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The Person and Teachings of Nestorius of Constantinople¹ with a special reference to his Condemnation at the Council of Ephesus

No person can or will ever be able to sufficiently describe in human language the mystery of the Incarnation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Nestorius and Cyril both strove to do so by using two different and often opposing starting points and theological systems. Their failure to arrive at a mutual agreement on language describing the mystery of God the Word becoming man caused the whole Church of Christ to enter one of the most deplorable chapters in Christianity's history. Yet historical research demonstrates that differences in theological persuasions were not the only reasons for their conflict, but personal, political and cultural factors significantly determined the fate of Cyril and Nestorius' relationship.

The researched material of this paper has been mainly oriented towards the formulation of a theological statement on behalf of the Assyrian Church of the East in defense of Nestorius. I shall refer to certain "friendly" sources and expose their arguments without engaging in the exposition of the argument of the opposition to Nestorius. By doing so, one can only hope that this paper would present one possible statement toward a dialogue and further the understanding between the Assyrian Church of the East and both the Oriental and Eastern Orthodox Churches. I suggest the reader consult the bibliography provided by A. Grillmeier which lists references examining and/or in support of each side of the Nestorian controversy: Alloys Grillmeier, S.J., *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, tr. John Bowden, John Knox Press: Atlanta. 1974, 559-568.

Nestorius the Patriarch: *Insights into his Ecclesiastical History*

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Nestorius was born in Germanicia, a small town at the foot of Mount Taurus, in the Euphrates district of the patriarchate of Antioch in Syria. He received his education near Antioch, in the neighboring monastery of Euprepus, probably under Theodore of Mopsuestia.² He became celebrated—first as a monk and later as a presbyter—for his asceticism, his orthodoxy and his eloquence. After the death of Patriarch Sisinnius (December 427), Theodosius II appointed Nestorius to the vacant see of Constantinople.³ From Antioch to Constantinople, he brought with him an entourage of friends who later became his advisors and confidants. It is said that on his way to Constantinople, he stopped in Mopsuestia to pay tribute to bishop Theodore, who in turn asked him to be careful and moderate, and to pay respect to the opinions of others.⁴ Immediately after his arrival a troubling reality began to become evident: the Church in Constantinople had a different tradition of doctrine and liturgical practice than that of Antioch, and the little experience in ecclesiastical politics Nestorius had acquired in Antioch did not suffice. Moreover, Nestorius lacked any realization of the fact that in order to successfully manage the affairs of his new see he would have to *gradually* undertake the theological, moral and liturgical reforms he wished to achieve. Thus, after his arrival this naiveté began to set him at odds with some of the most prominent and influential people in Constantinople, including his first backer and most important ally, emperor Theodosius II.

In the following paragraphs of this section, we shall explore J.A. McGuckin's recent essay,⁵ along with other sources which investigate the non-theological factors which brought upon Nestorius his tragic downfall. McGuckin's hypothesis is succinct but startling: "*long before the Council of Ephesus had ever opened, the fate of Nestorius had largely been sealed and predetermined.*"⁶ With this thesis, McGuckin breaks off from a long-standing tradition advanced both by theologians and

²Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* vol. 3 (Maryland: Christian Classics, 1983), 514.

³Ibid.

⁴B. J. Kidd, *A History of the Church to A.D. 461*, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1922) as cited by Samuel Hugh Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, vo. 1 (Harper Collins, 1991) 173.

⁵ The appointment of Nestorius -- as an unknown outsider -- was a calm and deliberate plan Theodosius II was able to carry out, at last. After, Sisinnius, the emperor's previous appointment to the Archbishopric See of Constantinople died after two years in office, turmoil and competition for the See between the ecclesiastical factions of the capitol was renewed. The newly elected Archbishop John of Antioch, an old friend of Nestorius, recommended Nestorius' name to Theodosius; Nestorius' nomination was as an alternative that would make the emperor distance himself from the influence of his elder sister and other powerful parties of Constantinople. The person vis-à-vis whom Nestorius was chosen was Proclus whose close alliance with Augusta Pucheria and the monastic party of the capitol had eliminated his chances for the elevation to the prestigious post of the Church. See John A. McGuckin, "Nestorius and the Political Factions of Fifth-Century Byzantium: Factors in His Personal Downfall," *Bulletin of John Ryland Library*, vol. 78, no. 3 (autumn 1996) 7-21. I shall later explain in more details the effect of the tension that already had existed between Theodosius II, his sister, the monastic and religious groups in the empire hoping to evince the reader of the effect that the non-theological factors had on the condemnation of Nestorius. I am grateful for Prof. Chip Coakley, the editor of this special issue of the Bulletin, for providing me with an advanced copy of the article.

⁶Ibid, 21

historians specializing in the Nestorian Controversy⁷: that is, that the real causes for the condemnation of Nestorius were due to his heretical teachings more than anything else. Can such a *peculiar* assertion be possibly plausible? Let's examine a few historical details and try to find the answer ourselves.

In Constantinople, there were a number of political factions which, to a great extent, had shaped the political affairs in the empire. The most prominent individual was obviously the Roman Emperor himself, Theodosius II, a man of weak personal character and politically incompetent. The second important person was the emperor's sister, Pulcheria, who, in contrast, was a bright, capable and very pious woman. For years she had been entrusted with guardianship over her weak-minded brother and effectively ran the affairs of the imperial palace.⁸ But after her brother Theodosius grew up, she effectively lost control of the empire's affairs and increasingly felt perplexed by her imperial surroundings. By appointing an outsider as the bishop of his capitol the emperor was in effect freeing himself from the influence of both his dominant sister and the agile political aides of the imperial court.⁹ By distancing his powerful sister, Theodosius was not only weakening her but also the hold of her powerful monastic friends over the affairs of the Church in Constantinople. In time Nestorius' close alignment with the emperor would prove to be the single most destructive factor in his ecclesiastical career.¹⁰ The aristocracy of the capitol, aware of Pulcheria's power and connections, were not prepared to become involved in the inevitable conflict, nor were they willing to be seen to cross her in any manner.

In the sermon at his consecration (April 428), Nestorius exhorted the emperor with the famous words "*Purge, O Caesar, your Kingdom of heretics, and I in return will give you the Kingdom of Heaven. Stand by me in putting down the heretics and I will stand by you in putting down the barbarian Persians.*"¹¹ With these words, he enthusiastically inaugurated a new age of reforms and doctrinal purity within Byzantium.¹² The fulfillment of such a task was critical for the whole empire, for Nestorius was convinced that by defending the orthodox faith, military security could be assured. "*If God was displeased with the orthodoxy of the capitol,*" writes McGuckin to illustrate the sense of the people in the empire, "*he might even allow his kingdom to fall into the hand of punishing infidels.*"¹³ The first targets of Nestorius' reforms were to be his old theological foes, the Arians who denied the fully divine and fully human natures of Christ. But before Nestorius was able to deal with them, they, by a daring strategic maneuver with political consequences, anticipated the action the empire would take under the influence of Nestorius, and set fire to their own meeting-house in Con-

⁷Friedrick Loofs, Nestorius and His Place in the History of the Christian Doctrine, (University Press : Cambridge, England, 1914), 64-65.

⁸Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church; ed. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (Oxford University Press, London, 1974) entry of "Pulcheria, St."

⁹Quasten, 514

¹⁰McGuckin, 8

¹¹Ibid., 9.

¹²The Arians were not the only group that was targeted by the Nestorian Reforms. Sources indicate that Macedonians, Novatians and Quartodecimans were attacked on the charge of heresy and schism. Jews were also included, but the Pelagians, who were forced to leave the Latin West, were the only ones spared. See Quasten, 514.

¹³McGuckin, 10

stantinople. This incident took a specific toll on the reputation of the newly consecrated archbishop, due to the fact that there were near Constantinople hosts of Gothic troops whose doctrinal orientation was also Arian. Members of the aristocracy became alarmed, and were dismayed at Nestorius and at his annoying reforms. They arguably felt that if the Gothic Arian troops joined with the Arian citizens of the capitol disastrous consequences might follow. For these aristocrats, this incident became the first nail in the coffin of Nestorius' ecclesiastical career. However, despite this unrest, Nestorius was incapable of recognizing the serious situation his actions had produced, and remained determined to advance his anti-heretic agenda—a determination which further alarmed the aristocrats of the court, the leaders of the military and most of all the elder sister of the emperor, Pulcheria.

Nestorius' zeal for implementing his policies propelled him into another conflict with the citizens of the city. This time it started when he took action against the immorality of Constantinople's theatrical entertainers, whose offenses were said to include public nudity and the promotion of prostitution, particularly among the poorer masses of the city. Though Nestorius was successful in sending away the "*nude dancers and their organizers*"¹⁴ beyond the city limits, it produced wailing and lamenting, and the public's resentment against the archbishop was greatly intensified. This resentment was abetted by the fearful judgment of the imperial court's aristocrats upon Nestorius' de-stabilizing action, which was deemed to affect negatively the internal security of the capitol. They detested this or any of his other moves against the theatrical entertainers and their supporters.¹⁵ To his own detriment, Nestorius, as a zealous reformer, did not halt his actions but closed down many of the "strip clubs" which catered to upper-class Constantinopolitans, and there too he expelled the dancers beyond the city limits, causing public anger against him to grow dramatically.¹⁶

Another of Nestorius' reforms was his attempt to regularize monastic life in the empire's Archiepiscopal See. He wanted to disconnect the close relationship the monks maintained with the day-to-day affairs of the capitol and with members of the nobility. For a long time the monks had developed a strong bond with the ruling class in Constantinople, and some had even become secretaries and scribes for the peerage. Pulcheria was among their strongest supporters and sustained many of their monastic communities, and as a result, she was depicted as the monk's patroness and their strongest protector.¹⁷ In an attempt to bring the monks under his canonical jurisdiction and to decrease their involvement in the political affairs of the empire, Nestorius (writes Barhadbeshabba) "*forbade the monks to go out unless they had a chaperone who could account for their good behavior.*" The reasons set forth by this Church of the East historian to justify Nestorius' action with the monks, include charges that Nestorius "*saw the monks wandering imprudently in public places . . . falling into taverns, drinking indiscriminately with others, even talking to women, causing scandal in the city and reproach to those who were genuine monks.*"¹⁸ After this prohibition, and in order to prevent the monks from being in need of practical necessities, he "*made*

¹⁴See McGuckin, 13, citing a work by a Church of the East historian, Barhadbeshabba, "History of the Fathers."

¹⁵McGuckin, 13.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷McGuckin, 14.

¹⁸Barhadbeshabba, cited by McGuckin, 15.

arrangement for their food and necessary supplies."¹⁹ But this episcopal gesture was perceived to be adding insult to injury; the emperor's sister was belittled, the aristocracy was outraged, and the monks of Constantinople were humiliated. Instead of achieving the sought after monastic reforms, Nestorius' imprudence and misjudgment *transformed* all these powerful groups into adversaries in opposition to every exercise of his ministry in their capitol.²⁰

Nestorius' reforms in the Byzantine capitol included some unprecedented restriction on women's involvement in liturgical and ceremonial affairs of the church. The noble women, says Barhadbeshabba, *"would organize a service in church, and would sin during vigil meals by being promiscuous with men. It seemed prudent to Nestorius to forbid them their vigils . . . [consequently, his action] nearly exposed him to stoning by these women (and those who enjoyed their company)."*²¹ McGuckin intervenes at this point to suggest that the key issue that prompted Nestorius to issue the ban was not promiscuity, as Barhadbeshabba states, but liturgical privileges, as well as the significant social rights these highly placed women enjoyed in the Byzantine society. By taking this action, Nestorius was again alienating a group of very important citizens, the aristocratic women – Pulcheria and her two younger sisters, Arcadia and Marina, included.²² To make matters worse, Nestorius approved a plan to distribute alms to these noble women as a compensation for the lost income – they might have gained for the poor. At last a sinewy alliance had formed between very angry aristocratic women and the affected populace (*"the future mob of Constantinople"*), producing an outcry for the ouster of their uncompromising patriarch.

As if Nestorius' initiatives and deeds did not aggravate Pulcheria enough (even if indirectly), when he employed his ecclesiastical powers against her favorite monastic friends, opposed the charitable services rendered by her aristocratic friends and women who dedicated themselves liturgically to the poor of the capitol, and incautiously acted against the Arians of the capitol, he further decided to confront Pulcheria herself with even more critical issues touching her own dignity as the elder sister of the emperor. Pulcheria, due to her imperial and special ecclesial status (as a dedicated virgin to the empire), had donated her costly robe as a covering for the Cathedral's main altar, and possessed a special right of receiving the Holy Sacrament alongside her brother Theodosius. Nestorius was offended by her exalted status, and consequently, during a church service, he publicly refused to administer to Pulcheria the sacrament at the same time her brother the emperor was communed, and in addition ordered that her cope be removed from the Cathedral's main altar.²³ By both of these acts, Nestorius confirmed in Pulcheria, a future empress of the West, a determination that he was not on her side, and therefore his ecclesiastical future had ended, as far as she was concerned; and from this inauspicious set of circumstances the way was cleared for the final nail to eventually be driven into the coffin of Nestorius' ecclesiastical career.²⁴

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., 16.

²¹Barhadbeshabba cited by McGuckin, 17.

²²McGuckin, 17.

²³Ibid., 19.

²⁴Ibid., 19-20.

Soon after these events had transpired between Nestorius and the political factions in the capitol—in a matter of months—Anastasius, one of Nestorius' confidants and his presbyter, preached an infamous oration (November 428) in which he said “Let no one call Mary the mother of God, for Mary was a human being; and that God should be born of a human being is impossible.”²⁵ By asserting such a statement, Anastasius was perceived to be imposing the Antiochean Christology on the Church of Constantinople which, for the monastic community of that city, was an unfamiliar teaching. Nestorius did not reprimand his friend nor correct him during his Christmas lectures on the Nativity (December 428). And so this incident caused a great uproar among the monastic communities and a scandal to the public, in particular to the partisans of the Marian cultus then beginning to form in Constantinople and elsewhere. The faith of these people, whose devotion to the blessed Virgin was emotional (her veneration was highly popular), had prompted them to bestow upon the mother of Jesus the religious epithet *Theotokos*, “Mother of God.” Further, Anastasius' pronouncement about Mary was perceived as a direct denial of the divinity of Christ. So consequently, violence erupted in Constantinople, ultimately bringing the enemies of Nestorius down upon him like wolves. Nestorius was later accused of being the actual source of the offensive teaching and had to be judged and silenced by force.²⁶ As matters in Constantinople became ripe for further seditious maneuvers—with each side of the conflict preparing for a struggle—Cyril of Alexandria, a determined disputant in the conflict between the Alexandrian and Antiochene schools of theology²⁷, intervened on behalf of the “Marian” side and that of the monks of Constantinople against Nestorius. Later events of this controversy became so involved that the conflict which broke out as a result of Anastasius' sermon soon grew to encompass, in addition to Cyril, the Alexandrian clergy, Pope Celestine I. and the Roman Synod, the imperial court, and other episcopal supporters of one side or the other.²⁸ The choice of whom to support which the local people, clergy, monks and the aristocracy of Constantinople had to make was very clear. They saw in this a golden opportunity to procure the downfall of Nestorius, who had by now become their much despised bishop. “Suddenly,” writes Samuel Hugh Moffett, “an ironic twist of fate fell upon Nestorius; [he who was] the heresy hunter found himself accused of heresy.”²⁹

Nestorius the Theologian: Context & Thought

In his book “*The Bazaar of Heracleides of Damascus*,”³⁰ Nestorius makes a number of theological statements which largely define his thought and testify to his

²⁵Moffett, 173.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷At Alexandria a mystic and allegorical tendency prevailed, at Antioch the practical and historical, and these tendencies showed themselves in different methods of study, exegesis, presentation of doctrine and everyday piety.

²⁸Letters of the archdeacon Epiphanius to the patriarch Maximianus (Migne, Pat. Gr. lxxxiv. 826).

²⁹Moffett, 173.

³⁰Nestorius, *The Bazaar of Heracleides*, ed. G. R. Driver and Leonard Hodgson (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1925). Along with Sipioni and Chestnut, I consider the LH to be an authentic work of Nestorius. Much of the argument in the *The Bazaar of Heraclides* is

faith in the risen Lord. While standing his theological ground, Nestorius makes *six* denials and *two* affirmations.³¹ (i) That the union of divinity and of humanity in Christ is voluntary;³² however, this union is neither moral nor spiritual, namely, the result of joining two separate persons together.³³ (ii) The unity of Christ *is not* a “natural composition” in which two distinct elements are combined by the will of an external creator.³⁴ (iii) The Incarnation *does not* involve any change in the Godhead nor any suffering on part of God the Word, whose divine nature is impassable.³⁵ (iv) The Incarnation of the Son of God *was not* effected by a change of Godhead into manhood nor manhood into Godhead, nor by forming a third thing from these two ousiai; the divine and human ousiai are entirely and absolutely different from one another and they must remain so in the union if there is to remain perfect God and perfect man in the Incarnate Christ;³⁶ and so, if either ousia is mixed or mingled with the other, Christ would neither be God nor man, but some new kind of being.³⁷ (v) The Incarnation of the divine and human ousiai in one Christ *does not* result in any duality of sons/Christs.³⁸ (vi) God *was not* in Christ in the same way he was in the saints and prophets;³⁹ and that Christ *was not* the Son of God “as a consequence of moral progress” or by degrees, namely, by adoption as a consequence of proving his merits.⁴⁰ (vii) That the principle of this union *is* to be found in the combined *prosopa* of divinity and of humanity, namely, in the revealed *prosopon* of Christ incarnate, namely, the Person of the Union.⁴¹ (viii) The Incarnation *is real*; both natures in Christ are *true* and *complete*; neither is his humanity ‘imaginary’ nor his divinity ‘unsubstantial’.⁴²

Context

Unlike his ecclesio-political dilemma, this doctrinal framework, and the spiritual interest which Nestorius took with him from Antioch to Constantinople, can be more easily appreciated and defended. They are characteristic of his own cultural, theological and philosophical upbringing. In this regard, his expression and terminology reflect to a great extent the distinctive nuances peculiar to his Antiochean school of thought. This theological framework was developed in the context of direct opposition to the teachings of Apollinarius by Diodore of Tarsus and brought later to a fuller expression by a pupil of Diodore, Theodore of

in the form of a dialogue between (1) Nestorius and an imaginary opponent Superianus, (2) Nestorius and Cyril. The book reveals a strong personality and helps us to know the man and his teaching.

³¹Ibid., xxxii.

³²Ibid., 38, 179, 181-182.

³³Ibid., 60f., 314.

³⁴Ibid., 9, 84-86, 179, 303f.

³⁵Ibid., 39-41, 179, 181, 184.

³⁶Ibid., 14, 80, 182.

³⁷Ibid., 14, 18, 22, 26-27, 80, 182, 320.

³⁸Ibid., 47-50, 146, 160, 189-190, 209-210, 227, 314, 317.

³⁹Ibid., 52.

⁴⁰Milton Anastos, “Nestorius Was Orthodox,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 16 (Washington, DC 1962) 134. See also Bazaar, 57, 59f., 252f., 314.

⁴¹Bazaar, 23, 89, 218, 245f., 260-261.

⁴²Ibid., 15, 80, 182, 208.

Mopsuestia.⁴³ Nevertheless, like his liturgical and moral reforms, Nestorius' theological agenda encountered severe opposition. The reasons, according to Nestorius, were the presence of complex forms of Arianism and Apollinarianism⁴⁴ which, at that time, flourished in Constantinople.⁴⁵

The main features of the Antiochean theology are controlled by three factors. The first is certainly biblical. Nestorius was thoroughly imbued with the Pauline idea⁴⁶ of Christ being the "*second Adam*", holding that Christian moral life obliged every baptized person to strive, in cooperation with grace, to imitate the very real life pattern revealed and fulfilled in the also very real humanity of Christ, who, in his humanity, renewed in fallen man the "likeness of God" which the first Adam had lost through sin.⁴⁷ Reflecting on the Apostle Paul, Nestorius believed that since through Adam sin and death appeared in the world, so too, in Christ, the "*Second Adam*," sin and death were overcome and life secured for all.⁴⁸ The life Christ modeled in his humanity, therefore, was the example *par excellence* for all faithful who are initiated into a new life in their Lord through their baptism.⁴⁹ Indeed, it was very important for Nestorius to contrast the life and behavior of Christ to that of Adam so that a believer might discern and choose, through his/her freedom, the condign path to righteousness.⁵⁰ The second⁵¹ controlling factor of Antiochean theology was its refusal to attribute the human characteristics of Christ to his divine nature. This preference was mainly due to an understanding of the radical difference in the essence of God's nature and the rest of creation. In this way, the insistence upon God's immutability and impassability allowed no such possibilities as birth, suffering or death to be ascribed to the Word of God. Both the divine and human natures of Christ were preserved completely and perfectly in order that the pattern of life revealed in Christ's humanity could be a real model of human conduct for those aspiring to salvation. This allowed for no possibility of compromising any person's capacity and freedom to respond to God's grace. Human will had to be a constituent part of Jesus' humanity, they asserted, if we were to give a full account of Christ's human nature. The third⁵² vital element of Antiochean theology was its negative reaction to the teaching of the Apollinarians. The more the followers of Apollinarius denied the full humanity of Christ, the more emphasis the Antiocheans laid upon it, and the stronger advocates they became of the two natures Christology.

It is obvious that what the Arians and Apollinarians taught did not at all resonate with Nestorius' biblical exegesis and theological conviction. Their method of envisaging the Incarnation was to be found in the then still popular Logos-Sarx

⁴³Rowan A. Greer, "The Image of God and the Prosopic Union in Nestorius," ed. R. A. Norris in *Lux In Lumine: Essays to Honor W. Norman Pittenger*, (Seabury Press: NY) 46.

⁴⁴Nestorius almost always named the two groups side by side. See Loofs, 67

⁴⁵Moffett, 172-174.

⁴⁶Romans 5:12f.

⁴⁷Luigi I. Scipioni "Nestorio e il concilio di Efeso," (Universita Cattolica del Sacro Cuore: Milano, 1974) 425

⁴⁸Bazaar, 212-214.

⁴⁹Scipioni, 426.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Greer, Image, 46-47

⁵²Ibid.

framework advocated by their different communities in the empire. For Nestorius, just as with Basil of Caesarea,⁵³ such a dogma evinced a false teaching that the Lord took merely the *schema*⁵⁴ of a servant rather than himself becoming a servant.⁵⁵ The Arian Christ was understood to be a created celestial being—not like the Father in nature, in that he endured sufferings in his own nature—namely, the Word of God who changed in his own nature.⁵⁶ The Apollinarian Christ was conceived in strong “*Logos-Sarx*” terms—the Word of God joined to himself a human body and soul in such a way that he (the Logos) became the operating principle (the spirit) in the nature of the new and united being (Jesus Christ).⁵⁷ Nestorius' attacks over against both groups were not so much based on his commitment to a certain hypothesis or the result of abstract reflection on his part as they were in the practical area of pastoral concern. He attacked these groups because their views were rapidly taking a strong hold on the faithful in Constantinople.⁵⁸ This was unacceptable to Nestorius, because the consequence of such teaching undermined the reality and objectivity of the Son of God's humanity in the Incarnation, and this had profound implications for Christian piety. In a single-minded quest against the Arians and Apollinarians, he devoted all of his strength and resources to articulate, defend and ultimately vindicate the true principles which demand the reality of Christ's human nature, through which, Nestorius believed, a Christian was able to discern in Christ all the marks of authentic human experience.⁵⁹ When Nestorius' soteriological convictions and pastoral motives are understood his statements and action become comprehensible.

This is the context in which the newly appointed patriarch of Constantinople found himself seeking to prevent the spread of heresy in his diocese. He saw in his capacity as a bishop also a need to act as defender of the true biblical and apostolic faith—indeed, he did not see himself as someone who, as his enemies extensively and cleverly claimed, was seeking to impose on Constantinople an Antiochean theology as opposed to Alexandrian theology. His theological objective was to serve the purpose of defying the heretics who taught and advocated the view of confused or incomplete natures existing in Christ—the impassible Logos acquiring passible flesh (or incomplete manhood) through the Incarnation.⁶⁰ Such was the monophysite⁶¹ tendency among those whom Nestorius fought against; they denied the true and perfect humanity in Christ and consequently his consubstantiality with us. For them, the Incarnation could only be effected from a substantial unity between the Logos and incomplete human nature resulting in a new composite nature. This was objectionable to Nestorius, as to all the Antiocheans. It seemed to

⁵³Cited in Scipioni, 426.

⁵⁴I.e., the outward form, or clothing of a man/servant alone rather than the full man/servant. Bazaar, 15, 22.

⁵⁵Scipioni, 426.

⁵⁶Bazaar, 97, 176.

⁵⁷Grillmeier, Aloys, S.J., *Christ in Christian Tradition*, tr. John Bowden, (John Knox Press, Atlanta,), pp. 242-245, 329-333.

⁵⁸Scipioni, 428.

⁵⁹Ibid., 426.

⁶⁰Ibid., 427.

⁶¹By monophysite here the strict sense of the word is actually meant, i. e., Apollinarianism.

them that the Apollinarians were denying a true humanity and the possibility of its moral development.⁶²

Thought

But how did the teaching of Nestorius differ, or develop, when his quarrel against the Arians and the Apollinarians took a peculiar turning with the intervention of Cyril the Patriarch of Alexandria? First, it has to be stated that, in spite of notable differences of terminology stemming from the different historical developments in Antioch and Alexandria, the essence of Nestorius' and Cyril's theologies was in fact the same.⁶³ But the form in which they expressed that essence, their method of biblical interpretation and their starting points in dealing with the mystery of Incarnation were rather different.⁶⁴ Non-theological factors rather than doctrinal had by far the larger part in preventing them from achieving successful communication in order to resolve a conflict of terminology, exegeses and soteriology. Yet, just as in his fight against the Arians and the Apollinarians, so too, in his debate with Cyril, Nestorius expressed his inherited Antiochean theology, developing its implications and taking it at times to what appeared to many as dyophysite extremes.⁶⁵

Underlying this difference in form was difference in understanding—or rather in misunderstanding. The misunderstanding between Nestorius and Cyril was mainly due to the fact that Nestorius believed that Cyril did not conceive Christ's human nature as an authentic operative principle, because for him [Cyril] the only principle operating in the union was necessarily the Logos.⁶⁶ In contrast, such a concept of the union was totally unacceptable for Nestorius because in it the Logos appeared to be susceptible of earthly birth, suffering and dying, and therefore, the divine nature would be altered in itself.⁶⁷ Nestorius then, like any other fourth and fifth century Antiochean Christologist, was confronted with the problem of the existence of the human and the divine as two concrete and real natures in the unity of Christ—a problem that was to be encountered on the ontological level. As indicated above, Nestorius states that the union in Christ is not between two independent subjects, or persons, but it is between the two natures, divine and human, in the one *prosopon* of Jesus Christ. The human Jesus receives his *prosopon*—not as an individual separate self, but at the moment of his conception as God-man; there is distinction between the natures but most significantly for Nestorius there is no separation between the two natures; they are inseparably united in the *prosopon* of union of Jesus Christ. How and why? There are two points that need to be made in

⁶²Loofs, 66.

⁶³Loofs, 69.

⁶⁴Rowan A. Greer, "The Use of Scripture in the Nestorian Controversy" *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 20 No. 4 (1967) 416-419.

⁶⁵Andre de Halleux, *Nestorius: History and Doctrine*, tr. into English by Annette Hedman, in 'Syriac Dialogue #1, eds. Alfred Stirnemann and Gerhard Wilflinger (Pro Oriente Foundation: Vienna, 1994), 213.

⁶⁶Scipioni, 428. To justify the above cited assertion, Scipioni explains that Cyril did not understand salvation according to the Pauline concept of "*per hominem*," instead he dwells on the more hellenistic concept of deification of man by means of an effective permeation by God.

⁶⁷Bazaar, 391, 92-94; also see Loofs, 67-70.

order to answer this question. (i) Nestorius understood the “man” assumed in Jesus Christ as nothing more or less than the complete human nature of Christ;⁶⁸ (ii) when Nestorius talks about the giving and taking of the *prosopa* of the two natures, the dynamic is so mutual and perfectly reciprocal the result of this reciprocity is the absolute unity, making one the two *prosopa* of divinity and humanity in the Person of Jesus Christ.⁶⁹ This is not one and another because there is only one Son, one Lord, one Jesus Christ united in one *prosopon* of both natures. But Cyril could not see what Nestorius was teaching, for the reason indicated above, and remained firm in his exposition of the problem and accused Nestorius of suggesting “two sons” – preventing him from fully grasping the meaning of Nestorius, or his soteriology, with its attendant pastoral concerns.⁷⁰

His fundamental ambition is clearly to maintain the distinct continuance of the two natures of Christ when united through the Incarnation into the one Person of Jesus Christ.⁷¹ In other words, his objective is to defend the complete and genuine existence of Christ's full humanity in the union against any suggestion that it is incomplete. There is no doubt that according to his definition⁷² and the precise

⁶⁸Ibid., 237, 304.

⁶⁹Ibid., 166-167.

⁷⁰Scipioni, 428.

⁷¹Bazaar, 89

⁷²Nestorius followed terminology used by the Nicean Fathers who equated hypostasis, ousia and nature as synonyms. (See footnote # 97) Yet, he sometimes in a few passages (Bazaar, 16-17) makes a slight shift in usage of hypostasis. The new meaning is generally narrowed down from its general meaning (of ousia) to identify a new and particular “mode of existence” of the divine or the human natures in Christ. For more in-depth examination, see J. F. Bethune-Baker, *Nestorius and His Teachings*, (University Press: Cambridge, 1908) 50. Based on his metaphysical understanding of ousia and nature, it was literally impossible for Nestorius to “combine” the divinity and the humanity of Christ on the level of nature (ousia). Both natures were necessarily mutually exclusive in ways that neither of them could be the basis for unity with the other. (Anastos, 126; Bazaar, 294, 26-27) For Nestorius if the two natures in Christ were to exchange with one another, namely, that is for divinity to admit flesh and soul into its ousia, and similarly for the humanity to receive the Word of God into its ousia, each nature would inevitably cease to be what it is. Milton Anastos sums up Nestorius' understanding in these words: “Uncreated God the Word, who is eternal, cannot be transformed into that which is created (body), nor can the human body of Christ be changed into the ousia of God the Word.” (Anastos, 127) Nestorius is puzzled with Cyril's terminology because neither Cyril nor Nestorius follow the other's same metaphysical definition and understanding for concepts they extensively employed in their Christological debate. As an Antiochean, Nestorius did not deny the unity/ oneness of Jesus Christ. His theological reflection distinctively illustrates a different metaphysical view and a systematic approach to theology particular to his own Antiochean region and culture; using such a system, he followed concepts and patterns that were different from those Cyril knew and taught. Yet, Nestorius' metaphysical hypotheses could be summed up by noting that everything independently existing, including the Logos, has a substance (essence or ousia) of its own as an indispensable underlying factor from which it derives its existence. The way in which Nestorius sought appropriately to express the union of natures in Christ was by emphasizing one or both of the following: (i) the affirmation of the numerical oneness of Christ; (2) the rejection [denial] of a duality of sons in Christ. (Bethune-Baker, 412.) The two natures in Christ come together, not on the level of nature or ousia but through the only possible medium of union—the vehicle of the *prosopon*. For, it is the *prosopon* that is capable of presenting intact and perfectly integral the properties, faculties, operations and

understanding of the then popular metaphysical terms, Nestorius, as an Antiochean, denied any possibility that a "nature"⁷³ or an "ousia"⁷⁴ can exist without a "hypostasis"⁷⁵ or a "prosopon".⁷⁶ This statement as his starting point is directly in opposition to Cyril's doctrine of the "Hypostatic Union." The way that he expresses his position is to state that in the union the "prosopon" of God and the "prosopon" of man are joined in one "prosopon" of the union.⁷⁷ In this union, the oneness of the two "prosopa" is so absolute and perfect it can be said that the manhood (which is the taken) becomes the *prosopon* of the Godhead and the Godhead (the taker) becomes the *prosopon* of the manhood.⁷⁸ The *Prosopon* of the Union is the manifestation of Christ, united in his two distinct, but never separate or separable, hypostases as well as his two distinct, but also never separate, natures and essences.⁷⁹ But Nestorius' efforts to give due weight to Christ's human reality was perceived by Cyril as an obvious "two sons' heresy."⁸⁰

As an Antiochean, Nestorius resorted to the Bible to make his theology intelligible. The most significant mark of Nestorius thought is his dogma of the "*prosopic union*." It is characteristic of his complete work, *the Bazaar*, and conveys a message of a faith that is based on his understanding of the Sacred Scripture and Church Fathers. Nestorius attempts through the usage of his doctrine to show that the effective ends of the union of the two natures in Christ were dependent both upon God's action (His grace) and upon the co-operative free will of Jesus' humanity.⁸¹ The principle passage in which he explains and justifies the usage of the "*prosopic union*" as the vehicle for the union of the two natures in Christ is the passage from Paul's letter to the Philippians:

characteristics of each nature in Christ. (Anastos, 126; Bazaar, 53, 158-159) By making the following statement " . . . if he [God] had not come in human nature but had become flesh in his own ousia, he would not at all have become incarnate, in that he would have become incarnate for them in his own ousia and not in the nature of man" Nestorius rejects the assertion that God the Word took merely the schema of humanity in his act of the Incarnation. (Bazaar, 22) He attempts to illustrate that the Incarnation preserves and protects the integrity of both natures. Since the two ousias in Christ are mutually exclusive, (Bazaar, 26-27) when united neither divinity nor humanity could be the basis of the union. Therefore, they must come into unity through another medium, i. e., the united prosopon, which becomes the basis and the final subject of Incarnation in Christ Jesus.

⁷³Nature is present in every object; it is that which sums up the totality of qualities, features, attributes and peculiarities both positive and negative which characterize the object. (Anastos, 125-6).

⁷⁴Ousia is invisible reality reflecting the object in itself—apart from being perceived. Each ousia has a distinctive nature; further, there is no nature without ousia and no ousia without nature. (Anastos, 125-6).

⁷⁵Hypostasis is that which reveals and makes the ousia and nature fully present and effective and without which the ousia and the nature cannot be recognized. (Anastos, 125-6).

⁷⁶Prosopon is the outward expression of an essence or a nature, Cf. Greer, Image, 47.

⁷⁷Bazaar, 70, 72, 156-158, 163.

⁷⁸Ibid., 23, 81, 163-164, 182, 207, 218-219, 260-261.

⁷⁹Greer, Image, 47

⁸⁰Bazaar, 47-50, 224-226

⁸¹Greer, Image, 56, Bazaar, 59, 66.

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being made in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. [Phil. 2:5 -11]

It is apparent that the “form of God” and the “form of a slave” mean respectively the *Prosopon* of God and the *prosopon* of man. God (the taker) took the likeness, or the *schema and prosopon*, not the ousia or nature of the servant, in order that he might participate in the likeness of the servant;⁸² and similarly, in order that it (the taken humanity) might participate in the likeness of the God, it receives the form of God, and so, out of the two *prosopa* there is now only one *prosopon* from the two natures.⁸³ By an act of humility (Kenosis) the form of God becomes the *prosopon* of the servant; and similarly, by an act of exaltation, the form of the servant becomes the *prosopon* of God. This becoming (taking and being taken) occurs without any change or confusion of the nature or the ousia of either the divinity or the humanity.⁸⁴

Nestorius ventures to additionally use biblical texts so that he is more able to elaborate his doctrine of the *prosopic union*. In order to further elaborate the above cited Philippians text, he uses the following creation account of Genesis 1: 26-27:

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. [Gen. 1: 26-27]

In the Bazaar Nestorius uses the word “*prosopon*” as a synonym for the term “image.” By using these two biblical texts, he tries to argue that this coming together and this becoming of the two *prosopa*—the taker and the taken—in the “*prosopon* of the union” is understood in terms of creation, revelation and redemption.⁸⁵ The recreation of human nature in perfection—through the second Adam—can be depicted as the “image of God.” The intention of God in creating Adam in his image did not mature to reciprocity in the first man due to his fall; but in Christ, the second Adam, the total fulfillment of human nature was realized in its holiness, freedom and obedience because the image of God is given to Christ's humanity, from the moment of its conception, in its every iota of perfection. In Nestorius' words the justification for this argument is as follows:

[In that he⁸⁶ has received the title to be “holy”] not as the rest of mankind by virtue of obedience in faith and in works but from [the moment of] coming into being by the creation of the Creator, he has received his *prosopon* as something created, in such wise as not originally to be man but at the same time Man-God by the Incarnation of

⁸²Bazaar, 166, also see Greer, 48-50.

⁸³Ibid., 167, also see Greer, 48-50.

⁸⁴Greer, Image, 49

⁸⁵Greer, Image, 50

⁸⁶I.e., the manhood of Christ.

God who in him is what God was in the first man⁸⁷. He indeed was the Maker of all, the law-giver, without king, the glory, the honor and the power; he was also the second man with qualities complete and whole, so that God was his *prosopon* while he was in God.⁸⁸

The Incarnation took place for the purpose of revelation. God had to reveal himself in terms and conditions that we, his creation, would be able to comprehend and encounter. The image of God is considered to be the divine *prosopon*; writes Nestorius:

As God appeared and spoke unto Adam in schema, and as it was none other, so will God be [seen] of all men in the natural schema which has been created, that is, that of the flesh, appearing and speaking in his own image and the image in the Archetype. So that, on the one hand, God appeared in the image, since he is not visible, on the other hand, the image is conceived as representing him who appeared not. For it is not [the fact] that the image is his being, but that on the other hand the very image and *prosopon* [are] the humanity of the divinity and the divinity of the humanity.⁸⁹

The union in Christ, for Nestorius, is the perfect revelation of God. Through the united *prosopon* of Christ a full and complete revelation is made of the image of God. For man, the complete knowledge of God is made possible. In the words of Nestorius:

And it was congruous with the dispensation which is for our sake that both of them⁹⁰ should be taken into the *prosopon* [of the union]; for, because God created the first man in his own image and in his likeness and the *prosopa* of God the Maker—of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,—were not revealed to us, so that we might also know the Creator and obtain completely the teaching of the Divine knowledge and receive in completeness a complete idea of the image of God, he has renewed all creation in Christ and has made known and shown unto us what the Maker is: he who from the beginning was the Word with the Father was also God the Maker of all.⁹¹

In what has preceded, the union between Christ's divinity and humanity is advanced by Nestorius in terms that are biblical (Old and New Testaments), catechetical (prophetic and moral), revelatory (God's revelation in Christ), communal (between God and man), and finally through manifestations that are concrete and which stem from a human experience providing moral and spiritual knowledge and understanding so that mankind may achieve its destiny of communion with God.⁹²

In Nestorius' *prosopic union*, the role of Christ's humanity is to fulfill functionally that which the first Adam was endowed to fulfill but failed at. Through Christ's perfect obedience to the will of the Father, all of creation is endowed with a new relationship with God. But Christ's victory in aligning his will with that of his Father is due to his real struggle with sin, which alienates from God, and his victory

⁸⁷I.e., Adam.

⁸⁸Bazaar, 60

⁸⁹Ibid., 60

⁹⁰I.e., both natures.

⁹¹Ibid., 58-59

⁹²Greer, Image, 47-52

over it.⁹³ In doing so, he has become the prototype of our salvation, and has, through his life, ministry and passion, shown us the Way towards Life and Truth, drawing us to himself and making us fellow-heirs of his kingdom and sons of God. Nestorius puts it in these words:

For until the time of his victory he was striving to make firm in God the image which had been given unto him. But because he established his own image in all temptations perfectly and without failing and without falling short in anything, he comported himself on our behalf, being zealous to rescue us captives from the violence of the tyrant and to draw us towards him and to make all of us the sons of his own kingdom, the associates and the heirs and the sons of God.⁹⁴

Christ's divinity did not undermine the role of his humanity in his task of setting a perfect example for the rest of humanity. Christ's divinity did not prevent his manhood from facing, in freedom, temptation and the possibility of sin. Nestorius presents his thinking this way:

Because in fact he took this [likeness] in order to abolish the guilt of the first man and in order to give his nature the former image which he had lost through his guilt, rightly he took that which had proven itself guilty and had been made captive and had been subjected to servitude, with all the bonds of scorn and contempt.⁹⁵

Nestorius, without any incertitude, recognized redemption in Incarnation. The nature that had fallen in disobedience was now chosen in Jesus Christ to be made God's own—the inheritor of his image, the dwelling place of his Son. He was tempted and suffered death, but to the very last he did not cease to stand in obedience for the sake of the mission for which he had come. In this way, Nestorius' Christ is the savior of the world and the prototype of all humanity. He is not just a savior of the world, but an exemplar in every objective and human way. He sets a perfect example for every one to strive to emulate in his/her relationship with a perfectly loving God. Rowan Greer, in his analysis of the significance of Nestorius' *prosopic union*, states the following: “Adam completed the image of the devil by his disobedience; Christ completed the image of God, intended by God for Adam, by his obedience.”⁹⁶ As with the other Antiochean theologians, the realness of the union as depicted in Nestorius' thought does not depend on a substantial (*hypostatic*) union between God and man. It is more of a dynamic relationship that ultimately fulfills what was meant in God's plan in creating human nature.

Nestorius never intended to deny the legitimacy of the “*communicatio idiomatum*.” A proper text to illustrate his understanding of this doctrine is the following:

For he who refers to the one *prosopon* of God the Word the [properties] of God the Word and those of the humanity and gives not in return the *prosopon* of God the Word to the humanity steals away the union of the orthodox and likens it to that of the heretics. For you have learned from the orthodox in the testimonies that they

⁹³Roberta C. Chesnut, “The Two Prosopa in Nestorius' Bazaar of Heracleides,” *Theological Studies*, vol. 29 part 2 (October 1978) 399-402

⁹⁴Bazaar, 67.

⁹⁵Ibid., 62.

⁹⁶Greer, *Image*, 54.

have written, that they give in compensation the [properties] of the humanity to the divinity and those of the divinity to the humanity, and that this is said of the one and that of the other, as concerning natures whole and united, united indeed without confusion and making use of the *prosopa* of one another.⁹⁷

On the one hand, note how Nestorius' way of expressing the exchange of predicates between God the Word and the human nature in Christ is through their *prosopa*—“the divinity makes use of the *prosopon* of the humanity and the humanity of that of the divinity.” This is a vocabulary particular to him through which he performs at his best in expressing his thought. It is a terminology aimed at the same point that which the doctrine of the “*hypostatic union*” attempts to achieve. A question then can be asked: What if Nestorius did intend to mean by the usage of the term “*prosopon*” what was altogether equal to what Cyril meant by the term “*hypostasis*”?⁹⁸ This language that Nestorius utilizes to articulate his doctrine of the “*prosopon of the union*” allows him to express the sought after unity of the two natures in Christ. Through the “*prosopon of the union*” Christ's divinity makes use of the *prosopon* of his

⁹⁷Bazaar, 241

⁹⁸The Confession of Nicea stated that the Son is one in being (*homoousios*) with the Father. This concept was challenged by the question: does *homoousios* mean (1) the same being with the Father; or, (2) of one being with the Father? Interpretation of meaning #1 could be misunderstood as tritheistic and #2 as modalistic. The answer that emerged stated that the Son possesses the essentially unique and indivisible divine being that is proper to the Father; a unity of being and not merely a sameness of being is in the Father and the Son. The Son is of the being of the hypostasis of the Father, being and hypostasis still had the same meaning at Nicea—a doctrine that Nestorius continued to follow in context, meaning and terminology. The Nicene Creed starts with the Father as the “summit of unity” in which the Son and the Spirit are comprehended. Divinity originates in the Father and streams forth in the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Semi-Arians who interpreted *homoousios* to be modalistic, wanted to change it to *homoiousios* (like the Father, but not identical with him). Athanasius, the champion of Nicea offered a solution—there was a distinction between “three hypostases” and “one being.” This meant that the two concepts of being and hypostasis—which were used as identical in Nicea—now were differentiated. More conceptual evolution occurred in the process of time. For Basil, a Cappadocian Father, *ousia* was something general and not limited to a particular identity; for example, “man” was the common name for any human being. The term hypostasis meant the concrete individual embodiment of this common being; it came into being as a complex of *idiomata*, i.e., individualizing characteristics or constitutive elements of the concrete existence. In the Latin West, there arose difficulty with these distinctions due to translating the Greek hypostasis to the Latin *substantia*. On the one hand, to the Westerners it seemed that three hypostases meant three divine substances, thus, leading to tritheism or the doctrine of three Gods. On the other, Tertullian's distinction between nature and persona was difficult to be accepted in the East because persona was being translated to *prosopon*, which meant, “mask” or mere appearance, thus, leading to modalism. For this reason, Basil, issued a warning—which eventually would become the norm for future theological terminology—that the three persons in God exist as three hypostases. Once this statement was accepted by all parts of the Church in the Roman empire, practically every one who adhered to this statement was saying the same thing albeit using different terms in corresponding languages. The first official declaration of the Church was put forward in the fifth ecumenical Council in Constantinople (553). The Council took hypostasis and person as synonyms; it stated: “If any one does not confess that the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit are one nature or essence, one might and power, a Trinity one in being, one Godhead to be worshipped in three hypostases or persons, anathema sit.” For further elaboration please see: Walter Kasper, The God of Jesus Christ, (Crossroad: NY, 1984) 257-260.

humanity, and the humanity of that of the divinity. In Nestorius' words each *prosopon* becomes the "*eikon and prosopon*" of the other nature in such a wise that in the final analysis there is only one coalesced *prosopon* of Jesus Christ, both God and man.⁹⁹

On the other hand, Nestorius preferred something other than the term "*Theotokos*." He tells us an account in this regard of a situation in which he was called upon to settle a question as the Patriarch of his Church.

Those on the one hand who called the blessed Mary the mother of God they called Manichaeans, but those who named the blessed Mary the mother of a man Photinians. . . . But when they were questioned by me, the former denied not the humanity nor the latter the divinity, but they confessed them both alike, while they were distinct only in name: they of the party of Apollinarius accepted 'Mother of God' and they of the party of Photinus 'Mother of man'. But after I knew that they disputed not in the spirit of heretics, I said that neither the latter nor the former were heretics, [the former] because they knew not Apollinarius and his dogma, while similarly the latter [knew] the dogma neither of Photinus nor of Paul¹⁰⁰. And I brought them back from this inquiry and from this dispute, saying that: If indistinguishably and without extrusion or denial of the divinity and of the humanity we accept what is said by them, we sin not; but if not, let us make use of that which is very plainly [affirmed], that is, of the Word of the Gospel: 'Christ was born'¹⁰¹ and 'the book of the generation of Jesus Christ.'¹⁰² And by things such as these we confess that Christ is God and man, 'of them'¹⁰³ was born in flesh Christ, who is God above all.'¹⁰⁴ When you call her the Mother of Christ, [Christ] by union and inseparate, you speak of the one [nature] and of the other in the sonship. But make use of that against which there is no accusation in the Gospel and settle this dispute among you, making use of a word which is useful toward agreement.¹⁰⁵

The manner in which Nestorius conceives the union would be in such a fashion: The Word passed through Blessed Mary inasmuch as he did not receive a beginning by birth from her, as is the case with the body which was born of her. For this reason Nestorius would say that God the Word passed and not was born, because he did not receive a beginning from her. Nevertheless, in the union, the two natures being united are indeed one Christ. And He who was born of the Father as to the divinity, and from the Holy Virgin as to the humanity is one; for of the two natures there was a union. It is important in order to understand Nestorius' thinking to know that the notion of birth necessarily connotes to him the concept of generation—the coming into being, or the rising to existence, out of nothing. As a committed Antiochean, he cannot compromise the dignity of either nature in Christ. For this reason, he, in numerous places in the Bazaar, makes certain that he explains why he avoids the assertion that God the Word was born of the holy virgin, and, instead he maintains that:

⁹⁹Bazaar, 58, 240 f., 81, 174, 182,f., 191, 233.

¹⁰⁰I.e., Paul of Samosata.

¹⁰¹Mt. 1:16.

¹⁰²Mt. 1:1.

¹⁰³I.e., the Jews.

¹⁰⁴Rom. 9:5.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 99

He who is God the Word has surely passed through [the virgin] but was surely not born, because he derived not his origin¹⁰⁶ from her. But there both exists and is named one Christ, [Christ is the subject of the verbs here. The “both” does not refer to the natures. The clause in translation may read “But one Christ both exists and is named”.] the two of them being united, he who was born of the Father in the divinity, [and] of the holy virgin in the humanity, for there was a union of the two natures.¹⁰⁷ . . . God the Word existed in the body, in that which took the beginning of its coming into being from the blessed Mary, [yet] he took not the beginning of his coming into being. *In the beginning was the Word*¹⁰⁸, and God the Word exists eternally.¹⁰⁹

It is in the above context only that Nestorius would accept the *communicatio idiomatum* as expressed in the term *Theotokos*, and even then only with reservation. For the Antiocheans, to adhere to such a term without first providing safeguards which affirm adequately the full and authentic humanity of the Lord and his real consubstantiality with every other human being would lead to a fundamentally monophysite conception of the union in Christ.¹¹⁰ If the doctrine of the “*Hypostatic Union*” means that the blessed Virgin Mary is not the mother of the divine nature of Christ (i.e., that he did not receive a beginning from her), but only that the Divine Logos joined himself to the human nature of Jesus at the ‘moment’ of his conception, and that because of the intimate and inseparable union between the divine and human natures in Christ the holy Virgin is therefore called “*Theotokos*”, then it has been shown that Nestorius already accepts this doctrine.¹¹¹

Nestorius and the Council of Ephesus: Justice or Tragedy?

The subject matter of this section has already been dealt with in the Second Pro Oriente Conference held in Vienna, in February 1996.¹¹² However, below I will briefly deal with a few other points that may hopefully facilitate further understanding of Nestorius' thought in the contemporary ecumenical context.

In the Bazaar, Nestorius is throughout more concerned for the wrong done to the faith at Ephesus than to himself, saying that if he held the views attributed to him by Cyril he would be the first to condemn himself without mercy.¹¹³ The following remarks summarize the relationship that existed between Nestorius and the Council of Ephesus:

1. The Council of Ephesus itself was a theater of troublesome quarrels and unworthy violence. The two parties of bishops—the Cyrillians and the Antiocheans—blamed each other without being able to know who was the cause of the

¹⁰⁶Note the relation for Nestorius between birth and origination (or generation).

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 296.

¹⁰⁸Jn. 1:1.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 193.

¹¹⁰Scipioni, 427.

¹¹¹Anastos, 122.

¹¹²This position paper which unofficially expresses the point of view of the Assyrian Church of the East has just been published by Pro Oriente in the Syriac Dialogue #2.

¹¹³de Halleux, 200.

problem. The trial of Nestorius at Ephesus was conducted in an atmosphere of hostile schemes that are regrettable by today's standards and Christian ideals. Cyril took the initiative of opening the Council without the presence of the Roman delegates, or the Eastern bishops, or even the accused Nestorius himself. During the sessions of the Council, the accused and his friends never had a hearing. As Nestorius himself put it, "the Council was Cyril"; it simply registered the Alexandrian patriarch's views. He furthermore states that he was condemned untried for defending the faith that was vindicated by the Church, in 433 and 451.¹¹⁴ However, when John of Antioch and Cyril of Alexandria reconciled in 433, they thought it unnecessary to recall the scandals of Ephesus.¹¹⁵

2. It is in this manner that Nestorius and many others, including the Fathers of the Church of the East, think that the ecumenical Council of Ephesus began illegally, even opening its sessions against imperial orders. It seems that for Cyril, the main objective of the Council was to ratify the judgments of the Roman and Egyptian synods against Nestorius.¹¹⁶
3. Nestorius' response to the convocation of the Council—knowing that Cyril was "occupying" the place of the Bishop of Rome in addition to being both the accuser and the judge in the trial—was that he would be present only when all the bishops had convened in Ephesus. But after Nestorius refused to appear as a defendant, he was judged and condemned in a court that Cyril, his adversary, completely controlled, thus violating an elementary rule of proper legal procedure. In the trial the assembled bishops first verified the accusation of heresy, read the canonical norm of the orthodox faith, being the creed of Nicea, then the orthodoxy established by the Roman and Egyptian synods, with numerous other letters. However, there were no explanations or synodical discussions of the accusations; the sentences of the Council simply condemned a heresy whose content is not specified. Interestingly, the issue of the *Theotokos* is not presented as a charge against Nestorius, even though it was the question that ignited this controversy. The sham tribunal presented two witnesses who reportedly could attest to some damaging and scandalous remarks that Nestorius had made, but there was no authoritative verification of their accusations, nor had the grounds of the accusation been submitted to the verification of an impartial court, which the absence of the accused made even more necessary.¹¹⁷
4. Nestorius was a victim of imperial, ecclesial and political maneuvering among the sees of Rome, Constantinople and Alexandria. While in ordinary circumstances Rome would have maintained the balance between the contrasted schools of thought—as it had traditionally done and as was the case, for example, with Leo and Flavian¹¹⁸—it is not surprising that Celestine resisted any saving interference due to his resentment of Nestorius' assistance to the Pelagian refugees, and also, possibly, his unease at the growing power of the see of Constantinople—the *Nova Roma* of the East.

¹¹⁴Bazaar, 176, 374

¹¹⁵de Halleux, 201.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 202-203.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 202

¹¹⁸Ibid., 203

Despite this unfortunate record of events which took place in Ephesus more than 1500 years ago, to a contemporary and committed ecumenical thinker, who seeks a historically grounded interpretation of church history and dogma, there still remains some ray of hope for rapprochement between the theological heirs of Nestorius and Cyril if with good grace and charity such rapprochement is sought. There are three suggestions that I would like to present in order to facilitate the discussion and approach to a settlement.

The *first* suggestion concerns making a distinction, on the one hand, between the terminology Cyril and Nestorius made use of in articulating their theologies, and the methods which they employed, and on the other hand, their faith in the Risen Lord. Cyril's faith is not in question, for he is a saint and a doctor of the catholic Church—for Churches of both the Ephesian and Chalcedonian traditions. But his terminology remains questionable for the sole surviving non-Ephesian tradition, that of the Church of the East, though today the same Church is engaged in a process of rethinking and reformulating her position about the relevance of past reactions to that terminology, and whether it can be accommodated within the traditional confessional forms of the Church of the East. If Cyril's strong unitary language is clearly seen to provide also for the impassibility of the divinity in Christ and the perfect integrity of his humanity, I believe the Church of the East will be satisfied that Cyril's confession of Jesus Christ, though couched in different language, is the same as her own. To illustrate this precise point, below I have selected four texts from comparatively moderate epistles written by Cyril in which he spells out the essence of his faith in an answer to Succensus the bishop of Diocaesarea in Isauria.

For this reason and very wisely we say . . . that the Word of God the Father incomprehensibly and in a manner which cannot be expressed united to himself a body animated by a rational soul and came forth a man from a woman, having become like unto us, not by a change of his nature but rather by the goodwill of the dispensation of his Incarnation.¹¹⁹

. . . . The word of God of the Father was made man and was made flesh and . . . he has not fashioned that holy body from his divine nature but rather took it from the Virgin Mary. Since, how did he become man, if he has not possessed a body like ours?¹²⁰

If we want to establish a link between the Christologies of Cyril and Nestorius the most important connection, for the Antiocheans, would be found in language which asserts the integrity of Christ's humanity after the union and the unaltered integrity of his divinity. When Cyril describes Jesus' humanity as "*a body animated by a rational soul . . . having become like unto us, not by a change of his [divine] nature*" he speaks directly to the overriding issues of concern to the Church of the East, a concern which has persisted down through the centuries. Nestorius saw the need to assert the permanent integrity of both natures of Christ in the union, and also to make a distinction between the properties of each. And Cyril does that exactly with the next two statements.

¹¹⁹St. Cyril of Alexandria Letters 1-50, in Fathers of the Church Letters 1-50 vol.76, trans. John McEnerney (CUA Press, Washington DC, 1987) 192

¹²⁰Ibid, 193

. . . . Sometimes he speaks as a man according to the dispensation and according to his humanity, and sometimes as God he makes statements by the authority of his divinity.¹²¹

If Christ is perfect God and if he is known to be perfect man, and if he is consubstantial with the Father according to divinity, but according to humanity consubstantial with us, where is the consubstantiality with us, if the essence, that is our nature, no longer subsists?¹²²

These four texts indicate a dogmatic synthesis similar to that which Cyril and John of Antioch brought into the Christological debate, ending the dispute between the two camps—however, under the condition of Nestorius' continued condemnation. In both places, in these four texts and in the 433 peace accord, it seems that Cyril acknowledges the propriety of the language and theological vision of the Antiochean tradition.¹²³

This brings us to our *second* suggestion. In essence the emphasis of each of these two theological concepts represents the fundamental difference between the two Christological approaches. As we have suggested, Nestorius' insistence was on the soteriological side, stressing the priestly and prophetic role of Christ's humanity in the Incarnation. He draws from Saint Paul's kenotic passage in the letter to the Phillipians, and points out Christ's salvific role as the "*Second Adam*" which is set forth in the first letter to the Corinthians. His concern was that the complete and uncompromised humanity of Christ, as elder brother, high priest, and first fruits of our salvation, be acknowledged for its proper role as the vehicle through which the Word restored in humanity the image and likeness of God. Cyril's fundamental concern in his Christology was ontological: to preserve the unconditional assertion of the substantial *unity* between the Logos/subject and the humanity in Christ. The emphasis in his soteriology is on the efficient cause of our salvation, the activity of the Logos/subject in the union. In Nestorius and Cyril together, therefore, the Christian tradition may be said to have become richer because it possesses two different emphases, corresponding to two different objectives, one stressing the soteriological importance of Christ's humanity in the union, and the other stressing the ontological oneness of the incarnate Word. Both are valid and both are indispensable if the Church wishes to begin to fathom the inexplicable mystery of God becoming man in Jesus Christ. It is unfortunate that Ephesus was not able to simultaneously recognize the insights of both men and in the end resolve their controversy, which inevitably became the whole Church's controversy, especially since Cyril's and Nestorius' theological language expressing the mystery of the Incarnation was to some extent still in formation.

The solution, understandably, came about gradually, through the 433 reconciliation between Cyril and John of Antioch—the price of the peace being Nestorius' own condemnation—but ultimately, through the Council of Chalcedon in 451. What the Chalcedonian definition, "*one person in two natures*," was able to achieve, due to the Church's developing theological terminology, was exactly to

¹²¹Ibid, 192-193

¹²²Ibid, 201

¹²³A. di Bernardini & B. Studer, eds, History of Theology: the Patristic Period, (Michael Glaizer, 1996) 433.

realize what Ephesus had failed at doing: synthesizing and bringing the two theological orientations to the closest proximity which could be achieved. Chalcedon's genius was in its capacity to reject the heretical teaching, wrongly attributed to Nestorius,¹²⁴ and maintain the concept of the union in more Cyrilian (ontological) terms via the "*hypostatic union*." To counter-balance the human impersonalism perceived in Cyril's view of the Incarnation and in his hypostatic union, the Fathers at Chalcedon adopted a word like "*prosopon*" in the conciliar definition to indicate the subject of the union of the divinity and of the humanity of our Lord—a term, meaning *prosopon*, that which Nestorius utilized as well. Further, the same definition also guarded the permanence of the two natures in Christ, with all their properties, without change or confusion—the very theological objectives that Nestorius so fervently strove for.

The evaluation of these events brings us to our *third* and final suggestion, which concerns the actuality of Nestorius' faith. As for him personally, Nestorius praised with elation the outcome of Chalcedon, particularly the change that the acceptance of the *Tomus* of Leo the Great brought about in the situation which had prevailed in the Church from the time of the Council of Ephesus (431)—particularly after second synod of Ephesus in 449. Furthermore, Nestorius explicitly stated that his faith was exactly the same as the teachings of Leo and Flavian.¹²⁵ Nestorius is said to have been asked to write to Leo, seeking to inform him of the true state of affairs and concerning the change of faith that had taken place in the Church, but he replied: "... I wrote not,¹²⁶ not because I am a proud man and senseless, but so that I might not hinder from his running him [*i.e.*, Leo] who was running fairly because of the prejudice against my person."¹²⁷ Nevertheless, he asserts that "It is my doctrine which Leo and Flavian are teaching,"¹²⁸ and so persuades his friends to, "Believe as his holy comrades in the faith Leo and Flavian [do]."¹²⁹

It is perfectly understandable why Nestorius would say the above. The ideas for which he and the Antiochene school strove were acknowledged, protected and advanced by the Council of Chalcedon (451) in the content and language of the doctrinal synthesis of the Church. Chalcedon teaches that the two natures in Christ, though inseparably and perfectly united, have wholly retained all their characteristics, each nature perfect in itself and never altered. The manhood of Christ was appreciated and safeguarded, as distinct from the Godhead, against any type of docetism. The union was perceived as an ineffable mystery. In contrast to the Cyrillian conception of the "*impersonal manhood of Christ*," the Fathers at Chalcedon, at least implicitly, attributed a human nature to the Lord that was taken to include all that is today called in contemporary language by "personality." Again, when the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680) affirmed against the Monothelites that there were in the Lord two wills and two *energeiai*—divine and human—it seems to have

¹²⁴This could be summed up as the bringing the distinction between the two natures in Christ to its extreme of dividing the Lord into two separate persons or "two sons".

¹²⁵Loofs, 22,25,56,59.

¹²⁶But it may well be that Nestorius actually did somehow communicate his message—whether Leo was aware of it I am not sure—in the form of his important apology, the Bazaar.

¹²⁷Bazaar, 378.

¹²⁸Loofs, 25

¹²⁹Ibid.

explicitly affirmed what is the equivalent the modern idea of “personality.”¹³⁰ The mere fact that the Council of Chalcedon equated Cyril's hypostasis with Nestorius' *prosopon* says that the ideals which Nestorius strove for were, in the long run, reconsidered and given a place in the dogmatic formulation that became part of the faith of the Church for centuries. The faith of Nestorius gets another affirmation in the history records of the ancient Church historian Socrates. While Nestorius was most probably still alive, in year 440, Socrates defended Nestorius' faith with impartiality, arguing that his teachings were grossly and cunningly misrepresented. After Socrates denies that Nestorius ever taught the heresy attributed to him (that of “two sons” or “two christs”), he unambiguously states: “I read his writings and I will say the truth: he did not hold the same opinions as Paul of Samosota and Photinus nor did he at all regard the Lord as mere man, only he abhorred the term ‘Theotokos’ as a bugbear.”¹³¹

An Evaluation

Nestorius was an Antiochean and, indeed, he believed and thought as every Antiochean would. He used biblical interpretation that already was employed by his teachers, Theodore and Diodore. As an Antiochean, he was challenged politically, ecclesially and dogmatically. His challengers belonged to various theological tendencies which he had to face in a world that did not effectively exercise professional amenity nor sensitivity toward other people's different methods of understanding and terminological divergences, particularly in situations of disputes. The importance of such nuances of social sophistication and spiritual maturation would have been crucial in the discovery of the genuine theological thought of Nestorius, especially when we know that the work attributed to him, which we today have, was the product of, and due to, the fact that Nestorius was engaged in ecclesiastical polemics rather than in systematic theology.

The historical preface we have seen in section I of this paper suggests that embedded in ecclesiastical politics there is always a non-theological edge to every religious discord. In Nestorius' case, I suppose, even before any theological charges were brought against him, his lack of experience of worldly affairs, imprudent judgment and unwillingness to learn, tolerate or respect the sensibilities of the faithful of his diocese and the politics of the court in Constantinople, at least in matters that required time and tolerance,¹³² brought upon him the ill fate Cyril and other bishops of the empire had long wished for him and for his “school of thought.” His ignorance of the part that Pulcheria, the sister of the emperor, played in crucial issues, such as stabilizing the dynasty of her family, caused him to pay a dear price after she found in the zeal of Cyril the promise that no one else could deliver. Therefore, in light of McGuckin's hypothesis and due to convoluted historical events which evolved as a result of pure human interaction within the socio-political structure of fourth and fifth century Byzantium, it may be plausible to suggest the following: the events of AD 428 to 430 that culminated with the opening of the Council of Ephesus in AD 431 and the condemnation of Nestorius—in the manner that we have seen in section III—were driven by the politics engaged in by Pulcheria and the rest of the aristocracy, the monks, and the populace of the capitol, who

¹³⁰Bazaar, 239, fn, #1.

¹³¹Loofs, 20

¹³²Ibid., 62

collectively were driven by abhorrence of their bishop. Taking advantage of the adverse relationship that historically had existed between Alexandria and Antioch, they were able to personalize it in the relation between Cyril and Nestorius. All the involved parties in Constantinople needed a man like Cyril as much as, in turn, he needed them, if not more. They found in Cyril's zeal for defending orthodoxy, along with his own political agenda¹³³ and theological objectives,¹³⁴ a genuine opportunity for challenging Nestorius and absolutely getting rid of him.

Barhadbeshabba, the Church of the East historian, would concur with such a rationale. His verdict on the real causes of the controversy is very much along the same lines. His synopsis of the real causes behind the disagreement with Nestorius, namely, that "*the whole body of the monks fought against him*"¹³⁵ only confirms the historian's conviction that the real causes for his condemnation and exile were not as theologically oriented as Nestorius' enemies in Constantinople and elsewhere wished everyone to believe. McGuckin on his part thinks that Barhadbeshabba's conclusion is borne out by credible evidence, even though, the latter's glossing over the theological issues may suggest an attempt to narrow the real causes of the conflict as being merely the results of the agitated relationship between the monks of capitol and their bishop.¹³⁶

Even so, the popular anger that was directed against Nestorius could also be explained similarly. Before the opening of the Council of Ephesus, when both Alexandria and Rome had already condemned Nestorius' teachings and were demanding a recantation from him, Nestorius desperately needed Constantinople, his own patriarchal town, to be his secure home front. In his attempt to avoid discord among his own subjects, Theodosius, in the final analysis, abandoned Nestorius due to immense pressure emanating from popular demonstration of dislike for Nestorius and the masses' chanting slogans at the Capitol demanding the deposition of their by now much hated bishop.¹³⁷ Thus, it became crystal clear to Nestorius that under heavy pressure, in this case from the masses of Constantinople, even the emperor, formerly his strongest friend, ally and defender, would abandon his cause.¹³⁸

But what about the mistakes and the shortcomings of Nestorius? Is it fair to suppose, at least to a certain extent, that these were determinant factors in his misfortune? Whatever the case might be, the most drastic blunder, as far as the Church of Rome was concerned, was his handling of the Pelagian refugees in Constantinople, and his consequent letter, perhaps displeasing, to the pope.¹³⁹ His action vis-a-vis Rome was a sample of the temperament by which he, through passion and a lack of caution, poisoned his relations with a host of individuals and groups in the Church, as we have seen earlier. Socrates attests to this by maintaining that Nestorius' error was never heresy as much as he, as a patriarch, lacked knowledge, or sometimes,

¹³³See Moffett, 170-175.

¹³⁴Ibid

¹³⁵Barhadbeshabba cited by McGuckin, 15.

¹³⁶Ibid., 15.

¹³⁷Ibid., 13.

¹³⁸Ibid., 9.

¹³⁹Loofs, 45.

demonstrated over-confidence and dogmatism in matters requiring prudent judgment and premeditated balance.¹⁴⁰

During the heat of the theological debate, Nestorius used a theological approach and technical language in which he failed to illustrate, in terms recognizable by his Alexandrian counterpart, how his vocabulary system accounts for a concrete and unambiguous union between the two distinct, yet not separated, natures which he confessed in Jesus Christ. The Incarnation is a mystery beyond any human description; there is always a need for a humble reticence in men who attempt to peer into the mystery of God. Nestorius' approach seemed, at times, to confine itself to purely logical categories; he also seemed too determined to explain himself in such a way as to preclude any contradictions, that precluded a theological statement only based on prayer and confession of the true faith. Though Nestorius' conception of the union of divinity with the humanity is perfectly brilliant and his theory to solve the Christological problem on the basis of "*oneness in duality*" is consistent, yet Cyril's methodology, which, as Nestorius points out over and over again in his Bazaar, is inconsistent, has been approved by the Church over Nestorius' precisely for the very fact that it is not—and perhaps could never have been—perfectly consistent. It seems that, unlike Nestorius, Cyril would not pursue the dialectic of the union to the end; and, furthermore, when his theological system cannot fully articulate the truth of the Incarnation, he reverts to inconsistency, invoking the inadequacy of humans to comprehend fully the mystery.¹⁴¹ Nestorius took a risk when he chose to explain the mystery of the Incarnation in terms of the prosopic union. The combination of utilizing misunderstood terminology and offending people by political mistakes created a fatal situation that Nestorius could not manage to escape from. It allowed both his theological and non-theological adversaries to blame him with heresies and to bring other charges against him in matters concerning which he was confident of his blamelessness.

And so, conscious of the charge that he taught a 'two sons' Christology, Nestorius repeatedly and vehemently denied such accusations and instead maintained his faith in the incarnation by emphasizing unity. The following two quotes tell us about his faith and confession: "*I have confessed in one Christ two natures without confusion. By one nature on the one hand, that is [by that] of the divinity, he was born of God the Father; by the other, on the other hand, that is [by that] of the humanity, [he was born] of the holy virgin;*"¹⁴² and further, he asserts also that "*no one else than he who was in the bosom of his Father came and became flesh and dwelt among us; and he is in the bosom of his Father and with us, in that he is what the Father is, and he has expounded unto us what he is in the bosom of his Father.*"¹⁴³ Considering such faith in the Incarnation and in the unity of the two natures in Jesus Christ, Nestorius was no heretic. His faith is orthodox as any of the Fathers contemporary to his time. His assertions promoting the unity of the Son are many and his denials of the possibility that there were two sons or subjects in Jesus, similarly, are numerous. Both emphases and rejections respectively should tell us a lot of his intention, faith and zeal for maintaining an orthodox teaching.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., 60-61.

¹⁴¹Bazaar, 420.

¹⁴²Ibid., 296.

¹⁴³Ibid., 50.

Nevertheless, criterion for orthodoxy should not be confined to certain terminological formulae, but should be a subject to confessing the Apostolic Kerygma, the true faith that is biblically based and that points to the transcendence of God's mystery in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. Nestorius was orthodox in that he confessed the oneness of Christ, yet his theological theses, and more so, his articulation of them, could not sufficiently express his faith, at least in terms that were acceptable to Cyril of Alexandria, and, in due course, to the ancient Christian Church in the Roman-Byzantine Empire.

For the contemporary ecumenical community, the question of Nestorius presents a challenge. But this challenge should be transformed by means of Christian charity into an opportunity to bring the differing parties together—an opportunity such as that which has already been seized by the Foundation Pro Oriente. The needs of evangelization in the world require the Christian community to work with values and principle that the Gospel teaches; and to be principled and impartial would mean to allow Nestorius be evaluated and judged in accordance to his own words and metaphysical thought, which is available to us today in his work, albeit this work was composed twenty years after Ephesus by a defensive Nestorius.¹⁴⁴ Nestorius and Cyril, if measured by the standards of Chalcedon and its creed, both have defects in their teachings and theological thought.¹⁴⁵ But both men were faithful to their own respective schools of thought. They, each on his own, truly intended never to say anything that is different from Athanasius and the early Church Fathers.¹⁴⁶

The Church of the East of today has remained faithful to the judgment of her early Fathers concerning the case of Nestorius. Although the place of Nestorius' thought and person in this Church is not comparable with the extent of honor and admiration accorded Theodore of Mopsuestia, yet there has always been a consistent refusal by the Fathers of this Church to abandon Nestorius' cause. This Church has always held that his theological concerns were valid and his contribution to protecting the integrity of Christ's humanity will always be admired and appreciated. These firm commitments have been maintained for hundreds of years in the Church of the East without any change or alteration, while at the same time this Church has suffered untold martyrdoms for the sake of her witness to the same God and Savior Nestorius and the rest of the Fathers loved and worshipped.

Within the context of the relationship between Nestorius and the Church of the East,¹⁴⁷ one is moved to contemplate the effects of the recent "Common Christological Declaration" signed by Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV and Pope John Paul II, in 1994, on the question of Nestorius. There is no mention of Nestorius in this declaration, but there is, however, the vindication and the acceptance of the term "*Christotokos*" by both the Catholic Church and the Church of the East—obviously,

¹⁴⁴Anastos, 121.

¹⁴⁵Anastos, 119.

¹⁴⁶Bazaar, 176-189; 194-205; 210-218.

¹⁴⁷While today's Church of the East rejects the name "Nestorian" as an appellation for reasons that may imply that this Church was established or came into existence by or because of Nestorius, nevertheless, we, in line with Church of the East Fathers, continue to have every respect for the person of Nestorius and appreciation for his faith in Christ, for which, we believe, he underwent undue suffering.

when the meaning of the term is understood within the proper interpretation of the Apostolic faith. The suggested use of this term instead of "*Theotokos*" was what ignited the Nestorian controversy; did the rehabilitation of the term resolve the controversy? Pope John Paul II had this to say when welcoming Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV at the Vatican during the Pope's public audience with the Catholic faithful in Rome. "[*The Patriarch*] has come also to sign with the Catholic Church a '*Common Christological Declaration*,' that will resolve the separation created by the Council of Ephesus in the year 431. This will settle and definitively put an end to more than fifteen centuries of misunderstandings that afflict our faith in Christ, true God and true Man, born to the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit."¹⁴⁸ How can this confession of faith be different from that of Leo, Nestorius and Cyril? This is a matter that one would leave to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and to the courageous leaders of the Church that have already instituted the process of restoring the essence of the Church that Jesus established in today's society and with today's mentality.

The Holy Synod of the Church of the East has unilaterally just decided to remove all references of a negative character concerning both Cyril and Severus from its liturgical books and official publications. This initiative is undertaken with the full realization that it involves risks and that it may not be reciprocated, but we would ask our brethren to consider the results of 1500 years of experience: after a millenium and a half the followers of Cyril and Severus continue to affirm the impassibility of the divine nature in Christ and the full, integral reality of his manhood; at the same time, the Church of the East, along with Theodore and Nestorius, continue to insist on the oneness of the person of Christ and at no time have divided his divine nature from the fully human nature which the Word took for his own. The legitimate fears expressed by each party to this dispute, as each side saw the weakness in the other's terminology, have not been realized. Meanwhile we have faced an increasingly hostile world divided against ourselves in contradiction of our Lord's fervent prayer, "That they may be one." And if it is permissible to draw from secular sources in order to emphasize our plight, Abraham Lincoln put it as well as any: "*A house divided against itself cannot stand.*" If the gates of Hell do not prevail over our embattled segment of Christ's body it will only be because we have found the humility to confess our failure of love and the strength to reach out to one another in brotherly embrace.

4th July 1997 – Chicago (USA)

¹⁴⁸Editorial, "Papal Address at the Public Audience," *L'Osservatore Romano*, (Vatican City) 16 November 1994, weekly edition in English, 3.

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