

## Eutyches and the Oriental Orthodox tradition

The Oriental Orthodox communion has been regularly and routinely accused of following the teaching of Eutyches, the controversial archimandrite of Constantinople. Historical sources, such as the Catholic Encyclopaedia, conflate the teaching of Eutyches with monophysitism, and then insist that all those who speak of one nature may be indifferently called Eutychians or Monophysites<sup>1</sup>. Of course, this understanding would mean that St Cyril of Alexandria must also be called a Eutychian since he speaks of the 'one nature of God the Word incarnate'. Nor is this a new tendency, since the early opponents of St Cyril also accused him of confusing the Divinity and humanity in Christ<sup>2</sup>, and from the beginning of the post-Chalcedonian period those who refused to say that Christ was 'in two natures' were accused of being the followers of Eutyches<sup>3</sup>.

Eutyches appears as a monk of Constantinople during the crisis surrounding the first council of Ephesus, held in 431 AD. In the History of the Patriarchs, under the section describing the patriarchate of St Cyril, there is a description of the difficulties which were placed in the way of the Orthodox party sending any information to the emperor and their supporters at Constantinople. The Patrician Candidian had put guards on the roads to prevent any word of the situation reaching the court. In the end St Cyril and his fellow bishops had to disguise a member of their party, and place a message to the emperor inside a hollow walking stick!<sup>4</sup> When the messenger reached Constantinople he gave the message to two monks, Dalmatius and Eutyches, who had contacts in the court and were able to pass the message to the emperor. It would seem that even in 431 AD Eutyches already had important friends.

Eutyches was not a great theologian, and his importance was rather limited to the monastic circle in Constantinople where he was the respected and powerful archimandrite of a monastery outside the city walls. He was the godfather of the eunuch Chrysaphius, one of the most influential ministers in the court of the emperor Theodosius II. Despite his lack of learning he was resolutely opposed to the heresy of Nestorius, and those who thought like him, and considered himself a disciple of St Cyril.

Eutyches becomes more than a minor footnote in monastic history because by 448 AD, a few years after the death of St Cyril and the succession of his archdeacon Dioscorus<sup>5</sup>, it was clear that the teaching of Nestorius had not been rooted out. In fact Nestorius was not the chief proponent of this Christology, and was himself a disciple of the much more significant Theodore of Mopsuestia, whom Nestorius, Theodoret of Cyrus, Ibas of Edessa, and others, all considered a great teacher of the Church<sup>6</sup>. By 448 AD Ibas of Edessa was facing great opposition in his own see of Edessa, where he had set about translating the

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<sup>1</sup> Chapman, John. "Eutyches." The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 5. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909. 18 Mar. 2009

<sup>2</sup> Bulgakov, S. (2008). *The Lamb of God*. : Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. p.756

<sup>3</sup> The Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai (Brief Historical Notes) of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, as just one example, describes the later followers of the Cyrilline position of *mia physis* as being 'disciples of Eutyches'.

<sup>4</sup> History of the Patriarchs, p. 440

<sup>5</sup> Haas, C. (2006). *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*. : JHU Press. p.316. Dioscorus was an important supporter of St Cyril in his lifetime, but had to deal with the opposition of some of Cyril's family members, who had expected to continue to benefit from their position in the Church.

<sup>6</sup> Ibas describes him as a Doctor of the Church in his infamous Letter to Maris the Persian.

works of Theodore of Mopsuestia into Syriac. Theodoret was restricted to his own see by imperial decree, because he was also attempting to revive the Theodorean Christological position<sup>7</sup>.

It was clear that the agreement between St Cyril of Alexandria and John of Antioch in 433 AD had not really resolved any of the underlying tensions. Indeed it was interpreted by some, such as Ibas of Edessa, as being the complete reversal of St Cyril's Christology and his acceptance of that of Theodore of Mopsuestia<sup>8</sup>. Theodoret had also written his polemical work, *Eranistes*, possibly directed at Eutyches, but also criticising the Christology of St Cyril. This being the case, it is understandable that the issues should come to the surface again.

One of those flash points was Constantinople. Early in 448 AD Eutyches had written to Pope Leo of Rome advising him that a revival of Nestorianism was taking place. Leo replied to him in a letter which commends Eutyches for his concern about the situation, and promises some action when the details are more fully known<sup>9</sup>. It is thought that Eutyches had accused Domnus of Antioch and Theodoret of Cyrus of being sympathetic to the teaching of Nestorius. Domnus retaliated by writing to the emperor and accusing Eutyches of reviving the heresy of Apollinarius. The emperor appears to have also sensed that there were moves to re-establish the Christology of Nestorius, and he issued instructions to burn the writings of Nestorius, wherever they were found, and to depose Irenaeus, the bishop of Tyre and a close friend of Nestorius.

At the home synod of Flavian of Constantinople, held in November 448 AD, Eusebius of Dorylaeum, who had also been accused by Eutyches of a covert Nestorianism, took the opportunity to openly accuse Eutyches of heresy. Flavian seems to have attempted to counsel a more cautious approach, but Eusebius insisted on pressing his charges, not least because he believed that if he failed he was laying himself open to a counter-charge of false accusation.

Eutyches was accused by Eusebius of having become corrupt and a source of corruption. He refused outright to visit Eutyches to try and come to an agreement, but insisted that the matter be dealt with in the synod without delay. The other members of the synod appear to have criticised Eusebius for lacking respect to his archbishop, but it was agreed that Eutyches should be called to the synod since the charges against him were so grave.

Eutyches was summoned to attend the synod, but was hesitant to do so since it was clearly being dominated by his enemies<sup>10</sup>. First he said that he had made a vow never to leave his monastery; then he pleaded illness. But on the third summons he knew that he must attend or be condemned and so he appeared in person.

The synod began without him though, and in the first sessions some of the letters of St Cyril were read out. Clearly the bishops did not fully comprehend the teaching of St Cyril which they acclaimed, because after reading his letters they then went on to insist that Christ should be 'acknowledged in two natures'. First Basil of Seleucia made such a statement, and then Seleucus of Amasia anathematized anyone who did not say that Christ was 'defined in two natures'<sup>11</sup>. The other bishops present at the synod then agreed to these statements. There

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<sup>7</sup> Urbainczyk, T. *Theodoret of Cyrillus*. (2002). Univ. of Michigan Press. p. 26

<sup>8</sup> Ibas said that opponents of Theodore such as Cyril were 'now teaching the very opposite to their former Doctrine'.

<sup>9</sup> Library of the Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol XII, p. 72

<sup>10</sup> Price, R. *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (2005). University of Liverpool Press. Vol I, p.26

<sup>11</sup> Price, R. *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (2005). University of Liverpool Press. Vol I, p.191

is a clear Theodorean tinge to their position. Indeed Eudoxius of Bosphorus makes this clear when in his statement he says, 'God.. assumed a perfect man for our salvation'<sup>12</sup>. Everyone present agrees with St Cyril, but it is not clear that the St Cyril they agree with is being properly represented.

At the beginning of the third session Eusebius asks that the messengers who were sent to call Eutyches should report back to the synod. They reported that Eutyches insisted that since the beginning he had bound himself by a rule that he would never leave his monastery, but treat it as a tomb. Nevertheless he did make several statements. Firstly, and as seems quite clear, Eusebius of Dorylaeum had long been an enemy and was simply seeking to slander him. Secondly, that he was ready to assent to the teachings of Nicaea and Ephesus. Thirdly, that after the incarnation he worshipped one nature in Christ, that of God made man. Finally, that he had never said that the humanity of Christ came down from heaven. He added that he did not find that the fathers spoke of Christ being formed of two natures united hypostatically, and that while he acknowledged Christ as perfect God and perfect man, he could not say that the Word had flesh which was consubstantial with us.

Eutyches was clearly basing his Christology on that of St Cyril, and his understanding of the term 'nature' was in accordance with that of St Cyril and the Alexandrians. Christ is not formed from two natures, when that term is used in the sense of an identity or subject. But his position was certainly weak in regards to denying the double consubstantiality of the Word. He was trying to avoid any idea that the humanity of Christ was a man on its own, but this took him beyond St Cyril, and certainly into ambiguity, even while his intent did not seem to be heretical<sup>13</sup>.

At the next session Eusebius reported that Eutyches was circulating a tract around the other monasteries and was trying to gain support for his position. Eusebius insisted that the synod should send to all of the monasteries and report if Eutyches had contacted them. Even while he was urging this action on the synod the messengers returned who had been to call Eutyches a second time to appear before the bishops.

The brothers of Eutyches' monastery had told the messengers that he was ill, but eventually they were able to give their message to him in person. He repeated his statement that nothing would cause him to leave his monastery save death, although he did wish to read a statement of faith to the messengers which they refused to hear. Then he said that he would send his statement of faith to the bishops.

Eusebius, who does appear a rather unpleasant character even from the sympathetic records of the synod at Constantinople, urged that he be brought to the synod by force and condemned. But the other bishops wished him to have one more chance to appear of his own accord.

At the fourth session some of the Eutychian brethren appeared at the synod, and related that Eutyches had been unwell all night and was unable to appear. Flavian was willing to give Eutyches the weekend to recover, but it is telling that even without an investigation of Eutyches having been conducted he spoke of Eutyches as having led many into error, and of persisting in the wrong. It would seem that he had prejudged the case, and even went so far as to prepare a written condemnation of Eutyches before he had a chance to speak.

Then at the fifth session, because this controversy was taking up many days, Eusebius spoke up again demanding that Eutyches be condemned. He insisted that there

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<sup>12</sup> Price, R. *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (2005). University of Liverpool Press. Vol I, p.197

<sup>13</sup> Perry. *Acts of the Second Council of Ephesus* (1881)Orient Press p.423

could be no defence open to Eutyches. His aim was clearly that Eutyches be deposed, and his opinion was clearly that there was no need for Eutyches to defend himself. Flavian agreed and stated that in his opinion also Eutyches was already liable to deposition for holding opinions contrary to the faith<sup>14</sup>. But unlike Eusebius he wanted him to have one last chance to appear.

Eusebius prepared his case at the sixth session and drew up a list of witnesses he wanted to appear on Monday morning, when Eutyches was finally expected to present himself. While this preparatory session was underway some of those who had previously taken messages to Eutyches were ordered to report other parts of their conversations. The main evidence was that Eutyches refused to say that Christ was from two natures, even though he insisted that Christ was perfect God and perfect man. This again should be understood as reflecting his use of the term 'nature' as an identity or subject and not in the sense of an ousia or underlying substance. It is clear that he did confess that the humanity of Christ was perfect but he did not wish to call it a nature, in the sense of a distinct subject.

Another messenger reported a similar conversation, and added that Eutyches had spoken of the Word made flesh, but did not want to speculate about which nature of Christ had raised humanity to life. Indeed the very words of the messenger again point to a Theodorean perspective. St Cyril would also have rejected saying that one or other natures had saved man. The messenger appeared to have wanted Eutyches to agree that it was the human nature of Christ which saved man, but the very division of natures in Christ in such a way is not Cyrilline at all.

At last the final session arrived and Eutyches did appear before the bishops. It was agreed that the minutes of the previous sessions be read out. When the letter of St Cyril was read out which spoke of Christ being consubstantial with the Father and consubstantial with us, Eusebius could not contain himself. The very last thing he wanted was for Eutyches to agree with what was being read.

'I have proved him guilty', he shouts out, 'He is convicted already'<sup>15</sup>.

Eusebius' great concern was that Eutyches would be able to convince those present that he held to the faith, and would therefore jeopardise his own position. If at all possible he wished to prevent Eutyches from accepting the position presented to him for approval. Flavian agreed that Eutyches was guilty as charged - though he had not yet spoken. And comforted Eusebius with a promise that even if he accepted the faith of the synod he would be still be convicted for his past statements.

Flavian finally questioned Eutyches and asked him if he acknowledged that Christ was a union from two natures. 'Yes, from two natures' Eutyches replies. This is indeed a Cyrilline position, and if he had resisted this previously then it weakened his Christology. Eusebius pressed his own position however and insisted that Eutyches confess two natures after the incarnation, and that Christ is consubstantial with us in the flesh.

Eutyches is unwilling to enter into an argument and asks that his statement of faith be read. Flavian requires him to read it himself, which he then does. His confession is short but worth repeating in full. He says,

'This is what I believe: I worship the Father with the Son, the Son with the Father, and the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son. I acknowledge that his coming in the flesh was from the flesh of the Holy Virgin, and that he became man perfectly for our salvation'<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Price, R. *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (2005). University of Liverpool Press. Vol I, p.212

<sup>15</sup> Price, R. *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (2005). University of Liverpool Press. Vol I, p.218

As far as it goes this statement is Orthodox. It confesses the Trinity, the incarnation of the Son, his becoming perfectly man of the Virgin Mary. Flavian explores the difficulty which Eutyches had perceived in saying that Christ was consubstantial with us according to his humanity. On this occasion Eutyches is willing to say that the humanity is consubstantial with us because the bishops insist on it. He does explain his reticence, and it lies in the fact that he wishes to say that the perfect and complete humanity of Christ is the body of God the Word rather than the body of another man. When it has been explained to him that to say that the Virgin is consubstantial with us, and that the humanity of Christ is from the Virgin, then it is necessary to say that the humanity is consubstantial with us he is willing to agree.

The discussion then passes to the refusal of Eutyches to acknowledge two natures after the incarnation. He asks the bishops to read the teachings of St Athanasius were they would discover that he did not speak of two natures after the incarnation. The bishop Basil insisted that if he did not accept two natures after the incarnation then he must imply confusion and mixture. Of course St Cyril also refused to speak of two natures after the incarnation and he was not guilty of any confusion of mixture, though he was also often accused of it.

As St Cyril says,

‘But who will be thus distraught and unlearned as to suppose that either the Divine Nature of the Word has been turned into what it was not, or that the flesh went over by way of change into the Nature of the Word Himself (for it is impossible)? but we say that One is the Son and **One His Nature** even though He be conceived of as having assumed flesh with a rational soul. For His (as I said) hath the human nature been made, and He is conceived of by us none otherwise than thus, God alike and man’<sup>17</sup>.

At this point many of the bishops started shouting out condemnations of Eutyches, and Flavian rose up to issue the synodal condemnation. He accused him of being riddled with the heresies of Valentinus and Apollinarius, and forthwith deposed him and excommunicated him, and threatened to excommunicate anyone who even spoke to him.

This all seems a little unfair. Eutyches had been willing to go so far as to speak of Christ as being ‘from two natures’. He had even accepted that the humanity of Christ could be spoken of as being consubstantial with us. He confessed that the humanity of Christ was ‘perfect’, and that it was God the Word who had become flesh of the Virgin Mary. Though his earlier statements could be criticised, even condemned, nevertheless during this session the sole issue which remained a point of difference was whether or not Christ could be spoken of as one nature after the incarnation or two.

Since Eutyches had rejected any sense that the humanity of Christ had come down from heaven, and had insisted on its perfection, it seems unreasonable to accuse him of the heresy of Valentinus who denied the physical body of Christ. And since Eutyches insisted on the perfection of the humanity of Christ, there is little basis for accusing him of the heresy of Apollinarius. It would seem that the sole point on which he was condemned was that of speaking of one nature of Christ after the incarnation, rather than two.

If the position of Eutyches, as presented in the hostile minutes of the home synod, still seems to allow him to just about fit into a Cyrilline Orthodoxy, though his earlier position as reported was certainly defective, then it also raises questions about the dyophysite position adopted by Flavian and his synod. Some of the bishops certainly

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<sup>16</sup> Price, R. *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (2005). University of Liverpool Press. Vol I, p.220

<sup>17</sup> Pusey, P.E. *Cyril of Alexandria: That Christ is One*. (1881). p.264

seemed to understand their two nature Christology in an equally unbalanced manner, especially those able to speak of the Word 'assuming a perfect man'.

Immediately Eutyches appealed to Rome, and he clearly hoped that Leo would support him rather than Flavian. He also sent letters to other important figures, not least the emperor himself. His complaint was that the record of events at Constantinople had been doctored and that he had not received a fair trial. He says,

'I read yesterday the minutes concocted by the most devout bishop Flavian against me, and I found it contained in the document things contrary to the proceedings; for neither does it contain what he said to me, nor have they recorded in these minutes what I said'<sup>18</sup>.

This had some significant results because the emperor ordered that a hearing be conducted in Constantinople to verify whether or not the minutes published by Flavian were a true record of the events. The official notaries were required to come before the bishops and officials but were very hesitant in producing the minutes as required. One of them says,

'Let him who caused and initiated the investigation of this matter give us an opportunity to justify a decision whether to produce the minutes or not'<sup>19</sup>.

What a strange comment from a clerk? Why would he be so concerned about producing what should have been simply the record of the council meeting? The notaries were even accused of using 'delaying tactics', and they expressed their fear of being liable to penalties. Eventually they were instructed to produce the minutes without any further delays.

The reading and discussion of the minutes proceeded with some arguments and minor disagreements over the record of the messengers conversations with Eutyches. As he had been deposed and excommunicated he was not allowed to be present, but was represented by a small group of monks. Eventually the process reached the record of the more important final session. At this point some interesting, and subsequently important differences between the written minutes and the recollections of those present became known.

For instance, the minutes showed that Florentius, the patrician who had been involved in the synod, had said, 'He who does not say 'from two natures' and 'two natures' is not Orthodox in his beliefs'. But now he insisted that he had said no such thing, and would not have done so because it was a matter of faith. The notaries replied that he had been able to read the minutes before and had never complained, but he interrupted them and asserted that he had never been given the minutes to read, or had them read to him.

Then came the crucial point at which Eutyches had been condemned. Constantine the Deacon, who was representing him, pointed out that the grounds for his deposition were missing from the record. He said,

'The Lord our Archbishop made this demand of him, "Say two natures after the union and anathematize those who do not say it!". It was when he refused to anathematize, saying, "Woe is me if I anathematize the Holy Fathers" that he carried out his deposition.'<sup>20</sup>

This would make much more sense in terms of the condemnation given by Flavian. In the minutes it seemed that Eutyches had gone a long way in agreeing with the synod. But

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<sup>18</sup> Price, R. *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (2005). University of Liverpool Press. Vol I, p.234

<sup>19</sup> Price, R. *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (2005). University of Liverpool Press. Vol I, p.235

<sup>20</sup> Price, R. *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (2005). University of Liverpool Press. Vol I, p.260

when this final demand is written back into the record it becomes clear that he could never have agreed to it. As St Cyril said, 'We say that the Son is one, and one is His nature'. Flavian and Eusebius were pushing for a position that was certainly not Cyrilline in language, and were overturning the fragile agreement of 433 AD by insisting that the continuing dynamic duality of humanity and divinity in Christ must be described as 'two natures' to the exclusion of St Cyril's own language. What did Flavian and Eusebius mean by 'two natures'? Certainly Eutyches understood them as describing a Theodorean unity of two identities, which he could never admit.

At this point in the review bishop Basil also spoke up. He claimed that he had mentioned that St Athanasius also used the phrase 'one incarnate nature of the Word'. Other witnesses remembered that at this point they had recommended that their own statements of faith, recorded in the earlier sessions, should be read out to see if Eutyches was in agreement with them. None of this was recorded in the minutes. The patrician reminded the bishops that even though this had been proposed, the deposition of Eutyches had in fact been read out straight away.

Basil then added to his statement. He remembered that when Eutyches had been unable to confess two natures he had tried to be helpful and had said,

'If you say from two natures before the union but say one nature after the union without qualification, you incur the suspicion of implying confusion and mixture..If you ascribe to God the Word one nature incarnate and made man, you say the same as we and the Fathers'.<sup>21</sup>

Basil said that he had made these comments to try and calm Flavian down, who was obviously himself becoming agitated, and also said that when he had tried to find a way forward Eusebius also became angry with him. It seems that a reconciliation and agreement between Eutyches and the synod was the last outcome which some participants wanted.

The notary complained that he could not be expected to write everything down, but these missing comments do show rather clearly that the issue was finally whether it was proper to anathematize those who spoke of one nature and refused to speak of two. Much more discussion took place between the bishops, about whether or not Flavian or Eusebius had made this the sticking point, and the bishop Longinus had to declare that during the synod 'those who were at the back didn't know what was going on at the front'.

Finally, Constantine the Deacon complained that after the sentence of deposition had been read out against Eutyches he had appealed to the synods of Rome, Alexandria, Jerusalem and Thessalonica and that this was also not in the minutes. Florentius the patrician remarked that Eutyches had indeed made such a comment to him softly and that it had seemed important enough for him to tell the archbishop Flavian. Basil remembered that Eutyches had mentioned that he would only affirm two natures in Christ if the fathers of Rome and Alexandria ordered him to but he hadn't heard his appeal.

This official review of the minutes, under Imperial instruction, does not change a great deal. It would seem that the issue was entirely whether or not Eutyches would accept two natures after the incarnation, and would anathematize those who spoke of one nature. It also seems clear that the final session was rather uproarious and not all the bishops had a very clear idea of what was taking place. Both Flavian and Eusebius seem to have become heated in their exchanges, and Basil felt the need to try and be conciliatory, a response not very well received by Eusebius.

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<sup>21</sup> Price, R. *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (2005). University of Liverpool Press. Vol I, p.261

We are fortunate to also have information about why Eutyches was able to receive this official review of the minutes. When he wrote to the emperor, after the synod, he claimed that Magnus the Silentiary, one of the court officials, who had been sent to accompany Eutyches to the synod, had heard some important matters which should be reported. It is worth quoting Magnus' testimony as it has a bearing on Eutyches' appeal to the other synods.

He said,

'I was sent many times by our most divine and pious master to Archbishop Flavian concerning the presence of the most magnificent and glorious former prefect, former consul and patrician Florentius at the synod which was about to take place in the Episcopal palace of this imperial city. The archbishop postponed it, saying, "There is no need for the same most magnificent former prefect, former consul and patrician Florentius to take the trouble to come here, for a sentence has already been delivered on the case, and the monk Eutyches has been deposed because he did not heed a second summons". They finally brought me a document containing his deposition....I have already said that it was prior to the synod that he showed me Eutyches' sentence of deposition'<sup>22</sup>.

This does seem to show that from the beginning it had been the intention of Flavian and Eusebius to condemn, depose and excommunicate Eutyches, whatever he said at the synod. Certainly there was evidence that his Christology was weak, though not necessarily fatally flawed, but at the synod he seemed willing to go most of the way towards accepting some sort of compromise position with the bishops. The sticking point seemed to be that he was not willing to anathematise those who spoke of one nature, since as far as he was concerned this would require him to anathematise St Athanasius and St Cyril.

There was no possibility that the situation could be allowed to rest with the deposition of Eutyches. Flavian had laid down the gauntlet before the whole Alexandrian tradition of St Cyril. In anathematising all of those who spoke of one nature he was responsible for re-opening the Christological controversy much more than Eutyches. Flavian was after all the archbishop of the imperial city and his attitudes and actions had an effect across the empire. Therefore after the synod Eutyches was able to gain support for a review of the minutes, and then for a new council, an ecumenical council, to consider the controversy which had broken out into clear view again.

The letters of the Emperors to the Second Council of Ephesus show the concerns which moved the Imperial authority, and what were expected to be the main issues to be dealt with. They were essentially that the matter of doctrine which Flavian of Constantinople had raised against Eutyches be concluded, and that the heresy of Nestorius be finally rooted out of the Church. If some of the Eastern Orthodox have wished to describe the Council of Chalcedon in anti-Eutychian terms only, then it is reasonable to ask that the Second Council of Ephesus be understood as an anti-Nestorian council, and as seeking to complete that elimination of Nestorianism which the First Council of Ephesus wished to see take place, but which circumstances prevented.

This article is not concerned primarily with the Second Council of Ephesus, apart from the reception and restoration of Eutyches. He had already written to the Emperors, and in his letter he insisted that he had not said those things of which he was accused, and that the minutes of the Flavian's Synod had been falsified. The court was already aware that Flavian appeared to have condemned Eutyches even before he had been able to appear before the synod. One of the reasons which the emperors gave for calling the council was to

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<sup>22</sup> Price, R. *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (2005). University of Liverpool Press. Vol I, p.268



discover exactly what had taken place. The emperor wrote to St Dioscorus, to Leo of Rome, and to other bishops, calling them to assemble at Ephesus so that the whole controversy might be investigated and resolved, and that the Orthodox faith might be confirmed. The emperor also instructed that since there were certain bishops 'said to be infected with the impiety of Nestorius' who were troubling the cities of the East, (and he must mean Ibas and Theodoret, with their supporters), Barsumas, a leading archimandrite from Syria, would also be invited to attend as a representative of the monks of the East.

Eutyches had prepared a written statement of his faith, which was presented to the bishops. He says that from his childhood he had only wished to live a life of quiet, but had been disturbed by the intrigues of others. He declares that he entertained no opinions contrary to the Fathers of Nicaea. Then he writes out the creed of Nicaea into his statement and asserts that he has always held this Faith, and will always hold it. He reminds the bishops that the First Council of Ephesus had canonised the same creed, and had condemned those who should change it. He was even able to state that he held in his hands a copy of the Declaration of the First Council of Ephesus which St Cyril had had sent to him. Then he goes on to denounce publically a list of heretics, naming Manes, Valentinus, Apollinarius and Nestorius, as well as those who say that the flesh of the Lord Jesus descended from heaven.

On the one hand, it would seem clear that Eutyches wishes to be known as being faithful to the Nicaean Faith, and rejecting all heresies and heretics. The fact that he wishes to write out his statement, and that he has wished to have a statement read out at the Home Synod, suggests that he was not comfortable in public speaking, and that it is reasonable to conclude that he was not entirely confident in theological disputation.

On the other hand, Eutyches wants it made clear that his enemies, especially Eusebius of Dorylaeum, had intrigued with Flavian so that he was condemned and deposed even before he had been accused. He writes,

'He called me a contemptible heretic without advancing any specific heresy in his libel, when, suddenly in the altercations of dispute I committed those lapses of the tongue so customary in such confusion and through strong voices, I fell into mistake.'<sup>23</sup>

We find a useful description of Eutyches in this short passage. Not only must he write out his statement to the bishops, but he recognises that he often slips up and makes mistakes when he gets into a theological argument. We can hardly imagine St Cyril describing himself in the same way. The lapses of the tongue might be customary to Eutyches, but this illustrates his lack of ability as a controversial theologian.

Eutyches describes his position several times in his statement as being that of Nicaea and Ephesus. In one sense he is correct, that was his position. The Nicaean creed spoke of Christ as being consubstantial with the Father, and as having been made man of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary. This was exactly what Eutyches confessed. And just as he had not found the creed using the term 'consubstantial with us', so he also hesitated to use it. He has rightly been described as an 'Old Nicaean', although it was a weakness in his Christology not to have embraced the complete terminology of St Cyril, since he claimed to be a disciple of the great Alexandrian.

The Second Council of Ephesus properly begins with St Dioscorus reminding the bishops that the faith had been defined at Nicaea and at Ephesus and that those who went beyond what had been decreed should be excommunicate. The bishops gathered together all

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<sup>23</sup> Perry. Acts of the Second Council of Ephesus (1881) Orient Press p.414

agree, 'We all say the same, let him who rejects them be excommunicate'<sup>24</sup>. St Dioscorus wishes these two councils to be the basis of this new council, and he wishes it to be clear that the council has not gathered to define the faith again, but to determine whether in the present controversy anyone goes beyond the definition of the faith already laid down. St Dioscorus proposed that first of all the transactions from the various meetings in Constantinople be heard, and then the letter of Leo of Rome.

The minutes of Constantinople were then read out, and the bishops at Ephesus found some of the recorded statements disturbing. Those passages which seemed especially troubling were those which have already been referred to such as that of Julius of Cos who confessed two natures in one person, and Eudoxius of Bosporus who had said that the Word had taken a perfect man. The Ephesine bishops began to murmur that those who held such view were at odds with the Fathers. Then the statement by Seleucus was read out in which he said he believed in two natures after the incarnation and excommunicated anyone who thought differently. The bishops started calling out now, and their comments are written into the record.

'Nobody proclaims our Lord to be two after the incarnation - nobody divides that which is indivisible - Nestorius did this'<sup>25</sup>.

The council then heard some of the transcript of Eutyches' testimony, especially where he had said that he worshipped one incarnate nature of God, and that the Lord was of two natures before the union but that he confessed one nature after the union. They also heard him affirm the perfect humanity and divinity of Christ. There were undoubted weaknesses, not fatal ones however, in his comments, but the last passage they heard was his confession of one nature after the union, and this resonated with the Cyrilline mood of the council. The members of the council affirmed, 'We all assent to this - yes, all of us'.

Then the council heard the passages where Eutyches confessed that Christ was 'of two natures', and where Eusebius had insisted that he confess two natures after the incarnation. Many of the bishops cried out at this point. The council had been asked to consider those statements which described Christ as being two natures, and those which described him as one, and they were sure that the Orthodox faith required that the former be rejected, while the latter be affirmed.

The members of the council all cried out together, 'Whoever affirms two natures let him be anathema!'

At this point bishop Basil, hearing his own testimony being read out and criticised, made it clear that he wished to repudiate his earlier language, saying,

'I worship one nature of the divinity of the only, begotten Son, who became incarnate and assumed corporeity'.

Seleucus also spoke up and rejected his previous statement, and anathematized all those who spoke of two natures after the union.

It seems clear that the issue surrounding Eutyches, both at Constantinople and Ephesus, comes down to whether or not it is proper to speak of Christ as two natures, excluding the language of one nature; or as one nature, excluding the language of two natures. It would seem that a bishop such as Basil of Seleucia could find Orthodoxy in Eutyches' insistence on speaking of one nature - as indeed St Cyril did - by drawing attention to the language of 'one nature of the Word made incarnate'. He was also able to

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<sup>24</sup> Perry. Acts of the Second Council of Ephesus (1881) Orient Press p.419

<sup>25</sup> Perry. Acts of the Second Council of Ephesus (1881) Orient Press p.422

repudiate the language of two natures which he used at Constantinople, and use the language of one nature at Ephesus, without seeming to find any great difference in his own understanding of these phrases. What seems important to him is an affirmation of the presence of a real humanity and divinity in Christ.

There is no evidence that any of the other bishops at Ephesus rejected this duality of humanity and divinity in Christ, even though they rejected the use of the concept of two natures, which for them had the Theodorean sense of two identities and subjects. This is made very clear from the statements they make as they give their opinions of Eutyches.

Juvenal of Jerusalem speaks first, and accepting the repeated statement of Eutyches that he follows the definitions of Nicaea and Ephesus proposes that he be restored to his ministry. Then Domnus of Antioch states that he had only signed the deposition of Eutyches when it was sent to him by Flavian because of the documents he had received. Now that he had heard Eutyches assent to the Faith of Nicaea and Ephesus he believed that he should be restored. Stephen of Hierapolis agrees that what he has heard from Eutyches shows that he is Orthodox. John of Massana said that Eutyches had not gone beyond Nicaea and Ephesus. The other bishops then gave similar opinions. Finally Dioscorus also gives his approval to the restoration of Eutyches to his ministry. In all one hundred and thirteen bishops, together with Barsumas representing the monks, agree to Eutyches being restored.

Eutyches is therefore accepted as Orthodox because he accepts the Faith of Nicaea and Ephesus, and for no other reason. His views are not considered a definition of the faith, or as modifying it at all. What matters is that he confesses the faith of Nicaea and Ephesus. The monks of Eutyches' monastery, who have been excommunicated along with him, then present themselves, asking to be released from the discipline laid upon them by Flavian. They also insist that they and Eutyches held to the faith of Nicaea and Ephesus, and that Flavian wished to overthrow it. The monks are required to state their own faith so that it can be understood whether or not they were worthy of such penalties. They state,

'As our religious archimandrite informed your holiness in his plaint, our beliefs accord with the decrees of the holy fathers at Nicaea, which the holy council here confirmed, and we have never conceived or held anything contrary to this creed'<sup>26</sup>.

St Dioscorus then questions them more closely and asks,

'Regarding the coming of the Saviour in the flesh, do you believe the same as the blessed Athanasius, the blessed Cyril, the blessed Gregory, and all the bishops?'

The monk Eleusinius replies,

'We believe the same as the holy fathers who met at Nicaea, and those who assembled here'.

St Dioscorus asks again,

'The most devout presbyter and archimandrite Eutyches has sent a document. Do you agree with what he has written? Do you follow his faith?'

The monk insists that he does, that he does not offend against it in any way, and that they all believe the same.

It is on this basis, of receiving the faith of Nicaea and Ephesus, that Eutyches' monastic community is then received back into communion. Dioscorus is clear that it is only with the assent of the bishops that they are released from the penalty which had been placed

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<sup>26</sup> Price, R. *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (2005). University of Liverpool Press. Vol I, p.295

on them. Just as Eutyches also was restored to his priesthood and monastic leadership only by the assent of the bishops at Ephesus.

Thalassius of Caesarea and several other bishops then suggest that the creed of Nicaea and of Ephesus be read as the substance of their Orthodoxy. These are read out in great detail, together with the writings from the fathers which supported the Orthodox position at Ephesus I, and the writings of Nestorius which were condemned. It is interesting that the Greek manuscript tradition of the Acts of Chalcedon in which these minutes are found has removed almost all of the statements made by the various bishops in favour of restoring Eutyches, and all of this review of the documents of Ephesus I, though these have been fortunately preserved in the Latin manuscripts. This allows us to see clearly that the Acts of Chalcedon are not a simple verbatim record of the events, but are themselves an edited text to be used to support the a particular position.

Dioscorus asks whether the bishops are agreed that no-one should go beyond this faith of Nicaea and Ephesus, and one by one the bishops state such things as said, for instance, by Stephen of Ephesus,

‘The decrees and definitions of the 318 fathers who assembled in the city of Nicaea are clear, and were confirmed by the ecumenical council that met in the metropolis of Ephesus. Therefore if anyone utters what is contrary to the decrees, let him be anathema, because this is the true and orthodox faith’<sup>27</sup>.

Even Julius, representing Leo of Rome, agrees ‘The apostolic see holds this’. While Hilary, also representing Leo, says, ‘That which has just been read, partly from the creed of those who met at Nicaea and partly that which was confirmed at the holy council held previously at Ephesus, the apostolic see teaches and reveres’.

The rest of the bishops then make it clear that they also hold the same views.

It is necessary to summarise what has been considered so far. Eutyches was found to have certainly expressed himself in an ambiguous manner, but when questioned at Constantinople it seems clear that he confessed the perfect and true humanity of Christ the incarnate Word, and did not believe in a humanity come down from heaven. It would also seem clear that Flavian and Eusebius had determined to depose and excommunicate him, even before he appeared before the synod, and that he was excommunicated on the basis that he refused to anathematise those who spoke of Christ as being one nature.

At Ephesus he was restored to his ministry on the basis of his affirming the faith of Nicaea and Ephesus, and then the bishops at the council, including those representing Leo of Rome, and some of those who had been present at the synod in Constantinople, stated very clearly that the basis of the Orthodox faith was that same faith as proclaimed at Nicaea and Ephesus. This is not the place to go on to describe the deposition of Flavian and Eusebius, save to say that the record shows that this was entirely because they were understood as having perverted the doctrines of Nicaea and Ephesus. Indeed during the statements made by the bishops as they condemned Flavian and Eusebius there is no mention of Eutyches.

Of course Flavian did appeal to Leo of Rome, and had already sent letters to him discussing the controversy with Eutyches. These letters were the cause of Leo’s Tome which he sent to Flavian. It is necessary to make a few comments about this Tome as it relates to Eutyches. It is clear that Leo failed entirely to comprehend Eutyches’ position. When Eutyches said that before the union he confessed two natures, and after the union he confessed one, he was essentially echoing St Cyril, who had said,

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<sup>27</sup> Price, R. *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (2005). University of Liverpool Press. Vol I, p.342

'In respect of the elements from which is the one and only Son and Lord Jesus Christ, as we accept them in thought, we say that two natures have been united, but after the union, when the division into two has now been removed, we believe that the nature of the Son is one'<sup>28</sup>.

Leo of Rome is setting himself against St Cyril when he says in his Tome, against Eutyches,

'It is just as impious to say that the only-begotten Son of God is from two natures before the incarnation as it is unlawful to assert that after the Word became flesh there is one nature in him'<sup>29</sup>,

Once again the issue is that the opponents of Eutyches, and now of St Dioscorus, wish to exclude all use of the 'one nature' language, even though it is that of St Cyril. It is not at all clear that Eutyches is being used as anything more than a representative figure of the 'one nature' Christology of St Cyril and of the Alexandrians.

Now it is necessary to consider whether or not St Dioscorus is a Eutychian, and what that might mean. The accusation was raised at Chalcedon by the disturbing character Eusebius of Dorylaeum, who was now intriguing against Dioscorus, as he had against Eutyches. He proposed that even though Eutyches flatly denied that the humanity of Christ was from heaven, he did not clearly say where it did come from – though in fact he did say several times that it was from the Virgin Mary.

This prompted St Dioscorus to state that, 'if Eutyches holds opinions contrary to the doctrines of the Church he deserves not only punishment but hellfire. For my concern is for the catholic and apostolic faith and not for any human being'<sup>30</sup>.

Now this has been taken by some as if St Dioscorus was already withdrawing his support from Eutyches<sup>31</sup>, but it is much more consistent with everything else we know of him to read it as simply showing that the controversy was not about Eutyches at all, but about the faith. Eutyches was only accepted at Ephesus II because he affirmed the faith of Nicaea and Ephesus, and it was this same faith which was being assaulted at Chalcedon, as far as St Dioscorus was concerned.

Even after Chalcedon, when the council sent a letter to the Emperor Marcian, they chose to describe St Dioscorus as supporting Eutyches who had said, 'I acknowledge that our Lord Jesus Christ was from two natures before the union, but after the union there is one nature'. Yet we have seen that this is the teaching of St Cyril. St Dioscorus is also accused of having restored Eutyches to his monastic ministry without waiting for a conciliar decree, yet the evidence produced in the minutes of Ephesus II showed clearly that he had waited until the bishops all affirmed that his restoration should take place. Eutyches was already becoming simply a pawn in the Chalcedonian strategy of excluding the Cyrilline language of 'one incarnate nature'.

In exchanges of letters in the following years all those who resist Chalcedon are accused of being followers of Eutyches. Yet this is manifestly false. At Ephesus II Eutyches

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<sup>28</sup> Cyril of Alexandria *Select Letters*, 48

<sup>29</sup> Price, R. *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (2005). University of Liverpool Press. Vol II p.23

<sup>30</sup> Price, R. *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (2005). University of Liverpool Press. Vol I p.159

<sup>31</sup> Price, R. *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (2005). University of Liverpool Press. Vol I p.159 n.120. Richard Price thinks this shows that Dioscorus was ready to abandon the cause of Eutyches, but it shows no such thing, rather that in the mind of Dioscorus the issue was never about Eutyches, and always about the faith.

only featured because in standing up for the one nature of St Cyril he was opposed by those who insisted on the 'two natures' terminology. The bishops present there spent most of their time considering the faith of Nicaea and Ephesus. That of Eutyches was only of importance as it showed itself to be an affirmation of the faith of the fathers. At Chalcedon Dioscorus also made clear that the personal beliefs of Eutyches were irrelevant when it came to the defence of the faith.

In a letter from Leo of Rome to the council members, sent in 453 AD, he speaks of the 'impious teaching of Eutyches and Dioscorus', but by this he can only mean the Cyrilline teaching of 'one incarnate nature' which he showed great difficulty in comprehending. The issues at Ephesus I, Constantinople, Ephesus II and Chalcedon seem to be essentially about the same thing. Whether or not the Cyrilline language of one incarnate nature, or the duality language rooted in the Theodorean tradition, should predominate. Eutychianism, as far as this process is concerned, seems to be defined simply and polemically as a use of the one nature language and the rejection of the two nature language.

St Dioscorus certainly did not doubt the reality of the humanity of Christ. Writing from his exile in Gangra he said,

'No man shall say that the holy flesh, which our Lord took from the Virgin Mary, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, in a manner which He Himself knows, was different to and foreign from our body. And, indeed, since this is so, they who affirm that Christ did not become incarnate for us, give the lie to Paul. For he has said, 'Not from angels did He take (the nature), but from the seed of the House of Abraham'; to which seed Mary was no stranger, as the Scriptures teach us. And again,' It was right that in everything He should be made like unto His brethren,' and that word 'in everything' does not suffer the subtraction of any part of our nature: since in nerves, and hair, and bones, and veins, and belly, and heart, and kidneys, and liver, and lungs, and, in short, in all those things that belong to our nature, the flesh which was born from Mary was compacted with the soul of our Redeemer, that reasonable and intelligent soul, without the seed of man, and the gratification and cohabitation of sleep....For if, as the heretics think, this was not so, how is He named 'our brother,' supposing that He used a body different from ours? And how, again, is that true which He said to His Father, 'I will declare Thy name to my brethren?' Let us not reject, neither let us despise, those who think in this way. For He was like us, for us, and with us, not in phantasy, nor in mere semblance, according to the heresy of the Manichaeans, but rather in actual reality from Mary, the Theotokos. To comfort the desolate and to repair the vessel that had been broken, He came to us new. And as Emmanuel, indeed, He is confessed; for He became poor for us, according to the saying of Paul, 'that we, by His humiliation, might be made rich.' He became, by the dispensation, like us; that we, by His tender mercy, might be like Him. He became man, and yet He did not destroy that which is His nature, that He is Son of God; that we, by grace, might become the sons of God. This I think and believe; and, if any man does not think thus, he is a stranger to the faith of the apostles.'<sup>32</sup>

If this teaching of St Dioscorus is the same as that of Eutyches then neither may be considered to have departed from the position of Nicaea and Ephesus. But St Dioscorus never defined himself on any occasion as a follower of Eutyches. Even if Eutyches Christology was different, even heretical, then it cannot diminish the entirely Orthodox Christology of St Dioscorus. Nevertheless the name of Eutyches came quite quickly to be associated with a weak Christology and his name gathered up a variety of errors which had already been current both in the time of St Cyril, and even before. The Chronicle of

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<sup>32</sup> Zachariah of Mitylene, *Syriac Chronicle* (1899). Book 3.

Zachariah, written in the time of St Severus, described a certain John the Rhetor who sought to make a name for himself in Alexandria at the time of the usurping bishop Proterius. This man is accused of failing to confess the natures from which the one Christ appeared, and of sometimes denying that Christ took anything from the Virgin Mary. Certainly this is a defective Christology, and it is given the name of Eutyches, but in fact as we have seen he was always careful to insist that the perfect humanity of Christ was taken from the Virgin Mary.

In the time of St Timothy of Alexandria, the proper successor of St Dioscorus, there was a need for him to write against a group of clergy based in Constantinople whom he calls Eutychians. Eventually he excommunicated them from his exile. They had been spreading the report that St Timothy was of their opinion, but in his letter he said,

‘Accordingly, let no one, thinking to honour God, insult His mercy by refusing to obey the doctrine of the holy fathers, who have declared that our Lord Jesus Christ is of the same nature with us in the flesh, and is one with His flesh. For I have heard also the holy apostle teaching and saying, ‘Forasmuch as the children were partakers of the flesh and the blood, He also (partook of the same) in like manner; that by means of death He might destroy the power of death, who is Satan; and might deliver all who were held in the fear of death, and were subject to bondage, that so they might live forever. For He did not take (the nature) from angels, but He took it from the seed of Abraham. And it was fitting that He should be made in all points like unto His brethren, and that He should be a merciful priest and faithful with God; and that He should make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.’ For this expression, ‘He was made like us in all points,’ teaches all who desire to be meet for the blessings of heaven and to be redeemed, that they must confess the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ as being from Mary the holy Virgin and Theotokos; Christ Who was of the same nature with her and with us in the flesh, and is of the same Nature with the Father in His Godhead’ without change God the Word, One Person who became flesh’.

It is also said that when St Timothy was recalled from his exile and stayed in Constantinople, he was able to show that both Nestorianism and Eutychianism were two sides of the same heresy. ‘For the one, indeed, making objection declares that it would be a degradation to God to be born of a woman, and to be made in all points like as we are, by becoming partaker of flesh and blood; whereas He was only partaker by identity of name, and by power and indwelling, and by operation. But the other, indeed, for the purpose of liberating and exalting God, so that He should not suffer degradation and contempt by association with a human body, publishes the doctrine that He became incarnate from His own essence, and that He assumed a heavenly body; and that just as there is no part of the seal left upon the wax, nor of the golden signet upon the clay, so neither did there cleave to Christ any portion of humanity whatsoever’.

It would seem that this identification of Eutyches with definite Christological heresy arises during the episcopate of St Timothy. What could this be based upon? Perhaps Eutyches had indeed developed his weak Christology in a more advanced manner and had slipped into a real heresy, although he always seemed to affirm that the humanity of Christ was truly of the Virgin Mary? Perhaps those who followed him and used his name developed the heretical position which St Timothy wrote against? In the time of St Timothy it would not have appeared very important to consider whether Eutyches held the views of those who proposed what seemed a similar Christology. Perhaps Eutyches, like Nestorius, had already become a useful symbol for a particular Christology, irrespective of what he actually believed.

What is clear is that the heretical and defective Christology attributed to Eutyches, which was certainly present in a weak form in his own statements, though without appearing to have gone so far as definite error was never held by St Dioscorus, or St Timothy. Indeed turning to the writings of St Severus we find the same rejection of this false Christology under the name of Eutyches.

In one of his letters he addresses the issue of how Eutyches had come to be received at Ephesus II if he actually held an heretical Christology? On the one hand he explains that the council had only been interested in dealing with those who held the teachings of Nestorius, and taught nothing new with regard to the faith. On the other hand, with the information before them, both the minutes of Constantinople and the petition of Eutyches, there was nothing which was contrary to the faith, even if heresy was hidden in his heart. In another letter he suggests that perhaps Eutyches had 'returned to his vomit'. In some of his other writings St Severus compares Julian of Halicarnassus, who taught that the humanity of Christ was glorified from the moment of the incarnation with Eutyches because he diminished the reality of the humanity of Christ.

This indeed is what the name of Eutyches has come to represent. Any Christology which causes the reality of the humanity of Christ to be minimised in some way. Yet this false Christology has always been condemned by all those who follow the teaching of St Cyril. It plays no part in the Orthodox Christological tradition of those Churches which have rejected the council of Chalcedon. The reason for the rejection of Chalcedon has nothing to do with Eutyches at all, but is entirely to do with the belief that Chalcedon was soft on the error of Nestorianism, and contrary to the Christology of St Cyril. Eutyches has never been considered a saint, his teaching, such as it is, has never been promoted, or transmitted, his error is not very clear. The Church of St Dioscorus, St Timothy and St Severus cannot be considered Eutychian.