
There is One Christ and Lord (not two)

Problems with Nestorius' understanding of Christ

Our opponents have chosen to hold and teach that the Only Begotten Word of God assumed a man of the line of the divine David and Abraham, and took care to form him in the holy virgin, then conjoined himself to him, made him come to the trial of death, raised him from the dead, took him up to heaven, and seated him at the right hand of God. But if this is the case then it seems to me that the holy Fathers and all the God-inspired scriptures, and we ourselves, are speaking in vain whenever we say that he became man. Nonetheless I think that it is exactly this, and nothing else, that the all-wise John meant when he wrote: "The Word became flesh" (Jn 1:14).

It seems to me that they have turned the mystery of the economy in the flesh completely on its head, for in their argument one cannot see how God the Word, born of God, and God by nature, abased himself to a self-emptying and humbled himself to assume the form of a slave. On the contrary, in their estimate a man is exalted into the glory of the Godhead and into pre-eminence over all things; he receives the form of God and is raised on high and comes to be enthroned alongside the Father.

... And if it was true that he assumed a man, brought him to the trial of death, raised him to the heavens and made him sit alongside the Father, then where would the Only Begotten position his own throne after this? For it is part of their argument that there are not two Sons, only one enthroned with God, and he seems clearly to be the one who is of the line of David and Abraham. But if this were so, how could the Only Begotten be said to have been the Saviour of the World? Would he not rather have been the Patron and Promoter of that man by whom we were saved? In such a case the fulfilment of the law and the prophets would then turn out to be a man, someone different than him.

... It is past all belief that such a man, who is not God truly or by nature, should parade himself in a divine situation (doubtless having ousted him who is the Son by nature) and that the angels and archangels, or even the Seraphim who are higher still, should stand before him ready to do service for someone who is not truly Son or God, but in reality is a man who has received the title of Sonship, and divine honours in the form of great benefits in which he participates just as is the case with us.

... [People who think in this way] steal the worship from him who is really the Son, and persuade us to worship someone conjoined to him in some kind of relationship instead, someone (so they say) who has risen over every Principality and Authority and Dominion. In this way they have implicated not only everyone on earth, but even the rational heavenly powers too in the guilt of a deception, if they, like us, are found to be worshipping not the true and natural Son made man, the Word who shone forth from God the Father's very being, but rather some other person apart from him, a man of the line of David, a man who has only been given the external appearances of deity by God's will as if they were external decorations, but someone who is not God in truth.¹

¹ *On The Unity of Christ* (McGuckin, pp.69-72)

A mere “conjunction” of natures is not enough

How wicked they are, then, when they divide in two the one true and natural Son incarnated and made man, and when they reject the union and call it a conjunction, something that any other man could have with God, being bonded to him as it were in terms of virtue and holiness...

A disciple can also be said to “attach” himself to a teacher in terms of a love of study, and we too can attach ourselves to one another not in one fashion only but in many. In short, when someone assists another in a task, should we not consider that he has been conjoined by will to the one who receives his assistance? It seems to us that this is exactly what these innovators mean by conjunction.

You must have heard how they stupidly maintain that God the Word assumed a man, as if he were a different son to himself, and then proposed him as a kind of assistant to his designs so that he underwent the trial of death, came to life again, rose up to heaven, and even sat upon the throne of the ineffable Godhead? With arguments such as these have they not completely and utterly proven that this man is altogether different from the true and natural son?²

The Nestorians must logically have a “saved saviour”

I cannot understand how these people, who pillage this wonderful and noble economy of the Only Begotten, connect a man to him in terms of a relationship adorned with external honours and radiant in a glory which is not his, for then he is not truly God but someone who has fellowship and participation with God, and is thus a falsely-named son, a saved saviour, a redeemed redeemer.³

The Nestorians reject the suffering of God the Word incarnate – but how can the blood of a mere man save?

[The Nestorians] think it is not at all right to attribute the suffering upon the cross to the Word born of God. They would argue instead that he prepared the man who was conjoined to himself in terms of equal honour to undergo the insults of the Jews, and the sufferings on the cross, and even death itself, and that in this way the man became the “leader of our salvation,” returning to life and crushing the dominion of death by the power of the Word who was with him.

... [but] in that case we have no longer been redeemed by God (how could we have been?) but rather by the blood of someone else. Some man or other, an impostor and a falsely-named son, has died for us. The great and venerable mystery of the incarnation of the Only Begotten has turned out to be only words and lies, for he never really became man after all. We certainly could not regard him as our Saviour who gave his blood for us, we would have to attribute this to that man.⁴

² *On The Unity of Christ* (McGuckin, pp.73-4)

³ *On The Unity of Christ* (McGuckin, p.89)

⁴ *On The Unity of Christ* (McGuckin, pp.111-2)