A controversy having arisen between Victor, the thirteenth Bishop of Rome (A.D. 188-198), and the Eastern Churches respecting the observance of the Paschal season, a Council was held in this city under the presidency of its Metropolitan St. Theophilus, and his Coadjutor St. Narcissus, the fifteenth of the Gentile Bishops of Jerusalem, and the thirtieth in succession from the Apostles. 1

Cassius, Bishop of Tyre, and Clarus, Bishop of Ptolemais, also took part in the proceedings. From the fact that these two Diocesan Bishops attended this Synod at Caesarea, it is clear that the limits of the Ecclesiastical Province did not in this case coincide with the Civil Province. Geographical facilities of access sometimes made themselves more felt than the Provincial boundaries, as laid down by the Imperial Government.

It is important to remember that Pope Victor, who had no jurisdiction in the Province of Asia, at first merely requested Polycrates, the Metropolitan (Bishop of Ephesus), to exercise the authority which he possessed, and to convene the Bishops of this Province.

"It had been the practice of the Asiatic Churches to celebrate the Paschal Supper on the fourteenth day of the first Jewish month

1 St. Narcissus presided over the Church of Ælia with great reputation towards the close of the second century.
—the same day on which the Jews ate the Passover; and three
days later, without regard to the day of the week, they kept the
Feast of the Resurrection. Other churches, on the contrary, held it
unlawful to interrupt the fast of the Holy Week, or to celebrate the
Resurrection on any other day than Sunday; then Easter,
consequently, was always on a Sunday; and their Paschal Supper
was on its Eve. The Asiatic or quarto-deciman practice was traced
to St. John and St. Philip; that of the other Churches to St. Peter
and St. Paul." Robertson's History of the Christian Church, Vol. I,
p. 56. Murray, 1854.

"It is singular that the only detailed account we have of the
Acts of this Assembly has been preserved to us by our own
Bede (A.D. 672-735) in his treatise on the Vernal Equinox. . . . It
was likely that in a country where the Paschal Controversy raged
so long and so furiously as in our own, a document of this kind
should have been preserved with more than usual care: while the
ecclesiastical intercourse between Britain and the East adds a still
greater probability to the authenticity of the document.” Neale's
London: Rivingtons, 1873.1

Mr. Puller reminds us in his Primitive Saints and the See of Rome,
pp. 14-19 (Longmans, Green & Co., 1900), that under Pope Victor
we find the first beginnings of the claims of the See of Rome.
This Pope conceived the idea that the Church of Rome had the
right of coercing the Eastern Churches, and ordered them, under
pain of excommunication, to follow the Western observance of
always keeping their Easter on a Sunday. On their refusal he
excommunicated them.

2. A.D. 331—Charges Against St. Athanasius.

A second Council was summoned to inquire into the truth of
some charges brought against St. Athanasius by his enemies. It is
stated by Theodoret (H.E., I. 26) that Constantine was induced to
name Caesarea by the Arian party, who selected it because the
enemies of St. Athanasius were in a majority there. The Emperor,
however, may have given the preference to this city because he
reposed the greatest confidence in the moderation of its Bishop.

1 See “The Council of Whitby,” A.D. 664, in Dean Spence's The Church of
The Council was not held till A.D. 334, thirty months later, when St. Athanasius was further accused of being responsible for the delay. He knew too well to what party Eusebius, the Metropolitan of Caesarea, A.D. 313-340, "the Father of Church History," was inclined, to appear at this Council. On his non-appearance, proceedings, by order of the Emperor, had to be adjourned to the Council of Tyre, under the tenth Bishop (Paulinus), A.D. 335. To Tyre accordingly, in the summer, St. Athanasius went with about fifty of his Bishops Suffragan. He was condemned by default, on the most frivolous grounds by this Synod, which had no sort of jurisdiction over him, except what it obtained from the Emperor.

3. A.D. 357 or 358—Contest About Precedency between Acacius of Caesarea and St. Cyril of Jerusalem.—A Third Council was held in Caesarea.

Acacius, the pupil and biographer of Eusebius, succeeded his master as Metropolitan of Caesarea, A.D. 340.

He consecrated St. Cyril (Κύριλλος) (the author of the celebrated Catechetical Lectures) Bishop of Jerusalem, A.D. 351.

In accordance with the seventh Nicene Canon, Acacius claimed right of priority for his Metropolitan See over the See of Jerusalem, which placed the Bishop of Ælia Capitolina under his Metropolitan. St. Cyril refused to yield.

Acacius (from a personal defect known as 'Ομοφθαλμος), supported by some Palestinian Bishops, deposed St. Cyril, A.D. 357, at a small packed Synod of his own adherents.

Before the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70, Caesarea had become the civil Metropolis of Palestine. The Church, as has already been stated, followed that arrangement—the Council of Nicea, A.D. 325, having decreed as follows:

"Since custom and ancient tradition have prevailed that the Bishop of Ælia should be honoured, let him, saving its due dignity to the Metropolis, have the next place of honour."

Dr. Bright, in his first volume of The Age of the Fathers, p. 103, happily describes what occurred:

"A remarkable instance of the conformity of ecclesiastical relations to civil, is exhibited in the arrangement made with respect to the Churches of Palestine. If purely religious associations
were to decide such points, they would certainly have made Jerusalem metropolitical; but the centre of provincial government, as we learn from the Acts, was not Jerusalem, but Caesarea; and therefore, all such associations notwithstanding, the Bishop of Caesarea is acknowledged to be Metropolitan over all the Bishops in the Province, including the successor of St. James 'the Just,' the Chief Pastor of the Mother Church of Christendom, to whom 'ancient custom' gives only an honorary precedence among the Suffragans of the Metropolitan See."

Some years afterward a similar contest about this same claim was waged between Juvenal, the forty-third Bishop of Jerusalem, c. A.D. 420, and Maximus, the forty-second Patriarch of Antioch.

The ruling object of Juvenal's episcopate was to obtain the elevation of his See from the subordinate position it held under Cæsarea. The increase of pilgrimages to the "Holy City" inspired Juvenal with a not unnatural desire to make his throne truly "apostolical"—supreme in Palestine.

The question ultimately came before the Emperor Marcian, who ordered the Commissioners at Chalcedon to settle it.

At last Maximus, weary of the controversy, agreed that the three Provinces, called the "first, second, and third Palestine," should be released from their subjection to his Patriarchate, and constitute a new one, of which the Bishop of Jerusalem should be the head; and this arrangement was finally sanctioned by the Council of Chalcedon, A.D. 451.¹

   December 20th, A.D. 415.

A renewed effort to quell Pelagianism was made by two deposed Gallic Bishops, Heros of Arles, and Lazarus of Aix, who laid a formal accusation against Pelagius before a Local Council at Diospolis (the ancient Lydda), at which Eulogius, of Caesarea, Metropolitan of Palestine, presided. Fourteen Bishops were summoned, including John II, Bishop of Jerusalem, who supported Pelagius. The two accusers were absent from the hearing, owing to the illness of one of them, but a document was handed in containing the principal charges.

Pelagius confessed some of the propositions attributed to him, but he denied the sense which his accusers put upon them, maintaining that they were capable of being understood in a sense agreeable to Catholic truth.

The Council, unfortunately, was little versed in Western questions, and desired to act with moderation. As the Greek Bishops were unable to examine the writings of Pelagius critically, which were in Latin, they felt obliged to take his own word for the soundness of his views, and accordingly acknowledged his orthodoxy.

St. Augustine, after he had received a full official record of this Council, argued that Pelagius had only escaped by a legal acquittal of little moral worth, obtained by evasive explanations, and by his condemning the very dogmas he had before professed.

The fiery spirit of St. Jerome, when at Bethlehem, took an active part in his opposition to Pelagius, and he did not hesitate to speak of “the wretched Synod of Diospolis.”


A.D. 541.

At the Council of Gaza, Pelagius I (the first Pope of that name, A.D. 555–560), then a Deacon, and Roman Legate at Constantinople, was sent by order of the Emperor Justinian I, (the Great), with letters to Gaza, where Paul, the twenty-ninth Patriarch of Alexandria, had been banished. These letters ordered the deposition of Paul, which was accordingly carried out.

This local Council was attended by Peter, Patriarch of Jerusalem, Ephraim (surnamed Amadas), Patriarch of Antioch, the Metropolitan of Ephesus, and other Prelates.

The story of the fall of Paul is involved in much confusion. He was consecrated by St. Menas, Patriarch of Constantinople—this being the first instance of an Alexandrian Prelate being consecrated from the Throne of Constantinople.

ST. LUKE’S MISSION,

HAIFA-UNDER-MOUNT CARMEL,

May 10th, 1913.

1 Paul was a native of Tarsus, and had been a Monk or Abbot of the Upper Egyptian State of Tabenna, founded by St. Pachomius, c. A.D. 340. Paul only held his See for about two years, from A.D. 539–541.