Who Is the Head of the Church? On the Question of the Theory of Primacy

In an article published in Theological Herald (No. 1 (48)/2023), Archimandrite Dionysius (Shlenov), Candidate of Theology, Professor in the Department of Philology at the Moscow Theological Academy, and Head of its Postgraduate Studies Department, examines the question of the admissibility of a primatial figure within the earthly Church. Fr om the perspective of ecclesiastical hierarchy, a primatial figure—as the primate of the Church occupying first place in the diptychs—appears not only permissible but even necessary. Historically, the Patriarch of Constantinople (especially after the Council of Chalcedon in 451) enjoyed a primacy of honor in the East, though not a primacy of both honor and authority, which—particularly after Rome's separation in 1054—came to be regarded as unacceptable. By appealing to isolated precedents of the exercise of a primacy of both honor and authority on the part of the Patriarch of Constantinople, his supporters seek to justify the extraterritorial decision to establish the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, a decision that has in effect become the cause of a schism among the Orthodox Churches. As is well known, the Russian Orthodox Church categorically rejected this approach. The extent to which its position is well founded becomes evident from a survey of the understanding of the Head (κεφαλή) of the Church in the biblical and patristic tradition.

Quoted from the publication of the Bogoslov.ru portal.

In the contemporary world, the Orthodox Church is compelled to face a number of challenges whose aim is to undermine its unity both from without and from within. At the heart of these challenges lies the question of primacy. In his 2011 publication, D. Shabanov outlined the general historical, canonical, and literary context of this issue,[1] which, however, acquired particular urgency and relevance following the unilateral granting of the tomos to the Ukrainian schismatics and the subsequent chain of events.[2] Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon was perhaps the foremost theological ideologue of the primacy of Constantinople, advancing an interpretation that greatly exaggerated its earthly dimension.[3]

Is the one who is first in honor also first in authority? Can the principle of hierarchy be applied to the relationships among the Primates of the Local Churches? Who is the Head of the Church, and to what extent is this designation appropriate?

We shall attempt to answer these questions by examining the doctrine of the Head of the Church in the

Byzantine tradition. Who is the Head of the Church (or of the church understood as a local community)? According to the theology of the Apostle Paul, it is Christ the Savior—for the Church as a whole; according to Apostolic Canon 34, it is the bishop—for the particular local community; according to the titulature of the Popes of Rome, it is the Roman Pontiff as the head of the churches under his jurisdiction; according to certain contemporary theologians of the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate, it is the Ecumenical Patriarch in relation to his potential worldwide "super-jurisdiction." Clearly, a line must be drawn somewhere in this list—but wh ere?

An Exaggerated Conception of the Rights of the Primatial Bishop

Unfortunately, in the East, especially after Rome's separation, alongside the understanding of the Church's conciliar structure there gradually emerged notions of the primacy of both honor and authority of the Primate of Constantinople. In the thought of certain contemporary Constantinopolitan theologians and canonists in particular, he is not merely "first among equals" (primus inter pares), but rather "first without equals" (primus sine paribus).

This concept is based upon:

- an exaggerated interpretation of Canons 9, 17, and 28 of the Council of Chalcedon. As is well known, the "barbarians" mentioned in Canon 28 of the Council of Chalcedon came to be understood by Byzantine canonists of the twelfth century as peoples Christianized after the fifth century, namely the Alans and the Rus'.[4] This expanded interpretation gradually became the foundation for the conception of the Bishop of Constantinople as a hierarch possessing a "primacy of honor and authority";
- the theory of the "two authorities," first clearly articulated in the Eisagoge (mid-880s);
- the actual elevation of Constantinople among the Eastern patriarchates beginning with the era of St. Photius the Great, a development that took place within Byzantium, which at that time truly existed and preserved the Orthodox tradition;
- the polemic against the primacy of Rome after its separation—not only through rejecting that primacy but also through reproducing and continuing it within the territory of the Orthodox East;
- the legislative acts and ecclesiastical regulations, both ecclesiastical and imperial, promulgated after 1054, which emphasized the special rights of the head of the Byzantine Church,[5] although these were never accepted conciliarity at the universal ecclesiastical level;
- the defense of the authority of the Patriarch of Constantinople as the head of the Church, both in certain medieval treatises and documents[6] and by contemporary theologians and canonists of the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate.

What particular canonical acts served as antecedents to the theory of a primacy of honor and authority? In addition to the better-known examples, let us mention several lesser-known ones.

Under Patriarch John VIII Xiphilinos, a decision was adopted (14 March 1072)[7] permitting the election and consecration of bishops in the capital of Byzantium rather than in their own metropolitan

sees.[8]

Patriarch George II Xiphilinos (acts of 1191 and 1197) and St. Germanus II of Constantinople (1232) emphasized the significance of patriarchal stavropegia, whose clergy were required to commemorate the Ecumenical Patriarch and pay him the kanonikon.[9] At the same time, the monasteries and parishes subject to these stavropegia were to remain under the authority of the local bishop.[10]

In the sixteenth century, Patriarch Metrophanes III of Constantinople issued a written indulgence to the hieromonk Joseph: "...for whatever, as a human being, he has sinned in deed, word, thought, and in all his senses; and if, being under an anathema <...>, he has incurred <...> or fallen into certain other sins, as a human being, at various times, he has confessed these himself to his spiritual fathers and has faithfully fulfilled the penance imposed by them. Fr om all these faults and bonds we declare him free by the all-powerful power and grace divine..." (Document of 1571; more precisely, the document was drawn up in April 1567.)[11] It is evident that, in the matter of indulgences or letters of absolution, the Primates of the Local Churches,[12] above all of Constantinople, began to imitate the analogous practice of the Roman Church, albeit without its more extreme features.

Each of these acts is explicable in light of the circumstances of its own time. When interpreted within the limited context of the actual existence of the Byzantine Empire, it was permissible to acknowledge certain prerogatives of the hierarch of the imperial capital, provided that no categorical theological foundation was constructed to support them.

By the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, however, the situation had changed dramatically and had become significantly more radical. On 18 September 2022, Patriarch Bartholomew, while praying in the Anglican Church of St. Helena in Constantinople/Istanbul, prayed for the "supreme head" or the "supreme ruler of the Church,"[13] evidently referring to himself as that head—a conclusion confirmed by a number of his own public statements.

Thus, on 12 June 2022, a solemn concelebration took place in Constantinople between Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and Archbishop Stephen of Ohrid.[14] In his address, the Ecumenical Patriarch explicitly described his own exceptional rights as the head of the Church. While the principal ideas expressed in this speech had been articulated previously, never before had they been presented in such a concentrated and ecclesiastically and canonically formulated manner. According to this address, the Ecumenical Councils and the "divine Fathers" bestowed upon the Ecumenical Patriarch a special ecclesiastical and canonical authority (including the right of appeal and judicial authority) in relation to the other Local Churches of the East.

> "(The divine Fathers) laid upon the seemingly frail shoulders of the Archbishop of

Constantinople the cross of sacred and canonical oversight over the Lord's Body in the East, namely, to judge the bishops of the inhabited world..."[15]

"The Great Church of Constantinople is the mother, nourisher, nurse, and testator of each of her children."[16]

"The newly created and newly established Churches believe that, by reinterpreting—or rather by abolishing—the truth, they can establish new principles and new perspectives within the Church."[17]

"The Archbishop of Constantinople is not merely one who governs on a single occasion, but, by canonical obligation and unfailing duty, he is the perpetual guardian of the well-being of the holy Churches of God."[18]

It thus follows that the Ecumenical Patriarch is understood as the one who possesses the exclusive right to establish Local Churches and to oversee their activity. Although the term "head" is not explicitly employed in this text, its content is developed in detail. Within this conception, the "head" is not the first among equals, but rather the first with the assistance of those who are historically equal (the ancient Eastern patriarchates and the Church of Cyprus) and without equals in relation to all the other Local Churches apart from the remainder of the ancient Pentarchy and the Church of Cyprus.

At the beginning of 2023, these views became even more radical. Thus, Archbishop Makarios of Australia, addressing a gathering of clergy, urged them to avoid the heresy of the "authority of a single person" (αίρεση της «μονοπρόσωπης αυθεντίας»). Anyone who protests or disagrees with the Church's prevailing position on any issue falls into this category. Those who dissent from the Church's policy regarding the Ukrainian schism are viewed not merely as seekers of truth, or even as schismatics, but as heretics.[19]

On the eve of the Feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, on 3 March 2023, in his greeting to Archbishop George, the head of the Church of Cyprus, the Ecumenical Patriarch declared that it was his sacred duty to preserve "the canonical integrity of the Church's canonical tradition, the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils, and the centuries-old ecclesiastical practice."[20] He described those who disagree with this approach as being under the influence of "extra-ecclesial principles" (εξωκκλησιαστικαί αρχαί), evidently referring to the Russian Orthodox Church and its traditional conciliar position.[21]

These radical views constitute a consistent leitmotif of the new ideology of the Phanar. In his doctoral dissertation, defended at the Sorbonne in 1996, the present Metropolitan Gregory (Papathomas) formulated the principle of the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, a principle that stands in striking contrast to the call for the other Local Churches to remain within the boundaries of their own national territories.[22] According to the concept of a "pre-jurisdictional right," everything that does not fall under the jurisdiction of another Local Church belongs to the Patriarch of Constantinople, who may, either temporarily or permanently, share this jurisdiction with those Churches that remain obedient to him.

Hieromonk Niketas of the Monastery of Pantokrator[23] attempts, through subtle dialectical argumentation, to demonstrate that, in addition to Christ as the Head of the Church, an earthly head is likewise necessary.[24] In particular, he writes:

> "...It is important that he (that is, the Ecumenical Patriarch.—I. D.) received these rights alone; he did not demand them, but they were granted to him by an Ecumenical Council. Unfortunately, whoever doubts these rights is doubting the decisions of the many God-bearing Fathers who established them. All this is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, who is perfect God; and what God has accomplished is perfect and requires no correction. It cannot be made better. If we intervene, we can only make it worse."

Other terms, expressions, and arguments employed by proponents of this theory, both in general and in particular, likewise emphasize the thesis of the actual and highly significant superiority of the Patriarchs of Constantinople.[25]

Among earlier sources, one may cite the striking address of Nicetas of Amaseia in defense of the primacy of the Patriarch of Constantinople as the head of the Church of Constantinople. The Patriarch of Constantinople is described as "the first hierarch," shepherding the inhabited world.[26] "To him the City and the Church are subject as to their head."[27] Yet the author was defending nothing more than the relatively weak authority of Patriarch Theophylact (933–956) against the excessive dominance of the metropolitans under his jurisdiction, and nothing beyond this.[28]

In his polemic against the primacy of Rome, the anti-unionist Patriarch Joseph of Constantinople likewise greatly exaggerated the significance of the Council of Chalcedon and the judicial prerogatives of the Patriarch of Constantinople as early as the second half of the thirteenth century. According to Patriarch Joseph, the Council of Chalcedon is

> "...later than the Council of Sardica, yet ecumenical, marvelous, renowned, and confirmed by the sign and miracle of the all-glorious Great Martyr Euphemia; it possesses a unique preeminence above all the Ecumenical Councils. This holy and ecumenical Council—renowned, great, and more numerous than the others—grants me the primacy of hearing appeals among all the Churches, although I am (only) the Patriarch of Constantinople."[29]

It is evident that, in this self-exaltation, he was imitating the ambitions of the Roman Pontiffs of his own age and of the preceding period, who (as, for example, in the writings of John Bekkos) laid claim both to primacy and to the exclusive right to hear appeals.[30]

It is only natural that such inflated conceptions of the "primacy of honor and authority" should provoke opposition and a desire to examine the matter in search of the truth. We shall therefore consider the understanding of the bishop as the head of the Church in the Byzantine tradition.[31]

The following topics will be examined:
1) Christ as the Head of the Church.
2) Apostolic Canon 34: the bishop as head.
3) Criticism of the Western doctrine of primacy (supremacy) in the Orthodox East.
4) Catalogues of ranks of sanctity and ecclesiastical hierarchy.
5) Hierarchy and holiness.
6) Historical conclusions.
7) A critique of the primacy of honor and authority.

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1. Christ as the Head of the Church

According to the theology of the Apostle Paul, "Head" is one of the names[32] of Christ the Savior. Christ is "the head of every man," while God is the "Head" of Christ Himself (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3). God the Father has exalted His beloved Son, Christ the Savior, above all things and appointed Him Head of the Church (Eph. 1:22). Christ is the Head of the body of believers, which is composed of many different members (cf. Eph. 4:15–16; Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:27).

The Apostle Paul's most fundamental passage concerning Christ's headship over the Church states that, just as the husband is the head of the wife, so Christ is the Head of the Church (cf. Eph. 5:23). Christ is the Head of the body, the Church (Col. 1:18), and also the Head of every principality and authority (Col. 2:10).

In all of these passages, the Greek term κεφαλή ("head") is employed (corresponding to the Hebrew ראש, meaning "head," "leader," "beginning").

The true Head of the Church is Christ the Savior. It is He who governs the Church. As Head of the Church, Christ the Savior sets before us the example of meekness, patience, and boundless forgiveness. He washes the feet of His disciples, and He declares that He came not to be served, but to serve others (cf. Matt. 20:17 ff.). He alone is the true Primate of the Church (the hierarch, the deified and divine man, the knower of every sacred form of knowledge, according to the distinctive definition found in the Dionysian Corpus).[33] Earthly power, worldly might, temporal preeminence, and earthly privileges belong to the realm of secular authority and are wholly inadmissible in the relations among the Local Orthodox Churches.

This doctrine of Christ as the Head of the Body of the Church, or simply as the Head of the Church, constitutes a cornerstone of ecclesiology, for the Church is the treasury of the faith, the guardian and authoritative interpreter of Divine Revelation as contained in Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition. Since the Church is the Body of Christ, whose Head is Christ Himself, it is precisely the Church that is infallible.[34] Infallibility is an attribute of God[35]—of all three Persons of the Holy Trinity, including the Second Person. According to the Macarian Corpus, Christ is "infallible in knowledge."[36] "Grace"[37] and "divine justice"[38] are likewise described as "infallible." According to the patristic tradition, God is also the "Infallible Judge" and the "infallible eye."[39]

Thus, the doctrine of Christ as the Head of the Church is inseparably connected with the concept of divine infallibility, which is bestowed upon the Church as a divine-human organism. Consequently, every form of leadership and authority within the Church was understood by the Holy Fathers as an imitation of Christ: both as the reception of the authority that belongs properly to Christ the Savior, and as its delegation to those who exercise it according to the divinely established order and for the benefit of the Church.

On the basis of the theology of the Apostle Paul, St. John Chrysostom wrote:

> "...we have become one Church, constituting the harmonious members of one Head, and have become one body; if what has taken place should be treated with contempt, then everything will fall into contempt and destruction."[40]

Elsewhere he writes:

"...[Christ] is first in all things: first above, first in the Church, for He is the Head; first also in the Resurrection."[41]

2. Apostolic Canon 34: The Bishop as Head

From the earliest period, the primacy and universal headship of Christ the Savior did not preclude the existence of a certain form of primacy within the Church's hierarchical order.

Apostolic Canon 34 (fourth century) speaks more clearly than any other text of the primacy of honor enjoyed by the bishop as a fundamental ecclesiastical principle:

"The bishops of every nation ought to know the first among them, and to acknowledge him as their head (emphasis added.—I. D.), and to do nothing of consequence without his consent; but each may do only those things which concern his own diocese and the places belonging to it. But neither let him who is first do anything without the consent of all. For thus there will be unanimity, and God will be glorified through Christ (διὰ Χριστοῦ) in the Holy Spirit."[42]

A profound symmetry is embedded in Apostolic Canon 34 between the primacy of the bishop within his own church and the conciliar character of all ecclesiastical decision-making, in which the primatial bishop himself also participates. The bishop is to be recognized "as the head," yet not as the head of the entire Church, but only of the diocese entrusted to his care.

Subsequently, the Byzantine tradition contains numerous references to Apostolic Canon 34, which came to be interpreted not merely within the historical circumstances in which the Apostolic Canons were compiled (the fourth century), but as possessing universal significance.

The twelfth-century Byzantine canonist John Zonaras applied the first part of Canon 34 (its reference to the bishop as head) to "the primatial bishops in each province, that is, to the metropolitans."[43] At the beginning of his commentary, he writes:

"Just as bodies move improperly—or indeed become altogether useless—if the head ceases to function in a healthy state, so too the body of the Church will proceed in a disorderly and improper manner if the member that occupies the place of the head and holds the primacy is not accorded the honor due to him."[44]

Taken in isolation, this principle of primacy might appear to imply a universal primacy throughout the entire Church. Yet Zonaras' subsequent explanation makes it clear that he understands Canon 34 as referring not to a single universal first bishop, but to a plurality of first bishops, in keeping with the conciliar structure of the Church. In essence, he interprets it in the sense expressed more explicitly in Canon 9 of the Council of Antioch (341):

> "The bishops of every province ought to know that the bishop who presides over the metropolis assumes responsibility for the whole province, because all who have business to conduct come to the metropolis from every direction. Therefore it has been determined that he should enjoy the primacy of honor, and that the other bishops should undertake nothing of importance without him, in accordance with the ancient canon of our Fathers... Yet each bishop is to exercise authority over his own parish... and to show pastoral care for the entire territory subject to his city... But let neither attempt to do anything without the bishop of the metropolis, nor he without the judgment of the others."[45]

Alexios Aristenos proposed a broader and less specific interpretation, allowing for an even higher level of ecclesiastical authority above bishops and metropolitans—namely, the patriarchal office. After briefly paraphrasing Apostolic Canon 34:

> "Without their primatial bishop, bishops do nothing beyond the affairs of their respective provinces, and the primatial bishop does nothing without them, for the sake of proper unanimity,"[46]

he offers the following explanation:

> "Neither bishops nor metropolitans should undertake anything beyond their authority without the consent of their primatial hierarch—for example, the ordination of bishops, investigations concerning new dogmas, or the alienation of ecclesiastical property. They should concern themselves only with matters pertaining to their own territories and the places subject to them. Likewise, the primatial hierarch cannot undertake anything of this sort without their knowledge. Thus the principle of unanimity is preserved."[47]

Aristenos' interpretation does not imply the existence of a single universal primatial figure within the Church, since he speaks of "their own primatial hierarch" (τὸν ἑαυτῶν πρῶτον). Consequently, every body of metropolitans has its own primate—that is, a patriarch, the head (primate) of a Local Church. Aristenos likewise regarded Canon 9 of the Council of Antioch as an authoritative clarification of Apostolic Canon 34.[48]

Theodore Balsamon interpreted Canon 34 in substantially the same way, understanding the "primatial bishop" to be the ordaining bishop and those governed by him to be those whom he had ordained. He likewise speaks consistently of "primatial bishops" in the plural.[49]

A later Byzantine canonist, the hieromonk Matthew Blastares, also understood the "head" of the Church referred to in Apostolic Canon 34 to mean the primatial metropolitan,[50] just as Zonaras had done. Elsewhere, however, Blastares maintained that the Patriarch of Constantinople should possess judicial primacy (see, for example, his commentary on Canon 9 of the Council of Chalcedon[51]), but only within the boundaries of his own patriarchal jurisdiction, just as any other patriarch.[52]

According to the interpretation of Apostolic Canon 34 found in the Slavonic Kormchaia, the bishop who is "head" is the senior metropolitan or an archbishop. Since the archbishop is mentioned after the metropolitan, the term refers not exclusively to the Archbishop of Constantinople, but to any archbishop within the general structure of the Church's hierarchy.[53]

In the late Byzantine patristic and literary tradition, Apostolic Canon 34 consistently served to affirm the conciliar structure of the Church.

Hieromonk Hierotheos cited Canon 34 to demonstrate that the Roman Pope, having fallen into heresy, was obliged to heed the conciliar body that rebuked him and to repent without delay.[54]

During his stay within the Patriarchate of Constantinople, Barlaam of Calabria employed this canon in his polemic against papal primacy. In his Treatise on the Primacy of the Pope, appealing to Canon 34, he argues that the Church is fundamentally conciliar in nature and that there can be no question of privileges even for a see possessing exceptional historical significance, such as Rome.

In his anti-Latin treatise On the Procession of the Holy Spirit, St. Nilus Cabasilas likewise invokes Apostolic Canon 34 in order to affirm the conciliarity of the Church and to demonstrate the inadmissibility of the Filioque. He argues that the conciliar structure of the Eastern patriarchates enables them to preserve the true doctrine and maintain the truth without alteration.

In his commentary on Apostolic Canon 34, St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite presents a vision of complete

ecclesial harmony:

> "Because the metropolitan listens to the judgment of the bishops, priests, and deacons subject to him, and because they likewise obey the metropolitan, the principle of mutual obedience is realized, and genuine concord and love are truly brought to fulfillment."[55]

In more recent times, however, theologians of the Phanar have interpreted Apostolic Canon 34 as supporting the primacy of Constantinople. Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, the author of the "Eucharistic ecclesiology of primacy" (εὐχαριστιακὴ ἐκκλησιολογία τοῦ πρωτείου),[56] regarded Canon 34 as the principal foundation for the idea of a visible primacy within the earthly Church.[57] He compares the bishop's primacy at every level of ecclesiastical hierarchy with the primacy of the First Person of the Holy Trinity, God the Father, among the three divine Persons.[58] According to this interpretation, the significance of Canon 34 lies above all in its teaching concerning a first among the first, an understanding that, however, does not correspond to the Byzantine tradition.

Metropolitan John further argues that Canon 34 establishes the indispensable role of the president of an Ecumenical Council in the very convocation and conduct of the Council. Without the first patriarch—that is, specifically the Patriarch of Constantinople—an Ecumenical Council cannot take place.[59]

According to Metropolitan John, the principles embodied in Canon 34 are to be implemented at every level of ecclesiastical organization—episcopal, metropolitan, and patriarchal—on the basis of Trinitarian theology.[60]

He further maintains that the ecclesiastical order that emerged after the Great Schism of 1054 is one in which the Patriarchate of Constantinople possesses among the patriarchates of the Orthodox East not merely a primacy of honor but also a primacy of responsibility—in other words, a primacy of authority. In his view, Apostolic Canon 34 provides the canonical explanation for this highly hierarchical and comparatively less conciliar model.[61]

Ultimately, for Zizioulas, the primacy of the first among the first at the highest patriarchal level becomes a pressing and indispensable ecclesiological principle, as reflected in his statement:

> "It appears that even within the Orthodox Church there does not exist a merely honorary primacy."[62]

Within Zizioulas' system of argumentation, it is explicitly maintained that canon law (the doctrine of primacy) is inseparable from dogmatics (ecclesiology). He thereby implies that the doctrine of primacy—as represented by this expanded interpretation of Apostolic Canon 34—belongs to the Church's dogmatic teaching and cannot be separated from it.[63] Yet, in seeking to defend the doctrine of primacy in this manner, he simultaneously exposes it to considerable vulnerability: sound dogmatic teaching is inherently coherent, whereas unsound dogmatic formulations invite theological criticism and refutation.

A similar interpretation was advanced, for example, by Protopresbyter George Tsetsis, with whom Bishop Athanasius (Jevtić) (8 July 1938–4 March 2021) profoundly disagreed.[64]

Bishop (now Metropolitan) Kyrillos of Abydos likewise connects Apostolic Canon 34 with the right of appeal to Constantinople, thereby interpreting it as evidence of the exceptional prerogatives of the See of Constantinople.[65]

Vlassios Phidas wrote that "the canonical institution of the First" is "splendidly expressed in Apostolic Canon 34." He further states: "In his commentary on this canon, the distinguished canonist J. Zonaras likewise demonstrates with great clarity the ecclesiological importance of the exceptional role of the First for the harmonious functioning of the entire ecclesial body."[66] Yet the passage from Zonaras cited immediately thereafter[67] amounts to little more than a paraphrase of Apostolic Canon 34 itself.[68]

In his article defending the position of the Patriarchate of Constantinople regarding the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, Lewis Patsavos likewise appeals to Apostolic Canon 34 as supporting the principle of the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.[69]

Thus, contemporary Constantinopolitan theologians have come to defend positions that their predecessors had explicitly rejected. It is as though the trajectory of the tradition itself has been reversed, indeed almost completely redirected. Evidently, the balance between conciliarity and primacy has been distorted in favor of an absolute earthly primacy, one that has come into conflict, "both in word and in deed," with the evangelical understanding of primacy, perfectly embodied in the person and example of Christ the Savior.

If one considers the broader subject of "the bishop as the head of the Church," beyond the exegesis of Apostolic Canon 34 alone, Byzantine literature consistently portrays the bishop as a spiritual guide and shepherd. References to a bishop exercising judicial authority beyond the boundaries of his own diocese are exceedingly rare.

In the account of Abba Evagrius, while he was living as an ascetic in his cell, a presbyter said to him:

> "We know that, had you remained in your own country [Constantinople], you would have become a bishop and a head; but now, as a foreigner, you sit here."[70]

Evagrius' reply makes it clear that he preferred the monastic life to the episcopate:

> "You have spoken truly, Father. Yet I have spoken once, and I shall not add a second word."[71]

At first glance this appears to be a simple expression of monastic renunciation. Yet it also reveals, on the one hand, a confirmation of the straightforward meaning of Apostolic Canon 34 (the local bishop is the head), and, on the other hand, the priority of holiness over hierarchical rank. To be holy is of supreme importance, and this same principle governed the understanding of ecclesiastical hierarchy itself.

During the golden age of patristic literature (fifth–seventh centuries), references to the bishop as the head of the Church (or of a church) are relatively infrequent. The Apostolic Constitutions even exhort bishops to lead rather than be led: every bishop ought to be "the head," and not "the tail."[72]

In the late Byzantine Chronicle of the Morea, "all bishops" are described as "heads,"[73] an understanding likewise implied in the writings of Patriarch Callistus III.[74]

3. Criticism of Western Primacy (Supremacy) in the Orthodox East

The Popes of Rome began referring to themselves as the heads of all the Local Churches at least as early as the Fourth Ecumenical Council. At that Council, the deacon Paschasinus, representing Pope St. Leo of Rome, described him as "the head of all the Churches."[75] This formulation broadly reflects the position of St. Leo the Great and his legates, who, as is well known, presented to the Council Fathers a falsified version of Canon 6 of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325), with the addition: "The Church of Rome has always possessed the primacy" (Ἡ ἐκκλησία Ῥώμης πάντοτε ἔσχε τὰ πρωτεῖα).[76]

In the self-understanding of the Roman Church, especially after the Schism of 1054, it was and remained the universally acknowledged "head, mother, and teacher," even during the era of the Council of Ferrara-Florence.[77]

The Church of Constantinople, as well as the Patriarch of Constantinople, was likewise referred to as "head," as, for example, in the writings of St. Nikon of the Black Mountain: "...the Great Church, that is, the Patriarchate, the head of all churches and monasteries..."[78]—clearly within the limits of its own jurisdiction.

From the standpoint of Orthodox polemicists, however, the epithet "head," when employed as a synonym for universal primacy, is rejected. According to John Eugenikos (mid-fifteenth century), the Roman Pope, by calling himself "the head of the whole Church," manifests a spirit of audacious presumption.[79] Should he repent, he could become "the head of the Western Churches" and the first "according to rank" in relation to the Eastern Churches, but nothing more.[80]

Patriarch Meletios Pegas of Alexandria (5 August 1590 – 13 September 1601)[81] denounced the tyranny of the Roman Pontiffs, who claimed to be "the sole principle and head of the Church."[82] "The truth of the Gospel acknowledges one catholic Head of the Catholic Church, proclaiming one Christ..."[83]

The doctrine of the Pope as the head of the Church distorts ecclesiology in its entirety, since it stands in direct contradiction to the doctrine of Christ as the Head of the Church.[84]

Christ is the Head, whereas the Primates of all the Local Orthodox Churches are "heads" only in a derivative and subordinate sense.[85] Christ alone is the one Head of the Church, while the patriarchs are many heads.[86]

The most comprehensive critique of the doctrine of the primatial bishop as a distinct head or mother of the Church was offered by St. Dositheus (Notaras), Patriarch of Jerusalem.[87] There is no third head between Christ as the Head and the bishop as a head.[88] Consequently, the Roman Pope, insofar as he claims to occupy the position of such a "third head," must be rejected.[89] Christ is the "special Head" of the Ecumenical Council.[90] Thus, it is not the Pope, but Christ who is the Head of the Church.[91]

A prominent leitmotif in the writings of St. Dositheus is his criticism not only of the Roman Pope as a claimant to primacy, but also of the Patriarch of Constantinople. Neither of them, he maintains, has the right to claim the title "Ecumenical" in the absolute sense of the term.[92]

Over time, the title "head" entered the titulature of the Patriarchs of Constantinople during the Byzantine period, particularly throughout the second millennium.[93] At the same time, they remained especially sensitive to this designation, since the Pope of Rome's self-identification as "head" was regarded as unacceptable. It was precisely this criticism that the Byzantine Patriarch Theodore II Eirenikos (1214–1216) advanced.[94]

In late Byzantine theology, it was considered permissible to refer to the patriarch as a head, but only insofar as he represented the image of the true Head, Christ the Savior.[95]

St. Dositheus of Jerusalem described the Ecumenical Council as the "head" both of the Popes and of all the patriarchs.[96] All the patriarchs are "heads and chief shepherds,"[97] or, as another formulation expresses it, "...the five patriarchs are one head."[98]

4. Lists of the Ranks of Holiness and Hierarchy

In St. Dositheus, in his polemics against the papal primacy, one can find the most complete list of the sacred ranks and epithets within the Church:

1. Rulers (Ἡγεμόνες);
2. Exarchs (Ἔξαρχοι);
3. Leaders (Ἄρχων – Ἄρχοντες);
4. Presidents (Προεστῶτες);
5. Chairmen (Πρόεδροι);
6. Members of the Council (Σύνεδροι);
7. Luminaries (Φωστῆρες);
8. The Unbound (Ἀπόδεσμοι);
9. Torches (Πυρσοί);
10. Pillars of truth (Στύλοι τῆς ἀληθείας);
11. Fathers of bishops (Πατέρες τῶν Ἐπισκόπων);
12. Fathers of fathers (Πατέρες πατέρων);
13. Educators of the universe (Οἰκουμένης Παιδευταί);
14. Foundation of the Churches (Ἑδραίωμα τῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν);
15. First among the chief ones (Κορυφαῖοι);
16. Leaders of the people (Δημαγωγοί);
17. Establishment (Στερέωμα);
18. Architects (Ἀρχιτέκτονες);
19. Support (Ἔρεισμα);
20. Heads (Κεφαλαί);
21. Rules of faith (Κανόνες πίστεως);
22. Protectors, teachers, and eyes of the entire universe (τῆς Οἰκουμένης ἁπάσης Προστάται καὶ Διδάσκαλοι καὶ Ὀφθαλμοί);
23. Fruit-bearers and nourishers of the universe (Καρποδόται τρέφοντες τὴν Οἰκουμένην);

24. Features of the Church (Χαρακτῆρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας);
25. Great champions (Μεγάλοι ἀνταγωνισταί);
26. Great bishops (Μεγάλοι Ἐπίσκοποι);
27. New apostles (Νέοι Ἀπόστολοι);
28. Equal-to-the-apostles (Ἰσαπόστολοι);
29. Common pastors of the universe (κοινοὶ τῆς Οἰκουμένης Ποιμένες);
30. Providers and protectors (Προμηθεῖς καὶ Προστάται);
31. Mouth of the Church (Στόμα Ἐκκλησίας);
32. Great fathers (Μεγάλοι πατέρες);
33. Zeal for the faith (Ζῆλος πίστεως);
34. Impregnable towers (ἀκαθαίρετοι Πύργοι);
35. Foundation of doctrines (Βάσις δογμάτων);
36. Unbreakable rock of faith (Πέτρα πίστεως ἄῤῥηκτος);
37. Sources of piety (Πρόβολοι εὐσεβείας);
38. Archpastors (Ἀρχιποιμένες);
39. Great archpastors (μεγάλοι Ἀρχιποιμένες);
40. Wise chief shepherds (σοφοὶ Ποιμενάρχαι);
41. Definition of Orthodoxy (Ὅρος ὀρθοδοξίας);
42. Guardians and cultivators of the vineyard (Φύλακες καὶ Ἀροτῆρες τῆς Ἀμπέλου);
43. Unshakable towers (ἄσειστοι Πύργοι);
44. Adorners of the apostolic choir (Κοσμήτορες ἀποστολικῆς χορείας);
45. Hierarchs by the self-operation of the Word (Ἀρχιερεῖς αὐτουργίᾳ τοῦ Λόγου);
46. Successors of the apostles (Ἀποστόλων Διάδοχοι);
47. Rulers over the entire universe (ἐπὶ πᾶσαν Ἄρχοντες τὴν Οἰκουμένην);
48. Foundation of the Church, and those who preside, and the rule (Ἐκκλησίας Θεμέλιον καὶ Προεξάρχοντες καὶ Κανών);
49. Heirs of the throne of Christ on earth, as Peter — the rock of confession — upon which Christ established His Church (Κληρωταὶ τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ὡς Πέτρος Πέτρα ὁμολογίας, ἐν ᾗ ἔπηξεν ὁ Χριστὸς τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν αὐτοῦ);
50. Pillar of Orthodoxy (Στήλη Ὀρθοδοξίας);
51. Most blessed (Μακαριώτατοι);
52. Most holy (Ἁγιώτατοι);
53. Holy ones (Ἅγιοι);
54. Light (Φῶς);
55. Salt (Ἅλας);
56. Great priests, who have jointly received from God the oversight of all things (μεγάλοι Ἱερεῖς, ἐκ Θεοῦ κοινῶς πάντων τὴν ἐπιστασίαν λαβόντες);
57. Great teachers of the Church (μεγάλοι τῆς Ἐκκλησίας Διδάσκαλοι);
58. Apostolic men (ἀποστολικοὶ Ἄνδρες);
59. Apostolic priests (ἀποστολικοὶ Ἱερεῖς);
60. Apostolic choir (ἀποστολικὴ Χορεία);
61. A choir deriving from apostolic authority (ἐξ ἀποστολικῆς αὐθεντίας Χορεία);
62. Fathers of Christians (Πατέρες τῶν χριστιανῶν);
63. Prophetic men (προφητικοὶ Ἄνδρες);
64. Wise interpreters of the ineffable things (τῶν ἀπορῥήτων σοφοὶ Ὑποφῆται);
65. God-bearing (Θεοφόροι);
66. God-inspired (Θεόπνευστοι);
67. God-speaking (Θεόφθογγοι);
68. Lords of all (Δεσπόται πάντων);
69. Worthy of apostolic authority (τῆς ἀποστολικῆς αὐθεντίας Ἄξιοι);
70. Teachers of teachers (Διδάσκαλοι Διδασκάλων);

71. Shepherds of shepherds, resembling Paul (Ποιμένες Ποιμένων Παύλῳ παραπλήσιοι);
72. First among the chief ones, as other apostles (Κορυφαῖοι ὡς ἄλλοι Ἀπόστολοι);
73. First among the fathers (Κορυφαῖοι τῶν πατέρων);
74. Teachers of the catholic faith (Διδάσκαλοι τῆς καθολικῆς πίστεως);
75. Instruments of the Holy Spirit (Ὄργανα τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος);
76. Treasure of the Church (Θησαυρὸς τῆς Ἐκκλησίας);
77. Lords (Κύριοι);
78. Guides (Καθηγεμόνες);
79. Fathers and teachers of the Universal Church (Πατέρες καὶ Διδάσκαλοι τῆς καθόλου Ἐκκλησίας);
80. Lights of lights (Φῶτα τῶν φώτων);
81. Common fathers of the universe (κοινοὶ Πατέρες τῆς Οἰκουμένης);
82. Most divine (Θειότατοι);
83. Honored by God (Θεοτίμητοι);
84. Most pious (Εὐλαβέστατοι);
85. Most beloved of God (Θεοφιλέστατοι);
86. Most holy in all things (τὰ πάντα ἁγιώτατοι);
87. Good shepherds (ἀγαθοὶ Ποιμένες);
88. Most reverent (Ὁσιώτατοι);
89. Most honorable (Αἰδεσιμώτατοι);
90. Most sacred (Ἱερώτατοι);
91. Lords and masters (Κύριοι καὶ Δεσπόται);
92. Venerated bishops (προσκυνητοὶ Ἐπίσκοποι);
93. Servants of the servants of God (δοῦλοι τῶν δούλων τοῦ Θεοῦ);
94. Bishops of the Universal Church (Ἐπίσκοποι τῆς καθόλου Ἐκκλησίας);
95. Ministers of God (λειτουργοὶ Θεοῦ);
96. Good servants (Ἀγαθοὶ θεράποντες);
97. Glorious and honorable fathers (Ἔνδοξοι καὶ Ἐπίσημοι πατέρες);
98. Cultivators (Γεωργοί);
99. Blessed ones (Μακάριοι);
100. Great ones (Μεγάλοι);
101. Those who dig up, uproot, and plant (κατασκάπτοντες, ἐκριζοῦντες καὶ καταφυτεύοντες);
102. Defenders of apostolic teachings (τῶν ἀποστολικῶν δογμάτων Ὑπέρμαχοι);
103. Those who appeared as abbots of the Churches through the election of divine grace (ψήφῳ τῆς θείας χάριτος ἀναφανέντες Ἡγούμενοι τῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν);
104. Salvation of Christians (Σωτηρία τῶν Χριστιανῶν);
105. Wonder-workers (Θαυματουργοί);
106. Lawgivers, having received authority from apostolic authority (Θεσμοθέται, ἐξ ἀποστολικῆς αὐθεντίας λαβόντες τὴν ἐξουσίαν);
107. Rulers of the priesthood (Ἄρχοντες Ἱερωσύνης);
108. The least presidents of the Churches, reigning together with Christ (ἐλάχιστοι τῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν Πρόεδροι, συμβασιλεύοντες τῷ Χριστῷ)[99].
109. Most venerable (Πανοσιώτατοι);

St. Dositheus of Jerusalem explains the source from which he derived such a large number of ecclesiastical titles and appellations: the menologia, the writings of the Holy Fathers, and the acts of the councils[100]. The title “head” occupies the 20th place in the list of 109 names. Some of the titles evidently repeat Divine names (“lights,” “salt”), while others represent characteristic ranks of holiness (fathers, apostles) or ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy (most holy, presidents, exarchs).

This list enumerates lofty epithets that may be applied not only to bishops, but also to other shepherds who are most closely suited to episcopal ministry. Each of these exalted titles has its own history: some appeared in ancient times, while others entered episcopal titulature during the second millennium, either before or after the fall of Constantinople. Each title presupposes a high calling — through deed, word, and thought — directed toward the spiritual enlightenment and pastoral care of the flock of God.

The fundamental meaning of all these appellations is to indicate the teachers of holiness in accordance with the patristic understanding of hierarchy. Ideally, the representatives of the hierarchy — and especially of the higher hierarchy — should themselves attain the spiritual heights to which they are called to lead others. All these titles are, in essence, Christ-imitation, as can be seen from the examples of the titles “wonder-worker”[101] and “head.”

It is also noteworthy that we are dealing here with a mixed list of ranks or titles belonging both to holy persons and to hierarchical offices. This phenomenon is characteristic of earlier analogous (although considerably shorter) lists as well. Thus, in the Apostolic Constitutions, the ranks of ecclesiastical hierarchy and holiness are enumerated in a total number of sixteen:

1. the saints;

2. patriarchs;

3. prophets;

4. righteous ones;

5. apostles;

6. martyrs;

7. confessors;

8. bishops;

9. presbyters;

10. deacons;

11. subdeacons;

12. readers;

13. chanters;

14. virgins;

15. widows;

16. laypeople[102].

St. John Chrysostom urged that children should not be given names in honor of their ancestors — their father, mother, grandfather, or great-grandfather — but rather in honor of the righteous, martyrs, bishops, and apostles[103]. It is evident that bishops are mentioned among these three ranks of holiness not merely as office-holders, but as holy persons — hierarchs.

St. Cyril of Alexandria, among other things, referred to the apostles and bishops as “the dogs of the Lord,” as “guardians of the intelligible flock”[104].

St. Epiphanius of Cyprus, in turn, lists bishops, together with anchorites, among the most important groups of clerics and saints within the Church[105].

Thus, the most detailed list of the ranks of hierarchy and holiness compiled by St. Dositheus excludes

the notion of a single primatial person within the Church, but rather emphasizes the idea of the Areopagitic hierarchy, in which the representatives of one rank are completely equal in honor and do not differ from one another by any special authority or power[106].

5. Hierarchy and Holiness

The emphasis on the holiness of the hierarchy is also confirmed by patristic exegesis of Acts 20:28:

"…Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the Church of the Lord and God, which He purchased with His own blood."

In this verse, the Apostle Paul, addressing the presbyters from Ephesus who had come to him at his invitation in Miletus, called them overseers/bishops of the Church. By the overseers/bishops, the Holy Fathers and Christian writers understood:

- priests or shepherds who were utterly self-sacrificing and devoted, as, for example, in the writings of St. Basil the Great[107];
- bishops[108];
- holy and God-bearing fathers. Thus, St. Nicephorus of Constantinople wrote of the saving dogmas of "our venerable and God-bearing fathers, whom the Holy Spirit appointed for a time to shepherd His Church and govern it"[109].

The exegesis of the verse Matthew 10:40 — "He who receives you receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me…" (ὁ δεχόμενος ὑμᾶς Ἐμὲ δέχεται καὶ ὁ Ἐμὲ δεχόμενος δέχεται τὸν ἀποστείλαντά Με) — is equally multifaceted. In its literal understanding, this verse referred to the apostles[110]. In spiritual-contemplative exegesis, it could indicate the virtue of obedience[111], as well as refer to particular groups of believers or ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy: monks[112], priests[113], or holy persons in general[114]. St. Gregory Palamas interpreted it precisely in this way: "He who receives you receives Me," says the Lord. "Not at the same time concerning all, but concerning one among all"[115]. The connection between the bishop and Christ, just as the connection between the bishop and the Church as the Body of Christ, is exceedingly great. From this perspective, the bishop cannot fail to be holy, or at least cannot fail to strive for holiness, since the bishop, as the head of the small body of the Church, by definition must correspond as fully as possible to his exalted calling. The idea of episcopal holiness is expressed with particular clarity in the prayer for the consecration of a bishop, cited by St. Serapion of Thmuis[116]. Patriarch Gregory III Mammas, moreover, applied the verse Matthew 10:40 to every hierarch: "Every hierarch we call a successor of Christ and one who sits upon the throne of my Christ and God. For He says: 'He who receives you receives Me' (Mt. 10:40), and: 'He who hears you hears Me' (Lk. 10:16)"[117].

This seemingly accidental blending in lists and variants of exegesis compels one to reflect on the essence of the matter. Is it possible, among all the saints, to distinguish one who would be holier than the others and could be called the imitator of Christ the Savior par excellence? If the answer to this question is negative, one may ask an analogous question with regard to the hierarchy. Indeed, the hierarchy is called a hierarchy precisely because it indicates the subordination of the lower ranks to the higher ones; however, according to the sufficiently generally accepted theology of the Areopagitica, its true center is Christ the Savior, who, according to the interpretation of the scholar René Roques[118], acts as a double mediator or head — both of the ecclesiastical hierarchy (the Mediator between the ecclesiastical and heavenly hierarchies) and of the heavenly hierarchy (the Mediator between the heavenly hierarchy and God the Father). Can there be someone supreme beside Him Who is the true way, and the truth, and the life (Jn. 14:6), and the Light?

6. Historical Summaries

1. The title “head” in the sense of an absolute leader and spiritual sovereign refers primarily to Christ the Savior — as the “Head of the Church,” according to the theology of the Apostle Paul (see: Eph. 1:22; 5:23; Col. 1:18).

2. In the Orthodox tradition, the Church as the Body of Christ, with Jesus Christ as its Head, was the bearer of Divine infallibility, which further strengthened the designation “Head” as the spiritual apex of such infallibility.

3. The designation of a bishop as “head” in the 34th Apostolic Canon (4th century) became, on the one hand, a direct indication of the special Christ-like character of episcopal authority, following the example of apostolic authority, and, on the other hand, emphasized his governing role in the local Church among the bishops and clergy subject to him — in an organic combination with their conciliar opinion.

4. The establishment of the metropolitan and patriarchal systems of Church governance led to the clarification and multidimensional use of the title “head” with regard to the levels of episcopal, metropolitan, and patriarchal administration in the East. In the West, Roman popes, as the sole rulers of the Western Church, found it easier to call themselves heads, or rather, the head — in each particular case.

5. The omnipotence of the Roman popes, permissible in itself but at times excessively ambitious, created a dangerous precedent and example for the Patriarchs of Constantinople, who, after the falling away of the Western part of Christianity in 1054, became first “in honor” within the tetrarchy of the

Eastern patriarchates (while theoretically considering themselves members of the pentarchy in the hope of Rome's repentance).

6. The main thrust of the Eastern polemicists against papal primacy, who constituted an overwhelming majority in the East, consisted in their opposition to the remaining and growing claims of the Roman popes to primacy, the right of appeal, and first place in the Roman papal Diptychs. In the event of their repentance, it was theoretically possible to grant them or restore to them the primacy of honor in the diptychs, whereas the right of appeal was not considered acceptable for them (although the Roman popes sought to obtain it, seeing in it a real manifestation of primacy of authority).

7. As a result of the polemic against Western primacy, two directions or tendencies emerged, which later became fully independent and no longer dependent upon the original impulse:

Representatives of the Eastern Autocephalous Orthodox Churches began to place particular emphasis on the conciliarity and equality of these Churches, which allowed them to oppose to Roman primacy a principle directly contrary to it. Within the framework of this foundational approach of Orthodox tradition, which categorically excludes the principle of omnipotence, one could speak only of the primacy of honor in the Diptychs (although in reality stronger and more independent Churches, due to political factors, could possess temporary practical advantages) as the only theoretical distinction between Churches, both ancient and those established at the end of the first and during the second millennium.

The Patriarchate of Constantinople, as the first in honor and the only patriarchate located within Byzantium, which remained independent until a certain period, as well as the one who remained first after Rome and therefore assumed the role of heir not only to the primacy criticized by the East but also to the right of appeal, increasingly began to imitate the ambitions of the Roman Church — both because of genuine practical needs and as a result of excessive ambition. However, these aspirations of the Constantinopolitan See remained limited in nature. The period following the fall of Constantinople in 1453 allowed the Patriarchs of Constantinople to add to their existing claims to primacy of authority real secular powers granted to them by the Ottoman regime (for which they had to pay with their freedom and excessive accommodation — something particularly evident in their attitude toward the Greek liberation movement of the 1820s).

In 1923, Patriarch Meletius (Metaxakis) of Constantinople attempted to compensate for the loss of power within the Turkish state by expanding jurisdictions on the global stage (primarily at the expense of certain parts of the former Russian Empire). Finally, in 2018, the unilateral granting of the Tomos to the "Orthodox Church of Ukraine," contrary to the position of the canonical Russian Orthodox Church in that territory, marked the practical realization of that theoretical primacy which had been developed in preceding decades by leading Constantinopolitan theologians, such as Metropolitan John Zizioulas, and

canonists, such as Metropolitan Gregory (Papathomas).

8. Modern canonists and theologians of the Phanar have attempted to skillfully substantiate the necessity of the authority of the first in the earthly Church as absolute and not subject to any revision. This justification has proved to be extremely subtle and difficult to refute. Thus, from their perspective, it is impossible to convene an Ecumenical Council without the “first.” This “first” (that is, precisely the Patriarch of Constantinople) seemingly performs only an organizational role at such a Council; however, the organizer becomes the head, the leader, and, in essence, the presiding authority, “hierarchically” greater than all other primates, among whom their own rather significant hierarchical gradations arise (the division between members of the pentarchy and the Autocephalous Churches established in the Balkans). Yet the Ecumenical Council is the bearer of infallible revealed divine truth. It is precisely the Ecumenical Council that constitutes the highest criterion on earth — in its divine-human and synergistic structure. Could such an organ truly possess a ruling figure besides God Himself?

7. Critique of the Primacy of Honor and Authority

The primacy of Constantinople appears to be greater than that of Rome, since its ideologues in reality claim absolute universality (while diplomatically refraining from directly entering into the jurisdiction of Rome, which serves as a model for them but has not yet been reunited with them).

The primacy of honor has its foundation in the conciliar canonical order of the Church, whereas the primacy of authority in the East proceeds from temporary practice and “customary law,” which has not been received by the other Autocephalous Churches or has been accepted only partially, but in any case not by all.

Primacy is not another organic aspect of conciliarity, but rather enters into a strong and insurmountable contradiction with the principle of conciliarity.

The polemic against Roman ambitions and the distortion of doctrine has become a tradition of the Orthodox East, which has preserved its methodology with a particular emphasis on the immutability of Tradition, to which nothing may be added and from which nothing ought to be taken away.

The principle of the immutability of Tradition obliges one not to introduce a new universally accepted canonical norm of primacy (as Metropolitan John Zizioulas introduces it), which, when consistently implemented, leads to schism, although in itself it may also be regarded as heresy (if, according to

Metropolitan John, canonical order proceeds or ought to proceed from dogmatics).

The canonical teaching concerning the necessity of a first in honor and authority within the earthly Church, toward which the new theology of the Patriarchate of Constantinople tends, comes into categorical contradiction with Christology, as was noted by Orthodox polemicists primarily in relation to papal primacy.

The critique of papal primacy is, in essence, also a critique of Eastern primacy. The absence of a Trinitarian or Christological heresy does not justify the idea of an excessive primacy of the Phanar, which, considered in the totality of its consequences for Orthodox unity, constitutes in itself a dark page in the history of the universal Church.

The absence of reflection among Constantinopolitan canonists and theologians, as well as their unwillingness to revise the theory of primacy, indicates, among other things, their arbitrary approach to Tradition — rejected in certain respects and excessively reinterpreted in others — which nevertheless retains its life-giving power and significance according to the theory and practice of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches (including many faithful of the Greek Orthodox Church who understand the “lawlessness” of arbitrariness concentrated in the hands of one person).

Conclusion

Is this article not excessive in its pathos of denying something obvious and significant? It would appear that the observations presented here are drawn from reliable sources, important and authoritative for Byzantium itself. The final conclusion is as follows: the primacy of honor and authority contradicts the very tradition of the Orthodox East.

The term “head” itself may be used of a superior of any rank; however, if this term is understood in an absolute sense, it may become — and does become — an obstacle between the believing soul and Christ, Who revealed to the entire world the true example of humility and greatness for all ages to come.

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Notes:

[1] See: Shabanov, D. The Roman Primacy in Byzantine Theology of Episcopal Primacy. URL: **https://bogoslov.ru/article/1876128**. See also: Christophoros (Daniilidis), Metropolitan. The Place of

the Ecumenical Patriarch in the Orthodox Church (An Article from 1924 Translated from French). URL: **https://pravlife.org/ru/content/mesto-vselenskogo-patriarha-v-pravoslavnoy-cerkvi**; Troitsky, S. "On the Limits of the Extension of the Authority of the Patriarchate of Constantinople over the 'Diaspora'" [O granitsakh rasprostraneniya prava vlasti Konstantinopolskoy Patriarkhii na «diasporu»]. Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate 11 (1947): 34–45; Tsypin, V. A., Archpriest. Archpriest Vladislav Tsypin on the History of Primacy of Authority in the Church and Contemporary Conflicts. URL: **https://bogoslov.ru/article/6171330**; Dionysius (Shlenov), Abbot. "The Primacy of the Bishop of Constantinople in Byzantium and the Post-Byzantine Period: A Canonical and Theological Aspect" [Perventstvo Konstantinopolskogo episkopa v Vizantii i Postvizantii: kanonicheskiy i bogoslovskiy aspekt]. In The Orthodox Church of Estonia: 100 Years of Autonomy, Tallinn, 2021, 50–82; Vasilik, V. V., Archdeacon. Theological Aspects of the Teaching on Primacy in the Church. URL: **https://pravoslavie.ru/122683.html**; Ermilov, P. V. "The Origin of the Theory of the Primacy of the Patriarch of Constantinople" [Proiskhozhdenie teorii o pervenstve Konstantinopolskogo patriarkha]. Vestnik Pravoslavnogo Svyato-Tikhonovskogo Gumanitarnogo Universiteta. Series I: Theology. Philosophy 1, no. 51 (2014): 36–53; Novikov, A., Archpriest. Primacy in the Church: Primacy of Honor or Primacy of Authority? URL: **https://www.rus-obr.ru/ru-club/4184**; Lapidus, I. E., Archpriest. "Some Canonical Aspects of the Actions of Patriarch Bartholomew (Archondonis) of Constantinople in Ukraine at the Turn of 2018–2019" [Nekotorye kanonicheskie aspekty deystviy Patriarkha Konstantinopolskogo Varfolomeya (Arkhondonisa) na Ukraine na rubezhe 2018–2019 godov]. Bogoslovskiy Vestnik 3, no. 34 (2019): 218–246; The Concept of Primacy: Origins and Contexts: A Collective Monograph [Ponyatie pervenstva: Istoki i konteksty: Kollektivnaya monografiya], edited by P. V. Ermilov and M. V. Gratsiansky. Moscow, 2022.

[2] See the book defending the conciliar structure of the Church: Luke of Grigoriou, Hieromonk. The Rights of the Churches and the Unity of the Church [Prava Tserkvey i edinstvo Tserkvi]. Translated by Abbot Dionysius (Shlenov). Moscow, 2022.

[3] See especially the collection of his articles: Zizioulas, J. D., Metropolitan. One and the Many: Studies on God, Man, the Church, and the World Today. Edited by G. Edwards. Alhambra, CA, 2010. (Contemporary Christian Thought Series; 6). See especially: Idem. "Primacy in the Church: An Orthodox Approach." In Idem. One and the Many, 262–273; Idem. "Recent Discussions on Primacy in Orthodox Theology." In Idem. One and the Many, 274–287. See also the key work substantiating the special primacy of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the Church: Maximos, Metropolitan of Sardes. Τὸ Οἰκουμενικὸν Πατριαρχεῖον ἐν τῇ Ὀρθοδόξῳ Ἐκκλησίᾳ. Thessaloniki, 1989. (Ἀνάλεκτα Βλατάδων; 52). See, in particular: Zizioulas, J. D., Metropolitan. "Recent Discussions on Primacy in Orthodox Theology," 274–287, wh ere the 34th Apostolic Canon is called "the golden rule of the theology of primacy." See: Ibid., in the cited work, 284.

[4] See: Dionysius (Shlenov), Abbot. “The Expression ‘ἐν τοῖς βαρβαρικοῖς…’ of the 28th Canon of Chalcedon and Its Interpretations” [Vyrazhenie «ἐν τοῖς βαρβαρικοῖς…» 28-go pravila Khalkidona i ego interpretatsii]. Paper presented at the conference of the Theological Commission “World Orthodoxy: Primacy and Conciliarity in the Light of Orthodox Doctrine,” September 17, 2021, Cathedral of Christ the Savior (Moscow). Part 1. URL: **https://bogoslov.ru/article/6170883**; Part 2. URL: **https://bogoslov.ru/article/6170934**.

[5] Church legislative acts were adopted by the permanent council known as the “synodos endemousa” (σύνοδος ἐνδημοῦσα), which increasingly strengthened its position. As the leading expert in canon law S. Troianos notes, in Byzantium the activity of the “synodos endemousa” was regarded as an opportunity to continue legislative activity after the era of the Ecumenical Councils in two areas: matrimonial law and ecclesiastical administration and canon law. See more: Hartmann, W., and Pennington, K. The History of Byzantine and Eastern Canon Law to 1500. Washington, D.C., 2012. (History of Medieval Canon Law; 4), 163–165.

[6] A striking example: Nicetas Amasenus. “Oratio de suffragiis.” In Documents inédits d’ecclésiologie byzantine, edited by J. Darrouzès. Paris, 1966. (Archives de l’Orient Chrétien; 10), 160–174. See the Russian translation: Ulyanova, A. O. “The Treatise of Nicetas, Metropolitan of Amaseia, as a Source for the History of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the Second Half of the 10th Century” [Traktat Nikity, mitropolita Amasiyskogo, kak istochnik po istorii Konstantinopolskogo patriarkhata vo vtoroy polovine X veka]. Prichernomorye v Srednie veka 8 (2011): 6–49.

[7] Joannes VIII Xiphilinus, Patriarcha. Decretum synodale de episcoporum electione. In Bibliothèque de l’Escorial. Cod. R. II. 11 (Revilla 030), fol. 270v–271; Oikonomidès, N. “Un décret synodal inédit du patriarche Jean Xiphilin.” Revue des études byzantines 18 (1960): 57–59.

[8] See more: Hartmann, W., and Pennington, K. The History of Byzantine and Eastern Canon Law to 1500, 167–168.

[9] Ibid., 173.

[10] Ibid. The special “imperial” monasteries were also to remain under the administration of the local bishop.

[11] The key article by F. Iliou fr om 1983.

[12] The Patriarchs of Jerusalem began issuing letters of absolution in the 15th century. See, for example: Kobeko, D. O. “Letters of Absolution of the Patriarchs of Jerusalem” [Razreshitel’nye gramoty iyerusalimskikh patriarkhov]. Journal of the Ministry of Public Education 305 (June 1896): 270–279; Lebedev, A. P. History of the Greek Eastern Church under Turkish Rule: From the Fall of Constantinople (in 1453) to the Present Time. St. Petersburg, 2012. (Library of Christian Thought. Studies), 599.

[13] “Οἰκουμενιστικὴ συμπροσευχὴ διὰ τὴν «Ὑπερτάτην Κεφαλήν»!” (September 24, 2022). URL: **https://orthodoxostypos.gr/οἰκουμενιστικὴ-συμπροσευχὴ-διὰ-τὴ**/.

[14] “Οικουμενικός σε Αχρίδος: «Εμπιστευθείτε καρδιακώς την Μητέρα Σας Εκκλησία».” URL: **https://www.romfea.gr/epikairotita-xronika/50605-oikoumenikos-se-axridos-empisteftheite-kardiakos-tin-mitera-sas-ekklisia**.

[15] And further concerning the unlimited, that is, extraterritorial character of the Patriarchate of Constantinople: “...and they established an extraordinary exception, but one which, as the practice of the Church has shown, is beautiful, wise, and holy with regard to its organization within boundaries. Without such a determination of boundaries, the multiplicity of ecclesiastical life would be fatal, and the questions arising at certain times and periods would become increasingly intricate and numerous.”

[16] “Οικουμενικός σε Αχρίδος: «Εμπιστευθείτε καρδιακώς την Μητέρα Σας Εκκλησία».” URL: **https://www.romfea.gr/epikairotita-xronika/50605-oikoumenikos-se-axridos-empisteftheite-kardiakos-tin-mitera-sas-ekklisia**.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] [Makarios, Archbishop of Australia]. “Αυστραλίας Μακάριος προς ιερείς: Αποφύγετε την αίρεση της «μονοπρόσωπης αυθεντίας».” (March 2, 2023). URL: **https://www.romfea.gr/oikoumeniko-patriarxeio-ts/arxiepiskopi-australias/55380-afstralias-makarios-pros-iereis-apofygete-tin-airesi-tis-monoprosopis-afthentias**.

[20] “Θερμή υποδοχή του Αρχιεπισκόπου Κύπρου από τον Οικουμενικό Πατριάρχη στο Φανάρι.” [March 3, 2023]. URL: **https://fosfanariou.gr/index.php/2023/03/03/thermi-ypodoxi-arxiepiskopou-kyprou-sto-fanari/**.

[21] Ibid.

[22] For more details, see: Dionysius (Shlenov), Abbot. “In Search of Authentic Canonicity: Concerning the Terms συνεδαφικότης and πολυαρχία in the ‘New’ Ecclesiology of Metropolitan Gregory (Papathomas).” In the conference of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy “The Bishop in the Life of the Church: Theology, History, Law,” March 15, 2022 (forthcoming).

[23] See: Niketas Pantokratorinos, Hieromonk. “Η αδελφική συνάντηση στο Αμμάν και η Ιερά Παράδοση της Εκκλησίας.” URL: **http://fanarion.blogspot.com/2020/03/blog-post_92.html**.

[24] See: Ibid.

[25] In the comments to the document on the charitable activity of the Patriarchate of Constantinople (“Η οικονομική συμβολή του Οικουμενικού Πατριαρχείου στον αγώνα κατά της πανδημίας.” URL: **http://fanarion.blogspot.com/2020/04/blog-post_4.html#more**) dated April 1, 2020, Archimandrite Joachim (Economikos), preacher of the Metropolis of Kos and Nisyros, wrote:

“The Great Church in Constantinople has once again shown that it is the Mother Church, which cares for Her children, and that our Patriarch Lord Bartholomew is the expression of this Motherhood, as the Summit of Orthodoxy and the Hypatos (i.e., Ruler — I. D.) of the Nation”

(Για μια φορά ακόμα η Μεγάλη Εκκλησία της Κωνσταντινουπόλεως έδειξε ότι είναι η Μητέρα Εκκλησία που νοιάζεται για τα παιδιά Της, και ο Πατριάρχης μας κύριος Βαρθολομαίος, εκφραστής αυτής της Μητρότητος, ως Κορυφή της Ορθοδοξίας και Ύπατος του Γένους).

[26] Nicetas Amasenus. Oratio de suffragiis. In Archives de l’Orient Chrétien 10, p. 170:9–11.

[27] Ibid., 10, p. 168:19–20: “...Τέως γοῦν ἡ Πόλις αὐτῷ ὑπόκειται καὶ ἡ Ἐκκλησία ὡς κεφαλῇ”.

[28] See: Ulyanova, A. O. “The Treatise of Nicetas, Metropolitan of Amaseia, as a Source for the History of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the Second Half of the 10th Century,” pp. 36–38.

[29] Acta Concilii secondi Lugduno. Apologia Josephi patriarchae. In Dossier grec de l’Union de Lyon (1273–1277), edited by J. Darrouzès and V. Laurent. Paris, 1976. (Archives de l’Orient Chrétien; vol. 16), p. 227:14–20: “Αὕτη τοίνυν ἡ ἁγία καὶ οἰκουμενικὴ σύνοδος...”.

[30] Joannes XI Beccus. Epistula ad papam. In Archives de l’Orient Chrétien 16, p. 481:10–15.

[31] For the purpose of developing this topic, it is important to present the patristic teaching on the bishop and separately on hierarchy. See: Dionysius (Shlenov), Abbot. “Can One Speak of a Hierarchy

among the Primates of the Autocephalous Churches? The Term ἱεραρχία in the Byzantine Tradition." Theological Herald 4, no. 47 (2022): 103–130; International Scientific-Theological Conference "The Sacred Hierarchy in the Life of the Church," dedicated to the 75th anniversary of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, November 11, 2021, Sretensky Theological Seminary (forthcoming).

[32] See other names in the commentary of Euthymius Zigabenus: Euthymius Zigabenus. Commentarius in Pauli epistulam ad Ephesios 2, 20:14–16.

[33] Dionysius Areopagita. De ecclesiastica hierarchia 1, 3. In Patristische Texte und Studien 67, p. 66:4–5: "...".

[34] Xexakis, N. Ὀρθόδοξος δογματική: ἐν γ΄ τ. Vol. 1. Athens, 2006, p. 158.

[35] See: Athanasius. Expositiones in Psalmos. Ps. 10. In Patrologia Graeca 27, col. 93B:14–C:2.

[36] Ps.-Macarius. Sermones 30–64 (collectio B). Sermo 37, 1, 3:4. In Makarios/Symeon Reden und Briefe, 2 vols., edited by H. Berthold, vol. 2. Berlin, 1973. (GCS), p. 51:19.

[37] Ps.-Macarius. Sermones 39, 3, 1:3–4. In Makarios/Symeon Reden und Briefe, 2 vols., edited by H. Berthold, vol. 2. Berlin, 1973. (GCS), pp. 14–15.

[38] Marcus Eremita. De lege spirituali 55:2: "...ἀλάθητος ἡ τοῦ Θεοῦ δικαιοσύνη".

[39] Theodorus Studites. Sermones Catecheseos Magnae. Catechesis 4. In Nova Patrum Bibliotheca 9/2, p. 12:31–36.

[40] Joannes Chrysostomus. In Acta apostolorum 24, 4. In Patrologia Graeca 60, col. 190:43–45.

[41] Joannes Chrysostomus. *In epistulam ad Colossenses* 3, 2. In *Patrologia Graeca* 62, col. 320:20–22.

[42] See the Greek text and Slavonic translation: *The Canons of the Holy Apostles and Holy Fathers with Commentaries*, 2 vols., vol. 1. Moscow, 2011, pp. 90–91. The text of the canon in a later Greek edition: *Constitutiones apostolorum* 8, 47:119–125 (Can. 34). In *Sources Chrétiennes* 336, p. 284.

[43] Russian translation: *The Canons of the Holy Apostles and Holy Fathers with Commentaries*, vol. 1,

p. 91.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Cf. the Slavonic translation:

“In every province the bishops must know the bishop who presides in the metropolis and has care for the whole province, since all those who have matters to resolve come from everywhere to the metropolis. Therefore, it has been decided that he should have precedence in honor, and that the other bishops should do nothing of particular importance without him, according to the ancient rule received from our fathers, except only matters concerning the diocese belonging to each of them and the villages within its boundaries. For each bishop has authority in his own diocese, and let him govern it with the proper prudence belonging to each, and let him have care for the whole territory dependent on his city, and ordain presbyters and deacons, and resolve all matters with discernment. But let him not presume to do anything further without the bishop of the metropolis; and likewise, the latter should act only with the consent of the other bishops.”

(*The Canons of the Holy Apostles and Holy Fathers with Commentaries*, vol. 1, pp. 163–164).

[46] Alexius Aristenus. *Scholia in canones apostolorum* 32:1–3. See also the Greek text and Russian translation: *The Canons of the Holy Apostles and Holy Fathers with Commentaries*, vol. 1, p. 92.

[47] Alexius Aristenus. *Scholia in canones apostolorum* 32:4–9. See also the Greek text and Russian translation: *The Canons of the Holy Apostles and Holy Fathers with Commentaries*, vol. 1, p. 92.

[48] Alexius Aristenus. *Scholia in concilia oecumenica et localia*. Council of Antioch, 5, canon 9. Russian text: *The Canons of the Holy Local Councils with Commentaries*. Moscow, 2000, p. 164.

[49] Balsamon:

“Order sustains everything, both heavenly and earthly. Therefore, the present canon determines that those who have been ordained should render honor to those who ordained them. For these are the first (πρῶτοι) and their heads. Therefore, it has been determined by common agreement that everything which goes beyond the sphere of matters belonging to each diocese, relating to the common ecclesiastical order and considered to exceed the authority of an individual bishop, should not be carried out without the knowledge of the first-ranking bishops. Nevertheless, even the first-ranking bishop himself has not been granted the right to do anything of this kind without the knowledge of his bishops; for in this way, he says, concord and love for God will be preserved among them. This is the explanation

of the canon.

To explain the expression ‘exceeding authority’ (τὰ περιττά), say that many cities which remain without bishops because of the invasion of pagans are entrusted, according to discretion, to other bishops. Therefore, the first-ranking bishop under whose supervision these cities are placed will be subject to accusation if he distributes them without the knowledge of his fellow bishops. Such are the actions exceeding authority, and concerning these the canon provides a decision.

But say that the prohibition against the first-ranking bishop doing anything without the knowledge of his bishops does not refer to everything he must do, but only to that which exceeds authority (τὰ περιττά). For if you say otherwise, the one who ordains will be placed below the one who is ordained, since he would be entirely forbidden to do anything without the knowledge of his subjects, whereas their need for the presence of the first-ranking bishop applies only to matters exceeding their authority, which would be inappropriate.”

(*The Canons of the Holy Apostles and Holy Fathers with Commentaries*, vol. 1, pp. 92–93).

[50]

“The 34th Apostolic Canon commands the bishops of each nation to manage independently the affairs of the Churches and other places under their jurisdiction; but when an extraordinary question arises (which ordinarily happens rarely), concerning the general condition of the Church — for example, when it is necessary to examine doctrines, or to ordain a bishop in a place wh ere there was previously none, or to correct a common error, or something similar — then the bishops must know their presiding metropolitan and honor him as the head of the body of the Church; and, having assembled together, they should deliberate concerning the matters at hand and accept the opinion recognized by all as the best.

However, the metropolitan must not, through an abuse of honor, transform it into domination and do any of the aforementioned things without the common consent of his fellow bishops; rather, they should judge common matters while being united by unanimity and love. For in this way they will become a common example for the people entrusted to them, and God will be glorified through the Son in the Holy Spirit: since the Son revealed the name of the Father and established for mankind the law of love, while the Spirit enlightened the nations through the Apostles.

The 9th canon of the Council of Antioch, although not in words but in meaning, agrees entirely with this canon.”

See: Matthaeus Blastares. *Collectio alphabetica* ε 11:1–23. Ἀποστόλων λδ′. Russian text cited from: Matthew Blastares. *Alphabetical Syntagma E, 11 (The 34th Apostolic Canon).* In *A Collection in Alphabetical Order of All Subjects Contained in the Holy and Divine Canons, Compiled and Arranged by the Most Humble Hieromonk Matthew, or the Alphabetical Syntagma of Matthew Blastares*. Translated fr om Greek by Priest N. Ilyinsky. Simferopol, 1892. (*The Alphabetical Syntagma of Hieromonk Matthew Blastares: Canonical Rules and Civil Laws Concerning the Church*. Moscow, 2006), p. 190

[51] See: *Matthaeus Blastares. Collectio alphabetica* δ 7, bis:59–74. *Συνόδου τετάρτης θ΄.* Russian translation: Matthew Blastares. *Alphabetical Syntagma Δ, 7 (9), Ninth Canon of the Council of Chalcedon* // *Op. cit.* P. 157.

[52] See: *Matthaeus Blastares. Collectio alphabetica* δ 7, bis:77–96. *Καρθαγένης ιε΄. κη΄. ρκε΄. ρδ΄. λ΄.* Russian translation: Matthew Blastares. *Alphabetical Syntagma Δ, 7 (9), Seventeenth Canon of the Council of Chalcedon* // *Op. cit.* P. 156.

[53] The Slavic *Kormchaya*, commentary on the 34th Apostolic Canon:

> “Without the consent of all bishops, even the senior bishop shall do nothing. Without their senior bishop, the bishops shall do nothing, except each within his own district. And the senior bishop likewise shall do nothing without them, for the sake of the unity beneficial to all. Commentary. It is not proper for bishops, apart from the will of their senior, that is, without the consent of their metropolitan or archbishop, to do anything excessive: neither to ordain a bishop, nor to dispute concerning commands or new rules, nor to sell or give away any church property. They should only govern what belongs to each within their own boundaries and in the territories and villages under their authority. Likewise, the senior, that is, the metropolitan or archbishop, cannot do anything of this kind without the consent of all bishops. For by acting in this way, all will preserve the commandment of unity and love.”

(*The Canons of the Holy Apostles and Holy Fathers with Commentaries*. Vol. 1. P. 93.)

[54] *Hierotheus hieromonachus. Orationes* 3:1286–1292 // *Ὁ Ἱερομόναχος Ἱερόθεος (ΙΓ΄ αἰ.) καὶ τὸ ἀνέκδοτο συγγραφικὸ ἔργο του* / ed. N. Ch. Ioannidis. Athens, 2003. P. 207.

[55] See: *Nicodemus Hagiorita. Pedalion. Scholia in canones apostolorum. Canon 34:24–32* // Agapius the Hieromonk and Nicodemus the Monk. *Πηδάλιον τῆς νοητῆς νηὸς τῆς μιᾶς ἁγίας καθολικῆς καὶ ἀποστολικῆς τῶν ὀρθοδόξων ἐκκλησίας.* Athens, 1896. P. 37.

[56] He died on February 2, 2023. Against the background of numerous laudatory articles devoted to the Constantinopolitan theologian, see an article criticizing Metropolitan John's views: G. Karalis, *Ζηζιούλας τοῖς οἰκείοις συντέθνηκε δόγμασι.* URL: **https://orthodoxostypos.gr/ζηζιούλας-τοῖς-οἰκείοις-συντέθνηκε/** (February 26, 2023), wh ere this characterization is used with justification.

[57] "Can there be unity of the Church without primacy on the local, the regional, and the universal level in an ecclesiology of communion? We believe not. For it is through a 'head,' some kind of 'primus,' that the 'many' – be it individual Christians or local Churches – can speak with one voice" (Zizioulas J. D., Metropolitan. *The Church as Communion* // *Idem. One and the Many.* Pp. 55–56).

[58] "I believe that what is at stake here is nothing less than the proper balance between Christology and Pneumatology, between the one and the many, between love and freedom, between the one God the Father and the other Persons of the Holy Trinity. The right view of the bishop is related to the right faith of the Church in all its basic aspects" (Zizioulas J. D., Metropolitan. *The Bishop in the Theological Doctrine of the Orthodox Church* // *Idem. One and the Many.* P. 250).

See also: Seraphim (Zisis), Monk. *The Intratrinitarian Monarchy of the Father and the Newly Appeared Monarch of the Ecclesiology of Phanar.* Moscow, 2022; and the preface to this book by Abbot Dionysius (Shlenov).

[59] "The patriarch can convoke the synod and set its agenda. His presence is a sine qua non condition for all canonical deliberations, such as the election of bishops, etc. This means that the synod cannot function without its head; the many without the one are inconceivable. The primus therefore gives theological status to the synod, and not simply honor" (Zizioulas J. D., Metropolitan. *The Institutions of Episcopal Conferences: An Orthodox Reflection* // *Idem. One and the Many.* P. 258).

[60] "The canon (34), significantly enough, ends with reference to the Holy Trinity, thereby indicating indirectly that canonical provisions of this kind are not a matter of mere organization but have a theological, indeed a triadological, basis" (Zizioulas J. D., Metropolitan. *Primacy in the Church: An Orthodox Approach.* P. 269).

[61] "This primacy is sometimes called 'primacy of honor,' a misleading term since, as we have noted, it is not an 'honorific' primacy but one that involves actual duties and responsibilities, albeit under the conditions just mentioned" (*Ibid.* P. 270).

[62] "There seems, in fact, not to exist, even in the Orthodox Church, 'a simple primacy of honor'"

(Zizioulas J. D., Metropolitan. *Recent Discussions on Primacy in Orthodox Theology.* P. 277).

[63] See: *Ibid.* Pp. 278–279.

[64] Athanasius, retired Bishop of Herzegovina. *Ο 34ος Αποστολικός Κανών και ο πατήρ Γεώργιος Τσέτσης* [February 28, 2010]. URL: **https://amethystosbooks.wordpress.com/2010/02/28/o-34oc-αποστολικός-κανών-και-ο-πατήρ-γεώ/**.

[65] See: Cyril, Bishop of Abydos. *Ἡ Ἔκκλητος πρός τό θρόνο τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως.* URL: **https://ec-patr.org/vydoy-kyrilloy-kklitos-pros-to-throno-t-s/**; The publication begins with the following statement:

> "The petition of appeal (ἔκκλητος) to the First-Throne Church of Constantinople refers to the exclusive prerogative of the Throne of Constantinople to deal with…"

[66] See: V. Fidas. *Η Συνοδική Πράξη του Οικουμενικού Πατριαρχείου (1686) και η Αυτοκεφαλία της Εκκλησίας Ουκρανίας* (Russian translation of the title: Fidas V. *The Synodal Act of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (1686) and the Autocephaly of the Ukrainian Church*). URL: **https://orthodoxia.info/news/h-συνοδική-πράξη-του-οικουμενικού-πατρ/**.

[67] V. Fidas. *Η Συνοδική Πράξη του Οικουμενικού Πατριαρχείου (1686) και η Αυτοκεφαλία της Εκκλησίας Ουκρανίας* (Russian translation of the title: Fidas V. *The Synodal Act of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (1686) and the Autocephaly of the Ukrainian Church*). URL: **https://orthodoxia.info/news/h-συνοδική-πράξη-του-οικουμενικού-πατρ/**.

He clearly notes that:

> "Just as bodies move incorrectly, or even become completely useless, if the head does not preserve its activity in a healthy state, so the body of the Church will move disorderly and incorrectly if the member occupying the place of the head does not receive the honor due to him. Therefore, the present canon commands that the bishops who hold primacy in each province, that is, the hierarchs of metropolitan sees, should be honored by the other bishops of the same province as the head, and that without them (= the Primates) they should do nothing relating to the general condition of the Church…"

(Rallis G., Potlis M. *Syntagma.* II. P. 45. Russian translation: *The Canons of the Holy Apostles and Holy*

Fathers with Commentaries. Vol. 1. P. 91.)

[68] P. Boumis, Professor of Canon Law at the University of Athens, understands the 34th Canon in a more moderate and conciliar manner: as regulating the leadership of Local Autocephalous Churches by their Primates. See: P. I. Boumis. *Βασικές κανονικές αρχές επιλύσεως του ουκρανικού ζητήματος.* URL: **https://www.romfea.gr/katigories/10-apopseis/24892-basikes-kanonikes-arxes-epiluseos-tou-oukranikou-zitimatos**.

[69] "The pastoral care for those territories beyond the geographical boundaries of the other local (autocephalous) Churches…" (Patsavos Lewis J. *The Role of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Granting Autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in Ukraine: A Canonical Perspective* // *The Ecumenical Patriarchate and Ukraine Autocephaly: Historical, Canonical and Pastoral Perspectives* / ed. E. Sotiropoulos. [No City]: Order of Saint Andrew the Apostle, Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, May 2019. P. 68).

[70] See: *Apophthegmata Patrum (collectio alphabetica). De abbate Evagrio* 7 // *PG.* 65. Col. 176A:9–11.

[71] *Ibid.* Col. 176A:13–14.

[72] Constitutiones apostolorum 2, 14:70–77 // SC. 320. P. 178. Russian translation: *Apostolic Constitutions* 2, 14 // *Apostolic Constitutions*. Sergiev Posad, 2006. P. 30.

[73] Chronicon Moreae (recensio Π). L. 2441–2445 // *The Chronicle of Morea* / ed. J. Schmitt. London, 1904. P. 165:41–45.

[74] The persecutors of the Church: the feet wish to become heads — bishops (Callinicus III Patriarcha. *Narratio brevis* 1, 9:1087–1094).

[75] Concilium universale Chalcedonense // ACO. 2, 1, 1. P. 65:17–21.

[76] In the later Latin translation: *Ecclesia Romana semper habuit primatum*. See more: M. V. Gratsiansky, *The Ecclesiological History of the Modern Claims of Constantinople to Primacy in the Orthodox Church*. URL: **https://pravoslavie.ru/119735.html**.

[77] See: *Acta Concilii Florentini*. Latinorum responsio ad libellum a Graecis exhibitum circa purgatorium ignem 16 // PO. 15. Fasc. 1. P. 97:26–30.

[78] Nicon Nigri Montis. *Canonarium vel Typicon* 20, 48:5–10.

[79] See: Joannes Eugenicus. *Antirrheticus adversus decretum Concilii Florentini* 31 // *John Eugenikos' Antirrhetic of the Decree of the Council of Ferrara-Florence* / ed. E. Rossidou-Koutsou. Nicosia (Cyprus), 2006. P. 143:10–13; Ibid. P. 143:20–144:1.

[80] Ibid. P. 148:18–149:7.

[81] Cf. the polemic against the Roman doctrine of primacy: Meletius Pegas Patriarcha. *Epistulae* (e cod. Patr. Alex. gr. 296) 201:374–378.

[82] Meletius Pegas Patriarcha. *Epistulae* (e cod. Patr. Alex. gr. 296) 137:70–73.

[83] Ibid. 137:92–96.

[84] Ibid. 239:20–25.

[85] Ibid. 243:35–40.

[86] Ibid. 201:389–396.

[87] Cf.: *Δωδεκάβιβλος Δοσιθέου Β΄* // Dositheus, Patriarch of Jerusalem. *History of the Patriarchs of Jerusalem, also called the Twelve Books of Dositheus: in six volumes* / ed. E. Deleḍemos. Vol. I. Thessaloniki, 1982. P. 492:11–18. See: Dionysius (Shlenov), Hieromonk. *The Criticism of the Extraterritorial Appeal to the Patriarch of Constantinople by St Dositheus of Jerusalem* // International Scientific Conference "The Conciliarity of the Church: Theological, Canonical and Historical Dimensions". [11 November 2021]. Kyiv, 2021. **https://andreevsky-monastery.ru/blog/detail/kritika-eksterritorialnoy-apellyatsii-konstantinopolskomu-patriarkhu-svt-dosifeem-ierusalimskim/**.

[88] *Δωδεκάβιβλος Δοσιθέου Δ΄* // Dositheus, Patriarch of Jerusalem. *History of the Patriarchs of Jerusalem, also called the Twelve Books of Dositheus: in six volumes* / ed. E. Deleḍemos. Vol. II. Thessaloniki, 1982. P. 301:30–302:4.

[89] *Δωδεκάβιβλος Δοσιθέου Ε΄* // Dositheus, Patriarch of Jerusalem. *History of the Patriarchs of Jerusalem, also called the Twelve Books of Dositheus: in six volumes* / ed. E. Deleḍemos. Vol. III.

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[90] Ibid. P. 349:7–9.

[91] *Δωδεκάβιβλος Δοσιθέου Ζ΄* // Dositheus, Patriarch of Jerusalem. *History of the Patriarchs of Jerusalem, also called the Twelve Books of Dositheus: in six volumes* / ed. E. Deleḍemos. Vol. IV. Thessaloniki, 1983. P. 45:1–5.

[92] *Δωδεκάβιβλος Δοσιθέου Ι΄* // Dositheus, Patriarch of Jerusalem. *History of the Patriarchs of Jerusalem, also called the Twelve Books of Dositheus: in six volumes* / ed. E. Deleḍemos. Vol. V. Thessaloniki, 1983. P. 253:18–254:2.

[93] See: Joannes Apocaucus. *Notitiae et epistulae*. Epistula 57:2–5.

[94] Theodorus II Irenicus Patriarcha. *Epistula ad papam* (e cod. Urbani 32, ff. 185v–191):12–18.

[95] Maximus Planudes. *Oratio in sancto Arsenio Autoriano* (e cod. Patm. gr. 366) (Dub.) 22:6–13; Ibid. 22:13–17.

[96] See: *Δωδεκάβιβλος Δοσιθέου Δ΄* // Op. cit. Vol. II. P. 320:24–31.

[97] *Δωδεκάβιβλος Δοσιθέου Ζ΄* // Op. cit. Vol. IV. P. 181:19–23.

[98] *Δωδεκάβιβλος Δοσιθέου Θ΄* // Dositheus, Patriarch of Jerusalem. *History of the Patriarchs of Jerusalem, also called the Twelve Books of Dositheus: in six volumes* / ed. E. Deleḍemos. Vol. V. Thessaloniki, 1983. P. 21:22–25.

[99] *Δωδεκάβιβλος Δοσιθέου Ι΄* // Dositheus, Patriarch of Jerusalem. *History of the Patriarchs of Jerusalem, also called the Twelve Books of Dositheus: in six volumes* / ed. E. Deleḍemos. Vol. V. P. 458:30–460:26.

[100] Ibid. P. 460:1–6.

[101] *Thaumatourgoi*. See: Ibid. P. 459:35. See also: Dionysius (Shlenov), Hieromonk. *The Epithet of St Nicholas θαυματουργός in the Greek Literary Tradition* // *Metaphrast*. 2019. Vol. 1. No. 1. P. 23–24.

[102] Constitutiones apostolorum 8, 12:285–290 // SC. 336. P. 202. **Russian text:** *Apostolic Constitutions* 8, 12 // *Apostolic Constitutions*. Sergiev Posad, 2006. P. 215.

[103] Joannes Chrysostomus. *De inani gloria et de educandis liberis*. L. 648–653.

[104] See: Cyrillus Alexandrinus. *Expositio in Psalmos LXVI*, 24 // PG. 69. Col. 1156A:6–10.

[105] Epiphanius. *Panarion (= Adversus haereses)* // GCS. 37. P. 339:5–10.

[106] For more details see: Dionysius (Shlenov), Hieromonk. *Can One Speak of a Hierarchy among the Primates of Local Churches? The Term ἱεραρχία in the Byzantine Tradition* // *Theological Bulletin*. 2022. No. 4 (47). P. 103–130.

[107] See: Basilius Caesariensis. *Regulae morales* 80, 16 // PG. 31. Col. 865:23–31.

[108] See: *Catena in Acta* (catena Andreae) (e cod. Oxon. coll. nov. 58) // *Catenae Graecorum patrum in Novum Testamentum* / ed. J. A. Cramer. Vol. 3. Oxford, 1838. (Hildesheim, reprint 1967). P. 337:33–338:3.

[109] Nicephorus I. *Epistula ad Leonem III papam* // PG. 100. Col. 192:9–14.

[110] Callistus I Patriarcha. *Vita Gregorii Sinaitae* 1:15–21.

[111] See: Basilius Caesariensis. *Constitutiones asceticae (Constitutiones monasticae)* [Sp.] 22, 2 // PG. 31. Col. 1404C:2–8; *Typicon monasterii Theotoci Bebaias Elpidos* (sub auctore Theodora Synadena) 5 // Delehaye H. *Deux typica byzantins de l'époque des Paléologues*. Brussels, 1921. (Mémoires: Second series; 8). P. 40:15–19.

[112] Nicolaus Catascepenus. *Vita sancti Cyrilli Phileotae* (e codice Athonensi Caracalli 42) 47, 10:19–24.

[113] Theoleptus Philadelphiensis. *Orationes* 1:151–157.

[114] Athanasius. *De virginitate* [Sp.] 22:12–14; Nicolaus Catascepenus. *Vita sancti Cyrilli Phileotae* (e codice Athonensi Caracalli 42) 12, 2:12–14.

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[116] Serapion Thmuitanus. *Euchologium* 14:1–10.

[117] Gregorius III Patriarcha. *Responsio ad epistulam Marci Ephesii* (ex variis sanctorum sententiis) // PG. 160. Col. 200A:15–B:4.

[118] See: Roques R. *L'Univers dionysien. Structure hierarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys*. Paris, 1954.

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