THE COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE II AS A MODEL RECONCILIATION COUNCIL

G. L. C. FRANK

University of South Africa, Pretoria

THE SECOND Council of Constantinople in 553 has tended to be downplayed and, in my opinion, underrated by both secular and church historians. J. B. Bury, the well-known historian of the later Roman Empire, for example, described the significance of Constantinople II not in terms of the doctrinal decisions of the Council, which he considered to be trivial, but in terms of what he interpreted as the adoption by the Church of theological tenets formulated by the Emperor Justinian, and thus as "the most characteristic manifestation of Justinianean Caesaropapism."[1] In other words, for Bury the historical significance of this council was to be found in the area of church-state relations. While theologians and church historians have often ascribed a more specifically theological significance to Constantinople II, they have also frequently interpreted it as representing in one way or another a movement away from Chalcedonian orthodoxy. In the nineteenth century, Philip Schaff, for example, interpreted the Council as a "leaning toward Monophysitism," while Adolph Harnack described it as the means whereby the Christian East revenged itself dogmatically on the Christian West for the "blow" given it at the Council of Chalcedon.[2]

This less than positive evaluation of Constantinople II has continued to dominate much of twentieth-century church historiography. In his monograph on the Monophysites, W. A. Wigram, for example, asserted that Constantinople II "provides a landmark to show how far the policy

[1] J. B. Bury, *A History of the Later Roman Empire from Arcadius to Irene (395 A.D. to 800 A.D)* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1966) 2.5. A. H. M. Jones also described the Council in similar terms, arguing that after the Council of Chalcedon, decisions concerning doctrinal questions increasingly became a matter of imperial edict, and that Justinian called the Council of 553 in order to ratify his own condemnation of the Three Chapters; see *The Later Roman Empire 284–602* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973) 2.937. Against this charge of Caesaropapism as the determining and most significant aspect of the Fifth Council, see Asterios Gerostergios, *Justinian the Great: Emperor and Saint* (Belmont, Mass.: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1982) 127–29.

[2] P. Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1919) 2.73; A. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. E. B. Speirs and James Millar (London/Edinburgh/Oxford: Williams & Norgate, 1898) 4.250–51.

of concession to the Monophysites had been carried."[3] Kurt Aland has claimed that the Council "interpreted the decision of Chalcedon in such a way that it closely resembled the position of the Monophysites. Not until the Sixth Ecumenical Council of 680–81, again in Constantinople, were statements adopted which led back to the intention of Chalcedon."[4] The Lutheran theologian Paul Tillich interpreted the Council of 553 and the Eastern Christian Christological thought which gave rise to it as an indication that the importance of the Council of Chalcedon and its decisions were never really accepted in the East, but were "transformed" and "swallowed up in the eastern Christian sacramental way of thinking and acting."[5]

Roman Catholic theologians and historians, who are committed to accepting Constantinople II as the Fifth Ecumenical Council, have at times also downplayed its theological significance and value.[6] This may be due in part to the humiliation suffered by Pope Vigilius during the events surrounding the Council, and in part to the continuing unease which many Western theologians have had with Eastern Christology. It seems to me that it was this discomfort at having to reckon with Constantinople II as an authentic Ecumenical Council which was partly responsible for the development in Roman Catholic circles earlier in this century of the theory of "neo-Chalcedonianism," an interpretation which

[3] *The Separation of the Monophysites,* (London: Faith, 1923) 131. With regard to Constantinople II, Wigram expresses his gratitude that as an Anglican he accepts the statement of Article XXI of the Thirty-Nine Articles that "General Councils may err, and sometimes have erred." (ibid. 130).

[4] *A History of Christianity,* trans. James Schaaf (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 1.203.

[5] *A History of Christian Thought,* ed. Carl E. Braaten (London: SCM, 1968) 86–90. For other similar negative evaluations of Constantinople II, see e.g., P. E. More, *Christ the Word* (New York: Greenwood, 1922) 244: "As a consequence [of accepting the *enhypostasis* concept] the fifth council virtually repeated the error which had been condemned for heresy in Apollinarius and Eutyches." J. F. Bethune-Baker, a reconstructionist and proponent of Nestorius, describes the fifth council as "the most obscurantist of General Councils" (*Nestorius and His Teaching* [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1908] 58).

[6] Adrian Fortescue, e.g., states that like the first Council of Constantinople, the second Council of Constantinople was irregular and is ecumenical "only by reason of later acceptance" (*The Lesser Eastern Churches* [London: Catholic Truth Society, 1913] 206 n.3). One can easily discern the discomfort felt by the French Roman Catholic historian J. Tixeront in his discussion of the Fifth Council. After asserting that the Emperor, the Council, and the Pope were all discredited to a certain degree by the Three Chapters affair—a major reason for the calling of the Council—he concedes, "This does not mean that, in themselves, the decisions that were finally taken were not correct and tenable." Tixeront, however, understood the Fifth Council as weakening the authority of Chalcedon and as promoting a "peculiar fusion" between Chalcedon and Cyrillian theology at the expense of Antiochene theology (*History of Dogmas,* trans. H. C. B. [Westminister, Md: Christian Classics, 1984] 3.144).

has become widespread in historical-theological circles. According to this theory, the Fifth Ecumenical Council represents to a lesser or greater degree an abandonment of the original meaning of Chalcedon and a twisting of its teaching in a specifically Cyrillian, although not necessarily heretical, direction. The implication of this reading of Constantinople II is that a more strictly Dyophysite Antiochene position was and is the one faithful to the intention of Chalcedon and that Constantinople II imposed on Chalcedon a Cyrillian interpretation not inherent in it. Neo-Chalcedonianism has provided the academic world with a more carefully thought-out theory as to how and why Constantinople II represents a theological imbalance, without being necessarily heretical.[7]

The above-mentioned interpretations of Constantinople II, it seems to me, either fail to recognize fully the theological-ecclesial significance of the Council or reflect a certain theological bias against its Christological doctrine.[8] To a certain degree this is to be expected, since one's own

[7] For discussions of "neo-Chalcedonian" theology, a term coined by J. Lebon in his 1909 Louvain dissertation, *Le monophysisme sévérien*, see especially Charles Moeller, "Le chalcédonisme et le néo-chalcédonisme en Orient de 451 à la fin du VIe siècle," *Das Konzil von Chalkedon I* (Würzburg: Echter, 1951) 638–720; J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th rev. ed. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1977) 342–43; John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1975) 29–31; and Patrick T. P. Gary, *The Defense of Chalcedon in the East (451–553)* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979) 1–6. Both Meyendorff and Gray reject the "neo-Chalcedonian" theory, if this is understood as implying that Chalcedon was not Cyrillian or that neo-Chalcedonianism was not truly Chalcedonian.

[8] The possibility of a fair and sympathetic reading of Constantinople II is becoming less and less likely in many Western theological circles. Western Christian thought by and large, has never been sympathetic toward the Cyrillian Christology proclaimed by Constantinople II, despite a formal adherence by at least Roman Catholics to Constantinople II as a genuinely ecumenical council. Protestant theologians have been overtly negative at times toward the Fifth Council; see, e.g., Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought* 84–86. At other times, they have simply chosen to ignore the significance of Cyrillian Christology before, during, and after the Council of Chalcedon and its articulation at the Council of Constantinople. J. F. Bethune-Baker, for example, has given expression to a popular Western sentiment that Pope Leo's Tome and the Council of Chalcedon helped to close (sic) the Christological controversy (*An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine to the Time of the Council of Chalcedon* [London: Methuen, 1942]) 288. Orthodox Lutheran thinking may be an exception to this Western tendency inasmuch as it has represented a revival of Cyrillian Christology in the West. See, e.g., Martin Chemnitz, *Two Natures in Christ*, trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia, 1970) and T. G. A. Hardt, *Venerabilis et Adorabilis Eucharistia. En Studie i den Lutherska Nattvardslaran under 1500 Talet* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1971). The contemporary theological scene has further exacerbated the negative reading of Cyrillian theology and of Constantinople II by calling into question any Christology "from above," which is interpreted as not taking seriously Jesus' humanity. See, e.g., Gerald O'Collins, *What Are They Saying about Jesus* (New York: Paulist, 1977).

theological, philosophical, social and other convictions do, of course, influence one's reading and interpretation of history. The problem in this instance, however, is that the various underlying presuppositions and extraneous convictions of historians have unfortunately often hindered them from understanding the significance of Constantinople II in social and ecclesial terms and from seeing it as a genuinely ecumenical attempt at reconciliation among separated Christians. If the tendency to interpret the Council as either an unwarranted concession to an heretical Monophysitism or as a too particularist reading of Chalcedonian dogma could be overcome, then, I believe, one might begin to understand the real significance of Constantinople II in terms of themes such as reconciliation, conciliarity, and the acceptance of the limitations of theological language.[9] If one were to read the Council in this light, Constantinople II could be seen as representing one of the high points in the history of the early Church. Popes, patriarchs, bishops, emperors, empresses, monks, ecclesiastical rivalries, ethnic differences, state policies, and political machinations were, of course, part and parcel of the history of the Council. What the Council Fathers finally defined in dogmatic terms, however, reflects one of the saner and more theologically mature moments in the history of the Christian community. Rather than being either a political sellout or a theological distortion, I would suggest that Constantinople II was, perhaps more than any other conciliar gathering, a genuine and honest attempt to find a common mind among separated and disputing Christians without sacrificing doctrinal convictions.

It is not within the scope of this article to rehearse the entire history of the development of Christological thought from the fourth to the sixth centuries, but it is crucial for an understanding of the Council of 553 that one understands its connection with the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria as his Christology found expression at the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon. Consequently, we cannot bypass entirely the controversy between St. Cyril and Nestorius of Constantinople. As is well known, during the twentieth century there has been a revival of historical interest in Nestorius and there have been various attempts by scholars to rehabilitate the onetime archfoe of orthodox Christology.[10] However one may evaluate the ability or the inability of Nestorius' adversaries to

[9] It was Fr. John Meyendorff who introduced me to the significance of Constantinople II in this regard. See his recent work, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions: The Church 450–680 A.D.* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1989) 235–37.

[10] For discussions, see, e.g., J. F. Bethune-Baker, *Nestorius and His Teaching*; Friedrich Loofs, *Nestorius and His Place in the History of Christian Doctrine* (1914; reprint, New York: Lenox Hill, 1975); Milton V. Anastos, "Nestorius was Orthodox," *Studies in Byzantine Intellectual History* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1979) 119–40.

represent accurately his views, I would argue that even in the mature expression of his theology Nestorius was unable to present an adequate Christological vision which would avoid the impression that the Word of God had taken on or had indwelt a human being with his own human center of existence. Nestorius' "prosopic union" failed to answer very easily the question of who, rather than what, was the subject of the experiences of Jesus of Nazareth.[11] It was undoubtedly because Cyril of Alexandria was able to give an unambiguous answer to this question that his teaching had such widespread appeal and power. Cyrillian Christology reflected that deep soteriological concern with regard to the question of *who* can save humanity, a concern which was found in the earlier patristic tradition and which was expressed so forcefully in the teaching of one of Cyril's predecessors, Athanasius. The answer given in this tradition was that only God can save humanity. Consequently, from the viewpoint of Cyril and his followers, the Christological debate had to do with the very possibility of salvation itself and not just with intellectual speculations about "nature" and "persons".[12]

[11] The real culprit in the Nestorian controversy was Theodore of Mopsuestia. He was the theological brains behind "Nestorian" theology, while his student Nestorius seems only to have faithfully passed on the teaching of his master. The importance of Theodore can be seen, e.g., in the "Nestorian" Persian Council of Seleucia (585), which canonized him and declared that "it is forbidden to anyone, in secret or in public to criticize the Teacher of the Church [i.e., Theodore], to reject his holy writing and to adopt other commentaries of scripture. . . . " (John Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity* 288). Theodore taught an indwelling of the divine Logos in Jesus according to the "good pleasure" of God in such a way that there was a single prosopon of union. The ambiguity of this language was worsened by Theodore's willingness to speak in personal terms (e.g., "he," "him," "the one") about the humanity brought into this prosopic union. See, e.g., his *On the Incarnation* 7 and 8. Here one sees the weakness of the Antiochene tradition—its inability to articulate Christological doctrine in such a way as to affirm clearly the unity of subject in Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary. Nestorius, likewise, had this problem. Even in his *The Bazaar of Heracleides*, a work representing the mature Nestorius in which his views were more carefully nuanced after the controversy with Cyril, one still finds this basic Antiochene–Mopsuestian problem. E.g., in his defence of the "prosopon by union" idea Nestorius' language still betrayed his inability to avoid the notion that the Incarnation consisted of a union between the Logos and "a man," rather than between the Logos and "man," "humanity," or "human nature." Nestorius still described the Incarnation as God and man taking the prosopon of one another. Even when he asserted that there was only one prosopon of the two natures, he failed to make clear exactly *who* this prosopon was and whether it was merely a single mask, a single outward expression, of two subjects. In other words, if Nestorius was not really a "Nestorian," teaching two Sons, two Christs, and two persons, nonetheless he was still unable to provide a theological framework for unambiguously affirming that the eternal Logos of God was the single subject and centre of being in Jesus of Nazareth—that belief which was central to Cyrillian Christology. See, e.g., his *The Bazaar of Heracleides*, trans. G. R. Driver and Leonard Hodgson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925) 217–20.

[12] For discussions of this, see Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* 17–19;

The affirmation of the Council of Ephesus in 431 that Mary was rightly designated by the term *theotokos* was a victory for Cyrillian Christology, but the implications of this were not yet fully digested by the entire Church. The Eutychian controversy threw into relief the fact that Ephesus had not answered all the questions and that the various Christological schools had not yet reached a common mind. The Council of Chalcedon was eventually called to resolve the Christological question, but, while it made a significant contribution in this regard in 451, it likewise was not able to deal adequately with all the questions. It unfortunately also succeeded in alienating large sections of the Church which were committed to Cyrillian Christology. Consequently, one's understanding of the Council of Chalcedon and its relationship to this Cyrillian Christology is of crucial importance for one's interpretation of Constantinople II.

Without a doubt, Chalcedon represented an important attempt on the part of the episcopate to find a Christological language which was balanced, inclusive, and catholic. Certainly the bishops succeeded in this to a remarkable degree. Chalcedon's great strength, and nonetheless the very cause of schism, was the linguistic and theological distinction it made between *physis* as "nature" and *hypostasis* as the personal subject of nature. Such a distinction had neither been clearly made nor digested by either the school of Antioch or of Alexandria. This distinction was Chalcedon's original and essential contribution to Christology.[13] It was precisely due to this, however, that the difficulty arose for many followers of Cyril. The holy father of Alexandria, the standard of orthodoxy in much of the East, had spoken of *mia physis theou logou sesarkōmenē* ("one nature incarnate of God the Word"), as well as of *mia hypostasis*. Thus, Cyril often used "nature" and "hypostasis" synonymously: both terms were used to stress the unity of subject between the preexistent Logos and the incarnate Logos. In using "one nature incarnate," however, Cyril did not deny the full and complete humanity of the incarnate Logos. One sees this, for example, in his first letter to Bishop Succensus in which he defended his preference for the "one nature incarnate" formula while at the same time clearly stating that in the Incarnation "we see that the two natures have met without merger (*asygchytōs*) and without alteration (*atreptōs*) in unbreakable mutual union."[14] Here one finds

Georges Florovsky, *The Byzantine Fathers of the Fifth Century*, vol. 8 of *The Collected Works* (Vaduz: Büchervertriebsanstalt, 1987) 278–86.

[13] Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* 24.

[14] For both the Greek text and an English translation, see Lionel R. Wickan, ed. and trans., *Cyril of Alexandria: Select Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983) 74–75; see also Cyril's letter to John of Antioch in which he affirms that the difference of the natures is not ignored. T. Herbert Bindley, *The Oecumenical Documents of the Faith* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1900) 141–45, 220–23. For discussions of Cyril's language, see Florovsky, *The*

Cyril using "nature" with a meaning different from "hypostasis." The Council of Chalcedon, then, in speaking of *one* hypostasis and prosopon and of *two* natures in Christ had not changed Cyril's Christological thought, but had clarified his language in order to make certain that the Apollinarian–Eutychian tendency could not creep in under the ambiguity of Cyrillian terminology.

Despite the various claims that Chalcedon represented the triumph of a Western Christology over that of the East, it is clear that Leo's famous Tome was accepted by the Eastern bishops because they were convinced that it did not conflict with Cyril's doctrine. The debates at the Council during the third session resulted in an inquiry into Leo's orthodoxy, judged on Cyrillian presuppositions. In the fourth session, the bishops, nearly one after another, declared that Leo's Tome was in accord with the faith of Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Cyril. Maximus of Antioch, for example, is recorded as saying: "The epistle of the holy Leo, Archbishop of Imperial Rome, agrees with the decisions of the 318 holy fathers at Nicaea and with the 150 at Constantinople which is New Rome and with the faith expounded by the most holy Bishop Cyril at Ephesus, and I subscribe to it." The bishops of Illyricum and Palestine accepted St. Leo's Tome only after they were convinced that it was actually not as contradictory as it first seemed and that it was in accord with the teaching of Cyril. Much is often made of the cry which greeted the reading of Leo's Tome, "St. Peter has spoken through Leo"; but it is often ignored or forgotten that the fathers also went on to say: "Cyril taught thus. Eternal be the memory of Cyril. Leo and Cyril taught the same thing. This is the true faith." At the fifth session, before the reading of the *horos*, or definition, the Council Fathers once again mentioned both Leo and Cyril by name, claiming that their letters were written for the establishment of the true faith.[15] At Chalcedon, then, the episcopate accepted the new linguistic distinction between *physis* and *hypostasis*— a correction of Cyril's language—because they were convinced that it did

Byzantine Fathers of the Fifth Century 286–88; P. E. More, *Christ the Word* 227–28; J. S. Romanides, "St. Cyril's 'One physis or hypostasis of God the Logos Incarnate' and Chalcedon," in *Does Chalcedon Divide or Unite? Towards Convergence in Orthodox Christology*, ed. P. Gregorios et al. (Geneva: WCC, 1981) 50–70; Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* 18–20; Bindley, *Oecumenical Documents* 127–28.

[15]*ACO (Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum)*, ed. E. Schwartz (Berlin, 1927–) 2.1.2.94–96; for the statements of Maximus, see 94, and for those of the bishops from Illyricum and Palestine, see 102–103; for the response to the Tome of Leo, see 81; for the Definition of Chalcedon and the preliminary affirmation, see 127–30. Cf. also Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity* 172–78; *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* 26–28; Gray, *The Defense of Chalcedon in the East* 5–7; the *Encyclical Epistle of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church to the Faithful Everywhere, Being a Reply to the Epistle of Pius IX to the Easterners* (1848) 22.

not represent a departure from Cyril's doctrine. By repeated statements of loyalty to Cyril and by allowing his epistles to stand together with the Tome of Leo, the Council Fathers witnessed to their belief that both Cyril and Leo had taught the same faith. They did not regard the Chalcedonian Definition, then, as replacing either Cyril's letters or Leo's Tome, but as a conciliar attempt to express the Church's mind in such a way as to be loyal to both Cyril and Leo.[16]

That Leo and Cyril were compatible was not only an Eastern interpretation. Something largely ignored by historians is that Leo himself accepted this (despite the fact that he and Cyril used different theological language) and that he urged the acceptance of *either* his own Tome *or* Cyril's (second) letter to Nestorius accepted by the Council of Ephesus.[17] What is significant about this is that Cyril's letter to Nestorius, while not using the controversial "one nature incarnate" formula, did, nonetheless, forcefully assert the hypostatic union (*kath' hypostasin*) of natures in Christ in such a way as to affirm that there is one Christ and one Son "out of both" (*ex amphoin*) natures.[18] At Chalcedon, Patriarch Dioscorus, representing the strict Cyrillians, expressed his willingness to accept the Council's definition if this Cyrillian "*out* of two natures" (*ek duo physeōn*) formula were included. It was the language of "*in* two natures" (*en duo physesin*) inspired by Leo's Tome, however, which was finally included in the Definition of Chalcedon. Had the language of Cyril somehow been used, the so-called Monophysite schism might have been avoided.[19] The irony and the tragedy is that while the Council did not include Cyril's formula, Pope Leo himself understood Cyril's letter with its "out of" two natures language as being able to serve as a criterion of orthodoxy. For example, in a letter written in 450 to Ravennius, Bishop of Arles, Leo urged that "through your diligence our letter, which we have issued in the East in defence of the Faith, or else that of Cyril of blessed memory, which agrees throughout with our views (*quae nostris sensibus tota concordat*), may become known to the brethren."[20]

As is well known, the strict Cyrillians rejected the Council of Chalcedon as Nestorianizing and as inadequately expressing the unity of subject in

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[16] Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity* 177.

[17] See, e.g., Pope Leo's epistles 67, 69, 70, in *PL* (*Patrologiae Latinae cursus completus*, ed., J. P. Migne, Paris: 1844–66) 54.886–87, 891, 895. For an English translation, see Philip Schaff and Henry Ware. *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2d series (reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 11:62–64.

[18] See Bindley, *Oecumenical Documents* 95–99.

[19] *ACO* 2.1.2.125; *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* 14.261; Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity* 175–76. Leo's Tome, e.g., had referred to a "*unitatem personae in utraque natura*" (Bindley, *Oecumenical Documents* 171).

[20] Epistle 67 in *PL* 54.886–887 and *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* 12.62.

Christ, especially since the Council had also rehabilitated Theodoret of Cyrus and Ibas of Edessa who had criticised Cyril. The problem with Chalcedon was that its language was in fact not without a certain ambiguity and did leave the door ajar for a Nestorianizing tendency.[21] The problem with the strict Cyrillians was that they unfortunately adhered to Cyril's language in a "fundamentalist" way and were not able to accept that a difference of language need not imply a difference in doctrine. This fundamentalism was exacerbated by the kind of defence of Chalcedon made in the East during the period after the Council. Many defenders of Chalcedon interpreted its decisions in a strict Antiochene Dyophysite way and fought against some essential components in Cyril's Christology, such as the famous Theopascite teaching: "One of the Holy Trinity suffered in the flesh." The teaching of this strict Dyophysite pro-Chalcedonian party provided the strict Cyrillians with their main arguments for rejecting Chalcedon as a Nestorian council and as a disavowal of their holy father Cyril.[22]

There was, however, also a third party—those who argued for the inner cohesiveness of Cyril's thought and the Council's intention. These Cyrillian Chalcedonians represented the majority of bishops at Chalcedon. After the Council, they struggled against both the strict Cyrillians and the strict Dyophysites—neither of whom could accept the compatibility

[21] As Georges Florovsky has pointed out, the major problem with the Tome was that Leo did not define precisely and directly what he meant by "person." Did the Latin *persona* correspond to Cyril's *hypostasis* or *physis* or to Nestorius' *prosopon tēs henōseōs*? Moreover, his use of the language of "forms," which he took from the Tertullian tradition was even more unclear, especially when brought into an essentially Eastern theological dispute (*The Byzantine Fathers of the Fifth Century* 293–95). John Meyendorff has noted that Chalcedon did not say that the hypostasis of the union was the pre-existent hypostasis of the Logos. In order to acquire a fully orthodox sense, the Definition of Chalcedon had to be read in a Cyrillian context, and this was the way the majority of bishops at the Council read it (*Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* 44). See also Peter Charanis, *Church and State in the Lower Roman Empire*, 2d ed. (Thessalonika: Kentron Byzantinon Ereunon, 1974) 46; Bindley, *Oecumenical Documents* 164–65.

[22] John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology, Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (London/Oxford: Mowbrays, 1974) 33–34. The strict Dyophysites of this period, like their predecessors Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopusuestia, were reluctant or unable to admit a real unity of subject in Christ. They seem to have interpreted the "one hypostasis" language of Chalcedon as being synonymous with "one prosopon," thus weakening it, inasmuch as "prosopon" was not only a weak term for "person," but also could mean "mask," "impersonation," or "role." This was a return to the Nestorian "prosopon of unity" concept. Consequently, these Antiochene defenders of Chalcedon had great difficulty in dealing with the question of *who* suffered on the cross. They preferred to speak about *what* suffered on the cross, e.g., the humanity, human nature, or flesh of Christ. See Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity* 187–89; *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* 31–37; Gray, *The Defense of Chalcedon in the East* 80–89.

of St. Cyril and the Council of Chalcedon. Finally in 553 at the Council of Constantinople, however, it was this Cyrillian Chalcedonianism which prevailed.[23] The bishops at Constantinople repeatedly declared their loyalty to the Council of Chalcedon (canons 5, 6, 11, and 14). Like the Chalcedonian Fathers, they affirmed that Jesus Christ is only one hypostasis (*unam subsistentiam*; *mian hypostasin*) and one person (*unam personam*; *hen prosōpon*) (canon 5), and that the union in Christ (which is described as a "synthetic" and hypostatic one—*secundum compositionem siue secundum subsistentiam*; *henōsin kata synthesin kai kath' hypostasin*) took place in such a way that the divine and human natures are neither confused (*non solumn inconfusa*; *asygchyta*) nor separated (*sed nec divisionem suscipit*; *all'oude diairesin epidechetai*) (canon 4).

While reaffirming their adherence to Chalcedon, the Council Fathers at Constantinople also stated more clearly what Christological tendencies were outside the boundaries of catholic orthodoxy. On the one hand, adherents of the thinking of Apollinarius and Eutyches were condemned (canons 4 and 11), together with anyone who taught a confusion of the natures (canon 8). On the other hand, not only was Nestorius again censured, but the Council now condemned the person of Theodore of Mopsuestia, the writings of Theodoret of Cyrus which were directed against the 431 Council of Ephesus and Cyril, and the letter of Ibas of Edessa to Maris the Persian (canons 11, 12, 13 and 14). (Here the Council confirmed the personal judgment of the Emperor Justinian with regard to the so-called "Three Chapters").

By both reaffirming their commitment to the central tenets of Chalcedon and by now specifically condemning those theologians and/or writings which had a certain credibility within some Chalcedonian circles but which could be interpreted as representing a Nestorianizing tendency under the cover of Chalcedon, the Council Fathers removed an ambiguity in the theological tradition. In doing this, they were confronting genuine doctrinal differences which had continued to exist in the Church and they were now judging certain theological ideas and tendencies to be incompatible with catholic dogma. This represented, in a sense, a further narrowing of the parameters of orthodox theological reflection. Nonetheless, the Council Fathers at Constantinople were simultaneously struggling to open up the dogmatic *formulation* of the Church as it had been expressed at Chalcedon, in order to unify people who genuinely agreed in *theological content* but who used different language in speaking about the Christological mystery.

The main tenets of St. Cyril's theology were now reaffirmed as being

[23] For the canons of the Council, see ACO 4.1.215–20 (the Latin text) and 240–44 (the Greek text).

the faith of the Church and as having an inner cohesiveness with the teaching of Chalcedon. As I have argued, the Fathers at Chalcedon had already acknowledged this; at Constantinople it was now forcefully reasserted. Those who accepted this cohesiveness could now be united if they were willing to accept a certain plurality of theological language around a commonly held dogmatic core.

Canons 4 and 5 of the Council of Constantinople made clear that in the Incarnation there was no union of two hypostases or persons which only out of a sense of dignity, honor, or worship could be called "one person" of Jesus Christ. Rather, the hypostasis or person of Jesus Christ is none other than that of the eternal Word of God, who in the Incarnation united to himself human *nature* (flesh animated by a reasonable and living soul), and not a human hypostasis or person. This idea found clear expression in the Council's confirmation of the Theopascite formulation, "our Lord Jesus Christ crucified in the flesh is true God, the Lord of Glory and one of the Holy Trinity" (*dominum nostrum Iesum Christum qui crucifixus est carne, deum esse verum et dominum gloriae et unum de sancta Trinitate; ton estaurōmenon sarki kyrion hēmōn Iēsoun Christon Theon einai alēthinon kai kyrion tēs doxēs kai hena tēs hagias triados*) (canon 10). In asserting this, the Council Fathers removed an ambiguity in the Chalcedonian Definition, which had not clearly identified the hypostasis of the incarnate Lord as the hypostasis of the preexistent and eternal Word of God. The Council of Constantinople now made this identification and declared it to be the teaching of the Catholic Church.   ·

At the same time, it also reopened the question of the language to be used in describing the mystery of Christ. In canon 7, the Council Fathers asserted that the expression inspired by Leo's Tome and used at Chalcedon, "in two natures" (*in duabus naturis; en duo physesin*), was not to be understood as implying either a separation of the natures or the existence in Christ of two persons. While the difference between the natures was not destroyed in the Incarnation, one could recognise this difference only in a "theoretical manner" (*non intellectu tantummodo; tē theōrią monē*). Here, then, the Fathers affirmed the legitimacy of the terminology adopted at Chalcedon but rejected what they regarded as a wrong interpretation of it—a Nestorianizing strict Dyophysitism.

Similarly, canon 8 allowed for those characteristically Cyrillian phrases, "out of two natures" (*ex duabus naturis; ek duo physeōn*) and "one nature incarnate of God the Word" (*unam naturam dei verbi incarnatum; mia physis tou theou logou sesarkōmenē*), so long as these were understood "as the holy Fathers taught" and not as implying either a confusion of the natures or as if each nature did not remain what it

was before the Incarnation. Thus, an heretical Monophysitism was not allowed to hide under the cover of Cyril's phraseology.

In these canons of the Council of Constantinople, then, the episcopate made several important decisions. First, the correctness of the Cyrillian Christological tradition was reaffirmed, while an heretical tendency which had and could be associated with it was rejected. Second, the Leonine-Chalcedonian Christological terminology was also reaffirmed, while an heretical tendency which had and could be associated with it was also rejected. Third, the inner cohesiveness between the teaching of Cyril and that of the Council of Chalcedon was strongly asserted. Fourth, various and different Christological expressions were allowed, so long as these were understood in an orthodox manner, that is, in accordance with "Chalcedonian Cyrillianism" or "Cyrillian Chalcedonianism." Constantinople II was not merely an attempt at a political compromise with those churches which had not accepted the decisions of Chalcedon, the so-called Monophysite churches; but it was a serious theological attempt to heal the schism on the basis of the common Cyrillian tradition which had been accepted at Ephesus and at Chalcedon. In doing this, however, it clarified the meaning of the Chalcedonian Definition just as Chalcedon had clarified Cyril's language, and it allowed for the legitimacy of the old Cyrillian theological formulations so long as the one faith was upheld. The negative assertions of the Council clarified the boundaries of theological thought while the Fathers struggled to open up the dogmatic formulation of the Church as defined at Chalcedon.

As an example from the early Church of an attempted ecclesiastical reconciliation, the Fifth Ecumenical Council provides us with a significant model for twentieth-century ecumenical endeavors. Constantinople II teaches us first of all that however badly Christians may want reconciliation and church unity, they cannot sidestep doctrinal issues. Many sixth-century Christians, especially politicians, desperately wanted reconciliation between the conflicting parties and engaged in various attempts to achieve this. Finally, however, all parties had to face and deal squarely with the hard rock of what seemed to be a real doctrinal divide. The theological questions could not then, and cannot today, be sidestepped by either political maneuvering or by naive assertions that doctrinal convictions were not, or are not, relevant, significant, or meaningful. Real ecumenism must take seriously the conflict in theological thinking and speaking which does in fact separate Christians from each other. It must also desire and strive to arrive at a solution which will stand in continuity with the received apostolic and catholic tradition. By its very nature ecumenism must be concerned with preserving Christian orthodoxy and passing it on.

Second, the Fifth Ecumenical Council represents an orthodoxy which is inclusive and embracing, rather than exclusivistic. Throughout the history of the Church various kinds of "orthodoxy" have arisen and have degenerated into sectarianism, in part at least because of the unconscious desire on the part of their proponents to exclude and cut off as many people as possible. The orthodoxy of Constantinople II was the exact opposite. It struggled to give the conflicting parties as much theological space as possible without compromising or sacrificing the truth. In terms of "orthopraxis," the Byzantines, like Christians of other times and places, often failed to incarnate the truth in their church life. This Council, however, represents one of their greatest achievements—their willingness to reconsider theological formulation so as to extend the boundaries of fellowship and Eucharistic communion.

The third significant feature of Constantinople II is that it recognized the limitations of language in doctrinal formulations and urged that different expressions need not be interpreted in a mutually exclusive way. Some language, such as that of the strict Antiochene tradition, it acknowledged, was not "adequate" to the truth and so had to be rejected. Even when language was "adequate," however, it still had a limited value. Chalcedon's formulation was necessary to combat Eutychianism, while Cyril's language was important to repudiate the Mopsuestian–Nestorian tendency. Each formulation was meaningful and orthodox within its specific context, but neither had the capability of serving as *the* ecumenical expression of the Church's faith within the wider context if it was isolated from the other. In this sense, they complemented each other and belonged together.

The Council of 553, then, represents a genuine terminological flexibility in catholic thinking and an acceptance of the relativity of all language and methods in expressing the one truth and the one living tradition. The brotherly spirit and the ecumenicity of the Council of Constantinople is evident, as John Meyendorff has pointed out, in the fact that its attempt to correct omissions and better explain that which had been a cause of scandal in the past was *for the sake of the separated brethren.*[24] The goal of the Council was to express the common mind of the Church while allowing for flexibility in language. The great tragedy is that this conciliar attempt at reconciliation was surrounded by clumsy state politics and that it came too late to heal a schism that had already taken root in the hearts and minds of a large number of Christians. The separation eventually came to be hardened in the forms of ethnic self-

[24] *Imperial Unity* 247.

identity and self-affirmation.[25]

Only today is the dogmatic declaration of Constantinople II beginning to bear fruit. In 1970—more than 1400 years after the attempt by Constantinople to achieve a reconciliation between the strict Cyrillians and the Cyrillian Chalcedonians—Eastern Orthodox and non-Chalcedonian Oriental Orthodox (the so-called Monophysites) made a joint statement at their unofficial consultation in Geneva which deeply reflects the faith and spirit of Constantinople II:

Our two traditions, despite fifteen centuries of separation, still find themselves in full and deep agreement with the universal tradition of the one undivided Church. It is the teaching of the blessed Cyril on the hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ that we both affirm, though we may use differing terminology to explain this teaching.[26]

In 1990, theologians from sixteen countries who make up the official joint commission of the theological dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches unanimously approved an agreed statement and recommendation to the Churches. The new statement reiterated the position of the earlier one, asserting that the two Orthodox families have always loyally maintained the same authentic Orthodox Christological faith and the unbroken continuity of the apostolic tradition, despite the fact that they have at times used Christological terms in different ways. It is this common faith and continuous loyalty to the apostolic tradition that should serve as the basis of unity and communion between the two Orthodox families, according to the agreed statement.[27]

Only now in the twentieth century in certain circles is the ecumenical

[25] Despite attempts by some historians to portray the conflict over Chalcedon as motivated largely by ethnic/political rivalries, this seems not to have been the case. Not until the sixth and seventh centuries, for example, did traditional Alexandrian chauvinism and a growing displeasure with imperial interference combine with a developing Coptic self-consciousness in Egypt to produce what one might call an Egyptian "national religion." Certainly until the seventh century, the primary goal of the non-Chalcedonian Coptic hierarchy was to secure the imperial renunciation of Chalcedon. It was not to establish a separate ethnic "Egyptian Church." By the time of the Council of Constantinople in 553, however, the schism had taken root deeply enough and mutual confidence between the imperial church and the non-Chalcedonian communities had so eroded that the significance of the Council was lost. See W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1972) 70–73; Frend, "Heresy and Schism as Social and National Movements," *Religion Popular and Unpopular in the Early Christian Centuries* (London: Variorum Reprints [xxiv] 1976) 45–56; L. A. Thompson, "Christianity in Egypt before the Arab Conquest," *Tarikh* 2/1 (1967) 13–14; Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity* 243–48.

[26] *Does Chalcedon Divide or Unite?* 8.

[27] *The Orthodox Church* 27, no. 2/3 (Feb./Mar. 1991) 1.

and ecclesiological significance of Constantinople II coming to be more fully understood, as Christians become increasingly more sensitive to the tragedy of ecclesiastical divisions. Perhaps only now can Constantinople II be fully appreciated for what it was and thus become a model for Christian reconciliation.