one character doctrine to Constantinople Church, the Church of the Byzantine Empire. The political results of this churchly dispute led to enlarging the gap of cultural dissenter inside the Byzantine Empire, this made it easy for the Arabs to invade the Levant and Egypt due to what was known about Muslims like tolerance about choosing religion.

## **THE ECUMENICAL COUNCILS**

The councils are consultative organizations within the Church; their systems were organized by messengers in their being alive. The first council was held in Jerusalem in 105 A.D under the chairmanship of the bishop Jacob the messenger. It was held to discuss the gentile's circumcision, and then the church continued along this road.

The councils are two types: the Ecumenical councils (Ecumenical worldwide pertaining to inhabited lands) and local or spatial councils. Ecumenical councils were held many times in the first centuries and witnessed them representative from all over the world. The main reason for holding these councils was the rise of bizarre doctrines which must be investigated and examined and making decisions about them and about their innovators. 19<sup>th</sup> councils, of the Ecumenical councils were held starting with the first council of Nicaea in 325 A.D till council of Basel, Ferrara and Florence in 1431-1445 A.D. The Orthodoxies do not admit any decisions but of the first-seven councils who's last one of them was in Second Council of Nicaea in 787 A.D. Also, the most important Council of these was that first one in Nicaea. In both Councils, first and second in Nicaea, the main Christian beliefs, on which all Christian denomination and doctrines agree, were decided "godhood of the Christ, godhood of the Holy Spirit, thus, completing the firmness belief with both of these". For the Ecumenical councils, they are many, and churches were and still holding them within their own space to decide certain beliefs, or refuse other, or even looking into some local affairs.(Shalabi:1990)

The Ecumenical Councils, Space does not permit us to elaborate on this period in detail. It is, quite simply, the single longest chapter in the history of the Church. The Byzantine Empire was characterized by a remarkable endurance: it survived for over a millennium, until its fall to the Ottoman Turks in 1453 A.D. We will therefore limit ourselves to an outline of this age, to the events and developments which exercised the greatest influence on the Church's life. In this respect, the seven ecumenical councils with their theological discussions and doctrinal formulations are of particular importance. Specifically, these assemblies were responsible for the formulation of Christian doctrine. As such, they constitute a permanent standard for an Orthodox understanding of the Trinity, the person of Christ, and the incarnation. The mystery of the divine reality with which these verbal definitions were concerned was, of course, not

exhausted. All the same, they remain a permanent authoritative standard against which all subsequent speculative theology is measured. Their decisions remain binding for the whole Church; non acceptance constitutes exclusion from the communion of the Church. Hence the expulsion and separation from the body of the Church of many groups, the Jacobites, Armenians, Copts, and Nestorians, all of whom refused to adhere to them. Ultimately acceptance of these councils by the whole Church is what made these decisions valid and authoritative. By and large, however, their reception was also due to the great theologians or Fathers of this age; their literary defence of the councils' theology was decisive for the Church's victory.

But the seven ecumenical councils are significant for another reason. The Church's visible threefold ministerial structure was already a reality in many churches by the post-apostolic period as we have had occasion to observe. Each of these local churches, with its own independent hierarchical structure, was a self-governing unit. However, precise standards governing the relations of these self-contained churches with each other had not been defined. Still, a certain "power structure" modelled, in the main, upon the organization of the Byzantine Empire did emerge.(Shalabi:1990)Thus, even before the fourth century a provincial system had developed in which churches were grouped in provinces. In such cases it was customary to give greater honour to the "metropolitan" or bishop of the capital city (metropolis) of each province. Similarly, following the importance of certain cities in the Byzantine administration, special precedence was accorded the presiding bishop of the three largest cities in the Empire: Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch. This development, however, in which a church was ranked according to its civil importance in the administrative divisions of the Roman state, had evolved by common consensus, without any ecclesiastical legislation to support it. (Painter: 1964, Bury: 1963-1981)

In the history of Christianity, the first seven Ecumenical Councils, from the First Council of Nicaea (325 A.D) to the Second Council of Nicaea (787 A.D), represent an attempt to reach an Orthodox consensus and to establish a unified Christendom as the State Church of the Byzantine Empire. The East-West Schism, formally dated to 1054 A.D, was still almost three centuries off from the last of these councils. Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Anglican churches all trace their clergy by apostolic succession back to this period and the earlier period referred to as Early Christianity. However, breaks of unity that still persist today had occurred even during this period. The Assyrian Church of the East accepted the first two, but rejected the third, the First Council of Ephesus (431 A.D). The Quinisext Council (692 A.D), which attempted to establish the Pentarchy and which is not generally considered one of the first seven ecumenical councils, is not accepted by the Roman Catholic Church, which also considers that there have been many more ecumenical councils after the first seven. (Eyre: 2002)

This era begins with the First Council of Nicaea, which enunciated the Nicene Creed that in its original form and as modified by the First Council of Constantinople of 381 A.D was seen as the touchstone of orthodoxy on the doctrine of the Trinity. At this point, though the emperors had already ceased to reside habitually at Rome, the church in that city was seen as the first church among churches In 330 A.D Constantine built his "New Rome", which became known as Constantinople, in the East. All of the seven councils were held in the East, specifically in Anatolia and the neighbouring city of Constantinople. The First Seven Ecumenical Councils, as commonly understood, are:

**First Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D** Emperor Constantine I convened this council to settle a controversial issue, the relation between Jesus Christ and God the Father. The Emperor

wanted to establish universal agreement on it. Representatives came from across the Empire, subsidized by the Emperor. Previous to this council, the bishops would hold local councils, such as the Council of Jerusalem, but there had been no universal, or ecumenical, council. (Ashour: 1975)

The council drew up a creed, the original Nicene Creed, which received nearly unanimous support. The council's description of "God's only-begotten Son", Jesus Christ, as of the same substance with God the Father became a touchstone of Christian Trinitarianism. The council also addressed the issue of dating Easter, recognised the right of Alexandria to jurisdiction outside of its own province "by analogy with the jurisdiction exercised by Rome" and the prerogatives of the churches in Antioch and the other provinces and approved the custom by which Jerusalem was honoured, but without the metropolitan dignity.(Cross:2005)

The Council was opposed by the Arians, and Constantine tried to reconcile Arius, after whom Arianism is named, with the Church. Even when Arius died in 336, one year before the death of Constantine I, the controversy continued, with various separate groups espousing Arian sympathies in one way or another.(Eyre:2002) In 359 A.D, a double council of Eastern and Western bishops affirmed a formula stating that the Father and the Son were similar in accord with the scriptures, the crowning victory for Arianism. The opponents of Arianism rallied, but in the first Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D marked the final victory of Nicene orthodoxy within the Empire, though Arianism had by then spread to the Germanic tribes, among whom it gradually disappeared after the conversion of the Franks to Catholicism in 496 A.D. (Bury: 1963-1981)

In 331 A.D, Constantine I commissioned Eusebius to deliver fifty Bibles for the Church of Constantinople. Athanasius recorded Alexandrian scribes around 340 A.D preparing Bibles for Constans. Little else is known, though there is plenty of speculation. For example, it is speculated that this may have provided motivation for canon lists, and that Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus are examples of these Bibles. Together with the Peshitta and Codex Alexandrinus, these are the earliest extant Christian Bibles. (Cross: 2005)

**First Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D** the council approved the current form of the Nicene Creed as used in the Eastern Orthodox Church and Oriental Orthodox churches, but, except when Greek is used, with two additional Latin phrases "Deum de Deo and Filioque" in the West. The form used by the Armenian Apostolic Church, which is part of Oriental Orthodoxy, has many more additions. This fuller creed may have existed before the Council and probably originated from the baptismal creed of Constantinople.(Cross:2005)

The council also condemned Apollinarism, the teaching that there was no human mind or soul in Christ. It also granted Constantinople honorary precedence over all churches save Rome. The council did not include Western bishops or Roman legates, but it was accepted as ecumenical in the West. (Daoud: n.d)

**Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D** repudiated Nestorianism, proclaimed the Virgin Mary as the Theotokos (Birth-giver to God, God-bearer, Mother of God), repudiated Pelagianism, and reaffirmed the Nicene Creed. This and all the following councils in this list are not recognized by the Assyrian Church of the East.(Vryonis:1967)

Second Council of Ephesus in 449 A.D declared Eutyches Orthodox and attacked his opponents. Though originally convened as an ecumenical council, this council is not recognized as ecumenical and denounced as a Robber Council by the Chalcedonian (Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestants).(Stanley:1908, Nichols:1941)Theodosius II called the council to settle the Nestorian controversy. Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, opposed use of the term Theotokos "God-Bearer". This term had long been used by Orthodox

writers, and it was gaining popularity along with devotion to Mary as Mother of God. He reportedly taught that there were two separate persons in the incarnate Christ, though whether he actually taught this is disputed. The council deposed Nestorius, repudiated Nestorianism, proclaimed the Virgin Mary as the Theotokos. (Nichols: 1941)

After quoting the Nicene Creed in its original form, as at the First Council of Nicaea, without the alterations and additions made at the first Council of Constantinople, it declared it "unlawful for any man to bring forward, or to write, or to compose a different Faith as a rival to that established by the Holy Fathers assembled with the Holy Ghost in Nicaea." (Stanley: 1908)

**Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D** repudiated the Eutychianism doctrine of Monophysitism, adopted the Chalcedonian Creed, which described the hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ, human and divine. Reinstated those deposed in 449 A.D and deposed Dioscorus of Alexandria. The most important point for us is that Council of Chalcedon upgraded again the position of Constantinople church, made it at a degree higher than Alexandria Church and granted members the Council of Chalcedon, the bishops of the five churches, the title patriarch, and these churches are as follows respectively; Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. The direct result of decisions of this council was increasing disputes, dissenter and conflicts between Constantinople and the eastern states following it. In addition, there were dangerous political consequences none of the participators in the council ever expected, that most inhabitants of Egypt and the Levant, they were Greeks, were of those who followed that Monophysitism. To conclude, the one character doctrine, and they got stick to their doctrine even after the Council of Chalcedon, besides, they did not even lean to accord that the Egyptian Coptic Church banned the Greek language when practicing fetishes, and used the Coptic language, thus the Coptic Church was called orthodox.(Vasiliev:1952) This is also the last council explicitly recognised by the Anglican Communion. This and all the following councils in this list are rejected by the Oriental Orthodoxy.(Ostrogorsky:1956)

**Second Council of Constantinople in 553 A.D** this council condemned certain Nestorian writings and authors. This move was instigated by Emperor Justinian in an effort to conciliate the Monophysitism Christians, it was opposed in the West, and the Popes' acceptance of the council caused a major schism. (Painter: 1964)

Prior to the Second Council of Chalcedon was a prolonged controversy over the treatment of three subjects, all considered sympathetic to Nestorianism, the heresy that there are two separate persons in the Incarnation of Christ. Emperor Justinian condemned the Three Chapters, hoping to appeal to Monophysitism Christians with his anti-Nestorian zeal. Monophysitism believes that in the Incarnate Christ there is one nature, not two. Eastern Patriarchs supported the Emperor, but in the West his interference was resented, and Pope Vigilius resisted his edict on the grounds that it opposed the Chalcedonian decrees. Justinian's policy was in fact an attack on Antiochene theology and the decisions of Chalcedon. The pope assented and condemned the Three Chapters, but protests in the West caused him to retract his condemnation. The emperor called the Second Council of Constantinople to resolve the controversy. (Shalabi: 1990)

The council, attended mostly by Eastern bishops, condemned the Three Chapters and, indirectly, the Pope Vigilius. It also affirmed the East's intention to remain in communion with Rome. Vigilius declared his submission to the council, as did his successor, Pelagius I the council was not immediately recognized as ecumenical in the West, and Milan and Aquileia even broke off communion with Rome over this issue. The schism was not repaired

until the late 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D for Milan and the late 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D for Aquileia. Emperor Justinian's policy failed to reconcile the Monophysitism.(Smith:1950)

**Third Council of Constantinople in 680-681 A.D** repudiated Monothelitism affirmed that Christ had both human and divine wills. (Bury: 1963-1981)

Quinisext Council (Fifth and Sixth) or Council in Trullo 692 A.D has not been accepted by the Roman Catholic Church. Since it was mostly an administrative council for raising some local canons to ecumenical status, establishing principles of clerical discipline, addressing the Biblical canon, and establishing the Pentarchy, without determining matters of doctrine, the Eastern Orthodox Church does not consider it to be a full-fledged council in its own right, instead it is considered to be an extension of the fifth and sixth councils. (Eyre: 2002)

**Second Council of Nicaea in 787 C.E: in 753 A.D** Emperor Constantine V convened the Synod of Hieria, which declared that images of Jesus misrepresented him and that images of Mary and the saints were idols. The Second Council of Nicaea restored the veneration of icons and ended the first iconoclasm. (Bury: 1963-1981)

In the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D, Emperor Michael III struggled to appoint Photius as Patriarch of Constantinople and Pope Nicholas I struggled to keep Ignatius there. After Michael was murdered, Ignatius was reinstated as patriarch without challenge. An ecumenical council in Constantinople held while Ignatius was patriarch, anathematized Photius. With Ignatius' death in 877 A.D, Photius became patriarch, and in 879-880 A.D an ecumenical council in Constantinople annulled the decision of the previous council. The West takes only the first as truly ecumenical and legitimate. The East takes only the second.(Eyre:2002)

Councils recognised as ecumenical in the Roman Catholic Church As late as the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D, only seven councils were recognized as ecumenical in the Roman Catholic Church. Then, in the time of Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085 A.D), canonists who in the Investiture Controversy quoted the prohibition in canon 22 of the Council of Constantinople of 869-870 A.D against laymen influencing the appointment of prelates elevated this council to the rank of ecumenical council. Only in the 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D was recognition as ecumenical granted by Catholic scholars to the Councils of the Lateran, of Lyon and those that followed.

**Fourth Council of Constantinople in 869-870 A.D** was the eighth Catholic Ecumenical Council held in Constantinople from 5<sup>th</sup> October 869 A.D, to 28<sup>th</sup> February 870 A.D. It included 102 bishops, three papal legates, and four patriarchs. The Council met in ten sessions from October 869 A.D to February 870 A.D and issued 27<sup>th</sup> canons. The council was called by Emperor Basil I the Macedonian and Pope Adrian II. It deposed Photius, a layman who had been appointed as Patriarch of Constantinople, and reinstated his predecessor Ignatius. (Smith: 1950)

The Council also reaffirmed the decisions of the Second Council of Nicaea in support of icons and holy images and required the image of Christ to have veneration equal with that of the gospel book. (Bury: 1963-1981)

A later council, the Greek Fourth Council of Constantinople, was held after Photius had been reinstated on the order of the emperor. Today, the Roman Catholic Church recognizes the council in 869-870 A.D as Constantine IV, while the Eastern Orthodox Churches recognize the councils in 879-880 A.D as Constantine IV and revere Photius as a saint. At the time that these councils were being held, this division was not yet clear. These two councils represent a break between East and West. The previous seven ecumenical councils are recognized as ecumenical and authoritative by both Greek-literate Eastern Christians and Latin-literate

Western Christians. This division led eventually to the East-West Schism of 1054 A.D. (Smith: 1950)

**First Council of the Lateran in 1123 A.D** addressed investment of bishops and the Holy Roman Emperor's role therein.

**Second Council of the Lateran in 1139 A.D** is believed to have been the Tenth Ecumenical Council by Roman Catholics. It was held by Pope Innocent II in April 1139 A.D, and was attended by close to a thousand clerics. Its immediate task was to neutralise the after-effects of the schism, which had arisen after the death of Pope Honorius II in February 1130 A.D and the setting up of Petrus Leonis as the antipope Anacletus II. Reaffirmed Lateran I and addressed clerical discipline (dress, marriages). (Eyre: 2002)

**Third Council of the Lateran in 1179 A.D** restricted papal election to the cardinals, condemned simony, and introduced minimum wages for ordination (thirty for bishops). Besides removing the remains of the recent schism, the Council condemned the Waldensian and Cathar heresies and pushed for the restoration of ecclesiastical discipline. It also became the first general Council of the Church to legislate against sodomy. (Smith: 1950)

**Fourth Council of the Lateran in 1215 A.D** defined transubstantiation addressed papal primacy and clerical discipline. (Painter: 1964)

**First Council of Lyon (Wetterau: 1994) in 1245 A.D** deposed Emperor Frederick II and instituted a levy to support the Holy Land.

**Second Council of Lyon (Richard: 1999) in 1274 A.D** attempted reunion with the Eastern churches, approved Franciscan and Dominican orders, a tithe to support Crusades, and conclave procedures. (Stanley: 1908)

**Council of Vienne in 1311-1312 A.D** was the fifteenth Ecumenical Council of the Roman Catholic Church that met between 1311 and 1312 A.D in Vienne. Its principal act was to withdraw papal support for the Knights Templar on the instigation of Philip IV of France. (Ostrogorsky: 1956)

**Council of Pisa in 1409 A.D** was an unrecognized ecumenical council of the Catholic Church held in 1409 A.D that attempted to end the Western Schism by deposing Benedict XIII and Gregory XII. Instead of ending the Western Schism, the Council elected a third papal claimant, Alexander V, who would be succeeded by John XXIII. (Vasiliev: 1952)

**Council of Constance in 1414-1418 A.D** is the 17<sup>th</sup> ecumenical council recognized by the Roman Catholic Church, held from 1414 to 1418 A.D. The council ended the Western Schism, by deposing or accepting the resignation of the remaining Papal claimants and electing Pope Martin V. (Nichols: 1941)

The Council also condemned and executed Jan Hus and ruled on issues of national sovereignty, the rights of pagans, and just war in response to a conflict between the Kingdom of Poland and the Order of the Teutonic Knights. The Council is important for its relationship to ecclesial Councilism and Papal supremacy. (Stanley: 1908)

**Council of Siena in 1423-1424 A.D** addressed Church reform. Not numbered as it was swiftly disbanded. (Richard: 1999)

**Council of Basel, Ferrara and Florence in 1431-1445 A.D** addressed church reform and reunion with the Eastern Churches, but split into two parties. The fathers remaining at Basel became the apogee of Councilism. The fathers at Florence achieved union with various Eastern Churches and temporarily with the Eastern Orthodox Church. (Ashour: 1975)

**Table 1. The Worldwide Ecumenical Councils in the History of Christianity (Shalabi: 1990)**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Date</i>
First council of Nicaea	325	Third council of Lateran	1179
First council of Constantinople	381	Fourth council of Lateran	1215
Council of Ephesus	431	First council of Lyon	1245
Council of Chalcedon	451	Second council of Lyon	1274
Second council of Constantinople	553	Council of Vienna	1311-1312
Third council of Constantinople	680-681	Council of Pisa	1409
Second council of Nicaea	787	The council of Constance	1414-1418
Fourth council of Constantinople	869-870	Council of Siena	1423-1424
First council of Lateran	1123	Council of Basel, Ferrara and Florence	1431-1445
Second council of Lateran	1139		

It is noted that these previous councils were including both members of the Church in the East and West; even they included the dissenter between both churches, the Eastern and Western Church. The dissenter whose events started in the ninth century A.D and its final events ended in the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D (1054 C.E) when both churches separated completely. The Eastern Church admitted that the first councils only were ecumenical.

It's so clear for the researcher that these councils had a very strong powers and made decisions that are now considered origins in Christianity as they made up gods, spoke about their nature, gave the Church the powers and right to forgive sins, decided that the Pope is infallible, besides, they see massive things which human can imagine that these things are of human characters. Councils had powers which most or even all religions have never known, for example, in Islam, for scholars have the right to have discretions about something but in branches, but origins like number of prayers, number of inclines, obligatory pilgrimage duty and so on they cannot have discretions bout them. Beside, Muslims do not have the right to legislate because Allah is the only one who has the right to legislate. In addition, Muslims are far away from such a thing like making up gods, and, for them, Allah is the only one who may forgive sins and accept good deeds, besides, Allah is the one who punishes severely. Also, infallibility and impeccability are only for Allah, and prophets, despite they have a great and supernal position, have no infallibility except when reporting about Allah, according to most scholars' views.(Ashour:1975)

There is a political Criticism addressed to decisions of the ninth council (Rome's council in 869 A.D) when it was decided that all Christians all over the world must follow decisions of the archbishop of Rome's Church, such a decision is considered so dangerous that it interfered onto affairs of all nations and independent countries. So, it meant that Christians wherever they from must follow their own state with their bodies and follow Rome's Church with their spirits and souls. Besides, the Pope, according to this decision, made kings and governments give in to him by the name of that decision, however, some governments rebelled and announced that they were not religious governments, thus the Pope turned

around to subjects when was unable to make governments give in to him. In the modern age, we see that the Pope bargains with this power he has at his hands. For example, it happened that the Pope met the former president of Indonesia and asked that president to let a huge number of evangelists enter his country and promised him, in exchange for that, that he ensures to him that all Christians in that country will be loyal to him. This declaration shocked all citizens and drove them mad about that danger when they realized that loyalty of their Christian citizens is at the archbishop of Rome's Church.

It considered of frankest says, what Professor S. Ashour said in his comment on councils and we quoted it as following,

*"These bishops, at first, represent some means of defending Christian faith and believing, however, soon they became afterward a tool at hands of the Empire to get to his objectives by exploiting wishes of some bishops and their ambition towards influence, powers and sovereign. So, councils became destructive tool instead of being constructive one as it opened the door widely for conflicts, disputes and dissenter between Christians all over the world." (Ashour: 1975)*

Churchly councils represent an important corner stone in churchly organization in medieval ages. In fact, the spread of Christianity accompanied by the widening of churchly powers necessitated holding several councils since the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D to solve complicated problems which accompanied the spread of Christianity on one side, and to organize Church affairs and enhance it with powers on the other side.(Painter:1964)Here, we refer to that the Church was not the first to invent the idea of holding councils or councils appeared thanks to it, but they, Church, took or derived it from Israeli charisma and from known heathenism.(Eyre:2002)

All Orthodox creedal formulas, liturgical texts, and doctrinal statements affirm the claim that the Orthodox Church has preserved the original apostolic faith, which was also expressed in the common Christian tradition of the first centuries. The Orthodox Church recognizes as ecumenical the seven councils of the 1<sup>st</sup> council of Nicaea in 325 A.D, the 1<sup>st</sup> council of Constantinople in 381 A.D, council of Ephesus in 431 A.D, council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D, the 2<sup>nd</sup> council of Constantinople in 553 A.D, the 3<sup>rd</sup> council of Constantinople 681 A.D, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> council of Nicaea in 787 A.D but considers that the decrees of several other later councils also reflect the same original faith "the councils of Constantinople that endorsed the theology of St. Gregory Palamas in the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D."

Finally, it recognizes itself as the bearer of an uninterrupted living tradition of true Christianity that is expressed in its worship, in the lives of the saints, and in the faith of the whole people of God.(Bury:1963-1981)Some of these councils were public and worldwide so bishops all over the Christian world came to them to study and discuss together problems which faced them in their power regions, or to investigate differences between them and get rid of any existing misunderstanding through evidence and persuasion. The best example for this type of councils is the 2<sup>nd</sup> council of Constantinople which was held due to conflict and dispute around the explanation of some theology topics, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> council of Constantinople which condemned of the monotheism, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> council of Nicaea which condemned of the non-iconolatry, then the 4<sup>th</sup> council of Constantinople in 869 A.D which condemned of the patriarch Photius and deposed him. It is noted here that the pre-mentioned councils were consorting between Church members from the East and the West till happened the great dissenter between the Eastern Church and the Western one. That dissenter stated to occur in the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D in the era of the patriarch Notions, and ended in the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D in 1054 A.D when the great dissenter actually occurred between both churches. Since that time, councils which were held in the West cared only about the West affairs even if the word



"ecumenical" was called to Lateran councils which were held in cathedral and popery in Rome. Thus, ecumenical councils were 19<sup>th</sup> councils in the history of Christianity. (Smith: 1950) (Refer to table 1).

In addition to these worldwide or ecumenical councils, there was a different type of local councils which had a very limited impact. That type of councils was because bishops in some European countries got used to, they sometimes organized a council in which they reunite to look into some problems facing them, such as what happened in 598 A.D when 66<sup>th</sup> bishops and 5<sup>th</sup> of archbishops from Spain and France met in Toledo. (Bury: 1963-1981) The churchly system divide this type of councils into what is known as organized regional councils, thus, the archbishop in this region invites his other fellow bishops and other executive religion men to participate in a private council regarding the region. It seems clear that this type of regional councils had its own impact in cantering churchly power and uniting churchly systems and resisting dissenter in some European countries. (Bury: 1963-1981)

Finally, comes the type of smallest councils which are the bishop councils which care about the invitation of a bishop to other bishops of churches that follow him in his episcopacy to discuss some matters or topics concerning them. This way, councils were differentiated up to this degree in medieval ages Europe. This, in turn, had an important impact on religious life. Here, we have to exclude of our thought the modern Asian constitutional views regarding the purpose of holding councils, so that our thought would not expand to those councils which were known for medieval ages Europe aimed, any case, to determine the power of popery or to limit powers of Church executive's men. (Eyre: 2002)

The churchly government in the West of Europe in the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D became like monarchy, thus, there were no wishes or greed for the churchly councils, whether inhabited or local or bishop, in limiting powers of the Pope or any other executive religion men. Objectives of inhabited councils were resisting some type heterodoxy which began to threaten the Church from a time to time, or the desire to launch a comprehensive movement to enhance and support Christianity like Crusades, or even feeling that it is necessary to initiate a collectable movement to reform the church and enhance it. It is obvious that these objectives ended directly or indirectly to enhance and support powers of popery.(Ashour:1975)So, popery in the era of Anu Cent took full control of the Church, besides controlling big councils effectively. In fact, later on there was an attempt to make councils supernal and superior in their will and powers over popery, however, this attempt did not rise except in the 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D, near the division of middle ages. (Eyre: 2002)

## **CONCLUSION**

To conclude, this paper discussed the study, we found that the victory of Christianity was achieved in the era of Constantine the great, and that was not only professing and confessing Christianity's right to be existing, but also placing it under protection of the Empire. We found also that the danger that threatened the Byzantine Empire in the beginning of its rise was the religious disputes among doctrines. It is noted that these disputes managed to harm the Byzantine East, while these disputes were not there in Latin West. Besides, it known that the profession of Christianity by the emperor Constantine I the Great helped largely to spread the word about it.

Finally, it is highlighted also that councils had very strong powers and made decisions considered origins in Christianity, besides they made up creatures and talked about their nature, gave the church thee power to forgive sins, and decided that popes are infallible. Churchly councils represented an important corner stone in churchly organization in medieval ages. In fact, the spread of Christianity and the accompanying expansion of

Church's powers necessitated holding many types of council since the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D to solve complicated problems which accompanied the spread of Christianity on one side, and to organize the affairs of the Church and enhance its powers on the other side.

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