

ABSTRACT
THE MAKING OF CONSTANTINOPLE II: RECEPTION AND RENEWAL
OF CONCILIAR CHRISTOLOGY, A.D. 428–553

Joshua Miller

Marquette University, 2025

The Second Council of Constantinople in 553, recognized by many Christian traditions as the fifth ecumenical council, represents a pivotal moment in the development and articulation of the Church's understanding of the central mystery of her faith, that of the Incarnation of the Word of God who is Jesus Christ. Constantinople II provides a clarification of the symmetrical statement of Christology produced at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 by reading it in continuity with the preceding conciliar tradition, especially the Council of Ephesus in 431, and by retrieving neglected tenets of Cyril of Alexandria's more asymmetrical account of Christology, especially the doctrine of "hypostatic union" understood as the union of the human nature to the divine nature in the one hypostasis that is the second Person of the Trinity. In this way, following fifth and sixth century theologians loyal to Cyril or Chalcedon or both, Constantinople II safeguards Chalcedon from a distorted two-subject Christology by means of a Cyrillian interpretation that may be properly called *neo-Chalcedonian* insofar as it newly situates the fourth council vis-à-vis that older patristic and conciliar tradition in which it participates.

The synthetic *reception* of tradition at Constantinople II provides a historical instance of doctrinal development through the *renewal* of those Christological teachings handed down in the Church at its previous councils, together with their distinguished teachers such as Cyril. This joint act of receiving and renewing conciliar Christology demonstrates that Chalcedon is one key stage in an ongoing process over the course of which the Church struggled to define her faith in response to successive theological challenges, each threatening the integrity of the Revelation entrusted to her. Reflecting on and contributing to this process, the fifth council exemplifies a *hermeneutic of renewal* that assumes the continuity and consistency of the Church's tradition while perceiving the need to present the Church's faith anew in response to new questions and concerns generated by and within the tradition. This hermeneutical framework yielded a deeper realization of the significance and limits of particular human words for naming and preserving the mystery of the Word made flesh.