

From the Ecumenical Authority and Exclusivity of the Nicene Creed to the Ecumenical Recognition and Reception of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed*

By Georgios Martzelos**

Introduction

It is an undisputable fact that, as far as the consciousness of the Church is concerned, until the Council of Chalcedon (451) there was no other creed of unquestionable ecumenical authority except the one drawn up by the Council of Nicaea (325). This was above all the baptismal creed which gradually replaced all the local baptismal creeds that were in use within the Church in both East and West.

However, this in its turn was substituted in the worship practice, especially that of the Eastern Church, by a more perfect theological symbol, the Constantinopolitan Creed (381), which acquired an ecumenical status comparable to that of the Nicene Creed, and is known as the “Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed”. The Council of Constantinople which drew it up did most certainly not have the intention to give its creed an ecumenical status, so as to replace or, much more, to render

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useless the Nicene Creed. After all, already in its First Canon, it expressly and clearly stipulated that the Creed of Nicaea should not be set aside and rendered useless¹. Again, we must bear in mind that as a council it had no such competence; it was not convened as an ecumenical council, but as a general council of the Eastern Roman State.

Therefore, the following question arises: What did it really occur, so that the Creed of Constantinople acquired an ecumenical authority comparable to that of Nicaea, thus effectively replacing it in the practice and life of the Church? To answer that question, and since the turning point towards this development was the Council of Chalcedon, where for the first time the creed gained ecumenical recognition, we must first look at the place that the Nicene Creed occupied in the Church's life in the pre-Chalcedonian period, and then examine the reasons that led the Council of Chalcedon to the ecumenical promotion and recognition of the Constantinopolitan Creed as equal to the Nicene one.

a) The Ecumenical Authority and Exclusivity of the Nicene Creed in the Pre-Chalcedonian Period

The conviction that prevailed in the Church shortly after the Council of Nicaea was, as Athanasius of Alexandria notes, that the faith of the Church Fathers of Nicaea, as reflected in its council, was “capable” and “self-sufficient” both for overthrowing any impious heresy and securing the Church's teachings². Besides, for this very reason, the Council of Constantinople (381), although it drew up its own Creed, with the aim of safeguarding the Orthodox faith against Arianism and the other heresies

1. See H. S. Alivizatos, *Οί ἱεροὶ Κανόνες καὶ οἱ ἐκκλησιαστικοὶ νόμοι*, Athens ²1949, p. 35: «᾽Ωρισαν οἱ ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει συνελθόντες ἅγιοι Πατέρες, μὴ ἀθετεῖσθαι τὴν πίστιν τῶν Πατέρων τῶν τριακοσίων δέκα ὀκτώ, τῶν ἐν Νικαίᾳ τῆς Βιθυνίας συνελθόντων ἀλλὰ μένειν ἐκείνην κυρίαν...». Cf. Vl. Io. Pheidas, *Τὸ Σύμβολον Πίστεως. Φύση καὶ ιδιότητες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, ἐκδ. Ἀποστολική Διακονία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος, Athens 2023, p. 54. As Vlasios Pheidas aptly observes, the Constantinopolitan Synod “was fully conscious of its ecclesiastical responsibility not only to add a single word in the Nicene Creed but also not to remove any word from it” (*op.cit.*, p. 57).

2. See *Πρὸς Ἐπίκτιτον ἐπίσκοπον Κορίνθου 1*, PG 26, 1052A.

of the time³, emphatically declared already in its First Canon, as we have already said, its firm adherence to the “faith” of the Fathers of Nicaea.

However, apart from confronting Arianism, which was the main reason for the establishment of the Nicene Creed, the latter’s ecumenical significance and exclusivity as a basic criterion of Orthodoxy was even more strongly emphasized and established at an ecumenical level when Nestorianism was confronted and condemned at the Council of Ephesus (431). More specifically, when at that council, after Nestorius’s condemnation, the elder Charisius of Philadelphia stated that, because many heretics of Lydia returning to the Orthodox faith were preferring a Nestorian Confession of Faith instead of signing the Nicene Creed, he was forced to draw up his own Orthodox Confession of Faith, so that those returning to Orthodoxy would accept it and reject the Nestorian one⁴, the Council reacted by expressing its unwavering and exclusive commitment to the Nicene Creed. By a special canon («ῥοδος»), which he drew up, he expressly forbade the composition or recitation of any confession of faith other than the Nicene creed; he even decreed that those who might dare composing or presenting another Confession of Faith other than the Nicene Creed to those returning to the Orthodox faith from any heresy, if they are members of the clergy, to be deposed and, if they are laymen, to be anathematized (Canon 7)⁵.

For this very reason, in the preface of the so-called «Ἐκθεσις πίστεως τῶν Διαλλαγῶν (433)», in order for any misunderstanding to be avoided, it is strongly emphasized that this *Exposition* is not an addition to the faith of the Nicene Fathers –to the Nicene Creed–, but rather a necessary clarifying “information”; as it is emphatically underlined, the Nicene Creed is sufficient both for the knowledge of the Orthodox faith and for

3. See H. S. Alivizatos, *op.cit.*: «... καὶ ἀναθεματισθῆναι πᾶσαν αἵρεσιν καὶ εἰδικῶς τὴν τῶν Εὐνομιανῶν, εἴτ’ οὖν Εὐδοξιανῶν, καὶ τὴν τῶν Ἡμαρειῶν, εἴτ’ οὖν Πνευματομάχων καὶ τὴν τῶν Σαβελλιανῶν, καὶ τὴν τῶν Μαρχελλιανῶν, καὶ τὴν τῶν Φωτεινιανῶν, καὶ τὴν τῶν Ἀπολλιναριανῶν». See also, Vl. Io. Pheidas, *op.cit.*, p. 54 ff.

4. See Mansi (= J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, Graz 1960-1961), IV, 1345 ff.; ACO (= *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, ed. E. Schwartz, Berolini et Lipsiae 1927-1940) I, 1, 7, 96 ff.

5. See Mansi IV, 1361 ff.; ACO I, 1, 7, 105 ff.

the renunciation of all heretical cacodoxy⁶. This explains why Cyril of Alexandria in his letter to John of Antioch, bearing in mind the Ephesian 7th Canon and despite having accepted the text of the *Reconciliations*, («*Διαλλαγῶν*»), strongly emphasizes that he remains faithful to the Nicene Creed to the letter, without the slightest modification⁷.

However, with the outbreak of the heresy of Monophysitism, it became clear that the Creed of Nicaea was not enough to dealing with the Christological problem. On the contrary, it became the refuge to which some people resorted in order to hide their Monophysitism. It is quite characteristic that in the Resident Council of 448 Eutychēs refused to confess that Christ has two natures after the incarnation, as well as the consubstantiality of his human nature with the common human one⁸, citing as proof of his orthodoxy simply the Nicene Creed and the 7th Canon of Ephesus⁹. In other words, for Eutychēs and his supporters, the recourse to the Creed of Nicaea and the 7th Canon of Ephesus was the only way of proving their orthodoxy, as well as the main argument of their attempt to avoid any formula betraying Dyophysitism in the exposition of the Christological doctrine.

Above all, however, the acceptance of the Creed of Nicaea and the 7th Canon of Ephesus was for Dioscorus of Alexandria the foundation of his ecclesiastical policy, which, as it is well known, he imposed by force in the so-called “Robber” Council (449) in dealing with the issue that arose after the condemnation of Eutychēs in the Resident Council of 448¹⁰. The reason for this was that Flavian of Constantinople and Eusebius of Dorylaeum, who were Orthodox, based on this very criterion, were

6. See Mansi VI, 668 ff.; ACO II, 1, 1, 108 ff.

7. See PG 77, 180D-181A; Mansi VI, 672; ACO II, 1, 1, 110.

8. See Mansi VI, 737 ff.; ACO II, 1, 1, 140 ff.

9. See Mansi VI, 801; ACO II, 1, 1, 168.

10. For the ecclesiastical policy of Dioscorus of Alexandria in the “Brigands” Synod, see E. Schwartz, „Das Nicaenum und das Constantinopolitanum auf der Synode von Chalkedon“, *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 25, 1 (1926), p. 39; A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil von Konstantinopel und sein Symbol. Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie des II. Ökumenischen Konzils*, Göttingen 1965, p. 204. See also, G. D. Martzelos, *Γένεση και πηγές του Όρου της Χαλκηδόνας. Συμβολή στην ιστορικοδογματική διερεύνηση του Όρου της Δ΄ Οικουμενικής Συνόδου*, [ΦΘΒ 7], P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 1986, p. 27 ff.

condemned in the “Robber” Council, while Eutychēs, who had been deposed in the Resident Council of 448, was reinstated. Flavian and Eusebius, by condemning Eutychēs in the Resident Council because he did not confess the “two natures after the incarnation” («*δύο φύσεις μετὰ τὴν ἐνανθρώπησιν*»), they were accused in the “Robber” Council as, «*ἐπιχειρήσαντες προσθεῖναι τι ἢ ἀφελεῖν ἐκ τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐκτεθείσης ἐν τῇ ἀγία συνόδῳ τῇ ἐν Νικαίᾳ, ἣν ἐβεβαίωσεν ἡ ἀγία καὶ οἰκουμενικὴ σύνοδος ἡ ἐν ... τῇ Ἐφέσῳ πάλαι συνελθοῦσα*»¹¹, while Eutychēs was considered orthodox and acquitted, because he simply confessed his faith in the Creed of Nicaea and in the 7th Canon of Ephesus¹².

We should nevertheless note that this tactic of adherence to the Nicene Creed and the Ephesian canon was not at first manifested by Eutychēs in the Resident council and Dioscorus in the “Robber” one; it had already made its appearance in Alexandria, immediately after the *Διαλλαγές* of 433, as a way of fighting against the *Ἐκθέσεις πίστεως τῶν Διαλλαγῶν* and indirectly against Cyril of Alexandria who considered it «*ἀδιάβλητον*»¹³ and had enthusiastically and pleasurably accepted it¹⁴. In fact, many extreme Alexandrians accused Cyril that, by accepting the *Ἐκθεσιν πίστεως τῶν Διαλλαγῶν* he fell into the trap of the Antiochians and accepted what was essentially a «*σύμβολον καινόν*», dishonoring the Nicene Creed and disobeying the 7th Canon of Ephesus. Of course, Cyril was forced to defend himself, writing letters of great historical and doctrinal importance, in which he explained that the *Ἐκθεσιν πίστεως* sent to him by the Antiochians was not «*ἔκθεσις συμβόλου καινῆς*» but «*ἀπολογία*» to proving their Orthodox views¹⁵. Such was the fanaticism of some Alexandrians, though, that they continued opposing to Cyril’s

11. See Mansi VI, 909; ACO II, 1, 1, 192. See also, Mansi VI, 908; ACO II, 1, 1, 191.

12. See Mansi VI, 629; 833 ff.; ACO II, 1, 1, 90 ff., 182 ff.

13. See *Ἐπιστολὴ 39, Πρὸς Ἰωάννην ἐπίσκοπον Ἀντιοχείας*, PG 77, 176C; Mansi VI, 668; ACO II, 1, 1, 108.

14. See *op.cit.*, PG 77, 173C-176A; Mansi VI, 665 ff.; ACO II, 1, 1, 107 ff.

15. See mainly Κυρίλλου Ἀλεξανδρείας, *Ἐπιστολὴ 40, Πρὸς Ἀκάκιον ἐπίσκοπον Μελιτινῆς*, PG 77, 188B-189A; ACO I, 1, 4, 23 ff. See also, *Ἐπιστολὴ 44, Πρὸς Εὐλόγιον ἐπίσκοπον Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, PG 77, 224D-225A; ACO I, 1, 4, 35; *Ἐπιστολὴ 50, Πρὸς Οὐαλεριανὸν ἐπίσκοπον Ἰκονίου*, PG 77, 276CD; ACO I, 1, 3, 100.

unifying policy, by simply citing the Creed of Nicaea and the canon of Ephesus. This opposition became even greater after the Antiochians' refusal to condemn the teaching of Diodorus Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia¹⁶. From the extreme Alexandrians' point of view, this attitude of the Antiochians was proving Cyril's erroneous ecclesiastical policy, which was put into effect by the *Διαλλαγές* of 433. In fact, the main exponent of this reaction against Cyril's unionist policy was Dioscorus of Alexandria, who, as E. Schwartz observes, owed his ascension to the archbishop's throne to the anti-Cyrrillic current that prevailed in Alexandria after the *Διαλλαγές* of 433¹⁷.

It is no coincidence, therefore, that Dioscorus, by applying in the "Robber" Council the above ecclesiastical policy, which was based on the mere acceptance of the Nicene Creed and the canon of Ephesus, he created the basic conditions under which the *Διαλλαγές* of 433 were essentially leading to a complete disaster. We could claim that the "Robber" Council was nothing else than the culmination of Dioscorus's ecclesiastical policy, which, based on the Nicene Creed and the canon of Ephesus, tried to deal with the Antiochian Dyophysitism, effectively destroying the *Διαλλαγές* of 433¹⁸.

Thus, despite the additional and exclusive ecumenical authority that the Nicene Creed had acquired with the canon of Ephesus (431), it became clear that not only was it not enough to overcome the Christological problem that arose with the heresy of Eutychēs, but it was also exploited by the Monophysites and their supporters for the foundation of their heretical views.

16. On this subject, see L. Abramowsky, „Der Streit um Diodor und Theodor zwischen den beiden ephesinischen Konzilien“, *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 67, 3 (1955/56), p. 252 ff.

17. See E. Schwartz, *Über die Bischofslisten der Synoden von Chalkedon, Nicaea und Konstantinopel*, [Abhandlungen der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Abteilung, Neue Folge, Heft 13], München 1937, p. 4 ff.

18. See G. D. Martzelos, *op.cit.*, p. 32. See also, E. Schwartz, „Das Nicaenum und das Constantinopolitanum...“, *op.cit.*, p. 83 ff. and A. M. Ritter, *op.cit.*, p. 204.

b) The Constantinopolitan Creed and the Council of Chalcedon

Already with what had been unfolded in the “Robber” Council, it became perfectly obvious how treacherous and dangerous from an Orthodox point of view has been Dioscorus’s ecclesiastical policy, which was exclusively based on the Creed of Nicaea and the canon of Ephesus. That is why, from the very first session of the Council of Chalcedon, the imperial representatives who were responsible for maintaining order and discipline in it turned against Dioscorus’s ecclesiastical policy.

One of their first actions was their proposal to declare Flavianus of Constantinople and Eusebius of Dorylaeum innocent and to punish the six instigators of the “Robber” Council¹⁹. The vindication of Flavianus and Eusebius, who had been condemned, as we have seen, in the “Robber” Council, for having attempted at the Resident Council of 448 to add or subtract something from the Nicene Creed, in effect overturned the basis on which Dioscorus²⁰, based his ecclesiastical policy. To this end, they propose the punishment of the six instigators of the “Robber” Council. Only by following this path would the way be opened for the Council Fathers to more easily accepted the emperor’s wish, who had aimed from the very beginning for the Council to establish an Exposition of Faith that would have solved the Christological problem²¹.

This policy had already become clear at the end of the first session, when the imperial representatives invited the Holy Fathers to conscientiously and fearlessly expose their faith “in writing”²². Indeed, in order to delineate the exact framework within which the Holy Fathers should move in their written statement of faith, they considered it appropriate to refer to the emperor’s faith. The emperor, contrary to the criterion of orthodoxy that prevailed in the “Robber” Council, not only accepted the

19. See Mansi VI, 935 ff.; ACO II, 1, 1, 195.

20. See E. Schwartz, *Über die Bischofslisten der Synoden...*, *op.cit.*, p. 2.

21. See G. D. Martzelos, *op.cit.*, p. 36 ff.

22. See Mansi VI, 936 ff.; ACO II, 1, 1, 195.

Nicene Creed, but also that of Constantinople («τὴν ἔκθεσιν τῶν ρν'»), as well as the canonical letters and expositions of earlier Holy Fathers²³.

This explains why the question of drawing up an Exposition of Faith was actually put on the agenda at the next session of the synod. Already at the beginning of the session, the imperial delegates proposed to the Holy Fathers that they should draw up a doctrinal text in which they should clearly state the Orthodox faith «ἄνευ φόβου ἢ χάριτος ἢ ἀπεχθείας». After all, as they stressed, this was the main purpose of the Council to be convened. They even took the opportunity to reiterate that both the emperor and themselves are in accordance with the faith of the 318 Fathers of Nicaea, the 150 Fathers of Constantinople, as well as the rest of the Holy Fathers²⁴. Thus, they made it clear within the council that, in this context, the criterion of Orthodox faith which had formed the basis of Dioscorus's ecclesiastical policy in the "Robber" Council was out of question in Chalcedon.

Nevertheless, the Holy Fathers of the Council rejected the proposal of the imperial representatives to drawing up an Exposition of Faith: «Ἐκθεσιν ἄλλην οὐδεὶς ποιεῖ», they shouted, «οὐδὲ ἐγχειροῦμεν, οὐδὲ τολμῶμεν ἐκθέσθαι: ἐδίδαξαν γὰρ οἱ πατέρες καὶ ἐγγράφως σώζεται τὰ παρ' ἐκείνων ἐκτεθέντα καὶ παρ' ἐκεῖνα λέγειν οὐ δυνάμεθα»²⁵. As expected, they were based their objections on the 7th Canon of Ephesus, which clearly forbade the establishment or confession of any other creed than the Nicene one. Indeed, the Holy Fathers of all the factions of the Council had initially agreed on this point. Besides, many of them had taken part two years earlier in the "Robber" Council, where the prohibitive nature of the Ephesian canon for any attempt to expound the Orthodox doctrine had been emphasized. Apart from the prohibition contained in the Ephesian canon, most of the Chalcedonian Fathers who did not belong to the Alexandrian faction believed that the writing of a new Exposition of Faith was not necessary, from the moment that they are accepting the letter sent by the Pope Leo of Rome to Flavian of Constantinople, known as Leo's *Tome* which adequately addressed

23. See Mansi VI, 937; ACO II, 1, 1, 195 ff.

24. See Mansi VI, 952; ACO II, 1, 2, 77-78 [273-274].

25. Mansi VI, 953; ACO II, 1, 2, 78 [274].

Eutyches's cacodoxy²⁶. It is very characteristic that, when Cecropius of Sebastopol observed that the Leo's *Tome* («τύπος»), which most of the Holy Fathers signed, was enough to deal with the situation that arose from the heresy of Eutychēs, the Holy Fathers, according to the Council's Minutes, cried out loudly: «ταῦτα πάντες λέγομεν; ἀρκεῖ τὰ ἐκτεθέντα· ἄλλην ἔχθεσιν οὐκ ἐξὸν γενέσθαι»²⁷.

There was nothing, however, that was able to break the insistence of the imperial representatives, who remained unyielding regarding their initial demand; still, with considerable diplomatic skill, they tried to convince the Holy Fathers of the necessity of establishing an Exposition of Faith. However, the latter remained adamant. They explicitly invoked the Ephesus canon and, once again, categorically refused to draw up any other Exposition of Faith beyond the Nicene Creed²⁸.

Florentius of Sardis came to bridge the intransigence of the two parties; he stressed that it was the most inopportune time for accepting and implementing the imperial delegates' proposal, not only because the Holy Fathers were negatively inclined to this proposal, but also because they were completely unprepared to carry it out. He observed that it was impossible for those who faithfully followed the decisions of Nicaea and Ephesus to improvise in matters of faith. He therefore urged for more time to be allowed, so that they might face the question of drawing up an Exposition of Faith with due deliberation and no hastiness. In any case, he stressed that, for him personally, as well as for other Holy Fathers who signed Pope Leo's *Tome*, there was no need for a new Exposition of the Faith to be drafted. The *Tome* was enough for them²⁹.

The Holy Fathers' reference to the Nicaea and Ephesus Creed, as well as to the *Tome* of Pope Leo, gave the opportunity to Cecropius of Sebastopol to emphasize that the *Tome* was nothing else but a recent confirmation of faith of the 318 Fathers of Nicaea; therefore, he asked

26. See G. D. Martzelos, *op.cit.*, p. 39 ff.

27. Mansi VI, 953; ACO II, 1, 2, 78 [274].

28. See Mansi, 953; ACO II, 1, 2, 78 [274]: «Οἱ εὐλαβέστατοι ἐπίσκοποι ἐβόησαν Ἐγγραφον ἔχθεσιν οὐ ποιούμεθα κανὼν ἐστὶν ὁ διαγορεύων ἀρκεῖν τὰ ἐκτεθέντα ὁ κανὼν βούλεται ἄλλην ἔχθεσιν μὴ γενέσθαι. Τὰ τῶν πατέρων κρατεῖτω».

29. See Mansi VI, 953; ACO II, 1, 2, 78 ff. [274 ff.].

that these two texts should be read for their agreement with each other to be demonstrated³⁰. The imperial representatives accepted his proposal – with one modification; they proposed that, after the Nicene Creed, the Constantinopolitan one should also be read («τὰ ἐκτεθέντα παρὰ τῶν ρν' ἁγίων πατέρων») in accordance with the content of the imperial creed. It is noteworthy that their proposal was not only heartily accepted, but after its realization it also provoked enthusiastic cries of praise from the Holy Fathers of the Council³¹.

As it is obvious, with this proposal, the imperial delegates were not only in complete harmony with the imperial ecclesiastical policy, which they had just presented to the Council; they were also certainly aiming at setting a precedent that would override the Holy Fathers' opposition to the establishment of an Exposition of Faith. By reading the Constantinopolitan Creed immediately after the Nicene one, they wanted to prove to the Holy Fathers of the Council that by drafting or confessing another Exposition of Faith, such as in this particular case the Creed of the Fathers of Constantinople, they did not necessarily reject the Nicene Creed and breach the Ephesus's 7th Canon. When the Constantinopolitan Holy Fathers drew up their creed, they didn't believe that by doing so they were violating the Nicene one; on the contrary, they believed that they were renewing it according to the new developments of their time, as it can already be seen from the first canon they drafted. The same could have been done by the Holy Fathers of Chalcedon – to draw up their own Statement of Faith, without this meaning that they were rejecting the Nicene Creed and, consequently, the Ephesian canon; on the contrary, they were renewing the Nicene Creed due to the Christological heresies. In the context of such a view, the reactions of the Holy Fathers to the drafting of the Exposition of Faith³² were completely out of place. As it was subsequently shown, after the reading of the Constantinopolitan Creed and Pope Leo's *Tome*, there were no serious obstacles left for an Exposition of Faith to be composed.

30. See Mansi VI, 953; ACO II, 1, 2, 79 [275].

31. See Mansi VI, 956 ff.; ACO II, 1, 2, 79 ff. [275 ff.].

32. See G. D. Martzelos, *op.cit.*, p. 42 ff.

By acting in this way, the imperial representatives achieved not only the elevation of the Constantinopolitan Creed to the same level with the Nicene one, but equally its universal acceptance and promotion. In fact, by taking advantage of the contestation of the *Tome's* three passages by the bishops of Eastern Illyricum and Palestine, to whom these passages appeared to be influenced by Nestorianism³³, they made a deliberate move that further promoted the Constantinopolitan creed's ecumenical status alongside with the Nicene one. Despite the fact that the questioning of the *Tome's* three passages by the bishops of Eastern Illyricum and Palestine was essentially about whether and to what extent they were in agreement with Cyril of Alexandria, especially with his *Third Letter to Nestorius*, a question on which a special committee had been set up under Anatolius of Constantinople³⁴, the imperial representatives asked the Holy Fathers to rule only on the agreement of the *Tome* with the Nicene and Constantinopolitan creeds³⁵. It is noteworthy that, although the Holy Fathers, in expressing their opinion, obviously referred to the agreement of the *Tome* with Cyril of Alexandria, they also referred –with the exception of the papal legates– also to the *Tome's* full agreement with the Creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople, as the imperial representatives had demanded³⁶. Thus, with the above request, the imperial delegates succeeded in making the Constantinopolitan Creed not only the criterion of the *Tome's* orthodoxy, but also in having its ecumenical authority most formally recognized by the Council on the same level as that of the Nicene Creed, in relation to a text that has also been ecumenically accepted by the Council – pope Leo's *Tome*.

For this very reason, the Fathers of Chalcedon, sealing definitively and officially its ecumenical vesting, included it, along with the Nicene Creed, in the text of the *Canon* they drafted³⁷, considering it to be «βεβαίωσιν ... τῆς αὐτῆς καθολικῆς καὶ ἀποστολικῆς ... πίστεως» of

33. See Mansi VI, 972 ff.; ACO II, 1, 2, 81 ff. [277 ff.].

34. See Mansi VI, 973 ff.; ACO II, 1, 2, 82 ff. [278 ff.].

35. See Mansi VII, 9; ACO II, 1, 2, 93 ff. [289 ff.].

36. See Mansi VII, 9 ff.; ACO II, 1, 2, 93 ff. [289 ff.].

37. See Mansi VII, 108 ff.; ACO II, 2, 126 ff. [322 ff.].

the Nicene Fathers³⁸. In this context, it becomes clear why the Creed of Constantinople was characterized, and from then onwards remained, in the Church's consciousness as the "Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed".

c) The post-Chalcedonian importance of the Nicene Creed

Despite the ecumenical status and prominence that the Constantinopolitan Creed had acquired at the Council of Chalcedon, as well as its theological thoroughness and affinity to the Nicene Creed, the latter's ecumenical status remained undiminished in the Church's consciousness and devotional life for many centuries. It is characteristic that, when Emperor Leo I asked from the bishops and certain prominent monks of the Eastern Roman Empire, as well as from Leo of Rome, a few years after the Council of Chalcedon (457), to express in writing their views on the doctrine of Chalcedon, most of them, in their letters of reply, which constitute the so-called *Codex Encyclius* (457-459)³⁹, stressed the unquestionable ecumenical authority of the Nicene Creed, despite the fact that most of the bishops who had taken part in the Council of Chalcedon, and some of them very actively so⁴⁰, contributed decisively to

38. See Mansi VII, 109; ACO II, 2, 127 [323].

39. See Mansi VII, 537-627; ACO II, 5, 24-98. Regarding the *Codex Encyclius*'s historical context, see K. Ahrens – G. Krüger, *Die sogenannte Kirchengeschichte des Zacharias Rhetor*, [Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanum Teubneriana, Scriptorum Sacri et Profani, Fasc. III], Leipzig 1899, IV, 7, p. 31 ff.; R. Devreesse, «Les premières années du Monophysitisme. Une collection antichalcédonienne», *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 19, 2 (1930), p. 257 ff.; Th. Schnitzler, *Im Kampfe um Chalcedon. Geschichte und Inhalt des Codex Encyclius von 458*, Romae 1938, p. 5 ff.; A. Grillmeier, „Piscatorie“ – „Aristotelice“. Zur Bedeutung der „Formel“ in den seit Chalcedon getrennten Kirchen“, in: *Mit ihm und in ihm. Christologische Forschungen und Perspektiven*, Freiburg – Basel – Wien 1975, p. 283 ff.; G. D. Martzelos, *Ἡ Χριστολογία τοῦ Βασιλείου Σελευκείας καὶ ἡ οὐκουμενικὴ σημασία της*, [ΦΘΒ 17], P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 1990, p. 252.

40. For example, we could mention Pope Leo of Rome (see Mansi VII, 537; ACO II, 5, 24), who presided through his legates at all the sessions of the Council of Chalcedon, the Patriarch Anatolius of Constantinople (see Mansi VII, 537 ff.; ACO II, 5, 24 ff.) and Julian of Kos (see Mansi VII, 583 ff.; ACO II, 5, 66) who participated in the committee responsible for revising the original *canon* of the Council (see Mansi VII, 105; ACO II,

the ecumenical promotion and consolidation of the Constantinopolitan Creed within the Council.

More specifically, responding to the emperor's question about the doctrine of Chalcedon and its relation to the earlier patristic tradition, they stressed that the doctrinal foundation of the Chalcedonian *Canon* is the Nicene Creed. With its *Canon*, the Council of Chalcedon not only does not violate the Nicene Creed, as Dioscorus and his followers had claimed, but equally aims to preserve it unharmed from the heretical misinterpretations and distortions⁴¹.

After all, as Basil of Seleucia and the bishops of his diocese observed in their letter of reply, the Holy Fathers of Constantinople had done the same, in order to shield the Nicene faith against the heresies of the Pneumatomachoi and the Apollinarians. As the Fathers of Constantinople had established a creed of faith to preserve the inviolability of the Nicene Creed from these heresies –and not to renounce it–, the Holy Fathers of Chalcedon uniformly acted in the same spirit, by establishing a *Canon* solely intending to preserve and not to deny the Nicene Creed, keeping it intact from the heresies of the Nestorians and the Eutyechians⁴². Just as the Nicene Creed is the foundation of the Chalcedon's *Canon*, so the latter guarantees the correct understanding and interpretation of the former. This explains why they perceive the Chalcedonian *Canon* as a “broad interpretation” (*interpretatio latior*) of the Nicene Creed⁴³.

We should note here that viewing the Chalcedonian *Canon* as an “interpretation” of the Nicene Creed is not only the approach adopted by Basil of Seleucia and the bishops of his diocese, but equally by a wider group of metropolitans and bishops in *Codex Encyclius*⁴⁴; they

1, 2, 125[321]), the bishops of Eastern Illyricum, such as Peter of Corinth (see Mansi VII, 611 ff.; ACO II, 5, 88 ff.), Luke of Dyrrachium (see Mansi VII, 619 ff.; ACO II, 5, 95 ff.) and Martyrius of Gortyna, Crete (see Mansi VII, 621 ff.; ACO II, 5, 96 ff.) who, as advocates of St. Cyril of Alexandria's Christology, questioned the orthodoxy of three passages from the pope Leo's *Tome*, and asked from the papal legates to satisfactorily explain the *Tome's* doctrinal agreement with Cyril's *Third Letter to Nestorius* (see Mansi VI, 972 ff., VII, 28; ACO II, 1, 2, 82[278], 101 ff. [297 ff.]) *et alibi*.

41. See Mansi VII, 537 ff.; ACO II, 5, 24 ff.

42. See Mansi VII, 560 ff.; ACO II, 5, 47. See also, G. D. Martzelos, *op.cit.*, p. 266 ff.

43. Mansi VII, 561; ACO II, 5, 47. See also, A. Grillmeier, *op.cit.*, p. 286.

44. See Mansi VII, 539 ff., 556, 561, 567, 582, 620; ACO II, 5, 27, 43, 47, 53, 65, 96.

underline the Nicene Creed's primary importance, which was also the baptismal creed of the Eastern Church at this time⁴⁵. They considered that all the other councils after Nicaea have had a single purpose: to interpret the Nicene Creed and preserve it unharmed from the heresies that have appeared over time⁴⁶. In this sense, the Constantinopolitan Creed (381), despite the ecumenical recognition and acceptance it had received at the Council of Chalcedon, was perceived as nothing else than an interpretation of the Nicene Creed⁴⁷.

It is particularly noteworthy that the exclusive adherence to the Nicene Creed did not disappear even a whole century after the Council of Chalcedon; for example, this can be proved from the attitude of the Gazan Fathers Barsanuphius and John. Most typical are the advices given by these two Holy Fathers to their spiritual children; their recommendation to the latter was to refrain from the doctrinal discussions that were related to the post-Chalcedonian theological disputes and to believe according to the faith of the Nicene Fathers, in which they were baptized and which they had received from the Church at their baptism⁴⁸. In other words, the two Gazan Holy Fathers' exclusive commitment to the Nicene Creed is due to the fact that the latter was at that time a baptismal confession, to which the believers were bound for life at their baptism, and which they were constantly confessing in all liturgical assemblies. In this sense, the doctrinal significance of the Nicene Creed was still at that time exclusive in relation to the later doctrinal ecumenical decisions of the Church, whether it was the Chalcedonian canon or the Constantinopolitan Creed.

However, with the passage of time, most probably from the 8th century onwards, the Constantinopolitan Creed, having already assumed

45. See Mansi VII, 574-575, 588, 598, 606, 608; ACO II,5, 58 ff., 70, 77, 85, 86, 90. See also, A. Grillmeier, *op.cit.*, p. 285 ff., and *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, Bd. 2/1, Freiburg – Basel – Wien 1986, p. 244 ff.

46. See Mansi VII, 613; ACO II,5, 90.

47. See G. D. Martzelos, *op.cit.*, p. 271.

48. See G. D. Martzelos, «Theologia e spiritualità nella traditione ascetica dei padri di Gaza», in: *Il deserto di Gaza. Barsanufio, Giovanni e Dorotheo, Atti del' XI Convegno ecumenico internazionale di spiritualità ortodossa, sezione bizantina, Bose, 14-16 settembre 2003*, Edizioni Qiqajon, Comunità di Bose 2004, p. 121 ff.

ecumenical status comparable to that of the Nicene one, and because of its apparent great theological thoroughness and affinity to it, it was considered to express more fully the Nicene faith⁴⁹; thus, it gradually replaced the latter⁵⁰, which remained in disuse in the Church's baptismal and devotional practice and life. In this respect, one of the historical paradoxes is that this symbol was also passed on to the worship practice of the Coptic Church⁵¹, despite the fact that the latter one, based on the Ephesian 7th Canon, had always supported the Nicene Creed's exclusivity, and subsequently rejected the Council of Chalcedon, in which the Constantinopolitan Creed acquired ecumenical authority!

Conclusion

We believe that, after our previous analysis, it has become clear that the ecumenical exclusivity of the Nicene Creed, which was established at the ecumenical level by the 7th Canon of the Council of Ephesus, was overcome at the Council of Chalcedon in relation with the resolution of the problem regarding the composition of the *Exposition of Faith*, the

49. See for example: Germanos of Constantinople, *Πρὸς Ἄνθιμον διάκονον, Λόγος ἀφηγηματικὸς περὶ τε τῶν ἁγίων Συνόδων καὶ τῶν κατὰ καιροὺς ἀνέκαθεν τῷ ἀποστολικῷ κηρύγματι ἀναφεισῶν αἰρέσεων* 22, PG 98, 60C; John Damascene, *Ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα Θεόφιλον περὶ τῶν ἁγίων καὶ σεπτῶν εἰκόνων* 7, PG 95, 353D.

50. It is noteworthy that St. John Damascene, speaking of the «τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ... σύμβολον», in which there is a reference to the God-Son's «ὁμοούσιον» with the God-Father, does not cite the Nicene Creed, where, for the first time, the Son is characterized as «ὁμοούσιος τῷ Πατρὶ», but the Constantinopolitan creed! See John Damascene, *Κατὰ τῆς αἰρέσεως τῶν Νεστοριανῶν* 34-35, PG 95, 205BC.

51. See for example *The Coptic Liturgy (St. Basil)*, By Committee Formed by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, St. John the beloved publishing house (J.B.P.H.), Cairo 1993, p. 213 ff.; *St. Basil Liturgy. Reference Book*, ed. by Fr. Abraam D. Sleman, https://www.copticchurch.net/pdf/liturgy/liturgy_of_st_basil.pdf, p. 73 ff.; *The service of the Deacon (According to the Coptic Orthodox Church)*, ed. by Saint Demiana & Saint Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Church, Sydney 2013, p. 158 ff. See also, the "Address" of the Coptic Liturgy, where, among the 318 Fathers of the Council of Nicaea and the 200 Fathers of the Council of Ephesus, the 150 Fathers of the Council of Constantinople are also mentioned [*The Coptic Liturgy (St. Basil)*... p. 253; *St. Basil Liturgy. Reference Book*..., p. 106; *The service of the Deacon*..., p. 320].

topic of concern for the Holy Fathers at the Council. Thus, the imperial delegates, in order to override the refusal of the Fathers to draw up an Exposition of Faith when they were discussing this matter at the Council, invoked the precedent of the 150 Fathers of Constantinople, who drew up a creed of faith without violating the Nicene Creed. This is precisely why they asked for the Constantinopolitan Creed to be read aloud immediately after the Nicene one, thus achieving with this way, as we have seen, its ecumenical promotion and recognition as equally forceful and valid to the Nicene Creed.

However, despite the ecumenical acceptance of the Constantinopolitan Creed at Chalcedon, after the Ecumenical Council, the Nicene Creed continued to be surrounded with undiminished ecumenical authority, and to be regarded as the foundation of the subsequent doctrinal formulations of the Church. After at least two centuries, though, it was slowly replaced in the liturgical practice of the Orthodox and Coptic Churches by the Constantinopolitan Creed, which has not since ceased to be used until this very day.