

## The Church of the Great Councils (325 A.D. – 451 A.D.)

### Questions:

1. **What is a Church Council/Synod?**- A gathering of bishops in a given nation or region which makes decisions in collegiality as in Acts 1 (which decided a successor to Judas) and Acts 15 (which decided how gentile converts would be brought into the Church). Headed by a senior prelate such as a Patriarch or Catholicos who is the “first among equals.”
2. **What is an Ecumenical Council?**- A synod of bishops representing the worldwide/universal Church. In the Non-Chalcedonian Communion, the first three “Ecumenical” Synods are acknowledged as in continuity with the Apostolic Tradition.
3. **Why do we acknowledge 3 Ecumenical Synods whereas others recognize 7?**- The Council of Chalcedon was not accepted by the party in the Empire which believed it was not according to the Orthodox teaching as taught by St. Cyril of Alexandria. A schism resulted and 3 subsequent Councils were held by the party which accepted Chalcedon.
4. **Does an Ecumenical Council “create” doctrine?**- No, an Ecumenical Council states doctrine which has been misunderstood and in need of clear and precise definition.

### Nicaea- 325 A.D.- Affirmed the Divinity of the Son

1. Athanasius of Alexandria- Deacon at the time of the Council of Nicaea who led the Anti-Arian party and clearly stated the Orthodox teaching of the Church. Authored the treatise “On the Incarnation” and is a revered Saint.
2. **Born vs. Created vs. Begotten-**
  - a. Born- Parent does not have inner knowledge of offspring
  - b. Created- Creator has inner knowledge of offspring, but the two are distinct and unequal
  - c. Begotten- With reference to the Father and Son in the Trinity, the Son is begotten of the Father before and outside of all time. The begetting of the Son is eternal and is an intrinsic property of the nature of the Trinity
3. **Homoousia-** One Substance; The three persons of the Trinity are of one substance in three persons (hypostases).
4. **Date of Pascha-** Decided on at Nicaea; First Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox

### Constantinople- 381 A.D.- Confirmed the Nicene Creed, affirmed the Divinity of the Holy Spirit

1. **Cappadocian Fathers**- Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzus (Gregory the Theologian)
2. **Homoousion of the Spirit**-
  - a. "Proceeds from the Father"- Whereas the Son is "begotten," the Spirit proceeds from the Father to the Son
  - b. Filioque Clause- The clause which states the the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son; NOT accepted by the Orthodox Church
3. **1 ousia, 3 hypostases**- The Holy Spirit is one substance or essence (ousia) in three underlying essences or persons (hypostases)
4. **Essence vs. Energy**-
  - a. Essence- That of God which is impenetrable, unknowable and stands outside of creation
  - b. Energies- That of God which may be attained by created beings and transcends through creation

**Ephesus- 451 A.D.**- Affirmed the full Divinity and Humanity in the person of Christ

1. **Cyril of Alexandria**- Patriarch of Alexandria who expounded the Orthodox doctrine of Divinity and Humanity of Christ and led the party against Nestorianism. Commemorated as a Saint.
2. **One incarnate nature of God the Word**- With reference to the person of Christ; Christ was one single nature, albeit a composite one, being both one substance with the Trinity and with humanity.
3. **The Persian Church**- Church outside of the Roman/Byzantine Empire which was not bound by the Ecumenical Councils, and nonetheless refused to acknowledge Ephesus, and did not anathematize Nestorius; still in existence today.

**Chalcedon- 451 A.D.**- Council not accepted by Oriental Communion; Divided natures of Christ

1. **Dioscorus**- Successor to St. Cyril, advocate of understanding Cyril's theology of the "one nature of God the Word Incarnate." Deposed by the Council of Chalcedon.
2. **Tome of Leo**- Document accepted by the Council of Chalcedon which stated Christ was "in two natures, united" rather than "of two natures."
3. **Monophysite vs. Dyophysite**- Christ's one naturedness vs Christ's two naturedness; The Orthodox teaching is that Christ is One single Incarnate Nature, one nature albeit one which is mysteriously both fully Divine and fully human.

## The Church in Schism

1. **St. Severus of Antioch**- Patriarch of Antioch who expounded St. Cyril's doctrine on the Incarnation, most eloquent defender of the Orthodox Faith
2. **Timothy Aelurus**- Successor to Dioscorus who was expelled by the Emperor, returned, and died in 477 A.D. Commemorated as a Saint (Aelurus= Cat/Weasel)
3. **Philoxenos of Mabbogh**- Persian Bishop who opposed Chalcedonian theology (died 523 A.D.). Commemorated as a Saint.
4. **Anthimus of Constantinople**- Last Non-Chalcedonian Patriarch of Constantinople (died 536 A.D.). Commemorated as a Saint.
5. **Jacob Baradeus**- Non-Chalcedonian Bishop who was ordained with Ecumenical authority and restored hierarchies of Non-Chalcedonian Clergy in the East after Justinian's persecutions (died 578 A.D.).