This is lecture nine—The Development of Christian Doctrine. Greetings once again in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and join me if you would in prayer as we begin. Good and gracious Lord, we ask that you would open our eyes to see afresh things that you would have us to see. Open our ears to hear your word and open our hearts to love in your name, for it’s in that name we pray. Amen.

As we mentioned in our last lecture on the Constantinian Revolution, there was a way opened with that new church/state relationship established there. For more serious reflection on doctrinal developments in the life of the church, the communities which had been preoccupied with survival under great persecution over the early centuries now had opportunity to turn their attention to other things such as church building, architecture, art, and, of course, the formulation of theology in a more systematic manner.

What Christians believed had, of course, been important from the very beginnings of the church, but the Constantinian Era made it possible for a more systematic and more thorough corporate reflection on the faith, and, in fact, the first of the great ecumenical councils, that which took place in Nicea in 325 AD, didn’t actually form until after the coming to the throne and power of Constantine. And the rest of the councils which emerged out of that down to the full twenty-one that make up the councils recognized by the Roman Catholic Church today, as well as the first seven which are recognized as authoritative in Eastern Orthodoxy and including the first four upon which we are going to focus a bit today at Nicea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon, which are recognized virtually by all Christians with a few exceptions, but by virtually all. These were made possible in part by this new relationship with the state which had been established under Constantine.
Now there are a lot of wonderful resources available to us as we begin our study of the development of doctrine in the church. Those of you who are following along in our text in Latourette will want to look at pages 135 to 188 particularly. There are some nice collections of documents. One of my favorite is John H. Leigh, *Creeds of the Churches*, put out by John Knox Press in paperback and is available in print. William C. Placher has a nice little collection of readings in *The History of Christian Theology*. The first volume is particularly relevant to our needs here put out in 1988 by Westminster Press. Henry Bettenson’s *Late Christian Fathers*, Oxford, 1970 is a fine little collection, and those of you who are familiar with the library of *Christian Classic Series* put out by Westminster Press will want especially to look at volumes two, three, four, five, and nine, which are especially relevant to our topic today. For more systematic analyses, I would encourage you to read Jaroslav Pelikan’s *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*. His volume one, which covers from 100 to 600 AD published by University of Chicago Press, 1971 is an excellent source and it will expand your mind. J. N. D Kelly’s *Early Christian Doctrines* is perhaps the classic in the field, put out by Harper Row in 1960, and is widely available in various libraries. These and a whole series of other wonderful books are available to us for our study of the formation of Christian doctrine and it is an enormously important and fascinating subject.

Now let me begin at the Scriptures themselves. All Christian theology, of course, begins in the Bible. There are no fixed creeds in the New Testament, but the basic elements of theology are all there and it’s from those, of course, that we draw our faith. One of the nice examples of a paragraph stating the faith in succinct form is in 1 Corinthians 15, and this writing from the Apostle Paul beginning at verse 3 we have these words, “For I received what I passed on to you as a first importance, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He appeared to Peter and then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than 500 of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James and then to all of the apostles, and last of all He appeared to me” (Remember Acts 9) “as one abnormally born.” This is a nice succinct collection of early Christian teachings. They sat around Christ, they focus on the Scriptures, they talk about His life, death, and resurrection, and the faith of the church which grows out of it.
This becomes a kind of summary of the faith, picked up again and again, as for example in the sermons in Acts. If you look at Acts 2:14 and following were those marvelous early sermons of the Scriptures. You have Peter selecting the text for his preaching from Joel 2:28-32 and from Psalm 16:8-11 and from Psalm 110:1. He puts these three texts then together, ties them to Jesus Christ, the Messiah, and then calls for response in verse 38 of Acts 2, “Repent and be baptized.” We see the very same kind of process in Acts 3:11-26 and in other places as well.

Most of the early Christian theology centered on Jesus Christ and, in fact, the very earliest creed of the church is the simple creed, “Jesus is Lord.” Look in 1 Corinthians 12:3 or Romans 10:9 or Romans 1:3, 4 or Philippians 2:6-11.

We also have in the Scriptures a clear Trinitarian theology emerging. Matthew 28:19 in the Great Commission. “Go, therefore, into all the world, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” And in 2 Corinthians 13:4, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

We find these basic elements of Christian teaching in the early writings of the church as well. In the collection that we’re using form Richardson, I turn your attention once again to Ignatius whose name should be very familiar to us by now. If you look on page 100 of our little collection, you have in his letter to the Traillians (9, verses 1 and 2), this interesting paragraph, a description of early theology and it’s written against the Docetists. Now the Docetists are those who emphasize the deity of Christ and who deemphasize any humanity of Christ, so as many felt to deny the humanity of Christ, and he’s arguing against them and writes, “Be death then to any talk that ignores Jesus Christ, of David’s lineage of Mary, who was really born, ate, drank,” (he’s talking against the Docetists here) “was really persecuted under Pontius Pilate, was really crucified in the sight of heaven and earth and the underworld. He was really raised from the dead, for His Father raised Him just as His Father will raise us who believe on Him through Christ Jesus apart from whom we have no genuine life.” You see how central in the writing of this early second century document Jesus Christ is—His real life, death, and resurrection as the basis for the faith.
You see that picked up also in the Epistula Apostolorum which came from Asia Minor in about 150 AD. This interesting formula which was probably used for baptisms, in fact most of the early creeds tended to focus on the baptismal service and those who were to be baptized gave affirmation of their faith through many of these early creedal formulas. This one reads, “We believe in the Father, the Ruler of the Universe, and in Jesus Christ our Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit, empirically in the Holy Church, and the forgiveness of sins.” Very interesting the formulation.

We see in 2 Clement, remember that early sermon from Alexandria and now 2nd Century, we see this same kind of emphasis upon Christ. In fact, it begins exactly at that point where he talks about Jesus Christ as God Himself. Let me read it from page 193. “Brothers, we ought to think of Jesus Christ just as we think of God, as the Judge of the living and the dead.” We find some of the same themes picked up in Justin Martyr from Rome in about 165 AD, and these are on page 248 and following. Let me pick up a phrase from 249, about a third of the way down the page, “It is Jesus Christ who has taught us these things, having been born for this purpose and crucified under Pontius Pilate, who was procurator in Judea at the time of Tiberius Caesar. We will show that we honor him in accordance with reason, having learned that He is the Son of the true God Himself, and holding Him to be the second place and the prophetic Spirit in the third rank.” Here you have an interesting reference to the Trinity, but with some problematical elements involved as well.

We find interesting further elaborations late in the second century in the philosopher from Athens, Athenagoras, in his famous plea, and you can find that on pages 308 and 309 in the collection that we have. Irenaeus picks up some of these themes on page 370. Remember, he was the head of the church in Leone in the southern part of Europe, and if you look in his writings which come from the late second century on page 370 and following, you have some interesting formulations of doctrine. Let me pick up a series of comments from 374 and following. This is chapter 4 in “Irenaeus Against the Heresies.” “Since there are so many clear testimonies, we should not seek from others for the truth which can easily be received from the church. There are apostles, like a rich man making a deposit fully bestowed upon her, all that belongs to the church, so that whoever wishes may receive from her the waters of life. She is the entrance to life; all others are thieves and robbers.” And then on the top of page 375, this early creedal statement: “Diligently following the old tradition, they
believe in one God, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all that is in them through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who on account of His abundant love for His creation submitted to being born of a virgin Himself by giving Himself uniting man to God and having suffered under Pontius Pilate and risen, and having been received up into splendor, His coming glory of the Savior of all those who are saved, and the Judge of all those who are judged.”

These themes are picked up also by Hippolytus in the early third century. We use one of his paragraphs to illustrate. “We also know in truth one God. We know Christ, we know the Son, suffering as He suffered, dying as He died, and risen on the third day and abiding at the right hand of the Father, coming to judge the living and the dead, and in saying this we say, that which has been handed down to us.” All of these sound strangely familiar, at least to those of you who are familiar with the Apostle’s Creed and who say that in your church services from time-to-time.

The Apostle’s Creed, which actually comes to us in the form that we use from about 700 AD, is clearly drawn upon much earlier precedence from the first and second centuries, and you see drawn together there many of the elements that I have been reading both from the Scriptures and from the early Christian writers these famous words, “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended to hell. On the third day, He rose again from the dead, ascended to heaven, and sits on the right hand of God, the Father, Almighty. From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.” Those famous words which legend has it were written by the apostles on the tenth day after the ascension probably cannot be verified in that way historically, but certainly come from the early practice of the church and have been used as one of our major creedal statements down through the centuries.

The early councils of the church picked up many of these themes, which in fact had been affirmed and were deeply believed by the Christian community, but which had only rarely been systematized or put together in any orderly fashion. They took those fragments and elements and affirmations and creedal statements and they began to think about those much more systematically—to deal
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with the faith much more systemically. And the early councils, particularly the first four that I’d like us to focus on from Nicea through Chalcedon, focused upon two major theological issues: the Trinity and Christology. Let me talk with you a little bit about those.

Putting it in historical framework, we need to recognize that the Council of Nicea was formed, gathered, debated, and ultimately made its judgments in 325 AD. This was followed by a council at Constantinople in 381 AD, and then at Ephesus in 431 AD, and finally at Chalcedon in 451 AD. These are called the ancient councils of the church and the findings of these four councils theologically are adopted by virtually all Christians everywhere, whether Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, or Protestant, and you’ll see why because they focus on two of the pivotal issues not only of that time, but of all Christian history.

The first of these was the Trinitarian question. This occupied most of the energy and time of the first two councils at Nicea and Constantinople. The early church, of course, from its Jewish heritage stressed radical monotheism. Now that simply means their belief in one God who not be divided, belief in God who was the Maker of heaven and earth. “Hear O Israel,” we have again and again repeated from the Old Testament, “The Lord our God is one Lord.” We see this in Clement, in the Didache, in Barnabas, in the Shepherd of Hermas, and many other of the early Christian writings. This was the great bulwark against pagan polytheism. It was a great defense against Gnosticism, against Marcionite dualism, and we’ll talk about all of those a bit later on as we move through the course.

The issue, however, is what do you do with Jesus. Of course, the Holy Spirit as well, but they were particularly focused in these early councils on Jesus. How do you understand radical Monotheism when you see Jesus in the Garden praying to the Father, “Not my will, but yours be done”? How can one affirm radical Monotheism and still affirm the reality of Jesus, the Incarnate One, praying to the Father that not His will, but the Father’s will be done? Well the answer which emerged out of these very heated and lengthy debates, what we now know as Christian Orthodoxy, is this: belief in one God clearly reaffirmed, but one God who exists in three co-equal, co-eternal persons—persons who are of the very same substance. This is where this famous word *homoousios* comes from. And these are related to each other technically in terms of proceeding and begetting. The Father begets the Son (this is
genitus, a technical term relating the Father and the Son together). The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, and of course part of the debate between the Western and the Eastern church which we’ll see later on is the debate over whether the Father and the Son together are the sources from which the Holy Spirit proceeds or the Father alone, this great question which really we’ll return to later on.

Thus Jesus is not seen as subordinate to the Father as some of the Gnostics were teaching and leveling the gods between the supreme God and the finite gods. Jesus was not simply a different mode as Servilius and others were teaching. Jesus was not simply a man upon whom God’s Spirit descended, who was adopted for God’s purposes, as with the teaching of Arius and others. In fact, there is belief in one God existing in three co-equal persons so that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all of the same substance, are all eternal, are all eternally related to one another in that unique fellowship which is the Trinity.

We see this picked up in the Nicene Creed. “I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten” (there’s that technical word) “Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, light of light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things are made.” Sometimes when we read these early creeds, we get the idea that they have all kinds of twisted unnecessary language. Well you have to recognize that behind each one of those little phrases and words are all of the debates that they’ve had with those that are now recognized as the heretics of the church—the Arians and the Apollinarians and the Ebionites and all of the others that make up that enormous list of options which were discarded by the church and which were rejected in the affirmation of this central Orthodox teaching.

Therefore, you have coming out of the Nicene and Constantinople conferences the basic creed which is known as the Nicene Creed, but which is really the Niceo-Constantinopolitan Creed affirming the Trinity—one God existing in three co-equal persons of the same substance. Now this raised a whole second series of questions and those focused more particularly on the Incarnate One, on Jesus Christ Himself. What is the relationship between the divine and human in Jesus once you have defined Orthodoxy as one God existing in three co-equal persons, including the Son, the Incarnate One? Well this was the question, this Christological question that occupied the attention of the councils at Ephesus and Chalcedon in 431 and 451 most particularly, and two great
options had emerged in these debates. There was the Alexandrian school on the one side—these led by the great teacher, Cyril, the leader of the church in Alexandria—focused largely on Platonic philosophy stressing Monism, tending to connect the human and the divine in the Incarnate One so closely as to nearly obliterate the human element.

Therefore, Cyril and others could talk about Mary, Christ’s mother, as Theotokos; that is, the mother of God. The human and divine united so closely that one could even speak of Mary as Theotokos. They used the illustration of this close union from common life as charcoal which was on fire. The charcoal and the fire were distinct in a sense, but once you saw them burning and glowing in the fireplace, you couldn’t distinguish the one from the other; the two were so closely intertwined.

Now the Nestorians in the Antiochene School, which was the second option—Nestorius then the bishop of Constantinople—stressed a more dualistic form, a more Aristotelian form of the relation of the human and the divine in Christ. Nestorius bordered on speaking of two persons in the incarnation and ultimately he is denied as a heretic because of that, but the Antiochene school stressed differences between the human and the divine in the one incarnate Lord, so that Mary could be spoken of not as Theotokos, but now as Christotokos, the mother of Christ or even Anthropotokos, the mother of a man. The two elements of human and divine are conjoined together in Christ, but they are not united in the same way that Cyril and the Alexandrian School was trying to teach.

Now these two great schools came into conflict with one another at the Council of Ephesus and in fact those from Antioch and from that area of Syria arrived late at the council and in fact action had been taken before they arrived. And that action pressed the council toward the much more Cyrilian or Alexandrian understanding of the faith. The council had also condemned Nestorius, had deposed him, and had exalted Cyril. Now, of course, when the folk from that delegation arrived, they were angry to say the least that they had gone ahead without waiting for them to come, and in fact a deep bitterness and riff broke out among them, which was only hammered out in a temporary compromise under the symbol of union in 433. And this compromise stressed as Orthodox that Jesus is one person, the God/man, but with two natures, human and divine. Now you can see that that is clearly a compromise and it doesn’t satisfy anyone very fully.
The Alexandrians were unhappy that Cyril had compromised their one nature and physical union position—the two unions didn’t seem to make sense to them. The Antiochenes were upset that Nestorius their leader had been deposed and they felt they hadn’t gotten a full loaf of bread either, and so the battle continued sieve under the surface. It was held in part by the enormous power and persuasive energy of Cyril, but after Cyril’s death in 444 AD, the problem again erupted and it did so around a very unlikely figure, an old leader of the church, an old monk, what was called an archimandrite. We know of them as abbots in the Western church, in the Eastern church, the head of a monastery is known as an archimandrite. And this man’s name was Eutyches, a fascinating old man. One of the most revered leaders of the church in the whole of the empire, but certainly very revered in Constantinople where he lived and where the monastery was located. And in 448 the issue erupts around Eutyches’ teaching of one nature doctrine. Now Eutyches was willing to admit that there may have been two natures before the incarnation, but after the incarnation, there is only one nature—the nature of God become man.

Now Flavian is the bishop of Constantinople, the one who had succeeded Nestorius who had been remember deposed. Under church law, the bishop of the church oversees the whole of the church in terms of its political work and life, including all of the monks and including the leaders of the monks, so that in Constantinople the leader of the church was not Eutyches, this old revered saint who headed up this enormously large monastery, but it was Flavian, the bishop of the city. So Flavian had to deal with this problem and Flavian was clearly Orthodox in his view; that is, he believed in the basic teaching that Jesus was one person, the God/man, but with two natures—human and divine.

So he has to bring some order out of this chaos that’s caused by Eutyches’ teaching. So he gathers together a home synod. These were very normal ways of dealing with these kinds of problems. He gathered together folk to talk over the issue from the area around Constantinople. This met in November of 448, Eutyches was brought before them, was questioned, and ultimately was deposed, and the language there is fascinating. Let me read a little bit of this account to you. Here is some of the debate with Eutyches and you can kind of picture all of this. Here’s a saintly old monk who is teaching a doctrine which he believes in deeply, but which is out of step with the church and has to be dealt with. Flavian asks, “Do you acknowledge Christ to be of two natures?” It was a straightforward question and Eutyches answered, “I’ve
never yet presumed to speculate about the nature of my God, the Lord of heaven and earth. I admit that I never said that He is consubstantial with us. I confess that the Holy Virgin is consubstantial with us and that of her our God was incarnate.”

So that Flavian’s assistant Florentius then asks, “Since the mother is consubstantial with us, then sure the Son is also,” and Eutyches says, “Please observe that I have not said that the body of a man became the body of God, but the body was human and the Lord was incarnate of the virgin. If you wish me to add that His body is consubstantial with ours, I will do so, but I take the consubstantial in such a way as not to deny that He is the Son of God. Hitherto I’ve altogether avoided the phrase consubstantial after the flesh, but I’ll use it now since your holiness demands it.”

Florentius, then, who obviously getting a little annoyed with this line of response says, “Do you or do you not admit that our Lord who is of the virgin is consubstantial with us and of two natures after the incarnation?” There’s no way to wriggle out of that and Eutyches says, “I admit that our Lord was of two natures before the union, but after the union one nature. I follow the doctrine of the blessed Cyrial” (and actually it’s pretty close to what Cyril had taught) “and the holy fathers and the holy Athanasius. They speak of two natures before the union, but after the union, they speak of one nature not two.”

Of course, this is out of bounds, so this home synod finds him not only guilty of heresy, but condemns him and the condemnation reads as follows: “Eutyches, formerly presbyter in our command right, has been shown by what has taken place in his own confession to be imperfect and infected with the heresy of Valentinus and Apollinaris and to follow stubbornly their blasphemies by rejecting our arguments of teaching, he is unwilling to consent to true doctrines. Therefore, weeping and mourning in complete traversity, we have decreed to our Lord Jesus Christ who has been blasphemed by him that he be deprived of every satirical office, that he be put out of our communion and deprived of his position over a monastery. All who after speak with him or associate with him are to know that they are also fallen into the same penalty of excommunication.” Now that’s a pretty powerful indictment against Eutyches. He’s stripped of his power over the monastery, he is stated to be a heretic, and no one is to associate with him.

Now you’d think that he would give up at that point, but he doesn’t. He writes to Leo, the bishop of Rome. Now this is an interesting point because by this time, of course, there is no Roman prominent;
that is, the bishop there is not seen to be finally authoritative in the life of the church. The wise of the papacy is a process that is going on, but it’s certainly not fulfilled yet. But Rome does hold a unique place of authority over all within the church, and we have started to see that certainly by the second century and clearly by this time. So that both Eutyches and Flavian, who is no political dummy, write to Leo to get his reflections on what has happened and Leo sends his famous tome back in 449 in which he clearly affirms Western Christology to be two natures Christology. He affirms what has happened at the council. He affirms Flavian’s position and the deposition of Eutyches.

Eutyches doesn’t want to give up yet though, and Eutyches turns to Dioscorus, a kind of scoundrel bishop from Alexandria. Alexandria’s always been a little at odds with Constantinople, Rome, Antioch, and the other major centers of the church, and Dioscorus sees this as opportunity to gain a little more prominence for his own area of church life and power in Alexandria. So he appeals to the Emperor, Theodosius II. Theodosius is back in Constantinople, of course, right under the nose of Flavian in all of this that has happened. So you have this odd thing, clearly a breach of canon law and the church, there is to be no jurisdiction by a place like Alexandria over what happens in Constantinople or over its bishop, but Theodosius responds to Dioscorus’ plea and calls for a council which is held at Ephesus. It’s held in 449. It’s controlled by Dioscorus. The papal delegates who are sent out from Leo are not even aloud to read his tome at the meeting, they are kept out of the meeting, and they declare that after the incarnation the doctrine is to be one nature. This is declared to be Orthodox. The symbol of union is set aside. Eutyches is rehabilitated and Flavian is condemned. After the meetings, he’s assaulted by a group of monks and dies very shortly thereafter. These were very deeply heated kinds of discussions.

Leo is, of course, angry as the dickens over this and he calls it the Robber Synod—robbing the faith of its true formulation. So he asked the emperor to call another council. Theodosius refuses, but the following year in 450 in July, Theodosius falls from his horse and dies. Some people felt that was the hand of God acting. And Marcian takes over, marries Pulcheria, the sister of Theodosius II to consolidate his power, and he then calls a council, which is the Council of Chalcedon. This is convened at the church of St. Euphemia. It’s held in October 8 and in following in 451. From 500 to 600 leaders of the church are present. Fist fights break out. People are angry, shouting at each other. There’s great violence
and animosity within the meetings, but out of this emerges the canonization of Cyril's two letters, the adoption of Leo's tome now officially, Flavian is reinstated, though it doesn't do him much good at this point, Dioscorus is in turn deposed, and the Chalcedonian formula is promulgated. In fact, it is a complete reversal, almost point for point, of the famous Robber Synod at Ephesus.

Now the question that I would like to raise with you to think about is why the council at Ephesus which was called by an emperor, which was peopled by the leaders of the church, it had all of the basic authoritative structure, why that is not one of our ecumenical councils? And the Council at Chalcedon, which was called in the very same way, is. One is considered heretical; the other is considered Orthodox. What made one acceptable and the other unacceptable? Was it simply that Rome had a great deal of power at this time and could promote its own wishes? Was it simply that the authority structure within the life of the church inclined at that direction? Was it simply that the preponderance of evidence theologically pointed in the direction of results at Chalcedon rather than Ephesus?

Certainly the church has accepted since that time in almost every quarter the two natures—doctrine as Orthodox and the one nature doctrine is heresy. I would like to suggest that the foundational reason for one being authoritative and the other not is that the Holy Spirit Himself was operating even in that strange collection of council meetings. You say, “I always thought the church councils were made up of people in black robes who walked in with long faces and speaking quietly, all agree that the faith was the faith and that no one dissented.” Actually the councils are very much like many of our church annual meetings of judicatory, and I take some real encouragement from the fact that God somehow seems to use even the frailty and weakness of people like ourselves who are always getting into fusses, who are always upset with one another and angry with one another, but who deep down want to understand God’s ways and God’s workings among us. That the Holy Spirit somehow draws those elements together as a final conclusion that God intends, is part of that sovereign power of God working in His church, even though we are clay vessels, even though we are fragmented and weak, God seems to use us to draw together His purposes and to do His ministry in the world.

We might say, “If I were God, I would never do it that way,” but the fact is that God has chosen us, weak as we are, to do His work
and has given us the great privilege not only of ministering in His name, but of thinking about the faith together of arguing and struggling so that we can come to true doctrine which is fundamentally important for us. You say, “Well, why were all of these discussions important anyway? What difference does it make if we affirm what is known as Orthodoxy—one God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit, related by begetting and preceding of the same substance, that Jesus Himself is one person of two natures? Why is any of this important?” Well, I would like to suggest that it is of enormous importance, because across the centuries of the church, it’s only the true teaching of the faith, that genuine biblical message that preserves us from heresies and from cults and schisms of every kind.

The purity of the faith is a fundamental importance to all of us, and this is captured for us even in the tome of St. Leo. If you read through that, and it’s a rather beautiful document, it points again and again to the importance of these theological discussions not as theological exercises or of mental acrobatics; the importance of them is that to get them right is to ensure that the genuine salvation which comes to us through the penalty paid by Jesus Christ can be passed on from generation to generation. It is in order to pay the debt of our condition as the tome puts it that these discussions became so important. “For Christ really accepted suffering,” as Leo put it, “even unto death for the sake of the world’s salvation.” It is salvation that is at stake in the discussions that were going on in these remarkable encounters at the early councils of the church, and we see that not only encapsulated for us in the statements that come out of Nicea and Constantinople, known as the Nicene Creed, but also of the definition of Chalcedon, and it’s with that that I want to us to end.

Following then the holy fathers, we unite in teaching, and this is the basic theological formula of this fourth great council, “We unite in teaching all men to confess the one and only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This self-same one is perfect both in deity and also humanness. This self-same one is actually God and actually man.” This is to fight against both the Ebionites on the one side, the Docetists, Gnostics, and the Polynarians on the other. “With a rational soul and a body, He is of the same reality of God as far as His deity is concerned and of the same reality as we are as far as His humanness is concerned. Thus, like us in all respects, sin only excepted. Before time began, He was begotten of the Father in respect to His deity and now in these last days for us and on our behalf and for our salvation, this self-same one was born of Mary,
the virgin, who is God-bearer in respect to His humanness. We also teach that we apprehend this one and only Christ’s son, Lord only begotten, in two natures, and we do this without confusing the two natures.”

It is that faith that was handed down to us through those early councils and which is the foundation for our hope for salvation in the future.