

Q Would you happen to know the history of the Introduction to the Creed, “We exalt you mother of True Light...”

A In the year 428, Nestorius the archbishop of Constantinople taught that there were two distinct persons in Christ. One is divine and beyond the reach of human frailty, and the other is human and susceptible to all the fragility of the flesh. The divine Christ could neither suffer nor die, and therefore, on the Cross it was the human Christ alone who suffered and died apart from the divine Christ. As a consequence, he denied the Virgin Mary the title “Mother of God” (Theotokos), declaring her instead to be “Mother of Christ” (Christotokos).

When reports of this heretic teaching reached St. Cyril, the 24th Patriarch of the Church of Alexandria, he ordered an emergency meeting with the Holy Synod. A unanimous agreement was reached. St. Cyril sent a letter to Nestorius known as “The Third Epistle of St. Cyril to Nestorius.”

In it he wrote “The Twelve Anathemas of St. Cyril.” In these anathemas, St. Cyril excommunicated anyone who followed the teachings of Nestorius. For example, “Anyone who dares to deny the Holy Virgin the title Theotokos is Anathema!” Nestorius however, would still not repent and so this led to the convening of the First Ecumenical Council of Ephesus (431 AD), presided by our Patriarch St Cyril.

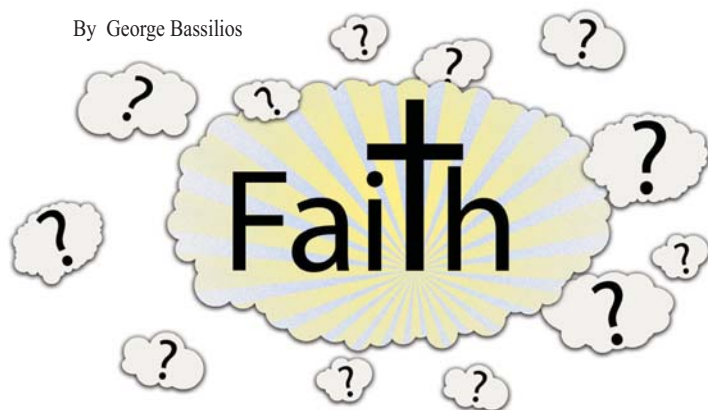
This council confirmed the teachings of St. Athanasius, that there is “One Nature and One Hypostasis for God the Word Incarnate” and confirmed the title of the Holy Ever-Virgin Mary as “Mother of God”. It also stated that anyone who separated Christ into two hypostases was anathema. As a result the introduction to the creed was formulated as follows:

“We magnify you O Mother of the True Light and we glorify you O saint and Mother of God (Theotokos) for you have borne unto us the Saviour of the world. Glory to you O our Master and King: Christ, the pride of the Apostles, the crown of the martyrs, the rejoicing of the righteous, the firmness of the churches and the forgiveness of sins. We proclaim the Holy Trinity in One Godhead: we worship Him, we glorify Him, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord bless us, Amen.”

Q “Is it not written in your law, ‘I have said Ye are gods’?” My question is concerning John 10:30-36 Why did Christ quote Psalm 82 in defense of the Jews’ charge of blasphemy against Him? I’ve heard many alternative Christian interpretations as well as the heretical ones. Please share your ideas with me.

A This text should not be used to support the view that we are (or can become) little gods, for such an interpretation is contrary to the overall context. Christ was not speaking to pantheists (who believe that God is everything and everything is God) or polytheists (who believe in many gods). Rather, he is addressing strict Jewish monotheists who believe that only the Creator of the universe is God. So, his statement should not be taken out of this monotheistic context and given a pantheistic or polytheistic twist.

Jesus’ statement must be understood as part of his overall reasoning here which is an *a fortiori* argument: If God even called human judges ‘gods,’ then how much more can I call myself the Son of God. Christ had just pronounced himself one with the Father, saying, “I and My Father are one”



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(John 10:30). The Jews wanted to stone Him because they thought He was blaspheming, making Himself to be equal with God (John 10:31-33).

Jesus responded by quoting Psalm 82:6 which says, “I said, “You are gods” So, Jesus reasoned, if human judges could be called “gods,” then why couldn’t the Son of God be called “God”?

Note that not everyone is called “gods” but only a special class of persons, namely, judges about whom Jesus said, they are those to “whom the word of God came” (John 10:35). Jesus was showing that if the Old Testament scriptures could give some status to divinely appointed judges, why should they find it unbelievable that he should call himself the Son of God?

These judges were “gods” in the sense that they stood in God’s place, judging even life and death matters. They were not called “gods” because they were divine beings. Indeed, the text Christ cites (Psalm 82) goes on to say, that they were “men” and would “die” (Psalm 82:7).

It also affirms that they were “children of the Most High,” (Psalm 82:6) but not because they were of the essence of God Himself.

It is possible, as many scholars believe that when the psalmist said to the unjust judges, “You are gods,” He was speaking in irony. He was saying, I have called you ‘gods,’ but in fact you will die like the men that you really are. If this is so, then when Jesus alluded to this psalm in John 10, He was saying that what the Israelite judges were called in irony and judgment, He is in reality. Christ was giving a defense for His own deity, not for the deification of man.

St Augustine says: “If the word of God came to men, that they might be called gods, how can the very Word of God, who is with God, be otherwise than God? If by the word of God men become gods, if by fellowship they become gods, can He by whom they have fellowship not be God? If lights which are lit are gods, is the light which enlightens not God? If through being warmed in a way by saving fire they are constituted gods, is He who gives them the warmth other than God? If, then, the word of God makes you gods, how can the Word of God be otherwise than God?”

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If you have a question about our faith, send it

BY MAIL:

Mighty Arrows: Q&A FAITH
P.O. BOX 1005
Colleyville, TX 76034

BY E-MAIL:

mightyarrowsmagazine@suscopts.org
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