



Ecclesiastical History

Part 4

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Ecumenical Council of Ephesus



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Who is Pelagius?



- Pelagius was born in 405 A.D. at Britannia (i.e. England/ Great Britain)
- He was ordained a monk but fell into heresy which affected Rome.

WHAT WAS HIS HERESY?

- His heresy was that: The sin of Adam was limited to Adam himself without affecting his offspring.
- Furthermore, every person is born at the state of Adam prior to his fall.
- He taught that within a person is the ability to reach Spiritual perfection without the assistance or help of divine grace.

Who is Nestorius?



- He became a monk in a monastery near Antioch, Syria.
- He showed spiritual brilliance and fervent defense of the Orthodox faith against heretics.
- He was chosen to become the Bishop of Constantinople.
- After become bishop he immediately fell into a grave heresy, the consequences of which troubled the church from the fifth century until today.
- He is known for his stance against the term “Theotokos or mother of God”

What was the Nestorian heresy?

- Nestorius taught that Christ has two hypostases, two natures and is two persons.
- Consequently, He held that the Ever-Virgin Mary was NOT the mother of God but rather the mother of the man Jesus or at the very best the mother of Christ.
- He also criticized the Magi or Wise Men (a.k.a. three Kings) for kneeling and prostrating before the infant Christ.
- He also omitted the endings of the *Triagion* (e.g. Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal Who was born of the Virgin have mercy on us)
- Exercising his power as Patriarch of Constantinople, Nestorius began spreading his heresy and influencing the priests and even the bishops also.





Orthodoxy

The reaction of the believers

- The Orthodox believers living in Constantinople rejected the heretical teachings of Nestorius and began to rebel against him but he insisted in his stubbornness.
- Some monks came before him and began explaining to him the deviation of his teachings from the Orthodox faith.
- He became enraged at them and ordered their imprisonment in the church.
- He ordered his attendants to hit them and insult them.



Pope St. Cyril I of Alexandria

- Saint Cyril I known as “the Great” is 24th Pope of Alexandria.
- He holds the title “Pillar of Faith” and he is the nephew of his predecessor Saint Theophilus, 23rd Pope of Alexandria.
- He presided over this council through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- In his second letter to Nestorius, Pope St. Cyril writes “We do not say that the Logos became flesh by having his nature changed, nor for that matter that he was transformed into a complete human being composed out of soul and body. On the contrary, we say that in an unspeakable and incomprehensible way, the Logos united to himself, in His hypostasis, flesh enlivened by a rational soul, and in this way became a human being and was designated ‘Son of man’. He did not become a human being simple by an act of will or ‘good pleasure’, any more than he did so by merely taking on a person” (The Christological Controversy, P.133).





Papal *Paschal Epistle* of Saint Cyril I

- Pope St. Cyril began his defense of the faith by using his annual **Paschal Epistle** (i.e. Papal Easter Message) at the Holy Resurrection Feast in **428 A.D.** to convey to the congregations the Orthodox faith and to publicly refute the Nestorian heresy.
- This Paschal Epistle was sent annually at Easter by the Pope of Alexandria to all the churches worldwide.
- In his Resurrection Eve Sermon, Pope St. Cyril said:
“Mary did not give birth to a mere man but the Incarnate Son of God. She is indeed the mother of the Lord and the mother of God”



Pope Saint Cyril and Nestorius

- Apparently Pope Cyril sent several letters to Nestorius some of which he sent by some of the brethren to hand it to Nestorius in person.
- Nestorius' arrogance compelled him to refuse to meet with the messengers carrying the Papal Letter.
- Pope St. Cyril invoked [gathered] a provincial council at Alexandria in which the Nestorian heresy was presented and the letters of Pope St. Cyril to Nestorius were read.
- The council approved of these letters and the errors of Nestorius' teachings was made clear and confirmed as heresy.



Alexandria and Rome



- St. Celestius, Bishop of Rome also gathered a council of his bishops in which he accepted the Letter of Pope St. Cyril which was sent to Rome as a reply to Celestius' request for information about the Nestorian heresy.
- Saint Celestius allied himself with Pope Saint Cyril and thus Alexandria and Rome were one in theology at this time.

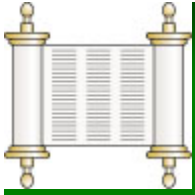


Twelve Anathemas of Saint Cyril

- Pope St. Cyril wrote **12 anathemas** in which he distinguished the Christian dogma from Nestorius' heresy and ended each point of Christian dogma with an excommunication or anathema of everyone who does not believe what is stated (which is why it is known as the Twelve Anathemas of Saint Cyril).
- Pope St. Cyril sent these Twelve Anathemas to Nestorius requesting him to sign it confirming his acceptance of the true Christian faith.
- Nestorius refused to sign it and responded to these Twelve Anathemas with his own retaliatory Twelve Anathemas contrary to the Orthodox faith as presented by Saint Cyril.

Two Schools of Theological Thought

- Some bishops of Antioch assisted Nestorius in compiling his own deviant Twelve Anathemas and thus the church was split into two schools of thought the **Alexandrian Theology** and the **Antiochene Theology**.
- Standing by the Orthodox teachings of Saint Cyril were **Rome, Asia Minor and the people of Constantinople** but **Antioch** sided with Nestorius in his heresy.



Papal Letter to the Emperor

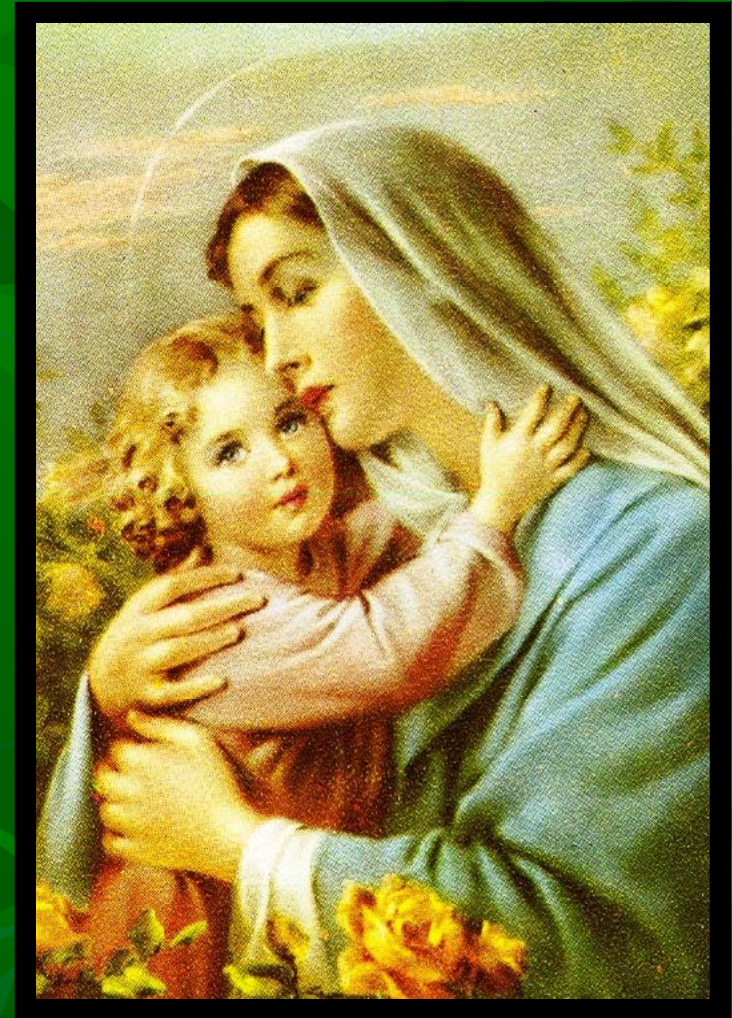
- When Pope St. Cyril saw the stubbornness of Nestorius, he sent a letter to the Emperor Theodosius II in which he told the Emperor:

“My fathers were protectors of the Church supporting her and defending her doctrines. They also encouraged and supported her men (i.e. the bishops and the priests) in establishing the Orthodox faith in the hearts of the believers and thus received blessings. Now, in your illustrious reign did appear this Nestorius who wills to shatter the Church with his deviation. Therefore, we ask your Piety to order the gathering of a general council to address the issue of this man. We pray for and bless your reign”.

- As a result, the emperor sent many letters inviting all the bishops to come to Ephesus in the appointed time.

The Events of the Ephesian Council

- At this stage, in **431 A.D.**, was held the third and last of the three great worldwide councils which is the **Holy Ecumenical Council of Ephesus**.
- The governing president of this council was **Pope St. Cyril I of Alexandria, the *Pillar of Faith***.
- Of this council only three fragments have reached us: the **introduction** to the **Creed**, the **canons**; the synodal decree.





Emperor Theodosius II and the Council of Ephesus



- The Council was opened by the righteous Emperor Theodosius II known as “the Orthodox King” as well as by the name “Theodosius the Younger”.
- His brother is Saint Karas the Anchorite the son of Emperor Arcadius and Empress Eudoxia of Constantinople.
- He also ordered the destruction of the pagan temples.
- The Emperor Theodosius II did not attend the council as a way of giving the bishops complete freedom to discuss the theological issue without external secular pressure.
- The emperor delegated Count Candidian to represent him in the council but Count Candidian was a Nestorian follower who wanted to install fear in the saintly bishops who refused the Nestorian heresy.
- When Candidian failed to scare the holy bishops into accepting the Nestorian heresy, he imprisoned Pope St. Cyril and his bishops in a grain storage facility.
- Nevertheless Pope St. Cyril and his bishops did not give in to the evil demands of Count Candidian so he gave up and released them from their imprisonment.



Calling the Ecumenical Council

- The Emperor Theodosius II himself begged the bishops of every country to come to Ephesus.
- The choice of Ephesus was favourable to the bishops just like Nicaea was favourable once before.
- 200 Bishops signed the introduction to Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed



The Significance of the Crisis

- Confirmed the motherhood of the ever-Virgin Mary to God the Logos forms the basis of our Christian faith and our doctrine of Salvation.



The Purpose of the Ephesian Council

- To write an introduction to the Nicano-Constantinopolitan Creed to include emphasis on the motherhood of the ever-Virgin Mary to God the Logos.



Delays



The bishops began to assemble from all over the empire to the city of Ephesus.

Since **Rome and Antioch were late** in attending this council, the fathers agreed to wait until the rest of the bishops arrived.

- After 16 days had past since the appointed time for the start of the council, the late bishops sent letters of apology regarding their lateness and informed the others of their imminent arrival.
- John, Bishop of Antioch sent two bishops with a letter to the fathers carrying his approval for the council to start without him.
- This letter from Bishop John of Antioch arrived to Pope Saint Cyril just as an imperial order came for the immediate start of the council without further delay.
- Therefore, the fathers decided to start the council on the following day.
- As for Nestorius, he arrived along with 40 bishops of his followers to this council.
- The bishops attempted to reason with Nestorius before the start of the council but failed to turn him away from his deviation [heresy].

Famous Attendees of the Council

- **Pope St. Cyril I of Alexandria (Egyptian)**
- **Saint Shenouti (a. k. a. Shenouda) the Archimandrite (Egyptian).**
- **Saint Peter of Sohag, the Abbot of the Monastery of Foaw (Egyptian).**
- **Bishop Eublianius of Jerusalem**
- **Bishop Memnon of Ephesus**
- **Patriarch John of Antioch** and his bishops were late in coming to the council.
- **Bishop Celestius of Rome did not attend but sent representatives who arrived late.**





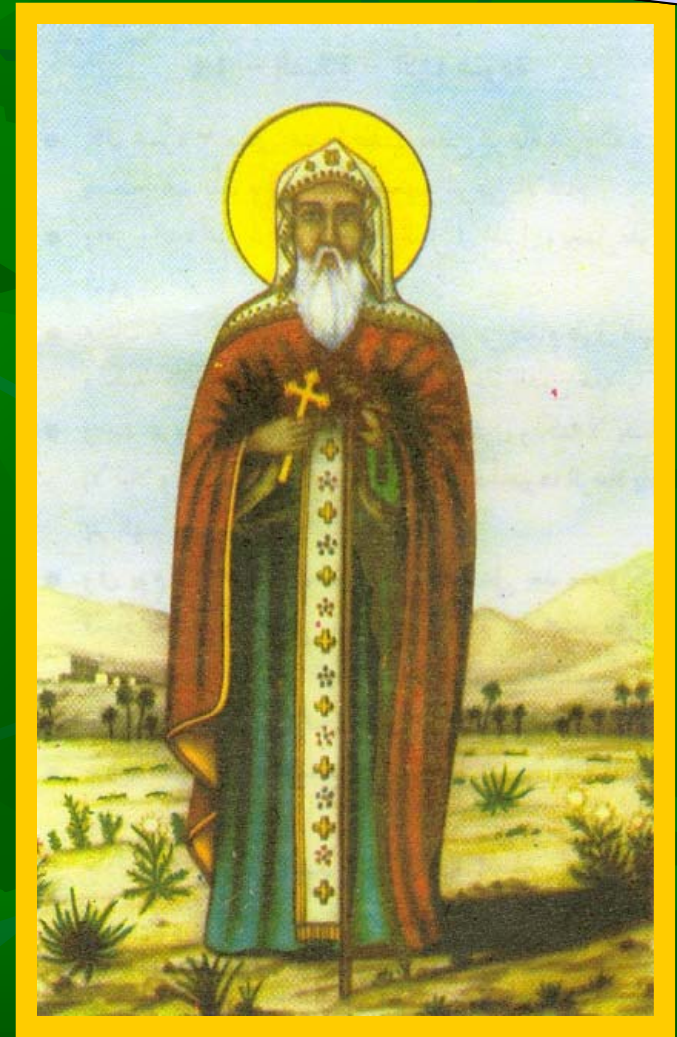
Coptic Delegation to the Council

- Then came **Pope Saint Cyril the Great** accompanied by 50 Egyptian bishops representing the Coptic Holy Synod as well as **Saint Shenouti the Archimandrite** and **Saint Peter of Sohag** the abbot of the Monastery of Foaw representing the Coptic monastic orders [ranks].



Saint Shenouti the Archimandrite

- **Saint Shenouti the Archimandrite** is the one of the pioneers in monasticism and **the founder of Monastic Solitude** known in Arabic as “Ra-ees El Mota-wah-e-deen”
- He attended this council along side Saint Peter of Sohag as a member of the Coptic delegation to the council representing the monastic ranks under Pope St. Cyril the Great.



Before the Council Began

- Sessions were held in the Cathedral of Ephesus
- The fathers sent three times for Nestorius to attend the council but he refused saying “there is no need for my presence” but in the end he said that he cannot attend before the arrival of John of Antioch and his bishops.
- The council did not believe him because of his impious intentions.



Readings in the First Session

- The first session began with the read of the Imperial Letter.
- Then the letters of Pope Saint Cyril to Nestorius were read.
- Then the Twelve Anathemas of Saint Cyril were read.
- Then the heretical counter Anathemas of Nestorius were read.
- Then the rulings of the provincial councils held against Nestorius at Alexandria and Rome were respectively read.
- The council approved of Pope Saint Cyril's letters and Twelve Anathemas as well as the rulings of the Alexandrian and Roman Councils.

The First Session & Nestorius

- The council began discussing the teachings of Nestorius.
- In this first session which lasted until evening, the council ruled against Nestorius saying: **“...therefore we saw that based on the Holy Canons to lay against him this ruling with all sorrow and tears asking the Almighty through this holy council to divest him of the Episcopal rank and to banned him from any fellowship with the priesthood”**.

First Session & Theology

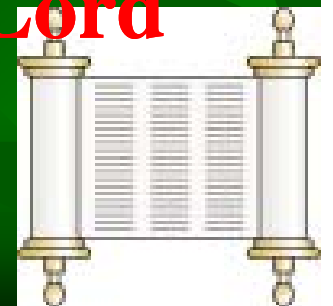
- The council decided according to the Apostolic Teachings that **the mystery of the Divine Incarnation is based on the union of the divinity and the humanity in the hypostasis of the eternal Logos [Word] without separation, mingling [mixing], or alteration.**
- As well they ruled that our Lady, the Ever-Virgin Mary is the Theotokos [mother of God].
- Then the fathers wrote the Introduction to the Creed as follows: ***“We exalt you O mother of the True Light and glorify you O Saint and Theotokos...”***





The Introduction to the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed

- We exalt you O mother of the True Light and glorify you O Saint and Theotokos for you have brought forth unto us the Saviour of the world, He came and saved our souls. Glory to You our Master our King, Christ the pride of the Apostles, the crown of the martyrs, the rejoicing of the saints, the firmament of the churches, the forgiveness of sins. We proclaim the Holy Trinity in One Godhead. We worship Him we glorify Him, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord bless us, Amen.



- *(Divine Liturgy)*



Excommunications



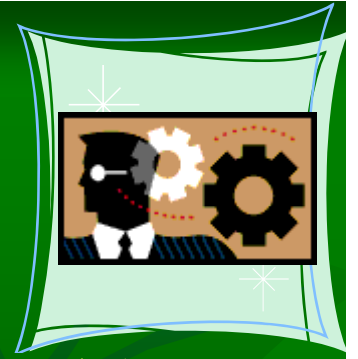
- They sent a letter to Nestorius stating: “**Know that because of your deceitful teachings and your disobedience to the Canons, you have been excommunicated from this holy council according to the Canons of the Church. Upon you the judgment came to be divested of the Episcopal rank... and to become estranged from all Ecclesiastical service...**”
- The council also ruled to excommunicate Pelagius and his vain teachings.

The Nestorian Reaction

- Nestorius did not accept the ruling of the council to excommunicate him but went to Constantinople carrying counterfeit rulings written by Count Candidian the Nestorian follower.
- He filled these counterfeit rulings with insults against the president of the council [Pope St. Cyril] and the [200] bishops of the council.



John of Antioch



- After 5 days Patriarch John of Antioch arrived with 32 of his bishops and created a council of his own bishops ruling in it to dethrone Pope St. Cyril of Alexandria and Memnon, Bishop of Ephesus.
- He also refused to have communion [fellowship] with the bishops of the Ephesian Council unless they reverse their ruling on Nestorius.
- With the help of Count Candidian, John of Antioch was able to send his own council rulings to the Emperor, asking for permission to reopen the Ephesus Council.

The Second Session

- A few days later, the representatives of Bishop St. Celestius of Rome arrived and Pope St. Cyril of Alexandria opened the second session of the Ephesian Council in their presence.
- After the minutes of the first session were read, the letter of St. Celestius, Bishop of Rome was read.
- Then the representatives of St. Celestius, Bishop of Rome spoke confirming the position of Pope St. Cyril of Alexandria.

The Third Session

- On the following day the council opened its third session in which the representatives of St. Celestius signed the rulings of the Ephesian Council (which included the excommunication of Nestorius, Pelagius and their teachings as well as the acceptance of the Title of Theotokos and the Introduction to the Creed).



The Fourth and Fifth Sessions

- The fourth and fifth session of the Ephesian Council were opened and the evil behaviour of John of Antioch against Pope St. Cyril and Bishop Memnon of Ephesus was discussed.
- After this discussion, the council ruled to excommunicate John of Antioch.

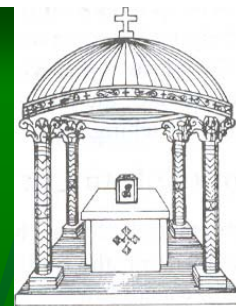
Informing the Emperor of the Rulings of the Ephesian Council



- Count Candidian barricaded the city of Ephesus so that the fathers would not be able to send their rulings to the emperor in Constantinople.
- The fathers thought of a way to get the rulings of the council to the Emperor, so they called an old man who was asked to wear old garments and gave him a hollow staff within which the rulings of the council were placed.
- With this method, the old man was able to escape the barricade of Ephesus and reach Delmatius the monk whom the emperor revered greatly for his holiness and virtue.
- Delmantius hurried after receiving the rulings of the council to meet with the Emperor and presented the rulings to the Emperor who immediately accepted and approved of them.



The Canons of Ephesus



- **Canon 1:** is an important dogmatic condemnation of all shades of Nestorianism, and ruled to excommunicate all who stray from the Orthodox faith and share with Nestorius his heretical teachings. It also accepted all who reject the Nestorian heresy.
- **Canon #2:** Any excommunicated bishop who performs an ordination, then that ordination shall be considered invalid.
- **Canon #7:** Warning and excommunication to all who dare add or remove from the Creed which the fathers wrote at Nicea, Constantinople and Ephesus.
- **Canon #8:** Restricted the jurisdiction of each bishop and forbade the bishops from interfering in the affairs of one another.



Nestorius' Last Attempt

- But Nestorius and his followers did not cease influencing the emperor to reverse his approval of the rulings of the council.
- After that, 8 bishops from the Ephesian Council as well as 8 bishops from John of Antioch were sent to the Emperor and meet with him at Chalcedon.
- After much debate between the two parties in front of the emperor, the emperor ruled to confirm his previous approve of the rulings of the Ephesian Council.
- Then the Emperor ordered the exile and banishment of Nestorius out of Constantinople.

Residue of Nestorianism

- Nestorianism did not die by the excommunication of Nestorius or his death even though it weakened greatly but the philosophers and teachers of Raha's School of Theology in modern-day Iraq continued to hold and teach the Nestorian heresy and began spreading it in their surroundings.
- When the bishop of Raha banished them from the city, they fled to the city of Naceban in Syria along with some priests.
- At Naceben they established headquarters and elected a leader for their group called "the Catholicos" and began spreading their teachings in the lands of Persia, Assyria, and India.
- Even today, there are Nestorians living in these territories but none more populous than Northern Iraq.

The Conclusion



- At the close of this council the Emperor Theodosius II issued an imperial decree binding all citizens of the Roman Empire to uphold the rulings of this Ephesian Council.



Thanks for Listening

