

NESTORIANS AND COPTS

The first theological and [Christological](#) clash between the Nestorian doctrines and [Alexandrian orthodoxy](#) took place at the Council of EPHESUS (431). CYRIL I (412-444) faced a new phase in Christology as preached by the scholar NESTORIUS, patriarch of Constantinople. The Alexandrian theologians, led by Saint Cyril, taught that Jesus Christ was the Eternal Logos under the condition of humanity. All the actions predicated to Jesus as a man were predicated to the Divine Logos as well; His mother, therefore, is the THEOTOKOS, mother of God.

According to Nestorius, Mary was only the mother of the man. This led to the doctrine of the dual nature of Jesus. Saint Cyril addressed himself to the pope of Rome, Celestine, in order to attract Roman attention to the irregularity of Nestorian doctrine. Saint Cyril hurled twelve anathemas [against Nestorius](#) from Alexandria, the center of the orthodox Christian world. This preeminent position and the Nestorian struggle led to the division of the church after the Council of Chalcedon (451).

[DIOSCORUS I](#) (444-458) recognized nothing but the Cyrillian formula for Christology. [Politics](#) under the cover of religion did the rest. Thus the [Alexandrian orthodoxy](#) was (because of dishonesty or ignorance) labeled as Eutychianism (see EUTYCHES). The [Copts](#) energetically protested against the basic elements of Eutychianism, as they refused the doctrines of Nestorianism. Their traditional hostility to Nestorianism and Nestorians, even from 616 to 642, when the Copts lived under Persian domination, as well as their unwillingness to discard their ecclesiastical and national independence, were deciding factors in favor of the establishment of a “Coptic church.”

The strict resistance to Nestorianism and Eutychianism has preserved the doctrinal [orthodoxy](#) of the Coptic church until today. This is illustrated by the statement on Christology drawn up by the Roman Catholic church and the Coptic church which was signed at the Anba Bishoi Monastery

near Cairo on 12 February 1988, “We believe that our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, is perfect in His divinity and perfect in His humanity, that His humanity is One with His divinity, without mixture or confusion, unchanging and unaltered, and that His divinity at no time was separate from His humanity. At the same time we anathemize simultaneously the doctrines of Nestorius, and of Eutyches” (John Paul II and Shenouda III).

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