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The Significance of Chalcedon and the Reformation Confessions for Asian Churches Today

Yuan-wei Liao

Introduction

I suppose many of us, as committed Protestants, look forward to celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation several years from now. Certainly I do. I am also grateful that this consultation on Christology offers us an opportunity to reflect on the Chalcedonian definition, which was promulgated more than fifteen centuries ago. The wider Christian world commemorated the 1500th anniversary of the Fourth Ecumenical Council with many books and

YUAN-WEI LIAO (Th.D., Luther Seminary) is Associate Professor of History and Theology and Director of Continuing Education at China Evangelical Seminary, Taipei, Taiwan. He presented an earlier version of the material in this article at the Asia Theological Association's Consultation on Christology, held at the Asian Center for Theological Studies and Mission, Seoul, South Korea, August 11-14, 2014.

articles published in 1951 and soon thereafter.[1] Similarly, a number of Luther-related events and publications are planned for 2017.[2]

To the best of my knowledge, no celebrations of Chalcedon or the posting of the 95 Theses are planned for this year. Still, it is a good time to reflect on the import of the Chalcedonian Creed and the Reformation-era confessions, especially as those documents apply to the Asian church in the context of the twenty-first century.

Chalcedon

Christianity confesses a Trinitarian faith. We believe in a triune God who exists eternally in three distinct persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Yet at the center of our belief is the person of Jesus Christ, whom we confess as fully divine and fully human. Christianity is a Christ-centered religion whose core value could even be summarized in W. H. Griffith Thomas's words: "Christianity is Christ."[3] Outside of Christ, there is no salvation,

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[1]Some important English-language works written for the 1500th anniversary of Chalcedon are Francis X. Murphy, "The Dogmatic Definition of Chalcedon," *Theological Studies* 12, no. 4 (December 1951): 505-519; Jaroslav Pelikan, "Chalcedon after Fifteen Centuries," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 22, no. 12 (December 1951): 926-936; and R. V. Sellers, *The Council of Chalcedon: A Historical and Doctrinal Survey* (London: SPCK, 1953). More recent essays along this line include Craig A. Blaising, "Chalcedon and Christology: A 1530th Anniversary," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 138, no. 4 (October 1981): 326-337; and Frances Young, "The Council of Chalcedon: 1550 Year Later," *Touchstone*, January 2001, 5-14.

[2]For example, see "National Exhibition in Torgau to Mark Anniversary of the Reformation," *Deutsche Welle*, http://www.dw.de/national-exhibition-in-torgau-to-mark-anniversary-of-the-reformation/ a-18448571, accessed May 29, 2015.

[3]"Christianity is the only religion in the world which rests on the Person of its Founder. A man can be a faithful Mohammedan without in the least concerning himself with the person of Mohammed. So also a man can be a true and faithful Buddhist without knowing anything whatever about Buddha. It is quite different with Christianity. Christianity is so inextricably bound up with Christ that our view of the Person of Christ involves and determines our view of Christianity." W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Christianity Is Christ* (London: Longmans, Green, 1909; reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1953), 7.

according to the apostles' bold proclamation in Acts 4:12. And this Jesus Christ must be unerringly known as well as genuinely believed in and trusted.

It is therefore understandable that the theological controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries regarding the doctrines of the Trinity and the person of Christ were closely connected. In fact, the solution of the Trinitarian problem at the Council of Nicaea seemed to make the Christological problem even more pressing. To be specific, if Jesus Christ is "of the same substance" with God the Father, as the Nicene Creed says, then what is the relation of his deity to his humanity?[4] Facing so many heterodox and even heretical responses—Docetism, Gnosticism, Arianism, Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, Eutychianism, etc.—church leaders and theologians have always felt the need for great care in dealing with this question, for the purpose of safeguarding the *analogia fidei.*

Chalcedon concluded nearly 150 years of theological debate on the doctrines of the Trinity and the person of Christ. Its definition of Christological orthodoxy "has produced a yardstick for measuring attempts to articulate Christological doctrine, a set of parameters within which an 'orthodox' approach to Christology must take place."[5] It is impossible to overemphasize the significance of the Chalcedonian Creed for confessing a biblically and theologically correct Christology.

In reviewing the historical development of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and the person of Christ, Ferguson gives us a succinct description of the foci and relationships of the first four ecumenical councils. The Council of Nicaea (325) emphasized the *oneness* of God by asserting that Jesus Christ is *homoousios* with the Father, while the Council of Constantinople (381) emphasized the *threeness* of God by insisting that Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit are three distinct yet mutually indwelling persons. The Council of Ephesus (431) emphasized the *oneness* of Jesus Christ by defending Mary's

[4]Everett Ferguson, *Church History*, vol. 1, *From Christ to Pre-Reformation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2005), 255-256.

[5]Young, "The Council of Chalcedon," 12.

designation as *theotokos*, while the Council of Chalcedon (451) emphasized the *twoness* of Jesus Christ by explicating the union of divine and human "natures" (*physes*) in the Son's one person.[6]

Along with various theological issues which led to vehement controversies, closely interwoven were "imperial policy, ecclesiastical politics, and doctrinal formulas."[7] Beginning in the third century, Alexandria and Antioch had developed a sharp political rivalry to accompany their distinct hermeneutical and Christological approaches, and these differences became even more pronounced after the Council of Constantinople. Alexandria's Word-flesh Christology, which emphasized Christ's divinity, and Antioch's Word-man Christology, which emphasized his humanity, needed to be reconciled, if at all possible. As Roger Olson puts it, in the Council of Chalcedon "[t]he truth of both sides had to be preserved and expressed, while the extremes of both had to be avoided and even excluded."[8]

With imperial oversight and direction, and after heated debate, the council eventually reached consensus and promulgated its definition of the relationship between Christ's two natures. Unfortunately, this caused a split in the church; the Monophysites, who held that Christ has only one nature, permanently isolated

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[6]Ferguson, *From Christ to Pre-Reformation*, 255. Gerald O'Collins's Christological summary is also quite helpful: "Against Arianism, Nicaea I used the term *homoousios* to reaffirm 'Christ is divine'. Against Apollinarianism, Constantinople I affirmed 'Christ is human'. Against Nestorius, Ephesus professed that Christ's two natures (his divine being and his human being) are not separated. Against Eutyches, Chalcedon declared that, while belonging to one person, the two natures are not merged or confused. These first four councils became acknowledged as presenting the essential and orthodox norm of understanding and interpreting the christological (and trinitarian) faith of the New Testament." Gerald O'Collins, *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 198.

[7]R. V. Sellers, *The Council of Chalcedon: A Historical and Doctrinal Survey* (London: SPCK, 1953), xi.

[8]Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 231.

themselves from Orthodox and Catholic Christendom.[9] This outcome may sound tragic to some, yet in light of the history of doctrinal development in general, it seems to have been almost unavoidable.

Most church historians and theologians would concur that the Chalcedonian definition was "both a compromise between two extremes and an attempt to protect the mystery of the incarnation."[10] In addition to endorsing the creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople, the Council of Chalcedon added its own Christological confession. The key was its affirmation of "Christ's one person ('*prosōpon*' and '*hypostasis*') 'in' his two natures, human and divine." The creed thus made it clear that "the unity of Christ exists on the level of person and the duality on that of his natures." The Fourth Ecumenical Council has proved "a lasting success in regulating language about Christ."[11] Its succinct phrase, "one person in two natures," has since become normative; knowing and acknowledging Christ as fully God and fully human, no matter how mysterious this may seem, is something that no true Christian can escape.

Chalcedon's description of the two natures of Christ as united in his one divine person "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation" is the core of its definition. These four phrases have even been referred to as Chalcedon's four "fences."[12] They were used to refute various Christological heresies in the early church, including Eutychianism, Monophysitism and Nestorianism. Due to limits of space, we will not discuss this topic further here.[13]

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[9]"There are five of these non-Chalcedonian Christian Churches: the Coptic Church (headed by the Patriarch of Alexandria), the Syrian Church (headed by the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East), and the Armenian Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church in India, and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. For 1500 years these churches have been estranged and out of communion with their fellow Orthodox Christians because of Chalcedon." Douglas G. Eadie, "Chalcedon Revisited," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 10, no. 1 (Winter 1973): 141.

[10]Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 233.

[11]O'Collins, *Christology*, 196-197.

[12]Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 233-234.

[13]For further discussion of the significance of Chalcedon's four "withouts," see Martin H. Scharlemann, "The Case for Four Adverbs: Reflections on

The Reformation Confessions

There is an obvious temporal gap between the Council of Chalcedon and the Protestant Reformation, a span of more than ten centuries that covers the whole of the Middle Ages. Is there any conceptual connection between "creed" and "confession"? What are the purposes of these two terms? As all of us are aware, "creed" comes from the Latin term *credo*, which means "I believe." All of the three ecumenical creeds—the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed[14]—as well as many others have acquired that designation because they are considered to be expressions of true and right faith. Creeds have become standards for discerning orthodoxy, since many of them have resulted from the long deliberations of councils that dealt with various heresies.

In his introduction to an edition of St. Augustine's *Confessions*, John K. Ryan argues that this *opus magnum* is in fact a threefold confession: "a confession of sins, a confession of faith, and a confession of praise."[15] The second of those meanings could justly be applied to the Reformation confessions as well. The Latin term *confessio* already had a long history in medieval dogmatics when the Reformers first used it to describe what we know as confessions of faith. For example, in the sacramental system of penance, it had been commonly employed to mean "the admission or self-accusation of sin."[16] The Reformers, however, gave this term a more positive

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Chalcedon," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 28, no. 12 (December 1975): 881-892. A concise exegesis of these terms was given by the Lutheran theologian Johann Gerhard in his *Loci Theologici*, ed. E. Preuss (Berlin, 1863), 1: 500; quoted in Pelikan, "Chalcedon after Fifteen Centuries," 935 n. 18.

[14]"The Three Ecumenical Creeds," in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2000), 19-25.

[15]John K. Ryan, introduction to *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, trans. John K. Ryan (New York: Doubleday, 1960), 29. See also Garry Wills, *Saint Augustine*, Penguin Lives (New York: Penguin, 1999), xiv-xv.

[16]Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1985), 77.

use, applying it to the affirmation of theological truths distilled from the Scriptures. There is indeed a theological connection between "creed" and "confession."

Just as the creeds were formulated by early councils facing a wide range of heresies and other challenges to the faith, the Reformation confessions were composed by leaders of differing theological persuasions, what today would be called traditions, confronting the manifold problems of late medieval Christianity. Irene Dingel is certainly right when she observes, "The sixteenth century presents a striking array of confessions which cannot easily be placed within a single analytical structure."[17] Theologians of different traditions wrote confessions not only to forcefully express their shared Protestant beliefs but also to carefully articulate the various distinctions within the Protestant camp. Their "striking array of confessions" included the Augsburg Confession (1530) and Formula of Concord (1577), representing the Lutheran tradition; the Sixty-Seven Theses (1523) and Belgic Confession of Faith (1561), representing the Reformed tradition; the Thirty-Nine Articles (1571), representing the Anglican tradition; and the Schleitheim Confession of Faith (1527), representing the Anabaptist tradition. By the end of the sixteenth century, adherence to a particular confession had become a sign of loyalty and a badge of denominational identity.[18]

In spite of their undeniable diversity, these expressions of faith demonstrated a broad and deep sense of unity in sixteenth-century Protestantism. They certainly shared the spirit of the Reformation that was captured in the Renaissance motto *ad fontes*. They sought to return to the ultimate source of the Christian faith, the Bible, claiming to base their tenets on its correct interpretation. Moreover, as an aid to interpreting Scripture, they frequently drew on the historic creeds, thus underscoring again the close connection between creeds and confessions. This is very clear, for example,

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[17]Irene Dingel, "The Function and Historical Development of Reformation Confessions," *Lutheran Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (Autumn 2012): 295.

[18]For an introduction to the process of confessionalization, see Ute Lotz-Heumann, "Confessionalization," in *Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand, 4 vols. (Abingdon, England: Routledge, 2004), 1: 497-501.

in the area of Christology. The Augsburg Confession's Article III, "Concerning the Son of God," leans very heavily on the terminology of Chalcedon: "[T]he Son of God...took upon himself human nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary so that there might be two natures, divine and human, inseparably conjoined in the unity of one person, one Christ, truly God and truly a human, being 'born of the Virgin Mary,' who truly 'suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried' that he might reconcile the Father to us and be a sacrifice not only for all original guilt but also for all actual sins of human beings."[19]

Therefore it makes perfect sense to compare modern Protestant doctrines with the contents of the historic creeds.[20] Harold O. J. Brown's remarks express this well: "If we accept the creeds of Nicaea and Chalcedon as the adequate tests for orthodoxy, and if Protestantism accepts them and conforms to them, then Protestantism must be accepted as orthodox. Indifference to the creeds or rejection of them—common among Protestants today—does not make contemporary Protestants 'more Protestant,' but rather less so. The raison d'être of orthodox Protestantism is not a claim to be more progressive than Roman Catholicism, but rather the contrary: more ancient, closer to the historic Christian faith, than Catholicism."[21]

Contemporary Significance

What are the implications of all this for Asian churches in the twenty-first century? Here I will address the challenge of the so-called "Emerging Church" and the consequent need for what has been described as a "Confessing Church," examining the issue from a wider angle. But first let me explain my motivation. I am

[19]"The Augsburg Confession (1530)," in *The Book of Concord*, 39.

[20]Harold O. J. Brown, *Heresies: Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1984; reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1998), 309-310.

[21]Ibid., 310.

focusing on the Emerging Church movement partly because of the availability of literature but also because of its resonance with the contemporary Asian context. Asian denominational churches were planted by Western missionaries, and today most of them maintain ties to Western denominations. They tend to affirm the importance of the creeds and confessions that are central to the Western theological traditions. Since the early twentieth century, though, in many parts of Asia these churches have coexisted with indigenous churches and independent congregations.[22] The latter became increasingly popular after World War II, the pace of their growth accelerating even more over the past thirty years. Many of these churches and congregations do not deem it necessary to teach or even to keep loyal to the ancient creeds and confessions. They and the Emerging Church, for all their differences, have at least this much in common.

Analyzing the backgrounds of leaders of the Emerging Church movement in North America, D. A. Carson notes, "Many of them have come from conservative, traditional, evangelical churches, sometimes with a fundamentalist streak."[23] Reacting against their upbringing, they recognize the need to engage with postmodern culture. However, they are in danger of accommodating too much to society's secular trend. Carson puts it this way:

> The telling point for [Brian] McLaren and most of the other leaders of the emerging church movement is

[22]For example, the True Jesus Church, the Jesus Family, and Ni Tuosheng's Church Assembly, among the most famous of the indigenous churches, started in China in the late 1910s and early 1920s. All three of these originated as lay movements, and they are still flourishing. The True Jesus Church and the Church Assembly have even become de facto denominations, while the Jesus Family, banned by the Communist regime in the 1950s, has since merged with the House Church movement in northern China, especially in Shandong province. Lian Xi, *Redeemed by Fire: The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2010).

[23]D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2005), 14.

> their emphasis on the discontinuity as over against the continuity with modernism....A rapid reading of [their] books shows how much what McLaren thinks "a new kind of Christian" *should* be like today is determined by all the *new things* he believes are bound up with postmodernism: hence "a new kind of Christian." For almost everyone within the movement, this works out in an emphasis on feeling and affections over against linear thought and rationality; on experience over truth; on inclusion over against exclusion; on participation over against individualism and the heroic loner.[24]

Though some evangelical leaders have been highly critical of the movement as a whole, it is fair to say that its "revisionists"—McLaren, Tony Jones, and Doug Pagitt, among others—have caused the greatest concern. They seek to revise not only the church's outward forms but also our understanding of the gospel. Though they often continue to call themselves evangelicals, their views of the Bible and its authority are not in line with the traditional evangelical position, nor do they any longer see the church as "the center of God's intentions. God is working in the world, and the church has the option to join God or not."[25]

Revisionist theologians' accommodation to postmodernism, which will result in the loss of the biblical and theological foundations of our faith, threatens a disaster as great as the one that followed from liberal theologians' earlier accommodation to modernism.[26]

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[24]Ibid., 29.

[25]Ed Stetzer, "First-Person: Understanding the Emerging Church," *Baptist Press News*, http://www.bpnews.net/22406, accessed June 4, 2015; Jim Belcher, *Deep Church: A Third Way beyond Emerging and Traditional* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 45-47; Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2005), 41-46. Quotation is from Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 42.

[26]David Kowalski, "Appropriate Response to the Emerging Church Movement," http://www.wordinlife.com/pdfs/Biblical-studies/appropriateResponsetoEmergingChurchMovement.pdf, accessed June 4, 2015.

Some of the movement's dubious teachings and goals are listed below before we propose a remedy:

- Since the church has been culture-bound for so long, we must reexamine and question all of its beliefs and practices, finding new ways to express these.
- Since we cannot know absolute truth, we cannot be dogmatic about doctrine.
- Since we cannot know absolute truth, dogmatic preaching must be replaced with dialogue between people of all beliefs.
- Since propositional truth is uncertain, spiritual feelings and social action are the only reliable substance of Christianity.[27]

In evaluating the Emerging Church movement, we must certainly draw on orthodox principles of ecclesiology. However, Christology is involved as well. On this point, McLaren's treatise, "The Seven Jesuses I Have Known," repays closer examination. His seven Jesuses are the conservative Protestant Jesus, the Pentecostal/ Charismatic Jesus, the Roman Catholic Jesus, the Eastern Orthodox Jesus, the liberal Protestant Jesus, the Anabaptist Jesus, and the Jesus of the oppressed.[28] McLaren is convinced that different types of Christianity are based on different images of Jesus which are in fact not mutually exclusive. Faced with a choice, the solution is to embrace all of them: "*Why not celebrate them all*? Already, many people are using terms like *post-Protestant*, *post-denominational*, *post-liberal*, and *post-conservative* to express a desire to move beyond the polarization and sectarianism that have too often characterized Christians of the past....Up until recent decades, each tribe felt it

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[27]Ibid.

[28]Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy: Why I Am a Missional, Evangelical, Post/Protestant, Liberal/Conservative, Mystical/Poetic, Biblical, Charismatic/ Contemplative, Fundamentalist/Calvinist, Anabaptist/Anglican, Methodist, Catholic, Green, Incarnational, Depressed-Yet-Hopeful, Emergent, Unfinished Christian* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2004), 43-67.

had to uphold one image of Jesus and undermine some or all of the others. What if, instead, we saw these various emphases as partial projections that together can create a hologram: a richer, multi-dimensional vision of Jesus?"[29]

As further encouragement to embrace a multi-faceted Jesus, McLaren appeals to the analogy of indiscriminately enjoying various ethnic cuisines. As a metaphor this is obviously inappropriate, for although we are free to eat all kinds of food as long as they do us no harm (Mark 7:18-19), a great deal of harm may be done by urging people to embrace powerless images of Jesus that cannot actually save them. For salvation, we must kneel at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ who identifies himself as the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). Contrary to McLaren's overheated imagination, and very much contrary to the spirit of our pluralistic age, in Christ's message there is no hint of postmodern inclusiveness without boundaries.

Coincidentally, this year marks the eightieth anniversary of the Barmen Declaration. In 1934 the Theological Declaration of Barmen was drawn up to serve as the foundational document for the "Confessing Church," a Christian group that stood against Hitler's policies and resisted the "German Christians" working to advance the National Socialist agenda for Germany's state church.[30] The Declaration's first article presented a summary of its theology: "Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death. We reject the false doctrine, as though the church could and would have to acknowledge as a source of its proclamation, apart from and besides this one Word of God, still other events and powers, figures and truths, as God's revelation."[31]

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[29]Ibid., 66.

[30]Richard E. Burnett, "Barmen Declaration," in *The Westminster Handbook to Karl Barth*, ed. Richard E. Burnett (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 16-17.

[31]"Theological Declaration of Barmen," *Internet Sacred Text Archive*, http://www.sacred-texts.com/ chr/barmen.htm, accessed June 3, 2015.

On Barmen's fiftieth anniversary, evangelical theologian Donald Bloesch published an essay entitled "The Need for a Confessing Church Today."[32] Three decades later, this article still offers many useful insights to go with its bold challenge. By a confessing church, Bloesch meant "a church that boldly confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord and that the gospel is crucial in our own time and culture."[33] He described the historic creeds and confessions as signposts directing people to the center of our faith—Jesus Christ, the living Word of God. Bloesch argued that the need for a confession faithful to biblical truth "arises not out of a desire for relevance but out of fidelity to the divine commandment. It is born out of a growing sense that both the church and the age stand under the judgment of the Word of God."[34]

In an age demanding praxis, Bloesch insisted that praxis was not enough; our faith must be genuinely biblical and evangelical. On this point he quoted the Chicago Call (1977): "We deplore two opposite excesses: a creedal church that merely recites a faith inherited from the past, and a creedless church that languishes in a doctrinal vacuum."[35] As though foreseeing the Emerging Church movement, he observed, "The mood today in both conservative and liberal theological circles is to stress both *doxa* (worship) and *praxis* over dogma." He proposed instead a Confessing Church movement that would steadfastly affirm "the truth of the gospel against serious theological misunderstandings that threaten the integrity of the church's proclamation."[36]

In short, the historic creeds, the Reformation confessions, and certainly the Barmen Declaration "were born of an absolute, dire

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[32]Donald G. Bloesch, "The Need for a Confessing Church Today," *Reformed Journal*, November 1984, 10-15.

[33]Ibid., 10.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Ibid., 11. For the complete text of the Chicago Call, see Robert E. Webber, *Common Roots: A Call to Evangelical Maturity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1978), 281-286.

[36]Bloesch, "The Need for a Confessing Church Today," 14.

need in which the very life of the Church was at stake, in which the Church was devastated by heresy and error, and in which confession was the only thing left to the Church to do."[37] This is an important reminder for Asian churches of the twenty-first century, especially those that see little value in affirming and defending creeds and confessions.

Conclusion

Reviewing the history of the church in Asia, we observe that Nestorianism and Monophysitism have had a lasting influence. Though the former was anathematized at Ephesus and the latter at Chalcedon, churches upholding those aberrant Christologies not only survived but even expanded, sending missionaries to many parts of central, south, and east Asia. Nestorian Christianity flourished in China during the Tang Dynasty, from the seventh to the ninth century. Nestorian missionaries were also active in India, Turkestan, Kyrgyzstan, and other parts of Asia, notably from the eleventh to the fourteenth century. Monophysite Christianity had taken root in Egypt and Ethiopia before Chalcedon, and afterward it gained ground in Syria and beyond, reaching Armenia, Persia, and India.[38] Yet how many adherents do Nestorian and Monophysite Christianity claim in Asia today? Their churches—for example, the Assyrian Church of the East and the Syriac Orthodox Church—are little more than fossilized remnants.[39]

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[37]Arthur C. Cochrane, "Barmen and the Confession of 1967," *McCormick Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (January 1966): 138; quoted in Bloesch, "The Need for a Confessing Church Today," 14.

[38]Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Christology in Africa, Asia, and Latin America," in *The Blackwell Companion to Jesus*, ed. Delbert Burkett (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), 381-382.

[39]Bat Ye'or, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam: From Jihad to Dhimmitude*, trans. Miriam Kochan and David Littman (Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1996); Wilhelm Baum and Dietmar W. Winkler, *The Church of the East: A Concise History*, trans. Miranda G. Henry (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 135-157.

In recent decades, Asian theologians have come to understand the critical importance of formulating Christologies that speak to the Asian cultural context.[40] Unfortunately, though, too often these contextualized Christologies, driven by pluralist, relativist, or liberationist ideology, lack rooting in the historic Christian faith.[41] From the standpoint of Chalcedon and the Reformation confessions, they seem to risk denying the uniqueness of Christ and the imperative of a Christ-centered soteriology. While the work of contextualization is essential, at the same time we must stand firm on "the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3), the faith whose fundamental tenets were so well summarized by the historic creeds and the confessions of the Protestant Reformers. This is not negotiable.

[40]José M. de Mesa, "Making Salvation Concrete and Jesus Real: Trends in Asian Christology," *Exchange: Journal of Missiological and Ecumenical Research* 30, no. 1 (January 2001): 1-17.

[41]Kärkkäinen, "Christology in Africa, Asia, and Latin America," 383-385.