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The Five-Part Diptych as a manifestation of orthodoxy

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V. The Five-Part Diptych as a manifestation of orthodoxy

The chapter dealing with the dating and provenience of the Milan Diptych led us to the turn of the 460s, to the milieu of the imperial residence in Ravenna and a workshop producing ivory and goldsmithing of high quality. This goldsmithing workshop produced jewellery with the *cloisonné* technique on commission for the emperor, which was found in the graves of his military allies and very likely also the central panels of the Five-Part Diptych. Nevertheless, it is not possible to label the Milan Diptych clearly as an imperial commission based on this statement. The functioning of goldsmithing, ivory and other workshops of large centres was likely based on the principle of the “free market”,²³⁰ when orders could come from the emperor, bishop, high officials and private persons. The last possibility to set the likely dating and place of creation of the Five-Part Diptych, hence to determine its significance and possible commissioner, is to read its iconographic programme.

The majority of researchers have agreed on the interpretation of the overall iconographic concept of the Milan Diptych; the Christological narrative cycle is divided into two halves to emphasize on one hand Christ’s human nature and life on Earth culminating with his final sacrifice metaphorized as the Lamb of God and on the hand his divinity and miracles²³¹ lifted by the cross, which is not a cross of suffering but a cross of victory.²³² Based on a simple reading of the iconographic scenes of the Five-Part Diptych, the absolutely crucial place of the theological debates of that time, which became a decisive period in the history of Christian doctrine, was named without noticing.²³³ That was the disputes on the dual nature of Christ leading to the convocation of the Council of Chalcedon in 451. It results were set and asserted intensely for the rest of his life by Pope Leo I the Great (440–461).²³⁴

230 Arrhenius, *Merovingian Garnet Jewellery*, pp. 17–18 and 120–126.

231 E.g. Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, 1976, p. 84; Spier (ed.), *Picturing the Bible*, pp. 16 and 256.

232 Herbert L. Kessler, *The Word Made Flesh in Early Decorated Bibles*, in: Spier (ed.), *Picturing the Bible*, pp. 141–168, esp. p. 142.

233 Peter Brown, *Pouvoir et persuasion dans l’Antiquité tardive: vers un Empire chrétien*, Paris 1998, p. 30.

234 Susan Wessel, *Leo the Great and the spiritual rebuilding of a universal Rome*, Leiden 2008.

In the chapter dealing with the functions of the Five-Part Diptych, I have endeavoured to present a hypothesis that this medium, i.e. carved ivory tablets, was perceived by Late Antique society as a representative reminder of significant events or a voucher for the position, cultivation and wealth of the commissioner, where the most luxurious preserved examples of the five-part form are of a sacral character without any exceptions. Using one example of a sacral nature (the Trivulzio Panel with the Women at the Tomb; Fig. 4), Beat Brenk convincingly showed that it was moreover able of transmitting and spreading also much deeper political or theological ideas.²³⁵ The following chapter is hence an attempt to read the iconographic scenes in the milieu of the mentioned theological disputes, whose comprehension could help us determine the possible commissioner and message that the Milan Diptych was to bear.

Atmosphere of the theological dispute on the dual nature of Christ

The argument presented above serving to set the date *post quem* and possibly explaining the emphasis on the figure of the Virgin Mary on two of the most uncommon scenes of the Milan Diptych (cat. Nos 5 and 10) is the year 431 and the first council in Ephesus. It officially declared the Virgin Mary as the mother of God (*Theotokos*)²³⁶ and in art caused an expansion of Marian iconography with a vogue of drawing from the Aprocryphal texts.²³⁷ The main question of the council, however, did not in fact affect the person of the Virgin Mary as much as the person of Christ.²³⁸

The declaration of the Virgin Mary as *Theotokos* was a consequence of the disputes evoked by the so-called Nestorian heresy. The Christological controversy was born with the accession of Nestorius of Antioch (381–451), who was raised to bishop of Constantinople by Emperor Theodosius II (408–450) in 428. The beginnings of his preaching propagating the extreme position of contemporary Syria quickly sparked an ecumenical scandal.²³⁹ Nestorius did not agree with the label of the Virgin Mary as *Theotokos*, because he believed that in fact it denied Christ's divinity. He considered Mary as the mother of only the human part of Jesus' nature.²⁴⁰ This claim was declared as a heresy by Cyril (412–444), patriarch of Alexandria, and against Nestorius' teachings

235 Brenk, Das Trivulzio, 2011.

236 André-Jean Festugiere, *Actes du concile de Chalcedoine: sessions III–VI (la définition de la foi)*, Genève 1983, p. 11.

237 Caillet, Remarques sur l'iconographie, p. 17.

238 H. E. W. Turner, Nestorius Reconsidered, *Studia Patristica* 13, 1975, pp. 306–321.

239 Giuseppe Alberigo (et al.), *Les conciles oecuméniques*, Tome 1: L'histoire, Paris 1994, p. 73.

240 Turner, Nestorius.

he wrote the so-called *Twelve Anathemas*, which were to be his formulation of orthodoxy. At the request of Cyril, Pope Celestine I (422–432) convoked the council in Ephesus in 431.²⁴¹ The result was the condemnation of this heresy and the declaration that Jesus was one, not two separate beings, as declared by Nestorius; entirely God and entirely human with soul and body; hence two substances mutually inseparable.²⁴² Mary is then *Theotokos*, because she gave birth to Christ; God and also a person.²⁴³

Although Nestorius after his condemnation retired to his monastery in Antioch, John of Antioch (429–441), Patriarch of Antioch and supporter of Nestorius doctrine, was ordered by the emperor to accept Nestorius' condemnation and its theological consequences and Cyril quietly renounced the assertion of his *Twelve Anathemas*, the relations in the eastern church, particularly between the Alexandrian and Antiochian bishoprics continued to be very tense.²⁴⁴

Among those, who respected Cyril's *Twelve Anathemas* was also the highly respected archimandrite of Constantinople Eutyches (380–456). He took Cyril's doctrine to the extreme and evoked more disputes labelled as the Monophysite heresy.²⁴⁵ Eutyches declared that Christ had only one essence: divine. He was unwilling to believe that God could appear in a fully human form.²⁴⁶ At the convocation in 447, Eutyches was accused of heresy for this claim and subjected to an interrogation by Patriarch of Constantinople Flavian (446–449). The reaction of Pope Leo I the Great to this assembly was the famous letter addressed to Flavian known as *Tomus ad Flavianum* in 449.²⁴⁷ Its contents and significance, which could be essential for the interpretation of the iconographic scenes of the Milan Diptych, will be given a separate part of this chapter.

Emperor Theodosius II and Bishop of Alexandria Dioskuros (444–457) did not accept the decision taken over Eutyches and organized their own synod. The emperor convoked a council in Ephesus in 449 and Pope Leo I the Great sent a letter in which he requested the acceptance of his rejection and the essentials of orthodox faith defined in it. Despite that, Eutyches was rehabilitated by a decision of the synod and his office was returned to him, whereas Flavian was sent into exile.²⁴⁸ The pope himself then had this council called the "synod of thieves"

241 Arnold Hugh Martin Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602: A social, economic and administrative survey*, Oxford 1986, p. 214.

242 Brown, *Pouvoir et persuasion*, p. 30.

243 Festugiere, *Actes du concile de Chalcédoine*, p. 11.

244 Brown, *Pouvoir et persuasion*, p. 30. Festugiere, *Actes du concile*, p. 31.

245 Jones, *The later Roman Empire*, p. 215.

246 Festugiere, *Actes du concile de Chalcédoine*, p. 11.

247 Ibidem.

248 Giuseppe Alberigo (ed.), *Conciliorum oecumenicorum generaliumque decreta. The Oecumenical Councils. From Nicaea I to Nicaea II (325–787)*, Turnhout 2006, p. 121.

(*latrocinium*) and refused to accept its conclusions.²⁴⁹ The council caused the victory of the Alexandrian theology, which did not last long however. Not even a year later, Emperor Theodosius II died and with the new emperor Marcian (450–457) the disputes on the essence of Christ were reopened.²⁵⁰

Marcian's ecclesiastical policy had a clear aim. The new emperor wanted his election to be ratified by the western imperial court, where Pope Leo I the Great had substantial influence. In the same way, Anatolius (449–458), the new bishop of Constantinople, also sought recognition of his new function from the pope.²⁵¹ Marcian hence had his reasons to accommodate Leo's call for a correction, but the pope did not consider it necessary to convoke another council; he wanted to avoid a new round of debates and tried to convince the emperor that the orthodox dogmas set by previous councils should not be the subject of debates. The only issue in his opinion should be the rehabilitation of the bishops sent into exile.²⁵² Despite that, Emperor Marcian convoked a council in Chalcedon, which convened on 8 October 451.²⁵³ The pope who was not present, and despite his disagreement, took control of it and the bishops in attendance were at his request to use the mentioned *Tomus ad Flavianum* as a formulation of the fundamentals of orthodoxy.²⁵⁴

Tomus ad Flavianum and the Chalcedonian Confession of Faith

If we weigh the possibility that the Milan Five-Part Diptych could be a response to the mentioned theological disputes, then for the support of this hypothesis it is only logical to use the most reliable written sources testifying on the atmosphere of the given time; the preserved sermons and correspondence of Pope Leo I the Great.

No other pope of the 5th or 6th century left such an extensive correspondence behind. This fact can be explained by the length of his papacy, but rather the renewal of the general assertion of the Council of Chalcedon and the intensive battle with the Monophysite heresy. The majority of his letters are addresses to the eastern part of the empire and are reactions to the above-mentioned synods (in 447, 449 and 451). Of 143 preserved letters, 115 are addressed to the East and 112 of them are marked as dogmatic. As against that, there are only 17 decrees sent by bishops to the West. More so than theological matters, these deal with the discipline

249 Alberigo (ed.), *Conciliorum oecumenicorum*.

250 Jones, *The later Roman Empire*, p. 216.

251 Ibidem, p. 219.

252 Norman P. Tanner, *Decrees of the ecumenical councils*, Vol. 1, Nicaea I to Lateran V, London 1990, p. 75.

253 Ibidem, pp. 75–76; Alberigo (ed.), *Conciliorum oecumenicorum*, p. 121.

254 Tanner, *Decrees of the ecumenical councils*, pp. 75–76.

of the clerical office and the problems that can arise with heretical movements.²⁵⁵ From what we know of the distribution of Leo's letters, particularly on the above-mentioned *Tomus*, we can anticipate that various series of letters and decrees were in circulation not only during his life but were repeatedly cited by his successors for their general validity. We can find references to *Tomus* for instance in the correspondence of Pope Simplicius (468–483), Vigilius (537–555) or Pelagius II (579–590)²⁵⁶ and testifies to us on the strong influence of the papal letters on the theological thought of the given time in general.

The dogmatic letter of Pope Leo I the Great to the patriarch of Constantinople Flavian about Eutyches from 13 June 449 hence is not only a reaction to the specific event. It is primarily a formulation of Christology as understood by Leo I the Great; as connection of Divine glory and human weakness:²⁵⁷

“The birth of flesh reveals human nature; birth from a virgin is a proof of divine power. A lowly cradle manifests the infancy of the child; angels' voices announce the greatness of the most High. Herod evilly strives to kill one who was like a human being at the earliest stage the Magi rejoice to adore on bended knee one who is the Lord of all. And when he came to be baptised by his precursor John, the Father's voice spoke thunder from heaven, to ensure that he did not go unnoticed because the divinity was concealed by the veil of flesh: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (...) Hunger, thirst, weariness, sleep are patently human. But to satisfy five thousand people with five loaves; to dispense living water to the Samaritan woman, a drink of which will stop her being thirsty ever again; to walk on the surface of the sea with feet that do not sink; to rebuke the storm and level the mounting waves; there can be no doubt these are divine.”²⁵⁸

For Leo, the church lives and grows in the faith that as humanity is not without Divinity, so Divinity is not without humanity (e.g. Sermon 51).²⁵⁹ Leo's letter was generally known, because it was mentioned directly in the Chalcedonian Confession as he wished which defined the idea of the two natures of Christ

255 Detlev Jasper; Horst Fuhrmann, *Papal letters in the early Middle Ages*, Washington D. C. 2001, pp. 42–43.

256 Ibidem, pp. 43–44.

257 In: Tanner, *Decrees of the ecumenical councils*, pp. 77–82.

258 „*Nativitas carnis manifestatio est humanae naturae, partus virginis divinae est virtutis indicium; infantia parvuli ostenditur humilitate cunarum, magnitudo altissimi declaratur vocibus angelorum. Similis est rudimentis hominum quem Herodes impie molitur occidere, sed dominus est omnium quem magi gaudent suppliciter adorare. Iam cum ad praecursoris sui Iohannis baptismum venit, ne lateret quod carnis velamine divinitas tegetetur, vox patris de caelo intonans dixit: hic est filius meus dilectus, in quo mihi bene conplacui.* (Matt. 3:17) (...) *Esurire sitire lassescere atque dormire evidenter humanum est, sed quinque panibus quinque milia hominum satiare* (Matt. 14:17–21) *et largiri Samaritanae aquam vivam, cuius haustus bibenti praestet ne ultra iam sitiatur* (John 4:14), *supra dorsum maris plantis non desidentibus ambulare* (Matt. 14,25) *et elationes fluctuum increpata tempestate consternere sine ambiguitate divinum est.*“ in: Tanner, *Decrees of the ecumenical councils*, pp. 79–80. Translation from <https://www.ewtn.com/faith/teachings/incac1.htm>; accessed on 23 April 2014.

259 Léon I/3, p. 88.

God and man as orthodox.²⁶⁰ This, however, was never accepted by part of the Eastern Empire, chiefly Egypt and some areas of Syria.²⁶¹

The religious opposition between the Monophysites and the rest of the Empire deeply divided the church and until the 7th century the policy of every emperor will be to seek an impossible compromise.²⁶² Although the resolution of the Council of Chalcedon meant a separation of the non-Chalcedonian churches, the ideology of ecclesiastical unity continued. Imperial Rome fell apart and the Monophysite crisis showed the urgency of giving the church a tighter hierarchy, capable of avoiding collapse.²⁶³ Leo achieved this through his correspondence with the western and eastern imperial courts, the other bishops and through his sermons. “It would not be hyperbole to say that his long-term conception of the unified church survived the physical reality of its schism.”²⁶⁴ To reach this goal, Leo used the instruments valid in the church already since the second century; asserting the primacy of the bishop of Rome as the successor of St Peter.²⁶⁵ In the sermons, the very often emphasized superiority of the Roman episcopal seat is the second most important point of Leo’s policy.²⁶⁶

Leo’s Ideology of Christian Unity and the Primacy of Rome

Leo was appointed the bishop of Rome on 29 September 440.²⁶⁷ He called himself “*diem fecit divina dignatio*” in his second sermon at the episcopal consecration (Sermon 93).²⁶⁸ From that day, each year the bishops would assemble around its pastor in celebration and memorial of this event in the feast called *dies natalis*.²⁶⁹ The commemoration of this day “affects the happiness of all and through the annual celebration of the pastor, we venerate the entire flock” (Sermon 95).²⁷⁰ Establishing a celebration of the anniversary of the

260 Tanner, *Decrees of the ecumenical councils*, pp. 75–76.

261 Klaus Schatz, *La primauté du Pape: son histoire des origines à nos jours*, Paris 1992, p. 79.

262 Jean-Michel Spieser, *L’empire byzantin de Constantin à la veille de l’iconoclasme*, in : Danielle Gaborit-Chopin (ed.), *Byzance, l’art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises*, Paris 1992, pp. 24–29, esp. p. 26.

263 Gilbert Dagron, *Constantinople, la primauté après Rome*, in: Elia Febronia, *Politica retorica e simbolismo del primato: Roma e Costantinopoli (secoli IV–VII): atti del convegno internazionale (Catania, 4–7 ottobre 2001)*, Catania 2002, p. 26.

264 Wessel, *Leo the Great*, p. 345

265 Ibidem, pp. 286–287.

266 Philippe Henne, *Léon le Grand*, Paris 2008, p. 25.

267 Ibidem, p. 23.

268 Léon I/4, p. 249.

269 Henne, *Léon le Grand*, p. 23.

270 „*Intelligitis hujus diei recursum ad communem laetitiam pertinere, et honorem celebrari totius gregis per annua festa pastoris.*“ in: Léon I/4, p. 265.

consecration of Pope Leo purposefully underlined the superiority of the Roman episcopal seat.²⁷¹ The tradition of the church had already been an apostolic tradition since the 2nd century, in which the bishop of Rome was raised above the other bishops through the unbroken chain of followers of Sts Peter and Paul. Following this argument, the primate of the apostolic Roman seat was always valid.²⁷² At the time of Leo I the Great, this doctrine was already solidly rooted. Yet, despite his great interest in preserving the primacy, nowhere in his letters or sermons did he recite the genealogy of the Roman seat, as did Irenaeus or Augustine. His original contribution was to make the past present not only by repeating the doctrine of succession but the direct connection of the bishop of Rome with the person of St Peter, whom Leo considered to be present “in the person of his lowness”. Christians were to understand his teaching as equivalent to Peter’s and consider Peter to be present in them,²⁷³ precisely as the fathers at the Council of Chalcedon accepted Leo’s letter with the famous proclamation: “Peter spoke through the mouth of Leo”.²⁷⁴ In Leo’s sermons, the frequent reference to the superiority of the Roman episcopal see, it seems, had its clear aim: to strength the necessary hierarchy in the church at a time of the disintegrating empire and at a time of still strong Monophysite heresy. It is also explicable, chiefly thanks to one of the results of the Council of Chalcedon, which is the famous Canon 28.²⁷⁵ It recognizes the same privileges for the seat in Constantinople as the Roman seat held, calls it the “new Rome” and expands its authorities over other territories. The canon was officially refused by the pope and his representatives and never adopted.²⁷⁶

Canon 28

The canon raised sensitive questions of the relation of Rome and Constantinople, on the size and activity of papal authority in the Empire and on various strategies by which Christian unity would be achieved by a shared ideology.²⁷⁷ We do not

271 Henne, *Léon le Grand*, p. 23.

272 See in more detail on the Roman primus in: Michele Maccarrone, *Apostolicità, episcopato e primato di Pietro: ricerca e testimonianze dal II al V secolo*, Roma 1976; Philip A. MacShane, *La romanitas et le pape Léon le Grand: l'apport culturel des institutions impériales à la formation des structures ecclésiastiques*, Tournai 1979; Schatz, *La primauté*, 1992.

273 Wessel, *Leo the Great*, pp. 287–288.

274 Schatz, *La primauté*, p. 76.

275 For a more detailed interpretation of this canon, see in: André de Halleux, *Les deux Rome dans la définition de chalcédoine sur le prérogatives du siège de Constantinople*, in: Idem (ed.), *Patrologie et oecuménisme: recueil d'études*, Louvain 1990, pp. 504–519 and Idem, *Le décret chalcédonien sur les prérogatives de la nouvelle Rome*, in: Idem (ed.), *Patrologie*, pp. 520–555.

276 Schatz, *La primauté*, p. 78.

277 Wessel, *Leo the Great*, p. 298.

know for certain if this canon was aimed only against Alexandria or directly against Roman primacy. This provision was justified by the Chalcedonian resolution chiefly by the presence of the emperor and senate in Constantinople. Hence, the role of the emperor as the head of Christianity was indirectly confirmed, when the importance of the episcopal seat depended on his presence.²⁷⁸ In this, it set a political principle against the undoubted apostolic church, but according to Leo Rome retained the ecclesiastical dignity coming from Sts Peter and Paul and not because it is the capital city of the empire and its political centre.²⁷⁹ The theory of apostolic succession, which had developed in the past centuries into a well-articulated ideology, thus probably became a theoretical basis, through which Rome mobilized the episcopal seats of the West and East against Constantinople at times when it wanted to use special privileges.

Ravenna and Roman Primacy

Until the move of the Milanese court to Ravenna in 402, this port city had been under the strict jurisdiction of the pope, but soon its secular importance as the imperial residence gave rise to the importance of its bishop. The Ravennan church began to establish itself as a metropolis with several dependent dioceses.²⁸⁰ This change was likely completed around 430, evidently with the consent of Rome.²⁸¹ The resolution of Emperor Valentinian III, which granted the bishop of Ravenna a pallium and metropolitan authority, named 14 suffragan bishops.²⁸² It seems that the emperor and pope granted this title to the bishop of Ravenna despite the opposition of the bishop of Milan, whose authority was thus significantly and purposefully limited.²⁸³ The promotion in the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the prestige of the ecclesiastical see was enhanced by the episcopacy of the famous Peter Chrysologus (431–451).²⁸⁴ Step by step, Ravenna hence became a metropolis, whose authority had to be respected also by the bishop of Rome.²⁸⁵ The authority of the metropolis

278 Dagron, Constantinople, p. 27.

279 Schatz, *La primauté*, p. 78.

280 Vincenza Zangara, Una predicazione alla presenza dei principi: la chiesa di Ravenna nella prima metà del se. V., *Antiquité tardive* 8, 2000, pp. 265–304, esp. pp. 298–304; Deliyannis, *Ravenna in late antiquity*, p. 84.

281 René Massigli, La création de la métropole, ecclésiastique de Ravenne, *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'École Française de Rome* 31, 1911, pp. 277–290.

282 Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis, *Agnellus of Ravenna. The Book of Pontiffs of the Church of Ravenna. Medieval Texts in Translation*, Washington 2004, p. 4.

283 Zangara, Una predicazione, 2000; Deliyannis, *Ravenna in late antiquity*, p. 84.

284 Deliyannis, *Ravenna in late antiquity*, p. 41.

285 Henne, *Léon le Grand*, p. 73.

enclined inter alia supervision of the election of the bishops of the suffragan dioceses, confirmation and consecration of their functions, resolution of conflicts that appeared between them and convocation of the synods.²⁸⁶

In the second quarter of the 5th century, Bishop of Ravenna Petr Chrysologus actively engaged with Empress Galla Placidia (392–450) in the building and furnishing of churches in Ravenna and in his sermons often prayed for the cooperation of the rulers and the Church.²⁸⁷ He was also active in church policy and was particularly included in the affairs of the condemnation of Eutyches as a heretic at the Council of Chalcedon. It is proved for us by a letter that he wrote at the end of his life at the request of the pope to Eutyches.²⁸⁸ He had a common interest with the empress; to make Ravenna famous by founding churches and open propagation of religious orthodoxy at a time of the expanding Monophysite heresy. The Empress noted her position at the mentioned second council in Ephesus that took place in 449 in a letter addressed to Emperor Theodosius II with the support of Pope Leo I the Great. She was in close contact with the pope and other than the patronage of Ravennan churches she participated in the decoration and renovation of the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls and the Basilica of the Holy Cross in Rome.²⁸⁹ After moving the imperial court from Ravenna to Rome in 440,²⁹⁰ the main authority in the city became the bishop. After the death of Peter Chrysologus, Bishop Neon (450–473) acceded to the Ravennan episcopal seat.²⁹¹ His pontificacy includes the decoration of the Baptistry of the Orthodox, which I used as a stylistically similar comparison for the Milan Diptych and the time of the reign of Emperor Majorian, when there was an active workshop in Ravenna, from whose production also the Five-Part Diptych likely comes.

The rivalry between Ravenna and Rome is one of the most important points of Agnellus' *Liber pontificalis ravennatis*.²⁹² It can, however, be a similar historiographical construct like his claim that Ravenna was the capital city of the Western Empire. As has already been said, we do not know much more about Ravenna in the 5th century than Agnellus. From the evidence presented by Ivan Foletti, it is clear that Ravenna e.g. showed its independence through

286 Henne, *Léon le Grand*, p. 74.

287 Saint Peter Chrysologus, *Selected Sermons*, translated by William B. Palardy, vol. 2., The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation (Patristic Series) 109, Washington 2004.

288 Wessel, *Leo the Great*, p. 276; Deliyannis, *Ravenna in late antiquity*, p. 85

289 Leslie Brubaker, *Memories of Helena: Patterns of Imperial Female Matronage in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries*, in: Liz James (ed.), *Women, Men and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium*, London 1997, pp. 52–75, esp. pp. 53–61.

290 Deliyannis, *Ravenna in late antiquity*, p. 49.

291 *Ibidem*, p. 85.

292 *Ibidem*, p. 6.

an altered Christening liturgy,²⁹³ but it does not arise from the preserved letters mentioned above and the unequivocal patronages of Galla Placidia that it tried in some way to delimit Rome fundamentally in terms of power or ideology in substantial issues. Peter Chrysologus in his sermons often expressed his sympathy for the empress and her family and praised them for their activity in the disputes concerning topical theological issues. Also in the case of Bishop Neon, who quite clearly wanted to build on his famous predecessor, compared in the period sources with Augustine or Ambrose,²⁹⁴ it is rather possible to seek indirect evidence that he actively participated in Leo's ideology of a unified Church recognizing the primacy of Rome. They are practical reasons and Neon's artistic patronage, where I propose to include also the Milan Five-Part Diptych.

Bishop Neon

Although the bishop of Ravenna was the metropolitan of the area of Emilia, he was in a peculiar position. In a certain way he remained subject to the pope; he is elected by him and is a member of the synod during the mentioned celebration of the consecration of the bishop of Rome *dies natalis*.²⁹⁵ However, besides that, it seems that it was also comfortable for the bishop of Ravenna to be subject to the pope. Large North Italian towns like Milan, Aquileia and Ravenna were threatened with invasions by nomads at the time of the reign of Pope Leo I the Great. The stability, that Rome provided by insisting on the doctrine maintaining the testament, discipline and church hierarchy was a comfortable resolution at a time of social unrest caused by the invasions controlling the region.²⁹⁶ The evidence for us can be a letter from 24 October 458, which Leo the Great addressed to Neon. It is an answer to the bishop's request for advice on how to act in the problematic issue concerning children born in slavery, who were not sure if they had been baptised or not or how to deal with accepting Arian baptism.²⁹⁷ This two-way correspondence is proof that in practical issues Neon relied on the authority of the bishop of Rome and that was in active contact with him.

The bishop of Milan was also inclined towards Leo's Christology, although for a different reason. In Milan, 19 bishops supported the denunciation of Eutyches, approved the *Tomus* and decided that Leo's Christology was identi-

293 Foletti, Saint Ambroise.

294 Kostof, *The orthodox*, p. 3.

295 Henne, *Léon le Grand*, 2008, p. 77.

296 Wessel, *Leo the Great*, p. 135.

297 Henne, *Léon le Grand*, p. 79.

cal with Ambrose's, because the *Tomus* arose from the teaching on the incarnation, which Ambrose had written against the Arians. Since it was a repeat of the Christology that was ideologically close to the bishop and cleric of Milan, agreeing to the *Tomus* was not any obstacle for them.²⁹⁸

Besides the already mentioned Baptistry of the Orthodox, the construction of part of the episcopal palace at the cathedral of the so-called *quinque accubita* and its fresco decoration, known today only from Agnellus' descriptions, are also among the numerous artistic patronages of Neon. It was a *triclinium*, hence a joint refectory with representative functions. Dining rooms of this type were typical for aristocratic residences and palaces.²⁹⁹ Neon's *triclinium* was built at a time when the imperial palace in Ravenna had already been unused for a long time or used only with breaks. Neon, at that time already the main authority of the city, thus endeavoured to imitate and perhaps even compete with the imperial palace.³⁰⁰

The decoration of Neon's *triclinium* is not unimportant if we discuss the relation of the bishop of Ravenna to Rome, because the decorative programme of the unpreserved decoration of the Basilica of St Peter in Rome and the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls was repeated there.³⁰¹ The unpreserved extensive cycle of frescoes once decorating the walls of the nave of the Basilica of St Peter were certainly some of the most important and most significant narrative paintings of the Middle Ages. We know them today only from the aquarelles made during the demolition of the building in 1606 by Domenico Tasselli and from the descriptions by Jacopo Grimaldi.³⁰² Their dating is disputable and is from about 360³⁰³ until the time of the pontificate of Leo I the Great.³⁰⁴

298 Wessel, *Leo the Great*, p. 134.

299 For more on Neon's Triclinium, see in: Adolf Weis, *Der römische Schöpfungszyklus des 5. Jahrhunderts im Triclinium Neons zu Ravenna, Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte: Supplementheft* 30, 1966, pp. 300–316; Giovanni Montanari, *Iconologia del ciclo musivo del ravenne „Triclinium neonianum“*, *Studi romagnoli* 44, 1997, pp. 207–244; Maureen Catherine Miller, *The Bishop's Palace: Architecture and Authority in Medieval Italy*, Ithaca 2000, pp. 23–27. In Late Antiquity, the triclinium became a relatively independent architectural structure with a distinctly representative function, see in: Clementina Rizzardi, *L'Episcopio di Ravenna nell'ambito dell'edilizia religiosa occidentale ed orientale dal Tardoantico all'Alto Medioevo: gli ambienti di rappresentanza*, *Atti e memorie. Deputazione di storia patria per le provincie di Romagna LV*, 2005, pp. 147–175.

300 *Ibidem*.

301 Herbert L. Kessler, *Studies in pictorial narrative*, London 1994, p. 395; Herbert L. Kessler, *Old St. Peter's and church decoration in medieval Italy* (Collectanea / Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, Spoleto 17), Spoleto 2002, p. 53.

302 *Idem*, entry Copy of the frescoes of S. Paolo fuori le mura, in: Kurt Weitzmann (ed.), *Age of spirituality*, pp. 489–490; More about the aquarelles in: Herbert L. Kessler, *Old St. Peter's*, pp. 47–48.

303 Jean-Michel Spieser, *Le décor figuré des édifices ecclésiastiques*, *Antiquité tardive* 19, 2011, pp. 95–108, p. 106.

304 Manuela Viscontini, entry I cicli vetero e neo testamentari della navata di San Pietro in Vaticano, in: Maria Andaloro, Serena Romano (eds), *La pittura medievale a Roma, 312–1431: corpus e atlante*, Corpus, Volume I

In the same way, we only know the frescoes of the nave of the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls, where the narrative programme from the Basilica of St Peter was repeated,³⁰⁵ from the pen-and-ink drawings and aquarelles made in 1635 by Antonio Eclissi for Cardinal Francesco Barberini.³⁰⁶ Not even their dating is clear. The range of the proposals of their dating begins in the period of the construction of the basilica at the end of the 4th century, but Jean-Michel Spieser allows also for the possibility that the cycle could have been restored fifty years later at the time of Leo I the Great. It does not seem likely to him that the original frescoes came from that late as is believed by for instance Manuela Viscontini.³⁰⁷

Thanks to Agnellus' descriptions, we know that just like in the *triclinium* in St Peter's there were depictions of the Flood, Creation of the World, a story from Christ's life when He feeds five thousand people with five loaves of bread and two fish and the story of the apostle Peter.³⁰⁸ The composition of the named images in chronological order telling the story of Christ or the apostle using the models of illuminated painting as arises from the studies by Kurt Weitzmann and Herbert Kessler,³⁰⁹ is a method of narration that was possible to see in the 5th century only in the Roman churches of St Peter and St Paul Outside the Walls. Elsewhere, already only on the ivory monuments considered as the closest iconographic parallels to the Milan Diptych,³¹⁰ as we will see below. The decision of Bishop Neon to have his *triclinium* decorated following the Basilica of St Peter can be another piece of evidence that he took part in the spread of the two above-mentioned political and theological aims of the pope in Rome; the preservation of the unity of the church recognizing Roman primacy in the person of St Peter and the spread of the orthodox faith with the use of models appearing at his time only in Rome.

(L'orizzonte tardoantico e le nuove immagini), Milano 2006, pp. 411–415, esp. p. 411; Herbert L. Kessler proposes the most likely hypothesis based on written sources that the cycle of frescoes is from about 400. in: Kessler, *Old St. Peter's*, pp. 49–50.

305 Spieser, *Le décor figuré*, p. 106.

306 Manuela Viscontini, entry I mosaici i dipinti murali esistenti e perduti di San Paolo fuori le mura, in: Andarolo, Romano (eds), *La pittura*, pp. 367–409, esp. p. 372.

307 Ibidem.

308 Agnellus of Ravenna, pp. 132–133.

309 Kurt Weitzmann, Narration in Early Christendom, *American Journal of Archaeology* 61/1, 1957, pp. 83–91, esp. p. 88; Herbert L. Kessler, Narrative Representations, in: Weitzmann (ed.), *Age of spirituality*, pp. 449–512, esp. p. 450.

310 Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, 1976, p. 84.

Interpretation of the iconography of the Milan Diptych

The beauty and complexity of the Milan Diptych, its function, dating and provenience lead us to an attempt for a clear interpretation of the meaning of the images used from the life of Christ and the Virgin Mary. To clarify the theological milieu in which Bishop of Ravenna Neon lived and his relation to the pope in Rome, it is at this point unavoidable to endeavour to use the preserved sermons of Leo I the Great for reading the narrative scenes of the Milan Diptych. For us, they are irreplaceable historical, liturgical and doctrinal documents.

Seeking a single iconographic meaning of the pensive commissioner for the use of Leo's texts, however, would, in my opinion, be a misunderstanding of Late Antique art, where only an image could evoke more meanings and associations. As shown by Henry Maguire, not only the art but also the early Christian exegesis was based on the concept that any Biblical passage could be interpreted in various ways. If Christian exegetes attributed more meanings to God's word, they certainly expected that also religious images could be multivalent, i.e. that there is more than one way to read it. Also, the idea that the viewer could consider images and give it his/her own associations was likely directly planned by the creators of the religious decorative programmes.³¹¹ Moreover, Leo's theological positions were not original. In Christological issues, he built on the teachings of Augustine, Ambrose or John Cassian. He did not copy any of them, but selectively integrated their theological views and gave them new meanings for strengthening and spreading the orthodox faith at a time when the unity of the church was seriously disrupted by heresies.³¹²

However, despite this care in approaching the reading of the Milan Diptych, we can still encounter means of the spread of orthodoxy by Leo I the Great in the already cited letter to the patriarch of Constantinople Flavian and the Milanese scenes can be easily derived from it: Nativity ("The birth of flesh reveals human nature.") Murder of the Innocents ("Herod evilly strives to kill one who was like a human being at the earliest stage."), Adoration of the Magi ("Magi rejoice to adore on bended knee one who is the Lord of all.") and Christ's miracles of which "there can be no doubt these are divine" Leo I the Great uses them as buttresses of his orthodox teachings not only in the *Tomus*, but also in many of her sermons (e.g. Sermons 33,³¹³ 51,³¹⁴ 78³¹⁵). Can it be an accident that precisely these scenes are the subject of the four horizontal panels which because of their size have at first glance greater importance than the others?

311 Henry Maguire, *Earth and ocean: the terrestrial world in early Byzantine art*, University Park 1987, pp. 8–15.

312 Deliyannis, *Ravenna in late antiquity*, p. 211.

313 Léon I/2, pp. 151–161.

314 Ibidem, pp. 84–89.

315 Ibidem, pp. 121–129.

In reading Leo's sermons, however, it seems that it is not possible to agree with the researchers who have labelled the panel with the lamb as a manifesto of humanity and the panel with the cross as the manifesto of the divinity of Christ.³¹⁶ The above-mentioned multivalent nature of Biblical exegeses can be seen also in the sermons of Leo I the Great. He explains the four main scenes of the Milan Diptych in other places in a double way, inseparately, just like he understood the dual nature of Christ, as for instance in a sermon given at Lent:

“Assign to the man that He is born a boy of a woman: assign to God that His mother's virginity is not harmed, either by conception or by bearing. Recognize the form of a slave enwrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger, but acknowledge that it was the Lord's form that was announced by angels, proclaimed by the elements, adored by the wise men. Understand it of His humanity that he did not avoid the marriage feast: confess it Divine that he turned water into wine. Let your own feelings explain to you why He shed tears over a dead friend: let His Divine power be realized, when that same friend, after mouldering in the grave four days, is brought to life and raised only by the command of His voice.” (Sermon 46).³¹⁷

Leo's sermon above and many other rather lead us to an understanding of the Milan Diptych as one compact concept, as a unified statement of Christ's divinity and humanity as set out by the Chalcedonian confession of faith; “unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.”³¹⁸

The dominant scene of the Adoration of the Three Magi is also an example of this dual reading (cat. No. 3). In early Christian art, this episode is not a description of the story from the childhood of Christ, but a more fre-

316 E.g. Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, 1976, p. 84; Spier (ed.), *Picturing the Bible*, pp. 16 and 256.

317 „*Da homini quod de muliere puer nascitur; da Deo quod nec conceptu laeditur virginitas materna, nec partu. Formam servi obvolutam pannis, jacentem in praesepe cognosce; sed annuntiatam ab angelis, declaratam ab elementis, adoratam a magis formam Domini confitere. Humanum intellige, quod non declinavit nuptiale convivium; divinum approba, quod aquam convertit in vinum. Nostra tibi innotescat affectio, cum mortuo amico fletus impenditur; divina potentia sentiatur, cum idem post quatruiduanam jam faetidus sepulturam, solo vocis imperio vivificatus erigitur.*“ in: Léon I/2 pp. 155–157. From <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/360346.htm>; accessed on 25 April 2014.

318 „(...) *immutabiliter, indivise, inseparabiliter agnoscendum, nusquam sublata differentia naturarum propter unionem magisque salva proprietate utriusque naturae et in unam personam atque subsistentiam concurrente, non in duas personas partitum sive divisum, sed unum et eundem Filium unigenitum Deum Verbum dominum Iesum Christum* (...)“ in: Tanner, *Decrees of the ecumenical councils*, p. 85. <http://carm.org/christianity/creeds-and-confessions/chalcedonian-creed-451-ad>; accessed on 25 April 2014.

quent symbol, the recognition and veneration of his Divinity detected by the three earthly wisemen.³¹⁹ Leo the Great, however, for fear of protecting the doctrine of the dual nature of Christ places special emphasis on their gifts, which he again joins in one human and divine: “The incense they offer to God, the myrrh to Man, the gold to the King, consciously paying honour to the Divine and human Nature in union” (Sermon 31).³²⁰ The Magi saw and could attest with their own eyes that it was a child in all of the vulnerability of his age. Yet from this moment the power of the Word began to act in that through him all people could go to the heavenly kingdom as had happened in the case of the Holy Innocents.³²¹

The central panels also support this dual reading. The lamb set in the wreath of wheat, olives, grapes and other fruits symbolize Christ’s perpetual sacrifice in the Eucharist, the culmination of his life on Earth.³²² The precious stones placed in the cross stand in the background with two columns supporting an architrave with hanging tied curtains. The cross stands on a hill representing paradise, from which the four rivers of paradise flow. It is an allusion to Christ’s victory over death and eternal redemption of mankind in the world where to come. Within the multivalent interpretation, however, the doors with the curtain in the background of the cross can send the message that Christ’s physical sacrifice allows the faithful to enter the temple thanks to his human sacrifice: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh” (Hebrews 10,19–20).³²³

If we understand this dual reading of the main scenes and the central panels of the Milan Diptych, the other scenes seem to be rather a reinforcement and supplementation of this doctrine leading to the clarification of the mentioned theological idea. They are not a chronological narration from the life of Christ, but rather a series of symbolic images leading the viewer to seek a deeper meaning of what is explicitly presented by the four main scenes.³²⁴ Many visual depictions of the Biblical stories in Early Christian art are more guidelines than specific illustrations. Their selection, composition

319 Louis Réau, *Iconographie de l’art chrétien*, Tome II, *Iconographie de La Bible II, Nouveau Testament*, Paris 1957, p. 246.

320 “*Thus Deo, myrrham homini, aurum offerunt regi, scienter divinam humanamque naturam in unitate venerantes.*” in: Léon I/1, p. 215. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/360331.htm>; accessed on 25 April 2014.

321 Léon I/1, p. 28.

322 Kessler, *The Word*, in: Spier (ed.), *Picturing the Bible*, p. 142.

323 For more on this iconography, see in: Herbert L. Kessler, *Through the Temple Veil: The Holy Image in Judaism and Christianity*, *Kairos* 32–33, 1990–1991, pp. 53–77.

324 Spier (ed.), *Picturing the Bible*, p. 256.

and wider context show that they had another and rather prevalent purpose: to reinforce and explicate the meaning of the story itself.³²⁵

The papal propagation of the results of the Council of Chalcedon by a constant emphasis on the inseparability of the human and divine natures in Christ and the strengthening of this idea using stories from his life with two interpretations are the unifying element of all of Leo's sermons and dogmatic letters. The main and excessively thought-out concept of the Milan Diptych of Five Parts is also absolutely clear. I therefore propose the possibility that it could be considered to be a visual rewriting of Leo's efforts in the battle with the Monophysite heresy.

The Milan Diptych and Rome

Volbach's group of ivory monuments surprisingly supports the hypothesis proposed above that the Milan Diptych could be put in connection with the person of Pope Leo the Great and his main aim, which was the spread of the orthodox faith. They are primarily the tablets of former five-part diptychs divided today between Berlin (Staatliche Museen, beginning of the 5th century; Fig. 6),³²⁶ Paris (Musée du Louvre, beginning of the 5th century; Fig. 7)³²⁷ and Nevers (Musée Blandin, beginning of the 5th century; Fig. 8),³²⁸ the Andrews Diptych with scenes of Christ's miracles (Victoria and Albert Museum in London, 450–460; Fig. 19),³²⁹ four tablets with Passion scenes from London³³⁰ (British Museum, 440–461³³¹; Fig. 23) or Werden Casket (Victoria and Albert Museum, beginning of the 5th century³³² or 9th century³³³; Fig. 14). The last named monument was discussed in more detail in the chapter dealing with the stylistic analysis, but any stylistic relation with the others was ruled out and also new studies have confirmed that they belong to the Roman milieu.³³⁴ They are,

325 Robin M. Jensen, *Early Christian Images and Exegesis*, in: Spier (ed.), *Picturing the Bible*, pp. 65–85, esp. p. 68.

326 Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, 1976, entry 112, p. 80; Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux*, entry 1, pp. 33–35.

327 Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, 1976, entry 113, p. 81; we know the appearance of the complete five-part Diptych from the Carolingian copy deposited today in the Bodleian Library in Oxford from the period around 800 (*ibidem*, entry 221, p. 131); Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux*, entry 1, pp. 33–35.

328 Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, 1976, entry 114, p. 81; Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux*, entry 1, pp. 33–35.

329 Kötzsche, *Andrews Diptych*.

330 Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, 1976, entry 116, p. 82.

331 Foletti, *Infer digitum tuum huc*.

332 Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, 1976, entry 118, p. 83.

333 Beckwith, *The Andrews Diptych*.

334 E.g. Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux*, entry 1, pp. 33–35; Foletti, *Infer digitum tuum huc*; Kötzsche, *Andrews Diptych*. The mentioned entry dealing with the Andrews Diptych provides confused information. The author categorizes the Diptych in the milieu of North Italy based on "close relationship with other North Italian ivories". As an example, she provides the Liverpool Venatio Panel (entry 84 of the same), but in the same publication Roman origin is proposed for that panel.

however, iconographically similar to the extent that it is only barely imaginable that they (or the monuments unpreserved for us today from the same group) were not used by the creator of the Milan Diptych as the source of models of the iconographic scenes.

The tablets from Berlin, the Louvre and Nevers likely formerly comprised one whole five-part Diptych as proved by Gaborit-Chopin.³³⁵ At first glance, they are very close in composition, but it is also clear in the individual details that they come from the same source. One of these details can for instance be the shared brick background or the horn of plenty in the hands of one of the Magi, which is not on any other of the preserved monuments. A perhaps even larger parallel can be seen in the scenes of the Andrews Diptych. The brick background, apostle-witness attending Christ's miracles, the staff in the hands of Christ when he orders the vessels filled with water or when he revives Lazarus or the healed lame man bearing his bed on his back are present also on the Milan Diptych in almost the same form.

How can we explain these iconographic similarities between the Roman (the tablets from Paris, Berlin and Nevers, the Andrews Diptych) and the North Italian (Werden Casket, Milan Five-Part Diptych) ivories? What connects all of these monuments is first of all the shared brick backgrounds. This detail was labelled by Alexander Coburn Soper as "a very rare motif in Rome" and for him they are indisputable proof that they are the product of "artistic customs spread from the north". While he notices the brick background on the wooden doors of the Basilica of Santa Sabina (Fig. 11), he thinks that they too could be the work of artists who came from the north.³³⁶ Whoever produced the doors of the Basilica of Santa Sabina, the argument by Baldwin Smith can be easily disproved, namely with one of the most important Roman monuments: the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls, where brick backgrounds also appears in some of the scenes of the narrative cycle.³³⁷

Even stronger evidence that the Milan Diptych could have been inspired by Roman production is another iconographic detail, namely the Lamb of God in a wreath of the fruits of the four seasons. Wolfgang Kemp indicated that the only two examples of the connection of the wreath and the lamb in Early Christian art are the Milan Diptych and the mosaic in the cupola of the Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna (middle of the 6th century;³³⁸ Fig. 50).³³⁹ Also this statement is easy to disprove with another preserved Roman monument; moreover, likely contempo-

335 Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux*, pp. 34–35.

336 Soper, *The Italo-Gallic*, p. 169.

337 Viscontini, entry I mosaici.

338 Deliyannis, *Ravenna in late antiquity*, pp. 236–250.

339 Wolfgang Kemp, *Christliche Kunst: Ihre Anfänge, Ihre Strukturen*, Munich 1994, p. 44.

rary with the Milan Diptych. The almost identical execution of the lamb in the wreath can be found in the Lateran Baptistery in Rome and that twice. The first example is the mosaic in the Chapel of St John the Evangelist, where we find the elegant pose of the Milan lamb with its head with a halo turned three quarters behind and drooping tail, but we find a noteworthy similarity in the wreath regularly separated into four parts according to the fruits of the individual seasons just like on the Diptych (Fig. 51). The second example is an unpreserved mosaic, known only from the drawing by Giovanni Ciampini, from another chapel of the Lateran Baptistery: the Chapel of John the Baptist (Fig. 52). Both monuments are dated to the time of the pontificate of Pope Hilarius (461–468), the successor of Leo I the Great.³⁴⁰

If we take into account the theological milieu presented, the relation of the bishop of Ravenna to that of Rome, the identical iconography and method of narration known in the 5th century only from Roman basilicas and from ivory diptychs or their fragments categorized by the latest research in the Roman milieu as well, then, in my opinion, it is not illegitimate to label the Milan Diptych as a possible way the bishop of Ravenna could have publically declared for the battle to spread the “correct” orthodox faith of Pope Leo the Great. That the ivory tablets of a five-part format were used as a medium able to demonstrate publically political or theological opinions can be further proved thanks to three later entirely preserved diptychs of the five-part format.

The iconography of the Diptych from Murano (Fig. 53)³⁴¹ the Etschmiadzin Diptych (Fig. 54)³⁴² and the Diptych of Saint-Lupicin (Fig. 49)³⁴³ were labelled by Jean-Pierre Caillet in his study³⁴⁴ as manifestations of so-called neo-Chalcedonian tendency, because their dating (533–553) corresponds with a time which is named after the dispute on the *Three Chapters*; in the period of the reign of Emperor Justinian (527–565). A hundred years after the Eutyches controversy with the decision of the Council of Chalcedon, in the West already perceived as untouchable, it once again became the subject of lively debates.³⁴⁵ Whether it was a political or ecclesiastical aim, the emperor tried to reach a new church unity by denouncing the treatises of the three Nestorian theologians Ibas of Edessa († 457), Theodoret of Cyrillus († 466) and Theodore of Mopsuestia († 428). The main aim of this

340 Stefania Pennesi, entry I mosaici delle cappelle del Battistero lateranense, in: Andaloro, Romano (eds), *La pittura*, pp. 425–436.

341 One of the two panels of the Diptych is deposited today in the Museo nazionale Ravenna, the second is divided between Berlin (Staatliche Museen), Manchester (John Rylands Library), Paris (Musée du Louvre) and Saint Petersburg (Ermitage). Vollbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, 1976, entry 125–129, pp. 87–89; Rizzardi (et. al.), *Avori bizantini e medievali*, entry 2, pp. 62–65; Gaborit-Chopin, *Les ivoires*, entry 24, p. 71.

342 Erivan, Matenadaran; Vollbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten*, 1976, entry 142, pp. 94–95.

343 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale; Ibidem, entry 145, p. 97; Gaborit-Chopin, *Les ivoires*, entry 27, pp. 74–77.

344 Caillet, *Remarques sur l'iconographie*.

345 Jasper, Fuhrmann, *Papal letters*, p. 43.

newly evoked conflict was the acceptance of the results of the Council of Chalcedon on the part of the Monophysites.³⁴⁶

The iconography of these diptychs very strikingly reflect the basic idea seen already on the Milan Tablets and the monuments related to them almost a century before. The emphasis on the dual nature of Christ is depicted even more explicitly here; the central panels always show on the one side the Virgin Mary and on the other side Christ. The narrative scenes related to Christ's incarnation (Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity, Adoration of the Magi, Escape to Egypt or the Apocryphal scene of the Trial of Bitter Water) on the one side and the supernatural actions of Christ and his miracles on the other side repeatedly appear also in a group of monuments where the Milan Diptych is also included. Jean-Pierre Caillet in his study sought a direct connection between the iconography of the diptychs and the emperor's position in the issue of the denunciation of the *Three Chapters* and proposes seeing them as a "direct radiation of the neo-Chalcedonian tendency".³⁴⁷

346 Caillet, *Remarques sur l'iconographie*.

347 *Ibidem*, p. 20.