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THE SECOND ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

An attempt at the reconstruction of the proceedings

The Second Ecumenical Council (also known as the First Council of Constantinople), held in Constantinople in 381 AD, is in many ways unique in the history of ecumenical councils. Its uniqueness lies, among other things, in the scarcity of written sources describing this event. No documents from the Council are extant. All that has remained is passing references by fifth century historians¹ and chance remarks on the Council in letters². An important, although rather singular, source on the Second Ecumenical Council is St Gregory of Nazianzus's *Autobiographical Poem*³. We can also rely on the documents which were the fruit of the Council: the canons⁴, the Symbol⁵ and a letter written to the Emperor Theodosius I at the conclusion of the Council⁶. The information included in these documents is not entirely coherent. This paper aims to reconstruct the proceedings of the Council on the basis of the available evidence.

¹ Hermias Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, vol. VII, 7–9, PG 67, 1429–1440 (later abbreviated to Sozomen, *HE*); Socrates Scholasticos, *Historia Ecclesiastica* V, 6–8, PG 67, 572–581 (later abbreviated to Socrates, *HE*); Theodoret of Cyrus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, V, 6–8, PG 82, 1207–1212 (later abbreviated to Theodoret, *HE*).

² See Damasus, *Letter 5*, PL 13, 365–369; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Letters 130, 131, 132, 133, 135, 136*, PG 37, 225–232; Tomos of the Synod of Constantinople (382 AD), in: Theodoret, *HE* V, 9, PG 82, 1212–1217.

³ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Autobiographical Poem*, PG 37, 1029–1166.

⁴ *Documents of the Ecclesiastical Councils* ed. A. Baron, H. Pietras, translated by T. Wnętrzak, Kraków 2001, pp. 70–73; C. J. Hefele, *Histoire des conciles d'après les documents originaux, Nouvelle traduction française... corrigée et augmentée de notes critiques et bibliographiques par H. Leclercq*, vol. II, Paris 1908, pp. 20–28 (later abbreviated to Hefele – Leclercq).

⁵ G. L. Dosssetti, *Il simbolo di Nicea e di Costantinopoli*, Roma 1967, pp. 244–251.

⁶ J. S. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, III, Paris 1901, col. 557 (later abbreviated to Mansi).

BACKGROUND TO THE CONVENING OF THE COUNCIL AND ITS PARTICIPANTS

The Council was convened primarily at the initiative of the Emperor Theodosius I, who wished to put in order the ecclesiastical affairs of the provinces under his rule. Apart from the Emperor, the idea had another supporter in the person of Bishop Meletius of Antioch, who had been his religious adviser from at least Theodosius I's arrival in Constantinople in autumn 380 AD⁷. Yet another architect of the Council was probably Ascholius, Bishop of Thessalonica⁸. Theodosius's decision might also have been influenced by the trouble with Maximus the Cynic's usurpation of the See of Constantinople. After his flight from Constantinople, Maximus hastened to lay his cause before Theodosius I. This highlighted the need for rapid action to settle the issue of the rightful claim to the See of Constantinople⁹.

Although the first plans for the Council were made as early as 378 AD, they were not confirmed until the summer of 380 AD, and not put into effect until the turn of 380 and 381 AD. It was then, on his arrival to Constantinople, that Theodosius I sent a letter to the bishops convening the Council and began preparations for the event¹⁰. Regrettably, the Emperor's invitation has not been preserved although it is mentioned in a letter the bishops wrote to the Emperor at the conclusion of the Council¹¹.

The situation became complicated when, owing to the problem with the Illyrian bishops accused of Arianism, the Emperor Gratian began making preparations for calling a general council. Fortunately, St Ambrose managed to persuade Gratian to give the intended gathering the status of a local council¹². As a result, the Emper-

⁷ See W. Ensslin, *Die Religionspolitik des Kaisers Theodosius der Grosse*, München 1953, p. 30; A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil von Konstantinopel und sein Symbol. Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie des II. Ökumenischen Konzils*, (Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte, 15), Göttingen 1965, p. 38.

⁸ See Chr. Konstantinidis, *Les présupposés historico-dogmatique de l'oecuménicité du II^e Concile oecuménique*, in: *La signification et l'actualité du II^e Concile Oecuménique pour le monde chrétien d'aujourd'hui*, ser. *Les études théologiques de Chambésy*, vol. 2, Chambésy-Genève 1982, pp. 64-67.

⁹ See A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, p. 35. However, the plans for convening the Council must have existed earlier because Ascholius consulted Damasus on Maximus's problem and Damasus' answer shows that the decision to summon the Council had already been taken. (Damasus, *Letter 5*, PL 13, 368).

¹⁰ See Sozomen, *HE VII*, 7, PG 67, 1429; W. Ensslin, *op. cit.*, p. 31; Ch. Pietri, *Le débat pneumatologique à la veille du Concile de Constantinople (358 - 381)*, in: *Credo in spiritum sanctum. Πιστεύω εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον. Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Pneumatologia in occasione del 1600° anniversario del I Concilio di Costantinopoli e del 1550° anniversario del Concilio di Efeso*, Roma 1983, vol. I, pp. 82-83; A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, p. 33-37. Sozomen suggests that in spite of Theodosius's official support, the Nicene adherents in Constantinople were afraid of the recurrence of the situation, which had developed at the beginning of Constantius' s rule as once again, as then, there were many very influential Arians at the court, able to affect the change of the Emperor's policy. This could have had a bearing on prompting the decision to convene the Council (see *HE VII*, 6, PG 67, 1428).

¹¹ See Mansi III, 557.

¹² See *Gesta Episcoporum Aquileia*, 3-4, in: *Scolies ariennes sur le concile d'Aquilée*, ed. R. Gryson, (*Sources Chrétiennes* 267), Paris 1980, pp. 330-332; R. Gryson, *Introduction*, in: *Ibid.* p. 129.

or Theodosius I had every freedom to convene the bishops' synod in the eastern part of the Empire¹³.

Summoned by the Emperor at the beginning of 381 AD, the bishops started to arrive after Easter¹⁴. However, the sessions did not commence until the beginning of May¹⁵. This is as close as we can get to the date on which the Council started. All that we know – thanks to the account by Theodoret – is that before the official inauguration there had been a meeting held in the Emperor's palace. Theodosius I had addressed the bishops in a speech which, as we have already mentioned, has not been preserved¹⁶.

Theodosius I invited to the Council the bishops of the provinces under his jurisdiction¹⁷. On this there is general agreement in the sources¹⁸. The ancient historians of the Church mention the most distinguished participants of the sessions¹⁹. Fortunately, there has been preserved a subscription list of the Council's canons from which it is possible to identify all the participants²⁰. Since about 150 bishops took part, this Council is traditionally called the "Council of 150 Fathers."

As for the origin of the participants, the majority – more than 70 – came from the Orient Dioceses. Nearly 30 bishops came from the Pont Diocese. The other regions were represented in much smaller numbers. The distribution shows the area of influence of the supporters of the neo-Nicene theology. It also shows indirectly which regions were still under the influence of the followers of different theological concepts²¹. By far the greatest number of bishops was linked to the party of Me-

¹³ See A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, p. 36.

¹⁴ See J. M. Szymusiak, *Grzegorz Teolog. U źródeł chrześcijańskiej myśli IV wieku*, Poznań 1965, p. 232. Easter 381 AD fell on 28 March.

¹⁵ See Hefele – Leclercq, vol. II, 1, p. 3; I. Ortiz de Urbina, *Nicée et Constantinople*, [in:] *Histoire des Conciles Oecuméniques*, ed. G. Dumeige, vol. 1, Paris 1963, p. 169.

¹⁶ See Theodoret, *HE V*, 6, PG 82, 1208; Hefele – Leclercq, vol. II, 1, p. 7–8; A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, p. 41–42.

¹⁷ See P. L' Huillier, *Faits et fictions à propos du deuxième concile oecuménique*, „*Église et Théologie*” 13 (1982), p. 139; Chr. Konstantinidis, op. cit., p. 69; I. Ortiz de Urbina, op. cit., p. 169–170.

¹⁸ See Gregory of Nazianzus, *Autobiographical Poem* lines 1509–1514, PG 37, 1034; Socrates, *HE V*, 8, PG 67, 576; Sozomen, *HE VII*, 7, PG 37, 1429; Theodoret, *HE V*, 6, PG 82, 1207. Theodoret of Cyrus stresses, however, that his decision was based on the fact that Arianism spread only among the Churches in the East. The West, due to its rulers, was free from this heresy. Socrates and Sozomen do not mention directly that the invitation was extended only to the bishops of the East but it is evident from the supplied list of the leaders.

¹⁹ Socrates mentions: Timothy of Alexandria, Cyril of Jerusalem, Meletius of Antioch, Ascholius of Thessalonica as well as Gregory of Nazianzus and Nectarius in a different context (*HE V*, 8, PG 67, 576–577). Sozomen mentions Timothy of Alexandria, Meletius, Gregory of Nazianzus, Cyril of Jerusalem, Ascholius of Thessalonica, Diodorus of Tarsus, Acacius of Beroea (*HE VII*, 7, PG 37, 1429). Theodoret mentions: Meletius, Gregory of Nazianzus, Helladius of Cesarea in Cappadocia, Gregory of Nyssa, Peter, Gregory's brother, Amphilocheus of Iconium, Optimus of Antioch in Pisidia, Diodorus of Tarsus, Pelagius of Laodicea, Eulogius of Edessa, Acacius of Beroea, Isidor of Cyrus, Cyril of Jerusalem, Gelasius of Cesarea in Palestine (*HE V*, 8, PG 82, 1209).

²⁰ See Mansi III, 568–572. Notes to this list: Hefele – Leclercq, vol. II, 1, p. 6.

²¹ See G. Bardy, J.-R. Palanque, *La victoire de l'orthodoxie*, [in:] *Histoire de l'Église*, ed. A. Fliche, V. Martin, vol. III, Paris 1950, p. 285; P. Batiffol, *Le catholicisme des origines à saint Léon*,

letius of Antioch. He himself, according to the sources, came to Constantinople much in advance of the Council²². He used this time to reinforce his position and this, in turn, enabled him to have a major influence on who was invited²³.

THE FIRST STAGE OF THE COUNCIL – THE PRESIDENCY OF MELETIUS OF ANTIOCH

The man chosen to preside over the Council was Meletius, the unquestioned leader of the majority of the Council²⁴. Both the participants and the Emperor readily accepted the choice. In fact, there was no-one able to rival Meletius's position. Timothy of Alexandria had not yet arrived, while Gregory of Nazianzus remained under the influence of Meletius and at the time when the sessions started had not yet been canonically approved to the See of Constantinople²⁵. Cyril of Jerusalem was present but the Council was for him more of an opportunity to clear himself of the accusations than an occasion to play the role of a leader²⁶.

Immediately after the inauguration of the Council, the Fathers set about settling the disputed succession to the See of Constantinople. With general consent, Gregory of Nazianzus was appointed to this bishopric, the function he had been actually fulfilling for some time. After being approved, he was ceremonially enthroned by Meletius of Antioch²⁷. The only person to raise objections to this nomination was Gregory himself²⁸. He was finally persuaded by the prospect of having more influence on the reconciliation process with the West, and thus of putting an end to the Antioch schism²⁹.

Alongside Gregory's appointment, Maximus's claims were pronounced unfounded. His consecration was declared invalid as well as all the rites performed by

vol. 4, *Le Siège apostolique* (359-451), Paris 1924², p. 116-118; I. Ortiz de Urbina, op.cit. p. 172; A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, p. 39.

²² See Socrates, *HE V*, 8, PG 67, 576; Sozomen, *HE VII*, 7, PG 37, 1429; Theodoret, *HE V*, 8, PG 82, 1209.

²³ See W. Ensslin, op. cit., p. 31; I. Ortiz de Urbina, op. cit., p. 172; A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, p. 38; A. M. Ritter, *Dogma und Lehre in der Alten Kirche*, in: *Handbuch der Dogmen- und Theologiegeschichte*, hg. v. C. Andersen, vol. I, Göttingen 1982, p. 208-209; E. Schwartz, *Zur Kirchengeschichte des vierten Jahrhunderts*, "Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft" 34 (1935), p. 202.

²⁴ See Gregory of Nazianzus, *Autobiographical Poem* lines 1514-1522, PG 37, 1134-1135; Gregory of Nyssa, *Funeral Oration on Meletius*, PG 46, 852-856.

²⁵ See J. M. Szymusiak, op. cit., p. 233.

²⁶ See Sozomen, *HE VII*, 7, PG 67, 1429.

²⁷ See Gregory of Nazianzus, *Autobiographical Poem* lines 1525, PG 37, 1135; Gregory of Nyssa, *Funeral Oration on Meletius*, PG 46, 860; Sozomen, *HE VII*, 7, PG 67, 1432; Theodoret, *HE V*, 8, PG 82, 1209-1210; G. Bardy, J.-R. Palanque, op. cit., p. 287; P. Batiffol, op. cit., p. 119; Hefele - Leclercq, vol. II, 1, p. 8-9; I. Ortiz de Urbina, op. cit., p. 175; A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, p. 49-53; M. Starowieyski, *Sobory Kościoła niepodzielonego*, vol. I, *Dzieje*, (ser. α - teologia dla wszystkich), Tarnów 1994, p. 39; J. M. Szymusiak, op. cit., p. 233-234.

²⁸ See Gregory of Nazianzus, *Autobiographical Poem*, lines 1062-1073.1525-1526, PG 37, 1102. 1135.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, lines 1525-1571, PG 37, 1135-1138; Hefele - Leclercq, vol. II, 1, pp. 8-9.

him³⁰. This decision was reflected in the fourth canon – formally passed at the end of the council sessions but probably discussed at this stage.

At the same time, the Council's Fathers discussed and accepted two more disciplinary canons. They are known as the second and third canons of the First Council of Constantinople³¹. They are both of greatest significance, for they shaped, to a large extent, eastern ecclesiology. However, a detailed analysis of their background, content and significance goes beyond the scope of this presentation.

Before May ended Meletius of Antioch was dead³². With his death came to an end the first stage of the Council's sessions. As it turned out, it was to be the most peaceful stage³³. Undoubtedly, its calm atmosphere is to be credited to the invisible but overwhelming influence of the presiding leader. The funeral celebrations started in Constantinople. The funeral oration was delivered by Gregory of Nyssa³⁴. The remarkable silence of Gregory of Nazianzus, the bishop of the place and the most brilliant speaker among those present at the time in Constantinople, can only be explained by his illness. After the funeral service in Constantinople, Meletius's body was carried to Antioch and entombed in the martyrion of St Babylas, as was the will of the deceased³⁵.

THE SECOND STAGE OF THE COUNCIL – THE PRESIDENCY OF GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS

The second stage of the First Council of Constantinople was the longest and the most turbulent. On the other hand, one cannot say that it was the most momentous in the life of the Church. The dramatic events that had taken place at the time did not produce the desired outcome. What they produced was chaos and the deepening of the divisions.

The Council's Fathers faced the necessity of finding a new leader of the Council who would take the place of Meletius. The choice fell on Gregory of Nazianzus. In fact, the decision was quite logical since Gregory bore the reputation of a brilliant speaker and theologian. Also on his side was his appointment to the See of Constantinople, as well as the high esteem in which the Emperor held him³⁶.

³⁰ In this view we follow the opinion of most of the authorities (Bardy, Hefele, Leclercq, Ortiz de Urbina, Palanque, Starowieyski, Szymusiak) and change slightly the sequence of the events reported by Theodoret (*HE V*, 8, PG 82, 1209). He states that Maximus was not deprived of his bishopric until the election of Nectarius. This view is difficult to accept and it is impossible to find the reason why Maximus's claims should not be taken into account while nominating Gregory.

³¹ Hefele – Leclercq, vol. II, 1, pp. 21–27.

³² See Theodoret, *HE V*, 8, PG 82, 1209.

³³ See A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil*, p. 53.

³⁴ See Gregory of Nyssa, *Funeral Oration on Meletius*, PG 46, 852–864; Socrates, *HE V*, 9, PG 67, 581.

³⁵ See Sozomen, *HE VII*, 10, PG 67, 1441; A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil*..., p. 54.

³⁶ There is quite a definite connection between the nomination of Gregory and the raising of the status of the See of Constantinople. One conditioned the other. See *Chr. Konstantinidis*, op. cit., pp. 72–73.

However, Gregory himself mentions this function only in passing³⁷. This can be easily understood in the context of his generally negative assessment of the Council as expressed in his *Autobiographical Poem*³⁸.

The Council faced the difficult question of the nomination to the See of Antioch. This issue had not been put on the agenda but circumstances forced it on the Fathers. Against the Council majority, Gregory of Nazianzus sympathized with the incumbent bishop of Antioch, Paulinus³⁹ or, to put it more accurately, he favoured postponing the nomination of a new bishop of Antioch until Paulinus's death⁴⁰. This proposition caused an outcry in the Meletian camp. To them, Paulinus's candidature was entirely unacceptable⁴¹. He was stigmatized with uncanonical consecration and accusations of the heresy of sabelianism. Gregory probably wished to reconcile the parties in Antioch. He may have hoped for a positive effect from his decision in the West and in Alexandria⁴². It is also quite likely that he adopted this attitude to support the Emperor's plans. It was at the Emperor's court that the idea was born of putting an end to the Antioch schism through recognizing the rights of both of the bishops and appointing to the bishopric whichever of the two outlived the other⁴³. Convinced of the rightness of this viewpoint, Gregory did not take into account the grave hostility demonstrated towards Paulinus by the Meletian fraction. The stormy negotiations, in which a new leader of the Council was engaged, led only to a resolution not to appoint the bishop of Antioch while the Council was in session. It was decided that the bishop would be elected in Antioch after the Council in Constantinople had finished⁴⁴. The outcome of such an election was easy to predict as the Meletian fraction had an overwhelming majority in Antioch⁴⁵. Pres-

³⁷ See Gregory of Nazianzus, *Autobiographical Poem*, lines 1739–1744. 1766–1768, PG 37, 1151–1152; also his *Oration 42*, 20, PG 36, 481.

³⁸ See A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, p. 56.

³⁹ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Autobiographical Poem*, lines 1624–1627, PG 37, 1142–1143.

⁴⁰ See J. Bernardi, S. Grégoire de Nazianze. *Le théologien et son Temps*, 330–390, Paris 1995; P. P. Joannou, *Die Ostkirche und die Cathedra Petri*, (*Päpste und Papsttum 3*), Stuttgart 1972, pp. 244–246; A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, p. 62; E. Schwartz, op. cit., p. 203.

⁴¹ See Gregory of Nazianzus, *Autobiographical Poem*, lines 1585–1590, PG 37, 1139–1140; Socrates, *HE V*, 9, PG 67, 581; G. Bardy, J.-R. Palanque, op. cit., p. 288–289; P. Batiffol, op. cit., p. 120–121; P. L'Huillier, op. cit., p. 144; I. Ortiz de Urbina, op. cit., p. 176; A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, pp. 64–66; M. Starowieyski, op. cit., p. 39; J. M. Szymusiak, op. cit., p. 234.

⁴² See Gregory of Nazianzus, *Autobiographical Poem*, lines 1560–1571. 1635–1641, PG 37, 1137–1138. 1143–1144; Sozomen, *HE VII*, 11, PG 67, 1441–1444; A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, p. 63–64.

⁴³ According to Theodoret that was the aim of the mission of Sapor who was magister militum. See Theodoret, *HE V*, 3, PG 82, 1201.

⁴⁴ See G. Bardy, J.-R. Palanque, op. cit., p. 291–292; I. Ortiz de Urbina, op. cit., pp. 180–181; A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, p. 66–67; J. M. Szymusiak, op. cit., p. 234. On the subscription list from Constantinople, Flavianus is still referred to as presbyter. Thus, the nomination would have had to take place after the Council. (Mansi III, 568). Of different opinion is Hefele – Leclercq, vol. II, 1, p. 9. This view holds that the choice was made in Constantinople and approved by the Council. Likewise W. Ensslin, op. cit., p. 32. Ritter in his work, quoted here many times, argues that the nomination of Bishop of Antioch was postponed due to the influence of the bishops from Macedonia and Egypt who arrived at the Council at this particular moment. See A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, pp. 101–103.

⁴⁵ See Socrates, *HE V*, 10, PG 67, 593; Sozomen, *HE VII*, 11, PG 67, 1441.

byter Flavianus was a sure candidate to become the new bishop since he had been the leader of the Meletian community whilst its bishop had been in exile⁴⁶.

The course and the result of the negotiations undeniably weakened the position of Gregory of Nazianzus. The Council's majority voted against its leader. Thus, his presidency did not start well.

Apart from the Catholic bishops, present at the Council were also the Macedonians. The sources state that there were 36 of them. Their leaders were Eleusius of Cyzicus and Marcian of Lampsacus⁴⁷. They owed their invitation to the Emperor⁴⁸. According to the ancient historians, it was the manifestation of the Emperor's idea of unity which was one of the main aims of the Council⁴⁹.

However, the unification negotiations proved, by far, to be more difficult than had been expected. The Emperor probably took it for granted that the Macedonian party, which – in his eyes – was not much different from the Catholics, would easily agree to compromise. Nevertheless, the Macedonians showed an unyielding attitude. The Council's Fathers tried to persuade them to seek unity by reminding them of their former negotiations with Pope Liberius and the then signed declaration of unity. It was to no avail. The offer of reconciliation was rejected. The Macedonian delegation left the Council and sent a letter to their followers urging them to distance themselves from the adherents of the Nicene Creed⁵⁰.

These facts are conclusive. However, when we start to delve into the details, we are confronted with numerous ambiguities. The first question is about the precise timing of the Macedonians' arrival. The scarcity of the historical sources referring to the Council does not help with finding a clear answer. Although Sozomen states that the negotiations with the Macedonians had preceded the nomination of Gregory of Nazianzus to the See of Constantinople⁵¹, this is not confirmed by Gregory himself, who in his *Autobiographical Poem* suggests that these talks were held after Meletius's death⁵². The latter's report is far easier to accept as it would have been rather unthinkable for Meletius to agree to the negotiations with the Macedonians, whose views he so totally rejected at the synod in Antioch in 379 AD when he accepted the Western Church position on the Holy Spirit⁵³.

⁴⁶ See Socrates, *HE V*, 9, PG 67, 581; Sozomen, *HE VII*, 11, PG 67, 1441; Theodoret, *HE V*, 23, PG 82, 1248.

⁴⁷ See Socrates, *HE V*, 8, PG 67, 576–577; Sozomen, *HE VII*, 7, PG 67, 1429.

⁴⁸ See A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, p. 79–82.

⁴⁹ See Socrates, *HE V*, 8, PG 67, 576; Sozomen, *HE VII*, 7, PG 67, 1429.

⁵⁰ See Socrates, *HE V*, 8, PG 67, 577; Sozomen, *HE VII*, 7, PG 67, 1432; G. Bardy, J.-R. Palanque, *op. cit.*, p. 286–287; Hefele – Leclercq, vol. II, 1, p. 10; J. Naumowicz, *Wstęp*, in: *św. Bazyli Wielki, O Duchu Świętym*, translated by A. Brzóstkowska, Warszawa 1999, p. 25; I. Ortiz de Urbina, *op. cit.*, p. 172–173; M. Starowieyski, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

⁵¹ See Sozomen, *HE VII*, 7, PG 67, 1432. It is repeated by P. Batiffol, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

⁵² Gregory of Nazianzus, *Autobiographical Poem*, lines 1737–1739, PG 37, 1151; Ch. Pietri, *op. cit.*, p. 84–85; A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, pp. 68–69.

⁵³ See Ch. Pietri, *op. cit.*, p. 78; A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, p. 78–79.

Another intriguing question is: what was the basis for the negotiations with the Macedonians? Socrates and Sozomen maintain that the Macedonians were outraged at the teaching that the Son was of one essence with the Father. They both accuse the Macedonians of aligning themselves with Arianism, considered a heresy, and rejecting the Nicene Creed. However, a very insightful piece of research by Adolf Martin Ritter proves that the cause of the dissension was a pneumatological issue. This assumption stands in agreement with the traditional viewpoint. The basis for negotiation was not the Nicene doctrine but the formula which is called today the Nicene-Constantinople Symbol⁵⁴.

Another problem which needs to be discussed is the participation in the Council of Ascholius, Bishop of Thessalonica, Timothy, Bishop of Alexandria, and the delegation of the Macedonian and Egyptian bishops accompanying them⁵⁵. They are known to have taken part in the Council and to have played an important role there. They are also known not to have been present at the beginning of the Council, but to have arrived some time later when the sessions were already in progress. They owed their invitation to the Council to the Emperor. Ascholius had known the Emperor personally at least since the time when he had baptized him in autumn 380 AD. It is also evident from the correspondence between Ascholius and Pope Damasus that Theodosius I consulted his plan for convening the Council with Bishop of Thessalonica⁵⁶. Since the meeting of the two emperors, Theodosius I and Gracian, at Sirmium in autumn 380 AD, Thessalonica found itself again under the rule of the latter. Thus, it was only for personal reasons that Ascholius could receive an invitation⁵⁷. It should be also added, that although Ascholius was not an official representative of the Pope at the Council, Damasus had in him a trusted confidant and a reliable source of information⁵⁸.

⁵⁴ See Ch. Pietri, *op. cit.*, p. 86–87; A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, p. 78–85. 253–270; A. M. Ritter, *Dogma und Lehre...*, p. 211; A. M. Ritter, *Il secondo Concilio ecumenico e la sua ricezione: stato della ricerca*, 'Cristianesimo nella storia', 2(1981), p. 349–357; M. Starowieyski, *op. cit.*, p. 39. Ritter's thesis is resolutely opposed by Hauschild (*Die Trinitätslehre des Konzils von Konstantinopel und die Situation der Kirche im 4. Jahrhundert*, [in:] *La signification et l'actualité du II^e Concile Oecuménique pour le monde chrétien d'aujourd'hui*, ser. *Les études théologiques de Chambésy*, vol. 2, Chambésy-Genève 1982, p. 216). He is radically faithful to Sozomen and Socrates stating that the negotiations were the introduction to the Council. The subject of discussion was the essence of Son. The pneumatological issue was not discussed at all. The basis for the discussion was the Nicene Symbol.

⁵⁵ It is confirmed that together with Timothy came Doroteus of Oxyrhynchos, as his signature is to be found on the subscription list (Mansi III, 568). It can be assumed, however, that also Ascholius was accompanied by other bishops from Macedonia. This is what Gregory of Nazianzus seems to suggest (*Autobiographical Poem*, lines 1800, PG 37, 1155) using plural forms: Egyptians and Macedonians.

⁵⁶ See Damasus, *Letter 5. To Ascholius* PL 13, 367–368.

⁵⁷ See P. L' Huillier, *op. cit.*, p. 140; Chr. Konstantinidis, *op. cit.*, p. 70; E. Schwartz, *op. cit.*, p. 203; J. M. Szymusiak, *op. cit.*, p. 232. Of different opinion is: S. Bralewski, *Imperatorzy późnego cesarstwa rzymskiego wobec zgromadzeń biskupów*, Łódź 1997, pp. 98–99.

⁵⁸ See M. Starowieyski, *op. cit.*, p. 44; W. de Vries, *Orient et Occident. Les structures ecclésiales vues dans l'histoire des sept premiers conciles oecuméniques*. Paris 1974, pp. 49–51.

Timothy of Alexandria belonged to the Eastern episcopate. However, his theological line linked him more with the West than with the Meletian fraction dominating at the Council. Besides, due to the scandal with Maximus the Cynic, the Alexandrian party won a lot of enemies in Constantinople.

The timing of sending the invitations to the bishops of Thessalonica and Alexandria was not coincidental. By the time they were summoned to the Council, the most difficult decisions had already been taken; Gregory had been nominated to the See of Constantinople and the most important canons of the Council – the second and the third – had been passed⁵⁹. It also means that the invitation was sent after the death of Meletius with whom Timothy had not remained in the communion of the Church. The Emperor took advantage of a new situation and sent the invitations to those bishops whose presence, he thought, could help to ease the tension between the East and the West⁶⁰.

However, the arrival of the Macedonian and Egyptian bishops stirred new tensions among the participants. The newly arrived started by questioning the validity of the decisions already undertaken. Then again, the Meletian fraction was not going to discuss the issues that had already been settled. This resulted in the rift between the two sides as the new delegates did not want to confer with the Meletians⁶¹.

Gregory of Nazianzus became the subject of particularly passionate attacks by the “people of the West”. His nomination to the See of Constantinople was judged to be in violation of the canons of the Nicene Council⁶². The first to raise this question was bishop Ascholius – following the instruction he had been given by Pope Damasus⁶³. He was quickly backed up by Timothy⁶⁴. It is very indicative that while, on the one hand, Gregory’s opponents lodged a complaint against the noncanonical nature of his nomination, on the other, they assured him that it had nothing to do with him personally. Gregory himself perceived this attitude as an attempt to seek

⁵⁹ See Hefele – Leclercq, vol. II, 1, p. 5; P. L’Huillier, op. cit., p. 140; A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, p. 98–101. Of different opinion is: G. Bardy, J.-R. Palanque, op. cit., p. 289; S. Bralowski, op. cit., p. 100.

⁶⁰ See W. Ensslin, op. cit., p. 32.

⁶¹ See Theodoret, *HE* V, 8, PG 82, 1209; G. Bardy, J.-R. Palanque, op. cit., p. 289; P. Batiffol, op. cit., p. 121.

⁶² See Gregory of Nazianzus, *Autobiographical Poem* lines 1810–1812, PG 37, 1156; Sozomen, *HE* VII, 7, PG 67, 1432; I. Ortiz de Urbina, op. cit., p. 176–177. The fifteenth and sixteenth Nicene canons were referred to which forbid the bishops to move from one see to another in order to gain a greater prestige (Mansi II, 691). See on the same subject: Hefele – Leclercq, vol. I, 2, Paris 1907, p. 598–600.

⁶³ See Damasus, *Letter* 5, 6, PL 13, 368–369, 370; Gregozy Nazianzus, *Oracle* 42, 19, PG 36, 480; also his *Autobiographical Poem*, lines 1802, PG 37, 1155; G. Bardy, J.-R. Palanque, op. cit., p. 289; J. Bernardi, op. cit., p. 215–216; E. Caspar, *Geschichte des Papsttums von den Anfängen bis zum Höhe der Weltherrschaft*, Bd. I, *Römische Kirche und Imperium Romanum*, Tübingen 1930, p. 236; P. P. Joannou, op. cit., p. 246–247; J. M. Szymusiak, op. cit., p. 234; M. Wojtowysch, *Papsttum und Konzile von den Anfängen bis zu Leo I (440–461)*. *Studien zur Entstehung der Überordnung des Papstes über Konzile*, (ser. *Päpste und Papsttum* 17), Stuttgart 1981, p. 161–162.

⁶⁴ See Gregory of Nazianzus, *Autobiographical Poem*, lines 1800, PG 37, 1155.

revenge on the Melatians for the past grudges⁶⁵. It is very likely that Timothy at least was led in his actions by the wish to humble the bishopric which aspired to the position in the Church structure that so far had been occupied by the See of Alexandria⁶⁶.

Gregory and his defenders rightly argued that the accusation was immaterial. The fifteenth and sixteenth Nicene canons were already considered in the East as outdated. Gregory had not been nominated to any bishopric before Constantinople. Besides, one could not suspect Gregory of moving from one see to another with the aim of making a career – the very practice the Nicene canons related to⁶⁷.

However, the undermining of the canonical nature of his bishop's authority in the See of Constantinople distressed Gregory very much. Increasingly embittered by the course of the events at the Council, he handed in his resignation first to the Council, and then to the Emperor⁶⁸. Although Gregory was unanimously nominated to the See of Constantinople, the same Council agreed to dismiss him with hardly anybody opposing⁶⁹. This inconsistency can only be understood by considering Gregory's attitude in the controversy over the successor to Meletius in Antioch. In addition, the Emperor withdrew his support for Gregory who was not able to come to an agreement with the Macedonians. It is true that the negotiations were broken off by the Macedonians; however, Gregory's uncompromising attitude could not have made a good impression on the Emperor. Thus, he accepted Gregory's resignation⁷⁰.

The Emperor's decision opened the way for Gregory to leave the city. He gave a farewell speech to the bishops and gathered people in the Holy Apostles Church, and left the city⁷¹.

THE LAST STAGE – THE PRESIDENCY OF NECTARIUS

After Gregory's resignation it was necessary to appoint a new bishop of Constantinople⁷². Such necessity had not been previously taken into account, therefore

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, lines 1812–1817, PG 37, 1156.

⁶⁶ See A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, pp. 103–104; J. M. Szymusiak, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

⁶⁷ See Gregory of Nazianzus, *Autobiographical Poem*, lines 1810–1812, PG 37, 1156; Sozomen, *HE VII*, 7, PG 67, 1432; A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, p. 104–105; J. M. Szymusiak, *op. cit.*, p. 234–235.

⁶⁸ See Gregory of Nazianzus, *Autobiographical Poem*, lines 1828–1856, PG 37, 1157–1159; Theodoret, *HE V*, 8, PG 82, 1209.

⁶⁹ See Gregory of Nazianzus, *Autobiographical Poem*, lines 1868–1870. 1914–1918, PG 37, 1160. 1163.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, lines 1881–1904, PG 37, 1161–1162; A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, p. 107.

⁷¹ See Gregory of Nazianzus, *Autobiographical Poem*, lines 1909–1918, PG 37, 1163; Theodoret, *HE V*, 8, PG 82, 1209; A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, p. 108–111. Of different opinion is J. Bernardi (*op. cit.*, p. 228), who thinks that this speech was not delivered. Gregory wrote it later and besides, it does not seem to be finished.

⁷² Theodoret's report on the election of Gregory's successor is limited to giving his name and the name of a patrician family he belonged to. He mentions, of course, that the election was conducted after Gregory's resignation. See Theodoret, *HE V*, 8, PG 82, 1209.

there was no "ready" candidate as had been the case with Gregory. There were also some unfavourable circumstances such as the presence of the "people of the West" and a necessity to keep the fifteenth canon of the Nicene Council. With this in mind, it is easier to understand the seemingly endless discussions and the high number of the candidates⁷³.

According to Sozomen, the matter was finally settled by the Emperor Theodosius I⁷⁴. As there was a great divergence of the opinions concerning the candidate for the bishopric of the capital, the Emperor asked for a written list of candidates among whom he was going to choose. He happened to select Nectarius, whose name had been put at the very bottom of the list⁷⁵.

Nectarius, who came from Tarsus, belonged to a family of senators. He was even praetor of Constantinople and was very popular with the people of the city⁷⁶. Certainly the appointment of the Emperor's official suited the Emperor. The decision was especially opportune in view of the third canon, already approved, on the status of the See of Constantinople in the universal church. This turn of events was welcome by the Meletians, who regarded Nectarius as a member of their party because he was protégée of Diodorus of Tarsus. Also the West, represented by Ascholi and Timothy, could consider this choice their victory; the Nicene canons were preserved and this was what the "people of the West" felt called themselves to defend while questioning Gregory's nomination⁷⁷.

The fact that Nectarius had not been baptized yet did not hamper his nomination. Immediately after his election, he received the Sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Orders. The Emperor's willpower overcame the opposition of some of the bishops⁷⁸.

After Gregory, Nectarius inherited not only the See of Constantinople but also the post of President of the Council⁷⁹. This testifies to the increasing importance of the See of Constantinople⁸⁰.

During Nectarius's presidency the canons were finally approved, the tomos was agreed on and the Council sessions came to an end with the request to the Em-

⁷³ See A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, p. 112-113.

⁷⁴ According to Socrates, the appointment was forced by the people of the city who greatly admired their praetor, Nectarius. The formal choice was made by the bishops. He does not mention the Emperor's involvement at all, which is difficult to accept considering the political status of the bishop of the Emperor's capital. See Socrates, *HE V*, 8, PG, 577.

⁷⁵ See Sozomen, *HE VII*, 7-8, PG 67, 1432-1436; G. Bardy, J.-R. Palanque, *op. cit.*, s. 290; Heffele - Leclercq, vol. II, 1, p. 10; I. Ortiz de Urbina, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

⁷⁶ See Socrates, *HE V*, 8, PG 67, 577; Sozomen, *HE VII*, 8, PG 67, 1433-1436.

⁷⁷ See A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, pp. 114-115.

⁷⁸ See Sozomen, *HE VII*, 8, PG 67, 1433-1436; W. Ensslin, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42.

⁷⁹ See Sozomen, *HE VII*, 9, PG 67, 1436.

⁸⁰ See A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, p. 116.

peror for final approval⁸¹. It was the last stage of the Council. It was also the shortest, lasting just a few days at the beginning of July 381 AD.

Together with the approved text of canons and tomos⁸², the Fathers enclosed a brief letter to the Emperor with the request for his final approval of the accepted resolutions⁸³. All this documentation was sent to Theodosius's court. After that, the bishops started back to their churches⁸⁴.

It is not known whether the Council ended in a ceremonial way or whether it was sealed with the simple act of signing the Council's documents. The Emperor answered the bishops' letter with the publication of the canons, together with the list of signatures appended to them⁸⁵, and an edict of 30 July 381 AD⁸⁶.

Such a picture of the First Council of Constantinople emerges from the testimonies preserved up to our times. As one can see, it is a multifaceted and multicoloured picture, full of drama and sudden turns of action. The basic problem in the case of the Second Ecumenical Council is the scarcity of the sources. For that reason, research on the Council is far from conclusive. In many aspects the researchers are dealing only with hypotheses and there is considerable scope for further in-depth studies. Many other theories are bound to appear which, hopefully, will help to understand better the event of the Council of 150 Fathers.

⁸¹ See Sozomen, *HE VII*, 9, PG 67, 1436–1437; Theodoret, *HE V*, 8, PG 82, 1212; A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, p. 116–117.

⁸² The tomos of the First Council of Constantinople has not been preserved up to our times. There is, however, the evidence of its existence in the tomos of the Synod that took place in Constantinople in 382 AD. See Theodoret, *HE V*, 9, PG 82, 1217

⁸³ See Mansi III, 557; W. Ensslin, op. cit., p. 34; Hefele – Leclercq, vol. II, 1, p. 40; A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, pp. 124–127.

⁸⁴ See Mansi III, 557; W. Ensslin, op. cit., p. 34; Hefele – Leclercq, vol. II, 1, p. 40; A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, pp. 124–127.

⁸⁵ See A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, p. 127.

⁸⁶ See *Codex Theodosianus XVI*, 1, 3, hrsg. lines Th. Mommsen und P. M. Meyer, Berlin 1905, s. 834; Sozomen, *HE VII*, 9, PG 67, 1437–1440. Socrates confused the text of an edict with the Council's resolutions and attributed to the bishops who were mentioned in it the dignity of patriarchs, supposedly given to them by the Council. (*HE V*, 8, PG 67, 580–381). See also: G. Bardy, J.-R. Palanque, op. cit., p. 291; P. Batiffol, op. cit., p. 139; Hefele – Leclercq, vol. II, 1, p. 41; I. Ortiz de Urbina, op. cit., p. 180; A. M. Ritter, *Das Konzil...*, p. 128–130.236–239.