

#### 4. The Monothelite Problem

The monophysite problem did not, as we have noticed, end immediately. The Emperor Zeno tried to silence it with the ban on discussion known as the Henoticon, Justinian tried to end it with the fifth council of Constantinople (551) and a revision of some errors not treated at Chalcedon. But the pot continued to boil although the fumes were of other matters than just monophysitism. The last episode in the development of objective christology for this period was shaped at the insistence of the emperor Heraclius (7th cent.) and did not resolve matters either.

##### a. The idea

The main idea grew from a teaching of Sergius, patriarch of Constantinople (d. 638) as he tried to harmonize the concepts of the person of Christ in such a way as to bring peace to all the monophysite and orthodox segments. Sergius proposed that the man-god acted on only one divine energy and later explained this as "one will." Thus the new teaching was known as monothelitism. He was quickly opposed by the bishop of Jerusalem, Sophronius, and most others who upheld the Chalcedonian decision. In time his view was espoused by the Bishop of Rome, Honorius, (d. 638) and was advanced by the Alexandrian see as well but was widely opposed in Asia Minor and the western church in particular. It is hard for us sometimes to articulate these ideas well, but the concept is that Christ has two natures but one will...and that will is not perfectly consistent with either of the natures...being something of a syncretism of both.

##### b. The resolution

The matter was sufficiently intense as to need another council. This was convened in 681 and met over a span of 10 months! It pronounced against monothelitism, put an anathema on Honorius, Sergius and their ilk and reaffirmed the full intent of the Chalcedonian doctrine. Agreeing in the decision was the current Roman Bishop, Agatho I. The end of the matter was to say that Christ had both a divine and human will...each in His unique person in a non-confused and non-injured state. The two wills were compatible with and expressive of the two natures.

#### 5. The Resultant Position

When all of this had been thrashed out and the battles adjourned, it meant that the church had formalized the Christological doctrine through the Nicene and Chalcedonian creeds and the reaffirmation of the later councils. It would be infinitely easier to say that Christ was both God and man and answer what that meant.