THEODORE OF MOPSUESTIA REVISITED

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[The author offers a new insight into Theodore of Mopsuestia's christological thought by stressing the Antiochene Father's unique outlook on how Christ functions as the perfect image of God to illumine his meaning of prosōpon or person. It suggests too that the image's revelatory, cultic, and binding roles within creation's organic unity can clarify his "indwelling of good pleasure." Christ's humanity is seen to image the Word in a real permanent way analogously to how the human body functions as one with its spiritual partner without either nature being compromised.]

THEODORE OF MOPSUESTIA (ca. 350–428) was acclaimed in the late-fourth and early-fifth centuries as the preeminent exegete of the School of Antioch as well as one of the most respected theologians of his day. His fame, however, was short-lived. Within a few years of his death, he was being denounced as the teacher of Nestorius. One hundred and twenty-five years later in A.D. 553 his christological writings and person were condemned at the Second Council of Constantinople as impious and heretical.[1] His enemies assailed him as the "Father of Nestorianism." After the council, the Emperor Justinian ordered his entire literary output to be destroyed. Except for those passages cited as proof of his heretical views and a few other fragments, little of his works has survived. For the next 1400 years, he was routinely branded by all ecclesiastical writers, outside of those belonging to the East Syrian Church, as the leading exponent of the heretical view that the Word and Jesus are two separate "persons" united in a moral union of grace.

Then at the beginning of the 20th century, a renewed interest in his

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[1] *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* 1: *Nicaea I to Lateran V*, ed. Norman P. Tanner (Washington: Georgetown University, 1990) anathema 12 against the "Three Chapters" 119–120; Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion symbolorum* 34th ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 1967) nos. 434–35.

theology and an in-depth reevaluation of Theodore occurred when some of his lost works, mainly in East Syrian translations, were discovered. As scholars compared the many fragments used to condemn Theodore with these newly found writings, a number of theologians seriously questioned whether Theodore had been fairly judged.[2] They argued that the fragments cited at the council had been twisted out of context and falsified for political and nationalistic reasons as well as for theological reasons. The fragments, therefore, were thought to be so unreliable that they could not be trusted to establish Theodore's true christological thought. This controversy over the authenticity of the surviving fragments continued to simmer until the 1950s. At that time Francis A. Sullivan proved in a thorough and brilliant analysis that the surviving fragments were indeed authentic and reliable indications of Theodore's thought.[3] His only caveat was that in a few instances where the actual context of the citations could be checked Theodore's enemies had distorted his views, for example, attributing a remark about Christ by the apostle Nathaniel to be by Theodore.

Since the publication of Sullivan's analysis, scholars have accepted his conclusion that the surviving writings of Theodore are unquestionably incorrupted.[4] Besides authenticating these texts, Sullivan also reexamined them to ascertain how orthodox was Theodore's teaching. While sympathetic to what Theodore was attempting to do and while acknowledging Theodore's desire to think with the orthodox Church of his day, Sullivan concluded that Theodore could rightly be labeled as the "Father of Nestorianism."[5] Kevin McNamara had arrived at the same conclusion in his study published in the early 1950s.[6] Both Sullivan and McNamara based their arguments on the way that Theodore wrote about a center of unity in Christ. It was judged to be flawed and ultimately a failure when measured against the christological stand taken by the Fathers at the Council of

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[2] For a brief but an accurate and fair summary of the leading scholarly opinions on both sides of this dispute, see Francis A. Sullivan, *The Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, Analecta Gregoriana 82 (Rome: Gregorian University, 1956) 18–33. For a more recent theological assessment of Theodore up to 1960, See Richard A. Norris Jr., *Manhood and Christ* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963) 246–62.

[3] Sullivan, *The Christology of Theodore* 141–43.

[4] For example, Rowan Greer in his *Theodore on Mopsuetia: Exegete and Theologian* (Westminster: Faith, 1961) remarks: "Sullivan in his *Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia* discusses the critical problems involved in the use of these sources in what must be considered in a definitive way" (10).

[5] Sullivan, *The Christology of Theodore* 288.

[6] Kevin McNamara, "Theodore of Mopsuestia and the Nestorian Heresy," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 42 (1952) 254–78 and 43 (1953) 172–91. While sensitive to Theodore's efforts to explain the union of natures in Christ and balanced in his assessment, McNamara concluded: "Nevertheless, a defense of Theodore's good faith must not blind us to the gravity of his error" (189).

Ephesus in 431 and at the Council of Chalcedon in 451: namely that Christ is a divine *hypostasis* or person (that of the Word) subsisting in a truly divine and a truly human nature.

In the 1960s other scholars, such as Luise Abramowski,[7] Rowan Greer, Ulrich Wickert,[8] Richard A. Norris Jr., and Aloys Grillmeier[9] published major studies on Theodore. Abramowski sought to understand Theodore's theology from a sacramental perspective, especially regarding his views on participation and the role of the Spirit in Christ's life. Greer explored how Theodore's exegetical methodology affected his theological thinking. Wickert studied the theology expressed in Theodore's extant commentaries on Paul. Norris examined the philosophical and cultural underpinnings of Theodore's anthropology. Finally, Grillmeier produced in-depth summaries of Theodore's thought and assessed the literature published up to 1975. Though most scholars did not directly enter into the question of Theodore's orthodoxy,[10] they did provide invaluable insights into his christological views and have raised serious questions about how Theodore has been interpreted. In 1971 Joanne McWilliam Dewart published *The Theology of Grace in Theodore of Mopsuestia*[11] and somewhat later a thought-provoking article "The Notion of 'Person' Underlying the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia"[12] in which she suggested a Stoic influence upon Theodore's understanding of person. The only other subsequent major

[7] Luise Abramowski, "Zur Theologie des Theodors von Mopsuestia," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 72 (1961) 263–93. She challenges the view of Wilhelm de Vries, "Der 'Nestorianismus' Theodors von Mopsuestia in seiner Sakramentenlehre," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 7 (1941) 91–148 that Theodore did not recognize in baptism and the Eucharist a true (but partial) participation in the life of the Spirit. She also includes other authors not included in Sullivan (265 n. 6a).

[8] Ulrich Wickert, *Studien zu den Pauluskommentaren Theodors von Mopsuestia: Als Beitrag zum Verständnis der Antiochenischen Theologie* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1962).

[9] Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, 2nd rev. ed. (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975) 1.421–39. See Grillmeier (ibid. 422 n. 31, and 423 n. 32) for succinct summaries of major works on Theodore and of the dispute that I. Oñatibia, "La vida cristiano tipo de las realidades celestes," *Scriptorium Victoriense* I (1954) 100–33 and Abramowski had had with Wilhelm de Vries, "Der Nestorianismis' Theodors von Mopsuestia in seiner Sakramentenlehre," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 7 (1941) 91–148.

[10] Norris briefly discusses the question of Theodore's orthodoxy in the epilogue to his study *Manhood and Christ* 235–38. He points out that Theodore approached the issue of the unity in Christ from a different perspective than Cyril and ought to be judged accordingly (ibid. 236).

[11] Joanne McWilliam Dewart, *The Theology of Grace of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, Catholic University of America Studies in Christian Antiquity 16 (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1971).

[12] Joanne McWilliam Dewart, "The Notion of 'Person' Underlying the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia," *Studia Patristica* 12 (1975) 199–207.

works on Theodore were a posthumous work by Rudolf Bultmann, *Die Exegese des Theodor von Mopsuestia* (1984),[13] Dimitri Z. Zaharoupolos's book on *Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Bible: A Study of His Old Testament Exegesis* (1989)[14] and then my own *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition* (1999)[15] which focused primarily on Theodore's understanding of the "image of God" and its theological ramifications.

My present article does not wish to repeat what has already been ably established in the cited works. Those who accept what the Councils of Ephesus and of Chalcedon taught about Christ as authentic and definitive declarations of the Christian faith, cannot logically reconcile these declarations with Theodore's cautious ways of attributing predicates to Christ as the Word. Theodore did not accept the statements that the Word is the one who suffered, died, and was raised from the dead, nor that Mary is truly the Mother of God without added qualifications. If one uses, as Sullivan and McNamara have expertly done, the now centuries-old traditional *communicatio idiomatum* as one's touchstone to determine what is the acceptable and right way to speak and write about Christ as the subject of a sentence, then Theodore's christological affirmations do not pass muster. Granted the linguistic analyses employed here and the presuppositions underlying them, their conclusions flow with the same ineluctable logical necessity as does the statement that two plus two equals four.

But I wish to propose here a different approach or key for the understanding of Theodore's Christology. My approach deals with his unique perspective on the *imago Dei* and Christ's role in achieving cosmic salvation. It has value, I believe, not only for understanding Theodore's Christology but also for highlighting what are the basic weaknesses as well as strengths of a low Christology. Since the usual emphasis in Christology today is to begin from Christ's humanity rather than from his divinity,[16] Theodore's approach provides a number of insights as well as pitfalls. This may also be especially helpful in an age that seeks to present the mystery of Christ not in the obscure terms from the fifth century but in language

[13] Rudolf Bultmann, *Die Exegese des Theodor von Mopsuestia*, ed. Helmut Feld and Karl Hermann Schelkle (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1984).

[14] Dimitri Z. Zaharopoulos, *Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Bible: A Study of His Old Testament Exegesis* (New York: Paulist, 1989).

[15] Frederick G. McLeod, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1999).

[16] In a lengthy contribution on the Roman Catholic perspective concerning "Jesus Christ," John Galvin observes in light of his research that: "One result is a widespread tendency among contemporary theologians to approach Christology 'from below,' starting with the historical figure of Jesus, rather than beginning 'from above,' with the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity" (*Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, ed. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin, 2 vols. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991) 1.251–324, at 254).

that is understandable and relevant to contemporary Christians. If one wants to avoid a postmodern subjectivistic outlook on who Christ is, it is imperative to uncover the underlying reality beneath the traditional terms that have become a sacralized formula often repeated verbatim with little understanding. My present study may also have value for the recent theological discussions between Roman Catholic and East Syrian theologians since the latter continue to reverence Theodore as their outstanding patristic interpreter.

Before elaborating Theodore's view of the image of God and then spelling out its ramifications for his Christology, I want first to discuss several key elements that have shaped Theodore's theological framework. Hopefully these will illustrate why Theodore thought and wrote as he did; they will also indicate how his understanding of the image of God provides a key for interpreting his assertion that one *prosōpon* or person unites the divine and human natures in Christ.

THEODORE'S THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Theodore was first and foremost a biblical scholar wholly committed to the School of Antioch's literal, historical, and rational hermeneutical principles for interpreting the Christian Scriptures. In fact, he so honed the Antiochene exegetical method that he is now considered its exponent par excellence.[17] This is important to keep in mind because he sought to develop his christological thought primarily out of what he found to be revealed in the New Testament which in turn has affected how he would exegete a text.[18] Though influenced by the ways that terms such as *ousia, physis, hypostasis* and *prosōpon* were employed in the theological and cultural milieu of his own day,[19] his resolve was to keep these terms to a minimum and to remain as close as possible to those terms present in the Bible. For instance, Theodore preferred to describe Christ's Incarnation as being a graced "indwelling" of "good pleasure" that justifies Christ being called the true "Son of God," "Lord," and "image of God." Even his favored term for Christ's person, *prosōpon*, is found in the New Testament.[20]

[17] For a further understanding of Theodore's method, see Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia* 86–150; McLeod, *Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition* 10–42.

[18] To cite but one work, Greer concludes from his close examination of Theodore's surviving works: "In the course of our discussion of Theodore of Mopsuestia we have repeatedly found his theology proceeding from Scripture and his exegesis motivated by a theological purpose" (*Theodore of Mopsuestia* 151).

[19] For a more detailed study of how these terms evolved in patristic times, see McLeod, *Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition* 90–97.

[20] For example, a literal translation of the Greek text for 2 Corinthians 2:10 reads

A second important key for understanding Theodore's thought is his typology. While adamantly opposed to an allegorical interpretation of a scriptural passage, he did concede a spiritual meaning could be discerned there. He was convinced that God's will is revealed through a literal exegesis of a passage. However, he recognized that God could foresee and contrive that at times a real relationship exists between two historical persons or events. He insisted, nevertheless, that this relationship had to be confirmed by a New Testament passage.[21] For instance, the First Adam and the Second Adam, Sarah and Hagar, and the Hebrew and the Christian covenants, and Adam and Christ as God's images can be seen as type and archetype. Their relationships are acknowledged as such by Paul. Being approved and inspired, these types and archetypes could be used to illumine the meanings of each other as will be seen in the case of image. If, however, neither of these poles were grounded in reality, Theodore considered such an instance to be an allegorical interpretation spun out of one's vivid imagination. Theodore was so inflexible in this regard that he admitted the existence of very few legitimate types and archetypes, if we can judge from the handful of Hebrew psalms he was willing to accept as being directly applied to Christ in a truly messianic sense.[22]

A third and crucial point necessary for understanding Theodore is his unwavering conviction that God's transcendence can in no way be compromised. He does not see how the uncreated, infinite, and immutable Godhead can enter into a substantial union with a created, finite, and mutable human being in both this life and the next. He reflects here probably not the Jewish and the Aristotelian outlook toward a transcendent God with whom creatures are incapable by their very natures from directly knowing, seeing, and being united to in a true substantial union, but the viewpoint that he himself detected in Scripture and made his own. Thus, for him, to assert that a human being could be divinized meant that this finite creature had now become totally transformed into God's nature.[23]

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in English: "For your sakes I forgave it in the person (*prosōpon*)) of Christ." See also 2 Corinthians 3:7, 5:12, 19:1; Galatians 1:22, 2:6.

[21] For a more developed elaboration of Theodore's typology, see McLeod, *Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition* 35–38.

[22] Theodore believed only Psalms 2, 8, 45 and 110 directly referred to Christ and the Church.

[23] For a fuller treatment of Theodore's objection to the concept of divinization, see McLeod, *Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition* 125, n. 27, 169–70, and 239–40. Jules Gross asserts that the principal elements of divinization are implicitly found in Theodore's writing (*La divinisation du chrétien d'après les Pères grecs* [Paris: Gabalda, 1938] 253, 262, and 270). I think Gross relied only on generic biblical statements used by Theodore without understanding Theodore's true attitude toward divinization.

For him, this is both impossible and incomprehensible. It is not surprising, therefore, that he would have looked upon a hypostatic or substantial union set in the personhood of the Word as resulting in the destruction of Christ's humanity.

Theodore's understanding of Christ's natures as being concrete and specific can also cause confusion in the mind of his readers. Theodore easily passed from what we now consider the abstract to the concrete as well as vice versa. For him Christ's divine nature was interchangeable with the Word, and his human nature was synonymous with Christ as a "man." Again it is not at all clear whether Theodore has been influenced here by an oral Jewish tradition[24] that did not distinguish the abstract and concrete other than in the context or by an Aristotelian tradition that rejected the generic Platonic world of real forms and ideas or by what he thought to be the scriptural perspective. Whatever may have been the reason, Theodore considered every concrete existing nature to be real and able to function in its own right. With this kind of mental outlook, he would have found it hard to fathom what the neo-Chalcedonians[25] meant when they asserted that the Word can be said to suffer in his humanity, with his human nature being conceived in some sense as an abstract but real nature.

Theodore's understanding of nature as concrete and complete led him to regard nature rather than the person as the source and subject of the Word's and the "man's" free activity. Since person and nature are identified in every case except for Christ and the Trinity, the problem arises only here. Because there are two complete real natures in Christ, Theodore is forced to speak of the two natures (or their equivalents, the Word and the "man") as two sources of activity of the will—which is then interpreted as being indicative of two sources of unity and therefore of two real "persons" and thus as heretical by his Orthodox and Catholic adversaries. But for Theodore both of these activities of the will become one in a prosopic union. This is expressed in the usually careful way that he refers not to Jesus as such but to the *homo assumptus* (the assumed man) and to the Word as the *Verbum assumens* (the assuming Word). He did this, so it

[24] See Graham Warne, *Hebrew Perspectives on the Human Person in the Hellenistic Era: Philo and Paul* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen, 1995). He sums up what I believe are also Theodore's understanding of nature and a key for grasping his outlook on person: "[T]he Hebrews used one single term to express both a concrete, observable reality (to which they could readily relate), and non-concrete, or figurative meaning. . . . that which was concrete could be perceived. The human person, therefore, was characterized by function, rather than by metaphysical abstraction" (59–60).

[25] The neo-Chalcedonians would be those Orthodox who accepted Cyril's use of *hypostasis* as being the person of the Word and tried to mollify the Monophysites by affirming that the Word suffered but adding the qualifying phrase "according to his human nature."

seems, to avoid the impression that the two complete natures or their equivalents, the Word and the "man," can be conceived as two individuals acting freely in separate ways from one another. The "man" is always from the beginning of conception the one who has been assumed, and the Word is the One who has assumed "him" and his nature. After my discussion of image I will then go more deeply into this question.

The real central problem for Theodore is not so much on the level of the unity of Christ's natures but on the kind of unity that has to exist between the Word's and the assumed man's free will.[26] He did not believe that Christ could be truly and fully human unless he was also acknowledged to have a human free will. Theodore doubtless found justification for this in the scriptural statement that: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). This certainly denotes the presence of true human freedom and the ability to act in a truly self-determining way. In Theodore's theological understanding, Christ had to be humanly free if he was to achieve redemption and serve as the true mediator between God and creation, and as the exemplar par excellence for all others to follow. His position was later substantiated by the Third Council of Constantinople (680–681) when it solemnly declared: "And we proclaim equally two natural volitions or wills in him and two natural principles of action which undergo no division, no change, no partition, no confusion, in accordance with the teaching of the holy fathers."[27] In other words, there is not merely a single operating power or *energeia* proceeding from one unique will, namely the divine, but there are present two truly natural activities and two natural wills in Christ.

A final point needs to be made to highlight the basic framework of Theodore's thought, namely the issues he was confronting. By examining the three major controversies that raged from the second half of the third century to the latter part of the fourth century at Antioch, we have contrasting backdrops that will sharply etch what were Theodore's primary concerns regarding the christological issues. His hostility to particular individuals reveals what he personally held in a positive way. The first adversary was Paul of Samosata, the bishop of Antioch from 260 to 268. The

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[26] McNamara affirms the same view but with some hesitation: "It appears probable, therefore, that Theodore's admission of two persons in Christ was due, in part at least, to his anxiety to safeguard the freedom of the will in the 'assumed man as in all other men, and to his inability to reconcile that freedom with true unity of subject in the two natures" ("Theodore of Mopsuestia and the Nestorian Heresy" 188).

[27] *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* 1: *Nicaea I to Lateran V*, ed. Norman P. Tanner (Washington: Georgetown University, 1990) 128–30; Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, 34th ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 1967) no. 556.

Council of Antioch in 268 declared his teaching untenable and deposed him. Although Paul lived a century earlier, Theodore was indeed aware of his teaching and castigated him as an angel of Satan for teaching that "Christ our Lord was a simple man."[28] This illustrates that Theodore regarded his own understanding of Christ's humanity as notably different from that of Paul of Samosata. Next was Arius (256–336) who rejected the Son's equality with the Father in the Trinity and, therefore, the divinity of Christ.[29] Although Arius died before Theodore was born, Antioch remained in upheaval for at least the first 30 years of Theodore's life. He belonged to the Orthodox faction under Bishop Meletius and Diodore who were opposed, on one side, by a strict Nicene group called Eustathians and, on the other side, by the Arians and the so-called semi-Arians. Theodore was keenly aware then of the sharp and contrasting positions taken about the divinity of the Word and their christological significances. He was uncompromising in his belief in the Word's full equality and divinity.

Theodore's most pressing challenge arose from the teaching of Apollinaris (ca. 310–390).[30] On the theological level, Apollinaris was known to be a staunch adversary of the Arians and of the Antiochene speculations about the presence of moral growth and development in Christ's life, about the existence of two personalities in Christ, and about Christ's human power of free self-determination, to such a point that there was a real possibility that Christ could have sinned in his earthly life. Apollinaris's other concerns were to defend the traditional ways of referring to Mary as the Mother of God, her virginal conception, the redemptive power of Christ's death, and the real presence of Christ's transforming power in the Eucharist. He reasoned that if these three ways of affirming traditional beliefs were the acceptable and correct way of speaking, then they indicated that there was "one incarnate nature of the God-Word,"[31] that is, only one real, biological unity in Christ. He also concluded that since the Word and Jesus could not be two complete natures—otherwise this would result in a hybrid—the Word must have supplanted the rational part of Christ's human soul resulting in Christ's human nature being incomplete and thus enabling the divine and human natures in Christ to be joined in one truly substantial union.

[28] *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, ed. and trans. A. Mingana, Woodbrooke Studies 6 (Cambridge: Heffer, 1933) 40.

[29] For a study on the influence that the Arian controversy had on Theodore, see Sullivan, *The Christology of Theodore* 159–65.

[30] For a lengthy study on Apollinaris as a background for understanding Theodore, see Norris, *Manhood and Christ* 81–122.

[31] *Apollinaris von Laodicea und seine Schule*. Texte und Untersuchungen, ed. H. Leitzmann (Tübingen: Mohr, 1904) 251.

Theodore's oppositions to Paul of Samosata, Arius, and Apollinaris clearly sets off the parameters of his own position. Against Paul he held that Christ is more than a mere man, against the Arians that the Word is fully divine with Jesus Christ somehow sharing in his divinity, and against Apollinaris that Christ cannot possess an incomplete human nature that is lacking a rational soul and a free will and that the assumed man really "increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor" (Luke 2:52). The fundamental problem that Theodore had to face was how to maintain the scriptural affirmation that Christ is like other human beings in all things except sin and to balance this in a way that maintained that Christ was also truly divine and not merely a human mediator such as Moses.

THEODORE'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE *IMAGO DEI*

Having set the general framework of Theodore's thought, we are now in a position to examine how he understood the various ways that human beings are the *imago Dei* and in the next section to determine its christological significance. First of all, against those who postulated that human beings are to be regarded as God's image residing in the rational, spiritual reaches of the human soul,[32] Theodore cautions: "Image, however, could never be said of human beings, if it were [only] proper to the divine nature. Moreover, these [interpreters who hold image to be spiritual] have not seen that every image, when seen, shows what is not seen. It is impossible, therefore, to make an image that is not seen. For it is evident that images are ordinarily fashioned by their makers either for honor or affection, so that they may be a remembrance of those not seen for those who are able nevertheless to see."[33]

For Theodore, therefore, every image must be a visible revelation of what is not seen, enabling one to honor and love who or what is hidden from view. He applied this need for a image to be visible when he interpreted the Genesis passage (1:26–27) where God is said to have created Adam and Eve as God's own image. He construed God's bestowal of image upon them as a solemn declaration to the rest of creation of why humans excel over others and what are the roles that Adam qua human being is called to play in the divine plan: "This is [the reason for] the excellence of humanity's coming to be: [namely] that it came to be in the image of God. For just as in the case of these other created beings, [the

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[32] For a recent summary of the positions of major patristic writers on the image of God, see A.-G. Hamman, *L'homme, image de Dieu* (Paris: Desclée, 1987).

[33] H.B. Swete, ed., *Theodori episcopi commentarius in epistolas B. Pauli commentarii*, 2 vol. (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1880 and 1882) 1.261–62; hereafter cited as Swete. Unless otherwise indicated, this and subsequent translations from non-English texts are my own.

author of Genesis] by his repetition made known [what is] the excellence of each one and its reason for coming to be. He twice established that He made humankind in the image of God, in order to manifest that there is indeed a matter or excellence in his fashioning—that it is in him that all beings are gathered together, so that they might draw near to God through him as an image by obeying the laws laid down by Him about showing service to him and [thus] please the Lawgiver by their diligence to him."[34]

Theodore affirms here that the reason why humans are superior lies in their being set apart as God's image within creation. Other creatures encounter God through humans and are thus enabled to glorify and please God by the service they render to them. He also alludes here to some connection between the honoring of human beings as God's image and the fact that all other creature are "gathered" up in Adam. As indicated in the next citation, the reference here is to the role that humans play as the bond of the universe: "For [God] fashioned Adam with an invisible, rational, and immortal soul and a visible and mortal body. By the former, he is like unto invisible natures; and by the latter, he is akin to visible beings. For God willed to gather the whole of creation into one, so that, although constituted of diverse natures, it might be joined together by one bond. He [then] created this living being which is related by its nature to the whole of creation. He created Adam to be this bond.[35]

Besides assigning Adam a preeminent place in creation because of his bonding and thus unitive role as well as his quasi-cultic role (in the sense that other created beings please God by their service to humans), Theodore also observes in the following text that Adam as God's image exercised a more clearly defined cultic function in addition to his unique revelatory one: "If some king, after having created a very great city and adorned it with numerous and varied works, ordered upon the completion of everything that his image, having been made the greatest and most remarkable, be set up in the middle of the entire city as proof of his founding of the city, the image of the king who built the city would necessarily be venerated, with all in the city confessing their gratitude to their city's founder for having given them such a place to live. So also the Artisan of creation has made the whole cosmos, embellishing it with diverse and varied works and at the end established humankind to serve as the image

[34] Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Theodori Mopsuesteni Fragmenta Syriaca*, ed. E. Sachau (Leipzig: G. Engelmann, 1869) 24–25 in the Syriac, 15 in the Latin; hereafter cited as Sachau.

[35] Sachau 7 in the Syriac, and 5 in the Latin. For somewhat contrasting views on how the image of God is related to the idea of human beings as the bond of the universe and what is Theodore's source, see Norris, *Manhood and Christ* 140–48 and McLeod, *Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition* 62–70.

for his household, so that all creation would by their care for and veneration toward humans render the honor due to God."[36]

We find the idea of humankind being the bond linking together all creation present in Stoic writings and in the classic Christian philosophical work by Nemesius *On Human Nature*.[37] But one may wonder why Theodore has connected it with the notion of the "image of God." Granted Theodore's intent to follow the lead of Scripture, it appears most likely that Theodore derived this functional outlook on the *imago Dei* as the bond of the universe from what he believed to be Paul's view in Colossians 1:15–20: "He (the Lord Jesus Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible…all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. . . . For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all thing, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross."[38]

Fortunately a passage has survived where Theodore plainly alludes to the idea of Christ as the bond of the universe. It occurs when the author of Colossians was elaborating on the Pauline theme of reconciliation. Though one can dispute whether his thought here has been directly or even ultimately derived from an eclectic Stoicism, the following passage strongly suggests that Colossians (as well as in an auxiliary way the Pauline theme of the body of Christ) have exercised a clear, if not determining, influence on why Theodore included a bonding role to what he understood to be the meaning and content of the "image of God:" "Therefore all things, those which are in heaven as well as those on earth, he renewed or rather, recapitulated in Christ, making as it were, a certain vast renovation and reintegration of every creature through him. For by making the body incorrupt and impassible by means of his resurrection and joining it again to the immortal soul . . . he is seen to have restored the bond of friendship upon the entire creation."[39]

There is another aspect of Theodore's understanding of image that mirrors in part how his fellow Antiochenes interpreted image. Like them, Theodore regarded God's image as referring to the whole human being and not merely to the spiritual part of the human soul. He also agreed with

[36] Swete, 1.1xxx. For other places where Theodore spoke of image as being related as the bond or keystone of the created order, see Swete 1.130, 2.9, 13 and 269.

[37] Nemesius, *Cyril of Jerusalem and Nemesius of Emesa*, ed and trans. William Telfer, Library of Christian Classics 4 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955) 234.

[38] The translation here is from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha, The New Revised Standard Version*.

[39] Swete, 1.130.

them that it involved the authority to rule over the material universe. Diodore, Chrysostom, and Theodoret believed that the context surrounding Genesis 1:26–27 justifies this interpretation: "God said to (Adam and Eve), 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' " Then employing an Antiochene hermeneutical principle that one scriptural passage can illumine another, they restricted the full power to rule to men qua males on the basis of their exegesis of Genesis 3:16 and 1 Corinthians 11:7 where Paul asserts that the male "is the image and glory of God but woman is the glory of man."[40] As the next citation suggests, Theodore also viewed Adam's power to rule over the material universe as inherent in the notion of image and a foreshadowing of the universal power that Christ possesses to judge the universe: "We see His invisible nature present in his [Christ], as in an image. For he has been united to God the Word and will judge the whole world when he appears, as it is right, according to his own nature, coming in the future age from heaven in great glory."[41]

In brief, Theodore's understanding of image as pertaining to Adam and to Christ is unique among the Fathers insofar as both play a fourfold revelatory, binding, cultic, and divine power-sharing roles within the cosmic creation. His view differs especially from those who held that image is found in the higher spiritual soul specified as the *nous*. It is also at variance with Theodore's fellow Antiochene theologians. What Theodore seems to have done was to derive his meaning of image not from the Genesis text as such but from the typological relationship he detected existing between Adam's image and the Pauline understanding of Christ's image in Colossians. For Theodore, both Adam and Christ are real historical figures whose inner spiritual relationship to each other has been divinely sanctioned by Paul as being a type and archetype. From Colossians he accepted the roles that Christ plays as the perfect archetypal image. He acts as the one who reveals the transcendent God and his will, who serves in God's plan as the divinely designated way for all creatures to worship and glorify God, who possesses total divine dominion and who will recapitulate all creation at the end of time.

With this insight, Theodore must have then reasoned that Christ's roles are also prefigured and foreshadowed in those roles that Adam and other

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[40] For a study of Theodore's view of whether women too are images of God, see McLeod, *Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition* 211–20. His position is not unequivocal in the extant fragments. His understanding of image would seem logically to require it. But his comments on 1 Corinthians 11:7 appears to reject it. I argue that he held women to be images of God but function as subordinate to men as does the body to its head.

[41] Swete, 1.261–62.

human beings were assigned to play in creation. But he would insist that like all limited secondary images that Christ's roles outshine Adam's just as the sun does when compared to its reflection in a mirror. Adam as God's image points to the roles Christ's human nature will enjoy because of its unique union with the divine nature of the Word. Christ in turn acts as a religious icon or symbol that not merely reveals the presence of the Word and God's will but also truly shares in a participatory way in God's name, power, and glory. Fortunately a fragment has survived where Theodore connects image to the way that others can know and love Christ:

Christ fulfills the role of image in two ways. Those who love certain individuals very often set up their images after their death and deem this as providing them some solace over their death. By looking at their image, they think that they see, as it were, their [loved] one who is neither seen nor present, appeasing thereby the flame and force of their desire. Also those who have the emperors' images within their cities seem to honor by cult and adoration those [emperors] who are not present, as if they were present and seeing all this. Both of these [analogies] are fulfilled in the case of Christ. For all his followers who pursue virtue and promptly fulfill what is due God love him and greatly honor him. And even though the divine nature is unseen, they still show love to him who is seen by all. For they all think of Him [the Son] as one who is seen by means of him and who is always present to him. They fully honor him as the imperial image, seeing that the divine nature is, as it were, in him and is seen in him. For if the Son is indeed the one who is said to be dwelling in him, then the Father is also with him. For everyone believes that He is altogether inseparable from the Son. And the Holy Spirit is not absent in that He came to him in the form of an anointing and is always with the assumed one."[42]

Theodore's careful and cautious way of qualifying his statement here about how the divine nature is "as it were" present in the visible Christ confirms the belief and fears of his adversaries that he did not assent to a true substantial union between the divine and the human natures in Christ. But granted his understandings of an existing nature and the unbridgeable gulf that he was convinced existed between an infinite and a finite nature, Theodore is consistent in his thinking and in his method of speaking of the union. What is important here is Theodore's insistence that Christ's visible appearance actually images the presence not only of the Son but also of the Father and the Holy Spirit. For Theodore, one can be wholly confident that those who experience Christ's image in a visible way are encountering God in a true sense. And because his union with the Word is permanent from the moment of conception they will always be able to do so.

We catch a similar but clearer glimpse of this view in a passage from Narsai, a fifth-century East Syrian theologian, a staunch defender and an undeviating disciple of Theodore's teaching. These may not be Theodore's

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[42] Theodore, PG 66.991.

exact words about Christ's visible role as God's image in a future heavenly state. But they certainly offer a close reflection of his thought:

By the yoke of his love will be united together angels and men; and they will celebrate [the assumed man] as the image of the hidden king. . . . They continue to worship in the temple of his body that One who is hidden in him and offer therein the pure sacrifices of their minds. In the haven of his body come to rest the impulses of their thoughts, as they become worn out in search for the transcendent incomprehensible One. For this reason, the Fashioner of the universe chose him from the universe, that by his visible body he might satisfy the need of the universe. A creature needs continually to search out what is transcendent and to discover the meaning and intent of what is secret. Because it is impossible that the nature of the hidden One appear in an open way, He limited their inquiries to his visible image.[43]

Theodore's Orthodox and Catholic adversaries contend that these citations support their contentions that the visible body and the hidden King are really separate individuals. Another interpretation is possible. However, the point is that Theodore and Narsai are emphasizing not the difference between the two but the presence of a truly permanent relationship existing between God's transcendent nature and the image that God chose from all eternity to be the visible way for all other creatures to satisfy both their intellectual and affective desires to know and worship God both on earth and in heaven. In other words, to confront Christ's humanity is, for Theodore, to experience the hidden reality of the Word in a way similar to how the human body as an historical reality provides knowledge of the soul's existence, and a kiss can symbolically express one's innermost love for another. Because Christ's visible humanity truly reveals the indwelling Word, his outward appearance is the sole way to know and worship God. No other creature can fulfill this cultic role. One may argue linguistically that this way of expressing the union in Christ is not indicating a center of unity in Christ. But this is not the kind and level of union, as we shall see later, that Theodore and Narsai were speaking about. Rather they were interested in affirming how the two together can be said—or at least thought—to function in a unity whereby a transcendent spiritual nature can operate in, with, and through its visible image in order to reveal itself externally to others. It is the approach we find in the Synoptic Gospels where Jesus is visibly portrayed as acting in divine ways and gradually realized to be divine.

THE CHRISTOLOGICAL RAMIFICATIONS

My main purpose in this section is to delve more deeply into how *prosō-pon* and image are related to each other and what ramifications this rela-

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[43] *Narsai's Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension*, ed. and trans. Frederick G. McLeod, Patrologia Orientalis 40, Fasc. 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1968) 130.

tionship offers for an extended understanding of Theodore's Christology. But before attempting to do so, I need to be clear as to what Theodore meant by the basic terms used by the Fathers and the early ecumenical councils when they referred to Christ's two natures and person. While Theodore favored biblical words and phrases to designate who Christ is, he could not completely avoid making use of the terms being employed in the creeds and the theological disputes of his day. There are five which need to be plainly defined: *ousia, physis, hypostasis, prosōpon* and *schēma*. These terms are best explained in as extended example[44] that Nestorius offered in his *Bazaar of Heracleides* an example that sums up how the terms are closely interrelated to one another, and how they fit in well with those fragments where Theodore has employed four of these terms. Afterwards I consider two passages from Theodore that reflect the same way for understanding the terms *ousia, hypostasis,* and *prosōpon*. This last term will be developed afterwards at considerable length.

To exemplify the meaning of the five words, Nestorius described a king who has dressed himself in an ordinary soldier's clothing. He considered *ousia* as referring to the king's human nature and as such like that of all other human beings. *Physis* specifies his human nature as being that of a king. *Hypostasis* adds to the notion of *physis* a summing up of all the characteristics belonging to this existing king. *Prosōpon* is the *hypostasis* but considered as the visible manifestation of the *hypostasis* to others; *prosōpon* denotes the external appearance of the king but in a notably different way than Nestorius's technical use of *schēma*–a word not found as such in Theodore's surviving works but still invaluable for understanding what *prosōpon* means in their writings. For Nestorius, *schēma* denotes simply a person's present external appearance that changes continually with time and new situations. For instance the king may be dressed at this moment in his regal robes—his present *schēma*–but then later dresses as a mere common soldier—thus assuming a new *schēma*. In other words, *schēma* refers simply to one's present appearance, whereas *prosōpon* connotes, if not denotes, how the external appearance of a person images the internal being of an individual and how this interiority reveals itself in external ways. As such, *prosōpon* is to be understood as a revelatory and therefore functional term relating the exterior to the interior and the interior to the exterior.

The distinctions proposed above between *ousia, hypostasis* and *prosōpon* can also be exemplified in a passage from Theodore's surviving works: "At that time, the men of the Old Testament did not understand the *hypostasis* and *prosōpon* of the Holy Spirit to be distinguished by his *prosōpon* from

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[44] Nestorius, *Bazaar of Heracleides*, ed. Godfrey R. Driver, trans. Leonard Hodgson (Oxford: Clerendon, 1925) 20–23.

God . . . the Father has his own *prosōpon*, the Son his own, and the Holy Spirit his own; and we believe that each of them equally belong to the divine, eternal *ousia*."[45] Theodore understood the term *ousia* as designating the essence that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit share within the Trinity. In addition, each Person has its own *hypostasis* and own *prosōpon*—terms that the documents of the Council of Constantinople I used seemingly as synonyms to describe the Persons in the Trinity: ". . . a single Godhead and power . . . in three most perfect *hypostaseis* or in three perfect *prosōpa* . . ."[46] Theodore interpreted these two terms as specifying how the three Persons of the Trinity are each distinguished from their common *ousia*. Theodore also suggests a difference in meaning between *hypostasis* and *prosōpon*. He observes that the Hebrews in Old Testament times were unaware of the Spirit's *prosōpon*. They were not able to know the Spirit as a Person separate from the Father and the Son in the Trinity or, for that matter, from the Godhead. For the Spirit's Person or *prosōpon* had not yet been revealed, but the Spirit's *hypostasis* or specific individuality as an existing divine Person is still a trinitarian reality. What the term *prosōpon* adds, therefore, to the latter is the *hypostasis'* actual or, in the case of Christ's human nature, a potential ability to express itself outwardly simply as a human being in a visible and vital way.

In light of these distinctions, we can grasp what Theodore meant in the disputed passage where he speaks of the two natures in Christ each having its own *prosōpon* and a common *prosōpon* for both: "For when we distinguish the natures, we say that the nature of God the Word is complete and that [his] *prosōpon* is complete (for it is not correct to speak of an *hypostasis* without a *prosōpon* and also that the nature of the man is complete and likewise [his] *prosōpon*. But when we look to their union, then we affirm one *prosōpon*."[47] In other words, the *prosōpon* each nature possesses would signify that the two natures each have a unique individual way of manifesting itself—or at least for the human nature the potential for existing and revealing itself solely as a human being—and that the common *prosōpon* reveals in a visible, concrete way the existence of the invisible and transcendent Word functioning together with Christ's humanity.

The common *prosōpon*, therefore, can be considered as equivalent to Theodore's understanding of Christ as the perfect image of God. For Christ's *prosōpon* visibly images the reality of the Word to all creation and shares in the name, power, and worship due to God. Granted the interchangeable nature of these two terms, it allows us to expand upon and

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[45] Theodore of Mopsuestia, PG 66.484–85.

[46] *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* 1: *Nicaea I to Lateran V*, ed. Norman P. Tanner (Washington: Georgetown University, 1990) 28.

[47] Swete, 2.299.

deepen our understanding of the specific roles that Christ's *prosōpon* is meant to play in Theodore's thought. His *prosōpon* has not only a revelatory and mediating role but also a recapitulating and binding role to perform in salvation. For it is called to unite all those who share organically in his human nature, other human beings as well as the angels by their spiritual kinship and the material world by their bodies. Besides binding all creation together in and with his human nature, Christ's humanity because of its union with the Word's divine nature also provides the sole means for all creatures to enter into communion with God. He is not only the head directing all the parts of his human nature toward their appointed final end but also their indispensable bond linking them to their creator so that all have at least the opportunity to attain and enjoy both an immortal and immutable existence in a new future life.

Is Theodore's Assumed Man Merely a Human Bond?

The question can be raised, nonetheless, whether Theodore understood *prosōpon* and the phrase "image of God" as applied to the assumed man merely as man. For if the bond between the Word and the assumed man is an accidental or moral union established by grace, there is a weak link that will not support the assertion that Christ is a true mediator, being truly God as well as man. This question needs to be answered in several ways. First in an all-encompassing way. Since Theodore has seemingly immersed himself fully in the Pauline world vision as seen expressed in Colossians, he would have been sensitive to the purpose for which this letter was written. For its author was writing to counteract the opinion that Jesus as the Christ was not the complete answer to all the world's salvation needs because his role in salvation is subordinate to that of the heavenly cosmic powers. Theodore would reject this absolutely because he believed that in God's plan no one else, including the heavenly spiritual powers, outranks Jesus and provides full access to God. For he alone is the perfect image of God. As Scripture scholars point out, the Christology expressed in Colossians reflects an early stage in the development of a faith awareness of Christ's full divinity. Later the Fathers came to the realization that a mere man could not serve as the cosmic Christ who will not only redeem creation but recapitulate all creatures and return them to God the Father. The same can be said about Theodore's Christology. It represents a view of Christ evolved before the Council of Ephesus—one that ought to be judged more in light of the early Christology that we find within the Synoptics and the Pauline tradition as reflected in Colossians rather than in the Gospel of John and in the decrees of Ephesus and Chalcedon. In other words, like the Synoptics, Theodore may not have unambiguously asserted a divine center of unity in Christ. But that does not mean he denied its reality.

The Meanings Attributed to the Term "Person"

Before we proceed farther in trying to establish what kind of unity Theodore maintained when he wrote about the union of Christ's natures in one *prosōpon,* it is crucial to resolve a perennially confusing and frustrating problem in Christology: what meanings can be attached to the term "person."[48] The Ephesian and Chalcedonian Fathers chose Cyril's term *hypostasis* apparently as the best word available to signify in a descriptive way[49] how a Christian ought to speak about the unity of Christ that justified both the New Testament witnesses and the creedal and the age-old traditional ways of referring to the Incarnate Word and Mary. When theologians had later to wrestle with the conciliar statements affirmed about Christ, they speculated as to what is the underlying metaphysical meaning implied in the term *hypostasis* when it is used as the subject of a sentence, such as Boethius did when he defined person as an individual substance of a rational nature. Aquinas later refined this, adding that a person is an individual substance that is complete, subsists by itself, and is separated from others.

A radical change in outlook occurred in the 17th century that continues even up to the present. Many modern philosophers rejected the earlier metaphysical definition in favor of a functional one where a person is looked upon as a human being who is self-conscious, who thinks, wills, remembers, imagines, and senses. Others today add another element to the meaning of "person." They see this as present in the Trinity and in most societies and cultures where an individual is considered to be an irreducible part of a family or a larger collectivity and must be understood as having an essential relationship to others. In other words, the term "person" ought necessarily to include also in its definition both a communal and an indi-

[48] For a fine summary of the possible meanings for "person," see *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins and Dermot Lane (Wilmington: Glazier, 1987). 757–59; also Quassim Cassam's article in the *Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. T. Honderich (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) 655–56. The controversy over the meaning of "person" is, of course, much wider and more complex than the very brief presentation offered here.

[49] See Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, 2nd rev. ed. (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975) 545, 549–50; and Richard A. Norris Jr., "Toward a Contemporary Interpretation of the Chalcedonian Definition," *Lux in Lumine: Essays for W.N. Pittenger* (New York: Seabury, 1966) 62–79, esp. 74–75. They hold that the Fathers at Chalcedon were not intending to provide a metaphysical explanation of *hypostasis*. They wanted this term to be understood against the background of Scripture and the whole patristic tradition. Grillmeier also adds. "The formula of the council states only the bare essentials of what was needed to resolve the difficulties of the time (549). . . . It does not lay claim to having said all that must be said about Christ" (550).

vidual meaning.[50] Finally, the word "person" can be understood as a legal term that stipulates those who possess rights in a state and what these are, such as the Supreme Court decision that a fetus is legally not a person until it is viable outside the womb.

It is not clear why Cyril chose the term *hypostasis* to express the personal unity of Christ. He may simply have taken at full face value John's statement about the Word becoming flesh and understood the creed's affirmation about the only-begotten Son of God who came down from heaven and became man, suffered, died, and rose again as confirming this. He may have come to it, as Henry Chadwick argues, from his understanding of "the eucharist and the atonement."[51] He may also have arrived at this because he had an inkling of the need for a metaphysical basis that grounds an essential perduring unity within Christ. Theodore, on the other hand, looked upon a person from a different angle or perspective. He believed that one could come to an understanding of who a person is by knowing how he or she acts and interrelates with others as a member of a defining community. Whether or not he derived this outlook regarding a person from a Stoic, a cultural, or a scriptural background, or a combination of all three is incidental. He had a different notion of person or, perhaps better, a different approach to the understanding of a person from the way one reveals oneself externally. These two different viewpoints, of course, do not exhaust the full reality of who a person is. Caution, therefore, has to be taken in assessing what someone else means by the term "person," especially in the formula that there exists "one Person and two natures in Christ."

Theodore's Functional Understanding of "Person"

Theodore's notion of person certainly reflects the functional and communal emphases of the ancient world as well as that prevalent among many people living today outside of our own cultural milieu. His view may have been shaped by his culture. Here one's own identity as a person would be known and achieved by acting as a member of a group or of a community

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[50] For a probing sociological study into how the ancients regarded the meaning of person, see Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, *Portraits of Paul: An Archeology of Ancient Personality* (Louisville: Westminster/Knox, 1996). They hold that: "From the documents that have come down to us, we can see that the ancients would quite readily agree that you can indeed tell a book from its 'cover.' So too you can tell another person by the way she or he looks and moves. Thus any intelligent person can tell what any other person is like by his or her 'cover' as well" (xii).

[51] Henry Chadwick, "Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy," *Journal of Theological Studies* 2 (1951) 153.

in which an individual was expected to fulfill assigned roles. One's external behavior would, therefore, be expected to be in conformity with one's inner identity; and one's inner identity was expected to manifest itself outwardly in a similar conformity. Theodore's understanding of person may also have been profoundly influenced by the Pauline notions that Christ is the head of the Body that is the Church and the recapitulation of all beings within himself. As seen in Theodore's understanding of image's bonding role in creation, he did not look upon these expressions as mere metaphors but as realities where the various members are functionally linked together within an organic body for the common good. Just as the spiritual soul and material body can co-exist in an organic union where each operates for the good of the whole, Theodore may have conceived of an analogous, if not the same, kind of union between Christ's divine and human natures within one *prosōpon*. For just as the soul empowers the body without being compromised in its spiritual nature, so too could the Word function in a similar way with his humanity without his immutable divine nature being in any way affected in the exchange.

Theodore's functional view of person can be discerned in his exegesis of John 10:30 where John has Jesus affirming: "I and the Father are one." Theodore must have been perplexed by such a clear statement, as well as others in John's Gospel, particularly that "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14), suggesting a substantial unity between Jesus' humanity and the Father. This ran counter to his theological conviction that the Infinite God cannot be joined to a finite creature. His reply illustrates how his mindset affected his exegesis. Acknowledging the difficulty confronting him here, he points out that the word "one" can be interpreted as having three different meanings: as an "equality," or a "similarity," or a "consensus," each being determined by its context. Theodore believed that the context of John 10:30 indicates that John was speaking of a consensus of wills where the assumed man was empowered to act in uniquely divine ways "seeing that his power [*virtus*] is greater and more powerful than all others; and this appears from the interpretation of the words."[52] The same viewpoint is expressed a little more clearly when Theodore explained the passage where Christ cured a leper: "[The assumed one] showed that there existed one will [and] one operation, one according to one and the same power, produced not by reason of nature but of good pleasure, through which he is united to God the Word . . . who had an inherent affection for him from the womb."[53] This consensus of the divine and human wills to

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[52] *Theodori Mopsuesteni commentarius in Evangelium Johannis Apostoli*, ed. J.-M. Vosté. Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium 115–116/Syr. 62–63 (Louvain: Officina Oridetali, 1940) 153; hereafter cited as Vosté.

[53] Theodore of Mopsuestia, PG 66.1003.

form one will and operation needs now to be scrutinized carefully and judged cautiously.

Nemesius's View of Union as Background for Understanding Theodore

To understand the above citations as to how the divine and human natures and their respective wills can function as one, it will be helpful to establish first the framework out of which Theodore was operating. I believe it is the same view that we find expressed at length in a contemporary of Theodore, the Christian philosopher Nemesius. His work *On Human Nature*[54] is considered a reflection of the Antiochene tradition. When explaining how the spiritual soul can act on its material body without being altered or changed by it, he used the example of the union between Christ's natures to explain the union of the soul and the body in a human being. As Nestorius later pointed out,[55] this analogy limps in that the soul and body are incomplete natures whereas the Word and the humanity are complete. The point, however, both here and possibly in Theodore, is not how two natures become one but how in an organic kind of unity a spiritual nature can act upon its material nature while remaining untouched by it: "it is the nature of the *intelligibles* both to be capable of union with things adapted to receive them . . . and to remain, nevertheless, unconfused with them while in union."[56]

Nemesius expands upon how spiritual realities related to their material copartners in a passage where he is writing about how Christ's natures react to each other in the same organism.[57] It is also evocative of the Council of Chalcedon's often quoted line as to how Christ's natures are united: "The Word mingles with body and soul, and yet remains throughout unmixed, unconfused, uncorrupted, untransformed, not sharing their passivity but only their activity, not perishing with them, nor changing as they change; but, on the one hand, contributing to their growth, and, on the other, nowise degraded by contact with them, so that he continues immutable and unconfused, seeing that he is altogether without share in any kind

[54] The first person I am aware of who noticed the similarity between Nemesius and Theodore was R. Arnou, "Nestorianisme et néoplatonisme: L'unité du Christ et l'union des 'Intelligibles'," *Gregorianum* 17 (1936) 116–31. McNamara briefly elaborates on this ("Theodore of Mopsuestia and the Nestorian Heresy" 179–81), as Norris frequently does in passing (*Manhood and Christ* 21–56) when discussing the philosophical influences on Theodore. See also my own treatment in *Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition*, 97–115.

[55] Nestorius, *Bazaar of Heracleides* 304.

[56] Ibid. 295.

[57] Nemesius is indebted here to a Neoplatonic outlook. See Telfer's commentary on 301 (cited above in n.37).

of alteration."[58] Nemesius has described earlier how the soul as an intelligible spiritual power vitalizes and energizes its human copartner without suffering any alteration when remarking on how the soul acts with its body:

[T]he vital power which is pre-requisite to feeling is acknowledged to be derived by the body from the soul. It is legitimate to speak of the soul's 'sympathy' with its body, thus recognizing that while soul and body are not partners on equal terms, in this respect, they are partners[59]. . . . Therefore, if the soul is said to be in a body, it is not so said in the sense of being located in a body, but as being in a habitual relation of presence there, even as God is said to be in us. For we may say that the soul is bound by habit to the body, or by an inclination or disposition towards it, just as they say that a lover is bound to his beloved, not meaning physically, or spatially, but habitually.[60]

In other words, since the soul supplies the energy source that its body requires, it can be thought of as being bound habitually to the body and able to participate in a loving, sympathetic way in whatever the body is experiencing. Though the two are not equals, subsisting and operating at different levels, they are united as one in the same living organism.

Since Nemesius was critical—but in a very circumspect way—about how Theodore expressed the union in Christ, the objection can be raised whether Nemesius provides the suitable background for understanding how Theodore viewed the union. In the following passage, Nemesius does not mention Theodore explicitly by his name. But his allusion to "divine favor" makes it evident as to whom he is referring: "The manner of union is, therefore, not by divine favour, as is the opinion of certain men of note, but is grounded in nature . . . the unconfused union is a proper work of the divine nature, and not of divine favour alone."[61] It is important to note here that Nemesius is using "nature" in its vital, dynamic sense, not as the later Monophysites understood it as signifying the presence of only one nature in Christ. For Nemesius, Christ is one because he is a living unity of Word and man. So in criticizing Theodore's union of "divine favor," Nemesius may simply be pointing out here that there also has to be a deeper (metaphysical?) level to the union of natures in Christ beyond the functional way that the divine nature favors Christ's humanity. This is borne out by the fact, as Telfer notes insightfully, that Nemesius's explanation of the presence of an "habitual relationship" between Christ's natures is very close to what Theodore meant by his "indwelling by divine favour."[62]

Theodore's Meaning of a Union of "Good Pleasure"

We turn now to consider whether Theodore's understanding of a union of "divine favor" or, as it is more often translated, "divine good pleasure"

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[58] Ibid.   [59] Ibid. 297.   [60] Ibid. 299.
[61] Ibid. 303.   [62] Ibid. 299 and 303.

or "benevolence" is equivalent to Nemesius's understanding of an "habitual relation of presence" where a person is continually disposed and desirous to do whatever will benefit another with whom he or she is in a standing co-partner relationship. A subsidiary but much more fundamental question to this is whether Theodore has made Christ too human when he described the union between the divine and the human natures in Christ as one of good pleasure. He explained the phrase thus: "Good pleasure is said to be the highest and most sublime act of God's will which He exhibits when pleased with those who have been and are still devoted in their dedication to Him. For this (saying) about 'being well and sublimely pleased with them' has been commonly received and found in Scripture."[63] As he has invariably done when addressing a dogmatic question, Theodore has turned to the New Testament for his way of portraying how the Word and Christ's humanity have been united at the moment of conception. He has drawn his terms of an "indwelling of good pleasure" from the Synoptics, John's Gospel, and Colossians.[64]

Theodore has rejected out of hand that Christ's natures are united in either a substantial or an accidental moral union.[65] He opted for what he considered to be a special, unique graced kind of union—a union that has bedeviled theologians and philosophers who cannot comprehend a union that is neither substantial nor accidental. To his critics, a graced union between God and those dedicated to his will means that Christ's union is the same as that existing between God and his saints, differing only in degree and not in kind and thus an accidental/moral union. To his credit, Theodore recognized that this was a possible interpretation. For he immediately responded: "When, then (God) may be said to dwell either in the apostles or generally in the just . . . we do not say that the indwelling [of the Word] happened thus in his case—for we would not rave in such a way—but as in a son (*hos en huio*)."[66] To clarify what he means by the phrase *hos en huio.* Theodore continued: "It means that by his [the Word's] indwelling

[63] Theodore of Mopsuestia, PG 66.973. See Sullivan, *The Christology of Theodore* 254–55 where he treats of this passage. He concludes: "But in all this we do not see anything which is essentially superior to that cooperation which God grants to other men in whom he is well pleased" (255).

[64] For instance from John 1:14, Matthew 3:17, Mark 1:11, Luke 3:22 and perhaps significantly from Colossians 2:9: "For it is in Christ that the complete being of the Godhead dwells embodied. . . ." This last passage is the same where the author of the epistle speaks of Christ as the binding and recapitulating agent in salvation.

[65] Swete, 2.293–94.

[66] Ibid. 2.295–96. When a noun lacks its article, it signifies that it should be translated in a generic sense. Another interpretation, however, is possible. Since a proper name does not require an article before it, it is possible to understand *huios* in the present context as referring to the "Son of God."[66] it could then be translated ". . . the indwelling [of the Word] happened in this case . . . as [God the Father dwells] in [His] Son."

He united the one who was assumed wholly to Himself and made him share in all the honor that He, the indwelling One, naturally participates in as Son, in such a way that He is accounted to be one *prosōpon* with him because of their union, and shares with him all his dominion and thus works all things in him."[67] Theodore maintains, therefore, a profound difference between the way God showered the divine good pleasure upon Christ and all others, including the saints. For Christ's humanity shares in the honors that the Word naturally participates in as the Son within the Trinity.

Another way to grasp Theodore's meaning of an "indwelling of good pleasure" is to relate it to his view of how Christ's common *prosopōn* is the perfect image of God. The assumed man not only visibly manifests the existence and will of God but shares as the perfect image of God in the name, power, and glory due to the Word as God. He was chosen as an expression of God's love for those seeking to encounter the hidden divinity. A pale example of this kind of relational union between an image and its reality is found in the ancient world when supreme rulers set up images of themselves in the cities under their control. The supreme ruler's image was not looked upon as a mere painting or a simple representation of himself. Rather his image was accepted as a true symbol of his regal power and personage and of his desire to be present among his people. To desecrate the image was tantamount to a personal attack. In the tax revolt that erupted in Antioch in 387, an enraged mob utterly destroyed the Emperor Theodosius I's image. He exploded in anger when informed of this, regarding it as an affront to his imperial person. Similar examples of the relationship existing between emperors, kings, and pharaohs and their images can be discerned in the divine cult that they demanded for themselves as God's specially anointed image. Those like the early Christians who refused to do so could face death for their impiety.

Theodore's Analogy of the Union Between the Body and the Soul

I have pointed out how an "indwelling of good pleasure" was meant to express the unique union where the Word has lovingly chosen the humanity of Christ to image forth his presence within the world, so that to encounter his humanity is to encounter God. I turn now to an analogy that Theodore alludes to only in passing that exemplifies the union of the two natures in Christ, namely the union between the body and the soul.[68] To

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in [His] Son." If so, it offers an interesting analogy. Theodore would be comparing the way that the Father and Son share in the same nature and same divine operation to the way that the Word and the assumed man can be said to share in the same *prosōpon* and same common activity.

[67] Ibid.   [68] Vosté 119ff.

understand the point Theodore is making, we turn to a passage from Narsai that can help us. It highlights what doubtlessly was Theodore's own outlook.

We call the created one, "the Temple" whom the Word fashioned for his dwelling, and the Creator, the Only-Begotten who was pleased to dwell within his handiwork. [They are] like the soul and the body that are co-partners and called one *parsope* [Syriac for *prosōpon*]. The soul has a vital nature, and the body, a mortal nature. And we call the two that are distinct from one another one *parsope.* The Word is the nature of the Divine Essence; and the body, the nature of humanity. One is the creature; and the other, the Creator: they are one in [their] unity. . . . The soul does not suffer in the body; when its limbs are scourged; and the Divinity did not suffer in the sufferings of the body in which it dwelt. And if the soul does not suffer, seeing that it is something created like the body, how does the Divine Essence suffer whose nature is exalted above passions? The soul suffers with the body in love and not in its nature; and the sufferings of the body are predicated of the soul in a metaphorical sense.[69]

This passage from Narsai reflects a number of points already treated in Theodore. Both understand the natures of the Word and the assumed man as concrete and specific so that the terms are interchangeable: the Word for the Divine Nature, the assumed man for the human nature and vice versa. But most tellingly, this passage employs the analogy of the soul-body as a way to understand how the Word or Divine Essence does not suffer physically but metaphorically when Christ's body is scourged. It suffers out of love. The point of the analogy is to help one understand how the Word suffers in love with Christ's humanity without being affected in any way by it. There is also an implication that the two natures are functioning together within some sort of an organic unity.

Theodore's Use of Predicates

If we look upon Theodore's understanding of the one common *prosōpon* in Christ as signifying not only how Christ appears outwardly to others but how his two natures and their activities function internally as well as externally as one, we are in a clearer position to realize how Theodore's use of attributes within a sentence differs from that proposed later by the neo-Chalcedonians and how they can also overlap. Their differences and overlap can be exemplified by what became the classic touchstone for determining if one was truly orthodox: could one assert that the Word became flesh, suffered, died, and was raised from the dead or that Mary was truly the mother of God. By centering the unity of Christ's natures in the Word's divine person, Cyril and his followers were easily able to justify

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[69] This citation is found in an unedited manuscript in the Vatican Syriac Collection no. 594, fol. 69v.

the two statements linguistically within a sentence. It is the Person of the Word that comes and possesses Christ's humanity. And if Mary is the mother of Jesus whose person is that of the Word, then she can be hailed as the Mother of God. But Theodore could not affirm these statements without qualification. For he understood person in a twofold operational sense where the inner unity of a person is visibly recognized by his or her way of acting in a consistent, habitual manner. His center of unity would be on the deeper level beyond where the divine and human natures are operating together. Thus if he were holding for an analogous kind of an organic unity, he would have difficulty in accepting the Word as the center of unity in Christ unless it, at the very least, implied an essential functional relationship to the humanity. So to assert as Cyril did that the Word is the *hypostasis* or "Person" of the union would have been interpreted by Theodore in two ways. First, a hypostatic union would mean for him that Christ's human nature has been changed into the divine; and secondly, that one has omitted the essential relationship that the Word always has with the humanity. Rather for Theodore it is the *prosōpon* common to the two natures that must be used as the true subject of a sentence. The concrete terms expressing this are: "Christ," "the assuming Word," "the assumed man," and "I."

In other words, Theodore's idea of Christ's person always connoted that his two natures were acting in tandem. He could not assert unequivocally that the Word suffered or that Mary is the mother of God. Rather he had to state that the assumed man suffered or that Mary is the mother of Christ's humanity in which the Word dwells. Whether Theodore was consciously aware of his understanding of person is incidental, but he was in point of fact distinguishing whether the Word was being used as the subject of a sentence in an absolute sense or a relative one or, to put it another way, whether the disputed sentence is true as stated or true only insofar as it goes but requiring some qualification in order to be complete. The Monophysites, for example, understood in an absolute sense the statement that the Word suffered. They conceded that one could conceive of two abstract natures before the union but there is in fact only one concrete divine nature afterwards.

The neo-Chalcedonians, on the other hand, understood the statement about the Word in a relative sense. They saw the necessity of either adding the crucial distinction that the Word suffered "according to his human nature" or simply stating that it was the Word Incarnate who suffered. But they do not proceed to explain what this meant concretely. For how does the Word relate to and operate in, with, and through his humanity? They recognized that the unity of the two natures cannot prescind from but must include the presence of an operational or functional relationship, if not between the complete natures in Christ, at least between the person of the

Word and Christ's humanity. It is on this operational level we discern where Theodore realized that the mystery of the Incarnation had to be encountered and preserved.

Theodore was always sensitive to the need to express the unity of the divine and human natures as one subject. Divine and human attributes can be predicated to the one subject, provided the attribute is not one proper to the Word's divine nature as such; for example, Christ cannot be said to have been eternally generated by the Father because the term "Christ" also includes his human nature that has been created in time. Theodore's way of predication makes sense, if the subject of a sentence is looked upon as being an organic unity. For instance, my mind may be daydreaming and my toe broken. But I cannot say my toe is daydreaming or my head is broken. I can only affirm that I am daydreaming and feel the pain of a broken toe because I am a living organic whole. So too Theodore is mindful of what can be asserted of the Word and of the assumed man. Theodore cannot directly attribute suffering to the Word but to Christ's human nature or to a subject that includes both natures. But as we noted when we treated Nemesius and Narsai, the Word can be said to suffer sympathetically in love for its copartner. So too Christ's humanity can be said to share in the Word's name, power, glory, and right to receive worship. For the two natures are united and share analogously in the way the soul and body interact in a living human being.

We can discover a further insight into how Theodore conceived of Christ's *prosōpon* acting as the visible image of God by comparing it to the visible aspects of the Eucharist. Those holding for the real presence of Christ under the consecrated species of bread and wine believe that the external appearances of the bread and wine are really related and united to Christ's body and blood. Theodore has stated it thus: "We have been joined in communion to these holy mysteries and have been instructed about this by our head, Christ our Lord whose body we believe we are and from whom we have communion with the divine nature."[70] Theodore believes that the Eucharist in its visible symbolic form not only points to the hidden reality of Christ but possesses a real transforming power that both unites one to the body of Christ and because of his union with the Word enables the recipient of the Eucharist to be in communion with the divine nature or God. But since Theodore is opposed to any form of divinization, which he saw to be an absorption into the divine nature, he did not un-

[70] Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Les homélies catéchétiques de Théodore de Mopsueste*, trans. Raymond Tonneau with Robert Devreese (Vatican City: Vaticana, 1949) 555; hereafter cited as Tonneau. For a complete listing of Theodore's references to the Eucharist, see Abramowski, "Zur Theologie des Theodor von Mopsuestia" 282–83 and, for a through study of his understanding of the meaning of "participation," ibid. 283–91.

derstand the communion effected by the Eucharist to be a sharing in God's nature but a sharing in God's immortal and immutable life in a future state which Christ now enjoys. We see this idea expressed in a passage where Theodore speaks of the transforming power of baptism: ". . . the one who descends there is formed anew by the grace of the Holy Spirit and born anew into another superior human nature."[71] One's nature is not divinized but united in a transforming way to the body of Christ. Then because Christ's humanity is bound to the Word in a similar way to how the human body is linked to its soul in an organic unity, it too can share in the immortal and immutable life that belongs to those united to the Word.

Could Christ's Human Will Freely Sin?

The issues of Christ's unity of natures and wills lead to the perplexing christological question as to how free was Christ's humanity: could the assumed man be tempted to sin? Theodore would have been nonplussed by the idea that Christ's hypostatic union and his access to the beatific vision from the time of his conception removed any possibility of his sinning. Theodore was so committed to Christ's humanity being free and subject to true human development that he would discern an inherent contradiction between the two positions. He could admit that a person may commit oneself freely to do what has been commanded as good but be baffled by the conclusion of some[72] that the choice between good and evil was not a real option open to Christ's free human will. He would doubtless rejoin that if there was no true option, Christ's human will would be necessitated. For Theodore, Christ being faced with and freely resisting a temptation would be a more striking example of Christ's total and loving commitment to his Father's will. Moreover because of his emphasis upon the necessity of using one's free will—together with God's grace—to attain salvation, Theodore insisted that Christ had to be truly free if he was going to be not only the mediator but the exemplar of salvation. To fulfill these roles, he had to have encountered what all others experienced and are experiencing in their moral struggles during their earthly existence.

CONCLUSION

To grasp Theodore's christological thought is like trying to put together a picture puzzle with large sections missing. I have attempted to do so first

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[71] Tonneau, 424.

[72] M. Anastos maintains this view in his "The Immutability of Christ and Justinian's Condemnation of Theodore of Mopsuestia," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 6 (1951) 125–60, especially 135. Anastos believes that Theodore's willingness to allow that the assumed man could sin up until the time of the Resurrection to be contrary to the anathema of Nicea condemning those who affirm that the Son of God is mutable or changeable.

by sorting out how Theodore interpreted the scriptural references to Adam and Christ as the images of God. Influenced, so it seems, by Colossians, Theodore regarded Adam as a type foreshadowing Christ as the perfect archetypal image. Both indeed reveal God and his will to the rest of creation, exercise divine power, are the way that other spiritual and material creatures can glorify God, and are by their human nature the binding agent uniting all created beings among themselves and with God. I then proceeded to clarify what Theodore meant by Christ's common *prosōpon* and afterwards to establish how *prosōpon* and image were interchangeable, even though there is no extant fragment that explicitly states this. If this is granted, this means that *prosōpon,* besides revealing the presence of the Word and expressing why Christ's humanity shares in the divine name, power and glory, can also be interpreted as playing a binding role in salvation. Christ's human nature like Adam's is not only organically united to other created beings and recapitulates them as the head does to the members of its body, but also because of his humanity's union with the Word, Christ provides the possibility to enter into communion with God. This is an outlook that native Americans and Taoists can readily relate to in their experiences of being bonded to nature and through this to a universal sacred power. But it is a difficult viewpoint for those living within our contemporary cultural mentality to grasp and accept as real.

I then explored whether Theodore conceived of the union between Christ's humanity and the Word as a graced union between a mere man and the divine. Theodore's position is very confusing because he excluded both a substantial and an accidental kind of unity, opting instead for an "indwelling of good pleasure." To his adversaries, this indicated, contrary to what he said, an accidental moral unity. I sought to explain Theodore's understanding of the "indwelling of good pleasure" as needing to be interpreted in light of his view of Christ as the perfect image of God. He considered "image" as signifying the way that the angelic and the material worlds are organically bonded to humans and to Christ as the one "in whom all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17). It is such a context that one can understand the point of Theodore's analogy liking the union of Christ's divine and human natures to the union of the human soul and the body. They both exist and operate within an unity where just as the soul vitalizes its body component without being affected by it—though it can be said to suffer sympathetically in love for its copartner—so too the Word can be conceived as dwelling within Christ's humanity empowering it to act without his transcendent nature being compromised—though he can be said to suffer sympathetically in love for his humanity. Thus Theodore may not have been able to assert a substantial union between Christ's natures. But he does come close to this when he regarded them as functioning together in what he seems to have viewed as analogously similar to the

organic unity between the human soul and body and between the angelic and material worlds and human beings.

If this assessment is true, one can see then from an Orthodox and Roman Catholic perspective that Theodore's christological problem was not primarily over a unity of Christ's natures but with the profound mystery of how a finite nature could be divinized in a way that it can maintain its human identity and not be absorbed into the divine. It is ironic that Theodore who advocated a literal, historical interpretation of Scripture could not accept at face value the Johannine and creedal statements about the Word having become flesh. While an argument can be raised here that Theodore's rationalistic bent appears to be stronger than his emphasis on a literal interpretation, there is more likely a deeper hermeneutical reason. It can be exemplified in the different ways that a Scholastic and a Hebrew scholar would interpret Exodus 3:14—the celebrated passage where Moses sought to know Yahweh's name. Some Scholastic teachers have interpreted the reply "I am who am" in a metaphysical sense as revealing God to be pure existence. Such a reading would be wholly foreign, however, to the Hebrew mentality, especially when the Hebrew text is translated as "I shall be what I shall be." This latter rendition can be construed as evasive, signifying that Yahweh transcends every name and evades being grasped in any human categories. But from the context it may also connote that one can know God by what He has done and continues to do for his people. It is as if Yahweh were saying to Moses: "It is history that will reveal me."[73] No text exists in which Theodore has expressed such an interpretation. But it is clear from those we do have that Theodore either is unaware of or eschews an essentialistic definition of who Christ is in favor of the scriptural approach where Christ is described as acting in divine and human ways. In other words, Theodore seems to be dependent upon the mentality he sensed present in the Scriptures, especially the Synoptics and Paul. For him, a person can be historically known from what he or she says and does. So too the Word can be known in and through Christ's visible *prosōpon.* For Christ is the perfect image of God.

Granted the scriptural and theological framework out of which Theodore was working, his language can certainly be open to the critical analyses and interpretations to which his opponents have subjected it. But the deeper and much more important issue is, what was he trying to accomplish? Or to put it more concretely as his adversaries have done, did

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[73] I am following here Thierry Maertens and Jean Frisque's interpretation as found in *Guide For the Christian Assembly* 6 (Notre Dame: Fides, 1973) 171. See also Catherine Mowry LaCugna, "The Trinitarian Mystery of God," in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, ed. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin, 1.156.

Theodore look upon his "assumed man" as an individual separate from the Word? As doubtlessly all have realized at some time in life, we do not always really mean what we say, especially when someone like Socrates can carefully and systematically lead us step by step to a conclusion opposed to what we originally intended. Our use of language is often inexact, especially when referring to Christ. For instance, when orthodox Christians speak of Jesus sleeping in the boat while a storm strikes fear in his disciples, they do not intend to assert that Jesus is merely human. We believe that if the New Testament authors can utilize terms, such as Jesus and the Christ, others too ought to be granted the same freedom.

The question of how the Word operates in and through Christ's human nature can be somewhat answered by noting how a resolution was finally reached in the theological controversy that in the 16th and 17th centuries Dominicans and Jesuits waged over grace and free will.[74] They remained irreconcilably and at times bitterly opposed as to how an efficacious grace can move the human will to a free act when it encounters God. Each side could push the other logically to an extreme it did not want to go, on the Dominican side to predestination and on the Jesuit to Pelagianism. Since both sides affirmed the fact that it does happen and were ordered to remain silent as to how it happens, we may have here an example of how the present theological explanations can fail to explain the union of natures in the person of Christ beyond what Chalcedon has laid down as the acceptable parameters for the mystery. Rather than try to explain the unexplainable, higher authority was right in the dispute between the Dominicans and the Jesuits to insist on recognizing where the mystery lies and on not attempting to go beyond it. Chalcedon wisely and prudently chose to take the fundamental revealed truths contained in the Alexandrian and the Antiochian positions and combine them into one, insisting that neither the divinity nor the humanity was to be so stressed that the truth expressed on the other side was denied. Perhaps this is what John of Antioch earlier recognized when he agreed to a reunion with Cyril in A.D. 433 and as Theodoret did later when he accepted the decrees of Chalcedon. They could approve of the essentials expressed in the decrees of Ephesus and Chalcedon as the guideposts for orthodox faith.

The critical point, however, still remains, Was Theodore aware of a union deeper than the functional, perhaps organic, type that he espoused? His view of image points in that direction. Cyril accepted at face value that

[74] The controversy raged from A.D. 1582 to 1609 when the pope ordered both religious orders not to condemn the opposite opinion and to await final decision of the Holy See (which is yet to be formulated). See the articles "Congregatio de Auxiliis," "Free Will and Grace," and "Controversies on Grace" in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (San Francisco: McGraw-Hill, 1967) 4. 168–71; 6.93–94; 6.675–78 for more information.

the Word took a human nature and made it his own. The same can be said of Theodore's understanding of Christ being chosen to be the perfect image of the Word. While Christ's *prosōpon* as God's image points to the hidden nature of the Word, it is the Word who is the reality. In the relational union, therefore, that exists between the Word and his prosopic image, the pre-eminent role belongs to the Word. For He is the one who actually reveals God through his visible image, who empowers his image to perform miraculous deeds, who receives worship through his image, and who enables his image to share fully in his name, power and glory. If divine cult is shown to the humanity as the visible image apart from its union with the Word, this would be tantamount to idolatry in the mind of Theodore.

Theodore may not have made an explicit connection between his understanding of the common *prosōpon* and the image of God in his surviving works. But this needs to be assessed in the wider context of what were his overall focus and purpose. Because of his ongoing dispute with Apollinaris over the necessity of Christ's humanity having to be completely whole and free, Theodore's primary aim and concern were centered almost entirely on maintaining two objectives. First, he sought to remove any ambiguity in the statements that appeared to deny the full humanity of Christ. He could not conceive of the Word as the center of unity apart from at least an implicit reference to the Word's union with a fully safeguarded integral humanity. This is exemplified when he speaks to Mary as the Mother of God: "When they ask whether Mary was the Mother of God, let us reply that she was both; the first by nature and the second by the Word's relationship to the assumed humanity.[75] . . . It is indeed madness to say that God was born of a virgin. For this is equivalent to saying that He was born of the seed of David from the substance of the virgin."[76] Being a literal and rationally minded exegete, Theodore saw the necessity of maintaining that the Word came to dwell in a humanly generated nature and sought to avoid any implication that the Word had so absorbed his human nature that it did not function in a fully human way.

Secondly, Theodore may have been wholly preoccupied in his defense of Christ's full humanity against Apollinaris. But he was never oblivious to the Word's principal role within the incarnation. He recognized that the humanity's role in the union was secondary and vastly inferior to that of the Word. But he also insisted on the necessity for Christ's human will to be freely committed to live in conformity with God's will for salvation to be achieved. Theodore may seem to have ascribed so much freedom to Christ's human will that he appeared to be actually holding a human center of activity that belonged to an individual separate from the Word. But he

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[75] Theodore, PG 66.992.   [76] Ibid. 993.

was always careful to maintain that Christ's human will never acted apart from its union with the Word and its empowerment by the Word. Their common activity can be likened to the way that the head of the body acts in a coordinated way with its various bodily members for the good of both within a living organism. He wisely refrained from going beyond his opinion that the Word supplied the humanity its vitality and permitted it to share in his name, power and glory without his divine nature being affected and without the human nature's freedom being infringed. He doubtless realized that one could not proceed further into the underlying mystery of how a divine and a human will can both freely act in one *prosōpon.*

In brief, Theodore's Christology is in its essence a functional Christology that should be appraised as such and not refuted on the basis of who is the subsisting subject of the union. He implies that there is a subject of unity but it is recognized by the way that the two complete and real natures in Christ interact truly as one. How well his brand of "low" Christology falls within the parameters of the Chalcedonian formula and contemporary Orthodox and Roman Catholic positions is open to questioning. What is so tragic in all this is that Theodore's attempt to defend Christ's integral humanity, especially his free will, in scriptural terms led to so many deep bitter disputes that has ripped asunder the fabric of the church's unity and to a reliance upon a technical formula that sums up who Christ is but does so in terms that few can relate to so as to nourish their faith. Perhaps the best way to conclude this study is to repeat what Theodore's fellow Antiochene compatriot, Theodoret, said about this controversy:

What does it matter whether we style the holy Virgin at the same time mother of Man and Mother of God, or call her mother and servant of her offspring, with the addition that she is the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ as man, but his servant as God, and so at once avoid the term which is the pretext of calumny, and express the same opinion by another phrase? And besides this it must also be borne in mind that the former of these titles is of general use, and the latter peculiar to the Virgin; and that it is about this that all the controversy has arisen, which would to God had never been."[77]

[77] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Letter XVI to Bishop Irenaeus, *Théodoret de Cyr, Correspondance*, ed. Yvan Azéma, Sources chrétiennes 98 (Paris: Cerf, 1964) 58–59. English translation is from The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, Second Series (Reprint, Peabury, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994) 3.255–56.