

Christology in Chalcedon: Creed and Contextualization

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In this essay, the author rehearses the contextual theology of the Council of Chalcedon in order to derive lessons for contemporary Christianity. After defining theology and history as inextricable, the troubled search for dogmatic unity regarding the identity of Jesus Christ among the pro-Nicene fathers is traced through the two councils of Ephesus (431 and 449) and through Chalcedon (451). A theological analysis of the Formula of Chalcedon compares favorably with its varied reception by diverse Christian churches. Next, the longstanding divisions in piety and theology that arose with Roman imperial coercion are evaluated. The author derives seven lessons from a comparison between the Constantinian traditions and the canonical teachings of Jesus Christ.

Key Words: Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinian, Contextualization, Council of Chalcedon, Council of Ephesus, Duophysitism, Jesus Christ, Miaphysitism, Tolerance

As part of this conference on “Christology in America,” with its concern to address orthodox Christology while considering marginalized voices, I have been asked to focus upon contextualized Christology in Chalcedon. The Council of Chalcedon is perhaps the best ecumenical council to reference when addressing contextualization and Christological creed in our own context. As we shall see, Chalcedon’s theology was deeply integrated with its historical context, shaping cultures and being shaped by them. We must first examine the theology and the context of the Council of Chalcedon in some detail before attempting to draw any lessons that may be helpful for the contemporary context.

Theology and context are inseparable. Theology (no matter how redeemed and perfect it wishes it were) and context (the history in which theology is performed by embodied souls located in a fallen world) are inseparable. On the one hand, *theologically*, Chalcedon represents the conciliar pinnacle of the dogmatic conversation which began with Arius’s challenge to Christ within the Godhead.¹ The Trinitarian questions raised

by Arianism found an immediate credal solution in the first ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325), which creed required further clarification, also with regard to the Holy Spirit, at the second ecumenical Council of Constantinople (381). The third ecumenical Council of Ephesus (431) did not revise the creed per se but deposed Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, for denying the application of the term *Theotokos* to Mary. Questions regarding the humanity of Christ, the deity of Christ, and the unity of Christ were now at the forefront. The fourth ecumenical council at Chalcedon was convened in 451 by the new emperor to restore the religious unity lost during the violent second Council of Ephesus in 449. Alas, although “Marcian wished to impose his own version of a Christian ‘world order,’” he “in fact, created a hotbed for ideological and religious frictions for centuries to come.”² Subsequent ecumenical councils focused upon the Christological questions prompted by Chalcedon.

On the other hand, *contextually*, Chalcedon served as a historical crisis point for the development of numerous church cultures, cultures variously included within or excluded from the Roman Empire over the next several centuries. The context of empire is analogous to the American experience in that the Roman Empire, which was increasingly centered on Byzantium, exercised influence both within and beyond its borders. Like America, it contained diverse ethnicities, languages, and regions. Among the most prominent languages was the official one of Latin, but Greek, Coptic, and Syriac were common in the east. Ethnically, the larger cultures included Rome, Greece, Egypt, Armenia, Persia, and Arabia. We must also account for major cities like Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Edessa. Rome and Constantinople were important due to their imperial position, while Alexandria and Antioch were dynamic commercial centers which sustained the two greatest theological schools in ancient Christianity. Jerusalem and Edessa played significant parts in the controversies, too.

After tracing the history and theology that created the Chalcedonian crisis, we discuss the long historical cleavages that came out of the council. Finally, we draw lessons from the Chalcedonian experience which may apply to the American context today.

the dogmatic “foundation was laid by Nicaea.” Tibor Horvath, *Jesus Christ as Ultimate Reality and Meaning: A Contribution to the Hermeneutics of Conciliar Theology* (Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 27–28.

² Hagit Amirav, *Authority and Performance: Sociological Perspectives on the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 210.

¹ “In terms of theological precision Chalcedon supersedes Nicaea.” However,

History and Theology

According to Henry Chadwick, the primary problem for pro-Nicene Christians arose not from anything which Athanasius taught but from what he did not. The Patriarch of Alexandria had ably defended the full participation of Christ in the Godhead. “By contrast, the writings of Athanasius in effect ascribe no significant role to the human soul of Christ; he does not deny that Christ had a soul, but for him this is not really salvific.”³ Athanasius was so widely revered that this lacuna allowed two different answers regarding the integration of Christ’s humanity to arise.

Under the influence of a strong pro-Nicene theologian, Apollinaris of Laodicea, many in Alexandria came to believe the best solution was to worship Christ according to the formula of “one nature [*mia physis*] of the incarnate divine Logos.”⁴ The context of worship was significant, for religious faith is shaped in the cultural encounter of souls with God. This does not mean Alexandria was embracing a gross form of *Monophysitism* (one-nature theology) such that Christ’s humanity was lost. Didymus the Blind of Alexandria argued that we must worship only one Christ, but we may distinguish the divine and the human from one another in our thought. In the union of the divine and the human, “the divine remains divine and the human human.”⁵

While Alexandria moved toward a *Miaphysite* form of worship,⁶ Apollinaris was censured by Rome in 377 for compromising the humanity of Christ. Recognizing the problem, Theodore of Mopsuestia, whose influence was formative for the rival school of Antioch, preserved Christ’s full humanity by positing that Christ possessed two natures. Theodore placed his theology in the eucharistic liturgy, thus ensuring his theology would become part of its developing religious culture. While he later said his writings were corrupted, Theodore apparently believed the two natures of Christ “remain distinguishable even in the union so that they may be described as two hypostases forming a single prosopon.”⁷ In the Latin West, under the influence of Tertullian and Augustine, it was taught that “Christ is one person both God and man.” “The same is both God and

³ Henry Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society: From Galilee to Gregory the Great* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 517.

⁴ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 519.

⁵ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 520.

⁶ Modern scholars distinguish gross Monophysitism over against the more nuanced Miaphysitism, which held that Christ’s one nature was yet composed of deity and humanity. Phillip Jenkins, *Jesus Wars: How Four Patriarchs, Three Queens, and Two Emperors Decided What Christians Would Believe for the Next 1,500 Years* (New York: HarperOne, 2010), xvii.

⁷ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 522.

man, without confusion of natures but unity of person.”⁸

The language used in worship and theology was hereby moving in two directions among those self-identified with pro-Nicene theology. The first tendency, which held sway in the rich and populous Egyptian city of Alexandria and ultimately much of Syria, emphasized the unity of Christ. The second tendency, which was influential in the West but was also propagated in the rich and populous city of Antioch, emphasized that Christ had both a human nature and a divine nature, two natures which remain distinct after the union brought about in the Incarnation.

Nestorius and Cyril

These tendencies in thought, reinforced by diverse pieties, turned into a full-blown crisis when the leading bishop of the second great city of the empire, also a student of Theodore, began suppressing theological errors. Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, believed it was his role to restore unity through hunting down heresy. So, immediately upon accession, he dismantled an Arian chapel, sparking not only riots but a fire that raged through a quarter of the capital. He also moved against Quartodecimans in Asia Minor, who celebrated Easter at the time of the synagogue Passover, as well as against Macedonian Christians in the Hellespont.⁹ While these moves upset many, Nestorius created an ongoing furor when he began criticizing those who used the term *Theotokos*, “mother of God,” to describe Mary. Miaphysites worshiped Jesus through the title, reminding themselves thereby that the divine Logos became a human being. But Nestorius was concerned the human Mary might be inappropriately worshiped by former pagans. In response, some Miaphysites whispered that Nestorius believed Christ was merely a man.¹⁰

Ranged against Nestorius was an even more powerful personality, Cyril of Alexandria. Like Nestorius, Cyril despised heresy. He encouraged the Christians of the southern city to move against both Jews and pagans. In the ensuing riots, Hypatia, one of the last great Neoplatonic philosophers, was captured, taken to a church, stripped, then beaten to death with bricks.¹¹ Learning of Nestorius’s moves, Cyril wrote letters to the northern Patriarch, challenging his theology. In the first letter, Cyril argued that Christ must be worshiped as one person and that the hypostatic union, versus a mere union of will, means we can say Mary was “God-

⁸ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 523.

⁹ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 528.

¹⁰ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 528–29.

¹¹ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 525–26.

bearer.” Nestorius responded that one must distinguish the natures without dividing them, so it is best to refer to Mary merely as “mother of the man.” In his second letter, Cyril commented on the Nicene Creed’s phrase, “became flesh, became man,” arguing that if the hypostatic union is set aside, then two Sons may be asserted. “On the contrary, we say that in an unspeakable way, the Word united to himself, in his person, flesh enlivened by a rational soul, and in this way became a human being and has been designated ‘Son of man.’”¹²

To settle the increasing division between the two greatest cities in the East, Alexandria and Constantinople, the emperor summoned a council to meet at Ephesus in 431. Sensing his peril, Nestorius wrote the Bishop of Rome, conceding the use of the title *Theotokos* in worship. But Cyril preemptively excommunicated Nestorius. In his famous third letter to Nestorius, Cyril attached a set of twelve anathemas, demanding the other bishop’s subscription. Among them were a denunciation of Theodore’s concept of two *hypostases* plus an affirmation that “the Word of God suffered in the flesh.”¹³ A witness soon came forward at the Council of Ephesus, saying he heard Nestorius argue that a baby cannot be called God. Cyril’s letters were approved, and Nestorius, along with a few bishops supporting him, was deposed.¹⁴

Immediately, a rival synod led by John of Antioch, who arrived late to the Ephesian council, approved a statement affirming the union from two natures of Christ and allowing the legitimacy of the *Theotokos*. They also asked for the withdrawal of Cyril’s twelve anathemas, then excommunicated Cyril.¹⁵ Desiring unity, the emperor, Theodosius II, soon forced John of Antioch and Cyril of Alexandria to agree to a *Formula of Reunion*. The formula affirmed Christ’s unity and the use of *Theotokos* in worship but also insisted Christ’s “two natures” be accepted. Cyril agreed to the reunion. However, his decision to affirm two natures did not sit well with the piety of Alexandria.¹⁶ Under pressure at home, Cyril argued, “after the union, the division into two is removed” so that the Lord has *mia physis*, “one nature.”¹⁷ The difficulty for John of Antioch was that he was forced to agree to the condemnation of Nestorius.

¹² William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 50–51.

¹³ Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 51–52.

¹⁴ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 534

¹⁵ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 534.

¹⁶ Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 52.

¹⁷ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 540–41.

The Sisyphean Struggle for Unity

The struggle for unity among the Christians was complicated by the diversity in their piety. The road to ecumenism was described by Firmus of Cappadocian Caesarea as akin to the misery of Sisyphus in Hades. As soon as he pushed the boulder up the hill, Sisyphus lost control again.¹⁸ Such was the case in the Christian east. In Edessa, the struggle between pro-Cyrrillines and pro-Nestorians reached a crisis between Rabulla, who supported Cyril fanatically, and Ibas, who later replaced him as bishop. Edessa was a key city, because it had schools for Christians who spoke Syriac, Armenian, and Persian. Its bishops were fluent in both Greek and Syriac. Ibas’s description of the two natures of Christ in his letter to Mari of Persia was subsequently approved at Chalcedon. However, the popular school where he taught was forced to move to Nisibis, in the territory of the Persian Empire, in 449, when Ibas was deposed. The school of Nisibis exercised such influence upon Christians in the area that the so-called “Nestorian” church, the Church of the East, expanded into Persia and beyond.¹⁹

Within the Roman Empire, the crisis over Christology flared up again as a result of the teaching of Eutyches, an old confidant of Cyril. Eutyches felt comfortable enough in his relation to the imperial court to argue against Theodosius’s *Formula of Reunion* in the presence of Eusebius of Dorylaeum, when the latter visited Constantinople in 448. Eutyches’s Monophysitism went so far as to deny the Lord was of one substance with humanity. The Bishop of Constantinople at the time, Flavian, called Eutyches to account. A court official warned Eutyches he must say, “Two natures after the union.” Eutyches cited the lack of any such claim in Athanasius, then explicitly denied the two natures. For Eutyches, there was only one nature after the union.²⁰ After Flavian deposed Eutyches as Archimandrite of his monastic community, the emperor, Theodosius II, asked Flavian for his own confession. Flavian affirmed Christ was “two natures” in “one hypostasis and one prosopon” but also allowed Miaphysite terminology.²¹

To settle the juridical dispute between Flavian and Eutyches, the emperor convened a second council to meet at Ephesus in 449. Theodosius sent an invitation to Pope Leo I, who promptly sent delegates to deliver

¹⁸ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 543.

¹⁹ David Wilmshurst, *The Martyred Church: A History of the Church of the East* (London: East & Wester, 2011), 23–31.

²⁰ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 553–55.

²¹ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 555.

his own judgment on the matter in a subsequently famous letter. Leo disliked Eutyches's idea that there were two natures before the Incarnation but only one afterwards. Arguing from the Old Roman creed, which is similar to our Apostles' Creed, Leo claimed Christ remains both God and man. In a surprising move, Theodosius gave the new bishop of Alexandria authority to lead the new council. Dioscorus of Alexandria had all the vigor of Cyril, but little of his predecessor's wisdom, and even less Christian charity.

First, Dioscorus refused to have Leo's *Tome* read to the council, no doubt because its contents later caused even Nestorius to feel vindicated. Dioscorus led the council to depose Flavian because the Bishop of Constantinople had used the *Formula of Reunion* in a credal way, effectively altering the Nicene Creed. Dioscorus also used monks backed by soldiers with drawn swords to coerce a number of reluctant bishops into signing blank sheets of paper condemning Flavian. Dioscorus then made sure that the two natures theology of Ibas's letter to Mari was condemned. Theodoret of Cyrrhus, the leading theologian of the Antioch school, was deposed without a trial, too. Worst of all, Flavian was rushed into exile in such a brutal way that he was dead within four days from beatings propelling him along the road north of Sardis. Eutyches had been restored to his leading monastic position, but Dioscorus's horrific actions soon recoiled to his disfavor, for Flavian had become a martyr for truth.²²

Before their exiles, both Flavian and Theodoret sent letters seeking Pope Leo's intervention. And Eusebius of Dorylaeum, who originally accused Eutyches, fled to Rome personally. Upon hearing all that happened, Leo gave the second Council of Ephesus its rather infamous name, *Latrocinium*, "robbers' den."²³ However, it wasn't Rome that turned the day for the persecuted theologians of Antioch, who suffered their most serious defeats at the Robbers' Synod. Rather, the emperor, Theodosius II, was called to the heavenly court to account for his own rule.

Unity at Chalcedon

The new emperor, Marcian, was a mid-level soldier plucked by the sister of Theodosius to enter a marriage with her. Pulcheria lauded Marcian for his virtues, choosing him with the caveat she would remain a virgin.²⁴ The new emperor, called the "New Constantine," believed it was his divine responsibility to unify the empire against both internal and external threats. He brought to his task a linguistic fluency in both Latin and

²² Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 561–65.

²³ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 566.

²⁴ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 52–53.

Greek and the air of a pastoral Christian emperor. While previous emperors convened and monitored ecclesiastical councils, Marcian ensured the imperial government actually chaired Chalcedon and controlled its theological debates. Perhaps Marcian felt this was necessary because of how poorly the clergy wielded plenipotentiary authority. The Council of Chalcedon thus became, even in comparison with other ecumenical councils, a "government tool."²⁵

In the late Roman Empire, the "profound, spiritually, if not mystically grounded notion" was that the welfare of the whole empire depended upon the proper worship of God. Marcian thus believed peace could be achieved if the empire began by crushing heretics and reaching unity in dogma.²⁶ Unity in faith and worship would bring both peace within and victory over the Huns threatening from the north and the Persians threatening from the east. As Nestorius told the previous emperor, "Give me the earth undefiled by heretics, and in return I will give you heaven. Help me destroy the heretics, and I will help you destroy the Persians."²⁷ "Orthodoxy" takes on a whole new meaning in modern Western eyes when the radical interdependence of religion, economy, politics, and warfare is perceived: "Right worship" guarantees imperial peace, making Rome great again.

The huge church of St. Euphemia at Chalcedon was chosen as the venue for the gathering of the council, which, it was hoped, would restore unity within the church and bring peace to the empire. Chalcedon was a prosperous suburb of Constantinople across the Bosphorus. The council sat through sixteen sessions, most chaired by a leading imperial official, but Marcian himself also appeared in his splendor to receive the assembly's doctrinal formula. The council was conducted in every way to foster a divinely arranged "mystique of consensus."²⁸ Marcian wanted a formula that would compromise enough with all parties to bring his fracturing empire back together. It should encompass both Miaphysites and Duophysites, reaching as many as possible on the Eutychian and Nestorian sides of the spectrum. Even the marriage of Marcian and Pulcheria was intended to demonstrate unity, for he favored Duophysite theology while she embraced Miaphysitism.

The council was composed of members representing the universality of Empire and Church. The extraordinary vigor of the large Alexandrian

²⁵ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 34.

²⁶ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 97.

²⁷ Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, VII.29.5, cited in Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 36.

²⁸ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 75.

church was diminished by the sheer numbers brought from all over the Roman Empire. Where the Council of Nicaea recorded just over 300 members, and the Council of Constantinople listed less than half that, the Council of Chalcedon included nearly 600 bishops from throughout the empire, alongside numerous lower clergy, court officials, and delegates from beyond the empire. The imperial senate proposed that the bishops appoint a diverse committee to create a universally acceptable doctrinal formula. Some objected that a new formula could not be created after Nicaea.²⁹ The modified creed of Constantinople was probably brought forward as a way to silence that objection.

After the reading of conciliar documents elicited positive acclamations during the second session, a decisive moment was reached. Atticus of Nicopolis rose to move that the emperor's representative "order it to be granted to us that within a few days what is pleasing to God and to the holy fathers may be formulated with calm reflection and unruffled thought."³⁰ A broadly representative committee was chosen to compose a formula. Geographically, six members were from Oriens, and three each were from Asiana, Pontus, Illyricum, and Thrace, along with the papal legates and Anatolius of Constantinople. These numbers suggest a representative universality.³¹

Theologically, the committee was comprised mostly of bishops who had supported the canons of the council held under Dioscorus. Moreover, no major Duophysites were represented. The committee sought unity as best they could. Indeed, during the subsequent reading of the draft before the council, the *Theotokos* had to be added to the confession. In addition, Rome had to demand that Leo's *Tome* be incorporated, so Cyril's language of "from two natures" was changed by a single Greek letter into "in two natures."³² According to the modern translators of the council's momentous fifth session, the new definition, "while Cyrillian in its expression, was so worded as to be acceptable to Rome"³³—a Solomonic composition.

Alongside the universal character of the council's participants and the representative nature of the drafting committee came the unifying setting of the meeting itself. The bishops gathered physically on both sides of the

²⁹ Michael Gaddis and Richard Price, eds., *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, 3 vols., Translated Texts for Historians (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 2:11.

³⁰ Gaddis and Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, 2:26.

³¹ Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society*, 578.

³² In the Greek, *ek* was changed to *en*. Gaddis and Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, 2:187–89.

³³ Gaddis and Price, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, 2:191.

Gospels, which were set in the middle to represent the Christological center of their common faith. The bishops were arranged so as to indicate the unity enjoyed by "Old Rome" and "New Rome," Constantinople. Both sat on the same side and close to the emperor at the head. The division in the seating was not where it might be expected in a political setting, between East and West. Rather, the division occurred between Egypt and Palestine, which was overwhelmingly Miaphysite, on the one hand, and Rome, Constantinople, and Antioch, along with their lesser sees, on the other hand.³⁴

Division at Chalcedon

While the empire crafted everything at Chalcedon to emphasize universality and unity, its ideal of justice first required a division, especially in light of recent history. Heretics in thought and morality must be banished in order to attain peace. The leading culprit was Dioscorus of Alexandria, who was called to sit before Anatolius, the imperial delegate, to face judgment from church and court. His accuser, who joined him in the center, was none other than Eusebius of Dorylaeum, recently returned from fugitive life in Rome. Eusebius accused the Alexandrian Patriarch of promoting the heresy of Eutyches with violence and bribery as well as through Flavian's murder.³⁵

During the proceedings, dramatic movements indicating formalized divisions were made when Juvenal of Jerusalem led a Palestinian delegation to cross the central space and enter the seating area of the Antioch party. The same visible disuniting with Alexandria and reuniting with Antioch and Rome occurred when Peter of Corinth and numerous Greek bishops "crossed over to the other side." The Antiochenes welcomed the converts with shouts of, "God has led you well, orthodox one. You are welcome." Alexandria questioned their sincerity, calling upon the converts to give an account. Some responded that they had just learned Flavian actually agreed with Cyril. Others said they were bullied into signing blank confessions.³⁶

As the documents from the Robbers' Synod were read aloud and various witnesses were brought forward, Anatolius maintained tight discipline. However, at points the proceedings were interrupted by shouts. When Theodoret of Cyrhus entered, the Alexandrians cried out, "Have mercy, the faith is being destroyed. The canons [of Ephesus II] exclude him. Drive him out. Drive out the teacher of Nestorius." The Oriental

³⁴ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 107–9.

³⁵ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 114–15.

³⁶ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 98–101.

bishops likewise moaned about their mistreatment under Dioscorus at Ephesus II: “We suffered blows and we signed. Drive out the Manichees. Drive out the enemies of Flavian. Drive out the enemies of the faith.” Raising the temperature to its highest, they called for judgment, “Drive out Dioscorus the murderer.”³⁷ Dioscorus fought legally for his dignity, but he was deposed, along with several others.

It is striking that both sides, even as they divided over the leadership of Dioscorus, proclaimed their devotion to the one Christ. They all also refuted heretics considered outside the center of the faith. Dioscorus, distancing himself from Eutyches, who at points was too Monophysite even for him, said, “For my concern is for the catholic and apostolic faith and not for any human being. My mind is fixed on the Godhead, and I do not look to any person nor care about anything except my soul and the true pure faith.”³⁸ Basil of Seleucia, a Duophysite, distinguishing himself from Nestorius, said, “I worship our one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, God the Word, acknowledged in two natures after taking flesh and becoming man.”³⁹ They centered on the One Christ, even as they blasted various perceived errors regarding his unity.

Every Christian creed comes in a cultural context, and Chalcedon may have been the most difficult context for achieving theological unity ever. In spite of the unitive desire of the emperor holding the sword of judgment, divisions for the sake of justice and final unity were required first. In spite of the pious desires of even its most combative members to center on Christ, divisions were plainly visible to every eye. In spite of its brilliant dogmatic language with its sensitivity for balance, the Council of Chalcedon became the context for growing historical rupture. In spite of its imperial and episcopal framers’ hopes for unity, the history of nations and the pieties of persons worked against formal unity. Before summarizing the historic divisions, let us examine the formula itself.

The Formula of Chalcedon

In addition to the universalizing and unifying aura created by the setting and the participants, the specialized theological vocabulary was constructed so as to try to create social cohesion across numerous human languages while encompassing various Christian religious pieties.⁴⁰ Theodoret, the leading theologian of Antioch, began setting out the principles of orthodoxy by turning against the worst expressions of his own school: “Anathema to whoever says two Sons; for we worship one Son, our Lord

³⁷ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 117.

³⁸ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 137.

³⁹ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 137.

⁴⁰ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 83–84.

Jesus Christ, the only-begotten.”⁴¹ But the floor was not only yielded to Antioch. The works of Cyril of Alexandria were also brought forward and read by an Alexandrian bishop. The struggle for unity may be Sisyphean, but the Empire was going to make the bishops try to reach theological unity together, and their linguistic efforts to achieve dogmatic balance were brilliant.

The Formula of Chalcedon first appealed to Leo, allowing his previously neglected *Tome* to set the tone for the confession. Leo affirmed two natures by appealing to the universal baptismal confession of the churches.⁴² After the *Tome* came the Definition of the Faith. Citing the peace that Jesus promised, the Definition stated that “no one should disagree with his neighbor regarding religious doctrines but that the proclamation of the truth be uniformly presented.” It then recited the council’s adherence to the creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople as well as the documents from Ephesus, the council led in part by Cyril “of most holy memory.”⁴³

The Definition took an evenhanded approach to the previous debates. Alongside positive appeals to both Leo’s *Tome* to Flavian, on the one hand, and to Cyril’s various letters at Ephesus, on the other hand, it offered negative condemnations. It denounced, on the one hand, Nestorius’s reluctance to apply *Theotokos* to the Virgin and, on the other hand, Eutyches’s proclamation of “a single nature of the flesh and the divinity.” For Eutyches had confused the divine nature so much with the human that the eternal Son became “passible.”⁴⁴

When it comes to the heart of Chalcedon’s Definition, “the confession,” the language moved carefully back and forth between the unity of the person and the duality of the natures, providing nuanced statements respecting the continuing yet unmixed relationship of Christ’s natures. The confession included “God-bearer” against Nestorianism and “in two natures” against Eutychianism. The confession is reproduced below, with bold italics to indicate the unity and italics the duality. I also underline the creed’s affirmation of the twofold generation of Christ, eternally from the Father and temporally from Mary. Chalcedon’s dual generation reinforces this paper’s analogy that theology participates in both eternal truth and contextual history.

So, following the saintly fathers, we all with one voice teach the

⁴¹ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 144.

⁴² Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols. (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 1:77–82.

⁴³ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1:83–84.

⁴⁴ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1:85–86.

confession of ***one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ***, the same *perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity*, the same *truly God and truly man*, of a rational soul and a body; consubstantial with the Father as regards his divinity, and the same consubstantial with us as regards his humanity; like us in all respects except for sin; begotten before the ages from the Father as regards his divinity, and in the last days the same for us and for our salvation from Mary, the virgin God-bearer as regards his humanity; ***one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten***, acknowledged *in two natures which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation*; at no point was the difference between the natures taken away through the union, but rather *the property of both natures is preserved* and comes together into ***a single person and a single subsistent being***; he is not parted or divided into two persons, but is ***one and the same only-begotten Son, God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ***, just as the prophets taught from the beginning about him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ himself instructed us, and as the creed of the fathers handed it down to us.⁴⁵

Historic Dissonance

Marcian—pastor, theologian, and emperor—called the assembled clergy to pray, “hoping that because of your prayers to the Almighty a peace that is both swift and universal will be granted to us by God.” Providentially, however, the peace he sought was neither “swift” nor “universal.” Why did peace not come? Only God knows the answer as to why he ordained (or allowed, if you wish) historic dissonance rather than historic harmony. But, if asked to guess why the ancient church fractured, I would say it was their misconstruction of “peace” and the means to it. The accepted truism, shared by Cyril and Nestorius as well as Leo and Dioscorus, was echoed in Marcian’s prayer and desire to enforce “the ending of discord due to many being in error over the faith.”⁴⁶ A godly desire for concord in Christological definition among Christians is one thing; the use of means antithetical to the character and command of Christ to bring about that concord is quite another.

The Failure of Imposed Orthodoxy

The council’s own natural revulsion against Dioscorus’s abuse of Flavian should have demonstrated to all those present that wielding coercive social measures to create theological harmony fosters further discord.

⁴⁵ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1:86–87.

⁴⁶ Amirav, *Authority and Performance*, 97.

Putting your theological opponents on trial in an imperial context, separating them from their own churches through extra-local juridical means, driving their supporters into exile, all while hurling religious anathemas against their religious pieties—these are abhorrent. Idolatry, irreligious worship, evil liturgies—yes, these are abhorrent. But self-justifying measures, whipped up indignation, evil means to good ends—these are also vile.

Jesus commissioned his church to “make disciples” of all nations (Matt 28:18–20). But the Lord gave us the proclamation of his Word (Rom 10:6–13) and the presence of his Spirit (John 20:21–23) as his chosen means to do so. Contrary to imperial and ecclesiastical usurpations of conveying “peace”—on display long before, during, and after Chalcedon—it is Christ alone who conveys “peace” (John 20:21). What of “peace?” The Constantinian confusion of Christ’s eternal kingdom with a temporal kingdom bequeathed both Western and Eastern Christianity a troubling legacy. It is not by raising hateful shouts and unbarred swords that we witness to Jesus and offer his “peace” to the world. Rather, “by this everyone will know you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35). For all their knowledge of Scripture, the powerful leaders of the late Roman empire abused both “peace” and the means of attaining it.

In spite of the brilliant Christology available in Chalcedon, the council served to divide ancient Christians rather than unite them. According to Averil Cameron, “the struggle to define orthodoxy was the technologizing of the issue.”⁴⁷ The traditional view was that orthodoxy was fixed and therefore need only be discovered and defended. Somebody like John of Damascus believed theological knowledge could be had through establishing philosophical principles, creating a catalog of heresies to avoid, then constructing theology according to the fathers and the councils.⁴⁸ The struggle to define orthodoxy, therefore, became marked by a continually narrowing set of definitions. Those theological conclusions, which were tested by manipulation and defended by polemic and invective, brought about the loss of open discussion. “Orthodoxy” and “intolerance,” enforced through violence and the state legislation of religion, have thus become synonymous.⁴⁹

Historically, orthodoxy has been more elusive for the church to per-

⁴⁷ Averil Cameron, “The Cost of Orthodoxy,” *Church History and Religious Culture* 93 (2013): 349.

⁴⁸ Cameron, “The Cost of Orthodoxy,” 347.

⁴⁹ Cameron, “The Cost of Orthodoxy,” 352.

ceive and receive. Indeed, harsh measures, from book burnings to mutilation, only inhibited the communal perception and reception of theological orthodoxy. Moreover, the cost to individuals, whether abusers or abused, ranged from hypocrisy to seared consciences.⁵⁰ According to Cameron, the effort to create a “culture of Orthodoxy” must be deemed “unsuccessful,” for “We do not have a single agreed Christian definition, and we still struggle with the legacy of those early battles.”⁵¹

“We Are Not Monophysites”

If we begin our review of the fractured body of Christianity with the religion that characterized Alexandria after Chalcedon, we see how orthodoxy may not be imposed from without. In Egypt, orthodoxy grew from within and established deep roots over against a nearly continual history of pagan, Christian, and Islamic oppression. According to Ghada Botros, the Coptic Orthodox Church developed a “religious identity” that incorporated contradictions to the history of Chalcedon. The Copts measured their history in three eras, beginning with a glorious age that stretched from its foundation in the first century to its formative role in the definition of Nicene Christianity under Athanasius. The second era began with Chalcedon’s excommunication and exile of Dioscorus, which was followed by a “bloody protracted struggle” between his followers and their imperial rulers. The third era began with the fall of Alexandria to the Muslim invaders in the seventh century. The long Arab era is deemed a “miracle of survival” marked by adaptation and resilience in the face of non-Christian oppression.⁵²

Currently, the Coptic Church is the largest church in the Middle East or North Africa. In spite of its history of oppression by imperial Christians, the Copts deny embracing any heresy, even heresy understood according to Chalcedon. The Coptic Pope, Shenouda, declared to an audience at the University of Michigan in 1977, “The Coptic Church was misunderstood in the 5th century at the Council of Chalcedon. We are not monophysites. . . . The Coptic Church never believed in monophysitism.”⁵³ For the Copts, the issue was more about Egyptian humiliation than about religious definition. The story passed down through the generations is that, due to Dioscorus’s challenge to imperial power, “the Empress ordered that Dioscorus be slapped on the face and that some of her

⁵⁰ Cameron, “The Cost of Orthodoxy,” 354–59.

⁵¹ Cameron, “The Cost of Orthodoxy,” 360.

⁵² Ghada Botros, “Religious Identity as an Historical Narrative: Coptic Orthodox Immigrant Churches and the Representation of History,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 19.2 (2006): 174–79.

⁵³ Cited in Botros, “Religious Identity,” 186.

imperial guards plucked his beard hair to humiliate him. Described as an old man, two of Dioscorus’ teeth were dislodged when he was slapped. He is said to have collected the plucked hair and the fallen teeth and to have sent them to his people in Alexandria with a note that this was the price he paid to keep the faith.⁵⁴ The Copts see themselves as a “virtuous victim” that was able to build on its existing pristine theological legacy.⁵⁵ Such an identity, borne of humiliation and sorrow, yet faithfulness to the Lord, is the very shape of Coptic piety.

Outside the Empire

While Coptic Christians deepened their religious culture through the imperial challenge of Chalcedon, other churches developed their worship and theology apart from the Roman imperial machinery. The churches of Armenia, Ethiopia, and Nubia each provide important case studies. Each remained outside the Roman empire, as each opted for a type of Miaphysitism. For instance, under the influence of the “Nine Saints,” who came from either Syria or Egypt, the Täwahido Church of Ethiopia held to a strong form of the unity of Christ. *Täwahido* itself means “being made one,” and the church employed the unique terminology of “Christ God” or “God Christ.”⁵⁶

We will focus upon Armenia, since it was the first national church in Christian history and always remained outside the Roman Empire, while interacting with it. Armenia had minor yet real participation in a number of Roman councils. Moreover, they freely received the doctrinal decisions of the first three ecumenical councils. The Armenians continue to celebrate these councils in their church calendar.⁵⁷ As for the Council of Chalcedon, the Armenian Church felt, at first, neither the need to accept nor to reject its doctrinal claims.⁵⁸

Because of their co-existence alongside the Nestorian church of the East within the Persian Empire, the Armenians were respectful but drew

⁵⁴ Botros, “Religious Identity,” 188.

⁵⁵ Botros, “Religious Identity,” 192.

⁵⁶ Vince L. Bantu, *A Multitude of All Peoples: Engaging Ancient Christianity’s Global Identity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 101–3.

⁵⁷ Mesrob Ashjian, “The Acceptance of the Ecumenical Councils by the Armenian Church: With Special Reference to the Council of Chalcedon,” *Ecumenical Review* 22 (1970): 348–54.

⁵⁸ There were synodal rejections of Chalcedon later. Vigen Guroian, “Identity and Continuity: The Armenian Tradition,” in *Christian Thought: A Brief History*, ed. Adrian Hastings, Alistair Mason, and Hugh Pypers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 56.

closer to Alexandrian Christology. Early Armenian theologians emphasized the unity of Christ, even using language such as “mixing” to describe the union. But later theologians such as Moses of Khoren placed the “form of God” alongside the “form of a Servant,” while maintaining the Union.⁵⁹ In the early sixth century, the Catholicos Pabgen noted that Nestorians in the East felt “strengthened” by Chalcedon. Recoiling in response, he denied “the false teaching of Nestorius and of others like him in Chalcedon.”⁶⁰ Harkening back to Nicaea, the Catholicos anathematized various Antiochene theologians, beginning with Nestorius. However, he also anathematized Eutyches.

In the following centuries, various Armenian theologians noted the difficulties on both sides of Chalcedon, maintaining a studied distance from the council. In the twelfth century, Nerses the Gracious wrote to the Byzantine Emperor that he would allow the language of either Miaphysitism or Duophysitism, but one must neither confuse the natures nor divide them. This sentiment, it should be noted, is in line with Chalcedon. Writing in the late twentieth century, Mesrob Ashjian argued rapprochement may be possible, “if the problem is approached as a *theological*, rather than a *historical* one.”⁶¹ Joint declarations on Christology were even signed between the Armenian Catholicos and Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox representatives.⁶² The historical fact that Armenia’s culture of religious devotion developed outside the Roman Empire, and partially inside the Persian and Ottoman Empires, long continued to shape its informal reception of, yet formal distance from, the Council of Chalcedon.

From Theological Dissent to Ethnic Identity

First, we noticed the Coptic Church separated from the Chalcedonian churches for historical rather than theological reasons. Second, the Armenian Church was always formally separated from the Chalcedonian churches for historical more than theological reasons. Now, third, the Syrian Orthodox Church created an historically divergent religious culture for primarily doctrinal reasons. Fergus Millar, a highly respected social historian, argues the Coptic, Armenian, and Ethiopian experiences were different from the Syrian experience. The Syrian Church was, at first, culturally indistinct from the Chalcedonian churches and notably bilingual. “There was thus no basis for an actual Syrian, or Syriac, ‘nationalism,’”

⁵⁹ Ashjian, “Acceptance of the Ecumenical Councils,” 357–58.

⁶⁰ Ashjian, “Acceptance of the Ecumenical Councils,” 360.

⁶¹ Ashjian, “Acceptance of the Ecumenical Councils,” 362.

⁶² Guroian, “Identity and Continuity,” 57.

whether linguistic or territorial.⁶³ Both Greek and Syriac were accepted as theological languages in the Syriac areas, with Greek predominant. And Syrian Christians perceived themselves as Roman.

However, as Chalcedon was increasingly forced upon the inhabitants of the Syrian provinces through imperial sanction, the Syriac language took on greater prominence. One must be careful when consulting the literature, for often opponents were characterized according to the most extreme labels. For instance, the so-called “Nestorian” Christians of the Church of the East were never followers of Nestorius per se, nor did their theological formulae differ significantly from Chalcedon, except for its condemnation of Nestorius. The various names applied to the Miaphysite Church in the East, the Syrian Orthodox Church, were also pejorative. Millar finds seven such names ascribed to those who simply referred to themselves as “orthodox.”⁶⁴ It was through such debates that the so-called “Jacobites” came to be a separate church, situated over against both the Eastern Orthodox Church, which sanctioned Chalcedonian theology, and the Church of the East, which held a strongly Duophysite theology.

Millar demonstrates that between 485 and 536, as the empire enforced Chalcedonian theology through persecution, both Eastern Miaphysites and Eastern “Nestorians” began to adopt Syriac as their primary theological language. One very prominent Patriarch of Antioch, Severus, began in a wholly Greek culture, but his Miaphysite views sparked a round of excommunications from both the Chalcedonians and the Nestorians.⁶⁵ Severus’s Greek works, along with many others, were translated into Syriac. Syriac subsequently became the liturgical and theological language of the Syrian “orthodox.” In the case of these Syrian Miaphysites, an ethnic identity developed out of a religious piety suffering imperial recriminations.⁶⁶

During a Synod at Constantinople in 536, we first hear of the ethnic identity of being “Syrian,” through it being used as a slur. The ethnic insult came from the lips of the bishop of Rome, Agapetus. The Roman Pope asked the Emperor, Justinian, why he allowed a prominent Miaphysite to reside in Constantinople, deriding this “Syrian deceiver.” Soon, Byzantine citizens cried out, “If the Syrian does not depart from the city, it is ruined!”⁶⁷ It takes little wonder to understand how the Syrians, through a

⁶³ Fergus Millar, “The Evolution of the Syrian Orthodox Church in the Pre-Islamic Period: From Greek to Syriac?” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 21.1 (2013): 46.

⁶⁴ Millar, “Evolution of the Syrian Orthodox Church,” 51–55.

⁶⁵ Millar, “Evolution of the Syrian Orthodox Church,” 64–66.

⁶⁶ Millar, “Evolution of the Syrian Orthodox Church,” 58–71.

⁶⁷ Millar, “Evolution of the Syrian Orthodox Church,” 70.

literature of persecution, also developed a distinct religio-ethnic self-awareness with their own language and their own contra-Chalcedonian history.⁶⁸

“The Martyred Church”

Of course, this distinct Syriac Miaphysite culture found a parallel in the rise of a distinct Syriac Nestorian culture.⁶⁹ It will be remembered that the term “Nestorian” is often misapplied, not only to Nestorius himself, who subscribed to the use of *Theotokos* and whose followers were pleased with Chalcedon, but also with regard to the so-called “Nestorian Church.” Moreover, the Church of the East does not hold to what is known as Nestorianism, but simply refuses to join with the anathema against Nestorius at the third ecumenical council.⁷⁰ Theologically, we might compare the official creed of the Nestorian church, established at the Synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon in 497, with the language of Chalcedon. David Wilms-hurst argues the theological meanings are inconsequential in difference.

The question revolves around the ambiguity of the Syriac term *qnome*, which is normally translated with the equally ambiguous Greek term *hypostasis*. We know that Chalcedon held to the formula of two *physes*, one *hypostasis*, and one *prosopon*.⁷¹ Seleucia-Ctesiphon held to the language of two *kyane*, two *qnome*, and one *parsopa*. The Syriac *qnome* translates the Greek *hypostasis*. While both Chalcedon and Seleucia-Ctesiphon regarded the person as one and the natures as two, the middle terms of *hypostasis* and *qnome* are subject to different interpretations.⁷² The formula of Seleucia-Ctesiphon is similar to the language of Theodore of Mopsuestia, who spoke of two *hypostaseis* and one *prosopon*, as noted above. An ecumenical scholar, Sebastian Brock, argues the Syriac term *qnome* corresponds to the Greek *idiotes*, “particularity,” rather than to “person.”⁷³

We cannot go further into the history of the Church of the East, except to note their liturgy was translated not only into Syriac, but also Persian and Arabic, *inter alia*. Their missionaries established communities

⁶⁸ Millar, “Evolution of the Syrian Orthodox Church,” 76–78.

⁶⁹ Millar, “Evolution of the Syrian Orthodox Church,” 88.

⁷⁰ Muddying the waters even further, “there are three entirely different perceptions of Nestorius.” Sebastian Brock, “The Syriac Churches and Dialogue with the Catholic Church,” *Heythrop Journal* 45 (2004): 469.

⁷¹ The Greek formula is “... *ben duo physesin ... ben prosopon kai mian hypostasin syntrechousas*.” The Latin translation is “... *in duabus naturis ... in unam personam atque subsistentiam concurrente*.” Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1:86.

⁷² Wilms-hurst, *The Martyred Church*, 31, 86. Wilms-hurst’s personal agnosticism and sense of moral superiority toward his subjects makes for difficult reading.

⁷³ Brock, “The Syriac Churches,” 470.

along the Silk Road through Central Asia and India into China. While prospering under the Persians and surviving under Islamic domination, large numbers of Nestorian Christians, among many other eastern Christians, were massacred during the Turkish invasions, but most horrifically by the Mongol convert to Islam, Timur. Timur Leng, or Tamerlane, stacked the skulls from entire cities in pyramids and boasted of “washing the sword of Islam in the blood of infidels.”⁷⁴ Many of the Christians who survived were forcibly converted or slowly suffocated by the *dbimmi* system.

In the twentieth century, their descendants in the Syrian Orthodox Church and the Church of the East entered ecumenical conversations and began to break down old barriers. A 1984 Common Declaration between Rome and the Syrian Orthodox leader admitted their churches’ disagreements “arose only because of differences in terminology and culture,” for “[T]here remains no real basis for the sad divisions and schisms.”⁷⁵ A 1994 Common Declaration between Rome and the Church of the East leader admitted common meanings between their liturgical references to Mary as “Mother of Christ” and “Mother of God.”⁷⁶ The Syriac churches have begun to lift their old anathemas, such as those against Cyril and Severus, and church history books are being rewritten so as to remove the harshness.⁷⁷ Brock believes that “underlying the verbal conflicts there lies a common understanding of the nature of the Incarnation and what it has effected.”⁷⁸

Lessons

What lessons may we learn for today from this long, turbulent, and tragic history? I believe theologian Jean Coman of the Romanian Orthodox Church traces a way forward. He writes, “It is not by its structure that an Ecumenical Council is infallibly declared to be such but by the power of the Church in its entirety, *ex consensu ecclesiae*, with the continued assistance of the Holy Spirit.”⁷⁹ He argues the authority of a council can only

⁷⁴ Philip Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia—and How It Died* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), 114–19, 137–38.

⁷⁵ Brock, “The Syriac Churches,” 468.

⁷⁶ Brock, “The Syriac Churches,” 470.

⁷⁷ Brock, “The Syriac Churches,” 471.

⁷⁸ Brock, “The Syriac Churches,” 466.

⁷⁹ Jean Coman, “The Doctrinal Definition of the Council of Chalcedon and Its Reception in the Orthodox Church of the East,” *Ecumenical Review* 22 (1970): 363.

be known by its free reception into various churches as a matter of convincing consciences. It is as the Holy Spirit leads both those who speak *and* those who hear that we come to agreement regarding theological claims. While I will not apply “infallible” to any post-biblical council, Coman correctly receives the Definition of Chalcedon as “a masterpiece of intelligence and piety among all other dogmatic statements.”⁸⁰

He reminds us that even in the Chalcedonian churches, there were continual attempts to undermine the Definition of Chalcedon. These Roman challenges came from various emperors and were manifested in Monophysite and Monothelite synods held within the empire. Three subsequent ecumenical councils defended and clarified Chalcedon’s confession. Since then, the Chalcedonian confession has developed deep roots in both Eastern Orthodox and Western theology and piety.⁸¹ The confession of Chalcedon is increasingly being recognized by even non-Chalcedonian churches, because they are pressed in conscience to see it as their own faith but confessed in a different way. The former difficulty was that alien terminology was pressed upon subject peoples by the Romans. But now, that empire is gone, and the churches are speaking to one another again.⁸²

With this history and this theology, please allow me to make seven applications from the contextualization of Chalcedonian Christology to our contemporary historical context:

1. *Grace*: “Orthodoxy,” defined as “right glory,” must be understood as a divine grace not yet fully seen. As a grace, orthodoxy is never something humans may possess; we may only receive grace. As a grace, it is not something we create; nor can we control it. As glory, orthodoxy is something we experience only in part now. Orthodoxy is something we should pray for, teach toward, and receive with thanksgiving, knowing entire dogmatic perfection comes by grace from the future.
2. *Analogy*: Christianity, as both an eternal and a temporal phenomenon, participates by grace in eternal truth but always within the limits of human embodiment in history. If we use Chalcedon’s Christological teachings in an analogous way, we can say that the human aspect of our theology grounds us in history while the divine revelation for our theology provides us

⁸⁰ Coman, “Doctrinal Definition,” 366.

⁸¹ Coman, “Doctrinal Definition,” 371–74.

⁸² Coman, “Doctrinal Definition,” 382.

hope for perfection. Of course, as an analogy, we must remember our own abstractions may be lacking.

3. *Diversity*: The human, historical, contextualized aspect of our Chalcedonian analogy requires us to remember that ethnicity, geography, and language will always render distinct pieties that may sound odd or inappropriate to Christians who live outside particular churches. These oddities must form part of our ongoing discussions, for it is while respectfully listening in an orderly manner to one another as prophets, following the *lex sedentium* of 1 Cor 14, that the churches may be led by the Spirit to discern more clearly the light of God’s Word.
4. *Unity*: The eternal, divine aspect of Chalcedonian Christology requires us to recognize that, among those truly born again by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (if I may import Reformation-era soteriological concerns), there resides a common participation in the very life of the Triune God. Our unity is guaranteed only by the presence in each of us of the Spirit of Holiness. Our unity is substantiated only in the Word of God intended for each of us. Our unity is guided only to the glory of God alone.
5. *Imperfection*: The human, historical, contextualized aspect of our Chalcedonian analogy requires us to remember we have not yet arrived in the state of seeing the glory of God. We must wisely recognize that within us there remains a battle against the principalities and the powers, the demonic ideologies which invade both world and church. We must perceive evil not only in our communities, but also in our own hearts, and we must refuse to act toward or be compelled by others to act toward that evil in ungodly ways. Theological evil may be manifested in either unorthodox goals or in abusive means to reach orthodoxy.
6. *One King*: God may providentially allow apparent Christian triumph in imperial contexts, or any other context of power, to be tested by imperial dissolution. No human empire—whether based in Rome, Constantinople, Seleucid-Ctesiphon, Baghdad, Aachen, Frankfurt, Addis Ababa, London, or Washington DC—ought to be confused with the Kingdom of God. And no magistrate or cleric ought to confuse himself with the King of the Kingdom of God, or with any of that King’s sole prerogatives. Christ Jesus will rule alone, without and against our petty

personal quarrels, lofty theological abstractions, and political machinations. The universal church and the churches local have a *monarch*, “one ruler,” and He is not standing or sitting here in the flesh, yet.

7. *Cruciform*: The Lord Jesus Christ called his disciples to turn the world upside down by overturning the paradigms of tyranny which characterize the cultures of the nations. “You know that those regarded as rulers of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and their superiors exercise authority over them. But it shall not be this way among you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant” (Mark 10:42–43). He also said, “whoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34). The way of Christ’s people before his Second Coming is the way of the cross and humility, not the way of glory and domination. The Lord will triumph in the end—have faith. The question before us now is this: “Will we make the hard choices to align our personal lives and our ecclesiastical cultures with his cross-bearing way? Or will we repeat the horrific errors of the Council of Chalcedon even as we honor their impressive dogmatic formula?”