

# Roots of Christianity

## IV.A. The Major Controversies of Christianity

### The Ecumenical Councils

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Miracle of St. Euphemia at the Fourth Ecumenical Council

# The Philosophers

- Socrates taught no man voluntarily chooses evil if properly instructed.
- The beneficial use of the goods of life demands knowledge of their appropriate employment.
- Wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice are the consequence of understanding and right action.
- His life and teachings profoundly influenced Plato (348 BC).

# Plato

- The Dialogues explore a theme in all aspects, extracting fundamental ideas through the use of reason.
- Mathematics (especially symbolic logic) is highest reasoning.
- Sense world is conjectural whose appearances are those of belief.
- Acquisition of knowledge is an understanding of the eternal forms and ideas of which the sense world is but a projection.

# Plato

- The soul is the rational part of man.
- The soul may perceive and have a share in the eternal forms and ideas, the ultimate values. Thus, the soul is divine.
- Evil cannot destroy the soul. Thus, the soul is immortal.
- Divinity creates out of chaos because he is good. Divinity is being, undivided, and unmovable.
- The soul, then, is that divine spark imprisoned in the body.

# Aristotle

- Student of Plato (322 BC). Tutor of Alexander the Great.
- Rejected the idea there are eternal forms.
- Knowledge can be gathered using the senses.
- With analytical reasoning (syllogism), one can extract meaning from the sensible world.
- Knowledge can be categorized.
- Essence belongs to a specific species or genus. All that participate in that same genus share the same essence.

# Aristotle

- All sense objects have a function, a formal cause.
- As that function is understood, a superior organization, a hierarchy could be constructed.
- This implies an agent (efficient cause) working in pre-existent matter (material cause).
- No first cause is implied.
- Introduced the idea of telos, final cause.
- Founder of modern scientific thought.

# The God of the Philosophers

- God is utterly transcendent. He transcends even virtue, knowledge, absolute goodness, and beauty.
- God is pure being, absolutely simple and self-sufficient, impassable, and cannot be included in any of the logical categories in which we classify finite beings.
- The philosophers postulated a series of lesser divinities as agents in creation (in Persia these divinities were known as angels). See Acts 14:8.



# The God of the Jews

- Wisdom is personified and assigned creative functions (Job 28:12; Prov 8:22; WIs 7:22; Sirach 24:1).
- Spirit is personified, sometimes spoken of as God's agent in creation (Jud 16:14; 2 Bar 21:4).
- Yet to the Jews these are simply the operations of God considered in abstraction from Himself.

# Wisdom

- Wisdom, the Word, YHWH, is God's agent in creation and also the means by which the mind apprehends God.
- The Word is the rational principle immanent in reality, giving form and meaning to it; reality is comprehensible to men because of the presence of the Word in them.

# Word

- The divine Word is first of all the ideas or thoughts of God's mind, and is then projected into formless unreal matter, making it into a real and rational universe.
- Immanent and transcendent in the divine mind, the Word is the medium of God's government in the world.

# Revelation

- God Himself is the author of revelation.
- God committed it to prophets and inspired lawgivers.
- The Law and the Prophets are normative through the teachings of Jesus.
- The Apostles, eye-witnesses to the incarnate Word, above all received the revelation of God, are more authoritative as to the restricted matters touched on by Jesus.

# Scripture

- Scripture is the foundation and pillar of the faith.
- Tradition itself was confirmed by Scripture for it was the preaching of the Apostles reduced to writing (Irenaeus, +207).
- Whatever Scripture teaches is necessarily true (Tertullian, ca 220).
- The indispensable key to Scripture belongs exclusively to the Church.

# Scripture

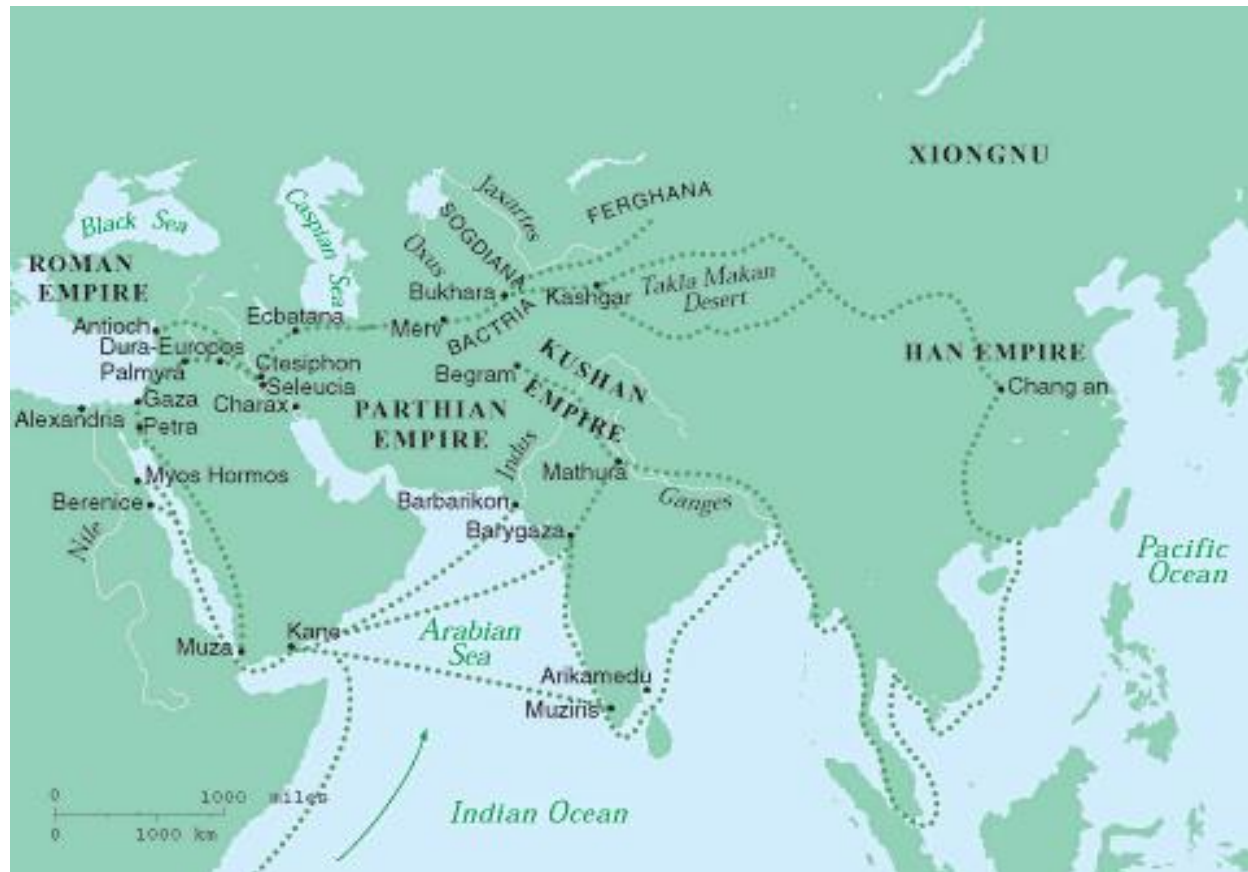
- “The holy and inspired Scriptures are fully sufficient for the proclamation of the truth.” (Athanasius, +373)
- “For our saving faith derives its force, not from capricious reasonings, but from what may be proved out of the Bible.” (Cyril of Jerusalem, +386)
- The Didache (ca 100 AD) and the collection of services by Hippolytus (+235) demonstrate the whole liturgical apparatus of the Church are regarded as emanating from the Apostles.

# Roman ruled regions in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD

The major cities are Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Athens, and Carthage.



# Major trade routes in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD and the diffusion of ideas





# The God of Christians

- God is one, the maker of Heaven and Earth, Who brought all things into existence out of non-existence.
- God has made Himself known in the person of Jesus, the Christ, raising Him from the dead and offering salvation to all men through Him.
- God has poured out His Holy Spirit upon the Church.
- Monotheism is balanced with the Trinitarian revelation.

# Ignatius of Antioch

- Bishop, martyred in Rome (107 AD).
- Christ is one with the Father (Jo 10:30; 14:9; 17:11).
- The Son “existed with the Father before the ages” and that “He came forth from the unique Father, was with Him and has returned to Him.”
- Ingenerate, timeless, invisible, impalpable, impassible who for our sake entered time and became visible, palpable, and passible.
- The Holy Spirit was the principle of the virginal conception.

# Apologists

- Ardent monotheists who were the first to try to frame an intellectually satisfying explanation of the relation of Christ to God the Father.
- Justin (+165 AD) proclaims Christ as the Law and Covenant in His existence, following John 1:1-5, 14.
- His all embracing divine reality is present in the man Jesus and in the world. But the world is not divine.
- There are distinctions within the godhead.

# Apologists

- The Word is other than the Father: the appearance to Abraham (Gen 10); the frequent Scriptural passages which represent God conversing with another, Who is presumably a rational being like Himself (Gen 1:26), personified as in Prov 8:22.
- As God, He is transcendent; as incarnate, immanent.
- The Holy Spirit is an “effulgence of God, flowing from and returning to” God. (Athenagoras, ca 180 AD).

# Shepherd of Hermas

- Ca 150, by the brother of Pius, Bishop of Rome
- Adopts Jewish use of “name” to mean the person, power, and nature of the one named.
- The name of the Son of God is great and incomprehensible; thus, complete transcendence and pre-existence for the invisible part of Jesus, the only begotten Son, Who sustains creation.
- His name is present in Christians as a result of their baptism and faith.
- He is the only door to salvation for those who receive his name.

# Gnostics (Plato redux)

- Christ is divine, acting through Jesus, and leaving him before the crucifixion.
- Merely fleshy or carnal man cannot be saved.
- Ordinary men can be saved with difficulty through knowledge of imitation of Jesus.
- Spiritual men need only understand the teaching of Jesus to be saved.
- Transmigration of souls is a process that permits the gaining of experience that frees the soul from sense concerns and enables the soul to focus on the universal.

# Iraeneus

- Bishop of Lyon, disciple of Polycarp in Smyrna, a disciple of the Apostle John. Martyred 207 AD.
- First full scale refutation of gnosticism.
- “God the Father, uncreated, unengendered, invisible, one and only Deity, creator of the universe” is the first article of our faith.
- Either this is the one God Who contains all things and has made all things according to His will, or there must be many indeterminate creators or gods, and, thus, none is God.

# Iraeneus

- As God is rational, He created all things by His Word. As God is spirit, He has His Spirit (Ps 33:6; Wis 1:6, 9:1, 17) who is coexistent (Prov 3:19; 8:22).
- The Word establishes things, bestowing reality on them; the Spirit orders them and gives them form.
- The Father begets; the Son is begotten. No man understands that generation nor may describe it. “Who shall explain his generation.” (Is 53;8)
- God has been declared through the Son Who is in the Father and has the Father in Himself.



# Iraanaeus

- Whatever is begotten of God is God. The Son, then is divine.
- The Father is God and the Son is God.
- The pre-existent Word incarnated.
- Only if the Word is fully divine and entered fully into human life, earthly and historical, could redemption be accomplished.
- In making Himself known, exerting Himself for creation and redemption, God manifests as the Son and the Spirit. They are His “hands” (Ps 119:73).

# Iraanaeus

- “What is invisible in the Son is the Father and what is visible in the Father is the Son.”
- All theophanies are manifestations of the Word.
- The Spirit is “He through Whom the prophets prophesied ...and Who at the end of the age was poured out in a new way, renewing man unto God.”
- Knowledge of the Son can only be obtained through the Spirit. Without the Spirit it is impossible to know the Son. (1 Jo 4:2-3)



Nativity

# Contrary currents

- Ebionites, a Jewish group. Insisted on the observance of the Law and Jewish custom.
- Jesus was a true prophet, the elect of God.
- Denied pre-existence, virgin birth.
- Son created as one of the ruling angels. This angel descended on the man Jesus.
- His mission was to end the Old Testament priesthood. He was the Christ as he fulfilled the Law.
- It is the Law that is the path to salvation, not Jesus.

# Contrary currents

- “Mary gave birth to a man like us, though better in every way, as He was of the Holy Spirit.” (Paul of Samasota, Patriarch of Antioch)
- God, the Father, created all things. The Son was a mere man. The Holy Spirit was the grace that dwelled in the Apostles.
- Wisdom descended upon the man Jesus, an adoption (at Baptism). It was Jesus’ moral progress that won him the title of Son of God.

# Contrary currents

- Modalists admitted the divinity of Christ but denied His distinction from the Father. Distinctions were mere names.
- The Godhead was believed a universal monad comprised in itself mutually contradictory qualities.
- If Christ suffered, the Father suffered, else there would be division in the Godhead.
- Callistus (223 AD), Pope of Rome, said the Father Himself came down into the virgin; was born of her; suffered. In short, the Father Himself is Jesus Christ.

# Contrary currents

- Subordinationists acknowledge the Trinity, placing the three not in order of quality, but of sequence; different not in substance, but in aspect; not in power, but in concrete presentation (hypostasis).
- In the end a duality is recognized in Jesus, the Lord. The divine element in Him is the Father. All divine attributes in Him or the Spirit revert to the Father.
- The Son is subordinate to the Father as He is begotten of the Father (He is always in the Father). The Father is antecedent to the Son.

# Orthodox response

- Tertullian (220 AD), the rigorist African theologian, strongly criticized this attempt to preserve the unity of God as violating Scripture.
- “I and my Father are one” indicates the Three are one reality (as the word one is neuter in Greek) and not mere numerical unity.
- The manifestation in creation are as three expressions (personae).
- Origen ( 254 AD) affirmed the generation of the Son is without beginning; the Three are individually existent from eternity.



# The Arian heresy

- Arius (336), Libyan theologian heavily influenced by Aristotelian dialectic . A priest of Alexandria.
- Maintained God is absolutely transcendent and One; without source but Who is the source of all reality.
- The essence of God cannot be shared else He would be divisible and changeable.
- Thus, whatever exists must come into being by creation from nothing and not communication of His essence.

# The Arian Heresy

- Creation mediated through the Word, a creature perfect and beyond all other creatures, but with a beginning outside of time.
- The Word did not sin because of prevenient grace.
- In Christ, the created Word, distinct from the immanent rationality in God, united himself to a human body lacking a rational soul.
- Any divine power manifest was transitory; any rule on Earth will be transitory.
- The Spirit came into existence through the Son.

# First Ecumenical Council

- The teaching of Arius created a political crisis in the Roman Empire. The Emperor Constantine, Equal to the Apostles, (+337 AD), had adopted Christianity. He attributed his victory to the vision of the Cross prior to battle at Milan.
- Constantine regarded himself as representing God on Earth as having been given supreme power in things material and spiritual.
- The bishops of the Church were summoned to Nicea in 325 AD to resolve this crisis.

# First Ecumenical Council

- The Emperor presided but did not vote. This was the long established procedure of the Roman Senate.
- The Emperor confirmed the decisions of the bishops and promulgated them for Christians as Roman Law.
- The 318 bishops summarized Scriptural positions in a creed of faith.

# Creed of Nicea

- We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible.
- And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father. God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God. Begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things were made.
- Who for us men and for our salvation came down and became incarnate and was made man, suffered and rose on the third day, and ascended into Heaven; and is coming with glory to judge the living and dead.
- And in the Holy Spirit.

# Controversy continues

- Arius, the adoptionists, modalists, and subordinationists were rejected.
- The use of the philosophic term “substance” was problematic for many.
- With the death of Constantine, Arianism regained political support. Orthodox bishops were removed from their sees and even martyred.
- Arian missionary activity converted the Franks. Clovis was baptized in 496 AD.

# Controversy continues

- Appollinaris (392 AD), Bishop of Laodicea, grasped the central insight that the Father and Son are a single divine substance. Only in Christ is mankind redeemed and restored. New life comes from a single source, the one mediator between God and us.
- Christ, then, must be a unity. If the divine were merely conjoined with man, then there would be two. The Word, while remaining God, shares the properties of the flesh; the flesh, while remaining flesh, shares the properties of God.
- But he faltered by believing the man Jesus had no rational soul or mind else he would be open to change.

# Athanasius

- Patriarch of Alexandria (+373 AD). Expelled by Arians; recalled by citizenry; expelled again by Arians. Reconciled those bishops doubtful of the use of the philosophic term “substance/essence.”
- At Nicea the Fathers enunciated a judgment about reality as revealed in the Scriptures:
- What is said of the Father is also said of the Son except that the Son is Son and not Father.
- Therefore the Son is of the same substance or essence of the Father but is not the same hypostasis (concretized existence) as the Father. There is distinction within the Godhead.



# Athanasius

- As the Spirit makes us all partakers of God (1 Cor 3:16), His essence must be that of God.
- The Eucharist is not merely the unbloody reasonable sacrifice, a substitute for Jewish and pagan sacrifices (that is why it is “reasonable”), but is that which sustains and unites the members of the Body of Christ, the Church.
- The spiritual sacrifice is participatory with the one sacrifice that occurred once and for all time.
- In the Eucharist Christ is truly present.

# Cyril of Jerusalem

- Patriarch (+386 AD).
- It is in the union with the Spirit that the Son participates in the Father's Godhead. As the Son, the Holy Spirit enjoys a perfect knowledge of the Father. He is an ineffable, divine being, ever present with the Father and the Son.
- The Father accomplishes all things through the Word and the Spirit.

# Cappadocian Fathers

- Basil of Caesarea, the Great (+329 AD), and his brother, Gregory of Nyssa (+395), with Gregory Nanzianzen, the Theologian (+389), led the orthodox faction following the death of Athanasius.
- What is not assumed by the Redeemer is not redeemed.
- If the whole of Adam fell, then the Redeemer must be united to the whole nature of Adam in order to save it wholly.
- Christ must be truly and wholly man.

# Cappadocian Fathers

- Emphasized the divinity of the Holy Spirit.
- The essence of the Godhead is one; three distinct hypostases, the concretized existences of that one essence, are present in the Godhead.
- “Begotten” and “Proceeding” are Scriptural terms that indicate only their eternal existence with the Father, the source of all things, and their independent generation from the Father.
- The Word of the Father is uttered on the Breath of the Father. (Ps 33:6)

# The heart of the Godhead

- The fathers synthesized Christian experience and philosophic thought by injecting the personal and relational into the heart of being,
- Person is prior to and deeper than nature.
- Relationality is not something added on to already established essences, but is at the heart of being.
- Identity does not precede relationship, but is achieved within the context of relationship.
- God is not a neutral nature but is personal. The deepest reality of God is three hypostases whose ground is in the Father. Being is relational life and communion.

# Second Ecumenical Council

- The philosopher Emperor Julian (the Apostate) came to the throne. He intended to destroy Christianity and restored pagan sacrifice. He moved to reconstruct the Temple in Jerusalem to restore animal sacrifice (an embarrassment for the Jews). This furthered Christian attempts to resolve the controversy.

# Second Ecumenical Council

- Julian died in an unsuccessful campaign in Persia.
- Visigoths, converted by Arian missionaries, entered the Empire under pressure from other eastern tribes.
- The Spanish general, Theodosius, became Emperor in the East and stabilized the Empire's frontiers. Baptized while severely ill on his military campaign stabilizing the East, Theodosius confessed the Nicene faith.
- Ambrose (+397 AD), bishop of Milan, deposed the last of the Arian bishops in the West. To consolidate the faith expressed at Nicea in the East, the Emperor Theodosius summoned a second synod.

# Second Ecumenical Council

- Chalcedon, 381 AD.
- The Creed of Nicea was reaffirmed.
- It was affirmed that the Kingdom of the Christ has no end.
- The Spirit proceeds from the Father. (Jo 15:26).
- The Spirit is manifest in creation through the Son. There is one essence. The hypostases are distinguished by relation.
- The Creed (now called Nicene) was reaffirmed at the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Councils.



# Nicene Creed

- We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth of all things visible and invisible.
- And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things are made.
- Who for us men and for our salvation came down from Heaven, and became incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

# Nicene Creed

- And was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and rose the third day according to the Scriptures.
- And ascended into Heaven and sits on the right hand of the Father, and is coming again with glory to judge the living and the dead, Whose kingdom will have no end.

# Nicene Creed

- And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who with the Father and Son is jointly worshipped and jointly glorified, Who spoke through the prophets.
- In one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.
- We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins.
- We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.



Hospitality of Abraham (Trinity)

# Controversy continues (Redux)

- Jesus is a composite. Two natures were conjoined voluntarily through the condescension of God and the love and obedience of Jesus.
- This leads to the conclusion that Jesus, then, only seems to suffer in his humanity or someone other than Jesus dies on the cross in the place of Jesus who is only hidden.

# Controversy continues (redux)

- Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, once an austere monk of Antioch, (451 AD), was an intellectual son of Theodore of Mopsuetia.
- Refused to use ancient title for Mary, “Theotokos”, the one who brought forth God, as that implied either that the Son was a mere creature born of a woman, or that the manhood of Jesus was completed by the presence of the Word.
- Called Mary, “Christokos.” He implied the Word was united with a complete man and that both these natures had their concrete reality, implying they were merely joined together.

# Cyril of Alexandria

- Patriarch of Alexandria (+444 AD). Opposed Nestorius.
- The “Word, having for us and for our salvation personally united to Himself a human nature, came forth of a woman, He is said to have been born after the flesh. Having been made one with the flesh from the very womb itself, He is said to have submitted to a birth according to the flesh, as appropriating and making His own the birth of His own flesh.”

# Cyril of Alexandria

- “God the Word did not suffer in His own divine nature, for the Godhead is impassible. But inasmuch as that which had become His own body suffered, we say that He Himself suffered for us. For the impassible was in a suffering body.”
- “Since His own body by the grace of God ... tasted death for every man, once more He Himself is said to have suffered death for us.”



# Cyril of Alexandria

- “The resurrection too is His resurrection, for it was His body that was raised.”
- “We do not worship man conjointly with the Word; we worship one and the same Lord because the body of the Lord is not alien from the Lord with which body He sits with the Father Himself.”
- The human and divine cannot be divided in Christ. There is no mingling or confusion of the divine and human in Christ. Union excludes division but does not eliminate difference.

# Third Ecumenical Council

- The Emperor Theodosius II summoned the bishops to Ephesus in 431 AD. Only Roman legates and Egyptian bishops were present. The teaching of Cyril was endorsed.
- Nestorius was deposed. Those who followed the teachings of Theodore of Mopsuetia moved to Mesopotamia, outside the reach of the Empire, and evangelized all the way to China through Persia and India. Their teachings heavily influenced Mohammed whose uncle was a Nestorian bishop.



Carlo Dolci The Blue Madonna  
Ringling Museum, Sarasota  
<http://www.ringling.org>

# New Controversy

- The exclusion of Eastern bishops from Ephesus remained a problem. John, Patriarch of Antioch, and Cyril negotiated a Symbol of Union in 433 AD. The Antiochene terminology acknowledged the role of the Word in providing the unity that made Jesus one person was held to be orthodox. It was Nestorius who was in error.

# New Controversy

- The Symbol of Union was opposed by the Egyptian priest Eutyches that Christ after the union was “of one nature, that of God made flesh and become man.”
- Implied is that the humanity of Jesus was not derived from Mary and that the divinity suffered, a point rejected by the leader of the opposition, who, rather, implied that the divine absorbs the human.

# Fourth Ecumenical Council

- In the first century AD much of present day England, France, Germany, and Spain were occupied by Celts. German tribes entered the Empire from the Baltic to the Black Sea under pressure from advancing Slavs and Turks from Central Asia. By the fourth century AD, German tribes had largely gutted the Empire in the West. Huns ravaged central Europe. Vandals (Goths) were displaced from Spain and had extinguished the Empire in Africa. Stability was an urgent requirement.

# Fourth Ecumenical Council

- The Emperor fell under this influence and began to persecute those who accepted the Symbol of Union.
- With the death of the Emperor Theodosius II, his older sister Pulcheria (+453 AD) seized power. She married the general Marcian and placed him on the throne.
- Marcian summoned the bishops to Chalcedon in 451 AD.

# Fourth Ecumenical Council

- Pope Leo, the Great (+461 AD) sent a Tome outlining the Western teachings on Christ.
- “He who became man in the form of a servant is He who in the form of God created man.”
- Jesus was true God and true man, complete in what belongs to God and complete in what belongs to us. Each of these natures had its own principle of operation and its own activity, which it did not exercise independently of the other nature nor apart from the union which is permanent.



# Fourth Ecumenical Council

- The Church accepted this teaching as consonant with that taught by Cyril.
- In Christ there are two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction in natures being in no way abolished by the union; the characteristic property of each nature being preserved and concurring into one Person and one subsistence ...one and the same Son and only-begotten God.

# Fourth Ecumenical Council

- The Ancient of Days at Dan 7:9 is not the Father, but the Son.
- The Son of Man in Dan 7:13 is the Christ.
- Two natures in one hypostasis without admixture or confusion (Col 1:15; Phil 2:6-7; Heb 1).

# New controversy (redux)

- Chalcedon did not specify the subject of suffering and crucifixion.
- It failed to clearly state that the person of the hypostatic union was the pre-existent person of the Word.
- It did not clearly state that the ultimate deification of man had its beginning in the union of the humanity of Christ with his divinity in an intimate and inseparable wholeness of person.

# New controversy (redux)

- Leo's Tome was used by the Nestorians to justify their position. ("Peter has spoken through Leo.")
- Cyril was felt to be the definitive guide to Christology.
- Emperor Zeno (491 AD) attempted to bridge the terminology of the parties with his Henoticon, a statement of faith that is thoroughly Chalcedonian.

# New controversy (redux)

- Despite efforts to bridge the terminology between the parties, the fracture deepened: The Empire held to Chalcedon; Egypt, Africa, and Syria rejected Leo; Persia was Nestorian; The Franks and Germans were Arian. Each consecrated bishops.

# Neo-Chalcedonians

- What is a human nature without human energy?
- The hypostasis of the union is the pre-existent hypostasis of the Word. The single hypostasis in Christ was the hypostasis of both the divine and human natures. (Phil 2:6-7)
- Christ's humanity had no separate hypostasis. Thus Christ unites not just an individual, Jesus, but all of mankind to his human nature.
- Cyrils' insistence on the dynamism of salvation through Christ, that one of the Trinity suffered on the Cross is retained.

# Fifth Ecumenical Council

- The Emperor Justinian (+565 AD) reconquered some lost Western territories for the Empire, rationalized the civil code, and attempted to reunify the Church, summoning all bishops to Constantinople in 553.
- The Council condemned anyone who maintained that “God the Logos who performed miracles was another than Christ who suffered.”
- “The Holy Trinity did not undergo the addition of a person or hypostasis when one of the Holy Trinity, God the Logos, became incarnate.”

# Fifth Ecumenical Council

- Leo was reaffirmed as consonant with Cyril.
- The neo-Chalcedonian position employs terminology once associated with the non-Chalcedonian Oriental Orthodox Church.
- Pope Virgilius (555 AD), appointed by the monophysite Empress Theodora, refused to attend the Council, having altered his doctrinal position four times. He was deposed.
- The teachings of Theodore of Mopsuetia were condemned.



# Schism not healed

- Fifty years after the Fifth Ecumenical Council, Avars and Slavs invaded the Empire from the East; the Empire was locked in a mortal struggle with Persia (losing Jerusalem in 614 AD and Egypt thereafter). Heraclius, son of the governor of Africa, took the throne in Constantinople. He regained the lost provinces, restoring the True Cross to Jerusalem in 630. A last attempt was made to heal the schism.

# Schism not healed

- Pope Honorius and the Ecumenical Patriarch, Sergius, put forth the decision that in Christ there is only one action or will. Every operation in Christ, divine or human, is ascribed only to the Incarnate Word. In short, the man Jesus had no human will. The humanity is totally subordinate to the divine, merely a docile instrument devoid of any initiative.
- The Patriarch of Jerusalem, Sophronius (+638 AD), opposed Emperor, Pope, and Patriarch.
- The Oriental Orthodox remained opponents.

# Schism not healed

- The Empire, exhausted by war and religious strife, reeled again before invasions by the Slavs and by the rise of Islam.
- Maximus, the Confessor (+662 AD), son of a noble family in Constantinople and student of Sophronius, began his campaign against religious and civil authority. He convinced the West. Both he and Pope Martin (+655 AD) were imprisoned and tortured.
- Those neo-Chalcedonians now outside the Empire were free of threat and rallied to Maximus.

# Sixth Ecumenical Council

- When the Empire was secure from Islam, the Emperor Constantine IV, summoned the bishops to Constantinople in 681 AD to resolve the schism.
- The Council held that the activity or operation of Christ proceeds not from the person of Christ as the sole agent but from the two natures: two wills, one human, and the other divine, indivisible, inconvertible, inseparable, and without confusion.
- (It was rabbinic teaching that the operations of God are divine but are not God).

# Sixth Ecumenical Council

- His human will adheres without doubt or hesitation to its perfect good.
- He has only natural will.
- (Humans have a gnostic will that gives to action its moral quality. In human beings salvation and deification consist in bringing the gnostic will through redemption in Christ into conformity with the innate drive of our human will toward God.)
- Those who confessed one will were condemned.



Pantocrator

# The debate continues

- Eastern and Western traditions begin to separate in the sixth century as the Empire continued its decline.
- The Emperor Justinian (+565 AD) was a patron of liturgical theology (what we believe we pray; what we pray we believe). The argument over Christ is an argument that arose over a liturgical title of Mary. The liturgy, then, as it is based in Scripture, becomes a doctrinal source for the Church as do the teachings of the Fathers. The construction of St. Sophia is a theological statement.

# The debate continues

- Mystical theology became a major doctrinal source, shaping how the Church spoke of the vision of God and the union between the soul and God. Its roots lie in ascetic practice and monastic spirituality.
- Pope Gregory the Dialogist, the Great (+604 AD), regarded the Ecumenical Councils as equal to the Gospels. Although he opposed the idea there was a bishop of bishops, he is associated with the rise in papal hegemony.



# The debate continues

- Boethius (524 AD), consul and philosopher, translated Aristotle into Latin and transmitted christological and trinitarian dogmas in such a way as to compel examination of the relation between revelation and reason as a means of finding religious truth.
- With him begins the rise of the scholastic method in the West. It is later influenced by John of Damascus (+749 AD)

# Seventh Ecumenical Council

- Leo the Isaurian became Emperor in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century. He recovered Asia Minor from the Muslims. Charles Martel had stopped the Muslim invasion at Tours.
- Influenced by Jewish and Muslim views that all sacred images were prohibited, not simply images of the one God, Leo began to remove sacred images from the churches in Constantinople.
- The Arians (German troops in the service of the Empire) held images to be idolatrous.

# Seventh Ecumenical Council

- The non-Chalcedonians maintained Christ's humanity was so profoundly elevated and immersed in the divine essence that it is impossible to discern it as simple humanity; only the Eucharist may be venerated.
- Tradition held that Jesus Himself imprinted His image on a cloth sent to the King of the Armenians.
- Eusebius (+340 AD) in his History refers to a still standing statue of Jesus erected by the Syro-Phoenecian woman whose daughter Jesus had healed. (Mt 15:21-28; Mk 7:20-24)

# Seventh Ecumenical Council

- Only the Church recognized sacred images as a means of contemplating the divine and could be venerated.
- Constantine V Copronymous, Leo's son, codified his opposition, based on christology. He began persecuting opponents.
- John of Damascus (+749 AD), free from the reach of the Emperor, crystallized the orthodox position:

# Seventh Ecumenical Council

- Rejecting the image of Christ is a rejection of the Incarnation of the Word. He may be depicted because He was a man. His image (cross, gospel book, icon) is venerated because He is divine. The honor offered to the image is that to whom the image represents.
- The West resolutely condemned iconoclasm.
- Pope Stephen, however, in fear of the Lombards, crowned Pepin King of the Franks, beginning a millennial long dependence of Rome on the Franks and Germans. Pope Leo later crowned Charlemagne Emperor of the West, finally breaking with the Emperor in Constantinople.

# Seventh Ecumenical Council

- Irene (+802 AD), daughter-in-law of Constantine V, began a regency following the death of her spouse. She arranged marriage between her son and Charlemagne's daughter. She replaced troops loyal to the iconoclasts with troops loyal to her. In 787, she summoned the bishops to council in Nicea.
- The Council adopted the teaching of John of Damascus.

# Seventh Ecumenical Council

- Charlemagne established a center of learning that collected the leading thinkers of the West. Many were not literate in Greek, nor did they comprehend why the argument over images in worship. Receiving a mistranslated document of the proceedings of the Council that stated images could be worshiped, Charlemagne rejected the findings of the Council as supporting idolatry.
- The iconoclasts returned to power in 802 AD.
- With the regency of Empress Theodora (+862 AD), the iconoclasts were defeated (843 AD).

# Fathers of the Church

- The Church maintains the Holy Spirit spoke in the venerable fathers themselves as well as in those who assembled at the Ecumenical Councils.
- Athanasius (+373 AD), Basil of Caesarea, the Great (+379 AD), Gregory Nazianzen, the Theologian (+390 AD), John Chrysostom, the lips of Paul (+407 AD), Cyril of Alexandria (+444 AD), Maximus the Confessor (+662 AD), and John of Damascus (+749 AD) are the most highly regarded of the Fathers.



# Fathers of the Church

- The Fathers have had no access to truths other than those already contained in Scripture although many had received rigorous education in philosophy.
- Their near unanimous interpretation of Scripture is a proof of the Holy Spirit.
- The norm of the faith is that which “has been believed everywhere, always, and by all.” (Vincent of Lerins, +451)
- Who deviates from their teachings are enemies of the truth.

# References

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