

## **Councils, Confessions, Creeds, and Catechisms**

The Council of Chalcedon – 451 A.D.

The purpose of the council:

To address the problem of Eutychian theology:

Eutychus was the head over 300 monks in a monastery outside of Constantinople, and was a strong adversary of Nestorius.

In opposition to Nestorianism, Eutyches taught that the two natures of Christ merged into one unique nature without alteration, absorption, nor confusion. He was then accused of the heresy of Docetism, that Jesus was true God, but that His humanity was a projection.

To settle problems arisen from the second council in Ephesus in 449.

Eutyches had been called on to explain his doctrine, but struggled to articulate his beliefs well. Thus he was looked upon with skepticism, and a decision had to be made concerning his status in the church.

The second issue to be settled was the result of Leo, the Bishop of Rome having sent a letter with his wishes to be expressed in how to handle matters with Eutyches in 449. Two versions of what happened have been preserved:

1<sup>st</sup>: According to the Roman Catholic church, Leo's representatives put forth the letter to be read at the opening of the council, but were ignored by the group, essentially snubbing the pope's delegation, and in essence, the pope himself.

2<sup>nd</sup>: According to the Eastern Orthodox church, the letter from Leo was to be read later as it was not vital to the early discussions to be heard.

In it are six sections:

- 1) Eutyches is denounced as young in his theology, though and "old man." He is regarded as quite ignorant.
- 2) A chide that Eutyches did not believe nor teach the amazing attributes of the incarnation of God by the virgin Mary. This he should have learned from a basic study of the Gospels.
- 3) Leo's summary statement on the incarnation of Christ.
- 4) Leo's development of the hypostatic union.
- 5) Leo attempts to prove the incarnation and admonishes Eutyches of not having studied to these conclusions too. However, two issues are worthy of our scrutiny:
  1. What was the extent of Christ's death and punishment for mankind?
  2. Was Leo recognizing Peter as the first in the papal line?
- 6) He scolds the council for its handling of Eutyches's doctrine and recommends a course for his restoration.

Therefore, the letter, "Leo's Tome" was read and approved as the prevailing sentiment of the council.

Dioscorus, the bishop of Alexandria, and pope of the Coptic Orthodox Church presided.