

The Council of Ephesus

431

St. Jerome (340-420), and St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) had just completed their prodigious theological work. Pelagianism (Man could achieve Salvation without God's help) was being preached in some Western Churches. Nestorianism (Mary was not the Mother of God) was being preached in some Eastern Churches.

Nestorius



Nestorius was selected by Emperor Theodosius II to be Patriarch of Constantinople. Nestorius taught the doctrine that Christ had two natures: one divine (the second person of God - Logos) and one human. These two natures were fused together with Mary being the mother only of the human. Thus, Mary could not be called the mother of God, (Theotokos).

St. Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, appealed to Pope Celestine I (422-432), charging Nestorius with heresy. Celestine agreed and gave Cyril his authority to serve notice to Nestorius to recant his views or be excommunicated. Cyril was known for his bellicose manner and his presidency of the Council proceedings was very confrontational!

St. Cyril



Before Cyril's summons arrived, Nestorius convinced Emperor Theodosius II (408-450) to hold a general council, a platform to argue their opposing views. The participants came mainly from Eastern and African churches.

The Council of *Ephesus* moved the Church:

The Birth of Jesus	➡	Condemned Nestorius' teachings
Mary's Title	➡	Mary was to be called 'Theotokos', the mother of God
Status of the Nicene Creed as modified by Constantinople I	➡	Declared unlawful any changes to this established Creed
Established Council's authority	➡	Excommunication of those not accepting the Council's decrees
Autonomy of bishops	➡	No bishop was to assume control of any province not previously assigned
Man's Eternal Salvation	➡	Condemned Pelagianism

Results of *Ephesus*

An edict of Theodosius II on July 30, 435 condemned Nestorius' writings and they were to be burnt. A few years later Nestorius was dragged from his retirement and banished to an oasis.

A major schism resulted, forming the Assyrian Church of the East, from those who opposed Cyril.

The Council findings were confirmed by Pope Sixtus III (432-440)

The Council failed to resolve the debate over the substance of union of the two natures for Christ.