

Early Church Development

Lesson #8

Emperor Theodosius and the Council of Constantinople

- ▶ 2nd Ecumenical Council. Held in Constantinople in A.D. 381
- ▶ Theodosius declares that the Nicene Christianity is the only legal religion of Rome.
- ▶ The Cappadocian Fathers - Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianus - established the Trinitarian Formula - one substance in three persons.
- ▶ Council of Nicea dealt with Jesus, Council of Constantinople dealt with the Holy Spirit
 - ▶ Originally the Holy Spirit was seen as less than God
 - ▶ Constantinople emphasizes full deity of the Holy Spirit, coeternal and coequal

Patriarchal Bishops

- ▶ Following Nicea 3 Bishops were viewed as having greater authority - Bishops of Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome. Constantinople would be added 4 years later.
- ▶ Council of Constantinople - hierarchy of Bishops is further clarified. Constantinople is elevated and placed just below the bishop of Rome. This is obviously paving the way for the need for a Pope.

Alexandrian and Antiochian Christology

- ▶ How can an infinite God be a finite human being at the same time? How is Jesus fully human and fully divine simultaneously? - Christology.
- ▶ Two schools of thought. Both affirm the deity and humanity of Christ. They each have a different emphasis.
 - ▶ Alexandrian - tended to focus more on the divinity of Christ, by emphasizing the unity of the divine and human natures of Christ.
 - ▶ Apollinaris - desire to affirm the sinlessness of Jesus. This stress on the sinlessness of Jesus caused a counter argument then that there was a time when Jesus was not fully human.
 - ▶ Antiochian - tended to emphasize the difference between the divine and humanity and thus focused more on the humanity of Christ.
 - ▶ Nestorius - Mother Mary, Mother of God, Mother of a man, Mother of Christ (theotokos, anthropotokos, christokos)

You ask whether Mary may be called the mother of God (*theotokos*). Has God, then, a mother?... No, my dear sir, Mary did not give birth to God ... the creature did not give birth to the uncreated Creator, but the man who is the instrument of the Godhead; The Holy Spirit did not conceive the Logos, but formed for Him, out of a virgin, a temple, which He might inhabit.... I separate the natures, but I unite them in worship. Consider what this must mean. He, who has formed in the womb of Mary was not Himself God, but God assumed Him. And because of God, He who was assumed is now also called God.

Nestorius

Cyril Versus Nestorius

- ▶ They were theological and political rivals.
- ▶ 431 Council of Ephesus - approximately 200 bishops are present.
- ▶ Cyril arrives in Ephesus with about 51 bishops on his side, including the bishops of Rome and Ephesus.
- ▶ Nestorius has about 16, but of the 16 John the bishop of Antioch comes with 42.
- ▶ Bishop John is delayed but Cyril does not want to wait. Cyril launches into 12 condemnations against Nestorius and declares him a heretic

“ Whosoever does not anathematize Nestorius, let him be anathema. The true faith anathematizes him; the holy council anathematizes him. Whoever holds fellowship with Nestorius, let him be anathema! We all anathematize the doctrines of Nestorius. We anathematize Nestorius and his followers, and his ungodly faith, and his ungodly doctrine. We anathematize Nestorius.

Cyril of Alexandria

Cyril versus Nestorius Continued

- ▶ Bishop John with his 42 arrives a day later. Council is reconvened. They declare Cyril a heretic and officially depose him as bishop of Alexandria.
- ▶ Declare Cyril to be a monster and born and bred to destroy the church.
- ▶ Council reconvenes in July, now with two more bishops from Rome, Nestorius is deemed a heretic.
- ▶ Appeal to the Emperor - initially both are deposed and sent into exile.
- ▶ Later Cyril is arrested, but escapes to Egypt, bribes someone in the Emperor's court and is allowed to become the bishop of Alexandria. It is Cyril's theological position that wins the argument.
- ▶ Nestorius remained in exile

Another Alexandrian and Antiochian Debate

- ▶ The argument created by Eutyches (Alexandria) - He said Christ's divine nature swallowed up the humanity of Christ "like a drop of wine in the sea." Therefore, the Jesus we meet on the pages of the Bible is only divine—hence, monophysite, or one divine nature.
- ▶ The debators - Flavian and Dioscorus
 - ▶ Flavian the bishop of Constantinople declares Eutyches a heretic. Decision is supported by bishop of Rome, Leo I
 - ▶ Emperor Theodosius appoints Dioscorus to represent Eutyches at Council of Ephesus in 449.
- ▶ Dioscorus will not allow bishop Leo's support of Flavian's decision to be heard.
- ▶ Flavian objects and he is beaten by Dioscorus' henchman so severely a few days later he dies.
- ▶ Leo of Rome is outraged, Dioscorus main supporter Theodosius dies, daughter and son-in-law turn out to be supporters of Leo of Rome. Eutyches is banished

Council of Chalcedon - 451

- ▶ 600 bishops from October through November met
- ▶ Robber Council of Ephesus declared null and void
- ▶ Dioscorus himself is deposed and banished.
- ▶ Eutychians' views—the monophysite view—is denounced as heresy.
- ▶ Flavian is declared an upholder of orthodoxy
- ▶ Mary is affirmed as Theotokos—the mother of God—and Jesus is declared to be “born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God.”
- ▶ Bishop of Constantinople is to have the same honor as the Bishop of Rome - Leo of Rome rejects this action believes Rome should have apostolic authority over all Christian churches

Council of Chalcedon Cont'd

- ▶ Chalcedon declares that Christ is “truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to his manhood; in all things like unto us, yet without sin.”
- ▶ Chalcedon declares that Christ is “one Person and one Subsistence [or hypostasis], not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.”
- ▶ Chalcedon says Christ is “one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved.”

Council of Chalcedon Cont'd

- ▶ The key christological affirmations of Chalcedon are that Jesus was homoousios—of the exact same nature with God the Father and with the rest of humanity, except without sin. Jesus has two natures—divine and human—in one person. We can sum up Chalcedon very simply by saying that it affirmed the full deity of Christ, it affirmed the full humanity of Christ, that Christ had two natures residing in one person.
- ▶ Chalcedonian Christology became normative in the West, some Eastern churches embraced Chalcedon, such as the Greek Orthodox Church, the Russian Orthodox Church, the Orthodox churches of the Balkans, as well as the Roman Catholic Church.
- ▶ However, a significant number of Eastern churches, which were called the Oriental Eastern churches, rejected Chalcedon in favor of a monophysite Christology—that is, one divine nature—and they broke away from the rest of the church in a schism. Those churches—the monophysite churches—include the Jacobite churches in Syria, the church in Ethiopia, the Armenian church, and the most significant among these—the Coptic church of Egypt.