

# St. Severus: Life and Christology



# Overview

- Biography
- Christology
- Why is it so important?
- Some Theological Questions
- Whom are we Addressing in our Prayers?
- More Theological Questions
- Heresies
- Chalcedon
- St. Severus' Christology

# Biography

- Born in 465 in Sozopolis, Turkey into a wealthy family
- Paternal grandfather (name was also Severus) was Metropolitan of Sozopolis and attended the Council of Ephesus in 431
- After the death of his father, studied in Alexandria
- There, he was introduced to the writings of St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory of Nazianzus (Theologian)
- In 486, moved to Beirut to study philosophy and Roman law where he was influenced by a group of Christian students
- Was baptized in 488 (23 years old) in Tripoli

# Biography

- After baptism, he was qualified as a lawyer, but eventually became a monk at St. Romanus Monastery in Palestine
- Lived in the wilderness of Palestine until 508 (about 20 years)
- Was expelled for rejecting Chalcedon and insisting on the Christology of St. Dioscorus
- Fled to Constantinople until 511 when he was permitted to return to his monastery
- Elected as Patriarch of Antioch on November 6, 512 (age 47) after Flavian II was deposed for not rejecting Chalcedon

# Biography

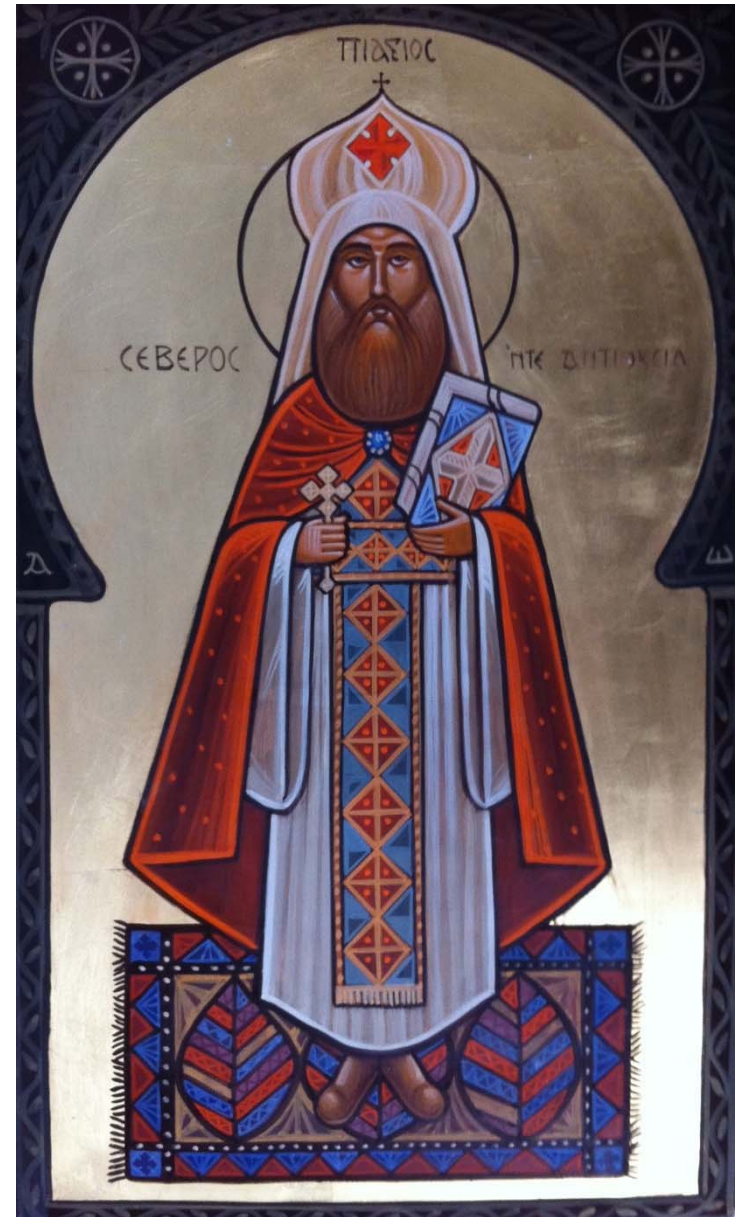
- Continued ascetic life as patriarch: sent away the many cooks from the papal residence and demolished existing baths
- Warned his people against attending the races and theaters
- Widely known as “the crown of the Syrians”
- Was summoned to Constantinople by Emperor Justinian who attempted to persuade him to accept Chalcedon
- When St. Severus refused, the Emperor planned to have him killed

# Biography

- St. Theodora, the Emperor's wife, intervened and urged him to flee the city
- St. Theodora was the daughter of a Syrian priest who was an opponent of Chalcedon
- Fled to Egypt disguised as a simple monk travelling from monastery to monastery
- Lived in the home of a layman, Dorotheus
- Departed in the city of Sakha on February 21 (Amshir 14), 538 (73 years old)
- Body was buried at the Monastery of El-Zugag

# Missing Qourban

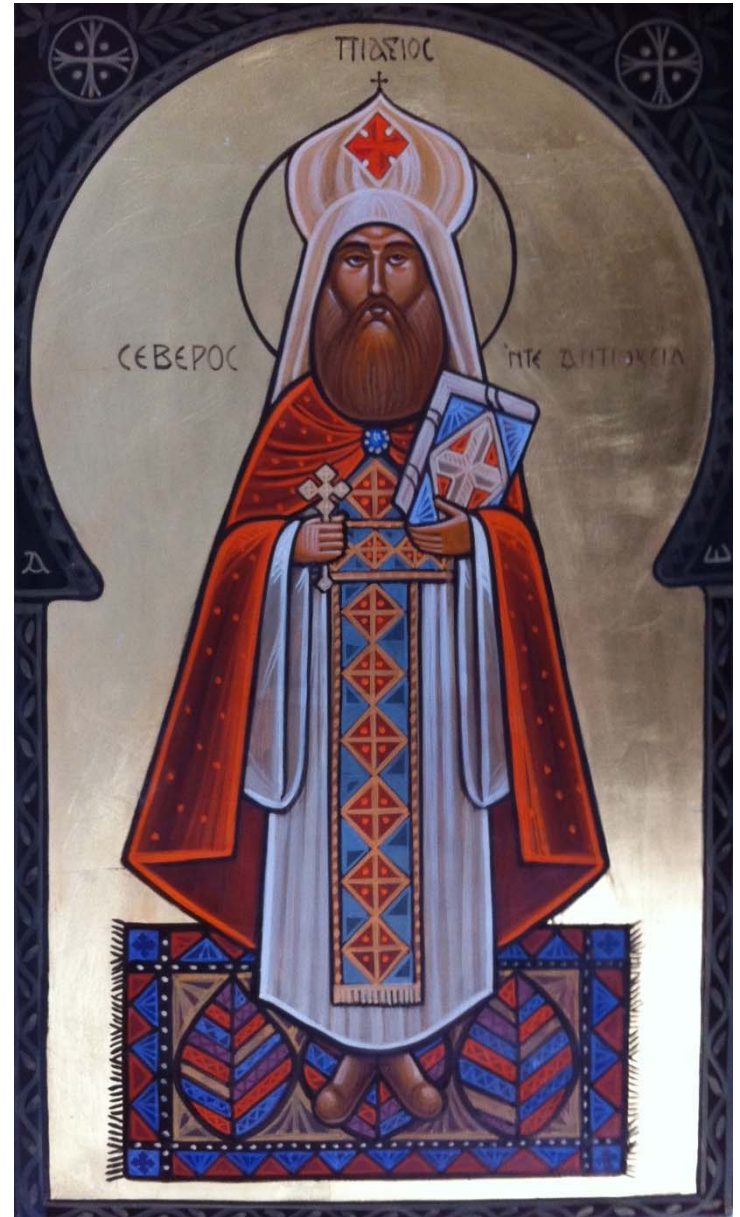
One day, he went to the desert of Scete, at Wadi-El Natroun, and he entered the church in a uniform of a stranger monk and a great miracle took place at that time. It came to pass, that after the priest had placed the bread (Qourban) on the altar and gone around the church offering the incenses, and after the reading of the Epistles and the Gospel,





# Missing Korban

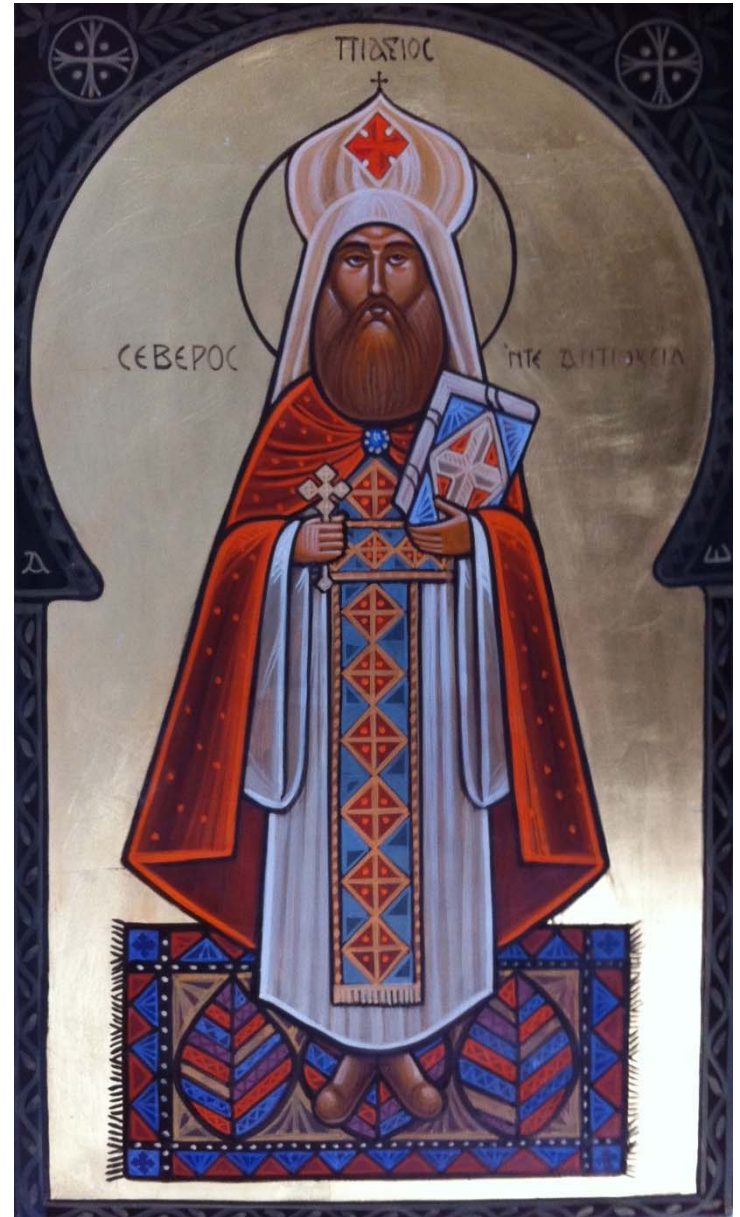
he lifted off the Ebrosharin (altar covering), and did not find the Qourban in the paten; so, the priest was disturbed and wept. He turned towards the worshipers saying, “O my brethren, I did not find El-Qourban in the paten, and I know not whether this thing has happened because of my sin or because of your sin.”





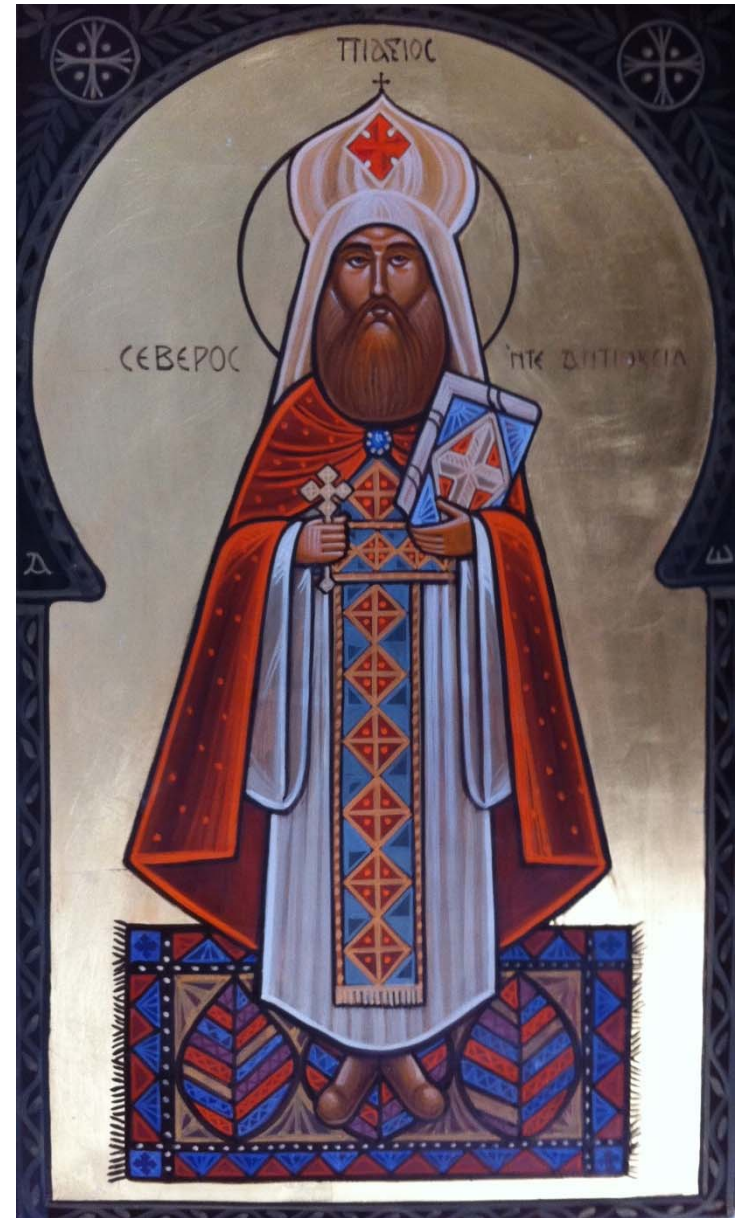
# Missing Korban

The people wept; and straightaway, the angel of the Lord appeared to the priest and told him, “This has happened not because of your sin or because of the sin of the worshipers but because you offered El-Qourban in the presence of the Patriarch.” The priest replied, “And where is he, O my Lord?” The angel pointed towards St. Severus.



# Missing Korban

St. Severus was standing in a corner of the church and the priest recognized him by the grace of the Holy Spirit. The priest came to Abba Severus, who commanded him to continue the liturgy after they brought him to the altar with great honor. When the priest had gone up to the altar he found the offering on the paten as before. They all praised God and glorified His Holy Name.



# Christology

- The study of the Lord Christ
  - Deals mainly with the nature and person of the Lord
  - Also, covers His work, particularly atoning work on the Cross
  - His activities and ministries
- Similar to the other “–ologies”
  - Biology: the study of life
  - Psychology: the study of life or the soul
  - Anesthesiology: the study of anesthesia

# Why is it so important?

- Our salvation depends on a sound Biblical understanding of the person of Jesus Christ
- If the Lord Christ was not who He claimed to be, then His atonement was a deficient payment for sin
- If He was not fully man, then how did He die? Was it then only a partial death? Then it would be a partial payment.
- If He was only divine, then how could there have been a death in the first place?

# Some Questions

- Did God die?
  - God died in the flesh
  - The Son of God died in the flesh
  - The Second Person of the Trinity died
  - The Lord Jesus Christ died
- Did God hunger?
- Did God become tired?
- Did God rise from the dead?

# Whom are we Addressing?

- “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, who was crucified for us...”
- The Thanksgiving Prayer:
  - “Let us give thanks to the beneficent and merciful God, the Father of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ...”
- Agpeya Litany:
  - “O heavenly king, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth

# More Questions

- When the union occurred, did one nature dominate the other at all times?
- Did one nature dominate at times while the other took a back seat?
- Did both natures exist simultaneously?
- Did the extinction of each nature's particular existence occur?
- Did the two natures work independently or in harmony?



# Heresies: Monophysite

- Mono: one; physite: nature
- One nature: the human nature was absorbed into the divine nature or only divine
- “Jesus Christ, who is identical with the Son, is one person and one hypostasis in one nature: divine.”
- Appollinaris: Jesus could not have had a human mind; rather, Jesus had a human body and lower soul (the seat of the emotions) but a divine mind; declared to be a heresy at Constantinople in 381
- Eutyches: the human nature of Christ was overcome by the divine; Christ’s divinity consumed His humanity as the ocean consumes a drop of vinegar; Christ was of two natures but not in two natures; he was of the same essence of the Father but not of the same essence of man

# Heresies: Dyophysite (Nestor)

- Dyo: two; physite: nature
- Emphasized distinction between the human and divine natures of the Lord Christ
- “Jesus Christ, who is not identical with the Son but personally united with the Son, who lives in him, is one hypostasis and one nature: human”
- Two persons living in the same body
- Two wills and two lines of action
- Rejected the title Theotokos for St. Mary, but called her “the mother of Christ” or Christokos
- St. Cyril argued that this undermined the unity of Christ’s divinity and humanity in Incarnation
- Condemned at Council of Ephesus in 431

# Miaphysite

- Mia: united; physite: nature
- Cyrrillian definition: “one nature of the incarnate Word of God”
- A unique nature; after the union, we no longer speak of two natures
- “There is no share in any blame that one should recognise, for example, that the flesh is one thing in its own nature, apart from the Word which sprang from God and the Father, and that the Only-Begotten is another again, with respect to his own nature. Nevertheless to recognise these things is not to divide the natures after the union.” –St. Cyril

# Miaphysite

- Christ has one nature and one will, but that nature is still of both a divine and human character and retains all the characteristics of both
- Like burning iron
- Liturgy Confession: “He made It one with His divinity without mingling, without confusion, and without alteration”
- We say that we always rejected Monophysitism
- We prefer to say that we are non-Chalcedonians

# Terms

- Ousia: substance
- Physis: nature
- Hypostasis: being (أقنوم)
- Prosopon: person

# Chalcedon: 451

Eastern (Byzantine) Orthodox (15)		Oriental Orthodox (6)
Constantinople	Georgia	Coptic
Alexandria	Cyprus	Armenian
Antioch	Greek	Syriac
Jerusalem	Poland	Ethiopian
Russian	Albania	Eritrean
Serbia	Czech lands & Slovakia	Malankara Syrian
Romania	Orth. Church in America	
Bulgaria		

# Chalcedon

## Chalcedonian Creed:

- “The Lord Christ is the eternal Son of God... made known in two natures without confusion [i.e. mixture], without change, without division, without separation, the difference of the natures being by no means removed because of the union, but the property of each nature being preserved and coalescing in one prosopon [person] and one hypostasis [subsistence]—not parted or divided into two prosopa [persons], but one and the same Son, only-begotten, divine Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.”



# St. Severus' Christology

Wrote three letters to Sergius where he quoted St. Cyril over 60 times:

- “nor has the nature of the Word passed over into the nature of the flesh, nor indeed has the nature of the flesh passed into that which is his, but while each one of them continues together in the particularity that belongs to the nature, and is thought of in accordance with the account which has just been given by us, the **inexpressible and ineffable union** shows us one nature of the son, but as I have said, incarnate.”

# St. Severus' Christology

- “For how will anyone divide walking upon the water? For to run upon the sea is foreign to the human nature, but it is not proper to the divine nature to use bodily feet. Therefore that action is of the incarnate Word, to whom belongs at the same time divine character and human, indivisibly.”

# St. Severus' Christology

## **Double Consubstantiality:**

- “Since the one Christ is one nature and hypostasis of God the Word incarnate from Godhead and manhood, it necessarily follows that the same is known at once as consubstantial with the Father as to Godhead and consubstantial with us as to manhood. The same is the Son of God and the Son of man. He is not, therefore, two sons, but he is one and the same son.”

# St. Severus' Christology

## Distinction in Thought Alone

- “Those, therefore, who confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is one (made up) of Godhead and manhood, and that He is one prosopon, one hypostasis, and one nature of the Word incarnate, recognize and affirm also the difference, integrity, and otherness of the natures, of which the one Christ is ineffably formed. As they perceive this by **subtle thought and contemplation of the mind**, they do not take it as a ground for dividing the Emmanuel into two natures after the union.”

# St. Severus' Christology

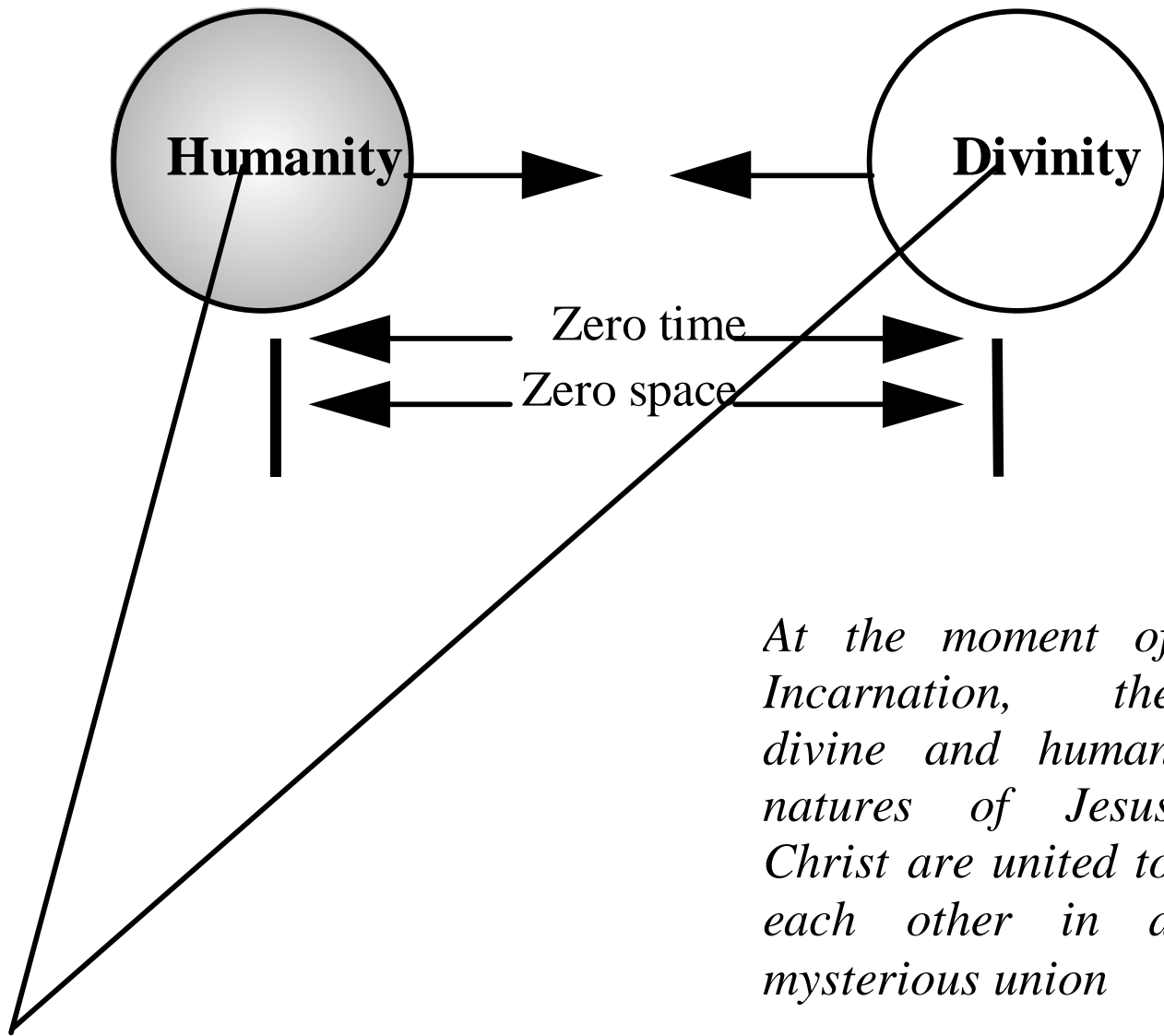
## Echoes St. Cyril:

- “Accordingly, whenever the manner of the Incarnation is closely considered, **the human mind doubtless sees the two**, ineffably and unconfusedly joined to each other in a union; but the mind in no wise divides them after they have been united, but believes and admits strongly that the one from both is God and Son and Christ and Lord.”

# St. Severus' Christology

## **St. Cyril, again:**

- “Therefore, we say that the two natures were united, from which there is the one and only Son and Lord, Jesus Christ, as we accept in our thoughts; but after the union since the distinction into two is now done away with, we believe that, there is one physis of the Son”



*'The eye of the mind'  
(Contemplation)*



# St. Severus' Christology

“There is **no error** in stating that Christ is of humanity and divinity, and that in union these differences persist. But there is error in setting up a humanity and a divinity with their own **separate activities** as though there were Christ the man and the Word of God, each perfect in a simple humanity or divinity and only united in some external manner. Following Severus' argument we see that it is not the saying that Immanuel has two natures which is condemned, but saying that he has these two natures and then **describing their activities separately**, as though there was God the Word acting as God in heaven and Christ the man acting as man on earth.

# St. Severus' Christology

Severus allows the naming of the natures. We can and must confess that Christ is human and divine, but we must not allow this Orthodox confession to be perverted such that we describe a man and the Word of God separately. It is God the Word who is this man Jesus.” –Peter Farrington

# Summary

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