

Orthodox view of Ibas of Edessa

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Introduction

Most modern Byzantine descriptions of the Council of Chalcedon, and its relationship to the Oriental Orthodox, or non-Chalcedonian communion, tend to be based almost universally on the point of view that the Council is beyond criticism, and that the end of any ecumenical activity must result in the Oriental Orthodox accepting the council as Ecumenical. Even those Byzantine and Roman Catholic historians and theologians who are willing to consider Chalcedon with a welcome degree of reflection still tend to describe the Oriental Orthodox objections as being substantially without merit.

But the anathemas which were issued against Chalcedon in the 5th century, and have been briefly considered in a previous article, still stand without any comprehensive or sympathetic response from the supporters of Chalcedon, now divided into the Byzantine and Roman Catholic communities. This particular paper will consider just one of these anathemas in rather more detail than was possible previously. It raises the most interesting case of an Eastern bishop, who had been deposed at the council of Ephesus in 449 AD. for his Nestorianism, was then restored at Chalcedon in 451 AD.

One of the six anathemas of Dioscorus refer to this bishop by name. It is in fact the fourth anathema which says,

Chalcedon is anathematised because it has accepted the communion of the partisans of Nestorius, such as Ibas.

This anathema helps us to see why it is worth spending a little time studying this particular bishop. As far as the non-Chalcedonians have been concerned, he is a representative of the Nestorian way of thinking about Christ, and therefore his acceptance at Chalcedon suggested that the council was soft on that false Christology. The ecumenical dialogue with the various Chalcedonian communities – Roman Catholic and Byzantine – requires that Chalcedon be comprehensively reconsidered, and this must include the historical events which took place there, as well as the documents which it produced.

In many ways the documents are easier to deal with. It is possible to understand even the Tome of Leo in an Orthodox manner, acceptable to our communion, since a document can be understood in a variety of ways. It is likely that we can find an Orthodox meaning to which all parties can agree in good conscience. But an event is perhaps harder to change without becoming guilty of historical revisionism. This short study of Ibas will help us to see how far the history of Chalcedon remains an obstacle to the acceptance of that council as authoritative and ecumenical.

Biography

Ibas, (or Hiba in Syriac), was a priest of the important Roman city of Edessa. The local Christians were particularly impressed by the teachings and writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, a priest of Antioch, who had become the bishop of Mopsuestia, a town in what is now South-Eastern Turkey. Theodore was himself a disciple of Diodore of Tarsus. These two were particularly concerned to combat the heresy of Apollinarius of Laodicea, who had suggested that the Word of God had united Himself to a human nature in such a way that He took the place of the intelligent soul. Against this error Diodore, and Theodore after him, stressed the complete humanity of the man Jesus, but often in a way which seemed to make him a man separate from God, even while they insisted this was not their intent.

Theodore had written, "The man assumed from us had had such free access [to God] that he became an ambassador on behalf of the whole race, so that the rest of humanity might become partners with him in this special transformation".¹

This description of the incarnation, suggesting that the Word had assumed a man, had always seemed liable to the objection that it failed to adequately take account of the fact that "the Word became flesh".² But its aim was to protect the impassibility of the Divinity from the equally defective Christology of Arius and Apollinarius, who had, for their part, described Christ as being a humanity in which the mind and spirit were not that of man but of God.

Ibas, together with many other Antiocheans and Eastern Christians, found the teachings of Theodore entirely satisfactory. Indeed Ibas became well known even while a priest as a translator of the works of Theodore into Syriac from Greek. He attended the council at Ephesus in 431 AD in the party of John of Antioch, and wrote to a friend afterwards that Cyril of Alexandria and his party had,

"..assented to the Twelve Chapters written by Cyril, just as if they were consonant with, while they are in reality adverse to, the True Faith".³

His own bishop, Rabulla, attempted to prevent the spread of Theodore's writings, both banning them and expelling Ibas from Edessa. But because Ibas seems to have had the support of the nobility in the city, he was elected bishop as successor to Rabulla in about 435 AD. He had supported the reconciliation between the Antiocheans under John of Antioch, with Cyril of Alexandria, in 433 AD, but a letter he wrote some time afterwards shows that he understood the reconciliation entirely from a Theodorean point of view, and says of Cyril that he and his party,

"have become abashed, apologizing for their folly and teaching the very opposite to their former Doctrine. For no man ventures now to affirm that there is One Nature only of the Divinity and humanity of Christ, but men openly avow the Temple and Him who dwells in it to be the One Only Son Jesus Christ".⁴

This is a description of the incarnation which is completely consistent with the thought of Theodore of Mopsuestia. The use of the phrase 'the Temple' to refer to the humanity of Christ excludes the Cyrilline idea that the Word Himself had become flesh. It is important to note that Ibas was clearly committed to the Christology of Theodore and condemned Cyril's Twelve Chapters against Nestorius⁵, even while in the same letter he was able to condemn Nestorius' terminology. Ibas needs to be understood as a disciple of Theodore, not Nestorius, and this even after he considered himself reconciled to Cyril.

Ibas was clearly a bishop who could condemn Nestorius for his terminological excesses, while also venerating Theodore of Mopsuestia as the greatest of theologians, and who could be reconciled with Cyril, while also considering his teaching of the Twelve

¹ Fairbairn, Donald. *Grace and Christology in the Early Church*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. p. 43

² John 1:14

³ S.G.F. Perry. *Second Synod of Ephesus*. Orient Press. 1881. p. 115

⁴ S.G.F. Perry. *Second Synod of Ephesus*. Orient Press. 1881. p. 119

⁵ These were twelve propositions which excluded the defective Christology of Nestorius, but also precluded that of Theodore. For that reason Ibas rejected them and indeed considered them heretical. In 433 AD Ibas was still describing Theodore as 'that preacher of the Truth, that Doctor of the Church'.

Chapters, and about the 'one nature' to be unadulterated heresy. It is clear that the rejection of Nestorius and the apparent reunion with Cyril do not preclude a commitment to the false Christology of Theodore.

Proclus, who became archbishop of Constantinople after Nestorius was deposed, mentions Ibas in one of his letters, to John of Antioch, and describes him as a wolf, and as someone who perverts the sense of scripture in order to devour the faithful.⁶ He was active as an advocate of the teaching of Theodore of Mopsuestia for the whole period between Ephesus I in 431 AD and Ephesus II in 449 AD.

Finally, in about 448 AD, some of his own clergy sought to bring the content of his preaching, and a number of administrative and moral irregularities at Edessa, to the attention of Domnus, the successor of John at Antioch. They found themselves summarily excommunicated. Further complaints taken to Constantinople led to an enquiry, but this seems to have been intended simply as a means of resolving the conflict at Edessa, not dealing with the charges themselves.

Eventually dissent became so vocal, with large numbers of citizens voicing their opposition to Ibas, from many different community groups, that the civil authorities had to take notice, and he found himself detained while his teaching was examined.

Ibas and the Second Council of Ephesus

During this same period there was also a controversy raised concerning the Christological opinions of Eutyches, the aged and famous archimandrite of a monastery in Constantinople. He had been accused of teaching that the humanity and Divinity of Christ were confused, and at a local synod he had been deposed by his bishop, Flavian.

Eutyches insisted that he had been misrepresented and that he was in fact only professing the unity of subject in Christ which was the teaching of Cyril. He was certainly powerful enough to be able to complain to the emperor, to Pope Leo of Rome and to Dioscorus of Alexandria, the successor to Cyril.

The confused situation of the times seemed to demand an ecumenical council to settle the various controversies. Thus, despite the resistance of Leo, a council was called to gather at Ephesus in 449 to consider the case of Eutyches and Flavian, and of importance for this study, in the second session it took time to review the status of Ibas of Edessa.⁷

The council had received a letter from the Emperor which drew attention to the reports which were being made from the people at Edessa about their bishop Ibas. There were also monks from the East who had been instructed to attend the council by the Emperor. They bore letters from the Emperor which describe 'certain bishops of that land who, infected with the impious tenets of Nestorius, have rendered themselves infamous.'⁸

This can only refer to Ibas, Theodoret and those who held their opinions. It is clear that the opinions of these bishops were not simply privately and discreetly held, but on the contrary were notorious for being in sympathy with that of Nestorius. The investigation of Ibas at this council was not simply a matter of ecclesiastical intrigue but was required by the public controversy which their teachings provoked.

⁶ Nicholas Constans. *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity*. Brill 2003. p. 113

⁷ The record of this second session is found in S.G.F. Perry. *Second Synod of Ephesus*. Orient Press. 1881.

⁸ S.G.F. Perry. *Second Synod of Ephesus*. Orient Press. 1881. p. 39

The bishops Photius, Eustathius and Uranius were asked to report on their own investigations into Ibas. They briefly referred to the great commotion which had been evident in Edessa over the previous year and stated that after their investigation into Ibas they had refused to be in communion with him.⁹

At this point the official records of the recent events in Edessa which had led to Ibas' arrest began to be read. A civil investigation had been ordered by the Emperors and this was conducted by Chaireas, the Civil Governor of the region of Osrhoene, in which Edessa was situated. His visit to Edessa began on April 12th, 449, just a year after the investigation of the three bishops mentioned above had concluded at Tyre, in February 448. There was still no peace in Edessa.

Indeed on his arrival the Governor was greeted by crowds of Edessans shouting out acclamations, as was their custom. This was not a mob, but rather one of the normal means of ordinary people making sure that their opinions were heard.

Among the praises offered to the Emperor were repeated criticisms and condemnations of Ibas.

"All of us are of one mind – nobody accepts Ibas. No man wants a Nestorian bishop"

"No man wants the enemy of Christ"

"An Orthodox bishop for the Metropolis – let Ibas take his departure"¹⁰

Of course it is the case that supporters of Ibas might well have wished to stay away from such a crowd, but these acclamations, and the others like them, are taken from official, not Church records, and certainly show that there was a significant proportion of the population who were offended by what they understood as Ibas' Nestorian sympathies.

A couple of days later the Governor held a meeting in the Council Chamber to which various clerics, monks and vowed people came to present depositions in writing. But the record shows that workmen and inhabitants of the city again came to make their voice heard, and having been admitted they shouted out their views which were duly recorded.

"No one accepts Ibas as bishop"

"No man wants a depraver of Orthodoxy"

"Ibas alone has robbed the Church"

"Ibas has corrupted the faith of Ephesus"¹¹

"Ibas has carried off possessions that are the common property of all"¹²

Some of these acclamations have reference to the accusations made against him over the previous year that he had used Church property for his own ends, and had preferred his own family and friends. Other refer clearly to the apparently widespread opinion that he was opposed to the Orthodoxy of the First Council of Ephesus and of Cyril of Alexandria.

There are a great many of these acclamations, all duly recorded in the official minutes.

⁹ S.G.F. Perry. Second Synod of Ephesus. Orient Press. 1881. p. 43

¹⁰ S.G.F. Perry. Second Synod of Ephesus. Orient Press. 1881. p. 49

¹¹ That is the first council of Ephesus in 431, at which Nestorius was condemned and the Christology of Cyril accepted as the measure of Orthodoxy.

¹² S.G.F. Perry. Second Synod of Ephesus. Orient Press. 1881. p. 51

Chaireas had felt obliged to report to his consular superiors, and therefore at this point in the proceedings of the Second Council of Ephesus his letter to them is read into the record. Chaireas describes how all of the priests, together with the leaders of the monks and wise-men,¹³ had gathered to ask him to consider a petition which had also been signed by various tradesmen and even labourers.

The petition states that Ibas had been respected for many years as a bishop even when it became clear that he had maladministered the property of the Church. But on his being accused of heresy, and the proof of his opinions being found in the testimony of many witnesses, and even in the letters which Ibas had written to Persia, then it was necessary for the clergy and people of Edessa to reject him. In fact the people of Edessa have to go further and petition that Ibas not be allowed to invoke the military power of the Empire to force himself upon the city.

An even larger group of citizens are recorded as having subscribed to this petition. They include the Clergy, the Archimandrites, the Monks, the Vowed Brethren, the Municipal Authorities, the Roman Officials, the schools of the Armenian, Persian and Syrian communities, as well as the Artizans.

As the official record states, "Every person, with his own hand, subscribed and assented to these transactions and to the presentation of the petition."¹⁴ Even if this is an exaggeration, it does seem clear that the vast majority of the population considered Ibas to be an heretic, and wished themselves rid of him.

The whole city was then in uproar for three or four days while the people persisted in making acclamations against Ibas. Chaireas was in rather a difficult situation since he felt that he could not continue to trouble the Imperial authorities with the problems in Edessa, not least because we can imagine that it would have reflected badly upon his abilities as Governor of the region. With this in mind, and since the clergy seemed united in wishing some resolution to the turmoil then overwhelming the city, he decided to proceed with a further examination of the case of Ibas so that he could report more fully to his superiors. This second enquiry is now read at the Second Council of Ephesus.

This second enquiry seems to have been forced after the local civil leader, Count Theodosius, together with the Governor, Chaireas, had to come to the cathedral to settle the population of the city who had gathered there for the Liturgy. Theodosius had to promise that the charges against Ibas would be made public, and so the clergy, monastics and community leaders gathered before Chaireas again to hear the substance of the accusations made public.

Count Theodosius entreats Chaireas to put an end to the tumult in the city which "the accusation made against Bishop Ibas, in the city of Berytus¹⁵, has occasioned, through which the people have learned that he has uttered a host of blasphemies, and that he has committed many acts subversive of the laws and adverse to the christian faith."¹⁶

¹³ Possibly various officers in the educational communities which were present in Edessa.

¹⁴ S.G.F. Perry. Second Synod of Ephesus. Orient Press. 1881. p. 67

¹⁵ This was the investigation conducted by the three bishops Uranius, Photius and Eustathius in 448, and which took place in Berytus and Tyre. Although accusations were made against Ibas it seems the bishops had the objective of trying to prevent scandal and discord rather than investigate Ibas' Christology.

¹⁶ S.G.F. Perry. Second Synod of Ephesus. Orient Press. 1881. p. 90

Once again a long list of clergy, civil leaders and citizens append their names or speak out publically in support of the request for some action to be taken immediately. Finally, after a week of unrest, the investigation gets under way and the original accusers of Ibas are called to give testimony. These were the priests Samuel, Maras and Cyrus. Samuel is their spokesman and he gives a detailed account of what had taken place, from his point of view, during the previous investigations of Ibas' teachings and behaviour.

He accuses Ibas of 'everywhere scattering gold' so that it was almost impossible to get their complaints heard, and it would appear that even the minutes of the meetings held with the bishops Photius, Uranius and Eustathius were being kept secret. There seems to have been a consistent desire to sweep the whole problem of Ibas under the carpet.

Samuel the priest described how at the very beginning the dispute was taken to Domnus of Antioch, the senior bishop of the See, but that after they had testified about many points he simply sent them away without taking any action at all. So they had to go to the capital and present their complaint before Flavian, the archbishop of Constantinople, and the Emperor Theodosius. Samuel repeats before Chaireas the same charge which he laid before Flavian.

Ibas had said,

"I do not envy Christ becoming God, for in so far as he has become God I have become so, for he is of the same nature as myself."

This rather clearly suggests that he maintained the views held by Theodore of Mopsuestia, that Christ was a human subject, apart from the divine Word, who became God in some sense. It would seem that Ibas dealt with this criticism by excommunicating those who objected to his teaching, and then claimed that as excommunicates they could not testify against him. A rather clever ploy that allowed him to avoid being investigated. Indeed at the enquiry in 448 he had objected to all those clergy from Edessa who came to testify against him by claiming that they were excommunicates or associated with excommunicates. It is no wonder that Ibas had not been found guilty of heresy previously, if he had managed to silence all those who had anything relevant to testify.

Things were rather different during the inquiry under Chaireas however, and all those who could throw light on the controversy surrounding Ibas were invited to speak. Many priests, deacons, monks and vowed persons now did just that.

Many repeated that they had clearly heard Ibas say,

"I do not envy Christ's becoming God; for I am become so no less than he, since he is of the same nature as my own."¹⁷

Or reported that they had heard him say,

"That God the Word, in His foreknowledge, knew that Christ would justify himself by his works, and therefore dwelt in him."¹⁸

This is an equally Theodorean description of Christ as a man in whom God the Word dwelt. Another Theodorean type of statement used by Ibas was,

"In the beginning was the Word, but Matthew the Evangelist has said - The Book of the Generations of Jesus Christ, the Son of Abraham, the Son of David - is not the former one thing and the latter quite another?"¹⁹

¹⁷ S.G.F. Perry. Second Synod of Ephesus. Orient Press. 1881. p. 101

¹⁸ S.G.F. Perry. Second Synod of Ephesus. Orient Press. 1881. p. 101

¹⁹ S.G.F. Perry. Second Synod of Ephesus. Orient Press. 1881. p. 104

Others reported hearing him dismiss the idea of Hell as a figure of speech used to threaten people, and said that he had copies of the works of Nestorius, and that he had said in the Church during a homily that the Jews had only crucified a mere man.²⁰

One witness, John, a vowed person, testifies most clearly to the essentially Theodorean foundation of Ibas' teaching in this period just before the Second Council of Ephesus and that of Chalcedon, when he reports,

"I heard Ibas, when expounding in Church, say:- 'It was one person who died, and another who was in heaven, and that was one person who was without beginning, and that was another person who is subject to a beginning; and he was one person who is of the Father, and he was another who is of the Virgin.'²¹

This is the Christology of Theodore, Nestorius and clearly also that of Ibas. Many other clergy continue to give their own recollections of things which Ibas had said which had troubled them, and which they had not been able to raise in public before, for fear of joining those who had so spoken and been excommunicated.

The Count Theodosius, one of the local civil leaders, asks that all of these testimonies be forwarded to the Imperial authorities, and to the Archbishops of Constantinople, Alexandria and Antioch. But he also asks that Ibas' letter to Maris the Persian also be read into the official record and placed among the Acts of the investigation being conducted by Chaireas.

This letter to Maris has been mentioned before. It is most important as showing the substance of Ibas' opinions after he had apparently entered into union with Cyril of Alexandria. This reconciliation is often taken by writers of the Eastern Orthodox Church as showing that there was a unanimity in the Church based on a balanced reading of Cyril's Christology. But a few brief excerpts from the letter will allow us to conclude that Ibas was, and remained to this period just before the council of Chalcedon, a determined supporter of Theodore of Mopsuestia and an opponent of the substance of Cyril of Alexandria's Christology.

The main points to concern us in this brief consideration of Ibas are that,

- i. He is able to condemn both Nestorius and Cyril for uttering blasphemous statements. The one because he rejected the phrase 'Mother of God', and the other for saying that 'God, the Word, became man'.
- ii. He describes the Twelve Chapters which Cyril had written to Nestorius as being impious and contrary to the True Faith.
- iii. He uses the Theodorean concept of Christ being the 'Temple' in which God dwells.
- iv. He warmly praises Theodore of Mopsuestia as being a Doctor of the Church.
- v. He describes Cyril as having abandoned his errors and having now accepted the Christology of Theodore, speaking of 'the Temple and Him who dwells in it'.²²

Now all of these points represent the opinion of Ibas *after* he had been 'reconciled' with Cyril of Alexandria. It is abundantly clear that his perception of this reconciliation is one in which Cyril has abandoned his Christology and that of Theodore has been adopted

²⁰ S.G.F. Perry. Second Synod of Ephesus. Orient Press. 1881. p. 105

²¹ S.G.F. Perry. Second Synod of Ephesus. Orient Press. 1881. p. 106

²² S.G.F. Perry. Second Synod of Ephesus. Orient Press. 1881. p. 116-119

by all. This letter was written in about 433. It allows us to see that at the First Council of Ephesus in 431 Ibas had been a disciple of Theodore of Mopsuestia, and that in 433 he remained a disciple of Theodore. His other spoken comments, testified to by a great many clergy from Edessa, as well as the statements of important bishops such as Proclus of Constantinople, and the fact that Ibas had been exiled from Edessa by his bishop Rabulla, all demonstrate that he never ceased to be a disciple of Theodore, and at the time of this present investigation before Chaireas, and during the Second Council of Ephesus in 449, there was no evidence at all that he had changed his Christological opinion.

Perhaps it will be suggested that Ibas might not have been the author of this letter, and that it had been associated with him simply out of mischief and a desire to do his reputation some damage. But this was also considered by the inquiry we are examining. When the presiding judge asked that those who had been present at the preceding and rather neutered investigation should certify if this letter had been acknowledged by Ibas a number of clergy stepped forward and made statements such as,

“I was there at Berytus when Ibas owned in my presence that the letter was his, by saying – ‘I acknowledge it to be so’ – and I have believed this to be the case up to the present day, and if the Emperor were to decree and order me to be cut in pieces, I should still believe it to be so.”²³

After other clergy had testified in a similar manner, the Governor Chaireas brought these considerations of Ibas to a close and promised to forward all of the materials to the Imperial authorities, as Count Theodosius and the great crowd of the people had been urging.

This brings us back to the events at Ephesus in 449. The case of Ibas was being discussed because of the investigation held under Governor Chaireas and because of the uproar against Ibas which had taken place in Edessa once his views became public.

Once his written and spoken opinions had been read out before the council of bishops there was no excuse found for him. He was unworthy of the episcopate, indeed he should be excommunicate since his opinions were contrary to the faith of the Church.

Dioscorus spoke first, saying,

“Ibas, who has estranged himself from the honours of the episcopate by those such great impieties on which he ventured and by those unmeasured statements contrary to the truth of the nature of our Redeemer which he has advanced, has brought upon himself .. condemnation.”²⁴

Others were more than willing to make the same judgement. Indeed the words of Ibas himself left the bishops no other option. He had exalted Theodore and condemned Cyril. He had confessed the Temple and he who dwelt in him.

Juvenal of Jerusalem, Thalassius of Caesarea, Stephen of Ephesus, one by one the bishops give their opinions. Eustathius of Berytus, one of those who had been part of the investigation at Tyre-Berytus in 448, states that,

“Ibas has given proof that he agreed with, if he did not precede, Nestorius, and has become a teacher of that impious heresy.”²⁵

²³ S.G.F. Perry. Second Synod of Ephesus. Orient Press. 1881. p. 121

²⁴ S.G.F. Perry. Second Synod of Ephesus. Orient Press. 1881. p. 134

²⁵ S.G.F. Perry. Second Synod of Ephesus. Orient Press. 1881. p. 137

This is indeed the only conclusion that a reading of the material gathered by Charieas could allow. One by one the bishops speak out, making the same judgement, until Dioscorus asks that the rest of the bishops should show whether they agree with what had been decided. The Acts of the Council show that the bishops indicated by various comments that indeed they did agree,

“The same things all of us say – this is the decision of us all – all of us reject him.”²⁶

Now what do all of these proceedings over the period of 448-449 tell us? Certainly we do not need to insist that all of the clergy and people at Edessa had turned against their bishop. Nor that all the bishops at Ephesus were entirely happy with the deposition of Ibas. But it does seem clear, not least because much of the evidence used in the final judgement was determined at a civil enquiry, that Ibas was and remained a follower of Theodore of Mopsuestia. Though he had been able to use various machinations to prevent his Christology coming under too strict an investigation, in the end, as the bishops decided, it was his own views which judged him unworthy of the episcopate.

Ibas and the Council of Chalcedon

Now if matters had remained as the Council of Ephesus in 449 left them, then Ibas' successor at Edessa, Nonnus, would have remained in undisturbed possession of his see. Ibas would have been no more than a less well known heretic of the same sort of views as Nestorius.

But when the emperor Theodosius fell from his horse and died, his sister Pulcheria abandoned her vows as a nun, and took the aged general Marcian as her husband, making him emperor. These two were much less inclined to support the Christology of Cyril over that of Leo and the Eastern bishops, and so at their council of Chalcedon the restitution of Ibas was one of the matters which was placed on the agenda.

Ibas approached the council and insisted that he had not been found guilty of any heresy, and that bishop Uranius had contrived that certain clergy should be assembled to accuse him. This argument does not bear much weight. If Uranius had contrived to assemble Ibas' accusers at Tyre-Berytus then why did he and his fellow investigating bishops not allow any of them to testify at that investigation? Likewise, if Uranius had desired above all to see the deposition of Ibas then why did his enquiry allow Ibas to make various promises about his future behaviour and essentially allow him to avoid any theological questions?

The main request which Ibas presented to Chalcedon was that,

“all the proceedings at Ephesus in my absence be declared void and that my rights be respected since I have been found guilty of nothing.”²⁷

This was an entirely disingenuous argument. Of course he had been found guilty of both heresy and mismanagement of his see. Both in the investigation under Charieas, and then at the council of Ephesus in 449. No wonder he wanted the investigation at Ephesus to be declared void, since it was at that council that the material was presented which showed he was a disciple of Theodore of Mopsuestia.

The Roman legates at Chalcedon took the lead and asked that the judgement of the proceedings which had taken place at Tyre-Berytus be read. Ibas had a copy conveniently to hand.

²⁶ S.G.F. Perry. Second Synod of Ephesus. Orient Press. 1881. p. 145

²⁷ Richard Price and Michael Gaddis. The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon. Translated Texts for Historians. Vol 45. Liverpool University Press. Vol III. p. 260

The judgement hardly clears Ibas from the condemnation which was imposed on him at Ephesus and which represented the opinion of the clergy and people at Edessa. The bishops Uranius, Photius and Eustathius appear to have been pleased that Ibas declared himself willing to anathematise Nestorius publically in his own city, accept the faith contained in the letter of reconciliation between Cyril and John of Antioch, and to accept the substance of the council of Ephesus in 431.

In actual fact we have already shown from the letter of Ibas to Maris the Persian that it was entirely possible for Ibas to condemn Nestorius and accept the reconciliation with Cyril, according to his own erroneous interpretation of that reconciliation, while all the time being a committed disciple of Theodore of Mopsuestia and his Christology. There is also no evidence whatsoever that Ibas ever followed through in his promises and anathematised Nestorius in public at Edessa or showed any inclination to change his opinion of Cyril's teaching.

This being so, the judgement at Tyre-Berytus was worthless. It had, as the council of Ephesus in 449 showed, entirely failed to address his theology, and was no more than an attempt at a white-wash.

After the reading of this weak judgement the Roman legate Paschasinus asked that the council express its will concerning Ibas. We read in the Acts that "all the most devout bishops remained silent."²⁸

It was just impossible for the bishops to swallow the idea that Ibas should be exonerated. Many of them had been at Ephesus a couple of years earlier and had heard the wider evidence against him. The 'most magnificent officials' declared that the council would give its opinion the next day. His reputation as a disciple of Theodore preceded him and undoubtedly there was a need for a busy night to convince the bishops that Ibas should be restored. It certainly was not their opinion at the end of the first session concerning him.

The second session appears to have been well stage-managed.²⁹ It begins with Ibas reminding the bishops that he had not been able to defend himself at Ephesus. This allowed the bishops to declare that all of the proceedings at Ephesus against Ibas should be annulled. There then followed a suggestion by Patricius of Tyana that the judgement of Photius and Eustathius should be accepted, the weak judgement which failed to investigate his Christology. The Eastern bishops of Antioch were happy to accept this, since it also meant that there would be no theological judgement required.

A small group of accusers of Ibas were allowed to enter the council. The charge that Ibas had said that he did not envy Christ becoming God was repeated. Photius, one of the bishops who had been happy to exonerate Ibas in 448, insisted that since Ibas swore he had not said anything like this, and seeing that those who had come to accuse him were all excluded, he must be innocent. Therefore the basis for their positive judgement is seen to be entirely based on the statement of Ibas himself that he was innocent, and on the exclusion of anyone who said anything different.³⁰

The Acts of the proceeding at Tyre-Berytus were now read up to and including the letter of Ibas to Maris the Persian. We have already seen that it clearly shows that Ibas was a

²⁸ Richard Price and Michael Gaddis. *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon. Translated Texts for Historians. Vol 45. Liverpool University Press. Vol III. p. 264*

²⁹ Richard Price and Michael Gaddis. *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon. Translated Texts for Historians. Vol 45. Liverpool University Press. Vol III. p. 274*

³⁰ Price notes that the accusers of Ibas had been excommunicated in an attempt to prevent them appearing against him. He seems to have used this ploy several times.

Theodorean. Price also detects omissions in the Acts of Chalcedon at this point which seem to serve to suppress any discussion of this controversial letter.

After the letter had been read, the 'magnificent officials' suggested that the proceedings of Ephesus in 449 be read out so that there would be a complete account of all of the circumstances in which Ibas was concerned. But these damaging documents, which must have made his true opinions public, were not even to be mentioned! The Roman legates insisted, "it is clearly pointless to read out the proceedings there...the proceedings there have been made null by the most blessed and apostolic bishop of the city of Rome."³¹

Of course it is interesting that Leo of Rome considered that he had the authority on his own to set aside a council of the Church. But it is also clear that there was no desire at Chalcedon to investigate the teaching of Ibas. On the contrary, anything that might seem liable to condemn him appears to have been simply written out of the historical record. Once the bishops had decided that nothing which took place at Ephesus in 449 should be considered at all, then there seemed nothing standing in the way of Ibas being restored to his see.

Paschasinus and Lucentius, with Boniface, speak first on behalf of Leo of Rome. We have already seen that Leo considered that he had the authority to make binding decisions for the whole Church. They speak with his authority and say,

"from the reading of his letter we have found him to be Orthodox."³²

This is an important judgement. The representative of the Roman See, giving a judgement on behalf of Leo, and concerning which Leo never shows any objection, say that they have read Ibas' letter to Maris the Persian and after having read it they conclude that he is Orthodox!

Anatolius, archbishop of Constantinople, speaks next and says,

"the reading of all the accompanying material prove the most devout Ibas innocent of the accusations brought against him."³³

Then Maximus of Antioch speaks, and he also states clearly that he has heard what has been read, including his letter to Maris, and,

"from what has just been read it has become clear that the most devout Ibas is guiltless of everything charged against him; and from the reading of the transcript of the letter produced by his adversary his writing has been seen to be Orthodox."³⁴

So the representatives of the great Sees of Rome, Constantinople and Antioch all agree that having read the letter of Ibas to Maris the Persian they believe that this shows him to be Orthodox. Does it not also show that they consider their own Orthodoxy to be in accord with the letter if Ibas to Maris the Persian? What does that mean in terms of the Orthodoxy of Chalcedon? Surely it requires that all of the statements of that council be read with the Christology of the letter to Maris in mind. The letter which considers the

³¹ Richard Price and Michael Gaddis. The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon. Translated Texts for Historians. Vol 45. Liverpool University Press. Vol III. p. 303

³² Richard Price and Michael Gaddis. The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon. Translated Texts for Historians. Vol 45. Liverpool University Press. Vol III. p. 305

³³ Richard Price and Michael Gaddis. The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon. Translated Texts for Historians. Vol 45. Liverpool University Press. Vol III. p. 306

³⁴ Richard Price and Michael Gaddis. The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon. Translated Texts for Historians. Vol 45. Liverpool University Press. Vol III. p. 306

Christology of Cyril to be heresy, and the teaching of Theodore of Mopsuestia to be Orthodox.

Even at this point in the session there were still bishops who were not convinced by this very impressive display of support for the erstwhile bishop of Edessa. They cried out demanding that he anathematise Nestorius. Of course we already know that Ibas is happy to anathematise Nestorius, even while he remains a disciple of Theodore. Nothing has changed. The anathema against Nestorius has no value if it is made by one who continues to follow Theodore.

Worse than that, at the same time he also anathematises all those who say 'one nature', and the council accepts this statement, and the one against Nestorius as being enough to prove his Orthodoxy.

But if we turn briefly and for a final time to the letter to Maris, which has just been read at Chalcedon, then we find that the anathema against those who speak of 'one nature' includes Cyril and his Christology. For Ibas had written,

"Cyril wrote the Twelve Chapters..asserting that there is one nature of the Godhead and manhood of our Lord Jesus Christ... No one now dares to say that there is one nature of Godhead and manhood but they profess belief in the temple, and the one who dwells in it."³⁵

It is clear that Ibas, in this final jibe at the session which exonerated him, has in mind not only Eutyches but Cyril himself. It was, after all, Cyril who had been his opponent for the past decades, not Eutyches. It was Cyril who had taught the 'one nature' of Christ, and whom Ibas considered mired in heresy until he accepted the teaching of Theodore.

Ibas and the Rejection of Chalcedon

At the beginning of this paper we considered the anathema issued against Chalcedon by Dioscorus in 451. It said,

Chalcedon is anathematised because it has accepted the communion of the partisans of Nestorius, such as Ibas.

Perhaps we are now better placed to see that there is weight in this argument. Ibas was well known in the decades between Ephesus in 431 and Chalcedon in 451, as a disciple of Theodore of Mopsuestia and his heretical Christology. He was quite able to condemn Nestorius while remaining a committed follower of Theodore. He was also quite able to enter into communion with Cyril on the false assumption that Cyril had abandoned his 'one nature' Christology, and Ibas always considered this 'one nature' or 'mia-physis' Christology to be heresy.

He appears to have been reasonably condemned at Ephesus in 449 on the basis of a civil investigation at Edessa which seems to have been conducted in an unbiased fashion by the Governor of the region whom we may conclude acted in a neutral manner. These investigations, and his own written and spoken words, were and are clear enough evidence that he was, as all knew him to be, a disciple of Theodore, and therefore a 'partisan of Nestorius', who was equally a disciple of Nestorius.

At Chalcedon it is clear that the Roman representatives of Leo had already determined his innocence. By excluding the negative evidence against him the council hoped that it would be reasonably easy to restore him to his see. Why allow the letter of Ibas to Maris to be read? Surely because it was considered positive not negative evidence in the

³⁵ Richard Price and Michael Gaddis. *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon. Translated Texts for Historians. Vol 45.* Liverpool University Press. Vol III. p. 296

case. The representatives of the three leading Sees all stated in their judgements that they and read the letter and after reading the letter concluded that Ibas was Orthodox.

This seems evidence that their Orthodoxy was the same as that of Ibas and his letter. There was nothing which Ibas said at Chalcedon which changes in even the smallest point the position which he had presented in his letter. The anathema against Nestorius does not preclude his continuing as a Theodorean, and his anathema against those who speak of 'one nature' excludes his being in any sense a Cyrilline.

It seems entirely reasonable to criticise Chalcedon as having accepted the partisans of Nestorius such as Ibas. In their haste to reject all that had taken place at Ephesus in 449, the way was opened for those whom Ephesus had rightly condemned to find a place in the Church.