

THE COUNCIL OF EPHESUS

Date: June 22, 431 – Held in Ephesus, Asia Minor (Modern Day Turkey)

Organizer: Called to order by Theodosius II. In total there were about 200 bishops

The Significance: This council had to come to a consensus regarding the person of Christ. Was he two separate persons in one nature? Or was he two natures in one person? The outcome would also be important because it would define how the church should view Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

The Person charged with heresy: Nestarius, Bishop of Rome

The Issue: Nestarius taught that Christ existed in two persons, the man Jesus and the divine Son of God (or Logos), rather than as two natures (True God and True Man) of one divine person.

An illustration from popular Culture

In the movie *Lord of the Rings*, the character Smeagol, developed a split personality named Gollum. Over the centuries, there was a personality struggle and the character can be seen debating back and forth with regards to the “precious” also known as the ring. One moment the character was good—another he was bad. Ultimately the audience is left to ponder which character will win the battle of personalities because they are independent of each other.

In a similar way, Nestarius taught that Jesus consisted of two persons, Jesus the man, and the Divine son. Nestarius and his followers would not allow the two persons to be linked together. It was the ultimate disconnect. Thus, when Christ suffered—you could not say that God suffered. When Jesus was born—you could not say Mary produced God because He had always existed beforehand.

The Nestarian Argument

1. Christ existed in two persons
2. Each person acted independently of each other: The Nestorians rejected such terminology as "God suffered" or "God was crucified", because the humanity of Jesus Christ which suffered is separate from his divinity.
3. They also rejected the term Theotokos as a title of the Virgin Mary, suggesting instead the title Christotokos because in their view he took only his human nature from his mother, while the divine Logos was pre-existent and external, so calling Mary "Mother of God" was misleading and potentially wrong.
4. The Perplexing Question of Nestarius: How can Jesus Christ, being part man, not be partially a sinner as well, since man is by definition a sinner since the Fall?
5. Nestarius' solution: To solve the question he taught that Mary, the mother of Jesus gave birth to the incarnate Christ, not the divine Logos who existed before Mary and indeed before time itself. The Logos occupied the part of the human soul (the part of man that was stained by the Fall).
6. Biblical Support:

John 3:10-12

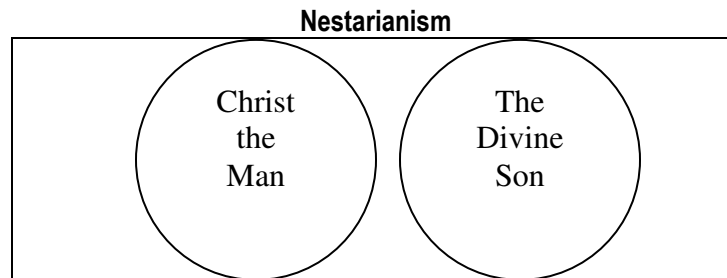
10 Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not understand these things? 11 "Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and you do not receive our witness.

John 20:27-28

27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing."

28 Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

Something to Ponder: In John 3:11 Jesus switches from a singular to a plural (we). Why would this be important in defense of Nestorianism? Also in John 20:28 Thomas responds accordingly. My Lord and my God! Why would how Jesus is addressed be important in relation to Nestarius' argument?



The Orthodox Argument

1. Christ is one person with two natures
2. There is no distinction between Jesus the man and the Divine Son. They are one in the same. When Jesus suffered; God suffered.
3. Mary must be understood as Theotokos because she bore Jesus who was both completely human and divine.
4. Jesus was not born with a sin nature because he was conceived by the Holy Spirit—which makes him unique in human history.
5. Jesus was fully divine and full human. He did not live as a human and have a soul that was not human. Besides, the entire being—not just the soul is effected by sin.
6. Biblical Support: There are no passages in Scripture where the human nature of Christ is independent from the Divine nature. No were do we have an indication that these natures talking to each other, or struggling with each other. Instead there is a single person acting in wholeness and unity. Jesus always refers to himself as "I" not "we." The only exception is when he referred to him and the father as "we."

John 14:6

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.

John 8:58

58 Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."

Philippians 2:5-7

5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.

Final Verdict

In the end, 198 Bishops sided with Alexander and Nestarius was declared Anathema (accursed or dammed). There was also a split. The Assyrian Church parted from the churches. Today they are known as the churches in Iraq and Syria.

Twelve Anathemas Proposed by Cyril and accepted by the Council of Ephesus

1. If anyone does not confess that Emmanuel is God in truth, and therefore that the holy virgin is the mother of God (for she bore in a fleshly way the Word of God become flesh, let him be **anathema**.
2. If anyone does not confess that the Word from God the Father has been united by hypostasis with the flesh and is one Christ with his own flesh, and is therefore God and man together, let him be **anathema**.
3. If anyone divides in the one Christ the hypostases after the union, joining them only by a conjunction of dignity or authority or power, and not rather by a coming together in a union by nature, let him be **anathema**.
4. If anyone distributes between the two persons or hypostases the expressions used either in the gospels or in the apostolic writings, whether they are used by the holy writers of Christ or by him about himself, and ascribes some to him as to a man, thought of separately from the Word from God, and others, as befitting God, to him as to the Word from God the Father, let him be **anathema**.
5. If anyone dares to say that Christ was a God-bearing man and not rather God in truth, being by nature one Son, even as "the Word became flesh", and is made partaker of blood and flesh precisely like us, let him be **anathema**.
6. If anyone says that the Word from God the Father was the God or master of Christ, and does not rather confess the same both God and man, the Word having become flesh, according to the scriptures, let him be **anathema**.
7. If anyone says that as man Jesus was activated by the Word of God and was clothed with the glory of the Only-begotten, as a being separate from him, let him be **anathema**.
8. If anyone dares to say that the man who was assumed ought to be worshipped and glorified together with the divine Word and be called God along with him, while being separate from him, (for the addition of "with" must always compel us to think in this way), and will not rather worship Emmanuel with one veneration and send up to him one doxology, even as "the Word became flesh", let him be **anathema**.
9. If anyone says that the one Lord Jesus Christ was glorified by the Spirit, as making use of an alien power that worked through him and as having received from him the power to master unclean spirits and to work divine wonders among people, and does not rather say that it was his own proper Spirit through whom he worked the divine wonders, let him be **anathema**.
10. The divine scripture says Christ became "the high priest and apostle of our confession"; he offered himself to God the Father in an odor of sweetness for our sake. If anyone, therefore, says that it was not the very Word from God who became our high priest and apostle, when he became flesh and a man like us, but as it were another who was separate from him, in particular a man from a woman, or if anyone says that he offered the sacrifice also for himself and not rather for us alone (for he who knew no sin needed no offering), let him be **anathema**.
11. If anyone does not confess that the flesh of the Lord is life-giving and belongs to the Word from God the Father, but maintains that it belongs to another besides him, united with him in dignity or as enjoying a mere divine indwelling, and is not rather life-giving, as we said, since it became the flesh belonging to the Word who has power to bring all things to life, let him be **anathema**.
12. If anyone does not confess that the Word of God suffered in the flesh and was crucified in the flesh and tasted death in the flesh and became the first born of the dead, although as God he is life and life-giving, let him be **anathema**.