

Development and Christology

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The subject of Christology more perhaps than any other theological issue is one which best illustrates the idea of doctrinal development in its inevitability, legitimacy and limitations. By confronting the world with its proclamation that in Jesus Christ the holy God and sinful man are reconciled, the church found itself compelled to think through its own faith. For faith must ever come to an understanding of itself. Thus the question pressed, 'Who precisely is this One in whom God is so evidently encountered?' Under the impetus of its own faith in its Christological gospel, the church set itself to discover the implications of it. Yet, however inevitable was such development it was not the result of some inherent principle within history; for the Christian conception of history is neither that of Hegel nor of Marx. Thus, while Christological development wears the appearance of necessity, it is still a contingent factor in the account of Christian theology. It arose mainly under pressure from enemies without the church and false interpreters within it. The emergence of critics of the church's gospel made the church consider carefully the essential content of its message: while the appearance within the church's own ranks of those who either misconceived or misconstrued the reality of Christ as the one Mediator between God and man in either one or other—or indeed both—of these relationships, virtually forced the church to put into a form of sound words its more precise understanding of the person of Christ. Added to this was the missionary programme accepted by the church which required an interpretation of its central doctrine to meet the needs of the day. Thus in its contact with a critical and unbelieving world it was vital, if its message were to be proclaimed effectively and defended adequately, that the church should uncover the deeper glories of its Christological faith. It must always be that the heralds of God should speak with reason and relevance to their time, 'For', as T. S. Eliot says:

'For last year's words belong to last year's language
And next year's words await another voice.'¹

But there are limits to such development. It is not development, but deviation, when a doctrine gets cut off from its biblical source. Consequently any Christology which is at odds with the full and final revelation in Christ is not of the authentic Christian proclamation.² This was one of the points made by Athanasius in his argument with the Arians. Referring to the so-called *Dated Creed* propounded by the Anomoean party and dedicated on 22 May AD 359 to 'the most religious and gloriously victorious Emperor Constantius Augustus' Athanasius contends that this recently *Dated Creed*, originating during the reign of the present Emperor, cannot be 'the ancient faith'.³ This does not mean, however, that one is being true to the biblical revelation by merely repeating the words of scripture. One reason for the hesitancy over the introduction of the term *homoousion* at Nicaea was the objection that it is not found in the New Testament. And the Arians made capital out of the fact that the Creed used extra-biblical concepts. Athanasius

¹ 'Little Gidding,' *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot* (1969), 194.

² Cf. Galatians 1:6f.

³ Cf. Athanasius, *de Synodis* iii; Socrates, *Hist. Eccl.*, ii. 37. 'After putting into writing what it pleased them to believe, they prefix it to the Consulate, and the month and the day of the current year; thereby to show all sensible men, that their faith dates, not from of old, but now, from the reign of Constantius' (Athanasius *ibid.*).

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writes to a friend who was troubled by their reiterated question, 'Why do the Fathers of Nicaea use terms not in Scripture, "Of the Essence", and, "One in essence"?' He replied that the Arians do indeed employ the designations 'Son' and 'Logos' which are certainly biblical; but they do not mean by them what the faith and doctrine of the church understands. So, contends Athanasius, the mere use of scriptural phrases is no guarantee of truth and no safeguard against error. To be precise as to the meaning of a biblical statement, it is often necessary to go outside the Bible itself. This was the more necessary, Athanasius argues, in the context of the discussions at Nicaea, since every scriptural phrase suggested was emptied of its true meaning by the Arian exegetes. When, for example, it was declared that the Son 'always' was Son, and 'from' God, they were 'caught whispering to each other and winking with the eyes'.⁴ They sought to explain away the real import of the declaration by quoting the usage of the words in other passages; for example, 2 Cor. 4:11—'For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus's sake'; while they contended that to say that the Son is, 'from the Father', is to say no more than that He is among the 'all things which are from God' (2 Cor. 5:18 cf. 1 Cor. 8:6). Such 'artful expressions and plausible sophisms', as Athanasius considered them to be, cannot be met by pitching quotation against quotation.

The only way to deal with such a situation is to make specific what a term intends to convey in a given context. It was for this reason that *homoousios* was introduced at Nicaea. Although an extra-biblical word it admits, says Athanasius, of no equivocation.⁵ He was therefore convinced that 'the term has a sound sense and good reasons'.⁶ Athanasius makes the further point that the Arians themselves have been unable to avoid the use of non-biblical phrases. They employ the designation 'Unoriginate' as a category for God which they have borrowed from the Greeks, not from the scriptures.⁷ Athanasius is not slow to indicate their inconsistency, as well as the absurdity into which their borrowed term lands them.⁸ Thus, while Athanasius confesses that he himself is not concerned to defend a mere word as such, he is still sure that some extra-scriptural categories can alone bring into the clear focus of developing Christological thinking what is inherent in the biblical witness at its source.

It is, then, in the context of this understanding of the inevitability, legitimacy, and limitation of doctrinal development that a true Christology operates, and within which its account must be explored. This real development can be traced within the wide sweep of history where we have demonstration of its inevitability; and in particular instances in, for example, the writings of Athanasius, Augustine, Abelard, S. T. Coleridge, Horace Bushnell, F. D. Maurice, Bonhoeffer, where we have attestation of its legitimacy. Both these contexts witness to the controlling awareness of its limitation.

The contingent reason for whatever signs of development there are in the epistolary writings of the immediate successors of the apostles was the desire to come to a clearer knowledge of the Christological faith of which their authors were heir. Looked at in a general way it may be

⁴ Athan., *de Decretis*, 20.

⁵ *ad Afros*, viii; cf. vii-ix.

⁶ *de Decretis*, 23.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 28; cf. 'And "Unoriginate" is a word of the Greeks who know not the Son'. *Ibid.*, 31. 'For if they think everything must be rejected which is not written, wherefore, when the Arian party invent such a heap of phrases not from Scripture... do not they speak against these...? And in what Scripture did they on their part find "unoriginate" and "the term essence"..'?' (*de Synodis*, 36).

⁸ Cf. *de Decretis*, 28; *Orat. c. Arinos*, i. 28.

admitted that the Christology of the Apostolic Fathers is, as Kelly says, 'meagre and tantalizingly inconclusive'.⁹ At the same time the one outstanding feature of the post-apostolic piety is its Christo-centricity. The key-note of all they believed about Christ is struck, according to Harnack, in the opening words of the spurious Second Letter of Clement: 'Brethren,

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it is fitting that you should think of Jesus Christ as of God—as the Judge of the living and the dead'.

It does not fall within our purpose to review the statements regarding the person of Christ of the several post-apostolic writers: that is an oft repeated story. But on the whole, due to the particular circumstances in which they found themselves and to the special need of the time, they are content, for the most part, merely to quote the words of scripture. Yet we have in Ignatius the beginnings of a Christological development arising out of his reflection on his own faith and his desire to fortify the faith of the churches to which he wrote. His seven authentic letters are marked by a deep devotion and a high conception of Christ. The mystic strain throughout arises from the way he blends the Pauline doctrine of union with Christ with the Johannine idea of life in Christ. Ottley considers his letters to be akin to St Paul's later writings, especially to his Ephesian epistle.¹⁰ Mackintosh, on the other hand, says 'His ideas are Johannine in the main'.¹¹ Perhaps in these two assessments we have the clue to the general christology of Ignatius's writings. For, as Johannes Quasten remarks, 'All in all, the foundation of Ignatius's Christology is St. Paul but influenced by the theology of St. John'.¹² The apostle to the Gentiles had an exalted view of Christ's person and John a profound belief in Christ's humanity. It is precisely these two ideas which are prominent in Ignatius.

Christ is truly God, he affirms; and faith in God and Christ are for Ignatius one and the same. Christ's blood and passion are God's; while all that Ignatius knows of God and receives from God are through Christ. The whole content of his thought is drawn from Christ: and in final analysis his concept of God and of Christ merge in one. On the other hand, Ignatius had a profound belief in Christ's humanity. He starts from the historic figure of the gospels and emphasises each stage in Christ's human existence. He descended from David and was of Mary: He was truly born and did eat and drink.¹³ Nor was His human nature shed by His rising from the dead, for 'after His resurrection He did eat and drink with them (His disciples) as being possessed of flesh, although spiritually He was united to the Father'.¹⁴ Again and again Ignatius attacks docetism: and he uses the word 'truly', or better perhaps rendered, 'genuinely' (ἀληθῶς) as a sort of watchword against those who were tempted to regard Christ's human life as in any sense unreal. For Ignatius the Incarnation was no mere entry of a pre-existent Spirit into human flesh as the Shepherd of Hermas seemed to conceive of Him.¹⁵ It is the unbelievers, declares Ignatius, who say that His sufferings were make-believe.¹⁶ For

⁹ J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (1958), 95

¹⁰ *The Doctrine of the Incarnation*, 3 (1904), 161.

¹¹ *The Person of Christ* (1912), 13.

¹² *Patrology* (1949), i. 66; cf. 'Once again we hear Paul and John speaking' (Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* (1968), 103).

¹³ Ignatius, *To the Trallians*, ix

¹⁴ *To the Smyrnaeans*, iii.

¹⁵ Cf. Hermas, *Similitudes* V, ch. vi; see, xi. ch. i.

¹⁶ Ignatius, *To the Trallians*, x.

Ignatius the coming of God in flesh is the central reality of the gospel: 'For our God Jesus Christ was according to the appointment (economy, dispensation) of God conceived in the womb of Mary of the seed of David, but by the Holy Ghost'.¹⁷

Two facts follow from Ignatius's presentation of the person of Christ as at once both human and divine. First, he focuses attention on the idea of two forms of existence in the one Christ. He glories indeed in the paradox as the very ground of man's salvation. 'There is one physician', he tells the Ephesians, 'both of flesh and of spirit; both made and not made; God existing in flesh, true life in death: both of Mary and of God; first passible and then impassible—Jesus Christ our Lord'.¹⁸ Ignatius is, then, the first to state explicitly the conception of Christ's person as a duality of two natures. For He is both 'Son of God and Son of

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man'.¹⁹ He therefore desires the confession that 'Jesus Christ, our perpetual Life, united flesh with spirit'.²⁰ But with that duality there goes a fundamental unity; for He is thus God's 'one temple', and 'one altar'.²¹

The other fact is, Ignatius indicates that a unique relation subsists between God and Christ. In Christ, the Son, the things wrought out in the primeval silence were made manifest.²² But Christ is not the mere revelation of the divine *nous*. In Him God's saving will is made clear, not in words only, but in the whole act and attitude of His work in the flesh. In one place Ignatius uses the term 'Logos' 'There is one God who has manifested Himself in Jesus Christ His Son who is His eternal Word (*Logos*)'.²³ But it may be too much to find in this one reference, as Ottley does, the germ of the Logos-doctrine of the Apologists and the antinomy which they endeavoured to solve.

As we pass from the letters of the Apostolic Fathers to the literature of the Greek Apologists we become immediately aware of a change of purpose and a contrast in method. The age of testimony has now given place to the age of testing. The time has come for a more exact formulation of the Christian message in face of pagan criticism and cynicism. Some specific interpretation was required for the facts of the gospel. An effort had to be made to state and co-ordinate the principles which underlay the Christian message. Thus with the Apologists of the second century we have the starting-pad from which the whole Christological enterprise was launched. With them we mark the beginnings of Christological dogma.

And the need for such an apologetic statement of Christology was pressing. There were a number of men eminent in their day to whom the Christian proclamation appeared absurd. Of such was Lucian of Samosata who satirized believers for their attitude of mutual love and contempt of death. The orator, Fronto of Cirta, and the Platonist, Celsus, took special delight in ridiculing the gospel.

¹⁷ *To the Ephesians*, xviii.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, vii; This passage is quoted by Athanasius in his *de Synodis*, iii, 47.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, xx; cf. xviii.

²⁰ *To the Magnesians*, i, 2.

²¹ *Ibid.*, vii, 2.

²² *Ibid.*, viii, 2; *To the Ephesians*, xix.

²³ *Ibid.*, viii.

Two main purposes then dominated the activity of these Apologists. They had first of all to unmask the absurdities of paganism by showing that the Christian faith holds the key to the riddle of the universe. 'In the theology of the Apologists', observes Harnack, 'Christianity as the religious enlightenment directly emanating from God Himself, is most sharply contrasted with all polytheism, natural religion, and ceremonial'.²⁴ Then, in the second place, they sought to present Christianity to the cultured world of their day as the ultimate philosophy, and to convince the outsider that the gospel was the highest wisdom and the absolute truth. For the Apologists Christianity came as the last word on ultimate issues just because it held the full and final revelation of God in the appearance in incarnate form of the Divine Reason, or Logos, in Christ.

In their efforts to formulate and demonstrate the essential truths of the gospel the Greek Apologists are rightly regarded as the first Christian theologians. Not of course that they set forth a full compendium of Christian truth; they were, after all, primarily Christian apologists seeking to set forth the gospel in a way which they believed would have contemporary appeal. Unlike the Apostolic Fathers whose words were directed to the converted who needed edification and counsel, theirs were directed to the philosophically minded pagan who had to be convinced that Christianity is true. They thus took up the weapons that paganism sought to use against them and cut off its head with its own sword. Yet they were no mere

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Hellenizers in Christian garb. It is rather more correct to 'speak therefore of a Christianization of Hellenism but hardly of a Hellenization of Christianity, particularly if we attempt to appreciate as a whole the intellectual achievement of the Apologists'.²⁵

Much of the Christological affirmations of the earlier church writers presuppose the teaching of Ebionism and Gnosticism. Christianity came with its declaration of Christ as 'Son of God' to a people fanatical for their belief in one God: and at the same time, it was preached among those to whom the Greek idea of 'sons of God' was not unknown. Hence, on the one hand, arose in Ebionism 'the tendency to look on the transcendence of Christ exclusively in the light of the idea of the Messiah, thus placing Christ in the rank of the prophets and men especially endowed by God'.²⁶ Gnosticism, on the other hand, rang the changes on the reality of a transcendent Christ, but the Gnostics were unsure of a human Jesus and a relation between them. 'Sometimes the human Jesus is one of the forms in which the divine redeemer manifests himself, the earthly vehicle of the transcendent Christ, or again, Jesus and Christ are different beings, although each has soteriological functions.'²⁷

Almost instinctively the church saw the inadequacies of both Ebionism and Gnosticism. And against that background, but with Gnosticism providing the larger element, the church's Christology developed; but almost by way of opposition. And in the ensuing conflict the church discovered its real strength. Its doctrine of God; of sin, not as the result of any necessity of nature, but as an effect of a moral fall; of a real incarnation; and of a God-man whose presence can be vindicated as an historical reality, proved themselves too strong to be swept away. It was then at this period, as a consequence of its clash with Ebionism and Gnosticism, that the church was compelled to draw out the implications of its Christological

²⁴ *History of Dogma* (1863), ii, 170, 171.

²⁵ Quasten, *Patrology*, i, 187, 188.

²⁶ Grillmeier, *op. cit.*, 90.

²⁷ R. McL. Wilson, *The Gnostic Problem* (1958), 218.

faith. And viewed in the light of the results, 'hardly any one', contends Dorner, 'could wish that the church might have escaped the Gnostic storm'.²⁸

There is one fundamental fact which emerged from the conflict between those who believed themselves to be defending the essential Christian faith on the one hand, and the two contrary views of Ebionism and Gnosticism on the other. While these latter two stood opposed to each other each emphasised in its own distorted way an essential element in the Christian proclamation, namely, that a solely human Jesus, on the one hand, or, a merely divine Christ, on the other, is not the Jesus Christ of authentic Christian faith. Ebionism indeed asserted a genuine church truth that however He differed from the rest of men Jesus arose out of humanity. Gnosticism stands as a witness to the necessity of a Christ possessing an essential divine nature. In this way Ebionism and Gnosticism are to be taken as 'proofs mutually supplementing each other, they are the last, and, as opponents, the indubitable credible witnesses for primitive Christianity, attesting that, in its representation of Christ, the higher as well as the human side was set forth. They are, further, in the same way, witnesses against each other; for they reciprocally accuse of omitting an essential part of Christianity. In fine, as has been said, each witnesses against itself; for each at the end of the Epoch, assumes that very thing of which at the commencement it had demanded the rejection'.²⁹

It fell to Irenaeus and Tertullian to concern themselves with the danger they believed threatened the church from Gnosticism. With Irenaeus we come to the first important theologian of the second century, and with him the first definite

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attempt to present Christianity in dogmatic form.³⁰ 'In Christology his approach was conditioned negatively by his opposition to Gnosticism and Docetism, positively by his own tremendous vision of Christ as the Second Adam'.³¹ Irenaeus seeks to overcome the gnostic dualism which sharply separated the heavenly 'Christ' from the human 'Jesus'. The Word became flesh in very truth: there was no mere temporary union of an aeon with a man. 'For Christ did not at that time descend upon Jesus neither was Christ one and Jesus another: but the Word—who is the Saviour of all and the Ruler of the earth who is Jesus... did also take upon Him flesh...'.³² Here we have the central theme of Irenaeus's Christology. Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man.³³ And He is no less God than the Father, for 'He who is born of God is God'—'and the Father is God and the Son is God'.³⁴ Nonetheless the incarnation was a real taking of human nature. It is the gnostic error to maintain that Christ came 'through' the Virgin Mother, but 'took nothing from her'.³⁵ The purpose of His becoming flesh was that He

²⁸ J.A. Dorner, *The History of Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ* (1861), 1, 1, 254.

²⁹ Dorner, *op. cit.*, 252.

³⁰ Cf. Hans von Campenhausen, *The Fathers of the Greek Church* (1963), 22; John Lawson, *The Biblical Theology of Saint Irenaeus* (1948), 23.

³¹ Kelly, *op. cit.*, 147.

³² Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, iii, 9, 3.

³³ *Ibid.*, iii, 16, 1.

³⁴ *Proof of Apostolic Preaching* (Eng. tr. Joseph P. Smith, 1952), 47.

³⁵ *Adv. Haer.*, iii, 22, 1; 'For if He did not receive the substance of flesh from a human being, He neither was made man nor the Son of Man...' (*ibid.*).

should 'recapitulate' human life by summing it up anew in Himself in order to restore it and bring it back to its original.³⁶

Tertullian's contribution to the development of Christology can hardly be exaggerated.³⁷ Tertullian makes much of the actuality of the incarnation as a veritable becoming flesh of the Son of God who 'is in His birth both God and man united'.³⁸ He speaks of Christ's 'twofold states',³⁹ 'two natures',⁴⁰ and 'two substances'.⁴¹ And while Tertullian attributes to each 'substance' its own distinctive functions,⁴² he does not set them in isolation; in fact, he may be the first to introduce the idea of the *communicato idiomatum* by leaving the impression that the attributes of one nature are taken up by the other.

With Tertullian, as Harnack declares, the character and course of Latin Christianity was already announced. He set the pace for those who were to follow him; and the later developments in Christology turn back to him for not a little of its teaching and terminology.

The heresies of Ebionism and Gnosticism which agitated the theological thought of the late second century continued into the third, when, under the new term Monarchianism, the two modes of thought reappeared to give rise to the controversies which were the main feature of the third century, and the cause of further development in Christological understanding.

The declaration that God is One and a Unity is of course a fundamental doctrine of Christianity as heir of the ethical monotheism of Judaism. But the question was posed, How is the concept of God as a single Divine Monarchia to be harmonized with the idea of Christ's divineness which was evidently an integral factor in the Christian proclamation? The answers returned by some put them outside the main stream of the church's developing Christological understanding. Yet the answers reflected the basic interest of their advocates. Where the theological concern was the stronger and the intention was to safeguard the sole Monarchia of God the tendency was to exalt the divine unity at the expense of Christ's essential deity. Christ was thus conceived of as the vehicle of a divine action: a special 'dynamism' of the One Monarchia had come to reside in the man Jesus who was accordingly accepted Son of God by adoption and grace. This view which goes by the name of Dynamistic Monarchianism, reached its refined exposition in Paul of Samosata who was condemned at the Council of Antioch in AD 269.

On the other side, where the Christological interest prevailed there was the

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³⁶ Cf. 'But if the Lord became incarnate for any other order of things, and took flesh of any other substance, He has not then summed up human nature in His own person, nor in that case can He be termed flesh' (*Adv. Haer.* v, 19, 2; cf. v, 16, 1-3; iii, 21, 10; etc.).

³⁷ Cf. Harnack, *op. cit.*, iv, 121.

³⁸ Tertullian, *Apol.* xxi.

³⁹ *Adv. Prax.*, xxvii. Cf. 'But the truth is we find that He is expressly set forth as both God and man. We see plainly the twofold states which are not confounded, but conjoined in one Person, Jesus Christ.'

⁴⁰ Tertullian refers to the two goats of the ritual of the Day of Atonement as the 'figure of the two natures of Christ'; cf. *de Carn. Christi*, iii; *Adv. Judaeos*, xiv.

⁴¹ Cf. 'The nature of the two substances displayed Him as man and God-in one respect born, in the other unborn; in one respect fleshly, in the other spiritual; in one sense weak, in the other exceedingly strong; in one sense dying, in the other living,' *de carn. Christi*, v.

⁴² Cf. 'It is not in respect of the divine substance, but in respect of the human, that we say He died,' *Adv. Prax.*, xxvii.

identification of Christ with the One Monarchia. In this case the incarnation was conceived of as another expression, or mode, of God. This type of Modalistic Monarchianism, or Sabellianism as it is otherwise known after its leading exponent Sabellius, rejected outright any idea of a hypostatic Logos, and therefore asserted that it was the Father Himself who became incarnate in Jesus, and in that state is called Son.⁴³

The decisive blow against Monarchianism was struck, according to G. P. Fisher, by the Alexandrian school through its greatest representative Origen.⁴⁴ On the one hand he staunchly maintained the eternal generation of the Son from the Father; and this side of his teaching was a definite repudiation of dynamistic Monarchianism. In order to make good his case against modalism, Origen sharply distinguished between God the Father and the generated Logos. The Father alone possesses deity *a se ipso*, of which 'fount of deity' the Son ever partakes. But Origen had however separated the Son to such an extent from the Father that he left the idea that the Son must be less than, if not indeed inferior to, the Father.⁴⁵ And although he did see the necessity of crediting to the Son a distinct hypostasis, he never succeeded in reconciling the two streams of thought with the result that they lay in uneasy juxtaposition to be called upon by either orthodoxy or heterodoxy as occasion required.

Beginning with Arius a number of teachers arose within the church itself whose views, although themselves sometimes opposed to each other, occasioned further consideration of the place of Christ in the church's faith and tradition and further construction in Christological dogma. Among these teachers the tendency was either to limit Christ solely to the earth, or lose Him altogether in the heaven: either to see Him as originating 'from below' and acquiring a little of what is 'from above', or as originating 'from above' and annexing something 'from below'. Under the leadership of Athanasius, the Cappadocian Fathers, and others of like insight, the generality of Christians were led to reject such presentations of Christ's person mainly on the score that they undermined His soteriological significance and because they could not be made to square with the total data of the Gospels' record, and the understanding of the church regarding Him from the first.

It was inevitable that the various ideas which were already present should coalesce into the view of Christ's person of which Arius (b. AD 256) became the first spokesman. There were, for example, the strong subordinationism of Origen and the teaching of Lucian of Antioch of which Arius was heir.⁴⁶ And as excuses for its appearance were the avowed desire of the Arians to uphold monotheism,⁴⁷ and to combat Sabellianism by insisting upon the being of the Son as a distinct entity from that of the Father.⁴⁸ But whatever were the creative ideas which made Arianism inevitable, it nevertheless burst upon the church with a sense of

⁴³ Cf. 'For neither do we hold Son-Father, as doth Sabellius, calling Him of one but not the same essence thus destroying the existence of the Son'. Athan., *Expositio Fidei*, 2; cf. *Orat. c. Aria.*, iv, 9; Thomus, *ad Antiochenos*, 6; Ambrose, *de Fide*, ii, 13; v, i, 8; Gregory Naziansen, *Orat.*, ii; *Defence of his Flight to Pontus*, 17; *On the Theophany* xv; Cyril of Alexandria, *Catechetical Lectures*, iv, 8; xi, 13; xvi, 4; Hilary, *de Trin.*, ii, 4; iv, 12; vi, 5, 11.

⁴⁴ *History of Christian Doctrine* (1902), 104.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Contra Celsum*, ii, 9; v, 39; *de Prin.*, i, 2, 13; on Jn. vi, 3; cf. 'the Son is not mightier than the Father but inferior to him', *Contra Celsum*, viii, 15.

⁴⁶ Cf. Theodoret, *Eccl. Hist.*, 1, 3; Arius it seems took pride in calling himself a 'Lucianist' see Epiph., *Haer.*, lxi.

⁴⁷ Cf. F. J. Bethune-Baker, *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine* (1903), 158. Arius's 'strongest interest was the maintenance of Monotheism'.

⁴⁸ Cf. Athan., *de Synodis*, xxvi; Arius's Letter to Alexandria; Athan., *de Synodis*, xvi.

novelty.⁴⁹ Setting out from a badly transcendent monotheism, Arius's Christology was vitiated from the start. For he had already assumed his conclusion, in spite of the exalted titles which he referred to Christ, that His ultimate place is within the sphere of created realities. If God alone is the only Unbegun, then the Son cannot be from eternity;⁵⁰ and if not eternal, then He must be created;⁵¹ and if created, then He must be alien to the nature of the Father,⁵² and because of this He cannot be said to be free from change or altogether sinless.⁵³ Thus, to speak of Christ the Word, as God, or even, Son of God, was to use these terms merely as 'courtesy titles'.⁵⁴ The Christ of Arius cut at the foundation of biblical theism and the Christian

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doctrine of redemption. It allowed a place to creature-worship and so compromised the basic element in the Christian doctrine of God.⁵⁵ It removed God from contact with creation so that even to the Son, God remained unknown, and in this way the possibility of a personal revelation of God was denied. The Arian Christology made unsecure the actuality of atonement and redemption. For the Christ of Arius, Himself a creature, has no stake in the ultimate nature of God and cannot unite man to Him. In truth, as Ottley observes: on the Arian theory mediation is impossible. Man is capable at best of an ethical sonship, not of receiving a communication of the Divine life. He cannot be a partaker of the Divine nature; he must be content with an independent endeavour to follow the example of Christ. Thus 'the Arians had made their problem impossible by neglecting its spiritual conditions'. The Arian Christ is a witness 'not to the love of God, but to a gulf beyond the power of almighty love to close... Revelation (on this theory) is a mockery, atonement an idle phrase, and therefore Christ is dead in vain.... No mere creature can impart the principle of sanctification which alone can re-create the creature separated from its Creator by sin'.⁵⁶ The simple fact is that the Arian Christ may be enough for the Pelagian man; but He is not enough to span the infinite abyss which man's own act of sin has brought about between the holy God and himself. For, as P. T. Forsyth reminds us, what it took a whole God to create a half God cannot redeem.

This is indeed the real issue of the Arian conflict which Athanasius, his chief protagonist, saw clearly. It was for this reason that he became the champion of the *homoousion*, firm in the conviction that a perfectly adequate redemption could only come through a perfectly adequate Saviour. To Athanasius therefore, Christ is above all the Divine Presence among men; and as such He is essentially one with the God whom He reveals. In contrast with all those who viewed salvation as an aid to man's best endeavours and consequently regarded Christ, less as the Word incarnate than as an inspired, if perfect, man, Athanasius considered salvation to consist in essential fellowship of men with God. And no inspired man could accomplish a

⁴⁹ Cf. Athanasius's remark to a friend: 'Now I wonder who was it that suggested to you so futile and novel an idea as that the Father alone wrought with His Own hand the Son alone...' (*de Decretis*, vii).

⁵⁰ At the close of a letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia Arius laments: 'We are persecuted because we say that the Son had a beginning, but that God is without beginning.' (Theodoret, *Eccl. Hist.*, 1, 4).

⁵¹ In his *Thalia* Arius wrote: 'the Son was made out of nothing'; and 'He had an origin in creation', and there was 'once when He was not', cf. Athan., *Orat. c. Aria.*, i, 5.

⁵² Cf. 'the Word (is) alien and unlike in all things to the Father's essence and property, and is therefore "not the very God"' (Athan. *Orat. c. Aria.*, 1, 6; cf. *de Synodis*, xv, xxv).

⁵³ Cf. Athan., *ibid.* v; *de Decretis*, xvi, 54.

⁵⁴ Kelly, *op. cit.*, 229.

⁵⁵ Cf. Athan., *Orat. c. Aria.*, ii, 23; iii, 64.

⁵⁶ *Op. cit.*, 310; cf. Gwatkin, *Studies in Arianism* (1898), 28.

work so Godlike. Only the Logos, Himself divine, coming in flesh to gather men into communion with God could bring to pass such a holy end.

In his two pre-Nicene tracts, as I take them to be, his *Contra Gentes* and *de Incarnatione Verbi*, Athanasius set himself to make clear that it is only Christ the Word, truly God, who can raise sinful man to the divine. In his various post-Nicene writings, in which Arianism is his main concern, he seeks to show that unless Christ is regarded as God in a literal and full sense He is but a creature: and fellowship with a creature however exalted can never bring man near to God. For in this case redemption, as union with God in virtue of union with Christ, is not possible. Thus is Athanasius concerned in his pre-Nicene writings to present Christ as the *Redeemer* Divine. Here we have a soteriology with a stake in a Christology. Against the Arians, Athanasius contends that the soteriological purpose of the gospel can be safeguarded only on the assurance that Christ is the *Divine Redeemer*: here we have a Christology with a stake in soteriology.

It was a dictum with Athanasius in his polemic against the Arians that if the Logos is not fully divine He cannot redeem. 'For what help could a creature derive from a creature that itself needs salvation?'⁵⁷ A creature, Athanasius argues, can never be saved by a creature, any more than it could be created by one. Thus if the Word is reckoned as something made there is no salvation for humanity.

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To establish that the Word is not a creature in the interests of man's salvation, is, then, Athanasius's chief endeavour: and it is this concern which conditions all his opposition to Arianism. Athanasius meets every fundamental Arian statement with an emphatic and outright denial. God was never once alone and without a Son,⁵⁸ therefore the Son is no created being;⁵⁹ consequently the Word even in His incarnate state cannot change. It is therefore Athanasius's assured conclusion that, 'He was not man, and then became God, but He was God, and then became man, and that to defy us'.⁶⁰

Although Athanasius speaks freely of the Logos as 'assuming', 'being clothed by', 'putting on', and 'bearing', flesh,⁶¹ he still desires to regard the body as a necessary factor in the Word incarnate. In his *Letter to Epictetus* he comments upon the passage in 1 Peter about Christ going in the Spirit to preach to the spirits in prison. He contends that it was not the Word that went into the tomb; it was the body which lay in Joseph's grave. 'And so it is shown to all that the body was not the Word, but the Body of the Word.'⁶² In this way he is able to assert against the Arians that it is the body qua body which is passible, the Word remaining impassible. The Word nevertheless make His own the properties of His own body: and

⁵⁷ Athan., *ad Adelphium*, Letter lx, 8.

⁵⁸ Cf. *de Decretis*, xii; *Orat. c. Aria.*, i, 23; 2, 32.

⁵⁹ Cf. 'For the Word is not created, but begotten; and a creature is not Son, but a production' (*ad Episc. Aegyp.*, xiv).

⁶⁰ *Orat. c. Aria.*, i, 29.

⁶¹ Cf. e.g. 'the Son did not become different when He assumed flesh, but remaining the same was veiled in it, putting on a body which came into existence and was made' (*Orat. c. Aria.*, ii, 8). Twice Athanasius speaks of the body as a garment (*himation* in *Orat. c. Aria.*, 1, 47, and *esthes* in ii, 8). He also says that the Logos works and speaks 'divinely through the instrument of His own body' (*Orat. c. Aria.*, iii, 15).

⁶² *ad Epictetum*, Letter lix, 6.

although the Word as such is impassible, yet He suffered as it were by association with His body.⁶³ It is the flesh that is troubled, that suffers, that dies.⁶⁴

Still Athanasius does not leave the flesh and the Logos in juxtaposition. He seeks to stress the personal unity of the Logos and flesh in the one Christ. As the approach is generally from the Divine end, Athanasius regards the flesh as taken up into the Logos and itself virtually deified. This means that the impression is given that the *communicatio idiomatum* is one way: it is, that is to say, not clearly stated that the Logos gathers up the properties of the human. Consequently in his stress on the personal unity of the 'two natures' in Christ—an expression by the way Athanasius does not use⁶⁵—the divinity is given larger scope at the expense of the human. Athanasius does however insist that the body taken by the Word was real flesh; a human reality not a 'heavenly'. This does not carry the conclusion that some have drawn that this means a foreign element has been imported into the Trinity so that we have 'a Tetrads instead of a Triad'.⁶⁶ The truth is rather, Athanasius declares, that the Word became flesh, not by reason of an addition to the Godhead, but in order that the flesh may rise again. The Word did not proceed from Mary that He might be bettered, but that He might ransom the human race.⁶⁷ By union with the Word the body benefited, not the other way round.⁶⁸ True, the flesh is part of the created world, but it has become, in the case of the incarnate Word, 'God's body'.⁶⁹ Therefore the object of Christian worship is Christ in the unity of body and Logos: 'we neither divide the body, being such, from the Word, and worship it by itself, nor when we wish to worship the Word do we set Him apart from the flesh, but knowing... that "the Word was made flesh", we recognise His as God also, after having come in the flesh'.⁷⁰

There are undoubtedly ambiguities in the way Athanasius has stated his Christology. Especially vulnerable are his seeming doceticism,⁷¹ and his failure to give to the human soul of Christ, if indeed he allowed its presence, 'theological' significance.⁷² In spite of this Athanasius was successful in his main concern that the church should continue to confess Jesus Christ as Lord in an authentic biblical sense, and thus to keep secure the necessary Divine basis for the world's existence

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⁶³ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Cf. 'For to be troubled was proper to the flesh, and to have power to lay down His life and take it again, when He will, was no property of men but of the Word's power. For man dies, not by his own power, but by necessity of nature and against his will; but the Lord, being Himself immortal, had power as God to become separate from the body as to take it again when He would' (*Orat. c. Aria.*, iii, 57).

⁶⁵ Athanasius does, of course, speak often enough of Christ as at the same time divine and human. And he accuses the Arians of not acknowledging Him as God nor believing that He has become man (Cf. *ad Adelphium*). Athanasius does speak of 'two elements' (*duo pragmata*), each with its own properties existing in union.

⁶⁶ *ad Epictetum*, Letter lx, 3.

⁶⁷ Cf. *ad Epictetum*, Letter lix, 9.

⁶⁸ Cf. 'the Son, being God, and Lord of glory, was in the Body which was ingloriously nailed and dishonoured; but the Body, while it suffered... because it was a temple of the Word, was filled full of the Godhead' (*ibid.* x.).

⁶⁹ *ad Adelphium*, Letter lx, 3.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Cf. *Orat. c. Aria.*, iii, 37, 55, 113, 114.

⁷² Cf. Athan., *Tomus ad Antioch.*, vii; Grillmeier, *op. cit.*, 196f.; Kelly, *op. cit.*, 287. 'So despite his clear exclusion of the soul as a "theological factor", we may still consider it possible that his picture of Christ knew a human soul as a "physical factor"' (Grillmeier, *op. cit.*, 216).

and man's salvation. And such, too, was the purpose enshrined in the clauses of the Nicene Creed in its repudiation of Arius.

Under the Cappadocian Fathers, Basil of Caesarea, his friend Gregory of Nazianzus and his brother Gregory of Nyssa, the Nicene terminology was made definite and the Son's place within the Godhead made secure. They took over from Athanasius 'the management of the Trinitarian cause'.⁷³ Basil was a fully convinced Nicene. Indeed he tells us that he was ostracised for being a 'Homoousiast'.⁷⁴ The main thrust of Basil's Christology was however to distinguish between the divine and human in Christ rather than to stress the unity of His person in terms of the *communicatio idiomatum*. He gave to the incarnate Word all the characteristics of human nature including that of a human soul: and for him the human soul was a 'theological factor' in the life of the incarnate Word. He regarded the flesh endowed by soul, as the proper seat of grief, weariness, and the like, exhibited by Christ in the days of His flesh. By distinguishing, as he did, between the human and divine in the person of Christ, Basil left the impression of setting each nature in juxtaposition. In fact, in his *Homily on Psalm xlv*, he makes a statement which the later Nestorius would have found satisfying: 'The flesh of Christ is "bearer of the Godhead" made holy by union with God'.

Gregory of Nazianzus's attachment to the Nicene formula can be read from his panegyric *On the Great Athanasius*.⁷⁵ And that allegiance is affirmed elsewhere: 'I never have and never can honour anything above the Nicene Faith, that of the Holy Fathers who met there to destroy the Arian heresy, but am, and ever will be of that faith', he declares.⁷⁶ Gregory gives special emphasis to the possession by the Word incarnate of a human soul. In Christ he says 'there are two natures, God and man, since there is a soul as well as a body in Him'.⁷⁷ And in often-quoted words he gives soteriological import to the human soul in Christ. If, he argues, Christ did not have a human soul then man is not fully redeemed 'For that which He has not assumed He has not healed'.⁷⁸ Gregory makes a special point of stressing the unity of Christ's person and often speaks of the human being taken up into the divine and becoming deified by commingling therewith: 'both natures are one by the combination, the Deity being made man, and the Manhood deified or however one should express it'.⁷⁹ Gregory emphasises however that this 'strange conjunction' does not involve the reduction of Christ's full human nature.⁸⁰ Gregory seems to have found inspiration in the idea of the self-emptying of the Son in His becoming man. 'O self-emptying of Christ!' he exclaims in his *Panegyric on his sister Gorgonia*.⁸¹ He sees in her suffering a pale copy of Christ's supreme act of self-renunciation. He gives soteriological significance to the kenosis by declaring that Christ assumed the poverty of flesh that we may assume the richness of His Godhead.⁸²

⁷³ Gibbon's remark that Basil 'succeeded Athanasius in the management of the Trinitarian cause' (quoted by C. N. Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture* (Galaxy Books 1957), 399), applies equally to the other Cappadocians.

⁷⁴ 'To Patrophilus bishop of Aegae,' Letter, ccxlv, 7.

⁷⁵ Cf. *On the Great Athanasius*, *Orat.*, xxi, 13; see R. R. Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus: Rhetor and Philosopher* (1969), 18f.

⁷⁶ *Second Letter to Cledonius*, cii.

⁷⁷ *To Cledonius* ci.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, cf. *The Second Oration on Easter*, 9.

⁸⁰ Cf. his two letters to Cledonius; *On the Theophany*, 13.

⁸¹ *Panegyric On his Sister Gorgonia*, *Orat.*, viii, 14.

⁸² *Panegyric on Basil*, *Orat.*, xliii, 61; cf. *On the Theophany*, 13.

More indeed than the other two Cappadocians, Gregory of Nyssa shows his indebtedness to Athanasius. He is specially concerned to affirm the eternal Godhead of the Son,⁸³ and to repudiate the charge that the idea of two natures means the existence of two Christs.⁸⁴ And to overcome the charge Gregory of Nyssa presses the unity of the two natures to such an extent that the human seems to lose something of its authentic humanness through the impact upon it of the divine. By mingling His life-giving power with our mortal nature the human is somehow interfused by the divine.⁸⁵ Gregory uses the illustration, which was to become dear to Eutyches later, in his effort to show the overwhelming and pene-

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trating power of the Godhead upon the manhood in Christ: it is like a drop of honey mingled in the ocean where 'the natural quality of this liquid does not continue in the infinity of that which overwhelms it'.⁸⁶ As a result of this 'overwhelming', 'His body is called "Lord" (Matt. xxviii. 6., cf. Jn. xx. 2, 13) on account of that inherent Godhead'.⁸⁷ Yet Gregory seems to postpone this final transformation until after His resurrection.⁸⁸

The extreme contrary views arrived at regarding the structure of Christ's person by Apollinarius and Nestorius, as respectively advocates of the Alexandrian and Antiochene approaches, led to further development in Christological doctrine. The reality and necessity of the divine nature in Christ as of one essence with the Father was assured as a result of the Arian controversy. But while the two-natures doctrine was firmly established it was given excessive emphasis by the Antiochene theologians. The school of Antioch had always insisted on Christ's true and full human nature, but it tended to destroy the concrete unity of His Person and to see Him, not as the God-man, but as a Man inspired by God. The Alexandrians, on their side, laid stress upon the divinity of the incarnate Word and the intimate unity of His person. Starting from Alexandrian presuppositions, Apollinarius attacked what he conceived to be the dualistic Christology of Antioch, and bent his whole energy against any teaching which appeared to make Christ less than fully divine, and other than one person.

Apollinarius set out to refute the view that Christ was a God-inspired man. His dominating thought was to secure the complete unity of Christ's person without lessening His deity or representing Him as an indwelt man. 'If the Lord is not incarnate,' he argues, 'He would be wisdom illuminating the heart of a man; but this is present in all men.'⁸⁹ Therefore, he declares, 'A man deriving energy from God is not God: but a body conjoined with God is God: so Christ is not a man, receiving energy from God, but a body compacted with God'.⁹⁰

Apollinarius contends that Christ's death has no atoning value if He is not essentially divine.⁹¹ He must therefore be morally unchangeable possessing a nature not open to the possibility of

⁸³ Cf. 'the Son of Very God is Very God' (*Letter to Eustathia, Ambrosia, and Basilissa*) xvii, cf. *On the Faith: Against Eunomius*, i, 34, 42; ii, 9.

⁸⁴ Cf. *Against Eunomius*, v, 5.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* Cf. By the 'indwelling of God the Word' the body which He took to Himself 'was transmuted into the dignity of Godhead' (*The Great Catechism*, xxxvii).

⁸⁶ *Against Eunomius*, v, 5.

⁸⁷ *Letter to Eustathia, Ambrosia, and Basilissa*, xviii.

⁸⁸ *Against Eunomius*, v, 5.

⁸⁹ *Apollinarius: Apodeixis Frag.*, 70.

⁹⁰ From the Anacephalaeosis appended to *Contra Diodorum*, 21.

⁹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 9, 23, 28.

sinning.⁹² To Apollinarius the Antiochene Christology was a menace to Christ's proper divinity and saving power. 'Paulinisers,' he calls them for slavishly following the Samosatene in separating Christ's person into two natures.⁹³ Apollinarius is emphatic that there are not two natures in the Word incarnate, 'one to be worshipped and one not to be worshipped'. There is but one nature in Christ.⁹⁴ Against the external union of the two natures for which the Antiochene school contended, Apollinarius argues for the absolute oneness of His being. In place then of the two-nature view of Christ's person, Apollinarius posits one new nature which he designates 'a marvellous mixture'. In Apollinarius's structure Christ's person is the result of the 'composition'⁹⁵ or, 'commingling',⁹⁶ of Logos and abridged human nature: He is a commixture of denuded humanity and Divine Word. He is indeed a *tertium quid*; 'a mean between God and man, neither wholly man nor wholly God, but a combination of God and man'.⁹⁷

Viewed in its full account there is something sensitive and suggestive about Apollinarius's Christology. It is to his credit that he sought the key to an understanding of Christ's person in His work. A divine act was needed for man's salvation and in Christ as divine person the reality of that divine act was accomplished. He may have been 'in the main', as Prestige contends, 'magnificently

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right'; and he certainly was right in his affirmation that, 'Jesus Christ was God and was doing God's work; and the fact that He did it was more important than the question how'.⁹⁸ Nevertheless even though Apollinarius seemed but to regularise and make explicit the church's own docetic tendencies his truncated manhood of Christ undercut the salvation of man for which he strove. In his Christology that very constituent of human nature which in man is intrinsically akin to God was absent. Thus by denuding Christ of the human soul or mind, Christ is neither our entire example nor our complete Saviour. It was mainly on this score that he was attacked by the Cappadocian Fathers as a result of which Apollinarius was condemned by the Council of Constantinople in AD 381.

Although Eustathius is often regarded as the first spokesman of the dualistic Christology of Antioch,⁹⁹ it is to Diodore to whom we must look as the founder of the Antiochene school.¹⁰⁰ Against the Alexandrian stress on the unity of the two natures, Diodore sought to mark the distinction of the human and divine in Christ. The Alexandrians had likened the human and divine in Christ to, 'the soul and body of a king', and contended that, 'the soul by itself is not king and the body by itself is not king'. Diodore retorts: 'the God-Logos is king before the flesh and therefore what can be said of the body and soul cannot be said of the Logos-God and the flesh'.¹⁰¹ To retain the integrity of the two natures, therefore, a clear distinction

⁹² Cf. *de Unit.*, *Frag.*, 2; *ad Julian Frag.*, 15.

⁹³ Cf. *Ep. ad Dion.*, 1.

⁹⁴ Cf. e.g. *ad Jovian*, 3; *Frag.*, 81; *ad Dion.*, i, i-ix

⁹⁵ *Ep. ad Dion.*

⁹⁶ *Contra Diodorum. Frag.*, 134, 137.

⁹⁷ *Sylog. Frag.*, 111; cf. *de Incarn.*, *Frag.*, 1, 'a new creation and a wondrous mixture: God and flesh have constituted one nature'. For almost identical words, see *Anac.*, 23; *Contra Diodorum Frag.*, 126; *Frag.*, 45.

⁹⁸ *Fathers and Heretics* (1956), 116, 117.

⁹⁹ Cf. R. V. Sellers, *Two Ancient Christologies* (1954), ch. 6.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Theodoret, *Eccl. Hist.*, ii, 19, 20; iv, 22f; v, 23f.

¹⁰¹ *Frag.*, 39 (Brière); cf. *Frag.*, 42 (Abram.).

between them, and the activities proper to both, must be made.¹⁰² Grillmeier draws attention to Diodore's use of the 'indwelling formula' as the 'Nestorian tendency' in him.¹⁰³ He conceives of the Word dwelling in the temple of flesh,¹⁰⁴ but insists that the indwelling of Logos in human flesh differs, at least in intensity, from that of the inspirational visitations of God to the prophets. As a consequence of this indwelling the vessel of flesh shares the honour due to that which it contains. In this way the two natures unite in the one worship; for as the purple robe of a monarch shares in the reverent regard for his person, so must the Son of David partake of the devotion offered to the Son of God. It was, however, by his clean-cut separation of the two natures in Christ that Diodore, as Prestige says, was already greasing the slipway down which Nestorianism was launched in the next century.¹⁰⁵

Diodore's Christological declarations were given stronger statement by Theodore of Mopsuestia.¹⁰⁶ Many attempts have been made to reduce his views to summary statement,¹⁰⁷ but his own summary can be found in his *de Baptizandos*.¹⁰⁸ Theodore regarded himself as standing within the Nicene tradition in his endeavour to give to the humanity of Jesus soteriological significance.¹⁰⁹ The work of Christ consists in restoring to human nature that which was lost by the Fall of Adam: therefore, to accomplish this end, Christ had to achieve moral perfection by the exercise of His own will. Theodore thus gives ethical import to the obedience of the Man Jesus who by His own volition 'joined Himself with an irresistible affection to goodness'. To make real the redemptive presence of God in the man Jesus, Theodore had recourse to the 'indwelling formula' as providing the key to the understanding of the Word's becoming flesh. In a comment on Ps. 45:8, he applies the term 'garment' to Christ's body in which His divinity was wrapped; and he sees Jn. 2:19, as authenticating his view of the body as a 'temple' in which Godhead dwells.¹¹⁰ But two natures, he insists, does not mean that there are Two Sons in juxtaposition.¹¹¹ So 'close' (a term which he often uses)

¹⁰² *Frag.*, 19 (Brière); *Frag.*, 42 (Abram.).

¹⁰³ *Op. cit.*, 269.

¹⁰⁴ *Frag.*, 20, 35 (Abram.).

¹⁰⁵ *Op. cit.*, 115.

¹⁰⁶ Of the multitude of his works the most important for Christological study are the recently discovered, *ad Baptizandos* (or *Commentary on the Nicene Creed*); a number of fragments, especially those of his *On the Incarnation*: these last have been preserved by Leontius of Byzantium in his treatise *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos*. A full quota of fragments can be found in H. B. Swete's *Theodore on the Minor Epistles of S. Paul*, vol. ii, Appendix A, 292f. Theodore's work, *The Commentary on the Nicene Creed* was edited by A. Mingana in 1932 (Woodbrooke Studies vol. 5). Quotations below of fragments of Theodore, *On the Incarnation* are from Swete and page numbers of Swete's Volume are added.

¹⁰⁷ For good summaries, see Bardenhewer, *Patrology*, 321; Quasten, *Patrology*, iii, 415; H. B. Swete, *Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Minor Epistles of S. Paul*, vol. i, 338, 339.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Theodore, 'The distinction between the natures does not annul the close union, nor the close union destroy the distinction between the natures, but the natures remain in their respective existence while separated, and the union remains intact, because the one who assumed is united in honour and glory with the one assumed according to the will of the one who assumed Him' (*de Bapt.*, 89, 90).

¹⁰⁹ Cf. 'Since they (i.e. the Fathers of Nicaea) took pains to teach us concerning His humanity, it is with justice that before everything else they set forth the reason for which the Divine nature humbled itself to the extent of taking upon itself the form of a servant and of its caring for our salvation. It is with justice, therefore, that our Fathers, in beginning their teaching concerning the Economy of His humanity, formed the starting-point of their discourse from this purpose: For us children of men and for our salvation. It was also fitting on their part to place the words 'for our salvation' after the words 'for us children of men', in order that they might show the aim of His coming, which was not only for the 'children of men' but also 'for their salvation'. He came down from heaven to save and to deliver from evil, by an ineffable grace, those who were lost and given up to iniquities' (*de Bapt.*, 52).

¹¹⁰ Cf. *de incarn.*, ix, *Frag.*, 1; *Contra Apollin.*, iv, *Frag.*, 2. (Swete *op. cit.*, ii, 300, 319.)

¹¹¹ Cf. *de Incarn.*, ix, *Frag.*, 1; (Swete, *op. cit.*, ii, 300).

is the union between the Divine nature and the human in Christ that we can speak of this Christ as one person.

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Theodore distinguishes between three possible modes of 'indwelling'. There is an 'essential' indwelling; but this he rejects because it suggests a localization or self-limitation of the being of God. Neither does he find satisfaction in what 'he calls an 'effectual' indwelling. For since God is omnipresent in His exercise of power any extension of His divine energy to local operation in Christ would not be sufficient to bestow on Him a special status. He therefore opts for the third, the 'moral' indwelling. In elucidation of this he takes Lev. 26:12 as his point of departure. Evidently God does not indwell all men indiscriminately. Some however are accorded this special favour; theirs is an indwelling by reason of the divine approval. But there are some, perhaps only One, who merit an affinity of God closer still. Such a union of the Logos with flesh in Christ is indeed 'unique'. And his usual word to describe this is *prosopon*. 'The mode of the natures according to good pleasure effects by reason of identity, one will, energy, authority, majesty, lordship, power between them which nothing can remove, there existing, and being shown, one *prosopon* between them in accordance with this union'.¹¹² In his recently discovered work, *Contra Eunomium*, Theodore elaborates and explains what he means by 'prosopic union'.¹¹³

Whether Theodore's Christology is to be branded heretical because it is deemed to be 'Nestorian' is an issue much in debate. Norman Pittenger would exonerate him from the least taint of heresy, as he would decontaminate Nestorius himself.¹¹⁴ Kelly, too, but less emphatically, would leave orthodoxy interred with his bones. Unquestionably however the ideas which the later Nestorius was to make use of were there in him so that Prestige may be right to state that, 'All that Nestorius did was to put a razor-like dialectical edge on Theodore's tools and apply them to the cutting up of Apollinarianism'.¹¹⁵

Nestorius's extant writings¹¹⁶ make it clear that he follows Theodore and sharply divides the two natures: 'Not one nature but two are we constrained to concede to Christ', he declares.¹¹⁷ Nothing seemed more evident to Nestorius than the reality of the duality.¹¹⁸ He distinguishes between the temple and Him who sanctifies and restores it,¹¹⁹ and states that, 'the bodily frame is the temple of the divinity of God the Word'.¹²⁰ But he denies that he conceives of the 'indwelling' as a matter of degree. True, God dwells in all the saints, but it is not said that He became incarnate in any.¹²¹ Nor indeed does God indwell all men in like manner; in some He has no dwelling place at all.¹²²

¹¹² Cf. Swete, *op. cit.*, ii, 338f.

¹¹³ Cf. Grillmeier, *op. cit.*, 352f.

¹¹⁴ *The Word Incarnate* (1959), 8.

¹¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, 115.

¹¹⁶ The fragments of Nestorius's writings were collected by F. Loofs in 1925; a number of these appear in English in Appendix 1 of the *Bazaar of Heracleides*, attributed to Nestorius, and translated by G. R. Driver and Leonard Hodgson, 383-398.

¹¹⁷ Frag., 216, Loofs's Collection, 379; cf. *Bazaar* 53, 143.

¹¹⁸ Cf. *Bazaar*, 143; *Frag.*, 205b, Loofs, 218, 219.

¹¹⁹ Cf. *Frag.*, 228, Loofs, 380; *Frag.*, 306, Loofs, 329, 379.

¹²⁰ Cf. *Bazaar*, 35, 50, 56, 59, 157, 228, 237.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 56.

By separating between the human and the divine nature Nestorius is able to fulfil his avowed intention of giving reality to Christ's humanity. He therefore gives the fullest statement to a Word-man Christology. 'He became man in truth,' he declares, 'since he had according to nature all the properties of a man.'¹²³ Nestorius seeks to ascribe saving purpose to the assumption by the Word of total human nature. Only one who sinned not, nor transgressed the commandment of God, could suffer and die. 'For this reason also it was needful for the whole man, for the purpose of the Incarnation of God the Word, being completed in body and in soul, to comport himself in the nature of men and to observe the obedience and the moral life of human nature.'¹²⁴ All those human things which men are ashamed to predicate of Him, the Evangelists had no inhibitions in crediting to Him.¹²⁵ Thus did He show weariness, joy, surprise, ignorance, suffering: He who was born of a Virgin, grew to manhood: He 'gradually advanced' until He came to maturity as God's special Man.

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Nestorius denied, however, that he sets the two natures 'far apart'. He holds rather to a 'conjunction', but not to a 'confusion', of the two natures.¹²⁶ He therefore repudiates the suggestion that he maintains the existence of Two Sons—'Our Lord Christ', he writes, 'who is double in His divinity and humanity is one Son by adhesion.... The Son of God is double in His natures: God and man'.¹²⁷ Almost to the point of weariness however he reiterates his disapproval of the unity of the two natures construed in terms of a 'natural'¹²⁸ or, 'hypostatic' union.¹²⁹ He proposes instead, what Vine calls a 'syntactic' and 'voluntary' union.¹³⁰ The adjective 'syntactic', Vine thinks, marks the difference between what Nestorius intends and that connoted by the terms 'natural' and 'ontic'. Yet it is a 'voluntary' union because, so to speak, the reciprocity is not necessarily inherent. It is a union consequent upon mutual love, adoption, and acknowledgement.¹³¹

Yet it is a union which existed from the beginning. However much it may be spoken of as 'little by little' this must not be taken as suggesting that 'Christ' existed other than in the union of two natures.¹³² From the moment of conception the manhood united with the Logos. Christ is therefore 'one even in the birth of the flesh'.¹³³ By this statement Nestorius means to affirm that it is not a unity begun from birth, but a unity within the actuality of the birth. Nestorius's most frequent term to characterise the union of the two natures in Christ is 'prosopic'.¹³⁴ The union took place in the *prosopon*, he declares, not in the *ousia*. 'I make use of one *prosopon* of union as (formed) of two *ousias*, as also Divine Scripture signifies.'¹³⁵ Leonard Hodgson accepts Loofs' interpretation of what Nestorius has in mind in his use of the category 'prosopon': it means 'external undivided appearance'. Every *ousia* must have its own 'appearance', but *prosopon* is never a mere 'appearance'. A *prosopon* which is not the

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 184, 185.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹²⁶ *Frag.*, 289, Loofs, 380; *Frag.*, 314, Loofs, 196, 197.

¹²⁷ *Frag.*, 262, Loofs, 282-4, 377.

¹²⁸ *Bazaar*, 154-6; 222-5; 295-7.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 36-43; 84-6; 179.

¹³⁰ A. R. Vine, *An Approach to Christology* (1948), 165, 166

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Cf. *Bazaar*, 237, 252, 304.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹³⁴ Cf. e.g. *ibid.*, 51f., 72, 205-7; 230-3; 413f.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 153.

prosopon of an *ousia* would be sheer illusion, a figment of the imagination; and neither the manhood nor the Godhead of Christ was that.¹³⁶

There is, therefore, a *prosopon* proper to the Godhead, and a *prosopon* proper to the manhood, since each of these is a true *ousia*. But still there are not two *prosopa*, because the two, as it were, coalesce to make one external undivided appearance. In spite of his stress on the unity of the two natures, however, there is something artificial in the way it is resolved. It may well be, as Hodgson suggests, that his theory was a brilliant attempt to solve the Christological problem on the basis of a principle which rendered all solutions impossible.¹³⁷ And should it be that the Nestorian doctrine does not, after all, provide a real union between the Godhead and the manhood in Christ, nor allow for a real union between the believer and God, then, from the point of view of religion, the one mediator between God and man has not been found; while from the point of view of a philosophy of religion the universe remains an unresolved dualism between two utterly opposed essences Godhood and manhood.

To Cyril of Alexandria Nestorius's separation of the two natures in Christ was a grave and dangerous error, and much of his literary activity was consequently directed against the 'heretic of Constantinople'.¹³⁸ In Cyril's judgement Nestorius's doctrine must lead inevitably to 'two Christs'.¹³⁹ He therefore counsels none to 'divide Christ after the Economy of the Incarnation into a pair of sons'.¹⁴⁰ It becomes a virtual slogan with him, 'Do not divide',¹⁴¹ for we must 'not sever the inseverable'.¹⁴² Cyril thus seeks to accentuate the essential oneness of Christ's person. This is the burden of his book, *That Christ is One*. By taking the

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bondman's form, the incarnate Son assumed human flesh 'by an inseverable union';¹⁴³ and He made the body His own in such a way that it is not possible for them to be 'plucked asunder'.¹⁴⁴

Cyril uses a number of analogies designed to show that different natures can become united as one without loss to either. In his *Commentary on John's Gospel* he illustrates from the union of body and soul to constitute one individual.¹⁴⁵ Elsewhere he states that, 'the union of the Word with human nature may be not unaptly compared with our condition. For as the body is of other nature than the soul, yet is one man produced and said to be of both; so, too, out of the Perfect Person of God the Word, and the manhood perfect in its mood, is One Christ, the

¹³⁶ Cf. *Bazaar*, Appendix iv, 416.

¹³⁷ Cf. *Bazaar*, Appendix iv, p. 411 f.

¹³⁸ From the point of view of Christology, most important are Cyril's *Commentary on S. John*, of which a translation has been made into English (vol. i, chs. i-viii, by P. E. Pusey, 1847, and vol. ii, chapters ix-xxi, by T. Randell, 1885): also, *The five Tomes against Nestorius*; *Scholia on the Incarnation*; *Christ is One*; *Fragments against Didore of Tarsus*: Theodore of Mopsuestia, *The Synousiasts*. All these appear in one volume, *St. Cyril of Alexandria on the Incarnation against Nestorius* (translated by E. B. Pusey, 1881). The following quotations are made from this volume with the page number added.

¹³⁹ *Commentary on S. John*, i. 435; cf. on Jn. v, 69, 455.

¹⁴⁰ *On John*, i, 563; cf. on Jn. ix, 37, ii, 56; on xii, 23; ii, 147.

¹⁴¹ *Christ is One*, *Cyril against Nestorius*, 270.

¹⁴² *Contra Theodorum*, *ibid.*, 362.

¹⁴³ *Christ is One*, *ibid.*, 261.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. *Christ is One*, *ibid.*, 251; *Contra Diod.*, *Frag. 4*, *ibid.*, 322; *The Synous.*, 6, *ibid.*, 37.

¹⁴⁵ *On John* xx, 30, 31, *op. cit.*, ii, 693.

Same God and Man in the Same.¹⁴⁶ The Old Testament furnishes Cyril with the most abundant illustrations by reason of the fact that he follows the typical Alexandrian hermeneutic method of allegorising. The live coal of the altar of Isaiah's vision; the flowers of the plain and the lilies of the valley; the tabernacle in the wilderness, are all made to yield analogies of the union in the one Christ of the Godhead and the manhood.¹⁴⁷

It is along this line that Cyril considers that he has entered a corrective to Nestorius's severance of the person of Christ into two separate 'parts'. In spite however of his declarations and illustrations, Cyril, more than once, has to acknowledge that, 'the mode of union is clearly above man's understanding'.¹⁴⁸

Nestorius's response to Cyril's exposition was to pronounce him an Apollinarian; but with equal emphasis Cyril stoutly repudiated the charge. He goes so far indeed as to contend that he knows of no single person who mingles or mixes the natures!¹⁴⁹ For his own part he can proclaim his belief in Christ's full human nature,¹⁵⁰ and accord to His manhood soteriological value. It is because He is man that He raises us to divine life,¹⁵¹ and makes us partakers of the second Adam.¹⁵² Thereby is our human nature ennobled;¹⁵³ and we are freed from corruption.¹⁵⁴

Christ is then no 'God-clad man'.¹⁵⁵ He is 'unalterably and without confusion flesh'.¹⁵⁶ He is the Word of God 'embodied'.¹⁵⁷ His birth was a 'fleshly birth',¹⁵⁸ and from the womb the Word united to His own flesh.¹⁵⁹ He rose in the body,¹⁶⁰ and no 'fleshless Word ascended'.¹⁶¹ Nor must His flesh be conceived as a garment; it was authentically human,¹⁶² but of course without sin. Cyril says much about the possession by Christ of a human soul. He was not, he reiterates, 'soulless'.¹⁶³ Yet for all that, Cyril does not make theological capital out of the admission. He does not, that is, give significance to the soul of Christ; for even when he grants that Christ advanced 'little by little', it is not due to the reality of His human soul, but, rather, because 'the Word of God permitted His humanity to advance by reason of the habits of its proper nature, and willed as it were by little and little to extend the illustriousness of His own Godhead'.¹⁶⁴

¹⁴⁶ *Scholia on the Incarnation*, 8, *Cyril against Nestorius*, 193, 194; cf. 'Just as everyone knows a man is not double, although made up of body and soul, but is one of both' (*Cyril to Nestorius*, Ep., xvi).

¹⁴⁷ Cf. *Scholia on the Incarnation* 9, *Cyril against Nestorius*, 194.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Cf. *Contra Nest.*, iv, *ibid.*, 153.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. *Christ is One*, *ibid.*, 265.

¹⁵¹ *Contra Nest.*, v, *ibid.*, 177f.

¹⁵² *Contra Nest.*, iii, *ibid.*, 105.

¹⁵³ *Christ is One*, *ibid.*, 286f.

¹⁵⁴ *Scholia on the Incarnation*, 12, *ibid.*, 198; *Christ is One*, *ibid.*, 247.

¹⁵⁵ *Scholia on the Incarnation*, 14, 19f., *ibid.*, 206, 208f.; *Christ is One*, *ibid.*, 247.

¹⁵⁶ *Against the Synous.*, *ibid.*, 371; *Contra Diod.*, 17, *ibid.*, 328, 329.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. *Scholia on the Incarnation*, 3, *ad fin.*, *ibid.*, 188. The term is frequent.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. *idem.*, 6, 7, *ibid.*, 190-1.

¹⁵⁹ *Contra Diod.*, 5, *ibid.*, 359.

¹⁶⁰ *Against the Synous.*, 12, *ibid.*, 375f.

¹⁶¹ *Idem.*, 11, *ibid.*, 372f.

¹⁶² *Contra Diod.*, 25, *ibid.*, 334.

¹⁶³ Cf. *Scholia on the Incarnation*, 27, *ibid.*, 214; *Christ is One*, *ibid.*, 242; cf. *ibid.*, 248, 251; *Contra Diod.*, 3f., *ibid.*, 322f.; especially, *To Nestorius*, Ep. iv, and, *To John of Antioch*, Ep. xxxix.

¹⁶⁴ *Scholia on the Incarnation*, 13, *ibid.*, 202.

It may be a merit with Cyril that he strove with such persuasiveness to bring out the living unity of Christ's person. But the vagueness of his phrase 'one nature', as well as the stress he puts upon the unity against Nestorius, gave his language a monophysite colouring. Cyril states definitely that there 'is one nature of God the Word incarnate, worshipped with His flesh with one worship'.¹⁶⁵ Christ was God in human nature.¹⁶⁶ So real is the union between Godhead and humanity in the one Christ, 'that One is the Son and One His nature even though He be conceived of as having assumed flesh with a rational soul'.¹⁶⁷ Although He may

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be said to have a body of the same nature with our bodies, yet it is 'nevertheless august and divine and far above our measures'.¹⁶⁸ The nature of man was in Him made illustrious,¹⁶⁹ and to such an extent that He may be called the 'heavenly man'.¹⁷⁰

In spite of this virtual divinization of the human, Cyril still insists that there are two natures in the Word incarnate, which are united in the one Person of Christ, not by way of participation, but hypostatically. And so indivisible is the union that it is proper to 'transfer the human and the divine to the same person'.¹⁷¹

Cyril's emphasis upon the unity of Christ's person was a necessary corrective of Nestorius's juxtaposing of the human and divine. But having declared so often for the full humanity of Christ, he ought to have abandoned the language of monophysitism. Nevertheless, it was a supreme merit that he succeeded in transferring 'the unity in Christ into the "personal realm" while ascribing a duality to the natures. Here he has anticipated the distinction of the Council of Chalcedon and has helped to lay its theological foundations. He has a greater depth of idea just as the Antiochenes have the greater clarity of formula. The synthesis of the Church will combine the two.'¹⁷²

In his effort to maintain the unity of Christ's person Cyril had declared that there was 'one nature after the union' of the Divine and human in the incarnate Word. It was this formula which was taken up by Eutyches, after Cyril's death in 444, and pressed to an unacceptable conclusion. Compelled to answer the question 'Do you confess the existence of two natures even after the Incarnation, and that Christ is of one essence (*homoousios*) with us after the flesh?', Eutyches replied, 'I confess our Lord to have become of two natures before the union. But I confess one nature after the union.' But the resultant one nature was conceived by Eutyches as virtually divine. For, according to Eutyches, in the coming together of the divine and the human in the incarnation, the divine so overwhelmed and transformed—both these terms are Eutyches' own—the human, that the reality of the human was rendered innocuous. Eutyches uses the Cyrillian illustration of a drop of honey mingled with the ocean to state his view of Christ's human natures becoming absorbed in His deity. In the act of the Incarnation,

¹⁶⁵ *Contra Theod.*, 11, *ibid.*, 341.

¹⁶⁶ *Christ is One*, *ibid.*, 249.

¹⁶⁷ *Idem.*

¹⁶⁸ *Against the Synous.*, 4, *ibid.*, 368.

¹⁶⁹ *Scholia on the Incarnation*, 1, *ibid.*, 186.

¹⁷⁰ *Christ is One*, *ibid.*, 248; cf. Ep. xxxix.

¹⁷¹ *To Nestorius*, Ep. xvii.

¹⁷² Grillmeier, *op. cit.*, 412

then, Eutyches teaches, according to Theodoret, that 'the divine nature remains while the humanity is swallowed up by it'.¹⁷³

In his letter of appeal for support to Leo of Rome, Eutyches affirms his adhesion to the Nicene Creed, and asserts his belief in Christ's 'perfect manhood'. In view of such explicit declarations, Kelly contends that he was neither docetic nor fundamentally Apollinarian in his teaching.¹⁷⁴ But, both by the impression he gave, and, maybe, by the final logic of his statements, Eutyches seemed to call in question the reality and permanence of our Lord's human body. And it was, in fact, on this score that Leo, in his famous Tome, judged Eutyches to be in error. Leo contends for the reality of the two natures, each 'perfect and entire'—'whole in what was His, whole in what was ours'. And he sees the unity of Christ's person in terms of the *communicatio idiomatum*. He regards Christ's resurrection appearances as demonstrating that 'the properties of the divine and human nature might be acknowledged to remain in Him without causing division, and that we might in some sort know that the Word is not what flesh is, as to confess that the Son of God is both Word and flesh'. This is, he contends, what Eutyches failed to see. He dissolved Jesus by separating the human nature from Him. But to

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rob Christ of real manhood is to make void the actuality of His cross and to deny efficacy to His blood of cleansing. The Catholic faith in contrast, 'lives and advances by this faith, that in Christ Jesus we should believe neither Manhood to exist without true Godhead, nor Godhead without true Manhood'.

It almost appears that with Eutyches the whole circle of possible views concerning the structure of Christ's person is complete. For all the controversies hinge on one or other of the three main issues; firstly, the reality of the two natures; secondly, the integrity of two natures; and thirdly, the union of the two natures in the one person of the incarnate Word. We have seen how Ebionism and Docetism denied the first—the reality of the two natures: Arianism and Apollinarianism denied the integrity of the two natures: it was left to Nestorianism and Eutychianism to complete the circle and deny their proper unity.

The Council of Chalcedon sought to find the *via media* between all these conflicting polarities. Here it was proclaimed that in the one person Jesus Christ there were two natures, a human and a divine, each in its completeness and integrity. These two natures are organically and indissolubly united, so that no third nature is formed thereby. In brief, then, the doctrine hammered out at Chalcedon, under the compulsion of such heresies which robbed the person of Christ of one or other of His relationships as the one Mediator between God and man, forbids us, according to the ancient dictum, either to divide the person or to confuse the natures.

Yet the findings of Chalcedon were in a sense merely negative. Its statements may be likened to the buoys on the river, placed so as to prevent the boatman from losing depth of water and becoming grounded on either bank. It left open the ultimate Christological problem of *how* the two discrete natures can be said to coinhere in the one person of Christ. And in a sense all subsequent Christological constructions can be said to be attempts to solve this problem.

¹⁷³ *Dial.*, ii.

¹⁷⁴ *Op. cit.*, 333.

Nevertheless, the unity of Christ's person in the distinction of the natures which Chalcedon asserted, 'provides the dogmatic basis for the preservation of the divine transcendence, which must always be a feature of the Christian concept of God. But it shows the possibility of a complete immanence of God in our history, an immanence on which the biblical doctrine of the economy of salvation rests'.¹⁷⁵

For Christianity the sovereign reality of Christ is the ultimate fact and the final claim. The Christ who lived in historical factness, is God thrown on the screen of human life; and in the actual flesh of Christ has God become savingly comprehensible. For Christ is God truly and livingly present in the world in a human way. And the 'incarnation shows us quite unmistakably that there is an essential bipolarity in God's revelation of Himself to man. God is God and not man, and yet in the incarnation God has become man, this particular Man, Jesus Christ, without ceasing to be God. In Him divine nature and human nature are united, really and eternally united, in one Person. In Him the eternal Word of God has assumed human nature and existence into oneness with Himself in order thus, as truly divine and truly human, to become the final Word of God to man and the one Mediator between God and man. In other words, the incarnation shows us that God reveals Himself (God) in terms of what is not-God (man), that revelation is given to us only in terms of what it is not, in the humanity of those to whom it is given, so that from first to last we have to reckon with an essential bipolarity'.¹⁷⁶

To come to Christ is not, then, to be led away from God; it is to be brought

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nigh to Him. For 'the Godhead of Christ is a faith that grows out of the saved experience of the Cross which is not only the mark but the being of a church; so that undogmatic Christianity is foreign, false, and fatal, to any church. The deity of Christ is the necessary expression of such a church's sense of what God has done for the soul in Christ. It is the theological expression of the experience which makes Christianity the experience that when we commit ourselves in faith to Christ we enter actual communion with God'.¹⁷⁷ Christ is consequently the soul's last reality as He is the final Exegete of God. To be 'in Christ' is to be in God; we are not led to God by Him; we find God in Him.

The church cannot therefore afford to set aside what it has learned from its teachers of the past in their effort to clarify its Christological gospel. For the great creeds of the church, in the last analysis, arose out of a living awareness of God's revelation in Christ. They are attempts to put into doctrinal form that which had been discovered of the grace and truth which came in Christ in fullest measure. The creeds are the church's confession of its discovery of, and faith in, God in Christ. For this reason they have, and must ever have, a continued interest, as well as an abiding relevance. No church can afford to repudiate the historical expressions of faith in its creedal statements.

This does not mean at all that the church merely repeats a string of words which carry the mystique of tradition and the mustiness of age. For the church has always the task of communicating its unchanging gospel to the contemporary need in terms understandable and

¹⁷⁵ Grillmeier, *op. cit.*, 401.

¹⁷⁶ T. F. Torrance, 'The Place of Christology in Biblical and Dogmatic Theology', in *Essays in Christology for Karl Barth* (ed. T. H. L. Parker, 1956), 15.

¹⁷⁷ P. T. Forsyth, *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ* (1946), 29, 30.

meaningful. But it will at all times be salutary and necessary to look back to the past and through its creeds keep its anchorage in history. For in whatever categories the church finds it best to proclaim its message it will never be right for it to cut loose from the insights of Nicaea, Constantinople, and Chalcedon.

But the question arises as to what significance these Christological creeds have for subsequent days. The extreme positions here are between those who read the history of Christian doctrine in terms of fixity and those who regard it as in a state of flux. The advocates of the 'classical view', as H. E. W. Turner calls the former, seem to conceive of the Church Fathers as architects of a fixed Christology which they have passed on to the church to remain unemended, unsullied and undefiled. But those who regard history as a state of flux see no such settled statement and norm; but rather various and varying types of christology reflecting the views of different teachers and temperaments, schools and interests. But in Turner's judgement 'the classical view over-estimated the extent of doctrinal fixity in the early Church, its modern alternatives all imply too high a degree of open-ness and flexibility'.¹⁷⁸ But the truth is surely to be found in the recognition of the fixities and the acknowledgement of the flexibilities. There are certain fixed elements in the Christian tradition itself which run back to the biblical source. There are the facts themselves; the facts, that is to say, of the reality of the one eternal God and of Christ as Divine Redeemer. And it is these facts which are given doctrinal stability in the creeds. But with these fixities there go certain flexibilities which, as we have seen, account in measure for the Christological development of the early centuries.

Such flexibilities do not mean that the creeds give a picture of Christ foreign to that which the New Testament data provide. For it is without question that the declarations of Nicaea were inherent in the primitive gospel, since christology was

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at the heart of the Christian message from the first. What was stated so guardedly at Chalcedon in AD 451 was known experimentally at Corinth in AD 51. This must mean therefore, as J. M. Creed affirms, that 'An appeal to the New Testament will not be declined by a theology which claims to be Christian'.¹⁷⁹ But this appeal, as Creed goes on to urge, 'does not involve us in the impossible attempt to transfer the affirmations of Scripture whole and entire from the historical environment in which they were first written into the very different circumstances of another age, but it does mean that a Christian theologian must seek to understand, appropriate and convey afresh the essential motives which lie behind those Apostolic teachings'.¹⁸⁰

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¹⁷⁸ *The Pattern of Christian Truth* (1954), 26.

¹⁷⁹ *The Divinity of Jesus Christ* (1938, Fontana 1964), 127.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 127, 128.