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**THE NOTION OF SYNODALITY FROM THE
ANCIENT CHURCH**

By

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Abstract

With the recent call by the Holy Father, Pope Francis for dioceses to convene synods on synodality, inviting all members of the church to journey together, it is pertinent to take a look at some of the early synods or councils in the ancient church. This will in no little way help in the understanding and appreciation of the intention of the Pope. The terms ‘synod’ and ‘council’ were used interchangeably in the early church to represent the gathering of bishops, sometimes with experts and sometimes without. These gatherings were in a way an expression of what the church truly is, that is, the gathering of a people called together by God. In this article I hope to use the synods and councils in the ancient church to buttress the fact that the church by her very nature is synodal and that these gatherings were very helpful in the resolution of issues. I hope to achieve this goal through an historical analysis and discussion of the early synods and councils of the ancient church. These gatherings that started quite naturally in the ancient church, were means of rubbing minds on issues affecting the church and proffering solutions to such issues.

Key words: Synod & Synodality, Church & Ancient Church, Councils.

Introduction

To say that the Catholic Church is synodal/conciliar is to express what the Church is by nature and this has also been proven to be by her historical antecedents with the immense

number of councils and synods (ecumenical, provincial and local/diocesan) that have been held from the very beginning. Just in October of the year 2021, the “Synod on Synodality” was convoked and declared open by His Holiness, Pope Francis. This is expected to run for two years and it is supposed to take place in all Dioceses of the Catholic Church and it is hoped to involve all, that is, clergy and laity of the church. This call for another synod in our time is a reminder to all members of the church to be true to our nature as a church, to be truly church, to be truly mother, to listen to one another. The Holy father expects all to journey together and reflect on how this journey is taken together. It is also an affirmation that the church will not rest on her oars until all her members are able to express themselves freely and feel at home in the church.

Though numerous councils and synods have taken place within the church with great results. These have led to the better enunciation and understanding of the doctrines of the church, they have also assisted the church in bringing about the reconciliation of aggrieved parties within and outside of the church. An exploration of some of these councils and synods in the early church will buttress the fact that, though the church is synodal or to apply the hypernym conciliar historically, but the facts according to some people have not been seen in practice. They claim that the hierarchy of the church speaks and all others listen. This is not the focal point of this article, rather, it aims at enumerating and analyzing some of the early synods and councils of the church in order to show that the church has truly been synodal or conciliar.

Before going on to enumerate and describe the issues discussed at the early synods and councils of the church, it is pertinent to define these key terms: the church, the synod and the council.

What is the church?

Etymologically, the term church is derived from the Latin and Greek terms *ecclesia* and *ekkalein* respectively which means ‘a convocation or an assembly’. The Greek *ek-kaleon* derived from *ek-kalo* which is a combination of the preposition *ek* (*ek*) which means “from, out of” and the verb *kalw* (*kalo*) meaning “to call, name, summon, invite” the two put together means “to call out of, summon or invite/invite out.” It is also used to designate the assemblies of the people, usually for religious purpose as expressed in Acts 19:39 where the term assembly was used to indicate the gathering of silversmiths at Ephesus. The Greek term ‘*ekklesia*’ originally “denoted the assembly of Free citizens called together by convocation¹.”

From the foregoing one can say that the church is those who are called out of, summoned or invited out. This is corroborated by Peter in his first Letter: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart (1Peter 2: 9)

The term *ekklesia* (*ekklesia*) was often used in the Greek Old Testament to represent the gathering of the chosen people before God, especially the assembly on Mount Sinai (Exod. 19) where the law was given to Moses. It was here that God made the declaration of the people as his own. The use of the term church as a designation for Christian believers is an affirmation of the fact that Christians see themselves as heir to the original assembly and that it is God who is gathering people from all over the world. The Greek term *Kyriake* from which the English and German Church and *kirche* respectively are derived means “what belongs to the Lord.”² This again corroborates what was said above. Though the term ‘church’ is usually presented as “a building where Christians go to worship or an institution of Christian religion” it goes beyond these and must be understood more as a people who have been called, chosen and dedicated to God. From the very beginning we found the assembly of the people called together by Christ even before the descent of the promised Spirit: “So from the Mount of Olives, as it is called,

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they went back to Jerusalem, a short distance away, no more than a sabbath walk; when they reached the city they went to the upper room where they were staying; ... All these joined in continuous prayer, together with several women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, with his brothers (Acts 1: 12-14).

What is Synod / Council?

The terms “Synod” and “Council” have been used interchangeably in the church from the earliest of times. This is attestable through the numerous synods and councils that have taken place in the church from inception till date. The church has always recourse to these gathering of her leaders either by themselves or as it happened later in the history of the church, convoked by the political authorities towards the resolution of various issues that have confronted the church at various times in her a little over two thousand years of existence. To continue we need to have a working definition of these terms and try to also see how the church from inception had made use of this means in attaining her goal.

A council is defined as “a formal meeting to discuss what action to take in a particular situation”³ while synod is “an official meeting of church members to discuss religious matters and make important decisions.”⁴ A council is a formal assembly of bishops and other church dignitaries to deliberate and legislate on ecclesiastical matters. According to Wilhelm Joseph, councils are “legally convened assembly of ecclesiastical dignitaries and theological experts for the purpose of discussing and regulating matters of church doctrines and discipline.” It goes further to say that councils are a concentration of the ruling powers of the church for decisive action.⁵ While an ecumenical council is the coming together of the universal church, a particular council (can be plenary, general, national or provincial) on the other hand indicates the coming together of the churches around the same area. Councils are usually called by the archbishops, that is, those who are in charge of the area (the metropolitan) based

on the need to consult on communal problems regarding faith and discipline. The functions of councils are basically dogmatic (the definition of the truths of the faith), liturgical (regulating the rites of the church) and canonical (ordering of ecclesiastical discipline)⁶

The term ‘synod’ is derived from the Greek word *sunodos*((*sunodos*) meaning assembly, synod or session. It is defined as a meeting or council of the clergy. Fanning William defines synod as “A general term for ecclesiastical gatherings under hierarchical authority, for the discussion and decision of matters relating to faith, moral or discipline.” It further indicates that synod is a synonym for council. It can be general, provincial, national or plenary.⁷ Lang said that it literally means a meeting or assembly. In general, it refers to a gathering of bishops and it is often used as an alternate for council. It is specifically used to denote that consultative body of selected clergy, religious and laity convoked by a local bishop to recommend legislation to improve the diocese. It is called the diocesan synod. This is different from the synod of bishops which is a deliberative body of representatives from the world convened by the Pope to discuss serious church matters. This goes a long way to show the hierarchical communion of the bishops as they partake in the responsibility of the universal church.⁸

Synods by the Apostles

The convocation of councils and synods started naturally in the church because of the need from the earliest moments of the church by the people in authority in the Christian communities to consult and deliberate on church matters. Councils and synods were born out of necessity. We have an example with the gathering of the apostles in Jerusalem in the upper room praying and waiting for the fulfillment of the promised Spirit. Peter raised the issue of the need for someone to take the place of Judas Iscariot, the people gathered, deliberated and decisions were made on how to go about it and the criteria that was required,

they prayed, lots were casted and Matthias was chosen and listed among the twelve apostles (Acts 1: 15-26).⁹ Peter could have taken a decision and made a choice on his own but he believed that it was better to rub minds and consult and that was what he did.

Some years later, what is usually referred to as the council of Jerusalem took place over the issue of circumcision for those were not Jews coming into the church (Acts 15). Around 50AD, the predominantly Jewish church was faced with the immediate consequence of the evangelization work of Peter, Paul and Barnabas and the spread of the gospel. With the conversion of gentiles, to what extent should these new converts conform to Jewish laws before they can be admitted to the new faith? The early church leaders, that is, the apostles and elders met at Jerusalem, they deliberated and decided that Jews were not saved because of their observance of the laws (laws of Moses), rather it is by the grace of God. At the end of their deliberation, James spoke thus: "I rule, then, that instead of making things more difficult for the pagans who turn to God, we send them a letter telling them merely to abstain from anything polluted by idols, from fornication, from meat of strangled animals and from blood (Acts 15: 19-21; Gal 2: 1-10). The decision of the council was put into a letter that was sent to all the churches of pagan origin. It is this council that many believe gave rise to the numerous councils and synods in the early church and a veritable means of resolving issues.

One can conclude here that with the notion of the church as the gathering of the people called, chosen and dedicated by God for himself; with the understanding we have of the terms 'council' and 'synods' as gathering and assembly of church leaders to discuss, deliberate and make decision on one hand and the constant praxis of the church from the earliest days to gather for the resolution of issues as seen thus far on the other hand, that the church is synodal. I will continue with the exposition of

synods and councils held in the nascent church to prove the same point further.

Councils and Synods of the early church

There are twenty-one (21) ecumenical¹⁰ council recognized by the church, though the ecumenical nature of some were doubted for some time but was eventually accepted by all, such as first Lateran Council 1123 AD and Basle/Ferrara/ Florence 1431-1439 AD. These large-scale councils were not known in the early church. It was impossible for the growing church to gather on a large scale. They only became feasible with the freedom granted the church by Emperor Constantine in 313 AD via the Edict of Milan. It must be noted that I do not intend to write on any of the 21 ecumenical councils, rather I will be focusing on the councils and synods of the early church until about the fourth century in this article.

After the council of Jerusalem 50 AD, we do not have records of any synod or council until the second century. Though before then we read in the writings of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians and Ignatius of Antioch's allusions to the gathering of presbyters in Corinth and the elders of the community in Rome and presbyters as the counsel of the bishops respectively. The very first synodal gathering recorded in the second century was in Asia Minor around 170 AD to deal with the issue of Montanus and his group, Montanists. Eusebius recorded the events of the outbreak of this heresy which he referred to as the Phrygian heresy.¹¹ Montanism was initially known as the 'New Prophecy' before it was named after its leader, Montanus, a convert to Christianity who claimed to have the gift of prophecy. Apollinarius of Hierapolis around 177 AD convoked a synod which condemned Montanus and his followers. In Lyon and Vienna about the same time local synods were held and these communicated their decision to Rome and Asia Minor regarding the same issue.

On the Date of the Feast of Passover

During the pontificate of Victor (183-193/193-203), a universal problem arose in the church regarding the date of the feast of Passover – the date of Easter. There were two parties to this, the Quarto-decimans¹² on the one hand and the Romans on the other hand. While the Quartodeciman (East) favoured the fourteenth day of Nisan, the Romans (West) emphasized Sunday as the day of Resurrection (*dies domini*) – dominical usage. These two sought a decision on the date for the celebration of Easter in the universal church. Until this point, there was disparity in the date for the celebration of Easter between the West and East. This issue is not new because it is on record that Polycarp of Smyrna during his visit to Rome around 155 AD had discussed the same issue with Pope Anicetus. Though no compromise was arrived at by the two, they parted ways amicably.¹³ Several synods were held in the West and East but no compromise was arrived at. Pope Victor tried to impose the Roman date, that is, the dominical date. He reaffirmed the decision of his predecessors, Soterius (167-174 AD) and Eleutherius (174-193 AD). He wrote letters excommunicating the Asian bishops but this was rebuffed, especially by the Asian Church led by Polycrates of Ephesus. After various local synods in the territory was affected, he was said to have sent a letter to Pope Victor; in the letter, he listed the names of apostles and apostolic fathers who had proclaimed the faith in Asia and had laid down the tradition of Quartodeciman. He wrote:

We for our part keep the day scrupulously, without addition or subtraction. ... All these kept the fourteenth day of the month as the beginning of the Paschal festival, in accordance with the Gospel, not deviating in the least but following the rule of the faith. Last of all I too, Polycrates, the least of you, act according to the tradition of my family, some members of which I have actually followed; for seven of them were bishops and I

am the eighth, and my family have always kept the day when the people put away leaven. So, I and my friends, after spending sixty-five years in the Lord's service and conversing with Christians from all part of the world, and going carefully through all Holy Scripture, were not scared of threats. Better people than I had said: We must obey God rather than men.¹⁴

Irenaeus who was believed to have had a better understanding of the issues at hand, was also said to have presided over one of such synods held in the Gallic province. Though he supported the view that only on the Lord's Day (Sunday) should the resurrection of the Lord be celebrated, he gave the Pope his piece of advice regarding his decision to cut off the whole Asian church. Irenaeus is recorded to have written thus:

The dispute is not only about the day, but also about the actual character of the fast. Some think that they ought to fast for one day, some for two, others for still more, some make their 'day' last forty hours on end. Such variation in the observance did not originate in our own day, but very much earlier, in the time of our forefathers, who – apparently disregarding strict accuracy – in their naïve simplicity kept up a practice which they fixed for the time to come. In spite of that, they all lived in peace with one another, and so do we: the divergency in the fast emphasizes the unanimity of our faith.¹⁵

Irenaeus in his letter buttressed his point using two anecdotes. The first was to refer to the predecessors of Victor, claiming that they allowed the divergence in practice. Secondly, he made reference to the visit of Polycarp of Smyrna to Pope Anicetus. The Pope did not force Polycarp to do what was done in Rome rather he left him to practice what he is believed to have received from the apostle John. The two out of respect for each

other parted ways in peace. In this way Irenaeus brokered peace in the church, he acted as a liaison for the two sides of the divide.

Synods in Africa

At Carthage in Africa numerous synods were held on varying matters. It is said that during the time of Tertullian, it was not a common practice but during the episcopacy of Cyprian (200/210 – 258 AD) things changed. The earliest were on the issue of *lapsi* or those who have lapsed in or abandoned their faith as a result of persecutions or backsliders. This happened as a result of the persecution of Emperor Decius (250 AD), it was general and compelled Christians to sacrifice to Roman gods and for the well-being of the emperor. During the persecution, Cyprian fled to a safe place from where he was in communication with the diocese. Felicissimus, his chief antagonist gathered a group of Confessors around him who confronted and condemned Cyprian's flight in the face of persecution. About the same time Pope Fabian was put to death and those who had charge of the church of Rome sent the information of his martyrdom and a letter to Carthage in which they express their surprise at the flight of Cyprian. He replied in another letter explaining the reason behind his flight (Ep. 20) accompanied with thirteen other letters written to his community, showing that he never abandoned his responsibilities. This almost caused a schism.

A synod was convoked in 251 AD presided over by Cyprian which agreed that all *lapsi* were to be admitted to penance, and can be reconciled with the church at the point of death with varying period of expiation depending on the gravity of the case. The synod also excommunicated Felicissimus and his supporters. Cyprian went on to write two pastoral letters: *De Lapsi* and *De Ecclesiae Unitate*¹⁶ on the same issue.

Towards the end of Cyprian's life another controversy ensued over the baptism of heretics. The traditional attitude of Carthage to this had been negative; heretics are not to be baptized, a view held by Tertullian in his writing *De baptismo* before him and

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upheld by a great council of African and Numidian bishops under Agrippinus in 220 AD. Cyprian also presided over synods in Carthage between 255 and 256 AD and reaffirmed the African stand that heretics are not to be baptized. When Pope Stephen (254-256) heard of this he warned against taking the African stand but Cyprian would not budge, he stood his ground and defended the African decision. A bitter dispute ensued between the two (Cyprian and Pope Stephen) and as it was threatening to get dangerous, Emperor Valerian promulgated an edict against the Christians.¹⁷

During the time of Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430 AD) several other synods were held such as in 345 AD on the issue of Donatism and the rebaptism of those baptized by heretics. On 28th August, 397 AD¹⁸ a synod was held at Carthage, Denzinger referred to it as the third Council, at the synod, the canon of Hippo 393 AD was reaffirmed. The synod of 393 AD was the first ever to list and approve a Christian biblical canon of the New Testament. A synod held at Hippo in 411 AD tried to put an end to the schism caused by the Donatists. Augustine called the synod held at Carthage in 418 AD the synod of Africa, it was presided over by Aurelius of Carthage, at the synod Caelestius a follower of Pelagius and Pelagius himself were both denounced.

Synods in Europe

Ambrose of Milan (337/339-397 AD) became bishop of Milan in 373 AD and from the very beginning of his episcopacy he had shown zero tolerance to Arianism that was dominant within his jurisdiction, in fact he was made bishop after the death of an Arian bishop. During his episcopacy he participated in and presided over a number of synods and councils. In 381 AD he presided over a synod at Aquileia, at the synod Arian bishops were deposed and the creed of Nicaea was upheld as the true creed of the church following the outcome of the council of Constantinople 381 AD. He was also said to have been the brain behind the outcome of the Council of Rome 382 AD which was

presided over by Pope Damasus. The council issued the Gelasian decrees on the Scriptures and also commissioned Jerome to work on the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible.

Of importance is also the synod of Elvira 305/6 AD. It is usually considered as one of three synods, the other two being Arles and Ancyra 314 AD. They are said to have prepared in character the way for the ecumenical council of Nicaea in 325 AD.¹⁹ The synod of Elvira was held at the rather unknown Spanish church before the edict of Constantine. Present at the synod were nineteen bishops, twenty-six presbyters mostly from Baetica with deacons and lay faithful. Eighty-one canons were said to have emanated from the synod but it has been said that some of these were only later additions to the original ones, all of them regarding discipline, conduct and order among Christian communities. The first canon on clerical celibacy is said to be traceable to this synod²⁰. There was also a canon on the use of images. The use of images was condemned at the synod. Canon 36 states that: "It has seemed good that images should not be in churches so that what is venerated and worshiped should not be painted on the walls." This will be dealt with again at the second council of Nicaea 787 AD. Canon 38 permits baptism by lay faithful under certain conditions while Canon 53 forbids the restoration of an excommunicated person by another bishop other than the one who excommunicated such a person.

Synods in Asia

Between 264 and 269 AD series of synods were held in Antioch discussing the issue of Paul of Samosata leading to the main council in 268/269 AD that eventually condemned him. He had taught that Christ was an ordinary man inspired by the divine wisdom, his theology was unitarian rather than trinitarian. Other than this synod, over thirty councils were said to have been held at Antioch on issues regarding the Arian and Christological controversies of the time. The proceedings of the council are presented by Eusebius of Caesarea, he said that

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the gathering of the bishops: “exposed and at last, explicitly and unanimously, condemned for heterodoxy the originator of the Antioch heresy.” At the synod a disputation was conducted by the Presbyter Malchion, the head of a school of rhetoric at Antioch in the presence of about seventy bishops gathered with Paul the bishop of Samosata with the intention of making Paul retract the purported heresy. Immediately after the condemnation and excommunication, the outcome of the council was addressed to Pope Dionysius, Maximus of Alexandria and all the provinces of the empire.²¹

There were also records of regular synods holding at Cappadocia in the third century under Firmilian of Cappadocian Caesarea (c. 200 – 260 AD). Some of the issues addressed at these synods will include the modalism heresy of Beryllus of Bostra, Novatian and Paul of Samosata. Much is not known about the person of Beryllus, other than what Eusebius mentioned. He was the bishop of Bostra in Arabia who had taught that Jesus did not pre-exist before the incarnation and that he did not have divinity of his own, rather it was the father that was dwelling in him. This is a form of modalism that had earlier been condemned severally. Origen was invited to dialogue with him and he was able to make him retract his heretical views and restored him to the faith.²²

There were also records of council of Fathers sitting at Neo Caesarea which is a city of Pontus in 315 AD. At this council, canons were promulgated some of which were accepted as ecumenical at the council of Chalcedon 451 AD. At this synod canons were adopted for the establishment of ecclesiastical orders. Of the fifteen canons, seven of them have to do with clerics. The first canon reiterates what was adopted at Elvira regarding clerical celibacy whilst the eleventh canon stipulated that the age for the ordination of a cleric is thirty. It states that: “Let not a presbyter be ordained before he is thirty years of age, even though he be in all respects a worthy man, but let him be made to wait. For our Lord Jesus Christ was baptized and began

to teach in his thirtieth year.”²³ Before now, there has not been any reference to age regarding ordination.

Conclusion

Other than the synods and councils enumerated and discussed above, there were other synods and councils that were convoked and celebrated in the ancient church and in the church of modern and contemporary era. From the above discussion it is obvious that councils and synods played a vital role in the life, development and growth of the early church. This is obvious in the various decisions and canons that were reached at the synod and councils discussed above. It is obvious that synods and councils were means of stabilizing the nascent church. They were used to teach and explain the faith of the church in better terms. They were used to foster peace and unity in the church, especially in the local Churches. These and many others are what the current synod on synodality is expected to achieve in the church in general. The Pope has called on all Catholics to journey together.

Endnotes

¹Jovian P. Lang, “Church and Liturgy”, in *Dictionary of the Liturgy*, New York: Catholic Books Publishing Corp., 1989, pp. 106-108.

²John Paul II, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Missouri- USA: Liguori Publications, 1994, 751. Henceforth: CCC & no.

³A S Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 6th Edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. This definition is the fourth and formal (especially in the past). There were other definitions of the term with regards to Council governance in Great Britain.

⁴CCC, 751.

⁵Joseph Wilhelm, “Council” in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912. Retrieved from newadvent.org, and on 29/01/2022 @ 12.45pm.

⁶*Concilio* by ch. Munier in Nuovo Dizionario Paristico e di

Antichità Cristiane, Casa editrice Marietti, Genova, 2006, p.1146-1147

⁷Fanning Williams, "Synod" in the Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 14, New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912. Retrieved from newadvent.org, and on 29/01/2022 @12.57pm

⁸Jovian P. Lang, Synod, p.606

⁹Cf. St. John Chrysostom, Homily 3

¹⁰The word ecumenical is derived from the Greek term oikoumen (oikoumene) meaning world or universe. They are usually convoked under the presidency of the Pope or his legates, involving the bishops and all those entitled. The decisions taken at such council are usually affirmed by the Pope and they are binding on all Catholics. Wilhelm Joseph Op. cit. CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA: General Councils (newadvent.org) viewed on 30/01/2022 @ 10.59am

¹¹Eusebius, *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*, trans by Williamson G.A., Penguin Books, London, 1965 (5. 16-19) pp.160-168. Montanus a neophyte to the Christian faith is the founder of the group called Montanists, he was from Phrygia a province of Anatolia. He claimed to be in the line of the succession of prophets and declared his mission to bring about a return to the simplicity of the early church and to announce the fulfillment of the prophecy Pentecost. He had two female assistants. They claimed to be under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and prophesy in ecstatic visions, urging their followers to fast and pray.

¹²These are Christians who celebrated Easter on the fourteenth day of the month of Nisan whichever day of the week that might be, that is on the day of the Jewish Passover (they celebrate at the full moon of the Passover). This was prevalent in Asia Minor and Syria. They emphasized the death of Jesus and see Jesus as the true paschal victim. Cf.: Quartodecimans | Encyclopedia.com viewed on 31/01/2022 @ 8.30pm

¹³Quasten Johannes, Patrology, vol. 1, Ave Maria Press, Indiana, p. 77

¹⁴Eusebius, Op. Cit, (5, 24), pp. 171-172

¹⁵Ibid., p. 173. Series of local councils and synods were held in Palestine, Pontius, Osrhoene in the East and Rome and Gaul in

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the West in 193 AD on the Quartodeciman controversy.

¹⁶Quasten Johannes, *Patrology II*, Ave Maria Press, Indiana, pp. 341-342

¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 342 – 343; Cyprian, *Epp.* 67 – 75; cf. Keresztes Paul, Two Edicts of Emperor Valerian in *Vigiliae Christianae*, vol. 29 no.2, North-Holland Publishing Company, June 1975, pp. 81 - 95

¹⁸At this synod the canon of the scriptures was affirmed. The record of the synod read thus: “The Canonical Scriptures are these: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua the son of Nun, Judges, Ruth, four books of Kings, two books of Paraleipomena, Job, the Psalter, five books of Solomon, the books of the twelve prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezechiel, Daniel, Tobit, Judith, Esther, two books of Esdras, two Books of the Maccabees. Of the New Testament: four books of the Gospels, one book of the Acts of the Apostles, thirteen Epistles of the Apostle Paul, one epistle of the same [writer] to the Hebrews, two Epistles of the Apostle Peter, three of John, one of James, one of Jude, one book of the Apocalypse of John. Cf. *Codex Canonum Ecclesiae Africanae*

¹⁹The Council of Arles was said to have been convoked by Constantine one year after promulgating the edict of Milan after Christianity became a legal religion in the Empire. The Council was called in order to bring an end to the Donatist heresy.

²⁰Canon 33 – “Bishops, Presbyters, Deacons and others with a position in the ministry are to abstain completely from sexual intercourse with their wives and from the procreation of children. If anyone disobeys, he shall be removed from the clerical office”. Cf.: Synod of Elvira 305 AD | Eastern Orthodoxy (easternorthodoxchristian.com) viewed on 06/03/2022 @ 1.26pm

²¹Eusebius, *Op. cit.*, VII, 27-30; Cf. Lang, U.M., The Christological Controversies at the Synod of Antioch 268/269 in *The Journal of Theological Studies*, New Series, Vol 51 no. 1, April 2000, Oxford University Press, p. 62 and Kelly J.N.D., *Early Christian Doctrines*, Continuum Press, New York, pp.117-119, 158-159.

²²*Ibid.*, VI, 33

²³Canon 11 of the Synod of Neo Caesarea, 315, cf. CHURCH FATHERS: Council of Neo Caesarea (A.D. 315) (newadvent.org) viewed on 07/03/2022 @ 8.43pm