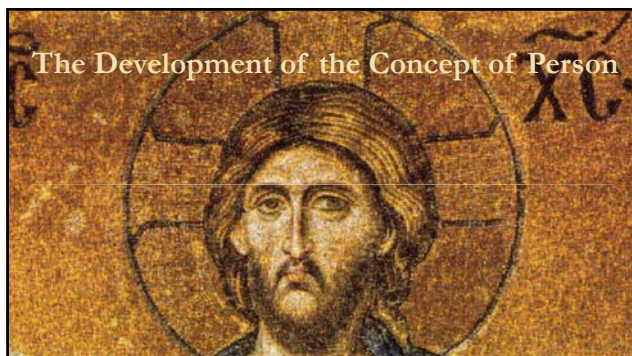




From Mask to Person

1. Greek thought is essentially "non-personal." In its Platonic variation, everything concrete and "individual" is ultimately referred to the abstract idea which constitutes its ground and final justification" (BC, 28-9).
 1. In Platonic thought (reincarnation): the soul, which ensures man's continuity, is not united permanently with the concrete, 'individual' man: it lives eternally but it can be united with another concrete body and can constitute another 'individuality.'
 2. In Aristotelian thought: "the soul is indissolubly united with the concrete and 'individual'" a man is a concrete individuality; he endures, however, only for as long as his psychosomatic union endures—death dissolves the concrete 'individuality' completely and definitively."
2. Reason: *Ontological monism*. "Not even God can escape from this ontological unity and stand freely before the world, 'face to face' in dialogue with it"

--- John Zizioulas, *Being and Communion* (St. Vladimir's Press, 1985)

"Mask" (προσωπεῖον)

"It is precisely in the theater that man strives to become a 'person,' to rise up against this harmonious unity which oppresses him as rational and moral necessity."

Plato's *Laws*: the world does not exist for the sake of man, but man exists for its sake (See *Laws*, X, 903 c-d).

“Hypostasis”

The word was not used by Plato or Aristotle as a philosophical term. It seems to have had the general meaning of “that which stands under something,” i.e. that which underlies the phenomena which one encounters. For Aristotle, for example, the term is invoked to refer to ‘sediment.’ As noted by Dörrie, Studer, Köster, and von Loom, the introduction of the term into philosophy is typically attributed to the Stoics, for whom ὑπόστασις “indicated the actualization of the primal matter (also called *ὁλφα*) into individual things, or the result of this actualization: the existence of individual beings.” It is interesting that it will maintain this implication of a “separate reality,” that is, something which really exists and which has some affinity with the universal or genus under which it is a part; but more so, it is a particularly actual manifestation or actualization of that universal.

Quotes continued ...

“The fullness of our happiness, beyond which there is nothing else, is this: to enjoy God the Trinity in whose image we were made” (Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 1.8.18).

“The whole of our life bears fruit and comes to achievement in the knowledge of the Trinity” (Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Sentences*, Bk I, dist. 2, exposition).

Th Kingdom of God is the knowledge of the Holy Trinity” (Evagrius of Pontius, *The Praktikos*, ch. 3).

Continued

With the dawn of Neo-Platonism we find a new use of the term that is laden with philosophical significance. One could cite Plotinus’ *On the Three Primary Hypostases* (Ennead VI.1), for example, in which the ‘three hypostases’ are enumerated as the transcendent One, *Nous* (Mind), and Soul. At the head of Plotinus’ universe stands the *ὁ ἓν*, the One, the transcendent first principle, the ground of being and goodness, which is ineffable and incomprehensible to the discursive and intuitive reason. Below this One, there are two *ὑποστάσεις*, which H. Armstrong describes as the universal correlatives of the whole range of human life, physical and intellectual, each of which are emanations of its ontological superior, leading all the way up to the One as the source of all things. The specifics of the Neo-Platonic system are beyond the scope of this paper, however, it is important to note two features of this use of hypostases: (1) The tension of terming the transcendent One a hypostasis, while apophatically maintaining that the One is beyond such categorization, brings to the forefront the ambiguity associated with the term; (2) On account of such ambiguity, we can see that two notions come to the fore with such a usage, with the second being more predominate: (a) There is a relationship between *hypostasis* and the universal with which it is associated beyond a mere manifestation; and (b) it denotes a concrete reality, a separate being, an actual existence. It seems that these two claims are perhaps mutually excluding; for, the former is associated with universals, and the latter with particulars, but it must be remembered that within the Neo-Platonic system, each hypostasis – whether seen as a universal (vis-à-vis the existence that is ontologically below it), or as a particular emanation of that which is above it – is understood as a hierarchy of underlying principles which undergird the rest of reality. The degree of variation among the hypostases is established through their respective positions of more primordial and more underlying cause (in the broadest sense of sustenance for existence) with respect to each other and the rest of reality (all the way down to matter).

This philosophical heritage seems to offer the basis for considering the term “hypostasis” as broadly designating two notions or concepts: (1) real existence; and (2) separate existence. Cf. Studer (1974), 1256. von Loom (2009), 137.

The Question

How, then, could we have arrived at an identification of the person with the being of man? How could freedom have become identical with the 'world,' the identity of the concrete man a product of freedom, and man in his very being identical with the person?

... Conditions

For these things to have come about, two basic presuppositions were necessary: (a) a radical change in cosmology which would free the world and man from ontological necessity; and (b) an ontological view of man which would unite the person with the *being* of man, with his permanent and enduring existence, with his genuine and absolute identity.

The first of these could only be offered by Christianity with its biblical outlook. The second was developed in the context of trying to understand what God is and who is Jesus Christ.

The first part: the biblical viewpoint

Let's revisit *Theo-Drama II*, pp. 402-404.

The Second Part

Let's look at how the Church Fathers developed an understanding of "person" in the context of the questions of:

1. What is God? (The Trinity)
2. Who is Jesus Christ?
3. Final Synthesis

Recall the Lecture on "Mission"

We come to know *who* he is (hypostasis) in his *role* (prosopon), and that gives us insight into what he is (ousia/substantia).

Part 2: Jesus at the Council of Nicaea

- a. The Problem: Jesus' relation to the Father
 - i. The Position of Arius (Preserving God's Transcendence; the Father was before the Son)
 - ii. The Position of Athanasius (Christ as God's self-gift)
- b. The Council of Nicaea
- c. What difference does this make ultimately?

Arius

- Word of God was not truly God but had the title only as an honorific. The Word is, rather, a creation of God, the very first and greatest creation, but still a creature created from nothing and not Creator, not truly divine.
- Why? ---- Because God would not be God, since:
 - God would either be divided, one part "Father" and one part "Son"
 - Or else, there would be two Gods.

OUSIA = PROSOPON/ HYPOSTASIS



"We know one God – alone unbegotten, alone everlasting, alone without beginning."

"God is thus before all as a monad and a cause. Therefore he is also before the Son"

(Arius, *Letter to Alexander of Alexandria* in William G. Rusch, *The Trinitarian Controversy*)

Arius's View

Father = God, as Monad (One)

FIRE WALL BETWEEN GOD AND THE WORLD.

Word of God = greatest Creature, received title of "Son of God" honorifically.

Can he ever say that the Son of God is God's self-gift to us?

We believe in one God, Father, all-sovereign, maker of all things seen and unseen; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father as only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, *homoousios* with the Father, through whom all things came into existence, the things in heaven and the things on earth, who because of us men and our salvation came down and was incarnated, made man, suffered, and arose on the third day, ascended into heaven, comes to judge the living and the dead; and in one Holy Spirit.
 ("The Creed of the Synod of Nicaea" in William G. Rusch, *The Trinitarian Controversy*)

"consubstantial with the Father"

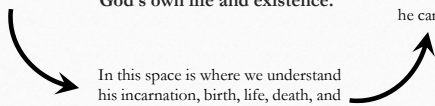
"*homoousion to patri*," that is, "of one and the same essence with the Father."

The Son was sent by the Father into the world...

Consubstantial / Homoousios claims that Jesus' Mission begins with the Father himself. It reaches all the way to the level of God's own life and existence.

... and then the Son returned to the Father from which he came.

In this space is where we understand his incarnation, birth, life, death, and resurrection.



Summary of Scripture for Athanasius

The phrase: "*for us and for our salvation.*"

What does this mean? KEY: If Jesus is *one with God*, then his entire life is a self-gift. His whole life is his *mission for us and for our salvation*. By saying "homousion" or "consubstantial," we are saying that Jesus himself gets nothing out of salvation, but that salvation is for us. His entire life, from birth to death to resurrection, is a divine gift for us and for our salvation. If he gained the title "Son of God" as a *reward*, as Arius thought, then his life is not a complete self-gift, since he gains something out of it too.

God as Trinity

- What mattered most to Arius: not to compromise God's transcendence by dividing him into three parts. And we agree --- which means *no Shamrocks!*
- On the one hand, there was the need to develop a way of speaking of the three persons in God in order to do justice to the Scriptural account of the Father sending the Son, and the Son sending the Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts. On the other hand, if salvation is truly God's self-gift, then we must also develop the language to understand these three persons as one God. It is only in this delicate language of the Trinity that we truly understand Christ as the self-gift of God.
- The word "person" was chosen to indicate that there was more than one "someone in God," namely three. But "persons" were not defined as we would define them today; they were defined *solely in relation to each other*.

"the Father is the name of the relation in which the Father is to the Son or the Son to the Father"

(Gregory of Nazianzus, 3rd Oration sec. 16)

The Significance of the Council of Nicaea and these Trinitarian Debates

The doctrine of the Trinity is the doctrine of a God who can enter into true and loving solidarity with his creatures and has done so in the fullest and most complete way in Christ. Thus Gregory of Nazianzus's claim that anything less than the doctrine of the Trinity not only does not help us understand "Who is Jesus?" according to the Bible, but it **"makes void the Gospel,"** and, by reducing the transcendence of God to what can be discovered by human logic and reasoning alone, **"declares the nullification of the cross"** (3rd Oration, sec. 21, allusion to 1 Cor. 1.17). The true teaching of Scripture is of one so loving that **"He is sold, and at a very low price – thirty pieces of silver – but redeems the world, and at a great cost: his own blood"** (ibid., 20).

We now have language to understand God as "person" and "being," but this language is not fully understood because it has yet to be applied to Christology (and thus, human beings in Christ).

Tertullian: *una substantia---tres persona*

Questions left open at Nicaea

If God is transcendent, immutable, and unchangeable,
And if Jesus is truly God, Then ...

How does he suffer? How does he experience human emotions, such as not knowing things or crying? How does he increase in "stature" and "wisdom" and in "favor with human beings" and even in "favor with God" (Lk 2:52)?

In fact, it is partly because of passages presenting such human experiences of Jesus that the Arians concluded that the Word who was Incarnate in Him could not be divine, because that would seem to imply that God, the true God, was not immutable or unchangeable at all, since He was liable to injury and change. "How can one who slept and cried and asked questions be Logos or God?" – so Athanasius reports objections raised by Arian theologians (Oration 3.27).

Part 3: Who is Jesus at the Council of Chalcedon?

- a. Jesus' Mission as connecting *who Jesus is* with *who God is*.
 - i. Because Jesus is his mission, his mission started before his earthly existence.
 - ii. This means that Jesus tells us something about *who God is*. For Christians, *who God is* is tied to *who Jesus is* and what Jesus has done for us.
- b. This understanding of Jesus' Mission explains the different starting points of the New Testament.
 - i. Virgin Birth Starting Points (God as Jesus' Father)
 - ii. Incarnational Starting Points (The eternal Word of the Father/ Son of God becoming flesh)
- c. Expressed in the baptismal mystery of the faith
- d. Important aspects of Jesus' Mission:
 - i. Jesus is the embodiment of the Father's love.
 - ii. The Father entrusted the Son with the task of saving the world.
 - iii. The key to Christian interpretation: "He is what he expresses—namely, God—but he is not whom he expresses—namely, the Father."

Two Patterns in Speaking about the God-human relationship in Jesus

Fourth and fifth century theologians committed to Nicene teaching began to talk about these kinds of passages in two different patterns. All of them agreed that it was the human being Jesus who suffered and grew, not the divine Word, but how?

Pattern 1 (Alexandrian)

1. Word-Flesh Christology (St. Athanasius)
2. Pattern 1 pushed to its limits: Apollinarius

Pattern 2 (Antiochene)

1. Word-Man Christology (Theodore of Mopsuestia)
2. Pattern 2 pushed to its limits: Nestorius

Pattern 1 (Alexandrian): Word-Flesh Christology

The letter of Peter says, as we've heard, "Christ therefore suffered in the flesh for our sakes" (1 Peter 4:1). So when it is said that he hungered and thirsted and toiled and was ignorant and slept and cried out and made requests and fled and was born and turned away from the cup – in general, did all the things which belong to the flesh – let it in each case be said, as is fitting: "Christ hungered and thirsted for our sakes in the flesh"; "Christ hungered and thirsted for our sakes in the flesh"; and "Christ said he did not know and was beaten and toiled for our sakes in the flesh"; and "Christ was lifted up and was born and grew up in the flesh"; and "Christ was afraid and hid himself in the flesh"; ...

So, then, let no one be scandalized by the human characteristics [of Christ]. Rather, let people see that the Logos himself is impassible by nature and that he nevertheless has these passions predicated of him in virtue of the flesh which he took on, since they are proper to the flesh and the body itself is proper to the Savior.

(Athanasius, *Orations Against the Arians* 3.34)

In other words, for Athanasius, we can notice that:

- (1) in predicating the sufferings and other human characteristics to Christ, they are predicated of the Word, who is Christ; and
- (2) they do not harm the divine nature nor are they characteristics of the divine nature, because they happen to the flesh;
- (3) but since the flesh or body of Christ is the Word's own body, and not just an appearance or creature controlled and manipulated by the Word like a puppet, these human characteristics can truly be predicated of the Word.

It is, moreover, crucial to recognize this. Otherwise, these impious people might fall into this error too and deceive some others, and these in their turn might suppose that just as in earlier times the Logos "came to be" in each of the saints, so even now he came into residence in a human being, sanctifying this one also and being revealed just as he was in the others.

(Athanasius, *Orations Against the Arians* 3.30)

This is why he who supplies others with the origin of their being is himself said to have been born: his flesh was born of Mary the Mother of God. The purpose of this is that we may have our origin relocated in him.

(Athanasius, *Against the Arians* 3.30)

Summary of Word-flesh Christology

The pattern of talking about the human characteristics of Jesus as the characteristics of the Word who, in the flesh, is Jesus, presupposed, or gave rise to a "Christology," a way of talking about the person of Jesus Christ, which has been called "Word-Flesh," because the Word becomes a human being by taking on flesh or a body of His own.



Weaknesses in Word-Flesh Christology

It is not difficult to see that in Athanasius's Christology, there is not a lot of functional room for a human mind or soul in Christ, even though Athanasius does not deny that there is one. But as this Christology developed, some of Athanasius's friends and disciples were not as careful, and in fact pressed this weakness of Athanasius's Christology into a conscious affirmation. Apollinaris of Laodicea, a friend of Athanasius, began to teach an exaggerated version of his Christology in Antioch, a city where a different pattern of response to the Arian questions about the sufferings of Jesus had grown up, one which implied a different view of how the Word was Incarnate in Jesus. Apollinaris held that there was no human mind or soul in Jesus, but that the Word, becoming flesh, did not need one. The Word replaced the human mind and soul.

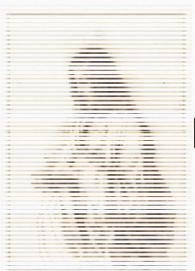
The confession is that in him the creature is in unity with the uncreated, while the uncreated is commingled with the creature, so that one nature is constituted out of the parts severally. ... The same thing happens in the case of the ordinary man, made up as he is of two incomplete parts which together fill out one nature and are signified by one name; for at the same time the whole is called "flesh" without the soul's thereby being stripped away, and the whole is styled "soul" without the body's being stripped away.... (Apollinaris, *On the Union* 5)

Depiction of Apollinaris' Christology

Body + Soul = Human Being.

Body + Word of God = Jesus Christ.

What's the problem?



Pattern 2 (Antiochene): Word-Man Christology

This kind of teaching, eventually condemned as heretical in 451 at the Council of Chalcedon, met with vigorous rebuttal in Antioch. To the Antiochene theologians, explaining how the Word became human simply by taking on physical flesh without a human soul or mind, was tantamount, paradoxically, to denying that He did become truly human. Instead of predicating the sufferings of Jesus of the Word Himself, even though in and through the flesh, these theologians predicated them of a human being, Jesus, who always was and remained a subject in his own right, different from the Word.

Theodore of Mopsuestia

He taught that Jesus was a full and complete human being, having a full and complete human nature, who was "indwelt" by the Word, in the same way that the prophets were indwelt by the Word. In order to preserve the uniqueness of Jesus, Theodore supposed that in the case of Jesus, this indwelling was perfect and began not at the moment of his baptism or at some other time in his adult life, but at the very moment that Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary. Resisting the "one nature" language of Apollinaris, Theodore taught that there were two natures in Christ, the human being Jesus, and the Divine Word who indwelt him. By indwelling Jesus through grace, the Word was said to "assume" the human being Jesus into unity with Himself. But the one indwelling was always a different subject than the one indwelt; or to put it another way, the one "assuming" was always a different subject from the one who was assumed:

"the one assumed is distinct from the One who assumes him"
(Theodore of Mopsuestia , *On the Incarnation* Book 5
Fragment 1)

Theodore's Main Concerns

For Theodore, this "two nature" Christology preserves intact and without question the transcendence of God, of the divine nature, which does not get "mixed up" with flesh in any way, even as it preserves intact the full and complete human nature of Jesus. He it is, Jesus, who suffers pain, sleeps, cries, prays and he it is who is truly ignorant of certain matters, just like all other human beings, and who grows in wisdom, guided by the Word who indwells Him, just like all other human beings, only with the Word indwelling him perfectly, he never sins, though tempted as we all are.

Weakness in Word-Man Christology: Nestorius

The weakness of this Christology seem obvious, though, especially once this Christology is exaggerated into the extreme form called "Nestorianism," named after Nestorius, archbishop of Constantinople from 428



Mary as "The Mother of God"

Just as Apollinaris exaggerated the teaching of Athanasius, so Nestorius exaggerated the position of theologians such as Theodore, and thereby exposed its weaknesses. In 428, at the very beginning of his term as Patriarch of Constantinople, Nestorius preached a series of provocative sermons, denouncing the use of the devotional title "Theotokos," or "Mother of God," for Mary, a title popular with the faithful and one which Athanasius himself used, as we saw earlier.

Does God have a mother? A Greek without reproach introducing mothers for the gods! ... A creature did not produce the Creator; rather she gave birth to a human being, the instrument of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit did not create God the Logos (for what is born of her is of the Holy Spirit, Matt. 1:20). Rather, he formed out of the Virgin a temple for God the Logos, a temple in which he dwelt.

(Nestorius, *First Sermon Against the Theotokos*)

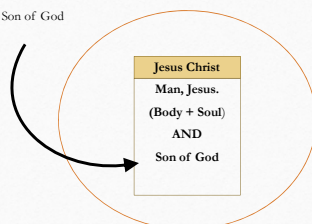
Nestorius' Main Problem

Nestorius' problem is that to say that God is born from Mary is to say that something "happens" to God --- he is born of a Mother. But doesn't that compromise the divine nature? Doesn't that compromise God's transcendence of all change and all becoming?



Depiction of Nestorius' Position

Son of God



Result

Two natures (Divine & Human)

Two Persons:

-Jesus = man

-Christ = incarnate Son of God

Who is God? The Divine.

Who suffers? The Man

Problem?

Cyril of Alexandria's Attempt at a Solution

This, at any rate, is the analysis of Nestorius's position tendered by his bitterest enemy, Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria during Nestorius's time as Patriarch of Constantinople. In a letter to Nestorius, Cyril critiques Nestorius for teaching, in effect, that there were two Sons of God, the human being Jesus, and the eternal Word of the Father:

We do not worship a human being in conjunction with the Word, lest the appearance of division creep in by reason of that phrase, 'in conjunction with.' No, we worship one and the same, because the body of the Logos is not alien to him but accompanies him even as he is enthroned with the Father. Again, it is not that there are two Sons enthroned together but rather that there is one, on account of the [Word's] union with the flesh.

(Cyril of Alexandria, *Second Letter to Nestorius*)

It is not that the Word of God suffered in his own nature, being overcome by stripes or nail-piercing or any of the other injuries; for the divine, since it is incorporeal, is impassible. Since, however, the body that had become his own underwent suffering, he is – once again – said to have suffered these things for our sakes, for the impassible One was within the suffering body.

(Cyril of Alexandria, *Second Letter to Nestorius*)

This is how we shall find the holy fathers conceived things. Accordingly, they boldly called the holy Virgin 'God's mother' [*Theotokos*], not because the nature of the Logos or the deity took the start of its existence in the holy Virgin but because the holy body which was born of her, possessed as it was of a rational soul, and to which the Logos was hypostatically united, is said to have had a fleshly birth.

(Cyril of Alexandria, *Second Letter to Nestorius*)

The Council of Chalcedon

451 AD



Following therefore the Holy Fathers we confess one and the same son who is our Lord Jesus Christ, and we all agree in teaching that this very same son is complete in his deity and complete, the very same, in his humanity, truly God and truly a human being, this very same one composed of a rational soul and a body, coessential with the Father as to his deity, and coessential with us, the very same one, in his humanity, being like us in a every respect apart from sin.

(Formula of Chalcedon, Richard Norris tr.)

As to his deity, he was born to the father before all ages, but as to his humanity, the very same one was born in the last days from the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, for our sake and the sake of our salvation: one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only Begotten, acknowledged to be unconfusedly, unalterably, undividedly, inseparably in two natures. Since the difference of the natures is not destroyed because of the union, but on the contrary, the character of each nature is preserved and comes together in one person, in one hypostasis.

(Formula of Chalcedon, Richard Norris tr.)

Implications for what it means to be a “theological person”

DISCUSSION
