Prayer
Scripture: Romans 1:1-7
Hymn: 92 "I Stand Amazed"

The three greatest controversies of the ancient church were the Trinitarian Controversy, the Christological Controversy and the Anthropological Controversy. The Anthropological Controversy was the controversy started by Augustine and Pelagius over the nature of man, sin, and grace. The Trinitarian Controversy was over the relation of the three persons of the Trinity raised by the heresies of Arius concerning the Second and Third Persons of the Trinity in relation to the First Person of the Trinity. It is often called the Nicene Controversy. The Christological Controversy was over the relation of the human and the divine natures in the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ.

BACKGROUND OF THE CONTROVERSY: Before the end of the first century there had arisen in the church the Ebionites who insisted Jesus was merely a man and the Docetists who insisted that he was pure spirit. Against these heretics the Logos theologians insisted that the Word of God became flesh. Toward the end of the second century the Apostles' Creed affirmed that Christ Jesus was the only son of God who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary. In the last decade of the second century the Adoptionist Monarchians taught that Jesus was a man who lived so good that God adopted him as his son. The Modalistic Monarchians insisted that the One God appeared in different modes or roles--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Tertullian, the apologist and theologian of North Africa at the end of the second and beginning of the third century gave the church a simple formula to solve the problem of Christology. It was drawn from his background in law: one person could own two pieces of property. The one person, Jesus, owned both humanity and divinity. This satisfied the Western mind but the East wanted something more philosophical. Novatian, the first great Latin theologian in Rome, about the middle of the third century, insisted that the Logos theology was the only correct interpretation of the Apostles' Creed. Dionysius, bishop of Rome in the third quarter of the third century polished and handed down the ideas of Tertullian and Novatian.

Arius, the great heretic on the Trinity, also offered a solution to the problem of Christology. He had suggested that Jesus received from Mary a human body and a human soul, but the place of the reasoning mind was taken by the Logos, the first thing that God Created--created in time out of nothing by an act of his will. Arius' ideas on Christology were somewhat overlooked in the Trinitarian Controversy. In the 360's Apollinaris of Laodicea, one of the champions of the Nicene faith, and the one who translated the Books of Moses into Homeric metre during the reign of Julian the Apostate, called attention to the heresy of Arius on Christology. Apollinaris insisted that the error of Arius consisted in making the mind of Christ a creature--the Logos as the first thing God created. Apollinaris taught that Jesus got his body and soul from Mary but the place of the mind was taken by the eternal Logos that was co-eternal and consubstantial with the Father. The human mind is corrupt and in bondage to the flesh. Hence in Jesus it was replaced by the Eternal Logos, the archetype of all minds, which though made in its image have fallen. Apollinaris believed he was honoring Christ's divinity and avoiding a duality of Sons. He held that his theory preserved the unity of Christ. He declared, "God has in His own flesh suffered our sorrows."

In 362 a synod in Alexandria condemned the views of Apollinaris without mentioning his name. After his views had been condemned by other local synods, Apollinaris withdrew from the church, setting up churches of his own. A synod of Rome condemned him in 377 and Antioch condemned him in 379. The Second Ecumenical Council at Constantinople in 381 condemned Apollinaris along with the Arians. The churches of both Arians and Apollinarians were ordered closed.
Gregory of Nazianzus strongly opposed Apollinaris. Also he was opposed by members of the school of Antioch. The roots of the school went back to Paul of Samosata and Lucian. In the Christological controversy the representatives of Antioch rejected the extreme positions of these earlier teachers and took a stand for Nicene orthodoxy. However, they still strongly emphasized the humanity of Jesus and their literalism in exegesis of Scripture stood in marked contrast to the Alexandrian allegory and emphasis on the divinity of Jesus. Diodorus was for many years a presbyter of Antioch and one of the most famous and able of the long line of noted teachers from the school. From 378 until his death he was bishop of Tarsus. Diodorus emphasized Christ as the "second Adam" whose human experiences of temptation and suffering were the example for all men. His concern was to give full and true value to Christ's humanity. In Diodorus' teaching the two natures of Christ approached the conception of two persons in moral rather than essential union. That which was born of Mary was human. The Eternal Logos had become incarnate in a perfect human, as God in a temple. The union of the human and the divine was like the union of body and soul, or of husband and wife. The Alexandrians saw in this adoptionist Christology such as had been condemned in Paul of Samosata. The Alexandrians stressed the ancient eastern idea of the human becoming divine.

Three noted disciples of Diodorus were John Chrysostom, the great preacher of Antioch and Constantinople, who eloquently exalted Christ as the perfect example; Theodore of Mopsuestia, the ablest exegete and theologian of the Antiochian school; and Nestorius, a presbyter and monk of Antioch, whose ability as a preacher led to his being made patriarch of Constantinople in 428. Theodore of Mopsuestia maintained that God and man in Christ constituted one person. He explained the union of the human and divine in Jesus in terms of God's "good will" or "good pleasure". There was a conjunction of will between the Logos and the human in Jesus. The Alexandrians felt that he failed to make the union real and that his teaching implied two Christs—one human and one divine.

Nestorius would not admit that there were two persons in Christ as the Alexandrians charged. He asserted, "With the one name Christ we designate at the same time two natures... The essential characteristics in the nature of the divinity and in the humanity are from all eternity distinguished." He declared that God the Word always has conjunction with Christ; that it is impossible for God the Word to do anything without the humanity. He believed there was intimate conjunction rather than the deification of the humanity. Nestorius insisted on the reality and completeness of both the human and the divine in Jesus with a conjunction of will between the two natures.

THE CLASH OF CYRIL AND NESTORIUS:

The bitterest critic and enemy of Nestorius was Cyril, the patriarch of Alexandria (412-444). Cyril was the nephew and successor of Theophilus, the bitter and unscrupulous foe of John Chrysostom. Cyril had learned his politics from his uncle. The role of the patriarchs of Constantinople in the Trinitarian Controversy had made it clear how important was the role of the preacher in the emperor's church. The rivalry between the schools of Antioch and Alexandria to secure the patriarchate of Constantinople for one of its products was bitter and marked with unscrupulous ambition and jealousy. Despite the unlovely traits of his character Cyril enjoyed the fanatical devotion of his people. His fiery preaching had inflamed the Christians of Alexandria to tear the great scientist, Hypatia, limb from limb on the streets. In Christology Cyril held the old Greek view that human in Christ had been made fully divine. Christ's humanity was complete—he possessed body, soul, and mind. But the two natures in Christ had so united as to form one divine Christ. Christ was one concrete existence. Cyril used "nature" to denote a concrete existence, the unified and divine individual. Nestorius used "nature" in an abstract sense to denote the totality of the human or the divine properties that together made up the Christ. Neither fully understood the other. For Cyril Christ was an impersonal humanity centered in divinity. The Word took flesh—the Word (Logos) was the center—the only center. Cyril proclaimed, "From two natures, one." Cyril believed that God was made flesh, was born, died, we partake of him in the Supper; his making the human divine, is the guarantee that we shall be partakers of the divine nature. Cyril accused Nestorius of having two Christs and of so separating the natures as to make Christ the son of God only by adoption.

Cyril's watchword was "Theotokos"—Mary was the "Mother of God" or, literally,
"The Bearer of God." This formula had been used by Alexander of Alexandria, Athanasius, Apollinaris and Gregory of Nazianzus. Though Theodore of Mopsuestia had allowed that it could be used if carefully guarded and defined, Nestorius and the majority at Antioch felt that it did not sufficiently distinguish the human and the divine in Christ.

When monks from Alexandria preached the "Theotokos" in Constantinople, Nestorius declared that the proper form was "Christotokos"—Mary was the mother of Christ. For Cyril and his sympathizers this was an attack on the rising reverence for the Virgin Mary. Cyril saw it as an opportunity to humiliate the rival see of Constantinople. An exchange of bitter and critical letters followed. Cyril began an open attack on Nestorius. He drew upon every influence and resource possible to get Nestorius condemned as a heretic. He appealed to the Emperor, Theodosius II, accused Nestorius of Destroying the basis of Salvation. He also presented the case of Pope Celestine I (422-432). Nestorius also wrote the pope, but Cyril was more respectful and flattering in his address to the pope. Rome was also jealous of the rising claims of Constantinople to be the "New Rome". Pope Celestine resented the attack on the "Theotokos" and also he was aware that Nestorius enjoyed considerable popularity among Pelagians. Pope Celestine held a Roman synod and found in favor of Cyril and ordered Nestorius to recant or be excommunicated.

THE THIRD ECUMENTICAL COUNCIL (Ephesus, 431)

The whole empire became involved in the controversy and the two Emperors, Theodosius II of the East, and Valentinian III of the West, called a general council to meet in Ephesus in 431. Cyril did his home work and prepared for the concil with thoroughness. Nestorius' supporters and friends were slow in arriving—partially because of heavy rains that slowed travel. When Cyril and his friend, Memnon, bishop of Ephesus, was that they had a clear majority they held a "quickie" concil and in a single day declared Nestorius a heretic and declared his deposed.

Then the friends of Nestorius, led by Bishop John of Antioch arrived, they were dismayed that Christians had not tarried one for another. They held a rump council and declared Cyril and Memnon heretics and deposed.

Both sides sent the results of their council to the emperors as the work of Holy Spirit inspired bishops. The emperors did not know what to do. Finally Theodosius II sent all the principals of the controversy into exile after first imprisoning them as trouble makers. Cyril, Memnon and John Politiced their ways back into the graces of the emperor, who allowed them to return to their churches with orders to settle their differences. Nestorius was made the "goat" and retired to a monastery where he would spend his life harassed and defamed and in great poverty.

In 433 John of Antioch submitted to Cyril and Memnon a creed that probably was prepared by Theodore of Cyrus, one of the leading theologians from the school of Antioch. Cyril and Memnon agreed to sign Antioch's creed if John would condemn Nestorius as a heretic. John thought it was better to sacrifice one man if the truth could triumph. Cyril signed the creed that contradicted his position in order to get his enemy condemned. Cyril circulated a letter containing twelve anathemas against Nestorianism that he had earlier submitted to the Council of Ephesus (431) and which became known as "The Twelve Chapters of Cyril."

The creed of Antioch signed by John, Cyril and Memnon was sent to Pope Sixtus III who agreed to sign it if the Easterners would sign the condemnation of Pelagius. Pope Sistus III condemned Nestorius though his own position was almost identical with that of Nestorius—he was much closer to Nestorius than to Cyril— but he wanted Pelagius condemned. The Easterners agreed with Pelagius but were willing to condemn his in order to secure the backing of the pope.

The Creed of Antioch acknowledged one Lord Jesus Christ—complete God and complete man, a union of the two natures having been made. It did make the concession to Cyril of declaring Mary to be Theotokos because the Word was made flesh in her and himself received the temple from her.

Nestorius in his exile in upper Egypt declared that he could have signed the creed with much better conscience than Cyril and declared that he was willing to be sacrificed that truth might triumph.

RENEWAL OF THE CONTROVERSY:

The agreement of 433 was a temporary truce. Cyril died in 322 and was succeeded by Dioscorus, a man of less acumen but great ambition and dogged determination and as unscrupulous in politics as Cyril. In 466 when the patriarchate of Constantinople again became vacant the rivalry of Antioch and Alexandria was renewed and Flavian, the
Antioch candidate, won the patriarchate of the emperor's church. From the first Dioscorus was out to get him.

An aged monk from Alexandria, Eutyches, was chosen abbot or "Archimandrite" of the monks of Constantinople. The representatives of Antioch led by Eusebius of Dorylaeum charged Eutyches with heresy. Eutyches was a follower of Cyril. Flavian was reluctant to take up the matter, preferring to let matters rest. Eusebius demanded a synod to try Eutyches and finally Flavian gave in and a synod was held in Constantinople in 448 to try Eutyches. The simple and almost senile Eutyches confessed, "...the Lord was of two natures before the incarnation (the union), but after the union of one nature." He was condemned as a heretic and declared deposed.

Dioscorus complained to the emperor, Theodosius II, and demanded a new ecumenical council. Both Eutyches and Flavian presented their cases to Pope Leo I, one of the ablest of the Roman popes. When the emperor's council met in 449 Leo had prepared for it his famous Tome in which he declared Christ had two full and complete natures in one person.

THE ROBBER COUNCIL (Ephesus, 449)

Dioscorus came to the emperor's council in Ephesus with an army of fanatical monks. Rumors circulated that they had daggers and clubs under their robes. Also rumors circulated that a few heads were so soft to guarantee that people would vote correctly. Flavian died in the midst of the council—rumors were that he had been beaten too much. Dioscorus and his monks dominated the council. Eutyches was declared innocent and ordered reinstated. Flavian and Eusebius of Dorylaeum were condemned as Nestorian heretics. The Tome of Leo was not even mentioned.

When Pope Leo received word of the council he called it "A Council of Robbers".

THE FOURTH ECUMENICAL COUNCIL (Chalcedon, 451)

When the emperor, Theodosius II, died, his sister, Pulcharia, became empress. Pope Leo began urging her to call an ecumenical council to reverse the Robber Council. The Romans insisted that Pulcharia, a virgin of the church, should marry. She married an old soldier and senator, Marcian, who agreed to allow her to keep her virginity. He was determined to protect her from undue pressures of churchmen—especially Pope Leo who had been her close friend.

Pope Leo wanted the council held in Rome. Marcian was determined to hold it in the East. When the pope saw that he could not get the council in Rome he cooled to the idea, urging that all should unite against Attila and his Huns who were threatening Italy.

Marcian and Pulcharia called the council for Chalcedon in 451. It was the largest of the councils up to this time—450 bishops were reputed to have attended. All previous heretics including Arius, Pelagius, Nestorius and Eutyches, were condemned. The Robber Council was condemned. The Tome of Leo was approved. The first three councils were declared to have been inspired by the Holy Spirit. The council issued and approved the famous "Creed of Chalcedon" declaring that Christ had two full natures but was one Lord Jesus Christ. He was consubstantial with both God and man—the two natures were not confused nor diminished in the union.

The doctrine of the council was that of Rome. In its disciplinary canons the council slapped Rome by declaring that Constantinople was the New Rome because it was the seat of the emperor. Leo would not accept the council at first because Old Rome was not great because it was the seat of the emperor but because it was the seat of Peter.

The Egyptians went home from the council in open rebellion. They declared that the creed was Nestorian. Palestine and Syria joined Egypt in rejecting the council. They proclaimed that their doctrine was the doctrine of the Blessed Cyril. The followers of Chalcedon called them "Monophysites." They called the Chalcedonians, "Diophysites."

THE MONOPHYSITE CONTROVERSY:

Egypt, Palestine and Syria were in open revolt against both empire and the churches of Rome and Constantinople. In 457 Timothy the Cat became patriarch of Alexandria. His followers gained control of Antioch and put Peter the Fuller in a Monophysite bishop. The Monophysites changed the Trisagion to read "Holy God, Holy Strong, holy Immortal, who was crucified for us."
Pelagius denied that he did away with grace. Pelagius taught that grace was free will, the revelation and example of Jesus Christ, Christian instruction and the endowment with reason.

8. Human Perfectability: Augustine taught that human perfection and perseverance was altogether the work of grace. Pelagius insisted that God had commanded perfection and this meant man was obligated to be perfect.

9. Faith: Augustine taught that faith was a gift of God. Pelagius taught that faith was the response of man to the evidence furnished by God in his revelation.

10. The Work of Christ: Augustine accused Pelagius of making the work and death of Christ unnecessary and vain. Pelagius denied that this was his teaching.

11. The Lord's Prayer: Augustine accused Pelagius of making prayer unnecessary. Man could avoid temptation by his own efforts.

12. Who takes the first step? Augustine insisted that in salvation God must take the first step. Man cannot love, believe, or want to be saved until God takes away his depravity. Pelagius insisted man can desire the physician.

Augustine's case against Pelagius may be summed up as follows:

1. Pelagianism knows nothing of grace. It is not freedom of the will but the grace of God that saves man.

2. If man were free in the Pelagian sense, then Christ came into the World in vain.

3. Christian experience and the prayer of the whole church testify that man cannot by his own power avoid sin.

4. The Universality of penalties imposed by a righteous God—from which even children are not exempt, makes against the Pelagian view.

5. Either new-born babies are sinful or they are not. If they are not, there is no need for baptism.

6. Augustine appealed to Scripture against Pelagius: Romans 5:12; 7:14-26; 8:26; Psalm 51:5; 143:2; Ephesians 2:3; John 8:36.

7. The History of the church's doctrinal development is against Pelagius.

THE APPEAL TO ROME: Dissatisfied with the synods in Palestine the Augustinians held synods in Carthage and Milevis in North Africa in 316 at which the Pelagians were condemned. Then they sent the results of their councils to Pope Innocent I of Rome. They also sent along a sheaf of documents against Pelagius, including a marked copy of his notorious On Nature. Augustine sent letters to Innocent. Innocent praised the Africans for appealing to Rome and condemned those who denied grace and infant baptism. Pelagius and Caelestius were summoned to Rome.

Innocent died on March 12, 417 and Zosimus became pope. Pelagius and Caelestius submitted to him orthodox sounding confessions of faith acknowledging the infallibility of papal decisions and asserting their full submission to the pope. They accused their enemies of quarrelling about questions never settled by the councils of the church. They acknowledged baptism for the remission of sins and denied that man is born in sin. They briefly mentioned with approval infant baptism, asserted faith in the freedom of the will and man's need of grace, saying, "We are always in need of the help of God." They took a stab at Augustine: "We excrete those who with Manicheans, condemn first marriage." Zosimus called a synod in Rome (417) that certified the orthodoxy of Pelagius and Caelestius. He sent the report of his Council to North Africa in letters to the bishops, reproving them for lack of consideration in the matter.
The bishops of Africa held a synod in Carthage (late 417 or early 418) that proclaimed that Zosimus had not given good reasons for changing the ruling of Innocent and that they would continue to subscribe to the pronouncements of Innocent. Zosimus was alarmed that they dared oppose him but took no action.

The bishops of Africa held another Synod, a general African Council, in 418 in Carthage, attended by 200 bishops. They condemned unanimously six Pelagian propositions:

1. That Adam was created mortal without respect to sin.
2. That children are not subject to original sin inherited from Adam.
3. That grace does not help with reference to future sins.
4. That grace consists only in doctrines and commandments.
5. That grace only makes it easier to do good.
6. That saints utter the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer (Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil) not for themselves, or only from humility.

The bishops placed a ban on the practice of appealing to Rome beyond the sea.

In 418 the Emperor, Honorius, issued an edict against Pelagius, Vaelestius and their followers and declared them expelled from Rome and threatened more serious measures.

Again in 419 a council in Carthage denounced Pope Zosimus for meddling in African affairs and repeated the interdict against appealing to Rome.

Zosimus lost his nerve, fearing the threat to the seat of Peter, and backed down. He condemned Pelagianism and called on all bishops to subscribe to the condemnation. Pelagius disappeared from the stage of history and from this time on was considered a heretic in orthodox councils.

JULIAN OF ECLANUM:

Julian of Eclanum led 18 bishops of Southern Italy in refusing to follow Zosimus. They sent Zosimus letters of protest against his change in position. They defended their action on the grounds that it was not right to condemn the absent without a hearing. Julian took up the battle against Augustine and became the new defender of Pelagianism. He and his bishops set forth a mild Pelagianism and renounced the extremes of Caelestius. Sin is an act of the will. Infants have no will and hence no sin. Imitation leads to sin. The generating act is pure. Christ redeemed us by giving us a mirror and a rule so that our wills might follow his will.

Julian charged Augustine with Traducianism and Manicheanism. Augustine's system was the result of his Manichean conception of marriage. He charged Augustine with contempt of marriage. Julian appealed to the testimony of reason and Scripture, asserting that neither recognized original sin. Augustine's doctrine was unscriptural, unscientific, and unreasonable. Julian declared, "What reason disputes authority cannot prove."

Julian was a brilliant young noble with a good education. He was the son of a bishop, was a ordained priest, and had married the daughter of a bishop. He gained great influence over educated monks and young nobles.

Augustine campaigned hard against Julian, appealing to the average man, and drawing on all his wisdom and experience and political connections. Within a year Augustine succeeded in getting Julian banished from Italy to the East where he was received by Theodore of Mopsuestia. He spent the last half of his life in exile writing against Augustine. He drew from Augustine strong replies. In 439 Julian almost succeeded in getting himself reinstated as a bishop in Italy. His last days were spent in Sicily teaching Latin to children.
THE SEMIPELAGIANISM OF THE MONKS OF HADRUMENTUM:

The Pelagian controversy had been settled among the bishops but the monks of Hadrumentum in North Africa sent letters to Augustine that showed Semipelagian leanings. Augustine took their questions seriously and patiently answered them. The monks were accustomed to an emphasis on self-control. They were inclined to believe that man could at least desire to be saved and must believe in order to be made whole. Augustine answered that man desires salvation only when stirred by God to do so. The monks believed that God desires all to be saved and that Christ died for all. Augustine replied that all the affairs of men are in the hands of God. Men must not question God's predestined plan. The monks thought man must search his soul for sin, agonize over it, and strive for perfection. Augustine urged that God gives men the gift of perseverance.

THE THIRD ECUMENICAL COUNCIL (Ephesus, 431) AND THE PELAGIAN AND CHRISTOLOGICAL CONTROVERSIES:

Augustine died in 430 before he had completed his refutation of Julian of Eclanum, and a year before the Third Ecumenical Council. In the aftermath of this council when the bishops sent the results to Pope Sixtus III asking him to approve the condemnation of Nestorius on Christology, the pope would not condemn Nestorius unless the Easterners would agree to condemn Pelagius. Thus the condemnation of Pelagius as a heretic came to be associated with Third Ecumenical Council.

AUGUSTINE'S WORKS AGAINST THE PELAGIANS:

I. Against Pelagius and Caelestius (412-219)
   On the Punishment and Remission of Sins (412)
   On the Spirit and the Letter (412)
   On Nature and Grace (415)
   On the Perfection of Justice (415)
   On the Deeds of Pelagius (417)
   Letter 186 to Paulinus of Nola (417)
   On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin (418)
   Letter 194 to Sixtus (418)
   On the Soul and Its Origin (420)

II. Against Julian of Eclanum (419-430)
   On Marriage and Concupiscence (419)
   Against Two Pelagian Letters (420)
   Against Julian the Defender of the Pelagian Heresy (421)
   Incomplete Work against Julian (428-430)

III. Against the Semipelagian Monks of Hadrumentum (426-430)
   On Grace and Freedom of Choice (426, 427)
   On Punishment and Grace (427)
   Letter 217 to Vitalis of Carthage (427)
   On the Predestination of Saints (428-429)
   On the Gift of Perseverance (428-429)

CAUSE OF THE FAILURE OF AUGUSTINIANISM:

Despite the popularity of Augustine only a few were willing to follow him all the way and accept his complete system.

Conviction that Augustinianism was a novelty.

Fear that Augustinianism destroyed human freedom and initiative.

Fear that it was tainted with Manicheanism and perhaps Neoplatonism.
CAUSE OF THE FAILURE OF PELAGIANISM:
It did not take sin seriously enough.
Inadequate conception of grace.
Suspicion that it was akin to Stoicism.
Ecclesiastical considerations: it undermined infant baptism and
penance. Fear that it made the sacraments unnecessary, that it
undermined the church, and that it implied that man could save
himself outside the church.