

Nestorius the patriarch, the fourth in succession from Chrysostom, as bishop of Constantinople, was a native of Germanicia. At first a cloistered monk, he afterwards became a presbyter of Antioch. At the invitation of the Eastern emperor, he assumed the patriarchate, A. D. 428. To the advantages of a fine voice and a commanding person, he added an almost irresistible eloquence, and a mind richly stored with all the theological learning of the time. As a disciple of the Syrian school of Antioch, he had been taught to discriminate between the divine and human natures of Christ, and to abhor their confusion. The Virgin Mary was, to him, Christotokos, the mother of Christ, not Theotokos, the mother of God. Hence he was charged by his opponents with making two persons out of two natures, and thus denying the proper personal divinity of Christ. The Byzantine clergy, perhaps secretly displeased with the intrusion of a stranger, were in general bitterly opposed to the uncompromising rigidity of his doctrine; and after a long contest, marked by many vicissitudes, he finally succumbed to the jealous enmity of a rival patriarch, Cyril of Alexandria. He was condemned at the Council of Ephesus, deprived of his see, and banished. He died, an exile, in Egypt. His tenets spread widely in the East, and Nestorian communities are still to be found, partly on Turkish, partly on Persian territory, in the wild and almost inaccessible regions of Eastern Kurdistan, and, on Persian soil, in the highly fertile plain to the west of the Lake of Urmia.