

NOTE

FURTHER NOTES ON THEODORE OF MOPSUESTIA: A REPLY TO FR. MCKENZIE

John L. McKenzie, S.J., of West Baden College, has devoted an article in a recent issue of this review¹ to a critical study of my monograph on the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia.² The length of his treatment, the detailed and exacting criticism he has offered, and the sharply divergent views that he has expressed seem to justify and even demand some word of mine in reply. It is flattering that a scholar of McKenzie's rank should have considered my book worth so thorough an examination, and I know that he will not take it amiss if I offer what comments I can in my own defense.

I attempted to solve two problems regarding Theodore: the sources to be used and the orthodoxy of his doctrine on the unity of Christ. McKenzie rejects my solution to both of these problems. In this Note, therefore, I shall first discuss his comments on my treatment of the sources and then consider the objections he has raised to my synthesis of Theodore's Christology.

THE PROBLEM OF THE SOURCES

The Procedure to be Followed

The most vexing question here concerns the reliability of certain florilegia of extracts from Theodore's writings, which were compiled by his adversaries and used as evidence of his heterodoxy at the Council of the "Three Chapters." R. Devreesse and M. Richard tested these hostile citations against some recently discovered Syriac versions of works of Theodore and concluded that the citations were wholly untrustworthy. My examination of the evidence led me to the conclusion that their verdict was not justified and that, on the contrary, we could safely use these hostile fragments, as long as we were careful to see them in the light of all the other evidence. Fr. McKenzie quotes my statement to this effect, and remarks: "This conclusion implies that the Syriac versions of Theodore's works 'do not merit such absolute confidence' because they lack the literal accuracy which is presupposed by Richard and Devreesse—and, it seems, by any one who uses the Syriac versions as a source of Theodore's Christology."³ Now it does not

¹ "Annotations on the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia," THEOLOGICAL STUDIES 19 (1958) 345-73; cited hereafter as "Annotations."

² F. A. Sullivan, S.J., *The Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Analecta Gregoriana 82; Rome, 1956); cited hereafter as *Christology*.

³ "Annotations," pp. 345-46.

seem to me that anyone who would use the Syriac versions as a source of Theodore's Christology (as I do myself) would have to presuppose *that degree* of literal accuracy which Devreesse and Richard postulated in their arguments to prove the corruption of the hostile citations. The "absolute confidence" which they showed in the work of the Syriac translators was such that they would unhesitatingly brand as falsified a citation which failed to correspond in even slight details to the Syriac version. Such a procedure supposed an extremely high degree of accuracy and competence in these Syriac translators, as well as a standard of fidelity to the original that is expected of modern scholarship, but can hardly be presumed in ancient translations. I have presented detailed evidence to show that none of these versions is quite so accurate that a variation from them would at once prove a citation to have been falsified. My contention is that in the case of a discrepancy between a Greek citation and the Syriac version one must reckon not only with the possibility of a dishonest compiler but also with that of the departure (intentional or otherwise) of the translator from his original text. Richard and Devreesse seem to have overlooked the latter explanation entirely, in arguing to the dishonesty of the compilers. In examining these cases of discrepancy, I attempted, on the basis of all the evidence that seemed pertinent, to determine which of the two explanations was more likely to be true. It is a caricature of my procedure here to describe it by saying, as McKenzie does later on: "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 dishonesty of the compilers."⁴ One of the points at issue in my work was the question as to the validity of the sweeping charges of dishonesty that had been leveled against the compilers of the extracts, and I believe I have shown that there is much less substance to them than had been claimed. It is clear that three fragments from the exegetical works had been so cut from their context that they would give a false impression of Theodore's teaching. There is some reason to believe that the persons responsible for these particular extracts were the "Acephales," authors of a sixth-century work against Theodore, refuted by Facundus. On the other hand, it seems fairly certain that the extracts from the *De Incarnatione* transmitted by Leontius were compiled within ten years of Theodore's death, by someone who carefully indicated the book and section from which his citations were drawn, thus giving Theodore's defenders a simple task in refuting him if his citations had been falsified. There is reason, therefore, to distinguish between the

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 355-56.

compilers of the extracts; it is a hasty generalization to speak of "the mendacious compilers of the florilegia"⁵ or to presume, as McKenzie does,⁶ that one man, proven dishonest in three citations from the exegetical commentaries, was the sole compiler of all the extracts that we possess. If the author of the florilegium of texts from the *De Incarnatione* had intended to falsify his citations, which he compiled in the original language, and while the writer's works were still available, he certainly would have been rash to note in each case the book and section from which his citations were taken. He would have been not only rash but fool-hardy to falsify his citations in details where there would be no advantage in making a textual change. Yet such, it seems, is the type of textual alteration that McKenzie detects in the case where he "suspects that the Greek of Leontius is an exegetical gloss upon the original which brings out what Leontius or his compiler thought was the mind of Theodore."⁷ It is difficult to see why the compiler would have laid himself open to the charge of altering his texts, merely for the sake of an exegetical gloss. *Nemo gratis mendax* is especially true when the liar makes detection easy by his accurate indication of the source of his pretended quotation.

When giving his general estimate of the value of my work, McKenzie observes that his judgment is based on texts of the 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."⁸ One will admit that it is somewhat risky to rely on the Latin version of Sachau; this dates from 1869 and has been shown to be in need of correction.⁹ On the other hand, the translations done by Tonneau (1949) and Vosté (1940) are scholarly versions, made precisely to render these Syriac texts available to theologians and intended to suit their exacting demands. McKenzie's implication that one cannot rely even on such scientific versions as these without doing an injustice to the man whose works are thus read would seem to prohibit the study of the Oriental Fathers to all but a few theologians and render almost useless the translations-volumes in the *CSCO*.

Some Cases of Alleged Falsification of Extracts

McKenzie discusses at some length my treatment of an instance where a Greek citation given by Leontius differs from the Syriac version found in one

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 353. ⁶ *Loc. cit.* ⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 351-52. ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 347.

⁹ *Christology*, p. 55, note. It is surprising, in view of this, that when McKenzie cites the Syriac text on p. 349, he quotes Sachau's Latin translation, instead of using the new one given by Richard, or giving us his own.

of the fragments edited by Sachau.¹⁰ One of the principal discrepancies here is that the Greek has the two natures in Christ united in one *prosōpon*, whereas the Syriac has them united in one *prosōpon* and one *hypostasis*. Referring to one of the points I raised in questioning the fidelity of the Syriac version to the original Greek here, McKenzie observes:

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.¹¹

One would hesitate to affirm of any writer whose works we possess only in part that any particular expression was never employed by him. But one can say with assurance that at least in all the sources that have come down to us, with the unique exception of the disputed Syriac passage in question, Theodore speaks always of union in one *prosōpon*, never of union in one *prosōpon* and one *hypostasis*. This is not merely to argue that the latter expression is not typical of the language of Theodore; it is to say that it simply never occurs in his extant writings, whereas the other expression "union in one *prosōpon*" occurs a great many times. This at least raises the doubt whether it might have been the Syriac translator who introduced a formula which by his time had become the consecrated formula of Chalcedon.

McKenzie, on the contrary, rejects the Greek citation as given by Leontius, because it makes Theodore speak of "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." He asserts: "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."¹² On this, one might first note that P. Galtier, who certainly cannot be accused of merely offering arguments in defense of my thesis, sees no difficulty whatever about admitting the Greek text of Leontius here, and in fact sees it as much more consonant with Theodore's usual manner of speaking about the Incarnation than the Syriac version.¹³ Galtier rightly insists on a point which McKenzie seems to overlook: where Theodore speaks of the two *prosōpa*, he is thinking of the two natures precisely as distinct: *as if* they were not

¹⁰ "Annotations," pp. 347-50. ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 348. ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 349.

¹³ Paul Galtier, S.J., "Théodore de Mopsueste: Sa vraie pensée sur l'Incarnation," *Recherches de science religieuse* 45 (1957) 168, note; 179-80.

united. When they are considered in their union, they are one *prosōpon*, and this is altogether consonant with Theodore's doctrine of the one person as "effected by the union." Hence the argument that this expression is "alien to Theodore's thought, which if anything insists on the unity of the *prosōpon*," seems to miss the point, since Theodore's one *prosōpon* is the result of the union, and he speaks of the two *prosōpa* here only in the hypothesis that one prescind from the union, adding at once that when we consider the union, we speak of only one *prosōpon*.

It is remarkable that the formula "one *prosōpon* and one *hypostasis*," which is found only in the Syriac version of this fragment, and nowhere else in all the extant texts of Theodore, is exactly the phrase by which the Council of Chalcedon expressed the unity of Christ. McKenzie thus notes my discussion of this point: "Sullivan argues that it is extremely unlikely that Theodore could have used a phrase which rings so much of the language of Chalcedon."¹⁴ My argument was actually a bit more cogent than that; my words were: "If Theodore's text had actually contained this striking anticipation of the formula of Chalcedon, it is strange that Facundus of Hermiane, who was so keen to produce evidence of Theodore's orthodoxy, would not have noticed it and made capital of it."¹⁵ Facundus, as I had pointed out earlier in the thesis, wrote a lengthy defense of the orthodoxy of Theodore, in which he quoted a number of passages, clearly looking for those most favorable to his cause. Writing at a time when the formula "one *prosōpon* and one *hypostasis*" was the consecrated expression of the dogma of the unity of Christ, he could hardly have failed to note a text in which Theodore would have so brilliantly anticipated the Council of Chalcedon.

However, McKenzie finds in the context of the passage, as it is given in the Syriac version, the proof that Theodore could actually have used the formula "one *hypostasis*" in this text. Theodore here illustrates the union of the natures in Christ from the union of body and soul in human nature, declaring that body and soul, when separate from one another, each has its own *physis* and *hypostasis*, but that when they are joined, they constitute one *hypostasis* and one *prosōpon*. McKenzie argues that the use of this comparison in the context shows how Theodore could likewise speak of the "theandric composite" as one *hypostasis*.

There are two difficulties with this argument. First: Theodore really uses this comparison to show how things that are two when considered as distinct, can yet be one in their union. He had previously illustrated this from man and wife, who are two, yet are rightly called one flesh in their union. Here also the comparison holds: when body and soul are separate, each has its

¹⁴ "Annotations," p. 349.

¹⁵ *Christology*, p. 82.

own *hypostasis*, but together they constitute one *hypostasis*. But it would be a mistake to jump to the conclusion that Theodore must also have spoken of Word and man as uniting in one *hypostasis*. The comparison would just as well have illustrated what the Greek citation has him say: while the two natures in Christ are two *prosōpa* when thought of as distinct, this does not prevent them from being one *prosōpon* in their union. The second point is this: Theodore asserts that body and soul unite in one *hypostasis*; can we conclude that *a pari* Word and man united for him in one *hypostasis*? There is an important difference to be noted here: body and soul also unite in one *physis*, and Theodore certainly would not have said that the union of the divine and human natures in Christ results in one *physis*. While McKenzie rather summarily rejects Galtier's view that the term *hypostasis*, as used by Theodore apart from a Trinitarian context, is synonymous with *physis*, I believe that there is considerable evidence for Galtier's statement, and I have offered some further examples to corroborate his findings.¹⁶ In view of this, it does not seem at all likely to me that Theodore would have followed the parallel to the extent of saying that just as body and soul unite in one *hypostasis*, the two natures in Christ likewise unite in one *hypostasis*, any more than that he would have said that the two natures unite in one *physis*. In this point, at least, Galtier lends his support to my position.

McKenzie also discusses the second passage where a Syriac fragment edited by Sachau can be compared with the Greek citation of Leontius.¹⁷ The texts correspond up to a point; then one notes a difference in what follows. To clarify the matter, I shall give the two texts in English, using McKenzie's version of the Syriac.

Section where Greek and Syriac agree:

Who was manifested in the flesh, was justified in the spirit.—He speaks of Him as *justified in the spirit*, whether as having, before His baptism, observed the Law with fitting accuracy, or as, subsequent to that,

Greek continues:
fulfilling the regime of charity
by the cooperation of the spirit
with great accuracy.

Syriac continues:
fulfilling [the Law]
by the guidance of the spirit
and His own accuracy.¹⁸

Richard and McKenzie both accept the Syriac here as an accurate version of what Theodore wrote, and judge the Greek citation falsified. Richard sees in the phrase "by the cooperation of the spirit" a shocking interpolation; McKenzie finds this phrase "certainly obscure" and suspects that "the

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 66–67.

¹⁷ "Annotations," pp. 351–52.

¹⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 351.

Greek of Leontius is an exegetical gloss upon the original which brings out what Leontius or his compiler thought was the mind of Theodore."¹⁹ One way to shed light on such an issue as this is to ask which of the two texts corresponds better with what Theodore has written elsewhere. To this purpose I introduced a passage from another extract given by Leontius, which I called a perfect parallel to the citation in question. McKenzie objects to my use of the term "perfect parallel," and I must admit that it is not perfect in every detail. But the key point of the parallel (which he seems to overlook) is that in both of these Greek passages we have the antithesis between Christ's observance of the Law before His baptism and His practice of charity after His baptism. McKenzie further casts doubt on the parallel text, since, being also given by Leontius, "it may not be independent of the first." I transmit the question as to the motive the compiler might have had for introducing this antithesis into the two passages, or what advantage he might have hoped to derive from it. I will refer, instead, to a series of passages in *Catechetical Homily 6*, where Theodore refers repeatedly to the question of Christ's observance of the Law.²⁰ A consistent note in all of these passages is that when Theodore speaks of Christ's observance of the Law, he is describing His life prior to His baptism; in not a single case does he speak of His observing the Law after His baptism, but here he speaks rather of His giving an example of "the evangelical life," clearly as contrasted with the Mosaic Law. The following passages bring out this point.

Cependant tout ce qu'il opérait pour nous se produisait selon la loi de notre nature: peu à peu il reçut sa croissance et parvint à la taille parfaite, accomplissant aussi exactement les préceptes de la Loi. Et c'est parce qu'il satisfit à notre obligation envers la Loi, qu'il reçut du Législateur (comme) prix de la victoire, pour avoir observé les préceptes de la Loi, d'attirer par lui à toute sa race cette bénédiction promise par la Loi à ceux qui l'observeraient. Il s'avança aussi au baptême, afin de transmettre d'une manière ordonnée la vie de l'Évangile, et enfin il reçut la mort et abolit la mort. . . . Il s'avança donc au baptême pour donner un modèle à notre baptême à nous, et dès là il se détacha de toute la conduite conforme à la Loi et accomplit toute la vie de l'Évangile. Il se choisit des disciples, établit l'enseignement de la loi et de la doctrine nouvelles, montra les moeurs qui conviennent à sa doctrine, (moeurs) différentes de ce qu'enseigne la Loi, et il enseigna que nos moeurs, à nous aussi qui croyons, devaient être conformes à celles-là. . . . Nécessairement donc, il satisfit à la dette de la Loi, s'avança au baptême et montra (l'exemple) des moeurs nouvelles de l'évangile, qui sont une figure du monde à

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 351-52.

²⁰ R. Tonneau, *Les homélies catéchétiques de Théodore de Mopsueste* (Vatican City, 1949) pp. 133, 145, 151, 153.

venir; en sorte que, nous aussi, qui avons cru au Christ et avons obtenu la faveur du baptême et, dans le mystère de ces (rites) avons reçu la figure du monde à venir, il nous faut vivre selon ses commandements.²¹

I think it cannot be denied that there is a clear parallel between Theodore's teaching in this homily and the antithesis which we found in the two Greek citations between Christ's observance of the Law before His baptism and His following the regime of charity after His baptism. On the other hand, the Syriac version seems to contradict what is said in the homily. McKenzie, however, judged that the Syriac version was substantiated by its biblical allusions, whereas he "finds no such allusions in the Greek of Leontius."²² Now certainly the allusion to Mt 3:15 (the exactitude with which Christ fulfils the Law) is present just as clearly in the Greek citation as it is in the Syriac. And the idea of the "cooperation of the spirit" is not far from the expressions by which the evangelists describe the influence of the Spirit on Christ subsequent to His baptism. McKenzie believes that his "closer examination of this passage has shown that there is good reason to suspect the Greek, and that there is nothing to show that the Syriac falls short of being an accurate rendition."²³ As the only "good reason" which he offers for suspecting the Greek is its supposed lack of biblical allusions, one might ask not only whether such allusions can really be found there, but also whether this would not turn out to be a rather rigid canon of genuinity if universally applied. I believe that most scholars would prefer the norm of consistency with what the author has written elsewhere.

Discussing some parallel texts in which the word "naturally" occurs in the Syriac version but is lacking in two different citations from the hostile florilegia, McKenzie argues that even if the Greek were correct in its omission of this word, we would be justified in supplying it *secundum sensum*.²⁴ I have offered positive reasons for believing that the original text actually did lack the word here; and the fact that it could have been supplied *secundum sensum* would seem to strengthen, rather than weaken, my hypothesis that it was actually so supplied by the Syriac translator.

The Value of the Syriac Versions

In summing up his discussion of the problem of the sources, McKenzie questions my judgment as to the relative merits of the hostile citations and the Syriac versions:

To trust the [Syriac] translators is not to affirm the "absolute literal accuracy" of their work, nor to deny that they were subject to the human weaknesses of

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 149-55.

²² "Annotations," p. 351.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

²⁴ *Loc. cit.*

translators. But we do not know that they were deliberately perverting the evidence; we do know that the compilers were. . . . 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.²⁵

Here a distinction is in order: to trust the Syriac translators as Devreesse and Richard trusted them is indeed to presume the literal accuracy of their work and to forget that they were subject to the human weaknesses of translators. To trust the Syriac translators in so far as they can be shown to be trustworthy is, on the other hand, quite a reasonable procedure. When I suggest that in some cases the more likely explanation of a discrepancy is to be sought in the departure of the translator from the original, I by no means feel bound to demonstrate the dishonesty and bad faith of the translator. In the first place, the departure may have been indeliberate. In the second place, they can be judged only by the standards that were expected of translators of their own day. To supply an occasional phrase *secundum sensum*, or even to "improve" a text by making its expression conform with current orthodoxy, was not always looked on as a "perversion of evidence," as it might be now. Finally, as regards the statement that my insistence that the hostile sources should be used must be taken with qualification, I myself supplied such qualification, when I said: "Our contention is, that for the purposes of a thorough study of Theodore's Christology, given the friendly material now available, we can safely use these hostile fragments, as long as we are careful to see them in the light of all the other evidence."²⁶ I think that this program of "seeing them in the light of all the other evidence" was actually carried out in the subsequent presentation of Theodore's doctrine, where it would be difficult to find an important point in which my conclusions are based exclusively on the hostile fragments. This point was noticed by the Abbot of Downside, Dom Christopher Butler, in his review of my book, where he remarked:

I think it must be said that his christological conclusions are substantially based on the evidence of the 'friendly' sources; that they are confirmed by the hostile sources if these be accepted as evidence; and that they are hardly contradicted except by a Syriac text which makes Theodore speak not only of 'one person' but also of 'one hypostasis' in Christ; and Fr. Sullivan has shown good reason for suspecting that this twice-repeated phrase (omitted in the same passage as preserved in a hostile source) is not authentic.²⁷

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 354. ²⁶ *Christology*, p. 158. ²⁷ *Downside Review* 75 (1957) 79.

McKenzie's final remarks on the reliability of the sources are:

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. 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.²⁸

For my part, I do not believe that the shortcomings of the ancient Syriac translations are such as to justify an attitude of critical despair. Even if one were to conclude that the Syriac fragments edited by Sachau cannot always be trusted, one would still have two major works in Syriac: the *Homilies* and the *Commentary on St. John*. While there is evidence that the translators of these works would occasionally omit a phrase, or even supply one *secundum sensum*, on the other hand there is good reason to believe that they are generally faithful to the argument as a whole. My position, therefore, is that while these Syriac texts are not quite as accurate as Richard and Devresse presumed them to be, still they are sufficiently reliable to be a valuable source of our knowledge of Theodore's doctrine. I think that there is more to be said for this position than for one of critical despair.

THE PROBLEM OF THEODORE'S CHRISTOLOGY

The Norm by Which It Is to Be Judged

McKenzie believes that I have set for Theodore an impossible canon of orthodoxy, inasmuch as I have called upon him "to answer a theological question in terms in which it had never been proposed" in his lifetime.²⁹ He declares:

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. . . . 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.³⁰

I can think of no better way to answer this objection than to refer to what I said on this point in my monograph. It was Grillmeier's suggestion that

²⁸ "Annotations," p. 355.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 356.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 371-72.

Theodore's doctrine must be measured against the standard of the dogma of Ephesus. Of this I wrote:

One may be tempted to ask . . . whether Theodore can justly be judged on the basis of dogmatic decrees which were laid down only after his death. To this question it seems to us that there is a satisfactory answer. First: this study is not a judicial process, to decide whether Theodore was guilty of formal heresy. It is rather a theological study, to see whether or not his objective teaching, as it has come down to us, conformed with the essential truths of revelation. Now the Fathers of Ephesus defined no new dogma, elaborated no new and binding formula of faith. They merely declared that the teaching of Nestorius on the Incarnation was essentially contrary to the dogma of the Church as already expressed in the Nicene Creed. And they did this precisely in a way that gives us a standard for judging the doctrine of Theodore. As is well known, the process whereby the Fathers reached their decision was to compare the contradictory doctrine of two letters with the dogma of the Nicene Creed. One of these letters, from the pen of Cyril of Alexandria, contained the substance of his teaching on the Incarnation; the other was a reply to this letter from Nestorius, who contradicted the basic assertions of Cyril. The decision of Ephesus was categorical: Cyril's teaching expresses the dogma of Nicea; Nestorius' is its opposite. Here, then, it seems to us, is a key to the solution. If Ephesus is to be the standard for judging the orthodoxy of Theodore, then it is in the light of the doctrine of these two letters that the judgment must be made.³¹

In my conclusion I explained what I meant by saying that Theodore had not without reason been called the "Father of Nestorianism": "By this we do not mean that Theodore was formally guilty of this heresy. But we mean that his concept of Christ: his basic solution to the problem of the unity of Word and man, is fundamentally akin to that proposed by Nestorius in the letter which was condemned at Ephesus."³² Now a careful reading of that letter of Nestorius will show that he was not condemned for teaching that "each of the natures before the union constituted a distinct *prosōpon*."³³ To justify our conclusion that Theodore's Christology shows the same basic weakness that characterized the doctrine of the letter condemned at Ephesus, we are not obliged to adduce evidence to prove that Theodore anticipated Nestorius in every position which the latter subsequently adopted.

A Discussion of Some of the Texts

Unfortunately I have space to discuss only a few of the passages of Theodore's writings on which McKenzie bases his rejection of my syn-

³¹ *Christology*, pp. 30-31. ³² *Ibid.*, p. 283. ³³ "Annotations," p. 372.

thesis of Theodore's Christology. However, I believe that the following examples will illustrate some defects of method which characterize his treatment of other passages as well.

Commenting on a passage from *Catechetical Homily 6*, McKenzie says:

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.³⁴

On this point I think it is well to recall that in the version of the Creed which Theodore is explaining, the term "Only-begotten" is followed immediately by the term "first-born of all creatures." Theodore explains his understanding of this twofold appellation in *Homily 3*. From his treatment there, it is clear that he takes the term "Only-begotten" to signify the divine nature, and the term "first-born of all creatures" to refer to the human nature. The two terms are said together, "as of one *prosōpon*," to indicate the marvelous union that took place. In view of Theodore's identification of the term "Only-begotten" with the divine nature, it seems quite alien to his thought to say that he intends to predicate what is true of the human nature of *the Only-begotten*. This is quite a different thing from saying, as Theodore actually does here, that terms referring to both natures can be proclaimed "as of one son." This "one son" is the *prosōpon* who is both "Only-begotten" and "first-born of all creatures."

With regard to the next passage which McKenzie discusses,³⁵ I will only remark that I believe my interpretation to be substantiated by the rest of the quotation from Theodore and the other text which I introduced, immediately following the section of my text which McKenzie has quoted.³⁶

Of another passage, McKenzie declares:

A fragment of the *De Incarnatione* is quoted from which Sullivan argues that the Incarnation for Theodore took place only in appearance and not in reality.³⁷ The argument is based on the explanation of the word *egeneto* as it is used in Scripture in the passage. . . . Sullivan argues from the explanations of Gal 3:13 and Phil 2:7 to the unreality of the Incarnation.³⁸

There are several objections to such a presentation of what I say in the pages to which McKenzie refers. I do not actually quote a fragment from

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 357. ³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 357-58. ³⁶ *Christology*, p. 209.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 231-32. The fragment in question is found in Sachau, pp. 28-29 (Latin), 45-46 (Syriac).

³⁸ "Annotations," p. 358.

Sachau, but refer to it, by way of offering confirmation from a Syriac source of a citation in Greek given by Leontius. In this Greek citation, which is the principal basis of my argument, but to which McKenzie does not refer, Theodore is discussing the meaning of the word *egeneto* in Jn 1:14 and speaks as follows: "We have found, therefore, that this word *egeneto* can be taken in no other sense than *kata to dokein*—a meaning which we have accurately shown above that this word has in other passages of Sacred Scripture, especially when it is used with reference to the Lord."³⁹ I introduced the Syriac passage from Sachau as a corroboration of this citation of Leontius since it does actually seem to correspond to what Theodore says about his having previously found this meaning of *egeneto* in Scripture. I do not see any basis for the statement: "According to the principle which Sullivan has deduced from these two texts, Theodore should have been unable to say, as he does under *in conversione actuum aut moribus animi*, that Christ became under the Law."⁴⁰ It does not seem to me that I have deduced any principle from these two texts, in observing that they seem to be examples of those other passages of Scripture in which Theodore says that he had previously shown that the word *egeneto* was to be taken in the sense *kata to dokein*. Obviously this is not the same as to say that the word always and everywhere has this sense. Nor is it to exclude the different shades of meaning represented by the Syriac terms which the translator used, on which McKenzie has given us an enlightening discussion; one might remark that the word *dokein* is also susceptible of a variety of nuances.

In discussing a passage where I ascribe to Theodore the view that the *homo assumptus* is, like other men, an adoptive son of God, McKenzie remarks:

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. . . . 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." 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.⁴¹

But for an adequate interpretation one should also advert to this sentence of the passage which I quoted:

Verba autem: *ad Patrem meum et Patrem vestrum, et Deum meum et Deum vestrum, nemo sic demens est, ut alii cuidam convenire diceret, nisi templo Dei Verbi,*

³⁹ PG 66, 981; the translation is mine.

⁴⁰ "Annotations," p. 359.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 360.

homini pro nostra salute assumpto, qui et mortuus est, et resurrexit, et ascensus esset in caelos, et Patrem cum discipulis vocabat Deum, et ipse gratia adoptionem meritus; et Deum etiam (suum appellat), quia ab eo cum ceteris hominibus ut esset accepit.⁴²

One cannot simply ignore the phrase "et ipse gratia adoptionem meritus," when we come a few lines later to the phrase "indicans excellentiorem gratiam acceptam, propter quam coniunctus Deo Verbo tamquam verus filius ab omnibus honoratur hominibus." I see no contradiction in saying that an adoptive son is to be honored *tamquam verus filius*. Nor does it seem to me that the idea that the *homo assumptus* is to be "perpetually united with the Father in honor" at once excludes the notion of adoptive sonship, which Theodore himself expressly introduces in the same context.

In confirmation of his view on this point, McKenzie introduces a quotation from Theodore in which he speaks of the assumed humanity as being "united with true sonship."⁴³ I will only observe that I have discussed the meaning of this very text at some length in my book, where I think I have shown that this somewhat ambiguous phrase can only be interpreted in the light of the numerous texts where Theodore speaks unequivocally of the *homo assumptus* as an adoptive son of God.⁴⁴ Certainly, there is a vast difference in dignity between his adoption and ours, but evidently Theodore did not see this difference as so essential as to prevent him from speaking of the *homo assumptus* as an adoptive son.

From Theodore's doctrine regarding the adoration due to the assumed humanity McKenzie argues to his orthodoxy on the unity of subject in Christ.⁴⁵ Here I must question the following statement: "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."⁴⁶ It is true that the glory which the *homo assumptus* receives after his ascension into heaven is something that exalts him high above all other creatures; he is to be honored along with the Word: "The adoration is not to be divided, but he who was assumed receives it along with Him Who assumed him, because he is the temple from which it is absolutely impossible that He Who dwells therein should depart."⁴⁷ But the question is: does the union in adoration mean that it is the same type of adoration which is to be paid both to the temple and to the One

⁴² J. M. Vosté, O.P., *Theodori Mopsuesteni Commentarius in evangelium Iohannis apostoli* (CSCO 116; Louvain, 1940) p. 251.

⁴³ "Annotations," p. 361.

⁴⁴ *Christology*, pp. 273-75.

⁴⁵ "Annotations," pp. 363-64.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 363.

⁴⁷ *Catechetical Homily* 8, 14 (Tonneau, p. 207).

who dwells therein? I fail to see the grounds on which McKenzie bases his confidence that this is Theodore's understanding of the matter. I think it would be closer to the truth to say that Theodore goes about as far as one possibly could in having the Word share with the assumed man His titles, dignity, adoration, sonship, dominion, etc., without ever stepping beyond the limits of a moral union between the Word and a man. As long as the communication of idioms is effective "in a downward direction" only (whereby the man shares in the titles and honors of the Word, but the Word is not seen as the Person to whom the humanity, with its actions and passions, ultimately belongs), it seems to me that we are still within those limits.

McKenzie quotes a passage in which he finds Theodore using the communication of idioms in the sense that the same "He" who assumed a man and dwells in him is also said to have suffered and borne all that is proper to human nature.⁴⁸ He does not remark that this passage is also the subject of an extended treatment in my book, where I attempted to determine the identity of the subject to whom Theodore refers by the "He" in question. I believe that there are some grounds for my conclusion that the one to whom this pronoun refers is not the One who assumed but the one who was assumed: the same one of whom the Creed goes on to say that he rose from the dead, ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God, namely, "the one who was assumed from among us"; "the one with whom God the Word clothed Himself."⁴⁹

In order to keep within the limits allowed to this Note, I shall have to forego discussion of a number of further points raised by McKenzie, as well as of his own synthesis of Theodore's Christology, which, as he himself admits, is based on "detached observations" rather than on a comprehensive study of all the evidence. One can only hope that some day he will substantiate his synthesis with such a complete examination of all the texts. It would not be very difficult to pick out a number of passages where Theodore's Christology seems to be quite orthodox. The real problem for the theologian here is to penetrate to Theodore's consistent view of the Incarnation: the view that can explain all of his utterances, both those that sound orthodox and those that do not.

One final point. McKenzie deduces the conclusion that I uphold the justice of the condemnation of Theodore at Constantinople, not for the reasons that were adduced before the Council but because I hold that he really was the "Father of Nestorianism."⁵⁰ I do not accept this conclusion, because it

⁴⁸ "Annotations," pp. 366-67.

⁴⁹ *Christology*, pp. 241-43.

⁵⁰ "Annotations," p. 372.

seems to me to ignore the distinction between judging a doctrine to be theologically unsound and condemning a person as a heretic, as the Council condemned Theodore. Perhaps some ancient councils did not draw this distinction; McKenzie implies that I do not draw it either, and I think I made it quite clear in my thesis that I do. He seems to have missed the place where I fulfilled my promise to return to the question of the justice of the conciliar condemnation; there I expressed my view as follows:

It is clear that an investigation such as we propose into the reliability of these conciliar *capitula* would be a necessary part of a thorough study of the justice of the conciliar process by which Theodore was condemned. But such a thorough study would involve many other historical factors and much other evidence which would be altogether beyond the scope of this thesis. Such a study would perhaps better be done after the publication of a new critical edition of the *Acta* of this council, expected in the near future. We would be gratified if our present thesis made some contribution towards such an eventual re-examination of the evidence.⁶¹

I hope that this Note may serve a similar purpose.

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⁶¹ *Christology*, p. 120.