

# Ancient Church History

## Christological Heresies and the Council of Chalcedon (451)

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### Ancient Church Christological Heresies

Heresy	Major Proponents	Summary
<b>Apollinarianism</b>	Apollinarius	Christ had no human spirit. The Logos replaced it.
<b>Nestorianism</b>	Nestorius	The Logos indwelt the person of Jesus, making Christ a God-bearing man rather than the God-Man. Affirmed merely mechanical rather than organic union of the person of Christ.
<b>Eutychianism</b>	Eutyches	The human nature of Christ was absorbed by the Logos.
<b>Monophysitism</b>	Severus / Julian of Halicarnassus	Christ had one nature (unwilling to accept impersonal human nature of Christ).
<b>Monothelitism</b>	Theodore of Arabia / Sergius / Cyrus of Alexandria	Christ had not human will, just the one divine will.

**Apollinarianism: Apollinaris** was Bishop of Laodicea. He was the first to call the attention of the Church to the psychical and pneumatic side of the humanity of Christ. Apollinaris was pro-Nicene and desired to continue Athanasius' orthodox position on the deity of Christ. He adopted a psychological **trichotomy** (body, soul, spirit), and attributed to Christ a human body, and a real human soul, but not a human spirit or reason.

He thought that the divine Logos took the place of Christ's human spirit: "The word was made flesh—not spirit" (cf. John 1:14). Orthodox teachers replied that "flesh" or *sarx* [sarx] is synecdochal for Christ's whole human nature. In Apollinaris' theology, Jesus Christ became a *tertium quid* ("third thing"), or a middle being between God and man, in whom, one part divine and two parts human were fused in the unity of a new nature. Apollinaris taught the deity of Christ, but failed to understand the biblical teaching of the completeness of his human nature.

**Athanasius and the Cappadocian Fathers** (Gregory of Nyssa, Basil of Caesarea, and Gregory of Nazianzus) combated the Apollinarian error. Two region councils and the Council of Constantinople in 381 condemned the Apollinarians.

**The Nestorian Controversy: Nestorius** was originally a monk, then presbyter in Antioch, and after 428 he became patriarch of Constantinople. He was considered an honest man, of great eloquence, monastic piety, and the spirit of a zealot for orthodoxy. In his inaugural sermon he said: "*Give me, O emperor (addressing Theodosius II), the earth purified of heretics, and I will give thee heaven for it; help me to fight the heretics, and I will help thee to fight the Persians.*"

As patriarch, he incited the emperor to enact stringent laws against heretics. He was opposed to the expression Θεοτοκοι or "**Mother of God**", which had been applied to the virgin Mary by Origen, Alexander of Alexandria, Athanasius and others which passed into the devotional

language of the people. This term never suggested that the creature bore the Creator as blasphemous as that is to think about, but the term "mother of God" was to denote the indissoluble union of the divine and human natures in Christ. Christ was born as one person and suffered as one person.

Nestorius said that he could call Mary *Cristotokoj* or "**The Bearer of Christ,**" but not the "mother of God." He said in his sermon, "*You ask whether Mary may be called mother of God. Has God then a mother? If so, heathenism itself is excusable in assigning mothers to its gods; but then Paul is a liar, for he said of the deity of Christ that it was without Father, without mother, and without descent*" (Heb. 7:3). He went on to write: "Christ was formed in the womb of Mary, was not himself God, but God assumed him (after his baptism), and on account of Him who assumed, he who was assumed is also called God."

Nestorius asserted rightly the duality of Christ's natures, and the continued distinction between them; he denied that God, as such, could either be born, or suffer and die; but he pressed the distinction of the two natures to a double personality. Instead of *theanthropos*, or a God-Man, he makes Christ merely a God-bearing man. The teachings of Nestorius were condemned by the **Council of Ephesus (431)** called by Emperor Theodosius II and the faith of Nicea was reaffirmed.

The confessions of the Council of Ephesus (431), composed by Theodoret says:

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and body subsisting; as to his manhood, born of the Virgin Mary...of the same essence with the Father as to his Godhead, and of the same substance with us as to his manhood; for two natures are united with one another. Therefore we confess ONE Christ, ONE Lord, and ONE Son. By reason of this union, which yet is without confusion, we also confess that the holy Virgin is mother of God, because God the Logos was made flesh and man, and united with himself the temple [humanity] even from the conception; which temple he took from the Virgin."

**The Eutychian Controversy/ The Council of Robbers (449):** The error of **Eutychianism** or **Monophysitism** (mono= one; *fusi j/ phis*=nature), urged the personal unity of Christ at the expense of the distinction of natures, and made the divine Logos absorb the human nature; Monophysitism was a reaction to Nestorianism's teaching of Jesus having a dual or double personality. The problem was that if Christ is not true man, he cannot be our example, and his passion and death dissolve at last into mere figurative representations or **Docetistic** show (Docetism: *dokein*- to appear).

**Eutyches** (*the fortunate*; his opponents said he should have been Atyches (*the unfortunate*), was presbyter and head of a cloister of three hundred monks in Constantinople. He had recently appeared at the Council of Ephesus to argue against the teachings of Nestorius in 431.

Eutyches taught that the impersonal human nature is assimilated and, as it were, deified by the personal Logos, so that his body is by no means of the same substance (homoousion) with ours, but a divine body.

All of Christ's human attributes are transferred to the one subject, the humanized Logos. So it can be said: God is born, God suffered, God was crucified and died.

Eutyches' teachings were first condemned at the **Synod of Constantinople in 448**. The **Synod of Ephesus met in 449** ("Robber Synod" from Pope Leo's Letter *Latrocinium*), and consisted of

135 bishops. It was called by the **Emperor Theodosius II** because of a patriarch of Alexandria named **Dioscurus** (another monophysite).

It has been called the "**Council of Robbers**" because the council affirmed the orthodoxy and sanctity of Eutyches and condemned **duophysitism** (duo=two; physis=natures/ dual natures of Christ) as a heresy (this was the orthodox teaching of the West since the time of Tertullian), reinstated Eutyches to ordained office, and deposed and excommunicated Theodoret, Flavian (Eutyches' opponents (orthodox duophysites) who died shortly thereafter because of violence at the council) and Leo (see Westminster Confession of Faith, XXXI.2-4).

The ancient alliance between Rome and Alexandria was ripped apart because of this erring council, and Leo denounced the council as a "synod of robbers." Theodosius II (Eastern Emperor) supported Dioscurus, but died the following year (July 450). The new emperor Marcian had good relations with Leo in the West and the Pope called a new council to meet in the following year. The place was to be at Chalcedon, opposite Constantinople, and there 600 bishops assembled at the Fourth Ecumenical Council. The so-called Council of Ephesus 449, was rejected, and the decisions of this erring council were rejected. Dioscurus was deposed and sent into exile by the emperor.

**Review of Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter XXXI:** WCF 31.3 It belongeth to synods and councils, ministerially to determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience; to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and government of His Church; to receive complaints in cases of maladministration, and authoritatively to determine the same: which decrees and determinations, if consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with, reverence and submission; not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God appointed thereunto in His Word.(1) (1)Acts 15:15,19,24,27,28,29,30,31; Acts 16:4; Matt. 18:17-20

WCF 31.4 All synods or councils, since the Apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err; and many have erred. Therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith, or practice; but to be used as a help in both.(1) (1)Eph. 2:20; Acts 17:11; 1 Cor. 2:5; 2 Cor. 1:24

### **The Council of Chalcedon (451)**

Summoned by Emperors Marcian (396-457- Eastern Emperor) and Valentinian III (419-455-one of the last Western Roman Emperors) and attended by approximately 600 bishop-pastors from the East and the West (Asia, Pontus, Thrace, Egypt, Rome, Africa, et al). Leo of Rome was represented by legates because of fear of travel due to the Huns. The emperors sought a common declaration against Christological heresies that would be in accord with Nicea and Constantinople.

The council confirmed that the Lord Christ is one person, his two natures preserved in one *prosopon* and *hypostasis* ("hypostatic union"). Both natures, God and man, are unimpaired, "perfect," consubstantial with God and man, and born of the Virgin. The distinct natures are fully God and man, thus securing salvation by a saving God and a man identified with men.

Unfortunately, **Monophysitism** continued to spread after the Council of Chalcedon. Those **Monophysites** who rejected the Council's orthodox teaching did so because they felt that this was the only way to protect the teaching of the unity of Christ's person. According to Monophysitism, to ascribe two natures to Christ was a denial that man could gain ultimate oneness with God which was the goal of salvation. The result of this emphasis is to play down the manhood of Christ and relegate it to the realm of unimportance. Scholars have noted that this heretical teaching had roots in early Christian monastic teaching. The monks were in constant battle against their human weakness and sinfulness. They thought to overcome one's humanity

was the way to gain Christian victory. For Christ to have a similar human nature as theirs would have been for them unthinkable. There are still struggles in the Eastern Orthodox Church today with Modern Monophysites.

### **The Creed of Chalcedon: October 22, 451**

"We then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial (*homoousion*) with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God (*theotokos*), according to the manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation, the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature preserved, and concurring in one person (*prosopon*) and one subsistence (*hypostasis*), not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us."

### **Westminster Confession of Faith- Chapter 8, Sections 2-3**

WCF 8.2 The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon Him man's nature,(1) with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin;(2) being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance.(3) So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion.(4) Which person is very God, and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man.(5) (1)John 1:1,14; 1 John 5:20; Phil. 2:6; Gal. 4:4. (2)Heb. 2:14,16,17; Heb. 4:15. (3)Luke 1:27,31,35; Gal. 4:4. (4)Luke 1:35; Col. 2:9; Rom. 9:5; 1 Pet. 3:18; 1 Tim. 3:16. (5)Rom. 1:3,4; 1 Tim. 2:5.

WCF 8.3 The Lord Jesus, in His human nature thus united to the divine, was sanctified and anointed with the Holy Spirit above measure;(1) having in Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;(2) in whom it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell;(3) to the end, that being holy, harmless, undefiled, and full of grace and truth,(4) He might be thoroughly furnished to execute the office of a Mediator and Surety.(5) Which office He took not unto Himself, but was thereunto called by His Father;(6) who put all power and judgment into His hand, and gave Him commandment to execute the same.(7) (1)Ps. 45:7; John 3:34. (2)Col. 2:3. (3)Col. 1:19. (4)Heb. 7:26; John 1:14. (5)Acts 10:38; Heb. 12:24; Heb. 7:22. (6)Heb. 5:4,5. (7)John 5:22,27; Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:36.

<b>Viewpoints of the:</b>	<b>Arians</b>	<b>Nestorians</b>	<b>Eutychians</b>
<b>Proponents</b>	Arius, Presbyter of Alexandria	Represented by Nestorius, 5 <sup>th</sup> -c. bishop of Constantinople	Represented by Eutychius Theodosius II
<b>Time</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> century	5 <sup>th</sup> century	5 <sup>th</sup> century
<b>Denial</b>	Genuine deity	Unity of the Person of Christ (denied the organic union of natures)	Distinction of the Natures of Christ (denied distinction of natures)
<b>Expanation</b>	Christ was the first and highest created being, homoiousia, not homoousia.	Union was moral, not organic- thus two persons. The human was completely controlled by the divine	Monophysitist; the human nature was swallowed by the divine to create a new third nature- a <i>tertium quid</i>
<b>Condemned</b>	Council of Nicea (325)	Synod of Ephesus (431)	Council of Chalcedon (451)
<b>Associated with</b>	Generation= creation	"Word-flesh" not "word-man" Christology; opposed to using <i>theotokos</i> of Mary	Concern for the unity and divinity of Christ (minimized humanity)
<b>Argument for</b>	They teach that Christ is subordinate to the Father	Distinguished human Jesus, who died, from Divine Son, who cannot die	Maintained the unity of Christ's person
<b>Argument against</b>	Only a divine Christ is worthy of worship; this view tends toward polytheism. Only a divine Christ can save (Phil. 2:6; Rev. 1:8)	If the death of Jesus was the act of a human person, not of God, it could not be efficacious (Rev. 1:12-18)	If Christ were neither a man nor God, he could not redeem as man or as God (Phil. 2:6)
<b>Major Opponents</b>	Athanasius	Cyril of Alexandria	Flavian of Constantinople Pope Leo Theodoret

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