

THE FIFTH & SIXTH ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

1. The Aftermath Of The Fourth Ecumenical Council

a) The Monophysite heresy continues

- * among the leaders Timothy the Cat and Peter the Hoarse
- * they were convinced that the Council of Chalcedon was defending Nestorian heresy
- * Arabic languages do not have a clear distinction of the words nature and persons; the word nature was almost synonymous with person;
- * the Fourth Ecumenical council had restored two episkopoi suspected of Nestorianism (Theodoret of Cyrus and Ibas of Edessa)
- * the Chalcedon definition seemed an addition the faith of Nicea
- * the political authority was, at times favorable to the heretics; thus, Timothy the Cat became the patriarch of Alexandria and he deposed the majority of the Chalcedonian episkopoi in Egypt

b) The Henotikon

- * Zeno, the Byzantine Emperor was very concerned with the political consequences of the heresy upon the union of the empire
- * a decree, probably drawn by Acacius, the patriarch of Constantinople, was issued by Zeno in an attempt to resolve the heresy; the Henotikon proclaimed that "the only right and true belief" was that of Nicaea, as confirmed by Constantinople and Ephesus; the decree also accepted the Twelve Anathemas of Cyril against Nestorius and made no mention of TWO NATURES.
- * many in the East, especially in Alexandria accepted this compromise; Calendion, the patriarch of Antioch refused to accept the compromise; to force acceptance, the political authority exiled Calendion and installed Peter the Fuller, who immediately accepted it.
- * in the West, Felix III convened a local council of seventy seven episkopoi in which they condemned Acacius and called for the restoration of the faith of Chalcedon.

2. The Fifth Ecumenical council or Constantinople II: 553

a) the Fifth Ecumenical council was an attempt to show the Monophysites that Chalcedon did preserve the theological values they held dear.

- * Justinian I, the emperor of Byzantium beginning with A.D. 527, was a very devoted Christian and able theologian; in his policy towards the Monophysite heresy he attempted to:
 - + hold to the definition of Chalcedon
 - + interpret the definition of Chalcedon according to the mind of Cyril of Alexandria, thus disavowing any Nestorian interpretation and hoping to win over the Monophysites.

- b) the Council itself convened on May 5th, 553
 - * it was presided by **Eutychius**, patriarch of Constantinople
 - * among those attending:
 - + the patriarch of Alexandria
 - + the patriarch of Antioch
 - + the representatives of the patriarch of Jerusalem
 - + six episkopoi from Northern Africa
 - + Vigilius, the episkopos of Rome refused to attend because he defended the above mentioned episkopoi reinstated by Chalcedon
 - + all together some **168 episkopoi attended**
 - * the council reaffirmed the definition of Chalcedon, and condemned as Nestorian:
 - + Theodore of Mopsuestia and his writings
 - + certain writings of Theodoret of Cyrus
 - + a theological letter said to have been written by Ibas of Edessa
 - * the council also condemned some of the teachings of **Origen**
- c) the Monophysites reject the Council, and their rejection leads to the consolidation of the Monophysite Churches in Egypt, Syria, Ethiopia and Armenia

3. The heresy of Monothelitism and Monoenergism

- a) the new Byzantine emperor, **Heraclius** (610-641) made attempts to resolve the theological disputes
 - * **Severus of Antioch**, a great Monophysite theologian had been insisting on one nature, one will and one activity in Christ
 - * **Sergius**, the patriarch of Constantinople, a close associate and supporter of the emperor, tried to offer a solution to the Christian division this way:
 - + while holding to the Chalcedonian definition of "in to natures", he felt that he could reconcile the Monophysites by the declaration of ONE WILL and ONE ACTIVITY in the Person of Jesus Christ.
 - * **Sergius** sent letters to some of the episkopoi on both sides of the dispute and he gain the support of some; Cyrus, episkopos of **Phasis**, became one of the great supporters of this compromise and he even travelled to Alexandria to convince to two factions; among the things stated by Cyrus, we find this remark: "it is no longer permissible to speak of two actions after the union, but only of a single dominant action, which directed everything that the Incarnate Word said or did or experienced in mind and body"
 - * the subtle heresy of this compromise was immediately pointed out by **Sophronius of Jerusalem**, a monk visiting in Alexandria at the time when this compromise was being celebrated
 - * in Constantinople, Sergius called a local council at which the monothelite heresy was upheld.

- * soon after, Sophronius was elected the new patriarch of Jerusalem; he called a local council in Jerusalem in 634, which defined the doctrine that in Christ there are TWO WILL and TWO ACTIVITIES, divine and human. After the council, Sophronius sent a synodical profession to **Honorius**, the patriarch in Rome, to **Sergius**, the patriarch of Constantinople and to the fellow patriarchs; among the things stated in this profession, Sophronius points out that the duality of wills and of activities in Christ results from the duality of the two natures and their properties. "As in Christ each nature preserves its properties (characteristics) inviolate, so EACH FORM WORKS, IN COMMUNION WITH THE OTHER, WHAT IS PROPER TO ITSELF" Since the being of the natures is DISTINCT, it follows that the OPERATIONS ARE ALSO DISTINCT.
- * **Sergius**, the patriarch of Constantinople wrote a letter to **Honorius**, the patriarch of Rome, explaining his heretical position as orthodox, and urging its defense; **Honorius** responded favorably to **Sergius'** letter and wrote a similar letter to Sophronius.
- * together with **Sergius**, the emperor Heraclius signed an edict, the Ecthesis, in 638, which supposedly defined the policy of the Church; among the statements in this imperial edict we find the following: "Every operation, divine or human, is ascribed solely to the Incarnate Word"; he also moved the discussion from the one action to the ONE WILL, which is the source of the one action; a council of Constantinople upheld this document
- * among those continuing the defense of the faith which began with Sophronius, was **Maximus the Confessor**, who preached and wrote against this new heresy; among the many things, he said the following: "Christ has two natures, two operations and two wills, really proceeding from the divine and human natures but always in harmony because the single divine Person assures the goodness of choice"; Maximus would to defend the true faith in spite of great persecution until his death in 662, while being exiled.

b) The Sixth ecumenical Council: Constantinople 680

- * urged by Constantine IV, the Byzantine Emperor
- * among those participating:
 - + George, the patriarch of Constantinople
 - + Macarius, patriarch of Antioch
 - + representatives from Jerusalem
 - + legates from Rome

- * the Council agreed to:
 - + declare the synodical letters of Sophronius as Orthodox,
thus upholding the true faith about two wills and two
activities in Jesus Christ
 - + condemn all the patriarchs and episkopoi who accepted
and taught Monoenergism and Monothelitism including
SERGIUS of Constantinople and HONORIUS of Rome.
- * the second part of this council is considered to be the one
called in 692, in Constantinople, later named the Quinisext
or Council in Trullo which defined the canons which should
have been established at the fifth and sixth ecumenical
councils; this council was attended among many others by all
four Eastern Patriarchs and by the legates from Rome.