

PART I



*The Council of Chalcedon and
Its Reception*

I

Acts of the Home Synod at Constantinople (November 448): Selected Proceedings against Eutyches, Presbyter and Archimandrite

Introduction and Translation by Mark DelCogliano

INTRODUCTION

Eutyches (ca. 378–454) became a polarizing figure in the post-Cyrrillian Christological debates leading up to the Council of Chalcedon in 451. A monk since his youth, Eutyches was eventually ordained a presbyter and around 410 became an archimandrite of a monastery outside the walls of Constantinople. At the Council of Ephesus in 431 he emerged as part of Cyril of Alexandria's circle of supporters and a fierce opponent of Nestorius. Unexpectedly, however, on November 8, 448, when the Home Synod of Constantinople was in session, presided over by Archbishop Flavian, Bishop Eusebius of Dorylaeum accused Eutyches of heresy. The proceedings against the archimandrite were conducted over the course of seven sessions, concluding with his deposition on November 22. The acts of this synod offer a rare glimpse into the debate over Eutyches, allowing the reader to observe the bishops and Eutyches in action as the former prosecute their case and the latter attempts to thwart their efforts. The acts also are a precious record of the archimandrite's views, which are difficult to reconstruct because his extant writings are few, short, and theologically sparse. The extracts from the acts of the Home Synod of November 448 translated here must be contextualized; accordingly, what follows is a summary of the sessions that also indicates which selections have been translated.

PART I: THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON AND ITS RECEPTION

Session 1: The Indictment against Eutyches (November 8, 448)

At the first session on November 8 Eusebius read his indictment against Eutyches, and the presbyter John and the deacon Andrew were sent to summon him to appear before the synod. The complete extant acts from this session are translated below.

Session 2: The Affirmation of Cyril's Letters (November 12, 448)

The second session on November 12 began with Eusebius summarizing the first session and justifying his actions by appeal to the precedent of Nestorius. The remainder of the session was occupied with the reading of Cyril's *Second Letter to Nestorius* and *Letter of Reunion to John of Antioch*,¹ after which each bishop present was asked to affirm that Cyril's teaching was in harmony with Nicaea, that he agreed with it, and that he condemned anyone who thought otherwise – all this setting the stage for a condemnation of Eutyches. Translated below are the majority of the bishops' responses to the reading of the letters; those statements omitted simply affirm what they were asked to affirm without further comment. These replies give some sense of the Christological views and sympathies of the bishops opposed to Eutyches.

Session 3: A Report on the First and Second Summonses
(November 15, 448)

At the third session on November 15 John and Andrew recounted their visit to summon Eutyches to appear before the synod. Translated below is John's report, which tells not only of Eutyches' refusal to come to the synod because of a vow he claimed to have made never to leave his monastery and to live in it "as in a tomb" (a vow apparently broken a week later when he finally did appear),² but also of the conversation that he and Andrew had with the archimandrite, which provides additional details about the views of Eutyches. After John's report was read, Andrew testified to its veracity, as did another deacon named Athanasius who happened to be present. After this, the presbyters Mamas and

¹ Translated in CEECW 3 on pp. 564–569 and 718–725.

² See *Acts of the Home Synod at Constantinople*, session 3, section 359.

Acts of the Home Synod at Constantinople

Theophilus were sent to summon Eutyches a second time, and when they returned the synod learned that this time Eutyches claimed illness as an excuse not to appear. The synod then decided to summon him a third time, ordering him to appear on November 17. The presbyters Memnon and Epiphanius and the deacon Germanus were sent to deliver the third summons.

Sessions 4 and 5: A Report on the Third Summons
(November 16–17, 448)

The fourth session on November 16 was brief. Some of Eutyches's monks visited the synod to report that the archimandrite was still ill and could not appear. They tried to convey a message from Eutyches, but Flavian refused to hear it since he wanted Eutyches to appear in person. At the fifth session the next day Memnon, Epiphanius, and Germanus recounted their visit to Eutyches. Memnon reported that Eutyches, still pleading illness, was ready to have his envoys assent on his behalf to the decrees of Nicaea and Ephesus, as well as to the writings of Cyril. This angered Eusebius, who became afraid of his case against Eutyches being dismissed because the archimandrite's present affirmations of orthodoxy might annul his past denials. Flavian promised that this wouldn't happen. Epiphanius and Germanus then confirmed Memnon's report. Eutyches was ordered to appear before the synod on November 22 under pain of automatic deposition if he failed to do so.

Session 6: A Further Report on the Second Summons
(November 20, 448)

There was a short session, the sixth, on November 20, at which Eusebius requested that certain associates of Eutyches be summoned to appear at this trial on November 22. Eusebius also reported that during the second summons Mamas and Theophilus heard Eutyches make certain potentially damaging statements that were not recorded in the minutes, and so they were asked to make a report. Translated below are the testimonies of both envoys, which provide further insight into Eutyches's theology.

PART I: THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON AND ITS RECEPTION

Session 7: The Trial and Deposition of Eutyches
 (November 22, 448)

The final and seventh session took place on November 22. Eutyches finally appeared, and the patrician Florentius sat in on the proceedings. Eutyches was interrogated, condemned, and deposed. Translated below is the entirety of the acts from this session, which concluded with the reading of the formal sentence against Eutyches and a list of the signatories. The debate between Eutyches and members of the synod, coupled with the reports of John, Mamas, and Theophilus, though frustratingly reticent, are some of the best sources for understanding the Christological views of Eutyches.

The image of Eutyches that emerges in these proceedings is that of a monk resistant to being drawn into the Christological squabbles among bishops. After his efforts to avoid even appearing before the synod failed, he tried to defend himself against the charges brought against him simply by affirming his agreement with the creed of Nicaea, the decrees of Ephesus I, and the writings of Cyril and other fathers. This proved insufficient. Two issues above all were found problematic. The first was his denial that Christ was same-in-substance with human beings according to his humanity – in essence, Eutyches was rejecting the so-called double consubstantiality endorsed in the Formula of Reunion of 433 and thus potentially destroying a fragile peace.³ In the end, however, Eutyches was willing to make this very affirmation since the synod affirmed it, with the provision that Christ's uniqueness as the Son of God not be impugned.⁴ The second issue was his refusal to acknowledge two natures in Christ after the incarnation. On this point he would not budge, maintaining that fathers such as Cyril and Athanasius had taught that after the incarnation and the union from the two natures, Christ was one nature. For this view and his refusal to anathematize those who held it, Eutyches was condemned and deposed.

³ The Formula of Reunion is quoted in Cyril of Alexandria's *Letter of Reunion to John of Antioch*, translated in CEECW 3 on pp. 718–725.

⁴ See *Acts of the Home Synod at Constantinople*, session 7, sections 514, 520, and 522.

Acts of the Home Synod at Constantinople

Eutyches appealed immediately.⁵ On April 13, 449 an inquiry was held under the presidency of the patrician Florentius to investigate the claim of Eutyches that the minutes of the Home Synod were inaccurate and even falsified. Some of the more significant points of contention over the minutes of the third and seventh sessions are highlighted in the notes in the translations below. Of particular importance is the apparent omission of Flavian's demand that Eutyches affirm Christ's two natures after the union – a much stronger dyophysite formula than the one the minutes record Flavian requiring, that Christ is from two natures.⁶ A second inquiry was held on April 27, 449, to investigate whether Flavian had written his condemnation of Eutyches before the archimandrite had even appeared at the synod. These inquiries raised enough questions about the legitimacy of the Home Synod of November 448 for a decision to be made to hear Eutyches's appeal at the upcoming second Council of Ephesus (Ephesus II) in August 449.⁷

The acts of the Home Synod in November 448 are preserved only because they were read out and debated at Ephesus II, whose acts in turn are only preserved because they were read out at the first session of the Council of Chalcedon in 451. To put it another way, the proceedings against Eutyches are preserved with interjected material from the two later councils. Accordingly, breaks in the sequence of the numbering of the acts of the November 448 Home Synod should not be taken as necessarily indicating omissions in the translated material; rather, the interjected material from the two later councils has been omitted from the translation for an uninterrupted reading of the acts of the Home Synod. Deliberate omissions of material from the acts are noted. Refer to the note at the beginning of each session for details on precisely what material is included in and omitted from the translations.

The translations here are based upon the Greek text of the acts edited by Eduard Schwartz, *Concilium Universale Chalcedonense*, ACO 2.1.1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1933), 100–161.

5 See also Eutyches's letter of appeal to Leo of Rome, translated in this volume on pp. 29–35.

6 See *Acts of the Home Synod at Constantinople*, session 7, sections 488 and 513, and the note on section 535.

7 For the proceedings at Ephesus II, see the introduction to *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, translated in this volume on pp. 49–116.

PART I: THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON AND ITS RECEPTION

TRANSLATION

First Session⁸*(Held on November 8, 448)*

223.⁹ In the consulship of the most illustrious Flavian Zeno and Flavian Postumianus, six days before the Ides of November, in Christ-loving and imperial Constantinople Rome, the holy and great home synod convened at the previously mentioned megalopolis in the episcopal council chamber, with the most holy and most sacred archbishop Flavian presiding. After a report dispatched from the most godly bishop Florentius of Sardis, the metropolis of the province of Lydia, and from his most godly suffragan bishops John and Cossinius, had been read in the presence also of the clerics who had carried the reports, an unambiguous decision was made in the matter relating to what had been read. Then the most God-beloved bishop Eusebius of Dorylaeum, one of those sitting in council, stood up and presented an indictment to the holy synod, imploring that it be read and entered into the minutes of the proceedings.

224. Given his insistence the most holy archbishop Flavian said, “Let the indictment be accepted and read, so that we may know the accusation contained in it.”

225. *A copy of the indictment of the most reverent bishop Eusebius of Dorylaeum*

To the most holy and most God-beloved archbishop Flavian and the holy and great home synod of the most God-beloved bishops, from bishop Eusebius of Dorylaeum.

I kept praying that the presbyter and archimandrite Eutyches would not be so overcome by insanity, drunken thinking, and mental derangement that he forgot the fear of God and despised the dreadful tribunal and the just judgment and retribution of Christ

⁸ The acts of the first session are translated in their entirety.

⁹ The numbering used here is that of the first session of the acts of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, during which the acts of Ephesus II were read out, which included the acts of the Home Synod of Constantinople in 448–449. Breaks in the sequence of the numbering should not be taken as necessarily indicating omissions in the translated material; rather, the interjected material from the two later councils has been omitted from the translation for an uninterrupted reading of the acts of the Home Synod. It is noted when material from the acts is deliberately omitted.

Acts of the Home Synod at Constantinople

the Savior of us all, who will come to judge the world in justice¹⁰ and to repay each according to his works,¹¹ so much so that he has ventured to stir his blasphemous tongue against Christ himself the Savior of us all and to label as heretical both the fathers who are numbered among the saints and us who have emulated their faith. With unchecked mouth and unbridled tongue he does not cease to deny the pious doctrines of orthodoxy and to disparage the holy fathers and me, even though I have never been suspected of being a heretic but have always waged war against heretics, have taken up the cause of the orthodox faith as best I could, and have resolutely maintained the faith of the 318 holy fathers who gathered together at Nicaea, all the proceedings of the holy and great synod at the metropolis of Ephesus, and the views and expositions of the blessed Cyril, who had once been bishop of the megalopolis of Alexandria, 230.¹² Athanasius, Basil, Gregory the Great, Gregory, Gregory, and the holy bishops Atticus and Proclus.¹³ For this reason, I beg and beseech Your Sacredness not to disregard this supplication of mine but to order the presbyter and archimandrite Eutyches to appear before your holy council and defend himself against the charges brought against him by me. For I am prepared to prove that he bears the name of orthodoxy falsely and is a stranger to the orthodox faith in every way. And I implore you by the holy and same-in-substance Trinity who preserves our Christ-loving emperors, and by the safety and continued reign of our most pious emperors Theodosius and Valentinian, eternal Augusti, to order the previously mentioned Eutyches to appear before your holy

¹⁰ See Acts 17:31. ¹¹ See Rev 22:12.

¹² Recall that a break in the sequence of the numbering does not indicate an omission in the translated material (unless explicitly stated); rather, the interjected material from Ephesus II and Chalcedon has been omitted from the translation for an uninterrupted reading of the acts of the Home Synod.

¹³ The list of names varies in the manuscripts (see the apparatus for ACO 2.1.1: 101, 16 Schwartz). Though some include Basil, Schwartz did not include his name in his edition. However, a similar list including Basil appears in the two ancient Latin translations of Eutyches's profession of faith (ACO 2.2.1: 35, 5–6 Schwartz and ACO 2.4: 145, 16–17 Schwartz), which is a response to Eusebius's indictment. Given this testimony, we have emended the text to include Basil. The three Gregories are probably Gregory Thaumaturgus, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa. Atticus and Proclus were previous bishops of Constantinople, from 406–425 and 434–446, respectively. A homily of the latter is translated in CEECW 3 on pp. 577–584.

PART I: THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON AND ITS RECEPTION

synod and defend himself against the charges brought against him by me, so that, after he has been convicted by me, those harmed by him may be corrected and the victorious orthodox faith may be seen even now as the preeminent one to the ends of the earth. If this comes to pass, I will confess thanks to your holy synod forever.

I, bishop Eusebius of the holy church of God in Dorylaeum, have delivered this indictment of mine and signed it with my own hand.

231. After this was read the most holy archbishop said, “While it shocks us that the document just read brings such an indictment against the most reverent presbyter and archimandrite Eutyches, let Your Reverence nevertheless deign to set up a meeting with him and discuss the orthodox faith with him. And if he should in actual fact be found to hold unorthodox views, he will then be summoned by the holy synod and have to present himself.”

232. Bishop Eusebius said, “I was a friend of his previously, and because of this I met with him not once, not twice, but many times, from the time when he became disabled. I had discussions with him and when I discovered that he held unorthodox views I exhorted and instructed him, but he remained steadfast in his affirmation of teachings that are alien to our orthodox faith. I can prove this with many witnesses who were present and heard him. So I adjure you again by our Lord Jesus Christ to summon him to defend himself, and after he has been convicted by me, to make him stop teaching his distorted doctrines, seeing that many have been harmed by him.”

233. The most holy archbishop said, “Let Your Reverence bear with us and take the trouble to go to his monastery again, and converse with him on the appropriate subjects with peace as your goal, so as to prevent any disturbance and turmoil from arising again among the holy churches of God.”

234. Bishop Eusebius said, “After having visited him often without persuading him it is impossible for me to visit him again and hear his blasphemous pronouncements. Instead let Your Holiness deign to summon him to appear. For I cannot consent to such a case being dismissed without an investigation.”

235. The holy synod said, “Your Reverence should have obeyed the counsel of our most holy and sacred archbishop. But since we see your

Acts of the Home Synod at Constantinople

persistence, what you have sought will come to pass. Therefore, let the indictments delivered by you be entered into the minutes to facilitate an accurate examination of the proceedings, and let the most reverent presbyter and advocate John together with the most reverent deacon Andrew go to the most reverent presbyter and archimandrite Eutyches, read him the indictment delivered against him, and suggest that he appear before this holy synod and contend for himself, as he is accused of no trivial matter.”

*

* *

Second Session¹⁴

(Held on November 12, 448)

270. After the letters were read,¹⁵ the most reverent bishop Eusebius of Dorylaeum said, “Convinced as I am that these are my own views and having also taken on the role of adversary against those who wish to debase the doctrine of orthodoxy away from them, I came to your holy synod. I ask also that Your Holiness too ratify what has been read, so that all may know that whoever undermines these expositions is the enemy of the orthodox church and a stranger to the priestly assembly.”

271. The most holy archbishop Flavian said, “It is necessary and pious for us to agree to opinions that have been expressed in an orthodox manner. For who shall be able to resist the words of the Holy Spirit? After all, the letters that have been read of our father among the saints, Cyril of blessed memory, who was once bishop of the most holy church in Alexandria, provide an accurate interpretation of the intent of the holy fathers convened at Nicaea at that time, teaching us the things which we have held always in the past and hold now, namely, that ‘our Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, was complete God and complete human being of rational soul and body. With respect to his deity he was begotten before the ages beginninglessly from the Father and the same one with respect to his humanity

¹⁴ The translation of the acts of the second session omits the exchanges at the beginning, as well as the reading of Cyril of Alexandria’s two letters, and begins with the responses of the bishops, with some omissions, namely, sections 307–308, 343–345, and 348–351.

¹⁵ Cyril of Alexandria’s *Second Letter to Nestorius* and *Letter of Reunion to John of Antioch*, translated in CEECW 3 on pp. 564–569 and 718–725.