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The Emperor at the Council. Imperial Interventions in Late Antique Church Councils in Literary Sources and Documentary Records

Abstract: This paper examines the modes of imperial interactions with Church councils, focusing on the emperor's participation in episcopal meetings and its representation in late antique sources, both literary and documentary. The author argues that the availability and strategic dissemination of conciliar records could affect, for better or worse, the understanding of the imperial religious policy and attitude towards Church institutions. This is most clearly illustrated by Marcian's behaviour at Chalcedon, and by the active steps he took to produce an official and imperially endorsed edition of the conciliar acts. The significance of Marcian's initiatives emerges more clearly when placed in the context of developing practices with respect to conciliar procedure (and the imperial role therein) and the circulation of conciliar information. After considering possible precedents in both these fields, the article reconstructs the early circulation and reception of the Chalcedonian acts, focusing particularly on the records of the sixth session, which was presided by the emperor himself. The author discusses the role played by the imperial initiative at the council and in its aftermath, and how it contributed to shape the reception of Marcian's image as a Christian ruler.

On 25 October 451, Emperor Marcian (450 – 457) appeared before the bishops assembled at the council of Chalcedon. He was accompanied by Empress Pulcheria, the highest state officials and 28 members of the senate, besides an unspecified number of *comites* and *tribuni et notarii*. Conciliar records report the opening speech delivered by the emperor, his actions as the president of this conciliar session – the sixth – at which a new definition of faith was officially presented and approved, and his interlocutions with the bishops. The Greek and Latin acts of Chalcedon provide thus the first official documentary account of an emperor's participation in a Church synod. As a matter of fact, the very nature of our main primary source on the episode is no less remarkable than the event itself.

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As we shall see, the role admittedly played by the imperial initiative in the issuing of an official edition of conciliar acts, in collaboration with the bishop of Constantinople Anatolius,[1] is unprecedented. In this view, it may be legitimate to ask whether Marcian's involvement hints at an emerging imperial awareness of the importance of conciliar documents as means of diplomatic communication and religious policy. Moreover, it is worth noticing that the records of the sixth session of the Chalcedonian council were transmitted not only as part of the complete acts, but also in an independent form: they were thus copied, excerpted and reused in documentary and canonical collections. The dogmatic significance of the business treated at this session and the imperial participation therein provide some obvious reasons for the interest aroused by this specific section of the Chalcedonian acts. I shall argue that the modes of dissemination of documentary records might also have favoured such a selective attention.

To better assess the significance and impact of Marcian's action in the realm of conciliar procedure and conciliar communication it is necessary to put it in its historical context. To this end, I will first consider the attitude towards Church synodal practices displayed by Marcian's predecessors in the 4th and 5th centuries. In doing so I will point to possible precedents of imperial intervention in ecclesiastical gatherings and to the sources which inform us about them. Then, I will address the question of the circulation and accessibility of minutes and synodal documents over the same period, considering their possible uses and potential audiences. This will help to shed light on the function of these texts as vehicles of targeted communication. In the light of these considerations, I will re-examine the records of the sixth session of Chalcedon, their initial circulation and their subsequent reception.

Emperor among Priests: Imperial Interactions with Church Synods (325 – 451 CE)

Since the reign of Constantine, the right to summon general Church councils had come to fall among undisputed imperial prerogatives.[2] As the supreme arbiter of justice and guarantor of order, the emperor was acknowledged the authority to intervene in religious quarrels, with the aim to facilitate their settlements and ensure the maintenance of social peace. The disruptive potential of conflicts within the Church and the threat posed by religious violence to public order and political stability provided compelling reasons for pursuing religious unity. On the other hand, the conviction that offering an unanimous cult to the Christian God would propitiate the welfare of the state also led to consider the suppression of religious dissent a

1 R. Price, M. Gaddis, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (Liverpool 2005), I, 79 – 83.

2 F. Dvornik, "Emperors, Popes and General Councils", *DOP* 6 (1951), 3 – 23: 11 – 12.

duty of the Christian ruler.[3] Yet, despite these widely accepted assumptions, the participation of Roman emperors in episcopal gatherings was neither usual nor frequent in late antiquity.

Several reasons may account for this. As a matter of fact, the summoning of imperially sponsored Church councils was just one possible form of imperial intervention in ecclesiastical affairs. Effective alternatives existed, notably the issuing of legislation in favour of an ecclesiastical party or doctrinal stance – without this being preceded by conciliar deliberations and representing their legal enforcement. The legislation of Theodosius I on orthodox belief and the rights over the churches, issued in the years 380 – 381, has been regarded as an example of such a policy. However, the importance of showing deference to ecclesiastical self-regulation and facilitate religious concord often made the recourse to conciliar practice highly desirable, as Theodosius's own convocation of a general council in 381 demonstrates.[4]

But while the summoning of an empire-wide Church council was usually welcomed as a commendable decision, the emperor's own participation therein was a risky move, which could raise heated criticism. Even though they stood above the common faithful for their rank and public responsibilities, Roman rulers were laymen, not members of the clergy.[5] Thus, depending on circumstances and the issues at hand, they could choose to interact with Church synods through different channels, which implied varying degrees of personal involvement and visibility. Imperial letters addressed to conciliar assemblies; the appointment of lay officials to check the unfolding of proceedings (and promote the imperial agenda);[6] private meetings with leading bishops and audiences with conciliar delegations; ceremonial appearances at conciliar sessions: all these approaches could be used and blended to influence the outcome of episcopal debates.

The Constantinian dynasty, which was responsible for the legal acceptance of Christianity, stands out for the significant involvement of its members in religious disputes, particularly Constantine the Great and Constantius II. Constantine set a foundational example by officiating at the opening ceremony of the great council in Nicaea which became later known as the first ecumenical. Eusebius of Caesarea, our principal source on the event, remembers with awe the emperor's entry in the hall where the council fathers were assembled, as well as his speech, pronounced

3 H. Drake, "Speaking of Power: Christian Redefinition of the Imperial Role in the Fourth Century" in J. Wienand (ed.), *Contested Monarchy. Integrating the Roman Empire in the Fourth Century AD* (Oxford 2015), 291 – 308. In the same volume, see also S. Diefenbach, "A Vain Quest for Unity. Creeds and Political (Dis)Integration in the Reign of Constantius II", 353 – 378, and J. Hahn, "The Challenge of Religious Violence. Imperial Ideology and Policy in the Fourth Century", 379 – 404.

4 E. D. Hunt, "Imperial Law or Councils of the Church? Theodosius I and the Imposition of Doctrinal Uniformity", in K. Cooper, J. Gregory (eds.), *Discipline and Diversity* (Woodbridge 2007), 57 – 68.

5 Drake, "Speaking of Power", 303 – 304.

6 R. Janin, "Rôle des commissaires impériaux byzantins dans les conciles", *REB* 18 (1960), 97 – 108; R. Price, "Presidency and Procedure at the Early Ecumenical Councils", *AHC* 41/2 (2009), 241 – 274, 242 – 250.

in Latin and translated into Greek by an interpreter.[7] According to T. D. Barnes, Constantine could have been present also at later Church councils, convoked in Nicomedia (winter 327/328) and Constantinople (336).[8] In fact, sources on these events are rather vague. While the physical proximity of Constantine in these localities and his care for Church's affairs are beyond doubts, the same cannot be said about his personal attendance at conciliar sessions.[9]

Similar hesitations arise when we consider Constantius' engagement in ecclesiastical controversies. In 341, Constantius was certainly present at the consecration of the great church founded in Antioch by his father, and may have appeared at the council summoned for the occasion.[10] We also know that he was in Sirmium when imperially sponsored councils were held there in 351, 357, 358 and 359.[11] If we are to believe Sozomen, Constantius participated in the promulgation of the definitions of faith produced on those occasions.[12] This is confirmed at least in the case of the fourth formula, issued in Sirmium in 359. The *incipit* of the text explicitly mentions imperial attendance: *The catholic faith has been expounded in the presence of our lord the most religious and victorious Constantius perpetual Augustus in the consulate of Flavius Eusebius and Hypatius clarissimi [viri], in Sirmium on the eleventh of the Kalends of June* [22 May 359].[13] In other instances, however, the emperor might have

7 Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 3.10 – 14; T. D. Barnes, "Emperors and Bishops, A.D. 324 – 344. Some Problems", *AJAH* 3 (1978), 53 – 75: 56 – 57.

8 Barnes, "Emperors and Bishops", 60 – 61 and 64 – 65; see also Id., *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge, Mass. 1982), 77, 80 and *Athanasius and Constantius. Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge, Mass. 1993), 170.

9 Barnes infers Constantine's presence at the council of Antioch 328 from Euseb., *Vit. Const.* 3.23. Eusebius reports that, since conflicts persisted among Egyptian bishops after the council of Nicaea, Constantine summoned them again, and acted as a mediator; no explicit information on the location of the meeting and its proceedings are provided. As regards the council of Constantinople 336, Barnes relies again on Eusebius (*Vit. Const.* 4.46). Yet, this text only tells that, after attending the consecration of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, Eusebius hastened to Constantinople for the celebration of Constantine's *tricennalia*. There, he pronounced a eulogy in the presence of the emperor and attended a banquet offered to the bishops.

10 The so-called council *in encaeniis:* Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* II, 8; Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* III, 5.

11 According to Barnes, Constantius "certainly attended the council of Sirmium in 351" (*Athanasius and Constantius*, 171). J. N. D. Kelly assumes that the creeds of 357 and 359 were "drawn up in the emperor's presence" (*Early Christian Creeds* [London – New York 1972], 285). R.P.C. Hanson thinks that Constantius was in Sirmium in 351 (*The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* [Edinburgh 1988], 325 – 329) but attended only the synods of 358 and 359 (*ibid.*, 343 – 347, 357 – 371). Diefenbach ("A Vain Quest", 358, n. 22) regards Constantius' presence at Sirmium in 357 as "far from certain."

12 *Hist. eccl.* IV, 12: Καὶ τὰ μεν ὧδε περὶ τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ τοῦ βασιλέως παρόντος ἔδοξεν. This comment might refer only to the last creeds evoked, i. e. the dated creed of 359.

13 Ath., *Syn.* 8.3: Ἐξετέθη ἡ πίστις ἡ καθολικὴ ἐπὶ παρουσίᾳ τοῦ δεσπότου ἡμῶν τοῦ εὐσεβεστάτου καὶ καλλινίκου βασιλέως Κωνσταντίου Αὐγούστου τοῦ αἰωνίου Σεβαστοῦ ὑπατείᾳ Φλαυίων Εὐσεβίου καὶ Ὑπατίου τῶν λαμπροτάτων ἐν Σιρμίῳ τῇ πρὸ ια′ καλανδῶν Ἰουνίων. See also Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* II, 37.18.

been "close at hand to keep a watchful eye on the proceedings",[14] without stepping in personally in the conciliar arena.

The latter line of conduct was most often adopted when matters of ecclesiastical discipline were under scrutiny. Though the emperor's arbitration was regularly sought after, Constantine and his heirs generally avoided to act as judges of bishops.[15] They preferred to refer such cases to councils of peers, on which they could exert influence in a less conspicuous way. Despite the account of Athanasius, who depicts the Western bishops as boldly confronting the emperor,[16] Constantius' actual attendance at the council of Milan, summoned in 355 to confirm Athanasius' deposition and get approval for the first Sirmian formula, is far from sure. He might well have acted through his agents, the bishops Ursacius of Singidunum and Valens of Mursa, communicating his wishes in writing when consulted;[17] or he could have met recalcitrant bishops in private audiences, as he later did with Liberius of Rome.[18] Besides, Constantius could rely on well-established bureaucratic practices to get detailed information about episcopal discussions.[19] We know, for instance, that the debate between the heretic bishop Photinus, deposed at Sirmium in 351, and Basil of Ancyra was recorded by stenographers, and a copy of the minutes was forwarded to the emperor.[20] According to Theodoretus of Cyrrhus, stenographic records were made at Constantius' bidding also during the doctrinal discussions held at a later synod in Antioch (361).[21]

When solicited to sanction alleged episcopal misconduct, the emperors of the Theodosian dynasty also tended to adopt a "reactive" attitude and a policy of minimal intervention in matters of Church discipline. When, in 418, the arbitration of Honorius was requested on a disputed papal election, the emperor summoned a council in Ravenna. According to a rescript addressed to the *praefectus urbi*, the

14 Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 117, with reference to the council of Milan (355).

15 Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 172.

16 Ath., *Hist. Ar.* 33.5–34. 2; Theodoretus, *Hist. eccl.* II, 15.3.

17 Sulpicius Severus, *Chron.* 39.3–6. Socrates (*Hist. eccl.* II, 36.2–37.1) and Sozomen (*Hist. eccl.* IV, 9.1–5) present the Eastern bishops acting as spokesmen of the emperor opposing Western colleagues. Brennecke, *Hilarius*, 164–192, and Hanson, *Search*, 332–334.

18 The alleged *verbatim* record of this talk is reported by Theodoretus, *Hist. eccl.* II, 15.10–16.27.

19 On the increasing importance and rank of imperial *notarii* in the 4th century and particularly during the reign of Constantius II, when a *schola notariorum* is mentioned for the first time, see H. C. Teitler, *Notarii and Exceptores: An Inquiry into Role and Significance of Shorthand Writers in the Imperial and Ecclesiastical Bureaucracy of the Roman Empire (from the Early Principate to c. 450 A.D.)*, Amsterdam 1985, 54–72.

20 Socrates (*Hist. eccl.* II 30.42–45) and Sozomen (*Hist. eccl.* IV, 6.14–15) place this debate after Photinus' deposition; most likely it preceded it. Epiphanius (*Haer.* 71.1.6–8) reports names and ranks of the shorthand writers: they were all laymen, with the only exception a deacon in the service of Basil of Ancyra.

21 Theodoretus, *Hist. eccl.* II, 32.6.

synod was expected to gather in the emperor's own presence (*nobis coram*).[22] If Honorius joined the bishops in session (a fact not confirmed by the available sources), he must have done so more as a guarantor of procedural fairness and an enforcer of episcopal decisions than as a judge in his own right. At a later date, on the occasion of the Nestorian and the Eutychian crises, Theodosius II consistently strove to abide by the principle of conciliar resolution of ecclesiastical quarrels, avoiding as much as possible heavy-handed interferences in synodal debates.[23] However, events at Ephesus 431 were to reveal the limits of such a policy when confronted with irreconcilable factional interests and ecclesiastical rivalries. In such circumstances, the importance of imperial opinion and Theodosius' own pivotal role emerged clearly. Yet, the emperor's reluctance to disavow the actions of the council, even when they were at odds with proper procedure and his own prescriptions, as well as his wavering and efforts to maintain a neutral position vis-à-vis the conflicting parties did not help to break the conciliar stalemate, nor to avoid an exacerbation of ecclesiastical rifts. The premises and shortcomings the imperial attitude stand out in a dialogue between Theodosius and Theodoretus of Cyrrhus, reported to have taken place at Chalcedon in fall 431, in the immediate aftermath of the first Ephesine council. Faced with the consequences of the schism stirred up by the council, which persisted after conversations in the presence of the ruler were engaged and resulted in the holding of rival services, Theodosius expressed his discontent to Theodoretus. Nevertheless, the emperor refrained from formally forbidding such a behaviour: "I cannot give orders to a bishop", he allegedly acknowledged.[24]

When it came to the definition of orthodox faith, the role of the emperor was less clear and more perilous. According to the Eusebian description, Constantine had acted at Nicaea as a moderator, striving to facilitate discussions and doctrinal agreement. The emperor's mediation could be discretely exercised also by organizing smaller meetings and reserved conversations, with a view to fostering religious compromise. Having a less official character than conciliar sessions proper, such talks allowed the ruler to push for an agreement (or a preferred party) without appearing to publicly usurp episcopal prerogatives. The hearing of synodal delegations organized by Constantius II upon the conclusion of the council of Seleucia (359) provides

22 *CA* 18. On the events: *CA* 14–37; R. Teja, "Un concilio imperiale in occidente: l'intervento dell'imperatore Onorio nello scisma romano del 418–419", in *I concili della cristianità occidentale*, 485–488.

23 On Theodosius' understanding and application of conciliar theory, see S. Wessel, "The Ecclesiastical Policy of Theodosius II", *AHC* 33 (2001), 285–308.

24 The conversation is reported by Theodoretus in a letter to Alexander of Hierapolis: ACO 1.1.7, 79–80 (Latin ACO 1.4, 69–70 and 1.5, 377–8). This episode is interpreted as a demonstration of Theodosius' respect for the boundaries between the secular imperial authority and the ecclesiastical sphere by Wessel, "The Ecclesiastical Policy", 296–297. T. Graumann has observed that the imperial behaviour at Ephesus 431 reflected "not autocratic decisiveness but a precarious balancing between competing interests"; despite his crucial role, Theodosius' initiatives were often frustrated and he "had to bow to public pressure and to realities shaped by others" (R. Price, T. Graumann, *The Council of Ephesus of 431. Documents and Proceedings*, Liverpool 2020, 24).

an example of such negotiations, and of the weight carried by the imperial opinion in their ultimate outcome.[25] A similar imperial attitude emerges on the occasion of the so-called "council of all heresies", summoned by Theodosius I in 383. Here the ruler apparently acted first as a convener and promoter of debates, then as the ultimate adjudicator of acceptable faith formulations submitted by the delegates of various Christian "sects".[26] Again in 431, after the first Ephesine council had failed to reach a solution to the Nestorian controversy, the bishops appealed to the emperor. Theodosius II granted a series of audiences to the rival factions at Chalcedon, in the presence of the consistory.[27] In this private setting the ruler had the chance to play a more active role, without appearing to overtly overstep the limits between secular and ecclesiastical sphere of authority. He became thus the target of attempts at persuasion from the rival parties, but his hesitations in taking side or imposing a settlement contributed to the ineffectiveness of the talks in finding a way out of the ecclesiastical crisis.

Occasionally late antique emperors also made the choice to show up personally at Church councils. In a general way, they appear to have done so at conciliar sessions which implied no real debate, and whose main business was the performance of ceremonial acts (as at Nicaea in 325) or the promulgation of doctrinal statements agreed in advance (as at Sirmium in 359 and at Chalcedon). By doing so, the ruler could pretend not to influence episcopal deliberations and to serve as a mere witness to official acts, to which he granted publicity and legal validity. Yet, this was never an inconsequential action. The indignation and mockeries of Athanasius about the fourth Sirmian formula remind us of the reactions such an imperial behavior could excite. A particular target of Athanasius' jibes was the formula's *inscriptio*, which reported the consular date and mentioned the attendance of the "perpetual Augustus", in the manner of ordinary civil acts.[28] Athanasius vehemently censored Constantius for his interference in synodal proceedings: "Who, seeing him at the head of his presumed bishops and presiding over the ecclesiastical trials would not conclude that this is 'the abomination that causes desolation' predicted by Daniel?"[29]

A century later, Marcian took good care to explain his presence at Chalcedon by the intention "to confirm the faith and not to exercise power of any kind." In his

25 Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* IV, 23.5–8.

26 Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* V, 10; Sozom., *Hist. eccl.* VII, 12. On this synod, see M. Wallraff, "Il 'sinodo di tutte le eresie' a Costantinopoli (383)", in *Vescovi e pastori in epoca teodosiana* (Rome 1997), 271–279, and the insightful analysis of T. Graumann, "The Synod of Constantinople, AD 383: History and Historiography", *Millennium* 7 (2010) 133–168.

27 ACO 1.1.7, 77; Latin versions in ACO 1.4, 65 and ACO 1.5, 374–5. Transl. in Price and Graumann, *The Council*, 567.

28 See above, p. 178, and Ath., *Syn.* 3–4.

29 Ath., *h. Ar.* 77: Τίς γὰρ βλέπων αὐτὸν ἐξάρχοντα τῶν νομιζομένων ἐπισκόπων καὶ προκαθήμενον τῶν ἐκκλησιαστικῶν κρίσεων οὐκ ἀκολούθως ἂν εἴποι τοῦτ᾽εἶναι τὸ διὰ τοῦ Δανιὴλ εἰρημένον "βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως";

opening speech at the sixth session of the Chalcedonian council, he explicitly appealed to the precedent set by "the religious prince Constantine" and the council of Nicaea, which by the mid-5th century had come to be regarded as the undisputed touchstone of orthodoxy.[30] It has been remarked that both Constantine the Great and Theodosius II provided conspicuous models for Marcian in the field of ecclesiastical policy and of its enforcement through imperial legislation.[31] However, when it came to conciliar procedure, Marcian's immediate predecessor seems rather to have represented a negative paradigm, from which the new ruler was determined to move away.[32] Not only was the reversal of Ephesus 449 – with regard to both doctrinal and disciplinary matters – one of the main tasks of the council that Marcian summoned shortly after his accession,[33] but the role played by the emperor and his representatives at Chalcedon also marked a clear shift in the modes of interaction between imperial authority and conciliar institution. Perhaps the experiences of Ephesus 431 and 449 had convinced Marcian that the strategy followed by Theodosius, who had favoured synodal self-regulation with distant or limited imperial supervision,[34] had proved ineffective in ensuring ecclesiastical unity and fulfilling imperial expectations. At any rate, at Chalcedon the unfolding of conciliar proceedings was placed under tight imperial control: all sessions but one were presided by lay court officials, who firmly directed episcopal debates;[35] as we have seen, at the sixth session this task was taken on by the emperor himself. Even when he was not physically present, the transfer of the council from Nicaea to Chalcedon made

30 Ἡμεῖς γὰρ βεβαιότητα τοῖς πραττομένοις προσθήσοντες, οὐ δυνάμεως ἐπίδειξιν ποιησόμενοι παρεῖναι τῇ συνόδῳ ἐδοκιμάσαμεν ὑπόδειγμα ποιησάμενοι τὸν θείας λήξεως Κωνσταντῖνον / *Nos enim ad fidem corroborandam, non ad potentiam aliquam excercendam exemplo religiosi principis Constantini synodo interesse uoliuimus* (ACO 2.1.2, 140; and 2.3.2, 150). A discourse analysis of this session in H. Amirav, *Authority and Performance. Sociological Perspectives on the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451)* (Göttingen 2015), 174–208; on Marcian's Latin and Greek speeches see also T. Mari, "Greek, Latin, and more: Multilingualism at the ecumenical Council of Chalcedon", *Journal of Latin Linguistics* 19/1 (2020), 58–87, especially 66–74.. On the reception and ecumenical status of Nicaea: H. Chadwick, "The Origin of the Title 'Oecumenical Council'", *JThS* 23/1 (1972), 132–135; M.S. Smith, *The Idea of Nicaea in the Early Church Councils, AD 431–451*, Oxford 2018, 171–207.

31 M. Keßler, *Die Religionspolitik des Kaisers Marcianus (450–457)*, PhD dissertation, Frankfurt 2011, 247–264; Amirav, *Authority*, 56–57.

32 Theodosius is not explicitly criticized, however, as the connection with the Theodosian dynasty provided Marcian with an essential source of legitimacy.

33 Keßler, *Die Religionspolitik*, 62–72.

34 Though on both occasions Theodosius II had given preliminary instructions and appointed civil officers to watch over the ordered unfolding of proceedings, presidency and, more generally, the direction of conciliar works at Ephesus I and II were firmly in episcopal hands (Price, "Presidency", 242–247). In both cases the presence of imperial officials did not suffice to prevent the outbreak of troubles or violence.

35 Price, "Presidency", 247–248; Amirav, *Authority*, 93–98. For an example of how imperial policy shaped the unfolding of conciliar discussions, consider the debate on the faith at the second session of Chalcedon: ACO 2.1.2, 69–84; ACO 2.3.2, 3–17; Price and Gaddis, *The Acts* II, 1–28.

Marcian close enough for real-time consultation, in case conciliar debates reached a deadlock. This possibility of effective – if not physical – intervention proved crucial at the fifth session, when imperial pressure was a determinant factor in pushing the fathers to approve a new definition of faith.[36]

The *acta* of Chalcedon conveniently contained information apt to justify and validate the emperor's behaviour and his appearance at the council. The minutes of the sixth session record the acclamations of the bishops, who praised the imperial couple as the "new Constantine" and "new Helena", providing ecclesiastical endorsement for the imperial conduct.[37] A letter of Marcian to the council, included in the official acts, opportunely mentions the fact that the imperial presence had been required by the Roman delegates as a *conditio* for their participation.[38] Most importantly, Marcian's intervention at Chalcedon is known to us (and was divulgated among his contemporaries) through official documentation edited under the auspices of the emperor himself, in which he could, as it were, speak with his own voice. His action was presented thus in the best possible light, as according to tradition and fair procedure. This obviously constitutes a main difference in comparison to attestations of earlier imperial interventions in episcopal gatherings, which survive mainly in the form of laconic references and indirect reports in the writings of ecclesiastical historians and polemists.

Conciliar Records: Production and Dissemination up to the Council of Chalcedon

The paucity and haphazard character of our sources before 451 is in keeping with the general state of evidence about Church councils for the same period. Ephesus I (431) is indeed the first ecumenical council for which substantial (though selected) records of proceedings are preserved; minutes from the council of Aquileia (381) and the conference between Catholics and Donatists held at Carthage (411) survive in an incomplete form.[39] For other synods we have at best isolated documents, most often excerpts and fragments, or nothing at all.[40]

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36 ACO 2.1.2, 124–125; ACO 2.3.2, 132–133; Price and Gaddis, *The Acts* II, 199. On the reasons behind the transfer of the council to Chalcedon, see also Keßler, *Die Religionspolitik*, 85–93.

37 Μαρκιανῷ νέῳ Κωνσταντίνῳ νέῳ Παύλῳ νέῳ Δαυίδ (...) αἰωνία μνήμη νέῳ Κωνσταντίνῳ (...) Μαρκιανὸς νέος Κωνσταντῖνος. Πουλχερία νέα Ἑλένη. Τῆς Ἑλένης τὴν πίστιν σὺ ἐπεδείξω. Τῆς Ἑλένης τὸν ζῆλον σὺ ἐπεδείξω/*Marciano nouo Constantino, nouo Paulo nouo Dauid* (...) *perpetua memoria nouo Constantino.* (...) *Marcianus nouus Costantinus. Pulcheria noua Helena. Zelum Helenae tu sectaris* (ACO 2.1.2, 155; 2.3.2, 175–176).

38 ACO 2.1.1, 28–29 (second letter of Marcian to the council).

39 Price and Graumann, *The Council*, 1.

40 A synthetic survey of available sources in T. Mari, "Working on the Minutes of Late Antique Church Councils: A Methodological Framework", *Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture* 13

The lack of surviving records for the vast majority of other councils up to 431 has led scholars to doubt about the actual existence of such documents. E. Chrysos formulated the hypothesis that only conciliar proceedings of judicial nature were recorded by officially appointed shorthand writers. Episcopal decisions on non-judicial matters (such as episcopal elections and consecration, or deliberations on dogmatic questions) were put in writing in the form of synodal letters or short "Beschlusstexte", like those transmitted in canonical collections.[41] Yet, as recently stressed by T. Graumann, it is often uneasy to draw a clear-cut distinction between disciplinary and theological issues debated at Church synods.[42] T. Graumann and H. Hess have also demonstrated that the use of synodal minutes might have been more pervasive than it seems, as their excerpting and editing appears to largely underly the process of compilation of early canonical *corpora*.[43] Moreover, we have evidence that deliberations on non-judicial issues could be recorded. The acts of Seleucia (359), explicitly mentioned and summarized by Socrates in his *Ecclesiastical History*, reported specific arrangements for the stenographic recording of dogmatic debates. Quarrels among the assembled bishops, first about the order of items to be discussed, then about doctrinal and procedural issues, were recorded as prescribed, and are summarized by Socrates on the basis of a collection of documents he could consult.[44] More examples could be cited, not least from the acts of Chalcedon.[45]

If the existence of conciliar minutes did not necessarily depend on the nature of the business transacted, to explain the very infrequent preservation of such documents up to the 5th century we should probably shift our attention from procedure to the intended function of these records and the interests of those responsible for

(2019), 42–59: 42–43. On the often partial and incomplete character of minutes of western synods, and the possible reasons behind this state of documentation, see also A. Weckwerth, *Ablauf, Organisation und Selbstverständnis westlicher antiker Synoden im Spiegel ihrer Akten*, PhD dissertation, Bonn 2007, 18–21.

41 E. Chrysos, "Die Akten des Konzils von Konstantinopel I (381)", in G. Wirth (ed.), *Romanitas – Christianitas. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Literatur der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Berlin – New York 1982), 426–435; Id., "Konzilsakten und Konzilsprotokolle vom 4. bis 7. Jahrhundert", *AHC* 15 (1983), 30–40. Weckwerth (*Ablauf,* 33–34) also suggests that it is not always necessary to postulate the existence of minuted records ("Verlaufsprotokolle"): synodal letters and "Beschlussprotokolle" could be produced independently and constitute the sole available synodal documents.

42 T. Graumann, "Die Verschriftlichung synodaler Entscheidungen. Beobachtungen von den Synoden des östlichen Reichsteil", in W. Brandes *et al.*, *Konzilien und kanonisches Recht in Spätantike und frühem Mittelalter* (Berlin – Boston, Mass. 2020), 1–24: 2–4.

43 H. Hess, *The Early Development of Canon Law and the Council of Serdica* (Oxford 2002), 69–75; Graumann, "Die Verschriftlichung".

44 Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* II, 39–40; he refers to the work of Sabinos, bishop of Heraclea, on which see below, 188.

45 One could think about the acts of the second and fifth sessions, when the elaboration of a new definition of faith was discussed, sparking strong reactions among the assembled bishops. *Contra:* Chrysos, "Konzilsakten", 38.

their production, publication and circulation. Since the 3rd century, the recording of discussions and decisions at ecclesiastical meetings, their preservation and their possible circulation appear to have been connected with perceived threats to the unity of Christian communities.[46] Evidence about this documentation suggests that it was aimed either at sharing general principles and patterns of conduct in response to contingent crises, or at addressing individual cases, with a view to polemical disputation and/or judicial reversal.

In the time of persecutions, debates concerning the *lapsi* provide a glimpse into the first type of ecclesiastical documentation – the one giving shared guidelines for ecclesiastical discipline. In 251, a synod held at Carthage condemned rigorist bishops, followers of Novatius, and decided that repentant *lapsi* could be readmitted in the Church under conditions. The same year, the decision of the African bishops was confirmed at a synod in Rome. Other councils and meetings were held subsequently on this and other related issues. Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* and the epistolary of Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (249–258), show that such synodal activity triggered the exchange of communications at a supra regional level, which involved the Churches of Africa and Rome, and reached as far as Antioch.[47] The bulk of documents exchanged were letters, sent by individual bishops in their own name or as collective synodical communications; occasionally minutes could be joined to such correspondence, too, or circulate otherwise. In a letter to Cyprian, Cornelius of Rome reports about a meeting for the readmission of some Novatian schismatics: he refers to a record (*notitia*) of the *sententiae* pronounced, a copy of which he forwarded to his correspondent.[48] In a letter to the Numidian bishop Antonian, Cyprian refers specifically to the council of Carthage (251), whose deliberation the correspondent was expected to know. As it seems, the bishops' sentences had been recorded in a *libellus* that circulated at the regional level.[49] This document might have been similar to the *Sententiae Episcoporum numero LXXXVII de haereticis baptizandis*, which reported episcopal statements pronounced in Carthage at a later council (256).[50]

Collections of African canons attest to continuing conciliar activity in the 4th and 5th centuries, and confirm that conciliar records were preserved and circulated within the African Church (in a more or less edited form) as reference documents for eccle-

46 C. Sotinel, "La circulation de l'information dans les Églises", in L. Capdetrey, J. Nelis-Clément (eds.), *La circulation de l'information dans les états antiques* (Bordeaux 2016), 177–194: 183–184.
47 Euseb., *Hist. eccl.* VI, 43. As regards African councils in this period and Cyprian's epistolary, see Hess, *Early Development*, 17–20.
48 Cyprian, *Ep.* 49.1–2.
49 Cyprian, *Ep.* 55.6: *secundum quod libello continetur quem at te peruenisse confido, ubi singula placitorum capita conscripta sunt*. Sotinel, "La circulation", 183.
50 Hess, *Early Development*, 20. On the typologies of documents issued by Church synods, T. Graumann, "Die Verschriftlichung".

siastical discipline.[51] A large share of these canonical texts presents indeed signs of derivation from synodal proceedings: they are casted in what Hess calls the *dixit – placet* form, that is, as proposals submitted by the presiding bishop (or by another participant with the president's endorsement) and enacted through the unanimous approval of the assembly.[52] *Gesta* of African synods, or excerpts of them, were attributed regulatory value and preserved not only in the episcopal archives at Carthage,[53] but also in other provincial churches. A canon of the council of Milevis (402) explicitly refers to the *matricula et archiuus Numidiae* at Cirta and to the sharing of documents within this ecclesiastical province.[54]

Although African sources predominantly point to a regional dissemination of conciliar information, they also show that the outbreak of particularly serious ecclesiastical crises could result in the circulation of archival material among distant episcopal sees. This had happened already during the Novatian schism; the fight against Pelagianism brought once again ecclesiastical networks of documents exchange to the fore. The polemical writings of Augustine draw largely upon synodal records. After Pelagius' trial before a synod at Diospolis (Palestine, December 415), Augustine requested copies of the official records from John of Jerusalem and Cyril of Alexandria, finally obtaining them from the latter.[55] Based on this document he wrote his *De gestis Pelagii*, in response to the apologetic letter by which Pelagius had announced his acquittal. According to Augustine, Pelagius' *chartula* contained an unreliable abridgement of official proceedings, whose slow circulation it had anticipated.[56] Augustine's treatise and Pelagius' report provide evidence of personalized accounts of proceedings and meta-documentary writings which must have fueled contemporary ecclesiastical disputations.[57] Augustine exploited also the records of the trial of Cae-

51 F. L. Cross, "History and Fiction in the African Canons", *JThS* n.s. 12/2 (1961), 227–247: 233; Hess, *Early Development*, 51–52 and 57–58. Texts edited by C. Munier, *Concilia Africae a. 345 – a. 525* (Turnhout 1974).

52 See, for instance: records of councils held in Carthage under Gratus and Geneclius in 345–348 and 390 (Munier, *Concilia*, 3–19); some canons in the expanded version of the *Breviarium hipponense* (*ibid.*, 45–46; also 20–21); a fragment pertaining to the council of Thelepte of 418 (56–57); several among the *canones in causa Apiarii* (101–145); several of the extracts included in the *Registri ecclesiae carthaginensis excerpta* (e. g. 186–193).

53 The Church of Carthage must have housed a structured archive. A passage from the *Registri ecclesiae carthaginensis excerpta* refers to the *gesta* of a council held in 397 and not reported in full: they could be consulted *in authenticis* (Munier, *Concilia*, 193: *gesta in authenticis quis quaeret inveniet*). On the meaning of this expression (an authorized text for consultation and production of copies upon request?): T. Graumann, "Documents, Acts and Archival Habits in Early Christian Church Councils: A Case Study", in A. Bausi *et al.* (eds.), *Manuscripts and Archives. Comparative Views on Record-Keeping* (Berlin – Boston, Mass. 2018), 273–294, 286–287.

54 Munier, *Concilia*, 207.

55 August., *Ep.* 179 and 4*.

56 August., *De gest. Pel.* 32.

57 We have already seen how Athanasius used conciliar documents to substantiate his criticism against Constantius' religious policy and Arianism (above, 178 and 181). Augustine was familiar

lestius, Pelagius' disciple, held in Carthage in 411, which he says to have consulted and which he quotes in several writings.[58] By ca. 430, the acts of Caelestius' examination were available also to Marius Mercator, who addressed a *Commonitorium super nomine Caelestii* to Theodosius II and the Church of Constantinople, probably writing from a monastery in the City or in its surrounding.[59]

In addition to being searched and used by individual clergymen as instrumental to personal attacks and doctrinal fights, stenographic records relating to the Pelagian controversy were also the object of official communication and transmission. We do not know how and why the acts of Diospolis traveled from Palestine to Alexandria. But we do know that dossiers of documents – including the minutes of Caelestius' condemnation in 411 and Pelagius' examination at Diospolis – were sent by the African bishops to their Roman colleague between 416 and 418, to secure confirmation for the condemnation of the Pelagian heresy. Similar documentation might have been forwarded to the court in Ravenna – a double-sided lobbying which possibly paved the way for the issuing of anti-Pelagian legislation by Honorius in 418.[60] Pelagius' disciple Caelestius was also condemned and expelled from Constantinople by bishop Atticus (406–425), who transmitted relevant documentation to his colleague in Rome.[61] The use of conciliar documents and records in institutional communication among episcopal sees is evident again in the Apiarius affair. In 419, a conflict over the Roman right to adjudicating appeals from the African clergy stimulated an inquiry into relevant canonical texts. Copies of the "genuine" Nicene canons were requested by the African bishops from Alexandria, Antioch and Constantinople. Records of a conciliar session held in Carthage on 25 May 419, where the *commonitorium* presented by the Roman legates was read out and contested, were also included in the dossier of documents collected by the African Church. Such documentary evidence was gathered, transmitted to the Pope and preserved in support of African claims to jurisdictional independence from Rome.[62] Later, at the council of Ephesus (431), the appeal to conciliar minutes will become a leitmotiv for self-justification which the Cyrillian party will exploit in messages addressed to the emperor, the bishop of Rome and the clergy and people of Constantinople.[63]

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with such literary weapons, which he used also in his struggle against Donatists: C. Humphress, "Controversialist: Augustine in Combat", in M. Vessey (ed.), *A Companion to Augustine* (Chichester 2012), 323–335: 329.

58 August., *De gest. Pel.* 11(23); G. Honnay, "Caelestius, discipulus Pelagii", *Augustiniana* 44 (1994), 271–302: 275–277.

59 ACO 1.5, 66: *quorum gestorum exemplaria habemus in manibus.*

60 M. Marcos, "Anti-Pelagian Legislation in Context", in *Lex et Religio. XL Incontro di Studiosi dell'Antichità Cristiana* (Rome 2013), 317–344.

61 As reminded by pope Celestinus in a letter to Nestorius: ACO 1.2, 11.

62 Documents edited by Munier, *Concilia*, 89–172. Cross, "History and Fiction", 240–247; Hess, *Early Development*, 57.

63 ACO 1.1.2, 70; ACO 1.1.3, 5–9 (Latin ACO 1.2, 85–8 and 1.3, 169–73); ACO 1.1.3, 3–5 and 10–13 (Latin ACO 1.3, 85–87 and 96–98).

The episodes evoked allow to single out some archival centres where reliable copies of ecclesiastical documents could be retrieved, copied, translated and transmitted upon request. Rome, Carthage, Alexandria, Antioch and Constantinople were significant nodes in this network,[64] which extended also to the imperial court. Though information about the keeping and circulation of synodal records in the eastern provinces surfaces more sporadically than observed in Africa, scattered references may help add details to this picture. In his *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius refers to records of congregational and synodal discussions dating back to the 3rd century and still extant in his times. For some documents he could have relied on Antiochene sources;[65] materials related to Origen's activity might have been retrieved in Caesarea, too.[66] Church historians of the 5th century had at hand the records of several councils which are not preserved.[67] Socrates and Sozomen used a collection of synodal acts (Συναγωγὴ τῶν συνόδων or τῶν συνοδικῶν, starting from Nicaea) compiled by the homoiousian bishop of Heraclea Sabinos.[68] P. Van Nuffelen has suggested that both Sozomen and Theodoretus of Cyrrhus were able to consult also a complete version of the *Historia acephala*, an Alexandrian collection of ecclesiastical documents accompanied by historical explanations, probably compiled under the episcopate of Theophilus (385–412).[69] The author of the *Ecclesiastical History* conventionally ascribed to Gelasius of Cyzicus (late 5th century) claims to have perused a collection of Nicene acts compiled by bishop Dalmatius of Cyzicus – though historians have questioned the reliability of his assertion.[70] These compilations – and perhaps others, such as a lost *Synodikon* attributed to Athanasius – were the product of

64 On the formation and contents of Alexandrian and Antiochene archives: A. Camplani, "Setting a Bishopric/Arranging an Archive: Traces of Archival Activity in the Bishopric of Alexandria and Antioch", in Bausi *et al.*, *Manuscripts and Archives*, and Id., "Fourth-Century Synods in Latin and Syriac Canonical Collections and Their Preservation in the Antiochene Archives (Serdica 343 CE – Antioch 325 CE)", in S. Torallas Tovar, J. P. Monferrer Sala (eds.), *Cultures in Contact: Transfer of Knowledge in the Mediterranean Context* (Cordoba 2013), 61–72.

65 Besides the correspondence between Rome, Carthage and Antioch (above, 185), Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* VII, 29) mentions the cross examination of Paul of Samosata, conducted by the priest Malchion at Antioch in the 260s and recorded by stenographers.

66 E.g. the records of the synod of Bostra (238/244): Euseb., *Hist. eccl.* VI, 33; Hess, *Early Development*, 13–14.

67 See Socrates on the council of Seleucia 359 (above, 184) and references to stenographic recording at councils held under Constantius II (179). Further examples in Hess, *Early Development*, 61–62.

68 Explicitly mentioned by Socrates as his sources on several occasions: e.g. *Hist. eccl.* I, 8.24; II, 17.10–11; II, 39–40 (council of Seleucia). On the dependence of Sozomen from the same source: P. Batiffol, "Sozomène et Sabinos", *BZ* 7 (1898), 265–284.

69 P. Van Nuffelen, "La tête de l'*Histoire acéphale*", *Klio* 84 (2002), 125–140.

70 Gelasius Cyzicenus (ed. G. C. Hansen), proem. 2: Εὑρηκὼς αὐτὰ ἐν βίβλῳ ἀρχαιότατη ἐγγεγραμμένα ἐν μεμβράναις ἁπαντα ἀπαραλείπτως ἐχούσαις, γενομέναις μεν τοῦ θείου καὶ ἀοιδίμου Δαλματίου τοῦ ἀρχιεπισκόπου γενομένου τῆς ἁγίας καὶ καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς τῶν Κυζικηνῶν λάμπρᾶς μητροπόλεως. G. Marasco, "The Church Historians (II): Philostorgius and Gelasius of Cyzicus", in Id. (ed.), *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity* (Leiden – Boston, Mass. 2003), 284–287.

local episcopal initiatives, aimed at building a partisan memory of past events for apologetic or polemical purposes. They circulated beyond local boundaries, in Constantinople and Antioch, where they were consulted by Church historians. But what sort of conciliar documents did these compilers use, and how did they obtain them?

Though secretaries associated with the presiding officials certainly played a prominent role in the handling of documents at ecumenical councils and in the production of minutes,[71] conciliar acts also allude to the presence and work of notaries from different bishoprics, who might have produced particular and/or partial versions of synodal records.[72] At Chalcedon, Dioscorus of Alexandria said to be accompanied by "only two notaries" (ACO 2.1.1, 78); later, when accused of altering conciliar records at Ephesus II, he replied: "Each one wrote through his own notaries. Mine recorded my statements (...) while the other most devout bishops had many notaries who kept a record. So the text is not the work of my notaries; each has his own" (*ibid.*, 87, par. 124).[73] Did such multiple records merge into a final reference version of the acts, or were they preserved locally as unofficial *aide-mémoire*, in response to specific interests and in the absence of an officially circulated edition? Neither possibility can be discarded. Examples of collaboration between notaries of various ecclesiastical and non-ecclesiastical institutions for the edition of common conciliar records are known.[74] On the other hand, until the mid-5th century at least the dissemination of synodal documents was neither systematic nor centralized: far from being a matter of administrative routine, it seems to have depended largely on the initiative of participants.[75] The emperor occasionally ensured the publication of specific conciliar decisions in the form of constitutions,[76] and synodal deliberations could circulate regionally, as it happened in Africa. However, surviving conciliar acts suggest that copies and extracts of proceedings were issued unsystematically, mostly as a result of individual interests and initiatives. The judicial ordeals of Eutyches, for instance, provide evidence that extracts of proceedings could circulate in monastic *mi-*

71 Consider the role played at Ephesus I by the Alexandrian presbyter and *primicerius* of the notaries Peter, or at Chalcedon by Veronicianus and Constantine, secretaries of the consistory, and the Constantinopolitan archdeacon Aetius. T. Mari, "Spoken Greek and the work of notaries in the Acts of the Council of Chalcedon", in S. Dahlgren, *et al.* (eds.), *Scribes and Language Use in the Graeco-Roman World*, Cambridge, forthcoming.

72 Further attestations concerning the existence and activities of ecclesiastical *notarii* are collected in Teitler, *Notarii*, 86–94.

73 Ἕκαστος διὰ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ νοταρίων ἔγραψε, οἵ ἐμοὶ τὰ ἐμά (...) ἦσαν δὲ καὶ ἄλλων εὐλαβεστάτων ἐπισκόπων πολλοὶ νοτάριοι ἐκλαμβανόντες. οὕτως οὐκ ἔστιν τῶν ἐμῶν νοταρίων τὸ γράμμα· ἕκαστος ἔχει τὸ ἴδιον. Translation by Price and Gaddis, *The Acts* I, 152–153.

74 At the conference of Carthage (411) between Catholics and Donatists, for instance, and again at Chalcedon. See Graumann, "Documents", and below, 191–192.

75 Sotinel, "La circulation", 188–191. Practices regarding the dissemination of conciliar documents appear to have been different in the West: acts of local synods held in Gaul, Italy and Spain between the 5th and the 7th century occasionally contains explicit instructions about the circulation and publication of conciliar documents (Weckwerth, *Ablauf*, 34–36).

76 Sotinel, "La circulation", 189.

lieux. In 448, the old archimandrite was accused not only of spreading heterodox beliefs, but also of stirring up rebellion in the monasteries, by circulating what appeared to be extracts of the Ephesine acts; we learn that some Constantinopolitan monasteries already possessed copies of this text.[77] Later, in an appeal hearing held in Constantinople in 449, Eutyches demanded that the original minutes of his first trial be collated with copies in his possession.[78] To judge from the reaction of Aetius, the spokesman of the patriarchal notaries, Eutyches might have obtained the document surreptitiously, perhaps with the help of someone at the patriarchal chancery.[79] At Ephesus II, copies of the same records were provided by both Eutyches and Flavian of Constantinople;[80] extract of these minutes were also sent by Flavian to pope Leo, who had requested a detailed report on Eutyches' case.[81]

From this survey we can conclude that, though no standard procedure for the communication of ecclesiastical documents existed, it was possible to find copies of synodal proceedings, in a more or less complete form, in the great episcopal sees of the Empire, and occasionally also in minor bishoprics and monasteries. The modes and itineraries of circulation of these texts depended on the functions attached to them, and on the actors involved in their dissemination. On certain occasions, they could be the object of institutional exchanges between synods, episcopal sees and the imperial court, with a view to promoting uniformity in discipline and faith, or substantiating jurisdictional points. They could also be sought and used by individual clergymen as tools of polemical confrontation, to advance doctrinal and ecclesiological agendas, or as evidence before ecclesiastical tribunals. What circulated were generally extracts and collections of selected documents, often gathered by interested parties without worrying too much for textual reliability,[82] not full corpora of official acts providing an exhaustive record of conciliar proceedings. This is still true for the acts of Ephesus I, which circulated as multiples collections of selected documents, probably drawing upon a core of conciliar materials first edited under the supervision of Cyril of Alexandria with propagandistic intents. Over time, this set of documents appears to have been copied and expanded by various compilers, who translated and/or added documents depending on the material to which they had access, and according to their interests and needs. However, no official or imperially sponsored reference version of conciliar acts ever existed.[83]

77 ACO 2.1.1, 133–134.

78 ACO 2.1.1, 154 (par. 587) and 155 (par. 604–611).

79 Aetius asks "to be informed if they are originals or copies, or what kind of text was given to him by someone" (Ἀξιοῦμεν γνῶναι πότερον αὐθεντικά ἐστιν ἢ ἀντίγραφα ἢ τί τοιοῦτο παρὰ τινὸς αὐτῷ παρεσχέθη: ACO 2.1.1, 155, par. 606; transl. Price and Gaddis, *The Acts* I, 237). See also ACO 2.1.1, 176, par. 827, on the possible role played by the presbyter and notary Asterius.

80 ACO 2.1.1, 92 (par. 168).

81 Liberatus, *Breviarium* XI (ACO 2.5, 155). Documents from Ephesus II were gathered in the so-called *Collectio Novariensis de re Eutychis:* ACO 2.2.1, v–viii.

82 Hess, *Early Development*, 56, 144; Sotinel, "La circulation", 191.

83 Price and Graumann, *The Council*, 1–18.

Things might have started to change in the context of the Eutychian crisis, as issues of documents authenticity took center stage in synodal discussions. As T. Graumann has pointed out, minutes and documents related to the first trial of Eutyches in Constantinople in 448, its revision in 449 and the second council of Ephesus (449) appear to have been kept by the imperial and the ecclesiastical administration, in the form of authentic records or secondary copies embedded in later proceedings, and to have circulated between state and church archives.[84] Though some of this material was certainly made available to interested parties, as the letters of Pope Leo and the documents included of the *Collectio Novariensis de re Eutychis* show, there is no conclusive evidence that an official imperially endorsed edition of the acts of Ephesus II was issued.[85] It is only in the aftermath of Chalcedon that such an imperial involvement in promoting the edition and circulation of officially sanctioned conciliar acts is clearly visible.

Marcian at Chalcedon: Records' Dissemination and Reception

Marcian's participation in the council of Chalcedon provides us with an enlightening example not only of imperial religious policy, but also of the modes of production and circulation of conciliar records, and of their impact. In the immediate aftermath of the council, records of the event were transmitted both as isolated documents and part of the official acts, serving different purposes and shaping in different ways the early reception of the facts they immortalized.

The acts of Chalcedon do not contain explicit references to the process of minute taking. However, the continuous presence of two secretaries of the imperial consistory, Constantine and Veronicianus, and of the Constantinopolitan archdeacon Aetius, as well as their alternance in handling documents presented at the council point to a coordinated collaboration between imperial and episcopal chanceries.[86] This bureaucratic cooperation reflected the permeability of imperial and ecclesiasti-

84 Graumann, "Documents", 279 – 291.

85 Graumann ("Documents", 289) consider such a hypothesis possible, though available sources do not allow to confirm it; he also considers the alternative that the records of Ephesus II (certainly produced under the direction of Dioscorus of Alexandria) were initially kept in an ecclesiastical archive only, in Alexandria or in Ephesus. However, the evidence for an imperial involvement does not seem compelling to me. The *Collectio Novariensis* draws its origin on the initiative and insistence of the pope, and relies on documents originating from the patriarchate of Constantinople (in the case of Constantinople 448) or collected by the papal legates at Ephesus 449: ACO 2.2.1, *praefatio*. The account contained in Nestorius' *Liber Heraclidis* seems to imply some knowledge of the conciliar proceedings of 448 and 449. However, it is hard to determine what kind of documents the author could have used, and how he had access to them.

86 Price and Gaddis, *The Acts* I, 75 – 78; Mari, "Spoken Greek".

cal archives, when the conciliar institution and the appeal to imperial arbitration came into play. The recent precedent of the Eutychian affair and its judiciary reversals, accompanied as they were by claims of documents' falsification, had certainly raised awareness of the need of authoritative records, while also underscoring the overlap and interdependent operation of civil and ecclesiastical archives.[87] Hostility towards Chalcedonian decisions, arising East and West, soon provided occasions to put such documents to use.

In an epistle to Leo of Rome, sent on 18 December 451, Marcian introduced bishop Lucian of Bizye and the deacon Basil, who were charged to inform the Pope about the council's proceedings.[88] Writing to the same correspondent, Anatolius of Constantinople added that the Roman legates had left the City carrying "certain documents containing the proceedings of the holy and ecumenical council"; however, Lucian and Basil had been dispatched "because it was fitting that in addition to them the remaining documents which ought of necessity to come to your notice should be conveyed by our own men, since some of the proceedings are specifically our work."[89] We may glimpse here a first attempt by the political and religious authorities in the eastern capital to counteract the uncontrolled circulation of conciliar documents, by opposing them a fuller authorized version of the acts – one apt to convey a narrative of events favorable to Constantinopolitan political and ecclesiological agendas.[90]

We do not know what the χάρται carried by Lucian of Bizye contained, nor how complete the dossier forwarded to the West in December 451 was. In the emperor's view, the information provided was exhaustive enough: in a letter from February 453, Marcian impatiently solicited the papal public approval of the council's proceedings.[91] His correspondent was not of the same opinion: in March 453, Leo complained to Julian of Cos, his representative in Constantinople, that he still had little grasp of the acts' content, due to his ignorance of the Greek, and demanded a full Latin translation.[92] Such a translation would not be completed before the mid-6th century, well

87 See above and note 85.

88 ACO 2.4, 167–168.

89 Τοὺς ὑπολελειμμένους καὶ εἰς γνῶσιν ὑμῶν ἀναγκαίως ἐλθεῖν ὀφείλοντας χάρτας καὶ δι'ἡμετέρων ἀνδρῶν ἀποσταλῆναι διὰ τὸ ἰδικῶς ἡμῖν πεπρᾶχθαι τινά: ACO 2.1.2, 52; transl. Price and Gaddis, *The Acts* III, 138–139.

90 T. Mari, "The Latin Translations of the Acts of the Council of Chalcedon", *GRBS* 58/1 (2018), 126–155.

91 ACO 2.1.2, 61–62.

92 ACO 2.4, 66–67: *gestorum synodalium quae omnibus diebus concilii in Chalcedonensi ciuitate confecta sunt, parum clara propter linguae diuersitatem apud nos habetur instructio et adeo fraternitati tuae specialiter iniungo ut in unum codicem uniuersa facias congregari, in Latinum scilicet sermonem absolutissima interpretatione translata*. A Roman concern for getting information about political and ecclesiastical developments in the East is discernible during the pontificate of Leo: P. Blaudeau, "Rome contre Alexandrie ? L'interprétation pontificale de l'enjeu monophysite (de l'émergence de la controverse eutychienne au schisme acacien 448–484)", *Adamantius* 12 (2006), 140–216, 151–153.

after Leo's death; however, isolated Latin documents and partial translations of conciliar materials started to reach Rome much earlier. Among them, records regarding the sixth *actio* of Chalcedon appear to have played a prominent role.

Various materials related to this conciliar session recur redundantly in the so-called *Collectio Vaticana vel Novariensis rerum Chalcedoniensium*, with a particular focus on the *definitio fidei* and the imperial allocution. E. Schwartz supposed that the original core of this compilation was made up by the reports and documents brought back by the Roman legates at the end of 451. These included texts originally authored in Latin, such as their own sentence against Dioscorus (third session) and Marcian's ceremonial speech (sixth session), in addition to the *definitio fidei* in Greek; other council-related documents were probably added to this original dossier during the second half of the 5th century.[93] The *Collectio* as we have it opens with three pre-conciliar letters of Marcian (nr. 1–3), followed by an abridged record of the sixth session (nr. 4: *ordo gestorum habitorum Calchedona praesentibus Marciano et Pulcheria Augg̃*).[94] The latter includes:

- a summarized narrative introduction
- Marcian's speech in the original Latin version
- the bishops' acclamations
- the intervention of the archdeacon Aetius + an abridged version of the *definitio fidei* (lacking the creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople)
- further imperial interlocutions and episcopal acclamations, including the announcement of measures submitted by the emperor for conciliar approval and promulgation as canons (*capitula* not reported)

With the exception of the imperial allocution, the text's wording is regularly at variance with 6th-century Latin translations of the acts, though it agrees with them in substance and structure. List of attendants and subscriptions are missing. In Schwartz's view, the reference to Pulcheria's attendance contained in the *praescriptio* would exclude a derivation from official acts, where the Augusta's presence is largely obliterated. The source for this information would be the oral reports of the Roman legates.

After the *ordo gestorum*, another version of the *definitio* (nr. 5) is reported; it diverges both from the text included in the *ordo gestorum* and from later Latin translations.[95]

Then comes a series of summaries and extracts of conciliar sessions (nr. 6: third and sixth session; dispute between Maximus of Antioch and Juvenal of Jerusalem). Passages relating to the third and sixth sessions are very concise and mainly cast

93 ACO 2.2.2, xi–xii.

94 ACO 2.2.2, 5–10.

95 ACO 2.2.2, 11–14. According to Schwartz (*ibid.*, xii), this improved translation was added in the time of the Acacian schism; it would have been taken from a lost source used also by the compiler of the *Collectio Quesnelliana*, where this version of the *definitio* is partially reproduced.

in a narrative indirect form.[96] The summary of the sixth session reports the Nicene and Constantinopolitan creeds, while the actual Chalcedonian *definitio* is only summarized; some imperial *interlocutiones* in direct speech are also recorded.[97] The presence of Pulcheria is not evoked, and the text ends with an annotation: *edidit Veronicianus et Constantinus viri devoti agentes in rebus secretarii sacri consistorii*. Schwartz has suggested that these summary accounts of proceedings derived from official acts: they could have been obtained from the imperial chancery and sent to Rome by Julian of Cos, in response to Leo's request of 453.[98] Be that as it may, these reports appear to reflect what Leo knew of the proceedings in the first years after the council: the condemnation of Dioscorus;[99] the content of the sixth session; a case of ecclesiastical jurisdiction for which an appeal to Rome had been envisaged.

After these extracts, Marcian's allocution is repeated again, in the same form as in the *ordo gestorum* (nr. 7). There follows a series of post-conciliar documents: two imperial constitutions (nr. 8 – 9), five letters of Leo (nr. 10 – 14) and an imperial epistle dealing with anti-Chalcedonian opposition in Egypt (nr. 15).[100]

Though the relations between these items and the way they came together remains a subject of speculation, their early date can be safely assumed. The poor quality of the *definitio*'s translation at nr. 4 (executed *imperite atque indocte*, in Schwartz's words) may reflect the lack of qualified interpreters in 5th-century Rome, lamented by Pope Leo. If Leo actually started collecting available Latin material about the council in the 450s, he did so under political pressure and in response to emerging ecclesiological frictions with Constantinople. However, this documentation acquired new meaning after the death of Marcian and the outbreak of the Acacian schism. After 457, the hesitations and wavering of eastern emperors vis-à-vis the Chalcedonian doctrinal heritage prompted Roman bishops to set aside initial resistances and indicate Marcian as a model of pious ruler, precisely for his support to (and involvement in) the council. Thus, in a series of letters preserved in the *Collectio Avellana*, pope Simplicius (468 – 483) exhorted first the usurper Basiliscus, then the emperor Zeno to imitate the orthodoxy of their predecessors, most notably *Marciani augustae memoriae* (*CA* 56, 6 – 8 and 60, 4).[101] In the 480s, the author of the *Gesta de nomine Acacii* highlighted the participation of the emperor and the Augusta Pulcheria in the synod, along with *omnes iudices, senatus et omnes aulicae potestates* (*CA* 99, 11 – 12). In this same period, dossiers of documents first assembled in Rome may

96 The Latin *exempla gestorum* of other sessions differs conspicuously, as they are in dialogue form, and may have been added to the series at a different moment: ACO 2.2.2, xiii – xiiii.

97 ACO 2.2.2, 15 – 17.

98 Schwartz's hypothesis, though not universally accepted, is not completely implausible: Price and Gaddis, *The Acts* II, 192 – 193.

99 Cfr. Leo's epistle to the bishops of Gaul, ACO 2.4, 155.

100 ACO 2.2.2, 21 – 27. Schwartz (*ibid.*, xii) supposes that nr. 7 – 15 were added during the Acacian schism, on the initiative of the archdeacon (and future pope) Hormisdas.

101 See also the considerations Blaudeau, "Rome contre Alexandrie ?", 200 – 201.

have circulated in the pro-Chalcedonian *milieux* of northern Italy, as suggested by the provenance of the manuscripts in which the *Collectio* was later copied and transmitted, the *Vaticanus* 1322 (*olim Veronensis*, 8th c.) and the *Novariensis* 30 (10th c.).[102] The importance attached to the emperor's presence as a source of legitimacy and authority for conciliar decisions is echoed in some canonical collections, where Marcian's *adlocutio* (variously associated with his pre-conciliar letters and/or post-conciliar constitutions) was included, along with the canons of Chalcedon – a most unusual combination. This can be observed in the *Quesnelliana* and *Hispana*, where the insertion of these texts may betray a Roman origin or the use of Roman sources.[103] The famous codex *Veronensis* LX 58 (7th/8th century) also adds to the Chalcedonian canons a unique translation of the *definitio fidei* and a brief imperial interlocution, which concluded the sixth session.[104]

While partial translations or reports of conciliar proceedings reached Rome and Italy, how did conciliar acts fare in the East? The *Codex encyclius*, compiled and published on the initiative of Emperor Leo I (457–474) and preserved in a 6th-century Latin translation,[105] provides an interesting testimony to the dissemination of conciliar information in this period. It collects episcopal responses to an imperial inquiry launched in 457 to test the Church's stance about the faith of Chalcedon and the conflicts shaking the Alexandrian episcopate, contended between supporters and opponents of the council.[106] On the whole, the bishops' replies reveal an unequal knowledge of conciliar proceedings. In most cases the acceptance of the Chalcedonian dogma is subordinated to its agreement with the Nicene faith, while the council's original theological contribution is not dealt with. On the other hand, a number of bishops who signed these letters also appear as attendants and subscribers in the acts of Chalcedon. Direct knowledge of the events surfaces occasionally in their writings. The bishops of Lycia assert that *hic* (at Chalcedon) *novum nil audivimus* and *haec* (the faith of Nicaea, Constantinople and Ephesus) *dudum in Chalcedone per nos obsignavimus*;[107] those of Isauria recall the letters of Cyril and pope Leo read out at the council.[108] The reference to the attendance of Marcian, regularly qualified as *princeps sanctae et piae memoriae*, and the senate, which appears in some texts, could derive from personal experience, or be grounded in some acquaintance with

102 D. Moreau, "Le processus de compilation des collections canoniques italiennes pendant l'Antiquité", *Cristianesimo nella storia* 39 (2018), 41–70: 55–56; below, 197.

103 ACO 2.2.2, i–x, xviiii. The *Coll. Hispana*, edited *ibid.*, 81–86, includes extracts of proceedings with a partial list of attendants (*turbata multis vitiis inscitiaeque documentis*, Schwartz), Marcian's allocution, episcopal acclamations, Aetius' intervention and the reading of the *definition fidei*; follows the canons, other imperial interlocutions and episcopal acclamations, and Marcian's constitutions.

104 ACO 2.2.2, xv, and 105–106 (*definition fidei* and Marcian's interlocution); Camplani, "Setting a bishopric".

105 See below, 198.

106 Schwartz, ACO 2.5, xii–xiii; Grillmeier, *Christ*, 195–204.

107 ACO 2.5, 62.

108 *Ibid.*, 47–49.

conciliar proceedings, at least with respect to the sixth session.[109] Prudent criticisms to the Chalcedonian formula, like those advanced by the bishops of Pamphylia and Armenia I,[110] also supposed some knowledge of the acts, at least the *definitio fidei*. In most cases, this must have been the only conciliar document received in peripherical bishoprics, as suggested by the reply of Alypius of Caesarea (Cappadocia I). He candidly (or diplomatically) confesses his ignorance: he was not bishop at the time of the council, and the only document his predecessor Thalassius had brought back to Caesarea was the definition of faith.[111]

If this was the situation in the eastern empire in 457/8, things had changed by the time of Justinian's rule. Since the mid-5th century, persisting ecclesiastical divisions and factional conflicts – which involved the eastern episcopate, the Roman see and the emperor – had stimulated fierce confrontation over the theology and disciplinary proceedings of the council. Drawing upon a tradition consolidated since the early 5th century, ecclesiastical disputations increasingly revolved around the authority (upheld or contested) of written documents and conciliar records. In the time of Justinian, the Three Chapters controversy originated precisely from the revision – demanded by some and rejected by others – of the council's judgment on three leading figures of the Antiochene theological school: Theodore of Mopsuestia, Ibas of Edessa and Theodoretus of Cyrrhus. In 532, it was possible for the Syrian miaphysite bishops summoned in Constantinople at the bidding of Justinian to quote the acts of Chalcedon, and affirm that these documents "are to be found all over the world."[112] Copies of the acts were obviously available in Constantinople – as *codices* kept in episcopal and imperial archives, but also in monastic libraries like that of the Acoemetes monks. In 553, at the fifth ecumenical council, extracts from the acts of Ephesus I

109 *Ibid.,* 29 (bishops of Thrace II); 50 (Cilicia I); 68 (Hellespont).

110 *Ibid.,* 59 (Pamphylia, with reference to the expressions *duarum naturarum unitas inconfusa/ex duabus [naturis]/una verbi natura incarnata*); 70 (Armenia I).

111 *Ibid.*,76: *ignoravi et quae Chalcedone sunt gesta, quia nec in synodo fui (...) gesta a sanctis episcopis in Chalcedonensi civitate collectis non legi (neque enim a sanctae memoriae tunc episcopo Thalassio, qui interfuit sancto concilio, aliquid hic amplius est adlatum ex his quae gesta noscuntur) sed tantummodo definition expositam ab illo santo concilio ab eo delatam inspexi*. On the apparently limited circulation of the proceedings of Chalcedon in the East, see also V. Menze, "Johannes Malalas, die Rezeption des Konzils von Chalkedon und die christlichen *milieux de mémoire* im 6. Jahrhundert," in J. Borsch, O. Gengler, M. Meier (eds.), *Die Weltchronik des Johannes Malalas im Kontext spätantiker Memorialkultur* (Stuttgart 2018), 133–151, especially 142–143. Menze refers to a passage from the chronicle of Marcellinus Comes, according to which, in the time of emperor Anastasius (491–518), no copy of the Chalcedonian proceedings was available at the imperial palace, and the emperor had to ask for an exemplar from the patriarchate. This would mean that the official edition of the acts was initially deposited only in the ecclesiastical archives of the City, no copy being made by the imperial administration. Menze notices however that this story is not confirmed by any other contemporary source.

112 S. Brock, "The conversations with the Syrian Orthodox under Justinian (532)", *OCP* 47 (1981), 87–121: 102.

(first session) and Chalcedon (second, fourth and sixth sessions) were read out.[113] While the council was unfolding, Pope Vigilius was able to consult synodal codes of the proceedings in Greek and have passages from the tenth session translated. He quoted them in his first *Constitutum* to Justinian, explaining that "because (...) we are ignorant of the Greek language, now through our men who have knowledge of the same language we have most carefully examined the acts of the holy and venerable Council of Chalcedon in the synodal codices."[114] It is in this period, and probably in connection with Vigilius' stay in the City, that the first complete Latin translation of the Chalcedonian proceedings was achieved in Constantinople, the so-called *versio antiqua*. It was quickly followed by a revised and expanded version (*versio antiqua correcta*), and then, in the 560s, by the edited translation of the Roman deacon Rusticus, who collated copies of the Greek acts and earlier Latin versions found at the Acoemetes' monastery.[115]

The *versio antiqua* of the Chalcedonian acts enjoyed a rapid success and soon crossed the Mediterranean: according to Schwartz, it was known in Rome since the late 6th century, and continued to be used well into the 7th.[116] A 6th-century manuscript containing an incomplete copy of this text reached Verona; the lacuna was later filled with a transcription of the *Collectio Vaticana rerum Chacedoniensium*.[117] Copies of translated conciliar acts were available also in southern Italy, notably at Vivarium. In the *Institutiones*, Cassiodorus recommended to his monks the reading of the Ephesine and Chalcedonian acts, to avoid "deception concerning the rules of our faith."[118] We cannot know what version of the acts he was able to obtain, through his contacts in Rome or Constantinople, or perhaps via his connections in Africa.[119] The possibility of a mediated circulation of ecclesiastical documents and conciliar texts from the East, via Alexandria and Africa, to Italy is suggested by the experience of the deacon Liberatus of Carthage (early 6th century – ca. 570).[120] In the *Breviarium causae Nestorianorum et Eutychianorum*, Liberatus tells that he

113 During the sixth session of 19 May 553: ACO 4.1, 147–177.

114 *Quia Graecae linguae (...) sumus ignari nunc per nostros; qui eiusdem linguae videntur habere notitiam, gesta sancti venerandique Calchedonensis concilii in synodalibus codicibus diligentissime perquirentes: CA* 83, 236–7; transl. R. Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553, vol. II* (Liverpool 2009), 195.

115 Schwartz, ACO 2.3.1, vi–xiii; Price and Gaddis, *The Acts I*, 83–85; Mari, "Latin Translations", 130–132.

116 ACO 2.3.1, vii.

117 Today in Rome: *Vat. lat.* 1322 (6th/8th century); description in ACO 2.2.2, v.

118 Cassiod., *Inst.* I, 23: *ut uobis in regulis fidei nulla possit nocere subreptio, legite quas habetis in promptu synodum Ephesenam et Calchedonensem necnon et Encyclia, id est, epistulas confirmationis supradicti concilii.*

119 In *Inst.* I, 8, Cassiodorus refers to books he has requested from Africa and other localities. On Cassiodorus' stay in Constantinople, see J. J. O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus* (Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 1979), 106–117, 131–136.

120 Biographical reconstruction in P. Blaudeau, "Introduction", in *Liberatus de Carthage. Abrégé de l'histoire des Nestoriens et des Eutychiens* (Paris 2019), 7–17.

had recently laid hands on a Latin translation of the Chalcedonian acts in Alexandria, which Schwartz identified with the *versio antiqua correcta*.[121] Schwartz and more recently P. Blaudeau have suggested that Liberatus might have written his *Breviarum* in Italy, at Vivarium or not far from there: in this case, he could have brought with him some of his books, while also finding useful sources on the spot. The *Breviarium* itself provides an analytic summary of the Chalcedonian proceedings, including some *verbatim* extracts, which conform to the *versio correcta*. Among these excerpts, texts emanating from (or addressed to) the emperor hold a prominent place: we find two rescripts of Theodosius II (read at Constantinople 448 and 449), Flavian's profession of faith (addressed to the same emperor in 449), and quotations from Marcian's *adlocutio* at the sixth session of Chalcedon.[122] Liberatus chose to lay emphasis on Marcian's emulation of Constantine, the Christian emperor *par excellence*, and on his role as a devout enforcer of episcopal deliberations. In the manuscript tradition, the regular association of Liberatus' *Breviarium* and the Latin translation of the *Codex encyclius*, made at Vivarium by Cassiodorus' friend Epiphanius, is symptomatic of the interest towards texts concerning the council of Chalcedon and its reception in the diaphysite *milieux* of Africa and Italy.

The example of Liberatus' hunting for sources in Alexandria, where (after 536) he could count on ties with the pro-Chalcedonian episcopate, offers us a glimpse into the competing uses of conciliar documents and memories in a doctrinally divided empire.[123] At the opposite extreme of the doctrinal spectrum, conciliar proceedings were exploited for the writing of a Church history also by Zachariah of Mytilene, a committed miaphysite and one generation the elder of Liberatus.[124] The original Greek text of his *Ecclesiastical History*, composed in Constantinople at the end of the 5th century, is lost; we only have an abridged Syriac translation, incorporated in the chronicle of an anonymous author, probably a monk in the region of Amida, who wrote around 568/569. As a lawyer with connections at court (he dedicated his *Ecclesiastical History* to the *cubicularius* Eupraxius), then as bishop of Mytilene, Zachariah had access to imperial and episcopal archives in the capital, which he appears to have exploited in his work; he might also have perused collections of documents from Alexandria, where he had studied in his youth. As far as the abridg-

121 *Nos ista [= acta synodi Chalcedonensis] nuper Alexandriae de Graeco in Latinum translata suscepimus:* ACO 2.5, 119; *ibid.*, xviii.

122 ACO 2.5, 115–116 (rescripts of Theodosius II), 116–117 (Flavian's profession of faith), 122 (Marcian's allocution: *adueniens Marcianus imperator ad Concilium cum iudicibus et sacro senatu adlocutionis uerba fecit in concilio et inter alia dixit se ad confirmandam fidem, non ad potentiam ostendendam exemplo Constantini imperatori synodum intrasse, unde abiecta omni prauitate et auaritia quorundam amputatis erroribus in perpetuum quae uobis ordinata fuerint, reseruentur*).

123 Blaudeau, "Introduction", 64–76. On historiography in the aftermath of Chalcedon, M. Whitby, "The Church Historians and Chalcedon", in Marasco, *Greek and Roman Historiography*, 449–495. On the uneasy reception of the Chalcedonian heritage see Menze, "Johannes Malalas".

124 G. Greatrex, *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor. Church and War in Late Antiquity*, Liverpool 2011, 3–12.

ed Syriac version allows us to see, Zachariah provided a selective and partisan account of Chalcedon, which in his view "introduced and increased the heresy of Nestorius, and disturbed the whole Empire (...) and tore into myriad divisions the perfect robe of Christ."[125] The preserved narrative presents the unfolding of conciliar proceedings up to the sixth session, making explicit references to the acts but summarizing them significantly, and leaving space to miaphysite sources such as Dioscorus' letters.[126] Interestingly, the largest *verbatim* quotation from the Chalcedonian acts is an extract from Marcian's allocution at the sixth session, which closes the exposition of conciliar events.[127] Though Marcian is described as inclining towards the Nestorian heresy and the presence of secular authorities at the council is interpreted as an expression of coercion and "hypocritical faith",[128] his speech does not seem to be distorted, nor is it criticized by the author. The selective use of documentary sources rather betrays the impression produced by this imperial action, which is represented as decisive and conclusive for conciliar proceedings.[129]

A century after its composition, Zachariah's *Ecclesiastical History* was still read in the eastern provinces and exploited by writers of opposite religious parties. The Antiochene Evagrius scrutinized and criticized it from a neo-Chalcedonian perspective, in the light of documentary sources which he was able to access in the patriarchal archives in Antioch and perhaps also in Constantinople.[130] On the other hand, Zachariah's work circulated among Syrian orthodox churches and monastic communities, where it was translated and excerpted. As M. Debié has pointed out, these communities did not live in provincial isolation; on the contrary, in the 6th century they maintained multiple relations with Constantinople, through travelling representatives, ecclesiastical visitors, and ties of friendship with the miaphysite com-

125 Greatrex, *Chronicle*, 97–98.

126 Greatrex, *Chronicle*, 109–110.

127 Greatrex, *Chronicle*, 112: "Since the beginning, when we were chosen and deemed worthy of the empire by God, no one matter among the concerns of public affairs has detained us, but rather we have chosen to honour the true faith of the Christian, and to accustom human souls to it in purity; all the while the array of deceitful teachings and opinions that do not agree with the proven teaching of the fathers being removed from [our] midst. Therefore we have called this holy council so that it may purge away entirely the darkness and remove the filth of [false] opinions, so that with pure thought the teaching of the faith that is in our Lord Jesus Christ may be established" (transl. R. R. Phenix and C. B. Horn). Compare with ACO 2.1.2, 139 (ἐν προοιμίοις τῆς ἡμετέρας βασιλείας ...) and ACO 2.3.2, 150 (*ubi primum diuino iudicio ad imperium sumus electi*...).

128 Greatrex, *Chronicle*, 101–102, 112.

129 As it seems, subsequent conciliar sessions were not considered in Zachariah's account, which moves on to narrate Dioscorus' exile and other events after the council.

130 Evagrius, a native of Epiphania in Syria II, completed his juridical education in Constantinople; he later served the patriarch of Antioch, whom he assisted in a lawsuit in the capital in 588. He achieved his *Ecclesiastical History* in 593/4. M. Whitby, *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus* (Liverpool 2000), xiii–xv, xx–xxv.

munity in the capital.[131] The writings of authors such as Pseudo-Zachariah and John of Ephesus suggest that Syrian miaphysite monasteries and churches maintained libraries and archives, where individuals able to read Greek texts and translate them could be found. In this environment, the documented memory of Chalcedon, preserved in conciliar acts and historiographical re-elaborations, participated in the construction of a cultural identity rooted precisely in this original doctrinal rift. Church histories and chronicles which, according to a well-established literary tradition, grounded their claims of veracity and orthodoxy in the testimony of official documents betray awareness of the exceptionality of the emperor's involvement at Chalcedon. Miaphysite authors like Zachariah and his Syriac epitomator could not but disapprove of conciliar proceedings, and they subtly imply the coercive weight of the imperial intervention. However, they refrain from the distorted rewriting and fictional narrative developments which blacken Marcian's and Pulcheria's image in other polemical texts:[132] when the emperor takes the floor, documents are let speak for themselves.

Conclusions

Marcian's appearance before the council fathers was a well pondered and carefully staged political move, which capitalized on the experience accumulated by earlier rulers in the relationship with the institutional Church. In order to push forward a desired policy of doctrinal uniformity and ecclesiastical unity with the West, the imperial government mobilized a whole array of ceremonial, rhetorical and symbolic weaponry, multiplying references to the universally accepted procedural and doctrinal model of Nicaea. The imperial initiative was to leave a lasting impression, which was enhanced by the circulation of conciliar records and documents.

Since an early stage, the sixth session enjoyed a remarkable visibility in the reception process of Chalcedon. This was due in the first place to its inherent dogmatic and normative importance. As a central piece among conciliar decisions, partial Latin records of this session were swiftly transmitted to Rome, on the initiative of the same Roman delegates and upon request of Pope Leo. In this respect, the circulation of conciliar information conforms to traditional communication dynamics, still predominant in the first half of the 5th century. We may observe that the divulgation of Marcian's allocution in Italy was facilitated by the fact that this was originally formulated in Latin: as such it naturally addressed a wider Western audience, and consti-

131 M. Debié, *L'écriture de l'histoire en syriaque. Transmissions interculturelles et constructions identitaires entre hellénisme et islam* (Leuven – Paris – Bristol 2015), 131, 156–165.

132 A. Camplani, "La percezione della crisi calcedonese in alcuni testi storiografici e agiografici prodotti negli ambienti dell'episcopato di Alessandria", *Adamantius* 19 (2013), 240–255; R. W. Burgess, "The Accession of Marcian in the Light of Chalcedonian Apologetic and Monophysite Polemic", *BZ* 86–87/1 (1994), 47–68; Menze, "Johannes Malalas", 136–140.

tuted a self-aware item of international institutional communication. Its immediate reception granted the emperor's speech a lasting and unusual association with Chalcedon's dogmatic and disciplinary decisions, in relation to which it came to serve as a token of authority and legitimacy. During the Acacian schism, the direct personal association of Marcian with Chalcedonian orthodoxy brought the papacy to retrospectively point at him as a ruler capable to revive an ideal "Constantinian" relationship between *imperium* and *sacerdotium*.

Such an idealized reinterpretation of Marcian's personality obviously obliterated the tensions created by decisions taken under his aegis in the sphere of ecclesiastic jurisdiction, notably the privileges and rank accorded at Chalcedon to the bishop of the eastern capital. It is in a joint effort to make the pope swallow this bitter pill that at the end of 451 Marcian and Anatolius of Constantinople hastily forwarded to Leo of Rome some version of conciliar proceedings. We do not know whether this was a full edition of conciliar records or a preliminary (and partial?) draft. It is, however, safe to assume that in the immediate aftermath of the council the episcopal and imperial chanceries in Constantinople collaborated under imperial sponsorship to the preparation of an official edition of the acts, which was read out and quoted at later councils, notably at Constantinople II in 553. This was an unprecedented undertaking, and it may be regarded as the counterpart, in the ecclesiastical sphere, of the move towards the establishment of a canon of imperially authorized reference texts already underway since the mid-5th century in the field of civil law.

The official acts of Chalcedon, first edited under the rule of Marcian, experienced a significant dissemination during the crises that divided Christianity in the late 5th and 6th century, particularly during the Three Chapters controversy. In this context they were consulted, upheld or contested by opposed parties, *in primis* in ecclesiastical and monastic environments, but occasionally also by cultivated laymen. Fully translated into Latin in Constantinople, the Chalcedonian acts travelled South and West, to Egypt and Rome and then throughout Italy, following itineraries determined by diplomatic, personal and factional relationships. In the 6th century, the Chalcedonian acts were read and translated also in the Syriac orthodox world. Their discussion substantiated interconfessional debates; their centrality is confirmed by recurring references to their content and words in contemporary works of ecclesiastical history. While they attest to the forging of divergent memories and cultural identities, the writings of Liberatus and Zachariah of Mytilene provide evidence of the lasting impression made by the imperial participation in the council, as immortalized in the acts.

Divulgated in the form of unofficial and partial records, or as official acts which were perused, re-elaborated and reinterpreted through the prism of militant ecclesiastical history, the records of the Chalcedonian council contributed to shape the image of Marcian as a Christian ruler which was bequeathed to posterity.