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History, Truth, Holiness

*Studies in Theological Ontology
and Epistemology*

*Edited by
Daniel Mackay*



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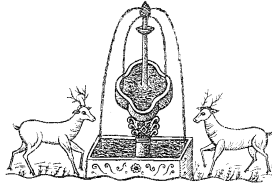
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Foreword

by Aristotle Papanikolaou

One of the most remarkable aspects of contemporary Orthodox theology is its abiding faithfulness to what constitutes the core and central axiom of the Orthodox tradition—divine-human communion. Even though Orthodox theologians disagree about many things—and those differences are becoming more manifest—they share a truly unprecedented consensus on the principle that God has created all of creation for communion with God and that this communion is a real union with God’s very life. One would be hard-pressed to find such an explicit consensus on any theological point in either Protestant or Roman Catholic theologies. In affirming that creation is destined for “deification,” Orthodox theologians bring the past wisdom of early Christian thinkers into contemporary theological discussion, even if the form of theology looks differently than patristic theology.

The most influential Orthodox theologian in Christian theology since the fall of the Christian Roman empire has unquestionably been John Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamum. Although detractors of his theology are increasing, his influence in contemporary Christian discussions of trinitarian theology, anthropology and ecclesiology is indisputable. In this incredibly insightful and poetic book, His Grace Bishop Maxim—a student of Zizioulas, Athanasius Yevtich, Christos Yannaras (to mention only the most influential)—amplifies and magnifies this relational understanding of *theosis*. He demonstrates with eloquence and persuasiveness that the importance of such an understanding of ontology is not limited to theology, but extends to questions of epistemology and the inter-disciplinary debates on human freedom.

Bishop Maxim also takes his teachers’ theology in directions in which Zizioulas, in particular, was hesitant to go. Although Zizioulas was not anti-monastic, there is not much reflection in his writings on monasticism, probably because he was nervous about its tendency toward an individualistic understanding of deification. Given the over-

emphasis in contemporary theology in the person of Vladimir Lossky on the singular, ascetical struggle toward union with God, Zizioulas offered a necessary corrective. Bishop Maxim offers a balanced approach in which the monastic understanding of holiness is interpreted as a relational, liturgical event and eschatological event. He offers a way forward beyond the opposition between the ascetical and the liturgical in showing that the ascetical struggle to holiness toward an *ekstatic* freedom is simultaneously an awareness that we are eternally loved by the God who is eternally Other, and as such, eternally unique and irreplaceable. Such holiness manifests itself in relations to others: the holy one now, like God, becomes the unique Other in whose face one is drawn toward personal freedom, toward a relational event of uniqueness and irreducibility.

In this book, the reader will find rich insights through a faithful engagement with the liturgical and patristic traditions, with contemporary thinkers, Orthodox and non-Orthodox, and in conversation with philosophy and science (particularly in the chapters “Truth and History” and “Is There a Biochemistry of Freedom?”). Bishop Maxim offers an invaluable contribution to Orthodoxy’s long tradition of thinking on divine-human communion.

Introduction: History, Truth and Holiness

Theology today is of crucial significance; by being faithful to the Fathers, it serves contemporary man. It is not, nor should it ever be, an exclusive luxury, but rather it is an *ancilla* of existential necessity: an incursion into the heart of humanity wherein compact createdness and unreachable otherworldliness meet. Theology responds to Christ's *ephapax* Incarnation and continual personal engagement in history as the Church, "for us men and for our salvation." In history Christ manifests the constancy of our existence; the Church articulates His everlasting and eternal presence with theology, not as depersonalized ideology but through personal and loving concern for the salvation of all. He meets each person within the communion of the "breaking of the bread", and each person encounters Him within the Church.

The texts collected in this book stem from a debt to contemporary man; aiming to synthesize the existential revelation of the Gospel and the Fathers, they represent man as living a permanent tension between person and nature. And is this not the Christian struggle: to say "yes" to God in an *ekstatic* and personal (rather than natural) action? In so doing do we not say "no" to nature? From out of this struggle within every beating heart emerge history, truth, and holiness. The articles herein inquire about the implications of this personal struggle: What does freedom mean? Why does love expressed through freedom mark the beginning of the advancement for which we were made? How does this *theosis*, an earnest indemnity against corruption and decay wherein God reveals man as God-like, reveal the image of the Triadic hypostases that willingly share their life, being, relation, and communion with us?

There is, however, a difference between theology serving contemporary man and theology unnecessarily burdening itself with the directionless demands of the time. The time, like nature, does not know what it wants. More to the point, unlike the experience of truth revealed in holiness, the time does not know for whom it longs. It is unaware of what

stories must be told, and a man is a story of his time. Theology must serve contemporary man, not be served by contemporary man. It attains this lofty and dutiful service through the perspicacity of a person being able to see past human nature, past the fallen nature that burdens time. By articulating that insight in language—a feat only possible if the Church refuses to pay the debt history asks of it—the Church will become a visible icon in which the time is transformed to the Eschaton, wherein nature is redeemed, and wherein the Godly image of each person is fulfilled. The time does not have an a priori need; rather, it is always incomplete, always in making. “In making” means that it is given a chance to recognize itself through the Church.

Sometimes anachronistic problems and questions arise to which the pressing issues and proposed answers of the day are insolvent. In such situations, contemporary man, subject to his time, lacks the sense to recognize them. But as long as there are thirsty spirits, the Church will be the debtor of their thirst, offering the means by which they will be satisfied. The Church cannot change the world, but this is not a deficiency for this is not her purpose. Rather, her responsibility is to reach the other, to pour oil upon the wounds of fellow persons, as modeled for us by the Good Samaritan, an image of Him who is “meek and of a humble heart” (Lk 10:34). Through the Church, Christ “pours oil and wine” over man’s tragic dead ends and the perils of the time.

And here we come to the ontological question of the Greek Fathers. Yet, some contemporary scholars do not seem to realize that the Greek Fathers propagated salvation in an existential way—which is *ontological*, of course—that speaks to every context concerned with true being. If “Hellenism” was simply about being “rational and disposed to definitions” or merely “abstract and metaphysical”, then why would it matter at all? This is the crucial question. By placing the dogma of Resurrection at the center of their concerns, these Fathers—unlike the Syriac, Arabic, Coptic, Ethiopian or Armenian Fathers—responded not to psychological, moral or other “contextual” questions (as did the abovementioned Fathers of non-Greek traditions, because ontology was not in their “blood”), but to the problem of existence. (By the way, the non-Greek Fathers were not concerned with the dogmatic aspects of the heresies of Arius, Nestorius, etc.) Even the Jews in Jesus’ time had not developed the idea of resurrec-

tion sufficiently. This work was done from as early as the 2nd century, when we encounter a developed theology of resurrection by those Fathers who were in charge of “translating” the Gospel for the Greek-Roman world. And this happened, as Florovsky explained, because salvation—having come “from the Jews” — “has been propagated to the world in Greek idiom.” And here the relevance of the Greek Fathers comes to the surface. Their epistemological tool was faith in the Resurrection from the dead, i.e., response to the existential problem of *to be* or *not to be*, because “natural” immortality was excluded. Christ himself asks his disciples an ontological question: *τίνα με λέγουσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι*, (lit. “whom me say men to be”), who do people say that I am? The preaching of the Resurrection is the nucleus for the genesis of dogma. “If Christ has not risen, your faith is a vain thing” (1 Cor. 15:16). “Christ has risen” is the message to all people, but the Greek answers: “Truly He is risen”!

Since the ontological question, i.e., the issue of true being (*τὸ ὄντως ὄν*) has been at the foundation of Western philosophy until our own time, the problem of death remains its main preoccupation. This is what the Greeks called the “ontological” question. When our Western philosophy stops using the word “to be” in its vocabulary (even giving a negative answer to ontology, as Nietzsche did) it will cease to be “Greek;” but not until then. Hence Florovsky’s assertion: “the Christian message has been forever formulated in Greek categories”. Even Post-modern thought does not pose new questions, it rather answers ontological, Greek, questions. It is no use having the right answers if you are not asking the right questions.

Orthodox theology must articulate the meaning of salvation so as to prevent it from being falsified by accommodation to the demands of culture. Inquiries into the meaning of life haunt contemporary man. This demands from the Church an existential interpretation of dogmatics and a new theological language in the face of a pluralistic culture. The question of the meaning of life resonates within us only to the extent that there is a vacancy within us for it to occupy. As Christ fills us up, it evaporates, replaced instead with a joyful need to express our union with Him to our time, addressing our anchorless culture with fundamental theological questions that challenge its stale presumptions. These inquests and their answers have immediate consequences for man’s general attitude toward the world and life. Ideally, the ques-

tion provokes a reorientation from time to history, from contemporaneity to Christ in the effort to posit an answer...

Terms of relationship such as love, otherness, freedom, and communion have neither stable nor static meaning because they always refer to a desired fullness, to a parousia of the Spirit. This expectation forms our theological engagement so that we look to our biblical faith and, even more, to the Christian Church as the experience of God as the *par excellence* personal and Holy Being. These presuppositions about God lead to anthropological implications for man who is created “in the image of the holy God”, they also lead to questions: Is there more than a mere formal correlation between “be holy, because I am holy” and person and otherness? Does one entering into communion with God become unique and special, seeing that God is really the One Who is fully and radically special as “completely other” (*ganz andere*)? As far as both theology and the experience of the Church are concerned, each man may be considered distinct and unrepeatable, but this is only applicable to him who reaches out from the anonymity of individuality towards the uniqueness of personhood. This transformation occurs through inter-personal communion, through *communio sanctorum*. Church tradition acknowledges the specialness and distinction of each Saint because of his special and unrepeatable relationship established with the Special and Unrepeatable Holy One within the liturgical experience of the Church. The notion of holiness itself contains both a personal and ethical meaning, both of which are emphasized in biblical tradition, although the former carries more weight than the latter in this volume because of the transformative possibilities implicit in the transition from ontology that is naturally conditioned to one that is hypostatically oriented.

Different meanings (or no meaning) have been attributed to “holiness”. In this book, we use it to refer to God’s personal sanctifying presence and its different manifestations in both anthropology and also in the experience of the Church. It is not perchance that the Orthodox Church denotes both the faith of the saints and the space of sanctification. It is a faith that produces holy persons, “enriches the world with saints” and insists on an ethos of holiness. It is well known that in contrast to the major natural religions, holiness in the Church is considered a free gift of God and a free accomplishment by the human person (unlike the naturalistic *mysterium*

fascinandum et tremendum) and is, furthermore, experienced as a catholic and communal act. This does not mean that holiness refers to an “objective” appraisal of a person’s degree of intellectual consciousness of the teachings of the Church (θεωρία) achieved by means of “purification” (κάθαρσις) of the body from the passions and of the soul from prejudice or ignorance. On the contrary, hagiography, especially in the early centuries, is predominantly concerned with overcoming the tragedy of existence, that is, of mortality. This is no mere coincidence, for the very existence of the Church cannot be understood outside the parameters of death and corruption. Holiness is a gift bestowed upon those who are open to the experience of communion whereby death and corruption are overcome.

The Truth is that death has been trampled down, overcome, defeated. The relevance of truth cannot be objectively understood, but it can be encountered as a Person; furthermore, that Person can be encountered through persons. The Fathers proceed from the assumption that the Truth, encountered in time, sets one free (John 8:32). They realize that our procession is one from corruption to death; however, this is the case only when truth is hypostatically, and not naturally, united to creation. Truth dwells in communion of man and God, where He is ever imparting an uncreated mode of existence to His creation. The Incarnate Truth, Christ, illumines and justifies history, affirming the human body as the center of human existence. No historical institution can monopolize truth because the faith and life of the Church and her position are *epi-
cletic*, that is, dependent on God. As a consequence of this dependency, an individual does not “possess” a given truth; rather, truth is bestowed according to the measure of one’s participation in the divine life offered in the Body of Christ through the grace of the Holy Spirit. The validation of these theological claims does not occur through observational methods because they are not susceptible to “objective” assessment since epistemology cannot “control” theological facts. In theology, God, the subject, confers knowledge of the truth out of freedom and love. The recognition that our consciousness is mainly a natural-biological product does not deny that God “touches” those existential chords in human beings that surpass all neurobiological processes.

Recent developments in the field of natural sciences shed a light on a theological-medical approach to the human being. Recognizing that

neuro-molecular biology-based medicine can say a lot about “spiritual” processes, we undertake to verify theological implications about man’s freedom through observations based on the premises of modern medicine in “Is There a Biochemistry of Freedom?” We can temper the unpleasant enslavement and conditioning suggested by the chemical and biological basis for the individuality of human “nature” by readjusting our premise to that of the ascetics, who labor in their feats of self-denial so that they might receive a personal inheritance, promised to all, and grow with ever increasing sanctity into the likeness of God. St. Maximus the Confessor and the contemporary elder Porphyrios Kapsokalibite are examples of theologians operating from such an ascetic premise. Of all human characteristics, freedom—experienced as transcendent impetus and gift—is the least submissible to objective testing precisely because it is initiated by God in love, emerges in successive moments of Truth-recognition, and is realized for salvific ends, spiritually saving those yoked to the world and subject to death and decay. Spirituality gives birth to an ethos that, in turn, produces habits and conducts that influence biological life. The personal characteristic of freedom, then, determines the very biochemical substance that some would place above both freedom and spirit. The eschaton—the true state of existence—enlightens our understanding of man’s biochemical substratum decisively. The person, experienced eschatologically, is not subject to “laws of nature” that cannot be changed. Rather, the human body as biochemical mechanism is so subject, but the eschatological person is subject to thorough epigenetic changes to the “tropos of existence.”

This multidisciplinary approach to the biochemistry of freedom has pedagogical, missiological, pastoral, bioethical and other implications. In the double jubilee of 2009, commemorating the 200th anniversary of Darwin’s birth and the 150th anniversary of the publication of *On the Origin of Species*, we reject a biochemistry of freedom and conclude that evolutionary laws do not exclude the transcendent cause, i. e. the Personal God and His intimate relationship with both the world and history. The Church offers the possibility of overcoming our fallen biochemistry through the two Holy Mysteries of Baptism and Eucharist. Baptism is humanity’s participation in the death of Christ—i. e. the dying of the old man and his “methods of knowing” and natural passions—and the new man’s entrance, through immersion, into the resurrection of the

God-man Christ. The Eucharist, on the other hand, bestows not only a foretaste, but also an earnest and advance experience of eschatological health and healing. Theologically, it could be admitted that there is a biochemistry of the natural will but not a biochemistry of freedom, for God's salvific activity and His transcendent dwelling within and among men ensure that our freedom escapes the determinations of biochemistry in a mystical, but no less experientially and realistic, way. In that sense, hopeless determinism seeking to reduce freedom to mere instinct is naught but a chimera. Orthodox theology must develop a corresponding ethos of freedom and love in order to establish a bioethical culture ruled by freedom, acknowledging that there is no real freedom without transcendence nor is there complete healing without Christ.

In order to develop the future of Orthodoxy at the beginning of the third millennium after Christ, we need to examine postmodern pluralism, since such is the cultural framework within which Orthodoxy is called to act and to which it must adapt, although, importantly, not align itself. Certain key concepts in the Orthodox theological tradition—among them Christology, Patricity, Neopatricity, and culture—can bridge the gulf between Orthodoxy and Western postmodernity. Despite all the answers, solutions, and propositions that have emerged from the inculturation of the Gospel into various historical conditions, most notably the age of the Fathers in the fourth century, the task remains difficult, although not without precedent. The solutions of the past, however, do not automatically transfer to the present, and, therefore, theological criteria are first and foremost required, as well as steadfastness in the face of severe spiritual struggle (*podvig*). Although every age has lived and experienced Christ in a way as unique as those persons encountering Him, and although every age has articulated this experience through its own means (theoretically, intellectually, politically and so forth), there have always been challenges to developing the cultural expression of this experience. The relationship between Christ and any given culture is always both dialectical and critical (“now is the judgment [*κρίσις*] of this world”, John 12:31). One could go even further and claim that every age has a legitimate need—even a right—to receive (in the same sense that the Apostle Paul uses the word) Christ—Who is the same forever—in its own way. But we must proceed cautiously for therein lurks the temptations of secu-

larization, utopianism, romanticism, sentimentalism, and aestheticism. Once appropriate criteria are established, we can discern those elements received by the Church from among cultural achievements, recuperating those Christological elements that help us to discriminate the ontological from the epistemological.

The Church, as the icon of God, is the only place where the freedom of being “other” represents sanctity in itself, for through her structure and salvific mission she expresses the freedom of otherness (*alteritas*). Holding true as it does within both Triadology and Christology, the freedom of otherness must also hold true for ecclesiology, where the same ontological principles apply. This is the reason we speak, primarily from a theological standpoint, of the synodality of both the Orthodox and Catholic Church. Orthodox and Roman Catholic concepts of conciliarity differ from each other even though they stem from the same synodal tradition. Our creative and more profound encounter is, nonetheless, beneficial and even necessary if we endeavor to fulfill sincerely the petition of the Lord’s Prayer at Gethsemane. Although the differences that exist in both general and historical interpretations of the one and same conciliar tradition are not insurmountable, overcoming them will be daunting unless expressly pursued through theological dialogue, from whence ecclesiology derives. Primacy (or *primus*) represents the *conditio sine qua non* of synodality, but the converse is true as well. Despite its relevance today (in view of preparation for the Great and Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church), our study on conciliarity is not focused on the evolution of conciliarity in the life of the Church. A close study of the Church’s historical development already reveals the message or idea essential to any genuine theology of synodality. Our primary interest is the ecclesiological elements forming this institution. Such an approach makes it easier to grasp the manner by which the fundamental ecclesiology of the synod has remained unchanged despite the adoption of new expressions of Church unity. In the light of these theological, historical and ecclesiological considerations, we must be clear about which guidelines, related to the institution of the synod, should inform the Canons of the Orthodox Church in order to ensure that fundamental concepts such as community, otherness and freedom remain essential pillars of life in the Church.

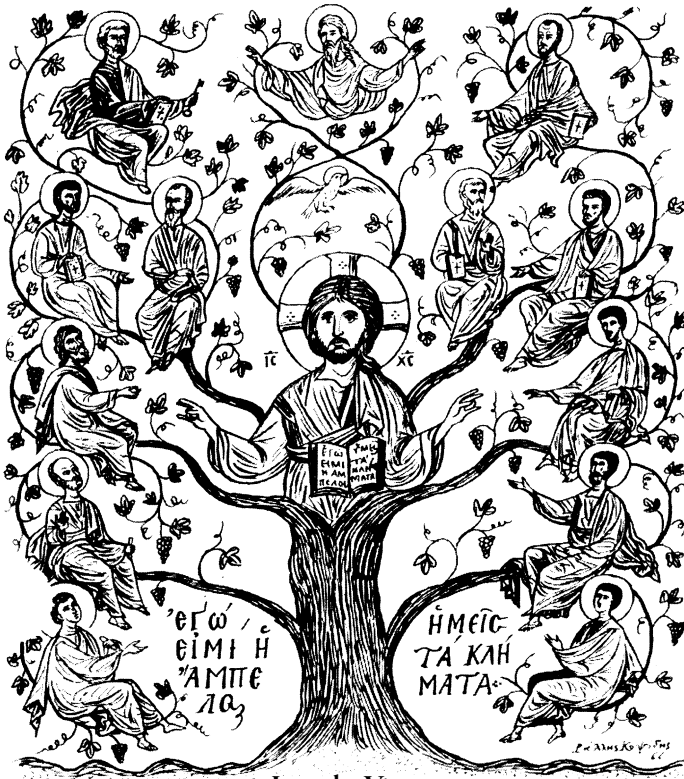
Among the most essential of Church pillars is reception of the Eucharist, the nature of which is fundamentally eschatological. In the Liturgy, we see the Truth of the Kingdom of God. The Church provides us with windows into this future kingdom in our liturgical use of icons. From the very beginning of Christianity, icons have been fundamental to theology, especially Christology. Although the means of expression derive from fallen nature, iconography refers to inexpressible Truth by encouraging personal relations with the Truth; a proper icon creates true personal relationships. That is why an icon is indivisibly linked with Love: we cannot speak about Truth without Love, and we cannot speak about iconography that does not lead us to Love, which for Orthodox Christians means the Church, wherein we meet the other in his or her true state. As St. Justin (Popovich) used to say, “in the Church we are taught to see (iconically) in every man our future brother/sister [as he or she is in] Paradise”. There, in the Eucharistic synaxis, we will see and meet God through our communion with others. So, the icon gathers (in a synaxis) the community we call the Church. The icon, then, is not only an object that we kiss and venerate, but also an eternal synaxis that exists in moments, movements, and actions during the Divine Liturgy. Outside the Church, there is not the Kingdom of God; inside the Church, all is iconic.

The identification of the selfsameness of Christ with His image leads to the assertion that Orthodoxy is the Church and not an ideology. It is a gathering of the people and, particularly, a Eucharistic gathering of living icons. This is what we must emphasize today: not an Internet—on-line—virtual illusion of communication, but the icon as the visible and true communication of the Kingdom; such must be the future of Orthodoxy because such is the future Christ promises His Church. In the Eucharist, we are taught not only to venerate and greet icons, but also the other members of the synaxis, not passing the living icons—people—by, but greeting and embracing them. So, the icon is indeed the right method of looking at the world. Only this iconic approach will save Orthodoxy from becoming a secular organization conforming to the image of the world.

The thoughts and insights in the following pages are the fruit of the author’s dialogue with the patristic “mind” of modern fathers and teach-

ers of the Church, especially George Florovsky, Metropolitan John Zizioulas, Bishop Athanasius Yevtich and Christos Yannaras. Thanks to them, an important trajectory of thinking within contemporary Orthodox theology, we hope, may continue.

I dedicate this book to Bishop Athanasius and Metropolitan John, my teachers in theology who have maintained this trajectory. From them, I was able to learn the criteria with which patristic Christology freely and creatively incarnates in space and time, transforming it, i.e. changing the mode—the *tropos*—of existence and not the reason, or *logos*, of nature. Our journey is one beyond romanticism, nationalism, and utopianism to history, truth, and holiness. I am especially grateful to Aristotle Papanikolaou for his forward and Deacon Daniel Mackay for his diligent work in editing this book.



I am the Vine,
you are the branches (John 15:5)

Holiness and Otherness

From Holiness as an Ethical Concept to Holiness as a Hypostatic Concept

The idea of personal holiness is deeply rooted in biblical faith, especially in the Christian Church. God is called and experienced as the personal and Holy Being par excellence.¹ Because the biblical God is the only foundation of true holiness, it follows that only He can state: “Be holy, because I am holy” (Lev. 11:44, 45; 1 Peter 1:16). Bearing in mind that man was created “in the image” of the *holy* God, it is not surprising that the Church has a well-developed sensitivity for the holiness of the *human* person. The idea of holiness, sanctified because of its connection to Christ and the Church, is profusely rich in both its content and inferences. For this reason, the Church understands any sin committed against the sanctity of the human person to be a sin against God Himself (regardless of intention or justification).

When we examine the idea of *holiness* within “be holy, because I am holy” before subsequent meanings are attached to it, we note an implied personal understanding of holiness apart from the more explicit ethical meaning emphasized in biblical tradition. This personal meaning, in turn, changes our understanding of anthropology and ecclesiology.

I. The biblical concept of otherness

1. The semitic word *qds*/קֹדֶשׁ = kadosh or godesh / which the Seventy translated from the Old Testament into ἅγιος² (*holy*) is related to the

¹ In 1 Sam. 6:20 *God* is identified as *Holy* within the same context. Refer to footnote 7 for further comments.

² Cf. *Ecclesia: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Church*, ed. Christopher O’Donnell, O. Carm, Minnesota, 1996, pp. 198–202. Also: *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, ed. Hastings, Mason and Pyper, Oxford, 2000.

Truth and History

Implications in Theology and Science

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us”

(John 1:14)

“If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised”

(1 Cor. 15:13)

In this presentation, we intend to succinctly examine—in light of the problem of truth—the following three basic questions concerning the ontology of the Christian faith and the resulting implications with regard to theology and science:

- a) What is truth for created beings, among whose number we belong?
- b) How can we reach an understanding of the historical Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God, Who embodies the *truth* of the created world?
- c) How do uncreated and final Truth and created and immanent human existence relate in space and time, i.e. in history? Furthermore, what is the outcome of this relationship?

This problem has been studied in the past. However, in view of the *existential (metaphysical) suppositions* of modern man and his contemporary world, it appears that a contemporary answer to this ancient¹ question, crucial to Christian thinking, has gained in significance. It is a difficult task to argue for a satisfactory case in the age of *pluralism*, where the most diverse and, more often than not, conflicting explanations and interpretations of universal realities, are respectively claimed as the truth by

¹ We use the term “ancient” because it denotes and condenses the problem, which from time immemorial has captivated men’s thought, namely, the triumph over all that is *transient* in the way of that which *truly is*. This, for instance, was the main preoccupation of ancient Greek thought, and is still today; more about this later.

dismantling history and tradition.² The vision of Church theology that we portray contrasts with the psychological and ideological approaches of modern man who has a genuine desire to re-examine everything that has become known to him by means of tradition. We emphasize the faith of the ancient Church in the Truth—Christ was not a matter of psychological and ideological conviction but was instead a revelation, an ontologically new historical *experience of the truth*, that is, the experience of God as Truth. Within this Christian perspective, every question about the truth is manifestly connected to *theology*, i.e. to the discussion about God, Who is the Truth par excellence, and is particularly discussed in Christology.³ The theology we have inherited from Church Tradition deals with the *true* life, the *whole* life in all its dimensions of catholicity,⁴ and argues that it is precisely *this* life and its foretaste that affects contemporary man and the world to which he belongs. In the text that follows, we shall attempt to examine the question about *true life* from every angle, with each one corresponding to the fundamental aspects of the Christian faith. We shall consider whether theological principles support empirical evidence. Furthermore, we shall see how the authentic life links one to God, particularly to the Persons of Christ and the Holy Spirit, by taking into consideration how patristic Christology and ecclesiology are inspired by and established through Pneumatology as the eschatological reality. Importantly, it is this reality that illumines the problem of truth in history.

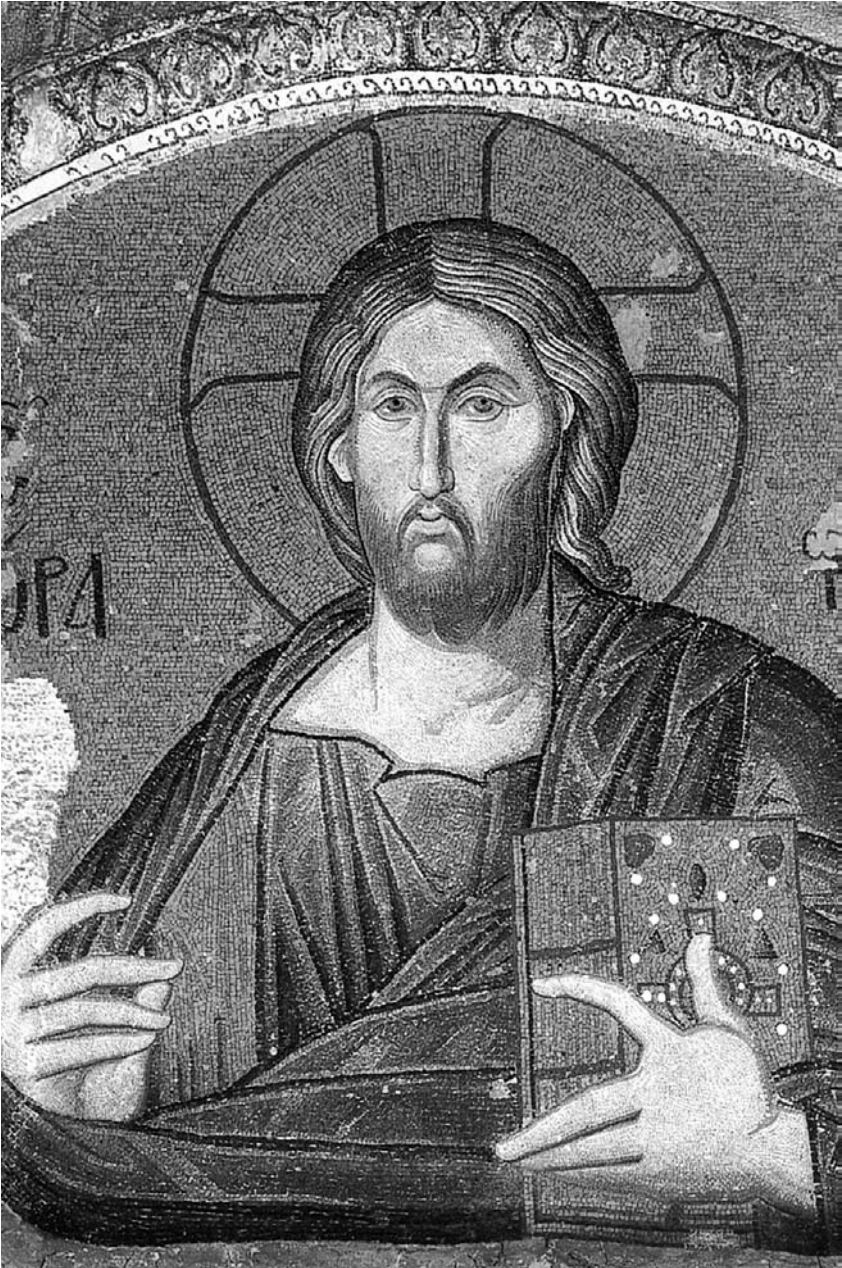
I. Truth and history

According to biblical faith, it is possible to speak about Truth from the historic Incarnation of the Son of God. From this moment, and especially from Christ's Resurrection, Hebrew tradition becomes inter-

² The worldview of a man is inevitably associated with and conditioned by his intimate preferences and surroundings. Therefore, every world view is "a description of the treasures that man loves, that he has perceived, transformed and 'appropriated'" (G. Florovsky, "The Metaphysical Premises of Utopianism," *Collected Works* 12, p. 76). Generally speaking, everything we observe has already been selected and organized by the very act of observance. See more in IV, 5–6.

³ In the Incarnate Christ "all the fullness of the Deity lives in a bodily form" (Col 2:9) and on account of this: "Christology is the sole starting point for a Christian understanding of truth" (J. Zizioulas, "Truth and Communion," *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1985), p. 67).

⁴ This entails the triumph over confessionalism and all forms of exclusiveness.



Lord Jesus Christ *The Land of the Living*
(mosaic in Chora Monastery, Constantinople, 13th century)

The Ethos of Holiness: Between Ontology and Gnosiology

Different meanings have been attributed to the word holiness, and for some people, the word has no meaning at all. In the following text we will review this word as God's *personal sanctifying presence* and its different manifestations in anthropology and in the experience of the Church. It is not perchance that the Orthodox Church is regarded as the faith of the saints and the space of sanctification. It is a faith that produces holy persons, "enriches the world with saints"¹ and insists on an *ethos* of holiness. Let us take a brief look at the phenomenon within Orthodoxy of which holiness consists.

It is well known that in contrast to the major natural religions, holiness in the Church is considered a free gift of God and a free accomplishment by the human person (unlike the naturalistic *mysterium fascinandum et tremendum*) and is furthermore experienced as a *catholic* act, a communal act. Holiness should not be understood as the reflection of a particular "objective" state of an individual who has attained intellectual consciousness of the teachings of the Church (θεωρία) by means of "purification" (κάθαρσις) of the body from the passions and of the soul from prejudice (ignorance).² On the contrary, hagiography (especially in the early centuries) is not predominantly concerned with this but rather with

¹ Holy Bishop Nikolaj of Žiča summarizes the problem of this topic with a schematic but correct assertion, which should, however, not be interpreted ideologically: "While the West [meaning the contemporary West] is increasing the world's wealth with books, Orthodoxy is enriching the world with Saints."

² This method of fallacy elimination is represented in Socrates' maieutics, Descartes' method of doubt, Bacon's inductive methodology etc. See more in K. Popper, "On the Sources of Knowledge and of Ignorance," in *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*, Routledge: 2000, pp. 3–32).

Is There a Biochemistry of Freedom?

Instead of an introduction

The topic of this study, with which I have been occupied for several years, is of great significance. I am, however, not able to adequately discuss it in this abbreviated presentation. I intend, therefore, to introduce certain fundamental hypotheses in the hope that these will raise further questions in subsequent studies. I am likewise aware that the manner in which they are described will seem unusual to some. Central to this topic are questions on the existence of theological propositions regarding medical therapy and on the proposition and possibility of medical asceticism.¹ Attempts at comprehending the genetic foundation of neuro-chemical processes, of which there are still no final results, have influenced modern man in his desire to discover a basic hormonal selection for taste, fashion, political choices, concerns and preoccupations, and finally, religiosity. However, to date, the genes and hormones²—those molecular transmitters of information from the glands to the cells whose final goal is to secure the optimal function of the homeostatic mechanisms—have not been examined in light of the anthropological experience of the Church, espe-

¹ Orthodox theologians adeptly enlighten this topic in several works. Among others see Irinej Bulović, “Duševne bolesti, strasti i vrline” [Irinej Bulovic, “Psychological Illnesses, Passions and Virtues”] in the anthology of *Religija i duševni život čoveka*, Belgrade 1994, pp. 33–46. Atanasije Jevtić, *Pravoslavna asketika* [Athanasius Yevtich, *Orthodox Ascetics*], Belgrade–Srbinje–Valjevo, 2002 [in French: *Cours d’ascétique*, Paris 1986]. John Zizioulas, “Νόσος και Θεραπεία στην Ὀρθόδοξη Θεολογία.”, in: *Θεολογία και Ψυχιατρική σέ Διάλογο*, Πρακτικά Ἡμερίδας, Αθήνα: Αποστολική Διακονία, 1999, 133–156. [“Pristup lečenju sa gledišta pravoslavne teologije,” *Vidoslov* 6/1994, pp. 21–32]. My study has been dependent in part on the suggestions from the council of professorial colleagues as well as students to whom I am thankful.

² Hormone derives from the word ὄρμη, which means stimulus, instinct, aspiration. This reflects the fact that the hormones act as a catalyst for chemical changes on the cell level, which is necessary for growth, development and energy.



Lord Jesus Christ
(icon by Andrei Rublev, 1410)

An Existential Interpretation of Dogmatics

Theological Language and Dogma in the Face of the Culture of Pluralism

“There is no dogma of our Church that does not have something to say about the actual problems of humanity” (J. Zizioulas)

I. Introductory remarks

“No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has *explained* (ἐξηγήσατο, made known) Him” (Jn 1:18). The contents of theology are quite complex, mostly because they are related to the great mystery of the existence or *the way* (τρόπος) of God, and therefore of man and the Church. As we know, theology is not about whether or not God exists; its theme, rather, is *how* He exists (cf. 1 Jn 3:2). Other important questions depend on this main and crucial question: Can one participate in God personally, or not? Is He in communication with the world, or not? Such fundamental questions, which go beyond dry academic inquests and their answers, have immediate consequences for man’s general attitude toward the world and life. It is in such a spirit that I propose to submit for your consideration certain reflections on the way I understand the challenges for Orthodox theology and Orthodox theological education in the twenty-first century.

Our Orthodox Church, which is none other than the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, being in the image of the Holy Trinity¹

¹ See the incomparable interpretation of the Eucharistic Liturgy in the *Mystagogy* of St. Maximus the Confessor (PG 91, 657–718). The “ecclesia” of the *Mystagogy* can be considered as a type of the providential action of God, and moreover as a reflection of God’s relational being on His economical work. St. Maximus and the Cappadocian Fathers see the relational ontology of Trinitarian personhood as the source of the communion of the Church and the very basis of anthropology.

Chalcedon's Christology

Theological, Historical and Cultural Significance

Who do people say I AM? True God and True Man:
Chalcedon's Christology in a Postmodern World

Preface

Chalcedonian Christology is a quintessential ingredient of the continuing liturgical-dogmatic-ethical life of the Church. The Church has constantly re-received and transmitted this Christological truth—"one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, unconfused, unchangeable, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ." In fact one can go even further and make the point that the Chalcedonian definition of Christ entailed not only a vertical perspective (consubstantial [co-essential] with the Father according to the Godhead), but also a horizontal perspective of the people of Israel to which Jesus belonged as Man ("consubstantial with us according to Manhood"). Without any doubt, Chalcedon brought about a helpful integration of "theology" and "economy," of transcendence and immanence. Being God, and belonging to a certain historical era and generation, Christ accepted what was the *de facto* human context as his own context. Thus Christology inevitably implies ecclesiology and even sociology.

For these reasons I propose to deal with my subject in the following way: First, I will try to point out Chalcedon's major theological issues in

Neopatristic Christology in Postmodern Culture

Presuppositions and Criteria for a Contextual Theology

The theological sensitivity of the organizers of this conference led me to consider the subject of Christology, as we have inherited it from the Fathers of the Church, in the light of the challenges of the modern era.¹ The Church cannot present society with an ethos other than that which springs from the life of Christ, nor can it preach a Christ who differs from the Christ preached to us by the Greek Fathers, in particular. The desideratum of Orthodoxy in the postmodern era will be a “Christ-centered ethos” (χριστοθήθεια, St. Ignatius of Antioch), which is always realized as a paradoxical, *cross-centered*, and *self-emptying* experience. Imbued with this ethos of Christ and faithful to the patristic spirit, Orthodoxy must express the language of love, compassion, and immediacy, without suppressing our God-bestowed freedom to respond to the exigencies of the moment, thereby miring the Church in a sterile longing for the past.

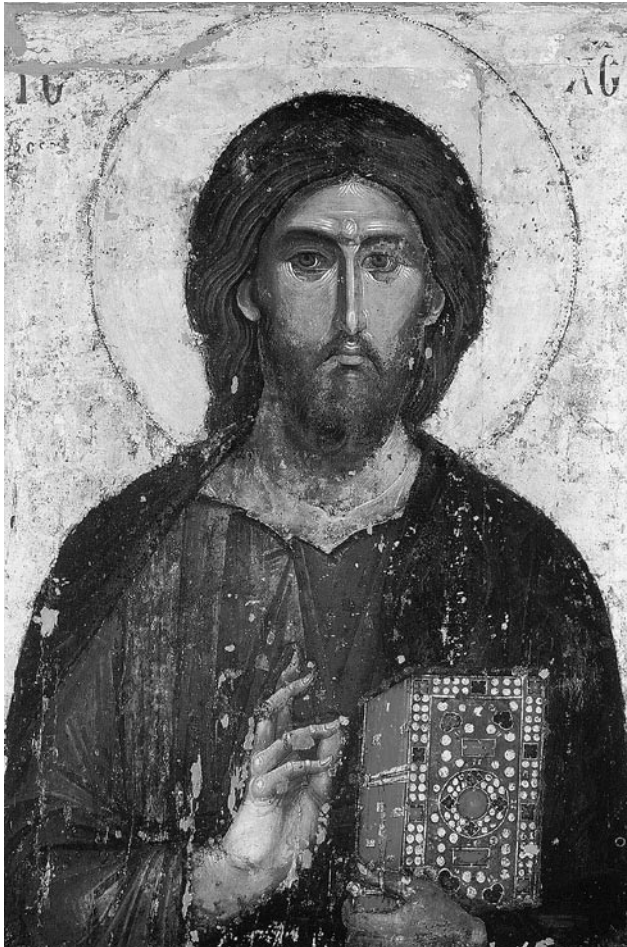
Introductory remarks

In order to develop the future of Orthodoxy at the beginning of the third millennium after Christ, we need to examine the current age of postmodern pluralism, since this is the cultural framework within which Orthodoxy is called to act, to which it is called to adapt, though not to align itself. If I may, I would like to clarify the key concepts in

¹ This study is a humble tribute to my teachers, Bishop Athanasius (Yevtich), Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) and Fr. Stamatis Skliris, from whom I was able to learn the criteria with which patristic Christology freely and creatively is incarnated in space and time, transforming it, i.e. changing the *mode* [tropos] of *existence* and not the *reason* [logos] of *nature*.

way will Orthodoxy shape culture as it is happening. In everything we do, we should proceed with the knowledge that the “perpetrator of *new* mysteries”⁵² is Christ, Who, as a Church and a true Eucharistic *community* and *synaxis*, heals and saves the world, through the Cross and the Resurrection, offering to it love as the mode of personal existence and eternal life.

⁵² Maximus the Confessor, *On the Lord's Prayer*, PG 90, 876.



Lord Jesus Christ Pantocrator

(icon in Chilandar Monastery, Mount Athos, 13th century)

The Old and New Wine of Liturgical Theology

The Task of Liturgical Theology Today

It is a privilege to attend such a conference that marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the blessed repose of one of the greatest liturgists of our time, Fr. Alexander Schmemmann (1921–1983).

One of the many gifts evident during Fr. Alexander Schmemmann's long service to the Church and which has impressed most of us very much, was his ability to unite his liturgical interests to a remarkably theological mind. For him theology and liturgy were inseparable twins and for this reason, when two days are devoted to his heritage involving the east-west ecumenical engagement, Saint Vladimir's Seminary wants to affirm the intermarriage between *lex orandi* and *lex credendi*, the law of prayer and the law of belief. This occasion motivates this school to acknowledge all those scholars who recently have shown great interest in Eastern liturgical themes.¹

For a bishop, it is an inspiring opportunity to speak about the *raison d'être* of his own ministry, which is: presiding over the Divine Liturgy and *unifying* all charismata and rites, being “in the image and place of Christ” and thus reconciling the people of God with the kiss of peace... and thanksgiving, through the *Mystery* of the transformation and “ἀνακεφαλαιώσις” (the summing up) of the entire reality of the salvation of the world, in the Eucharistic *movement* (kinisis) and *synaxis*. It is there that we understand the Eucharist as “not merely linked with the Kingdom which is to come, [but] it draws from it its being and its truth”² and *manifests* it in the material context of the Synaxis, with the communal and “catholic” character of the Eucharist as a “gathering in one place,” which

¹ See for example a recent study of one of the invited speakers, Michael Aune, “Liturgy and Theology: Rethinking the Relationship,” *Worship* 81, 2007.

² J. Zizioulas, “Eucharist and the Kingdom of God,” *Sourozh*, nos. 58/1995, p. 7.

Unitatis et alteritas

Unity and Otherness in the Ecclesiology of Conciliarity

Introductory remarks

The Orthodox and Roman Catholic concepts of conciliarity¹ differ somewhat from each other even though they stem from the same synodal tradition. Their creative and more profound encounter is, nonetheless, beneficial and even necessary if we endeavor to fulfill sincerely the petition of the Lord's Prayer at Gethsemane. Although the differences that exist in both general and historical interpretations of the one and same conciliar tradition are not insurmountable, overcoming them presents a daunting task unless expressly pursued through theological dialogue. The attention currently devoted to the question of relations between the "one" and the "many" in the realm of ecclesiology indicates that dialogues and gatherings such as this are necessary as well as practical. Primacy (or *primus*) represents the *conditio sine qua non* of synodality, but the converse is true as well. The Church, as the icon of God, is the only place where the *freedom of being the "other"* represents sanctity in itself, for through her structure and salvific mission she has to express the freedom of otherness (*alteritas*).² If this holds true in disciplines such as

¹ The term conciliarity or synodality comes from the word "council" (*synodos* in Greek, *concilium* in Latin), which primarily denotes a gathering of bishops exercising a particular responsibility. The themes of "primacy" (*primus*) and conciliarity have recently garnered greater attention on the agendas of mixed ecumenical committees (e.g., Rome 2003, Belgrade 2006, etc.). Cf. *Ut Unum Sint* (*May they be one*) which emphasizes the gravity of this question (Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, May 25, 1995, TN).

² Cf. *The Mistagogy* of St. Maximus the Confessor (PG 91, 657–717).



Christ the Great Archpriest
(fresco by Stamatis Skliris in Los Angeles)

The Icon and the Kingdom of God

Theological, Cultural and Artistic Implications

We live in times awash with man-made images, in a postmodern epoch where each person struggles to produce the most convincing image of himself and his idea, where people try to attract the most people they can through their self image in order to impress and to impose their “icon” or, better yet, their “idol,” on others (as St. Andrew says: “*αὐτείδωλον ἐγενόμην*,” “I have become an idol to myself”; Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, Ode IV). It is an era that offers falsehood, delusion, and fantasy without transcending the antinomies and limitations of history.

We live in such times; yet, this moment in time—The Sunday of Orthodoxy, the feast of the icon—proposes an alternative image: one Divinely-revealed rather than human-made, one that is convicting rather than convincing, one that is iconic rather than idolatrous—the icon of God.

This icon represents humanity having received the opportunity to circumscribe and depict the Transcendent God, which only became possible once God became man, expressing his Divinity in human form, bringing the Kingdom of God into the Divine Liturgy, and demonstrating the reality of the Resurrection by asking one of His disciples to verify what he saw by touching Christ’s hands, feet, and side (Jn 20:26). Similarly, the language of the Fathers about icons, especially that of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, has to do with both seeing and beholding the vision of God. But this language introduces significant questions: What is the real image of God? What is the real image of man? What is the real image of this world? Does the icon depict a Platonic ideal? Or does it represent Greco-Roman art? Or does the iconic image capture the corrupted world of Pieter Brueghel or Salvador Dali? Maybe, we Christians present an image that itself can obscure the image of the Kingdom? Do

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