

Fathers of the 3rd and 4th Century



Part 1

Part 2

The Fathers of the 3rd Century

200-299 AD



A Study in Patristics

Produced by St. Mina's Coptic Orthodox Church, Holmdel NJ

ORIGEN

[A.D. 185-230-254]

- His father, Leonides, who was himself a confessor and martyr: how he used to strip the bosom of his almost inspired boy as he lay asleep, and imprint kisses on his naked breast, “the temple of the Holy Ghost.”
- That blessed Spirit, he believed was near to his own lips when he thus saluted a Christian child, “for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”
- From a child, this other Timothy “knew the Scriptures” indeed. His own doting father imbued him with the literature of the Greeks: but, far better, he taught him to love the lively oracles of the Lord of glory; and in these he became so proficient

The making of Great Teacher

- Under his superintendence, the youthful Origen was not only educated in the various branches of Grecian learning, but was also required daily to commit to memory and to repeat portions of Scripture prescribed him by his father.

His Father's martyrdom

- Origen wished to share the fate of his father, but was prevented from quitting his home by the artifice of his mother, who was obliged to conceal his clothes to prevent him from carrying out his purpose.
- He wrote to his father, exhorting him to constancy under his trials, and entreating him not to change his convictions for the sake of his family.
- By the death of his father, whose property was confiscated to the imperial treasury, Origen was left with
- his mother and six younger brothers dependent upon him for support.

The Dean of the Alexandria School

- Bishop Demetrius appointed him to the office of master in the Catechetical School, which was at that time vacant (by the departure of Clement, who had quitted the
- city on the outbreak of the persecution), although he was still a layman,
- and had not passed his eighteenth year.

His Daily life

- After a day of labor in the school, he used to devote the greater part of the night to the investigation of Scripture, sleeping on the bare ground, and keeping frequent fasts.
- He carried out literally the command of the Savior, not to
- possess two coats, nor wear shoes. He consummated his work of
- mortification of the flesh by an act of self-mutilation, springing from a
- perverted interpretation of our Lord's words in <401912>Matthew 19:12 and the
- desire to place himself beyond the reach of temptation in the intercourse which he necessarily had to hold with youthful female catchumens.
- This act was destined to exercise a baneful influence upon his subsequent career in the Church.

His talent

Ambrose furnished him “with more than seven amanuenses, who relieved each other at stated times, and with an equal number of transcribers, along with young girls who had been practiced in calligraphy,” to make fair copies for publication of the works dictated by

- Origen.

His writing

- The great critical work of Origen was the Hexapla or Six-columned Bible;
- an attempt to provide a revised text of the Septuagint translation of Old Testament Scripture.
- On this undertaking he is said to have spent twenty eight
- years of his life, and to have acquired a knowledge of Hebrew in order to qualify himself for the task.
- Each page of this work consisted, with the exception to be noticed immediately, of six columns.

GREGORY THAUMATURGUS

Wonder-worker

(A.D. 205-240-265.)

- Alexandria continues to be the head of Christian learning.
- It is delightful to trace the hand of God from generation to generation, as from father to son, interposing for the perpetuity of the faith.
- We have already observed the continuity of the great Alexandrian school: how it arose, and how Pantaenus begat Clement, and Clement begat Origen. So Origen begat Gregory.

- He was born of heathen parentage, and lived like other Gentile boys until his fourteenth year (A.D. 218),
- At this period his father died; but his mother, carrying out the wishes of her husband, seems to have been not less zealous in furthering his education according to her pagan ideas.
- He was, evidently, the inheritor of moderate wealth; and, with his brother Athenodorus, he was placed under an accomplished teacher of grammar and rhetoric, from whom also he acquired a considerable knowledge of the Latin tongue.

- A.D. 233, making it for a time his home and the seat of his school.
- His own good angel, as Gregory supposes, led him away from Berytus, where he purposed to prosecute
- his legal studies, and brought him to the feet of Origen, his Gamaliel; and “from the very first day of his receiving us,” he says, “the true Sun began to rise upon me.”
- This he accounts the beginning of his true life; he was now about twenty-seven years of age.

- Under this great teacher he received lessons in
- logic, geometry, physics, ethics, philosophy, and ancient literature, and in due time also in biblical science and the verities of the Christian faith.
- Thus, having become Origen's pupil, he became also by the hand of God his convert. After a residence of some five years with Origen

Bishop

- For a considerable period, however, Gregory, who shrank
- from the responsibility of the episcopal office, kept himself beyond the bishop's reach, until Phaedimus, unsuccessful in his search, had recourse to the stratagem of ordaining him in his absence, and declaring him, with all the solemnities of the usual ceremonial, bishop of his native city.
- On receiving the report of this extraordinary step, Gregory yielded, and, coming forth from the place of his concealment, was consecrated to the bishopric with all the customary formalities.

A Great Shepherd

While there were said to be only seventeen Christians in the whole city when he first entered it as bishop, there were said to be only seventeen pagans in it at the time of his death.

DIONYSIUS, BISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA.

(A.D. 200-265.)

- Early in life he seems to have been brought under the influence of certain presbyters; and a voice seemed to speak to him in a vision
- encouraging him to “prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.”
- We find him at the feet of Origen a diligent pupil, and afterwards, as a presbyter, succeeding Heraclas (A.D. 232) as the head of the school, sitting in Origen’s seat.

His teaching

- He acted on this principle through his whole course as a teacher, pronouncing against such writings only when he had made himself familiar with their contents, and saw how to refute them.


- Again, in the chiliastic difficulties excited by Nepos, and kept up by Coracion, we see him assembling all the parochial clergy who held these opinions, and inviting all the laymen of the diocese also to attend the conference, and discussing the question for three whole days with all these ministers, considering their arguments, and meeting all their objections patiently by Scripture testimony, until he persuades Coracion himself to retract, and receives the thanks of the pastors, and restores unity of faith in his bishopric.
- On these occasions his mildness, and benignity, and moderation stand out in bold relief; and on others we trace similar evidences of his broad sympathies and his large and liberal spirit


PETER, BISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA.

[A.D. 260 — 300-311]

- Alexandria has been to the Church of Christ, the mother of churches, the mother of saints, maintaining always the intellectual and even the ecclesiastical primacy of Christendom.

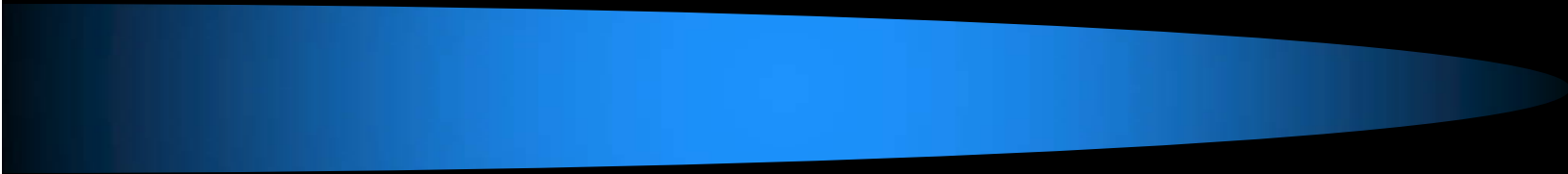
“Ye are the light of the world,” said the great Enlightener to the Galileans of an obscure and despised Roman province.

- 
- He was, says he, a divine bishop, both for the sanctity of his like, and also for his diligent study and knowledge of the Holy Scriptures; and in another place he styles him “that excellent doctor of the Christian religion,”
 - who, indeed, during the whole period of his episcopate, which he held for twelve years, obtained for himself the highest renown.

- 
- But because virtue is the mark of the zealot, “it is the tops of the mountains that are struck by lightning,” he hence endured multifarious conflicts with rivals.
 - He lived in persecution almost the whole of his life.
 - Meanwhile he ordained fifty-five bishops. Meletius lastly

The Fathers of the 4th Century

300-399 AD



A Study in Patristics

Produced by St. Mina's Coptic Orthodox Church, Holmdel NJ

Historical Background of the 4th Century

- New era for the Church (Peace of the Church)
- 1. Constantine the Great
 - ◆ His Baptism- in His person the empire accepted Christianity
 - ◆ Edict of Milan (Act of Toleration)
 - ◆ Friendly Neutrality / Protection / Restoration



Eusebius of Nicomedia: History of the Church Book 10 Chapter 2

- “we... had unspeakable gladness... and joy when we saw every place which ... had been desolate... revived from a long and death-filled pestilence...there were repeated ordinances on behalf of the Christians and personal letters of the emperor were sent to the bishops, with honors and gifts of money...
- After this was seen the sight which had been desired and prayed for by us all, feasts of dedication and consecrations of newly built churches. Bishops assembled, mutual love was exhibited between people and the members of Christ's body were united in complete harmony. And there was one energy of the Divine Spirit (Holy Spirit) pervading all the members and one soul in all, and the same eagerness of faith, and one hymn. Yes and perfect services were conducted... with the singing of psalms and the reading of the words of the Bible. And at the same time, people of every age, both male and female, with all the power of the mind gave honor unto God...in prayers and thanksgiving, with a joyful mind and soul.” (NPNF Vol 1 pg. 370)

Historical Background of the 4th Century

- 2. The Church came out of hiding
 - ◆ Freed from persecution and Martyrdom
- 3. Time of Transition and Growth
 - ◆ What was ahead? (Freedom to practice, preach and build Churches)
 - ◆ Liturgical Practices and ceremony

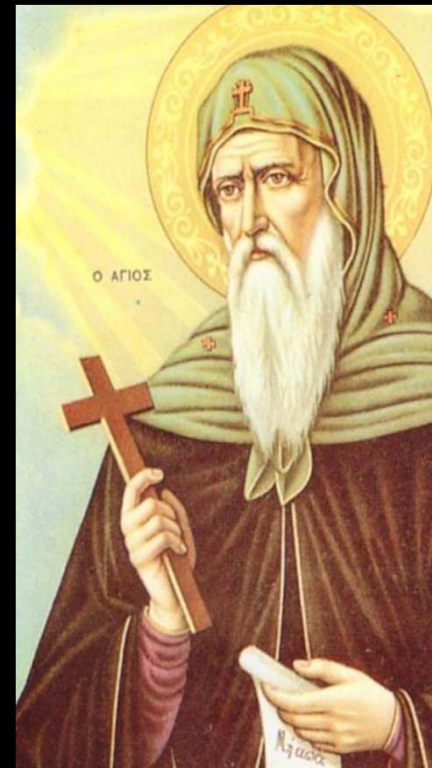
Historical Background of the 4th Century

● 4. The Spread of Monasticism

- ◆ The life of St. Anthony (Vita Antonii – written by St. Athanasius the Apostolic)
- ◆ Christian Martyrdom while still alive

● 5. The Era of Ecumenical Councils

- ◆ Time of Continuous Theological Debate
- ◆ Arius “There was a time when the word was NOT” – beginning point of theological debate and controversy



Who are the Fathers of the 4th Century

- 1. St. Athanasius the Apostolic (297-328-373)
- 2. St. Alexander of Alexandria (?- 312-328)
- 3. St. Theophilus of Alexandria (?-385-412)
- 4. St. Cyril of Alexandria (375-412-444)
- 5. St. Cyril of Jerusalem (313-?-386)
- 6. St. Hilary of Potiers (315-353-?)
- 7. St. Ambrose of Milan (339-374-397)

Who are the Fathers of the 4th Century

- 8. St. Jerome (349-382-420)
- 9. St. Augustine of Hippo (354-396-430)
- 10. St. John Chrysostom Patriarch of Constantinople (344-407)
- 11. St. Ephraem of Syria (306-373)
- 12. St. Basil of Caesarea (330-379)
- 13. St. Gregory of Nazianzus (The Theologian) (329-390)
- 14. St. Gregory of Nyssa (330-395)

St. Athanasius the Apostolic

- Born 297 AD
- Deacon at age of 15
- Priest at age of 21
- Pope at age of 30
- Lived through the period of severe persecution under Diocletian
- Spent time with St. Anthony the Great in the desert
- Accompanied Pope Alexander to the Council of Nicea in 325
- Spent most of his life combatting the heresy of Arius
- Arians (follower of Arius) considered St. Athanasius their #1 enemy and continued to fight him all the days of his life
- Exiled 5 Times by the Arians
- Wrote the Nicene Creed



St. Athanasius the Apostolic

- Writings: Apologetic (Defense)

- ◆ Apologia Contra Arianos (Apology Against the Arians)

- The Son is Equal to the Father
- He is of One-essence (homoousious)

- ◆ Against the Heathen

- A defense of the Christian faith and a refutation of paganism

St. Athanasius the Apostolic

● Writings:

◆ Four Discourses against the Arians

- “the mockeries which he utters... repulsive and unreligious are such as these: ‘ God was not always a Father, but once God was alone and not yet a Father, but afterwards he became a Father’ The Son was not always’...He, as others had an origin of creation... The word is not the true God... eventhgouth He is called God, He is not true God, but by participation of Grace”

God

Theology of Arius

created

Son

created

**The
World**



Theology of St. Athanasius

God the Father (uncreated and one essence)

God the Son

(uncreated and one
essence)

God the Holy Spirit

(uncreated and one essence)

Created

**God the Father, God the
Son, God the Holy Spirit
Of one essence
Equal in Divinity**

**God the Father created
the world by His Word,
through His Holy Spirit.**

The World



St. Athanasius the Apostolic

- Writings: Exegetical (Biblical)

- ◆ On the Interpretation of the Psalms
- ◆ Commentary on Songs of Songs, Genesis and St. Luke
- ◆ On the Incarnation 'De Incarnatione'

- Writings: Ascetic (Monastic)

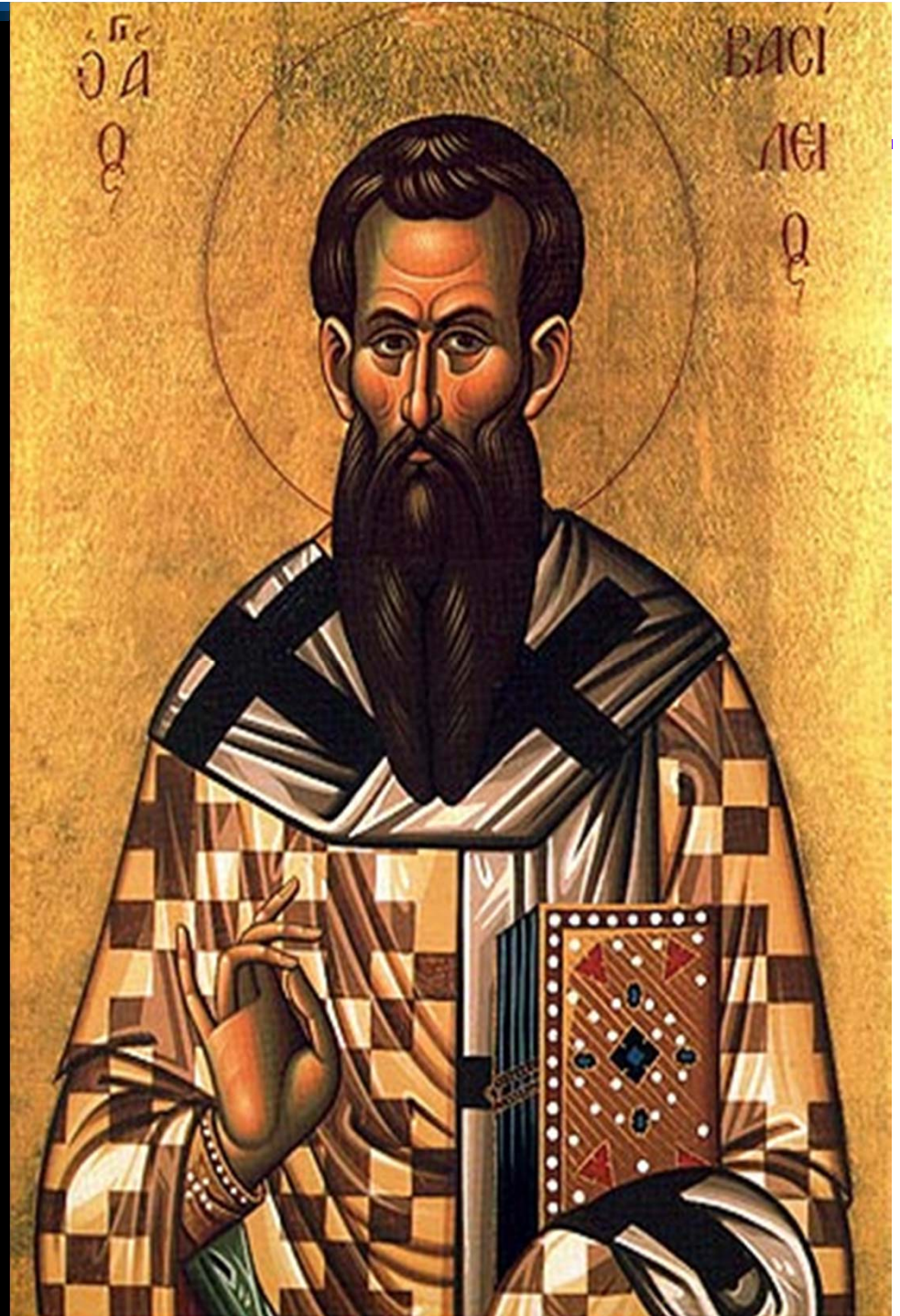
- ◆ The Life of St. Anthony (Vita Antoni)
- ◆ Letters on Virginit

St. Athanasius the Apostolic: Summary

- “Athanasius Contra Mundum”
- Wrote the Creed and Life of St. Anthony
- Defended the Orthodox Faith against Arius
- Defended the Divinity of the ‘Logos’
- 20th Pope of Alexandria
- Key word = Homoosious to Patri” Of one essence with the Father”
- Associated with the Council of Nicea 325 AD

St. Basil the Great

- Born 329 AD
- Priest at age of 35
- Bishop of Ceasarea 370 AD
- Was one of 10 children 3 of whom became bishops
- He became bishop and established hospitals for the sick and diseased, homes for the poor and houses for strangers and travelers and orphans
- Staunch defender of Orthodoxy against Arianus' teachings
- He was a strong advocate of monasticism
- One of the 3 Cappadocian Fathers
- He journeyed through Syria and Egypt and studied the lives of the Monks
- He took up the Cause of St. Athanasius after Athanasius Reposed



St. Basil the Great: Bishop of Ceasarea

● Writings: Dogmatic (Biblical)

◆ On the Holy Spirit 'De Spiritu Sancto'

- He uses Scripture and Early Christian Tradition to support His Doctrine of the Holy Spirit
- The opponents of the Holy Spirit were called Pneumatomachi (Combatants / Haters of the Holy Spirit)
- Crystallized and Clarified the Teaching of the Holy Trinity

● Writings: Ascetic (Monastic)

- ◆ 'Moralia' – rules on how to live life in the world, especially for Clergy, and Monks.

St. Basil the Great: Bishop of Ceasarea

● Writings: Liturgical

- ◆ Three Liturgies are Attributed to St. Basil
 - Byzantine Church
 - Syrian Orthodox Church
 - Coptic Orthodox Church

● Writings: Apologetic (Defense against Arius)

- ◆ 'Contra Eunomium' a refutation of Eunomian Arianism
- ◆ Was threatened with Exile by Emperor Valens (Arian)

St. Basil The Great -

- “The confiscation of goods does not harm one who has nothing... Exile I do not know, for I am bound to no specific place... for the whole world into which I may be banished, I hold as my own, for the whole world is God’s whose dweller and stranger I am. These tortures, what harm could they do me... but death would be an act of kindness for it will bring me nearer to God from Whom I live and for Whom I have been created and to Whom I hasten towards. Let the Emperor hear this, that you will not persuade us or win us over to the impious doctrine (Arianism) with cruel threats and deeds”

pg 132 Panoramic View of Patristics Fr. T.Y. Malaty



The Holy Spirit

St. Basil: On the Holy Spirit



- One and the same nature with the Father and the Son- Biblical proof and Christian Tradition
- Equal honor with the Father and Son
- “Glory be to the Father with the Son together with the Holy Spirit”

St. Basil the Great: Summary

- Bishop of Caesarea
- Crystallized the Orthodox Teaching on the Holy Trinity- “On the Holy Spirit”
- Author of the Liturgy
- Defended the Divinity of the Holy Spirit
- Council of Constantinople 381 AD

St. Cyril of Alexandria

- Born 375 AD
- Pope in 412
- Uncle was Pope Theophilus
- He studied all the works of the Fathers before him, St. Athanasius, St. Didymus the Blind, St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nazianzus
- Spent 5 years in St. Macarius Monastery as a disciple of St. Serapion
- 24th pope of Alexandria
- Opponent of Nestorianism



St. Cyril of Alexandria: Pillar of Faith

● Writings: Biblical

◆ Commentaries on the Old Testament

- Commentary on Isaiah, the Minor Prophets
- 'Glaphyra' – 13 books explaining the first 5 books of Moses (the Pentateuch)

◆ Commentaries on the New Testament

- St. John, St. Luke, St. Matthew

St. Cyril of Alexandria: Pillar of Faith

- Writings: Apologetic (Defense)

- ◆ Adversus Nestorii Blasphemias (Against the Blasphemies of Nestorius)
 - The Son is Equal to the Father
 - He is of One-essence (homoousious)
- ◆ De Recta fide (On the True Faith)
- ◆ 12 Anathemas Against Nestorius
 - A defense of the Nature of Christ as the Incarnate Son of God

Nestorius

- He drew a plain distinction between the man Jesus, Born of Mary and the Son of God who dwelt in Him.
- There were 2 distinct persons in Christ, who were united to one morally
- Christ should not be called God, but God-bearer (Theophoron)
- Subsequently, St. Mary was not the mother of God, but the mother of the man in whom the Godhead dwelt

Nestorius

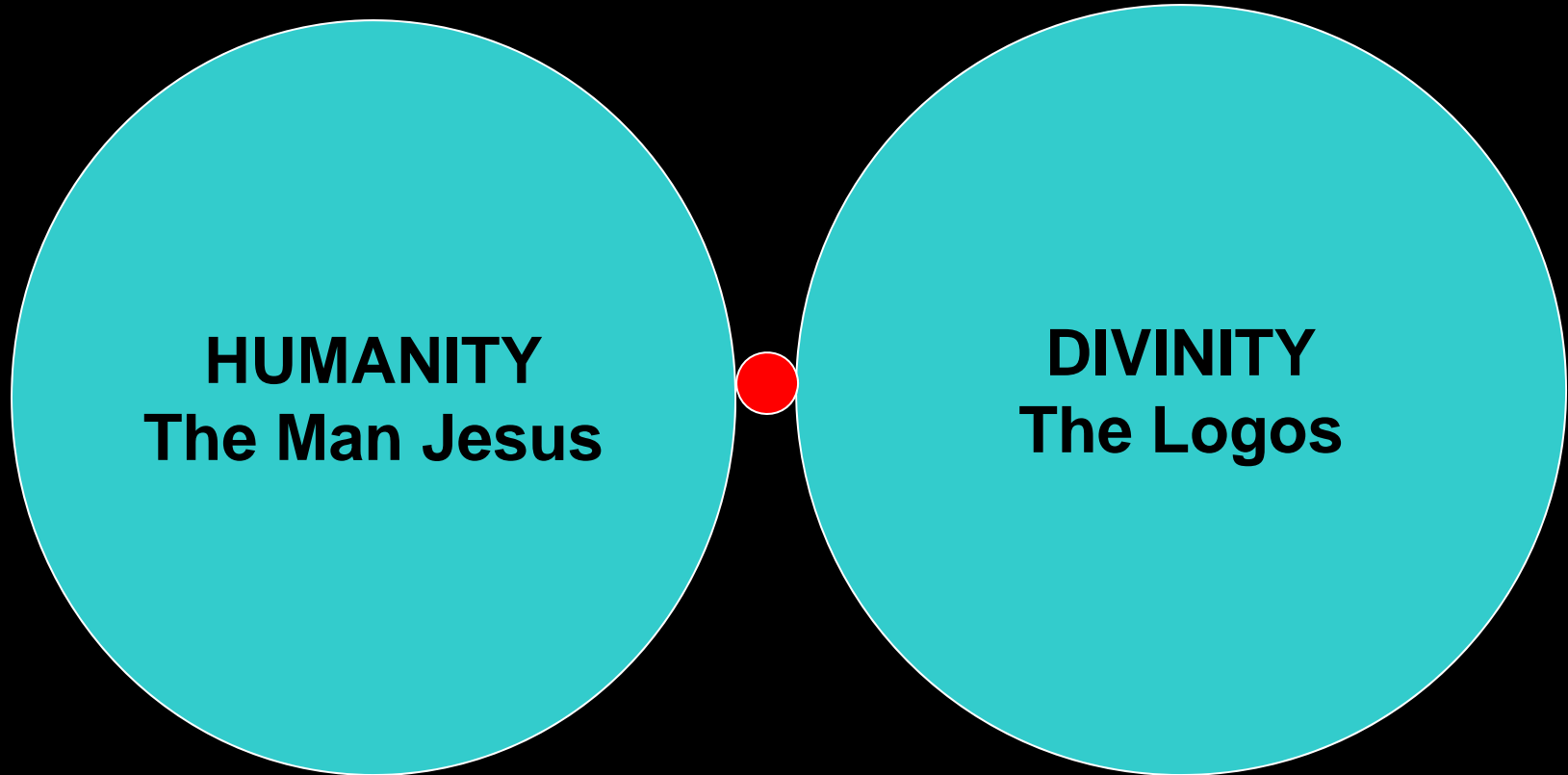
- Would not call Virgin St. Mary – the Mother of God, just Mother of Christ
- Implies that the Virgin St. Mary gave birth to a man who then became God
- Implies separation of divinity and humanity of the Lord
- Result = Jeopardizes Salvation

Nestorius

- “That which was formed in the womb of Mary is not God himself..... therefore it is not God who has suffered, but God was conjoined with the crucified flesh... therefore we will call the Holy Virgin Theodokos (Vessel of God), not Theotokos (God bearer)

Nestorius' Theology

2 separate entities joined together loosely



Result → Salvation is Jeopardized

St. Cyril of Alexandria's Theology

Complete and
Perfect Union of
Humanity and
Divinity
Without Mingling
Without Confusion
Without Alteration



One Incarnate
Nature of God
The Word

Result → Salvation is not Jeopardized

St. Cyril of Alexandria: Pillar of Faith SUMMARY

- 24th Pope of Alexandria
- Upheld and defended the Title of Theotokos (God – Bearer) for the Virgin St. Mary.
- Coined the phrase “one nature of the Word of God incarnate” (μία φύσις τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου σεσαρκωμένη *mía phýsis toû theoû lógou sesarkōménē*)
- Attended the Council of Ephesus in 431AD
- Defended the unity of the Divinity and Humanity

Announcements

- Fr. Luka Awad next week will speak to us about a practical issue in the service.
- Child abuse and types of abuse around us.
- Study hard for the quiz