



Diodorus's Concept of Insight; The Nestorian Controversy: Hypostatic Union Defined; The Council of Chalcedon; Cyril Distorts Nestorius's Teachings

Insight is the ability to perceive both the literal historical facts in a text, as well as the spiritual (theological) reality to which these facts point. Diodorus did not down play the literal meaning in favor of a hidden spiritual one, like the Alexandrians; rather, he argued that, like an image, the historical sense directly corresponded to the spiritual (theological) sense. In his concept of *theōria*, the prophet's vision and the interpreter's insight encompassed more than what is immediately evident in the bare historical details of the text.

Diodorus laid the foundation for the later articulation of the illumination of the Spirit that allows the interpreter to perceive the overall theological unity and contemporary relevance of the Scriptures. (p. 146)

Many regard Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350-428) as the greatest interpreter of the school of Antioch. He was the most adamant in rejecting the allegorical method of Origen and the Alexandrians, the most extreme in emphasizing historical-grammatical exegesis, and consequently, the most original in his exegetical conclusions. His commentary on the epistles of Paul is the first and almost the last exegetical work produced in the ancient church that bears any similarity to modern exegetical commentaries.

Like Diodorus, he challenged the nonhistorical aspect of the allegorical method ... in which he argued that Origen deprived biblical history of its reality, seen most clearly in his denial of the historicity of Adam. Theodore argued that Origen's denial of the reality of the fall of Adam destroyed the reality of redemption. (p. 147)

16. The description of Diodorus's system of biblical analysis reminds us of a point made earlier in our study that bears repeating here. The view that biblical interpretation is both a science and an art was obviously held by Diodorus in the fourth century and adopted by the theologians of the Reformation and beyond. These two concepts are stated as a principle by:

Ramm, Bernard. *Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics*. 3d rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), 9:

Hermeneutics is a *science* in that it can determine certain principles for discovering the meaning of a document. These principles are not a mere list of rules but bear organic connection to each other. It is also an *art* because principles or rules can never be applied mechanically but involve the skill of the interpreter.

17. The school at Antioch developed the system of hermeneutics that was intended by the Holy Spirit and made clear by the human writers. The literal-grammatical-historical method leads to the harmony of the Scripture while the allegorical method does not.
18. When the allegorical method caused contradictions to occur, the school of Alexandria would resolve the issue by forcing harmony by means of allegory.
19. Whereas the Alexandrians were all allegory all the time, the Antiochians recognized allegory and metaphor when the literal method indicated these were the intent of the writer.
20. Nevertheless, the school of Antioch lost its influence in the sixth century because of a theological controversy having to do with the two natures of Christ.
21. The two natures of Christ are defined by the post-Reformation term of "hypostatic union."



22. The word “hypostatic” is the adjectival form of the Greek noun **ὑπόστασις**, **hypostasis** which means “the real essence or nature of an individual.”
23. The Bible presents the doctrine that Jesus Christ had two real essences or *natures*: (1) divine and (2) human. The precise definition of the union of these two natures in the person of Christ is stated by:

Thieme, R. B., Jr. *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*. 3d ed. (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 1974), 78:

Hypostatic union. The presence of two natures, undiminished deity and true humanity, in the one person of Jesus Christ. Both natures are inseparably united without loss or mixture of separate identity, without loss or transfer of properties or attributes, the union being personal and eternal.

24. A controversy arose between the schools of Alexandria and Antioch regarding how these two natures were to be defined. How this conflict played out is summarized for us by:

Elwell, Walter A. (ed.). *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 758-59:

Nestorius, Nestorianism. In 428 Nestorius \ne-stōr' ē-as\ preached a series of sermons in which he attacked the popular attribution of the title *theotokos* [θεοτόκος] (God-bearing) [or, “mother of God,” (Liddell and Scott, 792)] to the Virgin Mary. As a representative of Antioch’s school of Christology, he demurred at what he understood to be in that title a mixing of the human and divine natures in Christ.

25. In an effort to combat this erroneous concept, Nestorius “stressed the independence of the divine and human natures of Christ and in effect suggested that they were two persons” [*Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia*, 7:269].
26. Cyril, Nestorius’s counterpart at the school of Alexandria, attacked Nestorius for heresy. This ultimately resulted in the famous church council being called in Chalcedon \kal' sa-dän\ (Turkey) in 451 to resolve the dispute. This resulted in a formal statement regarding the hypostatic union. Details are provided again by:

Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 540:

Hypostatic Union. The doctrine of the hypostatic union, first set forth officially in the definition of faith produced by the Council of Chalcedon, concerns the union of the two natures of deity and humanity in the one person of Jesus Christ. It can be stated as follows: In the incarnation of the Son of God, a human nature was inseparably united forever with the divine nature in the one person of Jesus Christ, yet with the two natures remaining distinct, whole, and unchanged, without mixture or confusion so that the one person, Jesus Christ, is truly God and truly man.

Several important Christological issues are highlighted by this doctrine: (1) The unipersonality of the Savior. Nestorianism, which divided the natures as persons, is ruled out. There is only one who is at the same time God and man. (2) The continuity of the Savior’s personality. Jesus Christ is the same person who was the preexistent Logos, the Son of God. The hypostatic union excludes the independent personal subsistence of the human nature. (3) The complexity of the Savior’s personality. It is no longer the divine nature alone which is expressed in his person. The incarnate Christ is *theanthrōpos*, the God-Man. (4) The distinction of the natures. A (third “person”) is excluded. (5) The perfection of the natures. Every Christology which diminishes either the deity or the humanity of Jesus Christ would be considered inadequate from the standpoint of this doctrine.

Jesus Christ is truly, perfectly, and wholly God, and he is truly, perfectly, and wholly man.



This doctrine was offered as a precise description of the incarnation recorded in Scripture, drawn from the greatest extent of biblical data and making use of whatever language that might help in that descriptive task. The considered biblical data include all the major passages on the incarnation, such as Philippians 2:6-11; John 1:1-14; Romans 1:2-5; 9:5; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 2:14; and 1 John 1:1-3.

27. This council at Chalcedon was the catalyst for the decline of the school of Antioch and a transition away from its literal-grammatical-historical system of hermeneutics over to the allegorical method of the school of Alexandria.

Couch, 149:

Unfortunately, the school of Antioch began to lose its hermeneutical influence in the fourth and fifth centuries as a result of theological controversies. When some of its teachers were accused of departing from orthodoxy in the Nestorian controversy, the school lost some of its credibility. Its loss of hermeneutical influence was further aggravated when the church split into Eastern and Western segments. Without the opposition of Antioch to keep it in check, the school of Alexandria grew in power and influence, and the allegorical method became more prevalent. By the Middle Ages [c. 500-1600], the allegorical method had become the dominant hermeneutical approach. The church would not begin to be loosened from its grip again until the Reformation.