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CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

AN INTRODUCTION

 WILEY-BLACKWELL

FIFTH EDITION

saints;]

10 the forgiveness of sins;

11 the resurrection of the flesh;

12 and eternal life.

The *Nicene creed* (more accurately known as the “Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed”) is a longer version of the creed which includes additional material relating to the person of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. In response to the controversies concerning the divinity of Christ, this creed includes strong affirmations of his unity with God, including the expressions “God from God” and “of one substance with the Father.” As part of its polemic against the Arians, the Council of Nicea (June 325) formulated a short statement of faith, based on a baptismal creed used at Jerusalem.

This creed was intended to affirm the full divinity of Christ against the Arian understanding of his creaturely status, and includes four explicit condemnations of Arian views, as well as its three articles of faith. As the full details of the proceedings of Nicea are now lost, we are obliged to rely on secondary sources (such as ecclesiastical historians, and writers such as Athanasius and Basil of Caesarea) for the text of this creed.

THE NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty, the maker of all things seen and unseen. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God; begotten from the Father; only-begotten – that is, from the substance of the Father; God from God; light from light; true God from true God; begotten not made; of one substance with the Father; through whom all things in heaven and on earth came into being; who on account of us human beings and our salvation came down and took flesh, becoming a human being; he suffered and rose again on the third day, ascended into the heavens; and will come again to judge the living and the dead. And in the Holy Spirit.

As for those who say that "there was when he was not," and "before being born he was not," and "he came into existence out of nothing," or who declare that the Son of God is of a different substance or nature, or is subject to alteration or change – the catholic and apostolic church condemns these.

The development of the creeds was an important element in the move toward achieving a doctrinal consensus within the early church. One area of doctrine which witnessed considerable development and controversy related to the person of Christ, to which we now turn.

The two natures of Jesus Christ: the Arian controversy

The two doctrines to which the patristic period may be argued to have made a decisive contribution relate to the person of Christ (an area of theology which, as we noted, is generally designated

"Christology") and the nature of the Godhead. These two developments are organically related to one another. By 325, the early church had come to the conclusion that Jesus was "of one substance" (*homoousios*) with God. (The term *homoousios* can also be translated as "one in being" or "consubstantial.")

This Christological statement can be seen as consolidating at the intellectual level the church's understanding of the spiritual importance of Jesus Christ to Christians. However, it posed a powerful challenge to simplistic conceptions of God. If Jesus Christ is recognized as "being of the same substance" as God, then the entire doctrine of God has to be reconsidered and reworked in the light of this belief. For this reason, the historical development of the doctrine of the Trinity dates from after the emergence of a Christological consensus within the church. Only when the divinity of Christ could be treated as an agreed and assured starting-point could theological speculation on the nature of God begin.

It may be noted that the Christological debates of the early church took place largely in the eastern Mediterranean world, and were conducted in the Greek language, and often in the light of the presuppositions of major Greek schools of philosophy. In practical terms, this means that many of the central terms of the Christological debates of the early church are Greek, often with a history of use within the Greek philosophical tradition.

The main features of patristic Christology will be considered in some detail on pp. 273–80, to which the reader is referred. At this early stage, however, we may summarize the main landmarks of the patristic Christological debate in terms of two schools, two debates, and two councils, as follows.

Schools

The *Alexandrian school* tended to place emphasis upon the divinity of Christ, and interpret that divinity in terms of "the word becoming incarnate." A scriptural text which was of central importance to this school is John 1: 14, "the word became flesh, and dwelt among us." This emphasis upon the idea of incarnation led to the festival

of Christmas being seen as especially important. The Antiochene school, however, placed a corresponding emphasis upon the humanity of Christ, and attached especial importance to his moral example (see pp. 277–9).

Debates

The Arian controversy of the fourth century is widely regarded as one of the most significant in the history of the Christian church. Arius (c.250–c.336) argued that those scriptural titles for Christ that appeared to point to his being of equal status with God were merely courtesy titles. Christ was to be regarded as a creature, although nevertheless as pre-eminent among other creatures.

This provoked a hostile response from Athanasius, who argued that the divinity of Christ was of central importance to the Christian understanding of salvation (an area of theology known as “soteriology”). Arius’s Christology was, he declared, inadequate soteriologically. Arius’s Christ could not redeem fallen humanity. In the end, Arianism (the movement associated with Arius) was declared to be heretical.

This matter having been settled, a further debate followed. The Apollinarian debate, which centered on Apollinarius of Laodicea (c.310–c.390), focused on the question of whether Christ was fully or partly human. A vigorous opponent of Arius, Apollinarius argued that Christ could not be regarded as being totally human. In Christ’s case, the human spirit was replaced by the divine *logos*. As a result, Christ did not possess full humanity. This position was regarded as severely deficient by writers such as Gregory of Nazianzus as it implied that Christ could not fully redeem human nature (see pp. 277–8).

Councils

The Council of Nicea (325) was convened by Constantine, the first Christian emperor, with a view to sorting out the destabilizing Christological disagreements within his empire. Constantine realized that the unity of the church was essential to the stability of the empire, and wanted to establish peace within the church over the issue of the

identity of Christ. The gathering held at Nicea (now the city of Iznik in modern-day Turkey) was the first “ecumenical council” (that is, an assembly of bishops drawn from the entire Christian world, whose decisions are still regarded as normative for the churches).

Nicea settled the Arian controversy by affirming that Jesus was *homoousios* (“one in being” or “of one substance”) with the Father, thus rejecting the Arian position in favor of a vigorous assertion of the divinity of Christ. The Council of Chalcedon (451), the fourth ecumenical council, confirmed the decisions of Nicea, and responded to new debates which had subsequently erupted over the humanity of Christ.

The doctrine of the Trinity

Once the Christological debates of the early church had been settled, the consequences of those decisions were explored. In this intensely creative and interesting period of Christian theology, the doctrine of the Trinity began to emerge in a recognizable form. The basic feature of this doctrine is that there are three persons within the Godhead – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – and that these are to be regarded as equally divine and of equal status. The coequality of Father and Son was established through the Christological debates leading up to the Council of Nicea; the divinity of the Spirit was established in the aftermath of this, especially through the writings of Athanasius and Basil of Caesarea.

The main trinitarian debates increasingly came to focus on the way in which the Trinity was to be understood, rather than its fundamental validity. Two quite distinct approaches gradually emerged, one associated with the eastern, and the other with the western, churches.

The eastern position, which continues to be of major importance within the Greek and Russian Orthodox churches of today, was developed especially by a group of three writers, based in modern-day Turkey. Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa, known collectively as the “Cappadocian fathers,” began their

reflections on the Trinity by considering the different ways in which the Father, Son, and Spirit are experienced. The *western* position, especially associated with Augustine of Hippo, began from the unity of God, and proceeded to explore the implications of the love of God for our understanding of the nature of the Godhead. These positions will be explored in greater detail at the appropriate point in this work (see pp. 245–7).

The doctrine of the Trinity represents a rare instance of a theological issue of concern to both the eastern and western churches. Our attention now shifts to two theological debates which were specifically linked with the western church, and have both come to be particularly associated with Augustine of Hippo.

The doctrine of the church: the Donatist controversy

A major controversy within the western church centered on the question of the holiness of the church. The Donatists were a group of native African Christians, based in modern-day Algeria, who resented the growing influence of the Roman church in northern Africa. For

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philosophers, such as Heraclitus or Socrates, thus had partial access to the truth, because of the manner in which the *Logos* is present in the world.

An idea of especial importance in this context is that of the *logos spermatikos*, which appears to derive from Middle Platonism. According to this idea, the divine *Logos* sowed seeds throughout human history. It is therefore to be expected that this "seed-bearing *Logos*" can be known, even if only in part, by non-Christians. Justin is therefore able to argue that Christianity builds upon and fulfills the hints and anticipations of God's revelation which are to be had through pagan philosophy. The *Logos* was known temporarily through the theophanies (that is, appearances or manifestations of God) in the Old Testament; Christ brings the *Logos* to its fullest revelation. Justin states this point clearly in his *Second Apology*:

Our religion is clearly more sublime than any human teaching in this respect: the Christ who has appeared for us human beings represents the *Logos* principle in all its fullness. [...] Whatever either lawyers or philosophers have said well, was articulated by finding and reflecting upon some aspect of the *Logos*. However, since they did not know the *Logos* – which is Christ – in its entirety, they often contradicted themselves.

The world of Greek philosophy is thus set firmly in the context of Christianity: it is a prelude to the coming of Christ, who brings to fulfillment what philosophy had hitherto known only in part.

It is in the writings of Origen (c.185–c.254) that *Logos*-Christology appears to find its fullest development. It must be made clear that Origen's Christology is complex, and that its interpretation at points is highly problematical. What follows is a simplification of his approach. In the incarnation, the human soul of Christ is united with the *Logos*. On account of the closeness of this union, Christ's human soul comes to share in the properties of the *Logos*. Nevertheless, Origen insists that, although both the *Logos* and Father are coeternal, the *Logos* is subordinate to the Father.

We noted above that Justin Martyr argued that the *Logos* was accessible to all, even if only in a fragmentary manner, but that its full disclosure only came in Christ. Related ideas can be found in other writers to adopt the *Logos*-illuminationist approach to revelation, in which God's act of revelation is compared to being enlightened by the "rays of God," which are caused by "the light which is the divine *Logos*." For Origen, both truth and salvation are to be had outside the Christian faith.

The Arian controversy

The process of exploring which religious and philosophical categories were most suitable for expressing the significance of Jesus of Nazareth reached a watershed in the fourth century. The controversy which forced the issue was precipitated by Arius (c.250–c.336), a priest in one of the larger churches in the great Egyptian city of Alexandria. Arius set out his views in a work known as the *Thalia* ("The Banquet"), which has not survived in its entirety. As a result, we know Arius's ideas primarily through the writings of his opponents.

The fundamental themes of Arius's teachings are not in dispute, even though they are known primarily through works which cite them in order to critique them. They are traditionally summarized as three basic statements.

- 1 The Son and the Father do not have the same essence (*ousia*). *William p. 104*
- 2 The Son is a created being (*ktisma* or *poiema*), even though he is to be recognized as first and foremost among them, in terms of origination and rank.
- 3 Although the Son was the creator of the worlds and must therefore have existed before them and before all time, there was nevertheless a time when the Son did not exist.

The most fundamental Arian belief was that Jesus Christ was not divine in any meaningful

sense of the term "creatures" – that is, unquestionably created by God. Christ, as *Logos*, was the agent of the world's creation. Yet John's gospel. Yet God for this purpose regarded as existing at a time when he was not. Father and Son are distinct, but consistent with Arius's view. Son is a creature, not God. Arius ten": the Son, like the Father, is from this one source. Arius critic Athanasius's statement.

God was not always God. God was all alone at first. Later did he become God? No, he existed. Everything was created by the *Logos* of God. The Son was brought into being. There was a time when he was not. Arius was brought into being at a beginning to his existence.

Arius is careful to be thought of as a creature. There is a distinction between the Son and other beings. The Son, however, is not as one among many beings, yet not a being. The implication is that the Son outranks other creatures. The New Testament as the "Son" are, as the Father is, an honorific, rather than a title. Of speaking about the Son, indeed referred to in a metaphorical way of speaking. Arius's position is in essence from all the following manner.

sense of the term. He was "first among the creatures" – that is, pre-eminent in rank, yet unquestionably a creature rather than divine. Christ, as *Logos*, was indeed the agent of the creation of the world, as stated in the Prologue to John's gospel. Yet the *Logos* was itself created by God for this purpose. The Father is thus to be regarded as existing before the Son. "There was a time when he was not." This statement places Father and Son on different levels, and is consistent with Arius's rigorous insistence that the Son is a creature. Only the Father is "unbegotten"; the Son, like all other creatures, derives from this one source of being. Arius's leading critic Athanasius reports him as making the following statements on this point.

God was not always a father. There was a time when God was all alone, and was not yet a father; only later did he become a father. The Son did not always exist. Everything created is out of nothing [...] so the *Logos* of God came into existence out of nothing. There was a time when he was not. Before he was brought into being, he did not exist. He also had a beginning to his created existence.

Arius is careful to emphasize that the Son is not to be thought of as identical to every other creature. There is a distinction of rank between the Son and other creatures, including human beings. The Son, he argued, is "a perfect creature, yet not as one among other creatures; a begotten being, yet not as one among other begotten beings." The implication seems to be that the Son outranks other creatures, while sharing their essentially created and begotten nature.

New Testament statements that refer to Jesus as the "Son" are, according to Arius, to be seen as honorific, rather than theologically precise, ways of speaking about Christ. Although Jesus Christ is indeed referred to as "Son" in Scripture, this metaphorical way of speaking is subject to the controlling principle of a God who is totally different in essence from all created beings – including the Son. Arius's position can be summarized in the following manner.

- 1 The Son is a creature, who, like all other creatures, derives from the will of God.
- 2 The term "Son of God" is thus a metaphor, an honorific term intended to underscore the rank of the Son among other creatures. It does not imply that Father and Son share the same being or status.
- 3 The status of the Son is itself a consequence not of the nature of the Son, but of the will of the Father.

Arius thus draws an absolute distinction between God and the created order. There are no intermediate or hybrid species. For Arius, God was totally transcendent and immutable. So how could such a God enter into history, and become incarnate? As a creature, the Son was changeable (*treptos*) and capable of moral development (*proteptos*), and subject to pain, fear, grief, and weariness. This is simply inconsistent with the notion of an immutable God. The notion of a changeable God seemed heretical to Arius. Furthermore, the notion that God the Son was divine seemed to compromise the fundamental themes of monotheism and the unity of God – themes which would re-emerge as central in early Islam.

Pursuing this line of argument, Arius emphasizes that the utter transcendence and inaccessibility of God precludes God from being known by any creature. For Arius, the Son is a creature, however elevated above all other creatures. Arius therefore argues that the Son cannot know the Father. "The one who has a beginning is in no position to comprehend or lay hold of the one who has no beginning." The radical distinction between Father and Son is such that the latter cannot know the former unaided. In common with all other creatures, the Son is dependent upon the grace of God to perform whatever function has been ascribed to him.

Arius thus affirmed the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth, declaring that he was supreme among the creatures. Like Ebionitism, Arius declined to accept that Jesus could be said to be divine in any meaningful sense of the term. Yet Ebionitism set out to interpret the significance of Jesus within

the framework of existing Jewish models of divine presence within humanity, particularly the notion of a prophet or spirit-filled individual. Arius, in contrast, sought to accommodate Jesus of Nazareth within the frameworks made available by the strict Greek philosophical monotheisms of his age, which precluded any notion of the incarnation as inconsistent with the changelessness and transcendence of God. Ebionitism and Arianism may appear to say similar things, but they begin from very different starting-points, and are guided by significantly different assumptions.

Arius is often said to have developed his position on the identity of Jesus of Nazareth on the basis of a preconceived philosophical position which declared that, as a matter of principle, God could not become incarnate. There is some truth in this point, but it is not quite the whole truth. Arius's concerns were partly apologetic since he clearly believed that many were being alienated from Christianity on account of its increasing emphasis upon an idea – the incarnation – which he believed many educated Greeks were unable to accept. Arius saw his approach to Christianity, in contrast, as representing a measured and judicious amalgam of philosophical sophistication and responsible biblical exegesis.

So why did this strongly rational approach to the identity of Jesus of Nazareth attract such vigorous criticism? Arius's most indefatigable critic was Athanasius of Alexandria (c.293–373). For Athanasius, Arius had destroyed the internal coherence of the Christian faith, rupturing the close connection between Christian belief and worship. There are two points of particular importance that underlie Athanasius's critique of Arius.

1 First, Athanasius argues that it is only God who can save. God, and God alone, can break the power of sin, and bring humanity to eternal life. The fundamental characteristic of human nature is that it requires to be redeemed. No creature can save another creature. Only the creator can redeem the creation. If Christ is not God, he is part of the problem, not its solution.

Having emphasized that it is God alone who can save, Athanasius then made a logical move which the Arians found difficult to counter. The New Testament and the Christian liturgical tradition alike regard Jesus Christ as savior. Yet, as Athanasius emphasized, only God can save. So how are we to make sense of this? The only possible solution, Athanasius argues, is to accept that Jesus is God incarnate. His argument could be summarized as follows.

- 1 No creature can redeem another creature.
- 2 According to Arius, Jesus Christ is a creature.
- 3 Therefore, according to Arius, Jesus Christ cannot redeem humanity.

Arius was firmly committed to the idea that Christ was the savior of humanity; Athanasius's point was not that Arius denied this, but that he rendered the claim incoherent. Salvation, for Athanasius, involves divine intervention. Athanasius thus argues that the biblical insight that the "Word became flesh" (John 1: 14) means that God entered into our human situation, in order to change it.

The second point that Athanasius makes is that Christians worship and pray to Jesus Christ. This pattern can be traced back to the New Testament itself, and is of considerable importance in clarifying early Christian understandings of the significance of Jesus of Nazareth. By the fourth century, prayer to, and adoration of, Christ were standard features of Christian public worship. Athanasius argues that if Jesus Christ were a creature, then Christians were guilty of worshipping a creature instead of God – in other words, they had lapsed into idolatry. Did not the Old Testament law explicitly prohibit the worship of anyone or anything other than God? Arius was not in disagreement with the practice of worshipping Jesus; he refused, however, to draw the same conclusions as Athanasius.

The Arian controversy had to be settled somehow, if peace was to be established within the church. Debate came to center upon two terms as possible descriptions of the relation of the Father

to the Son. The term "substance" or "of like substance" representing a judgment on the proximity between the Father and the Son, asserted without reservation on the precise nature of the relationship. However, the rival term "person" or "of person" gained the upper hand in one letter from the emperor. A very different understanding between Father and Son prompted Edmund Husserl's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, that never had so many single vowels. The Nicene Creed, 381 declared that the Son is "of the same substance" with the Father, since come to be with the Father, of Christological orthodoxy, Catholic, or Orthodox.

In turning to deal with Arius, we have to explore the features of Christology. It is to explore these in more detail with the views of the

The Arian Controversy

The outlook of the Arian controversy is to be seen in the significance of the incarnation of humanity. Jesus taking human being making them divine in terms of deification to what this soteriology put this another Nazareth is disclosed Jesus of Nazareth.

We could summarize the Alexandrian Christology in three lines: if human nature

to the Son. The term *homoiousios*, "of like substance" or "of like being," was seen by some as representing a judicious compromise, allowing the proximity between Father and Son to be asserted without requiring any further speculation on the precise nature of their relation. However, the rival term *homoousios*, "of the same substance" or "of the same being," eventually gained the upper hand. Though differing by only one letter from the alternative term, it embodied a very different understanding of the relationship between Father and Son. The fury of the debate prompted Edmund Gibbon to comment in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–88) that never had so much energy been spent over a single vowel. The Nicene creed – or, more accurately, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed – of 381 declared that Christ was "of the same substance" with the Father. This affirmation has since come to be widely regarded as a benchmark of Christological orthodoxy within all the mainstream Christian churches, whether Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox.

In turning to deal with Athanasius's response to Arius, we have begun to touch upon some of the features of the Alexandrian school of Christology. It is therefore appropriate now to explore these in more detail, and compare them with the views of the rival school of Antioch.

The Alexandrian school

The outlook of the Alexandrian school, to which Athanasius is to be assigned, focuses sharply on the significance of Christ as savior (Greek: *soter*) of humanity. Jesus Christ redeems humanity, by taking human beings up into the life of God, or making them divine, traditionally expressed in terms of *deification*. Christology gives expression to what this soteriological insight implies. Or, to put this another way, the *identity* of Jesus of Nazareth is disclosed through the *saving actions* of Jesus of Nazareth.

We could summarize the trajectory of Alexandrian Christology along the following lines: If human nature is to be deified, it must be

united with the divine nature. God must become united with human nature in such a manner that the latter is enabled to share in the life of God. This, the Alexandrians argued, was precisely what had happened in and through the incarnation of the Son of God in Jesus Christ. The Second Person of the Trinity assumed human nature, and by doing so, ensured its divinization. God became human in order that humanity might become divine.

Alexandrian writers thus placed considerable emphasis upon the idea of the *Logos* assuming human nature. The term "assuming" is important; a distinction is drawn between the *Logos* "dwelling within humanity" (as in the case of the Old Testament prophets), and the *Logos* taking human nature upon itself (as in the incarnation of the Son of God). Particular emphasis came to be placed upon John 1: 14 ("the Word became flesh"), which came to embody the fundamental insights of the school, and the liturgical celebration of Christmas. To celebrate the birth of Christ was to celebrate the coming of the *Logos* to the world, and its taking human nature upon itself in order to redeem it.

This clearly raised the question of the relation of the divinity and humanity of Christ. Cyril of Alexandria (c.378–444) is one of many writers within the school to emphasize the reality of their union in the incarnation. The *Logos* existed "without flesh" before its union with human nature; after that union, there is only one nature, in that the *Logos* united human nature to itself. This emphasis upon the one nature of Christ distinguishes the Alexandrian from the Antiochene school, which was more receptive to the idea of two natures within Christ. Cyril states this point as follows:

In declaring that the Word was made to "be incarnate" and "made human," we do not assert that there was any change in the nature of the Word when it became flesh, or that it was transformed into an entire human being, consisting of soul and body; but we say that the Word, in an indescribable and inconceivable manner, united personally to himself flesh endowed with a rational soul, and thus became a human being and was called the Son

of man. And this was not by a mere act of will or favor, nor simply adopting a role or taking to himself a person.

This raised the question of what kind of human nature had been assumed. Apollinarius of Laodicea (c.310–c.390) had anxieties about the increasingly widespread belief that the *Logos* assumed human nature in its entirety. It seemed to him that this implied that the *Logos* was contaminated by the weaknesses of human nature. How could the Son of God be allowed to be tainted by purely human directive principles? The sinlessness of Christ would be compromised, in Apollinarius's view, if he were to possess a purely human mind; was not the human mind the source of sin and rebellion against God? Only if the human mind were to be replaced by a purely divine motivating and directing force could the sinlessness of Christ be maintained. For this reason, Apollinarius argued that, in Christ, a purely human mind and soul were replaced by a divine mind and soul. "The divine energy fulfills the role of the animating soul and of the human mind" in Christ. The human nature of Christ is thus incomplete.

This idea appalled many of Apollinarius's colleagues. The Apollinarian view of Christ may have had its attractions for some; others, however, were shocked by its soteriological implications. How could human nature be redeemed, it was asked, if only part of human nature had been assumed by the *Logos*? Perhaps the most famous statement of this position was made by Gregory of Nazianzus (329–89), who stressed the redemptive importance of the assumption of human nature in its totality at the incarnation:

If anyone has put their trust in him as a human being lacking a human mind, they are themselves mindless and not worthy of salvation. For what has not been assumed has not been healed; it is what is united to his divinity that is saved. [...] Let them not grudge us our total salvation, or endue the Savior only with the bones and nerves and mere appearance of humanity.

The Antiochene school

The school of Christology that arose in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) differed considerably from its Egyptian rival at Alexandria. One of the most significant points of difference relates to the most text in which Christological speculation was set. The Alexandrian writers were motivated primarily by soteriological considerations. Concerned that deficient understandings of the person of Christ were linked with inadequate conceptions of salvation, they used ideas derived from secular Greek philosophy to ensure a picture of Christ that was consistent with the full redemption of humanity. As we have seen, the idea of the *Logos* was of particular importance, especially when linked with the notion of incarnation.

The Antiochene writers took a very different perspective at this point. Their concerns were primarily moral, rather than purely soteriological, and they drew much less significantly on the ideas of Greek philosophy. The basic trajectory of much Antiochene thinking on the identity of Christ can be traced along the following lines. On account of their disobedience, human beings exist in a state of corruption, from which they are unable to extricate themselves. If redemption is to take place, it must be on the basis of a new obedience on the part of humanity. Since humanity is unable to break free from the bonds of sin, God is obliged to intervene. This leads to the coming of the redeemer as one who unites humanity and divinity, and thus to the re-establishment of an obedient people of God.

The two natures of Christ are vigorously defended. Christ is at one and the same time both God and a real individual human being. Against the Alexandrian criticism that this was to deny the unity of Christ, the Antiochenes responded that they upheld that unity, while simultaneously recognizing that the one redeemer possessed both a perfect human and a perfect divine nature. There is a "perfect conjunction" between the human and divine natures in Christ. The complete unity of Christ is thus not inconsistent with his possessing two natures, divine and human.

Theodore of Mopsuestia, at this point, asserting that "comes from God the Father and united him to himself in this exact conjunction with God the Son, and worships him." This seems suspicious; this seems of "two sons" – that is, two single persons, but two divine. Yet this option was leading writers of the time (c.386–c.451), archbishops. Christ is, according to the name of the two natures.

Christ is indivisible in the fold in that he is both God and one in his sonship, but in that which is taken edge two Christs or two Lords; not one son and "only-begotten" and a first and second Christ.

So how did the Antiochenes view the mode of union of divinity and humanity in Christ? We have already seen a model which had been used at Alexandria, by which the *Logos* assumed flesh. What model was the Antiochene answer could be summarized as follows:

Alexandria: *Logos* assumed human nature.

Antioch: *Logos* assumed a human person.

Theodore of Mopsuestia, an Antiochene theologian, did not assume "human nature" as a specific human being. He suggested that instead of assuming a specific human nature, the *Logos* assumed a concrete human individual in his work. On the Incarnation, well, the *Logos* united the

Theodore of Mopsuestia (c.350–428) stressed this point, asserting that the glory of Jesus Christ "comes from God the *Logos*, who assumed him and united him to himself. [...] And because of this exact conjunction which this human being has with God the Son, the whole creation honors and worships him." The Alexandrians remained suspicious; this seemed to amount to a doctrine of "two sons" – that is, that Jesus Christ was not a single person, but two, one human and one divine. Yet this option is explicitly excluded by the leading writers of the school, such as Nestorius (c.386–c.451), archbishop of Constantinople. Christ is, according to Nestorius, "the common name of the two natures":

Christ is indivisible in that he is Christ, but he is twofold in that he is both God and a human being. He is one in his sonship, but is twofold in that which takes and that which is taken. [...] For we do not acknowledge two Christs or two sons or "only-begottens" or Lords: not one son and another son, not a first "only-begotten" and a new "only-begotten," not a first and second Christ, but one and the same.

So how did the Antiochene theologians envisage the mode of union of divine and human natures in Christ? We have already seen the "assumption" model which had gained the ascendancy at Alexandria, by which the *Logos* assumed human flesh. What model was employed at Antioch? The answer could be summarized as follows:

Alexandria: *Logos* assumes a general human nature.

Antioch: *Logos* assumes a specific human being.

Theodore of Mopsuestia is a good example of an Antiochene theologian who held that the *Logos* did not assume "human nature" in general but a specific human being. Theodore appears to suggest that instead of assuming a general or abstract human nature, the *Logos* assumed a specific concrete human individual. This seems to be the case in his work *On the Incarnation*: "In coming to indwell, the *Logos* united the assumed [human being]

as a whole to itself and made him to share with it in all the dignity in which the one who indwells, being the Son of God by nature, possesses."

So how are the human and divine natures related? Antiochene writers were convinced that the Alexandrian position led to the "mingling" or "confusion" of the divine and human natures of Christ. To avoid this error, they devised a manner of conceptualizing the relationship between the two natures which maintained their distinct identities. This "union according to good pleasure" involves the human and divine natures of Christ being understood to be rather like watertight compartments within Christ. They never interact or mingle with one another. They remain distinct, being held together by the good pleasure of God. The "hypostatic union" – that is, the union of the divine and human natures in Christ – rests in the will of God.

This might seem to suggest that Theodore of Mopsuestia regarded the union of the divine and human natures as being a purely moral union, like that of a husband and wife. It also leads to a suspicion that the *Logos* merely puts on human nature, as one would put on a coat: the action involved is temporary and reversible, and involves no fundamental change to anyone involved. However, the Antiochene writers do not seem to have intended these conclusions to be drawn. Perhaps the most reliable way of approaching their position is to suggest that their desire to avoid confusing the divine and human natures within Christ led them to stress their distinctiveness – yet, in so doing, to inadvertently weaken their link in the hypostatic union.

The problems this raised are best seen from Theodore of Mopsuestia's discussion of the nature of the "union of good pleasure" in his eighth *Catechetical Oration*:

The distinction between the natures does not annul the exact conjunction, nor does the exact conjunction destroy the distinction between the natures, but the natures remain in their respective existence while separated, and the conjunction remains intact because the one who was assumed is united in

honor and glory with the one who assumed, according to the will of the one who assumed him [...] The fact that a husband and wife are "one flesh" does not impede them from being two. Indeed, they will remain two because they are two, but they are one because they are also one and not two. In this same way here [i.e., in the incarnation] they are two by nature and one by conjunction; two by nature, because there is a great difference between the natures, and one by conjunction because the adoration offered to the one who has been assumed is not divided from that offered to the one who assumed him, since he [i.e., the one that is assumed] is the temple, from which it is not possible for the one who dwells in it to depart.

Here, Theodore seems to regard the hypostatic union as a conjunction according to the will of the parties involved – more of a contractual arrangement, comparable to a human marriage, than a genuine union of natures. This point becomes especially clear through Theodore's use of the marriage analogy to stress the common honor and dignity shared by the couple, rather than their physical union.

The "communication of attributes"

An issue of major concern to many patristic writers centered on the question of the communication of attributes.

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