

Nestorianism

Wednesday, June 7, 2023 6:59 PM

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Happy Father's Day! - I find it interesting that on Father's Day we will be reflecting on our Mother.

Brief Recap

Opening Prayer - on YouTube video "The Mother of God? Cyril of Alexandria and the Nestorian Heresy by Institute of Catholic Culture

>Play YouTube video "The Mother of God? Cyril of Alexandria and the Nestorian Heresy by Institute of Catholic Culture - 59 minutes long.<

Time of Heresy: 428 A.D. during Nestorius Christmas homily where he condemned the traditional title for Mary as Theotokos which means God-Bearer in Greek.

Definition of Nestorianism

Named after Nestorius the Patriarch of Constantinople who was trying to understand how the eternal God could also exist in a finite person. He articulated himself in a way that suggested that Jesus was 2 persons.

- Jesus the divine Person (Spirit/The Word)
- Jesus the human Person (Christ) and Mary only birthed the human person (Christ)

Nestorius didn't believe the Church was correct in calling Mary the "Mother of God" (Theotokos) and that Mary is only the "Mother of Christ" (Christotokos). There are still small communities of Nestorians that exist today called "The Church of the East"

Early Church Father who opposed it

St. Cyril of Alexandria who was named a doctor of the Church in 1882 and died in 444 A.D. Patriarch of Alexandria, Egypt.

Church Councils that opposed it

Council of Ephesus 431 A.D. - 3rd Ecumenical Council held in Ephesus Turkey that dealt with both Nestorianism and Pelagianism heresies. Most famous for defining that Mary may be called the God-bearer or "Mother of God."

Council of Chalcedon 451 A.D. - 4th Ecumenical Council held in Chalcedon (Istanbul, Turkey) most famous for defining that Christ has two natures (Divine and Human) that are united, but distinct.

Hypostatic Union - theological term used with reference to the incarnation to express the revealed truth that in Christ one person subsists in two natures, the Divine and the human, each retaining its own properties, are united in one subsistence and one person.

It is an adequate expression about Jesus Christ that in him are two perfect natures, divine and human; that the divine person takes to himself, includes in his person a human nature; that the incarnate Son of God is an individual, complete substance; and that the union of the two natures is real (against Arius), not a mere indwelling of God in a man (against Nestorius), with a rational soul (against Apollinaris), and the divinity remains unchanged (against Eutyches).

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

Anathema - to separate, to curse, condemn

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**.

What is True about it - Jesus is both Divine and Human. Nestorians will claim Jesus is God. Mary is the mother of Christ.

What is False about it - The only divine person in Jesus is the Spirit (WORD) and the flesh and body part of Jesus is the human part of Jesus (Christ), which is like another person that is totally separate from the Spirit/divinity of God/WORD. Christ is not eternally God, but only became so at the incarnation. There are two persons in Jesus.

This is not true because Jesus is inseparably true God and true man, and Mary gives birth to a person who is Jesus Christ. - Catechism 469 Therefore, Mary is the mother of God- Jesus is a divine person (the second person of the Trinity) who became incarnate with two natures (Divine and Human). In scripture Jesus is referred to as the Son of God and the Son of Man. St. Cyril used the burning bush scripture to explain this, it is like the fire of divinity burns on the wood of humanity (like the burning bush), but doesn't destroy it and in the same way with the Sacraments.

How does Nestorianism exist today? When we hear any of the following statements:

- Mary is not the Mother of God or the mother of his human nature
- God wasn't born of a woman, because God is eternal and can't be born of a woman.
- God didn't die on a cross, because God can't die.
- When Christians don't celebrate Christmas or Easter
- Disbelief in the resurrection of the Body
- Disbelief in the real presence of the Eucharist
- Hatred towards Mary

How do we respond to these claims?

<Play Formed Video titled **Mother of the Messiah Lectio Mary by Brant Pitre: Episode 3**> - 35 minutes long

Mary's identity flows from Jesus's identity. The reason why the Church emphasizes this Marian title is because it is affirming what is true about Jesus NOT because we think Mary created God or that we worship her as some type of deity.

The Church celebrates Mary as Mother of God on January 1st, 8 days after Christmas.

Closing Song and Prayer "[Let all Mortal Flesh Keep Silence](#)"

1 Let all mortal flesh keep silence
and with fear and trembling stand;
ponder nothing earthly-minded,
for with blessing in his hand
Christ, our God, to earth descending,
comes our homage to command.

2 King of kings, yet born of Mary,
as of old on earth he stood,
Lord of lords in human likeness,
in the body and the blood
he will give to all the faithful
his own self for heav'nly food.

3 Rank on rank the host of heaven
spreads its vanguard on the way
as the Light from Light, descending
from the realms of endless day,
comes the pow'rs of hell to vanquish
as the darkness clears away.

4 At his feet the six-winged seraph,
cherubim with sleepless eye,
veil their faces to the presence
as with ceaseless voice they cry:
"Alleluia, alleluia!"

Alleluia, Lord Most High!"

Resources to oppose Nestorianism:
Catechism 464-478

Hebrews Ch. 1, 2, and 4

1 John 4:1-3 - "Beloved, do not trust every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they belong to God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can know the Spirit of God: every spirit that acknowledges Jesus Christ come in the flesh belongs to God, and every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus does not belong to God. This is the spirit of the antichrist that, as you heard, is to come, but in fact is already in the world."

Isaiah 7:10-14 "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign; the young woman pregnant and about to bear a son, shall name him Emmanuel" which means God with us. Jesus is God.

Micah 5:2-3 - "But you Bethlehem-Ephrathah least among the clans of Judah, From you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel; Whose origin is from of old, from ancient times. Therefore the Lord will give them up until the time when she who is to give birth has borne, Then the rest of his kindred shall return to the children of Israel. He shall take his place as shepherd by the strength of the Lord, by the majestic name of the Lord, his God;"

Matthew Chapter 1 - birth of Jesus

Luke 2:25-35 - Simeon prophecy "He took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, Lord now let your servant depart in peace according to your word;

John 1:14 - "And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.

1 John 4:9 - "In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him." The Son is eternal/Divine.

Hebrews 4:15 - "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been similarly tested in every way, yet without sin." Jesus was human like us in every way except sin.

Romans 5:6-11 - "For Christ, while we were still helpless, yet died at the appointed time for the ungodly. Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage. But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us." God did die in his human nature.

John 10:18 - "This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again."

Matthew 1:20 - "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home." We should not be afraid to take Mary into our hearts and love her.

John 19:26-27 - "When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home." We are to take Mary into our hearts as our mother and love her. Also, Mary is the mother of all the living (The Church).

THE EPISTLE OF ST. CYRIL TO NESTORIUS

To the most religious and beloved of God, fellow minister Nestorius, Cyril sends greeting in the Lord.

I hear that some are rashly talking of the estimation in which I hold your holiness, and that this is frequently the case especially at the times that meetings are held of those in authority. And perchance they think in so doing to say something agreeable to you, but they speak senselessly, for they have suffered no injustice at my hands, but have been exposed by me only to their profit; this man as an oppressor of the blind and needy, and that as one who wounded his mother with a sword. Another because he stole, in collusion with his waiting maid, another's money, and had always laboured under the imputation of such like crimes as no one would wish even one of his bitterest enemies to be laden with. I take little reckoning of the words of such people, for the disciple is not above his Master, nor would I stretch the measure of my narrow brain above the Fathers, for no matter what path of life one pursues it is hardly possible to escape the smirching of the wicked, whose mouths are full of cursing and bitterness, and who at the last must give an account to the Judge of all.

But I return to the point which especially I had in mind. And now I urge you, as a brother in the Lord, to propose the word of teaching and the doctrine of the faith with all accuracy to the people, and to consider that the giving of scandal to one even of the least of those who believe in Christ, exposes a body to the unbearable indignation of God. And of how great diligence and skill there is need when the multitude of those grieved is so great, so that we may administer the healing word of truth to them that seek it. But this we shall accomplish most excellently if we shall turn over the words of the holy Fathers, and are zealous to obey their commands, proving ourselves, whether we be in the faith according to that which is written, and conform our thoughts to their upright and irreprehensible teaching.

The holy and great Synod therefore says, that the only begotten Son, born according to nature of God the Father, very God of very God, Light of

Light, by whom the Father made all things, came down, and was incarnate, and was made man, suffered, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven. These words and these decrees we ought to follow, considering what is meant by the Word of God being incarnate and made man. For we do not say that the nature of the Word was changed and became flesh, or that it was converted into a whole man consisting of soul and body; but rather that the Word having personally united to himself flesh animated by a rational soul, did in an ineffable and inconceivable manner become man, and was called the Son of Man, not merely as willing or being pleased to be so called, neither on account of taking to himself a person, but because the two natures being brought together in a true union, there is of both one Christ and one Son; for the difference of the natures is not taken away by the union, but rather the divinity and the humanity make perfect for us the one Lord Jesus Christ by their ineffable and inexpressible union. So then he who had an existence before all ages and was born of the Father, is said to have been born according to the flesh of a woman, not as though his divine nature received its beginning of existence in the holy Virgin, for it needed not any second generation after that of the Father (for it would be absurd and foolish to say that he who existed before all ages, coeternal with the Father, needed any second beginning of existence), but since, for us and for our salvation, he personally united to himself an human body, and came forth of a woman, he is in this way said to be born after the flesh; for he was not first born a common man of the holy Virgin, and then the Word came down and entered into him, but the union being made in the womb itself, he is said to endure a birth after the flesh, ascribing to himself the birth of his own flesh. On this account we say that he suffered and rose again; not as if God the Word suffered in his own nature stripes, or the piercing of the nails, or any other wounds, for the Divine nature is incapable of suffering, inasmuch as it is incorporeal, but since that which had become his own body suffered in this way, he is also said to suffer for us; for he who is in himself incapable of suffering was in a suffering body. In the same manner also we conceive respecting his dying; for the Word of God is by nature immortal and incorruptible, and life and life-giving; since, however, his own body did, as Paul says, by the grace of God taste death for every man, he himself is said to have suffered death for us, not as if he had any experience of death in his own nature (for it would be madness to say or think this), but because, as I have just said, his flesh tasted death. In like manner his flesh being raised again, it is spoken of as his resurrection, not as if he had fallen into corruption (God forbid), but because his own body was raised again. We, therefore, confess one Christ and Lord, not as worshipping a man with the Word (lest this expression with the Word should suggest to the mind the idea of division), but worshipping him as one and the same, forasmuch as the body of the Word, with which he sits with the Father, is not separated from the Word himself, not as if two sons were sitting with him, but one by the union with the flesh. If, however, we reject the personal union as impossible or unbecoming, we fall into the error of speaking of two sons, for it will be necessary to distinguish, and to say, that he who was properly man was honoured with the appellation of Son, and that he who is properly the Word of God, has by nature both the name and the reality of Sonship. We must not, therefore, divide the one Lord Jesus Christ into two Sons. Neither will it at all avail to a sound faith to hold, as some do, an union of persons; for the Scripture has not said that the Word united to himself the person of man, but that he was made flesh. This expression, however, the Word was made flesh, can mean nothing else but that he partook of flesh and blood like to us; he made our body his own, and came forth man from a woman, not casting off his existence as God, or his generation of God the Father, but even in taking to himself flesh remaining what he was. This the declaration of the correct faith proclaims everywhere. This was the sentiment of the holy Fathers; therefore they ventured to call the holy Virgin, the Mother of God, not as if the nature of the Word or his divinity had its beginning from the holy Virgin, but because of her was born that holy body with a rational soul, to which the Word being personally united is said to be born according to the flesh. These things, therefore, I now write unto you for the love of Christ, beseeching you as a brother, and testifying to you before Christ and the elect angels, that you would both think and teach these things with us, that the peace of the Churches may be preserved and the bond of concord and love continue unbroken among the Priests of God.

From a letter by Saint Athanasius, bishop

The Word took our nature from Mary

The Apostle tells us: *The Word took to himself the sons of Abraham, and so had to be like his brothers in all things.* He had then to take a body like ours. This explains the fact of Mary's presence: she is to provide him with a body of his own, to be offered for our sake. Scripture records her giving birth, and says: *She wrapped him in swaddling clothes.* Her breasts, which fed him, were called blessed. Sacrifice was offered because the child was her firstborn. Gabriel used careful and prudent language when he announced his birth. He did not speak of "what will be born *in you*" to avoid the impression that a body would be introduced into her womb from outside; he spoke of "what will be born *from you*" so that we might know by faith that her child originated within her and from her.

By taking our nature and offering it in sacrifice, the Word was to destroy it completely and then invest it with his own nature, and so prompt the Apostle to say: *This corruptible body must put on incorruption; this mortal body must put on immortality.* This was not done in outward show only, as some have imagined. This is not so. Our Savior truly became man, and from this has followed the salvation of man as a whole. Our salvation is in no way fictitious, nor does it apply only to the body. The salvation of the whole man, that is, of soul and body, has really been achieved in the Word himself.

What was born of Mary was therefore human by nature, in accordance with the inspired Scriptures, and the body of the Lord was a true body: It was a true body because it was the same as ours. Mary, you see, is our sister, for we are all born from Adam.

The words of Saint John: *the Word was made flesh,* bear the same meaning, as we may see from a similar turn of phrase in Saint Paul: *Christ was made a curse for our sake.* Man's body has acquired something great through its communion and union with the Word. From being mortal it has been made immortal; though it was a living body it has become a spiritual one; though it was made from the earth it has passed through the gates of heaven.

Even when the Word takes a body from Mary, the Trinity remains a Trinity, with neither increase nor decrease. It is for ever perfect. In the Trinity we acknowledge one Godhead, and thus one God, the Father of the Word, is proclaimed in the Church.