

Synod of Carthage(418)

1st Council at Ephesus (431)



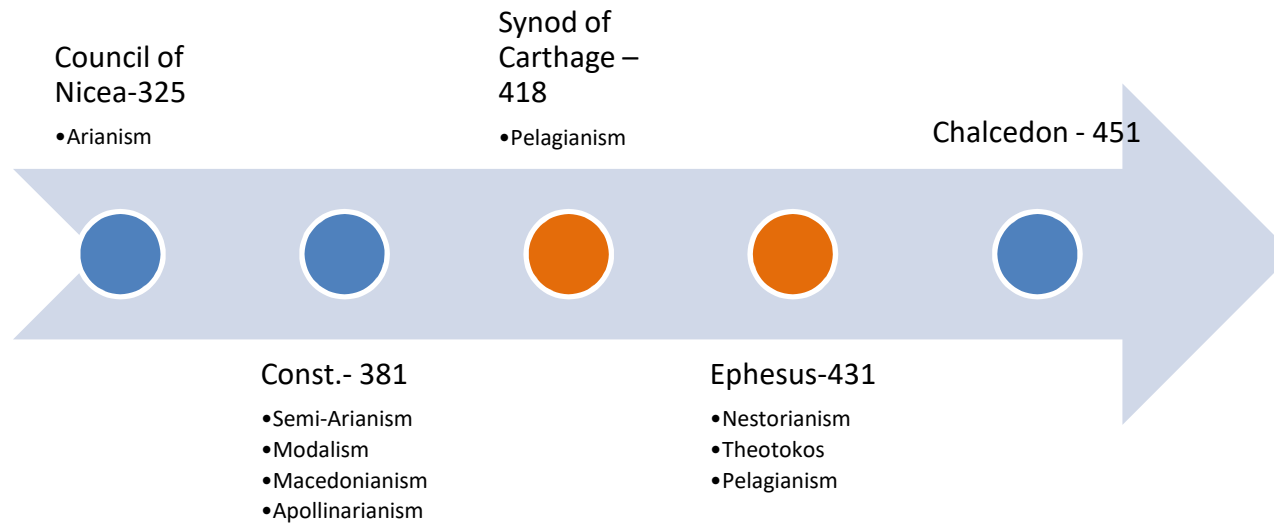
Icon of St. Gregory the Theologian, fresco from Kariye Camii in Istanbul, Turkey

**Theologian, Doctor of the Church,
Great Hierarch, Cappadocian Father,
Ecumenical Teacher**

Born	c. 329 Arianzus, Cappadocia, Roman Empire
Died	25 January 390 (aged c. 61) Arianzus, Cappadocia, Roman Empire



Ecumenical Councils & Heresies Addressed



Pelagianism

BACKGROUND:

Pelagius was a monk b. 350 in Britain. He moved to Rome where he observed moral laxity among Christians. In response, Pelagius developed an *optimistic theology* of human nature: pleading for moral reformation.

He did not accept that God would call us to not sin, without giving us free will and the ability to avoid sin.

“God would not command anything that would be impossible for humans to carry out.”

Pelagius reacted to Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, Matt 5:48 “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” - This must mean that perfection is within our reach. We have unconditional free will and personal responsibility.

NO SUCH THING AS ORIGINAL SIN:

Adam’s sin does not affect us. We are born sinless, as was Adam.

Sin is in the action when we choose to sin.

There was no effect from Adam’s fall, no transmission of guilt.

WHAT ABOUT GRACE?

Pelagius believed that God’s grace is not particular or individuated, but was the general ability God gives to all men to be able to choose and act morally.

Pelagianism - 2

PELAGIANISM, SUMMARIZED BY CELESTIUS:

1. Adam was created mortal and he would have died, whether he sinned or not.
2. Adam's sin injured himself alone, not the human race.
3. The law, as well as the gospel, leads to the kingdom.
4. There were men without sin before Christ's coming.
5. Newborn infants are without sin.

VIGOROUS OPPOSITION:

Augustine, bishop of Hippo, strenuously objected and formulated responses that held to orthodox views of man's incapacity to not sin.

In *On Nature and Grace*, he cites Gal 2:21 "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose."

SO WHAT HAPPENED?

A synod of N. Africa bishops in Carthage in 418 approved 9 canons condemning Pelagianism. And at Ephesus in 431, followers of Pelagius were condemned.

Pelagianism - 3

DISCUSSION

- A. Some form of Pelagianism is the default position of most people. Most attempt to attain salvation through their own efforts. Why do you think that is?
- B. Which of these beliefs is most responsible for personal Pelagianism ?
 - 1. Freedom is independence from God's sovereignty.
 - 2. Original sin is false. We are all born good.
 - 3. Sin is only in our will, when we choose to act sinfully.
 - 4. Grace as unmerited favor from God is unknown, rejected, or ignored.
- C. In the New Heaven and the New Earth, when Satan, sin and death are done away with, is it really freedom not to have a choice to sin anymore?
- D. Is there any aspect of Pelagianism that seems attractive to you? Its emphasis on morals? Optimism? If not, why not?

The Development of Orthodox Christology

After formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity, (viz. the Nicene Creed) attention turned to the nature of Jesus Christ.

We saw this in Constantinople with the rejection and condemnation of Apollinarius, who taught that Jesus had only a divine mind. He rejected subordinationism, which holds that the Son, proceeding from the Father, is not fully divine.

The implications of such a view are striking. Gregory of Nazianzus argued: “What has not been assumed has not been healed.”

Christ had to have a fully human mind. If all of Adam (including his mind) fell and was ruined, then the second Adam, Christ, too must put on all that Adam possessed in order to save humanity.

Applying *reductio ad absurdum*, if you take away Jesus’ human mind, than the Logos could have just as easily put on the flesh “of an ox, or some other brute creature.”

Then came Nestorius, 5th century bishop of Constantinople, whose heretical views were addressed at Ephesus.

What Is Nestorianism?

Rather than, like Apollinarius, ascribing to Jesus Christ a fully divine nature and only a partly human one, Nestorius held that the full natures of divinity and humanity both existed separately but joined to each other, in Christ.

He was not two people. He had two complete natures.

This idea was based on good intentions

It protected the full divinity of Christ. His divine nature had divine attributes, like impassibility (lack of the capacity to suffer). When Jesus' suffered, it was in his human, not divine, nature.

It guarded the efficacy of the atonement, by protecting the full humanity of Christ, so that he could suffer fully in order to atone on the cross.

What Is Nestorianism – 2 ?

The orthodox response, from Bishop Cyril of Alexandria, found fault with the idea that Jesus only suffered in his human nature.

Divine suffering and divine sacrifice, needed for such an atonement, was absent.

Cyril, too, objected to his divine nature being cloaked by his human one. Jesus' divine nature was hidden, and Jesus' human nature was all we could see.

How then could Christ be worshipped as the “express image of God” or “the glory among us?”