

**John Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*  
Chapter 5: The Council of Chalcedon and Its Aftermath**

On Atonement theology: p.165 – 167

“The council of Ephesus (431) had marked the irretrievable defeat of Nestorianism in the East, and the triumph of the Christology expressed by St Cyril of Alexandria and based upon the concept that there was only one subject or “hypostasis” of Jesus Christ. This subject was the pre-existing Logos, the second Person of the Trinity. The unity of subject implied the “divine Motherhood” of Mary, the Virgin (she was indeed the “Mother of God,” and Theotokos, “God’s Bearer”), and “theopaschism” (no one else but the Son of God Himself suffered on the cross in His fleshly nature). This Christology of Cyril was actually in full conformity with the faith of Nicaea. Indeed, the Nicæan creed literally affirmed that same unity of subject. It was the Son of God, “consubstantial with the Father” who “was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary... was crucified under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried.” The same person, or subject was proclaimed to be both Son of God and son of Mary – a kerygmatic affirmation implying that, **in order to save His creation, the Creator assumes in full the fallen, mortal conditions of humanity, makes it “His own” even in death, in order to have it participate in His own eternity through the resurrection.**

[...]

**“After the death of Cyril (444), some of his radical and generally unenlightened disciples began to speak of Christ as if His humanity, united “naturally” with divinity, was immediately and totally “deified” from the time of His conception by Mary,** so that it could not be described any more as being identical or “consubstantial” with *our* humanity. Eutyches, an archimandrite of Constantinople, was particularly vocal on this point and became the founder of the heresy known as “monophysitism.” His group adopted a “fundamentalist” attitude regarding Nicaea. The Nicæan creed, they said, proclaimed Christ to be “consubstantial with the Father,” but did not include the formula: “consubstantial with us.” Thus the Eutychians would not allow any doctrinal formulation beyond the Nicæan.

“Eutyches was condemned by a local synod, presided over by Flavian of Constantinople (448). However – and quite unfortunately – Dioscoros of Alexandria, deacon and successor of Cyril, stood up in his defense. Obtaining imperial support, he presided over a second council at Ephesus, also known as the “Robber council” (449), at which he rehabilitated Eutyches, deposed Flavian of Constantinople, Domnus of Antioch, Theodoret of Cyrus and others, refused to read Pope Leo’s Letter to Flavian, which opposed Eutychianism, and established a sort of Alexandrian dictatorship over the entire East. The papal legate, real, or imaginary “Nestorians” by Dioscoros, whose personal christological convictions were not really different from Cyril’s, made it necessary to clarify issues, reexamine terminologies and reestablish a catholic consensus. Furthermore, following the accidental death of emperor Theodosius II (July 28, 450), his sister Pulcheria took power in Constantinople. Reserving her virginity, she entered a formal marriage of convenience with the elderly senator Marcian, who was proclaimed emperor (August 24). The new government moved decidedly towards the convocation of a new, and truly representative ecumenical council.”