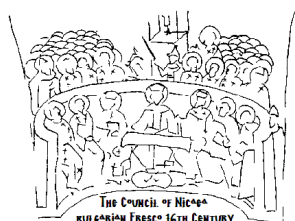




## *The Responsibilities of the Councils*



Secondly, and more important, the Councils **defined once and for all the Church's teaching upon the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith - the Trinity and the Incarnation.**

All Christians agree in regarding these things as 'mysteries' which lie beyond human understanding and language. **The bishops, when they drew up definitions at the Councils, did not imagine that they had explained the mystery; they merely sought to exclude certain false ways of speaking and thinking about it.**

To prevent men from deviating into error and heresy, they drew a fence around the mystery; that was all. The discussions at the Councils at times sound abstract and remote, yet they were inspired by a very practical purpose: the salvation of man.

Man, so the New Testament teaches, is separated from God by sin, and cannot through his own efforts break down the wall of separation which his sinfulness has created. God has therefore taken the initiative: He became man, was crucified, and rose from the dead, thereby delivering humanity from the bondage of sin and death.

This is the central message of the Christian faith, and it is this message of redemption that the Councils were concerned to safeguard. Heresies were dangerous and required condemnation, because they impaired the teaching of the New Testament, setting up a barrier between man and God, and so making it impossible for man to attain full salvation."

*Kallistos Ware. The Orthodox Church. Chapter 2*



## THE OECUMENICAL COUNCILS II

### *The Fourth Oecumenical Council*

Held in **Chalcedon**, near Constantinople, **451**. Under Emperor Marcian. 630 Bishops were present.

#### *The Monophysite Controversies*

The Council was concerned, once again, with the nature of Jesus Christ. The teaching arose that Christ's human nature (less perfect) dissolved itself in His divine nature (more perfect): like a cube of sugar in a pot of water. Thus, in reality, Christ had only one nature, the Divine. Hence, the term: Monophysites ("mono", one and "physis", "nature".) **Monophysitism overemphasized the divine nature of Christ, at the expense of the human.**

#### *Proclamation*

The Council condemned Monophysitism and proclaimed that **Christ has two complete natures: the divine and the human, as defined by previous Councils. These two natures function without confusion, are not divided nor separate** (against Nestorius), **and at no time did they undergo any change** (against Eutyches: Monophysites).



### *The Fifth Oecumenical Council*

Held in **Constantinople** in **553**. Under Emperor Justinian the Great. 165 Bishops were present. The Council was called in hope of putting an end to the Nestorian and the Eutychian (Monophysite) controversies). The Council confirmed Church's teaching regarding the two natures of Christ (human and divine) and condemned certain writings with Nestorian learnings. Emperor Justinian himself confessed his Orthodox faith in a form of





the famous Church hymn "Only begotten Son and Word of God" which is sung during the Divine Liturgy.

"O Only-Begotten Son and Word of God, who art immortal, who for our salvation willed to be incarnate of the Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and without change became man, and wast crucified, O Christ our God, and trampled down death by death, who art one of the Holy Trinity, glorified together with the Father and the Holy Spirit: save us!"

### ***The Sixth Oecumenical Council***

Held in **Constantinople** in **680**. Under Emperor Constantine IV. 170 Bishops were present.

#### ***The Monothelite Controversy***

This concerned the last attempt at compromise with the Monophysites. Although Christ did have two natures (divine and human) He nevertheless, acted as God only. In other words, His divine nature made all the decisions and His human nature only carried and acted them out. Hence, the name: "Monothelism" ("*mono*" one and "*thelesis*" will.)

### ***The Council's Pronouncement***

*"Christ had two natures with two activities: as God working miracles, rising from the dead and ascending into heaven; as Man, performing the ordinary acts of daily life. Each nature exercises its own free will."*

"Christ's divine nature had a specific task to perform and so did His human nature. Each nature performed those tasks set forth without being confused, subjected to any change or working against each other.

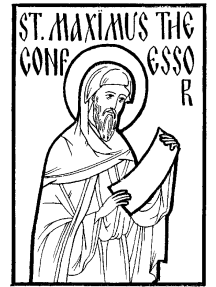
*The two distinct natures and related to them activities were mystically united in the one Divine Person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."*



### ***Defenders of Orthodoxy***

**St. Maximus the Confessor** (580-662) A simple, but enlightened monk; died in exile (Caucasus).

**St. Andrew of Crete** (+740) Participated in the deliberations of the Council; author of the famous "Canon" which is read during Great Lent.



### ***The Quinisext Oecumenical Council***

Held in **Constantinople** in **692**. In the dome of the Imperial Palace, the "*In Trullo*" (dome) Council, from which it derives the name: "Trullan" Council.

### ***Legislative Matters***

*It is regarded as supplementing the Fifth and the Sixth Ecumenical Councils*, hence, it is called "*Quinisext*." Its work was purely legislative, *it ratified 102 canons and the decisions of the previous Ecumenical Councils*.

### ***Doctrinal and Disciplinary Canons***

Sanctioned the so-called "Eighty-five Apostolic Canons" and approved the disciplinary decisions (Canons) of certain regional Councils. The Council added a series of disciplinary decisions or canons to the existing ones.

***The "Quinisext" Council laid the foundation for the Orthodox Canon Law.***

"All confess that there are seven holy Ecumenical Councils, and that these constitute the seven pillars which support the Faith of the Divine Word upon which He erected His sacred palace, the Catholic and Ecumenical Church"

*John II, Metropolitan of Russia (1080-89)*

