The Western Kingdoms and Eastern Rome after 476

Three Notes on the Impact of Religion on Cohesion and Connectivity in the Sixth- and Seventh-Century Mediterranean

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Shared traditions played an important part in Western and Eastern Christianity, but Christian religious dogma in particular was at the heart of a debate on Mediterranean cohesion and conflict, as can be illustrated by the ecumenical councils held between the sixth and the eighth centuries. The phases when such councils were prepared and assembled show a remarkable conjunction of religious and political issues that could extend far beyond the Roman Empire, as they were under the direct control of the emperor in Constantinople. This article will take a closer look at three cases of ecclesiastical councils that involved Eastern and Western Rome, Italy and Gaul. In all three examples, religious issues went along with political negotiations, and all can be characterized by very intense long-distance communication, as becomes visible not only in the official spread of documents and the translation of conciliar acts, but also in unofficial letters, rumors and propaganda.

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The barbarian kingdoms that emerged from the Late Roman West were not situated »between empires«. The two big empires at this time were the Roman and the Persian, with the latter being replaced by the Arab empire in the course of the seventh century.[1] The Western kingdoms were not directly located between these two empires, though it would be premature to say that tension and conflict between the two Eastern empires would have had no effect upon them. At times, as we can observe, Western politics could indeed be strongly influenced by what was going on in the East.

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1 Bowersock, *Empires*.

Modern Western historiography, looking at these barbarian kingdoms as some early manifestation of modern national states, often saw them as more or less independent. The master narrative of separation and a parting of ways has been dominant in Western historiography since the 19th century at the latest, and we owe to it some of our most important and influential contributions such as Henri Pirenne's »Mahomet et Charlemagne«.[2] On the other hand, it took the Franks more than 300 years to emancipate from the Roman Empire. And even when they did so, their claim was to be equal to Constantinople, to be just another Roman empire with another Roman emperor, not to replace the Roman Empire as such.

For this reason, one could equally ask in the opposite direction: What was it that made these kingdoms cling to the Roman Empire for such a long time? From the perspective of Eastern Rome, it is clear that Constantinople would never formally give up its former Western provinces, which it regarded as being only temporarily under barbarian dominion.[3] From a Western perspective, their quest for legitimacy prevented the barbarian kings from claiming full independence from Eastern Rome – apparently for most of the time, as they were satisfied with being »kingdoms of the Empire« and having this status officially sanctioned by treaties.[4] If we compare these kingdoms to the powers that would inherit Roman provinces in the East, it becomes obvious that Christianity and the church must have mattered a lot in maintaining some idea of Mediterranean connectivity that was essentially linked to the existence of the Roman Empire. This could be illustrated by many features, such as the cult of saints and transfer of relics, which always created some awareness among the Christian *regna* that they were part of something bigger that extended beyond their political frontiers and had its center elsewhere.[5]

Shared traditions played an important part in Western and Eastern Christianity, but Christian religious dogma in particular was at the heart of a debate on Mediterranean cohesion and conflict, as can be illustrated by the ecumenical councils held between the sixth and eighth centuries.[6] The phases when such councils were prepared and assembled show a remarkable conjunction of religious and political issues that could extend far beyond the Roman Empire, as they were under the direct control of the emperor in Constantinople. In what follows I shall take a closer look at three cases of ecclesiastical councils that involved Eastern and Western Rome, Italy and Gaul. In all three examples, religious issues went along with political negotiations, and all can be characterized by very intense long-distance communication, as becomes visible not only in the official spread of documents and the translation of conciliar acts, but also in unofficial letters, rumors and propaganda.

2 Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne*.

3 Chrysos, Byzantine diplomacy. For a survey, see Esders, Merovingians and Byzantium.

4 Wolfram, *Roman Empire*; Pohl (ed.), *Kingdoms of the Empire*; Esders, In the shadow of the Roman Empire.

5 See, e.g., Esders, Avenger of all perjury.

6 For the seventh century, see Booth, *Crisis of Empire*.

A Papal Dossier on the Three-Chapters-Controversy in a Gallic Canon Law Collection (c. 550-553)

My first case comes from the Three-Chapters controversy of the mid-6th century CE, which was instigated by the East Roman emperor Justinian, who wanted to condemn three theological treatises in order to achieve unanimity with the Eastern churches.[7] This provoked fierce resistance among the churches of the Western provinces of the Roman Empire. In 547 CE, therefore, Pope Vigilius was brought to Constantinople, perhaps involuntarily, while Justinian was hoping that the pope would agree to condemn the three chapters. Vigilius initially seemed to be willing to compromise, but the publication of an imperial edict prompted him to seek asylum in a church of Constantinople and to demand that bishops from all provinces of Africa, Illyricum and Dalmatia would assemble at Constantinople so that an ecumenical synod would decide on the matter.[8] However, before this could happen, enormous pressure was exerted on the Western bishops, and a lot of tactics were employed to overcome their resistance. In 551 Justinian issued an edict on the orthodox faith which made the condemnation of the three chapters obligatory and was a slap in the face of the pope.

This religious controversy extended even into Gaul, which by then had been under Frankish control for more than half a century.[9] In a Gallic canon law manuscript[10] we find a dossier containing three letters written by Vigilius from Constantinople in AD 551 or 552, in which the pope sought to clarify his position and actions in the Three-Chapters controversy.[11] Obviously these documents were transmitted to Gaul to manipulate opinion among the episcopacy on the matter and to exert some influence on one of the Frankish royal courts. Added to them is a lengthy report probably written by the clergy of the archbishopric of Milan in Italy.[12] This report, addressed to the ambassadors of an unknown Frankish king about to depart for Constantinople, narrates how the pope declined to agree to Justinian's edict on the three chapters, because he thought they would infringe on orthodoxy. While Vigilius, it is said, did not want to call into doubt the Synod of Chalcedon without the consent of all (*sine consensu omnium*), imperial politicians, we are told, tried to manipulate not only the »Greek bishops«, as they are repeatedly called, but also the bishops from Africa and elsewhere in the West. The pope thus threatened all bishops who subscribed to the imperial edict with excommunication, and in so doing was supported by Datius, the archbishop of Milan, who was detained at Constantinople, too. This Datius addressed all »priests of the region to which

7 On the Three Chapters controversy as a Mediterranean conflict, see Chazelle and Cubitt (eds.), *Crisis of the Oikoumene*.

8 On Vigilius, see the classic narrative by Caspar, *Geschichte des Papsttums,* 229-286, and the introductory chapters in *The Acts*, transl. Price.

9 Eber, *Christologie und Kanonistik*.

10 Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Phill. 1743, written in the 8th century, most likely in Bourges, whereas the manuscript was kept in Reims in the 9th century. On the manuscript, see Eber *et al.*, Selection and presentation of texts.

11 *Vigiliusbriefe*, ed. Schwartz.

12 *Vigiliusbriefe*, ed. Schwartz, 18-25; transl. Price, 165-170.

my church belongs, that is, Gaul, Burgundy, Spain, Liguria, Aemilia and Venetia«[13] – which extended far beyond his see. As becomes obvious from this letter, in the absence of Vigilius and Datius, agents of the imperial side were gaining ground all over Italy, where they consecrated bishops »who would assent to novelties«, as their opponents criticized;[14] they even had a notary at hand, who could imitate the hand of the pope and forged letters written in his name. But they were working against the archbishop of Milan as well, who due to the Ostrogothic war and to the religious controversy, had been absent for some 15 years from his bishopric: meanwhile, so goes the complaint, »almost all the bishops he ordained, according to custom, have died, and a huge number of people are dying without baptism«.[15] From this, we get the impression that support for the archbishop was crumbling away. The authors' intention was to communicate this to the provinces of Gaul, where apparently some »heretical« envoys had also already been sent. A certain Anastasius, once dispatched to the pope in Constantinople by Archbishop Aurelian of Arles, who traditionally acted as the apostolic vicar in Gaul,[16] was detained in the imperial city and, it is said, was only permitted to leave the capital after swearing an oath that he would »induce the minds of all the Gallic bishops to condemn the chapters over which these scandals have arisen«.[17] But he also received a huge bribe and brought some papal letters to Gaul, while those letters pertaining to the dogmatic question and which declared the pope to be a champion of Chalcedonian orthodoxy were withheld. Now, the Frankish envoys addressed by this report were asked to communicate this as quickly as possible to the bishops of Provence in southern Gaul, who in turn should write to Pope Vigilius and Archbishop Datius in Constantinople that they »should refuse to accept any novelties«.[18] In addition, the Frankish ambassadors, when arriving at Constantinople, should also visit Datius, seek his liberation and, rather mysteriously, »ask him the reason why he has not returned to his own church for such a long time«.[19] Moreover, they should not get caught in a trap and be always on their guard, »because those who want the chapters to be condemned pretend that they are defending the catholic faith and share the respect of all of us for the Council of Chalcedon«.[20]

This unique document raises at least two important questions: First, what was the actual idea behind circulating such a letter in Gaul? And second, what was the aim of the Frankish embassy heading for Constantinople that the authors of the letter were trying to influence?

While the report seemingly supports the position of both Vigilius and Datius, it also makes clear that people were no longer sure what the position of the pope with regard to the three chapters actually was. As it seems, the archbishop of Arles, who had acted as papal vicar

13 *Vigiliusbriefe*, ed. Schwartz, 21; transl. Price, 168.
14 *Vigiliusbriefe*, ed. Schwartz, 22-23; transl. Price, 169.
15 *Vigiliusbriefe*, ed. Schwartz, 24; transl. Price, 169.
16 Langgärtner, *Die Gallienpolitik*, 149-165.
17 *Vigiliusbriefe*, ed. Schwartz, 23-24; transl. Price, 169.
18 *Vigiliusbriefe*, ed. Schwartz, 24; transl. Price, 169.
19 *Vigiliusbriefe*, ed. Schwartz, 24; transl. Price, 169.
20 *Vigiliusbriefe*, ed. Schwartz, 24; transl. Price, 169-170.

since the fifth century and whose assistance Vigilius had only sought in April 550,[21] appeared not to be reliable anymore – at least for the authors of this letter. They wanted the Frankish ambassadors to admonish the bishops of Provence to get in touch with the pope directly and remind him not to accept any novelties. They sought to drag one of the Frankish kingdoms into the inner conflicts within the North Italian and Gallic clergy,[22] obviously hoping that with the help of the Franks, a certain pressure could be exerted in Constantinople – perhaps less on the emperor than on the pope and the archbishop of Milan. Since the Gallic bishops did not have an independent right to participate in an ecumenical council, the Frankish embassy obviously was not primarily concerned with the three chapters, and for this reason we may speculate a little about the Frankish envoys' intentions. We know from Procopius of Caesarea that a Frankish embassy was sent to Constantinople around this time that included a group of Angles who had been settled in Gaul with Frankish consent and now served to back a Frankish claim of ruling over Britain.[23] As has been shown by Ian Wood, this is not the only piece of evidence from the sixth century that points to a Frankish claim of hegemony over parts of Britain.[24]

But this is only one possible explanation. Another derives from the fact that we have some letters showing the Frankish king Childebert I of Paris acting on good terms with Justinian and also cooperating with the archbishop of Arles as the papal vicar. Moreover, Childebert had assembled a Gallic synod in Orléans in 549 which seems to have dealt with the Three-Chapters controversy.[25] The letter quoted may have actually been addressed to the Austrasian king Theudobald, who was in conflict with East Roman troops in northern Italy at exactly that time and should get involved.[26]

Nonetheless, this story of rumors, information flow, censorship and propaganda gives an interesting insight into the mingling of political and religious interests in the communication on the three chapters and how Frankish support was regarded as vital by both sides of the conflict. In 553, after the defeat of the Ostrogothic troops, the fifth ecumenical council was assembled at Constantinople and condemned the three chapters. Shortly afterwards, Pope Vigilius eventually agreed to this condemnation – to the horror of many Western bishops from Italy, Dalmatia, North Africa and Gaul.

21 See above, n. 16.

22 Wood, Franks and papal theology.

23 Procopius, *History of the Wars* VIII/20, transl. Dewing, 6-10; on this passage, see Thompson, Procopius on Brittia and Brittannia; Jones, *End of Roman Britain*, 54.

24 Wood, *Merovingians and the North Sea*, 12-19; Wood, Frankish hegemony over England, 235.

25 Cf. Stüber, Fifth Council of Orleans; Eber, *Christologie und Kanonistik*, 97-102.

26 On Austrasian policy with regard to Italy at this time, see Collins, Theodebert I.

The Lateran Council of 649 CE and the Western Image of the Emperor Heraclius in the Frankish Chronicle of Fredegar

My second, much shorter case leads us straight into the seventh century with its notoriously difficult sources.[27] It comes from the Frankish chronicle of Fredegar, which was probably written in around 660 and provides one of the earliest accounts of the Arab expansion.[28] Fredegar gives a general portrait of the emperor Heraclius and his personal qualities that culminates in the emperor's interest in astrology, which is crucial for understanding Fredegar's narrative. Heraclius received a horoscope predicting that his empire would be »laid waste by a circumcised people«. According to Fredegar, Heraclius thus ordered that all Jews be baptized and even induced the Frankish king Dagobert I to have his order carried out in Gaul. As it turns out, it was not the Jews but the Saracens to whom the horoscope was actually referring, since they also practiced circumcision. Following up, the author describes the battle of Yarmuk fought between Roman and Saracen troops, in which the Romans were defeated. Heraclius became desperate about this, and »the unhappy king pursued the heresy of Eutyches, abandoned the Christian faith and married his sister's daughter. He finished his days in agony, tormented with fever«.[29] Heresy, apostasy and incest committed by one single emperor, this is pretty much bad news within one sentence. But it seems clear that by focusing on Heraclius's end and death, Fredegar sought to develop a master narrative that explained why the emperor suffered such a disastrous defeat which led to the Arabs' capture of Jerusalem, and which could also be linked to his criticism of the Frankish king Dagobert, who suffered a disastrous defeat by the Slavs.[30] The story of the horoscope relating to Heraclius and the circumcised nations has come down to us in some 30 versions, most of which can be found in or be linked to Arab sources which situate it in Jerusalem.[31] However, by far the earliest one is that given by Fredegar from around 660, who cannot have become aware of it from a written Arabic source. For this reason, it seems likely that the story was indeed first invented in the Near East, not within a Muslim context but rather in a milieu hostile to Heraclius and also distant to the practice of circumcision. This suggests a Near Eastern Christian context, but how could Fredegar, writing in distant Gaul, take notice of this narrative tradition?

A possible answer is given by Heraclius' alleged adherence to the »heresy of Eutyches«.[32] This was one of the main charges put forward against Heraclius at the Lateran Council of 649, which met in Rome without imperial authorization to brand Monothelitism as an imperial heresy.[33] So tracing back Fredegar's channels of information somehow leads us to Rome.

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27 Invaluable guides to the source material are: Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*; Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis*.

28 On Fredegar, see in particular Fischer, Rewriting History.

29 Fredegar, *Chronicon* IV, ed. Krusch, 65-66; trans. Wallace-Hadrill, 53-55 (altered).

30 Esders, Herakleios, Dagobert und die „beschnittenen Völker».

31 Cf. Anthony, *Muhammad and the Empires of Faith*, 190-201.

32 See Esders, The prophesied rule.

33 Winkelmann, *Der monenergetisch-monotheletische Streit*, on the sources; on the theological background, see Lange, *Mia Energeia*.

As has been shown by Phil Booth, the Lateran Council brought about a remarkable shift in the definition and geographical setting of religious groups within the Roman Empire and beyond.[34] Theologians who were critical of Monothelitism, such as Maximus Confessor, exerted a profound influence on the debates held in 649, which ultimately led to the condemnation of both Heraclius' *Ekthesis* and Constans II's *Typos*. Interestingly, in the acts of the council's second session a lengthy report is given by Stephen of Dora, a pupil of the patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem, who had been appointed as papal vicar for Palestine following the Arab conquest and Sophronius' death in 638.[35] At the Lateran Council, this Stephen of Dora extensively narrates how the Monothelites, headed by Bishop Sergius of Joppa, took advantage of the situation following the Arab conquest and ordained several Monothelite bishops within the vacant see of Jerusalem.[36] Confronted with this situation, the Chalcedonian bishops and monks from Palestine saw no other choice than to acknowledge the primacy of Rome.[37]

Since Sophronius wrote a treatise on circumcision[38] and some contemporaries explained the Arab conquest as punishment for Heraclius' and Constans' religious policies[39] and also charged the Jews with supporting the Arabs in the conquest, the mingling of these hostile traditions towards Heraclius could indeed have happened at the Lateran Council in Rome, from where it most likely spread to Gaul.[40] We have evidence from a letter by Pope Martin I to the bishop Amandus of Maastricht in which the pope communicated to the Frankish bishop the decisions of the Lateran council.[41] Indeed, both Fredegar and Amandus can somehow be linked to the Columbanian network centered around the monastery of Luxeuil,[42] as Fredegar quotes Jonas of Bobbio's *Life of Columbanus* extensively in his chronicle.[43] Moreover, evidence suggests that the Lateran Synod of 649 was controversially discussed both in Merovingian Gaul and Visigothic Spain.[44]

So this, my second case, again shows how closely channels of information were linked – this time in forming a coalition that was very critical towards the Heraclian dynasty and its religious policy. And while the emperor Constans II would proceed harshly against Pope Martin and Maximus confessor following the Lateran Council, it was their position that found a lasting expression in Frankish historiography.[45]

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34 Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 273-295.

35 Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 295-296.

36 *Concilium Lateranense a. 649 celebratum*, ed. Riedinger, 38-46; *Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649,* transl. Price, 148.

37 Booth, *Crisis of Empire,* 273-274.

38 Duffy, New fragments.

39 Kaegi, Initial Byzantine reactions.

40 On the chronicle's sources, see Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*, 46-55.

41 *Concilium Lateranense a. 649 celebratum*, ed. Riedinger, 422-424; *Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649,* transl. Price, 408-412. On the letter, see Scheibelreiter, Griechisches – lateinisches – fränkisches Christentum; Riedinger, Wer hat den Brief, 327-338; *Acts of the Lateran Synod of 649*, transl. Price, 391-393.

42 Fox, *Power and Religion*, 118-132; on Amandus, see also Esders, Nationes quam plures conquiri.

43 Fredegar, *Chronicon* IV.36, ed. Krusch, 134-138.

44 Cf. Esders, Chindasvinth; Lin, Merovingian kingdoms.

45 Sarti, Digression.

Diplomacy and Negotiations on the Eve of the 6th Ecumenical Council 680/681 CE

My last case study deals with the final phase of the Monothelite controversy that eventually came to be settled by the 6th Ecumenical Council held in Constantinople in 680/681.[46] It starts from a report given by the 9th-century Byzantine historian Theophanes the Confessor, who for his chronicle drew on a variety of sources of different origin, Eastern as well as Western.[47] His account of the ecumenical council is embedded within a longer narrative which starts from East Roman military success in the Near East in the year 677 to the effect that the caliph Muawiyah realized »that the Roman Empire was guarded by God« and thus agreed to conclude a peace treaty;[48] following up on this, Theophanes reports on a settlement between the emperor Constantine IV and the Bulgars arranged in 680, and finally arrives at the Council of Constantinople.[49] This is, of course, a teleological narrative, since Theophanes sees all this worked out by a heavenly plan to achieve religious unity, which makes him even downplay a defeat Constantine suffered by the Bulgars and a tribute paid to them to secure peace. This sounds like an official statement and is confirmed by the conciliar acts, for when a priest from Syria mentioned the defeat by the Bulgars at the council, he was immediately shouted down, excommunicated and thrown out, because the bishops thought that he was using the Bulgars as an argument against a restoration of Chalcedonianism.

In Theophanes' »ecumenical« account, the following passage is particularly important:

> When the inhabitants of the West had learnt of this, namely the Chagan of the Avars as well as the kings, chieftains, and *castaldi* who lived beyond them, and the princes of the western nations [ὅ τε Χαγάνος τῶν Ἀβάρων καὶ οἱ ἐπέκεινα ῥῆγες ἔξαρχοί τε καὶ κάσταλδοι καὶ οἱ ἐξοχώτατοι τῶν πρὸς τὴν δύσιν ἐθνῶν], they sent ambassadors and gifts to the emperor, requesting that peace and friendship should be confirmed with them. The emperor acceded to their demands and ratified an imperial peace [δεσποτικὴν εἰρήνην] with them also. Thus, great security prevailed in both East and West.[50]

To his readers, Theophanes conveys the impression that on the eve of the ecumenical council »international relations« became restored, enforced by imperial peace treaties. His mentioning of *castaldi* clearly points to the Lombards here (and to a Western source), with whom Constantine concluded a peace treaty acknowledging their position in Italy in general terms for the first time.[51]

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46 *Concilium Universale Constantinopolitanum Tertium*, ed. Riedinger. On the acts, see Wessel, Politics of text and tradition.

47 Theophanes, Chronicle AM 6169 (677/678) and AM 6171 (678/679), *Theophanis Chronographia* 2, ed. De Boor, 355-359; transl. Mango and Scott, 495-500. On Theophanes' sources, see most recently Conterno, *La »descrizione dei tempi«*.

48 Theophanes, Chronicle AM 6169 (677/678) and AM 6171 (678/679), *Theophanis Chronographia* 2, ed. De Boor, 355-359; transl. Mango and Scott, 495-500.

49 Theophanes, Chronicle AM 6169 (677/678) and AM 6171 (678/679), *Theophanis Chronographia* 2, ed. De Boor, 355-359; transl. Mango and Scott, 495-500. See also Ziemann, *Vom Wandervolk zur Großmacht*, 161-163.

50 Theophanes, Chronicle AM 6169 (677/678) and AM 6171 (678/679), *Theophanis Chronographia* 2, ed. De Boor, 355-359; transl. Mango and Scott, 495-500. On this passage and the following, see Esders, Great security prevailed.

51 Pohl, *Awaren*, 278.

In later Western tradition Pope Agatho is held responsible for having negotiated the treaty between the empire and the Lombards, and this may be supported by further evidence.[52] But it is also interesting to see that according to Theophanes, in addition to the Lombards, other Western rulers (ῥῆγες) also concluded peace treaties with Constantinople, so we may suspect that the Franks or their mayors and other Western kingdoms may have been involved in this, too. Constantine IV had wanted to restore dogmatic unity from the beginning of his reign, but only his military success against the Arabs enabled him to negotiate the terms of a revocation of Monothelitism with the pope at an ecumenical council.[53] In 679 Pope Agatho ordered provincial councils to be held for preparing a joint Western statement on this issue, which should be coordinated at a Lateran council in Rome and instruct the ecumenical council to be assembled at Constantinople in late 680.[54] Parts of the Lateran proceedings are preserved for us, since they were read aloud at Constantinople and thus were included in the acts of the ecumenical council. In his address, Pope Agatho apologized for his belated writing to Constantinople by referring to the huge size of his patriarchate, which made it difficult to assemble a general council:

> [A] great number of us [*numerosa multitude nostrorum*] are spread over a vast extent of country even to the sea coast [*usque ad oceani regiones*], and the length of their journey necessarily took much time. Moreover we were in hopes of being able to join to our humility our fellow-servant and brother bishop, Theodore, the archbishop and philosopher of the great island of Britain, with others who have been kept there even till to-day; and to add to these diverse bishops of this council who have their sees in different regions, that our humble suggestion might proceed from a council of wide-spread influence [*a generalitate totius concilii*], lest if only a part were cognizant of what was being done, it might escape the notice of a part; and especially because among the peoples [*in medio gentium*], as the Longobards, and the Sclavi, as also the Franks, the Gauls [*Galli*], the Goths, and the Britains, there are known to be very many of our fellow-servants [*confamuli nostri*] who do not cease curiously to enquire on the subject, that they may know what is being done in the cause of the Apostolic faith: who as they can be of advantage so long as they hold the true faith with us, and think in unison with us [*dum in consonantia fidei nobiscum tenentur nobisque concorditer sentiunt*], so are they found troublesome and contrary, if (which may God forbid !) they stumble at any article of the faith. But we, although most humble, yet strive with all our might that the commonwealth of your Christian empire may be shown to be more sublime than all the nations [*christiani vestri imperii res publica … omnium gentium sublimior esse monstretur*], for in it has been rounded the See of Blessed Peter, the prince of the Apostles, by the authority of which all Christian nations venerate and worship with us [*omnes Christianae nobiscum nationes*], through the reverence of the blessed Apostle Peter himself.[55]

52 See Hartmann, *Geschichte Italiens im Mittelalter*, 272 and 280.

53 On the background, see Kaplony, *Konstantinopel und Damaskus*.

54 See Levison, Akten der römischen Synode.

55 *Concilium Universale Constaninopolitanum Tertium*, 2, ed. Riedinger, 134; transl. Percival, 352-353 (altered).

That the Western patriarchate was composed from among the Lombards, Slavs, Franks, Gauls (!), Goths and Britains should, of course also add weight to his argument that all these skeptical and quarrelsome Western peoples agreed with Rome in a deep »harmony of faith«, a *consonantia fidei*. Accordingly, no consensus with them could be achieved without St. Peter in Rome. The papacy, says Agatho, therefore strives with all might »that the commonwealth of your Christian empire may be shown to be more sublime than all the nations«.[56] Self-consciously, the pope sees himself as the most important factor to make the Western »nations« think of themselves as still being part of the Roman Empire.[57]

We get an impression of what this could mean when looking at the list of subscriptions attached to the joint statement. Here we find mostly Italian bishops, among them 16 coming from the North Italian sees of the Lombard kingdom, which had now become reintegrated in ecclesiastical terms, including the archbishops of Aquileia and Milan. In addition, there were three representatives titled »legate of the synod for the provinces of Gaul« (*legatus per Galliarum provincias*). These were Bishop Deodatus of Toul, Archbishop Felix of Arles and the deacon Taurinus of Toulon.[58] While the latter two had obviously been sent by the Neustro-Burgundian mayor of the palace of Ebroin to Rome, Deodatus of Toul had come from the Austrasian court, along with Bishop Wilfrid of York, who subscribed as the »legate of the synod for *Britannia*«.[59] Deodatus and Wilfrid had actually come to Rome the year before to negotiate on the status of the episcopal see of York,[60] while Theodore of Canterbury, mentioned in the letter of Pope Agatho, came to Rome after having assembled a synod at Hatfield to prepare his church's statement on Monothelitism.[61]

The subscriptions to the Lateran council also document the split of the Merovingian episcopate, which at this time became subordinated to the kingdoms of Austrasia and Neustro-Burgundia respectively. The Austrasian branch with Deodatus of Toul and its Anglo-Saxon associate Wilfrid of York also had Lombard connections. King Perctarit, who had been in Britain in exile, welcomed Wilfrid in Pavia in 679, when he was on his way to Rome, the year before the Lombard kingdom was legally acknowledged by Constantinople for the first time.[62] Perctarit was a Catholic and allowed a provincial synod to take place in Milan in 679 or 680, and consequently, among the 16 bishops from the Lombard kingdom that took part in the Roman synod of 680, we find Archbishop Mansuetus of Milan subscribing right after the delegates from Gaul.[63]

56 *Concilium Universale Constaninopolitanum Tertium*, 2, ed. Riedinger, 134; transl. Percival, 352-353 (altered).

57 On the concept of the barbarian *regna* as »kingdoms of the Empire«, see above n. 4.

58 *Concilium Universale Constantinopolitanum Tertium*, 2, nos. 48, 51 and 54, ed. Riedinger, 149.

59 *Concilium Universale Constantinopolitanum Tertium*, 2, no. 48, ed. Riedinger, 149.

60 See Wood, Continental journeys, 208-210; Ó Carragáin and Thacker, Wilfrid in Rome, 222-225.

61 On the conflict between Theodore of Canterbury and Wilfrid of York and on the synod of Hatfield (679), see Chadwick, Monothelete controversy, 92-93.

62 Christou, *Byzanz und die Langobarden*, 221-225. On Perctarit, see also Hartmann, *Geschichte Italiens im Mittelalter*, 256; Jarnut, *Geschichte der Langobarden*, 62-63.

63 *Concilium Universale Constantinopolitanum Tertium*, 2, no. 53, ed. Riedinger, 149.

We have no evidence for Spanish bishops being in Rome at this time, but it may be added that in Visigothic Spain in the same year 680, King Wamba was deposed and replaced by Ervig, who was the son of a man called Artabasdos, an immigrant from Constantinople, who once had married a niece of the Visigothic king Chindasvinth.[64] Ervig's predecessor, Wamba, and Constantine IV may have previously concluded a treaty,[65] but several papal letters by Leo II and Benedict II illustrate how the Visigothic episcopate, backed by King Ervig, adapted the ecumenical council's resolutions in 684.[66]

The Lombard historian Paul the Deacon would later describe how during the council at Constantinople innumerable spider's webs fell from the ceiling – a God-given miracle to indicate the end of all heretical irritations.[67] Our extant sources show unanimously that in the years 679/680, the constellation of Mediterranean politics had changed completely, politically as well as in religious terms. What is striking is the dynamics and the sudden importance attributed to ecclesiastical authority in Rome in the preparation and implementation of the council's decisions in the West, which should by no means be regarded as self-evident. For while Constantine IV promulgated the decrees of the council in all parts of the Roman Empire by imperial edict, it was by treaties as well as by papal intervention that the Western rulers came to accept the council's decrees for their churches. What we can observe here is some sort of »contractualization« in the process of implementing imperial religious policy.

To conclude with some more general observations. Typical for most empires, and particularly for the Roman one, is a high mobility of its functional elites – soldiers, administrators, jurists, long-distance traders, many of whom operated to some extent at an empire-wide level. The year 476 and the emergence of barbarian kingdoms introduced a process which gradually led to a regionalization of most secular elites in the West. Against this background, it is interesting to see how ecclesiastical elites continued to see the Roman Empire as a reference system that determined their actions, at least to some extent – that is, with regard to orthodoxy. After the fall of the Western Empire, Mediterranean communication related to the ecumenical councils of 553 and 680/81 and the Lateran Council of 649, both official and unofficial, was remarkably intense. As one would expect, our ecclesiastical sources tell us a lot about this and the involvement of the higher clergy. More difficult to grasp are some tiny bits of evidence which indicate how these negotiations were accompanied or even made possible by political arrangements made at the same time.

I treated the church basically as a factor of cohesion, though this has been disputed from Edward Gibbon onward, and such a statement certainly needs much more qualification and specification, for it posed a structural problem that the Roman Empire had inherited and incorporated such diverse civilizations that one could actually expect that this would also have a profound impact on conflicting interpretations of the Christian dogma. And for this

64 Chronicle of Alfons III, 2, ed. Gil Fernández *et al.*, 114.

65 Vallejo Girvés, *Hispania y Bizancio*, 418-420.

66 Vallejo Girvés, *Hispania y Bizancio*, 420-427.

67 Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum* VI, 4, eds. Bethmann and Waitz, 165-166 (also emphasizing the role of Mansuetus of Milan). On Paulus' treatment of religious affairs, see Pohl, Heresy in Secundus.

reason it would be one-sided to see the church only as a factor in establishing Mediterranean cohesion – the Lateran council attests to the ambiguity that it could produce the opposite effect, some sort of inner war that would also lend support to a usurpation, as we see in North Africa shortly before the Lateran Council of 649, but of course already before this in the issue of Arianism for instance.

So, the impact of the Christian religion and church on cohesion was ambivalent, with the papacy trying to tie together the kingdoms belonging to its patriarchate. In addition, it is also important to see what impact politics and warfare had on religiously denominated groups in the seventh century. The Persian and Arab invasions were certainly a catalyst here. People in the West reacted sensitively when Jerusalem and the Holy land came first under Persian and then under Arab control. At almost exactly the same time, we observe Jews, another group having the potential to operate on a wider scale, being prosecuted and sometimes forcefully converted in various parts of the Mediterranean, as is reflected in the narrative told by Fredegar.

No doubt, the seventh century was a particular distempered period that even in the far West enabled people to become aware that Christianity, besides offering valuable local identification, also by tradition entailed certain »global« aspects. These could sometimes be linked to the papacy in dogmatic terms and in a very essential way, not only in apocalyptical terms, also to the existence of the Roman Empire. It is important to keep this in mind when confronted with master narratives such as »the parting of ways« or »the rise of the papacy«.[68] For we can see the potential and relevance of this cohesion even in later periods when the Roman Empire and »the Mediterranean« had long ceased to be congruent.[69] Still, it would depend on certain preconditions of a political nature whether this potential of Mediterranean connectivity was not only present in apocalyptical texts but could be activated at certain times.

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68 For a skeptical – and not very convincing – reassessment, see Meier and Patzold, Qualifying Mediterranean connectivity.

69 For the period shortly before and after 700, see now Esders, Ökumenisches Kirchenrecht.

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Abbreviations

MGH SS = Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores

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