

Reaction to Ephesus and the Road to Chalcedon 451

By Monsignor Cantley

We ended our lecture on the Council of Ephesus with a reference to the difficulty in having the Council formally approved; and with a reference to the Edict of Union in 433 where both the opponents of Nestorius and the ‘converted’ former Nestorians still mistrusted one another. Patriarch Cyril of Alexandria died in 444 to be succeeded by an “extremely violent and ambitious man,”¹ *Dioscorus*. He was determined to foster the preeminence of Alexandria by subordinating both Constantinople and Antioch to its jurisdiction. His method was to attack the former associates of Nestorius, calling the sincerity of their conversion into question, and, with the aid of anti-Nicene zealots who never believed in the sincerity of Nestorius’ former supporters and abhorred the Edict of Union as betrayal, to foment further unrest. In doing so, they laid the foundations for the next Christological heresy, Monophysitism. They did this by so over-emphasizing the *union of the two natures in Christ* that they created a mind-set that made the new heresy palatable.

The Monophysite heresy took shape through three ‘systems’. The 1st taught that the human nature was absorbed by the divine. Their suggested image was the effect of fire consuming what it burned. When applied to the saving ministry of Christ, the implication was that His sufferings were actually those of the Divinity since this nature alone existed after the incarnation. This theory received the name *Theopaschetism* (from the Greek *Theos* –God, and *paschein* – to experience, to suffer). There is also a hidden Docetism (from the Greek *dokein* – to seem) imbedded in this theory, the idea that the Son of God took on only the appearance of a body, not a real human nature and therefore was only a divinely manipulated appearance of a human being. Since the divinity cannot suffer, suffering was only apparent, something offered to satisfy human senses.

A 2nd system taught just the opposite, that the humanity absorbed the divinity. The Word was no longer God, but man. Both systems faded out as it became obvious they nullified the redemption. The first because human nature disappears; the second because divinity cannot change and be absorbed, and human nature by itself is incapable of redeeming. *Theandric* (God-man) action is missing from both systems.

Now we arrive at the 3rd system, *Monophysitism* (*monos* – one; *physis* – nature) properly named. This did not suppress either nature, but blended them. The result was a *new nature* (a *tertium quid* – a Latin phrase meaning some ‘third thing’). The ‘new nature’ would be the combination of the divine and human (after the example, perhaps, of hydrogen and oxygen yielding water). The result of this is that after the incarnation, with the absorption of the human nature into the divine, there remained only one nature with the result that Christ’s humanity was not consubstantial with ours, not genealogically of the race of Adam, thus nullifying the

evidence of Scripture: Luke 3: 38; and rendering Romans 5: 12 – 21 incomprehensible.

Some background history is useful. We already noted in the last lecture that Pope Celestine did not approve the Council of Ephesus, thus placing the Council's status and teaching authority in limbo. Why? In a letter to the bishops of the East, on the occasion of the consecration of Nestorius' successor to the See of Constantinople, he explains that he hoped by his reserve that Bishop John, Patriarch of Antioch and strong supporter of Nestorius, would accept the Council without apparent force from Rome. He seems to have feared the former supporters of Nestorius, John being a leader among them, would foment a schism. He writes: "In cases of this kind, there are many things to be taken into consideration which the Apostolic See always has had regard to."ⁱⁱ Hence it was a judgment of caution, not a rejection of the Council. His patience was rewarded, though not in Celestine's lifetime. He died in 432. The reconciliation between John and Cyril was effected by the Edict of Union in 433, written in a language favored by Antioch, and accepted by Cyril though open to the reservations with which we ended the last lecture.

In the new Monophysite controversy there will be a new cast of characters. John of Antioch died in 440, Cyril in 444. Leo I (440 – 461, called "The Great") was Pope. As former secretary to Celestine, he was well aware of all of the controversy that had gone on. Theodosius II was still Emperor. A new figure was **Eutyches** (378 – 454?) a monk and Archimandrite (Superior) of a monastery just outside Constantinople. Eutyches intended complete and strict loyalty to the theology of Cyril, which, as it happened, he did not accurately understand. A 'watch word' for him was the unfortunate expression of Cyril: there is only "one φύσις incarnate of God the Word." For Cyril, the Greek word was intended to signify what the Latins called "person". But for the Greeks it meant "nature."ⁱⁱⁱ In accepting the Edict of Union in 433, Cyril accepted the Antiochean way of expressing the doctrine: "two φύσεις (natures) in one 'person'" as being an orthodox expression. But his later disciples, carrying on Cyril's work and critical of the Edict of Union, called this expression heretical – reading the Greek as affirming two persons in the incarnate Word. Cyril was dead three years when Eutyches, using the old Cyrillian formula, began his own heretical teaching. His basic position was that "before the Incarnation Christ was of two natures, but after it there was only one Christ, one Son, one Lord in one *hypostasis* and one *prosopan*."^{iv} Eutyches was a confused thinker and not always consistent. For example, while he repudiated the existence of two natures after the Incarnation, affirming only one nature, "that of God made flesh and become man;" he admitted that Christ was born of a woman and is therefore consubstantial with us, but then taught that the flesh of Christ was not consubstantial with us. Yet, Christ's flesh was full and complete, unlike the position held by Apollinaris; nor was it a mere appearance as it was for the Docetists. Again it was not fused into some 'third thing'. His problem was that "he understood nature to mean concrete existence. To affirm two natures was for him to affirm two concrete existences, two *hypostases*, two persons in Christ."^v He unbalanced the

relationship of the humanity and divinity, so emphasizing the latter that the genuine humanity of Jesus and his historical reality were effectively denied.

As this teaching spread, the two sides in the debate become more heated and hardened in their positions. The Fifth Century was a time in the Church's history when doctrine was taken seriously, and the implication of any new formulation of teaching mattered. The Emperor, sensing yet another rupture of the fragile peace thought to have been attained with the Edict of Union was determined to head it off. He reacted with an edict of his own in 448. In it he restated all of the decisions of Nicea and Ephesus and demanded that they be followed without exception. That same year, at a synod of bishops at Constantinople, called to address local issues, Bishop Eusebius of Dorylaeum dropped a 'bomb-shell'. He suddenly demanded the condemnation of Eutyches as a heretic and produced a dossier of evidence to support his charge. After lengthy debate, the synod complied: it condemned Eutyches, removed him from office as superior of his monastery and forbade him to exercise his priesthood. Eutyches appealed to Rome. Pope Leo I replied in 449 chiding the synod for its negligence in not informing Rome, immediately, of the issue under discussion as it was required to do. He asked for all of the relevant documents and a full disclosure of details about the heresy to allow him to give a fair judgment. After reviewing the matter, he wrote another letter on June 13, 449, addressed to Flavian the Patriarch of Constantinople, the famous *Tome of Leo*. The Pope took a definite stand against Eutyches' Monophysitism. This letter contained what was till then the clearest expression of the doctrine of the Incarnation. With the use of antithetic expression of comparison, Leo distinguished the two nature of Christ; at the same time he insisted on the unity of his Person. It was immediately accepted as the authentic statement of the faith, and played a central role in the Council of Chalcedon. Here is the text in full. The underlined portions are my own attempt to point out the places where the Pope most directly addresses the errors of Eutyches:

The letter of Pope Leo to Flavian, bishop of Constantinople, about Eutyches^{vi}

1. - Surprised as we were at the late arrival of your charity's letter, we read it and examined the account of what the bishops had done. We now see what scandal against the integrity of the faith had reared its head among you. What had previously been kept secret now became clearly revealed to us. **Eutyches**, who was considered a man of honor because he had the title of priest, is shown to be very rash and extremely ignorant. What the prophet said can be applied to him: He did not want to understand and do good: he plotted evil in his bed. What can be worse than to have an irreligious mind and to pay no heed to those who are wiser and more learned? The people who fall into this folly are those in whom knowledge of the truth is blocked by a kind of dimness. They do not refer to

- the sayings of the prophets, nor to
- the letters of the apostles, nor even to
- the authoritative words of the gospels,

but to themselves. By not being pupils of the truth, they turn out to be masters of error. A man who has not the most elementary understanding even of the creed itself can have learnt nothing from the sacred texts of the New and Old Testaments. This old man has not yet taken to heart what is pronounced by every baptismal candidate the world over!

He had no idea *how he ought to think about the incarnation* of the Word of God; and he had no desire to acquire the light of understanding by working through the length and breadth of the Holy Scriptures. So at least he should have listened carefully and accepted the common and undivided **creed** by which the whole body of the faithful confess that they believe *in*

1. God the Father almighty and in
2. Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord,
3. who was born of the holy Spirit and the virgin Mary.

2. - These three statements wreck the tricks of nearly every heretic. When God is believed to be both almighty and Father, the Son is clearly proved to be co-eternal with him, in no way different from the Father, since he was born God from God, almighty from the Almighty, co-eternal from the Eternal, not later in time, not lower in power, not unlike in glory, not distinct in being. The same eternal, only-begotten of the eternal begetter was born of the holy Spirit and the virgin Mary. His birth in time in no way subtracts from or adds to that divine and eternal birth of his: but its whole purpose is to restore humanity, who had been deceived, so that it might defeat death and, by its power, destroy the devil who held the power of death. Overcoming the originator of sin and death would be beyond us, had not he whom sin could not defile, nor could death hold down, taken up our nature and made it his own. He was conceived from the holy Spirit inside the womb of the virgin mother. Her virginity was as *untouched* in giving him birth as it was in conceiving him.

3. - But if it was beyond Eutyches to derive sound understanding from this, **the purest source of the Christian faith**, because the brightness of manifest truth had been darkened by his own peculiar blindness, then he should have subjected himself to the teaching of the gospels. When Matthew says, the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham, Eutyches should have looked up the further *development* in the apostolic preaching. When he read in the letter to the Romans, Paul, the servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for God's gospel, which he had formerly promised through his prophets in the holy writings which refer to his Son, who was made for him of David's seed according to the flesh, he should have paid deep and devout attention to the prophetic texts. And when he discovered God making the promise to Abraham that in your seed shall all nations be blessed, he should have followed the apostle, in order to eliminate any doubt about the identity of this seed, when he says, the promises were spoken to Abraham and his seed. He does not say "to his seeds"--as if referring to a multiplicity--but to a single one, "and to thy seed" which is Christ. His inward ear should also have heard Isaiah preaching *Behold, a virgin will receive in the womb and will bear a son, and they will call his name Emmanuel, which is translated "God is with us"*. With faith he should have read the same prophet's words, *A child is born to us, a son is given to us. His power is on his shoulders. They will call his name "Angel of great counsel, mighty God, prince of peace, father of the world to come"*. Then he would not deceive people by saying that the Word was made flesh in the sense that he emerged from the virgin's womb having a human form but not having the *reality* of his mother's body.

4. - Or was it perhaps that he thought that our lord Jesus Christ did not have our nature because the angel who was sent to the blessed Mary said, *The holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the most High will overshadow you, and so that which will be born holy out of you will be called Son of God, as if it was because the conception by the virgin was worked by God that the flesh of the one conceived did not share the nature of her who conceived it? But uniquely wondrous and wondrously unique as that act of generation was, it is not to be understood as though the proper character of its kind was taken away by the sheer novelty of its creation. It was the holy Spirit that made the virgin pregnant, but the reality of the body derived from body.* As Wisdom built a house for herself, the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us: that is, in that flesh which he derived from human kind and which he animated with the spirit of a rational life.

5. - So **the proper character of both natures was maintained and came together in a single person.**

Lowliness was taken up by majesty, weakness by strength, mortality by eternity. To pay off the debt of our state, invulnerable nature was united to a nature that could suffer; so that in a way that corresponded to the remedies we needed, one and the same mediator between God and humanity the man Christ Jesus, could both on the one hand die and on the other be incapable of death. Thus was true God born in the undiminished and perfect nature of a true man, complete in what is his and complete in what is ours. By "ours" we mean what the Creator established in us from the beginning and what he took upon himself to restore. There was in the Savior no trace of the things which the Deceiver brought upon us, and to which deceived humanity gave admittance. His subjection to human weaknesses in common with us did not mean that he shared our sins. He took on the form of a servant without the defilement of sin, thereby enhancing the human and not diminishing the divine. For that self-emptying whereby the Invisible rendered himself visible, and the Creator and Lord of all things chose to join the ranks of mortals, spelled no failure of power: it was an act of merciful favor. So the one who retained the form of God when he made humanity, was made man in the form of a servant. Each nature kept its proper character without loss: and just as the form of God does not take away the form of a servant, so the form of a servant does not detract from the form of God.

6. - It was the devil's boast that humanity had been deceived by his trickery and so had lost the *gifts* God had given it; and that it had been stripped of the endowment of immortality and so was subject to the harsh sentence of death. He also boasted that, sunk as he was in evil, he himself derived some consolation from having a partner in crime; and that God had been forced by the principle of justice to alter his verdict on humanity, which he had created in such an honourable state. All this called for the realization of a secret plan whereby the *unalterable* God, whose will is indistinguishable from his goodness, might bring the original realization of his kindness towards us to completion by means of a more hidden mystery, and whereby humanity, which had been led into a state of sin by the craftiness of the devil, might be prevented from perishing contrary to the purpose of God.

7. - So without leaving his Father's glory behind, the Son of God comes down from his heavenly throne and enters the depths of our world, born in an unprecedented order by an unprecedented kind of birth. In an unprecedented order, because one who is invisible at his own level was made visible at ours. The ungraspable willed to be grasped. Whilst remaining pre-existent, he begins to exist in time. The Lord of the universe veiled his measureless majesty and took on a servant's form. The God who knew no suffering did not despise becoming a suffering man, and, deathless as he is, to be subject to the laws of death. By an unprecedented kind of birth, because it was inviolable virginity which supplied the material flesh without experiencing *sexual desire*. What was taken from the mother of the Lord was the nature without the *guilt*. And the fact that the birth was miraculous does not imply that in the lord Jesus Christ, born from the virgin's womb, the nature is different from ours. The same one is true God and true man.

8. - There is nothing unreal about this oneness, since both the lowliness of the man and the grandeur of the divinity are in mutual relation. As God is not changed by showing mercy, neither is humanity devoured by the dignity received. The activity of each form is what is proper to it in communion with the other: that is, the Word performs what belongs to the Word, and the flesh accomplishes what belongs to the flesh. One of these performs brilliant *miracles* the other sustains acts of *violence*. As the Word does not lose its glory which is equal to that of the Father, so neither does the flesh leave the nature of its kind behind. We must say this again and again: **one and the same is truly Son of God and truly son of man.** God, by the fact that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; man, by the fact that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. God, by the fact that all things were made through him, and nothing was made without him, *man*, by the fact that he was made of a woman, *made under the law*. 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 baptized 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. Accordingly, the same one whom the devil craftily tempts as a man, the angels dutifully wait on as God. 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.

9. - So, if I may pass over many instances, it does not belong to the same nature to weep out of deep-felt pity for a dead friend, and to call him back to life again at the word of command, once the mound had been removed from the four-day old grave; or to hang on the cross and, with day changed into night, to make the elements tremble; or to be pierced by nails and to open the gates of paradise for the believing thief. Likewise, it does not belong to the same nature to say I and the Father are one, and to say The Father is greater than I. For although there is in the Lord Jesus Christ a single person who is of God and of man, the insults shared by both have their source in one thing, and the glory that is shared in another. For it is from us that he gets a humanity which is less than the Father; it is from the Father that he gets a divinity which is equal to the Father.

10 - So it is on account of this oneness of the person, which must be understood in both natures, that we both read that the son of man came down from heaven, when the Son of God took flesh from the virgin from whom he was born, and again that the Son of God is said to have been crucified and buried, since he suffered these things not in the divinity itself whereby the Only-begotten is co-eternal and consubstantial with the Father, but in the weakness of the human nature. That is why in the creed, too, we all confess that the only-begotten Son of God was crucified and was buried, following what the apostle said, If they had known, they would never have crucified the Lord of majesty. And when our Lord and Savior himself was questioning his disciples and instructing their faith, he says, Who do people say I, the son of man, am? And when they had displayed a variety of other people's opinions, he says, Who do you say I am? --in other words, I who am the son of man and whom you behold in the form of a servant and in real flesh: Who do you say I am? Whereupon the blessed Peter, inspired by God and making a confession that would benefit all future peoples, says, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. He thoroughly deserved to be declared "blessed" by the Lord. He derived the stability of both his goodness and his name from the original Rock, for when the Father revealed it to him, he confessed that the same one is both the Son of God and also the Christ. *Accepting one of these truths without the other was no help to salvation; and to have believed that the Lord Jesus Christ was either only God and not man, or solely man and not God, was equally dangerous.*

11. - After the Lord's resurrection--which was certainly the resurrection of a *real* body, since the one brought back to life is none other than the one who had been crucified and had died--the whole point of the forty-day delay was to make our faith completely sound and to cleanse it of all darkness. Hence he talked to his disciples and lived and ate with them, and let himself be touched attentively and carefully by those who were in the grip of doubt; he would go in among his disciples when the doors were locked, and impart the holy Spirit by breathing on them, and open up the secrets of the holy scriptures after enlightening their understanding; again, he would point out the wound in his side, the holes made by the nails, and all the signs of the suffering he had just recently undergone, saying, Look at my hands and feet--it is I. Feel and see, because a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have. All this was so that it would be recognized that the proper character of the divine and of the human nature went on existing inseparable in him; and so that we would realize that the Word is not the same thing as the flesh, but in such a way that we would confess belief in the one Son of God as being both Word and flesh.

12. - This Eutyches must be judged to be extremely destitute of this mystery of the faith. Neither the humility of the mortal life nor the glory of the resurrection has made him recognize our nature in the only-begotten of God. Nor has even the statement of the blessed apostle and evangelist John put fear into him: Every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ came in the flesh is from God, and every spirit which puts Jesus asunder is not from God, and this is *Antichrist*. But what does putting Jesus asunder consist in if not in separating his human nature from him, and in voiding, through the most barefaced fictions, the one mystery by which we have been saved? Once in the dark about the nature of Christ's body, it follows that the same blindness leads him into raving folly about his suffering too. If he does not think that the Lord's cross was unreal and if he has no doubt that the suffering undergone for the world's salvation was real, then

let him acknowledge the flesh of the one whose death he believes in. And let him not deny that a man whom he knows to have been subject to suffering had our kind of body, for to deny the reality of the flesh is also to deny the bodily suffering. So if he accepts the Christian faith and does not turn a deaf ear to the preaching of the gospel, let him consider what nature it was that hung, pierced with nails, on the wood of the cross. With the side of the crucified one laid open by the soldier's spear, let him identify the source from which blood and water flowed, to bathe the church of God with both font and cup.

13. - Let him heed what the blessed apostle Peter preaches, that sanctification by the Spirit is effected by the sprinkling of Christ's blood; and let him not skip over the same apostle's words, knowing that you have been redeemed from the empty way of life you inherited from your fathers, not with corruptible gold and silver but by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, as of a lamb without stain or spot. Nor should he withstand the testimony of blessed John the apostle: and the blood of Jesus, the Son of God, purifies us from every sin; and again, this is the victory which conquers the world, our faith. Who is there who conquers the world save one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? It is he, Jesus Christ who has come through water and blood, not in water only, but in water and blood. And because the Spirit is truth, it is the Spirit who testifies. For there are three who give testimony--Spirit and water and blood. And the three are one. In other words, the Spirit of sanctification and the blood of redemption and the water of baptism. These three are one and remain indivisible. None of them is separable from its link with the others. The reason is that *it is by this faith that the Catholic Church lives and grows*, by believing that neither the humanity is without true divinity nor the divinity without true humanity.

14. - When you cross-examined Eutyches and he replied, "I confess that our Lord was of two natures before the union, but I confess one nature after the union", I am amazed that such an absurd and corrupt declaration of faith was not very severely censured by the judges; and that an extremely foolish statement was disregarded, as if nothing whatever offensive had been heard. It is just as wicked to say that the only-begotten Son of God was of two natures before the incarnation as it is abominable to claim that there was a single nature in him after the Word was made flesh. Eutyches must not suppose that what he said was either correct or tolerable just because no clear statement of yours refuted it. So we remind you, dearest brother, of your charity's responsibility to see to it that if through God's merciful inspiration the case is ever settled, the rash and ignorant fellow is also purged of what is blighting his mind. As the minutes have made clear, he made a good start at abandoning his opinion when, under pressure from your statement, he professed to say what he had not previously said, and to find satisfaction in the faith to which he had previously been a stranger. But when he had refused to be party to the anathematizing of his wicked doctrine, your fraternity would have realized that he was persisting in his false belief and that he deserved a verdict of condemnation. If he is honestly and suitably sorry about this, and acknowledges even at this late stage how rightly episcopal authority was set in motion, or if, to make full amends, he condemns every wrong thought he had by word of mouth and by his actual signature, then no amount of mercy towards one who has reformed is excessive. Our Lord, the true and good shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep, and who came not to destroy but to save the souls of men and women, wants us to be imitators of his goodness, so that whilst justice represses sinners, mercy does not reject the converted. The defense of the true faith is never so productive as when false opinion is condemned even by its adherents.

15. - In place of ourself, we have arranged for our brothers, Bishop Julius and the priest Renatus of the church of St Clement, and also my son, the deacon Hilary, to ensure a good and faithful conclusion to the whole case. To their company we have added our notary Dulcitus, of proven loyalty to us. We trust that with God's help he who has fallen into error might condemn the wickedness of his own mind and find salvation.

God keep you safe, dearest brother.

Commentary:

- **The word “ignorant” (in paragraph 1 and elsewhere) which Pope Leo uses to describe Eutyches has to be understood against the meanings of the time. It**

is not intended as an insult. There is a twofold way of expressing a lack of knowledge: when the lack is due to fault, i.e., the person should have known better, especially taking into account his position and the likelihood that his statements will have a profound and widespread effect, that lack is called *ignorance*. If the lack of knowledge or information is about matters one does not have the obligation to know, it is *nescience*. The Pope is addressing Eutyches' refusal, his contumacy, in not learning from the learned around him. Note the directive for mercy outlined in paragraph 14 should Eutyches reform. We might be somewhat more circumspect in our use of language today, but we would, no doubt, have to say essentially the same to someone in authority who is wrong but stubbornly refuses to change.

- Note the antithetical way the Pope compares the natures in Christ, to preserve the difference and show that one does not melt into the other but both possess their own characteristics and their own unmixed properties. But they are the properties and natures of one and the same divine Person.
- The letter is obviously an authoritative statement of one who is conscious of his teaching authority. Here in the middle of the fifth century we have clear evidence of the papal consciousness as teacher, and the acceptance of this position as unique in the united Church. When he chides the bishops of the East for not informing him, they comply; and when he settles the issue, they also comply. The circumspection of Celestine evidences prudence in not doing what might lead to a greater evil of schism. Unfortunately schism would happen later in the East-West split in 1054.
- About this letter of Leo: "It is not in tone or form, a work of theology at all, but a judgment, a decision, an authoritative statement that 'this is the Catholic Faith'".^{vii}
- The Person of the God-Man is identical with the divine Word.
- The Word took his body from the body of the Blessed Virgin.
- The divine and human natures existed in the one Person of Christ without mixture.
- In this union to form one Person, each nature retained its own unimpaired natural properties. The form of God does not abolish the servant; and the form of servant does not diminish the God-form.
- Redemption demands that the one and same Mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ, is able to die in respect to the one nature but not in respect to the other.
- Each nature had its own principle of operation and its own activity, but one did not exercise without the other or apart from the union in Person which is permanent. Each accomplishes the purpose proper to it in concert with the other.
- The unity of person requires that the expression of activity of the natures be articulated according to the rules of the *communicatio idiomatum*.

The irony of history again appears in the aftermath of the reception of this letter of Pope Leo. The Council desired by the Emperor Theodosius II opened at Ephesus on August 8, 449 with Dioscoros of Alexandria, Cyril's violent and ambitious successor presiding, as the Emperor demanded. He ignored the Roman legates, representatives of Leo, and never allowed Leo's letter to be read. He manipulated the 135 bishops into a condemnation of Bishop Flavian, recipient of Leo's letter, and of Eusebius of Dorylaeum who had raised the issue of Eutyches heresy. They approved the 12 anathemas of Cyril, something the previous Council refused to do, and ousted the bishops of the Antiochean party. This Council was solidly in Eutyches' corner and even rehabilitated him. As such, its work was quickly decried by Pope Leo who labeled it a *Latrocinium* (a "Robber Council"). The Emperor, however, accepted this Council and no objection from the Pope, the Western Bishops or his own son-in-law and counterpart in the West, Valentinian III could sway him. Schism seemed certain, except for the fact that Theodosius died in 450. He was succeeded by a new Emperor, Marcian, who cleaned house, cowered the bishops who had taken part in the "Robber Council" and professed the Orthodox faith proclaimed by Pope Leo to whom he gave his full support. The Emperor called a new Council; one approved by Leo, and designated at first for Nicea, but for reason of state transferred to Chalcedon. The bishops who had been bullied by Dioscoros were reconciled with Rome, but not Dioscoros himself. He was condemned and deposed by the new Council. The president of the General Council of Chalcedon was a Bishop from Sicily, Paschasinus, the appointee of Leo himself. The new Emperor asked for a definitive statement on the Incarnation, even for a new Creed, one acceptable to Alexandrians and Antiocheans to bring peace to the Empire. When the *Tome of Leo* was read, the bishops responded: "It is Peter who says this through Leo. This is what we believe. This is the faith of the Apostles. Leo and Cyril teach the same thing."^{viii}

The deposition of Dioscoros caused consternation among the thirteen Egyptian bishops. They refused to sign on the Leo's letter, fearing that they would suffer reprisals even death upon their return to Egypt where they would be considered traitors. The Council allowed them to abstain until a new Patriarch for Alexandria should be appointed.

For all this, there was still some agitation for a new Creed. A commission set itself up under the leadership of Anatolis the Patriarch of Constantinople acting to please the Emperor. On October 22nd they offered a creedal statement marvelous for its ambiguity and intended to appeal to both the Alexandrian and the Antiochean parties. A majority of the bishops approved it, a minority (mostly Antiochean) opposed it. But, most importantly, the Papal Legate would have nothing to do with it and threatened to leave, return to Rome and call for a new Council there if a new creedal statement were to pass, particularly one so unclear. He insisted that the Leonine letter, which stated the doctrine so perfectly be accepted. He won. The Emperor acceded to this decision. The Council acceded to his demands and, in place of a new creed concluded with the following declaration:

Definition of the faith^{ix}

The sacred and great and universal synod by God's grace and by decree of your most religious and Christ-loving emperors Valentinian Augustus and Marcian Augustus assembled in Chalcedon, metropolis of the province of Bithynia, in the shrine of the saintly and triumphant martyr Euphemia, issues **the following decrees**.

1. - In establishing his disciples in the knowledge of the faith, our lord and savior Christ said: "My peace I give you, my peace I leave to you", so that **no one should disagree with his neighbor regarding religious doctrines** but that the proclamation of the truth would be uniformly presented. But the evil one never stops trying to smother the seeds of religion with his own tares and is for ever inventing some novelty or other against the truth; so the Master, exercising his usual care for the human race, roused this religious and most faithful emperor to zealous action, and summoned to himself the leaders of the priesthood from everywhere, so that through the working of the grace of Christ, the master of all of us, every injurious falsehood might be staved off from the sheep of Christ and they might be fattened on fresh growths of the truth.

2. - This is in fact what we have done. We have driven off erroneous doctrines by our collective resolution and we have renewed the unerring creed of the fathers. We have proclaimed to all the creed of the 318; and we have made our own those fathers who accepted this agreed statement of religion -- the 150 who later met in great Constantinople and themselves set their seal to the same creed.

3. - Therefore, whilst we also stand by

- the decisions and all the formulas relating to the creed from the sacred synod which took place formerly at **Ephesus**,
 - whose leaders of most holy memory were Celestine of Rome and Cyril of Alexandria

4. - We decree that

- pre-eminence belongs to the exposition of the right and spotless creed of the 318 saintly and blessed fathers who were assembled at **Nicaea** when Constantine of pious memory was emperor: and that
- those decrees also remain in force which were issued in **Constantinople** by the 150 holy fathers in order to destroy the heresies then rife and to confirm this same catholic and apostolic creed.
 - The creed of the 318 fathers at Nicaea.
 - And the same of the 150 saintly fathers assembled in Constantinople.

5. - This wise and saving creed, the gift of divine grace, was **sufficient for a perfect understanding and establishment of religion**. For its teaching about the Father and the Son and the holy Spirit is complete, and it sets out the Lord's becoming human to those who faithfully accept it.

6. - But there are those who are trying to ruin the proclamation of the truth, and through their private heresies they have spawned novel formulas:

- some by daring to corrupt the mystery of the Lord's economy on our behalf, and refusing to apply the word "**God-bearer**" to the Virgin; and
- others by introducing a confusion and mixture, and mindlessly imagining that there is **a single nature of the flesh and the divinity**, and fantastically supposing that in the confusion the divine nature of the Only-begotten is passible.

7. - Therefore **this sacred and great and universal synod**, now in session, in its desire to exclude all their tricks against the truth, and teaching what has been unshakeable in the proclamation from the beginning,

- **decrees** that the creed of the 318 fathers is, above all else, to remain inviolate. And because of those who oppose the holy Spirit, it
- **ratifies** the teaching about the being of the holy Spirit handed down by the 150 saintly fathers who met some time later in the imperial city
 - -- the teaching they made known to all,
- **not introducing anything** left out by their predecessors, **but clarifying** their ideas about the holy Spirit by the use of scriptural testimonies against those who were trying to do away with his sovereignty.

8. - And because of those who are attempting to corrupt the mystery of the economy and are shamelessly and foolishly asserting that he who was born of the holy virgin Mary was a mere man, it has accepted

- **the synodical letters of the blessed Cyril**, [already accepted by the Council of Ephesus] pastor of the church in Alexandria, to Nestorius and to the Orientals, as being well-suited to refuting Nestorius's mad folly and to providing an interpretation for those who in their religious zeal might desire understanding of the saving creed.

9. - To these it has suitably added, against false believers and for the establishment of orthodox doctrines

- the letter of the primate of greatest and older Rome, the most blessed and most saintly Archbishop *Leo*, written to the sainted Archbishop Flavian to put down Eutyches' evil-mindedness, because it is in agreement with great Peter's confession and represents a support we have in common.

10. - It is opposed to those who attempt to tear apart the mystery of the economy into a duality of sons; and

- it *expels* from the assembly of the priests those who dare to say that the divinity of the Only-begotten is passible, and
- it *stands opposed* to those who imagine a mixture or confusion between the two natures of Christ; and
- it *expels* those who have the mad idea that the servant-form he took from us is of a heavenly or some other kind of being; and
- it *anathematizes* those who concoct two natures of the Lord before the union but imagine a single one after the union.

11. - So, following the saintly fathers, we all with one voice teach the confession of one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and a body; consubstantial with the Father as regards his divinity, and the same consubstantial with us as regards his humanity; like us in all respects except for sin; begotten before the ages from the Father as regards his divinity, and in the last days the same for us and for our salvation from Mary, the virgin God-bearer as regards his humanity; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation; at no point was the difference between the natures taken away through the union, but rather the property of both natures is preserved and comes together into a single person and a single subsistent being; he is not parted or divided into two persons, but is one and the same only-begotten Son, God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ, just as the prophets taught from the beginning about him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ himself instructed us, and as the creed of the fathers handed it down to us.

12. - Since we have formulated these things with all possible accuracy and attention, the sacred and universal synod decreed that **no one is permitted to produce, or even to write down or compose, any other creed or to think or teach otherwise**. As for those who dare either to compose another creed or even to promulgate or teach or hand down another creed for those who wish to convert to a recognition of the truth from Hellenism or from Judaism, or from any kind of heresy at all: if they be bishops or clerics,

the bishops are to be deposed from the episcopacy and the clerics from the clergy; if they be monks or lay folk, they are to be anathematized.

Commentary: Chalcedon's "Definition of Faith":

- Clearly accepts the Councils that preceded it, hence they are Ecumenical, see section 3.
- Sections 4-5 clear state the preeminence to the Creed of Nicea-Constantinople.
- Section 6 condemns Nestorius and Eutyches.
- Section 7 declares Nicea primary and First Constantinople as a clarification of the doctrine on the Holy Spirit.
- Sections 8-9 declare the authentic teaching authority of the works of Cyril against Nestorius and of Pope Leo against Eutyches.
- Section 10 evokes anathema against the teachings that necessitated the Council of Chalcedon.
- Section 11 is a summary statement of the doctrines of the Council of Chalcedon, and the solemn definition of faith it gives to the whole Church (promulgated at the most important fifth session on October 22, 451). 1)The One Son of God is perfect in divinity and humanity, true God and true man; of a rational soul and body; 2) he is consubstantial with the Father in regard to the divinity and consubstantial with in the humanity; 3) he is like us in all respects except sin; 4) he is begotten from eternity in his divinity, and in time as regards his humanity, born of the Virgin Mary, the God-Bearer, and for our salvation; 5) he is acknowledged in two natures in which there is no confusion, change, division, or separation; 6) the union never took away the difference between the natures, the properties of each are preserved and come together in the one Person, one single subsistent being; 7) the Son is not parted or divided into two persons but is one and the same only-begotten Son, God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ; 8) this is affirmed by the Prophets from the beginning, the testimony of the Lord himself, and the teaching handed down to us in the Creeds and teachings of the Fathers.
- Section 12 affirms that no one may teach another creed than this.

As the Councils had done, Chalcedon concluded with 30 disciplinary Canons. The 28th Canon was a source of difficulty and rejected by Pope Leo. It attempted to give Constantinople priority over the more ancient Patriarchal Sees of Alexandria and Antioch which were acknowledged in the Council of Nicea, thereby nullifying the decrees of that first Council. Apart from that, the Pope approved the Council in regard to its doctrinal teachings and Chalcedon became an Ecumenical Council. It did not, however, put an end to the controversy about the natures of Christ and their relation one to the other in the Person of Christ. The term *person* continued to trouble many in the East who could not hear it in any other than with Nestorian overtones. There are Nestorian and Monophysite Churches even today.

ⁱ C. Poulet-S. Raemers, *a History of the Catholic Church*, Vol. I, B. Herder Book Co., 1950, pg. 238.

ⁱⁱ Philip Hughes, *the Church in Crisis: A History of the General Councils 325 – 1870*, Hanover House, 1961, Pg. 68. The full letter can be found in Jaffé – Wattenbach, *Regista pontificum Romanorum*, 1888, # 385. (This is a catalogue of existing papal letters to 1198).

ⁱⁱⁱ See the previous lecture *On the Way to Ephesus 431*, pg. 4.

^{iv} Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology*, A Michael Glazier Book, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1990, pg171.

^v Idem.

^{vi} Translation from *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman P. Taylor, www.dailycatholic.org/history/4ecumen2.htm

^{vii} See Hughes, Op. cit., pg. 74.

^{viii} P. Hughes, Op. cit., pg. 82.

^{ix} See Tanner, Op. cit.

Addendum: (reference Collins and Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, Paulist Press, 2000.

Apocatastasis: (Greek: meaning universal salvation. It is a theory attributed (seemingly falsely) to Origen and later condemned as heresy. It held that all angels (including the fallen angels) and humans will ultimately be saved. Hell, therefore, would not be an eternal destiny of the evil.

Filioque: (Latin meaning “and from the Father”) was added to the Creed of Nicea-Constantinople at the 4th Synod of Braga, Spain, in 675. It indicates: 1) that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, and b) that the three Persons of the Trinity are perfectly equal. The Greek Orthodox Church objected to this insertion as jeopardizing the “monarchy” of the Father (i.e., the Father as the single, unoriginated principle) by the introduction of a second principle in the procession of the Spirit (something the Catholic Church has never taught and repeatedly rejected). The Council of Florence (1438-1445) did not insist that the Greeks accept the “Filioque” provided they accept the doctrine behind it, which they do.

Perichoresis: Christological, the interpenetration of the divine and human natures of Christ. While each remains in tact and are not confused one with the other, they coinhere without separation or division; **Trinitarian,** the reciprocal presence or interrelationship of the three Persons in the Trinity.

Questions for discussion:

1. How do Nestorianism and Monophysitism differ?
2. What is the fundamental error of the first two stages of Monophysitism?
3. Why is the “Patristic rule” that “what is not assumed is not saved” so important to these Christological heresies we have discussed?

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4. What is the fundamental error of the 3rd stage of Monophysitic theory?
 5. Why was Pope Celestine hesitant about approving the Council of Ephesus? When was it approved and so recognized as a General Ecumenical Council?
 6. What is the central error of Eutyches' teaching?
 7. What was the *Latrocinium*? Who named it such, and why?
 8. What did Pope Leo teach in his "Tome" to Flavian?
 9. The Council of Chalcedon issued a "Definition of Faith". What did it teach?
 10. The "Filioque" is still problematic for the Orthodox Churches of the East. Why? Is it a doctrinal problem?