

ROAD TO NICAEA I (325): A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

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Abstract

As the article's title indicates, an attempt is made to explain the immediate historical background of the Council of Nicaea I. The encounter of the Christian religion with the Jewish religion and the Greco-Roman world resulted in various efforts to explain the uniqueness of Christ. Maintaining monotheism and developing the Christian concept of the Trinity was not an easy task for the theologians of the early Church. The Jewish influence and the liberal use of Greek philosophy resulted in various heresies, including Arianism. Emperor Constantine, acting as the representative of God, convoked the first ecumenical council, Nicaea I, in 325. Unity of the Empire was the major concern of the Emperor, and the identification of the Church with the State was inaugurated with this Council. Besides, the functioning of the Council was modelled after the Roman Senate. The clear articulation of the Christian Creed is the greatest

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achievement of the Council, which is being recited even today with certain additions.

Key Words: Ecumenical, Constantine, Arius, Council, Nicaea, Monotheism, Christology, Trinity

Introduction

An attempt is made here to narrate the events that led to the Council of Nicaea I (325), the first ecumenical Council in the history of the Church. Tertullian (+220) was the first to use the term "Council. Ecumenical comes from the word *Oikoumene*, the inhabited world.² Although the essential organization of the spreading Christianity remained the same - the bishop supreme in the local Church under the supreme hegemony of the Bishop of Rome - two very important new institutions developed during these first three hundred years, the council of bishops and the ecclesiastical province, i.e., the permanent grouping of sees around a central metropolitan see. A council is a natural idea, especially in the early Church. Around the middle of the third century, provincial synods developed, at which the bishops of a whole province gathered around their metropolitan. We had the Jerusalem Council, and regional councils were held in Carthage, Asia Minor, Rome, Elvira, etc. The earliest council recorded was called by the Bishop of Ephesus at the time of the Easter Controversy (189-198). The African Church made wide use of this new form of government. Under St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, through the Council of Africa, the primacy of Carthage developed rapidly. "When, for the first time after the Constantinian turning point, the bishops of the whole Roman Empire, the *ecumene*, were permitted to gather in order to consult on universal ecclesiastical problems, the first ecumenical council of Nicaea (325) met under Constantine's direction."³ The councils' structure followed the Roman Senate model, where consultation was held, and all followed the decisions taken. Although there are differences of opinion regarding the number of Councils, the Catholic Church recognizes twenty-one Councils as ecumenical or general councils. The Greek Orthodox Church, separated from the Roman Catholic Church, recognizes only the first seven ecumenical councils. Although the original spirit of the

² Cf., Joseph F. Kelly, *The Ecumenical Councils of the Catholic Church*, Minnesota, USA: Liturgical Press, 2009, 13-29.

³ August Franzen, *A Concise History of the Church*, New York: Burns & Oates/Herder and Herder, 1969, 44.

Council is the unity of the Church, the Councils led to divisions in the Church, as the Council of Ephesus (431) led to the formation of the Assyrian Church of the East and the Council of Chalcedon (451) led to the evolution of the Oriental Orthodox Churches. Although the councils, especially the first four councils, defined the Christological, Trinitarian, and Soteriological dogmas and doctrines and deepened the theology of the Church and clarified the fundamental teachings of the Church, these definitions also resulted in the development of the churches independent of the Roman Church.

Christian Religion: Palestine and the Greco-Roman World

The problem confronting the bishops assembled in Nicaea had long been the fundamental question facing all previous Christian theologians. In the monotheistic concept of the Jewish and Christian religions and the all-prevailing pagan background, the Christian religion's fundamental problem was maintaining the unity of God while insisting on the deity of one who was distinct from God the Father. The Jewish influence on the Christian religion also affected the Christological disputes. As the post-apostolic Church emerged from the Jewish world, "The Judeo-Christian mentality was content merely to illustrate the doctrine of the New Testament concerning Jesus Christ and His relation to God the Father by images drawn from the Old Testament and the apocalyptic literature without fashioning these often profound insights into a coherent explanation."⁴

The earliest Trinitarian debates did not include the Holy Spirit. Some of the Apostolic Fathers, immediate successors of the Apostles, e.g., St. Ignatius of Antioch (+107), used phrases like "God Incarnate" and "God in human" to describe Christ and the Incarnation mystery. Still, they did not develop a systematic theology of the Incarnation.⁵ St. Ignatius of Antioch recognized Jesus' unity with God, besides the full and real humanity.

Christians followed the strict Jewish tradition of monotheism. The encounter of the Christian religion with the Jewish religion and the Greco-Roman world resulted in many heresies. The Ebionites, a heresy of Judeo-Christian origin, stressed only the humanity of Jesus

⁴ Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787)*, Collegeville, Minnesota: The liturgical Press, 1990, 33.

⁵ Joseph Kelly, *The Ecumenical Councils*, 19.

and denied his divinity. They continued to insist on the observance of Jewish law and custom. For them, Jesus was the elect of God and a true prophet, but they denied His virgin birth and eternal pre-existence. They believed that the power of God descended on Jesus at his baptism. Irenaeus of Smyrna (+203), Asia Minor, later as bishop of Lyons in France, around 180, took much effort to prove that the God of the Old Testament, the God of the Gospels, and the God attainable through reason are all the same God.⁶ The first article of Christian faith is “God the Father, increate, ungendered, invisible, only Deity, creator of the universe.” Irenaeus also did yeoman service for the early Church in refuting the Gnostic distinction between the Supreme God and the lower Creator God, between Jesus and the Christ. Gnosticism, too, was a great threat to the early Church.

From the Ebionite heresy developed another heresy called Adoptionism, according to which Jesus is a mere man and is only the adopted Son of God.⁷ The Adoptionists looked on Christ as a mere man who, at some time, probably on the occasion of his baptism in the Jordan, was filled with divine power, transformed into a God, and thus adopted by God. The real and original God was the Father, and Christ was an adopted God.⁸ “If God the Father is a deity, and God the Son, incarnate Jesus, is also a deity, have the Christians not compromised monotheism by believing in two gods?”⁹ The Adoptionists answered the questions about Jesus by arguing that He was a mere man in whom God dwelt specially. Adoptionist Paul of Samosata, bishop of Antioch in Syria from 260 to 268, argued that “the Word is from above; Jesus Christ is a man from hence; Mary gave birth to a man like us, though better in every way since He was of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰

The problem was not simply whether Jesus is God.¹¹ The problem was how, within the monotheistic system that the Church inherited from the Jews, preserved in the Bible, and defended against the

⁶ Cf., Pope Benedict XVI, *Church Fathers*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008, 21-26.

⁷ Sebastian Athappilly CMI, *Christology: Mystery and History of Jesus Christ*, Vol.I (Sixth revised edition) Bengaluru: Dharmaram Publications, 2022, 271.

⁸ Joseph Kelly, *The Ecumenical Councils*, 69.

⁹ Joseph Kelly, *The Ecumenical Councils*, 19.

¹⁰ Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787)*, 40.

¹¹ Cf., Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787)*, 33-80.

heathen, it was still possible to maintain the unity of God while insisting on the deity of one who was distinct from God the Father. A bewildering array of solutions had been offered to the problem.

The dogmatic problem is to maintain a rigorous monotheism and the unity (*monarchia*) of God.¹² Confusion prevailed among the Roman theologians, and they feared that elevating the status of the Son and the Spirit would lead to polytheism. Some Roman theologians developed a new theological approach that emphasized the unity of the three to the point of denying the distinct coexistence of Son and Spirit, known as Monarchianism (*monos, arche* = only one rule). “According to it, God is three merely in the sense of manifesting three faces or modes of acting concerning the world, but God’s very being is not triune.”¹³ Some Monarchian theologians adopted Modalism, that “Son” and “Spirit” are names for the different forms or “Modes” of the Father’s activity, “Son” for his redemptive work, and “Spirit” for his sanctifying work.¹⁴ Thus, we have Modalistic Monarchianism and Dynamistic Monarchianism. The Modalists saw in Christ only one form or mode of the one and only God who manifests himself at one time as Father, at another time as Son, and at a third time as Holy Spirit. They maintained that in reality, the Father had suffered for us. Tertullian gave the defenders of this teaching, Sabellius and Praxeas, the nickname *Patripassiani* (Father suffered on the cross). *Patripassianism* is hence another name for the same heresy.¹⁵

Some Monarchians advocated Adoptionism, the belief that Jesus was just a good man in whom God dwelt as a divine, vivifying power. Jesus was only a man adopted by God at the time of baptism. Some denied the divinity of Christ, but others held that he became divine after resurrection.¹⁶ Monarchians stressed the unity of God in such a way that they acknowledged the divinity of Christ but denied His distinction from the Father.

When the Church encountered the Hellenistic culture, which was highly speculative, various accounts were given for Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Apologists like Justin the Martyr (+165) and his followers used philosophical terminology most effectively, and

¹² Cf. Joseph Kelly, *The Ecumenical Councils*, 69.

¹³ Sebastian Athappilly, *Christology*, 271.

¹⁴ Cf. Joseph Kelly, *The Ecumenical Councils*, 20.

¹⁵ Sebastian Athappilly, *Christology*, 272.

¹⁶ Sebastian Athappilly, *Christology*, 273.

Greek philosophy could help them formulate Christian teachings. Justin tried to defend the Christian faith by reconciling faith and reason. He used *Logos*, or the Word of God, to express the relation of Father and Son; that is, the Word emanated from the Father and became incarnate. For Justin, the Old Testament and Greek philosophy are like two paths that lead to Christ, to the *Logos*. He was a pioneer of positive engagement with philosophical thinking.¹⁷ Justin concludes that "since Christianity is the historical and personal manifestation of the *Logos* in his totality, it follows that whatever things were rightly said among all men are the property of us Christians."¹⁸ Another apologist, Athenagoras, used the word *trias* to explain the Trinity. The Trinitarian theology developed by the Apologists is called "economic Trinitarianism", that is, "the one Father unfolded into two and then three, His Word (Son) and His Wisdom (Spirit)."¹⁹

The greatest shortcoming of Greek thought is the absence of any idea of creation out of nothing. The nearest is the Platonic idea of emanation: less perfect beings come forth from God without impairing his unity of absolute perfection. An image used in this context is that of rays coming forth from the sun, which share the same nature as the sun but leave it unchanged. It was tempting to compare this conception with the going forth of the Word and the Spirit from the Father.²⁰

In the long run, the Christian interaction with the Greco-Roman culture had a much greater effect on developing the articulation of the Christian faith. The Church slowly adopted Greek philosophy to interpret the Christian religion. Jesus is one person with two natures, and the Son of God is *homoousios*, consubstantial with the Father.²¹

In the third century, some theologians advocated a more advanced economic trinitarianism, seeing God unfolding from one into three. Tertullian, the North African theologian, made advancements in trinitarian theology, even contributing proper terminology. He was the first to use the Latin word *trinitas* (*trias* = three, plus *unitas* = unity), from which we have the English word

¹⁷ Cf., Pope Benedict XVI, *Church Fathers*, 17-20.

¹⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, *Church Fathers*, 18.

¹⁹ Joseph Kelly, *The Ecumenical Councils*, 19.

²⁰ Cf., Ralph Woodhall, S.J., *The Theology of the Incarnation*, Bridge Street Cork: The Mercier Press, 1973, 28-31.

²¹ Joseph Kelly, *The Ecumenical Councils*, 14.

Trinity. He also used words like *substantia* and *persona*, arguing that the three persons partook in the divine substance in the Trinity. This teaching appears to be orthodox, but Tertullian remained an economic trinitarian. However, the terminology he created largely helped later Latin theologians. He developed the correct language to express the mystery of Christ, Son of God and true Man.²² Tertullian “prescribes the belief that there is only one God and that he is none other than the Creator of the world, who produced all things out of nothing through his own Word, generated before all things.”²³

Origen (+254), a leading Greek Alexandrian theologian, influenced by the Platonic philosophy, held the theory of pre-existentialism of the souls, that the souls existed before they came to this earth to be joined to the body.²⁴ Origen insisted that “God the Father always had to be a Father; that is, the Son’s generation from the Father is eternal and not part of a gradual unfolding. But Origen also believed in a hierarchical relationship in the Trinity, subordinated the Son to the Father and the Spirit to the Son.”²⁵

There was severe tension between Greek and Latin approaches to the Trinity. The Greeks feared that the Latins put such emphasis upon the unity of the Trinity that the individuality of the persons could be lost. The Latins feared that the Greeks put so much emphasis on the individuality of the persons that the oneness of the deity would be obscured. A serious terminological problem was added to this. Some Latins spoke of three “persons” and one “substance” in the Trinity, but the standard Greek equivalent of “person” was “hypostasis”, which would also mean substance. There was also another Greek word for ‘substance’, *ousia*. When Greeks spoke of three hypostases, Latins often feared “three substances”, raising fears that Greeks were compromising the unity of the Trinity.²⁶ When the Council of Nicaea I was convened in 325, the overwhelmingly Greek-speaking bishops there had accepted the notion that Greek philosophy could help formulate Christian doctrines.

²² Cf., Pope Benedict XVI, *Church Fathers*, 43–47.

²³ Pope Benedict XVI, *Church Fathers*, 47.

²⁴ Sebastian Athappilly, *Christology*, 274.

²⁵ Joseph Kelly, *The Ecumenical Councils*, 20.

²⁶ Joseph Kelly, *The Ecumenical Councils*, 20.

Immediate Historical Background of the Council

Emperor Diocletian (284-305) resigned from office in 305, having already divided the Roman Empire into East and West. Against all expectations, Diocletian raised Galerius to First Augustus and Constantius, Father of Constantine the Great, to Second Augustus. In the spring of 312, after the death of Galerius, a smooth transition of power did not occur, as there were many claimants. Constantine had to dislodge Maxentius, which was a daring gamble. He turned to the God of Christians for help. In a dream, he saw a cross in the sky and the words “conquer in this sign”, which convinced him to advance. He decorated his soldiers with the cross. On October 28, 312, he achieved his brilliant victory over the troops of Maxentius in the Milvian Bridge battle. Constantine looked upon his success as proof of Christ's power and the Christian religion's superiority over the pagan gods.²⁷ With the Edict of Milan in 313, the Christian religion was given freedom in the Empire.²⁸ Later events prove that his religious policy was one of Caesaropapism; Caesar acted as the protector and the promoter of the infant Church.

Alexandrian School

Influenced by Neoplatonic philosophy, in Christology, the Alexandrian School adopted the *Logos-sarx* model, the Word-flesh scheme, according to which the Word assumed the flesh (human nature). The chief concern of this school was to safeguard the unity and true divinity of Christ.²⁹ The great theologians of the Alexandrian School include Pantenus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, etc. Clement of Alexandria was one of the pioneers of the dialogue between faith and reason in the Christian tradition. For him, the Greek philosophical tradition, almost like the Law for the Jews, was a sphere of “revelation”; they were two streams which flowed ultimately to the *Logos* himself.³⁰

Arianism

Arius (260-336) was a priest in Alexandria, known for his ascetical life and great following, and was a preacher of talent. He was a proponent of the Alexandrian *Logos-sarx* model. Although he studied in Antioch under Lucian, the real Father of Arianism, strongly

²⁷ August Franzen, *A Concise History of the Church*, 58.

²⁸ Cf., Joseph Kelly, *The Ecumenical Councils*. 17.

²⁹ Sebastian Athappilly, *Christology*, 240.

³⁰ Cf., Pope Benedict XVI, *Church Fathers*, 30.

tainted with subordinationism,³¹ Arius followed the Alexandrian Christological model of Origenism. His main Christological thinking was Alexandrian in character, although in its heterodox form.³² He argued that a divine being cannot be subordinate. So, he concluded that the Son of God is subordinate because he is not divine. The Word of God is a created being and existed long before us because God created the world through him; he has perfections, but did not share God's being or enjoy any of God's manifest perfections. Through preaching and the hymns he composed, Arius taught that the Word was created to be the instrument of the Father's cosmic activity. There was a time when the Son was not.

As a theological doctrine, Arianism was the outcome of yet another effort of the Greek mind to reconcile rationally the truths that there is but one God, that the *Logos* incarnate in Jesus Christ is God, and that the *Logos* is yet admittedly distinct from the Father. If the Father is God, and if God is one only, and if the *Logos* is not the Father, how is the *Logos* God? Arianism represented a Hellenization of the content of the Church's Christological faith. Arius found followers among other bishops, especially in Palestine, although the bishop of Alexandria, Alexander, opposed him. Arius travelled around and attracted many. Among the prominent followers was Eusebius, the bishop of the imperial capital, Nicomedia, who became his ally.³³ The novel teaching had all the novelty's success until it was officially brought to the notice of the bishop of Alexandria. There followed the usual procedure of enquiry and consultations, and Bishop Alexander called a meeting of his priests and deacons. The bishop was not pleased with Arius's answer, and although called upon to recant, Arius refused and continued to spread his teachings in the city. By 320, Alexander called a synod of the bishops of Egypt and Libya. Although the majority were against Arius, some bishops, priests, and deacons favoured the teachings of Arius. Some of the bishops of Palestine rallied to Arius. He moved to Nicomedia, where he sought the support of Bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia, a fellow disciple of Lucian of Antioch, who became his staunchest and most influential supporter.³⁴ As already mentioned, the synod at Alexandria in 320 condemned the teachings of Arius as heretical and

³¹ Cf., Philip Hughes, *A History of the Church Volume One*, New York: Sheed & Ward, 1952, 189.

³² Sebastian Athappilly, *Christology*, 244.

³³ Joseph Kelly, *The Ecumenical Councils*, 21.

³⁴ Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 53.

excommunicated him. The Arian controversy divided Christians in the eastern Mediterranean. Pope Silvester I (314-335) was also informed. However, Arius was gaining importance.³⁵

Convocation of the Council

Many asked for a synod in the context of the Arian controversy. Some suggested a universal Council. In preparation for such an ecumenical council, several synods of bishops were held in the last months of 324 and the first months of the following year. One synod of great interest was held at Antioch at the end of 324 or, more probably, in the beginning of 325, which promulgated a lengthy statement of the faith in Christ as divine; it anathematized those who say or think or preach that the Son of God is a creature or has come into being or has been made and is not truly begotten, or that there was a time when he did not exist. Christ was described as not made but properly an offspring, but begotten in an ineffable, indescribable manner, as one who exists everlastingly and did not at one time not exist. In 324, Constantine defeated the Eastern Emperor, Licinius and became the sole master of the Roman world. To him, the disputants turned for help. His first action was to send to Alexandria Bishop Ossius of Cordoba, also known as Hosius of Cordova, the Spanish Bishop,³⁶ who had the greatest influence with the Emperor, together with Eusebius of Caesarea. It was possibly from this meeting of Ossius and Alexander of Alexandria that the idea of submitting the matter to a council of all the bishops of the Church came to light. Whatever the origin of the plan, Constantine made it his own.

Emperor Constantine thought he had the right to call a council because, in the spirit of the definition of Hellenistic royal competence, he regarded himself as legally entitled to interfere in religious affairs. He represented the Divinity on earth and was given by God supreme power in things material and spiritual.³⁷ As a staunch promoter of the cause of the Christians, Constantine thought that it was his foremost duty to lead men to God. The bishops were handicapped by the emotions of the sudden revolution in the fortune of the Christian religion, the new, utterly unprecedented situation for the triumph of the cause of Christ.³⁸ Originally, the idea was to hold

³⁵ Philip Hughes, *A History of the Church Volume One*, 189; Refer also, Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 51-56.

³⁶ Athanasius always calls him the Great.

³⁷ Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 56.

³⁸ Philip Hughes, *A History of the Church, Volume One*, 187, footnote 1.

the council at Ancyra. Constantine preferred Nicaea as there was easy access to the Western bishops, and it was not far from the imperial residence at Nicomedia.³⁹

In the name of the Emperor, the bishops were invited; he provided the travelling facilities that made the meeting possible; and he chose the place where it should assemble, Nicaea, a city of Bythynia, close to his capital. With the unity of the Church at stake, Constantine, the Emperor, acting as the representative of God, convoked the first ecumenical Council, which met at Nicaea and was opened⁴⁰ on June 19, 325.

Constantine found in the organization of the ecclesiastical synods a procedure akin to the organization of the Roman Senate itself. Conciliar procedure, thus modelled on that of the Senate, enabled the Church to safeguard a certain independence in all matters of doctrine by encouraging the Emperor to work through assemblies of bishops to achieve unity of belief.⁴¹

Though the bishops were mostly men of modest learning, it did not take long to decide that Arianism was not what they had been teaching and preaching all their lives. The vote against it was virtually unanimous; the divinity of Christ was not to be an open question in the Church. The Creed they issued has some additions that are still recited at Sunday Mass. It unequivocally condemned Arianism, asserting that the Son was begotten, not created, and was identical in substance with the Father - *homoousios*. In Latin, it is *consubstantialis*, which means that the Son, the *Logos*, "is of the same substance" as the Father; he is God of God; he is his substance. Thus, the full divinity of the Son, which the Arians denied, was brought into the limelight.

In other words, the Word shared the divine nature and was fully equal with the Father. While the bishops agreed to reject Arianism, they were not all happy with the term used to formulate the

³⁹ Cf., Norman P. Tanner S.J, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, Vol. I, Nicaea I to Lateran V*, Washington DC: Sheed & Ward, London and Georgetown University Press, 1990, 1-2.

⁴⁰ Until recently, historians generally gave 20 May as the date of the opening of the Council. This view springs from an error made by the historian Socrates. See E. Schwartz, *Nachrichten von der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, 1904, 395-398; Cf., Norman P. Tanner S.J, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, Vol. I, Nicaea I to Lateran V*, 1-2.

⁴¹ Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 57.

orthodox position, *homoousios*, which Constantine had imposed on them.⁴²

St. Athanasius, the great champion of the Nicene Creed, affirms that the Word of God “was made man so that we might be made God; and he manifested himself through a body so that we might receive the idea of the unseen Father; and he endured the insolence of men that we might inherit immortality.”⁴³

Estimates differ as to the number of bishops present. Traditionally, they were 318, but the Creed bears the signatures of 220 only. If the number were 318, it would be about one-sixth of all the bishops of the Empire, who were estimated to be at least eighteen hundred, one thousand for the Greek provinces, and eight hundred for the Latin.⁴⁴ According to Eusebius, the Church historian, more than 250 fathers were present. Hilary of Poitiers figure of 318 became traditional; however, it seems symbolic. The reports of the number of participants vary: 220 names have survived in one list.⁴⁵

The participants were almost all from the Eastern half of the Empire, only fourteen were from Europe, and of these fourteen, eleven were from European Greece. There was one bishop from Africa, one from Spain, and one from Gaul. The Bishop of Rome, Pope St. Silvester I (314-335), was absent; his age forbade him from making the journey, but two of his priests, Vitus and Vincentius, represented him. Ossius of Cordoba and the two presbyters representing the Apostolic See are listed before other names. Opinions vary regarding the president of the sessions. Due to the closeness to the Emperor, some presume that Bishop Ossius might have presided.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, it is more likely that Eustathius of Antioch or Alexander of Alexandria presided over the sessions. No secretary was probably there to write the report.⁴⁷

⁴² Thomas Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, New York: Image Books, 2005, 51.

⁴³ Pope Benedict XVI, *Church Fathers*, 61.

⁴⁴ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol.3, New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2020 (Reprint), 624.

⁴⁵ Joseph Kelly, *The Ecumenical Councils*, 71.

⁴⁶ Philip Hughes, *A History of the Church Volume One*, 188.

⁴⁷ Cf., Norman P. Tanner S.J ed, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Vol. I, *Nicaea I to Lateran V*, 2.

Conclusion

Faith statements became important for Christians in the first centuries. Therefore, dogmas and creeds were an efficient way of summarizing the trends of Christianity. Some simplified the mystery of the Incarnation, as in the case of Arianism.⁴⁸ The Council of Nicaea was an official response to the need of the hour to articulate the faith formula to the coming generations to avoid confusion and to be clear in faith expressions.

The Council's greatest achievement was the definition of faith, which was composed in the form of a creed. The additions made by the Council to an underlying form of the Creed are easy to identify: that is, from the substance of the Father, true God from true God, begotten not made, and especially the celebrated term *homoousios*, *consubstantial*.⁴⁹

Against Arianism, the Nicene dogma affirmed the radical difference between the mystery of Jesus Christ and Hellenistic philosophical concepts. It represents a DE Hellenization of content, even while this is expressed in Hellenistic language, that is, through linguistic Hellenization. The Christology of Nicaea also has implications for the Christian concept of God.

The Council of Nicaea is the first and most venerable of the ecumenical synods, next to the apostolic council at Jerusalem. St Athanasius calls it "a true monument and token of victory against every heresy." The Council forms an epoch in the history of doctrine, summing up the results of all previous discussions on the deity of Christ and the Incarnation, while regulating the further development of the Catholic orthodoxy for centuries.⁵⁰ Later history shows that seven more councils were convoked in the East, all convoked by the emperors, including two women. Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) compared the first four councils to the four Gospels, indicating the importance of these councils in developing Christological, Trinitarian, and Soteriological dogmas and doctrines.

⁴⁸ Cf., Henry Pietras, *Councils in The Early Church*, Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, J.A.McGuckin & Piotr Ashwin-Siejkowski, eds, New Delhi, London, Oxford, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2023, 448-465, 449; Cf., also Jacques Dupuis, S.J. *Who do you say I am? Introduction to Christology*, New York: Orbis Press, 1994, 83-87.

⁴⁹ Norman P.Tanner S.J (Editor), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Vol. I, Nicaea I to Lateran V, 2.

⁵⁰ Cf., Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol.3, 631.