

Reunification of the Chalcedonian Schism

Have both sides really been saying the same thing all along?

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Anthropology & Christology
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December 1, 2003

Introduction

In its second agreed statement, published in 1990, the Joint Commission of the Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches stated:

both families have always loyally maintained the same authentic Orthodox Christological faith, and the unbroken continuity of the apostolic tradition, though they have used Christological terms in different ways¹

This statement, which came after many years of both official² and unofficial³ dialogue between the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches, is very significant because it asserts that both sides of the debate have been in misguided disagreement throughout the nearly 16 century history of schism and mutual anathematization originating in the Christological proclamations of the Council of Chalcedon, held in 451.⁴ It claims, with the aid of numerous supplemental texts, that the theology concerning Christ and His incarnation maintained by each is, and always has been, identical, but that this one Christology has simply been described using differing language. One naturally wonders how, after over 1,500 years of rivalry, the two sides could agree that the Christological disagreement over one or two *physis* (φύσις in English ‘nature’) was based on nothing more than linguistic inconsistency.⁵ The purpose of this study, thus, is to examine whether this claim by the commission, that both sides have *always* been saying the same thing, is true, or whether the recent agreements made in the hope of reconciliation ignore a real difference in the Christologies of the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches around the time of Chalcedon.⁶

The Christological Problem

When examining any Christological debate of the Byzantine era, it is important to be aware of the differing “schools” of thought in Alexandria and Antioch. In a very simplistic summary, this difference can be described as a tendency in Alexandria to stress the unity of the Divinity and

¹ *On the Unity of Faith*, Orthodox Unity. 28 Nov. 2003 <<http://www.orthodoxunity.org/state07.html>>.

² Geneva, Switzerland- 1985; Anba Bishoy Monastery, Egypt- 1989; Geneva- 1990; Geneva- 1993

³ Aarhus, Denmark- 1964; Bristol, England- 1967; Geneva- 1970; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia- 1971

⁴ All reference to “Chalcedon” in this document are to this council, unless otherwise specified.

⁵ This brings to mind the song about how potato and tomato should be pronounced: “You say potato (with the ‘a’ pronounced as in the word day), I say potato (with the ‘a’ pronounced as in the word father), you say tomato, I say tomahto, potato, potahto, tomato, tomahto, let’s call the whole thing off!”

⁶ The intention here is to examine the language of each side around the time of Chalcedon through the time of the Fifth Ecumenical Council, held in 553, not to determine if the present-day Churches are in Christological agreement.

Manhood in Christ, and an inclination toward identifying the distinction between the two in Antioch. The renowned 20th century Orthodox theologian, the late Fr. Georges Florovsky very poetically describes this as “anthropological minimalism” in the former school, and “anthropological maximalism” in the latter,⁷ which the late Fr. Alexander Schmemmann attributes to, among other things, adherence to Platonic and Aristotelian thought, respectively.⁸ This separation in Christological emphasis is important when examining the writings of the different theologians of the time, since it gives insight into the pressures placed upon the different figures by their closest colleagues, and their subsequent theological leanings.

It should be further noted that the goal, and greatest difficulty, with all such Christological arguments is to find a balance between the two schools. This equilibrium is directly affected by the quest for soteriology, attempting to explain how our salvation is effected by Jesus, while maintaining the Divinity of Christ. His Manhood is vital, since we are deified by His full assumption of humanity. His Divinity is essential, because only God can save mankind. The danger always lies in stressing one over the other.

Historical Background

The Christological debates between the non-Chalcedonians⁹ and those who accept the Council of Chalcedon are, as could be expected, rather complicated, since the substance of the dispute goes well beyond just what language was proclaimed by the council as being orthodox. Many historical events, the differing mindsets of the participants, and the political ramifications of each decision were all instrumental to the anatomy of the debate. Before delving into the theology of the controversy, therefore, it is necessary to review the course of the events that lead to the disagreement. There are many accounts of these events, together with deep expositions of the respective theology, written by theologians and historians whose knowledge, insight and

⁷ Cf. “Unofficial Consultation Between Theologians of Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches.” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 10.2 (1965), pp. 33-35.

⁸ Alexander Schmemmann, *Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, 1977), p. 122.

⁹ I avoid the use of the term “monophysite”, from *monos* (μονος), in English ‘one,’ *physis*, because it implies that those described by it believe in only one nature of Christ, period. Fr. V. C. Samuel explained the problem during the dialogue in 1964:

The term “monophysites” was not used during the fifth, sixth, seventh centuries, but was introduced later in a specific way and in a polemic spirit on behalf of the Chalcedonian Churches. However, one should point out that there is a slight difference between *monos* and *mia* in regard to the two natures-one nature dispute. “Monophysitism” suggests the exclusion of all natures but one. *Mia physis* refers to “one united nature.” (*Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, p. 31).

To avoid any unnecessary implication, I avoid use of either term in favor of “Non-Chalcedonians.”

writing eloquence are far beyond anything I could ever dream to imitate. Not the least of these are the concise narrative of the Fr. Schmemmann,¹⁰ a more detailed chronicle by Leo Donald Davis,¹¹ and a masterpiece in theological reflection by Fr. Florovsky.¹² However, in the interest of clarity of the topic at hand, I believe it necessary to briefly summarize the background to the schism.

Historically, the Christological issue begins in earnest with Apollinarius, Bishop of Laodicea and great champion of Nicene orthodoxy, as early as the mid fourth century. Apollinarius saw in the Antiochene language not only a distinguishing between the two Natures of Christ, but in their term “connection,” describing the relationship between the two Natures, a dualism and division leading to a separation of Christ into two individuals. Although his concerns about dualism are fully justified from the orthodox perspective, his solution, asserting that Christ only possessed divine intellect, denies the humanity in Him necessary for man’s salvation. Apollinarius was quickly condemned by the Cappadocians, various local synods, and finally at the Second Ecumenical Council in 381.¹³

Apollinarius was opposed to the Antiochene practice of focus on the Humanity of Christ, versus Its unity with His Divinity. A prime example lies in Diodore of Tarsus. Like Apollinarius he was a stark defender of Nicene Orthodoxy, but in Christology he was clearly Antiochene. Although never condemned for his language while living, Diodore did say that the Logos dwelt in the body as in a ‘temple,’ and he distinguished between the Son of God and the Son of David.¹⁴ He denied introducing the idea of “two sons,”¹⁵ but it an inference of two persons is not difficult from such language. Indeed, Theodore, a student at Diodore’s monastic school, *Asketerion*, together with St. John Chrysostom, was greatly influenced by the teachings of his master. This Theodore, who later became bishop of Mopsuestia, made many assertions noticeably unorthodox to the Alexandrines.¹⁶ He described the relationship between the Humanity and Divinity of Christ as a “connection of honor,”¹⁷ arising from the union of the independent wills of the Logos and the man Jesus. Furthermore, he never identified Christ as the eternal Logos incarnate, but rather

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 120-142.

¹¹ Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology* (Collegeville, 1990), pp. 134-206.

¹² Georges Florovsky, *The Byzantine Fathers of the Fifth Century*, Vol. IIX of Collected Works (Belmont, 1987), pp. 181-333 & Georges Florovsky, *The Byzantine Fathers of the Sixth to Eighth Century*, Vol. IX of Collected Works (Belmont, 1987), pp. 35-190.

¹³ Cf. Florovsky, Vol. IIX, pp. 181-185.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 193.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Cf. Ibid., pp. 194-209.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 208.

indwelling in “the perfect man.”¹⁸ As such, he thought it “folly to say that God was born of the Virgin,” but said instead that she “bore a man, but God was in the man she bore, as he never had been in anyone before.”¹⁹ Such language became the spearhead for far-more egregiously unorthodox assertions by Theodore’s disciple, Nestorius.

Nestorius, who studied in Antioch and was highly respected as a gifted preacher, scholar and ascetic, was invited in 428 by the Emperor Theodosius II to fill the vacant see of Constantinople. Upon ascending the throne he quickly swept through the capital in a struggle against pagans and heretics. He most notably forbade the use of the term *Theotokos*, God-Bearer, to describe the Virgin Mary, because he, like Theodore, could not accept that God the Word could be born of a woman.²⁰ However, this term had already been in liturgical use for quite some time, and had been used in writings by Origen in the mid third century, by many revered fathers, including the Cappadocians, and even by someone of Nestorius’ own Antiochene school, namely Eusthatus, bishop of Antioch ca. 324-330.²¹

Nestorius was opposed by St. Cyril, bishop of Alexandria.²² St. Cyril represented the Alexandrian school, and held to the Christology of his predecessor of nearly a century prior, St. Athanasius, who was the first to claim that “the Logos became man so that we could ‘become divine,’ ‘in order to deify us in himself.’”²³ St. Cyril wrote several letters to Nestorius in support of the use of the term *Theotokos*, and referred to this issue in many of his writings. Instead of replying to Cyril, Nestorius instead used his political strength, particularly with the emperor, in attempts to quiet the Alexandrian. Instead of withdrawing, Cyril appealed to Rome, which condemned Nestorius’ doctrine in 430. St. Cyril sent this condemnation, together with 12 anathemas against Nestorius ratified by an Alexandrian synod, to all the bishops of the east that were either friends of Nestorius, or associated with the Antiochene school. This elicited the emperor to call for an ecumenical council to be held in Ephesus on Pentecost, 431. This council, however, was not convened to condemn Nestorius, but Cyril, the troublemaker. Unfortunately, many bishops, both from the east and from Rome, were late to arrive. After waiting two weeks, Cyril, against the wishes of some sixty-eight pro-Nestorius bishops and the imperial officials,

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 207.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 208.

²⁰ Schmemmann, p. 123.

²¹ Florovsky, Vol. IIX, p. 218.

²² Cf. Ibid. 250-288. My account here is a synopsis of Fr. Schmemmann’s chronicle, pp. 123-130.

²³ Ibid., p. 162.

convened the council. Since the council was now largely composed of Cyril's supporters, and he had secured the popular support of the faithful in Ephesus, St. Cyril was easily able to condemn Nestorius, who was unwilling to appear and face the charges placed against him. Four days later the bishops from the east finally arrived and convened their own council condemning Cyril. The Roman legates arrived as well, but sided with St. Cyril. The proceedings were sent to the emperor, who finally sided with Cyril, after realizing that popular support for Nestorius was lacking. However, John of Antioch still maintained that Cyril was a heretic until 432, when he sent Paul of Emesa to Alexandria with a statement of faith that Cyril accepted. Cyril responded with a "Formula of Union" which was finally accepted in the east in 433. Thus, peace between the schools was temporarily restored, until St. Cyril's death in 444.

Opposition to the Antiochene school after Cyril's death was renewed by Eutyches, an archimandrite in Constantinople.²⁴ Particularly opposed to the main voice of the Antiochene school at the time, Theodoret of Cyrus, Eutyches was able to convince the emperor to proclaim the 12 anathemas of Cyril as rule of faith for the empire, which Cyril himself had begun to disregard for the sake of unity with Archbishop John and the Antiochenes. Ignoring the "Formula of Union," where St. Cyril accepted that "a unity of two natures has come about"²⁵ in Christ, Eutyches refused to accept that Christ has two natures. As a monk he attained the sympathy of monastics, who tended to be more sympathetic toward the Alexandrian position anyway,²⁶ and quickly became a noticed proponent of the one nature doctrine. Flavian, archbishop of Constantinople, was thus compelled to have the "Home Synod," a sort of permanent synod of bishops set up to handle ecclesiastical affairs within the diocese, review the position of the elderly monk. Eutyches' belief was decisively condemned. Eutyches, however, attempted to appeal to Rome, but Pope St. Leo agreed with Flavian. Finally the monk appealed to the emperor, who concerned about the multitude of monastics supporting their elder, decided to call another ecumenical council, once again in Ephesus. Dioscorus, Cyril's successor in Alexandria, who was naturally sympathetic to the defender of the Alexandrian school, was assigned to chair the synod, while the opposition,

²⁴ Cf. *Ibid.* pp. 291-292. Once again my account is an abstract of Fr. Schmemmann's, pp. 132-134.

²⁵ Henry Bettenson, *The Later Christian Fathers* (Oxford, 1970), p. 260.

²⁶ Schmemmann says, "Particularly in monastic experience of the struggle against "nature," against human weakness and sinfulness, it was psychologically very simple to overstep the line dividing struggle *for* the true nature of man from struggle *against* man, and end with a denial of the essential goodness of human nature. 'Deification', or becoming one with God, began to be seen as the destruction within oneself of everything that is human, which was regarded as low and unworthy, 'a bad smell that soon would pass away.' In such a context, a theological emphasis on the manhood of Christ became incomprehensible." (Schmemmann, p. 131)

Theodoret, was not even invited to defend the eastern position. Furthermore, struggling against an imminent attack of Attila the Hun, Pope Leo only sent two legates to this synod, together with an epistle supporting Flavian addressed to Flavian. The stage was set for a victory by the Alexandrian camp, which quickly became an overwhelming triumph through the pressure of the hordes of monastic supporters of Dioscorus which had flooded the city. Flavian, who survived fierce beatings at the hands of the Eutychians, sent a letter to Rome informing Pope Leo of the events that transpired at this “Robber Synod.”²⁷ St. Leo, having received confirmation from other sources, including Theodoret, demanded that Theodosius reexamine the issue. Theodosius, now dead, was replaced by his sister, Pulcheria, who was sympathetic to Flavian. She, together with her husband, Marcian, called a new ecumenical synod to be convened across the Bosphorus from the capital in the suburb of Chalcedon.

Council of Chalcedon

The synod was convened by Paschasinus, Roman legate, on 8 October, 451.²⁸ The first order of business was to determine the fate of the “Robber Synod.” Interestingly, although the Papal legates wanted to exclude Dioscorus from the proceedings, since he was the president and instigator of the synod in question, the eastern bishops and imperial officials wished to give him a fair trial. Once he was seated, the minutes of the “Robber Synod” were read, as were those of the “Home Synod.”. When the deposition of Flavian, who by now had died in exile, was addressed, the whole assembly declared its support for his doctrine, saying he was in line with Pope St. Leo and St. Cyril. Only Dioscorus objected, saying with regard to the two natures, “I receive ‘the of two;’ ‘the two’ I do not receive. I am forced to be impudent, but the matter is one which touches my soul.”²⁹ Once the acts of the synods were completed, all those that had participated in the “Robber Synod” repented and sought forgiveness, although it was suggested that Dioscorus should suffer the fate of the unjustly sentenced Flavian. “This was agreed upon by all, except the bishops of Illyrica, who said ‘We all have erred, let us all be pardoned.’”³⁰ The final decisions, however, were

²⁷ Pope St. Leo is credited with naming the synod: *Laotrocinium* in Latin, meaning band of robbers. (Florovsky, vol. IX, p. 292)

²⁸ For a detailed description, cf. Davis, pp. 170-206. My account is a summary of the acts of the council published in Henry R. Percival, *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, vol. XIV of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series (Peabody, 1999), pp. 243-295, supplemented by detail provided by Davis.

²⁹ NPNF 2, XIV, p. 248.

³⁰ Ibid.

tabled until the next session.

Once the council was reconvened on 10 October, the imperial officials exhorted the bishops to declare their faith. After the assembly reaffirmed its faith in the First and Second Ecumenical Councils, Cecropius of Sebastopol suggested that the opinion of Pope Leo should hold with regard to the Eutychian controversy, and the everyone agreed. The imperial officers requested further statements of faith from representatives of each patriarch to clarify their positions for record, but the bishops declared that the Third Council forbade them to add any further creeds. Cecropius agreed, adding that this faith had been upheld “by the holy fathers Athanasius, Cyril, Celestine, Hilary, Basil, Gregory, and now, once again by the most holy Leo.”³¹ The Nicene exposition was then read, and the synod affirmed that Cyril and Leo taught so. Likewise the faith of the Second Council was proclaimed, and everyone proclaimed agreement. The Archdeacon Aetius brought up the letter of Cyril to Nestorius affirmed at the Third Ecumenical Council, and also his epistle to John of Antioch seeking reconciliation. These too were read, and were unanimously upheld by the assembly as the faith of Pope Leo. Finally, Pope St. Leo’s Tome to Flavian was brought to attention by the imperial officials, and it was read in its entirety. Afterwards, the assembly proclaimed:

Leo and Cyril taught the same thing, anathema to him who does not so believe. This is the true faith. Those of us who are orthodox thus believe. This is the faith of the fathers. Why were not these things read at Ephesus [i.e. at the heretical synod held there]? These are the things Dioscorus hid away.

*[Some explanations were asked by the Illyrian bishops and the answered were found satisfactory, but yet a delay of a few days was asked for, and some bishops petitioned for a general pardon of all who had been kept out. This proposition made great confusion, in the midst of which the session was dissolved by the judges.]*³²

At the third session, held three days later, Dioscorus’ trial was held, which the imperial officials did not attend because laymen were not to be present for the investigation of a bishop. Again under the presidency of Paschasinus, charges were brought against Dioscorus by Eusebius of Dorylaeum, which included, in addition to his own petition against the faith of Dioscorus, four accounts from Alexandrines: two deacons, one priest, and a layman. Once the charges had been enumerated, Dioscorus was summoned, but refused the invitation a total of three times, “telling

³¹ Ibid., p. 249.

³² Ibid., p. 259.

the delegation sent to him that he had said all he had to say.”³³ The bishops all spoke out against Dioscorus, and the legates read the proclamation of deposition. Each bishop then spoke in favor of the deposition, most on the ground that he failed to appear when summoned three times. Each then signed the proclamation, which states that he is deposed for disobedience to the canons, the council, and failing to appear to account for the crimes for which he was accused. Dioscorus’ deposition was unanimous, agreed upon even by his friends and supporters.

The fourth session was convened 17 October, at which the imperial officials again requested the bishops to offer forth an exposition of faith. Paschasinus offered forth the decisions of the previous three ecumenical synods, emphasizing St. Cyril’s teachings and the condemnation of Nestorius, as well as the Tome of Leo, as a sufficient statement. After the bishops had concurred with Paschasinus, the imperial representatives requested each of the bishops to individually offer his opinion on Leo’s Tome. However, once 161 bishops³⁴ had been asked and had given their affirmation for the Tome, the rest were requested to answer as a body, and “all the most reverend bishops cried out: We all acquiesce, we all believe thus; we are all of the same mind.”³⁵ Thus, Leo’s Tome was also unanimously upheld.

Once again, at the fifth session convened 22 October, the imperial representatives pressed the assembly to provide a statement of faith to represent the decisions of the council. Anatolius, Bishop of Constantinople, presented one to the council, but it was not accepted, because the Third Ecumenical Council forbade any further doctrinal creeds. The imperial command, however, was that a committee of 22 bishops would be formed to propose a statement of faith, otherwise the council would be reconvened in the west to address this command. Most bishops still remained defiant, stating that they had already made their statement. Cecropius suggested restating what had already been proclaimed and affirming unanimous agreement, while, as the Illyrians requested, anyone that disagreed would be labeled Nestorian. The imperial officials, however, brought up Dioscorus’ denial of two natures, contradictory to Leo’s Tome. Everyone affirmed Leo’s doctrine, thus the officials requested it be included in the exposition they demanded. “The committee then sat in the oratory of the most holy martyr Euphemia and

³³ Davis, p. 183.

³⁴ This number may signify a majority of those present, which would total 320 bishops in this case. With respect to the number initially gathered for the council, Davis speculates that there were “perhaps 500 bishops in attendance, though recent estimates would put the number as few as 350.” (Ibid., p. 181) Thus, accounting for Dioscorus’ deposition and the loss of those who couldn’t stay for a full two months (the council was originally scheduled for 1 September [Ibid., p. 180]), this estimate may be accurate.

³⁵ NPNF 2, XIV, p. 281.

afterwards reported a definition of faith which while teaching the same doctrine was not the Tome of Leo.”³⁶

Finally, at the sixth session convened after three days of deliberation by the committee, the emperor himself “crossed the Bosphorus to attend the ceremonies promulgating the Council’s Declaration of Faith. Solemnly, the papal legates and after them some 452 bishops affixed their signatures to the document. The core declaration of faith of the Council of Chalcedon states:

Following the holy Fathers we teach with one voice that the Son [of God] and our Lord Jesus Christ is to be confessed as one and the same [Person], that he is perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, very God and very man, of a reasonable soul and [human] body consisting, consubstantial with the Father as touching his Godhead, and consubstantial with us as touching his manhood; made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted; begotten of his Father before the worlds according to his Godhead; but in these last days for us men and for our salvation born [into the world] of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God according to his manhood. This one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son [of God] must be confessed to be in two natures, unconfusedly, immutably, indivisibly, inseparably [united], and that without the distinction of natures being taken away by such union, but rather the peculiar property of each nature being preserved and being united in one Person and subsistence, not separated or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Prophets of old time have spoken concerning him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ hath taught us, and as the Creed of the Fathers hath delivered to us.³⁷

The emperor asked the bishops to remain in session for a few more days to discuss matters of church discipline.”³⁸ Beside the issues addressed at these sessions irrelevant to this study, there was the matter of restoration of Theodoret of Cyrus and Ibas of Edessa, both condemned at the “Robber Synod” as Nestorians. This action to reverse the decisions of the annulled synod, ultimately taken by the council, was not without controversy, however, since each had writings that could easily be considered Nestorian in flavor. Theodoret, brought before the assembly, initially tried to defend his works, but was met by a chorus of shouts and howls, and thus anathematized Nestorius, upheld the use of *Theotokos*, and agreed to recognize Leo’s Tome. Similarly, Ibas was brought forth and recognized the Council’s Declaration of Faith and Leo’s Tome. Thus, as the Fifth Ecumenical Council held at Constantinople in 553, which ultimately condemned their suspect writings, declared, the men were spared at the Fourth Council for their undeniable public confirmation of the doctrine proclaimed there.³⁹

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 264-265. I exclude extraneous definitions, namely the repeated creeds and doctrine from the Nicene, Constantinopolitan, and Ephesine Councils.

³⁸ Davis, p. 188. His account, found on pp. 188-189, is summarized here.

³⁹ Cf. NPNF 2, XIV, pp. 309-311.

The Schism

It is clear from the language of its acts that the Council of Chalcedon unanimously upheld St. Cyril's Christology, showing due reverence to the man and his writing, while equally setting forth Pope St. Leo's Tome as a worthy statement of faith. Unfortunately, the Alexandrian school protested the language in Leo's Tome and the council's Definition of Faith that could imply two separate persons in Christ. They were also very unhappy with the restoration of "Nestorian-tainted"⁴⁰ Theodoret of Cyrus and Ibas of Edessa, and believed Dioscorus' deposition was unjust. The Definition of Faith offered by the council, although it outwardly opposes Nestorian doctrine, was inadequate to satisfy the hard-line Cyrillians, who demanded the phrase "of two natures" to describe Our Lord's Incarnation, rather than "in two natures." The Alexandrines feared that any change in Cyril's formula of "one incarnate nature" would compromise Cyrillian Christology, yielding instead to Nestorianism. Such fears were fueled by, of all things, nationalism and political wrangling.⁴¹ The Copts and Syrians had grown tired of the Hellenism imposed on them by the powerful yoke of the Empire, to the point that outside the cities of Alexandria and Antioch Greek had nearly ceased to be spoken at all. Such ethnic rebellion, combined with apprehension about the yielding of Church policy to political whims of the Emperor, and of course the growing conflict between the Christological schools, made the climate ripe for schism. Indeed, Patriarch Juvenal of Jerusalem had to be escorted back to his see in face of public uprisings against his acceptance of the council's decisions. Likewise in Alexandria, Proterius, appointed replacement to the deposed Dioscorus, when attempting to claim his new throne was met by mobs, who even resorted to burning to death a part of his protective detail after it was locked in an old Pagan temple. In response to these incidents, imperial control was enforced by the military, a fact which certainly contributed to the anger of the populous. After Emperor Marcian's death in 457, however, the people in Alexandria felt liberated enough to elect their own patriarch, Timothy Aelurus, and murdered the helpless Proterius. Without doubt, emotions were running very high on both sides.

Underlying the political discord and nationalistic strife that polarized the non-Chalcedonians from those that accepted the council, the theological debate between these groups undoubtedly involved much miscommunication and misunderstanding on both sides. When

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 197.

⁴¹ Cf. Schmemmann, pp. 138-141.

examining the attitudes of those involved during and after the synod, one sees more stubbornness by each side to defend its own position than honest desire to find the common theology that could be accepted as fully Orthodox by both sides. Yes, there were attempts to bridge the gap, such as the Henotikon in 482, but in reality the ongoing “negotiations” were complicated, ultimately doomed for failure, by the aforementioned factors of politics and nationalism. Since most theologians agree that heresy ultimately grows out of a zealous overreaction to another heresy, it could very well be interpreted that the quarreling over the Chalcedonian issue actually led the churches away from Orthodoxy into two rigorous camps. The Alexandrines, always concerned with maintaining the Cyrillian formula of “one incarnate nature” at all costs, were terrified to the point of paranoia of any talk of two natures, perceiving such language as necessarily indicative of Nestorianism and abandonment of St. Cyril. The Antiochenes, gripped by a perpetual and predominantly arrogant desire to prevail in stressing the anthropological reality of Christ, were unwilling to consider how potentially destructive their speculations could be, continually reaffirming the Alexandrines’ fears by walking the fine line between Orthodoxy and Nestorianism toward the latter extreme. Both sides were clearly guilty of obstinance that prevented the flowering of a unified Orthodox voice, of stubbornness that maintained a separation that might have been quickly healed if Christlike love, patience and understanding had been exercised.

Before the efforts to heal the schism can really be studied, however, the anatomy of the split itself needs to be examined in greater detail. The opponents of Chalcedon looked to 4 major points to justify their refusal of the council: a) the deposition of Dioscorus b) the restoration of the crypto-Nestorian Theodoret of Cyrus and Ibas of Edessa c) the acceptance of Pope St. Leo’s Tome d) the denial of St. Cyril’s formula “one incarnate nature” in the council’s Definition of Faith. The first issue, as set forth in the historical account above, which is admittedly taken from pro-Chalcedonian sources, appears to deal more with politics than theology. Although Dioscorus was naturally a champion for the Alexandrian cause, he was nevertheless condemned, not for his theology, but on canonical charges, as the acts of the council record.⁴² For the bishops at Chalcedon, the errors of Dioscorus at issue were his actions at the “Robber Synod,” and his refusal to appear before the assembly and face the theological accusations. For the non-Chalcedonians,

⁴² Cf. NPNF 2, XIV, pp. 249-248, 259-260.

however, Dioscorus' deposition was perceived as an injustice and an outright denial of the "natural continuation of the traditional conciliar theology," as it was seen in Alexandria, in favor of a capitulation to pressures calling for "ensuring the permanence of Byzantine Domination."⁴³ Now venerated as a saint in the Coptic (Egyptian) non-Chalcedonian church, his *vita* in the Coptic Synaxarium portrays him as a martyr against diophysitism, a victim of imperial tyranny:

When he was summoned to the Council of Chalcedon by the order of Emperor Marcianus, he saw a great assembly of 630 bishops. He said to them, "Whose faith is lacking that it was necessary to gather this great assembly?" They replied, "This assembly has been convened by the command of the Emperor." He said, "If it has been convened by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ I would attend and say what the Lord gives me to say, but if it has been convened by the Emperor's command let the Emperor manage his assembly as he pleases."⁴⁴

Naturally, such an interpretation of Dioscorus' deposition would negatively shape the non-Chalcedonian perceptions of the council. For them, everything that the council proposed and stood for was also a yielding to imperial pressure, and thus any further attempts to justify the faith of the synod would be met with, at best, extreme skepticism. Unfortunately, it does not appear that this issue could have been avoided. For the council to have accomplished that which it was attempting to do, that is reverse the affects of the "Robber Synod," which it perceived to be a Eutychian council, and proclaim a balanced Christology based on both St. Cyril and Pope Leo, then Dioscorus' failure to appear before the assembly and account for his faith and actions surely required disciplinary measures. Perhaps he could have been censured in some other way, but only his removal from his office would have ensured that he could not continue to proclaim an unanswered questionable Christology to his flock. Thus, it seems that the separation over Dioscorus could not be avoided, save a compromise of either side's position.

The inverse to Dioscorus' deposition occurred in the restoration by the council of two bishops condemned at the "Robber Synod," Theodoret of Cyrus and Ibas of Edessa. This restoration could be considered as blatant neglect of the crypto-Nestorian language in the writings of these two anti-Eutychians, or, as the non-Chalcedonians see it, an indication of the crypto-Nestorianism of the council as a whole. Indeed, the Alexandrines' concern with these figures was justified by the Fifth Ecumenical Council's condemnation of Theodoret's writings

⁴³ Cf. K. N. Khella, "A Theological Approach to the Mia-Physis Christology in the Fifth Century" in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 10.2, pp. 137-144.

⁴⁴ *Synaxarium: Thout 7*, myCopticChurch.com. 26 Nov. 2003 <<http://mycopticchurch.com/saints/Synaxarium.asp?m=1&d=7>>. This *vita* as a whole is an interesting read into the Coptic Church's view of the dispute.

“against the right faith, and against the Twelve Chapters of the holy Cyril, and against the first Synod of Ephesus, and also those which he wrote in defence of Theodore (of Mopsuestia)⁴⁵ and Nestorius.”⁴⁶ The Fifth Council further proclaimed “we also anathematize the impious Epistle which Ibas is said to have written to Maris, the Persian, which denies that God the Word was incarnate of the holy Mother of God, and ever Virgin Mary, and accuses Cyril of holy memory, who taught the truth, as an heretic, and of the same sentiments with Apollinarius, and blames the first Synod of Ephesus as deposing Nestorius without examination and inquiry, and calls the Twelve Chapters of the holy Cyril impious, and contrary to the right faith, and defends Theodorus and Nestorius, and their impious dogmas and writings.”⁴⁷ Leo Davis, in his account of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, recounts that Pope Vigilius “refused to condemn any of Theodoret’s views,” nor “Ibas’ letter which, he said, had been declared orthodox at Chalcedon.”⁴⁸ However, Davis also narrates:

Reviewing the Council of Chalcedon, the bishops said that it was impossible that such a letter could have been approved there because its contents were wholly opposed to the faith of Chalcedon. What may have been approved, they added, was a letter of Edessan clergy defending Ibas. They remarked that Ibas himself had been restored at Chalcedon after condemning Nestorius and his reaching and so had Theodoret after anathematizing “those things of which he was accused.”⁴⁹

Although the clergy assembled at Constantinople in 553 explained how the previous Ecumenical Council could restore Theodoret and Ibas, but not their writings, the damage done by this act is irrefutable. As mentioned, the Alexandrines viewed this act as yet another indication that Chalcedon was a Nestorian synod: Theodoret and Ibas were restored, while Dioscorus was condemned.⁵⁰ Thus, in an effort to restore two men who were condemned by an invalidated synod, the Chalcedonians ended up adding fuel to the fire of disdain in the Alexandrian camp.

The third complaint the non-Chalcedonians had with the council was its acceptance of Pope St. Leo’s Tome to, by this time deceased, Flavius, Patriarch of Constantinople. In it Leo sets forth his view of the Christological issues at hand, attempting to balance St. Cyril’s unity Christology with Antiochene diophysitism. Since the Tome was unanimously approved at

⁴⁵ Condemned at the same session of the 5th Council.

⁴⁶ NPNF 2, XIV, p. 310.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 310-311.

⁴⁸ Davis, p. 242.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 243-244.

⁵⁰ As an editorial note, considering the mercy the council showed toward these two proponents of Antiochene Christology, nearly fully Nestorian in their writings, one is left to wonder how Dioscorus would have been treated had he appeared at his trial.

Chalcedon, with repeated shouts of support by the delegates, it could be inferred that Leo's attempt was rather successful. However, the Alexandrian camp refused it, and to this day cites it as the primary reason for their inability to recognize the council. A modern historian of the Coptic church, Otto Meinardus, writes:

[The Chalcedonian Churches] adhered and still adhere to the *Tome of Leo*... in which the pope of Rome sets forth the christological doctrine, according to which Jesus Christ is one person in whom there are two natures, the divine and the human, permanently united, though unconfused and unmixed. In the name of the teachings of Athanasius and Cyril, Dioscorus, patriarch of Alexandria, felt himself unable to accept the christological teachings of the *Tome of Leo* and was exiled to Gangra in Paphlagonia as a result.⁵¹

The non-Chalcedonians explain that their resistance to the Tome comes from their understanding that Leo, in his Tome, separates Christ into two persons. In his paper presented to the recent dialogue between the two sides, the Rev. Prof. V. C. Samuel states:

According to the Tome, "Each nature performs what is proper to it in communion with the other; the Word, for instance, performing what is proper to the Word, and the flesh what is proper to the flesh." A teaching of this kind does not affirm Christ's personal unity, but regards the natures as two persons.⁵²

In another paper presented at the dialogue, Bishop Karekin Sarkissian, representing the Armenian Church, affirms this concern of the non-Chalcedonians. He quotes from "two doctrinal documents of the fifth century which make it clear how the Armenian Church understood the union of Two natures,"⁵³ the second of which "comes to us from St. John Mandakouni, a fifth century Church Father whose treatise is written in a remarkably pastoral and eirenical spirit:"⁵⁴

The distinctness of the Two Natures has led to the dyophysite thinkers so far as to give each *nature* the meaning of a *person*. It is this *hypostasized* understanding of Christ's natures, as the Tome of Leo formulates it so sharply, that has always been fiercely opposed by the non-Chalcedonians.⁵⁵

The Alexandrines saw in Leo's differentiation of what acts could be attributed to each nature as the separation of Christ into two distinct persons, a human and divine, because they believed Leo was actually saying that two separate identities are working within Christ to perform each action. This understanding of the Tome comes from their Cyrillian presupposition that nature equals

⁵¹ Otto F.A. Meinardus, *Two Thousand Years of Coptic Christianity* (Cairo, 1999), p. 53.

⁵² Fr. V. C. Samuel, "One Incarnate Nature of God the Word" in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 10.2 (1965), p. 50.

⁵³ Bishop Karekin Sarkissian, "The Doctrine of the Person of Christ in the Armenian Church: A brief survey with special reference to the union of two natures" in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 10.2 (1965), p. 109-110.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

hypostasis (ὑπόστασις).⁵⁶ Thus, for the Alexandrines, Leo's Tome could actually read "Each *hypostasis* (or person) performs..." Naturally, such language would be unacceptable to the Alexandrines, because Nestorius was already condemned for separating Christ into two persons at the Third Ecumenical Council. Their skepticism with regard to the Tome being Nestorian would be further exacerbated if it could be linked to Nestorius himself, as the Assyrians assert:

Nestorius was to welcome Pope Leo the Great's Confession of Faith at Chalcedon... It was, Nestorius asserted, exactly what he himself had always believed.⁵⁷

For the Alexandrines, then, the Tome, which was heralded as a symbol of faith at the council, was a clear indicator that the council was a Nestorian synod. However, the skeptics neglected to consider several issues in their condemnation. As the late Fr. John Meyendorff argues:

The anti-Chalcedonians were unfair to pope Leo, whom they considered as the real villain at Chalcedon. Indeed, Leo's *Tome*, for all its Western vocabulary, specifically included the "theopaschite" language, implying in Christ the single divine Person of the Son of God, *subject* of His human experience and activity. The council was right in calling Leo a "Cyrillian." In a letter to emperor Leo brought to Constantinople by papal legates in 458, the pope even accepted fully Cyrillian terminology, to the point of avoiding the expression "in two natures."⁵⁸

The "Theopaschite Formula," which is translated "One of the Holy Trinity suffered in the flesh,"⁵⁹ was an aspect of the Cyrillian Christology that most of the Antiochenes could not accept. This, as Fr. Meyendorff put it, was because "for them, the subject of suffering is Jesus, the son of Mary, not the divine Logos."⁶⁰ Notable in this quote is Fr. Meyendorff's use of the term 'subject' to denote "what" in Christ suffers, which implies that *something* is there to suffer, "not the divine Logos," as he put it, but rather another person, a human sufferer, clearly a Nestorian concept. Thus, non-acceptance of theopaschism is indicative, at very least, of crypto-Nestorianism, which of course the Alexandrines feared of the Council of Chalcedon. However, the *theopaschite* language, as Fr. Meyendorff says, appears in the Tome several times, for example:

Accordingly, the Son of God, descending from his seat in heaven, and not departing from the glory of the Father, enters this lower world, born after a new order, by a new mode of birth. After a new order; because he who in his own sphere is invisible, became visible in ours; He who could not be enclosed in space, willed to be enclosed; continuing to be before times, he began to exist in time; the Lord of the

⁵⁶ Our English translation usually comes from either of the Latin *substantia* or *persona*, and is rendered as 'substance,' 'subsistence,' or 'person.'

⁵⁷ Bishop Henry Hill, "The Assyrians: The Church of the East" in *Light from the East: A Symposium on the Oriental Orthodox and Assyrian Churches* (Toronto, 1988), p. 107.

⁵⁸ Fr. John Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions* (Crestwood, 1989), p. 192.

⁵⁹ Fr. John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology* (New York, 1979), p. 34.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

universe allowed his infinite majesty to be overshadowed, and took upon him the form of a servant; the impassible God did not disdain to be passible⁶¹ Man and the immortal One to be subjected to the laws of death.⁶²

The non-Chalcedonians, thus, could not actually claim to be opposed to the *entire* Tome, because it was measured at the council not only for its acceptance by the Antiochenes, but by whether it is in line with Cyrillian Christology. As Fr. Meyendorff reminds us:

To be convinced of this, one has only to read the Acts of the second session: while the majority of bishops, after the reading of the *Tome* of Leo, acclaimed it as an expression of the true faith, common to “Leo and Cyril,” the latter remained for them the only reference worthy of confidence. The representatives of Illyricum and Palestine, however, still objected to Leo’s orthodoxy. The Archdeacon of Constantinople, Aetius, finally obtained their agreement by reading to them other texts of Cyril; but the entire matter had to be sent back into a commission for five days, so that the *Tome* of Leo might be compared to the writings of Cyril, and especially to his *Anathematisms*. The result of the investigation was announced at the fourth session, and only then did the vote take place, each bishop specifying that Leo’s letter to Flavian was in his opinion only a new expression of the true faith proclaimed at Nicea, Constantinople, and Ephesus, and in Cyril’s letters.⁶³

Clearly, the non-Chalcedonians could justifiably complain only that the Tome’s use of “two natures” was non-Cyrillian terminology. Yes, it does seem to contradict Cyril’s formula “one incarnate nature of God the Word.” However, as Fr. Meyendorff explained on behalf of the Chalcedonian side in the dialogue with the non-Chalcedonians held on 12 August, 1964:

When we refer to Christ as “One incarnate nature of God the Word” we mean that He is one *hypostasis*. We also accept the phrase “from two natures.” But in these phrases the word “nature” means *ousia*.⁶⁴

This explanation was given in response to Fr. Samuel’s illustration of why the Alexandrines were unwilling to accept the “two nature” formula:

Why did Severus and the leaders of the non-Chalcedonian Church refuse to accept the phrase “in two natures?” In fact, both in his letters to Nephalius and in his *Liber Contra Impium Grammaticum*,⁶⁵ Severus admits that some earlier fathers had spoken of Christ that He was two natures. These fathers, insists Severus, meant by the expression only that Christ was at once God and man. However, the Nestorian school adopted the phrase to assert a doctrine of two persons. The phrase should not, therefore, be used any longer.⁶⁶

⁶¹ i.e. be capable of suffering

⁶² NPNF 2, XIV, p. 256.

⁶³ Fr. John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Crestwood, 1987), p. 27.

⁶⁴ *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, p. 53. (*ousia*, οὐσία, in English ‘essence’)

⁶⁵ “Work Against the Impius (John the) Grammarian”

⁶⁶ Samuel, p. 49.

Although the non-Chalcedonian fear of the term “two natures” can be understood in light of the ongoing fight against Nestorianism at the time, it should be nevertheless be noted just to what lengths the bishops of Chalcedon went in hopes of explaining this usage. This is precisely what the council’s proclamation hoped to accomplish.

The Definition of Faith of the Fourth Ecumenical Council is the fourth and final piece of the Alexandrines’ refusal to accept the synod of 451. The inception of this statement, as explained above, was pushed upon the bishops gathered in Chalcedon by the imperial representatives. The goal of these officials was to bring peace to the Church, and thus by extension the empire as a whole, through an irrefutable declaration that put aside the multiple heresies that had divided the Church for the previous decades: the lingering aftereffects of Arianism; the ongoing indication of Nestorianism, condemned at the Third Ecumenical Council 20 years earlier, in the East; and the onset of Eutychianism, a derivative of the Apollinarian language condemned at the Second Ecumenical Council 70 years earlier, in the Alexandrian school. The bishops were naturally aware of all these influencing elements, although, certainly, their background and preconceptions affected their inclination toward what heresies were of greater concern. However, it would appear that all sides of debate were, if not equally, then well represented, as Leo Davis records:

No fewer than nineteen court functionaries led by Patriarch Anatolius occupied chairs lined up along the balustrade dividing the sanctuary from the nave. Down the left of the basilica sat the papal legates, Anatolius of Constantinople, Maximus of Antioch and the metropolitans and bishops of Thrace, Asia Minor and Syria. Across from them sat Dioscorus of Alexandria, Juvenal of Jerusalem and the representatives of the bishop of Thessalonika with the bishops of Egypt, Palestine and Illyricum.⁶⁷

Thus, it would not be fair to label the council as inclined against, nor in favor, of any one position. Furthermore, the definition that was ultimately accepted by the council, and signed by over 450 bishops,⁶⁸ should truly be considered as a fair agreement by *all* sides, since it was scrupulously checked against the arguments of both the Antiochene and Alexandrian sides by a committee “consisting of the three legates, six Orientals, and three bishops from Asia, Pontus, Illyricum and Thrace,”⁶⁹ 21 bishops altogether,⁷⁰ a fair representation of the various churches. The proclamation not only represented various persons, but as the renowned historian Jaroslav Pelikan writes:

⁶⁷ Davis, p. 181.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 185. Although Egypt is not directly listed, it was most likely was represented amongst the “six Orientals,” a term which denotes the Palestinian and Syrian lands below Asia Minor, and can include the Egyptian lands also.

⁷⁰ The minutes of the council suggest there were 22 bishops on this committee. Cf. NPNF 2, XIV, p. 261.

The genealogy of this decree makes clear that “the formula is not an original and new creation, but like a mosaic, was assembled almost entirely from stones that were already available.” Specifically, its sources were the so-called *Second Letter of Cyril to Nestorius*, the *Letter of Cyril to the Antiochenes* together with the union formula of 433, and the *Tome* of Leo; the phrase “not divided or separated into two persons” appears to have come from Theodoret.⁷¹

The genuine diversity of incorporated theologies, and also the wide range of theologies rejected, is perhaps best exemplified in the sentence explaining how the two natures of Christ combine to form one person, yet maintain their respective identities. Fr. Meyendorff identifies and describes this ingenuity most eloquently:

The council added a touch of truly Catholic⁷² moderation and humility by maintaining in Christology the element of mystery amid the intricacies and the phraseological subtleties into which they have plunged. The union of the two natures was defined at Chalcedon by four *negative* adverbs, which while they condemned the two contrary heresies of Nestorius and Eutyches, excluded any pretension to explain *fully* in human terms the very mystery of the incarnation.⁷³

Truly, the council’s statement of faith is an assimilation of the orthodox aspects of the differing views of Christology. Thus, Fr. Schmemmann’s description of the Council of Chalcedon as a “miracle”⁷⁴ can be genuinely seen as a recognition of the extraordinary bringing together of bishops from all over the empire into a single place to proclaim one Christology, manifested in the Definition of Faith. Now, although this document contains many important declarations that redefine doctrine more clearly than ever before, the most revolutionary aspect of this proclamation is its definition of, or rather its distinction between, the terms *physis* and *hypostasis*, something not accomplished by either Cyril or Leo in their writings. Fr. Meyendorff elaborates on the problem:

Leo’s Latin terminology could not satisfy the East. The trinitarian quarrels of the fourth century had already shown what misunderstandings could result from the parallelisms *persona* (ἰσούστος ἰσούστος) and *substantia-natura* (ἰσούστος ἰσούστος). The Council of Chalcedon therefore translated St. Leo’s *persona* by ἰσούστος ἰσούστος and also put an end to Cyril’s ambiguous ἰσούστος ἰσούστος (“one nature”).⁷⁵

In other words, the confusion over the use of *physis* is directly addressed through the contradiction of the Alexandrian notion that the term is synonymous with *hypostasis*. In the declaration *prosopon* and *hypostasis* are defined to mean *person*, that is to indicate personal

⁷¹ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition, Vol. II: The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)* (Chicago, 1974), p. 264.

⁷² Perhaps the definition of the term ‘catholic’ as ‘universal’ would be appropriate here.

⁷³ Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, p. 28.

⁷⁴ Cf. Schmemmann, pp. 136, 139.

⁷⁵ Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, p. 25.

identity, while *physis* and *ousia* are left to denote *essence*, similar to how ‘species’ is used in modern scientific terminology. This distinction is clearly made in the statement where it declares that “one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son must be confessed to be *in two natures*,” while upholding “the peculiar property of each *nature* being preserved and being united in *one Person*.” Thus for the Chalcedonians, the phrase “one nature,” although acceptable when used by Cyril to specify *one hypostasis*, now implied *one essence*. Unfortunately, this became a problem for the Alexandrines, who with all their other concerns about the council were unable, or perhaps unwilling, to see such a clarification of terminology for what it was meant to be, an effort to present a balance of the two schools’ arguments while maintaining an orthodox Christology. Fr. Meyendorff agrees:

The statement was not meant to replace either the Letters of Cyril, or the Tome of Leo, as expression of the true faith, but to find a christological terminology which would be faithful to both.⁷⁶

The council’s opponents, however, believed otherwise. Pelikan reflects on the oppositions’ arguments and attempts to define the problem with the definition:

The insistence that Christ not be divided or separated into two persons did not really strike the center of its intended target, which was the need to affirm that the birth, suffering, and death of Christ were real, and simultaneously to protect the Godhead from compromise by them. To say that the difference of the natures was not taken away by the union could mean that the activities and properties appropriate to each nature, even though predicated ontologically only of that nature, even though verbally it might be permissible to predicate them of “one and the same Christ.” “Without confusion” could likewise be interpreted in support of the thesis that, since the incarnation no less than before it, the human was the human and the divine was the divine. Even more explicitly, “without change,” which applied to the human nature since it was taken for granted by both sides that the divine nature was unchangeable, could be read as an attack on the notion that because the salvation of man consisted in the transformation of his human nature into a divine one, the human nature of Christ had begun the process of salvation by its union with the divine nature. Although the Chalcedonian formula did not in fact say any of these things unequivocally, it did seem to allow room for them; hence it could even be, and indeed was, taken as a vindication of the Nestorian position.⁷⁷

Thus, although the non-Chalcedonians’ primary concern with the Chalcedon synod was its acceptance of Leo’s Tome, the statement offered by the bishops to explain how its Christology was in line with Cyrillian Orthodoxy was also rejected because it did not fully dispel the fears of the skeptics, and therefore the schism became no longer a looming concern, but an utter reality.

⁷⁶ Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity*, p. 177.

⁷⁷ Pelikan, p. 265.

Attempt to Reconcile

The initial reaction of the Alexandrines to the Council of Chalcedon was swift and furious. As previously indicated, the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Jerusalem, in returning to their sees, were met by hordes of great opposition. In the east, the area containing the desert strongholds of monasticism, specifically the lands of Syria, Palestine and Egypt, the non-Chalcedonian cause was very well received. In fact, by 475 Antioch had its own non-Chalcedonian patriarch, Peter the Fuller. The imperial authorities began to realize that instead of solving the great Christological debates, the Council of Chalcedon had only ended up widening the chasm between the opposing sides, and creating more political division. Fr. Schmemmann recounts just how bad the conflict had become:

In 475 the usurper Basilicus, who had driven out Emperor Zeno for a short time, published his Encyclion, which in fact condemned Chalcedon, and required the bishops to sign it. From five to seven hundred of them did so!⁷⁸

The ousted emperor Zeno recaptured his throne in 476, having learned his lesson about the controversy and under the influence of the Patriarch of Constantinople, Acacius, issued an imperial decree in 482 by which he hoped to appease the non-Chalcedonians and return them to the church. This decree, called the *Henotikon*, ignored the decisions and language clarification of the council in favor of language more agreeable to the Alexandrines: the Tome of Leo and the Definition of Chalcedon were ignored, as was any language mentioning “two natures,” while Cyril’s Twelve Anathemas were promoted. The core of the document reads:

We confess that the only-begotten Son of God, himself God, who truly became man, our Lord Jesus Christ, who, *homoousios* with the Father according to the Godhead and the Same *homoousios* with us according to manhood, came down and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of Mary the Virgin and ‘Theotokos,’ is one and not two; for we affirm that both the miracles and the sufferings which he voluntarily endured in the flesh are those of one Person. We altogether reject those who divide or confuse or introduce a phantom, since this true incarnation which was without sin of the ‘Theotokos’ did not bring about an addition of a Son; for the Trinity remained a Trinity even when One of the Trinity, the divine Logos, became incarnate.⁷⁹

Initially, the monophysite patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch both agreed to the decree, and so it appeared that communion would be restored. However, the Chalcedonian Patriarch of

⁷⁸ Schmemmann, p. 141.

⁷⁹ Davis, p. 202.

Alexandria, unhappy with the prospect of losing his throne, appealed to Rome about the recognition by the emperor of his rival, which in turn ultimately led to a thirty year breach between Rome and Constantinople. As Fr. Schmemmann explains, “by trying to preserve the Monophysite East, Constantinople lost the orthodox West; the ‘schism of Acacius’ was one link in the long chain of disagreements that led to final separation,”⁸⁰ referring of course to the Great Schism of 1054. The most unfortunate aspect of all this drama, however, was that the *Henotikon* did little to actually heal the Chalcedonian schism. The historical problem with the decree proved to be, of all things, its ambiguity, a definite miscalculation amidst all the usual political wrangling. Its vagueness gave the loyal proponents of either position reason to mistrust the agreement, because it failed to fully address the usual concerns of each side. For the Chalcedonians, headed by Pope Felix III of Rome, the *Henotikon* was clearly unacceptable since it did not outright accept the dogma of Chalcedon or Leo’s Tome, both of which, they felt, presented their position while maintaining the Christology of Cyril. On the other hand, the staunch non-Chalcedonians could not compromise either, as Davis recounts:

Peter the Hoarse promptly accepted the Henotikon and was recognized by Acacius as the legitimate patriarch of Alexandria. But many Monophysites wanted more—the outright repudiation of Chalcedon and the Tome. Peter played a double game, protesting to Acacius his respect for the council while conciliating the Monophysites with propaganda kept carefully hidden from the hostile eyes of the civil authorities... The Monophysites under Theodore, bishop who had originally consecrated Peter, organized a demonstration of monks said to have numbered 30,000... who refused in the end to be conciliated.⁸¹

Clearly, the damage had already been done, and thus reconciliation appeared to have been beyond anyone’s reach. The non-Chalcedonians, in modern reference to this attempt at unification, appear to be sympathetic to the endeavor. Meinardus, in his Coptic history, recounts:

The theological efforts after Chalcedon were largely determined by the desire for the Chalcedonians to bring the non-Chalcedonian Churches back into the fold of ‘Orthodoxy,’ and various methods were used to reach this goal... [The *Henotikon*] was carefully drawn up to secure a union between the Miaphysites and the Chalcedonians insofar as it condemned Eutyches and Nestorius and asserted that the Orthodox faith was epitomized in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, together with the Twelve Anathematisms of Saint Cyril. The *Henotikon* omitted all reference to the number of the ‘natures’ of Christ and made some important concessions to Miaphysitism. Though widely accepted in the east, this document was never countenanced in the west.⁸²

⁸⁰ Schmemmann, p. 141.

⁸¹ Davis, p. 202.

⁸² Meinardus, p. 54.

Yet, despite all the noted concessions of the Chalcedonians, union was not accepted. Was it only because of the political and ethnic rivalries, or was there a deeper theological rift? History alone obviously cannot say, so therefore let us consult the writings of the non-Chalcedonian partisans to find out.

Champions of the Non-Chalcedonian Cause

There are several distinguished non-Chalcedonian figures of the late 5th and early 6th centuries that offer a vivid portrayal of their position. The most notable is Severus of Antioch, to whom we shall devote the most attention here. The others consist of the first non-Chalcedonian Patriarch of Alexandria, Timothy Aelurus, the aforementioned Peter the Fuller, as well as Philoxenus of Mabbug. Chronologically, of these staunch non-Chalcedonians Timothy was the first, as he was elected to his see in 457. Known as “The Weasel,”⁸³ he saw in the Council of Chalcedon a departure from the Cyrillian formula, of which he was a staunch supporter. His positions are best summarized by Fr. Meyendorff:

Monophysites, following Dioscorus and Timothy Aelurus, considered Chalcedon as a return to Nestorianism and rejected the council. The Cyrillian formula, “one single incarnate nature of the God-Word,” represented for them the only admissible christological formula; for them this single nature undoubtedly consisted “of two natures” (ἓν φύσιν δύο φύσεων), since the word “nature” additionally could have a generic sense; yet, concretely, the historical Christ was “one single nature.” To agree with Chalcedon that he was “in two natures” (ἐν δύο φύσιν δύο φύσεων) after the union amounted to admitting the existence of two separate beings in Christ.⁸⁴

In such opinion, unfortunately, we witness the continuation of the “of two natures” vs. “in two natures” debate, addressed at the Council of Chalcedon. The former use, accepted by Timothy as described above, is an effort to remain faithful to Cyril, since the phrase is found in Cyril’s letter to John of Antioch establishing the “Formula of Peace.” In this instance, although Cyril does not use “in two natures” to describe Christ’s incarnation, he nevertheless appears imply it:

We confess, therefore, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, perfect God, and perfect Man of a reasonable soul and flesh consisting; begotten before the ages of the Father according to his Divinity, and in the last days, for us and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin according to his humanity, of the same substance with his Father according to his Divinity, and of the same substance with us according to his humanity; for there became a union of *two natures*. Wherefore we confess one

⁸³ This comes from the Greek *aelurus*, αἰλῦρος translated weasel in English (Florovsky, Vol. IIX, p.

⁸⁴ Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, p. 29.

Christ, one Son, one Lord. According to this understanding of this unmixed union, we confess the holy Virgin to be Mother of God; because God the Word was incarnate and became Man, and from this conception he united the temple taken from her with himself.⁸⁵

Cyril affirms that Christ remains consubstantial with “His Father according to His Divinity” and “with us according to His humanity,” in an “unmixed union.” The use of the preposition ‘of,’ however, can imply that before the incarnation there were two natures, but does not address the number of natures afterwards. The preposition ‘in,’ since it indicates the present, quantifies that the Christ maintains two natures while incarnate. The latter concept, however, is said to be a Eutychian notion by St. Leo in his Tome:

When Eutyches, on being questioned in your examination of him, answered, "I confess that our Lord was *of two natures* before the union, but after the union I confess one nature;" I am astonished that so absurd and perverse a profession as this of his was not rebuked by a censure on the part of any of his judges, and that an utterance extremely foolish and extremely blasphemous was passed over, just as if nothing had been heard which could give offence: seeing that it is as impious to say that the Only-begotten Son of God was *of two natures* before the Incarnation as it is shocking to affirm that, since the Word became flesh, there has been in him one nature only.⁸⁶

This ardent use of *only* the phrase “of two natures” was associated by the council with Dioscorus, since in his brief testimony he professed it as the only acceptable formula, as can be seen in the acts of the fifth session, where the bishops were asked to agree with either Leo or Dioscorus.⁸⁷ Leo’s formula is upheld in the council’s definition, which said that the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed “anathematizes those who foolishly talk of two natures of our Lord before the union, conceiving that after the union there was only one.”⁸⁸ It is clear, then, that Timothy, disciple of Dioscorus, in his attachment to “of two natures” was simply maintaining that which was held by his mentor and predecessor. Timothy’s explanation is quoted by Fr. Meyendorff:

No man whose heart is healthy in the faith teaches or believes two natures, either before or after the union, for when God the Father’s fleshless Word was conceived in the womb of the Holy Virgin, then he also took a body from the flesh of the Holy Virgin, in a manner known to him alone, while he remained without change or modification as God, and was one with his flesh, for his flesh had no hypostasis or essence before the conception of God the Word so that one could give it a name of particular or separate nature, for the nature does not exist without hypostasis, nor the hypostasis without person [proswpon]; therefore, if there are two natures, there are also necessarily two persons; but if there are two persons, there are also two Christs.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ NPNF 2, XIV, pp. 251-252, my emphasis.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 258, my emphasis.

⁸⁷ Cf. Ibid., p. 261.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 264.

⁸⁹ Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, p. 38.

Clearly, he did not accept the Chalcedonian redefinition of the term 'nature,' instead associating the language of Chalcedon with the Nestorian notion of two persons. I believe his opposition to Chalcedon can be directly linked to politics, instead of a genuine disagreement with Chalcedon. We have seen already that the council diligently worked to address the concerns of the Alexandrines, and that their refusal to listen to the council's arguments was linked in many ways to the ethnic and political tide of the day. For Timothy himself, we can see that he had everything to gain by taking a definite stance, in that he was elected by the populous as their champion against the impostor patriarch Proterius, who they killed while he was serving Liturgy on Holy Thursday.⁹⁰ As Florovsky notes, neither Dioscorus nor Timothy "denied the 'double consubstantiality' of the God-Man."⁹¹ Thus, in the case of Timothy at least, it does not appear unfair to conclude that the early contention with Chalcedon was more a result of miscommunication, perhaps intentional for political expediency, but in any rate an unwillingness to fully consider the Chalcedonian position.

In 475 the non-Chalcedonian populous in Antioch elected one of their own to replace the exiled Patriarch Calendion, a Chalcedonian. This man, Peter the Fuller, is most remembered for his alteration of the *Trisagion* Hymn by adding the phrase "Thou who was crucified for us," so the hymn would now read "Holy God, Holy Might, Holy Immortal, Thou who was crucified for us, have mercy on us" As Fr. Florovsky notes, "by itself there was nothing unorthodox with this formula if it referred to the person of the Logos in the flesh."⁹² However, this addition alarmed the Chalcedonians, who had already been using the hymn liturgically to refer to the Trinity, not just to Christ. Unfortunately, the Chalcedonians who opposed the change employed other arguments, as Fr. Meyendorff explains:

The Chalcedonian opposition would have been justified, therefore, if it had limited its objections to the fact that the hymn was interpreted in a Trinitarian sense in many churches and that consequently the use of the interpolated form was dangerously ambiguous. However, if one reads certain Chalcedonian texts relative to this controversy, one finds, against the episcopism in all its forms, objections current in the anti-Cyrrillian circles of Antioch before and after the Council of Ephesus. A notable example is to be found in the collection of (fake) letters to Peter the Fuller, published in 512. The first letter, for example, attributed to Anteon, Bishop of Arsinoe, asserts that the "Jesus Christ is one of the incarnate trinity, but the cross can only be attributed to his human nature." In this text, as in many others of the same collection, Dyophysitism, without being formally Nestorian, is expressed without reference to the hypostatic union.⁹³

⁹⁰ Cf. Davis, p. 197.

⁹¹ Florovsky, Vol. IIX, p. 327.

⁹² Florovsky, Vol. IX, p. 64.

⁹³ Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, p. 35.

The result of such writings by the more extreme Chalcedonians, unfortunately, was that all opposition to Peter's addition was perceived as an attack on theopaschism, once again reemphasizing the concerns of the non-Chalcedonians that the adherents to the council were actually Nestorian. In some places such fears could be justified, as in the case of the Acoemetae, a band of monks that "fought against theopaschite formulas, and, [for whom] it did not appear that the term $\square \square \square \square \square \square$ had to be taken literally, in consequence [of which] they were called Nestorians by Pope John II himself," as Fr. Meyendorff recounts.⁹⁴ Thus, it is not difficult to see how the modified *Trisagion* "became a rallying cry for the Monophysites,"⁹⁵ as Davis notes. This episode, however, is only a piece of a larger reality that overshadows the Chalcedonian controversy: the lack of sound and moderate opposition to the eloquent non-Chalcedonian theologians. As Fr. Meyendorff observes:

During the second half of the fifth and the first half of the sixth century, the great Monophysite theologians, Timothy Aelurus, Philoxenus of Mabbugh, and most especially Severus of Antioch, clearly dominated the scene; and the Chalcedonian party had practically no noteworthy theologian to oppose them.⁹⁶

This is why the present study is primarily concerned with the non-Chalcedonian positions, particularly their opposition to the council itself, and why arguments of the Chalcedonian proponents during that era are being avoided. Before delving into the vast arguments of Severus, let us first examine his forerunner in the Eastern non-Chalcedonian scene, Philoxenus.

Born around 440-455 to an Aramaic family in Persia, Philoxenus was trained in Edessa, where he established himself as an opponent of Ibas and Theodore.⁹⁷ Due to his close proximity with proponents of the Antiochene school, Philoxenus said he was well-read in the works of his opponents. Although expelled by Patriarch Calendion of Antioch for his monophysite teachings and support of the Henotikon, he was made bishop of Mabbug, also known as Hierapolis, by Peter the Fuller in 485. When Flavian II came to power in 489, this former non-Chalcedonian met strict opposition from Philoxenus. Fr. Florovsky describes this intrigue in greater detail:

Philoxenus took charge of the opposition to Flavian, denouncing him as Nestorian. Flavian responded by anathematizing Nestorius which led Philoxenus to demand that he anathematize not only Nestorius but also Theodore, Theodoret, and Ibas. The very raising of these three names

⁹⁴ Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, pp. 35-36.

⁹⁵ Davis, p. 203.

⁹⁶ Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, p. 38.

⁹⁷ This account is primarily taken from Roberta Chesnut, *Three Monophysite Christologies: Severus of Antioch, Philoxenus of Mabbug, and Jacob of Sarug* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 5-6.

together is interesting. Philoxenus is reported to have declared: "If you do not condemn these, you may anathematize Nestorius ten thousand times and still be Nestorian." Flavian was forced by imperial pressure to anathematize Theodore, Theodoret, and Ibas. He flatly refused and Philoxenus and his followers withdrew from communion with Flavian. Another schism in Antioch.⁹⁸

Philoxenus ultimately led the Synod of Sidon which removed Flavian in 512. Severus, who replaced Flavian, jointly presided with Philoxenus over the Synod of Tyre between 513 and 515, which declared the Henotikon in opposition to Chalcedon, which it anathematized. Philoxenus died in 523, after being exiled to Thrace in 519 by the new Emperor Justin. As Roberta Chesnut recalls, "Philoxenus had been an ardent supporter not only of the monophysite cause, but also of Syrian language and culture," and therefore "wrote, of course, exclusively in Syriac."⁹⁹ Although there is no real evidence to support such a claim, it is certainly plausible to conceive that Philoxenus is yet another example of ethnicity shaping theological leanings away from the imperial position. In any event, Philoxenus was not only Severus' predecessor as notable non-Chalcedonian figure in the east, but also as distinguished non-Chalcedonian theologian. However, unlike many of his contemporaries, he was not fanatically monophysite, as indicated by his rejection of both Apollinarius and Eutyches. Philoxenus writes:

The Word was not changed into flesh when he took a body from it, and the flesh was not transformed into the Word's nature when it was united to it. The natures were not mixed among themselves as water and wine which by commixture lose their natures, or as colors and medicines which, once they have been mixed together, lose (each one of them) the determination and the quality which they possess by nature.¹⁰⁰

Furthermore, Philoxenus recognized that Christ's humanity must be 'authentic,' not changed by or assumed into His divinity, in order for man's salvation to be effected. He therefore writes:

He has become perfect man as to the soul, the body, and the intelligence, in order to renew the whole man. True God by nature, by essence and eternity, he made himself, as it has been said, with the exception of sin which is neither man nor nature, true man and, above nature and according to the flesh, consubstantial with us.¹⁰¹

Philoxenus spent a great deal of time explaining the "double mode of being of the single hypostasis of the Word,"¹⁰² employing various analogies to do so, such as the union of soul and body

⁹⁸ Florovsky, Vol. IX, p. 102.

⁹⁹ Chesnut, p. 6.

¹⁰⁰ Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, p. 40.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁰² Chesnut, p. 62.

in man.¹⁰³ Unfortunately, as Chesnut points out, “although Philoxenus’ intention certainly was not to confuse the humanity and divinity in the sense we would regard as condemned by Chalcedon, from his tradition he had inherited a practice of speaking of the union between the manhood and the Godhood as a ‘mixture.’”¹⁰⁴ Naturally, such language would be suspect in the eyes of the Antiochenes, with whom he frequently interacted with. However, Fr. Meyendorff ultimately makes a positive conclusion about Philoxenus in this regard:

One sees that Philoxenus considers Christ as fully human. Even through the expression “one incarnate nature of God the Word” has an Apollinarian origin, he refuses to interpret it in this sense. He also asserts against Eutyches that Christ is consubstantial with us. The weakness of Philoxenus’ position resides, however, in the fact that in his Christology there exists no formula radically opposed to Eutychianism. One has to believe his word when he condemns Eutyches, just as one has to believe Theodoret when, under obvious pressure at Chalcedon, he condemns Nestorius.¹⁰⁵

With regard to Philoxenus’ use of the term ‘nature,’ he, as would be expected, maintains the *status quo* of a good non-Chalcedonian. He writes:

There is no nature without person, just as there is no person without nature. For if there are two natures, there must be two persons and two sons.¹⁰⁶

Nevertheless, Philoxenus in many places truly makes an honest effort to identify both the divine and human attributes in Christ. This is because, as Fr. Florovsky points out, St. Cyril used the phrase “natural qualities” when talking about the “unity of nature,” and therefore Philoxenus is led to view this single nature as “complex.”¹⁰⁷ Ultimately, aside from his stubborn denial of the Chalcedonian language, which can be understood considering the anti-Antiochene bias he developed while studying in Edessa,¹⁰⁸ Philoxenus was mainly Orthodox in his Christology. His rejection of the radical monophysite notions made his views rather compatible with the Cyrillian ideal of Chalcedon. As we shall now see, such a moderate stance will also be held by Philoxenus’ contemporary and compatriot, the most famous non-Chalcedonian theologian of all time.

Severus of Antioch was born in Sozopolis, Pisidia, a small province just north of Pamphylia

¹⁰³ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 57-85.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

¹⁰⁵ Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, p. 40. Admittedly, one could interpret Fr. Meyendorff’s final sentence negatively, since some of Theodoret’s writings were ultimately condemned as one of the “Three Chapters” at the Fifth Ecumenical Council, but I believe his point is that Philoxenus, like Theodoret against Nestorius, ultimately proclaimed anathema on Eutyches because he truly could not ultimately resolve the entire Christology of the Alexandrian.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁰⁷ Florovsky, Vol. IX, p. 36.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

and Lycia, around 465 to a family of distinguished Christians.¹⁰⁹ He studied grammar and rhetoric in Alexandria, and law in Beirut.¹¹⁰ Fr. Florovsky recounts Severus' experience in Beirut:

It was there that Severus fell under the influence of monasticism. He apparently came into contact with the extremely influential Peter the Iberian — we know that Peter visited the city in 488. Severus, much later in life while in exile in Alexandria, mentions the influence that Peter the Iberian had on him. He claims that he came to understand the "evil" and "the impiety" of Chalcedon through Peter. "This communion I so hold, I so draw near, as I drew near in it with the highest assurance and a fixed mind, when our holy father Peter of Iberia was offering and was performing the rational sacrifice." Severus accepted baptism, ruled out a profession in law in favor of a life of monasticism, and went to Jerusalem.¹¹¹

In 508 Severus went with a group of Palestinian non-Chalcedonian monks to Constantinople to seek support from Emperor Anastasius, where he stayed until he was made Patriarch of Antioch in 512. Chesnut sums up his rocky career:

After Severus served six years as monophysite Patriarch of Antioch, Justin became the emperor, and in 518, both Severus and Philoxenus were removed from their sees, Severus going into hiding in Egypt. In 531 or 532, in the reign of Justinian, but with the support of the empress Theodora, Severus was recalled to Constantinople; in 536 he was again condemned and returned to exile in Egypt. The date of his death is uncertain, but it seems to have been between 538 and 542.¹¹² Severus is generally called the best of the monophysite theologians, and he is credited with being the real unifier of the party, which at the time of his exile was probably too fragmented to survive without his leadership. Though he wrote in Greek, his writings survive almost exclusively in Syriac.¹¹³

Raised in a city which was one of the centers of an Apollinarian sect,¹¹⁴ educated in Alexandria, and nurtured in Palestine, it was obvious why Severus was a champion of the non-Chalcedonian position. Yet, like Philoxenus, he was very moderate, maintaining a Christology virtually Chalcedonian in substance, but not in language. Severus wrote in Cyrillian terms, using *hypostasis* and *physis* interchangeably. Chesnut notes that "the key to the understanding of the union according to Severus lies in his use of the word 'hypostasis,' for when he used such key monophysite phrases as 'the natural union' or 'the one nature of God the Word incarnate,' he used 'nature' as a synonym of 'hypostasis.'"¹¹⁵ Interestingly, Severus understood there to be two kinds of

¹⁰⁹ Chesnut, p. 4. Davis tells us his "grandfather had been a bishop at the Council of Ephesus and had voted to condemn Nestorius" (Davis, p. 212).

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Florovsky, Vol. IX, p. 102.

¹¹² Most sources place this as 538.

¹¹³ Chesnut, p. 5.

¹¹⁴ According to Fr. Florovsky, "Sozopolis had been one of the central cities of the Apollinarian Synousiasts in the 370's, a theological group who held that Christ's body was 'heavenly' or 'from heaven'" (Florovsky, Vol. IX, p. 102).

¹¹⁵ Chesnut, p. 9.

hypostases: self-subsistent and non-self-subsistent, that is *hypostases* that can and cannot exist independently.¹¹⁶ With regard to the incarnation, in essence he argued that Christ, like man, is a composite self-subsistent *hypostasis*; man consisting of the two non-self-subsistent *hypostases* of soul and body, while Christ consists of the pre-incarnate self-subsistent *hypostasis* of God the Word and the non-self-subsistent *hypostasis* of the humanity that Christ assumed at the incarnation. With respect to after the incarnation, however, Severus always “speaks of the ‘one nature, one hypostasis, and one prosopon of God the Word Incarnate.’”¹¹⁷ Now, although such language varies greatly from that of Chalcedon, one can see a parallel between the different types of *hypostases* of Severus and the way *physis* is used in Chalcedonian terms. In fact, according to the Chalcedonian definition, two natures are combined in Christ to form one single *hypostasis*, the former already having an animate *hypostasis* prior to union, the latter not. Thus, it appears that Severus is the saying the same thing as Chalcedon. The similarities continue, in that Severus maintains the “natural properties” within the union:

We are not allowed to anathematize those who speak of natural properties: the divinity and the humanity that make the single Christ. The flesh does not cease to be flesh, even if it becomes God’s flesh, and the Word does not abandon his own nature, even if he unites himself hypostatically to the flesh which possesses a rational and intelligent soul. But the difference is also preserved as well as the identity under the form of the natural characteristics of the natures which make up the Emmanuel, since the flesh is not transformed into the Word’s nature and the Word is not changed into flesh.¹¹⁸

Clearly, Severus identifies two *ousia* in Christ. Yet, he still maintained the idea of *hypostatic*, or “natural,” union:

...the peculiarities of the natural union is that the hypostases are in composition and are perfect without diminution, but refuse to continue an individual existence so as to be numbered as two, and to have its own prosopon impressed upon each of them, which a conjunction in honor cannot possibly do.¹¹⁹

Thus, we see how Severus maintains the peculiarities of each nature, while preserving the *hypostatic* union. However, in definite opposition to Chalcedon, he continues to use fully Cyrillian terminology, not only the Cyrillian concept of unity. Ultimately, though, he balances Cyrillian unity with near-Chalcedonian distinction, as Fr. Florovsky explains:

[Syrian] Monophysites spoke of the unity of the God-Man as a "unity of nature" but ϥϥϥ ϥϥϥϥ meant to them little more than the ϥϥϥ ϥϥϥϥϥϥϥ of the Chalcedonian oros. By "nature" they

¹¹⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-12.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹¹⁸ Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, pp. 40-41.

¹¹⁹ Chesnut, p. 14.

meant "hypostasis." Severus makes this observation directly. In this regard they were rather strict Aristotelians and recognized only "individuals" or "hypostases" as real or existing. In any case, in the "unity of nature" the duality of "natural qualities"—St. Cyril's term—did not disappear or fall away for them. Therefore, Philoxenus called the "single nature" complex. This concept of a "complex nature" is fundamental in Severus' system—*ἡ ἕνωσις τῆς φύσεως*. Severus defines the God-Man unity as a "synthesis," a "co-composition"—*σύνθεσις*—and in doing so distinguishes "co-composition" from any fusion or mixing. In this "co-composition" there is no change or transformation of the "components"—they are only "combined" indissolubly and do not exist "apart." Therefore, for Severus the "dual consubstantiality" of the Logos Incarnate is an indisputable and immutable tenet and a criterion of true faith. Severus could sooner be called a "diplophysite" rather than a Monophysite in the true sense of the word. He even agreed to "distinguish" "two natures"—or better, "two essences"—in Christ not only "before the union" but also in the union itself—"after union"—of course with the proviso that it can only be a question of a mental or analytical distinguishing, a distinguishing "in contemplation"—*ἐν θεωρίᾳ*, or "through imagination"—*ἐν φαντασίᾳ*. And once again this almost repeats St. Cyril's words.¹²⁰

Seeing such similarity between Severus and the Chalcedon, one is left to wonder for what reason was he so opposed to the council. Aside from the fact that Chalcedon abandoned Cyrillian terminology, Fr. Meyendorff points out that it also failed to explicitly use the expression "*hypostatic* union."¹²¹ Without such a definition, one could conclude that the unity was of two *prosopa*, or even *hypostases*. Furthermore, the reluctance of many Chalcedonians to accept the "Theopaschite Formula" suggests the council might have been crypto-Nestorian in nature.¹²² Finally, the distinction in Leo's Tome of "the active properties of each nature" was unacceptable to the non-Chalcedonians, because for them "two energies meant two active beings."¹²³ Severus argues:

Thus one also sees Immanuel [as one sees the builder] *for the one who acts is one*—this is the Word of God Incarnate—and *the operation is one efficient cause, but the things done are different*... Thus let no man separate the Word from the flesh, and thus he cannot *divide* or *separate* the operations.¹²⁴

This latter point, with regard to the operations, is the one real difference in the Christology of Severus with Chalcedon. Everything else discussed here could be attributed to a divergence in language, but the final point is a true disparity that can not be easily reconciled. Fr. Meyendorff explains the differing views:

The Monophysites contemplated the Logos in his new "state," the incarnate state, and insisted on the

¹²⁰ Florovsky, Vol. IX, p. 36.

¹²¹ Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, p. 44.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 42.

¹²⁴ Chesnut, p. 31.

absolute unity of subject, expressed by them with the word *homo* in both states. No human energy could thus be found in the action accomplished by the Logos alone in the incarnation. The Chalcedonian argument, while admitting the soteriological inspiration of the Cyrillian theology and, evidently, the identity between the pre-existing Logos and the incarnate Word, was also pre-occupied with the human aspect of salvation. It could not be satisfied with the manhood conceived only *in* *homo*, as a “state” of the Logos, which was expressed in human acts without human existence. Severus, of course, admitted this existence, but only *in* *homo* and he refused to designate it by the terms *homo* or *homo*, which according to him were necessarily linked to an existence that was separate, concrete, and hypostatic. But is a human nature without human energy a true human nature?¹²⁵

The impasse is obvious. However, as we have seen, for the most part Severus is fully Chalcedonian in the substance of his claims. He repeatedly argues against the commingling of natures in opposition to Apollinarius, Eutyches, and the more extreme non-Chalcedonians, clearly identifying the distinction of properties unique to Christ’s human and divine natures. Yet, he adamantly maintains the Cyrillian notion of *hypostatic* unity. Therefore, we see that Severus, who is considered the greatest non-Chalcedonian theologian of all time, appears to be, at the same time, the most moderate and, arguably, the most Chalcedonian non-Chalcedonian as well.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to answer the question of whether the Chalcedonian schism was the result of a great divide in theology. The Joint Commission of the Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches has concluded that it was not, but rather a miscommunication. It is clear that the schism was exacerbated by political and ethnic division, which prevented calm and collected negotiations between the opposing viewpoints. Such an opportunity has arisen in latter times, however, in the aforementioned dialogue, which is currently in the process of clarifying all Christological differences, and proposing ecclesiastical solutions to the more difficult problems of anathemas, inconsistent hagiography, a different count of Ecumenical Councils, and the like.

From the investigation of the nature of the schism, and from the different writings of the opposing viewpoints, it does not appear unreasonable to agree with the conclusion of the dialogue. Much difficulty existed during the early years of the schism that had little to do with

¹²⁵ Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, p. 43.

theology which artificially created a chasm in language and terminology, when, for the most part, both sides were trying to hold to the same Christology. I personally like to compare this dilemma to the old “I say potato, you say potahto...” song, which ultimately concludes with “let’s call the whole thing off.” I, personally, feel that this song does, in fact, apply to this debate. As a result, it would be very nice to quickly and easily reestablish communion between the two churches. But unfortunately, in the end I fear that the aforementioned ecclesiastical difficulties will certainly make this process slow and difficult, if at all possible.

Suggestions For Steps Toward Reconciliation

From an “Eastern Orthodox” perspective, I would personally like suggest the following solutions/requirements:

	Eastern Orthodox	Oriental Orthodox
Lifting of Anathemas	lift the anathema on Severus consider lifting the anathema on Dioscorus as well	lift the anathema on Leo and his Tome
Acceptance of Terminology	must accept “ <i>hypostatic</i> union” should accept “one incarnate nature” provided nature implies <i>hypostasis</i>	must accept “two natures,” where nature implies <i>ousia</i> , not <i>hypostasis</i>
Acceptance of councils	should be willing to lift anathemas to allow Oriental Orthodox to accept all Seven Ecumenical Councils	since the continuity of all Seven Ecumenical Councils is very important for the Eastern Orthodox, which for them, as a whole, define the Orthodox Faith, the Oriental Orthodox should be willing accept all seven councils, provided questionable anathemas are lifted

These terms seem reasonably fair from the “Eastern Orthodox” perspective, and I believe agreement to these terms would create a firm foundation upon which communion could be reestablished.

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