

THE SILVER SHIELDS OF POPE LEO III: A REASSESSMENT OF THE EVIDENCE

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On the occasion of the sixteenth centennial celebration of the Council of Constantinople in 1981, Pope John Paul II, in a homily for a Pentecost Mass at St. Peter's Basilica, read in both Greek and Latin the article concerning the Holy Spirit in the original text of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. He affirmed the truth of the words of this creed, which "testifies to the original unity [of the church] and calls us again to rebuild full unity."¹ In keeping with this ecumenical spirit, participants in the International Congress on Pneumatology (held March 22-26, 1982), which had been convoked by the pope in honor of the anniversary celebration of this council, circulated a motion containing the following request: "that . . . in order to emphasize that the Creed of this Council is the necessary criterion of the orthodoxy of the faith of all Christians, its Greek text and its exact Latin translation be placed at the confession of St. Peter in a stable manner."²

This proposal recalls the event in 810 of Pope Leo III having the text of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed engraved on silver tablets and placed at the confessions of St. Peter and St. Paul in Rome. Leo's act is recounted in many church history textbooks by writers of all branches of the Christian faith as an act of protest, directed against those who wished to interpolate the *filioque* clause into the Creed affirmed at the Second Ecumenical Council as the standard of orthodoxy. This recent allusion to the event, in the context of ecumenical dialogue, brings to the fore once again the story of these shields, long a source of polemic between the Eastern and the Western Church.

An assortment of Latin and Byzantine texts attest to the action of Pope Leo and the presence of the silver shields in Rome in subsequent centuries. Yet a careful examination of these accounts reveals some surprising facts. Vittorio Peri has done a thorough job of surveying the evidence for these shields, and I am indebted to his work in retracing the various sources.³

My own purpose, however, is to reexamine and reevaluate this evidence, in an attempt to provide appropriate explanations for the many as yet unexplained discrepancies in the accounts. In so doing, my conclusions will at times differ from, or at least go beyond, those of Professor Peri.

The story of the shields of Pope Leo III must begin with the controversy in Jerusalem in 808, between the Greek monks of St. Sabbas Monastery and the Frankish Benedictines on the Mount of Olives.⁴ The Greek monks reproached the Franks for the twofold innovation of singing the Creed during the Mass, and adding the *filioque* clause to the text. The Frankish monks had adopted this new practice in accordance with the example of the imperial chapel. The Greeks went so far as to accuse these "innovators" of heresy. In an appearance before the Patriarch of Jerusalem, the Franks affirmed their concordance with the Church of Rome, contending that to anathematize them would be to impute heresy to the Holy Apostolic See itself. They appealed to the Roman pontiff for counsel in their predicament.⁵ Patriarch Thomas of Jerusalem also despatched a letter to Pope Leo III, seeking clarification of his position on the matter.⁶ Leo sent copies of the two letters he had received to Charlemagne, requesting that the emperor himself intervene in this affair.⁷

In November of 809, Charlemagne convoked a council at Aachen to discuss the doctrine of the double procession of the Holy Spirit, the issue at the heart of the Jerusalem controversy.⁸ Despite the paucity of information regarding the actual proceedings of this council, it seems that the *filioque* was accepted without difficulty as expressing the traditional faith.⁹ Apparently in order to obtain papal approval of the Council of Aachen, Charlemagne commissioned a delegation to travel to Rome in 810 to explain the proceedings of the Council to Pope Leo. The animated dialogue which ensued between the papal envoys and Pope Leo III served to evince Leo's position vis-à-vis the *filioque*: he agreed with the clause doctrinally, but strenuously objected to its interpolation into the Creed approved by the fathers and the ecumenical councils.¹⁰

I gave permission for the singing of the Creed, but not for the adding, subtracting or altering of the Creed while it is sung . . . For we do not sing it [in Rome] but read the Creed and in reading it we teach. Nor do we presume in our reading or teaching to add anything to the Creed by insertion.¹¹

Moreover, although he admits that he had previously allowed the Franks to sing the Creed during the Mass, Leo now advised the imperial envoys

to follow the tradition of the Roman Church.¹² Hence, they should dispense with the singing of the Creed altogether, as well as removing the *filioque*. As a palpable witness of his convictions on this issue, Leo had silver shields engraved with the original version of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, and placed at the confessions of St. Peter and St. Paul.

The earliest and most reliable account of Pope Leo III's action is recorded in his *vita* in the *Liber Pontificalis*.¹³ The information provided there has been strangely disregarded or misconstrued in the accounts of later writers, but the basic facts are as follows: Leo III, "for love and protection of the orthodox faith" had two shields engraved with the text of the Creed, one in Latin and one in Greek. These shields, weighing ninety-four pounds, six ounces each, were placed on either side "over the entrance to the body" in the Basilica of St. Peter.¹⁴ In the next paragraph of the *Liber Pontificalis*, however, we find that this same Pope Leo had a single silver shield, weighing thirty-two pounds, engraved with the words of the Creed and likewise placed "over the entrance to the body" in the Basilica of St. Paul.¹⁵ While most modern accounts mention only two shields, there are clearly three in question—two shields inscribed with the Creed in Greek and Latin in St. Peter's, and one smaller shield in St. Paul's.

Writing around 1061, Peter Damian attests by direct sight the existence of the silver shield in the Basilica of St. Paul.¹⁶ He calls it a "tabula," thereby establishing the independence of his information, and describes its position in the front part of the confession of the Apostle. Peter Damian's is also the first testimony to the actual text of the creed engraved on the shield, for he cites the ascription to the Holy Spirit. It is, indeed, a recension of the Creed without the *filioque* addition.

In his *Sic et Non* (ca. 1123) Peter Abelard describes the same silver tablet present and legible in St. Paul's.¹⁷ Here we find the additional information that the silver tablet was superimposed upon a support of wood and placed behind the altar.¹⁸ Abelard records the complete text of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed engraved on the shield. He also affirms that immediately below the creed, on the shield itself, Pope Leo III named himself as the one who had had it made and the motive behind his action: "for love and protection of the orthodox faith." In fact, this is the exact expression used in the *Liber Pontificalis* with reference to the inscribed shields placed by Leo III in St. Peter's. In three other works Abelard mentions the silver tablet in St. Paul's in much the same terms.¹⁹ His accounts also reveal an awareness of the polemical use being made of this episode,

for he reproaches the Greeks for their abuse of the Latins with regard to this affair.

The Master of the *Sentences* provides a further reference to the silver tablet in the Basilica of St. Paul.²⁰ Peri points out the probability that Peter Lombard had the text of *Sic et Non* before him, for he describes the shield in almost identical words. Moreover, Peter Lombard notes that the creed is that which is in his day sung in the mass, and mistakenly refers to it as the Nicene symbol.²¹

An eyewitness describes the shield still present in St. Paul's sometime between 1230 and 1232. Nicolo Nettareo, the Greco-Italian abbot of Casole, expressly states that he and his retinue "saw with our own eyes" this silver tablet on their journey to Rome, not long before the abbot's death in 1235. While he translates into Greek Peter Damian's text concerning the shield, he adds a note of precision that could not have been gleaned from Damian's work.²² Below the text of the creed, Nettareo writes, the words "the unworthy bishop Leo III" were inscribed.²³ This is the last extant testimony to the shields in the Occidental tradition.

The earliest Byzantine attestations of the shields in Rome, which are fundamental to all subsequent Eastern accounts, are those of Patriarch Photius (ca. 820-891). Photius first mentions the shields in a letter written to the archbishop of Aquileia in 883. Here he praises the teaching of the two Roman pontiffs, both Leos—the old, referring to Leo the Great, and the new, his emulator in the faith and a zealous defender of religion. This Leo, Photius writes,

in order to preserve the pure Creed from corruption in any way by barbarous language, declared that the Divine and Holy Trinity should be praised and preached in Greek to those in the West, as it had been decreed and read from the beginning . . . He also inscribed it on certain shields, like inscriptions on columns, and placed it before the eyes of all and affixed it to the doors of the Church.²⁴

In two later texts in his *Liber de Spiritus Sancti mystagogia*, written in the decade after 886, Photius adds a number of details to the account.²⁵ He explains that because of the poverty of the Latin language which has led to imprecise formulations and subsequent heretical divergences from the faith, Pope Leo "commanded that the Romans also recite the Creed of Faith in Greek." Moreover, Photius expressly states that the shields were inscribed with the Creed "in Greek letters and words," and that Leo

had them read in the presence of the Roman people and exposed for all to see. To further substantiate this account, he adds that "many of those who at that time saw and read them are still among the living." It also becomes clear that Photius was not referring to Leo III at all, but rather Leo IV, for he names Benedict III as his successor.²⁶ Expanding on the observation of J. Hergenroether, Peri points out that this was no mere confusion on the part of the patriarch.²⁷ Rather, Photius was referring to an entirely different historical moment: when Pope Leo IV had the already existing shields removed from their hidden location in the treasuries of the apostles Peter and Paul, and publicly read and displayed before the people of Rome.

The three anti-Latin accounts concerning the origin of the Greco-Latin schism which are most often attested in manuscripts depend heavily upon Photius with reference to the shields engraved with the Creed, but also include particulars not mentioned by the patriarch.²⁸ They all place the episode within the context of the doctrinal controversy over the procession of the Holy Spirit. Unlike Photius, these later accounts explicitly note two successive popes named Leo. Yet they agree with Photius in attributing to the second Leo the decision to draw out of the "Treasury of the Apostles" or the "sacristy" these shields already inscribed with the Creed in Greek. The shields, which are described as "bronze" in one account, were then exhibited on the doors of the Church of the Romans (St. Peter's), so that they might be read by all. Between the end of the eleventh and the beginning of the twelfth century, the relevant passages from Photius pass over into many major Orthodox ecclesiastical books.²⁹

The next Eastern source on the shields is of particular interest because of its uniqueness among the Byzantine accounts. Patriarch John Bekkos (1275-1282) makes a point of clarifying the facts which he suggests have been misconstrued by Photius and subsequent Byzantine narrations. He too writes that the shields had once lain in the treasuries of Peter and Paul and, as in one of the earlier accounts of the schism, they are made of bronze.³⁰ In Bekkos' account, however, the Creed is inscribed on the shields in both Greek and Latin.³¹ Moreover, Bekkos says that he has heard about the shields from eyewitnesses who have seen them in Rome in the same location in which Pope Leo had placed them. In another passage about the shields, he claims that the Romans still recite the Creed in Greek as well as Latin on certain occasions.³²

The final Byzantine reference to the shields, with which Peri opens his article, is especially unusual. An anonymous text, first published in 1648

by Leone Allacci, the prefect of the Vatican Library, describes the rediscovery of the shields during the journey of John V Paleologus to Rome in 1369.³³ The decidedly anti-Latin author of the passage explains that John had traveled to Rome seeking the support of Western Christians in the struggle against the Turks. Not only was he unsuccessful in this endeavor, but he even received abuse from the Latins on account of doctrinal differences. During this same journey, some of the emperor's retinue, looking for the right direction in a passageway, stumbled across one of the shields on which had been inscribed the Orthodox Creed in both Greek and Latin letters. The Latins were reportedly embarrassed by this find.³⁴ This is the last extant text which claims to document the material existence of the shields, of which no trace whatsoever can be found today.

A comparison of the sources reviewed above exposes a substantial number of discrepancies regarding the action of Leo III and the subsequent fate of the silver shields. A number of these differences are simply irreconcilable, and one is left to appraise the relative reliability of the accounts that have come down to us. By examining the contradictions in these reports, I shall attempt to clarify the facts and draw some conclusions about the true plight of the shields.

One of the first questions is that of the language in which the Creed was inscribed on the shields. Some of the accounts make no mention of the language of the epigraphic Creed, others attest that it appeared in both Greek and Latin, while Photius and the bulk of Byzantine writers imply that the Creed was inscribed in Greek only. This latter suggestion is highly unlikely since Latin was by far the dominant ecclesiastical language in ninth-century Rome.³⁵ Moreover, there was an official Latin translation of the Creed dating from the Council of Chalcedon (451).³⁶ Photius himself has only second-hand information regarding the shields, and cannot substantiate his claims by direct, personal experience. Yet even discounting Photius' comments regarding the "barbarism" and "poverty" of the Latin language, one might well question the reason why a Greek inscription of the creed would be placed in a Roman basilica. The diplomatic aspect must not be overlooked. In the wake of reciprocal accusations of heresy on the part of Frankish and Greek monks in Jerusalem, and facing the gradual weakening of the Eastern sees under the weight of the Turkish advance, Leo III may well have hoped by this juxtaposition of Greek and Latin creeds to affirm the unity and solidarity of Eastern and Western Christendom.³⁷ But another significant consideration in Leo's decision to have one of the shields inscribed in Greek may have been the fact that expatriate

Greeks comprised a notable part of the population of Rome at this time.³⁸ Whatever might have been Leo's precise motives, there is no reason to doubt the complete reliability of the *Liber Pontificalis*, which clearly states regarding the shields in St. Peter's that one was inscribed in Latin and the other in Greek.

While the existence and the basic description of these shields can be affirmed with some confidence despite the discrepancies in the accounts, their destiny is by no means as clear. Photius and those dependant upon him describe the shields as having been extracted from a hidden treasury or treasuries during the pontificate of Leo IV and placed on the doors of St. Peter's Basilica. Peri has demonstrated convincingly that these Eastern sources are actually referring to a stage in the history of the shields subsequent to the event recorded in the *Liber Pontificalis*. His implication as to the verisimilitude of these records, however, is not nearly as convincing.

Peri defends the essential reliability of these Byzantine accounts on the basis of two explanations, both of which lack substantial evidence. First, he attempts to harmonize the seemingly contradictory descriptions of the location of the shields. He identifies the *Liber Pontificalis* description of their location ("super ingressu corporis") as "a venerable and intimate hiding place, obstructed by the famous gate of iron and full of sacred vestments, precious in every sense," which Photius could quite understandably have called the "Θησαυροφυλάκιον," the room of the treasury.³⁹ As further support of this proposed harmonization of accounts, Peri refers to a medieval custom of placing professions of faith and solemn oaths of Christian princes "on the body of the Apostle."⁴⁰ Such a custom would have been known to Photius and the Byzantine authors and would have supported their conception of the initial concealed location of the shields in St. Peter's. These are interesting speculations, but are certainly not compatible with the text of the *Liber Pontificalis*, according to which the shields are placed neither in the interior of the shrine, nor "on the body of the Apostle," but rather "over the entrance to the body." In this position they would have been readily visible to the many pilgrims who approached the tomb.⁴¹

The second argument posed in defense of the Photian accounts concerns the alleged transfer of the shields to the doors of St. Peter's during Leo IV's pontificate. Peri himself admits that in the *Vita* of this pope in the *Liber Pontificalis* there is no explicit reference to such a transfer, but he maintains that otherwise well known details about Leo IV render such an act "more than likely nevertheless."⁴² During the Muslim incursion of 846 the doors of the Vatican Basilica were gravely damaged. Leo IV had these

doors lavishly renovated in silver, and Peri notes the passage in *Liber Pontificalis* which describes this restoration.⁴³ He concludes that in the plan for restoring the basilica and its badly damaged doors, "nothing could appear more functional and opportune, even financially, than the adaptation, on the new or renovated shutters, of the two massive silver panels with the inscribed bilingual creed, which from the times of Leo III had remained in the Confession of the Apostle."⁴⁴ "Functional" and "opportune" as such an act might have been, the fact remains that in the very passage of *Liber Pontificalis* which Peri cites there is no mention whatsoever of these shields. Nor is there any credible motive for such an act on the part of Leo IV. Quite the contrary, in fact, for Leo IV was a pope determined to demonstrate the primacy of the Roman Church, and his relations with the Eastern churches were far from friendly.⁴⁵

The account of Patriarch Bekkos, attesting the existence of the shields toward the end of the thirteenth century, seems at first sight to be somewhat more tenable. After all, Bekkos alone among the Byzantine writers correctly affirms that the shields were inscribed in both Greek and Latin. If one accords greater accuracy to Bekkos' account, his testimony would tend to support the theory that the shields were drawn out of an interior treasury and publicly displayed on the doors of St. Peter's by Leo IV. There are, however, other factors which must be borne in mind in appraising his record of the event. Bekkos himself had become convinced of the orthodoxy of the Latins just prior to the Second Council of Lyons in 1274, at which an official reunion of the churches had been concluded.⁴⁶ He ascended to the patriarchal dignity in Constantinople upon the resignation of Patriarch Joseph in 1275, and remained there until the separatist tendencies of a new emperor caused him to abdicate in 1282, and forced him into exile and eventual imprisonment. From his exile on the gulf of Nicomedia, Bekkos continued to launch his unionist campaign with an abundance of polemical treatises directed against ancient and contemporary adversaries. It is in precisely such a work, *Refutatio libri Photii de processione spiritus sancti*,⁴⁷ that the passage about the shields in St. Peter's occurs. The entire treatise is devoted to refuting the pneumatological errors of his patriarchal forebear, and Photius' inaccurate accounts of the shields are by no means spared in the attack. Bekkos' confident affirmation that one shield was inscribed in Latin and the other in Greek may attest his knowledge of the *Liber Pontificalis* account. In fact, before his ascension to the patriarchal see, Bekkos had served as the patriarchal archivist and clerk, and in this capacity it is likely that he had access to such documents.⁴⁸ He does not, however, provide any documentation

regarding Leo IV's putative role in the history of the shields, and seems to be drawing the information about the restoration of the shields from other Byzantine sources. As for Bekkos' assertion that the two shields were still present on the doors of St. Peter's in his own day, it must be observed that he, like Photius, cannot verify this claim by direct sight.

The latest Byzantine source, claiming to substantiate by the testimony of eyewitnesses the existence of the shields in Rome in 1369, is questionable on numerous counts. The polemical nature of the document, expressing bitterness toward Latin Christians for their refusal of aid to the imperiled Eastern Church, tends to weaken its credibility. Moreover, despite its spontaneous tone in relating the accidental discovery of one of the shields during the journey to Rome of John V Paleologus, Peri himself notes that nowhere else in the accounts and studies of this emperor's important journey is there any mention whatsoever of such a find.⁴⁹ Should the discovery have actually occurred, it is difficult to imagine that the Greek polemicists would have maintained silence on such a useful piece of evidence. Finally, the description of the shield is a further indication of the inauthentic character of the account, for it agrees neither with the Latin nor with the Byzantine sources. While the *Liber Pontificalis* clearly attests that Leo had the shields in St. Peter's inscribed with the Creed, "one in Greek letters and the other in Latin,"⁵⁰ the writer of this latest report describes only one shield on which the Creed has been inscribed in both Greek and Latin letters.

The difficulties with the Byzantine references to the two shields in St. Peter's are obvious. Yet, one might still be inclined to accept their overwhelming agreement on the later placement of the shields on the doors of the basilica, were it not for one factor: the absolute silence of all the Western sources! After the *Liber Pontificalis*, not one Occidental account from Peter Damian to Abbot Nicolo Nettario, so much as mentions the shields originally placed by Leo III over the entrance to the confession of St. Peter. These accounts, however, are consistent in their witness to the smaller silver shield in the Basilica of St. Paul. Furthermore, at least in the cases of Peter Damian and Nicolo Nettario, its presence there is verified by actual eyewitnesses.

There is no apparent polemical reason why these Western Christian writers should avoid mentioning the shields allegedly affixed to the doors of the Vatican Basilica. They all readily admit that the Creed engraved on the shield in St. Paul's is the Eastern version, devoid of the *filioque* clause. They are aware of the contentious references to the shields on the part of the Greeks, and Peter Abelard and Peter Lombard expressly reproach

them for their exaggeration of the matter.⁵¹ It would have been natural in such a context to mention the shields allegedly placed in a prominent position on the doors of St. Peter's, along with the tablet in St. Paul's. Yet, the more one considers the evidence—the silence of the Occidental sources, alongside the tendentiousness of the Eastern records of the shields in St. Peter's—the more one is drawn to this conclusion: the Western writers make no mention of the shields in St. Peter's because the shields simply were not there during the time of their writing.

The puzzling question that remains, then, is what actually happened to the Greek and Latin shields, placed by Leo III in St. Peter's, subsequent to the *Liber Pontificalis* account of them. In a passing comment, Peri refers to the event which may well resolve the dilemma.⁵² In 846 marauding Muslims invaded the city of Rome and looted the Basilicas of St. Peter and St. Paul, both of which stood unprotected outside the city walls.⁵³ While Rome had been sacked several times before, these earlier attacks do not compare in severity with the 846 incursion. The shrines of the Apostles and the treasures that lay within them were the particular object of Muslim aggression. A warning to clear these two churches of their treasures went unheeded, and the marauders did indeed plunder the shrines and most likely ravaged the very tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul. At least two accounts described the violation of the Vatican Basilica. The *Liber Pontificalis* records only that the Muslims "invaded and occupied the church of the blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles, committing unspeakable iniquities."⁵⁴ The *Annals* of Prudentius of Troyes provide a bit more detail: they "sacked the church of the blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles and bore off all the ornaments and treasures, together with the very altar which had been placed over the tomb of the said prince of the Apostles."⁵⁵

Considering such descriptions of their plundering of the church and particularly the shrine of St. Peter, it is almost inconceivable that the Muslim invaders would have overlooked or left intact the two large silver shields which hung over the entrance to the tomb.⁵⁶ While the looting of St. Paul's Basilica is not specifically depicted in these accounts, it is likely that the attack was comparable in its ferocity. In this case, the more puzzling question is how the smaller silver shield in St. Paul's managed to survive the pillage. And how can we account for its eventual disappearance?⁵⁷ While we cannot answer these questions with any certainty, we can say with confidence that this shield still stood above the entrance to the confession of St. Paul in the fourth decade of the thirteenth century. The shields in St. Peter's, on the other hand, are absent from all eyewitness accounts after the *Liber Pontificalis*.

In conclusion, then, the history of the famous Roman shields might be reconstructed as follows. In 810 Pope Leo III, in order to preserve and affirm the canonical Creed against those who sought to alter it, had three silver shields engraved with the uninterpolated form of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, that is, without the *filioque* addition. He had two of these shields, one inscribed in Latin and the other in Greek, placed over the entrance to the tomb in the Basilica of St. Peter; the other smaller shield was placed in an analogous position in the Basilica of St. Paul. In 846 the valuable silver shields in St. Peter's fell prey to Muslim plunder, and henceforth, are no longer mentioned in Western accounts. Yet these shields had, indeed, hung in the Vatican Basilica for more than thirty-five years, and the action of Pope Leo, of great polemical value, had become much acclaimed by Christians in the East. Thus, Byzantine writers from Photius onward continue to attest to the alleged presence of these shields in St. Peter's. In their accounts, however, the shields are in a new and more prominent location, supported by a new tradition, though unfortunately never substantiated by the direct experience of the writers. The single shield in St. Paul's, which somehow endured the Muslim onslaught, remained in its original location, as attested by eyewitnesses up to 1232. At a later date, perhaps during the sixteenth-century sack of Rome, it too disappeared without a trace.

While a number of questions must remain unanswered, the preceding scenario seems to concur with the facts which can be confidently affirmed. Peri has rightly noted that the controversial theological value attached to this historical event of the ninth century, has likely diverted scholars from a detached and penetrating critique of the relevant sources.⁵⁸ In his own detailed exposition of these sources, he has at times pointed out the tenuousness of certain accounts. Yet perhaps Professor Peri himself has become the victim of his ecumenical zeal.⁵⁹ In attempting to reconcile the irreconcilable, he has failed to fully evaluate the evidence he has so carefully traced. It has been the task of this study to reassess that evidence, and to pose some more satisfactory conclusions to the history of the shields of Pope Leo III.

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NOTES

1. John Paul II, Morning Homily for a Pentecost Mass at St. Peter's Basilica, June 7, 1981, in "Pentecost 1981 in Rome," *Origins* (June 25, 1981): 93. This message was prerecorded since the pope was recovering from gunshot wounds at the time. The fact that this article of the Creed was cited in both Greek and Latin, and the significance of the pope's homily, is discussed in "Relations interconfessionnelles," *Irénikon*, 54 (1981): 226-228.

2. E. Lanne, "Chronique des églises," *Irénikon*, 55 (1982): 239.

3. Vittorio Peri, "Il simbolo epigrafico di S. Leone III nelle basiliche Romane dei SS. Pietro e Paolo," *Rivista di Archeologia Christiana*, 45 (1969): 191-221.

4. The events of this controversy are known to us through three documents: a letter of the Frankish monks on the Mount of Olives to Leo III, published in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica (MGH)* (Berolini, 1887-1939), *Epistolae* V, 64-66; a letter of Leo III to Charlemagne, 66-67; and an account of the dialogue between the imperial envoys and Pope Leo III (to be discussed below). Another piece, a profession of faith beginning "Incipit symbolum orthodoxae fidei Leonis papae," in J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina (PL)*, (Paris, 1844-1866), 102, 1030-1032, also deals with this affair, but its authenticity has been seriously questioned. For an analysis of the content of these documents see Bernard Capelle, "Le Pape Léon III et le Filioque," *1054-1954: L'église et les églises* (Chevetogne, 1954), 309-322. Cf. E. Amann, *L'époque carolingienne*, Vol. 6 of *Histoire de l'église*, ed. Augustin Fliche and Victor Martin (Paris, 1937), 179-181.

5. *MGH*, *Epistolae*, V, 64-66.

6. This letter is not extant, but is mentioned in Leo's explanatory letter to Charlemagne.

7. *MGH*, *Epistolae*, V, 66-67.

8. The acts of this council are not extant, and the relevant annals for the year 809 provide only the following information: "Mense Novembrio concilium habuit [Karolus] de processione spiritus sancti, quam questionem Iohannes quidam monachus Hierosolimis primo commovit; cuius definiendae causa Bernharius episcopus Wormacensis et Adalhardus abbas monasterii Corbeiae Romam ad Leonem papam missi sunt." *Annales Regni Francorum*, in G. H. Pertz, ed. *MGH, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum* (Hannover, 1895), VI, 12.

9. Charlemagne had commissioned Theodulph of Orleans to write his treatise *De Spiritu sancto* (*PL*, 105, 239ff.) just prior to this council. J. N. D. Kelly affirms: "The delegates present approved and endorsed Theodulphus's book, pronounced

in favour of the 'filioque,' and possibly even enjoined its addition to the creed.'" J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed. (New York, 1985), 365. Cf. Amann, 182.

10. The audience which the imperial envoys had with the pope is reported "avec une évidente objectivité" (Capelle, 317) by Abbot Smagardus, one of the Frankish delegation. *MGH, Concilia aevi karolini*, T. I, Pars I (Hannover, 1906), 240-244.

11. Quoted in Richard Haugh, *Photius and the Carolingians: The Trinitarian Controversy* (Belmont, Massachusetts, 1975), 87. Haugh has translated here much of the discussion between the Frankish envoys and Pope Leo III.

12. Leo does not specify either the reason for or the occasion of his granting this earlier permission.

13. For his edition of the Vita of Leo III in the *Liber Pontificalis*, L. Duchesne has relied most heavily upon the manuscript of the cathedral of Tours, Parisinus 5516 (D). Executed before the middle of 871, this manuscript contains pontifical biographies up to that of Leo IV, whose Vita is incomplete. Duchesne notes that the age of this manuscript, completed only shortly after the events which it describes, makes it particularly valuable for establishing the text. L. Duchesne, ed. *Le Liber Pontificalis*, II (Paris, 1892), "Introduction," ii.

14. *Liber Pontificalis*, II, no. 84, 26: "Hic pro amore et cautela orthodoxe fidei fecit ubi supra scutos ex argento II, scriptos utrosque symbolum, unum quidem literis grecis et alium latinis, sedentes dextra levaque super ingressu corporis, pens. inibi lib. XCIII et unc. VI."

15. *Liber Pontificalis*, II, no. 85, 26: "fecit et super ingressu corporis scutum ex argento purissimo, in quo orthodoxe fidei symbolum scribi praecepit, qui pens. lib. XXXII." Since the language of the inscription is not mentioned, it is most probable that this single shield was engraved with the text of the Creed in Latin only.

16. Petri Damiani, *Opusculum contra errorem Graecorum de processione spiritus sancti*, II, PL 145, 635C: "Beatus etiam Leo papa in argentea tabula, quae ante sacratissimum corpus beati Pauli apostoli videtur erecta, inter caeteros suae fidei symbolas ait: 'Et in Spiritum sanctum Dominum, et vivificatorem, ex Patre procedentem, cum Patre, et Filio coadorandum et glorificandum.'" "

17. Since there is no clear evidence that Abelard was ever in Rome, it is doubtful that he was an eyewitness. Thus, his information about the shields must have been gleaned from others.

18. Blanche B. Boyer and Richard McKeon, eds., *Sic et Non: A Critical Edition* (Chicago, 1976), III, 122-123, lines 32-55: "Ex symbolo fidei quod Romae habetur post altare sancti Pauli in tabula argentea ligno superposita, quam Leo tertius fecit componi ad cautelam fidei catholicae, sicut in eadem tabula subiunctum est: Credo in unum Deum . . . Amen. Leo indignus tertius episcopus pro amore et cautela orthodoxae fidei fecit."

19. Petri Abaelardi, *Theologia christiana*, lib. IV, 122, in Eligii M. Buytaert, ed., *Corpus Christianorum*, XII (Turnholti, 1969), 326, lines 1928-1935: "Addunt etiam, ad exaggerationem impudentiae nostrae testimonium damnationis, symbo-

lum fidei quod iuxta traditionem praedictorum conciliorum Leo III Romae transcriptum in tabula posteris argentea reliquit, 'pro amore,' ut ipsemet 'et cautela orthodoxae fidei.' In quo quidem symbolo ipse quoque in processione Spiritus solum commemorat Patrem his quidem uerbis: 'Et in Spiritum Sanctum, Dominum et uiuificantem, ex Patre procedentem, cum Patre et Filio coadorandum et glorificandum,' etc." Cf. *Introductio ad theologiam*, II, 14, *PL*, 178, 1075; *Expositio symboli quod dicitur Apostolorum*, *PL*, 178, 629.

20. Petri Lombardi, *Libri IV Sententiarum studio et cura PP. Collegii S. Bonaventurae in lucem editi* I (Ad Claras Aquas, 1916), 78-79: "Addunt etiam ad assertionem suae opinionis et in testimonium nostrae damnationis de Symbolo fidei, quod secundum traditionem praedictorum Conciliorum Leo tertius Romae transcriptum in tabula argentea post altare beati Pauli posita posteris reliquit, pro amore, ut ipse ait, et cautela fidei orthodoxae. In quo quidem Symbolo in processione Spiritus solus commemoratur Pater his uerbis . . . Illud est Symbolum, quod in Missa cantatur, editum in Nicaeno Concilio, in fine cuius subiunctum est: 'Qui aliud docuerit vel aliter praedicaverit, anathema sit.'"

21. The chanting of the Creed in the mass was enjoined in Spain by the second canon of the Third Council of Toledo (589). This practice seems to have been well established in Ireland (probably via Spanish influence) in the eighth century, whence it passed to England. The singing of the Creed in the Frankish rite had been approved by Leo III, i.e. some time after 795. According to the testimony of Walafrid Strabo, Abbot of Reichenau (d. 849), this practice had become widespread among the Gauls and Germans after the deposition of the heretic Felix ("De ecclesiasticarum rerum," *PL*, 114, 947CD). The implication of his words is that this liturgical innovation was introduced to counter the threat of the Adoptionist heresy. In Rome, however, the singing of the creed was not sanctioned until a considerably later date. Abbot Berno of Reichenau claims that the practice was not adopted in Rome until 1014, when the emperor Henry II was shocked during a visit to Rome to discover that the mass was celebrated there without the recitation of the creed (Epistolae, *PL*, 142, 1060D-1061A). At that time he persuaded Pope Benedict VIII to have it henceforth sung at the mass in conformity with the rest of the Western Church. For a discussion of the evidence for the adoption of this practice throughout Western Christendom, see Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 348-367.

22. See Johannes M. Hoeck and Raimund J. Loenertz, *Nikolaos-Nektarios von Otranto, Abt von Casole*, *Studia Patristica et Byzantina*, 11 (Ettal, 1965), 107, n. 72. The chapter of Nettario's treatise *Tria syntagmata* in which the text about the shields appears is described here as a literal translation of Damian's opusculo 38 (*PL* 145, 635C).

23. *Ibid.*, 107, n. 73: "καὶ κατωτέρω (namely under the Text of the Creed) γράφεται οὕτω Λέων ἀνάξιος τρίτος ἐπίσκοπος. Καὶ ταῦτα οἰκειοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἐν Ῥώμῃ ὄντες ἐσεασάμεθα."

24. Quoted in Haugh, *Photius and the Carolingians*, 131-132. Other portions of this letter can be found in English translation, 131-139. Cf. Photius, *Epist.* XXIV, J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca (PG)*, (Paris, 1857-1866), 102, 800AB.

25. Photius, *Liber de Spiritu Sancti mystagogia*, cap. 88, PG, 102, 376–380: “Λέων ἐκεῖνος ὁ περιώνυμος . . . ἐπεὶπερ τὸ ἱερὸν τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν μάθημα πολλακίς ἢ Λατινὶς φθεγγομένη διὰ τὸ τῆς φωνῆς ἐνδεές τε καὶ τῷ πλάνει τῆς Ἑλληνίδος μὴ συνεπεκτείνεσθαι οὐ καθαρῶς οὐδ’ ἐλικρινῶς οὐδὲ περὶ πόδα τοὺς λόγους . . . διὰ δὴ τοῦτο ὁ θεόσοφος ἐκεῖνος ἀνὴρ εἰς ἐνθύμιον κατέστη . . . Ἑλλάδι γλώσση πρόσταγμα δοῦναι τὸ τῆς πίστεως ἱερὸν μάθημα καὶ τοὺς Ῥωμαίους λέγειν . . . Ὁ δὲ γε θεσπέσιος Λέων οὐ μέχρι τῶν εἰρημένων προήγαγε τὴν καλὴν ταύτην καὶ θεοκίνητον πρόνοιάν τε καὶ πράξιν ἀλλὰ καὶ γὰρ ἦσαν ἐν τοῖς θησαυροφυλακίαις τῶν κορυφαίων Πέτρου καὶ Παύλου ἐκ παλαιωτάτων χρόνων καὶ εὐσεβείας ἀνθούσης ἀποτεθησαυρισμένοι τοῖς ἱεροῖς κειμηλίαις ἀσπίδες δύο, αἱ γράμμασί τε καὶ ῥήμασιν Ἑλληνικοῖς ἔλεγον τὴν πολλακίς εἰρημένην ἱεράν τῆς ἡμῶν πίστεως ἔχθειν ταύτας ὑπαναγνωσθῆναι κατενώπιον τοῦ Ῥωμαϊκοῦ πλήθους καὶ εἰς ὄφιν ἀπάντων ἐλθεῖν ἐδικαίωσε, καὶ πολλοὶ τῶν θεθαμμένων τηρῆκαῦτα καὶ ἀνεγλωκώτων ἔτι τῷ βίῳ παραμένουσιν.”

PG, 102, 396: “Οὗτος δὲ ὁ Λέων τὸ θησαυροφυλάκιον τῆς ἀποστολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας Ῥωμαίων διανοίξας, ἀσπίδας δύο τοῖς ἱεροῖς κειμηλίαις συναποτεθησαυρισμένας ἐξήνεγκεν, Ἑλληνικοῖς καὶ γράμμασι καὶ ῥήμασιν ἐχούσας τὴν εὐσεβῆ τῆς πίστεως ἔχθειν, καὶ ταύτας ἐνώπιον ὑπαναγνωσθῆναι τοῦ Ῥωμαϊκοῦ πλήθους ἐδικαίωσεν.”

26. PG, 102, 377: “ὁ κλεινὸς βενέδικτος ὁ μετ’ ἐκεῖνον τοῦ ἀρχιερατικοῦ θρόνου διάδοχος.”

27. Peri, “Il simbolo epigrafico,” 208–210.

28. Peri, “Il simbolo epigrafico,” 212. These three brief anonymous pieces, written sometime after 1054, provide notes on the course of the Greco-Latin schism mainly in the eighth and ninth centuries. The editor describes them as “opuscula de schismatis origine . . . sed exponendae posteriorum Graecorum sententiae accomodata.” J. Hergenroether, ed., *Monumenta Graeca ad Photium ejusque historiam pertinenta* (Regensburg, 1869; rpt. 1969), “Prologomena,” 10. The following passages refer to the shields.

Opuscula II, 5, 165–66: “Ὁ μακάριος Λέων ὁ τῆς Ῥώμης . . . ἀρχιερεὺς . . . ἐν ἀπορίᾳ ἦν τὰ κατὰ τοὺς ἐξ Ἱεροσολύμων πρέσβεις ἀναμαθῶν τί ποιεῖ; ἀθροίζει πρὸς ἑαυτὸν πάντα τὸν ὑπὸ τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἐκκλησίαν πιστὸν λαὸν . . . καὶ τὸ τῶν ἀποστόλων τοῦ θεοῦ θησαυροφυλάκιον διανοίξας ἐξάγει ἐκείθεν δύο ἀσπίδας χαλκείας ἐν ἑαυταῖς γεγραμμένον ἐχούσας γράμμασιν ἑλληνικοῖς τὸ τῆς πίστεως ἡμῶν θεῖον σύμβολον, καὶ ταύτας στήσας πρὸ τῶν πυλῶν τοῦ ναοῦ πάντας ἀναγινώσκειν προσέτατε τὸν ὄρον τῆς ἀμωμήτου πίστεως τῶν χριστιανῶν, εἰς ἀνατροπὴν μὲν τῶν τὴν αἵρεσιν κηρυττόντων, εἰς στηριγμὸν δὲ καὶ βεβαίωσιν τῶν τὴν ὀρθόδοξον πίστιν ἀσπαζομένων.”

Opuscula I, 5, 158: “Ὁ πάπας Λέων τὰς ἐν τῷ σκευφυλακίῳ οὐσας ἀσπίδας ἐγκεκολλημένον ἐν ἑαυταῖς ἐχούσας τὸ ἅγιον σύμβολον ἀνεστήλωσεν ἐν τῇ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἐκκλησίᾳ εἰς ἀποτροπὴν τῶν τοιούτων [αἰρέσιωτων] καὶ στερέωμα τοῦ χριστωνύμου λαοῦ.”

Opuscula III, 9, 176: “μανθάνει ταῦτα ὁ τῆς Ῥώμης ἀγιώτατος Πάπας Λέων, λυπεῖται, ἀδημονεῖ· εἶτα τί; ἐξάγει μὲν ἐκ τοῦ σκευφυλακίου τὰς ἱεράς τοῦ θεοῦ συμ-

βόλου ασπίδας, ἅς ὁ ἀγίωτατος Λέων ὁ Πάππας ὁ τὴν στήλην τῆς ὀρθοδοξίας συγγράψας ἀπὸ τῆς τετάρτης ἀγίας συνόδου προεναπεθησαύρισε θείῳ κινούμενος πνεύματι, καὶ ἀναθέματι καθυπέβαλε τοὺς μέλλοντας μεταμιγῆσαι ἐκ τοῦ ἀγίου συμβόλου τὸ ὀποιοῦν καὶ κατὰ πρόσωπον ταύτας τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἀναστηλοῖ πρὸς τὸ ἀναγινώσκεισθαι ὑπὸ πάντων.”

29. Peri, “Il simbolo epigrafico,” 213–214.

30. Peri does not comment on the fact that the shields are spoken of as “bronze” in one of the short pieces on the schism (see above, n. 28, *Opuscula II*, 5). With regard to Bekkos’ description, he suggests that the passage of time may have caused the shields to lose their original brightness and to assume a greenish color which could easily have been confused with bronze. Peri assumes that Bekkos has heard that the shields are bronze from the eyewitnesses who have allegedly seen the shields in his own day (Peri, “Il simbolo epigrafico,” 214). However, one ought not rule out the possibility that Bekkos was drawing upon the earlier account of the schism which described the shields in these terms.

31. John Bekkos, *Refutatio photiani libri de Spiritu Sancto*, 31, *PG*, 141, 848B: “κρατεῖ γὰρ εἰς δεῦρο καὶ αἱ ἀποτεθησαυρισμένοι ἐν τοῖς Πέτρου καὶ Παύλου θησαυροφυλακίαις καὶ χαλκοῦ πεποημένοι ἀσπίδες, αἷς τὸ ἱερὸν τῆς πίστεως σύμβολον Ἑλληνιστὶ ἐγγέγραπται καὶ Ῥωμαῖστί, ἐκεῖ τῶν τόπων εἰσὶν, ὅπου ταύτας ὁ πάππας Λέων ἀπέταξε, καὶ τὸ σύμβολον καθ’ ἑκατέραν διάλεκτον, ὡς οἱ κατὰ τόπους μαθόντες ἡμῖν πεπληροφόρηκασιν, ἀπανταχοῦ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἀναγινώσκειται.”

32. *De unione Ecclesiarum et Novae Romae*, 47, *PG*, 141, 112D: “Οὐ γὰρ παρεῖδον Ῥωμαῖοι, ὅπερ ὁ πάππας Λέων ἐπὶ ταῖς ἀσπίδι ταύταις εἰργάσατο· καὶ γὰρ ἀνεστηλωμένας οὕτω τηροῦσιν ἐς δεῦρο αὐτάς, καὶ καιροῖς ἰδίαις, καὶ Ἑλληνιστὶ ἀναγινώσκειν τὸ τῆς πίστεως Σύμβολον, οὐκ ἀναβάλλονται.”

33. Leonis Allatii, *De ecclesiae Occidentalis atque Orientalis perpetua concensione libri tres* (Coloniae Agrippinae, 1648), II, 6, 582. Allacci furnishes no useful information for identifying the passage. Peri has located the passage on f. 39r-v of Codex Baber. gr. 493, copied in Venice by Hippolytus Barelis on June 29, 1549. Peri also notes that this passage is inserted, with the apparent character of a gloss, immediately after the fifth paragraph in the *textus receptus* of the treatise *De origine schismatis* edited by J. Hergenroether, op. cit. Hergenroether, however, ignores the manuscript in which the addition occurs. Peri, “Il simbolo epigrafico,” 191–3.

34. The original Greek text published by Allacci (Leonis Allatii, *De ecclesiae Occidentalis atque Orientalis perpetua concensione* . . . , II, 6, 582) is unavailable, but Peri provides an Italian translation of much of the account, “Il simbolo epigrafico,” 192–93. Peri also comments that the spontaneous and broken language of this account, along with the awkward annotation of the Catholic editor which accompanies it, tends to dispose the reader favorably toward its credibility. In fact, however, Peri’s own argument here is rather awkward and unconvincing.

35. The Latin liturgy was gradually introduced in the churches of Rome, and during the period of transition from Greek to Latin the liturgy was probably

celebrated in both languages. However, by the end of the fourth century the liturgy in Rome was completely latinized. Christine Mohrmann, *Liturgical Latin: Its Origins and Character* (Washington, D.C., 1957), 50. Although the liturgical use of Greek became increasingly rare, there were exceptional occasions when parts of the liturgy would be celebrated in both Latin and Greek, even as late as the tenth century. See Deno John Geanakoplos, *Interaction of the "Sibling" Byzantine and Western Cultures in the Middle Ages and the Italian Renaissance (330-1600)* (New Haven, 1976), 78-80.

36. "Relations interconfessionnelles," *Irénikon*, 54 (1981): 227.

37. This aspect of Leo's motivation is particularly emphasized by Peri, "La synergie entre le Pape et le Concile oecuménique," *Irénikon*, 56 (1983): 182-184.

38. Emile Mâle, *The Early Churches of Rome*, trans. David Buxton (London, 1960), 84. Discussing the profound influence of Greek refugee monks and artists on the art of the Roman basilicas of the eighth and ninth centuries, Mâle describes the considerable influx of immigrant Greeks into Rome during the 7th century Arab invasions and the later iconoclastic persecutions.

39. Peri, "Il simbolo epigrafico," 216.

40. Ibid. Peri lists several sources which refer to such a practice.

41. For a helpful drawing of the shrine of St. Peter, reproduced from a drawing by S. Rizzello in J. Ward Perkins, "The Shrine of St. Peter and Its Twelve Spiral Columns," *Journal of Roman Studies*, 42 (1952): 25, see Jocelyn Toynbee and J. Ward Perkins, *The Shrine of St. Peter and the Vatican Excavations* (London, 1956), 215. The visible "entrance to confession" is clearly marked.

42. Peri, "Il simbolo epigrafico," 217.

43. *Liber Pontificalis*, II, 127-128, nos. 84-85: "Ipse insignis praesul praecipuus, cum innumera summi dedecoris opera in basilica celesti clavigeri perfecisset, portas, infanda quas destruxerat progenies argentoque Saracena nudarat, erexit multisque argenteis tabulis lucifluis salutiferisque historiis sculptis decoravit et in meliorem speciem quam pridem fuerat reparavit; . . . et camera, quae ante portas argenteae iamdictae aulae esse conspicitur, infinito fretus amore, renovans decoravit."

44. Peri, "Il simbolo epigrafico," 217.

45. E. Amann, "Léon IV," *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* (Paris, 1923-67), IX, 314-15. It is very doubtful that such a pope would take action which might appear to affirm the Byzantine position on a controversial issue.

46. Petit, "Jean Beccos," *DTC*, VIII, 656-60.

47. Written ca. 1285. *PG*, 141, 728-864.

48. G. Hofmann has shown that Bekkos did not know Latin, but that he was responsible for the patriarchal archives in Constantinople, and had access to Latin ecclesiastical writings in Greek translation. See G. Hofmann, "Patriarch Johann Bekkos und die Lateinische Kultur," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 11 (1945): 141-64. While Hofmann does not mention the *Liber Pontificalis* in particular, Bekkos' "high esteem for the Roman popes" and the many references to them in his writings (149) support the possibility of his familiarity with this document.

49. Peri, "Il simbolo epigrafico," 191-2.

50. *Liber Pontificalis*, II, 26: "unum quidem litteris grecis et alium latinis."

51. See notes 19 and 20 above.

52. Peri, "Il simbolo epigrafico," 217.

53. For descriptions of this attack, see Toynbee and Perkins, *Shrine*, 227-9, and Engelbert Kirschbaum, *The Tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul* (London, 1959), 162-3.

54. Quoted in Toynbee and Perkins, 228, from *Liber Pontificalis*, II, 101: "ecclesiam beati Petri apostolorum principis nefandissimis iniquitatibus praecupantes invaserunt."

55. *Ibid.*, from G. H. Pertz, ed. *MGH Scriptorum*, I, (Hannover, 1826), 442: "mense augusto Sarraceni Maurique Tiberi Roman aggressi, basilicam beati Petri apostolorum principis devastantes, ablatis cum ipso altari quod tumbae memorati apostolorum principis superpositum fuerat omnibus ornamentis atque thesauris."

56. Describing the excavations of St. Peter's, Kirschbaum comments that "the absence of all objects of any worth . . . tells us what the Saracens were looking for and what presumably they discovered." Kirschbaum, 163.

57. Peri suggests the Sack of Rome (presumably that of Emperor Charles V in 1527) as the possible cause. "Il simbolo epigrafico," 220.

58. Peri, "Il simbolo epigrafico," 200.

59. Prof. Peri is a member of the Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic and the Orthodox Church.