

# The Great Schism

## The Church Divided

(Part II)

Events, Causes and Controversies  
which led to the Church's division  
East and West

## The Story

- Background ... Definition & Early Structure 21 Apr
- Christological Controversy & Conflict **28 Apr**
- Divergence of Thought & Approach 5 May
- Attempts at Reconciliation & Continuing Conflict 12 May

## Which Schism?

- **Christological (Chalcedonian) schism**
  - Chalcedon 451 CE (4<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Council)
  - Nature(s) of Christ
- **East –West Schism**
- **Great Western Schism** (1378 – 1417)
  - Avignon ... Rome ... Pisa
  - Council of Constance 1417-18
- **Protestant schisms** (beginning 15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> cent)

## To Date

- Persecution and response
  - Rigorism ... shadow churches
- Donatist Controversy
- Meaning of *ecclesia*
- Ecclesial offices ... clerical positions ...
  - *Didache*
  -
- Christological Controversies and Ecumenical Councils

# The Arian Controversy

“There was ... when he was not.”

## Arius

- A priest ... of about 60 ... born in Libya.
- Licensed to preach at the Great Harbor in Alexandria.
- Put his sermons into poetry ... and chanted them.
  - “Before Christ, God was not yet Father ...”
  - “There was when he [Jesus] was not.”
- Jesus earned his “adoption” as Son and his “promotion” to divine status through moral growth and obedience to God.

## The Arian Position

- Jesus was a person of such moral accomplishments that God adopted him as His Son ... sacrificed him to redeem humanity from sin ... raised him from the dead ... and granted him divine status.
  - Jesus ... therefore ... became a model of righteous behavior for us.
  - He earned immortality ... and the same reward is available to other human beings if they model themselves after Jesus.
- From an Arian perspective it was essential that Jesus *not be* God. (The idea being that God cannot be our model since God ... by nature ... is perfect.)
  - Jesus virtue, achieved by repeated acts of will, is available (at least potentially) to the rest of us.
- The triumph over egotism that Jesus demonstrated shows us how we can become adopted sons and daughters of God.

## Arius - Chronology

- ~ 315 presbyter in Alexandria.
- 318 expelled by Bishop Alexander
  - travels to Nicomedia (Eusebius) where his views are declared “orthodox”.
  - travels to Eusebius of Ceasarea where a local synod is held (321 - 322) ... Arius’ orthodoxy vindicated. Eusebius demands that Arius be reinstated in Alexandria.
- For the first time, a council of bishops met specifically to overturn the decision of another council of bishops.
  - The result ... a priest expelled from one diocese and denied communion was welcomed in full communion in another diocese.

## Arius - Chronology

- When Arius is expelled from Alexandria by bishop Alexander and a council of bishops convened by him ... Arius finds significant support from other bishops.  
  
Problem: Arius' views are being so well received that as bishoprics become vacant ... both Arian and Anti-Arian bishops are being selected throughout the eastern empire.
- 325 Hosius of Cordova ... counselor to Constantine ... arrives in Alexandria to investigate.
  - Athanasius ... presbyter and “right arm” to bishop Alexander.

## The Council of Nicea

### Nicea (325 CE)

318 bishops condemned Arian Heresy

- Arius believed that Jesus was a creature of God ... later adopted by God to share in his divinity.
  - Jesus, the Logos, the Word, the Son of God is divine and uncreated.
  - Jesus is of one essence (*homoousios*) with the Father.
  - The Father and Son are co-eternal and co-essential.
  - The Son is not created but eternally begotten by the Father.
  - Formulated first part of the creed.
- 
- In 378 CE a Roman council (local synod) affirms Nicene orthodoxy.

## Creedal Statements

### Nicene Creed ... 325 CE

- We believe in ... one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages. Light of Light; true God of true God; begotten, not made; of one essence with the Father, by whom all things were made ...

Arians interpreted the creed in their own ways ...

- Jesus is divine ... but in a different sense than the Father.
- All things came into being through the Logos ... but by the will of the Father ... not by any inherent power of the Logos.
- Before all ages ... before time and creation ... but not eternal in the sense of the Father
- Co-essential ... in the same way that animals and humans have an essentially same “life.”

## Results

**Arius himself refused to sign the creed ... probably due to the *homoousious* ...**

**“All the rest saluted the emperor, signed the formula, and went right on teaching as they always had.**

**In the case of most of them, this meant a doctrine of Christ somewhere between that of Arius and that of Alexander.”**

Jaroslav Pelikan

# Nestorius and Nestorianism

It's all in the words

## Nestorius

- ~ 386 - 451
- A Syrian monk from Antioch
- Became Patriarch of Constantinople 428 - 431
- Heavily influenced by two contemporary theologians
  - Diodore of Tarsus
  - Theodore of Mopsuestia
- Preached against the excesses of the capital.

## Influences

- Diodore of Tarsus
  - Christ has two natures ... human and divine. The divine *Logos* indwelt the human body of Jesus in the womb of Mary ...
  - Therefore ... the human Jesus was the subject of Christ's suffering.
- Theodore of Mopsuestia
  - Two natures in Christ ... the assumed man ... perfect and complete in his humanity ... and the *Logos* ... of the same essence with the Father ... perfect and complete in his divinity.
  - Two natures ... whole and intact ... united in one person.

(Diodore, Theodore and Nestorius wrote in Syriac)

(In the West ... Tertullian (~ 160 - 225) "defines" Christ as being one person ... of two natures.)

## The First Issue

- Nestorius ...
  - Maintained that the term *Theotokos* (God bearer ... or Mother of God) should not be used to refer to Mary.
    - The term was already widely used in the West and East but not in Antioch ... home to Nestorius.
  - Considered *Christotokos* a more appropriate term to describe Mary's relationship to Jesus ... i.e., mother of "the anointed one."
  - Christ must be human to be our example.
  - He believed in the two natures of Christ ... but felt that the term *Theotokos* ... Mother of God ... had pagan overtones ... and presented the danger of treating Mary as a goddess.

## Cyril of Alexandria

- Cyril the, Patriarch of Alexandria (412 - 444) opposed Nestorius.
  - Antioch, Alexandria and Constantinople.
  - Cyril saw Christ's humanity as that of humanity in general ... not that of an individual human person.
    - The *Logos* accomplished "salvation" for humanity ... and this benefited mankind by the *Logos*' union with humanity.
  - Cyril accused Nestorius of teaching that Christ were a "mere man."
    - Gained the support of the Bishop of Rome (Celestine) and of the emperor Theodosius II.
    - A synod in Rome (430) orders Nestorius either to recant or be excommunicated.
      - Rome & Alexandria vs. Constantinople & Antioch
    - Holds a synod in Alexandria (430) condemning Nestorius.

## Roman Empire



## Council of Ephesus

- Emperor Theodosius ... how could anyone be so bold as to condemn his Patriarch ... calls a Council to resolve the issue.
  - Is Mary to be called *Theotokos*?
  - Is Nestorius wrong?
- The Council is to be held in Ephesus ... in a church dedicated to Mary ... 431.
  - Cyril takes charge of the council even before all of the delegates have arrived.
  - Calls for Nestorius ... 3 times ... to answer charges against him.
  - Nestorius refuses to respond and is deposed.
  - Patriarch John of Antioch arrives with the Antiochene delegation ... was enraged at what Cyril had done ... holds his own synod and deposes Cyril.
  - John complains to Emperor ... Emperor says both Nestorius and Cyril are out.
  - Cyril continues to hold sessions and deposes John of Antioch.

## Council of Ephesus

- Emperor again steps in ... says Nestorius is out but ...
  - Is exiled to a monastery.
- Sixteen theologians are selected from Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria and are told to come up with an acceptable solution.
  - In 433 the group reports:
    - It is proper to call Mary ... *Theotokos*.
    - The two natures of Christ are in "an essential unity" in one person.

## Results

- Nestorius never spoke of Christ as “two persons,” never denied Christ’s divinity, and never spoke of Christ as only human.
- Nestorius did think of Christ’s natures as distinct and separate.
  - Refused to attribute to the divine nature the sufferings of Jesus ... God did not suffer ... did not die on the cross.
- After Nestorius was condemned in 430/ 431, a strong “Nestorian party” emerged in the East.
  - Nestorius’ views were accepted by the Syrian Church of Persia at the Synod of Seleucia in 486.
- Cyril’s views were taken to an extreme ... and ultimately defined Christ as one person with one nature ... *Monophysitism*.
  - *mono* = one                      *physis* = nature
  - This would lead to yet another controversy ... heresy ... and the first “Great schism” of the church.

## The *Monophysite* Controversy

### Concerns over the Nature(s) of Christ

## Monophysite Controversy A Case Study

After the Council of Ephesus ... 431:

- Reaction against Nestorius ... truly a reaction against a mis-understanding of Nestorius ... that Jesus was actually two persons, one divine and one human.
- Cyril of Alexandria, anti-Nestorian of the Council of Ephesus, died in 444 but Eutyches ... archimandrite of a monastery near Constantinople ... continues his attacks against the Nestorians ... of the East.
- Eutyches ... Jesus’ two natures, human and divine, are so ultimately united that they become one. The human nature was completely absorbed by the divine nature.
  - ... “from two natures before the union, but in one nature after the union.”

## Monophysite Controversy

- Eutyches is supported by:
  - Dioscorus, Bishop of Alexandria.
  - Theodosius II, emperor.
- Domnus ... Bishop of Antioch ... accuses Dioscorus of heresy. A synod meets at Constantinople under Bishop Flavian (448 CE) to condemn Dioscorus and Eutyches. Both Dioscorus and Eutyches are removed.
  - Dioscorus appeals to Bishop of Rome.
  - Eutyches appeals to Rome, Alexandria, Jerusalem and Thessalonica.
  - Bishop Leo responds to Flavian with the *Epistola Dogmatica* (Tome of Leo).
    - “After the Incarnation what was proper to each nature and substance in Christ remained intact and both were united in one person, but so that each nature acted according to its own qualities and characteristics.”

## Monophysite Controversy

- Dioscorus asks the emperor Theodosius II to call a council and a council meets in Ephesus in 449.
  - About 130 bishops attend.
  - Dioscorus leads the council and condemns Bishop Flavian of Constantinople and Bishop Domnus of Antioch both of whom are “Nicene orthodox.” Bishop Leo of Rome is excommunicated.
    - Alexandria vs Constantinople, Antioch and Rome.
  - Anatolius chosen as Bishop of Constantinople.
  - Letter of Leo to Flavian is not permitted to be read.
  - Delegates from Rome leave in protest.

## Monophysite Controversy

- Leo holds a synod in Rome condemning actions in the East. He calls “Ephesus II” the “Robbers Council.”
  - Leo appeals to Theodosius II to overturn council and its decisions.
  - Theodosius II refuses to overturn Ephesus.
  - Flavian (Constantinople) dies.
  - Leo refuses to accept *monophysite* bishop in Constantinople (Anatolius) unless he accepts the *Epistola Dogmatica*.
  - Dioscorus name removed from *diptychs* in Rome.
  - Emperor Theodosius II dies.
  - Plucheria, the emperor’s sister, supports Flavian.

## Council of Chalcedon

- **Council of Chalcedon (451 CE)**
  - Fourth Ecumenical Council
- **Purpose:** Assert Nicene Orthodoxy against Monophysitism.
- **Issue:** How the eternal, immutable God could be joined to a historical man.
  
- Over 500 bishops attend.
- Three previous councils: Nicea, Constantinople, and Ephesus are reaffirmed and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed is recited.
- The letter of Cyril of Alexandria against Nestorius is read (from council of Ephesus).
- The letter of Leo of Rome to Flavian is read.
  - “We teach one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, known in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.”

## Chalcedon - Results

- Anatolius accepts the “Tome of Leo.”
- Eutyches called to defend himself ...
  - God brought his flesh down from heaven.
  - The body of Christ is the body of God.
  - Answer:
    - “Do you acknowledge two natures?”
    - “Do you say that Christ is consubstantial with us according to the flesh?”
- Dioscorus is summoned (three times) but does not appear.
  - Dioscorus is deposed because he excommunicated Leo and was summoned three times but did not respond. He was not officially deposed because of heresy.
- Thirteen Egyptian bishops reluctantly condemn Eutyches but would not accept the *Epistola Dogmatica*.

## Christological Definition

- A commission was established to define the faith with regard to the monophysite controversy.
- Six bishops from the diocese of the East, three from Asia, three from Pontius, three from Illyricum, three from Thrace and the Roman legates.

The Chalcedonian Christological Definition

## Christological Definition

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood;

truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body;

consubstantial [co-essential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood;

in all things like unto us, without sin;

begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood;

one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably;

## Christological Definition

the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence [essence],

not 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.

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- Condemned (by definition):
    - Arianism ... Jesus is a creature not truly God.
    - Nestorianism ... Mary was the mother of only Jesus the man.
    - Monophysitism ... Jesus two natures were merged into one ... he was not truly man ... like us.

## Result: Permanent Schism

- Alexandrians felt that they were defending orthodoxy and that the Antioch - Constantinople - Rome decision against them was simply a move to reduce their theological influence.
  - Canon 28 of the Council was used to reduce their "ecclesial" influence in the Church.
- Alexandria rejected the decisions of the Council.
  - Today, the Church still considers the Monophysites (non-Chalcedonians) in schism.
    - Copts (Egyptian)
    - Armenian (rejected Chalcedon in 506 CE)
    - Ethiopian (originally part of the Coptic Church)
    - Eritrean (originally part of the Ethiopian Church)
    - Syrian (Jacobites)
    - Malankara (Indian) (result of Syrian Church missionaries)



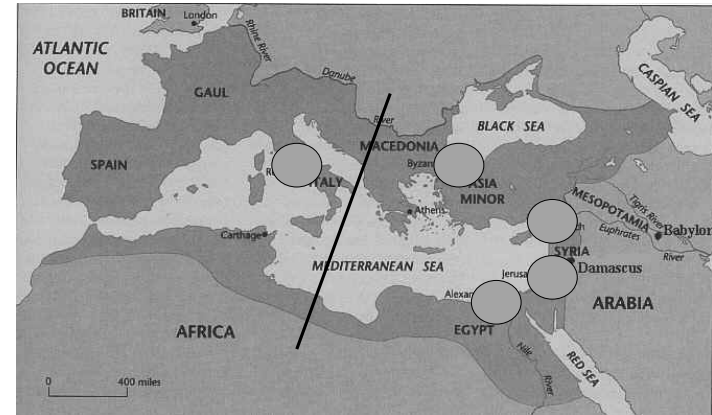
## Chalcedon Canon 28

“Following in all things the decisions of the holy Fathers, and acknowledging the canon, which has been just read, of the One Hundred and Fifty Bishops beloved-of-God (who assembled in the imperial city of Constantinople, which is New Rome, in the time of the Emperor Theodosius of happy memory), we also do enact and decree the same things concerning the privileges of the most holy Church of Constantinople, which is New Rome.

For the Fathers rightly granted privileges to the throne of old Rome, because it was the royal city.

And the One Hundred and Fifty most religious Bishops, actuated by the same consideration, gave equal privileges (*isa presbeia*) to the most holy throne of New Rome, justly judging that the city which is honored with the Sovereignty and the Senate, and enjoys equal privileges with the old imperial Rome ...”

## Roman Empire



## Non-Chalcedonian Churches

Today there are six major non-Chalcedonian churches.

- Copts (Egyptian)
  - Original followers of Dioscorus I.
  - ~ 3,900,000 members
- Armenian
  - No Armenian bishops represented at Chalcedon.
  - Chalcedon rejected at a local synod in 506 CE.
  - ~ 6,000,000 members
- Ethiopian
  - Originally part of the Egyptian (Coptic) church but became separated and isolated after Arab invasions.
  - ~ 16,000,000 members

## Non-Chalcedonian Churches

- Eritrean
  - Part of Ethiopian church until 1994 when it became autocephalous.
  - ~ 1,700,000 members
- Syrian (Jacobites)
  - Originally members of Antiochean Church that rejected Chalcedon.
  - ~ 250,000 members
- Malankara (Indian)
  - Indian subcontinent: result of missionary activities from Syrian Church.
  - ~ 1,000,000 members.

## Permanent Schism

### Schism:

#### Chalcedonian Churches:

- Roman Catholic
- Protestant (mainline)
- Eastern Orthodox

#### Non-Chalcedonian Churches:

- Coptic (Egyptian)
- Syrian (Jacobite)
- Ethiopian
- Eritrean
- Armenian
- Malankara (Indian)

#### Church of the East (Nestorian)

- Central Asia, Tibet, India, China, Mongolia