

ANNOTATIONS ON THE CHRISTOLOGY OF THEODORE OF MOPSUESTIA

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FRANCIS A. SULLIVAN, S.J., of the Gregorian University, has given us a new synthesis of the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia.¹ This synthesis is the first to appear since the article of Amann in 1946.² The book exhibits high competence in the handling of the material and in theological thinking. Sullivan has based his conclusions on a study of all the existing remains of the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia and he has consulted all the recent literature on the subject. The importance of the work needs no emphasis; it is an indispensable tool for anyone who wishes to study Theodore's Christology in detail.

Sullivan first reviews the present state of the question and then discusses the problem of the sources. Robert Devreesse has attacked the reliability of the "quotations" from Theodore found in the acts of the Fifth Ecumenical Council.³ Marcel Richard in an extended series of articles has, in the words of Sullivan, declared "flatly that historians of dogma should renounce any effort to derive their knowledge of the doctrine of Theodore from the dogmatic fragments found in Migne or Swete."⁴ A little over one-half of Sullivan's book is devoted to a critique of the arguments of Richard and Devreesse, and he believes that his examination "has established the legitimacy, if not the necessity, of considering the evidence of the hostile florilegia in a study of Theodore's christology. . . . Our contention is . . . we can safely use these hostile fragments, as long as we are careful to see them in the light of all the other evidence."⁵ This conclusion implies that the Syriac versions of Theodore's works "do not merit such ab-

¹ *The Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Rome, 1956); hereafter referred to simply as Sullivan.

² *DTC* 15/1, 235-79.

³ *Essai sur Théodore de Mopsueste* (Vatican City, 1948).

⁴ Sullivan, p. 24. The articles in which Richard has defended this proposition are listed in Sullivan's bibliography. Cf. in particular "La tradition des fragments du traité *peri iēs enanthrōpēsēs* de Théodore de Mopsueste," *Muséon* 56 (1943) 55-75.

⁵ Sullivan, pp. 157-58.

solute confidence" because they lack the literal accuracy which is presupposed by Richard and Devreesse⁶—and, it seems, by any one who uses the Syriac versions as a source of Theodore's Christology.

Once he has dealt with the sources, Sullivan in an excellent historical summary describes the theological milieu of Theodore, and finally presents a synthesis of Theodore's Christology. The synthesis falls into three parts. In the first, the conception of the "two natures," Sullivan finds that Theodore failed to distinguish what is said of the Word as such and what is said of the divine nature as such. Of the human nature he finds:

It does not seem certain that Theodore's use of the term *prosōpon* with reference to the *homo assumptus* would in itself suffice to prove that he considered the man to be a person in the strict sense in which we now use the word. But it cannot be denied that there are many aspects of Theodore's teaching which contribute to the impression that he conceived of "the man Jesus assumed by the Word" as a human *suppositum*, as the ultimate subject of the human predicates, as a person in his own right, distinct from the Divine Person of the Word.⁷

The second part of the synthesis discusses Theodore's concept of the Incarnation. Here Sullivan concludes that for Theodore the Incarnation was most frequently conceived in terms of inhabitation: the Word did not become man, but became in a man. The third part deals with the unity of person; here Sullivan proposes that, while the language rather clearly indicates that Theodore considered that the two natures exist in one *prosōpon*, actually it implies that this single person was created by the Incarnation itself and is therefore distinct from the person of the Word. On this basis, then, Sullivan's conclusion is that Theodore, like Nestorius, did not understand that the one *prosōpon* in which the two natures are united "is actually the Divine Person of the Word," and that therefore there is "ample justification for the verdict of the 'Doctor of the Incarnation': that Theodore of Mopsuestia was the Father of Nestorianism."⁸

I cast no aspersions on the integrity or the technical competence of Sullivan's work when I say that I do not believe he has demonstrated his thesis. This judgment is not made in haste. It is based on

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 284.

an examination of the texts cited by Sullivan, as well as an examination of the larger context of Theodore's writings in which these passages appear and of other texts of those passages which are preserved in Syriac versions without depending exclusively on the translations of Sachau, Tonneau, or Vosté; this, it seems, is the least we can do when a man's theological reputation is involved, even if the man has been dead fifteen hundred years. And perhaps what I wish to say about the book is best summed up by saying that the book is an argument in defense of a thesis rather than an impartial examination of the evidence. Unfortunately, a completely documented examination of the evidence would require a book which would be longer than Sullivan's; the enterprise might be worth while, but it could not be accomplished immediately. In this article, therefore, I can do no more than present a number of annotations to Sullivan's work which the reader can check for himself.

THE RELIABILITY OF THE SYRIAC VERSIONS

In discussing the reliability of the Syriac versions, Sullivan compares a passage of the *De Incarnatione* cited in Greek by Leontius of Byzantium with the Greek which Richard obtained by retranslating the Syriac:

Leontius

ὅταν μὲν γάρ τὰς φύσεις διακρίνωμεν, τελείαν τὴν φύσιν τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου φαμέν, καὶ τέλειον τὸ πρόσωπον (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀπρόσωπον ἔστιν ὑπόστασιν εἶπειν)· τελείαν δὲ καὶ τὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου φύσιν, καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ὁμοίως· ὅταν μέντοι ἐπὶ τὴν συνάφειαν ἀπιδώμεν, ἕν πρόσωπον τότε φαμέν. ... ὥστε κἀνταῦθα ὅταν μὲν τὰς φύσεις διακρίνειν πειρώμεθα, τέλειον τὸ πρόσωπον φαμέν εἶναι τὸ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, τέλειον δὲ καὶ τὸ τῆς θεότητος. ὅταν δὲ πρὸς τὴν ἔνωσιν ἀποβλέψωμεν, τότε ἕν εἶναι τὸ πρόσωπον ἅμφω τὰς φύσεις κηρύττομεν ...

Richard's version of cod. 14669.

ὅταν γὰρ τὰς φύσεις διακρίνωμεν, νοοῦμεν τὴν θείαν φύσιν ἐν ὑποστάσει ἰδίᾳ, καὶ τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην φύσιν· ὅταν μέντοι ἐπὶ τὴν συνάφειαν ἀπιδώμεν, ἕν πρόσωπον καὶ μίαν ὑπόστασιν φαμέν. ... καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο ὅταν τὰς φύσεις διακρίνειν πειρώμεθα, τέλειον εἶναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐν ἰδίᾳ ὑποστάσει φαμέν, τέλειόν τε τὸν θεὸν φαμέν. ὅταν δὲ πρὸς τὴν ἔνωσιν ἀποβλέπειν πειρώμεθα, ἕν πρόσωπον καὶ μίαν ὑπόστασιν ἅμφω τὰς φύσεις κηρύττομεν ...⁹

⁹ I quote the parallel passages as they appear in Sullivan, p. 64.

The point at issue is the apparent use in the passages quoted by Leontius of *prosōpon* as synonymous with *hypostasis*, and this is particularly clear in a parenthetical passage found in Leontius which does not appear in the Syriac: "For we must not say that the *hypostasis* is *aprosōpon*." The differences between these two texts are substantial; and Sullivan accepts the dictum of Richard that "If one of these two texts represents the original thought of Theodore, as there is good reason for thinking it does, the other was intentionally modified by a theologian well aware of what he was doing."¹⁰ Sullivan, however, refuses to accept Richard's argument that the Syriac is faithful and that the compilers of the florilegium used by Leontius have deliberately falsified Theodore's views. Sullivan conjectures that the Syriac version was made in the school of Edessa about the middle of the fifth century, shortly after Ibas, Bishop of Edessa, was rehabilitated by the Council of Chalcedon when he subscribed to the condemnation of Nestorius. In this atmosphere, Sullivan believes, anything too reminiscent of the formulae of Nestorius would have been considered better left unsaid, and the terminology of Theodore was altered to bring it into harmony with the terminology of Chalcedon. This is a conjecture, as Sullivan puts it, of why and how the change could have taken place in the Syriac version.¹¹ He does not see in it any great improbability. But Sullivan does not show *that* the alterations were made. He has argued that the phrase *mia hypostasis kai hen prosōpon* is not typical of the language of Theodore. This, I think, must be conceded; but it must also be conceded that we do not have enough of the writings of Theodore to affirm that the expression was never employed by him. Nor can it be argued with conviction that his thought on the subject and his ordinary use of terms do not permit it. The whole difficulty of Theodore's Christology lies largely in the fact that the term *hypostasis* was not clearly defined. It cannot be said, as Galtier has argued, that the term in Theodore is synonymous with *physis*.¹² Nor can it be argued that the term *hypostasis* is synonymous with *prosōpon*. The term in Theodore's usage is actually flexible enough to be applied to either.

Sullivan has taken too narrow a view of the question of these two

¹⁰ Sullivan, p. 65; Richard, "La tradition," p. 66.

¹¹ Sullivan, pp. 80-82.

¹² L'*union secundum hypostasim* chez saint Cyrille," *Gregorianum* 33 (1952) 351-98.

passages in considering merely the use of the words *physis* and *hypostasis*. In fact, the passages exhibit a number of other differences besides the one on which Sullivan has fastened, and these deserve serious consideration if one wishes to see in which direction the alterations seem to lie. Let us observe that in Sachau¹³ the Greek behind the Syriac would read: τὴν θεϊαν φύσιν ἐν ὑποστάσει ἰδίᾳ, καὶ τὴν ἀνθρωπινὴν φύσιν. For this Leontius reads: τελείαν τὴν φύσιν τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου φαρμέν, καὶ τέλειον τὸ πρόσωπον (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀπρόσωπον ἔστιν ὑπόστασιν εἰπεῖν). τελείαν δὲ καὶ τὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου φύσιν, καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ὁμοίως. This difference bears on more than the parenthesis. The perfection of the nature in its *hypostasis* which we read in the Syriac has become in Leontius the perfection of the nature of the Word *and of the person* and the perfection of the nature of the man *and of the person* likewise. It can be affirmed with assurance that this latter expression is paralleled nowhere in the extant writings of Theodore and is in fact alien to his thought on the Incarnation, which if anything insists on the unity of the *prosōpon*. The Greek of Leontius here cannot be an accurate reproduction of the Greek of Theodore. In the same passage¹⁴ the Greek behind the Syriac would be *hen prosōpon kai mian hypostasin*; the Greek of Leontius omits the words *kai mian hypostasin*. The same variation is found in Sachau.¹⁵ Sullivan argues that it is extremely unlikely that Theodore could have used a phrase which rings so much of the language of Chalcedon. Nevertheless, the preceding context of the very passage under discussion shows how the phrase could occur here; but this context was not included in the quotations of Leontius and is not discussed by Sullivan. The passage reads as follows in the Latin translation of Sachau:

Nam si separamus naturam Filii Dei, dicimus aliam esse naturam animae, aliam corporis, quum utri eorum personam [*qenuma*] et naturam esse cognoscamus et persuasum habeamus animam, ubi a corpore separatur, remanere in natura et persona [*qenuma*] sua. Itaque ab Apostolo quoque discimus hominem interiorem et hominem exteriorem et singularitatem a re, quae ad universitatem pertinet, nominamus addentes "interior et exterior", ne eas nomine simplice appellemus. Ut enim dicimus, in uno connexas esse unam essentiam [*qenuma*] et unam personam [*parṣuḫa*] et ambas uno nomine nominamus.

¹³ Ed. Sachau, *Theodori Mopsuesteni fragmenta Syriaca* (Leipzig, 1869) p. 70 (Syriac), p. 43 (Latin).

¹⁴ Sachau, p. 70.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

In this passage Theodore attempts to illustrate the union of the Incarnation from the union of body and soul in human nature. In theology this comparison has always been dangerous, and is in fact an Alexandrian rather than an Antiochene way of speaking. One must therefore see the point which Theodore draws from the comparison, and the point is this: in the human composite of *psychē* and *sōma* each component has its own *physis* and *hypostasis*. The *psychē*, however, has a *physis kai hypostasis* such that it can and does exist separate from the *sōma*. When the two are joined, we say that they are joined in *hen prosōpon kai mia hypostasis*. The point of comparison upon which Theodore dwells is the independent existence of the *psychē*, by which he illustrates the independent existence of the Word. Yet, just as the independent existence of the *psychē* in man does not destroy the unity of the human composite, so the separate existence of the Word before the union does not destroy the unity of the theandric composite. With this comparison in mind one can see how, at least in the passage where the comparison is employed, the phrase *hen prosōpon kai mia hypostasis*, which for Theodore would certainly describe a concretely existing human nature, could in turn be applied, as the Syriac version applies them, to the theandric composite. This passage, it seems, is the key to the entire citation, but it is not found in Leontius. The reader must judge for himself whether, in addition to the modifications suggested by Sullivan, the Syriac translators also created the comparison of *psychē* and *sōma*, which is entirely in accord with Theodore's thought on the Incarnation, and inserted this as well. But it is scarcely possible to suppose that the Syriac translator invented this, since the Greek of Leontius, which omits the comparison but quotes its application, begins *ton auton de tropon*, referring to the comparison given above. The comparison, which explains Theodore's use of terms in this passage, was not thought worthy of mention by Leontius or by the compiler of his sources. To say that it was omitted because it makes the entire passage more intelligible and less suspicious would be to impute motives; but this is certainly the effect of its omission. It is surprising that Sullivan did not include it in his discussion of the passage.

The second passage where Sullivan compares the Syriac version of *Cod. 14669* with the Greek of Leontius reads:

Greek of Leontius, where Syriac corresponds:

ὅς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί, ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι. — δεικνύσθαι ἐν πνεύματι λέγων αὐτόν, εἴτε ὡς πρὸ τοῦ βαπτίσματος μετὰ τῆς προσηκούσης ἀκριβείας τὸν νόμον φυλάξαντα, εἴτε ὡς καὶ μετ' ἐκείνο

Leontius continues:

τὴν τῆς χάριτος πολιτείαν τῇ τοῦ πνεύματος χάριτος πολιτείᾳ πνεύματος συνεργείᾳ μετὰ πολλῆς καὶ τῇ αὐτοῦ ἀκριβείᾳ πεπληρωμένον.¹⁶ πληροῦντα τῆς ἀκριβείας.

Syriac version continues:

The point at issue in this passage¹⁷ is whether Leontius is correct in giving us Theodore's thought as "fulfilling the regime of charity by the cooperation of the Holy Spirit with great accuracy" or whether the Syriac is correct in translating "fulfilling [the Law] by the guidance of the Spirit and His own accuracy." Sullivan believes the Syriac is a garbled version of the Greek. He quotes another passage preserved by Leontius¹⁸ and on this basis, which he calls "a perfect parallel both in thought and in expression," he believes that the text of Leontius is original. I transmit for the moment the question whether the text of Leontius is more reliable here than it is in other passages; but it is not a "perfect" parallel. In the second passage quoted by Sullivan, the *synergeia* is not that of the Spirit, but of the Word of God. Furthermore, Christ does not "fulfil" the regime of charity, but "follows" it. Nor does the second passage employ the expression translated by Sullivan as "regime of charity"; it speaks of "following the 'regime' in charity." Whether the phrase is "choquante" or not, as Richard has called it, it is certainly obscure. One can explain the Syriac version of fulfilling the Law by the guidance of the Spirit as based on a biblical allusion to the guidance of the Spirit mentioned after the baptism in all the Synoptic Gospels (Mt 4:1; Mk 1:12; Lk 4:1).¹⁹ The exactitude with which He fulfils the Law is doubtless also a reference to Mt 3:15. It is characteristic of Theodore to employ biblical allusions, and these allusions easily explain the Syriac; there is no reason to call it "garbled." I find no such allusions in the Greek of Leontius, and hence I suspect that the Greek of Leontius is an exegetical gloss upon

¹⁶ Sullivan, p. 83.¹⁷ *Ibid.*¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 84.¹⁹ Even Mt and Lk found the *ekballei* of Mk too violent, and substituted for it the gentler *anēchthē* (Mt) and *ēgeto* (Lk).

the original which brings out what Leontius or his compiler thought was the mind of Theodore. The second passage quoted need not be independent of the first; and one can only regret that the Syriac of this passage does not exist.

These are two of the three cases where, according to Sullivan, "in the very limited area where control is possible, . . . the Syriac version falls short of being an accurate rendition of an undoubtedly genuine Greek parallel. Here . . . there is no reason to suspect the genuinity of the Greek."²⁰ A closer examination of the passages shows there is good reason to suspect the genuinity of the Greek, and that there is nothing to show that the Syriac falls short of being an accurate rendition.

A third group of passages discussed²¹ deals with the omission of the word "naturally" in the quotations employed by Cyril of Alexandria and the Fifth Ecumenical Council where the word is found in the Syriac version. In three passages where Theodore quotes Rom 9:5, "It is from the Jews that Christ has come according to the flesh, who is God above all," Theodore denies that what is said to come according to the flesh is God naturally. The introduction of the adverb (*kyanait*) saves the passage from heresy. Its omission in three different places where the same text of Scripture is quoted cannot be, as Sullivan says, entirely accidental. Here likewise Sullivan does not think that complete confidence should be given to the Syriac version.

Whether the Syriac version is reliable or not, it cannot be denied that the phrase is characteristic of the language of Theodore. The same adverb is found in *Catechetical Homily* 4, 11 in a similar context.²² Much more frequent, however, is the adverbial phrase "by nature" or "in nature" to distinguish the properties of the divine and human natures. This idiom is so characteristic of Theodore's language that it is utterly impossible that it should have been invented by the Syriac translator. Hence in this passage, where the presence or absence of the phrase is crucial, its presence is demanded by the larger context of his works. Even if the Greek were correct in its omission, we would be justified in supplying it *secundum sensum*.

I do not wish to draw any unfounded generalizations from these points of detail. But the reader of Sullivan's book should bear these

²⁰ Sullivan, p. 88.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 90-97.

²² Raymond Tonneau, *Les homélies catéchétiques de Théodore de Mopsueste* (Vatican City, 1949) p. 89.

details in mind, when he reads such phrases as "the translator's tendency to let his own mode of expression influence his rendition. We have already seen indications that he did not feel himself bound to a rigorously literal translation."²³ "In the course of our study, we have seen evidence that the Syriac versions do not merit such absolute confidence."²⁴ If one is to defend the accuracy of the quotations of Theodore found in the sources of Leontius of Byzantium and the Fifth Ecumenical Council, it is impossible to accept the Syriac versions as reliable. In this journal I presented a brief study of one passage of Theodore's commentary on the Gospel of St. John with reference to the extracts presented in the *Constitutum Vigilii*, cap. 27, 33, 34.²⁵ Sullivan has granted that I made my point in this Note. He says: "The cutting of the context has definitely given rise to an unjust condemnation in this case."²⁶ He also grants that the same technique of omission has been used in cap. 52, 53, and says: "In both cases there can be little doubt about the dishonest intentions of the compilers. . . . This, then, would be another instance where the compilers of the conciliar extracts depended on a secondary, and unreliable source."²⁷ Sullivan finds faults with some details of my treatment, and there is no use going over the same ground again; the reader who is interested can compare my Note with Sullivan's animadversions.²⁸ But the main point which I made has been established: that the compilers in these instances were dishonest.

No doubt Sullivan is right in warning that it would be rash to apply to these three capitula the adage, *Ab uno disce omnes*, and hence to reject the conciliar extracts en bloc.²⁹ But it is also rash, I think, to affirm that, because a man has been proved a liar in three instances, he is therefore reliable in other instances where no proof has been adduced, particularly when the motive of the lie which has been proved is also operative in the other instances. There is no similar proof which casts doubt on the veracity of the Syriac translators. Sullivan's suspicions may be correct; but even after Sullivan's examination no convincing reason is presented why we should trust the mendacious compilers of the florilegia where they differ from the

²³ Sullivan, pp. 97-98.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

²⁵ "The Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on John 1:46-51," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 14 (1953) 73-84.

²⁶ Sullivan, p. 111. ²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 111, 112. ²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 143-46. ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

Syriac translators. To trust the translators is not to affirm the "absolute literal accuracy" of their work, nor to deny that they were subject to the human weaknesses of translators. But we do not know that they were deliberately perverting the evidence; we do know that the compilers were. This should be borne in mind when one reads Sullivan's discussion of cap. 27 and the corresponding passage in Theodore's commentary on the Gospel of St. John.³⁰ Here Sullivan concludes that in spite of the fact that the compilers succeeded in distorting the mind of Theodore by omission, they nevertheless at the same time in some mysterious way preserved the true opinion of Theodore on Christological questions.

I borrow a well-written paragraph of Sullivan³¹ on the Syriac translators and transfer it as follows:

Has he forgotten that any *compilation* may to a greater or lesser extent be an interpretation of the original text, and that it may, on occasion, reflect rather the *compiler's* way of putting a thought than that of the author? Has he failed to take into account the question of how strictly the *compilers of the fragments* of Theodore's works felt themselves bound to reproduce literally every phrase, every last word of their prototype? It seems to us that these are vital questions if one is going to base the *condemnation for heresy* on the testimony of the *Greek compilations*.

I agree that these are vital questions. It has been proved, and Sullivan has accepted the proof, that the compilations exhibit in some instances the compiler's way of putting a thought rather than that of the author; and it has certainly been shown that the compilers did not feel themselves bound to reproduce every phrase, every last word of their prototype. Until the dishonesty and bad faith of the Syriac translators have been equally well demonstrated, it is difficult to see how we can treat the two sources as of equal value. I do not say, indeed, that Sullivan treats them as of equal value; but his insistence that they must be used if one is to form a complete synthesis of Theodore's Christology must be taken with qualification.

Actually, Sullivan is able to question at the end of his investigation no more than the "literal accuracy" of these translations. The literal accuracy of the translations is not the point at issue. The differences go much further than the question whether the translator felt himself

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 142 ff.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

bound to reproduce every last word and phrase of the Greek text. The omission of such words as "naturally" and *hypostasis* in the examples cited above, or the difference between saying that the human nature is perfect and that the human nature and *prosōpon* are perfect, are not mere differences of detail which a translator or scribe might interpolate or omit. These are the phrases which make Theodore's Christology one thing or another. If the Syriac versions are no more reliable than the fragments preserved by the compilers, then, as I said in my earlier Note, no position is possible except that of critical despair, and one should neither affirm nor deny Theodore's orthodoxy or his heterodoxy in statement or in tendency.³² One must simply resign oneself to the fact that Theodore's Christology is lost beyond recovery. This position might be actually more defensible than the position which has been adopted by Sullivan.

SULLIVAN'S SYNTHESIS OF THEODORE'S CHRISTOLOGY

Sullivan has elaborated a very persuasive synthesis of Theodore's Christology. I do not think it represents the mind of Theodore; but it would demand more space than Sullivan has given to the subject to present another synthesis. Furthermore, if one with Sullivan accepts the principle of Grillmeier, it would seem to be a waste of time to heap up passages in which Theodore's Christology is orthodox beyond question.³³ According to Grillmeier, the orthodoxy of Theodore cannot be sufficiently proved merely by his use of correct formulae; one must go behind the formulae to the ideology which the formulae express. If this formula is stated with some qualification, it is not as extreme as it may sound. A heretic may parrot orthodox formulae, but very quickly he must abandon the formulae if he explains his belief. One wonders how many writers could pass the rigorous canon of Grillmeier—whether this writer, or F. A. Sullivan, or A. Grillmeier. One's doubt grows still more if, on the basis of second-hand prejudiced testimony, the translations, where orthodox, were attributed to manipulation by friendly translators, and the fragments, where unorthodox, were presumed to be credible in spite of the proved dis-

³² THEOLOGICAL STUDIES 14 (1953) 82.

³³ A. Grillmeier, S.J., *Das Konzil von Chalkedon* 1 (Würzburg, 1951) 145, n. 2, as quoted by Sullivan, p. 202.

honesty of the compilers. And the doubt would become insuperable if on the basis of such evidence we were called to answer a theological question in terms in which it had never been proposed in our lives. So I do not attempt to prove the orthodoxy of Theodore or to synthesize his Christology; I present a few instances where the larger context of Theodore's writings exhibits ideas which are not those of the synthesis constructed by Sullivan, and suggest a few conclusions which may be drawn from this inconcinnity.

Two Natures and Incarnation

Sullivan discusses³⁴ a passage from the sixth *Catechetical Homily* which reads:

For the blessed Paul, after he said "From them (the Jews) is Christ," adds, "according to the flesh," to distinguish the natures (*kyane*); and he lets us know that Christ is from the Jews according to the flesh. He did not think that it was the nature of the divinity of the Only-begotten, and he did not give this name to God the Word, to Him who from the beginning was with God, and from eternity was in the bosom of His Father, but to the form of man which He assumed.³⁵

On this passage Sullivan comments: "In this case it is clear that for Theodore, what cannot be said 'of the nature of the divinity of the Only-Begotten' cannot be said of God the Word. The longer, abstract phrase seems to be merely another way of speaking of God the Word."³⁶ First of all, Theodore said "nature"; he was quite capable of employing the concrete "God the Word," and frequently does. Secondly, it is only fair to Theodore to note that at least some of the difficulty comes from the words of Paul himself, who said that it was Christ according to the flesh who came from the Jews. In any case, the commentary on this passage ought to include what Theodore himself says on the preceding page:

Thus it is certain that they [our fathers] did not think that the divine nature of the Only-begotten was born of woman, as if from here was its beginning. It did not—for it is He of whom they said that He was begotten of the Father before all ages and from eternity was with Him—His beginning was not from Mary. But they follow the Sacred Scriptures, which speak differently of the two natures.

³⁴ Sullivan, p. 207.

³⁵ Tonneau, p. 137. The translations are my own unless otherwise acknowledged.

³⁶ Sullivan, p. 208.

For they teach of one person (*parṣupa*) because of the exact union which exists, and that they might not be thought to divide the perfect association which the one assumed has with the one who assumes. For if this union were dissolved, the one assumed would appear to be nothing other than an ordinary man like us. For this reason the Sacred Scriptures proclaim the two terms as of one son, making known in the very profession of faith the glory of the Only-begotten and also the honor of the man with which He clothed Himself.

This language, while not perfect, leaves no doubt that the terms predicated both of the divine nature and of the human nature in Sacred Scripture are predicated of "the one son." There is no doubt who is meant by the "one son"; it is the Only-begotten. In this passage, at least, it is clear that for Theodore there is one way in which what is predicated of the human nature is predicated of the Son.

A passage from the commentary on St. John is discussed which reads thus in Vosté's translation: "Quomodo ergo dixit: Filium suum unigenitum dedit? Quamvis sit evidens divinitatem pati non posse; propter conjunctionem tamen unum sunt; quare etsi alius pateretur, attamen totum divinitati tribuitur."³⁷ Sullivan comments:

This last clause deserves careful attention: it shows eloquently how far Theodore was from the distinction of Athanasius between what is said of the Word, and what is said of the divinity as such. As far as Theodore is concerned, when the Scripture attributes suffering to the *Filius Unigenitus*, it attributes it to the *divinity*, although it is another: *alius*, who really suffers. Then obviously Theodore does not see any distinction between predicating something of the "Only-begotten Son" and attributing it to the divinity. . . . In what sense, then, can he mean that suffering is attributed to the divinity by the scriptural texts? It can be nothing more than a way of speaking: of alluding to the divinity with which the *homo assumptus* is united.³⁸

The last clause of the quotation certainly does deserve careful attention. The word "attribute," presumably based on the word "tribuitur" in Vosté's translation, appears four times in these lines of Sullivan, and thus seems to be legitimately called the basis of the conclusion that Theodore does not think the Scriptures are speaking the truth when they communicate idioms. This is a bold conclusion to draw. It is particularly bold here because the Syriac phrase which

³⁷ J. M. Vosté, O.P., *Theodori Mopsuesteni Commentarius in evangelium Johannis apostoli* (CSCO 116; Louvain, 1940) p. 51 (Latin).

³⁸ Sullivan, pp. 208-9.

Vosté translated "tribuitur" is *s'buta metn'seb*. The word *s'buta* commonly represents the Greek *pragma* or *chrēma*, "business" or "affair." The word *metn'seb* is the word which is elsewhere used for the assumption of the humanity by the Word. I can find no lexicographical justification in Payne Smith or Brockelmann for Vosté's translation. The Greek is difficult to reconstruct, but the meaning of the Syriac is clearly not that the whole is attributed to the divinity, but that "the whole thing is assumed by the divinity." In the context it is safe to say that what is assumed by the divinity is the suffering of the humanity, in the same way as the humanity itself is assumed, whatever that may be in Theodore's doctrine; and certainly this leaves no basis for the statement that for Theodore the predication is merely a way of speaking which does not correspond to reality.

A fragment of the *De Incarnatione* is quoted³⁹ from which Sullivan argues that the Incarnation for Theodore took place only in appearance and not in reality.⁴⁰ The argument is based on the explanation of the word *egeneto* as it is used in Scripture in the passage. Here Theodore explains that the word may refer not only to fact but also to things which occur *in existimatione* (as in Gal 3:13, Christ became a curse), *in apprehensione locali*, *in opinione* (as in Phil 2:7, He became in the likeness of a man), *in apprehensione opinionis*, *in actione et passione*, and *in conversione actuum aut moribus animi*, as of Christ, who became under the Law that He might redeem those who were under the Law (1 Cor 9:20). Sullivan argues from the explanations of Gal 3:13 and Phil 2:7 to the unreality of the Incarnation.

The point may seem to be a bit pedantic, but these two texts are not taken as one in the text of Theodore. What the difference may be in his own mind is not clear; but he did not think Christ Jesus became in the likeness of a man (I quote literally) in the same sense in which He was made a curse—for that matter, neither do I think so, and I dare say Sullivan does not think so either. A reference to the Syriac words *masbranuta*, used of Gal 3:13, and *tar'ita*, used of Phil 2:7, shows not only that the words have a different sense in Syriac, but also that they represent different Greek terms. *Masbranuta* represents words like *hyponoia* and *hypolēpsis*, which connote a false

³⁹ Sachau, pp. 28–29 (Latin), 45–46 (Syriac).

⁴⁰ Sullivan, pp. 231–32.

opinion. *Tar'ita*, on the contrary, while it may represent simply "opinion," also is equivalent to such words as *dianoia*, *pronoia*, *phronēma*, *synesis*. The difference between these two groups of terms is obvious, and we can only desire that we had more of his text in order that we might determine what the difference meant to him; but certainly he does not explain the two texts in the same way. According to the principle which Sullivan has deduced from these two texts, Theodore should have been unable to say, as he does under *in conversatione actuum aut moribus animi*, that Christ became under the Law. One may observe that here again the language of Paul himself is ultimately at the root of the difficulty. If we applied to Paul the rigorous canons which we apply to Theodore, Paul ought to have said "the Word" instead of "Christ Jesus," and "became a man" instead of "became in the likeness," and he predicated the act of assumption of Christ Jesus and not of the divine person formally; and this permits Theodore to give the explanation which we find in the fragments of the *De Incarnatione*.⁴¹

A passage from the commentary on St. John⁴² is quoted twice by Sullivan. In the first quotation it is employed to illustrate this proposition:

Thus the distinction between the two natures becomes equivalent to a distinction between two subjects to whom the operations belong. . . .

This manner of distinguishing as between two subjects of attribution leads naturally to the distinction between "him who suffers" and "him who is present to the one who suffers"; . . .⁴³

⁴¹ Sullivan presents an interesting argument (p. 221): "An indication of the same concept of the distinction between these 'two natures,' is Theodore's use of two masculine pronouns in referring to the Word and to the *homo assumptus*. . . . One could easily multiply instances of such distinction between Word and *homo assumptus* by the use of such personal pronouns. It is a usage which characterizes all of Theodore's works, and contributes to the impression that he looked upon the 'man assumed' not only as a 'nature,' but as a person in his own right." The argument is illustrated by quotations from three of Theodore's works, all drawn from Syriac versions. This argument might have some validity if it were based on the Greek; but Syriac, like other Semitic languages, has no neuter personal pronoun, but only masculine and feminine. Should Theodore's translators have used the feminine pronoun in speaking of the assumed nature? As a matter of fact, the word *kyana*, which translates the Greek *physis*, is masculine; and it is often the antecedent, explicit or implicit, of the pronouns employed.

⁴² Vosté, p. 251 (Latin).

⁴³ Sullivan, pp. 219-20.

The second quotation has this commentary:

In this case, Theodore distinguishes between the nature of the *homo assumptus* and his person; his nature he has in common with other men, but his person is distinct from theirs. In this instance, by the expression "his person," he seems to mean the individuality of the *homo assumptus*: that which differentiates this man Jesus from the Apostles with whom he shares human nature. Can it be that this "person" whereby the *homo assumptus* is distinct from other men, is actually to be understood as the Person of the Word? It hardly seems possible that this is Theodore's meaning. This *homo assumptus* is, like other men, an *adoptive* son of God; he distinguishes himself from them because of "a more excellent grace," not because "his person" is, properly speaking, the Divine Person of the Word.⁴⁴

Sullivan has not adverted that, in the very passage which he quotes, the excellent grace which he mentions is that by which the assumed humanity is honored as the *true son* by all men. "As," Syriac *b'taksa*, is difficult to retranslate into Greek. The word itself *taksa* is a loan word from the Greek *taxis*; and whether Theodore's Greek actually read *en taxei* cannot be determined certainly. Payne Smith lists "order" or "rank" among the Syriac meanings. One might say that the use of this phrase indicates that the humanity is not the true son; if this were the sense, the addition of the adjective "true" would be inexplicable. The honor of which Theodore speaks in this passage is not the honor paid to an adopted son; on the same page a few lines above, it is said of the humanity that it is assumed into heaven and "perpetually united with the Father in glory."⁴⁵ One should notice here that it is the Father and not the Son or the Word with whom the humanity is equal in honor; such honor can be only the adoration paid to the Godhead. This quotation, "union with the Father in honor," of the one who is assumed into heaven should be read in connection with Sullivan's slightly fantastic view that in Theodore's mind another passage⁴⁶ "certainly gives the impression that God the Word and our Lord Jesus are two distinct persons, with one sitting at the right hand of the other in glory."⁴⁷ Were this Theodore's mind, there would have to be two sons; and no such idea can be found in his writings. Sullivan raises the question: "Does this actually solve the

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 226-27.

⁴⁵ Vosté, p. 251 (Latin).

⁴⁶ *Catechetical Homily* 5, 21 (Tonneau, pp. 129-31).

⁴⁷ Sullivan, p. 222.

problem of the 'two sons'? It does not seem to. For Theodore it is enough that there should not be two natural Sons of God. But the fact remains that his 'unique Son' consists of one who is Son of God by nature, and another who is son of God by adoption."⁴⁸ Such a view was certainly not in the mind of Theodore when he wrote the following passage:

From His fulness we have all received. This is the grace of the Spirit which we are given; from the wealth of His abundance we receive. For in Him—he speaks of His humanity—there is all grace; but this also reveals the greatness of the nature which is in Him. By the union which He has with God the Word, by the mediation of the Spirit, He is united⁴⁹ with true sonship. We, from the grace of the Spirit which is in Him, receive this benefit, and by means of it we become partakers of adoption, although we are far removed from this dignity.⁵⁰

Here again the assumed humanity becomes partaker of true sonship, and this true sonship stands in contrast to the grace of adoption which we receive through Him.

Redemption

Sullivan presents at some length Theodore's idea of the redemption, which he illustrates by a quotation from *Catechetical Homily 12*,⁵¹ which he calls "typical." The passage is too long to cite in its entirety. Sullivan explains the redemption as based upon a theory of the union of inhabitation and operation.⁵² Basically the redemption is accomplished first by the *homo assumptus* and then more actively by the Word:

At this [first] stage in the work of salvation, the union of activity seems to consist in a special cooperation of the Word with the man: an extraordinary inhabitation by grace.

This special presence of the Word to the man "by the operation of His grace," continues even during the crucifixion and death of the *homo assumptus*. But at this point a new phase of the work of salvation begins: now it is the Word who is the principal actor, for it is He who raises the man assumed from the dead, and makes him ascend into heaven where he enjoys immunity from death and sin.⁵³

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 270–71.

⁴⁹ Probably Greek *mignynai* or *symmignynai*; the Syriac word is used elsewhere in Syriac literature on the Hypostatic Union.

⁵⁰ Vosté, p. 26.

⁵² Sullivan, pp. 251–55.

⁵¹ Tonneau, pp. 335–37.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

This means, as Sullivan explains Theodore's thought, that the union of operation develops in perfection and that there is a corresponding increase in the "conjunction" between man and Word subsequent to the resurrection and the ascension; and Sullivan believes that this is his thought. This developing union ultimately does not differ from the union between the Word and other men:

But in all this we do not see anything which is essentially superior to that cooperation which God grants to other men in whom he is well pleased. It can be said that the Word "works our salvation through the man assumed," but at this stage of the plan of salvation, the work of the Word seems to be essentially one of cooperation. It is the man who places the actions of overcoming sin and accepting the unjust sentence of death. In the union of Word and man prior to the resurrection, therefore, this factor of "working through the man" does not seem to involve anything essentially superior to a moral, dynamic union: an extraordinary cooperation of God with a man.⁶⁴

This neatly elaborated theory, however, cannot be imposed upon a passage of *Catechetical Homily 3*.⁶⁵ The passage does not deal of set purpose with the redemption, but with the application of the two titles predicated in the symbol of the Incarnate Word, "the Only-begotten" and "the first-born of all creatures." In explaining the second title Theodore touches upon the redemptive work:

So also elsewhere "first-born of all creatures"; and this again of the Incarnation of Christ. He was not the first-born simply, but of all creatures. For one is not called first-born if he has no brothers; and because of this He is called and is first-born. So also He is said to be first-born of all creatures, because He first by the resurrection from the dead was renewed, and changed to a new marvelous life. And He also renewed all creatures to a new excellent condition [*katastasis*? Tonneau] for everything which is in Christ is a new creature. The old things have passed away, and everything is made new in our Lord Jesus Christ. He is then the first-born of all creatures, because the whole creation is renewed and changed with the renewal in grace which He gives it, by the renewal with which He is first renewed and passes to a new life and is raised above all creatures. Rightly therefore He is called first-born of all creatures, because He is first renewed and then He renews the creatures. For He is above all of them in honor. So the difference of the two names (only-begotten and first-born of all creatures) we thus understand. This difference our fathers, who were instructed by the Holy Scriptures, took as of one person (*par̄sup̄a*) and they said: and in one only-begotten Son, the first-born of all creatures, to tell us, as I said before, the exact union of the two natures.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

⁶⁵ Tonneau, pp. 65-67.

Rightly therefore they said first: only-begotten, and thereafter first-born, because it was fitting that they should tell us first of Him who is in the form of God and because of His mercy assumed from the nature which is ours; and then in the second place they should speak of the form of a slave which was assumed for our salvation. Thus they tell us of the two natures and the differences by the difference of the use of the names, and that there is one Son because of the exact union of the natures which was accomplished by the act of the will of God.

There is no question but that in this passage the term Son is spoken with respect to the assumed human nature; for Theodore says expressly that the fathers spoke first of the only-begotten Son and then of the first-born that they might make known first Him who is in the form of God, and then the form of a slave which is assumed for our salvation. Now in the passage he says without any change of subject whatever that He is first renewed by the resurrection and then He has renewed all creatures and brought them to a new and excellent condition. The entire creation has been renewed and changed with the renewal which He gives it; and this is the renewal which He Himself first received. It is difficult to see here how Theodore makes any distinction whatever in the redemptive work as divided between two subjects, the Word and human nature. And I know no reason why this passage cannot be cited as "typical" as well as the passage which has been cited by Sullivan.

Union in Dignity, Honor, and Glory

Sullivan devotes some attention to the idea of union in dignity, in honor, and in glory;⁵⁶ as he points out, the "important part" it plays "in the union of person as Theodore conceives it is seen in the frequency with which this factor is introduced as a justification for the scriptural communication of idioms."⁵⁷ Sullivan cites a number of passages to illustrate this view, and it is unnecessary to add to them or to treat them in any detail, since this point is not at issue between us. It is quite clear both from the passages quoted and from Sullivan's commentary on them that the human nature deserves the same glory and the same type of adoration which men owe to the Divine Word. What Sullivan seems to fail to emphasize sufficiently, however, is that the idea of union in adoration is a vital corollary of the unity of

⁵⁶ Sullivan, pp. 255-59.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

subject in the Incarnation. One of the first corollaries of Nestorianism was a division between the honor paid to the assumed human nature, which could not possibly be adoration, and the honor which is paid to the divinity. This is one instance in which Theodore's Christology is not only orthodox, but precisely as opposed to the theory of Nestorianism, and implying a basically correct ideology.

Communication of Idioms

The last point which Sullivan treats in his synthesis of Theodore's Christology is the most vital point: Theodore's understanding of the communication of idioms. Sullivan deals with this question at length,⁵⁸ and it is impossible here to quote or describe the argument fully; I fear I must run the risk of being unfair in giving only a slender outline of his conclusions. This argument is the basis of Sullivan's conclusion about what Theodore means by the "one person" of the Incarnation; for there is no question that Theodore did regard the Incarnate Word as one person (*prosōpon*), "in [the sense] that he is the 'one subject' whom one can address now as God, now as man."⁵⁹ In the discussion Sullivan quotes two passages from *Catechetical Homily 3* and the commentary on the Gospel of St. John which I have discussed above;⁶⁰ and I believe I have brought out some things in these passages which Sullivan has not brought out in his own commentary. Sullivan's view of Theodore's mind is that the one *prosōpon* of the Son is not the Divine Son.⁶¹

The unity of the Son, therefore, would seem to consist in the fact that there is one name: "the Son," which signifies both him who is Son by nature, and him who is son by adoption. . . .⁶²

Thus it appears that Theodore's concept of the communication of idioms is effective in a downward direction only: the man assumed can be called by the titles of the Word; the lesser nature enjoys the names of the greater. . . .⁶³

Again we see why Theodore conceived of the one *prosōpon* as something effected by the union. It is the result of the union that the man shares in the honors and titles of the Word; hence it is the result of the union that the one name "son of God" signifies both Word and man. Thus it is also the result of the union that the

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 261-82.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

⁶⁰ Tonneau, pp. 63-65 (Sullivan, p. 267); Vosté, p. 26 (Sullivan, p. 273).

⁶¹ Sullivan, p. 271.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 276.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

"Son of God" is one *prosopon*, one subject of whom one can say what is true either of Word or of man.⁶⁴

This comparison [of body and soul] brings out unmistakably the fact that as Theodore conceives the union of Word and man, it is strictly a question of two natures uniting to constitute one person. He simply does not conceive of the Word as the one Person involved; the Word is just one of the two natures, standing in symmetrical relation with the *homo assumptus* to the one person who is the effect of their union. Hence he cannot admit that it is the Word Himself who is the unique Person; that by His assumption of human nature the Word can be said to have become man; that thus one can properly predicate of the Word *qua* person what belongs to Him by reason of the humanity which he has made his own.

This, we believe, is the conclusion which flows from all that we have seen of Theodore's doctrine on the two natures, on their union, and on the one person. The Word and the *homo assumptus* are indeed united in one *prosopon*, but this *prosopon* is not the Divine Person of the Word. "Our Lord Jesus Christ" is both God and man, both Word who assumes and man who is assumed—but one cannot say that the Word has really become man, or that the Word was born of Mary according to the flesh. . . .⁶⁵

Now there is one point to be made concerning this ultimate conclusion which Sullivan draws from Theodore's doctrine of the one person; and that is that Theodore was always dealing first and foremost with what in modern theology is called the theandric composite. Theodore, writing before Ephesus and Chalcedon, faced the problem of the theandric composite as a concrete reality. As a concrete reality the theandric composite is not formally the same as the Word, nor can it be said that the theandric composite as a concrete reality existed from eternity. It is theologically quite accurate to say that the theandric composite is a new concrete reality which is constituted by the Incarnation. The question is whether Theodore's mind was so far removed from this sound theological view that he could be regarded as heterodox, at least in tendency. Hence I subjoin a few passages in which Theodore's use of the communication of idioms is at least as clear as it is in the passages cited by Sullivan.

In *Catechetical Homily* 6 Theodore is commenting on Phil 2:7.⁶⁶ Here he says that it is not said of the divine nature that it should be given to it to be adored by all, because this already belongs to the divine nature, and then he goes on to say:

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 282–83.

⁶⁶ Tonneau, pp. 141–43.

It is, then, evident and sure that these things are said of the human nature. He says them jointly⁶⁷ of the divine nature that this word might astonish and be perceived by those who heard it. For it is above the nature of man that it should be adored by all. Rightly therefore it is said as of one, so that by the exact union of the natures this word might be believed.

This passage is cited by Sullivan⁶⁸ but is not discussed. We should notice here that adoration belongs to human nature, as I have pointed out above; it does not belong to human nature in itself, but by virtue of the union. Likewise in virtue of the union the adoration is mentioned "as of one." This is certainly a communication in the downward direction of which Sullivan speaks, but it is an extremely important communication, as I have mentioned above, since Theodore's words can be taken in no other sense than of one object of adoration.

In the same homily Theodore writes of the resurrection:

If in the hour that Christ our Lord rose from the dead He had raised up all men who had previously died and had given them at once the perfection of a new life, we would have needed none of these. But because naturally He accomplishes this renewal which is to come in Himself alone, that He should rise from the dead and that His body should become immortal and His soul unchangeable. . . .⁶⁹

The point to be noticed in this brief selection is that there is only one subject: He who rises from the dead, He who raises other men from the dead and gives them the perfection of a new life, He who accomplishes within Himself the renewal which is to come, He whose body becomes immortal and soul unchangeable. And we must notice that it is said that the one who accomplishes all this does it "naturally" (Syriac *kyanait*). According to the rigid canons of diction which Sullivan has imposed upon him, Theodore in this passage is speaking carelessly about the one subject of the Incarnate Word.

In *Catechetical Homily 7* Theodore takes up the article, "who for us men and for our salvation descended from heaven." The question is: who is it who descended from heaven? Theodore begins the discussion of this in the first paragraph of the homily; I select this passage as "typical":

[Our fathers] wished in all these things to tell us the gift of His grace, which they saw towards the race of men, that He should assume from us a man, that

⁶⁷ Tonneau, *par communication*; Syriac *neqpait*, perhaps Greek *akolouthōs*.

⁶⁸ Sullivan, p. 262.

⁶⁹ Tonneau, p. 153.

He should be in Him and should dwell in Him. They teach that according to the law of the nature of men He suffered and bore all these things, that we might understand that it was not by way of opinion⁷⁰ that He was man, but that in truth He was man and according to human nature bore the things which are human.⁷¹

Here again Theodore has permitted himself to speak very inaccurately according to the canons which Sullivan has established for him. For in this passage "He," one subject, has a gift of grace towards human nature, and this gift is to have assumed from us a man, to be in Him and to dwell in Him. This "He"—without any change of subject—suffers and bears all which is proper to human nature, and He does this that we may know that He is man not merely in opinion, but in truth He is man.

In *Catechetical Homily 7* Theodore discusses the article, "He shall come to judge the living and the dead," and the question is who is He that is to come:

See, then, the exactness of their speech; because, treating of His humanity, His sufferings, and His resurrection, they say of the same person (*par̄suḫa*) that He will come to make the judgment, that there may be no doubt that it is a man who comes to be the judge of all creation. They add the word "again" to show as by a sign the divinity of the Only-begotten who is in Him, from whom it is that He receives all this dignity. For if they had wished to say only this, it was sufficient for them to say that He will come to judge the living and the dead. But by the addition of "again," they indicate His divinity; for He who comes evidently is in truth the man who was assumed from us, who comes from heaven, of whom it is said rightly that He moves from place to place.⁷²

We may consider not only the exactness of the speech of the fathers, but also the exactness of the speech of Theodore. The point is that it is one who is man, who suffers, who rises from the dead, who comes again into the world to judge. The key word for Theodore is "again." If the statement were made of the assumed humanity as such, he says the fathers would not have needed to add "again"; because, quite simply, the human nature had never come from heaven. But they do add "again" in order that we may all know that it is one who comes the first time and the second time. Again, we could scarcely ask a clearer statement of the proposition.⁷³

⁷⁰ *Masbranula*.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁷² Tonneau, p. 183.

⁷³ The biblical text, "It [the divine nature] will judge the entire earth by the man

The opening passage of *Catechetical Homily* 8 illustrates both Theodore's predication of idioms as of one subject and at the same time his overstatement of the distinction between two natures:

[The fathers] have handed down a twofold word according to the meaning of the Scriptures about Christ our Lord. That He is not God alone, and not man alone; but He is truly in the two by nature, both God and man. He is God the Word, the one who assumes, and man, the one which is assumed. But that which is the form of God assumes the form of a slave; and the form of a slave is not the form of God. In the form of God He is that which is by nature God, the one who assumes the form of a slave. But the form of a slave is that which by nature is man, the one which is assumed for our salvation. So the one who assumes is not the one which is assumed, and the one which is assumed is not the one who assumes. But the one who assumes is God, the one which is assumed is man. And the one who assumes is this by nature, what God the Father is; for He is God with God. He is what the one is with whom He is. But the one who is assumed is that by nature, which David and Abraham were, whose son He is and from whose seed He is. Therefore He is Lord and son of David: son of David by nature, and Lord by the dignity which He has. But He is raised above David His father because of the nature which assumed Him.⁷⁴

The first part of this passage leaves no question of the unity of predication in Theodore's mind; for the same one is God the Word and man. The distinction lies in what Theodore calls the form of God and the form of a slave; these he keeps entirely distinct—so distinct that it seems he almost denies that God is man. In the sense in which he employs the terms God and man, this denial expresses his mind; the denial, however, clearly refers to a distinction of natures and not of persons. Indeed, in this passage he affirms of the one assumed that He is both Lord and son of David: son of David by nature, Lord by reason of the dignity of the nature which assumed Him. To speak of the nature as assuming is theologically unsound; we affirm that it is the person who assumes, and in this passage it is not clear that this is what Theodore thinks. On the other hand, his failure to perceive this truth does not lead him to duality of the subject of predication.

The same homily shows how carefully Theodore could speak:

Jesus," wrongly referred by Tonneau (p. 185) to 2 Tim 4:1, is to be referred to Acts 17:31: "He comes to judge the world in justice in the man whom He has appointed." It is fairly important that this text be referred to its source. If the passage as it stands were attributed to Theodore, it would be taken as a clear indication of his Nestorian ideology.

⁷⁴ Tonneau, p. 187.

He speaks what follows as of one, to show the perfect union which exists: "When you see the Son of Man ascending to the place where He was from the beginning." If it were not so as I have said, it would have been right to say, "When you see the Son of Man ascending to the place where the one who is in Him was." . . . And this is the meaning of this, "No man has ascended to heaven except Him who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man, the one who is in heaven." He does not now say, "No man has ascended into heaven; but I ascend into heaven because of the divine nature which dwells in me, that which is now in heaven." But He says this jointly⁷⁵ as of one, that no one has ascended to heaven except Him who comes down from heaven, the Son of Man, the one who is in heaven. And He did not wish to say with distinctions that no one has ascended to heaven except the Son of Man, the one who dwells in Him, the one who has come down and is in heaven; but He abandons this way of speaking to speak jointly and as of one.⁷⁶

In this passage Theodore is very careful to repudiate exactly the explanation of this passage which he ought to give if he were following the synthesis of his thought which Sullivan has outlined.

CONCLUSION

This article is intended to be no more than a footnote to Sullivan's thesis. It does not match Sullivan's thesis either in the amount of evidence examined or in the completeness with which the texts are discussed. Here I can do no more than inject a note of caution for the theologian who employs Sullivan's book. The theologian should be cautious in reading Sullivan's discussion of the texts and in accepting his conclusions. I have attempted to show that, full and honest as Sullivan's examination is, he has not succeeded in giving a thorough examination of the evidence. His presentation of material, because of its amplitude, renders the book indispensable for one who wishes to make a detailed study of Theodore's Christology; but one cannot limit oneself to Sullivan's treatment and arrive, in the opinion of this writer, at an accurate and comprehensive grasp of Theodore's mind.

On the basis of this brief discussion of the texts it may seem slightly presumptuous to present a theory in opposition to the theory of Sullivan; yet I feel I owe it to Sullivan as well as to Theodore and myself to sum up the conclusions which may be deduced from these detached observations. At the moment, I feel that a full examination on the

⁷⁵ *Naqipait*; Tonneau suggests Greek *akolouthōs*.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

scope and scale of Sullivan's book would support this summary. I suggest that Theodore's Christology is no more and no less than what we should expect it to be in a man who lived in his time and his theological milieu. The Christology of Theodore is not the Christology of Ephesus and Chalcedon; nor do I think we should expect it to be. Neither is his terminology that which was elaborated in these Councils and in the theological discussions which took place before, during, and after them. The greatest single defect in Theodore's terminology is without doubt his lack of a clearly defined understanding of *hypostasis*. It is, however, no more than fair to ask where Theodore might have attained this understanding, which was the result of subsequent discussions. Sullivan attributes to Athanasius a Christology which did not have that degree of clarity and precision which Sullivan claims for it. The language of Athanasius, like the language of Theodore, was to a large extent determined by the heresies which he opposed. Actually, one may consider that the movement of Athanasius away from Arianism opened the door at least slightly for the error of Apollinaris; and Theodore, in refuting both the Arians and Apollinaris, moved not only back towards the center, but too far in the other direction, as did Athanasius, and—I think one may say—Cyril of Alexandria, whose insistence on the unity of person permitted his followers and successors to pervert his doctrine into a unity of nature.

Possibly we shall have to renounce any effort ever to reach the true mind of Theodore. The condition in which his writings have been preserved certainly makes it extremely difficult. Further examination may disclose his mind more clearly, but at the present moment it seems doubtful to this writer. But the opposite hypothesis which I suggest is that Theodore had a Christology which was substantially orthodox but accidentally defective in its terminology and in some of its conceptions in detail. These defects were not such as to render his Christology unorthodox or even to permit the legitimate deduction of an unorthodox Christology from his principles. Hence one finds in his writings certain inconsistencies, as Sullivan has pointed out in abundance. There are explanations of doctrine which are not mere parrotings of orthodox formulae but statements in his own language; and these statements exhibit none of the basic defects which Sullivan attributes to him in his synthesis of Theodore's thought. With these—sometimes on the same page—we find other pages which are simply

not correct in their use of philosophical terms. I have pointed out instances where these incorrect passages, read against the larger context of Theodore's writings, can be fitted into a basically orthodox Christology. Theologians who deal with these problems, it seems, deal with them on an antecedent presumption which is either favorable or unfavorable. In this respect greater objectivity is an ideal which all who study the matter should consider seriously. But I think a minimum of objectivity would demand that we do not charge Theodore with heterodoxy, or even with heterodox tendencies, because he fails to give a fully correct and precise answer to a question which was never proposed to him in the terms in which it was proposed to the Council of Ephesus. Sullivan has quoted and examined a great many passages of Theodore's writings. It will seem strange to many readers that at the end he has so little evidence to support his thesis. The reader will wonder that Theodore is able to speak of Christology so often without betraying the fundamental defects outlined in Sullivan's synthesis.

The defects of Theodore's terminology, as I have indicated in several passages discussed above, can often be ultimately reduced to his use of biblical texts. Sullivan has stated that Theodore's favorite formula is that the Word is in man or dwells in man. Theodore certainly does use this formula frequently; he can support it by Col 1:19, 2:9. But perhaps an even more favorite formula is the form of God and the form of a slave, based on Phil 2:7. Both of these biblical texts are more easily open to a Nestorian misconception than "The Word was made flesh" (Jn 1:14), as long as "flesh" is understood to mean "man." But I do not need to refer to the difficulties which were created in theology by the use of this biblical term "flesh." Hence Theodore, in selecting his terms, without feeling the necessity of emphasizing other texts—a necessity which he had no reason to feel from the theological discussions with which he was familiar—may easily use metaphors drawn from these passages which later theologians found it impossible to use. In fact, if the standards so strictly applied to Theodore were applied to the New Testament, one could easily show that these passages and others in the New Testament themselves exhibit a defective Christology. Of course they do not; but those who study these questions must bear in mind that the terminology of the New Testament is not the terminology of Ephesus and Chalcedon either, and that a theologian like Theodore, who was so familiar with

the New Testament, is more likely to draw on the New Testament for his language than on a theological definition of terms of which he had never heard.

Sullivan remarks⁷⁷ that a question of the justice of Theodore's condemnation by the Fifth Ecumenical Council arises because of the Council's employment of evidence which was distorted, and on this page he promises that he will return to the question of the justice of the condemnation. Later, however, he professes that he is not dealing with the justice of the condemnation;⁷⁸ and I find no fulfilment of the promise to return to the question except almost at the end of the book:

The ultimate point of contradiction comes down to this: is the one subject, of whom all these verbs of the Creed are predicated, really God the Word or not? Theodore certainly would agree with Nestorius that it is not. But the fathers of Ephesus agreed with Cyril of Alexandria that it is. Nestorius, as well as Theodore, thought that the two natures are united in one *prosōpon*. But neither understood that this one *prosōpon*, this one subject of whom one can predicate what belongs to both divinity and humanity, is actually the Divine Person of the Word. Here is the basic defect of Nestorianism. It is likewise the basic defect of the christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia. For all the positive and sound elements which are to be found in his thinking, one cannot deny the essential agreement between the doctrine of Theodore and the doctrine of that letter of Nestorius which was condemned at Ephesus. We believe this fact is ample justification for the verdict of the "Doctor of the Incarnation": that Theodore of Mopsuestia was the Father of Nestorianism.⁷⁹

From this I deduce that the justice of the condemnation is upheld because Theodore actually was the father of Nestorianism, although not for the reasons which were adduced before the Council.

But this is the conclusion of Sullivan's thesis which I cannot accept. It is misleading to put the question as if the unity of subject was already settled when the Nestorian controversy arose. Nestorius did not assert simply that the two natures are united in one *prosōpon*, but that each of the natures before the union constituted a distinct *prosōpon*. Of such a view Sullivan has adduced no evidence whatever in the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia; and I have adduced passages in this article which are in direct contradiction to such a view. The contradiction is not explicit because the question did not arise in Theodore's mind in these terms; but these passages are enough to

⁷⁷ Sullivan, p. 112.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 284.

raise a serious doubt about what Sullivan says concerning which side Theodore would take in this conflict of ideologies. One may question whether a man who asserts that there is only one Son, that He is the true Son, that the Incarnate Word Jesus Christ, divinity and humanity, is adored with a single act of adoration, who speaks of one subject as begotten of the Father, redeeming by His sufferings, raising from the dead and raising others from the dead, would have agreed with Nestorius that in the Incarnate Word there is not one subject but two. Hence I affirm that Sullivan's conclusion that Theodore would certainly agree with Nestorius is not a historical judgment. One would have to invoke a much more massive manipulation of the Syriac versions than Sullivan admits to exclude these "positive and sound elements" from his thinking.

Neither on historical evidence can I affirm that Theodore would have disagreed with Nestorius. On this question Theodore never had to stand up and give his vote. Quite possibly—Sullivan is certain—his dyophysism and his preference for speaking of the nature of the Word rather than the person of the Word would have driven him to support Nestorius; it is far more probable, I think, that his insistence on the unity of subject would have driven him to repudiate duality of person. He had in his own Christology the materials to correct its defects and to take his stand with the defenders of the doctrine that in the Incarnation there is only one *hypostasis*, the *hypostasis* of the Word.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ I could not obtain the article of Paul Galtier, S.J., "Théodore de Mopsueste: Sa vraie pensée sur l'Incarnation," *Recherches de science religieuse* 45 (1957) 161–86, 338–60, until this article was ready for the press. Some of the passages treated here are discussed by Galtier. With a dry understatement he says of Sullivan's work that he is not "partout de son avis." His conclusion is diametrically opposed to Sullivan: "Finalement donc, à rechercher, comme nous avons voulu le faire, la manière dont Théodore a compris et exposé lui-même l'incarnation du Verbe, on constate qu'il l'a fait à la manière même dont le fera l'Eglise après lui. Dans le Christ, il a distingué le Verbe et l'homme assumé par lui, deux natures totalement distinctes, dont chacune, si elle existait à part, serait un *prosôpon*, mais qui, de par leur union, n'ont qu'un seul *prosôpon*, celui du Verbe lui-même. Formée au sein même de la Vierge, cette union a fait du 'rejeton de David' le 'Dieu souverain' et de la mère de Jésus la 'mère de Dieu.' A cause d'elle l'homme né de Marie a pu s'attribuer à la fois la nature humaine et la nature divine; dans ses discussions avec les Juifs, il a pu se dire à la fois le créateur et le juge de l'univers. Dans le sacrifice qu'il a fait de lui-même, Dieu le Père a vu le sacrifice de son 'Fils unique.' Venu du ciel une première fois, lors de l'incarnation du Verbe, ce 'fils de l'homme' en reviendra encore, à la fin des temps, pour juger tout l'univers. Telle est l'union que Théodore met à la base de sa conception du Christ" (pp. 358–59). It is remarkable that Galtier reaches this conclusion with few references to falsifications by the compilers of the extracts of Theodore's works.