

c. The Remaining Councils

Basically the remaining councils did not add to the general concepts of ecclesiastical authority that had been set in motion at the first two. There is considerable reemphasis and direction of activity. The Sixth council condemned the views of Honorius, Bishop of Rome, on the monothelite view and conciliar pronouncements continued to be the strength of the church in deciding basic and peripheral issues. Later Councils (particularly after the Great Schism of 1054) will do more in the propagation of individual dogma and will have a more binding effect on the lives of individual churches. But ecclesiologically the church is seen as the Lord's spokesman on earth and its decisions are far reaching and binding.

3. The Roman Hierarchy

a. Aspirations of Roman Bishops

That the bishops of Rome long thought of themselves as the senior bishops in the church is no surprise. Their ideas were based on The Petrine authority assumption, the centrality of Rome to the empire, and the fact that the Roman See was the largest--by far--of the early churches. It would be amazing if the men who headed it had not thought of themselves as being something special. We see these in the second century in such leaders as Victorinus--who thought he could solve the Easter question out of hand. But throughout the first three centuries 'most of the Roman Bishops were just that...leaders of the church at Rome with little influence in other places other than what any one Christian leader might have with others.

Sylvester (4th century) refused the invitation to come to Nicaea pleading old age...although he lived another decade. Some scholars indicate he would not go because he had not been the issuing body...but I am not sure. He did suggest that Hosius of Cordova (Josius) be his representative and this man was eventually elected moderator of the council. The attempt of the western church to have the council make celibacy a law of the church did not pass indicating that the western bishop possessed no more than the due share of influence.

Leo (5th century) succeeded in having all the western clergy placed in submission to him through an edict of Valentinian III...we are not sure how fully the edict was carried out but it was an official enactment. Under his administration celibacy became a law in the western church--sometimes not uniformly enforced, we think, but certainly growing in application.

Symmachus (6th century) argued for a state of life in which the Bishop of Rome would not be judged on the same basis for integrity, etc., as were other men. His proximity to God gave him grounds for living on standards which he produced for himself and he could neither be faulted nor condemned by failure to fulfill other laws and legislation.

And thus it continued.