

isting. It took its rise in the fifth century. Nestorius, from whom it derived its name, was a native of Syria, and was made bishop of Constantinople, A. D. 428. Having warmly opposed the Apollinarian heresy, which lost sight of the distinction between the divine and human natures of Christ, and represented his divinity as occupying the place and performing the functions of a human soul, and having espoused the views of those who, maintaining that the divine nature of Christ was not confounded nor blended with his humanity, scrupled to apply to the Virgin Mary the epithet of *Mother of God*, he provoked the jealousy and opposition of the ambitious and turbulent Cyril, bishop of Alexandria, at whose instigation he was arraigned for heresy. It is not, perhaps, to be questioned, that Nestorius was chargeable with speculating too boldly upon these mysterious themes, in regard to which the human mind must be content to know the *fact* as revealed by inspiration, without inquiring as to the *manner of the fact*. Still, for ought that appears, there is reason for believing that his views were correct in the main: and the motive by which he seems to have been actuated was entitled to the highest commendation,—a wish, namely, to check the growing superstition of the age, and to prevent idolatrous homage from being offered to a departed mortal. The truth is, he did not even plead guilty to the charge of being unwilling to apply the above title to the Virgin, if it was properly understood. He said, “I have often declared that, if one more simple among you, or any others, is pleased with this word, I have no objection to it, so be that he make not the Virgin God.” And with reference to the other charge which was brought against him, of holding that there were not only two natures, but two persons in Christ, (though even this language might possibly have been used in a sense which would not have implied any serious heresy), he distinctly denied it: and he continued to do so to the end of his life. To Cyril, his enemy, he wrote thus:—“I approve that

you preach a distinction of nature in respect to the divinity and humanity, and a conjunction of them in one person.”—And to another prelate he said, “of the two natures there is one authority, one virtue, one power, and one person, according to one dignity.” The opportunity, however, for humbling the occupant of the see of Constantinople which had begun to eclipse its patriarchates was too good to be lost; and, accordingly, insufficient as were the grounds for proceeding against him, he was, through the influence of Cyril, condemned by an *ex parte* council without being heard in self-defence, excommunicated, hurled from the patriarchal throne of Constantinople, and banished to Arabia Petræa; whence, after a four year’s residence near Antioch he was transported to one of the Oases of Lybia, and died in Upper Egypt. It is instructive to look back upon the subtle and metaphysical distinctions on which the ecclesiastical censures of that age were grounded: and not less melancholy to discover that the unhappy contests which disturbed the church at that early period of its history, and led to the most calamitous consequences, rather proceeded from motives of jealousy, and ambition, than a sincere and disinterested regard for the truth. “Many, nay the greatest part of writers, both ancient and modern,” says Mosheim, “after a thorough examination of this matter, have positively concluded that the opinions of Nestorius, and of the council which condemned them, were the same in effect: that their difference was in words only, and that the whole blame of this unhappy controversy was to be charged upon the turbulent spirit of Cyril, and his aversion to Nestorius.”

As might have been supposed, the excommunicated bishop of Constantinople was regarded by thousands as an injured man. The doctors of the church in Syria,—many of whom had, like him, been disciples of Theodorus of Mopsuestia (from whom Nestorius is supposed to have imbibed his opinions), participated generally in his views; and after his