

Such was the general aspect of things in the year 439 A.D., when death closed the Pontificate of Sixtus III. When this event took place, Leo, then an archdeacon was absent in Gaul, whither he had been sent by the Emperor Valentinian III. on a mission to the renowned general Alarius. A deputation was sent to him to inform him of his unanimous election to the Pontificate and the holy man returned to Rome where he was received with the greatest joy and reverence. He lost no time in entering upon his arduous duties, the most important of which was the suppression of heresies that were ravaging the churches in various parts of the world. He was successful in combating the Arians in Africa and Sicily, the Manicheans who were threatening to infect Rome, the Priscillianites in Spain and the Nestorians in the east. In the work of preserving the integrity of the faith St. Leo found powerful auxiliaries in St. Hilary of Arles, who made Gaul the field of his unwearied labours, and SS. Germanus and Severus whose preaching and miracles succeeded in uprooting the heresy of Pelagianism in Great Britain.

The most noted heresiarch of Leo's time was Eutyches, the Superior of a monastery at Constantinople, who fell into the error of denying two natures in Christ, admitting only His divinity. Persisting in his heresy, he was excommunicated by the Patriarch of Constantinople, but by some influence or craft, he induced the weak Theodosius to convoke an Ecumenical Council for the purpose of deciding on his case.

The Pope was consulted on the subject by the Court of Constantinople and he sent legates bearing written instructions, establishing the Catholic dogma concerning the two natures in Christ. The Assembly consisting of one hundred and thirty Eastern bishops resolved itself into a mere cabal. Dioscorus appointed to be the presiding officer was a tool of Eutyches. He overlooked the papal legates, refused to read the letters they carried, and absolved Eutyches from sentence of excommunication after merely requiring of him to sign the Nicene Creed.

Not content with this arrogant assumption of authority. Dioscorus proceeded to denounce St. Flavian who had been the accuser of Eutyches. But here at least, the bishops refused to follow him. Angered by their resistance, he caused the Church