

## **TTS Foundations 2023/24:** **[S8] “Eternally Begotten of the Father” (P2/2)**

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## [1] On the Story of the Early Church

**TONIGHT:** the last of our sessions on ‘Christology’.

*“Eternally begotten of the Father – God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man.”*

- Of course, this is what we sing about every Xmas.
  - Re: “O Come All Ye Faithful” – based on the Nicene Creed.

**We might take these words of Christmas carols for granted today** – but the Church spent five centuries in stubborn vigil, guarding the manger as the very throne of God, defending the Godchild from all-comers.

**Tonight, we’re going to tell this story about the early Church.**

How and why did the early creeds come into existence?

What were the major heresies that inspired their creation?

How did God preserve his Gospel across the centuries?

### [1A] On the Challenge Ahead of Us

- **BUT – before we begin, we must make a few comments.**
  - FIRST: *tonight is likely to challenge and stretch us.*
    - Sometimes, TTS will be more like a Bible study or a sermon.
    - BUT – if we want to grow as theologians together, sometimes we need to eat the bread + chew the meat.
  - SECOND: *not everything we read tonight will be true.*
    - I.e. we will read false teachers in their own words.
    - This is a responsibility I take very seriously – I will always try to explain who is in error, and why.
  - THREE: *your belief in the Incarnation does not depend on you leaving here tonight having **perfectly** understood **everything** you’ve heard.*
    - Yes, it’s good to treat this as our theological worship.
    - But no, we don’t need to understand everything perfectly for this doctrine to be sweet.
  - FOURTH: *we are **all** ready to dig deeper.*
    - Not only is this our eighth session – but also, “*the eyes of the LORD watch over knowledge*” [Prov 22:12].

**In truth, I often agonise over what (or what not) to include at TTS.**

- Especially true as I’ve prepared for this evening’s session.
  - Part of the challenge? Sometimes like an alien world.
    - Strange ideas, names, and places, etc.
  - BUT ALSO – the early Church cared about *detail*.
    - “This is so inexplicable to the modern critics of the history of Christianity. I mean the monstrous wars about small points of theology, the earthquakes of emotion about a gesture or a word. It was only a matter of an inch; but an inch is everything when you are balancing. The Church could not afford to swerve a hair’s breadth on some things if she was to continue her great and daring

experiment of the irregular equilibrium. Let one idea become less powerful and some other idea would become too powerful. ... Remember that the Church went in specifically for dangerous ideas; she was a lion tamer. The idea of birth through a Holy Spirit, of the death of a divine being, of the forgiveness of sins, or the fulfillment of prophecies, are ideas which, anyone can see, need but a touch to turn them into something blasphemous or ferocious. ... [If] some small mistake were made in doctrine, huge blunders might be made in human happiness. A sentence phrased wrong about the nature of symbolism would have broken all the best statues in Europe. A slip in the definitions might stop all the dances; might wither all the Christmas trees or break all the Easter eggs. Doctrines had to be defined within strict limits, even in order that man might enjoy general human liberties. The Church had to be careful, if only that the world might be careless” [Chesterton – *Orthodoxy*, VI]

Some might say that we should leave Church history behind, or that the story of the early Church is just one of cold dogma.

Brothers & sisters, **I couldn't disagree more.** I'm convinced this is one story we should both tell and celebrate, for *five good reasons*.

#### [1B] Why Tell This Story?

- **FIRST: by telling this story, we have an opportunity to hone our understanding of the Incarnation.**
  - For example, our chance to define common terms or ideas.
    - E.g. 'hypostatic union', 'Arianism', 'Gnosticism', etc.
  - This is also our chance to learn from both error and truth.
    - We'll see how heretics twisted this doctrine ("*Critically examine everything; hold onto the good...*" [1 Thess 5:21]) – but we'll also see how faithful believers defended it.
- **SECOND: this story will help to 'vaccinate' us against error.**
  - Whether that be error found *within* the Church:
    - Re: Bill Johnson, 'kenotic Christology' (i.e. Jesus 'emptying himself' of divinity), etc.
  - Or error specifically found *without* the Church:
    - E.g. in Alfreton – Christadelphian + Kingdom halls.
- **THIRD: this story is a sobering reminder of just how deceptive and destructive heresy can be.**
  - Heretics don't make it easy for us.
    - **LOOK:** Acts 20:28-31
  - Heretics don't disregard Scripture.
    - **LOOK:** 2 Pet 3:15-16
      - “Both Arius himself and the later critics of Nicaea insist on the catholic and Scriptural nature of their language, and see themselves as guardians of centrally important formulae” [Williams, *Arius: Heresy + Tradition*, p. 234]

- **FOURTH: we’re called to care for and guard this story.**
  - **LOOK:** 2 Tim 1:13-14
    - “*But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it*” [2 Tim 3:14]
    - “*Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith*” [Heb 7:14]
    - “*The memory of the righteous is a blessing...*” [Prov 10:7]
  - Indeed, our care for this story is distinctly Protestant:
    - “You charge us with condemning and wholly rejecting [the Church fathers.] ... If it [were] so, we [wouldn’t] take the trouble to read them and to use the help of their teaching when it serves and as occasion offers. [Those] who make a parade of according them great reverence often do not hold them in such great honour as we; nor do they deign to occupy their time reading their writings as we willingly do” [Calvin – *Two Discourses on the Lausanne Articles*, Session I (1536)]
      - Re: SHC’s affirmation of the “four first and most excellent councils” [Second Helvetic Confession XI.18]
- **FIFTH: most of all, this story is a tribute to the goodness of God’s providence and love for his Church.**
  - **LOOK:** Ps 48:12-14 / John 14:25-27
    - “And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us / We will not fear, for God hath willed his truth to triumph through us” [Luther’s *Mighty Fortress*]

## [2] 1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> Century: Gnosticism, Docetism, and Christ's Flesh

### [2A] Introducing Valentinus & Christian Gnosticism

- **REFLECT:** Have we heard of 'Gnosticism' before?
  - Comes from the word *gnosis*, meaning 'knowledge'.
    - Huge diversity of gnostic belief – not exclusively Xian.
    - E.g. Platonic influences, etc.
- **Christian Gnosticism associated with Valentinus.**
  - Born turn of the century – active c130-160AD.
    - He'd been rejected for the episcopate in Rome [Tertullian's *Against the Valentinians* IV].
  - Christian Gnosticism was deliberately complicated.
    - Cultivated a 'mystery' cult, with *gnosis* [knowledge] replacing *pistis* [faith] as the key to salvation.
  - For example, Valentinus taught the following:
    - The divine world (the *pleroma* or 'fullness') – thirty *aeons* or powers.
    - Primordial two (Ineffable/Profundity and Silence) – these create two more.
    - From these four, another four are created – thus making the first *Ogdoad*. (Re: the eightfold Egyptian deities worshipped in Hermopolis.)
    - The *Ogdoad* create eleven pairs of *Aeons* – these made up the thirty.
    - Youngest is *Sophia* – restless, creates the material world and its demiurge, the god of the OT.
    - A Daimonic entity – keeps creatures in ignorance.
- **Physical rejected; spiritual / mystical knowledge pursued.**
  - Pauline language appropriated. (Hence Tertullian: 'apostle of the heretics'.)
    - **LOOK:** 1 Tim 6:20-21

### [2B] On Christian Docetism<sup>1</sup>

- **'Docetism' is a species within the genus of Xian Gnosticism.**
  - From the Greek word, *dokein* – to seem or to appear.
    - Christian Docetism taught that Jesus only *seemed* to have appeared in the flesh.
  - Found in some apocryphal texts – e.g. **the Nag Hammadi library** (discovered in 1945 by Egyptian Farmer).
    - "If you want to give [the unnumbered hosts] a number now, you will not be able to do so until you cast away from your blind thought, this bond of flesh which encircles you" [First Apoc. of James – c.200AD]
    - "[The] fleshly cloud overshadows you. But I alone am the friend of Sophia. ... Rest with me, my fellow spirits and my brothers" [Second Treatise of the Great Seth – c.200AD]

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<sup>1</sup> First appearance of the word in a letter by Serapion of Antioch (d. 211AD).

**[2C] On the Early Christian Response**

- The counterattack started immediately – even in Scripture.
  - **LOOK:** Jude 1:8 / 1 John 4:1-2 / 2 John 1:7

**Ignatius of Antioch** [c.35-107AD]:

"Be deaf, therefore, when any one speaks unto you apart from Jesus Christ, who was of the race of David, the child of Mary, who was truly born, and ate and drank, was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate, was truly crucified and died, before the eyes of those in heaven and those on earth and those under the earth; who also was truly raised from the dead, since his Father raised him up, who in like manner will also raise us up who believe in him – even his Father will raise us in Christ Jesus, apart from those whom have not true life. But if it be, as some godless men, i.e. unbelievers, assert, that he suffered in phantom only – it is they that are phantoms – why am I in bonds? Why, moreover, do I pray that I may fight with the wild beasts? Then I die for naught. Then I lie against the Lord" [Ignatius – *To the Trallians* IX.X]

**Justin Martyr** [c.100-165AD]:

"The adversary does not cease to resist many, and uses many and diverse arts to ensnare them, that he may seduce the faithful from their faith, and that he may prevent the faithless from believing. It seems necessary to me that we also, being armed with the invulnerable doctrines of the faith, do battle against him on behalf of the weak. There are even some who maintain that Jesus himself appeared only as spiritual, and not in the flesh, but presented merely the appearance of flesh – these persons seek to rob the flesh of the promise.

It is clear that man made in the image of God was of flesh. Is it not absurd, then, to say that the flesh made by God in his own image is contemptible, and worth nothing? The flesh is manifestly precious to God. And perhaps most forcibly of all, he raised Christ from the dead! He raised the body, confirming in it the promise of life. When his disciples did not know whether to believe he had truly risen in the body, and were looking upon him and doubting, he said to them, 'You have not faith, see that it is I!'; and he let them handle him, and showed them the prints of the nails in his hands. And when they were by every kind of proof persuaded that it was really him, in the body, they asked him to eat with them, that they might more accurately ascertain that he had truly risen physically. Finally, wishing to show them that it is not impossible for flesh to ascend into heaven, he himself was bodily taken up" [*Fragments* 1-2, 7-8]

**Irenaeus of Lyon** [c.130-202AD]:

"If the Lord became incarnate in some other way, and took on some other substance, he would not have summed up human nature in his own person. But the Word has saved that which really was – humanity, which was perishing! But the thing that was perishing possessed flesh and blood. Christ himself, therefore, took on flesh and blood, recapitulating in himself not something different, but the original handiwork of the Father, seeking out and saving that which had perished. ... The Lord has reconciled man to God the Father by taking us to himself through the body of his own flesh, and redeeming us by his own blood. In every epistle the Apostle Paul testifies to this fact – that through the flesh of our Lord, and through his blood, we have been saved." [*Against Heresies* V.XIV.2-4]

**REFLECT:** How are they responding to Gnosticism / Docetism here?

- **Gnosticism would have destroyed the Church in the crib.**
  - BUT – but God’s people fought back.
    - How by appealing to the Incarnation.
    - I.e. Christ taking on flesh isn’t incidental or accidental – he takes our flesh on purpose, that it might be saved.
    - (Hence why he raises from the dead with a glorified *body*, and why he ascends *physically* to heaven!)

### [3] 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> Century: Arius and Athanasius

#### [3A] Key Background for Arianism

- **REFLECT:** Have we heard of Arius or Arianism before?
  - A heresy that emerges in the 3<sup>rd</sup> / 4<sup>th</sup> Centuries.
    - BUT – it doesn't come from nowhere.
  - Indeed, leading up to Arius, one key question:
    - How can Jesus be 'divine' in Jewish context?
    - Various answers across the 2<sup>nd</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries.
- **FIRST: Ebionitism**
  - From Aramaic, 'the poor ones' – re: asceticism.
  - Judeo-Christian movement.
    - Rejected Paul's letters / Accepted only Matthew's Gospel / Retained the Law / Denied Jesus' Virgin Birth (Messiah but not divine).
- **SECOND: Sabellianism / Modalism**
  - Popular at the turn of the third Century.
    - Various: Noetus, Praxeus, and Sabellius *etc.* [c200AD]
    - Israel's God not Triune but singular 'monarch'. **THUS:**
      - Father the mode of God's creator expression.
      - The Son the mode of God's saviour expression.
- **THIRD: Adoptionism**
  - Suggested that Jesus was a normal man who was 'adopted' by God and filled with extraordinary power.
    - Also known as 'dynamic monarchianism'.
    - I.e. a 'monarchy' with God at the top, who displayed his 'dynamic power' first in Jesus the man and then by his spirit – Jesus later promoted to heavenly host.
  - Often associated with Paul of Samosata [c200-75AD].
    - Bishop of Antioch – eventually condemned by Synods of Antioch [264-269AD].
    - Taught Lucian of Antioch – who taught Arius of Alexandria... →→

#### [3B] Introduction to Arius

- Born c.256AD / Died 336AD.
- Served as Deacon, and then as a Presbyter in Alexandria.

#### Arius of Alexandria [c.256-336AD]:

"To his very dear lord, the faithful man of God, orthodox Eusebius. Arius, unjustly persecuted by Pope Alexander on account of that all-conquering truth which you also defend as with a shield, sends greetings in the Lord.

I want to tell you that the bishop makes great havoc of us and persecutes us severely, and is in full sail against us: he has driven us out of the city as atheists, because we do not concur in what he publicly preaches, namely, that 'God has always been, and the Son has always been: Father and son exist together; the Son has his existence unbegotten along with God, ever being begotten, without having been begotten; God does not precede the Son by thought or by any interval however small; God has always been, the Son has always been; the Son is from God himself'.



These are impieties to which we could not listen, even though the heretics should threaten us with a thousand deaths. But as for us, what do we say, and believe, and what have we taught, and what do we teach? That the Son is not unbegotten, nor in any way part of the unbegotten; nor from some lower essence (i.e. from matter); but that by the Father's will and counsel he has subsisted before time, and before ages as God's only-begotten, unchangeable.

There was a time when the Son was not – before he was begotten, created, purposed, established. He was not unbegotten. He was created. We are persecuted because we say, 'the Son had a beginning, but God is without beginning'" [Letter to Eusebius, c.320AD]

- **REFLECT:** What is our reaction to this?
  - Note the sincerity – "woe to those who call good, evil..." etc.
  - ALSO: remember Williams' point – i.e. heretics use + appeal to Scripture.
    - Arius was convincing because of the killing letter.
    - It was his opponents that had to hold tensions.

### [3C] Introduction to Athanasius

- Born c.296AD / Died 373AD.
- First a deacon and secretary to Alexander of Alexandria.
  - Made Bishop in 328AD after Alexander.
- Exiled several times but received in Rome as defender.
  - Re: the political web surrounding Arianism + Constantine.
    - Constantine increasingly lenient towards Arians.
    - Baptised by Eusebius of Nicomedia on his deathbed.

### Athanasius of Alexandria [c.296-373AD]:

"The devil, the author of heresies, because of the ill savour which attaches to evil, borrows Scriptural language, as a cloak wherewith to sow the ground with his own poison also, and to seduce the simple. Thus he deceived Eve; thus he framed former heresies; thus he persuaded Arius at this time to make a show of speaking against those former ones, that he might introduce his own without observation.

For, behold, we take divine Scripture and set it up as a light upon its candlestick, saying: Very Son of the Father, natural and genuine, proper to His essence, Wisdom Only-begotten, and Very and Only Word of God is He; not a creature or work, but an offspring proper to the Father's essence. Wherefore He is very God, existing one in essence with the very Father. And He ever was and is and never was not. For the Father being everlasting, His Word and His Wisdom must be everlasting. For what can they say, but that 'God was not always a Father, but became so afterwards'? And 'Christ is not very God; the Son has not exact knowledge of the Father, nor does the Word see the Father perfectly. He is not the very and only Word of the Father, but is in name only called Word and Wisdom.' For from this one question the whole case on both sides may be determined — He was, or He was not; eternal, or from this and from that.

Which of the two theologies sets forth our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Son of the Father - that which the Arians have vomited forth, or that that which we have spoken and maintained from the Scriptures?" [Against the Arians I.III.8-10]

- **DISCUSS:** What is Athanasius saying here?
  - Re-clarifying orthodoxy.
  - Is there change in God, vis. the Father's status as Father?

"Being God, he became a human being; and then as God he raised the dead, healed all by a word, and also changed water into wine. These were not the acts of a human being. But as a human being, he felt thirst and tiredness, and he suffered pain. These experiences are not appropriate to a deity. They all occurred in such a way that they were joined together; and the Lord, who marvellously performed those acts by his grace, was one." [*Epistulae ad Serapionem*]

- **REFLECT:** What is Athanasius' point here?
  - How can a being of like substance possess attributes that demand the same substance?

## [4] 4<sup>th</sup> Century: The Council of Nicaea [325AD]

"That there is nothing more honourable in my sight than the fear of God, is, I believe, manifest to every man. It would be well for a synod to assemble at Nicaea, a city of Bithynia, both because the bishops from Italy and the rest of the countries of Europe are coming, and because of the excellent temperature of the air. Wherefore I signify to you, my beloved brethren, that all of you promptly assemble at Nicaea. Let every one of you therefore be diligent, without delay in anything, speedily to come. God keep you my beloved brethren." **[Constantine's Summons]**

### The Council of Nicaea [325AD]:

- The first of the four 'ecumenical' councils.
  - Called in direct response to the Arian Controversy.
- Held at Constantine's palace in Nikaia, Bithynia (NW Turkey).
  - Between 20<sup>th</sup> May to 19<sup>th</sup> June.
  - Structured around Roman Senate.
    - Constantine didn't have a vote.
  - Presided over by Hosius, Bishop of Cordoba, and Alexander, 'Pope' + Patriarch of Alexandria.
    - 318 delegates (traditional) – possibly 220-250.
- On the agenda:
  - Contrary to popular opinion:
    - NOT the canon of Scripture.
    - NOT **whether** Jesus was divine, but **how**.
  - Instead:
    - Primarily – the Arianism controversy.
    - Secondarily – timing of Easter, *traditores*, etc.

*We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of all that is, seen and unseen. And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father (the only-begotten; namely, of the essence of the Father, God from God), Light from Light, true God from true God; begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made (both in heaven and on earth).*

*For us and for our salvation he came down, was incarnate and was made man. He suffered and on the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven. He will come to judge the living and the dead. And in the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

**REFLECT:** What do you think is the key part there?

- "Of One Being With The Father" – **Homoousios vs. Homoiousios**.
  - **Homoousios** (of one being / substance with the Father)
  - **vs. Homoiousios** (of like being / substance with the Father).
    - Re: Chesterton – these nuances made all the difference.

## [5] 4<sup>th</sup> Century: The Council of Constantinople [381AD]

At Nicaea, a consensus was reached concerning Jesus' divinity as it relates to the Father. Arianism survived for a while, but it had been mortally wounded. Now a new question emerged – how does Jesus' divinity relate to his humanity?

### [5A] Introduction to Apollinaris of Laodicea

- **Born c.315-392.**
  - Son of Apollinaris the Elder.
    - A famous rhetorician / linguist.
    - Priest in Laodicea (Syria).
- **In 346AD, he + his family hosted Athanasius in their home.**
  - Athanasius returning from exile.
    - Became staunch defenders of *homoousios*.
    - Made Bishop of Laodicea in 360AD.

### Apollinaris of Laodicea [c.315-392AD]:

- "Since certain people have troubled us, seeking to upset our faith toward our Lord Jesus the Christ, not confessing him God incarnate, but a man conjoined with God, we therefore make confession about the aforesaid faith and drive away their faithless disputation. He is true God, that is without flesh, but revealed in flesh, perfect in his true and divine perfection, not two persons or two natures." [*Exposition of Faith* XI]
- "We confess that the Word of God has not descended upon a holy man, a thing which happened in the case of the prophets, but that the Word himself has become flesh without having assumed a human mind, i.e. a mind changeable and enslaved to filthy thoughts, but existing as a divine mind immutable and heavenly." [*Letter to the Bishops at Diocaesarea* II]
- "We confess that he is the same Son of God, and God according to the Spirit, but son of man according to the flesh, that the one Son is not two natures or persons, one to be worshipped and one without worship, but one incarnate nature or person, God the Word, to be worshipped with his flesh in one worship." [*Ad Iovianum* I]
  - **REFLECT:** What do we think Apollinaris is trying to say?
    - He's trying to protect the *homoousios* article of Nicaea.
    - **Christ had a human body and a human 'soul' (corresponding to his lower emotions) – BUT a divine mind / 'nous'.**
    - Logos adopted the body, but wasn't a human person.
    - *Monophysitism* – one (*mono*) nature (*physis*).

### [5B] Introduction to Gregory of Nazianzus

- **Gregory of Nazianzus was born c.329-390AD.**
  - In Nazianzus – lost to history.
    - Romans called it Diocaesarea.
  - Born to a loving family.
    - Parents: Gregory the Elder (wealthy landowning Bishop) and Nonna (converted his father).
    - Siblings: a sister and a brother.

- **Gregory was converted in 348AD.**
  - Sent to Athens in 348AD, encounters a violent storm.
    - Promises himself to God's service.
    - Compelled to become priest in 361AD – and *again* for Bishop 372AD (by Basil + Father)!

**Gregory of Nazianzus** [c.329-390AD]:

"Do not let the Apollinarians deceive themselves and others with the assertion that the 'Man of the Lord', as they call him, who is rather our Lord and God, is without a human mind. For we do not sever the man from the Godhead, but we lay down as a dogma the unity and identity of person – who of old was not man but God, and the only Son before all ages, unmingled with body or anything corporeal. But in these last days he has assumed manhood for our salvation; passible in his flesh, impassible in his Godhead; at once earthly and heavenly; tangible and intangible, comprehensible and incomprehensible. By one and the same person, who was perfect man and God, the entirety of fallen humanity might be created anew.

If anyone has put his trust in him as a man without a human mind, he is really bereft of mind, and quite unworthy of salvation! For that which the Son has not assumed he has not healed; but that which is united to his Godhead is also saved. If only half of Adam fell, then that which Christ assumes and saves may be half also; but if the whole of Adam's nature fell, it must be united to the whole of Christ, and so be saved as a whole." [*First Letter to Cledonius*]

- **REFLECT:** What is Gregory's argument here?
  - "That which the Son has not assumed he has not healed"

**[5C] The Council of Constantinople** [381AD]

- **Second ecumenical council.**
  - Called by Emperor Theodosius – firmly Nicene.
- **On the agenda:**
  - Apollinarianism – condemned by first canon.
  - The Holy Spirit.
    - Re: the additions made to the Nicene creed.
- **Gregory eventually grew tired of councils + controversies:**
  - "You always find there a love of contention and love of power" [Ep. CXXX]

## [6] 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> Century: The Council of Ephesus [431AD]

As the Church entered the 400sAD, the debate still concerned the relationship between Christ's divinity and his humanity.

### [6A] On Nestorius of Antioch

- **Nestorius of Antioch – born c.381-452AD.**
  - A Priest and a Monk, famous for his preaching.
    - Became Archbishop of Constantinople in 428AD – shortly afterwards, controversy erupts!
- **What did Nestorius believe?**
  - Fiercely objected to certain statements:
    - E.g. *Theotokos*, and "My God wrapped in swaddling bands" // "I cannot call a baby of two or three months my God!"
  - Sought to protect the two centres of operation in Jesus.
    - The human and the divine.
- **Nestorius emphasised this so strongly, many believed he was suggesting that there are two persons and two natures in Christ.**
  - A 'prosopic union' – *prosopon*, person: Gk theatre mask.
    - Jesus' two natures are like the union of two masks.
    - Like oil and water – not really meeting.

### [6B] On Cyril of Alexandria

- **Born c.378-444AD.**
  - A native of Egypt, he had family in the Church.
    - His uncle Theophilus made Archbishop of Alex, 385AD.
    - When his uncle died in 412AD, Cyril was consecrated.
- **What did Cyril believe?**
  - The natures of Christ relate like wine relates to water.
    - In this way, Christ is the pattern of our divinisation.

### [6C] Council of Ephesus [431AD]

- **Third Ecumenical Council**
  - Called by Emperor Theodosius II.
  - Presided over by Cyril of Alexandria.
    - Dictatorial reputation – judge and jury.
    - Assumed presidency.
- **Condemned Nestorius' views – but legacy was nasty.**
  - In 433AD – *Formula of Reunion* required to help reconcile the disputing parties.
    - Clearly, something else was required.

## [7] 5<sup>th</sup> Century: The Council of Chalcedon [451AD]

With Ephesus having left a bitter taste, reconciliation was required, and a sound consensus was needed.

### [7A] Eutyches of Constantinople

- **Eutyches of Constantinople was born c.380-456AD.**
  - Presbyter in Constantinople.
    - Strongly reacted against Nestorianism.
  - Reached the opposite of a 'prosopic union' (oil + water).
    - "I confess that the Lord was of two natures before the union [i.e. in the Incarnation], but after the union, one nature".
    - **I.e. Like a drop of vinegar in the ocean.**

### [7B] The Council of Chalcedon [451AD]

- October 8<sup>th</sup> – November 1<sup>st</sup> 451AD.
  - In Chalcedon (Bithynia, NE Turkey).
- Presided over by Byzantine Emperor Marcian + wife Pulcheria.
  - Agenda: unite the Byzantine, Syrian and Roman traditions!

### The Creed of Chalcedon [451AD]:

"Wherefore, following the holy Fathers, we all with one voice confess our Lord Jesus Christ – one and the same Son, perfect in Godhead, perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting of a reasonable soul and a body, **of one substance with the Father** according to the Godhead, **of one substance with us** according to the manhood, like us in all things apart from sin.

He was begotten of the Father before the ages according to the Godhead, and in these last days, for us and for salvation, he was born from the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the manhood; one and the same Christ, Lord, Only-Begotten, to be **acknowledged in two natures, / without confusion, without change, without division**, without separation.

**The distinction of natures being in no way abolished because of the union, but rather the characteristic property of each nature being preserved, and concurring into one Person and one hypostasis**, not as if Christ were parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ – as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the creed of the holy fathers has handed down to us."

**DISCUSS:** What does this achieve?

- **"Of one substance with the Father"**
  - Retains *homoousios*.
- **"Of one substance with us"**
  - Rejects Docetic instincts.
- **"Acknowledged in two natures"**
  - Rejects monophysitism.
- **"Without confusion, without change"**
  - There is no gross mixture.

- **“The characteristic property of each nature being preserved”**
  - This is how we can speak of God wrapped in swaddling bands, of him dying on the cross.
    - EVEN THOUGH – we’re ALSO saying God conquered death on the cross.

**The Fathers of Chalcedon had one hand outstretched to the Christians of the past, inheriting what they fought for, whilst holding out a hand to us – handing to us a crisp Gospel.**



## [8] Conclusion

*"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it" [2 Tim 3:14]*

"This is the thrilling romance of Orthodoxy. People have fallen into a foolish habit of speaking of orthodoxy as something heavy, humdrum, and safe. There never was anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy. It was sanity: and to be sane is more dramatic than to be mad. It was the equilibrium of a man behind madly rushing horses, seeming to stoop this way and to sway that, yet in every attitude having the grace of statuary and the accuracy of arithmetic.

The Church in its early days went fierce and fast with any warhorse; yet it is utterly unhistoric to say that she merely went mad along one idea, like a vulgar fanaticism. She swerved to left and right, so exactly as to avoid enormous obstacles. She left on one hand the huge bulk of Arianism, buttressed by all the worldly powers to make Christianity too worldly. The next instant she was swerving to avoid an orientalism, which would have made it too unworldly. The orthodox Church never took the tame course or accepted the conventions; the orthodox Church was never respectable. It would have been easier to have accepted the earthly power of the Arians...

It is easy to be a madman: it is easy to be a heretic. It is always easy to let the age have its head; the difficult thing is to keep one's own. It is always easy to be a modernist; as it is easy to be a snob. To have fallen into any of those open traps of error and exaggeration which fashion after fashion and sect after sect set along the historic path of Christendom—that would indeed have been simple. It is always simple to fall; there are an infinity of angles at which one falls, only one at which one stands. To have fallen into any one of the fads from Gnosticism to Christian Science would indeed have been obvious and tame. But to have avoided them all has been one whirling adventure; and in my vision the heavenly chariot flies thundering through the ages, the dull heresies sprawling and prostrate, the wild truth reeling but erect." [Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*]

Heresy is boring; orthodoxy is brave. There is a mentality in the Church, even now amongst evangelicals that we must deconstruct. We must deconstruct the faith of our youth; we must see old truths anew. We might wonder whether there's a hell, whether the Scriptures aren't the Word of God, whether Paul isn't clear in Romans 1, whether doubt is virtuous.

Chesterton's answer? That's *boring*. That's *tame*. That's like coming across a blockage in the road and given up. By contrast, orthodoxy is like a whirling adventure in which we swerve one way to the next, so to avoid falsehoods on every side. Orthodoxy is like a chariot rider, holding the reins in tension, going along with God at speed. Orthodoxy is brave; orthodoxy is fun; orthodoxy is joyful, but heresy is tame and predictable. Don't be deceived by those who'd tell you heresy brings life. The *truth* brings you life; his Word is a light unto our feet.

## **Appendix [8A] – The Story After Chalcedon**

What happened after the Chalcedonian Creed was published? Did all those heresies just disappear? Did everyone immediately agree? You might be interested to learn what happened next.

Let's quickly observe how the Church got to Chalcedon in the first place. The Church of the 400sAD enjoyed relative peace compared to what it knew before. She suffered horrendous persecution at the hands of such Roman emperors as Nero [reigned 54-68AD] and Diocletian [284-286AD]]. Then, in 313AD, Constantine [who lived c.272-337AD] issued the Edict of Milan. This didn't make Christianity the official religion of Rome; that came later, in 380AD under Emperor Theodosius. However, it *did* mean that Christianity was now sanctioned by the state, no more to be persecuted.

Meanwhile, power changed hands repeatedly in the Roman Empire. When Constantine died in 337AD his family held the sceptre for nearly twenty years before transferring to a short military dynasty, before Theodosius I assumed the imperial throne in 379AD. When he died in 395AD, the Roman Empire was split in half. Theodosius' youngest son Honorius ruled the Western part of the Empire, whilst his oldest son Arcadius ruled in the East. The latter became known as the 'Byzantine Empire'.

Let's now return to the Council of Chalcedon in 451AD and its aftermath. We should note that most Christians were satisfied with the Chalcedonian definition. However, several others (called 'miaphysites' [*mia* = unity (of) / *physis* = nature]) sympathised more with Cyril of Alexandria's position – i.e. that in Christ there is one compound nature which retains both divinity *and* humanity, like when one mixes water and wine together. The disagreement of these Miaphysites with Chalcedon was the beginning of what we now would recognise as the Coptic and Oriental Orthodox Churches. It also led to a major schism, and great acrimony, even tit-for-tat persecution *between* believers.

As Churches in the East held onto Miaphysitism and rejected Chalcedon, the Byzantine Emperor Zeno (himself sympathetic to Miaphysitism) published a decree entitled the *Henotikon* in 482AD under his own name. The *Henotikon* was in fact written by Acacius, the Patriarch of Constantinople. It was designed as an olive branch statement, condemning both Eutychianism and Nestorianism (remember our discussion of these in the main session), without explicitly addressing the Miaphysite question. It didn't work. In what has become known as the 'Acacian Schism', the western Pope Felix III excommunicated Acacius, with both sides expressing disdain for Zeno's intrusion.

When Zeno died in 491AD, he was succeeded by his palace official Anastasius, who himself was succeeded by his bodyguard Justin I in 518AD. Both Anastasius and Justin sought a resolution to the Acacian schism, but to no avail. The Oriental Churches resisted imperial efforts to unite with Chalcedonian Christians in the West. Although the *vast* majority of Christians accept the Chalcedonian definition to this day (e.g. Protestant, Orthodox and Catholic), the Coptic and Oriental Churches continue to hold to a Miaphysite doctrine.

## **Appendix [8B] – Simple Summaries and Definitions**

### General Terms

- **Apocrypha**
  - Refers to those Biblical writings not included in the Canon of Scripture.
    - There are Old Testament 'apocryphal' books (e.g. the Wisdom of Solomon), and there are New Testament 'apocryphal' books (e.g. the Gospel of Thomas).
    - Whereas the Reformers believed the former aren't inspired but might prove helpful, the Churches are universally agreed that the latter have almost no merit, historically or otherwise.
    - Comes from the Greek verb, αποκρυπτειν (*apokruptein* [pronounced: 'apok-rup-tay-en']) – meaning 'to hide away from'.
- **Asceticism**
  - The discipline of rigorous self-denial. Ascetics might deny themselves sleep or food, withholding physical pleasure to gain some greater spiritual benefit.
    - Comes from the Greek noun, ασκητης (*askētēs* [pronounced: 'ask-ay-taze']) – meaning 'monk' or 'hermit'.
- **Catholic**
  - That which is held to be true in general, universally.
    - Comes from the Greek adjective, καθολου (*kathalou* [pronounced: 'cath-a-loo']) – meaning 'on the whole, in general'.
- **Creed**
  - A statement or expression of sincerely held belief.
    - Comes from the Latin verb, *credō* – meaning, 'I believe'.
- **Ecumenical**
  - Representing a wide range of different Churches and believers, i.e. not just local, but from across the wider world.
    - Comes from the Greek noun, οικουμενη (*oikoumenē* [pronounced: 'oy-koo-men-ay']) – meaning 'the inhabited world'.
- **Heresy**
  - Belief that contradicts the Creed of an established and settled religion.
    - Comes from the Greek noun, αίρεσις (*hairesis* [pronounced: 'high-reh-sis']) – meaning, 'a choice or selection', 'a system of principles'.
- **Heterodoxy**
  - Another word for 'Heresy', though specifically describing another kind of worship or opinion – i.e. a way of worshipping and thinking at variance with that which is established.
    - Comes from the Greek adjective, έτεροδοξος (*heterodoxos* [pronounced: 'hetero-dox-oss']) – meaning, 'another glory or opinion'.
- **Orthodoxy**
  - An established and agreed way of thinking or worshipping.
    - Comes from the Greek adjective, ορθοδοξια (*orthodoxia* [pronounced: 'orth-oh-dox-ear']) – meaning, 'correct way, opinion, or glory'.

### Key Terms

- **Christology**
  - The study of the person, ministry, nature, and significance of Christ.
    - Comes from the Greek terms *Christos* (Christ) and *Logos* (speech, discourse).
- **Incarnation**
  - The decision of the second person of the Trinity, the eternal Son of God, to add to himself a human nature and dwell amongst us at a particular point in history – making himself known as Jesus of Nazareth.
    - Comes from the Latin terms *in* (in) and *carō* (the flesh), as well as the verb *incarnāre* (to make into flesh).
- **Homoousios**
  - A Greek term significant at the time of Council of Nicea [325AD].
    - '*Homo*' means 'the same', whereas '*ousios*' means 'being'.
    - This term was used by the orthodox Church to describe how Christ is 'of the same being' or 'substance' with the Father – i.e. he wasn't merely *divine*, but very truly God himself.
- **Hypostatic Union**
  - This term is used to describe how, in the one person of Jesus Christ, there are two natures – i.e. he is fully God and fully man.
    - 'Hypostatic' comes from Greek word 'hypostasis', meaning 'existence' or 'essence'.
    - In other words, in Christ we see two 'essences' united in one person – divinity and humanity.
- **Kenotic Christology**
  - Refers to Christ's voluntary 'giving up' of certain heavenly advantages during his earthly ministry.
    - We read Paul describe this in Phil 2:6 – "*he did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited*". (Think, for example, about how he could have commanded an army of angels to defend him at the Cross, but chose not to.)
    - Comes from the Greek verb, *κενωσις* (*kenosis* [pronounced: 'ken-oh-sis']) – meaning, 'to empty'. (I.e. Christ 'emptied' himself of said advantages.)
    - Kenotic Christology has a Biblical basis, though one must be on one's guard if only because it has been abused to suggest falsehoods – e.g. Christ 'gave up' all divinity on earth.
- **Theotokos**
  - Literally means 'the God-Bearer' or 'Mother of God', referring to the Virgin Mary.
    - Comes from two Greek words, '*theos*' (God) and '*tokos*' (childbirth).
    - Protestants might wince at this as an appellation for Mary, but we ought to remember that it was defended by the early Church not as an exaltation of Mary but as a description of Christ. (I.e. the baby Mary bore and laid in the manger was very truly God of God.)

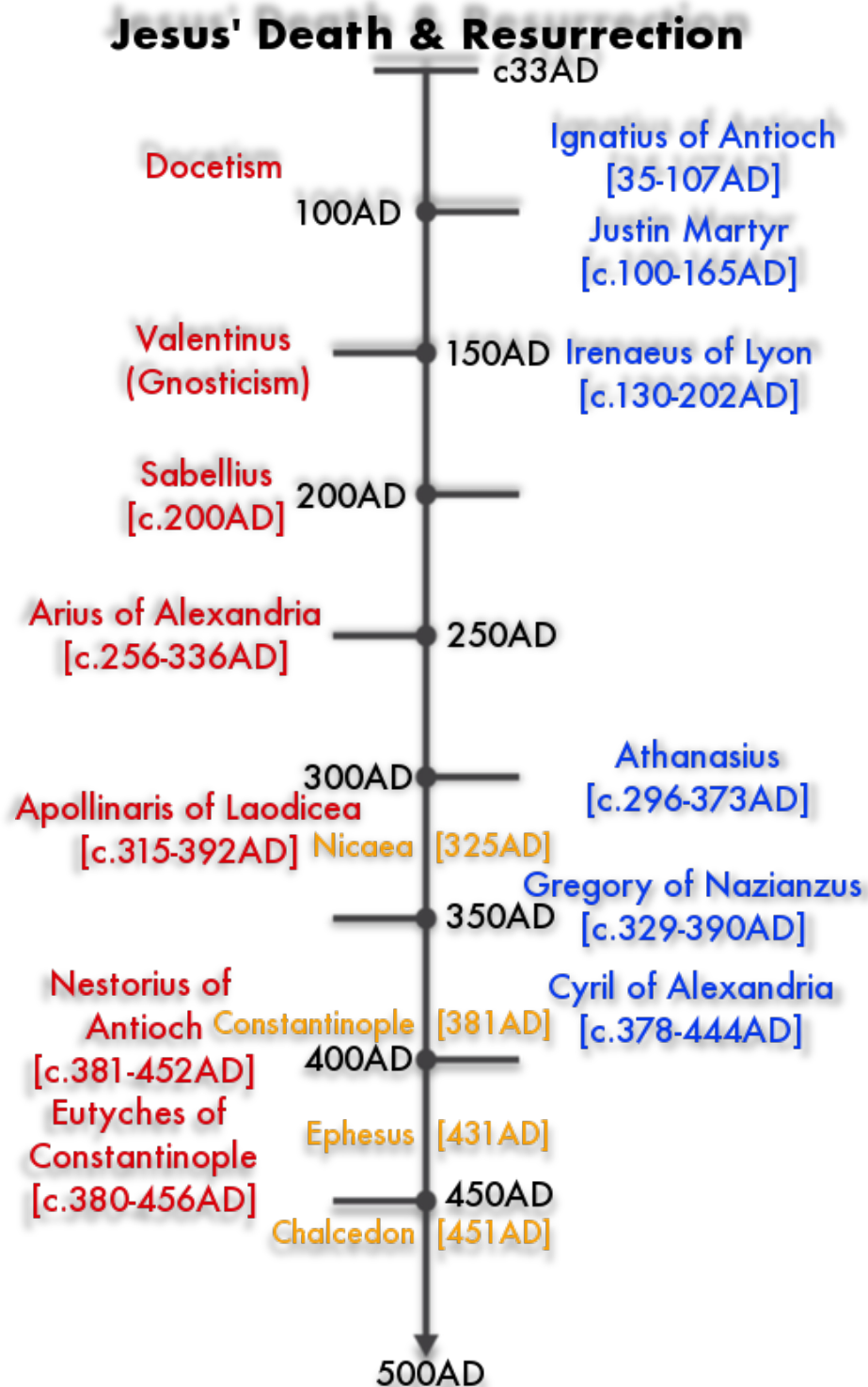
Ideas and Heresies

- **Apollinarianism**
  - Named after Apollinaris of Laodicea [c.315-392AD].
    - The belief that Christ had a human body and a human 'soul' (corresponding to his lower emotions) – but a divine rather than human mind.
- **Arianism**
  - Named after Arius of Alexandria [c.256-336AD].
    - The belief that the Son is an exalted divine creature, perhaps even the most pre-eminent of all creatures, but does not share the same substance as the Father.
- **Docetism**
  - Named after the Greek word, 'dokein' (to seem or to appear).
    - The belief that Jesus only *seemed* to have appeared in the flesh, but was instead the phantasm of a spiritual being.
- **Ebionitism**
  - Named after the Aramaic for 'poor ones'.
    - A Judeo-Christian ascetic movement that rejected Paul's letters, accepted only Matthew's Gospel, retained the use of the Law, denied the Virgin Birth, and believed that Jesus was the Messiah but was not divine.
- **Eutychianism**
  - Named after Eutyches of Constantinople [c.380-456AD].
    - The belief that after the Son incarnated himself and dwelled amongst us, his humanity was enveloped by his divinity, making one divine nature – like a drop of vinegar in the ocean.
- **Gnosticism**
  - Named after the Greek word 'gnosis', or 'knowledge'.
    - The belief that the material realm is overseen by an evil demonic entity (usually associated with the Old Testament God), who uses physical nature to keep creatures in ignorance. The way to enlightenment is by learning and contemplating spiritual secrets. The man Jesus was an enlightened spiritual being who came to teach us such secrets, and to free us from this material prison.
    - Christian Gnosticism was popularised by Valentinus, active c.130-160AD.
- **Nestorianism**
  - Named after Nestorius of Antioch [c.381-452AD].
    - The belief that the two natures of Christ correspond with two persons – like oil and water, they don't mix together.
- **Modalism**
  - Named after the word 'mode' – i.e. a 'mode of being'.
    - The belief that God is one being and one person, who presents himself as a Father when he is in the 'mode' of creating, as a Son when he is in the 'mode' of redeeming, and a Spirit when he is in the 'mode' of empowering.
- **Miaphysitism**
  - Named after the Greek 'mia' (unity [of]) and 'physis' (nature).
    - Popular after the Council of Chalcedon in 451AD.

- The belief that in the person of Jesus Christ, humanity and divinity are united together into a compound – he is fully God and fully man, but both these things in one nature, rather than two, as Chalcedon taught.
  - This belief is still held by Coptic Churches today. For more, see Appendix [8A] – above.
- **Monophysitism**
  - Named after the Greek 'mono' ('one') and 'physis' ('nature').
    - The technical term for (e.g.) Apollinarianism.
- **Sabellianism**
  - Named after Sabellius (who was active around c.200AD).
    - Sabellianism held to Modalism.

## Appendix [8C] – Diagrams and Charts

A timeline of individuals, councils, and ideas – running from the birth of Christ until 500AD.



A grid of Christological positions.

