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Saint Peter Chrysologus versus "Arius ... the pitiful man"

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ABSTRACT. This paper focuses on a witness to the gradual consolidation of the authority of the Council of Nicaea, in the form we know it today, namely Saint Peter Chrysologus. In his homilies delivered before the Christians of Ravenna, he draws attention to the Arian teachings which, even a hundred years after the condemnation of Arius, continued to spread and deeply divide the Church. In his polemic against Arianism, Saint Peter Chrysologus appeals to elementary logic, affirming that the attributes "Father" and "Almighty" are sufficient to believe that God has, from eternity, possessed the quality of Fatherhood in relation to the coeternal Son.

Keywords: Peter Chrysologus, Ravenna, Arianism, Council of Nicaea, Christology, Apologetics

The celebration of the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council provides a fitting opportunity to once again emphasize the importance of doctrinal debates and the impact of the decisions made by the bishops gathered at Nicaea. Although the authority of the 318 Holy Fathers' rulings is now recognized by almost the entire Eastern and Western Christendom, the years and decades following the conciliar event of 325 were far from such consensus. Rather, we can speak of a period of vehement contestation to the Nicene vision and of a long process leading toward the unanimous acceptance of a triadology purified from the various subordinationist nuances of Arian or Pneumatomachian type.

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As often happens, our bias prevents us from seeing the uncomfortable problems —especially when we take the easy path of projecting contemporary realities onto the past, instead of striving to study and understand it by seeking convincing evidence and testimonies of the historical phenomena we perceive.

A witness to this rather lengthy process of accepting the Nicene decisions is Saint Peter Chrysologus, who led the Church of Ravenna in the first half of the fifth century (436–450 AD). Given that more than a century had passed since the Council convened by Emperor Constantine the Great (Nicaea, 325), and about five decades since the Second Ecumenical Council (Constantinople, 381), one might assume that Arianism had already been definitively defeated. Nevertheless, when we read the homiletic works of Saint Peter, we are surprised to find that the threat of Arius' heretical teaching was still quite present, prompting the bishop of Ravenna to preach against it.

1. The Presence of Post-Nicene Arianism in the Western Part of the Roman Empire

Although the doctrinal formula summarized in the Nicene Creed should have definitively put an end to the theological debates provoked by Arius's subordinationist teaching, the events that unfolded in the following decades proved that it was both insufficient and far from popular. The exile of Arius, Theognis of Nicaea, and Maris of Chalcedon to Illyricum was not only a punishment but also an opportunity for the spread of their heretical teaching, leaving its mark on future bishops from the diocese of Pannonia[1]: Ursacius of Sirmium, Valens of Mursa, and Germinius of Sirmium, the latter two standing out as the authors of the "Blasphemy of Sirmium," that is, the second formula of faith approved at the council held in Sirmium in 357. Its radicalism scandalized even several Semi-Arian factions.

The attempt to impose throughout the entire Roman Empire the *homoian* formula (*homoion te kai aparallakton auton kata panta tō patri*), approved at the councils of Ariminum (359) and Seleucia (360) and confirmed at Constantinople (360), came to an end with the death of Emperor Constantius († November 3, 361).

Outside Illyricum – the Arian stronghold in the western half of the Empire – Arian bishops appeared only in exceptional cases, such as that of Auxentius of Cappadocia, who became bishop of Milan (355–374) with the

[1] Nicolae Chifăr, *Istoria creștinismului*, vol. 1 (Editura Universității "Lucian Blaga" din Sibiu, 2007), 147.

support of Emperor Constantius and remained at the head of the church during the reign of Valentinian I, despite numerous councils and confrontations that demonstrated his heterodoxy.

Although, following the Councils of Aquileia (381), Mediolanum (381), and Rome (382), the Nicene teaching seemed to have triumphed definitively in the West, the death of Gratian († August 25, 383) and the regency of Justina – a fervent supporter of Homoiousianism (*Arianae haereseos alumna*[2]) – favored the strengthening of the Arian position, even though their number was relatively small compared to that of the adherents of various Arian currents in the East. Less than a year after Gratian's assassination, in the summer of 384, Justina openly expressed her support for subordinationism by bringing to the imperial residence a certain Mercurius of Durostorum († c. 400), an Illyrian bishop who would take the name Auxentius, after the former Semi-Arian bishop of Milan († 374), both to benefit from his authority and to escape the poor reputation he had gained in Scythia[3].

An expression of the imperial support enjoyed by the subordinationists is the document of Homoian content published on January 23, 386. Based on the dogmatic formula adopted at the Council of Ariminum (Rimini, 359) and confirmed by the Council of Constantinople (360) –according to which "the Son is like in all things (*ho homoios kata panta*) to Him who begot Him, and the term 'substance' (ousia), being unscriptural, should be set aside" –the decree granted the right to assemble in liturgical communities to those who shared this doctrine, while threatening those who would oppose the enforcement of the new decision[4].

If the attempt to seize the Portiana Basilica in the spring of 385 had failed due to its illegality, the decree of January 386 provided the subordinationists with the necessary legal framework to secure their own places of worship. Consequently, another attempt was made to confiscate the same basilica on Palm Sunday, in March 386. The presence of the imperial guard heightened the tension between the Nicenes and the Homoians to such an extent that Saint Ambrose feared the heretical priests might be lynched[5]. A second siege of the basilica took place after Easter, though it was not successful. Establishing a clear chronology of these events is extremely difficult, just as identifying the precise location of this basilica still raises many unresolved questions[6].

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2 Tyrannius Rufinus, *Historiae ecclesiasticae libri duo*, II, 15, *PL* 21: 523.

3 Daniel H. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian-Nicene Conflicts* (Oxford University Press, 1995), 202-204.

4 *Codex Theodosianus* 16.1.4 (386 January 23).

5 Ambrose of Milan, *Epistula XX*.5, *PL* 16:995: See also Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End*, p. 210.

6 See for example the different presentations of events by Williams, *Ambrose of Milan*, 203-214 and Hervé Savon, *Ambroise de Milan* (Desclée, 1997), 201-222.

The two civil wars waged by Emperor Theodosius the Great against Magnus Maximus (388–390) and Eugenius supported by Arbogast (392–394) could have favored the development of an ecclesial environment in which the *fides Nicaena* might have eliminated all forms of Arianism from the western part of the Empire. However, at the beginning of the fifth century, the Thervingi Goths entered Italy under the leadership of Alaric. The treaties concluded between barbarian chieftains and the imperial authority –such as the one signed between Wallia (415–418) and Emperor Honorius (395–423) – included provisions for the enlistment of Gothic tribes in the service of the Empire, while also granting them the right to freely practice their Arian religious traditions.

Neither the transfer of the imperial residence to Ravenna (402–403) nor the reorientation of barbarian troops toward Gaul excluded the possibility of stable and substantial contacts between Emperor Honorius's entourage and the envoys of these migrants, who had been Christianized in the Homoian Arian form through the mission of Wulfila († 383).

The occasional presence of the Goths in the Italian Peninsula would favor the emergence of Arian communities even in the vicinity of Ravenna, especially during the reign of the usurper John (423–425), who had previously held the office of *primicerius notariorum*.

After the arrival in 425 of the expeditionary forces sent from Constantinople under the command of Ardabur, Aspar, and Candidianus, the usurper's rule came to an end: the Western troops betrayed the tyrant and proclaimed as legitimate Augustus the six-year-old Valentinian III, nephew of Honorius. In the following years, the young emperor was under the regency of his mother, Galla Placidia, and under the protection of General Aetius, whose troops were composed of *foederati*—Goths, Vandals, and Huns. Their leading officers, being Arians, were stationed near the imperial palace alongside elite barbarian units serving as bodyguards.

Therefore, we may assume that a fairly well-established Arian community existed in Ravenna at the time when Saint Peter Chrysologus carried out his pastoral ministry – nearly five decades before the Ostrogothic conquest of the Italian Peninsula.

Reading through the homiletic corpus attributed to Bishop Peter Chrysologus, we obtain confirmation this assumption, especially in the sermons focused on the *expositio symboli* or the interpretation of the Creed, delivered during Lent, on the Sunday preceding the Feast of the Resurrection. These sermons represented a central part of the process of *traditio et redditio symboli*—two essential practices that involved the transmission of the Creed and its interpretation by the catechist, respectively its reproduction or recitation by the catechumen before the bishop in the week preceding Baptism.

These homilies explained the Creed article by article, but not the one formulated at Nicaea in 325; rather, they expounded upon the Old Roman Creed (*R*)—one of the earliest formulations of faith to take shape in the West, accepted and used as an ancient baptismal confession by the Church of Rome. From this formula of faith derived, over time, several other confessions or symbols, including the Apostles' Creed, whose *textus receptus* (*T*) appeared in southwestern Gaul in the seventh century[7].

We may ask ourselves: *why, more than a century after the formulation of the Nicene Creed, was the Roman Creed still being used in Ravenna?*

In fact, this situation is not only found in Ravenna, but was found in the vast majority of Churches in the Western Roman Empire. As early as the end of the fourth century, Latin authors such as Rufinus expressed the conviction that only in the Church of Rome had the old Apostolic Creed been preserved in its "original"[8] and "primitive"[9] form—an idea that echoed the statement of Saint Ambrose of Milan, who wrote to Pope Siricius: "Let the Apostles' Creed be believed, which the Roman Church has always guarded and preserved intact."[10]

According to J.N.D. Kelly, the Roman Creed exhibits the structure, phraseology, and content characteristic of the confessions of faith from the early third century, as can be seen from its similarities to the creed contained in the Apostolic Tradition composed by Hippolytus toward the end of the pontificate of Zephyrinus (199–217 AD)[11]. The similarities between these two texts can be explained by their close kinship, converging like members of the same family, and they form the most convincing argument that the origin of the Roman Creed must be sought even earlier, in the second century, when no single formula of faith yet held a monopoly in baptismal practice[12].

The wide use and reception of the Old Roman Creed can be inferred from the numerous *expositiones symboli* based on this text. In the case of Saint Peter Chrysologus's explanations, it is particularly interesting to observe how he combats Arianism without employing the concepts and terminology of Nicaea.

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7 Daniel Benga, "Simbolul Apostolic". In Ştefan Buchiu, Ioan Tulcan (eds.), *Dicţionar de Teologie Ortodoxă* (Basilica, 2019), p. 837.

8 J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (Continuum, ³1972), 105.

9 *Ibidem*, p. 106.

10 Ambrose of Milan, *Epistula XLII*.5, *PL* 16:1125: „credatur symbolo Apostolorum quod ecclesia Romana intemeratum semper custodit et servat".

11 Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 17; Liuwe H. Westra, *The Apostles' Creed. Origin, History and Some Early Commentaries* (Brepols, 2002), 65-68.

12 Westra, *The Apostles' Creed*, 66-67. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 119.

2. Saint Peter Chrysologus and the Disproof Against Arianism

Although the peak of Bishop Peter Chrysologus's pastoral activity falls between the Ecumenical Councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451), it is surprising to find so many references to Arianism in his sermons on the Creed. In fact, out of the eight surviving homilies from the *Expositio Symboli* cycle, six contain explicit references to Arian subordinationism[13].

Sermo	LVII	LVIII	LIX	LX	LXI	LXII
Section	4	3	4	4; 6	6	6; 8

One might suspect this to be a recurring topos in the structure of the Creed's exposition, yet these passages are not isolated. We find references to Arianism in other sermons of Saint Peter Chrysologus as well, as follows:

Sermo	XXIV	LXXXVIII	CIX	CXLV
Section	3	5	4	6; 9

Since the golden age of patristic literature (ca. 313–ca. 450) – to which Peter Chrysologus also belongs – was characterized by authors' tendency to focus on the immediate doctrinal, social, or moral issues faced by their communities, we can conclude that the attention paid to Arianism by the bishop of Ravenna is fully justified by the religious context of that time. This is evident in the way he constructs his arguments.

If we attempt to identify the elements Saint Peter uses to refute subordinationism, we first notice his emphasis on two attributes affirmed in the first article of the Creed: *Credo in Deum Patrem omnipotentem* ("I believe in God, the Father Almighty").

By attributing to God the quality of "Father," we reach the monotheistic essence of the spiritual reality in which we recognize the One, Living, True God – who is One, but not solitary, since the very attribute of Fatherhood implies that He has a Son. In opposing Arian doctrine, the bishop stresses that this begetting takes place outside of time; otherwise, we would be asserting a process of becoming within the immutable divinity, which is nonsense:

[13] The division of the homilies is reproduced after the critical edition made by the Benedictine scholar Alejandro Olivar in *Sancti Petri Chrysologi Collectio sermonum*, pars I-III, col. *Corpus Christianorumm Series Latina*, XXIV-XXIVB (Brepols, 1975, 1981, 1982).

> "*I believe in God the Father*. (*Credo in Deum Patrem*) The man who names Him Father should already acknowledge the Son. For He who has wished to be called a Father, to be denoted as a Father, is kindly making clear that He has a Son, whom he did not receive at any point of time, or beget in time, or have in His care merely for a time. Divinity does not take a beginning, or admit an end, or any succession; it is incapable of any waning. Not amid any pains does God bring forth His Son; He manifests that because of His powers the Son is existent. He does not make as something outside Himself that Being which is from Himself, but he generates that Being; while the Being is inside Himself, He discloses and reveals the fact. The Son has proceeded from the Father, but not withdrawn from Him. Neither has He come forth from the Father as one destined to succeed the Father, but as one who will remain always in the Father. Hear John's words: 'He was in the beginning with God.' [1John 1:2] And elsewhere John says: 'What was from the beginning.' [1John 1:1] Assuredly, that which already was did not come by addition later on; clearly, that which was did not later take a beginning. 'I am the first, and 1 am the last', He says [Apoc.1:17; Isaiah 44:6]. He who is the first is not after someone else; He who is the last does not leave another behind Him. When He utters those words, He does not exclude the Father, but He concludes that all things are in both Himself and the Father."[14]

What is essential, when contemplating this relationship of divine paternity and filiation, is to accept by faith that the relationship between God the Father and the Son is far beyond our power of understanding, and it would be mistaken to apply to it attributes proper to human existence.

> "*I believe in God the Father Almighty*. (*Credo in Deum Patrem omnipotentem*) The one who has professed the Father also professes the Son, because without the Son, he cannot be called Father. And because there can be no increase or addition to God, the Son always was, because the Father also always was. The Son cannot have a beginning, be cause the Father cannot have an end; the Begotten does not grow, where the Begetter does not grow old. The substance of the Father and the Son is eternal and coeternal, and that substance must not be judged according to human stages of growth, but according to divine powers."[15]

Indeed, he warns both catechumens and baptized Christians that probing into the nature of the relationship between Father and Son using human paradigms is an improper act of irreverence.

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[14] Peter Chrysologus, *Sermo* LVII.4, in *Saint Peter Chrysologus Selected Sermons & Saint Valerian Homilies*, Vol. 1, Translated by George E. Ganss (The Catholic University of America Press, 1953), 105-106.

[15] Peter Chrysologus, *Sermo* LVIII.3, in *St. Peter Chrysologus Selected Sermons*, Vol. 2, Translated by William b. Palardy (The Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 222-223.

> "We believe in God, and we profess that this same God is Father, and so let us believe that he always had a Son: but that he had a Son not begun at conception, not separated from him at birth, not increased in time, not diminished in rank, not changed by age, but an Offspring abiding eternally within the eternal Begetter. 'I am in the Father,' he says, 'and the Father is in me.' [John 14:11] We have heard the Father, let us believe [that he has] a Son by divine power, not by human arrangement; by the mystery of God, not by earthly means; not by the law of the world, but by heavenly might. What it is right to know, it is not right to debate; what it is appropriate to believe, it is inappropriate to subject to an exhaustive analysis; for it is for this reason that we have called the Lord 'Almighty,' inasmuch as we consider nothing to be impossible for God."[16]

Furthermore, the bishop of Ravenna cautions his audience not to pry into the mystery of the Father's existence by imagining hierarchies or ages before and after the begetting of the Son. Saint Peter forcefully refutes the objections raised by the Arian heretics, who speculated on this matter to support their erroneous teachings. Such speculations, he explains, are silenced once we understand that divinity is not subject to human rules or logic—something already implied in the attribute "Almighty."

> The next word is *Father*. The one who believes in the Father, professes that there is a Son. The one who believes in the Father and the Son is not to think of ages, nor to consider ranks, nor to make hypotheses about periods of time, nor to inquire into conception, nor to understand a birth. The one who believes in God has professed divine not human matters. But the heretic says: 'How is he a Father if he does not precede? How is he a Son if he is not subsequent? How does the Begetter not provide a beginning? How does the Begotten not take his beginning from the Begetter? This is what reason teaches, this is what nature manifests.' You are wrong, O heretic! This is what human reason holds, but it is not what divine reason holds. This is what worldly nature proposes, this is not what the divine nature disposes. Human frailty is conceived and conceives, it is produced and produces, it is begotten and begets, it has a beginning and transmits death, it receives and it gives back, and preserves in its offspring whatever pertains to its own condition and nature. God the Father, however, did not beget in time, because he does not know time; he who knows no beginning did not give a beginning; he did not transmit an end because he has no end; but he generated the Son from himself in such a way that everything that was in him was and remained in the Son. The honor of the Begotten is an honor for the Begetter; the perfection of the Begotten is the image of the Begetter; any diminution of the Begotten brings dishonor on the Begetter. But when you hear these things, O heretic, do not say: 'How do these things happen?' You have said,

[16] Peter Chrysologus, *Sermo* LIX.4, vol. 2 (2004), 226.

> *God*, you have believed in the Father, you have professed that he is Almighty. If you doubt, you have lied. If you say, *I believe*, how is it that you do not believe but you raise objections? If you think such things are impossible, then you have removed the omnipotence that you professed. But let us, who profess that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have one majesty and glory, now speak about our faith concerning the Lord's Body."[17]

"Omnipotence," as a property of divinity, should suffice to end all rational inquiry, opening instead the window of faith to the mind. At the same time, the bishop warns the catechumens – and not only them – that investigating God's relationship with His Son, or questioning the Father's existence prior to the Son's appearance, is futile so long as we believe that God is Almighty, having the power to exist and act in ways beyond human comprehension.

> "*I believe in God the Father*. There is devotion in God, there is always affection in God, Fatherhood abides permanently with him. So believe that there was always a Son, lest you blaspheme that there was not always a Father. But you say: 'If he begot, how did he always have [the Son]? If he always had him, how did he beget him?' You who ask such questions deny the faith that you profess. *I believe*, is what you said: if you believe, where does that 'how' come from? 'How' is the word of one who doubts, not of one who believes. *I believe*, you said, *in God the Father Almighty*. If there is something he cannot do, he is not almighty. But you suppose that he begot his Son from something else, since you profess that he made everything from nothing; it certainly would have been from something else, if it had been a temporal action. But if the Father is not subject to time, the Son knows no beginning. But what a travesty it is that you make him temporal who has seen fit to make you eternal. Therefore, the Father begets the Son for us, not by a conception within time, nor by fleshly passion, but insofar as he reveals it."[18]

By emphasizing the reality of the Savior's passion and death, the bishop shows that His death was not merely apparent, nor was His endurance of it a sign of weakness. On the contrary: fear of death belongs to human nature, whereas resurrection is the expression of the Son's full divine power.

> "Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and was buried. (Qui sub Pontio Pilato crucifixus est et sepultus) You hear the name of the judge, that you may not be ignorant of the date. You hear that He was crucified, that you may learn what kind of death He suffered, and what He paid for your sake. It was for you that He took upon Himself all the pain of such a death. You hear that He was buried, that you may

[17] Peter Chrysologus, *Sermo* LX.4, vol. 2 (2004), 232-233.
[18] Peter Chrysologus, *Sermo* LXII.6, vol. 2 (2004), 242.

> know that His death was a true one, and not one unworthy to be taken seriously. To be reluctant to die is typical of human fear; to have arisen from death is a mark of divine power. So, do not be shocked at hearing of His death; in this case the glory of His resurrection blots out the harm done by death."[19]

In defending the consubstantiality of the divine persons, the bishop of Ravenna addresses quite sharply those who still dare to pry into this mystery.

> "Whether it is Christ's human generation, or whether it is his divine one, both generations are indescribable, so what surge of water, O man, what tidal wave has brought you to such a shipwreck? What wind has propelled you to fly through the air to your ruin? The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one deity, one power, one eternity, one majesty. But whatever inferiority the Son has, whatever he receives, whatever he does not know, comes from my body, not from his substance. Or are you surprised, O man, that he invokes his Father in heaven while deeming it fitting to have a mother on earth?"[20]

At times, Saint Peter's homilies include overtly polemical passages in which he directly confronts the Arians who denied the fullness of the Son's divinity and His consubstantiality with the Father.

> "'And many of the children of Israel he shall bring back.' [Luke 1:16] To whom? Let the angel tell, that the heretic6 may be silenced in his blasphemies and denials. Let the angel tell, that the faithful soul may hear and rejoice. Let the heretic believe and return. 'He shall bring back.' To whom? 'To the Lord their God,' the text says. Who is this God? He is the One of whom the Prophet states: 'This is our God, and there is no other apart from him. He found out all the way of knowledge and gave it to Jacob his servant, and to Israel his beloved.'[Bar 3:36-37] When did He give it? Then, indeed, when he wrote on the tablets of the Law a rule for the whole of life and a norm of disciplinary control. Be attentive, my hearer, that you may know who this our God is, apart from whom there is no other. Who is He? 'Afterwards He was seen upon earth and conversed with men.' [Bar 3:38] Who else was seen upon earth save Christ, who conversed in our flesh? And who else conversed with men, save He who tarried with men in His human body? And if He is since you will not have Him, whom will you have? 'There is no other,' Scripture says, 'apart from Him.' [Bar 3:36] And now do you not say: 'Where, therefore, is the Father?' The Prophet says: 'There is no other apart from Him.' [Bar 3:36] And where is He [the Father]? Assuredly, in the Son, because the Father is not apart from the Son. 'I am in the Father,' He says, 'and the Father is in me.' [John 14:10] Wherefore, too, the Prophet did not say: 'There is no other'; what he said was: 'There is no other apart from Him.' This is to

[19] Peter Chrysologus, *Sermo* LXI.6, vol. 1 (1953), 113-114.
[20] Peter Chrysologus, *Sermo* LXII.8, vol. 2 (2004), 243.

> say: There is Another, but He is in Him. But you object: 'And if He is in Him, how is He Another?' O heretic, He is Another in regard to His Person, in such a way that He Himself is the substance; and He Himself is the substance in such a way that the Trinity is not something put together. There is a unity of the Trinity in such a way that there is no separation in the Godhead. The Father is in Himself in such a way (and without Him the Trinity is not complete) that a distinct personality is in the Father and one in the Son and one in the Holy Spirit, but not a separate divinity"[21].

Moreover, Peter Chrysologus highlights the fact that the initiators of subordinationist heresies believed themselves to be defenders of a monotheistic purity when they emphasized the monarchy of the Father and the uniqueness of God, yet in doing so they only diminished His omnipotence.

> "Arius thinks that he does a service to the Father by blaspheming the Son. And while he is attributing a beginning to the Son, the pitiful man is putting a limit upon the Father. Photinus, while denying that the Son is co-eternal with the Father, is elaborately explaining how the Father was not always existent precisely as Father. So it is with all the heresies. While they are spread to the insult of God, and lie about the Trinity through their terms, they further blasphemies."[22]

Conclusions

The conciliar event of Nicaea in 325 is certainly of great importance, and over time it has often been credited with achieving a decisive and final victory over Arian subordinationism. Nevertheless, the series of subsequent councils in the East (Constantinople and Antioch – 330 AD; Tyre and Jerusalem – 335 AD; Ancyra – 358 AD) and in Illyricum (Sardica – 343 AD; Sirmium – 348, 351, 357, 358 AD) revealed both the fragility of the doctrinal consensus reached by the Nicene fathers and the weak reception of the decisions formulated at the First Ecumenical Council. The authority we now ascribe to that council is rather a projection into the past of an attitude that developed later — especially beginning in the sixth century, during of John II Cappadox (518–520), patriarch of Constantinople, who in 518 was compelled by the faithful to enforce the doctrinal authority of the Council of Chalcedon together with that of the previous Ecumenical Councils[23].

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21 Peter Chrysologus, *Sermo* LXXXVIII.5, vol. 1 (1953), 141-142.

22 Peter Chrysologus, *Sermo* CIX.4, vol. 1 (1953), 174.

23 W.M. Sinclair, "Joannes Cappadox, bishop of Constantinople". In Henry Wace & William C. Piercy (eds.), *Dictionary of Christian Biography and Literature to the End of the Sixth Century* (John Murray, 1911), 558-559.

A witness to this gradual consolidation of the authority of the Council of Nicaea, in the form we know it today, is Saint Peter Chrysologus. In his homilies delivered before the Christians of Ravenna, he draws attention to the Arian teachings which, even a hundred years after the condemnation of Arius, continued to spread and deeply divide the Church. The homiletic pragmatism of the period reveals a pressing need to combat Arianism—this was not merely a rhetorical topos inserted into the *expositio symboli*, especially considering that the Creed he expounded was the Old Roman Creed, which lacks the explicit anti-Arian clarifications found in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. This detail also reflects how limited the impact of the Constantinopolitan formula of faith still was in the liturgical life of the Universal Church.

Therefore, in the first half of the fifth century, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed was far from being the doctrinal standard it has since become—whose universal acceptance we tend to project back into earlier centuries.

In his polemic against Arianism, Saint Peter Chrysologus appeals to elementary logic, affirming that the attributes "Father" and "Almighty" are sufficient to believe that God has, from eternity, possessed the quality of Fatherhood in relation to the coeternal Son. Omnipotence itself reveals the mysterious and miraculous way of this birth which to us, as finite creatures, is incomprehensible through reason, but at the same time is within our reach through faith which does not unnecessarily scrutinize and does not apply human paradigms to intratrinitarian relations.

From this perspective, the position of Bishop Peter of Ravenna remains profoundly relevant today, perfectly illustrating the balance between rational understanding and reverent wonder before the divine mystery—two dimensions that together nourish the faith of every Christian.

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