



Talk VI: Post-Nicene Fathers

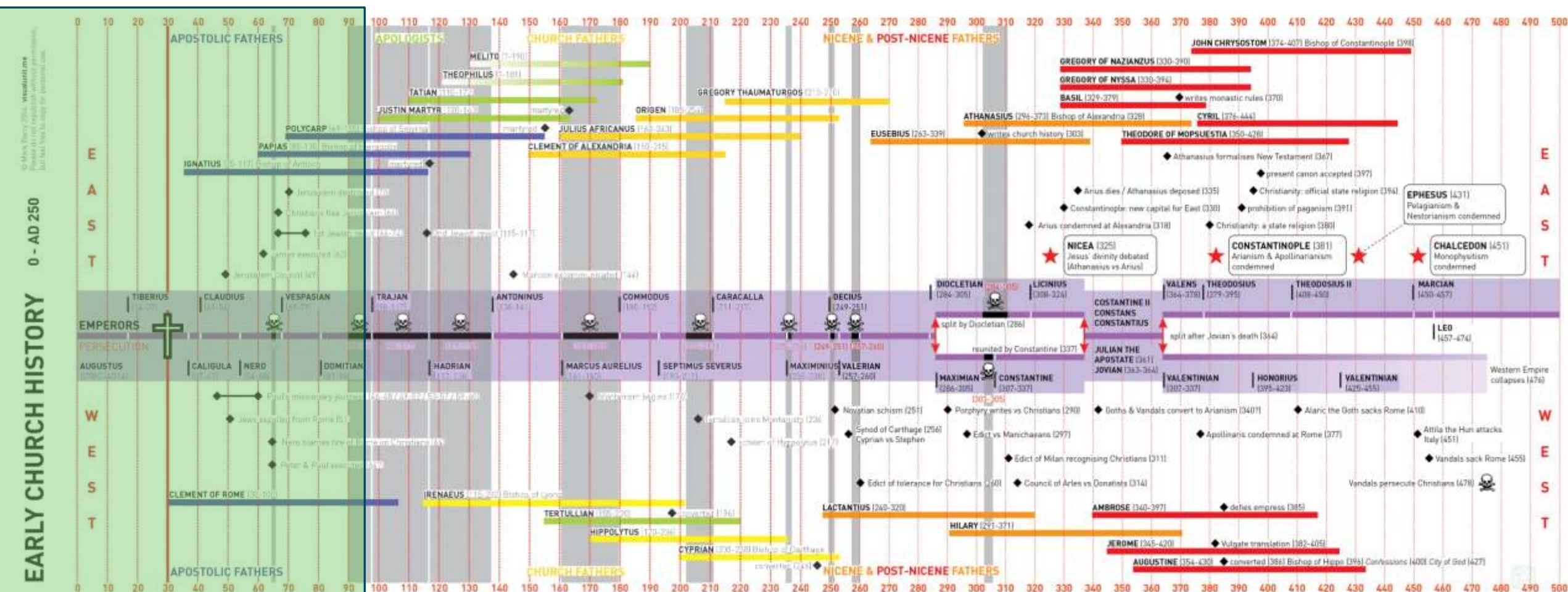
1 Cor 4:15 *“For although you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you have not many fathers. For in Christ Jesus, through the Gospel, I have begotten you.”*

**PATROLOGY VI – STS. CYRIL,
DIOSCORUS & SEVERUS**

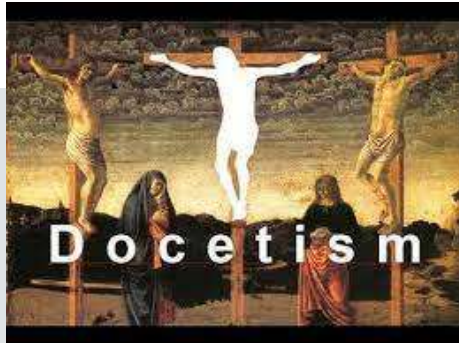
Pre-Servants Program
Ehab Roufail



THE CHURCH FATHERS (300 AD-480 AD)



2. THE SECOND CENTURY - HERESIES



DOCETISM

- Docetic, which comes from the Greek word meaning "to appear." Those who proposed this heresy maintained that Jesus really did not possess, or inhabit a physical body, but only "appeared" to have a body.
- Some of them believed that Simon of Cyrene was crucified instead of Jesus
- Saint Ignatius of Antioch responded to this heresy in his writings.
- Type of Gnosticism



MARCIONISM

- Marcion was the son of a bishop. He moved to Rome around 135 AD where he became known in the church and began to teach.
- Marcion observed differences between the God of Old Testament and the God of Jesus in the NT. His answer was to reject the God of the OT, seeing him as the creator of an evil world. He excluded the entire OT, and included only Paul's letters and Luke's gospel.
- Tertullian and many fathers responded to his heresy



MONTANISM

- Montanus testified that he had experienced an ecstatic visitation of the Paraclete (the Holy Spirit) and, along with two women (Maximilla and Priscilla), had the ability to deliver prophetic messages from God.
- The Montanist message was about close return of Jesus and the apocalyptic end of the world, and encouragement to embrace persecution and martyrdom. Some church leaders were women arguments against this position,
- Extreme Asceticism
- He claimed Jesus will reign for 1000 years on earth

3. THIRD CENTURY - HERESIES



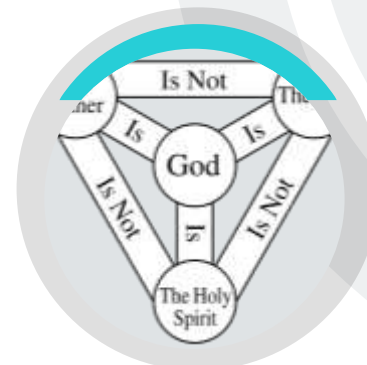
PAUL OF SAMOSATA

- Bishop of Antioch and was supported by Zenobia queen of Palmyra
- He claimed the Jesus was a normal human and was elevated to a God by His baptism.
- He also denied the Holy Spirit as a person of God claiming it's a kind of Godly power
- Excommunicated by Council of Antioch & Dionysius of Alex (14th Pope) wrote against his heresy



NOVATIAN/ DONATISTS

- Bishop of Rome who refused readmission of apostates during the persecutions of the time
- He was excommunicated by a council in Carthage, but his ideas remained and developed into a sect called Donatists in 4th century after the great persecution
- Pope Dionysius of Alex & Bishop Cyprian of Carthage fought his ideas



SABELLIANISM

- Libyan priest named Sabellius rejected the idea of three persons of God (Trinity) (Modalism)
- For him, God is described by an analogy: water in its three states of ice, liquid, and steam appear to be different substances, but they all are composed of the same chemical compound. Likewise, God the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit appear to be three distinct persons, but they are different manifestations of one solitary God
- Dionysius of Alex & Hippolytus of Rome (apologists)



MANICHAISM

- Found by Mani the Persian as a new religion that blended Gnosticism, Christianity, and the teachings of Persian Magi
- He believed that : all religions are equally valid, two cosmic kingdoms, which included a Kingdom of Light (the Primal God) and the Kingdom of Darkness (Satan). Accepted as prophets: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Paul, Mani
- Believed in cycles of life (reincarnation)

3. FOURTH CENTURY - HERESIES



ARIANISM

- Arianism denied the full divinity of Jesus Christ, asserting that he was a created being and not of the same substance (homoousios) as God the Father.
- Instead, they believed that Jesus was the highest and greatest of God's created beings.
- **Response:** The First Council of Nicaea in 325 AD was convened to address this heresy.
- It resulted in the Nicene Creed, which affirmed the orthodox belief in the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son.



APOLLINARIANISM

- Apollinarians believed that while Jesus had a divine nature, his human nature was incomplete, with his divine Logos replacing the human rational soul.
- In essence, they denied the full humanity of Jesus Christ.
- **Response:** The First Council of Constantinople in 381 AD condemned Apollinarianism and affirmed that Jesus Christ was fully human and fully divine.



MACEDONIANISM

- Macedonians, also known as Pneumatomachians, denied the full divinity of the Holy Spirit and believed that the Holy Spirit was a created being or a servant of the Father and the Son.
- **Response:** This heresy was addressed at the First Council of Constantinople in 381 AD, which affirmed the divinity of the Holy Spirit and expanded the Nicene Creed to include a statement about the Holy Spirit.



3. FIFTH CENTURY - HERESIES



NESTORIANISM

- Nestorius argued that Christ consisted of two distinct persons, one divine (the Logos) and one human (Jesus of Nazareth),
- Each with separate wills.
- He rejected the term *Theotokos* ("God-bearer") for Mary, preferring *Christotokos* ("Christ-bearer"), as he did not believe Mary bore the divine nature of God in her womb.
- **Response:** Jesus Christ was one person with one united nature (the *miaphysis*), fully divine and fully human, and that Mary indeed bore God in the flesh.
- St. Cyril's formulation: "one incarnate nature of the Word of God," countering any division between Christ's divinity and humanity



EUTYCHIANISM

- Eutyches, in his attempt to defend against Nestorianism, argued that Christ's human nature was essentially absorbed by His divine nature, leading to a blending that left only one nature—divine—after the Incarnation.
- **Response:** Christ's divine and human natures are united without confusion, change, division, or separation, maintaining a fully complete and perfect divine-human unity.
- This distinct understanding of *miaphysis* set Oriental Orthodoxy apart, especially after Chalcedon.



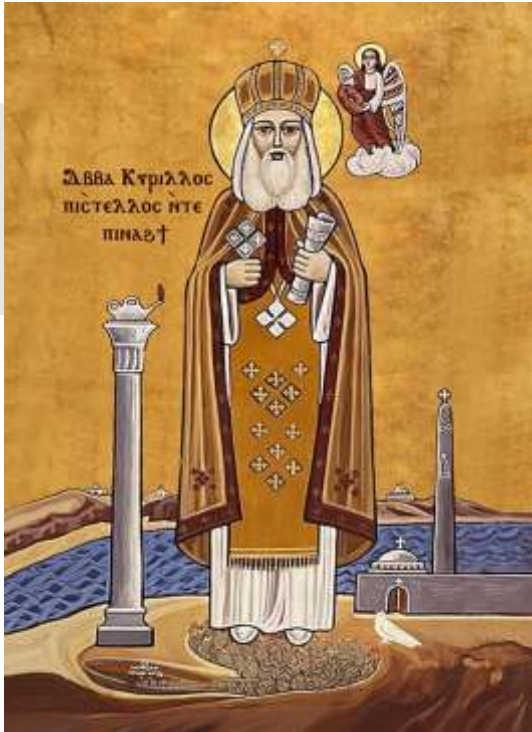
PELAGIANISM

- Pelagius argued that original sin did not taint human nature and that humans could achieve righteousness through their own efforts, without divine grace.
- Pelagius emphasized human free will, claiming that people could choose to live a sinless life solely through their own strength and decision.
- **Response:** The necessity of divine grace for salvation. Although humans retain free will, salvation and sanctification are only possible through the grace of God, a grace that operates through Christ and the Holy Spirit.





4. FIFTH CENTURY



- 431 AD Council of Ephesus
- 433 AD Formula of Union
- 449 AD Second council of Ephesus
- 451 AD Council of Chalcedon
- 452 AD Deposition and Exile of Dioscorus

1. St. John Chrysostom (c. 347-407): John Chrysostom, known as "Golden Mouthed" for his eloquent preaching, served as the Archbishop of Constantinople. He is revered for his sermons and writings, which continue to be highly regarded in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

2. St. Cyril of Alexandria (c. 376-444): One of the most influential theologians in the Oriental tradition, St. Cyril is known for his staunch defense of the doctrine of the Incarnation against Nestorianism. He articulated the miaphysite understanding of Christ's nature in his *Letters and Commentary on John*. His emphasis on "one nature of the Word of God incarnate" became central to the Coptic, Armenian, and Syriac Orthodox Churches.

3. St. Dioscorus of Alexandria (c. 400-454): The Patriarch of Alexandria after St. Cyril, Dioscorus was a strong defender of Cyril's Christology and opposed the doctrine that was later accepted at the Council of Chalcedon. Dioscorus's leadership helped solidify the miaphysite stance, which holds that Christ's divine and human natures are united in one nature. Dioscorus is considered a saint by the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

4. St. Severus of Antioch (c. 465-538): A leading theologian in the Syriac Orthodox Church, St. Severus is known for his strong Christological writings and his work *The Philalethes* (Lover of Truth). He argued against the two-nature Christology promoted at Chalcedon, advocating for the "one united nature" understanding. His works and extensive correspondence are foundational in the Syriac Orthodox Church's Christology.

5. St. Shenouda the Archimandrite (c. 348-466): An influential Coptic monastic leader and writer, Shenouda was known for his ascetic writings and his strict teachings on spiritual life. He played an essential role in articulating the Orthodox faith and opposing heretical teachings within Egypt. His works in Coptic emphasized the need for holiness, discipline, and love for Christ, shaping Coptic monasticism.



COUNCILS



NICEA 325 AD

- 318 Church fathers assembled
- Pope Alexandros of Alexandria came with 20 Bishops and a 25 yr old deacon **St. Athanasius**
- **Arian Heresy** – That the Son is not equal to the Father and is created and that the Holy Spirit is Created
- Led to definition of Creed – “**from the Substance of the Father**”
- Date of Easter
- Question of re-baptism of Apostates
- Celibacy of Clergy



CONSTANTINOPLE 381 AD

- 150 Church fathers assembled
- Pope Timothy 22nd Pope of Alexandria presided – notable presence of **St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Gregory of Nysa, St. Basil the Great of Caesarea**
- **Macedonian, Apollinarian and Sabellian Heresies** denounced
- **Heresy was that the Holy Spirit is not equal to the Father or the Son and is created**
- Addition to The Creed that Christ is **fully human** – “**became Man**”
- “**And in the Holy Spirit the life Giver who proceeds form the Father...**”



EPHESUS 431 AD

- 200 Church fathers assembled
- St. Cyril the Great 24th Pope Of Alexandria was presiding along with 50 of his bishops.
- St. Shenouda the Archimandrite was also present
- **Heresy – Nestorius** view that St. Mary gave birth only to the Human Jesus, then the Holy Spirit came upon him. So St. Mary is mother of Jesus and not mother of God the Theotokos





ST. CYRIL THE GREAT OF ALEXANDRIA

Early Life and Background:

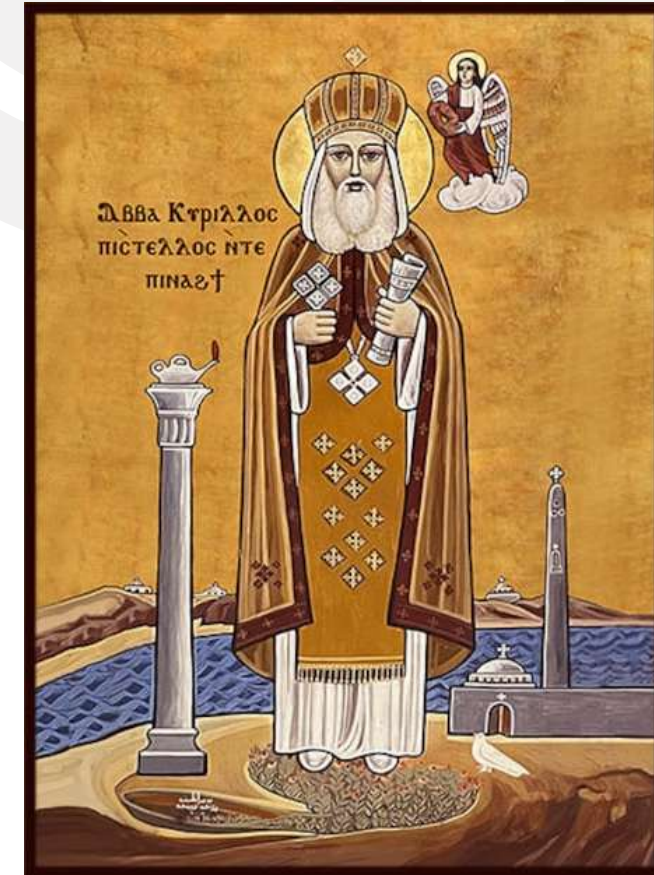
- St. Cyril was born around 376 AD in Alexandria, Egypt. He was the nephew of St. Theophilus and became the Patriarch of Alexandria in 412 AD. His early life was marked by a deep commitment to the Christian faith and the defense of orthodoxy against various heresies.

Role in the Coptic Tradition:

- Cyril's teachings continue to be a cornerstone of Coptic Christology. His works are often cited in Coptic theological discussions, and he is regarded as one of the pillars of the faith within the Coptic tradition.

The Council of Ephesus:

- St. Cyril played a central role in the Third Ecumenical Council (431 AD) held in Ephesus. This council condemned the Nestorian heresy, which proposed a distinction between the divine and human natures of Christ. Cyril's strong defense of the Theotokos (God-bearer) as a title for the Virgin Mary further solidified his reputation as a champion of Christological orthodoxy.





ST. CYRIL THE GREAT OF ALEXANDRIA

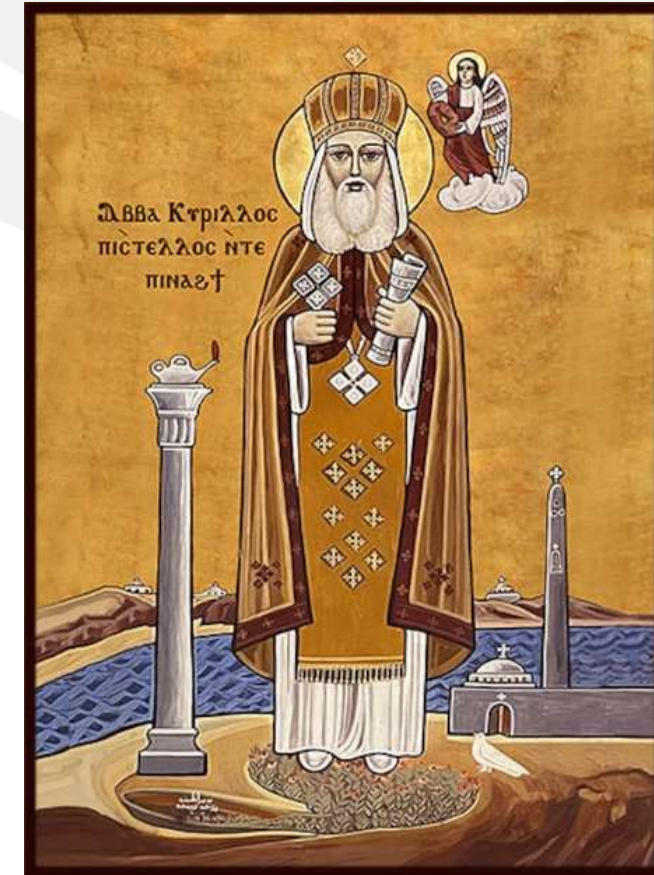
the Antiochian School was not a “school” in the modern academic sense, but a **shared theological method and emphasis** passed down through teachers and bishops associated with Antioch.

The Exegetical tie.

- The Antiochian school is closely associated with a **literal-historical method of biblical interpretation**. Scripture was read primarily according to its historical context, grammar, and immediate meaning, with caution toward allegory.
- **Diodore of Tarsus** and **Theodore of Mopsuestia** emphasized the real historical events and human actions described in the text.
- From a Coptic perspective, this is seen as incomplete when it is not balanced by a spiritual and Christological reading, which the Alexandrian school strongly emphasized.

The Christological tie

- The Antiochian school developed a way of speaking about Christ that strongly distinguished between the divine and human realities.
- In its later representatives, especially Theodore of Mopsuestia and those influenced by him, this distinction tended to move toward a **separation of the two**, rather than the miaphysite unity articulated by St Cyril of Alexandria.





ST. CYRIL THE GREAT OF ALEXANDRIA

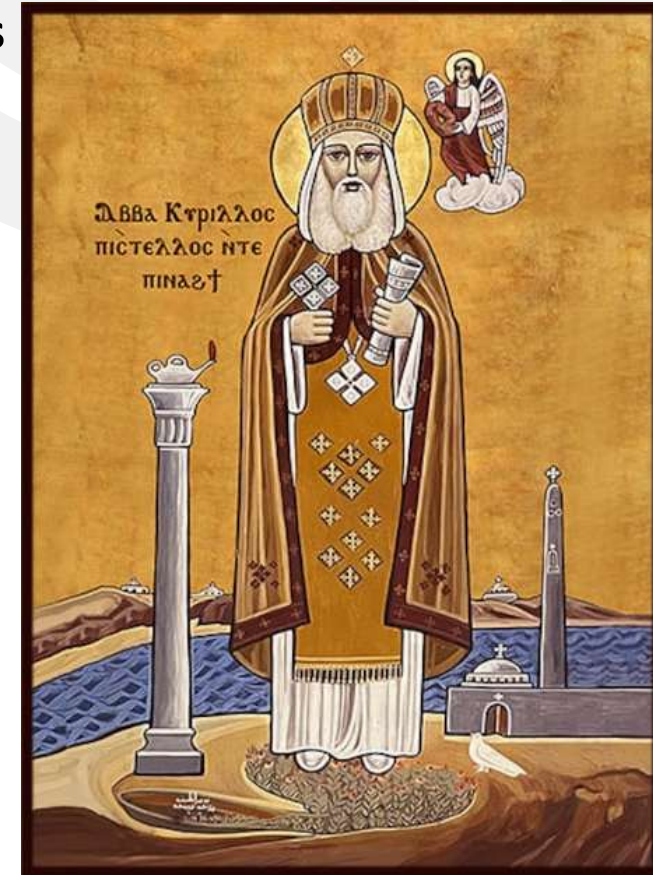
Two schools with different emphasis – before the council of Ephesus

Alexandrian School: Emphasis on Allegorical Interpretation and the Divine Logos

- Emphasis: **Unity of Christ's Divine & Human Natures**
- Approach: **Allegorical Interpretation** – Finding spiritual meaning beyond the literal
- Key Belief: **Divine Logos (Word) as Incarnate** – Unity essential for salvation
- Figures: **Clement, Origen**
- Influence: Foundation for *miaphysitism* (One Nature from Two)

Antiochene School

- Emphasis: **Distinction Between Christ's Natures**
- Approach: **Literal-Historical Interpretation** – Importance of Christ's human experience
- Key Belief: **Indwelling Analogy** – Divine and human exist distinctly within Christ
- Figures: **Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia**
- Influence: Set stage for Nestorius' view of separated natures





ST. CYRIL THE GREAT OF ALEXANDRIA

Two schools with different emphasis – At the time of the council of Ephesus

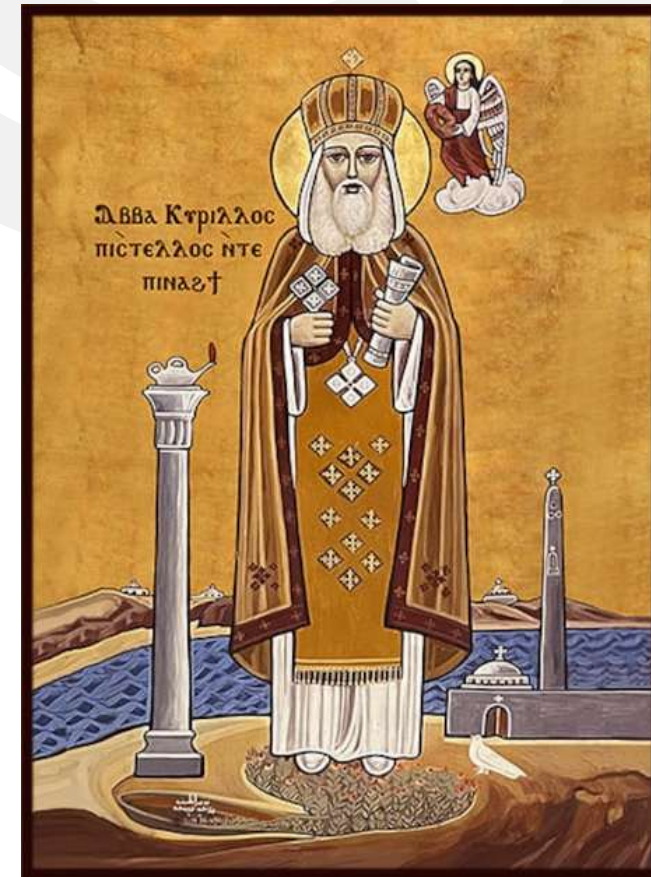
Central Influence: Both schools shaped early Christology; they approached the nature of Christ differently but were foundational to the Oriental Orthodox understanding of the Incarnation.

Alexandrian School: Unity of Natures

- **Focus:** *Hypostatic Union* — Christ's divinity and humanity are united as one.
- **Key Figure:** St. Cyril of Alexandria.
- **Doctrine:** Mary as *Theotokos* (God-bearer) emphasizes that Christ is fully divine and human.
- **Oriental Orthodox View:** *Miaphysitism* — one united nature of the divine Logos in the Incarnation.

Antiochene School: Distinction of Natures

- **Focus:** Completeness of Christ's humanity alongside divinity.
- **Key Figures:** Nestorius, Theodore of Mopsuestia.
- **Doctrine:** Christ's natures are distinct; Mary as *Christotokos* (Christ-bearer).
- **Oriental Orthodox Concern:** Avoids a “two-person” Christology.





ST. CYRIL THE GREAT OF ALEXANDRIA

Council of Ephesus 431 AD

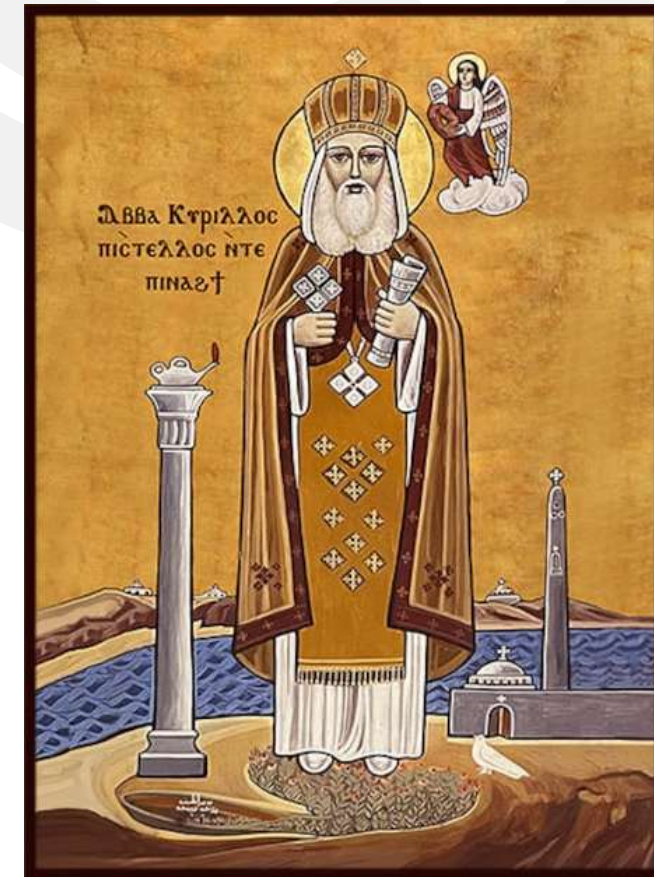
- *Outcome*: Cyril of Alexandria's theology upheld, leading to the condemnation of Nestorianism.
- *Decision*: Defined Christ's nature as one united in both divinity and humanity.

Oriental Orthodox Position

- *Miaphysitism*: Belief in "one incarnate nature of the divine Logos" (one united nature from two).
- *Theological Focus*: Christ's divinity and humanity are fully unified in the Incarnation, emphasizing the mystery of salvation through divine-human unity.
- *Contrast to Antioch*: Opposes the separation of Christ's natures, which could fragment the understanding of Christ's person and work.

Legacy in Oriental Orthodoxy

- *Unity Emphasis*: The Alexandrian focus on unity influences Coptic, Armenian, and Syriac Orthodox beliefs, liturgy, and theology.
- *Salvific Impact*: This perspective underlines the transformative power of the Incarnation, ensuring salvation through Christ's indivisible divine-human nature.





ST. CYRIL THE GREAT OF ALEXANDRIA

1. On the Incarnation and Hypostatic Union

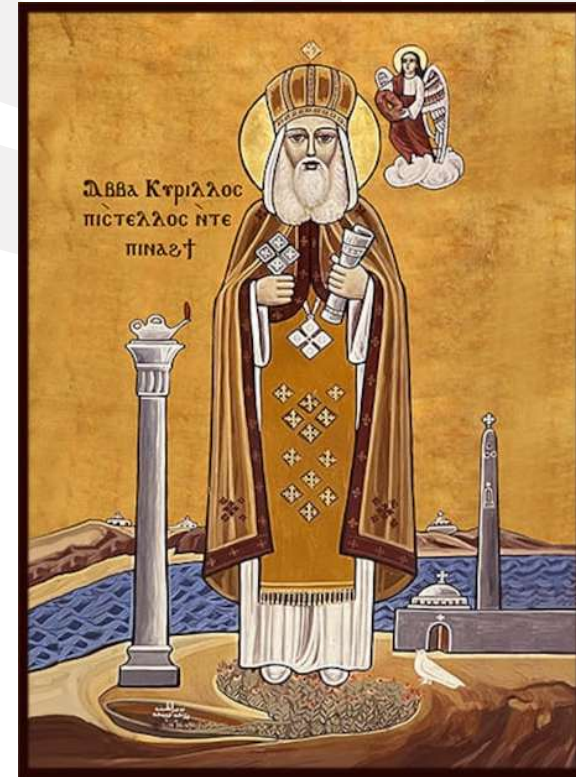
In his *Third Letter to Nestorius*, he writes: *"We do not say that the Word of God dwelt in him as in an ordinary man, born of the holy Virgin. Rather, we affirm that the Word united to himself according to the hypostasis flesh animated by a rational soul, and thus became man in an ineffable and incomprehensible manner."*

This stresses the inseparable union of the divine and human, where the divinity never departed from the humanity

2. Inseparable Unity of Natures

In *On the Unity of Christ*, Cyril addresses the unity of Christ's two natures as inseparable:

"For though the natures which were brought together into true unity were different, yet out of both is one Christ and Son... The Word is said to have been united to flesh, not that He sunk His own nature into the nature of the flesh, nor that His divine nature changed into human nature, nor that of a man; rather, He was, in an ineffable manner, united to flesh, remaining what He was."





ST. CYRIL THE GREAT OF ALEXANDRIA

3. Divine and Human Actions in Christ

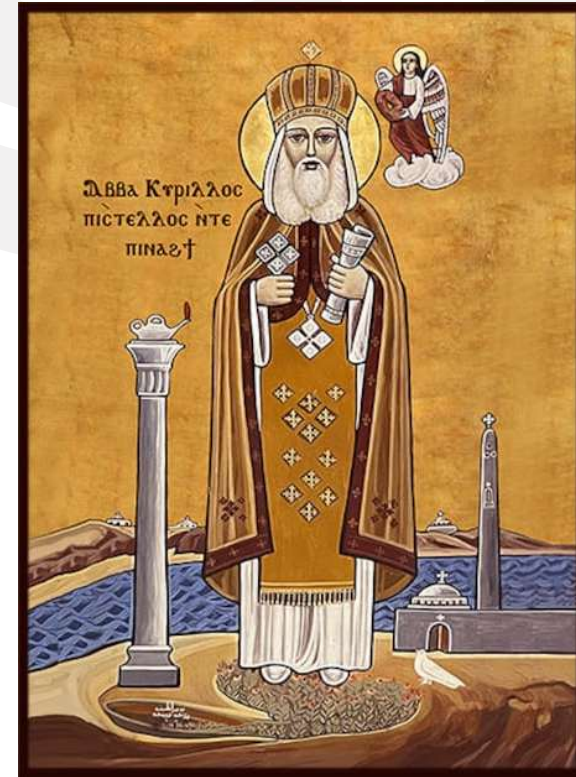
St. Cyril states that even in His human actions, Christ's divinity was active. In *Commentary on John*, Cyril describes this, saying:

"The only-begotten Word of God, even if He appeared in the flesh and as a man, did not cease to be God... there is nothing that He did that was purely human; for being God as well as man, even His human actions were filled with divine power."

This reaffirms that Christ's divinity and humanity were always present, united and active in all His works (*Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Vol. 1, Book 2, Chapter 1).

4. No Momentary Separation

"For we do not divide Him into two persons or sons... for there is One Christ, Son and Lord, not as if the Word of God dwelt in an ordinary man... but the Word became flesh, retaining His own proper being..."
(*Third Epistle to Nestorius*, PG 77).

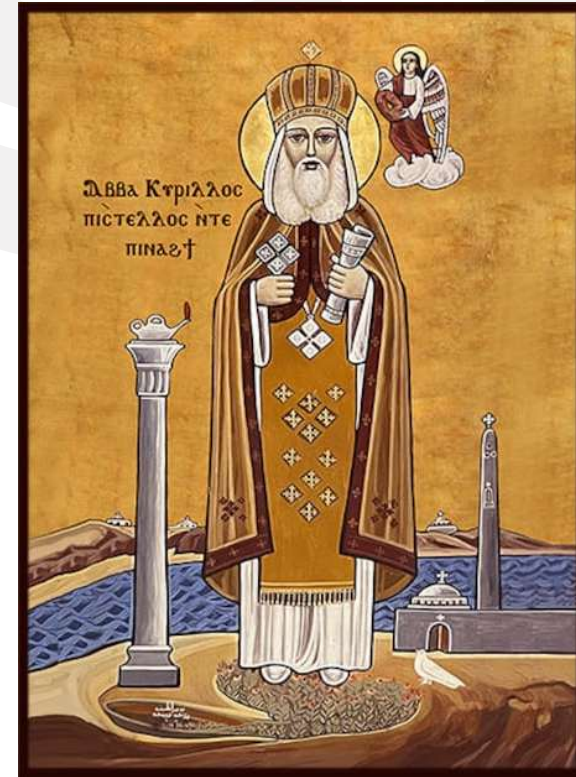




ST. CYRIL THE GREAT OF ALEXANDRIA

The Twelve Anathemas letter to Nestor

- *1. If anyone does not confess the Emmanuel to be truly God, and hence the holy virgin to be Mother of God (for she gave birth in the flesh to the Word of God made flesh), let him be anathema.*
- *2. If anyone does not confess that the Word of God the Father was hypostatically united to the flesh so as to be One Christ with his own flesh, that is the same one at once God and man, let him be anathema.*
- *3. If anyone divides the hypostases of the One Christ after the union, connecting them only by a conjunction in terms of honour or dignity or sovereignty, and not rather by a combination in terms of natural union, let him be anathema.*

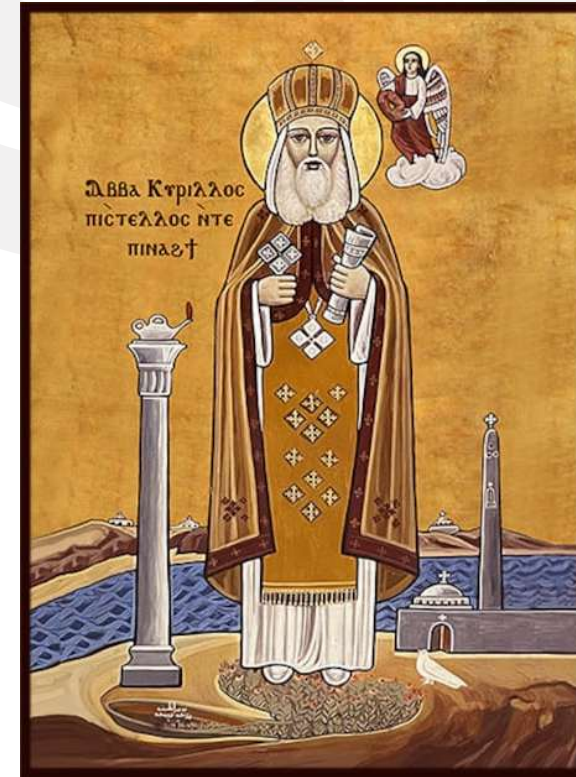




ST. CYRIL THE GREAT OF ALEXANDRIA

[The Twelve Anathemas letter to Nestor](#)

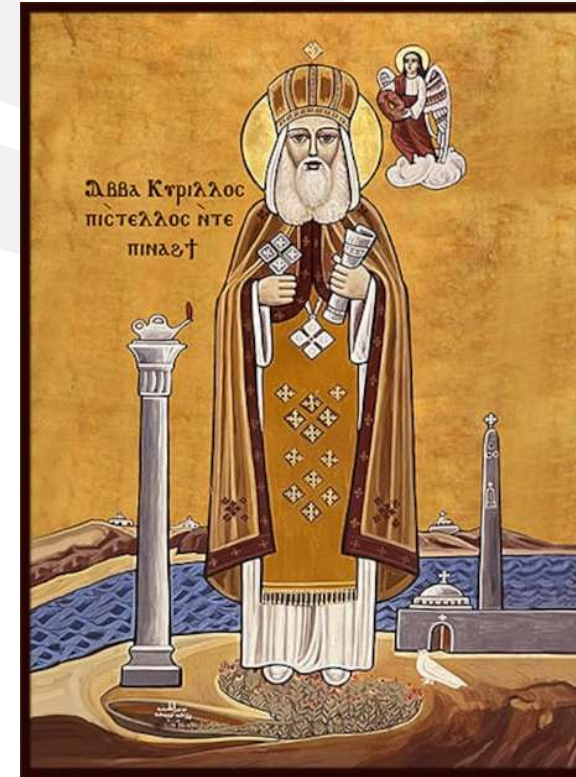
- 4. *If anyone interprets the sayings in the Gospels and apostolic writings, or the things said about Christ by the saints, or the things he says about himself, as referring to two prosopa or hypostases, attributing some of them to a man conceived of as separate from the Word of God, and attributing others (as divine) exclusively to the Word of God the Father, let him be anathema.*
- 5. *If anyone should dare to say that Christ was a God-bearing man and not rather that he is truly God as the one natural Son, since the Word became flesh and 'shared in flesh and blood just like us' (Heb.2.14), let him be anathema.*
- 6. *If anyone says that the Word of God the Father is the God or Lord of Christ and does not rather confess the same one is at once God and man, since according to the scriptures the Word has become flesh, let him be anathema.*





ST. CYRIL THE GREAT OF ALEXANDRIA

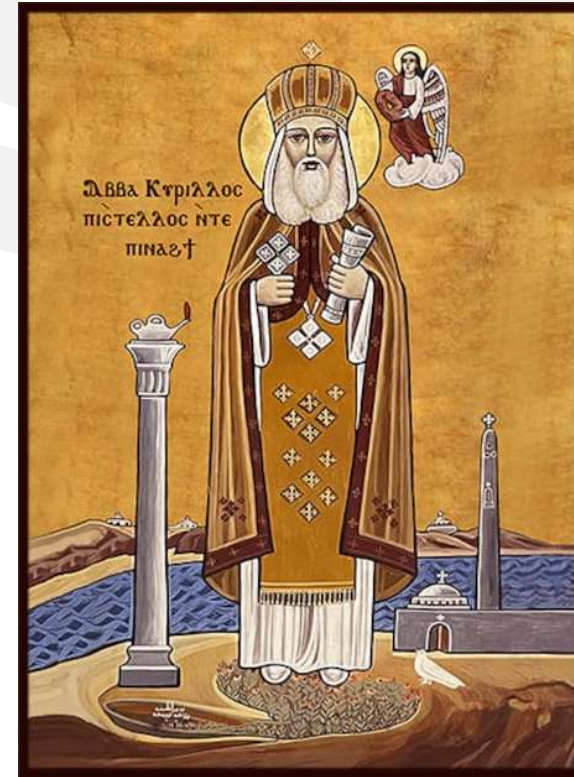
- 7. *If anyone says that Jesus as a man was activated by the Word of God and invested with the glory of the Only Begotten, as being someone different to him, let him be anathema.*
- 8. *If anyone should dare to say that the assumed man ought to be worshipped along with God the Word and co-glorified and called 'God' as if he were one alongside another (for the continual addition of the phrase 'along with' demands this interpretation) and does not rather worship the Emmanuel with a single veneration and render him a single doxology since the Word became flesh, let him be anathema.*
- 9. *If anyone says that the One Lord Jesus Christ was glorified by the Spirit, using the power that came through him as if it were foreign to himself, and receiving from him the power to work against unclean spirits and to accomplish divine signs for men, and does not rather say that the Spirit is his very own, through whom he also worked the divine signs, let him be anathema.*





ST. CYRIL THE GREAT OF ALEXANDRIA

- *10. The divine scripture says that Christ became 'the high priest and apostle of our confession' (Heb.3.1) and 'offered himself for our sake as a fragrant sacrifice to God the Father' (Eph.5.2). So if anyone says that it was not the very Word of God who became our high priest and apostle when he became flesh and man as we are, but it was someone different to him, a separate man born of a woman; or if anyone says that he made the offering also for himself and not rather for us alone (for he who knew no sin had no need of offerings), let him be anathema.*
- *11. If anyone does not confess that the Lord's flesh is life-giving and the very-own flesh of the Word of God the Father, but says that it is the flesh of someone else, different to him, and joined to him in terms of dignity, or indeed only having a divine indwelling, rather than being life-giving, as we have said, because it has become the personal flesh of the Word who has the 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, was crucified in the flesh, and tasted death in the flesh, becoming the first-born from the dead, although as God he is life and life-giving, let him be anathema.*





NESTORIUS HERESIES QUOTES

1. The Separation of Christ's Divinity and Humanity

- Nestorius - Christ's divine and human natures were separate and distinct
- So he refused to call the Virgin Mary **Theotokos** (God-bearer), insisting instead on the term **Christotokos** (Christ-bearer).
- This implied that Mary was only the mother of Christ's human nature, not His divine nature. Nestorius stated: *"I cannot call a two- or three-month-old infant God."*

Coptic Orthodox Response:

- This denies truth of the Incarnation, that the eternal Word of God (Logos) truly became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14).
- St. Cyril of Alexandria refuted this heresy by affirming that Christ is one person with two natures, divine and human, united without confusion, change, division, or separation. St. Cyril wrote in his **Second Letter to Nestorius**:
"The Word, having united to Himself hypostatically flesh animated by a rational soul, became man and was called the Son of Man... For the Word is not separate from the flesh, and thus we confess one Christ and one Lord."

The Council of Ephesus condemned Nestorius' teaching, declaring that Mary is indeed **Theotokos** as she bore the incarnate Word of God, both fully divine and fully human.





NESTORIUS HERESIES QUOTES

2. The Denial of the Communicatio Idiomatum

Nestorius rejected the concept of the **communicatio idiomatum** (communication of attributes), which teaches that the attributes of Christ's divine and human natures can be predicated of His one person. For example, Nestorius argued that it was improper to say, "**God suffered**" or "**God died on the cross**," because he believed that only Christ's human nature suffered, while His divine nature remained unaffected.

Coptic Orthodox Response:

This teaching undermines the unity of Christ's person and the reality of the Incarnation. St. Cyril emphasized that because the divine and human natures are united in one person, it is correct to say that **God suffered in the flesh**. In his **Twelve Anathemas Against Nestorius**, St. Cyril wrote in anathema 12:

"If anyone does not confess that the Word of God suffered in the flesh, was crucified in the flesh, and tasted death in the flesh... let him be anathema."

The Coptic Orthodox Church upholds this teaching, affirming that Christ's suffering and death on the cross were real and salvific because they were the actions of the one person of the incarnate Word.





NESTORIUS HERESIES QUOTES

3. The Two Sons Heresy

Nestorius' teachings implied a division in Christ so severe that it effectively created "two sons": one divine (the eternal Word) and one human (Jesus of Nazareth). He stated:

"I distinguish the natures, but I worship one."

Coptic Orthodox Response:

This statement was condemned as heretical because it divided Christ into two separate persons, undermining the unity of His personhood. St. Cyril responded forcefully in his **Third Letter to Nestorius**:

"We do not divide the one Lord Jesus Christ into two sons... For the Word, having united to Himself flesh animated by a rational soul, became man in an ineffable and incomprehensible manner, yet remained what He was, that is, God."

The Coptic Orthodox Church confesses that Christ is **one person** from **two natures**, divine and human, **united in a hypostatic union**. This unity is essential for our salvation, as it ensures that the actions of Christ—His life, death, and resurrection—are the actions of God Himself.





NESTORIUS HERESIES QUOTES

4. The Denial of the Full Reality of the Incarnation

Nestorius' teachings ultimately diminished the reality of the Incarnation by treating Christ's divine and human natures as separate entities rather than one united person. He argued:

"The Word dwells in the man Jesus as in a temple."

Coptic Orthodox Response:

This statement reduces Christ's humanity to a mere vessel or instrument, rather than affirming the full and true union of God and man in the person of Christ. St. Cyril refuted this in his **Second Letter to Nestorius**:

"The Word did not dwell in a man as in one of the prophets, but the Word Himself became flesh, that is, He united to Himself a body animated by a rational soul and thus became man."

The Coptic Orthodox Church teaches that the Incarnation is not a mere indwelling of God in a human being but a true and complete union of divinity and humanity in the one person of Christ. This union is the foundation of our salvation, as it allows humanity to be united to God through Christ.





NESTORIUS HERESIES QUOTES

The Orthodox Faith vs. Nestorianism

The teachings of Nestorius were condemned as heretical because they denied the unity of Christ's person and the reality of the Incarnation. From a Coptic Orthodox perspective, these errors strike at the heart of the Christian faith, undermining the mystery of salvation. St. Cyril of Alexandria and the Council of Ephesus defended the Orthodox faith, affirming that Christ is **one person** with **two natures**, fully divine and fully human, united without confusion, change, division, or separation. This truth remains central to the Coptic Orthodox Church's confession of faith and its understanding of salvation through the incarnate Word of God.

Key Quote from St. Cyril:

"If anyone divides the hypostases in the one Christ after the union, joining them only by a conjunction of dignity or authority or power, and not rather by a union of natures, let him be anathema."





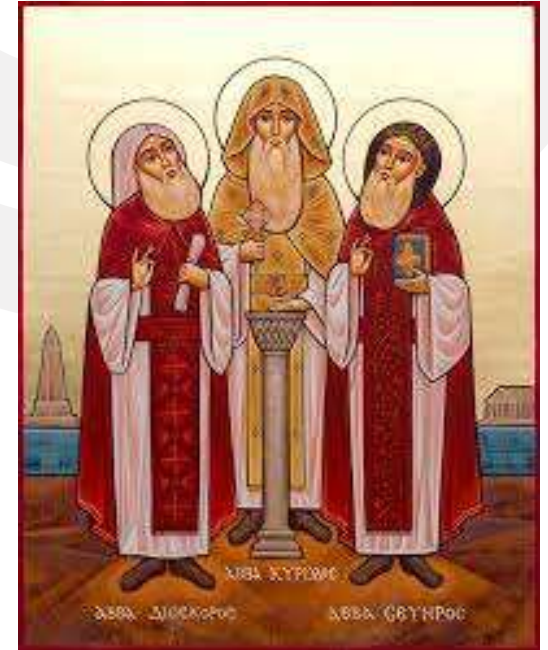
ST. DIOSCORUS 25TH POPE OF ALEXANDRIA

Early Life and Background:

- Born in Alexandria, Egypt, in the late 4th century.
- Known for his deep piety, theological knowledge, and ascetic lifestyle.
- Ordained as a deacon and later as a priest, serving under St. Cyril the Great.
- Elected as the 25th Pope of Alexandria in **444 AD**, following the departure of St. Cyril.

The second Council of Ephesus:

- St. Dioscorus presided over the **Second Council of Ephesus** (often called the “Robber Council” by his opponents).
- He defended the teachings of St. Cyril and the **One Nature of Christ** (Miaphysitism), affirming that Christ is fully divine and fully human in one united nature.
- Opposed the teachings of **Nestorius** and **Eutyches**, which were seen as deviations from the Orthodox faith.





ST. DIOSCORUS 25TH POPE OF ALEXANDRIA

Exile and Martydom

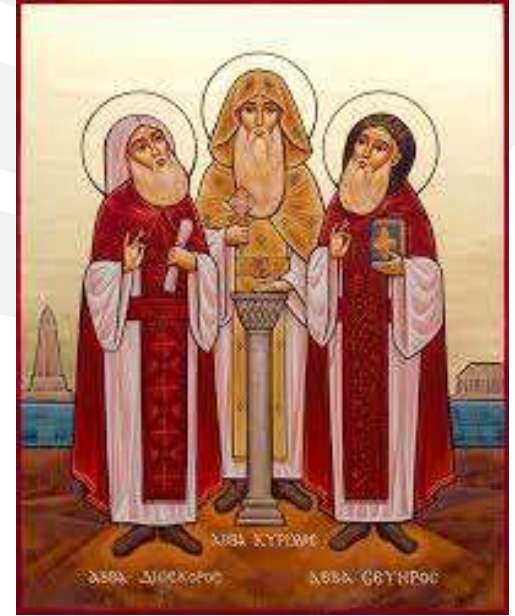
- St. Dioscorus was unjustly deposed and exiled at the **Council of Chalcedon (451 AD)**, which he refused to attend due to its deviation from the teachings of St. Cyril.
- He spent his final years in exile in Gangra, Paphlagonia, where he continued to write and defend the Orthodox faith.
- He reposed in **454 AD**, remaining steadfast in his faith until the end.

At the **Second Council of Ephesus (449 AD)**, Dioscorus upheld Saint Cyril's teaching and rejected Leo's *Tome*, stating:

"I accept the Twelve Anathemas of Cyril and I refuse any other document that deviates from them." (Acts of the Council of Ephesus, 449 AD)

He insisted that Christ is "*One Incarnate Nature of God the Word*" (μία φύσις τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου σαρκωμένη), following Saint Cyril's formulation. He believed that Leo's *Tome* could be interpreted as dividing Christ into two persons or subjects of action, similar to the Nestorian error.

- St. Dioscorus is venerated as a **pillar of Orthodoxy** and a martyr for the faith.
- His defense of the **One Nature of Christ** remains a cornerstone of Coptic theology.



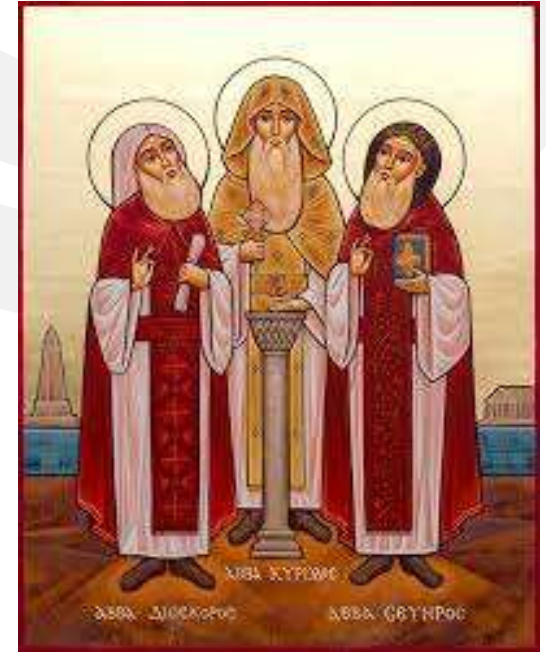


ST. DIOSCORUS 25TH ON TOME OF LEO

Leo's Assertion of Two Natures in Christ

“For each form does what is proper to it with the cooperation of the other: the Word performing what belongs to the Word, and the flesh carrying out what belongs to the flesh. The one shines forth in miracles, the other submits to injuries.” (*Tome of Leo*, Letter 28.4)

Dioscorus' Issue: This passage was seen as dividing Christ's actions between His divinity and humanity rather than recognizing them as unified in the one incarnate nature of the Word. Dioscorus followed Saint Cyril of Alexandria's teaching that “*the Word, made flesh, performed both divine and human acts*” in a single, inseparable nature.



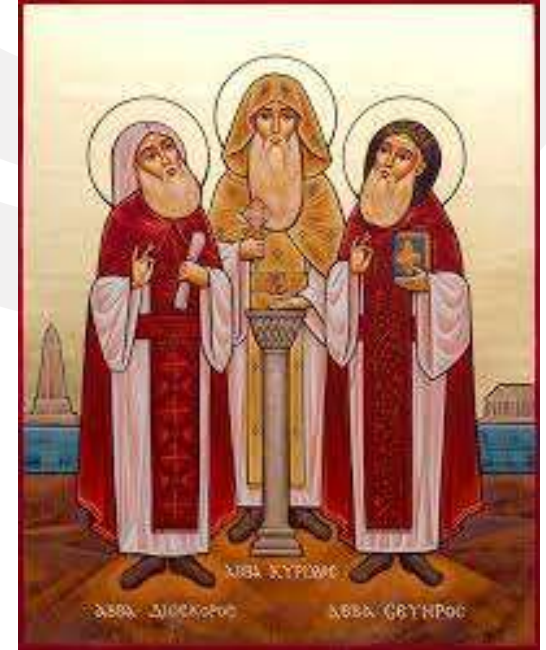


ST. DIOSCORUS 25TH ON TOME OF LEO

Leo's Use of 'Person' and 'Nature'

“Thus the one and the same Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, composed of a rational soul and body. In accordance with this nature, He is equal to the Father in His divinity, but less than the Father in His humanity.” (*Tome of Leo*, Letter 28.3)

Dioscorus' Issue: Dioscorus and the non-Chalcedonian bishops held that Christ is not "composed" of two separate realities but exists as "*One Incarnate Nature of God the Word.*" They saw Leo's wording as implying a division between Christ's divinity and humanity, rather than their inseparable unity.





ST. DIOSCORUS 25TH ON TOME OF LEO

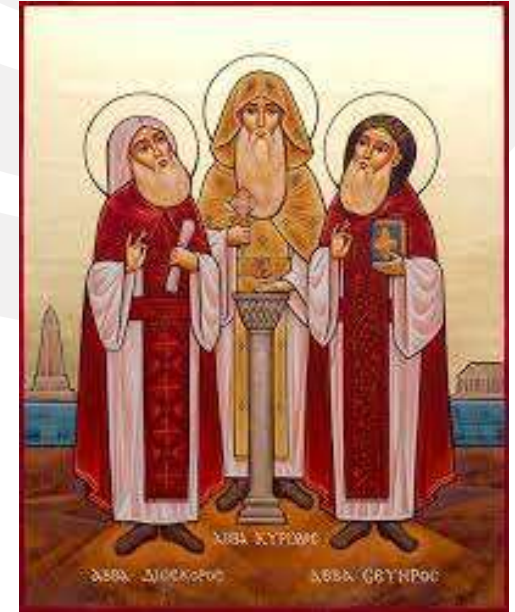
Leo's Distinction of Wills and Actions

"So, if I may pass over many instances, it does not belong to the same nature to weep out of deep-felt pity for a dead friend, and to call him back to life again at the word of command, once the mound had been removed from the four-day-old grave; or to hang on the cross and, with day changed into night, to make the elements tremble; or to be pierced by nails and to open the gates of paradise for the believing thief."

<https://www.ewtn.com/faith/teachings/incac1.htm>

"Each nature retains its own proper character without loss. Just as the form of God does not take away the form of a servant, so the form of a servant does not diminish the form of God." (*Tome of Leo*, Letter 28.2)

Dioscorus' Issue: The phrase "*each nature retains its own proper character*" was interpreted as a denial of the *hypostatic union* in which Christ's humanity and divinity are perfectly united without division or confusion.





ST. DIOSCORUS 25TH POPE OF ALEXANDRIA

On the Unity of Christ's Nature

Quote:

"We confess one nature of the Word of God incarnate, for the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. The divinity and humanity are united in one nature without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation."

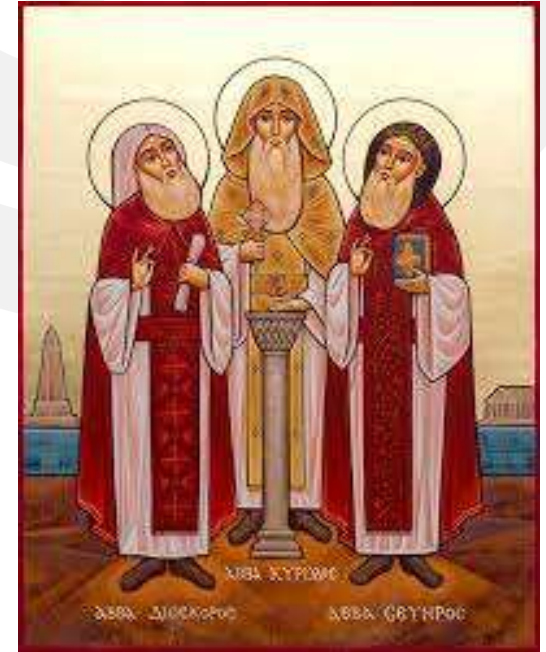
Reference:

St. Dioscorus' Defense at the Second Council of Ephesus (449 AD)

St. Cyril of Alexandria's Twelve Anathemas Against Nestorius

Explanation:

St. Dioscorus upheld the teachings of St. Cyril of Alexandria, emphasizing the **One Nature of Christ** (Miaphysitism). This teaching affirms that Christ is fully divine and fully human, with His two natures united in one person (hypostasis) without confusion, change, division, or separation. This unity is essential for salvation, as it ensures that the actions of Christ—His life, death, and





ST. DIOSCORUS 25TH POPE OF ALEXANDRIA

On the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD)

Quote:

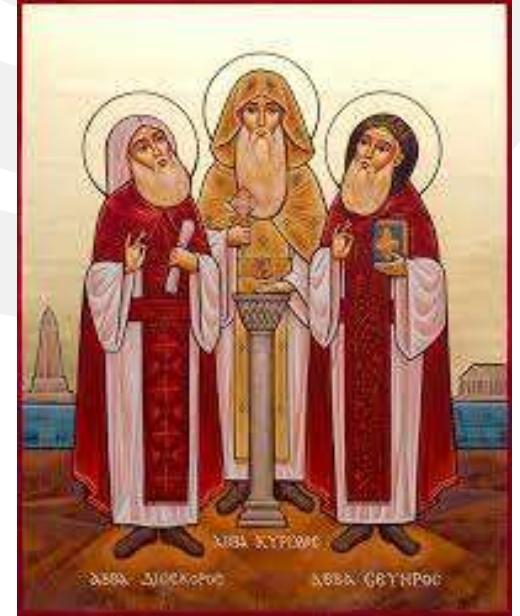
“The Council of Chalcedon has divided Christ into two natures and two persons, following the error of Nestorius. We cannot accept this, for it destroys the unity of the Incarnation and undermines the faith of the Fathers.”

Reference:

**St. Dioscorus' Letter to the Monks of Egypt
Coptic Synaxarium (7 Tobi)**

Explanation:

St. Dioscorus rejected the **Council of Chalcedon**, which he believed introduced a Nestorian division in Christ by teaching that He exists in **two natures** after the Incarnation. From a Coptic Orthodox perspective, this was seen as a betrayal of the faith established at the **Council of Ephesus (431 AD)**, which affirmed the unity of Christ's person. St. Dioscorus' refusal to accept Chalcedon led to his unjust deposition and exile.





ST. DIOSCORUS 25TH POPE OF ALEXANDRIA

On the Suffering of Christ

Quote:

"The Word of God suffered in the flesh, for He truly took upon Himself our humanity. His suffering was not a mere appearance, as some heretics claim, but a real and salvific act for the redemption of mankind."

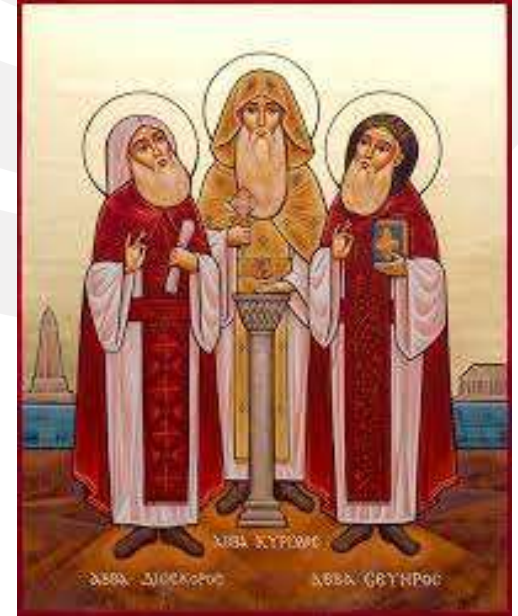
Reference:

St. Dioscorus' Homilies on the Incarnation

St. Cyril of Alexandria's Third Letter to Nestorius

Explanation:

St. Dioscorus emphasized the reality of Christ's suffering and death, affirming that the divine Word truly experienced human suffering through His united nature. This teaching refuted the heresy of **Docetism**, which claimed that Christ's humanity and suffering were merely an illusion. For St. Dioscorus, the reality of Christ's suffering was essential for our salvation.





ST. DIOSCORUS 25TH POPE OF ALEXANDRIA

On the Virgin Mary as Theotokos

Quote:

“The holy Virgin is truly Theotokos, for she bore the Word of God made flesh. To deny her this title is to deny the reality of the Incarnation and the unity of Christ’s person.”

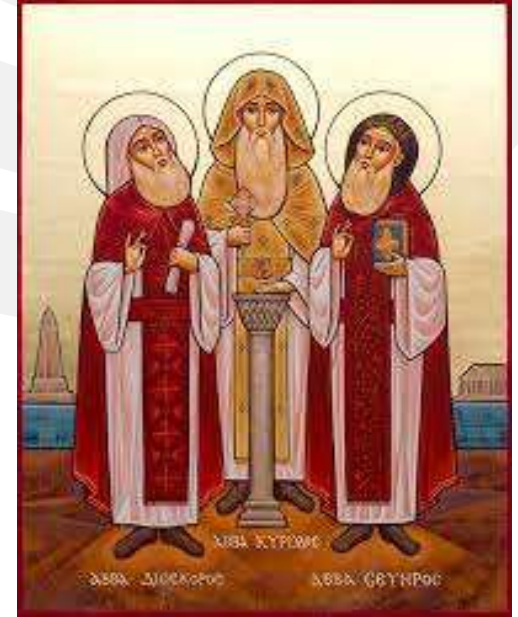
Reference:

St. Dioscorus’ Defense of the Title Theotokos

St. Cyril of Alexandria’s Second Letter to Nestorius

Explanation:

St. Dioscorus defended the title **Theotokos** (God-bearer) for the Virgin Mary, following the teachings of St. Cyril. This title affirms that Mary bore not just a human being but the incarnate God Himself. Nestorius’ rejection of this title was seen as a denial of the unity of Christ’s person and the reality of the Incarnation.





ST. SEVERUS OF ANTIOCH

- Born in **465 AD** in Sozopolis, Pisidia (modern-day Turkey).
- Studied law and rhetoric in Alexandria and Beirut.
- Converted to Christianity and embraced monasticism, joining a monastery in Palestine.
- Known for his deep piety, asceticism, and theological brilliance.

Key Quote:

“The pursuit of worldly knowledge led me to the greater knowledge of Christ, the true Light.”

- Elected as Patriarch of Antioch in **512 AD**.
- Defended the **One Nature of Christ** against the Chalcedonian definition of two natures.
- Worked to unite the Church against the heresy of Nestorianism and the errors of Chalcedon.
- Known for his eloquent sermons and theological writings.





ST. SEVERUS OF ANTIOCH

Defense of Miaphysitism

- St. Severus upheld the **One Nature of Christ** (Miaphysitism), following the teachings of St. Cyril of Alexandria.
- Rejected the **Council of Chalcedon (451 AD)**, which he believed divided Christ into two natures.
- Emphasized the unity of Christ's divinity and humanity in one incarnate nature.

Key Quote:

"We confess one nature of the Word of God incarnate, for the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

Exile and Persecution

- Deposed and exiled in **518 AD** by the Byzantine Emperor Justin I for his opposition to Chalcedon.
- Spent the remainder of his life in exile in Egypt, where he continued to write and defend the Orthodox faith.
- His exile was a time of great suffering but also of profound theological productivity.





ST. SEVERUS OF ANTIOCH

Theological Writings

- Authored numerous works, including homilies, letters, and theological treatises.
- His writings defended the **One Nature of Christ** and refuted the errors of Nestorianism and Chalcedonianism.
- Known for his **Homilies on the Incarnation**, which are still studied in the Coptic Church today.

Key Quote:

"The Word became flesh, not by change or alteration, but by the union of divinity and humanity in one nature."

Teachings on the Incarnation

- Emphasized the reality of the Incarnation, affirming that Christ is fully divine and fully human in one united nature.
- Rejected any division or separation in Christ's person.
- His teachings are summarized in the phrase: *"One Nature of the Word of God Incarnate."*

Key Quote:

"The Word became flesh, not by mixing or confusion, but by a perfect union of divinity and humanity."





ST. SEVERUS OF ANTIOCH

St. Severus and the Coptic Church

- St. Severus found refuge in Egypt during his exile and was supported by the Coptic Church.
- His theology aligns with the Coptic Orthodox understanding of Christ's nature.
- He is remembered as a champion of the faith and a spiritual father to the Coptic faithful.

Key Quote:

"Egypt, the land of St. Mark, has become my second home, for here the faith of Christ is preserved in its purity."

Legacy in the Coptic Church

- Venerated as a saint and a pillar of Orthodoxy in the Coptic Church.
- His teachings on the **One Nature of Christ** continue to shape Coptic theology.
- Celebrated in the **Coptic Synaxarium** on **8 Tobi (January 16)**.

Key Quote:

"The faith of St. Severus is the faith of the Fathers, and it is the light that guides the Church."

[Severus of Antioch: A collection of letters from numerous Syriac manuscripts \(1915\). Letters 1-61](#)





ST. SEVERUS OF ANTIOCH

One day, he went to the desert of Scete, at Wadi-El Natroun, and he entered the church in a uniform of a stranger monk and a great miracle took place at that time. It came to pass, that after the priest had placed the bread (Kourban) on the altar and gone around the church offering the incenses, and after the reading of the Epistles and the Gospel, he lifted off the Ebrospharin (altar covering), and did not find the Kourban in the paten; so, the priest was disturbed and wept.

He turned towards the worshippers saying, "O my brethren, I did not find El-Kourban in the paten, and I know not whether this thing has happened because of my sin or because of your sin."

The people wept; and straightaway, the angel of the Lord appeared to the priest and told him, "This has happened not because of your sin or because of the sin of the worshippers but because you offered El-Kourban in the presence of the Patriarch.

The priest replied, "And where is he, O my Lord?" The angel pointed towards St. Severus. St. Severus was standing in a corner of the church and the priest recognized him by the grace of the Holy Spirit. The priest came to Abba Severus, who commanded him to continue the liturgy after they brought him to the altar with great honour. When the priest had gone up to the altar he found the offering on the paten as before. They all praised God and glorified His Holy Name.





THE ALEXANDRIAN CRYLIAN FORMULA

- By death. Christ conquers death through His life-giving divinity. So also by fear does Christ conquer fear through His courage-giving divinity. That's the point St. Cyril was trying to make, that by being afraid, He quickly suppressed fear by filling natural human fear with "incomparable boldness". St. Severus made it even clearer that it is within the human fear we receive divine courage, just as within human death we receive divine life. When Christ died, it's not the human nature the died separated from divinity, but the death is an act of salvation, it's not a mere death. So also is the fear an act of salvation, not mere fear. We don't simply say, "his humanity died and his divinity rose his humanity from the dead." No, we say "**Christ died a life-giving death, and rose from the dead by the power of His divinity that filled His humanity.**"

Pope Leo on the other hand would say something along the lines of "**His humanity feared, his divinity didn't**". **St. Cyril** made it clear, "**He feared, and filled that fear with incomparable boldness.**" Remember a key part of Orthodoxy is paradoxy; through human fear we partake of the uncreated boldness of God. That is the point of "one nature."



THE ALEXANDRIAN CRYLIAN FORMULA

- Very rarely do we find Leo say something like this. "One and the same person" is simply a dry mechanical way of professing unity, but Leo hasn't assured me that I partake of the divine nature in the human experiences, that these human experiences are filled with the fullness of the divine counterpart.

Always ask this: where's my salvation in what is said about Christ? Are we merely talking about human and divine experiences, without the communication of properties between the two? Then that's a problem. I cannot partake of the divine nature if the properties of Christ are not communicated with each other to give a theanthropic action of our salvation.

- "The Word was united with its own flesh in a transcendent manner that is **beyond human understanding**, and having, as it were, transferred the flesh wholly to himself by that energy by which it lies in His power to give life to those things that lack life, he drove corruption out of our nature and also rid it of that which through sin has prevailed from of old, namely death. Therefore, he who eats the holy flesh of Christ has eternal life, for the flesh contains the Word who is by nature life. **That is why He says, "I will raise him up at the last day." Instead of saying, "My body shall raise him up"-that is, will raise up the person who eats it-He has put in the word "I," since He is not other than His own flesh.**"
- **St. Cyril of Alexandria**



CHALCEDON CORRECTED – 2ND COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE (553 AD)

- The clarification that the union in Christ is **hypostatic**, rather than a mere union in **prosopon**, was formally accepted and reinforced in the **Second Council of Constantinople (553 AD)**.
- **How the Council of Constantinople II (553 AD) Clarified the Hypostatic Union**
- The Council explicitly condemned **Nestorianism**, which could interpret Chalcedon's phrase "*in two natures*" as implying **two hypostases or two persons** in Christ.
- It reaffirmed **St. Cyril of Alexandria's** Christology and his formula "**One incarnate nature of God the Word**" (*μία φύσις τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου σεσαρκωμένη*).





CHALCEDON CORRECTED – 2ND COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE (553 AD)

- It clarified that Chalcedon should be read **in continuity** with Ephesus (431 AD) and Cyril's theology, meaning that Christ's two natures exist **without division** in the one hypostasis of the Logos.
- The Council rejected **the idea of a union in prosopon**, which had led to confusion in Chalcedon's wording. Instead, it affirmed that the **humanity of Christ is enhypostatic**, meaning it has its hypostasis only in the **divine Word**.
- Thus, while **Leontius of Byzantium (5th–6th century)** and **St. Maximus the Confessor (7th century)** played significant roles in refining Chalcedonian Christology, it was **Constantinople II (553 AD)** that formally established **hypostatic union** as the proper interpretation of Chalcedon.





JOINT-COMMISSION OF THE THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX NON-CHALCEDONIAN CHURCHES (CHAMBESY, 10-15 DECEMBER 1985)

- We have inherited from our fathers in Christ the one apostolic faith and tradition, though as churches we have been separated from each other for centuries. As two families of Orthodox Churches long out of communion with each other we now pray and trust in God to restore that communion on the basis of the common Apostolic faith of the undivided church of the first centuries which we confess in our common Creed. What follows is a simple reverent statement of what we do believe, on our way to restore communion between our two families of Orthodox Churches.
- Throughout our discussions we have found our common ground in the formula of our common Father, **St. Cyril of Alexandria: mia physis (hypostasis) tou Theou Logou sesarkomene**, and in his dictum that “**it is sufficient for the confession of our true and irreproachable faith to say and to confess that the Holy Virgin is Theotokos** (Hom : 15, cf. Ep. 39)”.



JOINT-COMMISSION OF THE THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX NON- CHALCEDONIAN CHURCHES (CHAMBESY, 10-15 DECEMBER 1985)

- Great indeed is the wonderful mystery of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one True God, one ousia in three hypostaseis or three prosopa. Blessed be the Name of the Lord our God, for ever and ever.
- Great indeed is also the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, for us and for our salvation.
- The Logos, eternally consubstantial with the Father and the Holy Spirit in His Divinity, has in these last days, become incarnate of the Holy Spirit and Blessed Virgin Mary Theotokos, and thus became man, **consubstantial with us in His humanity but without sin**. He is true God and true Man at the same time, **perfect in his Divinity, perfect in His humanity**. Because the one she bore in her womb was at the same time fully God as well as fully human we call the **Blessed Virgin Theotokos**.
- When we speak of the one composite (synthetos) hypostasis of our Lord Jesus Christ, we do not say that in Him, a **divine hypostasis** and a **human hypostasis came together**. It is that the one eternal hypostasis of the Second Person of the Trinity has assumed our created human nature in that act uniting it with His own uncreated divine nature, to form an **inseparably** and **unconfusedly** united real divine-human being, the natures being distinguished from each other in contemplation (theoria) only.



JOINT-COMMISSION OF THE THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX NON-CHALCEDONIAN CHURCHES (CHAMBESY, 10-15 DECEMBER 1985)

- The hypostasis of the Logos before the incarnation, even with His divine nature, is of course not composite. The same hypostasis, as distinct from nature, of the Incarnate Logos is not composite either. The unique theandric person (prosopon) of Jesus Christ is one eternal hypostasis who has assumed human nature by the Incarnation. So we call that hypostasis composite, on account of the natures which are united to form one composite unity. It is not the case that our Fathers used physis and hypostasis always interchangeably and confused the one with the other. The term hypostasis can be used to denote both the person as distinct from nature, and also the person with the nature, for a hypostasis never in fact exists without a nature.
- It is the same hypostasis of the Second Person of the Trinity, eternally begotten from the Father who in these last days became a human being and was born of the Blessed Virgin. This is the mystery of the hypostatic union we confess in humble adoration - the real union of the divine with the human, with all the properties and functions of the uncreated divine nature, including natural will and natural energy, inseparably and unconfusedly united with the created human nature with all its properties and functions, including natural will and natural energy. It is the Logos Incarnate who is the subject of all the willing and acting of Jesus Christ.



JOINT-COMMISSION OF THE THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX NON- CHALCEDONIAN CHURCHES (CHAMBESY, 10-15 DECEMBER 1985)

- We agree in condemning the **Nestorian** and the **Eutychian heresies**. We neither **separate nor divide the human nature in Christ from His divine nature, nor do we think that the former was absorbed in the latter and thus ceased to exist**.
- The four adverbs used to qualify the mystery of the hypostatic union belong to our common tradition - **without commingling (or confusion) (asyngchytos), without change (atreptos), without separation (achoristos) and without division (adiairetos)**. **Those among us who speak of two natures in Christ, do not thereby deny their inseparable, indivisible union**; those among us who speak of one united divine-human nature in Christ do not thereby deny the continuing dynamic presence in Christ of the divine and the human, without change, without confusion.
- Our mutual agreement is not limited to Christology, but encompasses the whole faith of the one undivided church of the early centuries. We are agreed also in our understanding of the **Person and Work of God the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father alone**, and is always adored with the Father and the Son.