

Why the Council?



The events that brought about the Council of Chalcedon are extremely complex and to make any reasonable attempt to understand how such a travesty could take place it is necessary to consider the circumstances that lead up to this historical meeting.

Prior to the Council of Chalcedon there arose two main heresies that were condemned by the Church in the Councils held after Nicea, “Nestorianism”¹ and “Eutychianism”.²

When “Nestorianism”, the first of these two heresies appeared Eutyches, a monk of the Church of Constantinople opposed the teachings of Nestorius so passionately that in his attempts to eliminate the heresy, he himself fell from true faith and denied the human nature of Christ.

This was reported to Flavianus the bishop of Constantinople who wrote to Eutyches to explain his error and to instruct him not to continue in this teaching. Flavianus was made aware that Eutyches had written to Leo, the Roman Pope so he wrote to Leo as well. Leo responded by writing what is known as the “Tome of Leo” or a study of the dogma in question showing what some called a distinct leaning towards the heresy of “Nestorianism”.

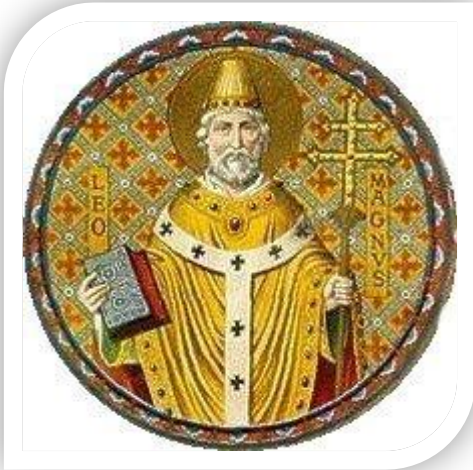
When his attempts to stop Eutyches failed, Flavianus called a local Council at Constantinople to consider the case of Eutyches and the controversial issue, which was gaining momentum partly due to all the attention it was receiving. After ignoring the first two summonses to attend, Eutyches finally arrived at the Council during its seventh session where he was immediately accused in reference to his heretical teachings by the bishop of Dorylaeum.

¹ The Nestorian doctrine was advanced by Nestorius Patriarch of Constantinople which stated that Christ was born man and later became God. This of course was heretical and condemned by all churches led by the Alexandrian Church and there leader St Cyril the Pillar of Faith who introduced the term “theotokos” or “Bearer/Mother of God”

² The Eutychianism doctrine was advanced by Eutychus of Constantinople (380-456AD.) Eutyches taught that the human nature of Christ was overcome by the divine, or that Christ had a human nature but it was unlike the rest of humanity.

The Tomes of Leo

After the “Tomes” of Leo were read, Eutyches was asked to declare his faith, but when he refused to give a direct answer and presented to the Council a written confession of faith that was full of ambiguity, Florentius, the Imperial deputy over the council then asked Eutyches to give a direct answer. When he refused, the Council decreed that Eutyches was to be excommunicated.



As the “Tome of Leo” appeared to have a Nestorian view and it was partly this writing that brought about the judgment, the people of Constantinople became alarmed so Eutyches wrote letters to the then Emperor, Theodosius and the Bishops of Rome, Alexandria, Jerusalem and Thessalonica.

Leo, the Roman Pope sent Eutyches the following letter,

“To the beloved son Eutyches the Priest, from Leo the Bishop – We have gathered from your letter that some people of wicked aims have once more asserted the heresy of Nestorius. We are glad because of your zeal and your care in this matter. We doubt not, therefore, that God Who granted us the Universal Faith will succour you in your endeavour. As for us, having heard of the hypocrisy of those who are following this heresy, we are bound by God’s Grace to cut off this evil. And may God the Almighty guard you, my son.”

When Flavianus became informed that Eutyches had appealed to the bishops of other Churches he also wrote letters to them to explain his actions. Flavianus received a letter from Leo stating that Eutyches claimed he had been unfairly excommunicated.

This letter concluded with the following comment,

“...Eutyches promised in his letter to correct the error he committed against the Doctrine. In this case, we should evade all discord and uphold Christian Love with no aim other than the Truth. We know what Eutyches did, but he seems to be worthy of the sacerdotal honour, even though denuded of all wisdom and knowledge.”

Emperor Theodosius

After Emperor Theodosius agreed to hold a further Council, Eutyches again began writing to a number of bishops, including Dioscorus, the Pope of Alexandria to win their support in the forthcoming meeting. Dioscorus also received letters from the Emperor requesting that he preside over the council and placing a demand that Theodorat, bishop of Cyrrhus be excluded due to his acceptance of “Nestorianism”, a belief he refused to recant, even though the earlier council condemned this as heresy.

When Leo of Rome heard of the new council to reassess the judgment passed on Eutyches by Flavianus and the local council he and his supporters had convened, he wrote to Flavianus asking him to deal with Eutyches with mercy and compassion. Leo also wrote to the Emperor’s sister, Pulcheria stating how Eutyches had fallen into his heresy by error rather than by any sinful reason and how if it was his decision, the excommunication would be lifted and Eutyches would be permitted to return to his position within the Church.

When the council commenced it was presided over by Dioscorus of Alexandria, Juvenal of Jerusalem and Domnus of Antioch. Juvenal and Domnus had also received requests from the Emperor to aid Dioscorus in his duties at the council. Altogether One hundred and thirty bishops attended the council held in 449 AD.

After the formal opening of the Council was complete, Dioscorus asked that the letter to the Council from Leo, Pope of Rome be read, however the head notary stated that there were letters from the Emperor that should be read first. The delegates from Rome that had carried the letter agreed, and then Juvenal of Jerusalem ordered the Imperial messages be read.

After all present acknowledged that they all adhered strictly to the Faith as was defined by the previous Councils, Dioscorus declared that as this was not in question then there was no necessity to examine the doctrines of faith but rather assess only the facts concerning the case of Eutyches and his sentence of excommunication.

Eutyches Responds

When Eutyches was called to express his faith he again chose not to speak and handed over a letter written by his own hand requesting that it be read. The following is a copy of the statement of faith submitted to the council by Eutyches.

“Since my youth, I diligently sought to live in retreat. Today I am exposed to a grave danger because in my strict fidelity to the Faith, and my refusal to admit any innovation. I sincerely uphold the faith declared at Nicea; and rely continuously on the writings legated to the Church by Abba Kyrillos (Pope Cyril of Alexandria) of blessed memory. I believe in One God the Almighty, Maker of the visible and the invisible; and in the Lord Jesus the Christ the Only Begotten Son – I mean that He is Consubstantial with the Father; by Him were all things made, in heaven and on earth; He is the One, Who, for us mankind and for our salvation, came down from heaven; He was incarnate and became man; He suffered and rose from the dead on the third day; He ascended up to heaven from whence He shall come again to judge the living and the dead.



As for all those who say that there was a time when the Son was not, or that He was not before He was born, or that He was created out of nothing or that He is of a different substance, or that His two natures were mixed or mingled, - all those who say such things are excommunicated by the mouth of the Church Universal. This is the faith I declare, and which I have received from my fathers; in this faith was I born, and in it was I baptised and consecrated, and ordained priest; by it I lived unto this day and I shall uphold it until I depart from this life.

While I was living in this faith and persevering in prayers, Eusebius Bishop of Dorylaeum calumniated me before Flavianus the honoured Bishop of Constantinople, stating unjustly that I was a heretic and beguiling me through some vain words. A council was held with the premeditated intention of degrading me whether I responded to its summons or not. This evil intention was made clear to me through the chief guard of the imperial office.”

After the reading of his letter, Eutyches finally made a statement declaring that the minutes of the council in which he was excommunicated had been falsified and made an appeal for justice. Dioscorus immediately requested that the minutes of that meeting be read before all in attendance, everyone present agreed except the two Roman representatives who again asked for the letter of Leo to be read.

At about this time, Eutyches again spoke out stating that he did not trust the Roman legates, as they were known friends of Flavianus, the bishop that had brought the original charges against him.

The Understanding of Excommunication

At this point, I wish to explain that if the sentence of “Excommunication” (also referred to as “Anathema”) should be lifted and if it were determined that the sentence was passed unjustly then those who passed such sentence would be judged by the same measure they judged.

When we consider this, it is more than reasonable that Eutyches would be concerned in reference to the two representatives of Rome as if it should be found the sentence was passed inappropriately, it would be passed onto those who accused him.

This would not mean that he was not in error concerning his belief at that time, only that proper action had not been taken to correct him and lead him back to the true faith in love and mercy.

Deliberations on the Fate of Eutyches

After hearing this accusation from Eutyches it was decided to examine the minutes of the council in question, as well as written reports from both Flavianus and Eutyches. Flavianus was then permitted to speak on his behalf but his comments appeared tainted with a strong Nestorian viewpoint, very similar to the “Tome of Leo”.

After the council deliberated for some time over the statements and comments of both Flavianus and Eutyches and the evidence of the earlier council, they made their determination. Dioscorus asked the bishops to pronounce their findings and the first to answer was Juvenal of Jerusalem with the following statement,

“Since Eutyches confesses the Creed of Nicea and accepts what the Fathers declared in the great Council assembled in this same city, it is clear to me that he is an Orthodox. Therefore, I suggest that he be reconfirmed in His sacerdocy and in his abbotcy over his monks.”

The bishops present responded that what Juvenal had said was both true and just. The next to speak was Domnus of Antioch stating:

“When I received from Constantinople the verdict passed by Flavianus and his Council, I signed it, but after hearing the written declaration submitted to this council by Eutyches, I find that he is an Orthodox. For he clearly states that he upholds the Faith of the three hundred and eighteen assembled at Nicea as well as the Fathers who assembled in this city. In consequence, I consent to his worthiness of the priesthood and of the supervision of his monks.”



After Domnus had finished, Stephen of Ephesus and Thasius of Caesarea of Cappadocia made similar declarations, the remainder of the bishops unanimously acquitted Eutyches.

Dioscorus then closed the issue with the following proclamation before those present signed their names confirming their decision:

“I confirm the judgment of this holy council, and I decree that Eutyches be counted among the priests and resume being archmandrite of his monastery as before.”

The consequence of accepting Eutyches Repentance

As a result, Flavianus and those who signed with him came under the same judgment that they had placed on Eutyches. When Emperor Theodosius was informed of the verdict of the bishops, he placed his seal upon it and banished Flavianus and those who excommunicated Eutyches, except those that had rescinded their earlier decision after hearing all the facts.

As had Eutyches before him, Flavianus then began sending letters to some of the bishops stating that he had relied on the “Tome of Leo” in forming his verdict over Eutyches and appealed the verdict concerning himself. Leo of Rome then sent a letter to the Emperor calling for yet another council to be held in Italy to again preside over the matter.

To assist him in applying pressure over Theodosius, the Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantine Empire), Leo requested the Emperor of the Western Empire, Valentinianus III, his wife, Empress Eudoxia and his mother Galla Placidia to write to Theodosius.

This they did and Emperor Theodosius answered each of them saying in regards to their request and concerning the council that had already been held,

“...an assembly of pious bishops who had behaved according to the fear of God, and in

conformity with the Orthodox Faith as I know for certainty. It would, therefore, be better that you do not interfere in the matter, hence why another council?"

After his attempts to persuade Theodosius to submit to his wishes failed, Leo of Rome began sending more letters to both the clergy and people of Constantinople. This also came to nothing as the Emperor authorised the people and clergy of Constantinople to elect a new bishop to replace Flavianus and pleaded with them not to elect any that followed the heresy of Nestorius.

In accordance with the instruction of Emperor Theodosius and the desire to avoid any further heretics that may lead the Church away from the faith as taught by the apostles, Anatolius was chosen. Before leaving the city, Dioscorus presided over the ceremony that consecrated the new

Bishop of Constantinople, further antagonising Leo as Anatolius had originally been a deacon from the Alexandrian Church.



The Death of Theodosius the Emperor

One month after the death of Theodosius on July 28, 450 AD, his sister Pulcheria and her consort Marcian, were declared emperors as her brother had left no heir. Pulcheria quickly asserted her power by banishing Eutyches to Doliche in Syria and removing the chief Chamberlain, Chrysophius by executing him as he had aided Eutyches in the appeal of his excommunication.

What is of note in regards to the nature of Theodosius' sister is that some years earlier, Pulcheria had taken vows of chastity within the Church, and then when her brother's wife had borne no children, she pressed him to marry another wife, thus she advised him to commit the sin of Adultery, against the Christian doctrine to remain monogamous. Theodosius ended her insistence after seeking council of the Alexandrian Church who had advised him to remain true to the faith and loyal to his wife. After her efforts to corrupt the Emperor failed, she renounced her vows as a Nun and married General Marcianus (Marcion).

Although all the other bishops were hesitant to sanction her marriage after disregarding her sacred vow that she had willingly taken, Leo of Rome promptly validated and blessed the marriage. Since this time, if not before, Pulcheria was against the supremacy of the Church of Alexandria in most ecclesiastical issues and their influence was a constant affront to the new monarchy of Pulcheria and Marcion. Through these apparent feelings of resentment and jealousy, the Roman Church and the heirs to the throne of the Eastern Empire developed a closer bond, and ultimately they became allies against the Church of Alexandria.

Pope Leo writes to Emperor Pulcheria

When Pulcheria gained the throne, Leo of Rome knew this was his opportunity to call for another council to overturn the decision of the previous council held at Ephesus. He began by sending a letter of congratulations to the new rulers in which he suggested the convening of a further council. After this, a number of further letters were exchanged between Leo of Rome and the Emperors Pulcheria and Marcion. In some of these letters, we read things that bring into question the motives of these people,

“From Leo the Bishop to Marcianus the Triumphant – Know, O King, that after I gave the answer to your monks... I received with joy the letter of your Tenderness... it was a source of great joy to me, for I gathered from it your resolve to amend Church affairs... Be it known unto you, O great king, that my reliance on God’s Guidance is coupled with my hope that through your love, matters will be straightened out. Now, therefore, I do entreat and implore you by the Mystery of Salvation, to strengthen your heart, and by your authority forbid any deluded ignorant dissenter from examining the Faith in his craftiness... It is neither fitting nor proper that we should revert to worldly discussions and search into the meaning of what ignorant men say and stray from the confirmed Truth as though there is some doubt with regard to It. It is not our duty to doubt Eutyches, whether he has erred because of his evil principles or not; we should not suspect the judgment of Dioscorus against Flavianus of blessed memory whether it was deceitful or not; but a number of bishops have repented and have made known to us the evil that has happened. They have asked to be forgiven for all their short-comings. Therefore, we should not investigate their faith, we should accept and forgive them.”

If we take note of lines such as the following, we must ask some simple questions.

“... It is not our duty to doubt Eutyches?”

“... we should not suspect the judgment of Dioscorus against Flavianus?”

“... we should not investigate their (the bishops’) faith” we should accept and forgive them...?”

One question would be if it were not their duty to doubt Eutyches, suspect Dioscorus, or investigate the faith of the bishops, what reason could there be to hold the desired council. It is true other issues were discussed; however, they were not the reason for convening the Council.

Another question could be why should any accept back a bishop or anyone else without first investigating the facts, unless they had another purpose?

A final question I will put forward at this time is that if Leo truly felt there was no reason to suspect the judgment of Dioscorus, a judgment made also by all but two of those present, against Flavianus, then why not accept it.

Emperor Pulcheria writes to Pope Leo

This letter speaks of unconditional forgiveness and love but if this is the true feelings of Leo to those whom he mentions then what motive did he have to call for a further council? Another letter that confirms the suspicion that the council that was being called had an ulterior motive is the following from Pulcheria to Leo,

“From Pulcheria the Triumphant to the venerable Father, the bishop of the great city of Rome, - know – O Father – that we have received the letter of your holiness with the great honour due to all bishops. Reading it, we knew that your faith was pure... I myself, and my husband the strong king, diligently believe according to your faith. As for doubts, heresies and dissensions, they are far from us. Then I would like to tell you of the venerable Anatolius, Bishop of this great city, that he upholds the Orthodox Faith and confesses the Apostolic teachings. He has evicted the heresy sown by some in the Church. You will know his true faith from the letter he sent you... As for me, I would like to tell you that my tender husband has brought the body of Flavianus, of blessed memory, from the place of exile to the great city of Constantinople, and has buried it with great honour in the Church of the Apostles where his predecessors, the bishops, are buried. My husband has also ordered the return of all the exiled bishops who were agreed with Bishop Flavianus of blessed memory concerning the faith, that the assembled bishops may judge their case, and restore them to their Sees according to the merit of their labours.”

In this letter, we read that Marcian had ordered the return of the exiled bishops so the assembled bishops may judge their case and restore them to their Sees according to their merits. This shows the disposition of the Emperor towards those in exile. He clearly was not neutral but had already determined the case as he was assuming they would be restored before the judgment was made. In reference to the return of the body of Flavianus I will mention here that he had died during his exile.

Pope Leo Fulfils his Desire

Finally Leo achieved his desire and the Council of Chalcedon was opened on the 8th October , 451 A.D. The exact numbers of those present are questionable but it is known that the Emperors had appointed nineteen civil judges to direct the council sessions and for the keeping of order. The assembled bishops all took their appointed seats then as the meeting began, a Roman delegate by the name of Paschasinus requested that Dioscorus be removed or he and his colleagues would withdraw themselves.

It is reported that when asked why Dioscorus should be removed Lucentius, another Roman answered that the man had not come to sit among the saints but to give an account for what he had committed at Ephesus. Apparently, one of the bishops present then asked what it was that Dioscorus is accused of, to which Lucentius then answered that he had convoked a council without the authorisation of the Bishop of Rome.

Again, we see something that is quite suspicious as it was Emperor Theodosius that had called the previous council not Dioscorus who had only responded to the Emperor's summons. This appears even more dubious when we consider that neither Domnus nor Juvenal were similarly accused when they too sat with Dioscorus to preside over the council being examined. Finally when we consider that the Bishop of Rome had to request permission to hold the Council in which they were present at proves it was for the Emperor to sanction a council not the Roman bishop. However, Dioscorus, probably to avoid a disturbance, left his place and seated himself amongst the civil judges.

Allegations hurled at Pope Dioscorous

The Roman delegates then accused Dioscorus of breaking the Church canons, to which he replied:

“Who of us is the law breaker: I, who responded to the request of Emperor Theodosius by sitting at the second Ephesian council and by refusing admittance to Theodore the Nestorian bishop of Cyrrhus in deference to the verdict passed upon him by the third ecumenical council, or you, who have permitted this same Nestorian to sit among you, when he has been cut off from the church Body and has not repented since his disposition?”

Dioscorus' question went unanswered then the bishop of Doryloeum accused Dioscorus of excommunicating him and his associates unjustly, he then submitted a written accusation that

Dioscorus was a believer in the heresy to which Eutyches had previously fallen. The council without question accepted this, and at about that time Theodorat, Bishop of Cyrrhus was formally accepted, regardless of the fact that he was by his own confession an unrepentant follower of the “Nestorian heresy” that had previously been condemned.

After this, those present from the Church of Alexandria began to protest resulting in a disturbance of such intensity that the civil judges had to remind those present that their behaviour was not appropriate for men of God. When this settled, Dioscorus requested that the minutes of the council held at Ephesus be read, then after the first section was finished he made the following statement;

“You can see from these minutes that Emperor Theodosius, of blessed memory, is the one at whose request the past council was convoked. You can also see that it was the Emperor who had entrusted the direction of that council to Bishops Juvenal of Jerusalem, Domnus of Antioch and myself. The three of us, together with all those who were assembled there, passed the judgment, after each expressed his opinion freely. Unanimously we all agreed to the verdict of acquitting Eutyches, and then each put his signature to it.”

In response, the bishops that had signed the judgment cried out that they had only signed due to coercion and that it was against their will. They also added that they had signed a blank piece of paper under the threat of being beaten by imperial guards.

At this the Egyptians again began to cry out that soldiers of Christ do not fear worldly powers and challenged those present to “light a fire and we will show you”. After this Dioscorus said,

“It would have been more compatible with a bishop’s dignity to refuse signing what he knows not specifically when it is that which concerns the majesty of the Faith”.

The meeting fell silent then one of the bishops accused Dioscorus and his monks of having Flavianus executed. In response, to this accusation one of the letters from Pulcheria to Leo was read showing that Flavianus had died in exile thus proving the claim false.

The chief notary then continued to read the minutes of the Council of Ephesus until it mentioned the “Tome of Leo”, when it was asked as to why it was not read. Dioscorus replied that he had ordered its reading twice. Again it was asked why it was not read so Dioscorus answered that they should ask the Bishops of Jerusalem and Antioch. Juvenal of Jerusalem then answered,

“When Dioscorus ordered its reading, the chief notary had presented to us all the letters of his imperial majesty Theodosius, of blessed memory, and these were naturally given precedence. After reading them, none of the notaries reminded us of Leo’s Tomos, so it was simply forgotten”.

Again, the notary began reading the minutes but after reading the Confession of faith of Eutyches, Basilus, bishop of Seleucia stated his signature had been forged. Dioscorus responded with,

“I know not why Basilus denies his signature when he knows that he consented to a pure Orthodox teaching”

After hearing this, the bishops also confessed it was their duty to preserve the faith passed down from the Council of Nicea and replied

“Dioscorus, Head of the Bishops keeps the Faith”.

Pope Dioscorus Declares the True Orthodox Faith

After this, the bishops asked Dioscorus to declare his faith, he replied with,

“If a piece of iron, heated to white heat, be struck on the anvil, it is the iron which receives the blows and not the white heat, even though the iron and the white had form one indivisible whole. And though indivisible, the heat mingles not with the iron, nor is it fused into it, nor changed by it. This same is true of the iron, and is in a measure, symbolic of the incarnation of Our Lord where the divine and the human natures united without mixing, fusion, nor change, though neither parted from the other – not even for a moment or the twinkling of an eye. This unity, the Fathers of the Alexandrian Church define as “the one Nature of God the Word made flesh” and is synonymous with St. John’s saying “the Word was made flesh”.

As none could fault Dioscorus, he was then asked,

“If Eutyches has uttered by mouth what was contrary to the written confession submitted to you, what would your judgment be?”

Dioscorus answered,

“If Eutyches has, indeed, denied the faith written by him and submitted to us, I would not decree his ex-communication only but would order burning him too. As for me, I steadfastly uphold the Faith of the Orthodox Church: One, Holy, Universal and Apostolic. Neither Eutyches nor any other person can make me swerve from this most holy Faith”.

On hearing this, the bishops of what we today call the Oriental Orthodox Churches that had made the false claim they signed blank paper cried out,

“We have sinned and we ask for forgiveness”.

When asked to confirm the earlier accusation that Dioscorus had Flavianus killed and then again a third time they repeated that it was they that had sinned and again sought forgiveness.

Pope Dioscorus opinion on the Tome of Leo

Dioscorus was then asked to state his opinion on the “Tome of Leo”, Pope of Rome.

The Pope of Alexandria read it and then declared it to be heretical and following the same beliefs of Nestorius so he immediately excommunicated it and the Roman Pope who had written it. Many of those present went silent as they agreed with Dioscorus, yet did not have the courage to speak it out aloud. They then requested of the civil judges an adjournment of five days to examine in more depths Leo’s “Tome”, such as the exact meaning of some of the Latin terms used.

The Council held in Secret

It was then that we see the truth concerning the treachery of the Roman bishops and the Empress Pulcheria. Pulcheria placed a guard to where Dioscorus was abiding, keeping him under a form of “house arrest” while Leo and his loyal bishops secretly reconvened the council after only three days and without informing the civil judges.

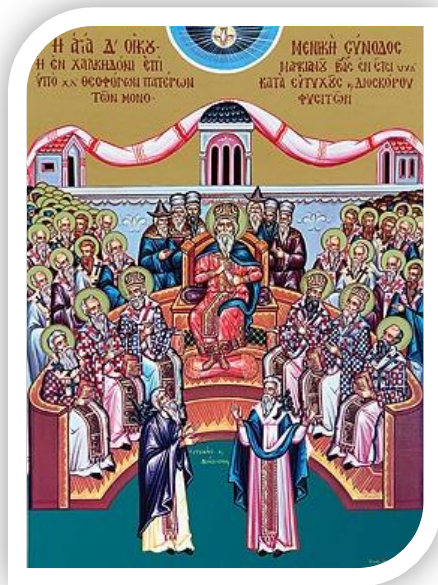
After the council was assembled, they sent delegates to instruct Dioscorus to report to the meeting; the guards however, were under orders to restrict his and his bishops from leaving the premises. Reportedly, Dioscorus inquired as to whether the civil judges had been notified that the council had reconvened and was informed that the attendance of the laity was unnecessary in Church matters.

He also asked whether they had informed the guards that the council was again in session so that he may be released to attend. He was then told that they were only sent to invite him to the council

and no instructions were given in regards to informing those who kept Dioscorus contained. This summons was repeated twice and in each case, Dioscorus was refused leave to attend by his guards, as they had received no further orders.

After Dioscorus failed to appear, new accusations were being made against him, all of which had no bearing on the case in question. When evidence was requested to support these claims could not be found, his case was discussed in the absence of all the bishops of Alexandria and any who had sided with Dioscorus.

Dioscorus Condemned



The Roman legates then put forward That Dioscorus should have repented after reading the “Tome of Leo” rather than excommunicating him and his writing. Finally having no evidence against the Alexandrian they declared that he had pronounced his own condemnation due to the fact the he had refused to respond to the Council’s three instructions to attend. I next present the statement proclaimed by the Council of Chalcedon against Dioscorus, Pope of the Church of Alexandria

“From the great ecumenical and holy council, convoked by the Grace of God in compliance with the decree of our pious Godfearing kings at Chalcedon of Bithynia, in the church of St. Euphemia the triumphant martyr – to Dioscorus: Be it known unto you that, because of your disdain of church canons, and the disobedience which you have committed with regard to the holy synod by refusing to appear after our triple summons without counting all your other crimes; you have been, on the thirteenth of October, 451 A.D., deposed of your Episcopal dignity by the Holy Synod, and declared incapable of fulfilling your ecclesiastical functions.”

This marked the informal separation between the Church of Alexandria, The Church of Antioch, The Church of Jerusalem and the other oriental Orthodox Churches from the Roman Church and those Churches under its honorary position, including the Church of Constantinople and all the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

Another fact that resulted, probably due to the Council of Chalcedon, was the imperial appointment of non-consecrated clergy, particularly bishops within the oriental Churches. These men were selected by the Emperors to usurp control away from the true anointed leaders. Those within these Churches that protested against this, were often imprisoned, tortured or even killed, sometimes in great numbers.

As a rule, the Churches of both Rome and Constantinople and the other Churches under their control then officially acknowledged these imposters. This resulted in further limitations being placed on those who had been the chief defenders of the true faith.

Considerations on the Council of Chalcedon

When we consider the result of the Council of Chalcedon there are some facts we should consider.

- The civil judges or Imperial Commissioners publicly declared that the judgment was both unjust and illegal. They also are quoted as saying to the bishops involved in this injustice;

“You shall give account unto God of what you have committed against Dioscorus whom you deposed in the absence of the Emperor, and in our absence too”

- The judgment was passed in the absence of Dioscorus, giving him no opportunity to defend himself.
- The judgment was passed before the Council was officially reconvened and not all were present.
- Many, if not all that passed the judgment were Nestorian, a heresy that had already been judged at a previous Ecumenical Council.
- According to Mgr. Hefele, a Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church, Bishop Anatolius made the following statement;

“Dioscorus was not deposed because of his Orthodox Faith, but because he had excommunicated Leo 1 (of Rome) and had not obeyed the Synod”

Mgr. Hefele adds:

“In the synodal decree against Dioscorus, there is no express mention of his heresy, and the sentence passed on him by the Pope’s (Leo) legates says nothing either”.

- After the judgment was passed on Dioscorus, the Council continued to convene. In its fifth session Anatolius, Bishop of Constantinople declared that the orthodoxy of Dioscorus was “impeccable”.
- The Council did not excommunicate Dioscorus as they found nothing indicating he had deviated from the true faith.
- In the following sessions of the Council of Chalcedon, the question of who would have the greatest position among them became a point of discussion, demonstrating their personal ambitions. This would provide a motive to remove the influential Church of Alexandria.
- Before the Council closed, Emperor Marcion endorsed the sentence and decreed the exile of Dioscorus to the island of Gangra. As Dioscorus was not excommunicated, only deposed of his ecclesiastical duties, he had done nothing to bring upon himself this further unjustifiable judgment.
- In 1553 AD, Bishop Georgius of Nimokopion made a legal study of this subject. He found that Dioscorus was not judged due to his faith but because he refused to submit to the views of Leo, Patriarch of Rome.
- Leo had joined forces with Pulcheria, a Nun who had tried to lead her brother, the Emperor into the sin of taking more than one wife. Then when this failed, she renounced her vows of chastity to marry a general to produce an heir to the throne. She even degraded to executing the chief chamberlain Chrysophius for supporting the appeal of Eutyches
- In the earlier letters of Leo, he often asked for kindness towards Eutyches and stated he would acquit him if it were his choice. After the Council of Chalcedon was officially called, Leo changed the tone of his letter in reference to Eutyches describing him as “malicious” and “wicked” like Nestorius.
- Pulcheria and Marcion had been gathering support for the “Tome of Leo” to be introduced as standard doctrine at Chalcedon in an attack against Alexandrian Orthodoxy that maintained the faith of the apostles and the original Church against “Nestorianism”.
- Eutyches was banished to the island of Doliche, after he had been acquitted and before the next Council was held at Chalcedon.

- The letters between Pulcheria, Marcion and Leo show that they had already decided to reinstate the bishops that had been excommunicated before the Council of Chalcedon had even been convened to examine the case.
- During the first session of the Council of Chalcedon, Paschasius made the following statement;

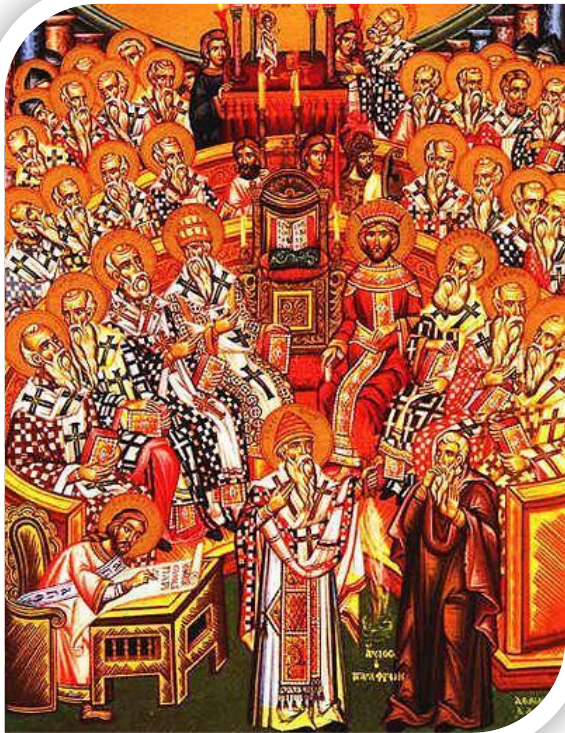
"We have orders from the most blessed and apostolic man, the bishop of the city of Rome, who is the head of all churches, enjoining that Dioscorus should not have a place in the synod. If this is violated, he should be cast out. We are obliged to obey this injunction. Your excellency may order, therefore, that either he goes out or we depart".

Through these actions, Dioscorus was judged before he had the opportunity to answer to any charges or accusations. Notice that Leo is declared to be the "Head of all the Churches". As Jesus Christ is the "Head", not a man we see Leo aspiring not only to lead the Church, but also to usurp the position of Christ Himself.

- Dioscorus was accused of summoning the Council of Ephesus that was in question, when it was actually the Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire Theodosius, the brother of Pulcheria.
- It was not only Dioscorus, but also Juvenal and Thalassius who acted as co-presidents over the Council in question in response to the Emperor's request.
- Stephen of Ephesus claimed that they were forced to sign blank papers at the Council of Ephesus. This is questionable due to the following reasons;
 1. Eusebius of Dorylaeum who was present with Stephen makes no mention of this in any of his letters to the Emperor.
 2. If it is true, why was it not mentioned for over two years and only from those who supported the "Tome of Leo".
 3. A clerk, none of whom mentions any bishop signing a blank paper, accompanied every Bishop at Ephesus.
 4. Later, when the Bishops were asked concerning their story they were forced to sign blank papers many answered twice "We all have sinned, we ask for pardon."

- During the Council of Chalcedon, many of the bishops told different stories.
- After the Council of Chalcedon accepted the “Tome of Leo”, many believers were executed or tortured for refusing to sign the “Tome of Leo”. Consider, if the Holy Spirit inspired this writing, would that same Holy Spirit inspire murder and torture. We may then ask what spirit would inspire such actions.
- Dioscorus was found guilty of only one offence and that being he refused to answer the summons to attend the Council when it secretly reconvened. This is undeniably unjust when he could not respond as he had been held prisoner by imperial guards. To assess what occurred at Chalcedon, it is also necessary to consider the “Tome of Leo” as compared to the Nestorian heresy if we are to determine if it is the same or in any way similar to its heretical nature.

Nestorius, who was at one time the Bishop of Constantinople, introduced the Nestorian heresy, it is outlined as,



“Christ was two separate persons, the one divine and beyond the reach of human frailty, and the other human and susceptible to all the fragility of the flesh. The divine Christ could neither suffer nor die, and therefore, on the cross it was the human Christ alone who suffered and died apart from the divine Christ.”

The following is the “Tome” that was considered heresy by Dioscorus;

“Christ the two, the God and the Man, came. The first overwhelmed us with miracles, and the second received the humiliations.”

In these two definitions both state, Christ was “Two”, one being “God” and one being a “man”. Both reinforce this by defining separate actions performed by two separate persons in Christ. By this, it can easily be recognized that the “Tome of Leo” was much the same as what was considered heresy by the One, Holy, Apostolic and Universal Church. This is also evident by the fact that while he was in exile even Nestorius himself declared his approval of the “Tome of Leo”. The only possible explanation other than heresy could be poor wording on the part of Leo and that he did not mean his “Tome” to separate Christ, but only to symbolize His divinity and His humanity. However, even if this had been the case, the writing was still heretical and could easily be misinterpreted. If Leo were the humble man of God that a man in his position should be, he would have accepted correction and amended his teaching.

Conclusion

I will add to this that the Roman Catholic Church does not teach as a doctrine the heresy of Nestorius and according to the “Catechism of the Catholic Church, Second edition” they follow the same doctrine of faith as was set down at the Council of Nicea.

They do however tell a different story about what occurred at the Council of Chalcedon. In the Roman version, the Council was held to deal with the “Monophysites”, those whom the Romans accuse of being followers of the teachings of Eutyches during the period when he taught his heresy.

They hold that Leo was a great defender of the orthodox faith and it was due to that teaching that they convened the Council. However as the above shows the question needs to be asked was that really the case?

This article was compiled from various sources and members of the Orthodox Church