

The Council of Ephesus

Historical and Theological Overview

Agenda

- Councils as cast
- Events Leading Up to Ephesus
- Council of Ephesus
- The Aftermath

Councils as Cast

- Something is broken – you fix it
- Difficulties in convening a Council:
 - A) Transportation
 - B) Timing that works for various diocese
 - C) Deciding who will lead the Council
 - D) Involvement of the State (Calling the Council, exiling, etc.)

Before Ephesus

- Nicaea 325: Christ is fully divine
- Constantinople 381: Christ is fully human
- Constantinople 381: Declaring Constantinople second after Rome and above Alexandria
- Constantinople 381: Difficult time given to Gregory Nazianzus – for becoming bishop of Constantinople
- John Chrysostom excommunicated in a local council

Before Ephesus

- Nestorius reacts to Apollinarius
- Nestorius emphasizes the double consubstantiality by insisting on a two nature or two hypostasis christology based on Antiochian theologians like Theodore of Mopsuestia
- Nestorius rejects the title Theotokos preferring Anthropotokos and Christotokos
- Cyril and Nestorius exchange letters that end with the need to hold a council

Council of Ephesus

- Council convened by Emperor Theodosius
- Both Cyril and Nestorius were imprisoned—in that time, Cyril writes more about his theological position (exposition of the twelve anathemas).
- The Council begins before the arrival of the Antiochene party
- Nestorius is excommunicated
- The second letter of Cyril to Nestorius is taken as authoritative with twelve anathemas
- There is only one creed (Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed) which is not to change

The Aftermath

- Schism between Alexandria and Antioch
- The formula of reunion in 433 CE
- Acceptance of the use of one nature in the entire Church while allowing the Antiochian party to use two natures given that by that they mean substances rather than subjects or identities (sufficient parameters needed to make the language acceptable)
- Antiochians accepting the Council of Ephesus

Important Theological Concepts

- One Incarnate nature of God the Word
- Emphasis of the person doing/acting rather than natures doing/acting
- Christ is one from divinity and humanity as man is one from soul and body
- Unity of divinity and humanity is like exposing rod of iron to fire
- We commune of the life-giving body of Christ → Bodies are naturally mortal and not life-giving but because of the hypostatic union, Christ's body is life-giving
- Communication of properties

Important Theological Concepts

- If anyone confess not that the Word of God the Father hath been Personally united to Flesh and that He is One Christ with His own Flesh, the Same (that is) God alike and Man, be he anathema.
- If anyone sever the Persons of the One Christ after the Union, connecting them with only a connection of dignity or authority or sway, and not rather with a meeting unto Unity of Nature, be he anathema.
- If any one allot to two Persons or Hypostases, the words in the Gospel and Apostolic writings, said either of Christ by the saints or by Him of Himself, and ascribe some to a man conceived of by himself apart from the Word That is of God, others as God-befitting to the Word alone That is of God the Father, be he anathema.

Important Theological Concepts

- If anyone confess not that the Flesh of the Lord is Life-giving and that it is the own Flesh of the Word Himself That is from God the Father, but say that it belongs to another than He, connected with Him by dignity or as possessed of Divine Indwelling only and not rather that it is Life-giving (as we said) because it hath been made the own Flesh of the Word Who is mighty to quicken all things, be he anathema.
- If anyone confess not that the Word of God suffered in the Flesh and hath been crucified in the Flesh and tasted death in the Flesh and hath been made First-born of the Dead, inasmuch as He is both Life and Life-giving as God, be he anathema.

Alexandrian vs. Antiochian Interpretations of 433 CE

- Alexandrians:

A) The Church is now one – unity is the most important thing for the Church

B) Antiochian language is peculiar but will allow it as a concession

C) Antiochians accepted the Council of Ephesus

- Antiochians:

A) The Church is now one – and we did not need to change our language

B) Cyril changed his mind because he allowed our language and saw the fluidity in theological expression

C) Alexandrians accept the formula of reunion and see it as binding because they signed it

To Be Continued

- The Council of Chalcedon and the Persisting Schism