Orthodoxy and Beyond: Understanding the Creed

Weeks 2 and 3

Christology: “And in one Lord Jesus Christ”

Soteriology: “For us and for our Salvation”

Theological Anthropology: “And was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, and became human”

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Paradoxes: Nature and Person

The Trinity and the Incarnate Christ Compared

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<th>Unity</th>
<th>Diversity</th>
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<td>TRINITY</td>
<td>Nature</td>
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<td>CHRIST</td>
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Article II of the Creed

• And [I/we believe] in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not created, of one essence \( \text{ὁμοοὐσιος} \) with the Father, through Whom all things came into being,

• Who for us human beings and for our salvation came down from the heavens, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became human,

• and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried, and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures and ascended to heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father, and will come again with glory to judge living and dead, of Whose kingdom there will be no end.
“Salvation as Sharing” (Ware)

How does are we saved? More specifically, how does Jesus Christ save us?

Eastern Christianity did not adopt ransom or atonement theology. Rather, it developed an incarnational soteriology, i.e., Christ saves us by sharing and restoring our human nature.

Thus, the importance of understanding who the person of Jesus Christ is, and the fullness of his human nature (Nauroth video #8):

- “What was not assumed was not healed [i.e., anything Christ did not take on of human nature, he did not save],” Gregory the Theologian, Letters 101.5 (regarding rational mind & other things)
- Christ had to touch all aspects of human existence from birth to death, Gregory of Nyssa, Great Catechism 27 (69 – 72), 32 (77 – 80)
Salvation as Sharing (cont’d)

Christ’s death was necessary as part of our fallen human nature: “Now we are to examine another fact and dogma, neglected by most people, but in my judgment well worth enquiring into. To Whom was that Blood offered that was shed for us, and why was it shed? I mean the precious and famous Blood of our God and High priest and Sacrifice. We were detained in bondage by the Evil One, sold under sin, and receiving pleasure in exchange for wickedness. Now, since a ransom belongs only to him who holds in bondage, I ask to whom was this offered, and for what cause? If to the Evil One, fie upon the outrage! If the robber receives ransom, not only from God, but a ransom which consists of God Himself, and has such an illustrious payment for his tyranny, a payment for whose sake it would have been right for him to have left us alone altogether. But if to the Father, I ask first, how? For it was not by Him that we were being oppressed; and next, On what principle did the Blood of His Only begotten Son delight the Father, Who would not receive even Isaac, when he was being offered by his Father, but changed the sacrifice, putting a ram in the place of the human victim? Is it not evident that the Father accepts Him, but neither asked for Him nor demanded Him; but on account of the Incarnation, and because Humanity must be sanctified by the Humanity of God, that He might deliver us Himself, and overcome the tyrant, and draw us to Himself by the mediation of His Son, Who also arranged this to the honour of the Father, Whom it is manifest that He obeys in all things?” Greg. Naz. Or. 45.22
Trying to “Solve” the Christological Paradox

- **Modalism** – Father, Son, and Spirit are just three “modes of existence” or “faces” of the one God – the articles of the Creed refute this
- **Adoptionism** – God “adopts” the human person Jesus and imbues him with God’s spirit (divine possession) – “only-begotten” refutes this (Unitarianism)
- **Docetism** – Christ only “appeared” to have a body and to be human (related to gnosticism) – [1 John 4:2-3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John%204:2-3) refutes this
- **Arianism** – named for a 3rd-4th c. Alexandrian priest whose his teachings centered on the subordination of the Son to the Father and the idea that Jesus Christ was neither fully divine nor fully human (Jehovah's Witnesses)
- **Apollinarianism** – Christ had a human body and soul, but only a divine mind
- **Nestorianism** – the human and divine are completely distinct in Christ (no “hypostatic union”)
- **(Eutychian) monophysitism** – Christ’s humanity subsumed by his divinity
- **Aphthartodocetism** – Christ’s body was impassible (“voluntary” death)
- **Monoenergism** and **monotheletism** – single energy/will in Christ
Problems with Arianism

• Christ is seen as a kind of demigod, not truly God, but not truly human, either – unique but not really connected to either God the Father or to humanity
• How can we worship someone who is not truly God?
• How can someone who is not truly God save us?

Problem with Apollinarianism

• While Christ’s full divinity is recognized, it is at the cost of his full humanity – he has no rational human mind, according to Apollinaris (who was trying to support Nicene christology against Arianism)
Apollinarianism
(A Denial of the Humanity of Christ)
Antioch v. Alexandria

- Two most important schools of theological thought in the early church
- Antioch emphasized the fullness and distinctness of Christ’s two *natures*
- Alexandria emphasized the unity of the *person* of Jesus Christ
- Theological controversies (and synods) swing back and forth between the two
  - 2nd Ecumenical Council (381) – refuted Apollinarianism (Alexandrian)
  - 3rd Ecumenical Council (431) – refuted Nestorianism (Antiochene)
  - 4th & 5th Ecumenical Councils (451, 553) – refuted monophysitism (Alexandrian)
  - 6th Ecumenical Council (680) – refuted monotheletism (Alexandrian)
  - 7th Ecumenical Council (787) – refuted iconoclasm (Antiochene)
Nestorianism & Monophysitism

- Nestorius said that the Virgin Mary could only be called Christotokos (“Christ-bearer”), not Theotokos (“God-bearer”) because she is the source of Christ’s human nature, not his divinity (symmetric christol.)
- Cyril of Alexandria responded that Mary gave birth to a person, not an inchoate human nature, and that person is the Son of God incarnate – “one nature of the incarnate Logos” (asymmetric christol.)
- Terminology issues (changes in meaning of philosophical terms)
  - Syriac translations of “hypostasis” continue earlier meaning of “nature”; thus, Christ has two “hypostases” – first break creates Church of the East
  - Church of Alexandria and other areas (Armenia, e.g.) continue Cyril’s phrase of “one nature incarnate” and reject “two natures” of the Council of Chalcedon as too Nestorian – creates the non- or pre-Chalcedonian (or Oriental) Orthodox Churches: Coptic, Jacobite, Armenian, Ethiopian, Eritrean
- Rapprochement – Second Agreed Statement outlines theological agreement underlying different terminologies, but no union yet
Second Agreed Statement

1. Both families agree in condemning the Eutychian heresy. Both families confess that the Logos, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, only begotten of the Father before the ages and consubstantial with Him, was incarnate and was born from the Virgin Mary Theotokos; fully consubstantial with us, perfect man with soul, body and mind (νοῦς); he was crucified, died, was buried, and rose from the dead on the third day, ascended to the Heavenly Father, where He sits on the right hand of the Father as Lord of all Creation. At Pentecost, by the coming of the Holy Spirit He manifested the Church as His Body. We look forward to His coming again in the fulness of His glory, according to the Scriptures.

2. Both families condemn the Nestorian heresy and the crypto-Nestorianism of Theodoret of Cyrus. They agree that it is not sufficient merely to say that Christ is consubstantial both with His Father and with us, by nature God and by nature man; it is necessary to affirm also that the Logos, Who is by nature God, became by nature Man, by His Incarnation in the fullness of time.

3. Both families agree that the Hypostasis of the Logos became composite (σύνθετος) by uniting to His divine uncreated nature with its natural will and energy, which He has in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit, created human nature, which He assumed at the Incarnation and made His own, with its natural will and energy.

4. Both families agree that the natures with their proper energies and wills are united hypostatically and naturally without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation, and that they are distinguished in thought alone (τις ὑποστασις πάντων).
Heresies: Trying to “(Re-)Solve” the Christological Paradox

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Following, then, the holy Fathers, we all unanimously teach that our Lord Jesus Christ is to us One and the same Son, the self-same perfect in Godhead, the Self-same perfect in humanity; truly God and truly human; the self-same of a rational soul and body; co-essential with the Father according to the Godhead, the self-same co-essential with us according to the humanity; like us in all things, apart from sin; before the ages begotten of the Father as to the Godhead, but in the last days, the self-same, for us and for our salvation (born) of Mary the Virgin Theotokos as to the humanity.
Horos of Chalcedon (451), pt. 2

[We also teach] that we apprehend this one and only Christ—Son, Lord, only-begotten—in two natures; [and we do this] without confusing the two natures, without transmuting one nature into the other, without dividing them into two separate categories, without contrasting them according to area or function.

The distinctiveness of each nature is not nullified by the union. Instead, the “properties” of each nature are conserved and both natures concur in one “person” and in one essence. They are not divided or cut into two persons, but are together the one and only and only-begotten Logos of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus have the prophets of old testified; thus the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us; thus the Symbol of the Fathers has handed down to us.
What Does It Mean to Be Human?

• “What is not assumed (by Christ of human nature) is not healed” – Gregory (Nazianzus) the Theologian
  • This assumes that the Son takes on our *fallen* human nature (Gen. 3:16-19), since that is what needs to be healed/redeemed/saved
• According to Chalcedon, Christ is “like us in all things, apart from sin”
  • What does “sin” mean?
  • Is there “original sin”? If so, what is it? What about the image of God?
  • Distinction between the Augustinian view of “original sin”, which permeates Catholicism and Protestantism, and the Orthodox view of the “ancestral” or “forefathers” sin (προπατορικὸ ἀμάρτημα)
• What about the will and orientation towards/away from God?
• What about mortality? Was Christ’s body mortal?
  • Heresy of aphthartodocetism (literally, “appearing incorruptible”)
• What about the physical and emotional passions? What about sexual differentiation, i.e., sex and gender? (Gen. 1:26-27)
Fallen Human Nature: West v. East

• **Original sin**
  - Like a stain on the soul, Inherited (based on faulty translation of Rom. 5:12)
  - Thus, infants condemned to first level of Hell (“limbo”)

• **Ancestral sin**
  - Sin is not inherited, but the effects of sin, e.g., mortality and the passions, are
  - Infants are baptized to be full members of the Church

• **Orientation and Will**
  - Augustine taught that we have no natural orientation to God without “prevenient grace” (predestination)
  - We will/desire only to do sin; God gives us grace or not

• **Orientation and Will**
  - We are still created in God’s image and so have a natural orientation toward God;
  - Human will has two parts: natural (toward God) and “gnomic” (personal opinions)

• **Passions**
  - “concupiscence” – we are unable to control it ourselves

• **Passions**
  - Similar to Greek philosophy re the passions (“animalistic”)
Augustine’s Postlapsarian Anthropology

Sin corrupts man’s:
--- Mind ---
--- Emotion ---
--- Will ---

He is spiritually dead

Plenary Inability

Total Depravity
What about Sexual Differentiation?

• Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Maximus the Confessor, and others base their views on Gen. 1 through 3; some also use I Cor. 11 and Gal. 3:28 (“there is no male and female”)

• Sex and gender exist or operate differently depending on what “stage” of human nature we are in (Gen. 1:26-28, 3:16)
  1) God’s eternal plan: image and likeness (Gen. 1:26); no mention of male or female – thus, not an essential feature of human nature
  2) prelapsarian humanity: created “male and female” (Gen. 1:27); “be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:28); “Adam’s rib” to denote another of the same/equality (Gen. 2:18-23)
  3) postlapsarian humanity B.C.: male domination (Gen. 3:16)
  4) postlapsarian humanity A.D.: “no male and female” (Gal. 3:28) in baptism; women deacons/prophets/church leaders; monast.
  5) eschatological humanity: fulfillment of God’s eternal plan – no longer male or female? (Gregory of Nyssa, Chrysostom, Maximus)
Summary

• For the Christian East, our understandings of who Christ is (*christology*), what human nature is (*theological anthropology*), and what salvation is (*soteriology*) are interrelated.

• We maintain the paradox of one person, Jesus Christ, who is both divine and human, having all the properties of *both* natures, even when those are polar opposites (e.g., mortal and immortal).

• Our christology is *asymmetric* in the sense that there is one person, the Son of God incarnate (no separate human Jesus).

• Christ took on our *fallen* human nature and thus restored/saved it through his death and resurrection – “salvation as sharing”.

• Being created according to God’s image (*imago Dei* – κατ’εἰκόνα Θεοῦ) gives us what is fundamentally human: free will, reason, etc. – we retain these in the Fall, even if somewhat impaired.

• Our fallen human nature includes mortality, passions, etc.