

Comparative Theology (Part II)

The Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches

1- Objectives

- ❖ An overview about the Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches

2- References

- ❖ The Era of Ecumenical Councils (Asr El Magamee), Fr. Kyrollos El Antouny
- ❖ The Nature of Christ (H.H. Pope Shenouda the 3rd)
- ❖ The Coptic Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Movement (Maged Attia)

3- Scriptural Verse

- ❖ “But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife“ (2 Tim.2:23)

4- Lesson Outline

The Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches

- ❖ Group of Churches, which recognize the council of Chalcedon and its canons.
- ❖ Adopts the formula "in two natures" in expressing its faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- ❖ Remained one with Rome until the eleventh century AD from 451 - 1054
- ❖ In 1054 AD, as the patriarch of Constantinople refused the infallibility and the Supremacy of the pope of Rome, a Roman cardinal with two delegates from Rome entered the church of Agia Sophia, the headquarters of the See of Constantinople, placed a decree of excommunication on the altar, and walked out of the church shaking off the dust of his feet against her. The Patriarch of Constantinople responded with an anathema against Rome. Since then, the Churches of Rome and Constantinople remained separate.
- ❖ They held four major councils which they consider ecumenical; so they look to seven councils for authoritative teaching concerning faith and practice: Nicea, 325 AD; Constantinople, 381 AD; Ephesus, 431 AD; Chalcedon, 451 AD; 2nd Constantinople, 553 AD; 3rd Constantinople, 680-681 AD; 2nd Nicea, 787AD.
- ❖ The major theological issue between the two families of Orthodoxy was the Christological issue. It has been resolved by the signing of protocols; the synods of some Churches have responded by ratifying the agreements. For the total unity, the synods of the other Churches must join in the official acceptance followed by a mutual lifting of the anathemas between all the Churches.

Divisions of the Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches

- ❖ Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches includes 19 Churches, varying in following from more than 100 million people (Russian Orthodox Church) to less than 100 people (Mount Sinai). They can be listed in three categories: The Ancient Patriarchates; Autocephalous Churches and Autonomous Churches

The Ancient Patriarchates

- ❖ The Patriarchate of Constantinople (The Ecumenical Patriarchate): Based in Istanbul, Turkey and headed by the Ecumenical Patriarch (EP) who is considered to be "first among equals".
- ❖ The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria: A few thousands in Egypt and some dioceses in other African countries and headed by a patriarch.
- ❖ The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch: Based in Damascus; headed by a patriarch; its diocese in Armenia is named the Antiochian Orthodox Church to differentiate it from the Syrian Orthodox Church which is in communion with us.
- ❖ The Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Autocephalous Churches

Churches that were rounded through the missionary work of the ancient patriarchates, especially that of Constantinople; granted the right to have an independent hierarchy and an independent holy synod.

- ❖ The Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate): Based in Moscow and headed by a patriarch. This Church has the largest following in the entire Orthodox world.
- ❖ The Romanian Orthodox Church: Based in Bucharest, headed by a patriarch.
- ❖ The Church of Greece: Based in Athens, headed by an archbishop.
- ❖ The Serbian Orthodox Church: Based in Belgrade, headed by a patriarch.
- ❖ The Bulgarian Orthodox Church: Based in Sofia, headed by a patriarch.
- ❖ The Orthodox Church of Georgia: Based in Kiev, headed by catholicos.
- ❖ The Church of Cyprus: Based in Nicosia, headed by an archbishop.
- ❖ The Orthodox Church of Poland: Based in Warsaw, headed by an archbishop.
- ❖ The Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia: One Church for the Czech and Slovak Republics, headed by an archbishop.
- ❖ The Orthodox Church of Albania: Based in Tirana, headed by an archbishop.
- ❖ The Church of Mount Sinai: Headed by a metropolitan, limited to the Monastery of St. Catherine.

Autonomous Churches

These are Churches that are administratively independent, but do not have the right to ordain their hierarchs.

- ❖ The Finnish Orthodox Church: Headed by an archbishop who is ordained by the See of Constantinople.
- ❖ The Orthodox Church in America and the Orthodox Church in Japan: These two Churches were rounded through the Russian missionary work and were granted autonomy by the Moscow Patriarchate but the Ecumenical Patriarchate has not approved their independence. Each is headed by an archbishop, has a holy synod and is in complete communion with the other Churches of this family. But their archbishops do not take part in the hierarchical meetings of this family of Orthodoxy, i.e. they have the right to oversee their own pastoral work, but their independent hierarchical status is not recognized.

- ❖ The Orthodox Church in China: This Church was rounded through the Russian missionary work, but all communications with her have been severed since the start of the communist rule in China

Note concerning other Churches

- ❖ The Churches listed above are the official Churches of the Chalcedonian Orthodox family, as recognized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople and the ancient patriarchates in general.
- ❖ However, through the ages and for various reasons, internal disagreements have caused other Churches to form such as the main split in the Church of Greece between Old Calendarists and New Calendarists, or such as the Russian Church outside Russia, or such as many smaller groups.
- ❖ In most cases, the people remain in communion within this family of Orthodoxy, but the clergy of these separate groups are considered non-canonical by the official Churches they separated from and they themselves refuse to be in communion with the official Churches.

5- Conclusion

- ❖ The Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches are the Churches that approve the resolutions of the Chalcedonian Council that is not approved by the non Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches (the Coptic; the Syrian (Antioch); the Armenian; the Ethiopian; the Indian and the Eritrean Churches).
- ❖ We pray and hope in our Lord that soon, the two families of Orthodoxy will be in complete communion.

6- Activities / Discussion Points

- ❖ Make notes of this lesson to distribute to the audience before the presentation so that they can follow and not be confused.