The Story of Christianity

VOLUME I

The Early Church to the Reformation

REVISED AND UPDATED

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HarperOne
An Imprint of HarperCollins*Publishers*

SECOND EDITION
Designed by Level C

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
is available upon request.

ISBN 978-0-06-185588-7

13 14 RRD(H) 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11

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Eastern Christianity

When I have no books, or when my thoughts, torturing me like thorns, do not let me enjoy reading, I go to church, which is the cure available for every disease of the soul. The freshness of the images draws my attention, captivates my eyes . . . and slowly leads my soul to divine praise.

JOHN OF DAMASCUS

Although in the last chapter our attention has centered on Western Christianity, one must not forget that at the same time there was an Eastern branch of the church. For Christians at that time, both East and West, the church was one. Historians, however, can now see that by the early Middle Ages the two branches of the church were drifting apart, and that the final schism, which took place in 1054, was long in the making. Apart from the obvious cultural differences between the Latin-speaking West and the Greek-speaking East, the political course of events produced entirely different situations in the two branches of the church. In the West, the demise of the empire created a vacuum that the church filled, and thus ecclesiastical leaders—particularly the popes—also came to wield political power. In the East, the empire continued for another thousand years. It was often beleaguered by foreign invasion or by inner turmoil, but it survived. Its autocratic emperors kept a tight rein on ecclesiastical leaders. This usually led to civil intervention in ecclesiastical matters, particularly in theological debates. Theological discussion came to be tainted with the ever-present possibility of appealing to the emperor to take one's side, and thus crushing an enemy one could not overcome by mere argument. Given that power, many emperors made theological decisions on the basis of political considerations, which led to even greater acrimony. For these reasons, theological controversy became one of the hallmarks of Eastern Christianity during the early Middle Ages.

This is not to say that such controversies were not important. The issues at stake were often central to the gospel. Furthermore, since Christians at that

time considered themselves members of the same church, the decisions made in the East, sometimes with little or no Western participation, came to be regarded as normative by both East and West. Finally, out of these debates the first permanent schisms developed within Christianity, giving rise to separate churches that still exist.

THE CHRISTOLOGICAL DEBATES TO THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON

The question of the divinity of the second person of the Trinity (and of the Holy Spirit) had been settled by the Councils of Nicea (325) and Constantinople (381). Although the conversion to Arianism of some of the Germanic people beyond the borders of the empire, and their subsequent invasion of Western Europe, brought about a brief resurgence of Arianism, this eventually disappeared, and Christians were in basic agreement on trinitarian doctrine. But there were still other issues that would cause sharp theological disagreement. Foremost among these was the question of how divinity and humanity are joined in Jesus Christ. This is the fundamental christological question.

On this question, there were in the East two different currents of thought, which historians have conveniently labeled the *Antiochene* and the *Alexandrine*—although not all those who followed the Alexandrine way of thinking were from Alexandria, nor were all the Antiochenes from Antioch. Both sides were agreed that the divine was immutable and eternal. The question then was, how could the immutable, eternal God be joined to a mutable, historical man? At this point, the two schools followed divergent paths. The Alexandrines, like Clement and Origen centuries earlier, stressed the significance of Jesus as the teacher of divine truth. In order to be this, the Savior had to be a full and clear revelation of the divine. His divinity must be asserted, even if this had to be done at the expense of his humanity. The Antiochenes, on the other hand, felt that for Jesus to be the Savior of human beings he had to be fully human. The Godhead dwelt in him, without any doubt; but this must not be understood in such a way that his humanity was diminished or eclipsed. Both sides agreed that Jesus was both divine and human. The question was how to understand that union.

As one now looks back at that question, it appears that the way it had been posed made it impossible to answer. In the preceding generations, guided mostly by earlier Greek philosophy, Christian theologians had come to define God in terms of contrast with all human limitations. God is immutable; humans are constantly changing. God is infinite; humans are finite. God is omnipotent; human power is limited. God is eternal and omnipresent; humans can only be present at one place in a particular time. When divinity and hu-

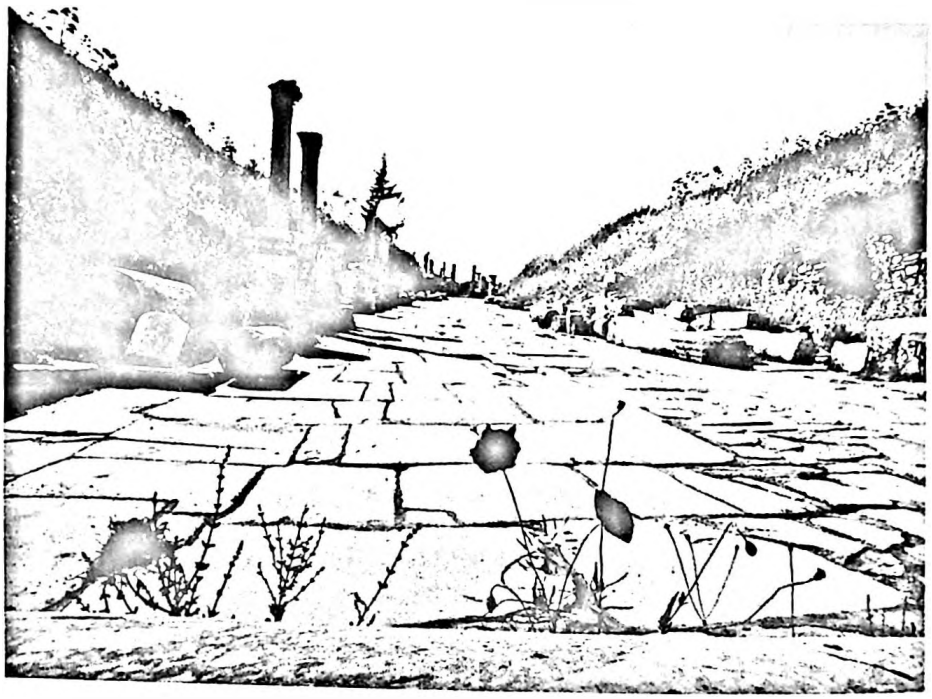
manity are thus defined, the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ—the presence and full union of the divine and the human—becomes a contradiction. (I have said elsewhere that it is like asking someone to produce hot ice cream. One can melt the ice cream; one can mix the ingredients; one can put both ice cream and something hot on the same plate; but one can never produce ice cream that, without ceasing to be ice cream, is hot.) The only solutions to such a quandary, when matters are posed in such terms, are to declare that the divinity and the humanity are not really joined in one—which was the Antiochene way of thinking—or to be willing to have the divinity overwhelm the humanity, overcoming its natural limitations—which was the Alexandrine position.

In the West, such questions did not create the same stir. For one thing, after the Germanic invasions, there were other urgent matters that required attention. For another, the West simply revived Tertullian's old formula—that in Christ there were two natures united in one person—and was content to affirm this. Thus, the West played a balancing role between the two factions in the East, and for that reason would come out of the controversies with enhanced prestige.

The first stages of the controversy began even before the trinitarian issue was settled. One of the defenders of the Nicene position regarding the Trinity, Apollinaris of Laodicea, thought that he could help that cause by explaining how the eternal Word of God could be incarnate in Jesus. This he attempted to do by claiming that in Jesus the Word of God, the second person of the Trinity, took the place of the rational soul. Like all human beings, Jesus had a physical body, and this was activated by the same principle that gives life to all human beings. But he did not have a human intellect. The Word of God played in him the role that the intellect or "rational soul" plays in the rest of us.

Although this explanation seemed satisfactory to Apollinaris, soon many began to see flaws in it. A human body with a purely divine mind is not really a human being. From the Alexandrine point of view, this was quite acceptable, for all that was needed was that Jesus really speak as God, and that he have the body necessary to communicate with us. But the Antiochenes insisted that this was not enough. Jesus must be truly human. This was of paramount importance, because Jesus took up humanity so that humankind could be saved. Only if he really became human did he really save us. If any part of what constitutes a human being was not taken up by him, that was not saved by him. Gregory of Nazianzus (one of the Cappadocian Fathers) put it this way:

> If any believe in Jesus Christ as a human being without human reason, they are the ones devoid of all reason, and unworthy of salvation. For that which he has not taken up he has not saved. He saved that which he joined to his divinity. If only half of Adam had fallen, then it would be



Ephesus, where the Third Ecumenical Council met (431), was also the site of the Robber Synod of 449.

possible for Christ to take up and save only half. But if the entire human nature fell, all of it must be united to the Word in order to be saved as a whole.[40]

After some debate, the theories of Apollinaris were rejected, first by a number of leading bishops and local synods called by them, and eventually by the Council of Constantinople in 381—the same council that reaffirmed the decisions of Nicea against Arianism.

The next episode of the christological controversies was precipitated by Nestorius, a representative of the Antiochene school who became patriarch of Constantinople in 428. There were always political intrigues surrounding that office, for the patriarchate of Constantinople had become a point of discord between the patriarchs of Antioch and Alexandria. The Council of Constantinople had declared that the bishop of Constantinople should have in the East precedence similar to that which the bishop of Rome had in the West. This was a simple acknowledgment of political reality, for Constantinople had become the capital of the Eastern empire. But the bishops of the older churches in Antioch and Alexandria were not content with being relegated to a secondary position. They responded, among other things, by turning the bishopric

of Constantinople into a prize to be captured for their own supporters. Since Antioch was more successful at this game than Alexandria, most of the patriarchs of Constantinople were Antiochenes, and therefore the patriarchs of Alexandria regarded them as their enemies—a process we have already seen when dealing with the life of John Chrysostom. For these reasons, Nestorius's position was not secure, and the Alexandrines were looking to catch him at his first mistake.

This happened when Nestorius declared that Mary should not be called *Theotokos*—that is, bearer of God—and suggested that she be called *Christotokos*—bearer of Christ. It is difficult for Protestants to understand what was at stake here, for we have been taught to reject the notion that Mary is the "Mother of God," and at first glance this seems to be what was at issue here. But in truth, the debate was not so much about Mary as about Jesus. The question was not what honors were due to Mary, but how one was to speak of the birth of Jesus. When Nestorius declared that Mary was the bearer of Christ, but not of God, he was affirming that in speaking of the incarnate Lord one may and must distinguish between his humanity and his divinity, and that some of the things said of him are to be applied to the humanity, and others to the divinity. This was a typically Antiochene position, which sought to preserve the full humanity of Jesus by making a very clear distinction between it and his divinity. Nestorius and the rest of the Antiochenes feared that if the two were too closely joined together, the divinity would overwhelm the humanity, and one would no longer be able to speak of a true man Jesus.

In order to explain this position, Nestorius declared that in Jesus there were "two natures and two persons," one divine and one human. The human nature and person were born of Mary; the divine were not. What he meant by this is not altogether clear, for the terms "person" and "nature" could be used with different meanings. But his enemies immediately saw the danger of "dividing" the Savior into two beings whose unity consisted of agreement rather than in any real joining together. Soon many others were convinced that Nestorius's doctrines were indeed dangerous.

As was to be expected, the center of opposition to Nestorius was Alexandria, whose leader, Bishop Cyril, was a much more able politician and theologian than Nestorius. Cyril made certain that he had the support of the West, for which the doctrine of two persons in Christ was anathema, as well as of emperors Valentinian III and Theodosius II, who then called an ecumenical council to be gathered at Ephesus in June 431.

Nestorius's main supporters, John of Antioch and his party, were delayed. After waiting for them for two weeks, the council convened, in spite of the protests of the Roman legate and several dozen bishops. They then dealt with the

case of Nestorius and, without allowing him to defend himself, declared him a heretic and deposed him from his see.

John of Antioch and his party arrived a few days later, and they then convened a rival council, which was much smaller than Cyril's, and which declared that Cyril was a heretic and reinstated Nestorius. In retaliation, Cyril's council reaffirmed its condemnation of Nestorius and added to it the names of John of Antioch and all who had taken part in his council. Finally, Theodosius II intervened, arrested both Cyril and John, and declared that the actions of both councils were void. Then followed a series of negotiations that led to a "formula of union" to which both Cyril and John agreed in 433. It was also decided that the actions of Cyril's council against Nestorius would stand. As to Nestorius, he spent the rest of his life in exile, first in a monastery in Antioch, and then, when he became too embarrassing to his Antiochene friends who had abandoned him, in the remote city of Petra.

Thus, the second episode in the christological controversies ended with a victory for Alexandria, and with a truce that would not hold for long. In 444, when Dioscorus succeeded Cyril as patriarch of Alexandria, the stage was set for a third and even more acrimonious confrontation, for Dioscorus was a convinced defender of the most extreme Alexandrine positions, and a rather unscrupulous maneuverer.

The storm centered on the teachings of Eutyches, a monk in Constantinople who lacked theological subtlety, and who held that, while the Savior was "of one substance [*homoousios*] with the Father," he was not "of one substance with us." He also seems to have been willing to say that Christ was "from two natures before the union, but in one nature after the union." Exactly what this meant is not altogether clear. In any case, Patriarch Flavian of Constantinople, whose theology was of the Antiochene tradition, felt that Eutyches's teachings were close to Docetism and condemned him. Through a series of maneuvers, Dioscorus had the affair grow into a conflict that involved the entire church, so that a council was called by Emperor Theodosius II, to meet at Ephesus in 449.

When this council gathered, it was clear that Dioscorus and his supporters had taken all the necessary steps to predetermine the outcome. Dioscorus himself had been appointed president of the assembly by the emperor, and given the authority to determine who would be allowed to speak. This council took an extreme Alexandrine stand. When Pope Leo's legates tried to present before the assembly a letter that Leo had written on the subject at hand—commonly known as Leo's *Tome*—they were not allowed to do so. Flavian was manhandled so violently that he died in a few days. The doctrine that there are in Christ "two natures" was declared heretical, as were also all who defended the

Antiochene position, even in moderate form. Furthermore, it was decreed that any who disagreed with these decisions could not be ordained.

In Rome, Leo fumed, and called the council a "Robber Synod." But his protests were to no avail. Theodosius II and his court, who apparently had received large amounts of gold from Alexandria, considered the matter ended.

Then the unexpected happened. Theodosius's horse stumbled, and the emperor fell and broke his neck. He was succeeded by his sister Pulcheria and her husband Marcian. Pulcheria had agreed earlier with the Western position, that Nestorius should be condemned, for it imperiled the union of the divine with the human. But she was not an extreme Alexandrine, and felt that the proceedings at Ephesus in 449 had left much to be desired. For this reason, at the behest of Leo, she called a new council, which met at Chalcedon in 451 and which eventually became known as the Fourth Ecumenical Council.

This council condemned Dioscorus and Eutyches, but forgave all others who had participated in the Robber Synod of Ephesus two years earlier. Leo's letter was finally read, and many declared that this expressed their own faith. It was a restatement of what Tertullian had declared centuries earlier, that in Christ there are "two natures in one person." Finally, the council produced a statement that was not a creed, but rather a *Definition of faith*, or a clarification of what the church held to be true. A careful reading of that "Definition" will show that, while rejecting the extremes of both Alexandrines and Antiochenes, and particularly the doctrine of Eutyches, it reaffirmed what had been done in the three previous great councils (Nicea in 325, Constantinople in 381, and Ephesus in 431):

> Following, then, the holy Fathers, we all with one voice teach that it is to be confessed that our Lord Jesus Christ is one and the same God, perfect in divinity, and perfect in humanity, true God and true human, with a rational soul and a body, of one substance with the Father in his divinity, and of one substance with us in his humanity, in every way like us, with the only exception of sin, begotten of the Father before all time in his divinity, and also begotten in the latter days, in his humanity, of Mary the Virgin bearer of God.
>
> This is one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, manifested in two natures without any confusion, change, division or separation. The union does not destroy the difference of the two natures, but on the contrary the properties of each are kept, and both are joined in one person and *hypostasis*. They are not divided into two persons, but belong to the one Only-begotten Son, the Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

> All this, as the prophets of old said of him, and as he himself has taught us, and as the Creed of the Fathers has passed on to us.

It will be readily seen that this *Definition* does not seek to "define" the union in the sense of explaining how it took place, but rather in the sense of setting the limits beyond which error lies. Thus, it rejected the notion that the union destroyed "the difference of the two natures" and also the view that the Savior is "divided into two persons"—thus rejecting the most extreme Alexandrine and Antiochene positions. It is clear that this manner of speaking of the Savior is far distant from that of the Gospels, and has been deeply influenced by extrabiblical patterns of thought. But, given the manner in which the issue was posed, it is difficult to see what else the bishops gathered at Chalcedon could have done in order to safeguard the reality of the incarnation.

The *Definition of faith* soon became the standard of christological orthodoxy in the entire Western church, and in most of the East—although there were some in the East who rejected it, and thus gave rise to the first long-lasting schisms in the history of Christianity. Some, mostly in Syria and Persia, insisted on a clear distinction between the divine and the human in Christ, and were eventually called "Nestorians." Many others took the opposite tack, rejecting the doctrine of "two natures," and for that reason were dubbed "Monophysites"—from the Greek *monos* (one) and *physis* (nature). Very few of these, however, adhered to the teachings of Eutyches. Rather, their concern was that the divine and the human in the Savior not be so divided that the incarnation be rendered meaningless. To this were joined political and nationalist considerations which added fire to the theological debates that raged for centuries.

FURTHER THEOLOGICAL DEBATES

The Chalcedonian *Definition* did not put an end to christological debates, particularly in the East. There were many in Egypt who considered Dioscorus a martyr, and believed that Flavian and Leo were heretics. A large number of believers in Syria held similar views. In both cases, their theological objections were also spurred by resentment against the central government in Constantinople, which collected taxes in the provinces and did not return to them proportional benefits. To this were added cultural and ethnic tensions that existed since the time of the first Roman conquests, and had never been resolved. In order to regain the loyalty of these people, the emperors sought theological compromises that would satisfy both them and those who held to the decisions of Chalcedon. It was an impossible task, for the reasons for disaffection were not purely theological. On balance, all that the emperors achieved was to alien-

ate both the Chalcedonians and the others, and to force the church into endless controversy.

The first to follow this unwise policy was Basiliscus, who had deposed Emperor Zeno, and who in 476 annulled the decisions of Chalcedon and called a new council. But this never met, for Zeno regained the throne and Basiliscus's projects were abandoned. Then Zeno himself published a *Henotikon* ("Edict of Union") in 482, in which he simply directed that all should return to what was commonly held before the controversy. But this created a new stir, for many, particularly Pope Felix III, declared that the emperor had no authority to prescribe what was to be believed. Since Zeno had the support of Patriarch Acacius of Constantinople, the dispute resulted in an open breach between the bishops of Rome and Constantinople. Called the Schism of Acacius, this separated the East from the West until 519, well after the death of both principals. At that time, Emperor Justin and Pope Hormisdas reached an agreement that was in fact a return to the decisions of Chalcedon.

Justin was succeeded by his nephew Justinian, the ablest emperor of the Byzantine Empire, who restored its military glory by reconquering North Africa and Italy, rebuilt Hagia Sophia, and codified the entire system of law. He was convinced that the differences between Chalcedonians and Monophysites were mostly verbal, and that the two parties could be reconciled through a series of meetings and dialogues. Much later, historians of Christian thought would come to the conclusion that on this score he was probably correct. But he seems not to have realized that to a great extent what appeared to be purely theological disagreements were in fact the results of much more difficult and intractable cultural, social, economic, and political conflicts. Thus, Justinian restored to their sees several of the Monophysite bishops who had been deposed during the reign of Justin, and some were even invited to visit the emperor and his wife Theodora at their palace, where they were received cordially and respectfully.

In 532, at the emperor's urging, a theological conference took place in Constantinople. The most distinguished Chalcedonian theologian of the time, Leontius of Byzantium, interpreted the Chalcedonian *Definition* in such a way that some of the leading Monophysites declared that the way was open for a rapprochement. One of them even declared that he was ready to accept the Chalcedonian *Definition*. At the end of the conference, many hoped that the schism would soon be healed.

But the emperor erred in thinking that he could regain the allegiance of his subjects who still rejected the council of Chalcedon by condemning, not the council itself, but the writings of three Antiochene theologians who were particularly distasteful to those who rejected the council—Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus, and Ibas of Edessa. What ensued is usually called the

Justinian, shown with his court in a mosaic in Ravenna, led the empire in a brief revival of its power.

Controversy of the Three Chapters. Justinian was correct in that these three were among the Antiochene theologians whose christological views most offended the Monophysites. But this created such a stir that eventually Justinian was forced to call a council, which gathered at Constantinople in 553. At Justinian's prodding, the council, which eventually came to be known as the Fifth Ecumenical Council, condemned the Three Chapters. (Many objected to the condemnation of people who had been dead for quite some time, and whose contemporaries did not consider heretics. Therefore, rather than condemning them, the council condemned those among their writings that the Monophysites found most offensive.) But this did not satisfy those who wished to see the decisions of Chalcedon withdrawn, and therefore Justinian achieved little for all his efforts.

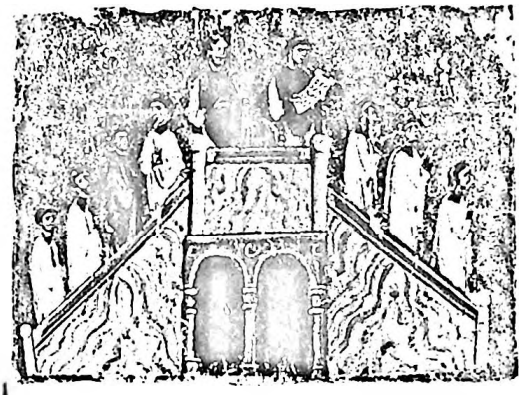
The last emperor who sought to regain the allegiance of those opposed to Chalcedon was Heraclius, early in the seventh century. Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople proposed that, while there are indeed two natures in Christ, there is only one will. Although Sergius's position is not altogether clear, it seems that he meant that in Christ the divine will took the place of the human will. In any case, this was how he was interpreted, and thus the objections raised against his view were similar to those raised earlier against Apollinaris: a man without a human will is not fully human. Sergius's position, which came to be

known as *Monothelism*—from the Greek *monos* ("one"), and *thelema* ("will")—gained the support of Pope Honorius, and long debates ensued. But then came the Arab conquests, which overran Syria and Egypt. Since those were the areas where opposition to Chalcedon was strongest, imperial policy no longer sought to reconcile the anti-Chalcedonians. In 648, Constans II prohibited any further discussion on the will or wills of Christ. Finally, the Sixth Ecumenical Council, gathered at Constantinople in 680–681, condemned Monothelism, and declared Pope Honorius to have been a heretic. (Much later, in the nineteenth century, this condemnation of a pope as a heretic came to the foreground in the discussions surrounding the proclamation of Papal Infallibility.)

Then came the controversy regarding the use of images. In a way, this was a final episode in the christological debates. In the early church, there seems to have been no objection to the use of images, for the catacombs and other early places of worship were decorated with paintings depicting communion, baptism, and various biblical episodes. Later, when the empire embraced Christianity, several leading bishops expressed concern that the masses now flocking to the church would be led to idolatry, and therefore they preached, not against the images themselves, but against their misuse as objects of worship. In the eighth century, several Byzantine emperors took steps against images. Emperor Leo III (who ruled in 717–741, and is not to be confused with the pope of the same name, who ruled in 795–816) opened the controversy when he ordered the destruction of a statue of Jesus that was highly regarded by many of the faithful. In 754 Constantine V, Leo's son and successor, called a council that forbade the use of images and condemned those who defended them. The reasons for these decisions are not altogether clear. Certainly, the presence of Islam, with its strong teaching against any physical representation, was a factor. Also, the emperors may have wished to curb the power of the monks, who were almost unanimously in favor of images—and part of whose income came from the production of images or icons. In any case, the entire empire was soon divided between "iconoclasts"—destroyers of images—and "iconodules"—worshipers of images.

The most influential theologian among the iconodules was John of Damascus, who lived under Muslim rule and was a high official in the caliph's government before he resigned from that position to become first a monk and then a priest. His *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* is significant both as a systematization of Eastern Orthodox doctrine and as the first major Christian writing written in the context of Islam and in response to it. John is also famous for his theological distinction between what can be known (the *kataphatic*) and what is by its very nature a mystery and cannot be known (the *apophatic*).

John of Damascus and the rest of the iconodules saw their position as a cor-



A deacon in the cathedral of Hagia Sophia reads the Decree of 843 that put an end to the iconoclastic controversy.

ollary of christological orthodoxy. If Jesus was truly human, and in him God had become visible, how could one object to representing him? Furthermore, the first maker of images was God, who created humans after the divine image. John, whose theology was such that he was among those condemned by the council of Constantine V, argued:

> Why do we venerate one another, if not because we are made after the image of God? . . . To depict God in a shape would be the peak of madness and impiety. . . . But since God . . . became true man . . . the Fathers, seeing that not all can read nor have the time for it, approved the descriptions of these facts in images, that they might serve as brief commentaries.[41]

The controversy raged for years. The West simply ignored the imperial edicts, while the East was rent asunder. Finally, the Seventh Ecumenical Council gathered at Nicea in 787. This assembly distinguished between worship in the strict sense, *latria,* which is due only to God, and a lesser worshipful veneration, *dulia,* which is to be given to images. Although the iconoclasts regained power for a time, in 842 images were definitively restored—an event that many Eastern churches still celebrate as the "Feast of Orthodoxy." In the West, the decisions of the council of 787 were not well received, for the distinction between *latria* and *dulia* was difficult to make in Latin. But eventually the difficulties were overcome, and most Christians agreed on the use of images in church, and on the restricted veneration due to them.

THE DISSIDENT CHURCHES OF THE EAST

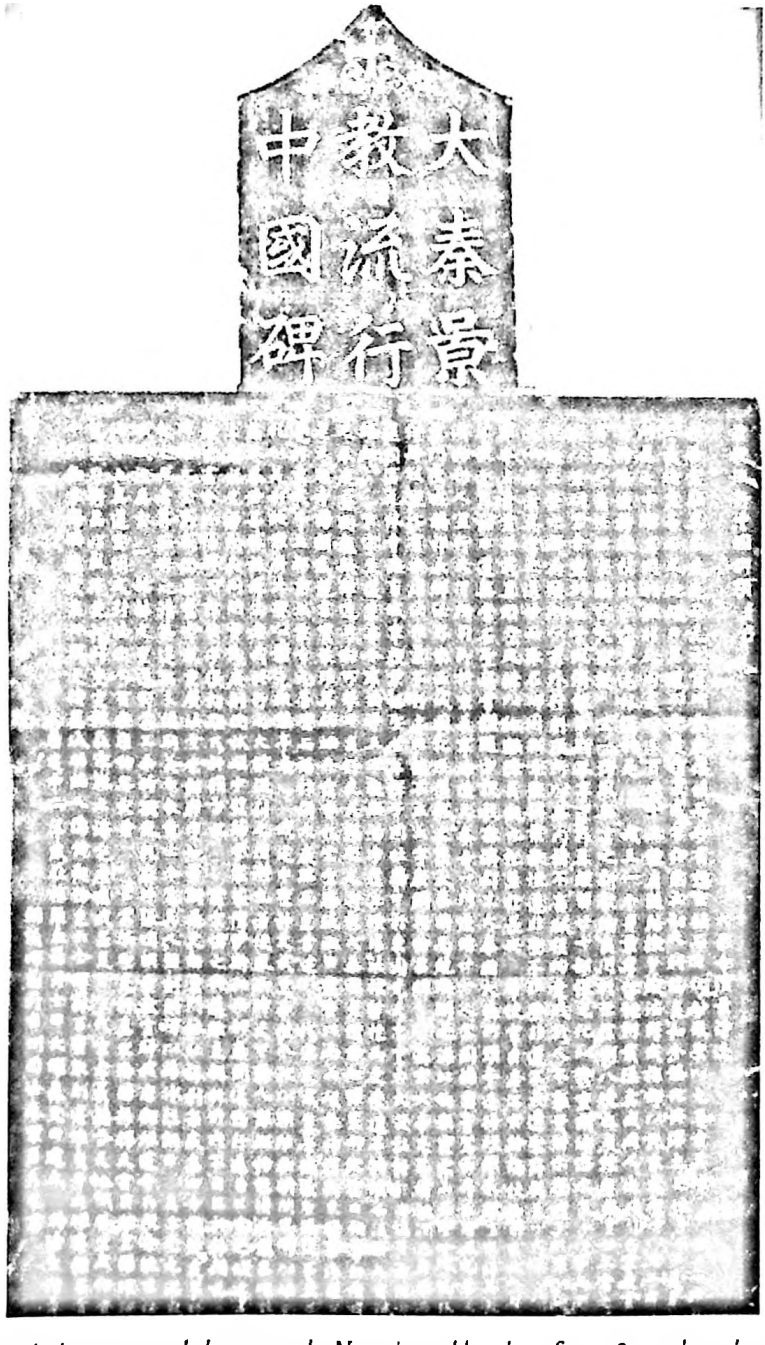
Although the various councils came to positions that eventually gained general acceptance in the West and within the borders of the Byzantine Empire, such decisions were not always well received by churches beyond the confines of the

empire. One of these was the Persian church. Since Persia was a traditional enemy of the Roman Empire, Christians in that nation took pains to show that their faith did not make them foreign agents. When they did not succeed in this, they were cruelly persecuted. In 410, the Persian church organized itself as an autonomous church, under the leadership of the patriarch of Ctesiphon—the Persian capital. When Nestorius was condemned shortly thereafter, a number of theologians of Antiochene inclinations, fearing further reprisals, crossed over to Persia, where they settled in the city of Nisibis and founded a school that eventually became the main center of theological education in Persia. As a result, the Persian church came to hold views that other Christians called "Nestorian." At its high point, this church had flourishing missions in Arabia, India, and even China. But political adversities eventually diminished its numbers, and the few thousand Nestorians who now remain are scattered all over the world.

Within the borders of the Byzantine Empire, the main strongholds of "Monophysism" were Egypt and Syria. In Egypt, opposition to the decisions of the council was coupled with unrest on the part of the people of ancient Egyptian stock, the Copts, who felt exploited and oppressed by the empire. In the cities, there were many Greek-speaking Christians who felt quite satisfied with the existing order, and who generally accepted the Chalcedonian *Definition of Faith*. After the Arab conquests, the Coptic Church became the main Christian body in Egypt. Those who held to Chalcedonian orthodoxy were dubbed *Melchites*—that is, "imperial" Christians. Both churches—the Coptic and the Melchite—have continued existing side by side until the present day, although the Coptic Church is the larger of the two. Since the church in Ethiopia had always had close ties with Egypt, and few directly with the rest of the church, it followed the lead of the Coptic Church in rejecting the Council of Chalcedon, and thus becoming "Monophysite."

Something similar happened in Syria, although the country was more evenly divided between Chalcedonians and "Monophysites." The great leader of the latter was Jacob Baradaeus, an indefatigable traveler and organizer, and for that reason their church came to be called "Jacobite."

The other major "Monophysite" body is the Armenian church. By 450, when the Persians tried to impose their religion on Armenia, Christianity—which had arrived there through the work of Gregory the Illuminator—had become the rallying point of Armenian nationality. This was just before the Council of Chalcedon, and the Armenians hoped that the Roman Empire would come to their aid as fellow Christians. But then Theodosius II, who had promised such aid, died, and his successors Pulcheria and Marcian simply let Armenia be invaded by the Persians. With 1,036 soldiers who fought to the last man, the Armenians defended the mountain passes, hoping that this delay would



This inscription, commonly known as the Nestorian tablet, dates from 781, and marks the presence of Nestorian Christianity in China at least a century and a half earlier. The heading reads: Memorial of the Propagation in China of the Luminous Religion.

give the Romans time to intervene. But it was all in vain, and the country was overrun by the Persians. Since it was precisely at that time that Pulcheria and Marcian called the Council of Chalcedon, it is not surprising that the Armenians rejected the decisions of that council. For that reason, they were dubbed "Monophysites." They in turn declared that those who had gathered at the council—who had declared that in Christ there are "two natures," the divine and the human—were not only traitors, but also heretics.

Under the Persians, the Armenians proved unwilling to give up their religion and traditions, and were granted a measure of autonomy. Then came the Arabs, under whose regime, in spite of sporadic persecution, Armenian Christianity flourished. In the eleventh century, the Turks took the country, and their harshness led many Armenians to emigrate to Asia Minor, where they founded Little Armenia. But eventually this region was also taken by the Turks, who ruled it with an iron hand. Early in the twentieth century, they massacred thousands of Armenians. Entire villages were wiped out. The survivors scattered throughout the world. Meanwhile, the older Armenia continued its traditions, first most of it under Soviet rule, and then as the independent Republic of Armenia.

While these various bodies continued existing into the present, by the second half of the twentieth century they had been touched by the ecumenical movement, and there were in all of these churches—as well as in those that had always held to the *Definition* of Chalcedon—growing numbers that felt that many of their disagreements were verbal rather than real, and thus a rapprochement had begun.

EASTERN ORTHODOXY AFTER THE ARAB CONQUESTS

Although it is obvious that every church thinks of itself as orthodox, that title has become such a hallmark of Eastern Chalcedonian Christianity that it is often called the Orthodox Church.

After the Arab conquests, the Orthodox Church was blocked to the south and east by Islam, and thus its expansion was in a northerly and northwesterly direction. Those areas of Eastern Europe were populated mostly by Slavs, who had invaded them after the Germanic peoples. They occupied most of what is today Poland, the Baltic countries, Russia, Slovakia, Serbia, and Greece. Those who had crossed the Danube were, at least nominally, part of the Byzantine Empire. The rest were divided among many tribes and nations. Then a new group of invaders, the Bulgars, conquered a vast portion of the Danube basin, where they ruled over a mixed population of Slavs and other former subjects of the Byzantine Empire.

Notes

CHAPTER 3: **The Church in Jerusalem**
1. *Against Heresies*, 1.26.2.

CHAPTER 5: **First Conflicts with the State**
2. *Annals* 15.44.
3. *Annals* 15.44.

CHAPTER 6: **Persecution in the Second Century**
4. *Apology* 1.2.
5. Ignatius, *Romans* 1.2–2.1.
6. *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 14.
7. *Meditations* 2.5.

CHAPTER 7: **The Defense of the Faith**
8. Origen, *Against Celsus* 3.55.
9. *Octavius* 12.
10. Origen, *Against Celsus* 4.3.
11. *Prescription against Heretics* 1.7.
12. *To Diognetus* 5.1–11.

CHAPTER 8: **The Deposit of the Faith**
13. Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism* (Oxford, U.K.: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 170.

CHAPTER 9: **The Teachers of the Church**
14. *Prescription against Heretics* 8.
15. *Prescription against Heretics* 8, 7.
16. *Against Praxeas* 1.

CHAPTER 10: **Persecution in the Third Century**
17. *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* 5.3.

CHAPTER 11: **Christian Life**
18. *Armenian Gospel of the Infancy*, 23.2-3.
19. *I Apol.*, 67.3-6.
20. *I Apol.* 14.2.
21. *I Apol.* 65.1-3.
22. Rodney Stark, *Cities of God* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 225.

CHAPTER 12: **The Great Persecution and the Final Victory**
23. *Church History* 8.17.6–10.

CHAPTER 13: **Constantine**
24. See the Appendix for a list of all the Ecumenical Councils, with dates and primary decisions.

CHAPTER 17: **The Arian Controversy and the Council of Nicea**
25. Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life of Constantine* 3.7.
26. Eusebius of Caesarea, *Epistle to the Caesareans.*

CHAPTER 20: **The Great Cappadocians**
27. *Homily on Luke's Words, "I'll tear down my barns. . ."* 1.

CHAPTER 21: **Ambrose of Milan**
28. *Commentary on Luke*, 2.41.
29. *Duties of the Clergy* 2.137.
30. *Sermon against Auxentius* 5.
31. Sozomen, *Church History* 7.25.