Theological Studies
50 (1989)

NEW LIFE IN CHRIST: SALVATION IN ORTHODOX THEOLOGY

JOHN MEYENDORFF

St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary, Crestwood, N.Y.

ORTHODOX THEOLOGY is, relatively speaking, a newcomer within the fabric of contemporary theology in the West. It is being rediscovered today in the context of the ecumenical movement, but also—perhaps more importantly— in the framework of the "return to the sources," which characterized post-World War II Roman Catholicism in France and Germany. This "return" involved a revival of interest in the Eastern Fathers of the Church and the liturgy, as a living witness to the unbroken Tradition of early Christianity.

Orthodox Christians indeed understand themselves as heirs of the Greek Fathers, and the liturgy has been for them the central and essential expression of the "catholic" nature of the Church. During the long centuries which followed the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the Orthodox communities of the Middle East and the Balkans had practically no other means of learning about their faith and witnessing to their Christian commitment than the liturgy, but it proved to be powerful enough to keep those communities spiritually alive. In Russia, meanwhile, historical circumstances delayed for long centuries the organic development of theological thought. It finally emerged into modernity within the framework of a Western school system and methodology, introduced in the 18th century by Peter the Great and adopted later in other Orthodox countries as well.

I will begin this study by a brief overview of theological trends as they developed in the modern period. Such an introduction is necessary, I believe, to explain the picture of theological diversity and vitality characteristic of Orthodoxy today and rarely noticed in the West, where interest in Eastern Christianity is limited to a few specialists.

TRENDS IN SOTERIOLOGY

Coined by Georges Florovsky, the concept of a "Western captivity of the Orthodox mind" is an inevitable and adequate characterization of theological realities in the Orthodox world in the period which followed the fall of Constantinople and which lasted practically until the 19th century. The Church in the East continued to live through its sacramental life, through its liturgy, through the spiritual tradition of a few monastic

centers, but books and bookmen, who pretended to represent theology, were imprisoned in the categories determined by the problems and conflicts of Western thought: scholasticism, Reformation, Counter Reformation, Enlightenment. Writing about the period, Florovsky aptly and sarcastically notes: "The West theologizes, but the East remains silent; worst of all, without thinking and belatedly, it repeats Western backlogs."[1] This was true of the various "Orthodox confessions" which appeared in the 17th and 18th centuries, and much time elapsed before the Orthodox learned how to use their own tradition creatively, without surrendering to the fateful habit of embracing Protestant arguments against the Roman Catholics and scholastic Latin ideas against the thought of the Reformation. Indeed, the whole period was dominated by defensive polemics, which—in the case of the Orthodox world—proceeded out of the real context of the Orthodox "mind."

The hopelessness of this *de facto* passivity of Orthodox theology was first formally acknowledged by Russian lay theologians, the so-called "older Slavophiles" in the 50s and 60s of the last century, who began to discover that solutions to Western problems are to be found in the Eastern tradition. "The older Slavophiles," Florovsky writes, "deduced Russian tasks from Western needs, from the issues which the other half of the Christian world would not or could not resolve." This is why, Florovsky continues, "a creative renaissance of the Orthodox world is a necessary condition for solving the ecumenical problem,"[2] and most Orthodox theologians would agree with him that such a renaissance requires a recovery of basic patristic intuitions, which would then be applied to the problems of today.

It was inevitable that a Latinizing, scholastic, basically "Anselmian" view of redemption and salvation would be reproduced in such documents as the *Orthodox Confession* of Peter Moghila (1640).[3] The *Confession* itself was actually a reaction against the Calvinist character of another "confession"—that of the patriarch Cyril Loukaris—and represented a good example of how arguments adopted from the Counter Reformation

[1] *Puti russkago bogosloviya* ("The Ways of Russian Theology") (2nd ed.; Paris: YMCA, 1981) 515.

[2] Ibid. 514.

[3] Published by Peter Moghila, metropolitan of Kiev, and later confirmed (with some modifications) by Eastern patriarchs, the *Confession*, originally written in Latin, was translated into Greek and Slavonic (cf. Eng. tr. by R. P. Popivchak, Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1975). It was meant to be a reaction against the Calvinistic *Confession* of Cyril Loukaris, patriarch of Constantinople (1629), but in substance and in form it is a document of the Latin Counter Reformation ("le plan, la matière . . . les expressions mêmes de la CO lui sont venues de l'Occident": A. Malvy et M. Viller, *La Confession orthodoxe de Pierre Moghila* [Rome: Oriental Institute, 1927] xciv).

could be adapted to combat Protestant thought in an Orthodox milieu. What is more remarkable is that scholastic methodology would survive, even as a theological revival was taking place in Orthodox textbooks of systematic theology.[4] The reasons for this survival might often have been simply a matter of scholastic routine, a sense of security offered by an orderly and rational presentation with an appearance of conservatism and scientific approach. No real creative use of the intellectual power contained in the medieval Latin systems was involved in such textbooks, which remained rather a good example of "Western backlogs" mentioned by Florovsky.

Parallel to and independent of established theological schools, a revival of monastic spirituality was taking place in Orthodoxy, starting particularly with the publication of the great patristic texts in the *Philokalia* of St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite (1782), its Slavonic translation by St. Paisy Velichkovsky (d. 1794), and its Russian edition by St. Theophanes the Recluse (d. 1894).[5] The tradition of Byzantine hesychasm and spirituality represented by this trend placed a major emphasis on the notion of spiritual progress of the individual and the community, implying synergy between divine grace and human freedom and refusing any legalistic understanding of redemption, sacramental grace, and therefore salvation. The "philocalic" revival contributed greatly to modern developments in Orthodox theology.

One other development, whose impact on theology was decisive and which could not have occurred without the influence exercised on intellectually oriented laity by the monastic revival, is the emergence, first in Russia, but later also in the Balkans and the Middle East, of theological thought independent of the ecclesiastical academic establishment. One dominant feature represented by this "lay" theology and adopted from the monastic tradition is a sharp critique of rationalism and legalism. Men like I. Kireevsky (1806–56) were "born to philosophy" under the influence of Schelling, but the same Kireevsky dedicated much of his energy to the publication and study of the Greek Fathers, published in

[4] Starting with Makary Bulgakov, *Pravoslavnoe dogmaticheskoe bogoslovie* ("Orthodox Dogmatic Theology") (5 vols.; St. Petersburg, 1849–53; anonymous French tr., Paris, 1859–60), and ending with the Greek textbooks of C. Androutsos, *Domatikē tēs Orthodoxou Anatolikēs Ekklēsias* ("Dogmatics of the Orthodox Eastern Church") (Athens: Kratous, 1907), and P. Trembelas, *Dogmatikē tēs Orthodoxou Katholikēs Ekklēsias* ("Dogmatics of the Orthodox Catholic Church") (Athens: Adelphotēs Theologōn Hē Zōē, 1958; French tr. by P. Dumont, 3 vols., Editions de Chévetogne: 1966).

[5] There are several expanded, multivolume commented and annotated modern editions of the *Philokalia*; a Romanian (by D. Staniloae, Bucharest, 1947 ff.), a French (Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1979 ff.), and an English (by G. E. H. Palmer, P. Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware, London: Faber and Faber, 1979 ff.) version are in process of publication.

co-operation with the famous *startsy* (monastic "elders") of Optino. This led him to the discovery of the Church and, particularly, "tradition," not so much as authority and criterion of truth, but rather and essentially as a "milieu" of "wholesome knowledge," of communion with God and fellowship within a redeemed humanity. Kireevsky's friend and contemporary A. S. Khomyakov (1804–60) is generally better known, particularly for his concept of "conciliarity" (*sobornost*), which in fact appeals to the same principle of communion between free persons, as the context and the condition for authentic knowledge of God and the Truth. For Khomyakov this communion is to be found in the "One Church."[6]

The theology of those early Slavophiles was looked at initially with great suspicion by the scholastic establishment, but by the end of the 19th century some of their most important ecclesiological and gnosiological intuitions won wide acceptance not only in Russia but also in Orthodox theology at large. This acceptance—which did not preclude criticism of some of the more romantic aspects of their thought—was based on the obvious fact that they were faithful to the notion of "communion," inherited from the early Christian and Greek patristic tradition, and that communion, rather than any other juridical and rationalistic model, was adequate for the Orthodox view of "life in Christ" and salvation.

In Russia polemics against legalism and rationalism dominate the thought of such major and very established theologians as Anthony Khrapovitsky[7] and Sergy Stragorodsky.[8] In his reaction against scholasticism, Anthony, a great admirer of Dostoyevsky, went to some extremes of moralism and psychologism, which would be congenial to pietistic trends in liberal Protestantism: redemption, he thought, really took place in Gethsemane, when Jesus manifested his ultimate "compassionate love" in his prayer for sinful humanity before the passion. This moralizing trend did find its most consistent, and definitely liberal, expression in the works of M. M. Tareev (1866–1934), a well-known and influential

[6] For a recent treatment of, and full bibliography on, these two authors, see P. K. Christoff, *An Introduction to Nineteenth-Century Russian Slavophilism: A Study in Ideas* 1: *A. S. Xomjakov* (The Hague: Mouton, 1961); 2: *I. V. Kireevskij* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972).

[7] His writings were first published in Kazan, 1909 (repr. Jordanville, N.Y., 1956–69); particularly controversial is his *Dogmat iskupleniya* ("The Dogma of Redemption," *Bogoslovsky vestnik*, 1917). Later metropolitan of Kiev, Anthony (d. 1936) became the head of the "Russian synod abroad" in Yugoslavia.

[8] *Pravoslavnoe uchenie o spasenii* ("The Orthodox Doctrine of Salvation") (St. Petersburg, 1895). Sergy headed the Russian Church during the tragic years of persecution and was elected patriarch in 1943.

professor of ethics at the Theological Academy of Moscow.[9]

Side by side with the "moralists," the antirationalistic trend was represented by a different school of thought, inspired primarily by the task of overcoming philosophical secularism and atheism. Initiated primarily by V. S. Soloviev (d. 1900), this school, heavily dependent upon German idealism, is known as sophiology. It conceived salvation not in historical but in cosmic terms, positing an ontologically-divine nature of creation, with the concept of *Sophia*, or Divine Wisdom, revealing both the essence of God and the foundation of created beings. The system, similar in its fundamental approaches to the thought of Paul Tillich or Teilhard de Chardin, could not escape the danger of pantheism, although the main disciples of Soloviev, S. N. Bulgakov (d. 1949)[10] and particularly P. Florensky (d. probably 1938),[11] attempted to place sophiology in the context of the patristic tradition.

All these tendencies and trends are manifestations of a searching, trying to express the Christian message of salvation in the context of modern needs and problems. It does appears, however, that a contemporary consensus is emerging on the basis of a more rigorous approach to patristic thought and tradition, which is facilitated by the results of revived patristic studies. This neo-patristic theology is dominant today in most Orthodox countries, as well as in the West. Its better-known representatives are authors like Georges Florovsky,[12] as well as Justin Popovich in Serbia[13] and particularly Dumitru Staniloae in Romania,[14]

[9] On Tareev there is a recent unpublished Columbia University dissertation by Paul Vallière; cf. also P. Vallière, "The Liberal Tradition in Russian Orthodox Tradition," in *The Legacy of St. Vladimir* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir, 1989).

[10] An apostate seminarian, a Marxist professor of economics, then a returnee to the faith, a priest, and a seminary dean, S. N. Bulgakov is the author of a series of monumental treatises which have been recently translated into French; cf., e.g., *Du Verbe incarné* (Paris: Aubier, 1982); *Philosophie de l'économie* (Paris: Aubier, 1987); in English see J. Pain and N. Zernov, eds., *A Bulgakov Anthology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976).

[11] The author of a theological synthesis, *Stolp i utverzhdenie istiny* (Moscow, 1914; Fr. tr., *La colonne et le fondement de la vérité* [Paris: Aubier, 1975]), and many writings which are being gradually published today, Fr. Florensky—sometimes referred to as a Russian Teilhard—died as a confessor of the faith in a concentration camp. He exercises a very great posthumous influence upon intellectuals returning to the faith today.

[12] Cf. G. Florovsky, *Collected Works* (several vols. published, Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1972 ff.)

[13] Cf. *Dogmatika Pravoskavne Cerkve* ("Dogmatics of the Orthodox Church") (Beograd, 1978).

[14] The author of a comprehensive work on dogmatics, Fr. Staniloae is able to relate patristic theology to contemporary philosophical thought in a truly original way. A representative collection of his articles appeared in English in D. Staniloae, *Theology and the Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir, 1980).

and Vladimir Lossky in France.[15] In Greece the patristic revival is expressed in a number of publications, and several younger theologians—C. Yannaras,[16] P. Nellas,[17] and others—are relating patristic thought on salvation to modern issues in a creative way.

In the context of the patristic revival, another trend, with direct relevance to the issue of Christology and salvation, is represented by what is frequently referred to as "Eucharistic ecclesiology." The term itself was coined by N. Afanasiev, whose major intuition is the identification of each local "catholic" Eucharistic community with the Church as such, and deducing from that original ecclesiology (represented best by St. Ignatius of Antioch around 100 A.D.) a permanent criterion for understanding not only ecclesiology but all aspects of soteriology.[18] The eschatological implications of Eucharistic ecclesiology, and its importance not only in terms of church order but also in Christology and pneumatology, are developed by John Zizioulas.[19] Other dimensions of Eucharistic ecclesiology, particularly important in defining Christian ethos, Christian witness in the contemporary world, and the mission of the Church, are best formulated by Alexander Schmemann.[20]

In spite of their variety, these various trends of contemporary Orthodox theology show agreement on the point that salvation is to be understood in terms of communion, sanctification, or deification (the *theōsis* of the Greek Fathers), that it is based on a synergy of divine grace and human freedom. This general approach to the theology of redemption and salvation has obvious implications for understanding the function of church institutions. Does it run the danger—as often noted by its Western critics—of indulging in a sort of Gnostic Monophysitism? The answer to this question can only come from one's understanding (or misunderstanding) of the basic content of the Chalcedonian formula, stating that Christ was both God and man.

[15] Lossky's writings (with the exception of his monumental dissertation on Eckhart, Paris: Aubier, 1960) are translated into English and published by St. Vladimir Seminary Press, Crestwood, N.Y.: *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church,* 1976; *In the Image and Likeness of God,* 1974; *Orthodox Theology,* 1978.

[16] Cf., e.g., *The Freedom of Morality* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir, 1984).

[17] *Deification in Christ: The Nature of the Human Person* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir, 1987).

[18] The legacy of Afanasiev is summarized in his book *L'Eglise du Saint-Esprit* (Paris: Cerf, 1983).

[19] Cf. an easily accessible collection of his articles in *Being as Communion* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir, 1985).

[20] Cf. particularly *For the Life of the World* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir, 1973) and *The Eucharist* (ibid. 1987).

CHRIST, THE SAVIOR

A most prevailing fear among many is that the recognition of Christ's divinity implies a diminution of his humanity. The high Christology or the descending Christology of the Gospel of John and, later, of the entire patristic tradition is often viewed today as a major danger not only for sound exegesis but also for spirituality. Exegetically, it gives primacy to supernatural and miraculous events, such as the resurrection, and makes any demythologizing difficult. On the level of spirituality, it calls Christians to forget the *humanum*, to look for mystical escapes away from social and historical responsibilities. Indeed, if the goal of the faith is to seek Jesus pre-existing as God, his human life is of no real interest: "He looks like a man, speaks like a man, suffers and dies like a man. But underneath he is divine, and his genuine humanity is suspect."[21]

How can a real humanity in Christ be expressed? Some modern Christologies had recourse to schemes known as kenotic. Using, rather arbitrarily, the Pauline expression of Phil 2:7 ("he emptied himself"—*ekenōsen heauton*) and giving it a specific philosophical interpretation, these Christologies imagine Christ emptying himself of his divinity as he was becoming more human. In his human death the "emptying" reached its ultimate point: the man Jesus died, while God, immortal by nature, remained free of death.[22] His person is then imagined as containing constantly-shifting levels of divinity and humanity, depending upon his acting either as God or as man. "The pre-existent One," writes John Knox, "emptied himself of such attributes of deity as omnipotence and omniscience but retained the more important qualities, and in so doing exemplified not only the very heart of divinity, but also what humanity truly is."[23] Those who share a similar concern for preserving an authentic and full humanity in Jesus try to rehabilitate the Antiochian school of Christology represented by Theodore of Mopsuestia and, eventually, Nestorius. In that tradition the human attributes of Christ are predicated of him as "Son of Mary," distinct from the Son of God. Although the historical Nestorianism of the fifth century stopped short of affirming clearly the existence of "two Sons" in the *prosōpon*, or "person," of Christ, there is no doubt that such a conclusion comes out logically from their

[21] G. O'Collins, *What Are They Saying about Jesus?* (New York: Paulist, 1977) 2.

[22] The kenotic scheme is also used in the sophiology of S. Bulgakov, who considers the kenotic theories as "the most important current of Christological thought since the ecumenical councils." Bulgakov writes: "The eternal God makes Himself a God-in-becoming in God-man. He empties Himself of His eternal divinity, lowers Himself to the level of human life and in it and through it makes man capable of receiving God" (*Du Verbe incarné* 146–47).

[23] *The Humanity and Divinity of Christ* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1967) 104. One wonders who can define what are the "more important" qualities of God.

presuppositions. This is recognized by those who even today interpret the Chalcedonian definition in 451 as a welcome posthumous rehabilitation of Theodore after the victory of St. Cyril of Alexandria at Ephesus (431)[24] and consider that the reaffirmation of Cyrillian Christology by the Fifth Council (553) was in fact a victory of Monophysitism in the East, under the cover of an artificial theory called today neo-Chalcedonianism.

The common feature of all such attitudes is the belief that divinity and humanity are ontologically incompatible, and that such concepts as communion or deification, if taken literally and seriously, are inappropriate borrowings from Neoplatonism, leading to a denial of true humanity in Jesus, with all the implicit theological, ethical, and historical consequences of such a denial.

Clearly, the problem here lies on two levels: the level of anthropology and the dimension of divine (and human) personhood as expressed in the concept of *hypostasis*.[25] On both levels the tradition expressed in post-Chalcedonian developments meets several concerns of modern thought.

1) It has been often noted that the Eastern patristic tradition understood humanity in terms of participation in God as, in a sense, its *natural* characteristic. The normal human existence as created by God presupposes "grace." In describing Adam before the Fall, St. Gregory of Nyssa speaks of his "beatitude of immortality," "justice," and "purity."[26] Jean Daniélou, in his well-known book on Gregory, notes: "Gregory identifies realities which Western theology considers distinct.... Man, created 'according to the image,' is for Gregory what man is by nature (*physin*). And the image includes what we call intellectual life, the *nous*, and the supernatural life, the *pneuma*."[27] W. J. Burghardt showed a similar

[24] Cf., e.g., F. J. van Beeck: "To reduce the humanity of Christ to a mere anhypostatic nature goes against the intention of Chalcedon, which never meant to indulge in an effort to 'salvage' Christ's divinity by reducing his humanity to a 'pure nature'" (*Christ Proclaimed: Christology in Rhetoric* [New York: Paulist, 1979] 51); also Ch. Moeller: "How can the human nature of Jesus be perfectly consubstantial with ours if it is devoid of a human hypostasis?" ("*Le Chalcédonisme et le Néo-Chalcédonisme en orient de 451 à la fin du VIe siècle,*" in Grillmeier-Bacht, *Das Konzil von Chalkedon* I [Würzburg: Echter, 1951] 697); for a recent critical review, see G. Havrilak, "Chalcedon and Orthodox Christology Today," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 33 (1989) 127–45.

[25] These points are made by J. Breck in his brief "Reflections on the 'Problem' of Chalcedonian Christology," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 33 (1989) 147–57, and are developed in my book *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir, 1975).

[26] *De opif. hom.* 16 (PG 44, 177–85).

[27] *Platonisme et théologie mystique: Essai sur la doctrine spirituelle de saint Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris: Aubier, 1944) 54.

dimension in the thought of Cyril of Alexandria,[28] and there is no doubt that the thought of the Greek Fathers on this point is consistent with the theocentric anthropology expressed already in the second century by St. Irenaeus of Lyons. Today a theocentric anthropology is not only maintained by Orthodox theologians[29] but constitutes a hopeful and widespread development among Roman Catholics, particularly characteristic of Karl Rahner.

The concept of communion with God or deification (*theōsis*), which in Greek patristic thought was used to define the authentic human destiny and also the purpose of man's creation by God, can be misunderstood in pantheistic terms. The Neoplatonic formulae and other philosophical expressions used by the patristic authors can contribute to such misinterpretations. In fact, however, the concept of *theōsis* is to be understood in a Christological context of redemption, which excludes pantheism.

It is significant that St. Athanasius of Alexandria, who coined the famous formula "The Logos assumed humanity, that we might become God,"[30] also defended (against the Neoplatonic tradition of Origen) the absolute transcendence of the divine nature: creatures exist by the *will* of God, as distinct from the divine Logos, who is Son of God by *nature*. "The nature of creatures," he writes, " . . . is fluid, impotent, mortal, and composite,"[31] and "they can even cease to exist if the Creator so wishes."[32] Athanasius' thought implies a radical rejection of Origen's vision of God as the *eternal Creator* by nature, and of his view of the original (as well as eschatological) state of created beings as participants of God's very essence.[33] For Athanasius, therefore, deification can only be based upon the historical fact of the Incarnation: the assumption by the Logos, consubstantial with the Father (and not with the creation), of the mortal, limited, and perishing human nature. This does not exclude a theology of "*logoi* of creatures" and the idea that the incarnate Logos is also the Logos "through whom all things were made," but even the pre-existing plan of God about creation lies on the level of God's *will* (or His pre-

[28] *The Image of God in Man according to Cyril of Alexandria* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1957) 38.

[29] Cf., for instance, P. Nellas, *Deification in Christ: The Nature of the Human Person* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir, 1987) ibid. 21–42; Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church* (ibid., 1983) 21–26.

[30] *On the Incarnation* 54 (PG 25, 192 B).

[31] *Against the Heathen* 41 (PG 25, 81 CD).

[32] *Against the Arians* 1:20 (PG 26, 55 A).

[33] On this see G. Florovsky, "The Concept of Creation in St. Athanasius," *Studia Patristica* 6, part 4 (TU 81; Berlin, 1962) 36–67; cf. also J. Meyendorff, "Creation in the History of Orthodox Theology," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 27 (1983) 27–37.

eternal, uncreated "energies")—not His nature or essence. God, as Creator and as Savior, is a personal God, exercising the power of His love in absolute freedom.

The Christology of Cyril of Alexandria is also based on the notion of a *self*-giving God. His is a theology of the Emmanuel—"God with us" (Mt 1:23)—affirming the *personal* assumption by the divine Logos of all the aspects of humanity in its fallen state, including death. Theopaschism, i.e. confession of the fact that the Logos was the only *subject* of death on Golgotha,[34] is an essential point of his polemics against Nestorius.[35] It did not imply that God could suffer or die in His very nature or essence: the *incarned* Logos suffered death, not the divine nature. The point of Cyril was to affirm that God alone is the Savior, entirely upon His personal action and initiative (although it does imply a free human response). Actually, an interesting parallelism can be established between the Christology of Cyril and the neo-orthodox thought of Karl Barth.[36]

But if such is indeed the context of the doctrine of deification, how are we to understand theological anthropology and the idea, referred to above, that participation in God is, in a sense, a "natural" human characteristic? Was not affinity and participation an element of humanity on the level of creation, independently of the historical incarnation of the Logos?

The answer to this question was sometimes found—unsatisfactorily, I believe—in the notion of an impersonal, ontological affinity or continuity between the Creator and the creatures. Speaking of the Incarnation, S. Bulgakov asks: "Do people sufficiently realize that this dogma is not primary, but derivative? In itself it demands the prior existence of absolutely necessary dogmatic formulations concerning a *primordial God-man-hood.*"[37] This approach seemed attractive also for many in the modern West who were concerned with transcending the secular perception of the created universe—for instance, Paul Tillich or Teilhard de Chardin.

Whatever partial truth there might be in their fully legitimate concern for establishing an authentically theocentric conception of creation, they

[34] "If anyone does not confess that the Logos of God suffered in the flesh, was crucified in the flesh and tasted death in the flesh ... let him be anathema." Third Letter to Nestorius, in J. Alberigo et al., eds., *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta* (3rd ed.; Basel: Herder, 1962) 61.

[35] Cf. Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* 13–28, 68–89.

[36] At least the "early" Barth—the author of the *Römerbrief* and of the earlier parts of the *Dogmatik.*

[37] *A Bulgakov Anthology* 152. For Bulgakov, and other disciples of Vladimir Soloviev, like P. Florensky, the "primordial God-man-hood" is, of course, the *Sophia*, or Wisdom of God in its uncreated *and* created aspects.

miss the personal or hypostatic dimension both in God and in humanity. Indeed, it is this hypostatic dimension which appears in the Incarnation as a unique manifestation of divinity and humanity united in one concrete, historical person.

2) Human freedom, which belongs to each human person, appears in the Greek patristic tradition as the real expression of the *image* of God. "Adam," writes St. Basil, "received from the Creator a free life, because his soul had been created after the image of God."[38] The same idea is developed even further by Gregory of Nyssa[39] and by Cyril of Alexandria. "Man," writes Cyril, "from the origin of creation, received control over his desires and could freely follow the inclinations of his choice, for the Deity, whose image he is, is free."[40] Therefore freedom of the human person points to the divine freedom, which is the origin of creation itself.

The Incarnation clearly implies a dimension of the hypostatic or personal existence of God, distinct from the natural or essential dimension. By nature or essence, God is changeless. In His essence, therefore, there is no becoming. Nevertheless, "the Word became (*egeneto*) flesh" (Jn 1:14), i.e. He undertook change by becoming something He was not before. Furthermore, since the human nature is necessarily changeable and exists in history, the changes in the human life of Jesus had to be appropriated not essentially but personally by the Logos, including death itself: otherwise He would not have been fully human. It was, therefore, the very divine hypostasis of the Son which came out of divine transcendence and became visible and accessible in the humanity of Jesus, restoring human nature in accordance with its divine prototype.

If Christology is, indeed, to imply the inaccessibility and absolute transcendence of divine nature, as well as the openness and existential changeability of the hypostasis, the formula adopted by the Council of Chalcedon—Jesus Christ as "one hypostasis in two natures"—acquires a clarity and relevance which was probably not fully perceived by its authors themselves. The full implications of the formula would be developed gradually in what is (perhaps inadequately) termed Byzantine neo-Chalcedonianism. Indeed, the basic soteriological intuition of Cyril—the personal unity of the incarned Logos—and the need to distinguish between the divine and the human natures had to be fully acknowledged *together*. It became gradually clear how, on the one hand, the hypostatic life in God expresses a mutual openness of the three hypostases to one another, and how, on the other hand, the hypostasis of the Son opened itself to creation and appropriated humanity, making it to be the "hu-

[38] *Hom.* 6 (PG 31, 344B).
[39] J. Gaïth, *La conception de la liberté chez Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris: Vrin, 1953) 40–66.
[40] *Glaphyra on Gen.* 1 (PG 69, 24C).

manity of God."[41]

Thus the openness of the divine hypostases is a mutual openness within the Holy Trinity, but it is also an openness downwards—toward creation. It reveals the meaning of the definition of God as love, because love implies personal mutuality and relationships—eternal and transcendent in the Trinity, but also expanding beyond the being of God into the temporal being of creatures willed by God.

On the other hand, human beings also are, hypostatically, open upwards. As Lars Thunberg noted in the case of St. Maximus the Confessor, "Maximus is able to express his conviction that there is a personal aspect in man's life, which goes, as it were, beyond his nature, and represents his inner unity, as well as his relationship to God."[42]

Thus the hypostatic dimension of divine Trinitarian life, as well as its image in humanity, excludes the idea that redemption, salvation, and deification are automatic or magical processes of absorption of the human by the divine. On the side of God, as well as on the side of humanity, they imply personal, free relations. In Christ one meets the hypostasis of the divine Logos, who assumed the fulness of humanity. Christ was not a human hypostasis. If that were the case, the man Jesus would be individualized on a created level, making "life *in Christ*" impossible. Indeed, one created hypostasis cannot exist in another. Human persons are irreducible to each other and always preserve their uniqueness. The decisive factor in salvation is that the hypostasis of the Logos is the prototype of which each human being is the image. His humanity is not only the humanity of a human individual, but it is also our common humanity which he assumed in its fallen state and glorified through his death and resurrection. The incarned Logos calls us to share in his saved and glorified humanity, through a free personal decision, through baptism, through Eucharistic communion, and to be transformed from the "first man ... made of dust" into "the second Man, the Lord from heaven" (1 Cor 15:47).

THE "NEW ADAM"

The New Testament applies to Jesus the image of the suffering servant described by the Second Isaiah (Isa 52–53; cf. Mt 8:17; Rom 15:21, etc.): "He was wounded for our transgressions.... He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.... They made his grave with the wicked." The image

[41] The implications are brilliantly developed by the Romanian theologian Dumitru Staniloae, "Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church," in *Theology and the Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir, 1980) 11–44.

[42] *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Lund: Gleerup, 1968) 119.

is that of a Messiah who suffers and dies, voluntarily accepting the consequences of humanity's sins. That suffering and death are the consequences, on a cosmic level, of Adam's sin, which qualifies the biblical perception of created reality after the Fall.

It has been often recognized that Eastern patristic thought ignores the notion of a transmission of *guilt* from Adam to his descendants. However, it does not ignore the very fact of cosmic fallenness. This fallenness is not expressed in terms of divine punishment inflicted upon all humans (the Augustinian *massa damnata*) from parents to children, but rather in terms of a usurpation or illegitimate tyranny exercised by Satan upon God's creation. Humans are rather seen as victims of the universal reign of death (indeed Satan is "a murderer from the beginning": Jn 8:44). "Through fear of death, they are subject to lifelong bondage" (Heb 2:15). What is being transmitted from parents to children is not sin but mortality and slavery, creating a condition where sin in inevitable: "Having become mortal," writes Theodoret of Cyrus, "[Adam and Eve] conceived mortal children, and mortal beings are necessarily subject to passions and fears, to pleasures and sorrows, to anger and hatred."[43] The model here is Darwinian: fear of death generates struggle for survival, and survival is attainable only at the expense of others—a survival of the fittest, winning over the weak. "By becoming mortal, we acquired greater urge to sin," writes Theodore of Mopsuestia, "because we depend on food, drink, and other needs, and the desire to acquire those leads inevitably to sinful 'passions.'"[44] Patristic references can be easily multiplied, and their context is understandable if one remembers that the Greek Fathers read the Greek original of the famous passage of Rom 5:12 ("As sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because [or "and because of death"] all have sinned") and were not conditioned by the Latin mistranslation, which implied that all sinned "in Adam."[45]

[43] *Commentary on Rom.* (PG 80, 1245A).

[44] *Commentary on Rom.* (PG 66, 801B).

[45] The Latin version of *eph' hō pantes hēmarton* in Rom 5:12 is *in quo omnes peccaverunt*. The masculine *quo* must refer to "one man," mentioned earlier in the sentence: "all have sinned *in Adam*." The Greek does not allow for such a meaning, and admits two grammatical possibilities: (*a*) if *eph' hō* is a neuter and means "because," the sentence defines death as the punishment for individual sins of any human (not "original" sin); (*b*) if it is a masculine, it refers to "death" (*thanatos*), so that death—as a cosmic, personalized reality—becomes the cause of individual human sins. It is in that sense that the text was read by Theodoret and Theodore, as well as many other Greek authors, including Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Maximus the Confessor, and later Byzantine theologians; on this problem see J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (3rd ed.; New York: Fordham University, 1987) 143–46. The clear divergence between the

It is the mortal, corruptible, and fallen humanity which was assumed by the Logos. This was well understood particularly by the Alexandrian Fathers, promoters of a high Christology: Athanasius and Cyril. And this is precisely the reason why their Christological position made theopaschism inevitable: the divine Logos *himself* voluntarily assumed mortal humanity and therefore had to die in the flesh. The implication was not "anthropological minimalism," as Florovsky once wrote,[46] but, on the contrary, the affirmation that humanity and its fallen condition were such a real and crucial fact that they brought about a *self*-emptying of God Himself as condition for salvation and true restoration.

That the high Alexandrian Christology does not imply a diminution of humanity in Jesus is also shown in the sixth-century debate around the Aphthartodocetism of Julian of Halicarnassus. The point of Julian was simple: since death and corruption (*phthora*) are consequences of human sin, they could not have been present in Jesus, who did not sin. Thus, according to Julian, Jesus possessed an "incorruptible" (*aphthartos*) humanity. Julian's critics were right in saying that he was in fact a Docetist: the death of Jesus on the cross was only an "appearance," not a real experience of what death is for other human beings.[47] But if one conceives of Christ as sharing the determinism of corruptible and fallen humanity, what happens to divine freedom? Did not the Logos suffer voluntarily? The rejection of Aphthartodocetism by the Church was not intended at all, however, as a denial of divine freedom. Indeed, the Incarnation in all its aspects was an expression of the free will of God. But God willed precisely that, *as man*, Jesus, since his conception in the womb of Mary, would be fully conditioned by what our human, fallen existence is: he lived in time, "grew in wisdom," did not know, suffered, and died. On the other hand, the hypostatic union—i.e., the conception and the birth of the God-man Jesus—is not yet by itself a deification of

Greek and the Augustinian traditions on "original sin" is widely acknowledged by historians; cf., e.g., J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: A. & C. Black, 1958) 348–52.

[46] *Vizantiiskie ottsy* (Paris: YMCA, 1933) 7.

[47] See the concise definition of Aphthartodocetism by St. John of Damascus: "They consider that the Lord's body was incorruptible from the time of its formation; they also confess that the Lord suffered the passions—hunger, thirst, tiredness—but that he suffered them in a way different from our own: while we suffer them as a natural necessity. Christ, they say, suffered them freely (*hekousiōs*) and he was not subjected to the laws of nature" (*On the Heresies* 84 [PG 94, 156A]); on Aphthartodocetism see R. Draguet, *Julien d'Halicarnasse et sa controverse avec Sévère d'Antioche sur l'incorruptibilité du corps du Christ* (Louvain, 1924); cf. also Meyendorff, *Christ* 87–88, 165–66. Of course, one cannot deny divine freedom if one believes in the divinity of Christ, but within the Orthodox tradition (as distinct from Aphthartodocetism) divine freedom is exercised in the Incarnation as a whole: mortality and corruptibility were assumed by the Son of God from the beginning of his human life.

Jesus' human nature. Deification would have been a somewhat automatic happening if, as some have supposed, the Incarnation was simply the manifestation of a pre-existing God-manhood of the Logos, fulfilled when he became a human being. In fact, the Incarnation implied tragedy and struggle. The Creator, by assuming the created and fallen flesh, met evil and death face to face. He met and overcame these realities of the fallen world, which he did not create but only tolerated. This tolerance reached its ultimate point when the incarned Son of God accepted a human death on the cross: this ultimate point was also his ultimate victory.

Modern New Testament criticism has often been concerned with the psychology of Jesus, and with such questions as his messianic consciousness. One wonders sometimes whether such concerns are not a blind alley, since, as a learned Anglican divine once wrote, "It is indeed both ridiculous and irreverent to ask what it feels like to be God incarnate."[48] However, what cannot be denied—and what a high Christology, affirming the full pre-existing divinity of the unique person of Jesus Christ, does not deny—is that "being human" necessarily implies change and growth from infancy to adulthood; that the humanity assumed by the Son of God was our "corruptible" humanity which needed salvation and which he led in a passage (the Christian Passover) from death to life; that "Jesus the Son of God . . . has been tempted in every respect as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15; cf. 1 Pet 2:22).[49]

This last point—"without sin"—also makes high Christology inevitable, because God and no creature can be said to be totally above sin, which is a conscious, personal act of rebellion against divine will. It is because he was God, not as "mere man," that Jesus was able to overcome the temptations inherent in fallen humanity: "You shall not tempt the Lord your God," said Jesus to the tempter (Mt 4:7; Lk 4:12). Although no philosophical, rational, or psychological explanation can be found for it, here is the very content of the "good news" revealed in Christ: that God Himself has placed Himself on our level, within our very existence; that He is not any longer a distantly heavenly being but the One who is personally, hypostatically "with us"—even in temptations and in death—the Emmanuel.

It is furthermore important to recognize that the Chalcedonian patristic tradition upholding a high Christology stands firmly against the Monophysitic or the Monotheletic or any other unilaterally theocentric views of salvation. The Christology of Maximus the Confessor, which defends the existence of a human will in Christ distinct from the divine,

[48] *Christ, the Christian and the Church* (London: Longmans, Green, 1946) 37.

[49] Cf. my article "Christ's Humanity: The Paschal Mystery," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 31 (1987) 5–40.

is very explicit in affirming that Christ's humanity was not a passive instrument of divinity, but that it exercised within time and space a true human freedom. Maximus illustrates this in his commentary on two episodes of Christ's life: the baptism in the Jordan and the agony in Gethsemane.

As Jesus was coming out of the Jordan—where he deliberately identified himself with the condition of the others, being baptized by John—he "saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove..." (Mk 1:11). For Maximus this was a "second birth" of Jesus, modeling our own baptismal regeneration.

> The Incarnation took first the form of a bodily birth because of my condemnation, but it was later followed by a birth in the Spirit through baptism which had been neglected [by a fallen humanity]; [this occurred] for the sake of my salvation, so that I may be recalled by grace, or, more clearly, so that I may be created anew.[50]

In Jesus, therefore, the synergy of divine and human will, a condition for the reconciling mystery of communion between divinity and humanity, included his human experience of a "new birth" at the conclusion of his human maturing and at the beginning of his messianic ministry.

What occurred at Gethsemane, according to Maximus, is another and ultimate human acceptance by Jesus of the will of the Father for the salvation of the world. Indeed, Gethsemane did not mean resistance or rebellion, but the agonizing exercise of Christ's human will. In the divine nature and Trinitarian will, the Logos willed our salvation at all times (*physei theletikos kai energetikos tēs hēmōn sōtērias*).

> This salvation he willed with the Father and the Spirit; but [for this same salvation] he also [as a human being] became obedient to the Father unto death, even death on a cross (Phil 2:8), realizing in himself (in his divine hypostasis) the great mystery of his coming to us in the flesh.[51]

This Christology illustrates again the distinction, always characteristic of the Greek Fathers, between the notions of hypostasis (or person) and nature. As we noted earlier, the hypostasis of the Son is not the same as divine "nature," because the hypostasis "becomes," whereas "nature" is absolutely unchangeable. The hypostasis, by assuming humanity and

[50] *Amb.* (PG 91, 1348 D). Scholarly literature on St. Maximus is abundant. On this particular point of his Christology, see F. Heinzer, "L'Explication trinitaire de l'économie chez Maxime le Confesseur," in *Maximus Confessor: Actes du Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur, Fribourg, 1–5 Septembre, 1980*, ed. F. Heinzer and Ch. von Schönborn (Fribourg, 1982) 159–72.

[51] *Opusc.* 6 (PO 91, 68D); on this point see the commentary by F. M. Léthel, *Théologie de l'agonie du Christ* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1979) 87–90, with French translation of the crucially important *Opusculum* 6 of Maximus.

making it "its own," becomes a "composite hypostasis" (*hypostasis synthetos*[52]). A person, divine or human, is not, therefore, a simple manifestation of "nature" (an individual), but a subject, capable of saying "I," and able to transcend, or go beyond, the limits of the nature it possesses. The humanity assumed by the Logos was fully human, and even more perfectly human than our humanity, because the Logos was the very model according to which we were created: the fact that there was no human hypostasis—or a distinct human "I" (the Nestorian solution)—in Jesus did not make him less perfectly human. Rather his hypostasis, because it was divine, enhanced humanity, which is, in Christ, the humanity of God. The same philosophy of hypostasis applied to created humanity makes deification understandable as always a personal, or hypostatic, possibility for each human being when he or she transcends natural limitations and communes in divine life.

Moving away from legalism and emphasizing personal communion as the content of salvation is, as we have seen, the main trend in contemporary Orthodox theology. In this approach there may be a certain danger of subjectivism, unless one remains fully consistent with patristic Christology and also a sound theology of baptism.[53]

If death is the ultimate, cosmic enemy, Christ is the Savior because he conquers death. His death on the cross is a historical fact, sealed by the resurrection. Having identified himself with fallen humanity down to death on the cross, he rose again and manifested the risen, transfigured, and deified humanity which was from the beginning in the plan of God. That new humanity becomes also ours when we are baptized and share in the Eucharist, which is a communion with the risen Lord: "You have died," writes the Apostle, "and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col 3:3). Baptism and Eucharist are, therefore, the true foundations not only of spirituality but also of Christian ethics. Through them each human person can share in the risen humanity of Christ and achieve a communal unity, which is the Church, Body of Christ. And since Christ's humanity is hypostatically united with the divine Logos, "life in Christ" can also

[52] Maximus, *Ep.* 12 (PG 91, 489 BC) etc.; John of Damascus, *De natura composita contra acephalos* (PG 95, 113D).

[53] The heresy of "Messalianism" has been a permanent temptation with Eastern Christian monasticism since the fourth century and until the late Middle Ages. One of its most distinctive traits was to conceive deification as a purely subjective result of prayer, independent of baptism. This criterion allowed the recent tendency to rehabilitate the author known as Ps.-Macarius from the accusation of being a "Messalian"; cf. H. Dörries, *Die Theologie des Makarios/Symeon* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck Ruprecht, 1978). This rehabilitation is important in view of the great (and fully justified) popularity of the Macarian writings in the Orthodox spiritual tradition.

be termed deification.[54]

Although the Christological dimension of "new humanity" is the necessary starting point of soteriology, the role of the Holy Spirit is central precisely to the personalistic and freedom-oriented Orthodox understanding of salvation.[55]

The Fathers—particularly St. Gregory of Nazianzus and Ps.-Macarius—often define theocentric anthropology in terms of an efflux of the Spirit in the human being, making him different from other creatures.[56] This affinity with God through the Spirit is what explains man's openness upwards, and also his freedom. Hence the Spirit is active wherever humanity exercises this God-given freedom, e.g. as Mary pronounces her yes to the divine will (Lk 1:38), as Jesus through his human will accepts the messianic ministry at the river Jordan, and as any human being is baptized "in water and the Spirit." Christian revelation and Christian theology are somewhat apophatic in their references to the Spirit. Indeed, the Spirit was not incarned, and his person, or hypostasis, remains hidden, except in its role of manifesting Christ, in perfecting his work in opening divine life in Christ to the free choice of each human person.

CONCLUSION: ETHICS OF THE RESURRECTION

If it is true to say, as we pointed out earlier, that human existence in the fallen world is dominated by mortality (and therefore by a struggle for survival, creating both a dependence upon means of sustenance and conflicts for possession of such means), the resurrection and the possibility of sharing in Christ's glorification and immortality change conditions radically. The awareness that this is indeed the case explains why, for early Christians, the resurrection was the *contents* of the "good news." "If Christ has not been raised," writes St. Paul, "your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (1 Cor 15:17), because a mortal human being cannot give up his struggle for survival and is therefore necessarily a sinner. Through immortality, however, he can be truly free.

Here lies, it seems, the right approach to ethics, as it is found in the New Testament, which can easily be explained away as unrealistic paraphrases unless one takes seriously the idea that the teachings of

[54] In the Christology shaped by Maximus the Confessor and later by Gregory Palamas, the hypostatic union of two natures in Christ implies a *communicatio idiomatum:* the divine "energies" penetrate and "deify" the risen humanity of Christ (without a mixture of "essences" or "natures"), as well as the humanity of those who are "in Christ"; cf. Meyendorff, *Christ* 170–71, 188–89; *A Study of Gregory Palamas* (2nd ed.; Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir, 1974) 157–84.

[55] "The Theology of the Holy Spirit," in J. Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir, 1983) 15–29.

[56] Cf. Gregory of Naz., *Poems* (PG 37, 452).

Jesus are addressed to those who are free from death and from struggle for survival. Indeed, such precepts as "Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink... Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap... Consider the lilies of the field ... " (Mt 7:25–30) sound like sentimental or emotional exhortations only, unless they reflect a real experience of victory over death, which liberates Christians from the most common dependence upon food (or money) and enables them to "give," rather than being concerned about "receiving" (cf. Acts 20:35). Redemption is not only a negative remission of sins but also and primarily a new freedom for children of God in the communion of the new Adam.