



## **SESSION 18: 7<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY – PERSIANS, MUSLIMS & THE 6<sup>TH</sup> ECUMENICAL COUNCIL – CONTENT**

1. Mohammed, born in Mecca in 570, was the founder of monotheistic Islam and said he was the last of the prophets. He was rejected there and went to Medina.
2. Eastern Emperor Maurice established a friendship with King Chosroes II of Persia, who married Maurice's daughter and considered him his father. This ended years of persecution of Christians in Persia and brought peace. But in 602 Phocas murdered Maurice and became Emperor – a terrible one. This prompted the Persians to attack Chalcedon in 610. General Heraclius led a fleet to recapture Chalcedon and was immediately proclaimed Emperor as Phocas was being executed. The result – a war with Persia that lasted 18 years – a war between Christianity and Zoroastrianism. Christians carried icons of Christ and the Virgin Mary into the battles.
3. In 613 the Persians took Antioch and Damascus (Syria); in 614 they took Jerusalem (Palestine). And in 619 they took Egypt.
4. In 622 Mohammed established the first Muslim community, in Medina. He had more than 10,000 followers.
5. In 622 Heraclius restored Asia Minor to the Empire, but in 622 Persians and Slavs attacked Constantinople. The attack failed and Christians in the city attributed it to protection by the Virgin Mary.
6. In 627 Heraclius invaded Persia, and in the following year took their imperial city and completely defeated them. He took the Holy Cross which they had taken from Jerusalem and returned it.
7. In 629 the heresy of Monotheletism appeared. It was an attempt to compromise between the Church and the Monophysites (i.e. Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians). It said that while Christ has two natures, he has no human will, just divine will. Supporters included Theodore of Arabia, Athanasius of Antioch, Cyrus of Alexandria, Sergius of Constantinople, and Emperor Heraclius.
8. In 632 Mohammed conquered Mecca and died. Experiencing rapid growth, Islam began expanding.
9. In 633 Emperor Heraclius, Pope Sergius and Cyrus of Alexandria reached a pro-Monothelete agreement, and Monophysites and Chalcedonians in Egypt began communing. In 637 Heraclius

published his Exposition of Faith, supporting Monothelitism. It was accepted in the East and protested in the West.

10. In 634 Muslims took Syria and Palestine. In 638 they took Jerusalem. Under long siege, Patriarch Sophronius sent the Holy Cross to Constantinople and then surrendered to Caliph Umar. The agreement of surrender was that the churches and property of Christians would be preserved if:
  - there is no evidence of Christian faith in the streets,
  - there is no preaching to Muslims,
  - there is no prevention of conversion to Islam,
  - Christians are submissive and loyal to Muslims.
  - If a Muslim commits a crime against a Christian, he is subject to half the normal sentenceThis set the pattern for Christian survival under Muslim domination in the Middle East.
11. In 639-646 Muslims took Egypt, installing Monophysites in the Church hierarchy.
12. In 641 Heraclius died and was succeeded by his 11 year old grandson Constans II. In 662 Constans II was murdered in Sicily, and was soon succeeded by his son Constantine IV. Arab sieges were making communication between Rome and Constantinople very difficult.
13. In 648 Pope Martin convened a council of 105 Western Bishops to condemn Monothelitism. He was promptly taken to Constantinople and tried. Also, Maximus the Confessor, abbot of a monastery in Constantinople, and the only real theologian of the period, protested Monothelitism and was tried. Both were tortured and died during exile in 662. Some historians have said this was the low point in the moral fiber of the Eastern church.
14. In 668 Pope Vitalian appointed the first Archbishop of Canterbury.
15. To deal with the issue of Monothelitism, an Ecumenical Council (6<sup>th</sup>) was held in the imperial palace in Constantinople in 680-681. In comparison to other Ecumenical Councils there was low attendance (174 bishops) and little representation from the East, due to the Muslim conquests. This Council:
  - focussed on Tradition of the Church. The theological legacy of Maximus the Confessor inspired their decisions,
  - Patriarchs George of Constantinople and Macarius of Antioch initially supported Monothelitism, but George switched his support to the Chalcedonians,
  - Monophysite priest Polychronius offered to place his confession on a dead man, who he said would then rise and proclaim Monothelitism. They did it; the man did not rise.
  - Monothelitism and several of its supporters including Popes Sergius and Honorius, and well as Emperor Heraclius, were condemned. This action is important as it shows that the ancient Church believed that *every* bishop, including the popes of Rome, and even the emperor, must submit to the religious authority of the general councils of the Church.

Following the 6<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Council John Maron, leader of a monastery near Antioch, took his followers to the mountains of Lebanon, insisting on one divine will of Christ, and formed their own church – the Maronites. In 1182 they accepted authority of the Roman church, thus becoming an Eastern Catholic church.

16. By 692 invasions and struggles had brought about a loosening of morals, or barbarization of life. Thus Emperor Justinian II called the Trullan Council, where 102 canons were adopted (e.g. priests cannot own hotels, lend money or gamble; monks cannot leave monasteries, spend the night under a roof where women are present, and cannot celebrate their tonsure; deacons and priests can be married). This council also condemned the Roman church for enforcing sexual abstinence on its married clergy, condemned the Roman practice of fasting on the Saturdays and Sundays of Great Lent, and rejected the Western practice of using a lamb as a symbol for Christ. This council is significant because its decisions showed that important differences were beginning to divide Eastern and Western churches 400 years before the actual schism.
  
17. By the late 600's the breakup of the Empire and the presence of Islam brought an emphasis on synods of governing bishops and especially on control from the one unoccupied patriarchate. Thus the Patriarch of Constantinople came to be seen as the Ecumenical Patriarch.