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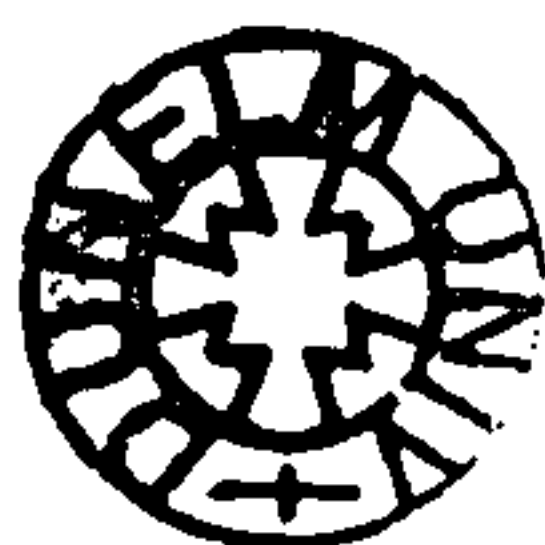
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THE CONTEMPLATION OF CHRIST
AND SALVATION
IN THE LITURGICAL CANONS
OF ST JOHN DAMASCENE

Alexander Pokhilko

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‘The Contemplation of Christ and Salvation
in the Liturgical Canons of St. John Damascene’
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Ph.D. thesis 2004

ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a systematic analysis of John Damascene’s liturgical canons for the great feasts. The canons were written in Palestine at the end of the era of Christological controversies and in the context of expanding Islam. So perfectly do they embody Christian Orthodox tradition that to this day they constitute a significant part of Orthodox liturgy, and are often referred to as the treasure of theology.

These poems are intended for one and all and they convey the heart of Orthodox Christology. Should we view them as prayers, homilies, theological or polemic treatises? What kind of historical, theological and exegetical reflections do they contain when meditating on the role of the Gospel events in the life of Jesus and the Church? How effective are they in the face of Monophysitism or Iconoclasm? While these issues emerge throughout the thesis, the focus of it is how the canons deal with the Person of Christ. We start by answering the following questions: how does John deal with Christological issues and what vocabulary does he employ when establishing the liturgical contemplation of the Incarnation in the Nativity canon? This is followed by an analysis of the canons for the Epiphany and Transfiguration.

The theology of the Passover unfolds in the Easter canon related to that of Antipascha, unveiling faith. Here tradition is largely defined by Gregory Nazianzen with John’s poems demonstrating its living continuity and establishing the Church’s theological definitions. Unfolding this tradition, the Oktoechos, unfortunately neglected by scholars, demonstrates the integrity of biblical history and Christianity which allows us, justifiably, to call the hymnography the Church’s own Bible. Its unique “Orthodox apokatastasis” and the nature of redemption are presented through the prism of Christology and asceticism.

Thus, as this thesis seeks to demonstrate, the liturgical and theological journey from the Nativity to the Resurrection makes Christian life a constant living contemplation of Christ and salvation.

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Declaration

I confirm that no part of the material offered in this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree in this or in any other university. This thesis does not exceed the maximum length allowable by the university.

Material from the works of others has been acknowledged and quotations and paraphrases suitably indicated. The copyright of this thesis remains with the author. Quotations and information derived from this thesis should be acknowledged.

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Introduction

St John Damascene belongs to the pleiad of the Fathers who shaped Orthodox Christology. Divine liturgy is the sphere where Christology turns into a living contemplation of the Person of Christ. Liturgical canons, composed or influenced by John, breathed a new life into this contemplation.

Life and Works of John Damascene

John lived in a historical and geopolitical situation conditioned by the growth of the young Islamic empire. In three decades after the death of the Prophet Muhammad (in 632) the Arabs defeated the Persian Sasanid Empire and conquered the eastern and southern provinces of the Byzantine Empire so that by the mid-eighth century the new, expanding Umayyad Empire covered vast territories from Spain to Northern India, including the Middle East, and even threatened Constantinople. In 651 Damascus was made the capital of the Umayyad caliphate (651-750). The history of John's family intertwines with the history of Damascus. John's grandfather, Mansur ibn Sarjun,¹ and John's father, Sarjun ibn Mansur,² had been in charge of the fiscal administration of the city even under the Umayyads because the Arabs prudently preserved the existing administrative systems in the conquered provinces. John's family was of Semitic, probably, Syrian origin and belonged to the thoroughly Hellenised Damascus' elite.³

¹ He negotiated the surrender of Damascus under Arabs in 635.

² Theophanes mentions him as a "most Christian man" and the General Treasurer, *Chron.A.M.* 6183 (de Boor, 365).

³ A.Louth, *St John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 5. For John's epoch, family background, and biography see Louth, *John*, 3-8; M.Jugie, *La Vie de saint Jean Damascène, Echos d'Orient*, 23, 1924; J.Nasrallah, *Saint Jean de Damas: Son Époque, Sa Vie, Son Oeuvre, Les Souvenirs Chrétiens de Damas*, 2, (Harissa, Lebanon: Imprimerie Saint Paul, 1950), 9-136. G.Richter, *Die Dialektik des Johannes von Damaskos: eine Untersuchung des Textes nach seinen Quellen und seiner Bedeutung, Studia patristica et Byzantina*, 10, (Ettal: Buch-Kunstverl, 1964), 2-24; D.Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam: The Heresy of the Ismaelites*, (Leiden,

General accounts of John's life¹ are classical examples of hagiographic literature and portray an idealistic picture of John. He appears as an educated layman, a martyr, a confessor, a monk progressing in ascetic life to become a renowned spiritual father, priest, preacher and poet whose life was accompanied by miracles. Unfortunately, these sources are not historical and reflect rather the attitude to John of the following Christian generations, while his actual life remains vague, and only a few facts can be restored.

John, whose civil name was Mansur ibn Sarjun, was born in Damascus in the second half of the seventh century (650-675).² His command of Greek verse and prose suggests that he received good classical education. Apparently, he knew Arabic and Syriac. Obviously, he also served in the fiscal administration of the Umayyads until the changeover from Greek to Arabic in its civil service finally took place around 706.³ During the following decade he resigned and became a monk in Palestine, taking the name John. He was ordained priest.⁴ *Greek* and *Arabic vitae* situate John in the Great Laura of Mar Saba, and there his tomb and cell are witnessed by the Russian pilgrim to

1972), 17-48; D.Sahas, *The Arab Character of the Christian Disputation with Islam: The Case of John of Damascus (ca.655-ca.749)*, in Bernard Lewis and Friedrich Niewöhner (eds.), *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter*, Wolfenbütteler Mittelalter-Studien, 4, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrasowitz, 1992), 185-205; R.Le Coz, *Jean Damascène 'Écrits sur l'islam'*, SC 383, (Paris, 1992), 41-58; M.Auzépy, *De la Palestine à Constantinople (VIII-LXs): Étienne le Sabaïte et Jean Damascène*, *Travaux et Mémoires*, 12, 1994, 183-218. For a complete list of bibliography with some notes on John's life see V.Conticello, *Jean Damascène*, in R.Goulet, *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques* III, (Paris, 2000), 989-1012.

¹ *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae* (Xc.), *Propylaeum ad Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, ed. H.Delehayc, (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1902). *Greek vita* by John, patriarch of Jerusalem (X or XIIc.), PG 94.429-89. *Arabic vita* (XIc.), C.Bacha, *Biographie de Jean Damascène, Texte original arabe*, (Harissa, 1912); R.Portillo, *The Arabic Life of St.John of Damascus, Parole de l'Orient*, 21, 1996, 157-88. Other *vitae* are listed in Sahas, *John*, 32-8.

² The year 675 – M.Jugie, *DTC*, VIII, 1924, 695; 655/60 – Nasrallah, *Jean*, 58; 652 – Sahas, *John*, 39; 650 – B.Kotter, *Johannes von Damaskos*, in Gerhard Müller (ed.), *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, xvii, (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), 127.

³ Louth, *John*, 6.

⁴ Theophanes refers to him as "priest and monk" – *chron.A.M.*6221 (de Boor, 408), and so his works are usually inscribed.

the Holy Land in 1106-8, Abbot Daniel.¹ John himself mentions his acquaintance with the patriarch of Jerusalem, John V (706-35).² In the title for the *Homilia in ficum arefactam* John is described as “presbyter of the Holy Resurrection of Christ our Lord”. Sophronios Eustratiades maintains that he was the “sacred preacher of the Church of the *Anastasis*”,³ and that as such he composed his liturgical poetry and homilies,⁴ for which Theophanes calls John *Chrysorrhoeas* (“flowing with gold”).⁵ Thus, at least for some while John could well have belonged to the monastic community of the *Anastasis* and moved to a quieter monastery in his old age, or the other way round.⁶

In the course of his life John opposed all major heresies. For the refutation of Iconoclasm he was anathematised under his Arabic name, Mansur, at the Iconoclast Synod of Hieria in 754, apparently shortly after his death. For this he was praised among the saints at the Seventh Oecumenical Synod of Nicaea in 787.⁷

John wrote a great number of works which can be put into three categories: exposition and defence of Orthodoxy, sermons, and liturgical poetry. Establishing their chronology and tracing his theological development can be rather speculative.⁸ His most famous work is *The Fountain Head of Knowledge*. The earlier version of the theological treatise consisted of 150 chapters. The first 50 chapters constitute the textbook of logic – *Dialectica* (*Dial.*). Such philosophical textbooks based on Aristotelian logic and

¹ J. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrimage 1099-1185*, (London: Hakluyt Society, 1988), 140.

² *Trisag.* 26.13-14.

³ Sophronios Eustratiades, *Ὁ ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Δαμασκηνός καὶ τὰ ποιητικὰ αὐτοῦ ἔργα*, Νέα Σίων, 26, 1931, 497.

⁴ Louth, *John*, 6.

⁵ *Chron.* A.M. 6234 (de Boor, 417).

⁶ V. Conticello suggests that for his uncompromising Orthodox position John could even be forced to leave Jerusalem and settle in the “desert” in his old age – *Jean*, 1003.

⁷ Cf. Mansi, 13.356CD.

⁸ Louth, *John*, 7.

Porphyrrian commentaries were especially popular in the seventh century. John also wrote another abbreviated version of a similar textbook – *Institutio elementaris ad dogmata (Instit.)*. The next 100 chapters of the *Fountain* are entitled *Expositio fidei (Expos.)*, in which John sets out the systematic exposition of Orthodox faith and theology. The later version of the treatise received a more extensive philosophical textbook. To this group belongs his *De recta sententia liber (Rect.)*. Among his polemic works are the following authentic writings: *Liber de haeresibus (Haeres.)* – brief explanation of 100 heresies largely based on Epiphanius of Salamis. *Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tres (Imag.I-III)*: the first of these famous letters with florilegia against Iconoclasts opposes the Iconoclast edict (726) of the Byzantine Emperor, Leo III; in the second John mentions the patriarch of Constantinople, Germanos, deposed in 730; and in the last letter echoing the previous two he re-systematises Orthodox teaching on the veneration of icons. Different Monophysite groups are opposed in: *De natura composita contra acephalos (Aceph.)*, *Contra Jacobitas (Jacob.)*, *Epistula de hymno Trisagio (Trisag.)*; Monothelites in: *De duabus in Christo voluntatibus (Volunt.)*; Nestorians in: *De fide contra Nestorianos (Fides)*, *Adversos Nestorianos (Nestor.)*. John also wrote *Dialogus contra Manichaeos (Manich.)* and dealing with the “heresy of Islam” *Disputatio Saraceni et Christiani (Sarac.)* however considered dubious, which is also treated in *Haeres.*100. John’s corpus of homilies includes: *Sermo in nativitatem Domini (Nativ.D.)*, *Sermo in Hypapanten (Hypap.)*, *Homilia in transfigurationem domini (Transfig.)*, *Homilia in ficum arefactam (Ficus)*, *Homilia in sabbatum sanctum (Sabbat.)*, *Homilia in nativitatem b.v.Mariae (Nativ.M.)*, *Homiliae I-III in dormitionem b.v.Mariae (Dorm.I-III)*, *Laudatio s.Anastasiae (Anast.)*, *Laudatio s.Barbarae (Barb.)*, *Laudatio s.Joh.Chrysostomi (Chrys.)*, *De sacris ieiuniis (Ieiun.)*. Dubious homilies are: *Homilia in dominicam palmarum (Palm.)*, *Passio s.Artemii (Artem.)*, *Commentarius in proph.Eliam (Elias)*. The patristic *catenae* – *Sacra Parallela (Paral.)* is, too, attributed

to John Damascene. The John Chrysostom based *Commentarii in epistulas Pauli* (Paul.) and the three prayers before the Holy Communion (*Deprecationes* i-iii) are dubious.¹ John wrote a great number of liturgical hymns the authenticity of which, however, is very difficult to establish.² Without doubt, many of his hymns still form the main content of the Orthodox divine office.

John's writings were not original in a modern sense. They were the work of an individual who considered himself a participant in Ecclesiastical tradition. Perhaps now, the pivotal term for the present thesis, "tradition", should be clarified. It is derived from Greek word παράδοσις and Latin word *traditio*. For example, Athanasios of Alexandria defines παράδοσις as the teaching and faith of the Universal Church given by the Lord, preached by the Apostles and preserved by the Fathers.³ For John Damascene παράδοσις consists of written and unwritten sources of faith confessed by the Fathers.⁴ In Orthodox usage, tradition includes Old and New Testament and its exegesis, liturgical worship with its sacraments rites and customs, Christian teaching transmitted verbally and in writing from generation to generation, Creeds, rules of faith, the acts of Oecumenical Councils and local synods, the writings of the Church Fathers, hagiography, personal spiritual experience of each believer from the beginning of Christianity up to the present. Thus, the tradition is the living succession of doctrine, spirituality, and experience originating from Christ and kept in the Church through the

¹ The list of authentic and dubious writings is based on Louth, *John*, xiv-xv, 24 and *Clavis Patrum Graecorum* (CPG), ed. M.Geerard and F.Glorie, CCSG, (Turnhout: Brepols, 1974-87), 3.511-36.

² See the list of John's authentic poetry in Eustratiades, *Ἰωάννης, Νέα Σίων*, 26, 1931, 385-401, 497-512, 530-8, 610-17, 666-81, 721-36; 27, 1932, 28-44, 111-23, 165-77, 216-24, 329-53, 415-22, 450-72, 514-34, 570-85, 644-64, 698-719; 28, 1933, 11-25.

³ Athanasios, *Serap.*I.28, (PG 26.593C-596A).

⁴ *Imag.*2.12.44-45, 3.41.4-6; Cf. 1.23; 2.16.1-6.

centuries – the aggregate of the experience of the Universal Church.¹ Yet tradition is both the total and particularity of local Church traditions. Basically by the term “tradition” in my thesis I imply the mainstream of Orthodox faith, theology, and liturgy, yet in the course of the thesis I shall highlight its other aspects and local trends.

John entered into “a tradition that extended back to the Apostles, but which in a particular way had evolved from the time of the establishment of monastic settlements in Palestine, and had assumed a special role after the conquest of the Middle East by the Arabs”.² The Holy Land and its tradition have always had a unique place in Christianity and in the history of Christological controversies, especially after Chalcedon. Palestinian hierarchs and monks respecting both the theology of Chalcedon and that of Cyril of Alexandria have in fact always occupied the middle position between the various Christological streams, on the path which can be defined as the ultimate Orthodoxy. An outstanding seventh century example is the patriarch of Jerusalem, Sophronios, who led the opposition to Monenergism. His disciple, Maximos the Confessor, withstood Monothelitism. “After Maximos’s death (662), it was the monks of Palestine who, almost alone in the East, came to assume the role of guardians of Orthodoxy”.³ Despite the fact that the Holy Land was under Arab rule from the time of Sophronios, its significance was preserved and pilgrimage did not cease. The tolerance of Arabs towards faiths other than Islam guaranteed a certain freedom and independence of Orthodoxy from the Byzantine imperial will. However, other faiths and Christian groups enjoyed this freedom, too. From the titles of John’s polemical works we can see that Orthodoxy had to oppose Manicheans; different groups of those who rejected

¹ Cf. T.Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, (London, 1993), 196. H.Alfeyev, *St.Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 6.

² Louth, *John*, 9.

³ Louth, *John*, 11.

Chalcedon out of loyalty to Cyril of Alexandria, usually called “Monophysites”; Monenergists and Monothelites; the followers of the Church of the East nicknamed “Nestorians”; let alone Muslims. So “the monks of Palestine found themselves not only defending the Orthodoxy of the Byzantine Councils, but also refining that Orthodoxy and defining it more precisely in this new situation of open controversy”,¹ working almost literally in the shadow of mosques. Yet at least until the ninth century, Orthodox Christians of the Middle East, Melkites or supporters of the imperial Orthodoxy, considered themselves sons of Byzantium zealously guarding Orthodoxy in a “Babylonian captivity”.

Both as a Syrian “Melkite” and as a Palestinian hieromonk John entered into this situation, into a process of refining and defining the tradition of Christian Orthodoxy. “But Palestinian monasticism was engaged in more than a prolonged bout of controversial theology: the Faith was not just defended and defined, it was also acclaimed in the weekly celebration of the paschal mystery, and in the celebration, year by year, of the great events of the history of salvation”.² Having entered into this tradition, John continued its ways of theological and liturgical expression so that still today, his liturgical poetry is an original contribution to the union of liturgy and theology focussing on the contemplation of Christ. Now the history of the Palestinian liturgical tradition needs to be outlined.

¹ Louth, *John*, 11.

² Louth, *John*, 12.

Palestinian Liturgical Tradition

Liturgical worship is the ever present axis in Christian life. In the second half of the fourth century ample documentary evidence of the evolution of local liturgical traditions bursts onto the scene;¹ in prime place is Palestinian tradition.² Great events and achievements of Christ's redemptive ministry commemorated in the liturgy received their especial significance in Palestine after Constantine the Great and Helena had restored Jerusalem and built famous Churches: the complex at Calvary called the *Anastasis*; the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem; and the Church of the Assumption on the Mount of Olives.³ These sites associated with major events in the redemptive ministry of Christ became the dwelling place of the Palestinian liturgical tradition. A valuable account of this tradition is given in the *Diary* of Egeria.⁴ She describes daily, weekly, and annual liturgical cycles. The first includes Matins at dawn, Sixth and Ninth Hours, Vespers in the evening,⁵ Third Hour during Lent.⁶ These services consist of psalms, responses, scriptural readings, antiphons, hymns,⁷ intercessions, prayers, blessings, dismissals, – everything is “proper to the time, day, and place”.⁸ Her picture is complemented by the Old Armenian lectionary reflecting the rite of Jerusalem between 417 and 439 A.D., and by the Georgian lectionary displaying the evidence of

¹ See R.Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1986), 31-2.

² For the stational liturgy in general and that of Jerusalem in particular see J.Baldovin, *The Urban Character of Christian Worship: The Origins, Development and Meaning of Stational Liturgy*, OCA, 228, (Roma, 1987).

³ *Vita Constantini*, 3.33-43 (Cameron). For the map see Baldovin, *Worship*, 271-2.

⁴ *Egeria's Travel*, tr. by J.Wilkinson, Second ed., (Warminster, 1999).

⁵ *Diary*, 24.

⁶ *Diary*, 27.

⁷ The hymns she mentions at Matins are likely to be the biblical canticles.

⁸ Cf. Egeria, *Diary*, 25.5; Taft, *Hours*, 54.

the V-VIIIcc.¹ which clarify what is "proper". Those services are celebrated daily and weekly. On particular days of the week the daily cycle includes Mass or Liturgy on Wednesday and Friday at the Church of Sion,² Vigil and liturgy on Saturday,³ and particularly solemn Sunday Office: Vigil and liturgy, probably, of James, dedicated to the Resurrection.⁴ The third cycle includes the Epiphany and its octave,⁵ the Presentation,⁶ Lent,⁷ Holy Week beginning with Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday and concluding with the Easter,⁸ Easter itself, Eastertide, Thomas Sunday,⁹ The Fortieth Day,¹⁰ Pentecost,¹¹ the Feast of Dedication of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre.¹² The obvious purpose of such an order is to fill a Christian's every day with prayer and worship commemorating the ministry of Jesus and declaring His presence. By the time of John Damascene it certainly had become more elaborate. The daily cycle of seven services plus liturgy altogether made the sacral number eight, the weekly cycle of all eight services with the *Oktoechos* in embryo, and the annual cycle of Twelve Great

¹ For the Armenian lectionary, which is based on two manuscripts, Paris arm.44 and Jerusalem 121 see A.Renoux, *Le codex arménien Jérusalem 121*, PO 35.1 (1969); 36.2 (1971). For the Georgian lectionary see M.Tarchnischvili, *Le grand lectionnaire de l'Église de Jerusalem*, I, CSCO 188-189, *Scriptores Iberici*, 9-10, (Louvain, 1959); II, CSCO 204-205, *Scriptores Iberici*, 13-14, (Louvain, 1960).

² *Diary*, 27, 41, 44.

³ *Diary*, 27. Cf. John Cassian, *Inst.* 3.8-9 (Guy).

⁴ *Diary*, 24-5.

⁵ *Diary*, 25.

⁶ *Diary*, 26.

⁷ *Diary*, 27-8.

⁸ *Diary*, 29-38.

⁹ *Diary*, 39-41.

¹⁰ *Diary*, 42.

¹¹ *Diary*, 43-4.

¹² *Diary*, 48-9.

Feasts, Lent, and the fifty days of Eastertide concluding with Pentecost, had come to be well established.

Along with clergy and laymen, monks and virgins played the most active part in the services according to Egeria.¹ Elias, patriarch of Jerusalem (494-517) built a monastery near his residence and gathered such monks (σπουδαῖοι or “eager”) in its cells. Palladios exemplifies such a monk describing the life of Adolios who was particularly keen on singing at the Mount of Olives.² The daily cycle of the monastery in Bethlehem where John Cassian was a monk around 382-386 reminds us of that described by Egeria with the inclusion of the twelve psalms.³ Later monastic settlement of the fifth-sixth century in Palestine marked with the work of Mar Saba was concentrated around Jerusalem and other holy sites. In fact it was going on in the already established context of the liturgical tradition of Jerusalem. It is quite obvious that liturgical voyages of new monasteries were directed towards the liturgical lighthouse of Jerusalem. Thus, Mar Saba introduced Vigils on Sundays and great feasts in his Laura, following the pattern of the *Anastasis*.⁴

On the one hand, there was the obvious influence of Jerusalem Cathedral liturgy on monasteries, on the other, there was eager participation of monks both in monastic and city divine services. The mutual influence of these two as seen in the history of what came to be called the Jerusalem *typikon*, believed by tradition to be in various ways contributed by Saba, Sophronios, John Damascene, and, perhaps, many others, inclines us to think that the Palestinian liturgical tradition is a centuries-old result of evolution of both monastic and cathedral office, an integral whole, a “perfect theandric

¹ Cf. *Diary*, 24-5.

² *Lausiac*, 43 (Bartelink).

³ *Inst.* 2.1-2, 3.3-9.

⁴ *Vita Sabae*, ed. E. Schwartz, *Kyrillos von Skythopolis*, Texte und Untersuchungen, 49.2, (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1939), 118.

mechanism". Apart from the number of Psalms and readings, Palestinian Cathedral and monastic services did not differ much, and in no way were monks of Palestine opposed to singing. Speculatively it is possible to suggest that certain developments of rite or hymnography could originate either in the monasteries or in the city churches,¹ but they obviously had to be approved by the patriarch, because both monasteries and churches belonged to the same Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the central figure of authority of which was the patriarch.² In this sense Palestinian liturgical tradition originates from Jerusalem.³

Biblical Canticles and the Canon

Another valuable detailed description of Palestinian liturgy with particular reference to the Matins of Sunday Vigil, can be drawn from the account of a visit paid by Abbots John and Sophronios to the anchorite Abbot Nilos of Sinai, a Greek source of the late sixth or early seventh century.⁴ The structure of Matins includes the Six Psalms (ἑξάψαλμος); the reading of the entire Psalter divided into three parts (στάσεις), interrupted by the Lord's Prayer "Our Father", Κύριε ἐλέησον 50 times, and lessons

¹ For example, Taft sees a possible impetus to the liturgical development in the monasteries and in the city churches in the restoration of Jerusalem and surrounding monastic life after the destruction caused by the Persian conquest – *Hours*, 276.

² *Trisag.* 26.10-14 can indicate that John Damascene refers to the authority of the patriarch of Jerusalem, John, when he censures the liturgical practice of some monasteries.

³ For the history of Palestinian divine office see M. Arranz, "*Les grandes étapes de la liturgie byzantine: Palestine-Byzantine-Russie*," *Liturgie de l'église particulière, liturgie de l'église universelle*, BELS 7, (Rome: Edizioni liturgiche, 1976), 43-72; "*L'office divin en orient*," DS 11, 707-20.

⁴ For the critical edition see A. Longo, "*Il testo integrale della Narrazione delgi abati Giovanni e Sofronio attraverso le Hermeneiai di Nicone*," *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici* 12-13, 1965-1966, 223-67. See also J. Mateos, "*La psalmodie variable dans l'office Byzantine*," *Societas academica Dacoromana, Acta philosophica et theologica* 2, (Rome, 1964), 336ff. Taft, however, notes that "the liturgical material of the narrative is not necessarily, at least in its entirety, as old as the rest of the account" – *Hours*, 199. Its reflections can be seen in J. Mateos, "*Un horologion inédit de Saint-Sabas, Le Codex sinaïtique grec 863 (IXe siècle)*," *Mélanges E. Tisserant*, vol. III.1, 47-76, ST 233, (Vatican: Typis polyglottis Vaticanis, 1964); *A Christian Palestinian Syriac Horologion* (Berlin MS. Or. Oct. 1019) ed. M. Black, *Texts and Studies, new series*, 1, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).

from the New Testament; nine biblical canticles or odes with the Lord's Prayer and Κύριε ἐλέησον after the third and sixth ode; Psalms 148-150; *Gloria in excelsis*; Creed; the Lord's Prayer; Κύριε ἐλέησον 300 times; concluding prayer.¹ These elements appear to be common for the office of Sinaite and Palestinian monks, which is called the canon or the monastic rule.² However, John and Sophronios expressed their astonishment at the absence of liturgical poetry in Nilos' rule. From the contrast it can be concluded that the following elements were present in their Palestinian Sunday Vigil office, which the visitors call "the rule of the Universal and Apostolic Church": 1. at Vespers: the refrains or *troparia* with Psalm 140; Psalm 140:2 responsory; 2. at Matins: the invitation responsory "The Lord is God" (Psalm 117:26-27); καθίσματα ἀναστάσιμα after each στήσις; certain readings or hymns after the third and sixth biblical canticles; *troparia* with the seventh, eighth and ninth odes; the responsory "Let everything that has breath" (Psalm 150:6) before the Gospel; and Sunday *troparion* after *Gloria in excelsis*.³

The nine odes are:

1. The Song of Moses: Exodus 15:1-19
2. The Song of Moses: Deuteronomy 32:1-43
3. The Song of Anna: 1 Kings 2:1-10
4. The Prayer of Avvakum (or Habakkuk): Avvakum 3:1-19
5. The Prayer of Isaias: Isaias 26:9-20
6. The Prayer of Jonas: Jonas 2:3-10
7. The Prayer of the Three Holy Children: Daniel 3:26-56 (LXX)

¹ Longo, *Narrazione*, 251-2. Thus, the liturgy is supposed to bring together scriptural readings, hymns, and the practice of Jesus prayer.

² For various meanings of the word see the entry in G.Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 701-2.

³ Certain elements were read by priests, some by readers, and other sung by singers – Longo, *Narrazione*, 252.

8. The Song of the Three Holy Children: Daniel 3:57-88 (LXX)

9. The Song of the Mother of God (the *Magnificat*): Luke 1:46-55, and the Song of Zacharias: Luke 1:68-79

It is clear that biblical canticles were exclusively part of Matins. Whatever *troparia* and readings were used in connection with the odes, they seem to be supplementary to the content of the odes at that stage. Nevertheless, they had been already in use for some time. Thus, in this case we are probably dealing with the embryo or prototype of the later hymnographical piece – the canon.¹ It is one step from such a prototype to the full canon and this step was gradually taken at the end of the seventh and the beginning of the eighth century by poetically gifted Palestinian authors. Most of them were monks, but not necessarily based in the anchorite monasteries or Lauras. They could well belong to the communities of σπουδαῖοι either at the *Anastasis*, or at Bethlehem, or at Eleona, or elsewhere. Their creative work, which could be both individual and collective, was welcomed by the Church authorities, which is not always the case. This means that the Church was in need of it, perhaps, for the reasons which were outlined above in the discussion of the geopolitical and religious context of the Jerusalem Patriarchate. Yet only the most brilliant poetic compositions (which however could incorporate earlier pieces), which were obviously written by the most talented and educated poets and theologians, retained their place in the liturgy. From that region and period three such authors are the best known:² 1. A Palestinian monk, Andrew, who sometime between 692 and 713 became bishop of Gortyna and metropolitan of Crete. Among the canons he composed is a famous penitential “Great

¹ Such an embryo roughly recalls the *triadion*, a form of a canon still used in Byzantine office during Lent and Eastertide.

² Cf. N. Vaporis (ed.), *Three Byzantine Sacred Poets*, Hellenic College Press, 1979. The book is dedicated to Romanos the Melodist, Andrew of Crete, and John Damascene.

Canon” sung in Lent. 2. Cosmas the Melodist, bishop of Maïuma,¹ to whom, for example, the first canon at Matins of many of the greater feasts of the liturgical year is ascribed. 3. John Damascene. It is traditionally believed that John wrote many canons, probably, more than a hundred. Among them are the Easter and Thomas Sunday canons; the second canon at Matins of most of the greater feasts, for example: the Nativity, Epiphany, Transfiguration, Assumption, Dormition; the first canon at Matins of the Sunday *Oktoechos*; numerous canons for the *Theotokos*; canons of many saints. There are several opinions concerning their authenticity. Church tradition does not question it, of course, whereas the most sceptical scholars entirely reject it. Neither of these assumptions fully reflects the evidence. Probably there are some pseudo-epigraphs. But unless an alternative inscription is present in the title of the canon, there can hardly be any convincing argument against the authorship of John as indicated in the titles. Moreover, there are also many positive arguments in its favour. Thus, from the evidence of the inscriptions of the canons in various manuscripts Sophronios Eustratiades credits a huge number of them to him including those for the great feasts.² The canons for the Transfiguration and Dormition clearly correspond to John’s authentic sermons for these feasts. Only three iambic canons were admitted into Orthodox liturgy. The language of two of them for the Nativity and Epiphany, ascribed to John Damascene, is fully identical and clearly corresponds with the theological terminology of *Expositio fidei*. So does the theological language of many other canons, including those of the *Oktoechos*, Easter, Thomas Sunday, the rest of the great feasts, and many saints. The third iambic canon for the Pentecost can still join them though it

¹ Theophanes mentions that John delivered a sermon in praise of Peter of Maïuma, who was martyred for cursing Muhammad in 743 – *chron.A.M.*6234 (de Boor, 417). *Greek Vita* of John defines Cosmas as John’s schoolmate, fellow-monk and fellow-poet who became bishop of Maïuma.

² Eustratiades, *Ἰωάννης, Νέα Σίων*, 26, 1931, 669-81, 721-36.

differs stylistically and is attributed to a certain unknown John of Arklas.¹ The earliest evidence for John's contribution to the *Oktoechos* can be found in Peter Damascene (XIc.) who several times quotes from John, and in virtually every case it is the *Paraklitiki* that he is quoting.² Whenever polemic implications occur in the canons, they always reflect the need for the defence of Orthodoxy against the heresies and controversies which formed John's religious context. In some cases specific poetic idioms might betray the authorship of John. In the course of the thesis the question of authenticity is dealt with in more detail. The comparison of canons and their ideas with John's polemic writings often highlight their correspondence and close relation. In many cases this is supportive of the authenticity of the canons and generally demonstrates that the canons are strongly influenced by John's polemic writings. Yet any discussion on this subject would seem to be rather speculative, at least until we can see critical editions of each hymn.

To illustrate the poetic quality of John's canons Fr Andrew Louth quotes S. Eustratiades: "John does not have the spontaneity nor the lyricism of Romanos or Cosmas, but there is sweetness in his rhythm and diction and simplicity in his description".³ This is particularly the case for John's iambic canons – fascinating poetic monuments rivalling classical poetry (iambic poetry, however, primarily belongs to classical Greek culture and is non-conventional for the Christian liturgy). From the start canons were designed for chanting.⁴ One of the eight musical modes was assigned to

¹ S.Eustratiades does not mention this canon in his list, yet it is possible to identify the enigmatic John of Arklas with John Damascene – cf. E.Lash, <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/PentCan02noted.pdf> 27.07.2004.

² *Philokalia: The Complete Text Compiled by St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St Makarios of Corinth*, trans. and ed. G.Palmer, P.Sherrard and K.Ware, (London:Faber and Faber, 1979 ff.), iii.122, 142-3.

³ Louth, *John*, 257; Eustratiades, *Ἰωάννης, Νέα Σίων*, 1931, 501.

⁴ Louth, *John*, 255; E.Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*, (Second ed., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 202.

each canon. *Troparia* were written in the compact metre suitable for singing. The pattern of chanting was supposed to be given in the *irmos*. "More than this it is difficult to say, as manuscripts with musical notation do not date back as far as the origin of the canon".¹ It is interesting to note that the name of John Damascene was used by authors in the treatises on the theory of music, appearing in the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries.² Such was his poetic fame. However, as far as the scope of the thesis is concerned, we shall not be paying particular attention to the poetical value but shall be putting the Christological dimension of the poems into focus.

The canon consists of a series of meditations. Its poetic, structural and theological integrity can be supported by the acrostic whenever it is present. Many acrostics propose a theological thesis which then unfolds throughout the poem. Canons without the acrostic often preserve the same level of theological integrity.

Normally the canon consists of nine odes, but the second ode was omitted for some reason (probably, because it was very long, mournful and penitential). The *troparia* of the canon were sung between the last verses of each of the nine biblical canticles. Some *troparia* have reference to the corresponding canticle, yet more obvious reference is usually found in the *irmos*. The *irmos* is the first stanza of each ode of the canon after which the following *troparia* are modelled. The *irmos* provides the link to the biblical canticle, sometimes being itself the conspectus of the canticle. Often the *irmos* encompasses and interprets the scriptural story to which the biblical canticle is dedicated. Sometimes the acrostic indicates that *irmoi* originally belonged to the same canon, in other cases *troparia* were composed after the existing *irmoi* to suit their melody and rhythm.

¹ Louth, *John*, 255. Cf. the speculation of Wellesz, *History*, 202-3 and D. Conomos, *Early Christian and Byzantine Music*, http://www.monachos.net/liturgics/chant_history.shtml 01.08.2004.

² Cf. J. Raasted (ed.), *The Hagiopolites: A Byzantine Treatise on Music Theory*, CIMA GL 45 (Copenhagen: Erik Paludan, 1983); G. Wolfram and C. Hannick (ed.), *Die Erotapokriseis des pseudo-Johannes Damaskenos zum Kirchengesang*, CSM, 5, (Wien, 1997).

Thus, the flight of Israel out of Egypt assisted by God, praised in the Song of Moses, often appears in the *irmos* and *troparia* of ode 1 as general prototype of the redemption accomplished by Christ. God-the Creator and Founder is usually referred to in the texts of ode 3 alluding to the Song of Anna. In the notion of the rock one can also see a reference to the story of the desert wandering. The vision of Avvakum which inspired his prayer appears in ode 4 to typify the Incarnation. Referring to the Song of Isaias, hymns of ode 5 are concerned with the theme of light. The author often speaks of the prayer at dawn which may correspond with the time of orthros. The story of Jonas and his prayer typifies the three days of the Resurrection of Christ, or sometimes our life is metaphorically compared with that of Jonas in the sixth ode of the canon. Odes 7 and 8 are based on the story of the three youths, their prayer and song. The fire and dew in the story commonly symbolise the activity of the Godhead. Referring to the *Magnificat* and the song of Zacharias, the ninth ode explores the wonders of the Incarnation and virgin birth.

The canon extensively employs Holy Scripture in addition to biblical canticles. Scriptural references given in brackets in the course of the analysis of the canons, are very important for they demonstrate the scriptural origins of the texts and images. Many of them will be discussed below.

Every canon is to some extent an independent theological piece, a compact and precise theological exposition of the event to which it is devoted, and in a broader perspective an integral segment of Orthodox theology. Christological themes are pivotal to most of John Damascene's canons. Therefore one can easily find many polemical implications typical of John, his time, and environment. In this connection it should be noted that the *triadika* and *theotokia*, present in many John's canons, with John's Orthodox insight, concentrate on two major Christian beliefs: in God the Trinity, and in the Incarnation of the Son of God. The canons also correspond to many of John's

œuvre, mentioned above, defining and defending Orthodoxy and expressing it in sermons.

The canons appeared soon after the Sixth Oecumenical Council, after the main theological and Christological issues had been settled. From this perspective, John's canons summed up the tradition and encapsulated the ultimate Orthodox theology and Christology. Therefore the canon can also be called the rule of faith, and the liturgy – the school of theology or the knowledge of God. And this is largely owing to the contribution of John Damascene. Thus, the Palestinian tradition of “refining and defining the Orthodoxy” found a clear way into the liturgy. Yet the canon is not merely an expression of faith, acclaimed in the liturgy, it is also a prayer reviving the faith on a deeper spiritual level. Although in some way the canon stands out in the liturgy, it is to be considered in the context of other liturgical elements: scriptural readings; hymns, among which there are many *stichera*, probably, also written by John; prayers; and above all the Eucharist.

The liturgical poetry of John and his Palestinian contemporaries – a substantial part of Palestinian tradition – has lived through more than a millennium of liturgical evolution till the present day when it plays the same important role. Surprisingly, “scholarly work on the riches of Byzantine liturgical poetry is in its infancy”.¹

The Aims of the Present Work

Considerable scholarly work has been done on John's theological prose. For example, the fundamental critical edition with rich apparatus was produced by Dom Bonifatius Kotter in five volumes, which encompass the *Dialectica* in the first, the *Expositio fidei* in the second, the *Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tres* in the

¹ Louth, *John*, 253.

third, polemical works in the fourth, and sermons in the fifth volume.¹ The latest comprehensive study of the personality of John and his theology belongs to Revd. Professor Andrew Louth.² However, little has been done on liturgical poetry in general and on John's poetry in particular. On the basis of Jerusalem and Paris liturgical manuscripts S.Eustratiades produced a series of articles including the list of John's authentic hymns.³ Only for the Easter canon is there a critical edition.⁴ Theological commentaries of the canons are also quite rare. Zonaras (XIIC.) has left one for the Resurrection canons of the *Oktoechos*.⁵ In the introduction to the French edition of the *Oktoechos* C.Hannick provided some historical and theological outlook about the texts.⁶ 'Εορτοδρόμιον ("Guide to the Feasts") by Nikodimos the Agiorite (1749-1809) is a theological commentary on the canons and their patristic sources for ten of the Twelve Great Feasts, together with those for Holy Week and Easter.⁷ The work is comparatively comprehensive for its time. Referring to Nikodimos, Fr Andrew Louth has analysed John's canons for Easter, the Transfiguration, and Dormition.⁸ Some commentaries

¹ B.Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, 5 vols., PTS 7, 12, 17, 22, 29, (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1969-88).

² *Op.cit.* See also C.Chevalier, *La Mariologie de saint Jean Damascène*, OCA 109, (Rome, 1936); B.Studer, *Die theologische Arbeitsweise des Johannes von Damaskos*, *Studia Patristica et Byzantina*, 2, (Ettal: Buch-Kunstverlag, 1956); G.Richter, *Dialektik, Johannes von Damaskos, Philosophische Kapitel*, *Bibliothek der Griechischen Literatur*, 15, (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1982); K.Rozemond, *La Christologie de saint Jean Damascène*, *Studia Patristica et Byzantina*, 8, (Ettal, 1959); *La lettre «De hymno trisagio» de Jean Damascène, ou Jean Mosche, patriarche de Jérusalem*, SP 15, 1984, 108-11;

³ *Op.cit.*

⁴ F.Gahbauer, *Der Osterkanon des Johannes von Damaskos: Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar*, *Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Benediktinerordens*, 106, 1995, 133-74.

⁵ See the introduction in PG 134.421-8 and description in S.Lauriotes, *Athos*, I, 1920.

⁶ C.Hannick, *Dimanche office selon les huit tons "Oktoechos"*, *La Prière des Églises de rite Byzantin* 3, (Éditions de Chevetogne, 1970), 11-60.

⁷ Nikodimos the Agiorite, *Εορτοδρόμιον*, 3 vols., (Θεσσαλονίκη, 1987, originally published in 1836). Nikodimos often refers to some preceding commentaries.

⁸ Louth, *John*, 252-82.

accompany the English translations of liturgical texts by Fr Ephrem Lash.¹ There are a few books in Russian.² Bishop Veniamin Milov presented a reconstruction of basic Orthodox concepts drawn from liturgical texts.³ Bishop Hilarion Alfeyev approached the liturgical reflections of the concept of the descent of Christ into hell.⁴ Altogether these works provide some basis, yet leave an enormous space for further systematic research into authenticity, scriptural and patristic origins and sources, theological, Christological and polemic significance of liturgical poetry in general and that of John Damascene in particular. Hence, the main purpose of this thesis is to produce a systematic analysis of John's canons which would fill these lacunas as far as possible.

As I have said above, the *troparia* of canons can be seen as series of meditations, but I shall also demonstrate their integrity within canons when making "internal" references. So, it is important to pay attention to every reference in brackets after the *troparion*, after the expression in the *troparion*, or in the following commentary which refer to the preceding *troparion*, ode, or canon. Such a demonstration of integrity helps to analyse the canon as a united piece or systematic theological treatise. Orthodox tradition and theology is compressed in liturgical books, and canons are compressed theological pieces which we have to unfold. Such compression points to what is really vital for the Church and absorbed by the liturgy.

My choice falls on the canons for the Nativity, Epiphany, Transfiguration, Easter, Thomas Sunday, and the Resurrection of the *Oktoechos*. Constituting the annual

¹ See E.Lash, <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/canons.htm> 27.07.2004.

² A general outlook of liturgical poetry can be found in Филарет (Гумилевский), *Исторический обзор песнопевцев и песнопений греческой церкви*, (Санкт Петербург, 1902).

³ В.Милов, *Чтения по литургическому богословию* (1960s), <http://www.liturgica.ru/bibliot/milov/milov1.html> 27.7.2004. However, the work lacks the systematic analysis of texts, their patristic sources, and secondary literature.

⁴ И.Алфеев, *Христос – Победитель ада. Тема сошествия во ад в восточно-христианской традиции*, (Санкт-Петербург: Алетейя, 2001), 196-302.

liturgical cycle, the great feasts and Sundays, to which these canons are dedicated, present a clear picture of Jesus Christ and commemorate the central redemptive events of His ministry, as the Church believes. So in the course of the thesis we will journey from the Incarnation of the Son of God through His manifestation on earth, Baptism, Transfiguration, Passion, Crucifixion, and Resurrection to His saving achievements. Thus, the whole “earthly life of Christ passes by the spiritual gaze of the faithful”.¹ Moreover, the contemplation of Christ is bound up with the contemplation of salvation. Throughout these events and feasts the mystery of human salvation fully unfolds.

The theology of these festivals is of particular importance to the Chalcedonian Orthodox Church to which John Damascene belonged. Their selection is supposed to highlight the central theological themes as they appear throughout these events and the liturgical poems devoted to them. Every canon establishes the Church’s theological perception of a certain event in the liturgical tradition. So this research will be concentrated on the theology of the canons with particular reference to Christology and its redemptive implications.

The structure of every chapter will include an historical and theological introduction to the feast. Then it will include canons approached from the reader’s or listener’s point of view. Canons will be accompanied by a *troparion-by-troparion* detailed commentary, interpretation, analysis, and scriptural and patristic allusions given in brackets and in footnotes displaying the sources. From this the most obvious theological ideas, emphasised by the author, are drawn into further discussion. The canon for the Epiphany for example will be compared with other liturgical hymns of the feast in order to see how the poem operates in its liturgical context. As mentioned above, the notion of tradition is central to this analysis. Each section of each chapter, particularly when the emphases are approached, clarifies, unfolds, and traces the

¹ H.Alfeyev, *Orthodox Worship as a School of Theology*, Lecture in Kiev Theological Academy on September 20, 2002, <http://www.orthodoxeuropa.org/page/12/1.aspx> 27.07.2004.

tradition – universal and local Christian succession, understanding, experience and use of belief, teaching, ideas and concepts relevant to the events analysed. These are inherited by John Damascene and expressed in his theological prose, and in particular in *Expositio fidei*. So an answer will be given to the question, what is tradition? Finally, each section virtually comparing the teaching of theological prose with that of liturgical hymns analyses how John's canons correspond with, express, and, perhaps, contribute to tradition. As a result of this analysis the following points will be demonstrated: a) the integrity of John's canons with respect to the tradition; b) the value of the canons as theological repositories that actually encompass almost every Orthodox concept, and especially, the importance of the expression of Christological tradition which make them "the rule of faith"; c) the polemic significance of the canons in the sphere of Christology; d) how the canons serve the purpose of living contemplation of the Person of Christ in the divine liturgy.

However, when concentrating on a certain idea in connection with one canon, we have to remember that the same idea can be found in many canons in a compressed form. For example, the canons for the Nativity and Epiphany recall the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, and the Resurrection canons recall the Incarnation. The themes of baptism, illumination, deification, correspondence with icons can be traced in each canon. Nevertheless, the thesis will demonstrate that these canons form one integral picture – the authentic picture of Christ and His salvation drawn and preserved by the Orthodox Church. So, being in some respect a pioneering work, this research illustrates the nature of liturgical tradition, how the theology of the Person of Christ is reflected in it, and what the contribution of John is to liturgical tradition, theology, and hymnography.

Orthodox divine services, whether it be Mass, Vespers, Matins, Hours, Nocturnes or Compline, nurture an atmosphere of uninterrupted prayer, in which

readings, psalms, litanies, *stichera*, *troparia*, canons, prayers follow one another in a continuous stream, in one rhythm, unfolding the mystery of faith and Christian truth. The Byzantine liturgy is filled with insightful theological and mystical content. In such a *theourgia*, according to the teaching of the Fathers, not only the Church on earth, but also the heavenly Church participates.¹

Similar services were once celebrated in other Christian communities, but over the centuries their content has been reduced as a result of both liturgical and theological reforms. There does not seem to be the same possibility for liturgical reform of Orthodox liturgy. The services of each tradition, be it Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, or any other, are the most authentic expressions of its doctrinal foundations.² Orthodox liturgical texts are important because of their ability to give exact criteria of theological truth. Theology should be confirmed through the guideline of liturgical texts. The Orthodox liturgy expresses the Orthodox faith – *lex orandi, lex credendi*.³ The liturgy is the highest manifestation of Christianity, the ultimate live theology, which brings God down to the realm of people and raises people up into the realm of God. Generally my work is dedicated to the demonstration of this idea.

¹ Alfeyev, *Worship*.

² Alfeyev, *Worship*.

³ “Law of prayer is the law of belief” – a traditional axiom going back to Prosper of Aquitaine (c.390-463), affirming that liturgy is the norm of faith.

I. The Canon for the Nativity

Introduction

The Nativity of Jesus Christ is a fundamental Christian festival which focuses on the Incarnation.¹ Who is Jesus Christ? (cf. John 12:34) Whence is He? (cf. John 19:9) What is the Incarnation? These questions have been asked since Christ was born. They were the pivotal axis of the dogmatic discussions which have shaped Church tradition (hereafter identified as Orthodox Christology).

John Damascene was very much concerned with these questions. He composed an iambic canon for the Nativity which established the traditional contemplation (ἀναθεώρησις) of the event in the Orthodox liturgy. How does the canon answer these questions when depicting the Person of Christ, and to what extent is it an exact exposition of Orthodox Christology? To answer this we shall look at the history of Christological tradition as summarised by John. This will be followed by a systematic theological interpretation of the canon, its theological language, its approach to the role of the Virgin Mary, and the comparison of these with tradition. The Christological terminology introduced in this chapter will be essential throughout the thesis.

¹ The feast of the Nativity is related to the feast of the Epiphany. The historical formation of both festivals will be investigated in the next chapter.

Christology of John Damascene

The idea of the Incarnation¹ that the “Word became flesh” (John 1:14), and the Person of the incarnate One, were the subject of a long Christological controversy, at the end of which John stands. This issue has been thoroughly discussed.² In this section I have first presented some of the most important landmarks in the history of the Christological controversies which influenced John’s Christology and which could have found reflection in his canons. The landmark to begin with would seem to be the fourth Oecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451).

On the basis of letters of Cyril of Alexandria³ against Nestorios, the “Formula of Reunion”,⁴ and the “Tome of Leo” or the letter of the Roman pope, Leo,⁵ to Flavian, the Council of Chalcedon issued a definition of faith that was meant to bring about reconciliation between the Alexandrian and Antiochene parties by accentuating simultaneously the unity of the hypostasis (the oneness of subject) of Christ and the existence of two natures “without confusion, without change, without division, without

¹ The term is derived from Greek words σάρκωσις (“into flesh”), and ἐνανθρώπησις (“into man”).

² See, for example, A.Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, Vols.1, 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, Second revised ed. (London:Mowbrays, 1975-1996). S.Hovorun, *Theological Controversy in the Seventh Century concerning Activities and Wills in Christ*, Ph.D.Thesis, (University of Durham, 2003); Г.Флоровский, *Восточные Отцы V-VII веков*, (Москва, 1992), 6-7. For a general outlook see also И.Мейендорф, *Введение в святоотеческое богословие*, (Вильнюс, 1992), 106-286.

³ On Cyril see J.Quasten, *Patrology*, 3.116-43; Grillmeier, *Christ*, 1.473-83; J.McGuckin, *St.Cyril of Alexandria: the Christological Controversy, Its History, Theology, and Texts*, (Leiden-N.Y.-Koln, 1994); N.Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, (London: Routledge, 2000). See also L.Janssens, *Notre filiation divine d'apres Saint Cyrille d'Alexandrie*, *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 15, 1938, 240-5, 267. Anathemas against Nestorios – Cyril, *Ep.*17.12 (III to Nestorios), *Anath.* 2-3, 6-7, 10, (Wickham, 28-33). On the third Oecumenical Council of Ephesus (431) see N.Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Vol.1, (London: Sheed and Ward; Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 40-69.

⁴ Tanner, *Decrees*, 69-70.

⁵ On Leo see Quasten, *Patrology*, 4.589-612; Grillmeier, *Christ*, 1.526-39; R.Riedinger, *Papst Martin I und Papst Leo I in den Akten der Lateran-Synode von 649*, *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 33, 1983.

separation”.¹ However the opposing groups had not been reconciled. On the one hand, Antiochene theologians, for whom two natures meant two hypostases, could not accept the one hypostasis of the definition, let alone Cyril’s *theopaschism* implied by it. The Antiochene or East-Syrian theological tradition remained forever faithful to the Christology of Diodore, Theodore, and Nestorios.² Being unfairly nicknamed “Nestorian”, it flourished in the Persian Empire.³ On the other hand, many did not accept the definition, regarding it as a betrayal of Cyril. Those were the people later known as “Monophysites”. But this was a misleading label since they all condemned Eutyches and held that Christ’s single nature was consubstantial with us, just as much as it was consubstantial with the Father. They were the adherents of the Christological language of Cyril who knew no sharp distinction between *ὑπόστασις* and *φύσις*.⁴ The leader of the *acephali*⁵, the patriarch of Antioch (512-518), Severos,⁶ was the most noted challenger, theologian, and apologist of Monophysitism. Faithful to Cyril’s

¹ Tanner, *Decrees*, 86. According to the final definition, one Christ was recognised in two natures rather than out of two natures as was proposed in the draft. This difference was fateful – Louth, *John*, 150.

² On Diodore see Quasten, *Patrology*, 3.397-401; Grillmeier, *Christ*, 1.352-60; on Theodore – Quasten, *Patrology*, 3.401-23; Grillmeier, *Christ*, 1.421-39; on Nestorios – Quasten, *Patrology*, 3.514-19; Grillmeier, *Christ*, 1. 447-72. See also R.Norris, *Manhood and Christ: A Study in the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963); A.de Halleux, *Nestorius, Histoire et Doctrine*, Irenikon, 1993, 66, xxx, 163-7; Hovorun, *Controversy*, 26-34.

³ For its history see H.Alfeyev, *The Spiritual World of Isaac the Syrian*, Cistercian Publications, (Kalamazoo, Michigan - Spencer, Massachusetts, 2000), 21. For the Christology of the Church of East in the historical perspective see S.Brock, *Studies in Syriac Christianity: History, Literature and Theology*, *Collected studies series*, CS 357, (Hampshire, Great Britain; Brookfield, Vt., USA: Variorum, 1992), 12.125-142.

⁴ Louth, *John*, 150-1. Alongside the language of “one nature” Cyril used the language of “one hypostasis” which was to foreshadow Chalcedon – Cyril, *Ep.* 17.8 (III to Nestorios), (Wickham, 22-5).

⁵ Those who rejected the *Henotikon*, issued by the Emperor Zeno in 482, were called *acephali* (“headless ones”). For its English translation see P.Coleman-Norton, *Roman State and Christian Church*, 3 Vols., (London: SPCK, 1966), 3.924-933.

⁶ On the history of Monophysitism and Severos see W.Frend, *The rise of the Monophysite movement: Chapters in the History of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972); R.Chesnut, *Three Monophysite Christologies: Severus of Antioch, Philoxenus of Mabbug and Jacob of Sarug*, *Oxford theological monographs*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1976); I.Torrance, *Christology after Chalcedon: Severus of Antioch and Sergius the Monophysite*, (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1988); Grillmeier, *Christ*, 2.1, 6-12; 2.2, 148-73; Hovorun, *Controversy*, 35-53, 59-61.

Christology, he maintained the identity of nature with hypostasis. Any mention of two natures or two activities was unacceptable to him since it split the oneness of Christ, that is, the one composite, theandric nature-hypostasis.

The challenge of Monophysitism and, especially of Julian of Halicarnassus who developed the so-called teaching of Aphthartodocetism,¹ was met by Leontios of Byzantium,² a talented representative of Chalcedonian Orthodoxy. Also important was the contribution to the clarification and recognition of Chalcedon made by a group of theologians, grouped under the umbrella-term, “Neo-Chalcedonianism” or “Cyrilline Chalcedonianism”. This movement was endorsed by the fifth Oecumenical Council (553). Summoned by Justinian, the synod reaffirmed the Christological formula of Chalcedon, making clear that the one hypostasis of the incarnate Christ is “one of the Trinity”, the second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God. The synod clarified Cyril’s understanding of one nature and one hypostasis in his formula “one incarnate nature of God the Word”³ pointing out that the adjective “incarnate” meant that the divine nature had been joined to human nature in Christ. *Theopaschism* as expressed in the formula “one of the Trinity suffered in the flesh”, originally proposed by Scythian monks, was also affirmed as referring to the hypostasis of Christ.⁴ Such a formula was acceptable to both the Orthodox diophysite and the Severan Monophysite. Justinian promoted it as a

¹ On Julian see Grillmeier, *Christ*, 2.2.79-110; Hovorun, *Controversy*, 53-6. See also section *Corruption – Incorruption* in Chapter V below.

² On Leontios see B.Altaner, *Der griechische Theologe Leontius und Leontius der skythische Monch. Eine prosopographische Untersuchung*, *Theologische Quartalschrift*, 127, 1947, 145-165; B.Daley, *The Christology of Leontios of Byzantium*, A paper at the Ninth International Conference on Patristic Studies, 1979; Grillmeier, *Christ*, 2.2, 181-229, 271-315; С.Говорун, *Леонтий Византийский и его трактат против Нестора и Евмухия, Церковь и время*, 2 (15), (Москва, 2001), 204-230; R.Cross, *Individual Natures in the Christology of Leontius of Byzantium*, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10, 2, 2002, 245-265.

³ Cyril, *Ep.*40 (PG 77.192D-193AC); *Ep.*46.2 (Wickham, 84-6).

⁴ For two kinds of Theopaschism and for the formula “*unus ex Trinitate passus*” and its place in the vetures of Justinian see Hovorun, *Controversy*, 61-75. In order to embody this formula in the Divine Liturgy the hymn “Only-begotten Son and Word of God” was composed at the time of Justinian. See also Tanner, *Decrees*, 107-122.

mean of reconciliation. However, by this time the schism between the Orthodox and the Monophysites was entrenched.¹ And soon the focus of the discussion between Cyrilline Chalcedonians or Orthodox and Monophysites moved into the sphere of the activities and wills of Christ.

Aristotle's philosophy holds the notion of ἐνέργεια ("energy", "activity", "power")² to be the actual manifestation of essence.³ For the Monophysites there was no problem with this notion, for one nature of Christ has one *theandric* (or divine-human), *energy*. The italicised expression originates from the *Epistle to Gaius*, found in the *Corpus Areopagiticus*. Originating, apparently, from moderate Monophysite circles of Syria (V-VIc.), its author⁴ speaks of "a certain new theandric energy" of Christ.⁵ Severos was the first Monophysite theologian who interpreted it as "one theandric energy".⁶ At the same time the first-known Orthodox interpretation of the phrase appears in John of Scythopolis who speaks of it as a "compound" or "mixed" activity of the Godhead and the humanity in Christ and simultaneously clearly distinguishes between the two energies.⁷ So the Dionysian formula was of central authority for both traditions.

¹ Jacob Baradaeus, bishop of Edessa (consecrated 542, died 578) set up a rival hierarchy of Monophysite bishops (called after him "Jacobites" by the Orthodox) - Louth, *John*, 152.

² For various meanings of the word see H.Liddell, R.Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 564; Lampe, *Lexicon*, 470-3.

³ Cf. *Metaph.* 8 (1042b10; 1043a20; 1048a26f). See also Hovorun, *Controversy*, 171-7; L.Westerink, *The Alexandrian Commentators and the Introductions to Their Commentaries*, in R. Sorabji, *Aristotle Transformed: the Ancient Commentators and Their Influence*, *The Ancient commentators on Aristotle*, (London: Duckworth, 1990), 336-41.

⁴ On ps.Dionysios see A.Louth, *Denys the Areopagite*, (London, 1989).

⁵ *Ep.* 4.9 (Ritter, 161).

⁶ Hovorun, *Controversy*, 180. Cf. Louth, *John*, 153.

⁷ P.Rorem, J.Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus: Annotating the Areopagite*, *Oxford Early Christian Studies*, (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 1998), 253. See also B.Suchla, *Die sogennanten Maximus-Scholien des Corpus Dionysiacum Areopagiticum*, *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen*, 1, *Philologisch-historisch Klasse*, 1980, 3, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 31-66; Hovorun, *Controversy*, 182-3.

The idea of one theandric energy was reanimated in the 610s by Sergios, the Patriarch of Constantinople and the Byzantine Emperor Herakleios in order to achieve the goal of reconciliation with the Monophysites for whom the idea of the single divine energy was synonymous with the single nature of Christ.¹ The theory called Monenergism was designed as a broader interpretation of the Orthodox faith. It was accepted the Chalcedonian doctrine of two natures and one person of Christ, but emphasized the unity of activity – the one theandric energy. The Monenergist formula was soon approved by the Roman pope, Honorios, who suggested the term “one will” instead of “one energy”:² hence the refinement of Monenergism known as Monothelitism.³

The chief apologists of Orthodox Christology at that period were Sophronios,⁴ the patriarch of Jerusalem (in 633-634), his friend Maximos the Confessor (d.662),⁵ and later Anastasios of Sinai (640-700). The efforts of Sophronios and Maximos were

¹ For the historical context of Monenergism see W.Kaegi, *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); J.Meyendorff, *Imperial unity and Christian divisions: the Church 450-680 A.D., The Church in History; v.2*, (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988), 333-373; Hovorun, *Controversy*, 93-7.

² “Unam voluntatem fatemur Domini nostri Iesu Christi” – ACO 2.II.2.551.14-15.

³ The idea of one will was taken up in the imperial edict *Ekthesis* drafted by Sergios and issued by Herakleios in 638. However, Honorios' successors, John IV (640-642), Theodore I (642-649), and Martin I (649-655), condemned Monothelitism. To obtain religious peace, Emperor Constans II in 648 replaced the *Ekthesis* with the *Typos* approving only traditional expressions and forbidding “any discussion of one will or one energy, two wills or two energies.” See ACO 2.I.156.20-162.12; 208-11; Hovorun, *Controversy*, 127-31, 142-3; *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church*, Third ed. (Oxford, 1997), 1105-6.

⁴ See *Synod.Ep.* (PG 87.3.3148-3200, 3173). On Sophronios see C.Schönbörn, *Sophrone de Jérusalem: vie monastique et confession dogmatique, Théologie historique; 20*, (Paris: Beauchesne, 1972); M.Albert, C.Schönbörn, *Lettre de Sophrone de Jérusalem à Arcadius de Chypre: version syriaque inédite du texte grec perdu*, (Turnhout: Brepols, 1978); R.Riedinger, *Die Epistula synodica des Sophronios von Jerusalem im Codex Parisinus Graecus 1115*, *Byzantiaka* 2, 1982, 143-54.

⁵ On Maximos see Louth, *Maximos*, 3-77; A.Louth, *St.Gregory the Theologian and St.Maximos the Confessor: the Shaping of Tradition*, in S.Coakley and D.Pailin, *The Making and Remarking of Christian Doctrine: Essays in honour of Maurice Wiles*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 117-30; A.Louth, *St.Denys the Areopagite and St.Maximos the Confessor: a Question of Influence*, in *Studia Patristica* 27, 1993, 166-74; *Диспут с Пирром, Преподобный Максим Исповедник и христологические споры VII столетия*, (Москва, 2004).

supported by Rome and approved by the Lateran Council summoned by Pope Martin I in 649.¹ It was ultimately through the influence of Maximos that the Sixth Oecumenical Council in Constantinople (680-681) condemned Monenergism and Monothelitism and vindicated the definition of Chalcedon and the doctrine of two energies and wills in Christ.²

It is necessary to mention two important theological tools and repositories of Christological tradition: florilegia and scholia. Appearing at the period of the Sixth Council, *Doctrina Patrum de Incarnatione Verbi* is probably the most significant florilegium.³ Maximos' *Ambigua*⁴ stands out among the scholia. *Doctrina patrum* may have been composed by Anastasios of Sinai⁵ who is famous for a manual of Orthodox theology, *Hodegos*, and his Orthodox-minded treatises against Judaism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism, Monenergism-Monothelitism. An Orthodox diophysite, John Damascene with his writings stands at the end of this era of Christological controversies.

The Arabian victories of the seventh century brought about the collapse of the eastern provinces of the Byzantine Empire and the complete collapse of the Persian Empire, all of which were incorporated into a new Islamic Empire. Its new official religion, Islam, tolerated all traditional religions.⁶ Therefore various forms of Christianity flourished throughout these territories. The Chalcedonian Orthodox were set in equal conditions with the others. As a Chalcedonian Orthodox, John Damascene

¹ However, both Martin and Maximos were persecuted by the imperial authorities and died in 655 and 662, respectively. See Hovorun, *Controversy*, 144-8.

² See Tanner, *Decrees*, 124-30; Hovorun, *Controversy*, 148-55.

³ Grillmeier, *Christ*, 2.1. 51-77, Louth, *John*, 32.

⁴ PG 91.1032-1417.

⁵ On Anastasios see Hovorun, *Controversy*, 267-338.

⁶ See G.Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 138-68.

was part of this historical and theological reality. As we see from his treatises, he was initially engaged in polemics with Christological movements of Nestorianism, Monophysitism (including Jacobites, *acephali*, Aphthartodocetes), and Monothelitism. Christological implications are also found in his treatises against Iconoclasm, Manichaeism, and Islam. Yet John's Christology was not merely defensive, it was an integral part of a wider process of refining tradition. He inherited the Christological tradition which had been shaped by the Cappadocian Fathers and notably Gregory Nazianzen, Cyril of Alexandria, Leontios of Byzantium, Dionysios Areopagite, Sophronios of Jerusalem with his disciple, Maximos the Confessor, and Anastasios, who was defending and refining Orthodoxy in Sinai. Part of Palestinian tradition, John's Christology is faithful to Chalcedon and joins Cyrilline Chalcedonianism.

As Fr Andrew Louth observes, the notion of hypostasis is central to John's contemplation of the Person of Christ.¹ Setting the terms in the manual of logic, *Dialectica*, John defines the Christological meaning of hypostasis as the fundamental ontological reality²:

Pagan philosophers... distinguished between οὐσία and φύσις...but the Holy Fathers... simply identified οὐσία, φύσις, and μορφή ("form", "appearance", "kind") as the common or εἶδος ("species", "kind"). They, also, identified ἄτομος, πρόσωπον, and hypostasis as the particular, such as Peter and Paul. Hypostasis needs to have οὐσία with accidents, and to subsist by itself, to be beheld by being perceived, that is, actually (or through activity) (*Dial.*31.3-4, 23-31).³

So the hypostasis is the particular of the common. However, John remarks that the term hypostasis is twofold. When it simply means "existence", it is the same as essence. Therefore some of the Holy Fathers used the terms "nature" and "hypostasis"

¹ Louth, *John*, 47, 144. See also Rozemond, *Christologie*, 62-3, 104-5.

² Louth, *John*, 49.

³ For the Aristotelian πρώτη οὐσία and δεύτερα οὐσία see C.Stead, *Divine Substance*, (Oxford, 1977), 110-17.

synonymously (so Cyril's one nature can be partly justified).¹ But when hypostasis means existence on its own and by itself, it designates the individual, which is numerically distinct from other individuals, such as Peter and Paul. It is necessary to know that essence cannot subsist without any specific form, nor can there be any real difference, or species, or accident, but there are only hypostases or individuals and it is in them that essences and real differences and species and accidents are beheld.² As for the term ἐνυπόστατος (popularised by Leontios),³ it also has two meanings: existent and existent in person or individual. In the proper sense ἐνυπόστατος is what does not exist on its own but is existent in hypostasis. For example, taken separately soul and body are not hypostases but ἐνυπόστατα because they are existent only in a hypostasis. Similarly, the humanity of the Lord is ἐνυπόστατον because it exists in His hypostasis.⁴

The main purpose of John's logical explanation is to properly apply terminology for Christ. The fundamental Christological thesis is that Christ is one hypostasis or person or individual. The one hypostasis is: "The one Son of God even after the Incarnation, and the Son of Man, one Christ, one Lord, the only-begotten Son and Word of God, one Lord Jesus".⁵ The divine, perfect, eternal, simple, incorporeal, invisible, uncircumscribed, consubstantial with the Father, hypostasis of God the Word, differs from the Father in the manner of generation and relation of the Father's hypostasis. Being at no time separated from the Father's hypostasis, the Son in the Incarnation

¹ Cf. *Expos.* 51; 55.

² *Dial.* 43.2-11.

³ The term ἐνυπόστατος can be translated as "existing in person(s)," existing as person(s)", "existent", "real" or "really existent" – the opposite of *anhypostatos* as "non-existent" and "unreal" – A. Louth, *Maximos the Confessor*, (London – N.Y., 1996), 214; Louth, *John*, 161; M. Gockel, *A Dubious Christological Formula? Leontius of Byzantium and the Anhypostasis-Enhypostasis Theory*, *JTS* 51 (2000), (515-32), 517-25.

⁴ *Dial.* 30.4-6; 45.2-22.

⁵ *Expos.* 51.28-30.

incomprehensibly dwelt in the womb of Mary and caused the flesh derived from her to subsist in the same hypostasis that was before all the ages:

Being by nature perfect God, the same became by nature a perfect human being, not changing His nature nor simply appearing to be incarnate, but being hypostatically united without confusion, change or division to the rationally and intellectually animated flesh assumed from the Virgin, which possesses its existence in Him, neither changing His divine nature into the essence of flesh, nor changing the essence of His flesh into His divine nature, nor bringing about one composite nature... (*Expos.* 46.34-42).

When the Word became flesh (or man),¹ He took upon Himself flesh animated with the intelligent and rational soul, so that the very hypostasis of God the Word became the hypostasis of the flesh, and the hypostasis of the Word, which was formerly simple, became compound of two perfect natures, divinity and humanity, and bearing the characteristic and distinctive property of the divine sonship of God the Word in virtue of which it is distinguished from the Father and the Spirit, and also the characteristic and distinctive properties of the flesh, in virtue of which it differs from the Mother and the rest of mankind, bearing further the properties of the divine nature in virtue of which it is united to the Father and the Spirit, and the marks of the human nature in virtue of which it is united to the Mother and to us. It differs from the Father and the Spirit and the Mother and us in being at once God and man. For this we know to be the most special property of the hypostasis of Christ (*Expos.* 51.15-27).

The names "Godhead" and "humanity" refer to natures, while "God" and "man" can refer both to natures and the hypostasis. In the case of Christ, when we contemplate His natures, we speak of His Godhead and His humanity. But when we contemplate His hypostasis compounded of these natures we sometimes name it after two natures: "Christ," "God and man," "God incarnate", and sometimes after one of His natures: "God", "Son of God," "man", "Son of Man" implying either His loftiness or His lowliness.²

Perhaps in this connection I should mention how John justifies Cyril's "one incarnate nature of God the Word." He says that in fact there is a reference to two natures in this expression: "one nature of God" means the divine nature, and "incarnate" implies the human nature. Furthermore, in Cyril's *theopaschite* expression "God the

¹ The formulas Λόγος-σάρξ and Λόγος-ἄνθρωπος mean the same for John – *Expos.* 55.24.

² *Expos.* 48.2-23.

Word suffered in the flesh” the name “God” refers precisely to the hypostasis of the Son.¹

Illustrating the existence of the hypostases of the Trinity “one in another without confusion but in accordance with the word of the Lord, “I in the Father and the Father in me” (John 14:10),² John introduces the notion of περιχώρησις (“coinherence”, “interpenetration”)³ into the Trinitarian realm: the three hypostases have “coinherence one in another without any coalescence or mixture”.⁴ But, like Maximos, he uses the notion to describe the existence of two natures in Christ. The τρόπος (“mode”, “way”) of existence of Christ’s hypostasis is conditioned by the περιχώρησις of two natures:

This is the τρόπος of the mutual communication, either nature giving in exchange to the other its own properties through the identity of hypostasis and περιχώρησις of natures in one another (*Expos.* 48.38-40).

The περιχώρησις, however, originates from the Godhead⁵:

Although the natures of the Lord coinhere in one another, we know that this coinherence springs from the divine nature. For this nature naturally pervades and coinheres with everything, as it wills, while nothing pervades it. For it imparts to the flesh its own peculiar glories, while abiding itself impassible and without participation in the affections of the flesh (*Expos.* 51.57-61).

Particular attention is paid by John to the Orthodox exposition of two energies and wills. In order to illustrate that wills and energies are faculties belonging to nature, John gives the example of the Trinity (for him Trinitarian and Christological terminology are integral and interchangeable, which is the pattern established by Chalcedon): if will and energy belong to hypostasis there would be different wills and

¹ *Expos.* 51; 55.

² *Expos.* 8.254-6.

³ For περιχώρησις see, for example, L.Prestige, *Περιχωρέω and περιχώρησις in the Fathers*, JTS 29, (1928), 242-52.

⁴ *Expos.* 8.263-4. See Louth, *John*, 112-13.

⁵ According to G.Florovsky this feature characterises the asymmetry of John’s Christology in which the dominating role in the union is given to the Word - *The Byzantine Fathers of the Fifth Century*, (Vaduz, 1987), 297.

different energies of the hypostases of the Trinity.¹ But their will and energy is identical, and through this we recognise the identity of their nature. In the Incarnation both divine and human natures preserve their natural activities and wills, and “we recognise the difference of the two natures from their difference in will and energy, and as we perceive the difference of the two natures we confess that the wills and energies also are different”.² However, the acting and willing person is one and the same:

Since Christ’s two natures have one hypostasis, it is one and the same person who wills and acts naturally in both natures, of which, and in which, and also which is Christ our Lord, and moreover that He wills and acts without separation but as a united whole. For He wills and acts in either form in close communion with the other (*Expos.58.3-8*).

The divine is capable of willing, and the human in like manner, but he who exercises volition, or the hypostasis, for instance Peter, is spoken of as willing. Christ is one and His hypostasis is one, he also who wills both as God and as man is one and the same, he has two natures endowed with volition (*Expos.58.40-6*).

Since Christ, who in His own person wills according to either nature, is one, we shall postulate the same object of will in His case, not as though He wills only those things which He willed naturally as God (for it is no part of Godhead to will to eat or drink and so forth), but as willing also those things which human nature requires for its support (*Expos.58.48-51*).

In this connection I should mention John’s interpretation of Dionysios’ “certain new theandric energy”. In John’s logic the word “theandric” refers to two parts: divine and human. Thus “theandric energy” is a compound activity that indicates the unity of human and divine natures and their activities in one hypostasis.³ It is a mutual coming together and unconfused *περιχώρησις* of the two energies:

The theandric energy makes plain that when God became man... both His human energy was divine, that is deified, and not without part in His divine

¹ *Expos.58.25-9*.

² *Expos.58.13-18*.

³ Cf. Maximos, *Opusc.7*, (PG 91.88A).

energy, and His divine energy was not without part in His human energy, but either was observed in conjunction with the other (*Expos.* 63.40-4).¹

As Maximos, John defines two kinds of human will: θέλημα φυσικόν (“natural will”), and θέλημα γνωμικόν (“opinion”, “intention”, “inclination”).² Being originally free, θέλημα φυσικόν after the Fall, however, depends on the inclination or θέλημα γνωμικόν. The latter is absent in Christ because as the omniscient God, He does not need to determine. As John says, we cannot speak of Christ as having inclination (γνώμην) and choice (προαίρεσιν), for inclination comes after investigation, counsel, and decision concerning something unknown; it is followed by choice; but the Lord being not a mere man but also God, and knowing all things, had no need of investigation, counsel, and decision, and by nature made whatever is good His own and whatever is bad foreign to Him.³

John adheres to the famous dictum of Gregory Nazianzen:⁴ “the unassumed is the unhealed, it is that which is united to the Godhead that is saved.”⁵ This phrase implies the presence of human mind and soul in Christ, i.e. the parts excluded by Apollinaris.⁶ According to Gregory, the human mind or soul was the first to transgress in Paradise. Therefore, it was the first to need divine healing. So the Word could not be

¹ *Expos.* 63. On “theandric energy” see Hovorun, *Controversy*, 182-6, 298-301.

² On wills in Maximos see Louth, *Maximos*, 56-61; Hovorun, *Controversy*, 207-21.

³ *Expos.* 58.155-62.

⁴ On Gregory Nazianzen see Quasten, *Patrology*, 3.236-54; D. Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation, A Study in Gregory of Nazianzus*, Patristic Monograph Series, 7, (The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979); J. McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography*, (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2001); И.Алфссы, *Жизнь и учение Св. Григория Богослова*, (Санкт Петербург, Алетея, 2001).

⁵ *Ep.* 101.32.

⁶ On Apollinaris see H. de Riedmatten, *Some neglected aspects of Apollinarist Christology*, *DomStud* 1, 1948, 239-60; *La christologie d'Apollinaire de Laodicée*, *Studia Patristica* 2, 1957, 208-234; J. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, (London, 1968), 292; Quasten, *Patrology*, 3.377-83; Grillmeier, *Christ*, 1.329-40; Hovorun, *Controversy*, 21-6. Cf. Gregory's orations and verses against Apollinaris *Or.* 22.13; *Or.* 38; *Ep.* 101; 102; 202; *Carm. dogm.* PG 37, 464-471.

incarnate without it. Alternatively, Gregory's dictum can be read: "the assumed is healed", which means that the whole man is deified and saved. On the basis of this dictum John illustrates how θέλημα φυσικόν led to sin and therefore had to be assumed and healed:

If Adam obeyed of his own will and ate of his own will, surely in us the will is the first part to suffer. If the will is the first to suffer, and the Word incarnate did not assume this with the rest of our nature, it follows that we have not been freed from sin (*Expos.* 58.133-6).

Thus, the restoration of the human will appears to be one of the major purposes of Christ. The notion of human will unveils the picture of Christ and redemption in John's Christology.

Human nature is an ontological constant from the moment of creation. It cannot be ontologically changed. The Chalcedonian expression "without change" affirms this thesis with reference to the human nature of Christ which remained consubstantial with us in the Incarnation. At the same time corruption and death entered into human nature after the Fall.¹ Under φθορά ("decay", "corruption") John implies natural passions, diseases, sufferings, the separation of soul and body, corruption, and death.² From this it appears that that φθορά was the potential ontological feature of human nature from the moment of creation, whereas impassivity, incorruption, and immortality, – ἀφθαρσία was sustained by God as a gift in Paradise.³

Sin is not an ontological reality but the result of the will of a person: "Sin is not natural, nor is it implanted in us by the Creator, but arises voluntarily in our mode of life

¹ Athanasios, *Incarn.* 4.13–5.30. Cf. *Expos.* 45.3-19.

² *Expos.* 72.2-28.

³ Athanasios, *Incarn.* 5.1-24. Cf. *Expos.* 25-26; 42.2-11; 57.12-13; 64.2-3.

as the result of a further implantation by the devil, though it cannot prevail over us by force”.¹

Here lies the sequence of Adam’s life uniting both ontological and non-ontological realities: will → the act of sin → the Fall → expulsion from Paradise → φθορά. From this it is clear that corruption and death entered humanity through sin. The potential ontological feature, φθορά, was released because of sin. But sin was the result of will. Therefore, will was virtually responsible for releasing φθορά. It is reasonable to suggest the possibility of a reverse process, namely, that through will sin can be abolished and therefore φθορά overcome. Hence the sequence of the redemption of Christ: will(s) → sinlessness → divinisation → ἀφθαρσία → eternal life. So the proper use of natural human will leads to salvation. Whereas the following passage generally demonstrates the link “sinlessness → eternal life”, the italicised expression among other meanings seems to refer to the determination of human will by will divine:²

It was necessary for the One who was to redeem human kind to be sinless and thus not subject to the death of sin, and also for human nature to be *strengthened and renewed and by His example educated and taught the way of virtue*, that turns away from corruption and leads to eternal life (*Expos.45.20-4*; cf. *Expos.64.22-7*).

A certain ambiguity in “fallen” and “original” seems to remain in Christology. It can be explained through the notion of will. The basic Orthodox thesis of the consubstantiality with us of Christ suggests that His human nature was subject to φθορά or fallen. John therefore asserts that it is precisely the fallen nature that needed healing. Moreover, God assumed a humanity that theoretically was capable of sinning by virtue of having a mind and a will:

If you say that He did not assume a sinning nature, He did not assume a nature that had sinned and was sick. If He did not assume this, He did not assume human nature; for it was the same that had sinned (*Volunt.28.38-41*).

¹ *Expos.64.4-6*.

² Cf. Hovorun, *Controversy*, 329-30.

The only difference between Christ and us, which makes His humanity original, is the absence of the fallen human inclination. But it was the original θέλημα φυσικόν with which Adam sinned. That is why, theoretically, Christ's humanity was capable of sinning. Thus both antinomies support the thesis of Christ's consubstantiality with us.

Yet not merely the restoration of fallen humanity was accomplished in the Person of Christ in the Incarnation. The effect of the Incarnation is the deification of humanity, as Fr Andrew Louth summarises:

The Incarnation restores human kind to its original destiny: to bring to full likeness the human creation according to the image, a process which brings about assimilation to God, or deification... The restoration takes place as a result of the Incarnation, in which there is a "wonderful exchange" between God and human kind. In answer to the divine Word's assumption of humanity, we gain the splendours of divinity.¹

So John's contemplation of Christ is clear, competent, comprehensive, balanced, and integral from the perspective of both philosophical and Christian logic. Having inherited Cyrilline Chalcedonianism that largely determines Orthodox Christological tradition, John responds to any controversial idea or venture in the realm of Christology, and especially targets Monophysitism with its Monenergist-Monothelite implications. It would not be an overstatement to say that the whole of Orthodox Christological tradition finds its integrity and completion in John's works. Moreover, as Fr Andrew Louth rightly observes, "John's own contemplation of Christ is better presented in his sermons and liturgical poetry."² The canon for the Nativity is among John's liturgical poems. Therefore its interpretation and analysis seem to me very important for the complete Orthodox contemplation of Christ, particularly, if we consider the canon for the Nativity as an introduction to liturgical Christology.

¹ Louth, *John*, 179. See *Expos.* 45.19-24; 56.15-19; 62.8-10; 77.9-28.

² Louth, *John*, 144.

The Canon for the Nativity

Acrostic

The acrostic is not used in the liturgy. Nevertheless, it does play a theological role. In the acrostic the author often puts a theological thesis which outlines the concept of the feast, and organises both the poetical and theological structure of the canon. The acrostic of the Nativity reads:

With songs of eloquence these hymns proclaim
God's Son for mortals' sake on earth now born,
Abolishing the world's grim miseries.
But, King, deliver preachers from these pains.¹

In lines 1 and 4 the author highlights that the canon is a hymn performed with eloquent melodies by preacher(s). Perhaps, this is a reference to John himself. Simultaneously it belongs to the whole congregation, which participates in the office by singing and praying.

The theological thesis of the canon and the leitmotif of the feast emerges in lines 2 and 3: the Son of God is born on earth for the sake of mortals. The universal redemptive implication of the Incarnation conditioned by divine love towards mortals is the abolition of grim miseries of the world. Commenting on the acrostic, Nikodimos mentions many miseries brought about through Adam's sin. The grimmest of them is death, which is implied by "mortals".² The entreaty to the King in line 4 implies that the Incarnation made it possible for the people to be saved from these pains.

¹ I use the translation of Fr Ephrem Lash <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/25decMat.htm> 27.07.2004.

² Nikodimos, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 1.208.

Canon

Ode 1

Of old the Master who works wonders saved a people, Turning the watery waves of the sea into dry land;	And now He has been born of His own will from a Maiden, Establishes a path for us to mount to heaven.

We glorify Him, equal by essence to Father and to mortals (NC 1, *irmos*).¹

John employs the image of the first biblical canticle as a scriptural introduction to the theology of the Nativity. As the table above demonstrates, he draws certain parallels between the image and the Incarnation. Christ appears to be the same God who delivered Israel “of old” and is born “now” of His own divine will. Also the salvation of Israel of old prefigures the salvation of man of new in the Incarnation; and “a people” – Israel relates to “us” – Christians or the new Israel. The passing through the sea in some way prefigures Christ’s birth from a Maiden. The passage through the sea is a figure of our path to heaven established by the Incarnation. In the last line (and in the beginning of the canon) the basic Chalcedonian concept of “double consubstantiality” is introduced: Christ “is equal by essence to Father and to mortals. Moreover, the idiom “mortals” referring to the mortality of humankind stresses the fullness and consubstantiality of Christ with us.

Clearly prefigured by the bush unburned
A hallowed womb has borne in it the Word,
God mingled with a mortal form, who now
Frees Eve’s *unhappy womb* from bitter curse
Of old. Him now we mortals glorify (NC 1:1).²

The *troparion* goes on with scriptural exegesis when referring to the story of the

¹ The abbreviation means “Nativity canon, ode 1, *irmos*”.

² The abbreviation means “Nativity canon, ode 1, *troparion* 1”. The refrain “we glorify” similar to that of NC 1, *irmos*, echoes the theme of the first biblical canticle - Nikodimos, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 1.209, 211.

burning bush (Exodus 3:2-3)¹ as a prototype of the Virgin birth in which God prefigured by fire mingled with a “mortal form”.² God was united with a complete human nature as implied by the expression “mortal form”, and thus was beheld. The italicised expressions demonstrate a figurative contrast between the sanctified womb of the Virgin and the cursed womb of Eve (cf. Genesis 3:16), inspired by the Homily on the birth of Christ attributed to Basil the Great.³ Mortal humankind generated from the cursed womb (cf. grim miseries and pains in the acrostic): “we” (in the last line) inherited mortality from it. Consubstantial with us, the humanity of Christ was also under that curse which echoes the *irmos*.⁴ Yet in the Incarnation, which took place in a womb hallowed by the Spirit (Luke 1:35), the Word looses the ancient painful curse of the Fall altering the condition of mortality.

A star to Magi clearly showed the Word
 Who was before the sun and yet He came
 To make an end of sin, in a poor cave:
 You, the compassionate, in swaddling clothes.
 With joy they saw you, a mortal and the Lord (NC 1:2).⁵

Whereas in the *irmos* and in the *troparion* John approaches the Incarnation through the Old Testament images, now alluding to the story of the Magi in Matthew 2:1-23 (cf. Numbers 24:15-17; Ezekiel 43:2), he seems to explore it through the prism of the ancient pagan vision. Existing before the sun, the Word and Creator was

¹ Scriptural references given in brackets are very important for they demonstrate the scriptural origins of the texts and images.

² See, for example, Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyr.Exod.Or.* 1.8 (PG 69.412-13). Cf. the commentary of the image by Theodotos of Ankyra quoted by Nikodimos in *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 1.211.

³ *Hom. in s.Christi generationem*, 6 (dub. see CPG 2913; PG 31.1473.A).

⁴ Such internal references in brackets which refer to the preceding *troparion*, ode, or canon, demonstrate the integrity within the canon and help to analyse it as a systematic theological treatise.

⁵ This *troparion* corresponds with John's *Sermo in nativitatem Domini*, a large part of which (6-12) concentrates on the story of the Magi being based on the late sixth-century *Religious Conversation at the Sasanid Court* (P.Bratke, *Das sogenannte Religionsgespräch am Hofe des Sasaniden*, TU 19/3; NF 4/3, 1899, 140-213).

recognised by the representatives of paganism, who, perhaps, had worshipped the sun and stars as deities. The Incarnation making “the end of sin” turns the world from idolatry to the true God. The idea of sin corresponds with the consequences of the Fall (cf. NC 1:1), which have come to the end in the Incarnation.

The Incarnation is the result of divine compassion: the Lord did not disdain to become a mortal man living in poverty. In the last line John emphasises the duality of nature in the Person of Christ. This hypostatic union of two natures made it possible for God the Creator to be beheld by people.¹ This also recalls a typical argument against Iconoclasts.

Ode 3

Accept, O Benefactor, the praises of your servants,
Humbling the haughty, despiteful look of the foe,
O blessed Lord, Who sees all, raise us all above sin,
And establish your singers, firm and unshaken,
Upon the foundation of the faith (NC 3, *irmos*).

As a kind of prayer the *irmos* moves from history and theology to ascetic struggles of the “singers”. They address God thrice, humbly entreating Him to accept this hymn (cf. Isaiah 1:14). The previous *troparion* has implied that the Magi praised the Lord. In the following *troparion* the shepherds’ choir worships Him. Thus those who sing this hymn can imagine themselves alongside the Magi and the shepherds before the divine Child. The “singers” also entreat God to humble the pride of the foe which is opposite to the humility of Christ (NC 1:2); extol them above sin which echoes the ceasing of sin (NC 1:2); and to establish them upon the foundation of faith (cf. the canticle of Anna, 1 Kings 2:2,8), which refers to the basic Christological principles introduced in ode 1.

¹ Nikodimos notes that ἴδον (“they saw”) can imply that the Magi saw Christ as man with their eyes whereas they recognised Him as the incarnate God with their minds - *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 1.212.

The shepherd choir, abiding in the fields,
 Counted beyond all thought worthy to see
 The all-blest Offspring of an all-pure Bride,
 Were stunned by the strange sight: a bodiless host
 Praising Christ King, incarnate without seed (NC 3:1).¹

Based on the story of the shepherds in Luke 2:8-20 this *troparion* unveils an icon of the Incarnation “surpassing mind”. Becoming incarnate in the all-pure Bride (cf. NC 1, *irmos*) without seed God unites immaterial and material essences. The universal doxology of Him newly born reconciles incorporeal angels and corporeal men. Ps.Dionysios notes that shepherds were found worthy of the revelation of this good news brought by the angels because they had somehow been purified in their quiet life withdrawn from the crowd.²

He, who rules heaven’s height, in His
 compassion (NC 1:2)
 Became as us from Maiden (NC 1,
irmos) without bridegroom;

Word immaterial once, in the last
 times
 Thickened with flesh, that He might
 draw
 The fallen first created to Himself
 (NC 3:2).

Following the previous *troparion*, and NC 1:2, this one unfolds the kenotic dimension of the Incarnation further on the basis of John 1:1-14 and Hebrews 1:1-3. Its first part (left) provides a general picture of the Incarnation, and the second part (right) draws a detailed one.

Echoing Letter Four to Gaius by ps.Dionysios,³ on the one hand John emphasises the supremacy and transcendence of God the Word. On the other, he explores the idea of divine kenosis which is pivotal to the feast: God became complete

¹ This *troparion* also corresponds to John’s *Nativ.D.*5-6.

² *Cell.hier.* 4.4.6-9 (Ritter, 23).

³ *Ep.*4. (Ritter, 160-1), cf. d.n. 2.10 (Suchla, 135-5).

as we are, which means identity of His and our humanity. A clear Christological picture appears in the expression derived from the Homily on the Nativity by Gregory Nazianzen: “Word immaterial once...thickened with flesh”.¹ The eternal and divine hypostasis of the Word immaterial before the Incarnation became the hypostasis for the material flesh, to put it in the terms of *Exposition fidei*.² The redemptive purpose of this mystery is the amendment of the whole of fallen human nature, implied by “fallen first created”³ or Adam.

Ode 4

Of old Avvakum the Prophet was
found worthy
Ineffably to see the figure;
And he foretold in song the renewal
of mortal generations;

For a young Babe, even the Word,
has come forth from the mountain,
Which is the Virgin, for the renewal
of people (NC 4, *irmos*).

The Song of Avvakum 3:1-19 (cf. Daniel 2:34, 45), the fourth biblical canticle, contains prophesy about the Incarnation. The right column demonstrates how the author of the *irmos* interprets the prophesy, referred to in the left column, according to the traditional pattern: “Mountain—the *Theotokos*”. Both the prophesy and its interpretation highlight the achievement of the Incarnation – “the renewal (ἀνάπλασιν) of mortal generations” or “people”. “Mortal generations” descend to the “fallen first created” (NC 3:2, cf. Eve’s cursed womb in NC 1:1). The Word as a “young (νέον) Babe” – the origin of a renewed people – contrasts with the fallen forefather. The scriptural term ἀνάπλασις can imply both the renewal and transfiguration of the human body (cf. Psalm 118:73),⁴ and of the human spirit (cf. Zechariah 12:1)¹ but in this case it

¹ Or.38.2.16-18 (Moreschini). Cf. John Damascene, *Jacob*.52.31

² *Expos*.51.2-11.

³ On this expression see Nikodimos, *Εορτοδρόμιον*, 1.216.

⁴ Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *De creatione hominis sermo alter* (sp., *Opera*, suppl. 44.7).

obviously refers to the whole human being.²

Equal to mortals voluntarily, O Most High,
You came forth from a Virgin, having taken flesh,
To cleanse the poison of the serpent's head,
By nature God, and leading all
From sunless gates to radiance life-bringing (NC 4:1).

Following the pattern of the *irmos*, the *troparion* expands the theological and redemptive dimensions of the feast. The simplicity of the divine hypostasis of the Word before the Incarnation is stressed by the expression θεός πεφυκώς (“God by nature”).³ This simple divine hypostasis by its own divine will (ἐκουσίως) assumes flesh and becomes compound of two natures (cf. NC 3:2; *Expos.* 51.2-11). In NC 1, *irmos* the idea of double consubstantiality is introduced, and now the author explains that Christ is equal to mortals. This means the fullness of His humanity, because His flesh originates from Mary – a representative of humankind. The word ἐκουσίως in the phrase “equal to mortals voluntarily...you came” might also imply the equality of the human will of Christ with mortals.

In the context of the *troparion* the phrase “to cleanse the poison of the serpent's head” (cf. Genesis 3:15), can imply the cleansing of sins – one of Epiphany's themes. This “poison” bound mortals within “sunless gates”, but through the Incarnation God led all to the life bringing radiance, which can be associated with His life-giving divine nature (cf. Isaias 9:1-2; Matthew 4:16; Romans 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:5-9). Thus the Incarnation brings humankind from death to life, from darkness to light, which is reminiscent of baptism and Epiphany.

¹ Cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentarius in xii prophetas minores*, (Pusey, ii, 475.24-476.3).

² Nikodimos, *Εορτοδρόμιον*, 1.218.

³ Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Comparatio vitarum* (carm. 8), (PG 37.649-650A).

Nations that once were in corruption sunk
And have the foe's destruction wholly fled,
Lift up your hands, clap them in songs of praise,
Honouring Christ alone as Benefactor,
Who in compassion has now come to us (NC 4:2).

As the previous *troparion*, this one mentions the fallen human condition: "sunk in corruption" and "foe's destruction" (cf. the acrostic), from which nations, or we, have escaped (cf. NC 1, *irmos*). For salvation we praise with this hymn (cf. Psalm 46:1; NC 3, *irmos*) Christ alone, our Benefactor (cf. NC 3, *irmos*), who in compassion (cf. NC 1:2; 3:2) came to us or became incarnate (cf. John 12:47). The expression "Christ alone" (μόνον Χριστόν) implies the oneness of subject of Christ. As Nikodimos points out, the language of the *troparion* in general is inspired by the Nativity Homily of Gregory Nazianzen.¹

O Virgin, who have sprung from Jesse's root,
The bounds of mortal nature you have passed,
Bearing the Father's pre-eternal Word,
As it was His good pleasure to pass through,
In strange self-emptying, your womb still sealed (NC 4:3).

Following the general pattern of the canon, the *troparion* praises the wonder of the Virgin birth. "Sprung from the root of Jesse" (Isaiah 11:1) means that the Virgin is of royal generation and belongs to humankind. Yet she passed the bounds of her mortal human nature when remaining a virgin (cf. Song of Solomon 4:12) she conceived without seed, provided human flesh for, and gave birth to the Word (cf. NC 4:1). "Surpassing mind" is the mystery of the indwelling of God in her the womb, where the union of transcendent Godhead and mortal humanity takes place. Thus the "strange kenosis" of God the Word is revealed (cf. Philippians 2:7; NC 1:2; 3:2): God by nature, He became a perfect man and acted as man. In general such an exposition of the

¹ Ἑορτοδρόμιον, 1.220.

Incarnation recalls many places in Leo's *Tome*.¹

Ode 5

From the night of deeds of error, in our darkness we keep watch,
And sing to you, O Christ, as to our Benefactor (NC 3, *irmos*; 4:2):
Come to us and grant forgiveness,
Make the pathway easy for us,
Whereby we may ascend, and so attain to glory (NC 5, *irmos*).

The first line of the *irmos* alludes to the fifth biblical canticle of Isaiah 26:9-19. Again John describes the miserable conditions of fallen humanity associated with “night” and “darkness” (cf. “sunless gates” NC 4:1; “corruption” NC 4:2), in which we are found as the result of our “deeds of error”. Fulfilling Christ’s commandment to keep watch which he has given to His disciples (Matthew 24:42; 25:13; 26:38, 41; Mark 13:35, 37; 14:34, 38), we entreat Christ to forgive us and help us to ascend the path to glory. Such ascent of humanity began in the Incarnation.

The ideas of cleansing from serpent’s poison, changes from death to life and from darkness to light in NC 4:1, and of forgiveness and path to glory in this *irmos* can refer to baptism, in which the notions of forgiveness, cleansing, illumination, and new path occur. This also reminds us of the period when the Nativity and the Epiphany formed one celebration.²

The Master by His coming in the flesh
Harsh hate against Him utterly cut through,
Strength of the murderer of souls destroyed,
Unites the world to immaterial beings,
Making His Father gentle to creation (NC 5:1).

Appearing after the Fall, the enmity between the Creator and creation was sustained by the strength of the devil – murderer of souls (cf. NC 4:2). His strength was

¹ Cf. Leo, *tom.* (Tanner, *Decrees*, 77, col.2.30-5; 78; 79 col.1.30-40, col.2.1-10). See Nikodimos, *Εορτοδρόμιον*, 1.221-2.

² This theme will be reviewed in the next chapter.

destroyed when creation or humanity was reconciled with immaterial essence of God the Creator and heavenly beings in the Incarnation of Christ (cf. Ephesians 2:14-16; NC 3:1). Christ introduced the material world into the realm of God. The idea of reconciliation with the Father through the mediation of Christ is originally found in Colossians 1:20.

The people that in darkness dwelt before
 Saw in broad day light from a beacon fire on high (cf. Isaiah 9:2).
 The Son to God as heritage
 Brings nations (cf. Psalm 2:8); grace ineffable bestows
 Where sin once flourished more abundantly (Romans 5:20; NC 5:2).

The imagery here is borrowed from three scriptural verses. The first two lines depict the fulfilment of Isaias' prophesy (9:2) of the coming of God the true Light. Darkness as a condition of fallen humankind is opposed by the "light from a beacon fire on high" (cf. John 8:56) or the divine "life bringing radiance" (NC 4:1). Thus the contrast between darkness and light and the notion of illumination (NC 4:1; 5, *irmos*) reappears in this *troparion*. The idea of reconciliation from the previous *troparion* is stressed now as well: "The Son to God (the Father) as heritage brings nations", which is the fulfilment of prophesy in Psalm 2:8. In this reconciliation the divine love is fully manifest: the divine grace is given despite the abundance of sin, which echoes the famous Pauline verse of Romans 5:20 (cf. Titus 3:5).¹

Ode 6

Enclosed in the uttermost depth of the sea, Jonas entreated you to come and still the storm;	And I, O Christ, pricked by the dart of the tyrant, Call upon you, the slayer of evil (cf. NC 5:1), To come quickly and deliver me from my sloth (NC 6, <i>irmos</i>).

In the first part of the *irmos* (left) John paraphrases the story and Song of Jonas 2, forming the sixth biblical canticle. Following the pattern of odes 4 and 5 it

¹ Cf. Nikodimos, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 1.224-5.

figuratively implies the condition of fallen humankind. The author applies its imagery for himself (“I”) in the entreaty in the right column. “The dart of the tyrant” causes the sloth of the person and retains him in sin as in the depth of the sea. The person asks Christ for deliverance (cf. Psalm 58:10).

Jesus interprets the story of Jonas as the image of His death and resurrection (Matthew 12:40). Therefore the *troparion* can contain a reference to His Resurrection (cf. “the slayer of evil”) and simultaneously imply the spiritual resurrection of a person from the death of sin.

Who was with God in the beginning (John 1:1),
God the Word, seeing our essence powerless
To guard what it once was, now gives it strength,
Lowers Himself, by second fellowship
Showing it once again from passions free (NC 6:1).

The *troparion* approaches the prehistory of the Incarnation. Before the Fall human nature was perfect and impassible because of the first fellowship with God. This was the original human destiny. After the Fall it became weak and passionate. The idea that “the dart of the tyrant” causes human sloth in the *irmos* here corresponds with human weakness causing passivity. As God consubstantial with the Father, the Word lowers Himself (cf. kenosis in NC 4:3) and assumes the weak and passionate human essence in the Incarnation, which is the “second fellowship.” Thus supported by God, humanity regains its strength to overcome passions and to reach its original destiny. As Nikodimos points out, the idea of the *troparion* was inspired by Gregory Nazianzen:

What is this mystery that is around me? I had a share in the image; I did not keep it; He partakes of my flesh that He may both save the image and make the flesh immortal. He communicates a second fellowship far more marvellous than the first, inasmuch as then He imparted the better nature, whereas now Himself partakes of the worse.¹

¹ Or.38.13.35-41. Cf. Nikodimos, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 1.227.

From loins of Abraham for us He came,
To raise as sons those sadly fallen in the dark of sins
That bowed them low. He dwells in light,
Yet in a manger now to dwell without dignity
For mortals' saving He has been well pleased (NC 6:2).

In this *troparion* John also explores the kenotic fellowship (cf. NC 1:2; 3:1; 4:3; 6:1). God by nature, Christ dwells in light (cf. 1 Timothy 6:16; NC 4:1; 5:2); He is light (cf. Psalm 103:2; 118:135). At the same time people are fallen “in the dark of sins” (cf. “darkness-light” in odes 4, 5). His εὐδοκία or good will of the Godhead¹ initiates His kenosis: despite His dignity He comes to human poverty (NC 1:2) and becomes man. The origin of Christ’s humanity from the loins of Abraham (cf. Matthew 1:1) stresses its fullness and equality with us. The first two lines of the *troparion* remind us of the promise of God to Abraham to raise the heir and many sons from his loins (Genesis 15:4-5). As the result of divine kenosis we, mortals, can be raised from sins and saved as sons of Abraham by faith (cf. Matthew 3:9; Luke 3:8), sons of light (Ephesians 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:5), sons of God.

Ode 7

Caught and held fast by love for the King of all,
The Young Men despised the impious threats
Of the tyrant in his boundless fury;
And when the dread fire withdrew from them, they said
To the Master: Unto all ages, blessed are you! (NC 7, *irmos*).

Seething and roaring in its wrath the flame
Burnt up when heated sevenfold the servants,
But the Young Men it saves, as victors crowns.
On whom the Lord, rewarding piety,
Bestows abundantly his cooling dew (NC 7:1).

The *irmos* and the first *troparion* are based on the story and Prayer of the Three Holy Youths (Daniel 3, LXX). The refrain of the *irmos* is almost identical with the

¹ See *Expos.* 2.20; 45.36; 63.26.

refrain of their Prayer (Daniel 3:26). In general the *irmos* and the *troparion* illustrate how tyranny and death can be overcome by the faith and love of God (cf. 1 John 4:18). The *troparion* also demonstrates the duality of the activity of fire: it consumes the ungodly (cf. Hebrews 10:27) but preserves the pious who are rewarded with cooling dew. This is in accord with Basil's commentary on Psalm 28:7: fire has two powers – to burn and to illumine; it consumes the unworthy but illumines and comforts the righteous.¹ The association of fire with Godhead, which does not consume human nature in the Incarnation, seems to be a well known common pattern for interpreting this story, and the author does not explore it in detail here.²

Christ our Defender, you shamed mortals' foe,
 Having your incarnation beyond speech
 As shield, in human form bringing the joy
 Of being like God (θεώσεως); in hope of which we once
 Fell from on high into the murky depths³ (NC 7:2, cf. NC 6:1).

The prehistory of the Fall – the serpent's promise to Eve that she will become godlike (Genesis 3:5) – is in the background of this *troparion* (lines 1, 4, 5). However, likeness to God was impossible to achieve only through devil's trickery and human desire contrary to the divine commandment. So the result turned out to be the opposite for people but rather satisfactory for the adversary: we all fell from on high into the murky depths (cf. "darkness" NC 6:2). So the author clearly implies that we were destined for hell. The achievement of the foe was abolished by Christ-"our Defender". In the Incarnation He assumes mortal human form or nature in order to make people truly like God, which in the Christian context implies deification. For the composition of this *troparion* John used the following passage from Gregory Nazianzen:

¹ PG 29.297AB.

² The interpretation of the story is more elaborate in the Epiphany canon (see the next chapter).

³ The poetic idiom κενθμῶνας is among those words which seem to illustrate John's acquaintance with classical poetry (cf. Homer, *Odyssey*, 10.283; 13.367).

For since the deceiver thought that he was unconquerable in his malice, after he had cheated us with the hope of becoming gods, he was himself cheated by God's shielding with our flesh (σάρκὸς προβλήματι); so that in attacking Adam as he thought, he should really meet with God, and thus the new Adam should save the old, and the condemnation of the flesh should be abolished, death being slain by flesh.¹

You have cast down by Your almighty power
Fierce sin that raised its head in wanton pride,
And raged blaspheming through a world gone mad.
Those once dragged down today You save from snares,
O Benefactor, by Your will incarnate (NC 7:3).

This *troparion* relates to the previous one. After the Fall people were dragged down by the snares of sin (cf. the condition of fallen humanity in odes 4-6). The result of this can be seen in the picture of the world before the coming of Christ, in the pagan bacchanalia²: fierce sin raised its head in pride and raged blaspheming through a world gone mad. Incarnate by His will (cf. NC 1, *irmos*; 4:1; 6:2), almighty Benefactor (NC 3, *irmos*; 4:2; 5, *irmos*), casts down sin and saves the world (pagan and Jewish) from its snares. The idea of escape from the snares of sin echoes Gregory Nazianzen's metaphor of Paschal redemption: "We flee from Egypt, that is from sullen persecuting sin, and from Pharaoh the unseen tyrant".³

Ode 8

The young men of the Old Covenant, walking in the fire
Unburned are figures of the sealed womb of the Maiden (NC 1, *irmos*; 3:2),⁴
When she gave birth in fashion past nature;
The same grace it was worked both by one wondrous power,
And raises the people to sing in praise (NC 8, *irmos*;
cf. hymns and praises in the acrostic, NC 3, *irmos*; 5, *irmos*).

¹ Or.39.13.22-7 (Moreschini).

² On "βακχεύουσιν" see Nikodimos, *Εορτοδρόμιον*, 1.234-5.

³ Or.45.15 (PG 36.644A).

⁴ The name κόρη ("Maiden") for *Theotokos* also occurs in *Nativ.D.7.46*; 9.30.

Now John clearly interprets the story and Song of the Three Holy Children, the eighth biblical canticle (Daniel 3:57-88, LXX), in the light of the Incarnation (cf. ode 7). The story prefigured that the human nature remained intact when the fire of the Godhead was united with it in the Virgin womb. It also prefigured that the womb remained sealed when God was born (cf. Ezekiel 44:2), which echoes NC 4:3. The basis for such an interpretation can be seen in the fact that the Three Holy Children and the Virgin Mary share the same human nature. It is the same nature that exceeded its bounds and was preserved by God in the fire and in the Incarnation. People are united with the youths in the continuous doxology of God incarnate – the Son of man (Daniel 3:25).

Fleeing the outrage of divinisation by error,
All creation like the youths
With trembling hymns the everlasting Word
Self emptied; fears to bring a prayer despised;
Subject to change, by wisdom though endures (NC 8:1).

The idea of the *irmos* that the Incarnation “raises the people to sing in praise” inspires this *troparion* wherein all creation like the youths humbly entreats and hymns the Word. John recalls that human desire for divinisation leads all creation to the Fall (NC 7:2; Genesis 3:5). He reminds us of the fallen instability – creation is damaged, subject to change or corruptible. Yet it is always sustained in being by the Wisdom of God. The expression that creation is “subject to change, by wisdom though endures” could be intended against Manicheans, who believed matter to be incorruptible and constant. To save creation and to give it true deification (cf. NC 7:2), the Word and Wisdom of God condescends to us in His kenosis. The theme of kenosis as pivotal for the feast of Nativity (cf. NC 4:3; 6:1), is once again stressed in this entreaty.¹

¹ See an alternative commentary by Nikodimos, *Εορτοδρόμιον*, 236-8.

The nations' Rising, you have come to turn
Back human nature from the desert hills
To pasture rich in flowers. Now destroy
The violent force of mortals' murderer (cf. NC 5:1; 6, *irmos*),
By providence now seen as God and man (NC 8:2).

The idea of the *troparion* is inspired by the parable of the lost sheep (Matthew 18:12-14; Luke 15:4). The lost sheep is a metaphor of fallen humanity. The sheep was lost because of the violent force of mortals' murderer. In the Incarnation Christ-the Shepherd assumes the fallen nature – puts the lost sheep on His shoulders, destroys the “violent force”, and brings humanity back to the rich pastures of Paradise (cf. NC 4:1).¹ The expression “You...now seen as God and man” signifies the duality of nature, and the personal address points to one hypostasis of Christ.

Ode 9

For us it is easier in fear to love silence,
For this is without danger, but it is hard indeed
With love to weave songs harmoniously composed,
O Virgin. But do you, O Mother, give us strength
That we may fulfil our intent (NC 9, *irmos*).

Here the author notes that it is hard to compose harmonious songs like this poem. His note can also be understood in a theological light: it is hard to meditate on the Christology of the feast, yet with the help of the *Theotokos* this meditation is accurate and harmonious. Purity of mind, fear and love of God are the basic conditions for such theological meditations.²

Types of the Word, pure Mother, we have seen
That have no light and shadows that are past;
Newly He has appeared from the closed gate (Ezekiel 44:2),
And we, found worthy of the light of truth (cf. “light” NC 4:1; 6:2),
Your womb, as is most fitting, now we bless (NC 9:1).

¹ For example, see the interpretation of ps.Dionysios, *Ep.*8.1, 5 (Ritter, 174-5, 187).

² Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.*20.4 (Mossay).

The *troparion* unfolds the idea of theological meditation from the *irmos*. The Incarnation of the Word would be impossible without the *Theotokos*. The Incarnation and her role in it were prefigured by many Old Testament types to which the *troparion* refers as “types that have no light and shadows that are past”. This expression echoes Gregory Nazianzen: “The letter gives way, the Spirit comes to the front; the shadows flee away, the truth comes in upon them”.¹ Some of the types occur in the above *troparia* (NC 1, *irmos*; 1:1; 4, *irmos*; 7, *irmos*; 7:1), and one is found here: the Word appeared from the Virgin as from the closed gate, mentioned by Ezekiel (44:2).² Thus the author implies that the whole of biblical history focuses on the Incarnation. The Virgin womb is its vehicle, from which the humanity of the Word originates. Therefore her “womb, as is most fitting, now we bless”, fulfilling what the *Theotokos* prophesied about herself (Luke 1:48). Moreover, in the *irmos* and in the *troparion* we address the *Theotokos* “O Mother” which can imply that she is the mother of the new humankind of Christians.

The people that delights in Christ³ has found
 Its longing, counted worthy of God’s coming,
 Now cries in supplication for rebirth
 As giving life. Do you, pure Virgin, grant
 The grace to worship then that radiant glory (NC 9:2).

The *troparion* concludes the liturgical exposition of the teaching on the Incarnation. The phrase “the people that delights in Christ has found its longing, counted worthy of God’s coming” includes both the believers of the Old Testament who expected Christ and the members of the Church for whom incarnate Christ is coming in

¹ Or.38.2.5-7.

² Cf. the interpretation of Proklos of Constantinople quoted by Nikodimos, *Εορτοδρόμιον*, 1.241.

³ Here the author uses a rare poetic idiom χριστοτερπής, cf. Manuelis Philae, *Carmina*, (Miller, 2.3.242.48).

every Eucharist. In the Incarnation humanity went through a life-giving rebirth, which can be now shared by all.

The *troparion* is also an entreaty to the *Theotokos* (cf. NC 9, *irmos*, 9:1). As the Mother of God she is in the closest parental relationship with her Son. On this basis Christians consider her the chief intercessor before God, and ask her to “grant grace to worship Him in radiant glory”. The themes of life-giving rebirth and divine radiant glory are typical of baptism and Epiphany. Thus the *troparion* also refers to the forthcoming festival of Epiphany (NC 4:1; 5, *irmos*).¹

Summary

If we assess the canon in general, we can see that firstly, its theological structure is controlled by the acrostic, in which we find the central idea of the Nativity, namely, that the Son of God was born on earth in order to save mortals from the consequences of the Fall. Secondly, the canon systematically alludes to Scripture for the images of the Incarnation and redemption. Such allusions include the biblical canticles, certain Old Testament figures of the Incarnation (NC 1:1; 9:1), the New Testament narratives and imagery (cf. NC 1:2; 3:1; 4:3; 5:2; 6:2).² There are also some allusions to Patristic sources, especially, to the Homilies for the Nativity and Epiphany by Gregory Nazianzen (NC 3:2; 4:2; 6:1; 7:2; 9:1). Thirdly, many *troparia* follow one and the same simple pattern: the creation of humanity and its original destiny → Fall → the conditions of fallen humanity → the kenosis of God and His Incarnation → the assumption of fallen humanity by God → the redemption, divinisation, and salvation of

¹ Nikodimos point out that the word παλιγγενεσίας (“rebirth”) can mean “resurrection”. Therefore it is also illustrative of the connection between the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ - *Εορτοδρόμιον*, 1.242.

² Many scriptural images of this canon also occur in the canon for the Epiphany (see the next chapter).

fallen humanity (cf. NC 1:1; 3:2; 4, *irmos*; 4:1; 4:2; 5:1; 5:2; 6:1; 6:2; 7:2; 7:3; 8:1; 8:2). This pattern is obviously derived from biblical history, and it can be discerned in many liturgical and Patristic texts, for example, in many Anaphoras, in *On the Incarnation* by Athanasios, in the Homilies for the Nativity and Easter by Gregory Nazianzen, in the *Tome* of Leo. Fourth, the cross-references in brackets in the course of the analysis demonstrate the correspondence between *troparia*, images, and theological ideas. Thus, although the canon does not have a clear story-line, it appears to be a systematic theological treatise. Therefore a systematic outlook of John's liturgical contemplation of the person of God the Word incarnate can be given.

The Word, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, is God equal by nature to God the Father (cf. NC ode 1; 3:2; 4:1; 4:3; 5:1; 5:2; 6:1; 6:2; 8:2). In His kenosis He was incarnate from the *Theotokos*, became man, assumed mortal human nature identical with us (cf. NC ode 1; 3:1; 3:2; ode 4; 5:1; 6:1; 6:2; 7:2; 7:3; ode 8; 9:1; 9:2). So the canon dwells on the "double consubstantiality" of Cyrilline-Chalcedonianism. John discerns the indwelling of the Word in the womb and His birth, thereby illustrating that His human nature began its existence and was formed into a human being in the divine hypostasis of the Word. That means, His human nature is ἐνυπόστατον in His hypostasis. So being in two natures, He is one hypostasis or individual. The oneness of subject is clearly underlined in almost every *troparion*, particularly, when the author addresses the single person of Christ in the vocative. Thus the idea of hypostasis plays a pivotal role in the canon as well as in John's Christology in general.

The author pays much attention to the description of the fallen state of humanity (cf. NC 3:2; 6:2; 7:3): human nature is mortal (cf. the acrostic, NC ode 1; 4, *irmos*; 4:1; 4:3; 6:2; 7:2); subject to corruption (cf. NC 4:2; 8:1); poisoned by the serpent (cf. NC 4:1); fallen into the darkness of sins (cf. NC 4:1; 5, *irmos*; 5:2; 6:2; 7:2; 7:3); enslaved by passions, helpless (NC 6:1); erring and lost (cf. NC 8:2). Such is our nature, and such

was it assumed by the Word of God.

He united humanity to Himself and, by its identity with humankind, He united us all to God (cf. NC 1:1; 3:2; 4:1; 5:1; 5:2). He draws the fallen forefather and his sons to Himself (cf. NC 3:2; 4:1; 5:2; 6:2; 8:2). He has stopped transgressions (cf. NC 1:2); destroyed the might of the devil (*irmos* 3; 5:1; 7:2; 8:2). He has cleansed (cf. NC 4:1), liberated from passions and strengthened (cf. NC 6:1), renewed (cf. NC 4, *irmos*, 9:2), and deified our nature (cf. NC 7:2). He has established us upon the foundation of faith (cf. NC 3, *irmos*); made for us a path to heaven (cf. NC 1, *irmos*; 5, *irmos*).

The most striking feature of the canon is that its Christology is primarily focussed on human salvation. The orthodox accuracy of the contemplation of Christ is of the foremost importance for the proper understanding of human destiny. The whole human nature (with no parts excluded) was united to God, redeemed, and made god or deified. This achievement can be shared by everybody.

However, the theological command of the canon may seem a bit unusual. John does not always use that strict scholastic language typical of Christological treatises. This is not surprising because the canon is a poem, a meditation, and a prayer. Nonetheless, this simplicity lacks nothing important from the point of view of Orthodox Christology. Moreover, it is an important feature of the theological language which could have made the canon more accessible to people. In order to highlight this, I would like to analyse some specific theological terms.

Terminology of the Canon

Although the author does not use the terms ὑπόστασις, πρόσωπον, and ἄτομος directly, he clearly concentrates on one hypostasis, person, and individual of Jesus Christ, the Son and Word of God, as we have shown. In order to characterise the

natures of this hypostasis and their union he uses such notions as μορφή, ἴσος, βροτός, and κένωσις, among others.

Exploring the so-called “double consubstantiality” of Christ, John employs traditional idioms: οὐσία (NC 1, *irmos*; 6:1, cf. 4:3), φύσις (NC 4:1; 8:2) as referring both to the Godhead and humanity, also indicated in NC 8:2 by more general terms θεός (“God”) and ἄνθρωπος (“man”).¹ Together with them in order to indicate complete human nature, he employs the word μορφή (NC 1:1; 7:2). This word has various meanings. For example: 1. form, shape, appearance; 2. form, kind, sort, species, nature, essence.² Plato and Aristotle used all these meanings, and the term became particularly important for Aristotle: μορφή is the appearance of substance, the form of nature, the εἰδικώτατον εἶδος (“basic kind”), such as the human species.³

In the Septuagint μορφή always refers to the external – the form or appearance (cf. Job 4:16; Isaiah 44:13; 52:14; Daniel 3:19; 5:6; Wisdom 18:1). In the New Testament Mark uses the term in a similar way when saying “He appeared in another μορφῇ to two of them” (Mark 16:12). However, the philosophical background of Paul makes his Christological language more sophisticated. Here is one of his most important Christological passages – Philippians 2:6-7:

ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων
οὐχ ἄρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο
τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ,
ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν
μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν,
ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος·
καὶ σχήματι εὗρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος

Who, though He was
in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied Himself,
taking the form of a servant,
being born in human likeness;
and being found in human form.

¹ Cf. *Expos.* 48.14-23.

² See the entry μορφή in Lampe, *Lexicon*, 884-5.

³ For example, Plato, *Phaed.* 103e, 104d, 271a; Aristotle, *Ph.* 1.7 (190b20f.); 2.1 (193a28f.); II.8 (199a30f.); *Metaph.* 4.8 (1017b25f.); 9.1 (1052a22f); Porphyry, *Isag.* 4.1.77, 34; 133.

There is no consent among scholars concerning the use of the term here. Is it just appearance, or nature?¹ In the first instance Paul could hardly use μορφή as the appearance or exterior form of the Godhead because, despite a certain anthropomorphism in the Old Testament, such an idea was totally alien to the Old Testament and Judaism.² The expression ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων reminds one of philosophical language in which μορφή means the εἰδικώτατον εἶδος, which is related to essence and nature. In the second instance μορφή is similarly not just form or appearance, for these Paul contrastingly uses the expression: σχήματι εὑρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος (“being found in human appearance”). So he could well have meant by μορφή kind, species, nature, and essence.

The Fathers tended to interpret the Pauline expression in this sense, and exploited this passage in Christological polemics. For Athanasios, ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων is a scriptural argument against the Arians for the consubstantiality of Son and Father. Similarly, μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν means that Christ assumed fallen human nature.³ Basil the Great (and also Cyril of Alexandria and John Chrysostom) generally identified μορφή, οὐσία, and φύσις.⁴ For Basil the passage demonstrates the duality of nature and double consubstantiality of Christ.⁵ Opposing Apollinaris, Gregory Nazianzen mainly focuses on μορφή δούλου in the context of his theology of deification. Typical of Gregory’s poetry, the expression implies that Christ

¹ See G.Kittel, *TDNT*, 4.750-2; *ICC, Philippians*, (Edinburgh, 1950), 57-61; 78-90.

² *TDNT*, 4.749.

³ Athanasios, *Arian.1* (PG 26.93, 100-1, 253A); *Arian.3.6*, 30 (Bright). Also spuria *Dial.Macedon. 1.8* (PG 28.1301C); *Apoll.1.7*, 12, 14 (PG 26.1105AB; 1113AB; 1117BC).

⁴ Cf. Basil, *Ep.38.7-8* (Deferrary); Cyril of Alexandria, *Comment.Joan*, (Pusey, 2.649.31); John Chrysostom, *Philip.6.1-2* (PG 62.219-20).

⁵ Basil, *Sabel.Hom.24.2* (PG 31.604BC); *Eun.1.18*, 23 (Scsboüé, 234-6, 254,). Cf. similar use by Gregory of Nyssa, *Antir.adv. Apoll.* (*Opera*, 3.1.159.4-19).

assumed complete human nature.¹ The same expression is also integral to the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria as the manifestation of assumed humanity.² It has the same meaning in the *Tome* of Leo.³ John Chrysostom maintains that it is a strong argument against heretics, whom he enumerates, implying that they could have misunderstood the verse:

For by these words he [Paul] has laid low the followers of Arius of Alexandria, of Paul of Samosata, of Marcellus the Galatian, of Sabellius the Libyan, of Marcion that was of Pontus, of Valentinus, of Manes, of Apollinaris of Laodicea, of Photinus, of Sophronius, and, in one word, all the heresies. It is written: "The form of God took the form of a servant." "The form of a servant," is it the energy of a servant, or the nature of a servant? By all means, I fancy, the nature of a servant. Thus too the form of God, is the nature of God. Tell me now, what means: "He took the form of a servant"? It means, He became man. Wherefore "being in the form of God," He was God. For one form and another form is named; if the one be true, the other is also. "The form of a servant" means, man by nature, wherefore "the form of God" means, God by nature. And He not only bears record of this, but of His equality too... that He is no way inferior to the Father, for He says, "He thought it not a thing to seize, to be equal with God."⁴

Such arguments frequently occur in the *Doctrina Patrum*.⁵ John Damascene follows the same tradition when employing this term. In his manual of logic he gives its precise philosophic meaning first: *μορφή* is essence formed and fashioned with essential distinctions, and indicates the basic kind or species.⁶ After this referring to the Holy Fathers he emphasises for the purposes of Christology the identity of the notions

¹ *Or.*30.6; *De Christi incarnatione* (*carm.* 11) (PG 37.471A); *Miracula Christi secundum Matthaeum* (*carm.* 20) (PG 37.490A); *De humana natura* (*carm.* 14) (PG 37.762A); *Carmina de se ipso*, 34 (PG 37.1313A); 45 (PG 37.1355A).

² *Comment. Joan.* (Pusey, 1.324.29; 373.24; 423.13; 721.5; 2.229.26; 649.31); *Ep. pasch.*27.4 (PG 77.937A); *Thesaur. trinit.*9, 10 (PG 75.117BD, 120-4); *Quod unus sit Christus*, (Durand, 718-19; 734; 741-3; 758; 764; 769).

³ *Tom.* (Tanner, *Decrees*, 78, col.2.30-45).

⁴ *Philip.*6.1-2 (PG 62.218-20).

⁵ *Doctrina patrum* (Diekamp, 38, 53, 64, 75, 83, 94, 96, 106, 111, 142, 146, 157, 199, 258, 297, 337).

⁶ *Dial.*42.2-7.

of μορφή, οὐσία, and φύσις when they mean the εἰδικώτατον εἶδος (“basic kind”).¹ Therefore he also maintains that μορφή θεοῦ is an expression of the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son,² and μορφή δούλου is the expression of assumed complete human nature consubstantial with us.³ However, John remarks against the Nestorians and, perhaps, Muslims that the word δοῦλος can be applied for Christ only metaphorically because He is one person and cannot be enslaved by Himself, nor He is a slave of God.

From this excursus it is clear why John uses μορφή when he means “human nature” in his canon. If properly understood this term is a perfectly adequate analogue of οὐσία and φύσις. If applied to humanity it indicates complete human nature. Furthermore its Christological legacy was approved by the Fathers representing the Orthodox tradition. In the light of this tradition the passage of Paul (commonly believed by scholars to be part of an early liturgical hymn – Philippians 2:5-11), appears to be a clear manifestation of double consubstantiality and of the fullness of assumed humanity. This passage had already been included in the poetry of Gregory Nazianzen⁴ and in the kontakia of Romanos the Melodist.⁵ Thus the liturgical use of this term in the canon is derived from Paul and is well grounded in Christological tradition. Yet John avoids the idiom δοῦλος due to its aforementioned possible use by Nestorians.

The exposition of double consubstantiality involves the term ἴσος (NC 1, *irmos*; 4:1). The primary meaning of the word is exact quantitative equality. Yet it also refers

¹ *Dial.* 5.75-84; 31.23-8; 42.8-11. See above in the *Christology of John Damascene*.

² *Expos.* 91.6-8.

³ Cf. *Expos.* 65.30.

⁴ *De Christi incarnatione* (carm. 11) (PG 37.471A); *Miracula Christi secundum Matthaeum* (carm. 20) (PG 37.490A); *De humana natura* (carm. 14) (PG 37.762A); *Carmina de se ipso*, 34 (PG 37.1313A); 45 (PG 37.1355A).

⁵ Romanos, *Cant.* 12.2.6; 18.14.2, 20.9; 42.11.1; 43.3.3, 13.8; 44.10.2; 47.23.5.

to qualitative equality, which finds its purest expression in the Aristotelian phrase: τὴν φύσιν ἴσους εἶναι πάντα.¹ Such a meaning can be found in the Old Testament with reference to human nature (Wisdom 7:1,3,6; cf. Isaias 40:25; 46:5). The term used elaborately in the Gospel of John: Jesus claims to be equal with the Father (John 5:18), He and the Father are one (John 10:30). The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* provides a commentary on this instance:

In John 5:18 ἴσος expresses neither likeness nor identity, but the equality of dignity, will, and nature which the later term ὁμοούσιος was designed to defend. Like many other terms, ἰσότης thus acquires in New Testament a depth and fullness which it never had before. Because of the character of exactness which clung to it as a term of quantitative equality, it was better adapted than ὅμοιος to express what New Testament has in view, the more so as it had already taken on qualitative significance as well. In other words, it denotes an equality which is both essential and perfect.²

This is also the case for the Pauline passage (Philippians 2:6), discussed above, where ἴσος implies the equality of nature. Most of the aforementioned Fathers commenting the Pauline hymn understood equality with reference to μορφή or nature. So, too does John Damascene in the *Contra Nestorianos*³ and in the *Expositio fidei*, where ἴσος underlines the equality of nature and energy.⁴ By this term he means exactly the same in his canon. The introductory *irmos* 1 sets a clear framework for ἴσος. There the word expresses the exact equality of essence: Christ is equal to the Father by His divine essence and by His human essence He is equal to humankind (cf. NC 4:1). This Christological term is part of the tradition, the origins of which are traced to Paul. So this term is authorised by Scripture and tradition, and therefore John makes his choice in

¹ *Polit.* 2.2, (Ross, 1261b1-2).

² *TDNT*, 3.353.

³ *Nestor.* 10.

⁴ *Expos.* 59.64-65; 91.100.

its favour. The phrase “equal by nature” was for him and for the congregation as, or even more, imposing than “consubstantial.”

Christ is equal by nature to mortals. John employs the word βροτός (“mortal”, “man”, “the one who can die”) with reference to humankind very often in the canon (NC ode 1; 4, *irmos*; 4:1; 4:3; 6:2; 7:2; cf. acrostic). This word is typical for classical Greek poetry, especially in Euripides and Homer. Usually translated as “mortal” or “man”, βροτός highlights human mortality. This is particularly evident from the book of Job, which is the only book of the Septuagint to contain eleven instances where the idiom is applied to emphasise the fundamental quality of the human race – its mortality: “A mortal, born of woman, few of days and full of trouble” (Job 14:1; cf. 4:17; 9:2; 10:4; 14:10; 15:14; 25:4; 28:13; 34:15; 32:8; 36:25). Thus the translators of Job stress the difference between the Creator and creation in the context of the book in which the narrator or Job explores the fallen human state.

This idiom is widely used in Christian poetry. Gregory Nazianzen more frequently than others uses βροτός in his verse when speaking of fallen mortal humanity and the immortality of God.¹ This is also the case for Romanos the Melodist.² In John Damascene the term appears once, when he speaks about virginity and marriage: “All mortals after the first parents of the race are the offspring of marriage”.³

Thus βροτός seems to be not merely a poetic idiom, a synonym of ἄνθρωπος. In scriptural and Christian anthropology it acquires a certain evident theological overtone: whereas ἄνθρωπος can mean both “man” in general and “fallen man”, βροτός precisely means “fallen mortal man”. John seems to employ this idiom both because of its poetic value and because of the importance of its theological overtone to the purposes of the

¹ See *De filio* (carm. 2) (PG 37.406A); *De anima* (carm. 8) (PG 37.452A).

² *Cant.* 12.11.3.

³ *Expos.* 97.58.

canon. Thus he emphasises that our human nature is fallen, corruptible, and mortal, and that Christ assumed the same human nature in order to renew it. Such was His kenosis.

The idea of kenosis, namely, that in the Incarnation God emptied or humiliated Himself (ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν), was first proposed by Paul in the aforementioned hymn (Philippians 2:7) which was later to become a very popular Patristic exposition of the redemptive ministry of God the Word. However, it has been pointed out elsewhere by scholars that John Damascene makes little of the kenotic dimension of Christology.¹ Yet in the canons John frequently exploits the idea of kenosis (cf. NC 1:2; 3:1; 3:2; 4:3; 6:1; 6:2; 8:1). Kenosis makes the Godhead very close to humanity. Although the union and coinherence originate from the side of the divine Word, His kenosis leaves enough space for humanity to manifest its own activity and not to be passive as in the case of Monophysitism. Thus, the Chalcedonian balance of both natures and their energies in one hypostasis is more clearly perceived. Furthermore, kenosis highlights one of the most important features of God – His loving humility. The kenotic language of the canon brings God nearer to those who contemplate Him.

The vocabulary of this canon includes very informative ancient terms of scriptural origin, which lack nothing from the Christological point of view. Their simplicity and accessibility is highly valued by tradition. It makes the contemplation of Christ easier. Yet, the contemplation of Him would be incomplete or even impossible without the contemplation of His Mother. The canon provides ample material for this.

¹ Unfortunately, Kotter's *Indices* do not mention that "kenosis" does occur in John (*Expos.* 91.47, 67; *Nestor.* 15.5; 35.20. This "lack of kenosis" leads to "Christological asymmetry" (Florovsky, *Fathers*, 297) and swamping Christ's humanity by His divinity (R. Swinburne, *The Christian God*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 209-12; Louth, *John*, 175-6). These assumptions are true to some extent.

The Role of the Mother of God in the Incarnation

The person of the *Theotokos* is inconspicuously mentioned in the Gospels (cf. Matthew 1:16-2:23; 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; 6:3; Luke 1:26-2:52; 8:19-21; 11:27; John 2:1-11; 19:25-27), and in the Apocrypha.¹ Her worship is a vital part of tradition from the beginning of Christianity. She is mentioned in the Creeds.

There are several reasons why Christians worship her. The first is highlighted by her name “the Mother of God” or the *Theotokos*, which was dogmatised in the beginning of the fifth century in response to Nestorios. John Damascene explains the origin of her name as follows:

Though she did not bear naked God, and the Godhead of the only-Begotten does not have its beginning from her, truly she bore God and is called the *Theotokos* because she conceived and gave birth to God incarnate from herself (*Fides* 30.2-4).

She gave birth to the single hypostasis of the Son of God, God and man: “The *Theotokos* bore a hypostasis revealed in two natures, begotten by reason of its divinity of the Father timelessly and at last incarnate of her in time and born in the flesh”.²

Her role to provide human nature for the Son of God highlights another reason for worshipping her: the *Theotokos* is the source of the humanity of the Word. This reason particularly stresses the fullness of His human nature and activity, the identity of His human nature with His Mother and with the rest of human beings. Although both Monophysites and Orthodox worship her for this, this reason is more supportive of the Orthodox way of thinking.

¹ Sec, for example, the English translation of the *Protoevangelium of James* (Elliott, 57-67), *the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* (Elliott, 88-99), *the History of Joseph the Carpenter* (Elliott, 114-17), *the Infancy of Saviour, the Passing of Mary* (ANF 8).

² *Expos.* 80.17-20; cf. 56; 87.

Mary is the person of outstanding piety, the Virgin predestined by God and found worthy of giving birth to Him. She became the first deified person among human beings. This, too, is a reason for worshiping her.

Finally, as the Mother of God she is the nearest and dearest relative of her Son (which may sound a bit trite). Her immense love of Him makes her an intercessor between Christ-God and humankind.

All these reasons can be observed in the works of John Damascene, a zealous worshiper of the Mother of God.¹ They are present in this canon too. John emphasises the role of Mary to provide human flesh for God and to give birth to Him in NC 1, *irmos*; 1:1; 3:1; 3:2; 4 *irmos*; 4:1; 4:3; 9:1; 9:2. He always employs names and imagery accentuating the ever-virginity of Mary. As all monastic theologians John pays particular attention to the notion of virginity.² It appears to be the original state of human nature, yet it does not contradict reproduction:

We were made confident by God the Word that was made flesh of the Virgin, that virginity was implanted in man's nature from above and in the beginning. For man was formed of virgin soil. From Adam alone was Eve created. In Paradise virginity held sway (*Expos.* 97.4-7).³

Thus virginity is compatible with procreation, and the Virgin birth is quite normal from the Christian point of view. It indicates the original purity of procreation, and the state in which a person is most capable of being in touch with God, thus setting an example of holiness (cf. NC 1:1; 8, *irmos*; 9:1). Since virginity is a key to impassivity, in his *Dorm.*I John highlights the link between virginity and incorruption.⁴

¹ See, for example, his canon for the Dormition and *Homiliae I-III in dormitionem b.v.Mariae*. Their analysis is in Louth, *John*, 243-9; 274-82. See also Chevalier, *Mariologie*.

² John Damascene, *Expos.* 97; cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Virg.*

³ Cf. Romanos, *Cant.* 12.refrain.

⁴ *Dorm.* 1.10.1-40.

The role of Mary is particularly elaborately illustrated when John appeals to Old Testament typology.¹ The comparison of the Virgin womb with Eve's womb (NC 1:1) reflects the concept of Mary as the second Eve. This concept lacks solid scriptural ground, yet "this may well have been the first Old Testament type to have been applied to her by the Church."² The concept appears in the second century in Justin and Irenaeos³ and later becomes very popular in homiletics and hymnography.⁴ The contrast of Eve and Mary echoes the Pauline analogy of Adam and Christ (Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:21-23, 45-49): as Adam was born from the virginal earth and Eve without the seed of man, as Christ was born from the Virgin; where Eve failed in disobedience, Mary succeeded in obedience; Eve brought the murderer Cain into the world, Mary brought the Giver of Life.⁵ Both the concept of the second Eve and of the second Adam are integral. In fact they form one complete picture: just as in the beginning Adam and Eve fell and introduced corruption, so Mary and Christ brought salvation and incorruption. The story of salvation thus contrasts the story of the Fall.

Perhaps, the most favourite Old Testament image in the exposition of the Incarnation is that of the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:1-4; NC 1:1). It prefigures both the merging of the Godhead with humanity in the Virgin womb and Mary's ever-virginity.

¹ See N.Constas, *Weaving the body of God: Proclus of Constantinople, the Theotokos, and the loom of the flesh*, JECS 3.2, 1995, 169-94; L.Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn*, (Leiden, 2001); E.Lash, *Mary in Eastern Church Literature*, in Alberic Stacpoole, OSB, *Mary in Doctrine and Devotion*, Blackrock, Co. (Dublin: Columba Press, 1990), 58-80; L.Thornton, *The Mother of God in Holy Scripture*, in *The Mother of God, A Symposium*, ed. E.Mascall, (London, 1949), 13; R.Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, (Cambridge, 1973), 142-150.

² Lash, *Mary*, 60; cf. Murray, *Symbols*, 144.

³ Justin, *Dialog.* 100.5; Irenaeos, *Haer.* 3.22.4; 5.19.1. On Justin in general see Grillmeier, *Christ*, 89-94; J.Quasten, *Patrology*, Vol.1, (Westminster, Maryland, 1986), 178, 196-219; E.Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr*, (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1968). On Irenaeos in general see Quasten, *Patrology*, 1.287-313; Grillmeier, *Christ*, 1.98-104.

⁴ See Ephrem, *Diat.* 2.2. (Leloir, 66); NH 1.14-16; Proklos, *Hom.Nativ.* 4.1 (PG 65.709B); *Hom.Theot.* 5.3 (PG 65.720BD), (on the homilies of Proklos see F.Leroy, *L'Homilétique de Proclus de Constantinople*, Vatican, 1967); Romanos, *Cant.* 12.8; the *Akathist Hymn*; John Damascene, *Dorm.* II.8.1-2.

⁵ See Lash, *Mary*, 60-7 (Fr Ephrem focuses mainly on Syriac typology).

The roots of such Christocentric interpretations can be found in Justin.¹ Cardinal Daniélou suggests that Gregory of Nyssa was the first to apply this passage to Mary.² Father Ephrem Lash demonstrates that this image was applied to Mary at least twenty years earlier by Ephrem the Syrian.³ In any case by the time of Ephesus it was well established.⁴

The paradox of the flame that does not devour leads to the other classic example, the story of the Three Children in the fiery furnace (Daniel 3), which also typifies the Virgin's womb (NC 8, *irmos*). The fire which becomes dew in the furnace evokes the "dew on the fleece" in the story of Gideon (Judges 6:36-40) and in Psalm 71:6, reminiscent of Epiphany theme.⁵ So the Three Children and the fleece prefigure Mary, whereas fire and dew prefigure Christ (as we have mentioned above in the analysis of NC 1:1 and 8, *irmos*). Romanos combines the types of the burning bush and the fleece:

At your conceiving without seed, O Mother of God, he (Joseph) understood the rain on the fleece, the bush unconsumed by fire... A Virgin bears a child and after child-birth remains still a virgin.⁶

The vision of the burning bush appeared to Moses on mount Horeb (Exodus 3:1-2). Perhaps, this is the link to the next type of Mary as the Mountain (NC 4, *irmos*). The Fathers see the descent of God upon Mount Sinai (cf. Exodus 19) as a type of the Incarnation in which the Mountain prefigures the Mother of God (cf. Psalm 117:22; Isaiah 28:16; Luke 20:17; Ephesians 2:20).⁷ It seems that the type of the Mountain of

¹ *Dialog.*60 (bush); cf. 70 (mountain); 87 (root).

² *Moses.*2.20 (Iter 119n3).

³ *Diat.*1.25 (Leloir 56-8); EH 14.33-34. See Lash, *Mary*, 68.

⁴ See Epiphany canon (EC) 9,1 in the next chapter; cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyr.Exod.Or.*1.8 (PG 69.412-13).

⁵ Cf. EC ode 7; 8,1 in the next chapter.

⁶ *Cant.*12 (prooimion). Cf. Proklos, *Hom.Theot.*1.1 (PG 65.681A).

⁷ Lash, *Mary*, 69-70.

God is not limited to Sinai for there are three other mountains which could metaphorically be associated with Mary. First is the mountain of Daniel 2:34, 44: a stone cut without hands from the mountain smashes the statue and itself becomes a great mountain. Daniel interprets it as the coming of the kingdom of God destroying all opposing kingdoms. Early Christian exegesis applies the image to Christ¹ whereas in the fifth century and later it unfolds to the Mariological extent² and so appears in the present canon. The mountain of Avvakum 3:3 is the second: the prophet openly says that God comes from the mountain. John Damascene combines these two types in NC 4, *irmos*. The third is the mountain of God in Psalm 67:16s: “the Mountain of God is a fat mountain, a *curdled mountain*.” For example, Fr Ephrem Lash demonstrates how the italicised expression is interpreted by Romanos as an image of the Incarnation (also referring to Job 10:10: “Did you not pour me out like milk, and curdle me like cheese?”):

I... came down from heaven like the manna not onto Mount Sinai, but into your womb; within it I was curdled, as David prophesied; understand the “curdled mountain”, noble Lady: for it is I; for being the Word I became flesh in you.³

The Mountain of God in Psalm 67 is the Temple Mount, Holy City of Jerusalem, Holy Sion, the Temple, the Ark, the dwelling of God. All these expressions point to Mary as the Temple, Ark, and dwelling of God. Perhaps her analogy with the Holy city and Temple drew the image of the “Gate which is shut because the Lord God of Israel has entered by it” (Ezekiel 44:1-2). This is the type of the Word who appeared from the Virgin (NC 9:1). The story of Aaron’s rod flowering in the tabernacle (Numbers 17:8)

¹ Justin, *Dialog*.70; Hippolytos of Rome, *Dan*.2.13 (Lefèvre).

² Proklos, *Hom.Nativ*.4.1 (PG 65.709AB); Romanos, *Verse for Christmas* 83.4 in P.Maas and C.Trypanis, *Sancti Romani Melodi Cantica Dubia*, (Berlin 1970).

³ Romanos, *Cant*.35.6. A possible source of this interpretation can be seen in *The Odes of Solomon*, 19 (Charlesworth, 81-4). Cf. Lash, *Mary*, 71.

reminds us of the flower which blossomed from the root of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1) – another image of the Virgin employed in NC 4:3 to demonstrate her royal genealogy.

The history of such Mariological typology is not easily traced, but it is already more or less elaborated in fourth century Syria. It rapidly unfolds universally in the beginning of the fifth century in the period of the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, when the role of the Virgin Mary in the Incarnation was dogmatised. By the time of Romanos and the Akathist Hymn it is fully established in Christian tradition. John Damascene gathers together many traditional aspects of Mariology and Mariological typology in his homilies on her Dormition,¹ but in the canon for the Nativity he emphasises the most important. In the canon Mary is seen as the fulfilment of all Israel's hopes and longings; the Old Testament is ransacked for Marian imagery.² Nonetheless in NC 9:1 John remarks that all typological allusions are simultaneously the figures of the Word. Fr Ephrem Lash explains this universality thus: "All Scripture points towards Christ, including the images which typify his Mother."³ Indeed it would be unnatural to separate images of Christ and His Mother when speaking about His birth from her. She plays a key role in the Incarnation. Her humanity experienced deification when she became the vehicle of the Incarnation of God. Mary and Jesus are relatives and share the same human nature. She became the first representative of the new deified race.⁴ Above all as the nearest relative of her Son, the Virgin Mary is the chief intercessor between God and humankind (cf. NC ode 9). This all explains the zealous Orthodox devotion to her, which together with the aforementioned dogmatic background, is reflected in the canon.

¹ John Damascene, *Dorm.* 1.8.9; 2.2.12,16; 3.2.5.

² Cf. Louth, *John*, 246.

³ Lash, *Mary*, 75

⁴ Cf. John Damascene, *Dorm.* 2.15.

Conclusion

The contemplation of God the Word incarnate in this canon is no less accurate, balanced, and comprehensive than that outlined in the summary of Orthodox Christological tradition. The canon is an integral part of this tradition.

Scripture is the principle source of many images and ideas in the canon; traditionally popular works by Gregory Nazianzen are the second major source. In general the Christological exposition of the poem dwells on Cyrilline Chalcedonianism. The poem operates with the same basic terms of philosophical and Christian logic usually employed in theological and polemical treatises. Its terminology is universal and should exclude any misinterpretations. The idea of the oneness of subject is pivotal for the canon. Whenever John speaks of the incarnate One, he clearly means one person. There are two natures in this person. By His divine nature Christ is equal to the Father, by His human nature He is equal to us – the Chalcedonian double consubstantiality is clearly stressed immediately in NC 1, *irmos*. The equality of Christ's human essence with us means the fullness of His human nature. The canon profoundly explores the fallen state of humanity and the redemptive achievements of Christ. In this light Mariology plays a significant role in the Christological framework of the poem. In fact the Orthodox contemplation of Christ incarnate would be incomplete without contemplation of His Mother.

The union of God with man has always been the central issue of Christological controversies. The accurate exposition of this in the canon sets the limits that prevent one from straying into Monophysite or Nestorian realms. However, the canon was not supposed to be a polemic treatise. It does not explore in detail the human activity and will in Christ. But it is an essential source of Orthodox Christology. Moreover, its

Christology appears not as a scholastic discipline but as a vital part of Christian life focussing on human salvation. Its soteriological message can be summarised by a phrase from one of the Nativity *stichera*: “God has come upon earth, and man has gone up to heaven”.¹

However unique in itself, this canon is actually an integral part of the Nativity office. Only in the context of other readings, hymns, and prayers does it become fully comprehensible. Furthermore, it refers to the forthcoming festival of the Epiphany, thus leading the congregation from one redemptive event to another without interrupting the solemn atmosphere around the celebration of the appearance of God.

¹ *Menalon, December 25, Lity, stichera 2* (Lash, <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/liti.htm> 27.07.2004).

II. The Canon for the Epiphany

Introduction

The festival of the Nativity is followed by the Epiphany in the yearly liturgical cycle.¹ Although the origins of this sequence are rather complex, by the time of John Damascene the Epiphany was mainly associated with Jesus' baptism in the Jordan and the manifestation of God on earth. The theological content of the event unfolds in John's second iambic canon. This chapter will begin with an investigation of the historical and theological formation of the Epiphany. Thus the background will be set for the systematic examination of the poem. In the course of the examination I shall concentrate on the theological and exegetical dimensions of the poem; its correspondence to the Nativity canon; its emphasis on the meaning of water; and its liturgical context. This analysis will make clear the role of the canon in the Epiphany tradition.

History of Epiphany

The substance of the celebration of Epiphany varied in different traditions.² Generally speaking, there were two major trends: Eastern and Western. The birth of Christ, the story of the Magi, Christ's baptism, His divine manifestation, miracle at Cana, and the feeding of the crowds formed the festival of Epiphany on January 6 as

¹ For the general information see, for example, K.McDonnell, *The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan*, (Collegeville, Minnesota, 1996).

² The Greek words ἐπιφάνεια ("appearance", "manifestation"), θεοφάνια ("the divine manifestation", "appearance"), φῶτα ("lights"), - are usually used to name the festival. For a general outlook see A.McArthur, *The Evolution of the Christian Year*, (London, 1953), 31-76; R.Bainton, "The Origins of Epiphany", *Early and Medieval Christianity, The Collected Papers in Church History, Series One* (Boston, 1962), 22-38; T.Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, (Collegeville, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1991), 79-154; P.Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship, Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy*, (London, 1992), 202-4; M.Merras, *The Origins of the Celebration of the Christian Feast of Epiphany*, (Joensuu University Press, Finland, 1995); М.Скаблланович, *Толковый типикон*, (Киев, 1910), 138, 296-303.

indicated in earlier Alexandrian¹ and Syrian² traditions. Alexandrian tradition seems to pay particular attention to the watery mysteries which may be due to the connection with the Nile. Together these events illustrate the appearance of God, His power and glory on earth. The theme of the Nativity or the birth of Christ was dominant in the western feast of Epiphany, with the baptism being less significant. December 25 (winter solstice) was the initial date of the Nativity festival in Roman tradition.³ It seems that Christians in the East hearing about this tradition, decided to adopt it too (it is also possible that certain Eastern customs may have influenced the West). The Western pattern was adopted by Constantinople,⁴ Cappadocia,⁵ Antioch⁶ and Syria. The representatives of these local traditions segregate the variety of Epiphany themes into two festivals: the Nativity of Christ on December 25 also called Theophania, and the

¹ Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1.21.146; *The Canons of Athanasius of Alexandria, The Arabic and Coptic Versions*, ed. W.Riedel and W.Crum, (Oxford, 1904), 26-8; John Cassian, *Conf.* 10.2. See observations of B.Botte, in *Noël, Épiphanie: retour du Christ, Lex Orandi* 40, (Paris, 1967), 25-42; Talley, *Origins*, 119; O.Cullmann, "The Origin of Christmas", in *The Early Church*, ed. A.Higgins, (London, 1956), 21-36; Merras, *Epiphany*, 104, 108. On Basilides see: Irenaeos, *Haer.* 1.26.1; W.Frend, *Saint and Sinners in the Early Church, Differing and Conflicting Traditions in the First Six Centuries*, (London, 1985), 37-46; K.Rudolph, *Die Gnosis, Wesen und die Geschichte einer spätantiken Religion*, (Göttingen, 1990), 334.

² *Didascalia Apostolorum* 3.8.6-8 (Vööbus); Ephrem the Syrian, *Nativity Hymns* (NH) 4.31-32, 58; 5.13; 22.6-8; 23.14; cf. 3.19; 4.210-11; 6.19-22; 16.9-11 (McVey); *Epiphany Hymns* (EH) 3.22; 4.1-2, 9, 12; 4.206-7 (McVey); Syriac lectionary of the fifth century, Ms Brit.Mus.Add. 14528; for the analysis see A.Baumstark, *Neuerschlossene Urkunden altchristlicher Perikopenordnung des ostaramäischen Sprachgebiets, Oriens Christianus Series 3*, (Leipzig, 1927), 1.1-22; for the translation see Merras, *Epiphany*, 160-2; *Constitutiones Apostolorum*, 5.13; 8.13; Epiphanius of Salamis, *Haer.* 51.16, (Holl, 270.1-3); 51.22 (Holl, 284.4-19); 51.27-30 (Holl, 298-301).

³ *Depositio Martyrum, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi*, 9.1, (1892), (13-196), 71; Ambrose of Milan, *Virgin.* 3.1-2; Augustine of Hippo, *Or.* 199-204; cf. *Or.* 202.2. On Epiphany in the West see L.Fendt, *Der heutige Stand der Forschung über das Geburtsfest Jesu am 25.XII und über Epiphanias*, TL 78.1 (January 1953), cols.1-10; M.Shepherd, *The Liturgical Reform of Damasus I, Kyriakon, Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, II, 854; J.Mossay, *Les fêtes de Noël et de l'Épiphanie d'après les sources littéraires cappadociens du IV^e siècle*, (Louvain, 1965), 34; J.Bernardi, *La prédication des Pères cappadociens, Le prédicateur et son auditoir*, (Paris, 1968), 205; Talley, *Origins*, 87, 141-7.

⁴ On the contribution of Gregory Nazianzen see H.Usener, *Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, (Bonn, 1911), 260-269; Mossay, *Fêtes*, 34; cf. T.Talley, *Origins*, 137-8; Алфсеев, Григорий, 195. See also Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.* 38.3, 16; *Or.* 39.1, 14; *Or.* 40.1-3.

⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *Nat* (dub., PG 46.1128); *Lumin.* (*Opera*, 9.1.221-242); *Lumin.* (*Opera*, 9.1.223.12-18); Basil the Great, *Hom. in s.Christi generationem* 6 (dub., PG 31.1473A).

⁶ John Chrysostom, *Pent.* 1.1 (PG 50.454); *Anom.* 6.3-4 (PG 48.752); *Nat.* 1 (PG 49.351); *Bapt.* 2 (PG 49.366).

Epiphany (the Lights) on January 6. The latter feast was dedicated to the baptism of Christ and His divine manifestation and was an occasion for mass baptism. This change and the theological development of both festivals obviously correspond to the unfolding of Christological teaching. It could be initiated by certain anti-Arian and anti-Apollinarian concerns in order to emphasise the idea of the Incarnation.¹

At the same time, the Churches of Alexandria and Jerusalem were reluctant to accept this change. In Alexandria the Nativity on December 25 was celebrated for the first time some fifty years later than in Constantinople.² Perhaps, the rivalry between the see of Alexandria and that of Constantinople (and perhaps Rome) was one of the reasons behind the Alexandrians' reluctance.

The development of Palestinian tradition corresponds with the reforms of Constantine the Great and the restoration of Jerusalem in the first half of the fourth century. Eusebios of Caesarea writes that Constantine built three Church complexes: on the site of the Holy Tomb; at the cave of Nativity ("the scene of the first Theophany of the Saviour"); and on the Mount of Olives.³ However, the church at Bethabara, dedicated to John the Baptist, was erected only in the early sixth century by the Emperor Anastasios.⁴ The description of the Epiphany festival on January 6 by Egeria focuses on the birth of Christ, celebrated at Bethlehem and Jerusalem, and does not encompass His baptism.⁵ According to the Armenian lectionary (Vc.), which

¹ Cf. Merras, *Epiphany*, 144, 152.

² Talley, *Origins*, 141; cf. PG 77.1432.

³ *Vita Constantini* 3.33-43. For their history and archaeology see, for example, H. Vincent, F. Abel, *Bethléem, Le Sanctuaire de la Nativité*, (Paris, 1914); B. Bagatti, *The Church from the Gentiles in Palestine, History and Archaeology*, Publications of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, Smaller Series 4, (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1971); Talley, *Origins*, 40-2.

⁴ Merras, *Epiphany*, 152; G. Ristow, *The Baptism of Christ, Pictorial Library of Eastern Church Art*, 15, (Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers Publishers, 1967), 49.

⁵ *Diary*, 25. Some scholars suggested that the missing fragments of *Diary*, 25 could describe a certain ceremony at the Jordan – B. Botte, *Les origines de la Noël et de l'Épiphanie*, (Louvain, 1932), 14; McArthur, *Evolution*, 52.

corresponds with the notes of Egeria, the Epiphany lasted for eight days from January 5 and commemorated the Incarnation without any allusion to the story of Jesus's baptism.¹ December 25 is called the feast of David and James. However, the title of the feast in the manuscript *Jerusalem, arm.* 121 has a note "in other cities the birth of Christ is celebrated".²

During the episcopate of Juvenal (424-458) the December festival was temporarily adopted as appears from two sermons for the Nativity by Hesychios, a preacher in Jerusalem from 412 to his death in 451.³ However, Cosmas Indicopleustes around 530 notes that only Jerusalemites celebrate the birth of Christ on January 6, on the same date as His Epiphany when He was baptised, while the rest of the world has separate festivals.⁴ The same evidence is testified by Abraham of Ephesus (530-553) who, in a sermon on the Annunciation, indicated that the Palestinians were alone in rejecting the feast of the birth of the Saviour on December 25.⁵

A letter of Justinian dated 561 called upon the Jerusalem authorities to keep the Annunciation on March 25 and Hypapante on February 2, forty days after December 25, rather than February 14. It makes clear that until then the Epiphany still celebrated the Nativity and baptism of Christ.⁶ The standardization of this tradition was ordered by Emperor Justin II (565-578).⁷ Shortly after the death of the patriarch Makarios (567/568), the December 25 festival was adopted in Jerusalem, and the itinerary of

¹ *PO* 35.163, 168; 36.211-25.

² See *PO* 35.75-8.

³ Talley, *Origins*, 139; cf. *PG* 93.1449.

⁴ *Topograph.* 5.10-12 (Wolska-Conus).

⁵ *PO* 16.443.

⁶ T. Talley suggests that this united celebration was defended by Monophysite forces – *Origins*, 139-40.

⁷ See Nikephoros Kallistos, *Hist.* 17.28 (*PG* 147.292A).

Antonios of Plaisance in 570 reports the observance of the Epiphany not at Bethlehem but on the Jordan.¹

Finally, the parts of the Epiphany office: *stichera* at the Royal Hours and the prayer at the Great blessing of the waters, attributed to Sophronios, patriarch of Jerusalem (633-634), clearly focus on the baptismal story as dominant in the feast of Epiphany, and mention the Nativity as a past event: "In the preceding feast we saw you as a child, while in the present we behold you full-grown, our God made manifest perfect God from perfect God".²

So the ultimate standardization in the East finally took place by the middle of the sixth century with the exception of the Armenian Church, which still celebrates the Nativity on January 6. It would be impossible to celebrate the Nativity, baptism, and the miracle at Cana simultaneously in Palestine where all the events of the life of Christ were geographically attached to certain places. Such a long survival of the Palestinian custom could indicate that the baptism of Christ was not considered as important as His Nativity. An emphasis on the theme of the Incarnation in the feast may indicate some strong influence of Alexandrian tradition, but it is not necessarily Monophysite. The unique Palestinian case witnesses to the jealous loyalty of the Church of Jerusalem not merely to its own independent tradition, but also to the universal tradition because this Church has always been considered loyal to Orthodox Christology.

This is the historical and theological background of the Epiphany feast as celebrated in Palestine in the time of John Damascene. As a clear dogmatic exposition, John's Epiphany canon plays a significant role in the celebration. The examination of

¹ Talley, *Origins*, 140; M.van Esbroeck, *La Lettre de l'empereur Justinien sur l'Annonciation et la Noël en 561*, *Analecta Bollandiana* 86 (1968), 351-71.

² Menalon, *January 6*, see translation of Fr. Ephrem Lash, <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/mcgagiasm.htm> 27.07.2004.

the poem should clarify the nature of the universal Epiphany tradition, and, perhaps, explain the Palestinian case.

The Canon for the Epiphany

Acrostic

Introductory to the canon, the acrostic conveys the concept of the feast of Epiphany:

The valiant Child of the Almighty One,
Blazes with the divine fire of the Spirit,
Throwing Himself [into the Jordan] He burns sin and buries it with waters;
As merciful He grants grace to singers of these melodies.

Thus it is the baptism of Christ (Matthew 3:11-17; Mark 1:7-11; Luke 3:15-22; John 1:29-34), which is celebrated today. But it is also the manifestation of all three persons of the Trinity: “The Almighty One”, His “glorious Child”, and “Spirit” radiating through the Son. The redemptive significance of baptism is that Christ buries sin with waters and burns it with the fire of the Godhead (cf. Deuteronomy 4:24).¹ “Grace” appears to be the gift of baptism which is granted to “the singers of these melodies” or Christians. These themes unfold in the canon.

Canon

Ode 1

Israel passed through the storm-tossed deep of the sea,
Which had been turned into dry land,
But the dark waters completely covered
The chief captains of Egypt in a watery grave

¹ Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.*41.12 (Moreschini).

Through the mighty strength of the right hand of the Master (EC 1, *irmos*).¹

The *irmos* paraphrases the story of the passage of Israel across the Red Sea, the theme of the first biblical canticle (Exodus 13-15; in particular, 15:6; cf. NC 1, *irmos*).² In Christian tradition, this story is interpreted as general prototype of the redemptive ministry of Christ, but it can be applied to particular events. Thus Paul refers to it as an image of baptism: "All our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea... Now these things became our examples" (1 Corinthians 10:1-2, 6). The same interpretation was extensively employed by the Cappadocian Fathers. According to the comparison of Basil, the font of baptism releases Christians from the tyranny of the devil in the same way that Israel was delivered from Pharaoh by the sea, and the Egyptians who perished thus prefigured both the devil and sins.³ Enumerating the five kinds of baptism with that of Moses the first among them, Gregory Nazianzen clarifies that "this was typical as Paul says; the sea of the water, and the cloud of the Spirit".⁴ John Damascene knows this tradition and echoes the interpretation of Gregory when explaining the mystery of baptism.⁵ Therefore this *irmos* does not merely allude to the first biblical canticle but interprets it in the light of the feast. John contrasts the flight of Israel and the sinking of Pharaoh, echoing the idea of a watery burial (cf. the acrostic).

¹ The abbreviation means "Epiphany canon, ode 1, *irmos*". I use and modify if necessary the translation of mother Mary and archimandrite Kallistos Ware from *The Festal Menaion*, (Pennsylvania: St Tikhon's Seminary Press, 1998), 367-82.

² Cf. Nikodimos, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 1.296-7.

³ *Spir.*14.31.1-9 (Pruche); cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Lumin.* (*Opera*, 9.1.232.23-233); *Moses* 2.122-5 (Daniélou).

⁴ *Or.*39.17; cf. Ephrem the Syrian, EH 1.5-6.

⁵ *Expos.*82.67-9.

When the Light of Dawn shone forth upon mortals,
Coming from the desert to the streams of the Jordan,
You, the King of the sun, have bowed your head before him,
That so you might snatch our forefather from the land of darkness,
And clean creation from its filth (NC 1:1).

The *troparion* alludes to the story of the baptism in the Gospels. The Light of the Dawn or John the Baptist came from the desert to the Jordan. The kenotic dimension is expressed in the phrase “the King of the sun bowed His head before him”. God condescended in order to “snatch our forefather from the land of darkness, and to cleanse creation from all its filth”. Under the idiom “our forefather” John means that we admit and confess our relation with the fallen Adam. Baptism cleanses fallenness both personally and universally.

O Word without beginning, you have buried with you in the stream
The one who was corrupted by error,
But you make him new again;
And the Father testifies to you ineffably, saying with mighty voice:
This is my beloved Child, equal to me by nature (EC 1:2).

Fallen humanity was corrupted by error. Hypostatically united to it, the Word buried it in water, thus renewing it. In the acrostic the watery burial affects sin, in the *irmos* it destroys Pharaoh, while here it is the universal rebirth of humanity (cf. Romans 6:3-5).¹ Whereas the first part of the *troparion* explores the consubstantiality of Christ with us, the last line employs the already familiar expression of His consubstantiality with the Father, who testifies that Christ is His beloved Child, equal to Him by nature (ἴσος τὴν φύσιν, cf. Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; John 1:34; NC 1, *irmos*; 4:1).²

¹ Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.*40.9.

² Cf. the explanation of the expression “Word without beginning” by Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.*39.12, and Basil’s note on “the testimony of the Father” in the commentary on Psalm 44 (PG 29.392AB), both exploring the consubstantiality of Christ with the Father.

Ode 3

From the ancient snares have we all been set loose (cf. Psalm 90:3; Proverbs 5:22; 6:5; 7:21; 22:25),
And the jaws of the devouring lions have been broken (cf. Psalm 57:7; 90:13),¹
Let us rejoice exceedingly and open wide our mouths,
Weaving with words a melody to the Word
Whose delight it is to bestow gifts upon us (EC, 3, *irmos*).

There are several parallels with ode 1 in this *irmos*. “The land of darkness” (EC 1:1), “the ancient snares”, and “the jaws of the devouring lions” imply the conditions of fallen humanity under the rule of the devil. Our universal deliverance and salvation follow the snatching of our forefather from the land of darkness, the restoration of man in Christ, the baptism of Christ, and the cleansing of creation (EC 1:1), which was also prefigured by the deliverance of Israel (EC 1, *irmos*). As Gregory Nazianzen notes, these are the gifts manifest in the baptism: deliverance, cleansing, renewal, illumination, grace, incorruption.² For these the congregation sings this hymn (cf. the acrostic).

He who once assumed the appearance of a malignant beast
And implanted death in the creation,
Is now cast into darkness by Christ’s coming in the flesh,
And by assailing the Master, the Dawn³ that has shone forth upon us,
He crushes his own hateful and loathsome head (EC 3:1).

The *troparion* provides another reference to the story of the Fall (Genesis 3:1-14; cf. EC 1:2), clearly pointing to its most painful dramatic consequence – death, implanted by devil. The coming of Christ in the flesh (σαρκικὴ παρουσία - the leitmotif of the Nativity, NC 5:1; 9:2), threw the devil away. The *troparion* omits the theme of baptism and refers directly to the temptation of Christ in the desert, which followed it: “by assailing the Master... he crushes his head” (cf. Matthew 4:1-11; Mark

¹ The words βρόχος (snare) and βορός (devouring) occur in Cyril of Alexandria, cf. *Commentarius in xii prophetas minores*, (Pusey, i, 193.23; 316.16; 554.17; ii, 51.8).

² Or.40.4.

³ The expression ὁρθοῦ φανέντος refers to John the Baptist in EC 1:1, but here a phrase ὁρθῶ φάναντι refers to Christ.

1:12-13; Luke 4:1-11). This is an allusion to Genesis 3:15: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall watch your head and you shall watch His heel.”

The Master draws to Himself the nature made by God,
Which had been covered over by the gluttonous tyrant;
A new birth He grants to the inhabitants of the earth, renewing them,
Thereby accomplishing a glorious work,
For He has come to protect this nature (EC 3:2).

The *troparion* follows a similar pattern. Our nature made by God was, however, covered over by the devil (cf. EC 3:1). God Himself assumes this fallen nature in His Incarnation, and accomplishes rebirth and renewal, which are shared by all in baptism. The ideas of rebirth and renewal are simultaneously found in the Nativity and Epiphany (cf. NC 4, *irmos*; 9:2). As Nikodimos points out, the imagery of the *troparion* might echo the parable of the lost drachma (Luke 15: 8-10; cf. Genesis 1:27) as interpreted by Gregory Nazianzen: “He lighted a candle – His own flesh – and swept the house, cleansing the world from sin; and sought the drachma, the royal image that was covered up by passions”.¹

Ode 4

Cleansed by the fire of a mystic vision,
The prophet hymned the renewal of mortals,
Inspired by Spirit, he raised his voice
To tell the Incarnation of the ineffable Word
Which shattered the might of the strong ones (EC 4, *irmos*).

The *irmos* refers to the fourth biblical canticle of Avvakum 3:1-19 and especially to verses 3 and 14. According to its interpretation, the prophet, cleansed by

¹ Or.38.14.12-15; cf. Nikodimos, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 1.303.

the fire of the Spirit, foresaw the Incarnation, in which the Word renewed mortals (cf. EC 1:2; 3:2; NC 4, *irmos*).¹

O all-shining blessed Word, sent forth from the Father,
You have come to dispel utterly the dark and evil night
And to uproot the sins of mortals,
And by your baptism to draw up with you
Bright sons from the streams of Jordan (EC 4:1).

The *troparion* alludes to John 1:1-14 and to the Nativity sermon of Gregory Nazianzen illustrating the coming of the Word sent by the Father.² The Incarnation of Christ and His baptism are compared with the coming of light, which dispels “the dark and evil night and uproots the sins of mortals” (cf. EC 1:1) as consequences of the Fall. The *troparion* stresses an essential idea that human sins are dispelled and uprooted in the baptism (cf. the acrostic, EC 1:2). The relation or union of mortals with Christ (cf. EC 3:2; 4, *irmos*) unfolds here to the extent of their sonship with God, expressed by the words “bright sons.” This sonship originated in the baptism of Christ and is shared by Christians in their personal baptism (cf. Romans 8:29).

Fastening his eyes on the very glorious Word,
The Preacher cried out plainly to the creation:
“This is the One who was before me, yet after me by flesh” (John 1:15, 30),
Like us in form, He has shone forth
In the strength of the Godhead to drive away our hateful sin (EC 4:2).

The *troparion* develops the previous idea when meditating on the sermon of John the Baptist. The prophet is the first to openly manifest the divinity of Christ and His redemptive ministry. Part of the Christological language of the canon, the idiom “like us in form” (σύμμορφος) is the expression of Christ’s consubstantiality with us

¹ Cf. speculations of Cyril of Alexandria in the commentary on Avvakum 3:3, *Commentarius in xii prophetas minores*, (Pusey, ii, 126.13-128.6).

² Or.38.15.

(cf. EC 1:2; 3:1; 3:2; 4, *irmos*; NC 1:1; 7:2). In His human nature Christ overcame our sin.

That He may lead us back to the live-giving pastures of Paradise,
God the Word goes searching for us in the lairs of the dragons.
Destroying the terrible snares which the enemy had laid for us,
He makes a prisoner of him who bruised mankind in the heel
And so He saves the creation (EC 4:3).

The *troparion* recalls the story of the Fall (cf. Genesis 3:15) and the parable of the lost sheep (Matthew 18:12-14; Luke 15:4 cf. Matthew 12:11; Psalm 48:13; cf. NC 8:2) when describing the miserable conditions of the fallen humanity, and its salvation. The redemptive purpose of God the Word is to return the lost sheep, us, or creation “to the life-giving pastures of Paradise”. Paradise is opposed by “the lairs of the dragons”, which could metaphorically imply hell. The Word goes searching for us in the lairs of the dragon and destroys his snares (cf. EC 3, *irmos*), which might also imply the descent of Christ into hell. This interpretation finds support in the idea that the enemy becomes imprisoned in line 4 which refers to Genesis 3:15. The interpretation of the same verse in EC 3:1 “assailing the Master, he crushes his head” now unfolds: Christ imprisons “him who bruised mankind in the heel.”¹ So a dynamic picture can be observed in these two *troparia*: the Incarnation threw out the devil; assailing Christ he crushed his head; Christ destroyed his snares; imprisoned him on His descent into hell and saved creation or us. In the poet’s language the word “creation” is of a particular importance for it stresses that salvation is universal (cf. EC 1:1; 3:1; 4:2; Romans 8:19-23).²

Ode 5

By the cleansing of Spirit we have been washed
From the poison of the dark and unclean³ enemy,

¹ Cf. the commentary of John Chrysostom on Genesis 3:15 – *Genes.17.7* (PG 53.143).

² Cf. Nikodimos, *Εορτοδρόμιον*, 1.307-8.

³ The word βεβορβορωμένου is exclusively patristic. For example, it occurs in the works attributed to Chrysostom, cf. *In illud: Ne timueritis cum dives factus fuerit homo*, PG 55.511A.

And we have been anchored on a new path free from error,
That leads to unapproachable gladness,
Which approach only those whom God reconciled (EC 5, *irmos*).

The allusion to the story of the Fall (Genesis 3:1-15; cf. EC 3:1; 4:3) is the most fundamental for the canon and for the whole of Christian tradition because it is about the history and destiny of humankind. Its interpretation includes many aspects. For example, Paul embodies it into his redemptive concept of Christ-Adam (Romans 5:12-14; 1 Corinthians 15:22). Without the Fall there would be no salvation. Referring to the same story of the Fall, the *irmos* goes on interpreting Genesis 3:15 (cf. EC 3:1; 4:3): the enemy injured mankind in the heel (EC 4:3), but we or the whole creation are washed from his poison by the Spirit in the baptism (cf. NC 4:1).¹ The *irmos* operates with the baptismal themes of cleansing (cf. EC 4, *irmos*), new path (cf. John 14:6), and reconciliation with God (cf. Romans 5:10; Ephesians 2:15; cf. NC ode 5).

In EC 1:2 the author reminds us of the corruption of man by error, but after the rebirth of our nature in Christ (cf. EC 1:2; 3:2), and the cleansing of the Spirit we are “anchored on a new path free from error”. The comparison of EC 1:2 and EC 5, *irmos* highlights that our new path is free from the source of corruption – error, yet corruption remains. The new path leads “to unapproachable gladness” which echoes “unapproachable light” or the dwelling of God in Paul, 1 Timothy 6:16.² This purpose echoes the return to Paradise in EC 4:3. Taken together these images unveil one of the sides of salvation – the incorruptible state of the heart. Baptism is the beginning of our path, whereas the path itself suggests dynamism: “only those attain it whom God reconciled”. Reconciliation with God and salvation is the course of Christian life.

¹ Cf. Ephrem, NH 1; 5.2, 9; 6.3-4; 12.4-6; EH 12.1-4; Romanos, *Cant.*16.2. Some of Ephrem’s ideas could have come to John through Romanos.

² Cf. Romanos, *Cant.*16, refrain.

When the Maker saw in the obscurity of sin, in bonds inescapable,
The one whom He had fashioned with His fingers;
Rising him up, He laid him on His shoulders,
And now in abundant floods He washes him
From the ancient shame of Adam's sickliness (EC 5:1).

The *troparion* echoes the New Testament parable of the lost sheep (Matthew 18:12-14; Luke 15:4-7), which is integral with the parable of the good shepherd (John 10:1-16, 25-30). The idea of the good shepherd is of Old Testament origin (cf. Ezekiel 34), but it is also common in pagan antiquity.¹ In the Gospels it refers to Christ as Saviour and to the salvation of fallen mankind symbolised by the lost sheep. This image was popular from the very beginning of Christianity;² it was depicted in the icons;³ it was included into any liturgical feast celebrating the redemption.⁴

A classical example of its interpretation can be found in the sermon for the Ascension by Gregory of Nyssa. He compares humanity with the sheep tended by God, and destined to dwell in the house of the Lord forever (cf. Psalm 22:6). However, the sheep was misled by demonic deceit to death. Christ as the good shepherd goes in search of the erring sheep, delivers it from death and returns it to the Father's dwelling place.⁵ Ephrem provides a similar interpretation in the Epiphany context. He calls Christ incarnate the shepherd⁶ who has found the lost sheep or fallen humanity.⁷ The shepherd

¹ See Merras, *Epiphany*, 134; J. Quasten, *The Painting of the Good Shepherd at Dura-Europos*, *Medieval Studies*, vol.9, (Toronto, 1947), 4.

² Cf. 1 Peter 2:25; 5:4; Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 1.9.

³ Quasten, *Painting*, 20.

⁴ Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.*38.14; Gregory of Nyssa, *Lumin.* (*Opera*, 9.1.224); John Chrysostom, *De cognitione dei et in sancta theophania* (sp., PG 64.44).

⁵ *Ascension*, (*Opera*, 9.1.324.1-8).

⁶ NH 3.

⁷ NH 13.5; EH 2.5.

cleanses the sheep in the water.¹ Moreover, in his kenosis the shepherd emptied himself and became the sheep, which emphasised the fullness of Christ's humanity.

The canon for the Epiphany encompasses these interpretations (cf. NC 8:2). Fallen human nature, Adam, fashioned by divine fingers (cf. EC 1:2; 3:2), is in the obscurity of sin, in inescapable bonds, which are the shame of sickness (cf. fallen human conditions in EC 1:1; 1:2; 3, *irmos*; 3:1; 3:2; ode 4; 5, *irmos*). "That He may lead us back to the live-giving pastures of Paradise, God the Word goes searching for us in the lairs of the dragons" (EC 4:3); As the good shepherd and Creator He takes man upon his shoulders in the Incarnation, and in the baptism He thus cleanses fallen humanity of its diseases (cf. cleansing in EC 1:1; 4:1).² Moreover, John unfolds the image further in his canon for the Ascension: "lifting up on your shoulders our nature which had been led astray and slain by sin, O Saviour, you were taken up and brought it to your own Father and God" (AC 7:2; 7:3). Perhaps, thus he illustrates the dynamism of redemption, different aspects of which are reflected throughout the feasts of the liturgical year.

In piety and eagerness let us run
To the undefiled fountains of the streams of salvation,
And let us look upon the Word who gives us to drink
From the bucket that satisfy our holy thirst:
And gently He heals completely the disease of the world (EC 5:2).

The language of the *troparion* refers to the story of Christ and the Samaritan woman (John 4:5-26; especially, 4:14). The word ἄντλημα (bucket) in line 4 is apparently derived from this story (John 4:11). Christians have always recognised the baptismal significance of the story.³ The interpretation of it in the canon reminds us of

¹ EH 7.1-5.

² Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.*38.14.

³ Cf. *The Odes of Solomon*, 11 (Charlesworth, 52-3).

that by Ephrem the Syrian.¹ The water mentioned by Christ in the story, and described in the *troparion* is the purifying water of baptism vital for salvation and, perhaps, the water sanctified at Epiphany. In both cases, by its means the Word accomplishes universal healing, “heals completely the decease of the world”. In response to Christ, the author summons the congregation to “run to the undefiled fountains of the streams of salvation” (cf. Isaias 12:3; 55:1). The phrase should be also understood in the metaphorical sense because “our holy thirst” is our longing of God (cf. Psalm 41:3).²

Ode 6

The Father in a voice full of joy made manifest
His Beloved whom He had poured out from the womb (cf. Psalm 44:2; 109:3),
He said: “Truly this is My offspring, of the same nature as Myself,
Bearing light, He has leapt out from humankind,
My living Word, and a mortal by divine providence (EC 6, *irmos*).

The *troparion* explores the public manifestation of the Word in more detail comparing to EC 1:2. The author approaches the Gospel story through the prism of double consubstantiality. The Father declares that the Son is His offspring (cf. EC 4:1); poured out from the womb; of the same nature (συμφυῆς γόνος); bears the same divine light (cf. John 1:14). As Nikodimos points out, John cites directly from Psalm 44:2 (Ἐξηρεύξατο ἡ καρδία μου λόγον ἀγαθόν), which the Fathers usually interpreted with reference to the origin of the Word from the Father.³ Altogether this appears to be the first public manifestation of the divine sonship of Christ, the manifestation of His consubstantiality with the Father (cf. ἴσος τὴν φύσιν in EC 1:2; NC 1:1). The expression συμφυῆς in particular indicates this idea, whereas a similar Christological term σύμμορφος in EC 4:2 indicates the consubstantiality of humanity. Here human

¹ EH 4.25; 7.20-1.

² Cf. Nikodimos, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 1.310-11.

³ *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 1.312.

consubstantiality is put in the terms that Christ is also a mortal, who “has come forth from humankind”. Moreover, the event of the baptism itself testifies His entire consubstantiality with us. This hypostatic union of two natures is underlined in the last line: “My living Word, and a mortal”.

The Prophet strangely swallowed up for three nights
In the belly of the sea monster,
Came forth again, making manifest beforehand to all
The salvation of rebirth at the last times
From the dragon that slays mortals (EC 6:1).

The reference to the story of Jonas (1-2) connects the ode with the sixth biblical canticle (cf. NC 6, *irmos*). Christ interpreted the story as paradigm of His death and resurrection (Matthew 12:40). This exegetical pattern was preserved by Christian tradition.¹ The *troparion* follows it: the deliverance of the prophet from the whale foretells the universal eschatological salvation of rebirth or resurrection (cf. EC 3:2). The word παλιγγενεσία can mean both rebirth and resurrection (cf. Matthew 19:28; Titus 3:5). It can imply baptism as in NC 9:2, but in the eschatological light of this *troparion* it is more likely to mean the final resurrection.²

Nikodimos points out some poetic relation between this *troparion* and the verse of the tragedian Lycophron, in which a similar story of Heracles’ three nights stay in the belly of the sea monster was depicted (cf. τριεσπέρου λέοντος).³ Both Lycophron and John use the word φλοιδούμενος (swallowed up) which is very rare. It also appears in John’s *Laudatio s. Joh. Chrysostomi*,⁴ which could support the authenticity of the canon. The similarity and difference between the stories of Jonas and Heracles was explained

¹ Cf. Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12; Justin, *Dialog.* 107.1-4; Ephrem, EH 3.20.

² See Nikodimos, *Εορτοδρόμιον*, 1.314.

³ *Alexandra*, 33-5 (ed. L. Mascialino, Leipzig: Teubner, 1964).

⁴ *Chrys.* 8.13.

from the Christian point of view by Cyril of Alexandria.¹ It is likely that Cyril was John's source for the allusion to Lycophron.

When the shining doors of heaven were opened,
He who knew the mysteries saw the Spirit,
Who proceeds from the Father and rests on the immaculate Word,
Descending in ways past speech in the form of a dove,
And he commanded the multitudes to hasten to the Master (EC 6:2).

The *troparion* draws attention to the celebrated story (John 1:32-34; cf. Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10-12; Luke 3:22; cf. EC 1:2; 4:2; 6, *irmos*) and proposes its interpretation in the light of the Trinitarian teaching. Whereas, above, the author explored the relationship between Father and Son (EC 1:2; 6, *irmos*), now he contemplates the mode of existence of the Holy Spirit: "the Spirit proceeds from the Father and rests upon the Word."² So the story appears to be primarily the Trinitarian manifestation, and can be interpreted as the manifestation of the fellowship of the humanity of Christ with the Godhead (cf. Colossians 2:9).

Ode 7

He who stilled the heat of the flame of the furnace
That mounted high in the air and encircled the godly Children,
Burnt the heads of the dragons in the stream of the Jordan;
And with the dew of the Spirit He washes away
All the stubborn obscurity of sin (EC 7, *irmos*).

The fierce Assyrian flame that prefigured you
You have quenched, changing it to dew;
And now you have clothed yourself in water, O Christ,
And so burn up the evil spoiler hidden in its depths,
Who calls men to follow the path that leads to destruction (EC 7:1).

¹ Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentarius in xii prophetas minores*, (Pusey, i, 576.25-579.5). See also Nikodimos, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 1.313.

² *Expos.* 13.88-90; Cf. *Doctrina patrum*, 33 (Diekamp 261.13-18).

Both the *irmos* and the *troparion* dwell on the story of the three youths in the furnace of Babylon (Daniel 3:26-56), the theme of the seventh biblical canticle. According to both texts, the story prefigured Christ “who stilled the heat of the flame” and “quenched the fierce Assyrian flame, changing it to dew”. The idea of the twofold action of the fiery Godhead from NC 8, *irmos* (cf. NC 8:1) re-emerges here in the context of the baptism of Christ. The water figures as the habitat of the devil. This metaphor is connected with the idea of sin. Christ burns the heads of the dragons in the Jordan, and the evil spoiler hidden in the depths of water (cf. Psalm 73:13), thus purifying the water for our baptism (cf. NC 4:1). However, baptism is also accomplished by the Spirit, who washes away the “obscurity of sin.” The tradition that fire appeared in the Jordan at the baptism of Christ is found in Justin.¹

Of old the Jordan was parted in two,
And the people of Israel passed over on a narrow passage of dry land,
Prefiguring you, O Lord most powerful,
Who now makes haste to bear the creation down into the stream,
Bringing it to a better and changeless path (EC 7:2).

The passage of Israel over the Jordan (Joshua 3:1-17)² also belongs to the “Epiphany” tradition. The account of the story is mentioned in the Syriac lectionary among the readings of the united Epiphany.³ It is found in a few Epiphany homilies.⁴ The story prefigures the baptism in the Jordan. Joshua typifies Jesus, and Israel, us or the whole of creation cleansed in the person of Christ. The narrow passage is a type of “a better and changeless path” (cf. EC 5, *irmos*). The idea of a new path is found in Isaias 40:3: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord;

¹ *Dialog.* 88.3.

² Cf. Psalm 65:6; 73:13; 113:3-5.

³ See F.Burkitt, *The Early Syriac Lectionary System*, from the *Proceedings of the British Academy*, XI, (London, 1923), 6; *The Palestinian Syriac Lectionary*, JTS 6 (1905), 91-8; Merras, *Epiphany*, 161.

⁴ Gregory Thaumaturgus, *Theoph.* (dub., PG 10.1184CD); John Chrysostom, *Jordan.* (dub., PG 61.726). Gregory of Nyssa, *Lumin.* (*Opera*, 9.1.233.18).

make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” In the Gospels this prophecy is applied to the ministry of John the Baptist (cf. Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23), who prepared the way for Christ by the baptism of repentance. Christ unfolds the idea of a path, comparing two ways, of which only the narrow one leads to God: “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it; because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:13-14; cf. Matthew 19:24; Mark 10:25; Luke 18:25). Moreover, Christ Himself is the path: “Where I go you know, and the way you know... I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:4-6).

The concept of two paths was popular in early Christianity. It appears in *Didache* and in the *Epistle* of Barnabas, as the catechetical introduction to baptism:

There are two ways, one of life and one of death; but a great difference between the two ways. The way of life, then, is this: first, you shall love God who made you; second, your neighbour as yourself... And the way of death is this: first of all it is evil and full of curse.¹

The way of light or life is the narrow passage leading to God, which commences in baptism. The passage of Israel over the Jordan in the *troparion* is interpreted with particular reference to this idea of path. In the baptism Christ sets Christians upon this saving path. It contrasts with the path that leads to destruction (EC 7:1). However, reaching God is the course of the whole Christian life (cf. EC 1:2; 4:3; 5, *irmos*).

We know that in the beginning you brought upon the world
The all-ruining flood unto the lamentable corruption of all,
O Christ, who reveals wonders most great and strange;
And we know that now you purged sin
Unto the comfort and salvation of mortals (EC 7:3).

The story of the flood (Genesis 7-8) is a very popular baptismal image. The origins of its interpretation are found in Peter, who writes that the flood was a prototype

¹ *Didache* 1; cf. Barnabas, *Ep.* 18-20.

of baptism and those few saved in the ark prefigured the Church of baptised Christians saved by Christ (cf. 1 Peter 3:20-21). Justin interprets the image in more detail:

The mystery of saved men appeared in the deluge. For righteous Noah, along with the other mortals at the deluge... being eight in number, were a symbol of the eighth day, when Christ appeared when He rose from the dead. For Christ, being the first-born of every creature, became again the chief of another race regenerated by Himself through water, and faith, and wood, containing the mystery of the cross; even as Noah was saved by wood when he rode over the waters with his household... By water, faith, and wood, those who are afore-prepared, and who repent of the sins which they have committed, will escape from the impending judgment of God.¹

The images of Christ as the new Noah and the dove as the Holy Spirit were well established in exegetical tradition and in the Epiphany context.² Traditional exegesis also highlights the contrast between the baptism of Noah and Christian baptism: although the Flood cleansed sins, it destroyed the living world, but Christian baptism cleanses sins, gives grace, and raises the world to heaven.³ This typology was familiar to John Damascene who calls the Flood the very first baptism which destroyed sins.⁴ The *troparion* dwells on this exegetical tradition and is certainly related to *Expositio fidei*. It implies that the figure of the Flood can be applied both to Christian baptism in general and to the baptism of Christ. It was one and the same Christ who for the salvation of mortals washed away sin in the Flood and in His baptism by which He established Christian baptism, and “we” confess our knowledge of this. Baptism leads mortals to comfort. The word εὐπείθεια (“happiness”, “comfort”) could have been

¹ Justin, *Dialog.*138.1-2.

² Cf. Ephrem, NH 1; 5.5; Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.*39.16; John Chrysostom, *Matt.*12.3 (PG 57.205).

³ Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.*40.7; Ephrem, NH 1; John Chrysostom, *Matt.*12.3 (PG 57.205). Cf. the interpretation of the story of the flood by Proklos of Constantinople quoted by Nikodimos, *Εορτοδρόμιον*, 1.319.

⁴ *Expos.*82.67.

derived from Cyril of Alexandria.¹ For example, in ps.Dionysios' language it describes the state of the heavenly beings.²

Ode 8

The creation finds itself set free,
And those who have been darkened before are made sons of light;
Alone the prince of darkness groans.
Let all the inheritance of the nations, that was before in misery,
Now bless with eagerness the Cause (EC 8, *irmos*).

The *irmos* explores the consequences of redemption and baptism. After the Fall the creation (cf. EC 4:3) was in misery, under the power of the prince of darkness (cf. John 8:34). In the redemption Christ changed its state into the freedom of sonship (cf. EC 4:1). Baptism makes people free, sons of light or sons of God (cf. John 1:9, 12; 12:36). This is the share of Christians, who are the "inheritance of the nations".³ The last line provides the link to the biblical canticle.

The three godly Children who were sprinkled with dew in the fire
Plainly prefigured how the Most High Nature,
Which shines with the bright rays of a threefold holiness,
Should mix (μίξει) with the mortal, to its great blessing,
Consuming all deadly error in the fire of dew (EC 8:1).

An allusion to the story of the three children, the theme of the eight canticle, reappears with reference to the Incarnation (cf. EC 7, *irmos*; 7:1; NC 7, *irmos*; 7:1; 8:1). Now the Old Testament prototype is considered from the Trinitarian and Christological perspectives. The three children prefigured the Trinity; that the Godhead was united with the mortal human nature in the Incarnation; and the salvation was accomplished

¹ *Commentarius in xii prophetas minores*, (Pusey, i, 370.14; ii, 299.3, 555.2, 614.14).

² *Cell.hier.*15.9 (Ritter 58.23-59.4).

³ Παγκληρία (inheritance) is a very rare word used in Tragedy. See, for example, Lycophron, *Alexandra*, 592, 983, 1474.



according to the one will of all three Persons.¹ Yet, as it was mentioned above, the union of Godhead and humanity took place in the divine hypostasis of the Word (cf. EC 6, *irmos*).

The *troparion* expresses the unity of Godhead and humanity in terms of μίξις (cf. μιγέντα in NC 1:1; μίξις in the canon for the Transfiguration – TC 3:3), suspicious even for Severos.² Obviously the idiom is derived from the Christological language of Gregory Nazianzen who often uses the term μίξις or καινὴ μίξις.³ Thus, John quotes Gregory in the florilegium of the *Contra Jacobitas*.⁴ The term can express περιχώρησις of two natures, but more precisely it expresses the new theandric or mixed activity of two natures,⁵ which, perhaps, is implied in the canon.

There is also a reference to the idea of fiery baptism (cf. EC 7, *irmos*; 7:1). Whereas, above, the fire of the Godhead burnt the devil, now the divine fire of dew consumes all deadly error, identified above with sins (cf. the acrostic; EC 1:2; 5, *irmos*). For example, Ephrem explores the idea thus:

The famous three in Babylon in the furnace of fire were baptised... they went in and bathed in the flood of flame... There was sprinkled on them the dew from heaven; it loosed from off them the bonds of the earthly king. That visible fire... pointed to the fire of the Holy Spirit which is mingled and hidden in the water. In the flame, baptism is prefigured.⁶

Let the whole earthly nature clothe itself in white,
For now it is raised up from its Fall from heaven,

¹ Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Eunom.* 3.10.38 (*Opera*, 2.304.5-17).

² Cf. Hovorun, *Controversy*, 41.

³ *Or.* 2.23.4 (Bernardi); *Or.* 29.12.3 (Gallay); *Or.* 30.3.6 (Gallay).

⁴ *Jacob.* 99.5. The same term appears in *Volunt.* 37.8.

⁵ *Expos.* 91.83. Such meaning appears in the *scholia* to the *Corpus Areopageticus* by John of Scythopolis – Rorem, Lamoreaux, *John*, 253; and in Anastasios of Sinai, *Capita adversus Monotheletas* 9.3.1-18 (Uthemann, CC Series Graeca 12, 140-41). See Hovorun, *Controversy*, 182-3, 199.

⁶ EH 8.5-6. Cf. Justin, *Dialog.* 88:3: when Jesus went to the Jordan, where John was baptising, and when He stepped into the water, a fire was kindled in the Jordan. Romanos, *Cant.* 16.4, 14: Christ is the dew in the fire, and fire in the Jordan.

Being cleansed in the flowing waters
By the Word who preserves all;
Washed and resplendent, it has escaped from its former sins (EC 8:2).

The universal consequences of baptism unfold in this *troparion*: the whole earthly nature (πᾶσα γήϊνος φύσις) or precisely the whole human nature has escaped from former sins. It has been cleansed, raised from its fallen to a heavenly state (cf. EC 4:3; 6:1).¹ Initially this happened in the humanity of Christ, but it can be shared by all because of human consubstantiality.

The baptismal theme of light and illumination runs through the whole ode reminding the faithful of their gift. The source of light is God who “radiates with the bright rays of threefold holiness”. The Trinity enlightens humanity: those baptised in the Trinity are usually clothed in white tunics; they become resplendent “sons of light”.²

Ode 9

O blessed Mother, O most pure Bride,
Past all understanding are the wonders of Christ’s birth from you,
Through you we have found full salvation
And fittingly we rejoice, as to [our] Benefactor,
A song of thanksgiving bearing as gift (EC 9, *irmos*).

The *irmos* concentrates on the role of the *Theotokos* in the Incarnation. “The wonders of Christ’s birth from her” imply that she provided the human nature for God and remained virgin after giving birth (cf. NC 3:1).³ Through her Christians “found full salvation” (“salvation” can be a metaphorical name for Christ). This *irmos* (as well as the whole canon), is the song of thanksgiving to the *Theotokos* (cf. Luke 1:42).

That which was revealed to Moses in the bush
We see accomplished here in strange manner:

¹ Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.*39.7 (Moreschini).

² Cf. Nikodimos, *Εορτοδρόμιον*, 1.323-4.

³ Cf. Basil the Great, *Hom. in s.Christi generationem* 4 (dub., PG 31.1465D-1468A).

As the Virgin bore Fire within her, yet was not consumed,
When she gave birth to the light-bearing Benefactor,
So the streams of Jordan received the Fire (EC 9:1; cf. "light" in EC ode 8.).

The *troparion* alludes to the story of Moses and the burning bush (Exodus 3:2-4). This is a very popular figure of the Incarnation. Whereas it was merely mentioned in NC 1:1, it is interpreted here. Its interpretation rests upon the traditional Christian association of Godhead with fire (cf. the acrostic EC 7, *irmos*, 7:1 and 8:1). This association is found in Deuteronomy 4:24: "the Lord your God is a consuming fire" (cf. Psalm 49:3; Daniel 7:9). It is explored in the New Testament and Patristic tradition with particular stress on the duality of action of the divine fire.¹ Likewise the canon emphasises that the divine fire should consume all evil, yet it cleanses and preserves human nature unharmed in the Incarnation (cf. EC 8:1; 9:1). Prefiguring this mystery and illustrating the antinomy of the union of fiery Godhead and humanity, the story of the burning bush became popular in the era of Christological controversies. For example, Cyril of Alexandria writes:

As fire is unbearable for blackthorn as the Godhead is for humanity. However, in Christ it became bearable. God dwelt in the temple of the Virgin thus showing His outstanding humility and softening the invincible power of His nature in order to be accessible for us as fire for the bush.²

Ephrem the Syrian applied this image both to the Incarnation and baptism in his EH 14.34: "I am the flaming fire; yet for man's sake I became a babe in the virgin womb of the Maiden; and now I am to be baptised in the Jordan." The imagery of John's *troparion* is very similar to that of Ephrem. But in the context of NC and EC it also serves the purposes of Orthodox Christology. If applied against Nestorians, it emphasises that the Virgin bore and gave birth to the fiery Godhead, and therefore she is

¹ Cf. Hebrews 12:29; Ephrem, EH 8.4-8; 14.33-4; Basil, *Hom.Psalm* 28:7, (PG 29.297AC); Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyr.Exod.Or.* 1.8 (PG 69.412-13); Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.* 40.36; John Damascene, *Expos.* 82.97-8.

² Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyr.Exod.Or.* 1.8 (PG 69.413C); cf. Justin, *Dialog.* 59.

called the *Theotokos* and not *Christotokos*. Against Monophysites it stresses that the fullness and all the properties of human nature were preserved in the Incarnation.

O King without beginning, through the communion of the Spirit
You anoint and make perfect the mortal essence;
You have cleansed it in the undefiled streams,
Triumphantly putting to shame the arrogant force of darkness,
And now you translate it into endless life (EC 9:2).

This *troparion* concentrates on baptism with allusion to the idea of the birth from water and Spirit into eternal life (John 3:5). The author recalls that Christian baptism includes dipping into water that symbolises cleansing, and anointing with myrrh that symbolises the fellowship of the Spirit – that is why Christians are called the anointed ones.¹ The story of the baptism of Christ clarifies the origins of the tradition of dipping and anointing, and explains its symbolism. Baptism makes mortal human nature (βρότειον οὐσίαν) as perfect or complete as it should be from the beginning: water cleanses it; the anointing of the Spirit *deifies* it and elevates into the realm of the Trinity (cf. EC 6, *irmos*, 6:2), which was first manifest in the baptism of Christ.² Eternal life is the inevitable result of human fellowship with eternal God. The message and the logical conclusion of this *troparion* and the whole canon is that all these achievements of baptism can now be shared by the faithful (cf. Psalm 44:8; Isaias 61:1; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 1 John 2:27).

¹ Cf. John Damascene, *Fides* 31; Ephrem, EH 5.8-11.

² As Nikodimos points out (*Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 1.327-8), the language of anointing echoes a passage from Gregory Nazianzen: “He was a perfect Victim not only on account of His Godhead, than which nothing is more perfect; but also on account of that which He assumed having been anointed with Godhead, and having become one with that which anointed it, and I am bold to say, made equal with God” – *Or.*45.13 (PG 36.640C-641A).

Summary

Scrutinising the *troparia* and giving cross-references in brackets, I have illustrated how certain ideas unfold or reappear throughout the text in different odes. This canon also appears to be a systematic theological treatise, the thesis of which is given in the acrostic. The manifestation of the Trinity and the baptism of Christ are the pivotal ideas of the Epiphany and this hymn (cf. EC 1:2; 4 *irmos*; 4:1; 4:2; 6, *irmos*; 6:2; ode 7; 8:1; 8:2; 9:1; 9:2).

The mention of Father, Son, and Spirit in the celebrated story is the first Gospel evidence for the existence of the three consubstantial Persons of the Trinity.¹ In the canon the manifestation of each divine Person can be distinguished: the Father testifies that Jesus is His only-begotten and consubstantial Son and Word (cf. EC 1:2; 4:1; 6, *irmos*; 6:2); the Spirit proceeds from the Father and rests upon the Son (cf. EC 6:2; 9:2). The single activity of the Godhead appears as light and fire (cf. EC 3:1; 7, *irmos*; 7:1; 8:1; 9:1).

The contemplation of salvation, with Christology being integrated into it, unfolds according to one and the same traditional redemptive pattern derived from biblical history: creation → Fall → Incarnation → baptism → redemption (cf. EC 1:1; 1:2; ode 3; ode 4; 5, *irmos*; 5:1; 7:3; ode 8; 9:2). In general it is similar to that of the Nativity canon, but here it includes the emphasis on baptism.

Created by God but having fallen, Adam became infected by sin, corrupted and mortal. Descending from him, humankind inherited corruption and death, which is emphasised by the word *βρωτός* (cf. EC 1:1; 4, *irmos*; 4:1; 6, *irmos*; 7:3; 8:1; 9:2). So fallen humanity is found in snares (cf. EC 3, *irmos*); bonds (cf. EC 5:1); sins (cf. EC 4:1; 5:1; 8:2); defilement (cf. EC 1:1); decease (cf. EC 5:2); error (cf. EC 1:1; 5, *irmos*;

¹ Justin, *Apol.* 1.61.3-4; Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.* 39.11-12; John Chrysostom, *De cognitione dei et in sancta theophania* (sp., PG 64.46); *In sanctam theophaniam seu baptismum Christi* (sp., PG 50.808); Ephrem, NH 2; 4; EH 14.16, 22, 41-42; Romanos, *Cant.* 16.18.

8:1); darkness (cf. EC 4:1; 8, *irmos*); under the power of devil (cf. EC 3, *irmos*; 3:2; 4, *irmos*; 4:3; 5, *irmos*; 5:1; 6:1; 7:1; 8, *irmos*).

Altering these conditions, salvation commences in the Incarnation, in which God the Word assumed the same fallen corruptible human nature descending from Adam and consubstantial with us (cf. EC 1:1; 1:2; 3:2; 4, *irmos*; 4:2; 5 *irmos*; 5:1; 6, *irmos*; 7:2; 7:3; 8:1; 8:2; 9:2). Thus in the Person of Christ fallen humanity was united with Godhead, which was confirmed by the Father and the Spirit (cf. EC 6, *irmos*; 6:2; 9:2). Moreover, the story emphasises His kenotic assumption of our guilty nature, “the form of a slave” (Philippians 2:7),¹ “the sins of the world” (John 1:29; Titus 3:5), in the fact that He came to be baptised like any other guilty man.²

The canon concentrates on the Incarnation in EC 3:1; 3:2; 4, *irmos*; 5:1; 8:1; 9, *irmos*; 9:1; and on the baptism of Christ (and of the faithful) in EC 1:1; 1:2; 3, *irmos*; 3:2; 4:1; 4:2; 5, *irmos*; 5:1; 7, *irmos*; 7:1; 7:2; ode 8; 9:1; 9:2. Sometimes the Incarnation and the baptism appear together in the same *troparia* (cf. EC 5:1; 8:1; 9:1). When the canon concentrates on the baptism of Christ and of Christians, it is possible to systematically observe many redemptive achievements: snatching from the land of darkness (EC 1:1); burial of sins and the old man (EC the acrostic; 1, *irmos*; 1:2); cleansing of sins and enemy’s poison (cf. EC 1:1; 5, *irmos*; 5:1; 8:2; 9:2); burning the devil and errors (EC 7, *irmos*; 7:1; 8:1); renewal or rebirth of mortal nature (cf. EC 1:2; 3:2; 4, *irmos*); anchoring on a new path to salvation (cf. EC 5, *irmos*; 7:2); becoming sons of light (cf. EC 4:1; 8, *irmos*); perfecting humanity in the fellowship of the Spirit (EC 9:2); freedom (cf. EC 3, *irmos*; 8, *irmos*); return to heaven and eternal life (cf. EC 8:2; 9:2). Thus baptism in some way alters the conditions of fallen humanity. The idea

¹ For the “kenosis” see Chapter I above.

² Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.*40.27; John Chrysostom, *Matt.*12.8 (PG 57.201-2); Romanos, *Cant.*16.7, 10, 13.

that all the changes in the human nature of Christ take universal effect over the whole creation runs throughout the canon.

The theological contemplation of this canon is related to that of the Nativity canon; many ideas and expressions correspond. This is evident from the list of the divine names: πατήρ (cf. NC 1, *irmos*; 4:3; EC 1:2; 4:1; 6, *irmos*; 6:2); θεός (cf. NC 1:1; 4:1; 5:2; 6, *irmos*; 6:1; EC 1, *irmos*; 4:3; 7:3; 8:1); δεσπότης (cf. NC 1, *irmos*; 5:1; EC 6:2); ἄναξ (cf. NC 3:1; 3:2; EC 1:1; 9:2); θεός λόγος (cf. NC 6:1; EC 4:3); λόγος (cf. NC 1:1; 1:2; 3:2; 4, *irmos*; 4:3; 6:1; 8:1; 9:1; EC 1:2; 3, *irmos*; ode 4; 5:2; 6, *irmos*; 6:2; 8:2); Χριστός (cf. NC 3:1; 4:2; 5, *irmos*; 6, *irmos*; 7:2; EC 3:1; 7:3); εὐεργέτης (cf. NC 3, *irmos*; 4:2; 5, *irmos*; 7:3; EC 9, *irmos*; 9:1). Both canons use the same Christological vocabulary: μορφή (cf. NC 1:1; 7:2; EC 4:2); φύσις (cf. NC 4:1; 8:2; EC 1:2; 3:2; 6, *irmos*; 8:2); οὐσία (cf. NC 1, *irmos*; 4:3; 6:1; EC 9:2); ἴσος (NC 1, *irmos*; 4:1; EC 1:2); and similar expressions of the Incarnation (cf. NC 1:1; 3:1; 4:1; 5:1; 7:2; 7:3; 9:1; EC 3:1; 3:2; 4, *irmos*; 8:1). The idiom of fallen humanity – βροτός – occurs eight times in NC and seven times in EC. The fallen human state is described with the notions of sin and darkness (cf. NC 1:2; 4:1; 5, *irmos*; 5:2; 6:2; 7:2; 7:3; EC 4:1; 5:1; 8, *irmos*; 8:2); and error (cf. NC 5, *irmos*; 8:1; EC 1:1; 5, *irmos*; 8:1). The lists of the names of evil also coincide (cf. NC, 3 *irmos*; 4:1; 6 *irmos*; 7 *irmos*; 8:2; EC 3:2; 4:3; 5, *irmos*; 6:1; 7, *irmos*). The redemptive work is put in similar terms: the destruction of evil's might (cf. NC 3, *irmos*; 4:1; 5:1; 7:2; 8:2; EC 3:1; 4, *irmos*); the illumination and salvation of the forefather and his sons (cf. NC 3:2; 4:1; 5, *irmos*; 5:2; 6:2; 8:2; EC 1:1; 4:1); κάθαρσις (cf. NC 4:1; EC 1:1; 4, *irmos*; 5, *irmos*; 9:2); ἐλευθερία (cf. NC 6:1; EC 8, *irmos*); τρίβος (cf. NC 1, *irmos*; 5, *irmos*; EC 5, *irmos*; 7:2); ἀνάπλασις (cf. NC 4, *irmos*; EC 3:2); παλιγγενεσία (cf. NC 9:2; EC 6:1).

The imagery of some *troparia* unfolds from one canon to another, which might well be intentional. For example, NC presents that part of the story of Jonas when he

was praying inside the whale, and EC illustrates the outcome of the story and its figurative significance. The enigmatic fiery imagery of the story of the three children in NC is explained in EC which plainly speaks of the Godhead as fire. Likewise the story of the burning bush is only mentioned in NC 1:1 but interpreted in EC 9:1 (cf. the virgin birth in NC 3:1; EC 9, *irmos*). The picture of the Incarnation is complemented by both canons: NC 5:1 mainly focuses on our reconciliation with heavenly beings, whereas EC 3:1 is about the devil loosing his power over us. Three similar *troparia*, paraphrasing the parable of the lost sheep, also supplement each other (cf. NC 8:2; EC 4:3; 5:1). Both canons compare God with light (cf. NC 4:1; EC 4:1; 8:1). Christ leads us from darkness to light in NC 4:1, and we become the sons of light in EC 8, *irmos*. The most striking example appears in *irmos* 5: whereas in NC we long for cleansing and a new path to glory, we have been cleansed and set upon this path in EC.

In John's theological contemplation of the Epiphany and baptism, water or the streams of the Jordan appear to be of vital importance (EC ode 1; 4:1; 5:1; 5:2; ode 7; 8:1; 8:2; 9:1; 9:2). Indeed for thousands of years water has been among the main religious symbols, especially in the Orthodox Christian tradition. Why is water so central to Christian life? It would be interesting to look at what tradition thinks of water in general in order to rationalise the message of the canon.

The Meaning of Water¹

Water as a symbol of life as well as a means of cleansing, or purification, is of particular importance in Old Testament. It was created on the first day (Genesis 1:2, 6-8). The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters (Genesis 1:2). The earth

¹ See A.King, *Holy Water: a short account of the use of water for ceremonial and purificatory purposes in pagan, Jewish and Christian times*, (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1926); P.Reymond, *L'eau, sa Vie, et sa Signification dans l'Ancien Testament*, (Leiden: Brill, 1958).

was founded upon the waters (Genesis 1:6-7, 9-10). God commanded the water to bring out an abundance of living souls (Genesis 1:20-21). In some sense the element is close to God (cf. Psalms 17; 28:3; 76:17, 20; 103:3; 148:4). God is compared with the rain (Hosea 6:3). Water brings life (cf. Exodus 15:23-35; 17:2-7; Psalms 1:3; 22:2; 41:2; 64:10; 77:20; Isaiah 35:6-7; 58:11), and joy (Psalm 45:5). It is a powerful purifying element and can destroy evil and enemies as in the stories of the Flood and the flight of Israel from Egypt (Genesis 3:1-15; Exodus 14:1-15:21). According to Old Testament Law, it cleanses defilement (Leviticus 11:32; 13:58; 14:8, 9; 15-17; 22:6; cf. Isaiah 1:16), and is used in sacrifices (Leviticus 1:9, 13; 6:28; 1 Kings 18:30-39), in which context the Bible mentions the living water (Leviticus 14; Numbers 5; 19). Water heals, as can be seen from the stories of Naaman the Syrian cured from his leprosy in the waters of Jordan (2 Kings 5:1-14), and the miracles at Bethesda in Jerusalem (John 5:1-4). John the Baptist used the waters of the Jordan to cleanse people's sins which might echo some Jewish customs (Matthew 3:1-6; Mark 1:4-5; Luke 3:2-16; John 1:26-33). Even Christ came to be baptised (Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10). On the other hand, water is also the habitat of serpents whose heads God crushed (Psalm 73:13-14) and of the dragon (Job 41:25; Psalm 103:26).

This is the belief common in the Old Testament that water is a mystically powerful element which, being connected with God in some way, can cleanse sins, defilement, and renew the human being. Water has taken on the religious symbolism of life. The New Testament integrates the Old Testament belief. The Old Testament symbolism of water actually prefigures the new baptismal mystery. Christ says that water is a means to a new spiritual birth into the kingdom of heaven (John 3:5). He gives living water which is the source of eternal life (John 4:10-14; 7:38; cf. Jeremiah 2:13). Christ comes in water, blood, and Spirit, witnessing to one God (1 John 5:6-8). He commands watery baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

(Matthew 28:19). When speaking about baptism, Paul states that in water we are buried with our sins in the likeness of Christ's death:

We were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4).

In Him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead (Colossians 2:12).

The baptismal meaning of water has been elaborately interpreted in Christian tradition. For example Old Testament stories such as the Flood and Exodus were often understood as figures of baptism, as demonstrated above (EC 1, *irmos*; 7:3). The healing power of water as indicated in the story of the prophet Elisha and Naaman the Syrian (2 Kings 5:1-14) and also in Old Testament Law, is also of paramount importance in reference to baptism.¹

Manifesting His kenosis, Christ cleansed His own body in water not because of His sinfulness but because He was "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, 36).² Thus He acknowledged the importance of the Old Testament which He came to fulfil. Moreover, water itself was purified of the "infection" of the sins and defilements washed in it. Because of them it was called the habitat of the devil.³ By entering the waters of the Jordan, Christ purified and blessed this element for our baptismal purification.⁴

Although water has also taken on the symbolism of spiritual grace, Christian tradition emphasises that it receives grace and power only through the presence of the Holy Spirit. In baptism water symbolises death, and receives the body like a tomb, as

¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Lumin.* (*Opera*, 9.1.235.5-14); Ephrem, NH 12.16; EH 3.5; 5.6; 6.12.

² Cf. Ephrem, NH 2; John Chrysostom, *Bapt.* 2 (PG 49.366).

³ Psalm 73:13-14; 103:26. Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.* 39.16.15-16: "the devil is king living in the waters".

⁴ Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.* 38.16; *Or.* 39.15; Ephrem, EH 9.refrain.

Paul writes, but the Spirit gives life.¹ Thus water prepares a person for the Spirit. This belief associates itself with the idea of the duality of human nature consisting of two natures, spiritual (soul) and corporeal (body). Water purifies the body, and the Spirit cleanses the soul, thus accomplishing rebirth from above and illumination of the whole human being, about which Christ spoke to Nikodimos (John 3:5-8; cf. Acts 8:38-39).² Moreover, since baptism is performed in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19), purification by watery also serves as the introduction to the mystery of Trinity.³

In the Eucharistic rite, water is mingled with wine at the liturgy of preparation, after the priest has pronounced verses of John 19:34-35: "One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out; He who saw it bore witness, and his witness is true". Immediately preceding Holy Communion, hot water is to be added to the sanctified cup with the words: "Blessed is the fervour of thy Holy Things, always, now and for ever, and to the ages of ages; the fervour of faith, full of the Holy Spirit, amen". In two reasonably detailed accounts of the Eucharist given by Justin, the cup containing wine mixed with water appears.⁴ Also an additional cup is mentioned, filled with water only, probably, a peculiarity of the baptismal Eucharist. The ancients regularly diluted their wine. But it seems that water in these liturgical instances symbolically reminds the faithful of baptism, and of the presence of the Holy Spirit.⁵

¹ Cf. Basil, *Spir.*15.35.45-72; Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.*38.14; *Or.*39.15.

² Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.*40.8.

³ Cf. Justin, *Apol.*1.61.3-5; Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.*39.12; Ephrem, EH 12.6.

⁴ *Apol.*1.65, 67.

⁵ See also R.Taft, *The Precommunion Rites*, OCA 261, Rome, 2000.

Epiphanius of Salamis and John Chrysostom describe the custom of obtaining sanctified water from the streams at midnight on Epiphany and keeping it throughout the year.¹ Epiphanius connects this with the miracle at Cana (John 2:1-11) but for John Chrysostom it is the remembrance of baptism. This custom became a part of liturgical tradition in which we encounter the rite of the consecration of water. The consecration of water on the Epiphany was first established by Peter, bishop of Edessa, in 498.² As follows from the prayer of the rite attributed to Sophronius of Jerusalem, which also corresponds with prayers at Christian baptism, water is consecrated in remembrance of the baptism of Christ in which it was originally sanctified. The element is given a similar miracle-working role as in the Old Testament, but any activity belongs to God and to the Holy Spirit, and not to the water itself:

For you are our God who appeared on earth and lived among mortals. You sanctified the streams of Jordan by sending down from heaven your All-holy Spirit and you smashed the heads of the dragons that lurked there. Therefore, O King, lover of mankind, be present now too through the visitation of your Holy Spirit, and sanctify this water. And give to it the grace of redemption and the blessing of Jordan. Make it a source of incorruption, a gift of sanctification, a deliverance from sins, an averting of diseases, unapproachable by hostile powers, filled with angelic strength. That all who draw from it and partake of it may have it for cleansing of souls and bodies, for healing of passions, for sanctification of homes, for every suitable purpose. For you are our God, who through water and Spirit renewed our nature made old by sin. You are our God, who in the days of Noah drowned sin through the water of the flood. You are our God, who through Moses freed the Hebrew race from the slavery of Pharaoh through the sea....³

Finally the meaning of water in tradition, which we have observed, is best summarised by John Damascene:

¹ Epiphanius, *Haer.* 51.27-30 (Holl, 298-301); Chrysostom, *Bapt.* 2, (PG 49.365D-366A).

² *Incerti auctoris chronicon pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum*, ed. J. Chabot, CSCO 91, SS 43: Textus, (Louvain, 1927), 258.16-17; CSCO 121, SS 66: Versio, (Louvain, 1949), 191.

³ Translation of Fr. Ephrem Lash, <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/megagiasm.htm> 27.07.2004.

Water, then, is the most beautiful element and rich in usefulness, and purifies from all filth, and not only from the filth of the body but from that of the soul, if it should have received the grace of the Spirit (*Expos.*23.58-60).

Christ taught His own disciples the invocation and said, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. For since Christ made us for incorruption and we transgressed His saving command He condemned us to the corruption of death in order that what is evil should not be immortal, and when in His compassion He stooped to His servants and became like us, He redeemed us from corruption through His own passion. He caused the fountain of remission to well forth for us out of His holy and immaculate side, water for our regeneration, and the washing away of sin and corruption; and blood to drink as the hostage of life eternal. He laid on us the command to be born again of water and of the Spirit, through prayer and invocation, the Holy Spirit drawing nigh unto the water. For since man's nature is twofold, consisting of soul and body, He bestowed on us a twofold purification of water and of the Spirit, the Spirit renewing that part in us which is after His image and likeness, and the water by the grace of the Spirit cleansing the body from sin and delivering it from corruption, the water indeed expressing the image of death, but the Spirit affording the pledge of life. For from the beginning the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and also the Scripture witnesses that water has the power of purification. In the time of Noah God washed away the sin of the world by water. By water every impure person is purified, according to the Law, even the very garments being washed with water. Elias showed forth the grace of the Spirit mingled with the water when he burned the sacrifice by pouring on water. And almost everything is purified by water according to the law: for the things of sight are symbols of the things of thought. The regeneration, however, takes place in the Spirit: for faith has the power of making us sons, creatures as we are, by the Spirit, and of leading us into our original blessedness (*Expos.*82:25-52).

John integrated this traditional concept of water into his canon. Perhaps, the prayer of Sophronios was the main source of his inspiration. The Pauline idea of watery burial unfolds there to the extent that both sins and the old man are buried in baptism (cf. EC, the acrostic, 1, *irmos*; 1:2). Baptism accomplishes the regeneration of humanity first in Christ and then in Christians (cf. EC 1:2; 3:2; 4, *irmos*) who are made the sons of God (cf. EC 4:1; 8, *irmos*). Even the perfection of Christ's human nature would be impossible without the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (cf. 5, *irmos*; 9:2). John emphasises that human defilement and sins are washed away by God, and that water is actually of secondary importance (cf. EC 1:1; 5:1; 8:2; 9:2). As a result of the baptism of Christ, the devil dwelling in the water from previously washed sins was burnt by the fire of the

Godhead, and the water was sanctified for our baptism (cf. EC 7, *irmos*; 7:1). All the achievements of baptism are universally shared by creation.

Although the concept of water found in Christian tradition may correspond with some obscure Jewish, Gnostic, or primitive Christian beliefs, it in fact rests upon a distinct scriptural, liturgical and Patristic basis devoid of any obscure mysticism. Water in Christianity is primarily associated with baptism. At the same time it transmits a great number of symbols, for example: destruction, death and burial, life, purification, cleansing, healing, blessing, sanctification, baptism (including remission of sins, illumination, rebirth), the presence of the Holy Spirit and divine grace, redemption, salvation. These rely upon a “rational” theological understanding that it is the omnipresent God who performs miracles and initiates any mystery, including “the mystery of water”. Dwelling on this tradition in the contemplation of this mystery, the canon reminds the Christian congregation of the gifts of their baptism.

However, one may note that the theological messages and exegetical samples of this canon (and any other canon), are very compressed. Either they imply that the congregation is familiar with them or they obviously refer the congregation to more extensive theological expositions, for example, homilies. Yet without interrupting the atmosphere of celebration and prayer they unfold in other festal scriptural readings, hymns, and prayers, which constitute the liturgical context of any canon. Now I would like to observe briefly the liturgical context of the canon for the Epiphany.

Liturgical Context of the Canon

It is very difficult to establish the precise liturgical context of the time of John. We have to largely rely upon later service books which, nonetheless, reflect some evidence of the contemporary Palestinian tradition.

The Old Testament readings and hymns of the feast mainly recall images already familiar to us from the canon: Genesis 1:1-13 (the creation of the world and of water); 32:1-10 (the Theophany to Jacob); Exodus 2:5-10 (Moses is found in the river); 14:15-29 (Israel crosses the Red Sea); 15:22-16:1 (the healing of the water of Marah); Joshua 3:7-17 (Israel crosses the Jordan); Judges 6:36-40 (the fleece of Gideon); 1 Kings 18:30-39 (the sacrifice of Elijah); 2 Kings 2:6-14 (Elijah and Elisha divide the Jordan); 2:19-22 (Elisha heals the water near Jericho); 5:9-14 (the healing of Naaman the Syrian); Psalms 22 (“The Lord is my shepherd; He leads me beside the still waters”); 26; 28 (“The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the Lord is over many waters”); 41; 73 (“You broke the heads of the dragons in the waters”); 76 (“The waters saw you, O God; the waters saw you, they were afraid; the depths also trembled”); 92 (“The floods have lifted up, o Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice”); 113 (“The sea saw it and fled; Jordan turned back”); Isaias 1:16-20; 12:3-6; 35:1-10 (water in the desert); 49:8-15; 55:1-13 (“Come you, thirsty, to the waters”).

The New Testament readings and hymns concentrate on the story of the baptism, and on the interpretations of the baptismal figures: Matthew 3:1-6; Mark 1:1-11; Luke 3:1-18; Acts 13:25-33; 19:1-8; Romans 6:3-11 (baptismal burial and resurrection); 1 Corinthians 9:19-27; 1 Corinthians 10:1-6 (Moses baptised in the cloud and in the sea); Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7 (Christ saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Spirit). Sung instead of the Trisagion hymn, the verse of Galatians 3:27: “As many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ”, recalls the earlier tradition of mass baptism on the Epiphany and simultaneously reminds the congregation of their baptismal vows. Many of these readings are mentioned in the Georgian lectionary reflecting the rite of Jerusalem of the fifth to eighth centuries.¹

¹ Tarchnischvili, *Lectionnaire*, I.2.9-25.

All these images appear in the aforementioned Epiphany hymns by Ephrem and Romanos. Some Romanos' hymns could have influenced John, but it is unlikely that they were part of the Palestinian office. At the same time the *stichera* at the Royal Hours and the aforementioned prayer attributed to Sophronios could have been present in the office. In these *stichera* the author emphasises the kenosis – the fact that Christ came to the Jordan as a slave for the sake of our sins, and in order to sanctify the water for our baptism. In the prayer the meaning of the feast unfolds from the Trinitarian angle: the Trinity was made manifest in the Epiphany; and from the Christological angle: the kenotic assumption of our nature by God was also made manifest. The author mentions all the redemptive fruits which became accessible to Christians, in particular stressing the ideas of illumination, spiritual rebirth, new path, and universal salvation. For example, the prayer says:

The Jordan turned back (cf. Psalm 113:3) when it saw the fire of the Godhead descending in bodily form and entering it... as it contemplated the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove... as it saw the Invisible made visible, the Creator made flesh, the Master in the form of a servant... The Jordan turned back and the mountains leapt as they saw God in the flesh, and the clouds uttered their voice, marvelling at what had come to pass, seeing Light from Light, true God from true God, the Master's festival today in Jordan; seeing Him drowning the death from disobedience, the goad of error and the bond of hell in Jordan and granting the baptism of salvation to the world.¹

The other *troparia* and *stichera* for the Epiphany attributed to John the Monk (perhaps, John Damascene), Cosmas the Monk, Germanos the Patriarch of Constantinople, Theophanes, and the *Anatolika* or Oriental *stichera* (perhaps, also by John), in general reflect the same ideas yet focus on different details. For example, they concentrate on the Incarnation; the epiphany of the Trinity; the public manifestation of God the Word in the flesh; divine kenosis; the defeat of the devil in the water; the sanctification of water for our baptism; the washing of sins; the cleansing by water and Spirit; universal renewal; Light and illumination; universal salvation; the role of John

¹ Translation of Fr. Ephrem Lash, <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/megagiasin.htm> 27.07.2004.

the Baptist. The restoration of Adam's nature is given particular attention: unlike Adam, ashamed of his nakedness after the fall, standing naked in baptism, Christ gave back sinlessness and the original glory to human nature;¹ Christ sees the heavens opened that Adam closed.²

The first canon for the Epiphany, written by Cosmas, is for the most part identical with the canon of John in scriptural and theological content. At the same time, it contributes to the contemplation of the feast with two concepts omitted by John: at the Epiphany the Christian Church was born of water and Spirit (Cosmas EC 3:1); the eschatological fiery baptism will consume sins after the Great Judgement (Cosmas EC 6:2).³

In general this liturgical context helps to unfold the compressed ideas of the iambic canon and make them comprehensible. Nevertheless it still implies that the congregation should be familiar with the theology of the Epiphany.

Conclusion

The celebration of Epiphany brings together basic Christian beliefs which can be contemplated by the faithful through the liturgical texts. John's canon is fully integral to the Epiphany tradition, and gives its clear systematic exposition, integrating ideas scattered in many different sources. Scripture is the principle source. The canon is based on scriptural imagery reflecting the Epiphany themes; it echoes the festal readings. In this light the poem appears as a repository of standard exegetical tradition. It is easy to discern in it influence of Gregory Nazianzen, Sophronios of Jerusalem and Romanos the

¹ *Menaion, January 5, Matins, kathisma 4*, (Ware, 303).

² *Menaion, January 6, Lity, stichera 4*, (Ware, 361).

³ Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.*39.19; John Damascene, *Expos.*82.85-92.

Melodist who in his turn could have been influenced by Ephrem the Syrian. The canon embodies exegesis into prayer thus making it integral to Christian liturgical life.

A few notes should be made on the contemplation of both the Incarnation and the baptism in the Epiphany canon, and the relation of this canon to that for the Nativity. It is not surprising that John uses the same vocabulary and imagery for both canons and for both events. Integral to salvation, the events celebrated also correspond theologically. They immediately follow each other in the liturgical year. So both canons form one context of the solemn celebration of the appearance of God and His redemption (perhaps, more obviously united through the idea of birth). The author alludes to the same scriptural and patristic sources, most familiar to people, in order to recall and emphasise the most important Christian beliefs.

The peculiarity of the Epiphany canon can also be explained if it is placed in the historical context discussed in the beginning of this chapter. References to the Incarnation and baptism as one redemptive piece reflect the evidence that the themes of Nativity and Epiphany were included in a single Epiphany festival in the East. Thus, the canon carries a reminder that the background of the Palestinian tradition of this united celebration is not totally forgotten. As John was writing in Palestine only a century and a half after this tradition was changed, he could well be familiar with its history. At the same time the canon clearly reflects the standard: the Nativity precedes the Epiphany historically and theologically.

As for a possible explanation of the Palestinian case, the canon does not show any evidence that the unique Palestinian custom might have been maintained by Monophysites, or, perhaps, Origenists. As a Christian Orthodox John himself does not hesitate to integrate both events, and draws a single Orthodox Christological picture from them (no need to say that the Christology of both canons is identical). Whereas the first canon focuses on the Incarnation, the second concentrates on the baptism and the

first public manifestation of God the Word, and contemplates the mysteries of Christian baptism.

III. The Canon for the Transfiguration

Introduction

The Transfiguration is another great event in the earthly ministry of Jesus after the Epiphany. Although it can be placed in line with His miracles and echoes the Epiphany, it was not a public event. Nevertheless, for the apostles who participated, the Transfiguration much exceeded everything they had experienced before. Christ appeared to them as the Messiah in His divine glory.¹ The term μεταμόρφωσις (“transfiguration”, “transformation”) is used to describe the glorious transformation of Jesus’ appearance (Matthew 17:2; Mark 9:23; Luke 9:29).²

The story of the Transfiguration occupies a special place in Christian tradition. Its reflections appear, for example, in Philippians 3:20-21, 2 Peter 1:16-18, Apocalypse of Peter.³ The Fathers were fascinated by its mystery.⁴ The story became an integral part of Christological tradition. At first it seems, the feast of the Transfiguration was local and unofficial,⁵ but became established in the fifth-sixth centuries. A chapel dedicated to the Transfiguration was built even earlier on mount Tabor in the fourth century. Certainly it was a great feast in Palestine at the time of John Damascene. John himself made an original contribution to the contemplation of the feast with his *Homily on the Transfiguration of the Lord* and his canon for the Transfiguration.⁶

¹ The whole account of the story is found in the synoptic Gospels: Matthew 16:13–17:13; Mark 8:27–9:13; Luke 9:18-37. For its critical analysis see G.Boobyer, *St. Mark and the Transfiguration Story*, (Edinburgh, 1942); A.Ramsey, *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ*, (London, 1949); B.Reid, *The Transfiguration: a Source - and Redaction - Critical Study of Luke 9:28-36*, *Cahiers de la Revue Biblique* 32, (Paris, 1993).

² Ramsey, *Transfiguration*, 101.

³ See Elliott, 611. Cf. Grillmeier, *Christ*, 1.69-71.

⁴ Cf. Irenaeos, *Haer.*4.20.7.

⁵ See *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church*, 1636-7.

⁶ S.Eustratiades considers the canon to be authentic – *Ιωάννης, Νέα Σίων*, 26, 1931, 721.

In this chapter I shall discuss the contemplation of the Transfiguration in the canon, with particular attention to its Christological and Iconolatric implications, from the point of view of tradition, which will be observed first.

The Transfiguration in Patristic Tradition¹

The story of the Transfiguration conveys various themes. Many details of the story are interpreted with reference to the Trinity. Jesus manifested Himself as the Son of God and God, and was so recognised by the disciples. This was also declared by the voice of the Father (as in the Epiphany). Jesus' glory or radiance is the divine glory, the glory of the heavenly kingdom, a sign of His relation or consubstantiality with the Father. It is the common energy of the Godhead. The cloud is often allegorically identified with the divine grace or the Holy Spirit, but it also symbolises the divine glorious presence in general. For example, it can be compared with the cloud that led Israel from Egypt,² or with that in the Ascension story.³ All the aforementioned details appear in many theologians starting with Origen⁴ ("in the Greek tradition, it was Origen

¹ For the general outlook see M. Coune (ed.), *Joie de la Transfiguration*, Spiritualité Orientale, 39, Second ed., (Bégrolles-en-Mauges: Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1985); J. McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity, 9, (Lewiston, Me., and Queenston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986); V. Christopher, *The Transfiguration of Christ in Greek Patristic Literature*, D.Phil. thesis, (Oxford, 1991); Louth, *John*, 234-6.

² Ephrem the Syrian, *Transfig.* (Phrantzoles, 22). Apparently, the sermon by Ephrem is not genuine for it contains a virtual citation of the Chalcedonian definition. Cf. Anastasios of Sinai, *In transfigurationem Domini*, (PG 89.1372BC).

³ John Chrysostom, *In ascensionem* 4 (sp., PG 52.800.60).

⁴ See, for example, Origen, *Cels.* 6.76; *comm. in Matt.* 12.42-3; cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Excerpta ex scriptis Theodoti* 1.11 (Sagnard); Basil the Great, *Enarratio in prophetam Isaiam* 4 (dub.), (Trevisan, 138.38); Gregory of Nyssa, *Eunom.* 2.248-9 (*Opera*, 1.298.25-299.7); Ephrem (ps.), *Transfig.* (Phrantzoles, 14-19, 23); John Chrysostom, *Matt.* 56.1-3 (PG 58.550-4); *In transfigurationem* (sp., PG 61.721-2); Proklos of Constantinople, *Hom. Transfig.* 8.3-4 (PG 65.768-9); Cyril of Alexandria, *Hom.* 9 *in transfigurationem* (PG 77.1012-13); *comm. Isa.* 1.5 (PG 70.220AD); Basil of Seleucia, *Or.* 40.2 (PG 85.457AB); Timotheos of Antioch, *In crucem et in transfigurationem Domini* (PG 86.1.264CD); Anastasios of Sinai, *In transfigurationem Domini*, (PG 89.1372-3).

who established the pattern of interpretation of the Transfiguration”¹). In the sixth century Leontios of Constantinople still criticises Arians² on the basis of these Trinitarian premises.³

The role of Christ’s humanity in the Transfiguration is particularly interesting. The divine glory or energy was radiating through the humanity and through the material garments. Thus it was clearly manifest that human nature participates in the Godhead; it was glorified by the Godhead and actually transfigured on the mountain. The Transfiguration itself was the manifestation of the Incarnation of the Son of God and of the hypostatic union of two natures.⁴ However, for Severos this feature seems to demonstrate the single divine activity or energy of Christ:

When the God the Word in His august union with humanity... allowed this to change, even transfigured this, not indeed into His own nature – for this remained what it was – but into His glory and into His own energy, how then can you refer to the teaching of the Synod of Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo..., which have distributed (the *operationes*, the activity of the *energeia*) to the Logos and the human being in Christ?⁵

The glorious transfiguration preceded the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ. Therefore it was also a manifestation of His divine kenosis: glorious God, He condescended to death in order to restore fallen humankind. Moreover, the Transfiguration partly revealed the state of restored and deified humanity; it illustrated

¹ Louth, *John*, 234.

² On Arius and Arianism see Quasten, *Patrology*, 3.7-13; J.Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, Christian Classics, (Westminster, 1968); Grillmeier, *Christ*, 1.219-48; R.Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, (London, 2001, first publ. 1987).

³ Leontios of Constantinople, *Hom.*14.200-250 (Datema, CC Series Graeca 17, 440-2).

⁴ Cf. Origen, *fragm.Luc.*140 (Rauer); Cyril of Jerusalem, *catech.*12.16; Gregory of Nyssa, *Eunom.*2.249 (*Opera*, 1.298.29-299.7); Ephrem (ps.), *Transfig.* (Phrantzoles, 15); Makarios, *hom.*15.38 (Dörries *et al.*149); John Chrysostom, *Theodor.*1.11 (PG 47.291-2); *De futurae vitae delictis* 6 (PG 51.352); *Matt.*56.3 (PG 58.553); Proklos of Constantinople, *Hom.Transfig.*8.2 (PG 65.768B); Cyril of Alexandria, *Matt.*198 (Reuss); *Luc.* (Sickenberger, 80.17-81.3); *Hom.*9 in *transfigurationem* (PG 77.1013BD); Leontios of Constantinople, *Hom.*14.209-50 (Datema, 440-2);

⁵ *Philalethes* 101 (CSCO 134.266.28-267.1)/Grillmeier, *Christ*, 2.2.83; also *adOecum* (PO 12.184.4-7). Cf. Basil of Seleucia, *Or.*40.2 (PG 85.457AB).

the future transformation of humankind which would take place at the *parousia* of Christ, at the coming of His glorious kingdom.¹

Tradition pays much attention to the participants of the event. The figures of Moses, the law-giver, and Elias, the prophet, represented the Old Testament Law and the prophets who foretold the coming of the Son of God and His New Covenant. Both Moses and Elias had already encountered God the Word in similar circumstances in their lives (cf. Exodus 33-34; 1 Kings 19:3-16). They appeared to confirm that Jesus was the Son of God who possessed power over the underworld (from whence Moses came) and the heavens (from whence Elias arrived), thus encouraging the apostles before His sufferings.² However, Jesus took only three apostles: Peter, James and John on the mountain. There are many explanations of their number. For example, Origen says that in the Incarnation Jesus appeared in different forms to different people according to their spiritual aptitude. His divine glory demanded the greatest receptivity, hence it was granted only to the three among the disciples.³ John Chrysostom puts it thus: "Because these three were superior to the rest: Peter showed his superiority by

¹ Cf. 1 Corinthians 3:18; Philippians 3:20-21; Origen, *fragm.Luc.*140 (Rauer); *comm.in Matt.*12.33-42; Athanasios of Alexandria, *Sabel.* 11 (sp., PG 28.116B); Basil the Great, *Hom.Psalm* 44:5, (PG 29.400CD); Gregory of Nyssa, *Eunom.*2.249 (*Opera*, 1.298.29-299.7); *Stephan.* (Lendle 30-44); Ephrem (ps.), *Transfig.* (Phrantzoles, 14-17); Makarios, *hom.*15.38 (Dörries *et al.*149); John Chrysostom, *Theodor.*1.11 (PG 47.291-2); *De futurae vitae deliciis* 6 (PG 51.352); *In transfigurationem* (sp. PG 61.722); Cyril of Alexandria, *Matt.*200 (Reuss); *Luc.* (Sickenberger, 80.17-81.3); *Hom.*9 *in transfigurationem* (PG 77.1012-13); Theodoret of Kyrrhos, *Ep.*146.253 (Azéma); Timotheos of Antioch, *In crucem et in transfigurationem Domini* (PG 86.1.256-65 – the whole homily); Leontios of Constantinople, *Hom.*9.50-80 (Datema, 274-5); *Hom.*14.251-81 (Datema, 442-3).

² For the variety of commentaries on Moses and Elias see Origen, *comm.in Matt.*12.43; *schol.Luc.* (PG 17.345BC); *fragm.Luc.*140 (Rauer); Ephrem (ps.), *Transfig.* (Phrantzoles, 18-22); Cyril of Jerusalem, *catech.*12.16; John Chrysostom, *Matt.*56.1-2 (PG 58.549-52); Cyril of Alexandria, *Luc.* (Sickenberger, 80.); *Hom.*9 *in transfigurationem* (PG 77.1012BD); Proklos of Constantinople, *Hom.Transfig.*8.2 (PG 65.764BC); Basil of Seleucia, *Or.*40.2-3 (PG 85.457BC-760A); Timotheos of Antioch, *In crucem et in transfigurationem Domini* (PG 86.1.261BD); Leontios of Constantinople, *Hom.*14.295-303, 346-75 (Datema, 444, 447-8); Anastasios of Sinai, *In transfigurationem Domini*, (PG 89.1369AB).

³ Origen, *comm.in Matt.*12.36; cf. *Cels.*2.64; 4.16.

exceedingly loving Him; John by being exceedingly loved of Him; and James by his answer...“We are able to drink the cup”.¹

This tradition is in the background of John’s interpretation of the Transfiguration in his homily.

The Homily on the Transfiguration of the Lord²

The homily seems to be addressed to a monastic congregation (cf.*Transfig.*1.1). Mainly concentrating on the Trinity and Christology, it begins with an eloquent theological introduction (1-5) and proceeds with the interpretation of the synoptic accounts of the Transfiguration (6-20). Its clear theological language and Chalcedonian terminology was supposed to edify the congregation in matters of Orthodox Christology.

Meditating on the Trinitarian aspect of the story, John places together two Trinitarian manifestations: at the Jordan and on Tabor, on which the voice of the Father came from the cloud of the Spirit witnessing that Christ is both the Son of God and man (3; 18). When he focuses on the Person of Christ, he depicts Him as the God of the Old and New Testaments (2). Sinai as the mountain of the old revelation is therefore contrasted with Tabor as the mountain of the new (4). The Christology of the homily unfolds with the emphasis on the hypostatic union of the two natures. Here the notion of glory seems to be central and in some instances can be associated with the divine ἐνέργεια. One Christ is consubstantial with the Father and us. From the very moment of the Incarnation when the flesh came into being in the hypostasis of the Word, it was

¹ John Chrysostom, *Matt.*56.1 (PG 58.550).

² For its analysis see Louth, *John*, 236-43. For an English translation see McGuckin, *Transfiguration*, 205-25. Cf. a homily by John’s contemporary, Andrew of Crete, *In Domini nostri transfigurationem*, (PG 97.931-58).

glorified (12). His earthly body is shining forth divine radiance; a mortal body is the source of the glory of the Godhead (2.34-5). The glory does not come from outside the body, but from within, from the Godhead of the Word of God, united to it hypostatically (2.38-40). Thus “what was human became divine, and what was divine human by the mode of exchange and unconfused mutual περιχώρησις and the strictest hypostatic union, for that which was eternally and this which became later were one” (2.47-50). The Transfiguration involved change neither in the humanity nor in the Godhead of Christ, but it was rather a transfiguration of disciples’ vision; it was a revelation of the reality of the incarnate Word. It is important that in this revelation the holy body remains circumscribed. The body shines like the sun; the radiance of light comes from the body, for all the properties of the incarnate Word have become common, those of the flesh and those of the uncircumscribable Godhead. The Godhead bestows its own radiance and glory to the body, while in the sufferings or passions it abides without any passion (13.23-31). The activities of both natures remain preserved.

John employs Neo-Chalcedonian language throughout the homily. His interpretation of the Transfiguration differs from that of Severos and the Monophysites quoted above: humanity was neither changed nor transfigured into the glory and energy of God the Word. At the same time the circumscribability of the body witnesses against the Iconoclasts (but in fact John does not separate the Transfiguration from other scenes in Christ’s life which may appropriately be depicted).¹

The homily is closely related to John’s canon for the Transfiguration, which I am going to scrutinise now.

¹ See *Imag.*I.8. John also explores the ways of achieving personal transfiguration and participation in the Godhead, which is associated with the heavenly kingdom (*Transfig.*10, 20). The interpretation of the presence of Moses and Elias (14-15), of the three disciples (9-10), and the mention of six and eight days (8) follows the aforementioned Patristic tradition.

*Acrostic*¹

The acrostic of the canon reads as follows:

“Μωσῆς Θεοῦ πρόσωπον ἐν Θαβὼρ ἶδε” (“Moses saw the face² of God on Tabor”). In these few words John expressed the original theological thesis of his canon and of the feast of the Transfiguration.³ He obviously refers to the words of God to Moses from Exodus 33:20: “You cannot see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live,”⁴ and also the story of the burning bush when “Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God” (Exodus 3:6), when he sets his antinomy in the acrostic. In the transfiguration of Jesus, Moses finally saw the Person of God who granted him the Law (cf. Matthew 5:8). Thus Jesus is one and the same God who acted in the Old and in the New Testaments, and this God became visible and circumscribable.

In the acrostic John operates with Neo-Chalcedonian language. As we have mentioned in the outlook of John’s Christology, the word πρόσωπον means not a mere face but a person, identical with hypostasis and individual⁵ (its use in the acrostic is derived from Exodus 33:20). When we contemplate the hypostasis or person of Christ, we sometimes name it after one of His natures: “God” or “man”.⁶ In the acrostic it is named with the word θεός after His divine nature. Thus formerly uncircumscribable, the hypostasis of the Word of God became circumscribed in the Incarnation because of the assumption of perfect human nature: “He becomes a man in nature and appearance

¹ See Nikodimos, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 3.281-2.

² In Greek πρόσωπον means both “face” and “person”. John seems to play on this ambiguity.

³ It is extensively explored in his homily – *Transfig.* 2.16-25; 4; 14.1-11.

⁴ Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Moses* 2.233-5.

⁵ *Dial.* 30.2-4; 31.28-9; 44.2-14. See Chapter I, above.

⁶ Cf. *Expos.* 48.2-23.

so that, revealing the brilliance of God in and through His own person, mankind could reach God who lies beyond their reach”.¹ Yet this does not mean that the nature of the Godhead became circumscribed.² John appeals to Moses as a witness of the mystery of God became incarnate.

The thesis that Christ is the same God of the Old and the New Testaments, and that He became visible in the Incarnation, is an integral part of Christological tradition. In its simple form it appears, for example, in Ignatios of Antioch, Justin Martyr, Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem;³ and more elaborately in Ephrem the Syrian, Basil of Seleucia, Leontios of Constantinople.⁴ In the homily John develops this in order that “the mouths of the heretics might be shut.”⁵ Whereas in Justin, for example, these heretics were Jews and Gnostics, for John they might be Aphthartodocetists or Origenists as implied in *Transfig.*14.1-6, but as follows from the acrostic, also Iconoclasts. One of their arguments was that God could not be visible, circumscribed, and depicted.⁶ The thesis of John unfolds in the canon as in a theological treatise.

¹ Cf. *Transfig.* 2.2-3, 9-10; 4.1-11.

² Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.*28.3 (Gallay).

³ Ignatios, *Polycarp.*3.2 (Camelot); cf. Justin, *Dialog.*32; 34; 36-38; 45; 56; 58; 59; 62; 64; 73; 126-128; 132; Origen, *comm.in Matt.*12.43; *schol.Luc.* (PG 17.345C); Cyril of Jerusalem, *catech.*12.16.

⁴ Ephrem (ps.), *Transfig.* (Phrantzoles, 14-17); Basil of Seleucia, *Or.*40.2 (PG 85.457AB); cf. Leontios of Constantinople, *Hom.*11.219-23 (Datema, 354); *Hom.*14.296-303 (Datema, 444).

⁵ Cf. *Transfig.*14.1-6.

⁶ Cf. *Imag.*1.8.

Canon¹

Ode 1

Moses of old saw prophetically the glory of the Lord in the sea, in the cloud, and in the pillar of fire, and he shouted out: let us sing to our God and Redeemer (TC 1:1).

Protected by the deified body, as by a rock, and seeing Him who is invisible, Moses shouted out: let us sing to our God and Redeemer (TC 1:2).

You appeared to Moses on the Mountain of the Law and on Tabor, of old in a dark cloud, and now in the unapproachable light of the Godhead (TC 1:3).

John focuses on Moses as on a very important figure of the Transfiguration. These *troparia* unfold the story of Moses. The first refers to Exodus 13:21-15:22 when depicting Moses' experiences of the divine glory. The second echoes Exodus 33:21-23, when Moses saw only the back of God, and meditates on Moses' experience of God on Tabor: Moses sees the invisible One covered "by the deified body as by a rock". The comparison of Christ with rock originates from Paul: "the rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:1-4).² The comparison of the body of Christ with rock comes from Gregory Nazianzen.³

The third *troparion* brings together both Moses' experiences. So it was Jesus who appeared to Moses on Sinai and on Tabor. The precise place of His Transfiguration – Mount Tabor – was not so important for earlier tradition. It does not appear in the Gospel accounts where mention is only made of a high mount (Matthew 17:1; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:28).⁴ The name of Tabor is found in Cyril of Jerusalem,¹ but as he mentions

¹ John mostly used existing *irmoi* for his canon save for the third and fourth ode. Therefore they will be excluded from the analysis. I use the English translation of the canon by Fr Andrew Louth – *John*, 269-74.

² Cf. *Transfig.* 2.11.

³ *Or.* 28.3.5-7.

⁴ For example, Ramsey reckons that Hermon is the place of the Transfiguration because geographically this mount can be called very high, unlike Tabor – *Transfiguration*, 113-14.

it as a known fact, it must have been established earlier. Both in the acrostic and in TC 1:3 John compares Sinai and Tabor in order to illustrate the difference between the revelation of the Old Testament and that of the New. "A dark cloud" signifies something secret, whereas "the unapproachable light of the Godhead" (cf. John 8:12; 1 Timothy 6:16) means the new open revelation of the Godhead.² The darkness and light of the Godhead is a well established Christian antinomy. In this sense Tabor receives particular importance as a new Sinai. The mountain often serves as a symbol of the Christian Church. Echoing the first biblical canticle, the refrain of the ode emphasises the significance of the Transfiguration in the redemptive ministry of Christ.³

Ode 3

The glory that formerly overshadowed the tabernacle⁴ and spoke to Moses your servant has become a figure of your Transfiguration, O Lord, that shone forth ineffably, like lightning on Tabor (TC 3, *irmos*).

The highest of the Apostles went up with you, Only-begotten Word most high, on to Mount Tabor, and Moses and Elias were both present, as servants of God, only Lover of humankind (TC 3:1).

Being complete God, you have become a complete mortal, having mixed humanity with complete divinity in your Person, which Moses and Elias saw on Mount Tabor in two essences (TC 3:2).

In the *irmos* John underlines the idea of the previous ode and the general idea of a figurative meaning of the Old Testament: the divine glory overshadowing the tabernacle (and Sinai, cf. Exodus 33:9; 40:38), so central to John's defence of icons,⁵

¹ Cyril of Jerusalem, *catech.* 12.16. It also occurs in *Fragmenta in Psalmos*, Psalm 88:13 (Pitra), previously attributed to Origen but now to Evagrius.

² Cf. *Transfig.* 4. On God as light see the next chapter, on God as darkness see ps.Dionysios, *Ep.* 5 (Ritter, 162-3).

³ Cf. Nikodimos, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 3.283-6; Louth, *John*, 269-70.

⁴ There is an ironic play on σκηνή (tabernacle). Moses was ordered to make a tabernacle; on Thabor no tabernacle is needed, despite Peter's enthusiasm (Matthew 17:4; Mark 9:5; Luke 9:33).

⁵ Louth, *John*, 270.

prefigured the glorious Transfiguration,¹ the radiance of Christ, and the descent of the cloud. The tabernacle is usually considered as the figure of Christ's humanity or of the *Theotokos*.²

The first *troparion* explores the synoptic accounts of the Transfiguration, stressing that Christ is the Only-begotten Word of God. He was accompanied on Tabor by the *leaders* of the apostles. In the italicised word we can see that John refers to the aforementioned tradition of the interpretation of why Jesus took only three apostles.³ Also, Moses and Elias appeared before Him as His servants. So the apostles took part in a revelation similar to those of the Old Testament in which Moses and Elias were involved.⁴ The revelation of the Transfiguration is the manifestation of the divine love of humankind.

The second *troparion* unfolds the Christological dimension of the story in the terms of double consubstantiality: Christ is one person in two essences, complete Godhead and complete mortal human nature.⁵ Although John describes the Incarnation in the terms of *μίξις* (cf. NC 1:1; EC 8:1),⁶ he clearly distinguishes two distinct essences in the hypostatic union, in accordance with Chalcedon.⁷ The truth of the

¹ Matthew 17:13; Mark 9:4; Luke 9:30-31; cf. TC 1:1; 1:3; *Transfig.*2.1-2.

² Cf. Nikodimos, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 3.286-9.

³ Cf. *Transfig.*7, 9-10. See also the metaphorical commentary and its implication for Christians in Maximos, *cap.theol.*ii.13-18 (PG 90.1129C-1133B).

⁴ TC 3:1 and 3:2 echo *Transfig.*14.1-11.

⁵ For the “βροτός” see *Terminology of the Canon* in Chapter I, above.

⁶ For its analysis see the previous chapter.

⁷ The language of the *troparion* directly corresponds with *Expos.*50.23-37 and 51.28-44 (cf. “διὰ δὲ τοῦ εἰπεῖν «ὅλον θεὸν καὶ ὅλον ἄνθρωπον» τὸ μοναδικὸν καὶ ἄτμητον δεικνύοντες τῆς ὑποστάσεως” 51.43-4). It might have been inspired by Gregory Nazianzen, *Ep.*101.15, 32-3 (Gallay), and by ps.Dionysios, *d.n.*1.4 (Suchla, 113-14), quoted in *Doctrina partum* 7 (Dickamp, 69.13). Cf. *Transfig.*2.5-12, 40-9; the definition of Chalcedon, Tanner, *Decrees*, 86; Nikodimos, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 3.291-3.

hypostatic union was revealed in the Transfiguration. Because of the hypostatic union it became possible to see God.

Ode 4

Lightning arrows of divinity proceeded from your flesh; those chosen from the Apostles and Prophets sing and shout out: Glory to your power, O Lord (TC 4, *irmos*).

You preserved the bush unharmed, though it was united with fire, O Master, and showed to Moses the flesh shining with divine radiance, as he sang: Glory to your power, o Lord (TC 4:1).

The visible sun was eclipsed by the rays of divinity, when on Mount Tabor it saw you transfigured, my Jesus. Glory to your power, O Lord (TC 4:2).

Seen as immaterial fire that did not burnt the matter of the body, when you appeared to Moses and the Apostles and Elias, Master, as one out of two, in two perfect natures (TC 4:3).

Whereas in the previous *troparia* John generally says that God was seen in the hypostasis of Christ, in the *irmos* he clarifies that the lightning arrows or flashes of divinity proceeded from His flesh. Arrows (βολίδες) are a device to link the *irmos* with the biblical canticle (cf. Avvakum 3:11).¹ Thus the nature of the Godhead was manifest and seen by the chosen among the apostles and prophets (cf. TC 3:2). Unfolding the image further, the first and the last *troparia* refer to the story of the burning bush, already analysed in a Christological light in EC 9:1, above. The figurative meaning of the story serves the purposes of any Church festival, celebrating redemption. Whereas in NC 1:1 and EC 9:1 the interpretation includes the *Theotokos*, here it solely concentrates on the coexistence of humanity and Godhead in the hypostasis of Christ. Perhaps addressing Monophysites, John points out that the flesh being united with the Godhead, is in no way changed or consumed by it; the integrity of human nature is preserved: “immaterial fire did not burn the matter of the body” (TC 4:3). At the same time “an

¹ Cf. Basil of Seleucia, *Or.*40.2 (PG 85.457AB).

earthly body is radiating the divine splendour; a mortal body is pouring forth the glory of the Godhead” because of “the mode of exchange and unconfused mutual περιχώρησις”.¹ These rays of divinity eclipsed the sun (TC 4:2).² In this remark John illustrates the superiority of the Creator over creation and also refers to the darkening of the sun at the crucifixion of Christ (cf. Matthew 27:45; Luke 23:45; John 12:23-33).³ Moses again is referred to as a key witness of both revelations (TC 4:1; 4:3; cf. the acrostic, TC ode 1). In addition, the Transfiguration is witnessed by the apostles and Elias.

The last line of the last *troparion* puts the imagery of the ode into the Orthodox Christological context (cf. TC 3:3). In the expression “one out of two, in two perfect natures” John combines the Chalcedonian expression “in two perfect natures”⁴ and the Neo-Chalcedonian tendency to supplement it by “one out of two natures” of the original Chalcedonian draft.⁵ Thus he implies that these expressions are equal from the point of view of Orthodox Christology.

The refrain of the ode “Glory to your power, O Lord” (cf. Avvakum 3:19) emphasises the divine power. In the *irmos* the phrase comes from all five witnesses of the Transfiguration, in TC 4:1 – from Moses, and in TC 4:2 – from the author or the one who reads or sings. Perhaps, John intends in this way to transfer everyone into the dimension of the Transfiguration by placing them together with the apostles and the prophets before Christ.

¹ Cf. *Transfig.* 2.35, 38-40, 47-50; 12.12-22.

² Cf. *Transfig.* 13.1-7: “His face (person) shone like the sun.... The face of Him who by His own immense power lit up the sun; He who created light before even the sun was”. Cf. Basil of Seleucia, *Or.* 40.2 (PG 85.457B).

³ Cf. *Transfig.* 13.34-42; Nikodimos, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 3.295-6.

⁴ Tanner, *Decrees*, 86.

⁵ See Louth, *John*, 150, 152; and *Christology of John Damascene* in Chapter I, above.

Ode 5

Even an eloquent tongue cannot declare your mighty works; for, ruling life and mastering death, you were present on Mount Tabor to Moses and Elias, who bore witness to your deity (TC 5:1).

You made humankind in your image with your invisible hands, O Christ, and manifested your original beauty in created humanity; not as in the image, but as you are yourself in essence, God who are also called man (TC 5:2).

In a union without confusion, you showed us on Mount Tabor the coal of divinity, that consumes sins, but enlightens souls, where you caught up Moses and Elias and the chief of the disciples in ecstasy (TC 5:3).

The first *troparion* reflects the traditional interpretation of the figures of Moses and Elias as representing the dead and the living. There is an alternative interpretation in which they both represent the dead whereas the apostles are the living.¹ They testify that Christ is God and Master over life and death, as John puts it in the *Homily*: by their appearance the resurrection of the dead was confirmed.²

Christ is also the Creator who made humankind in His own image (cf. Genesis 1:26-27; 9:6); He is the original prototype. In the Incarnation God established another relation much closer than that between the image and prototype, "He took pity on us and renewed a second communion with us, much more steadfast and wonderful than the first"³: the whole of human nature was united with the whole of the Godhead. This echoes the Pauline comparison of Christ with Adam. The last *troparion* explores this union in Chalcedonian terms: it is a union without confusion (cf. TC 3:3; 4:3).⁴ The Transfiguration actually revealed this union and therefore the primordial beauty of humanity;⁵ and because of this union it became possible for the chief of the disciples

¹ See above *The Transfiguration in Patristic Tradition*.

² Cf. *Transfig.* 3.3; 14.1-11; 17.10-17.

³ *Transfig.* 4.17-18; cf. 3.38-47; 4.10-20; 6.47-8; John Chrysostom, *Genes.* 9.3 (PG 53.78).

⁴ See the definition of Chalcedon in Tanner, *Decrees*, 86.

⁵ Cf. Augustine, *Conf.* 10.27.38. See Nikodimos, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 3.298-300; Louth, *John*, 271-2.

(cf. TC 3:2) and Moses and Elias in a spiritual ecstasy to experience the coal of divinity that consumes sins and enlightens souls (cf. Isaias 6:6-7). Thus John refers to the already familiar idea of the twofold activity of the fiery Godhead¹, and the idea of mystical ecstasy, widely explored in ascetic tradition. In this connection John also mentions "us" as observers and participants of the Transfiguration.

Ode 6

How great and fearful is the vision seen today! The visible sun shone from heaven, but from the earth on Mount Tabor there shone forth, beyond compare, the spiritual Sun of righteousness (TC 6:1).

"The shadow of the Law have grown weak and passed away, while Christ the Truth has plainly come": shouted out Moses, when he beheld your divinity on Tabor (TC 6:2).

As the pillar showed Moses Christ transfigured, so the cloud pointed most clearly to the grace of the Spirit, overshadowing Mount Tabor (TC 6:3).

These *troparia* continue the theme of the previous ode. The creation, the sun, does not merely eclipse before the Creator (cf. TC 4:2), it actually prefigures Him as the spiritual Sun of righteousness (cf. Malachi 4:2) which shone on Tabor.² In the *Homily* John says that the duality of the nature of the sun which consists of "body" and "light" is a prototype for Christ, "one Sun of righteousness, the one Christ manifest in two inseparable natures".³ The figure of Moses reappears (cf. the acrostic, TC ode 1; 4:1; 4:3; 5:1; 5:3), and his role becomes clear. Moses gave the Old Testament Law, granted by God, but it contained mere shadows of Truth. He is actually the main original witness that "the shadows passed away, while Christ the Truth (cf. John 14:6) has

¹ See EC 9:1. Cf. Exodus 24:17; Deuteronomy 4:24; 9:3; Hebrews 12:29; Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.*40.6; Basil the Great, *Hom. in s.Christi generationem* 2 (dub., PG 31.1460BC).

² Cf. *Transfig.*4.21-3; Ephrem (ps.), *Transfig.* (Phrantzoles, 17).

³ *Transfig.*13.20-2. Cf. *Expos.*8.35-40; *Fragm.Matt.*17.2-5 (dub., PG 96.1408D-1409AB).

plainly come” (cf. Galatians 3:19-25; Hebrews 10:1).¹ He declares this when he sees God in the flesh on Tabor. The fiery pillar from Exodus 13:21-2 was such a “shadow” of Christ, and the cloud likewise signified the grace of the Holy Spirit² both on Sinai and on Tabor (cf. TC 1:1; 1:3). Thus John gives a hint of the Trinitarian interpretation of the Transfiguration.³

Ode 7

Now the invisible has been seen by the Apostles, the Godhead shining forth in the flesh on Mount Tabor, and they shout: Blessed are you, Lord God, to the ages (TC 7:1).

Trembling with fear, and amazed at the majesty of the divine kingship on Mount Tabor, the Apostles shouted: Blessed are you, Lord God, to the ages (TC 7:2).

Now the unheard⁴ of has been heard. For the fatherless Son of the Virgin receives glorious witness from the paternal voice, that He is divine and human, the same to the ages (TC 7:3).

Not made by adoption, but being by essence from before all existence, the beloved Son of the Most High, unchangeably you dwelt with us, who cry out: Blessed are you, O God, to the ages (TC 7:4).

The first and second *troparia* unveil the Transfiguration from the apostolic point of view. John makes the point that the apostles saw the invisible Godhead as it was shining forth in the flesh (cf. TC 3:3; 4, *irmos*; 4:1). Moreover, they thus experienced the majesty of the divine kingdom which is God Himself (cf. Luke 17:21; John 14:23).⁵

“The “majesty of the divine kingship” recalls, appropriately for the Transfiguration, the first verse of Psalm 92: “The Lord reigns, He is clothed in majesty”; His majesty

¹ Cf. *Transfig.* 2.16-25; 17.1-7; Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.* 38.2.6-7: “αἱ σκιαὶ παρατρέχουσιν, ἡ ἀλήθεια ἐπείσέρχεται”.

² For the interpretation of the “cloud” see *Transfig.* 3.32; 4.27; 17.5-8; 18.2-3. For its origins see *The Transfiguration in Patristic Tradition*, above (Origen was the first to identify the cloud with the Spirit - *comm. in Matt.* 12.43).

³ Louth, *John*, 272. See above *The Transfiguration in Patristic Tradition*; *Transfig.* 3; 18.

⁴ The word ἀνήκουστα (unheard) is very rare. Apart from grammarians it is used once by Chrysostom, *Ad eos qui scandalizati sunt*, 3.8.7 and once by John Damascene, *Transfig.* 3.1.

⁵ See *The Transfiguration in Patristic Tradition*, above.

manifest in the clothing that became “white as the light” (Matthew 17:2)”.¹ (In the Transfiguration accounts Christ first promises to show the kingdom of glory, then He Himself appears in glory).

The third and the fourth *troparia* explore the Incarnation. People and the apostles saw and treated Him as the Son of the Virgin, as man. Indeed He is truly man, consubstantial with us, fatherless, however, because He was conceived without a human father.² But the paternal voice witnessed that He is the Son of God of the same essence, coeternal with the Father, and not adopted.³ Unlike the Epiphany, the Transfiguration itself is the manifestation of their consubstantiality. Moreover, the Father also declares the Incarnation, that His divine Son became fully human without change,⁴ that He is the same to the ages, both God and man, “for it is a man that this testimony is given.”⁵ So these two *troparia* follow the same Christological pattern of Chalcedonian double consubstantiality (cf. TC 3:3; 4:3; 5:3). Their language is both anti-Monophysite and anti-Nestorian (cf. “the Son of the Most High”; “the Son of the Virgin”; “not made by adoption”; “the same divine and human”; “unchangeably dwelt with us”).⁶

Providing a link with the seventh biblical canticle, the refrain “Blessed are you, Lord God, to the ages” (cf. Daniel 3:26, 52) in the context of the ode refers to God the Trinity eternally united with humanity in the hypostasis of the Son. In TC 7:1; 7:2 the refrain comes from the apostles, and in TC 7:3 it belongs to the congregation, which signifies the eternal participation of all the faithful in the mysteries of salvation.

¹ Louth, *John*, 273.

² The language of TC 7:3 echoes *Fides* 43.1-2; 49.1-18.

³ Cf. *Transfig.* 12.4-5.

⁴ See the definition of Chalcedon in Tanner, *Decrees*, 86.

⁵ *Transfig.* 3.36-7; cf. 3.1-4; 18.1-33; Ephrem the Syrian, *Transfig.* (Phrantzoles, 23); Basil of Seleucia, *Or.* 40.3 (PG 85.460AD).

⁶ See Nikodimos, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 3.307-9.

Ode 8

Having heard, O Master, the witness of the Father, but unable to bear to see the lightning flash of your face, too strong for human sight, your Disciples fell to the ground, singing: Priests, bless, people, highly exalt Christ to the ages (TC 8:1).

Most fair king of kings, Lord of all who everywhere exercise lordship, blessed sovereign, dwelling in light unapproachable, which struck with wonder the Disciples, who shouted: Children, bless, priests raise a hymn, people highly exalt Christ to the ages (TC 8:2).

You hold mastery over heaven, exercise kingship over the earth, and hold lordship over things beneath the earth, O Christ, so there were present with you, from the earth the Apostles, from heaven Elias the Thesbite, and from the ranks of the dead Moses, all singing in harmony: People, highly exalt Christ to the ages (TC 8:3).

Idle cares were left behind them on the earth by the chosen band from the Apostles, O Lover of humankind, as they followed you to the divine way of life that is far above this earthly world. Thus, accounted worthy of your Theophany, they sing: People, highly exalt Christ to the ages (TC 8:4).

This ode continues the theme of the previous ode meditating on the story of the Transfiguration. The first *troparion* depicts the reaction of the apostles: unable to bear to see the lightning flash of Christ's face (πρόσωπον), too strong for human sight, they fell to the ground (cf. TC 3:3; 4, *irmos*; 4:1; 7:1). This is based on Gregory's assumption: "The Godhead manifest as light to the apostles on the mountain, too strong for their little sight".¹ They were not yet ready for such a revelation, and John implies that there will be some spiritual progress in the apostles and in humankind for this. Describing the amazement of the apostles, the second *troparion* paraphrases 1Timothy 6:15-16 and meditates on the divine majesty of Christ: "fair (cf. Psalm 44:3; Song of Songs 1:16) king of kings, Lord of all who everywhere exercise lordship, blessed sovereign, dwelling in light unapproachable..."² Thus John implies that the divine omnipresence does not contradict the limitations of the human body. Being on Tabor,

¹ Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.*40.6.18-20.

² Cf. *Transfig.*2.1-2; 13.10-42; ps.Dionysios, *d.n.*12.4 (Suchla, 225.14-226.5).

Christ at the same time is the omnipresent God who has not left His dwelling place: “The holy body is therefore circumscribed – for, standing on Tabor, it did not stretch outside the mountain – the Godhead being uncontained by anything and beyond everything”.¹ The majesty and omnipresence of Christ is developed in the next *troparion*, spelling out that Christ is the ruler of heaven, earth, and hell. This is manifest in the Transfiguration by the presence of Elias who comes from heaven (cf. 4 Kings 2:11-12), the apostles who come from earth, and Moses who comes from the dead or hell (cf. TC 5:1).²

The last *troparion* can be applied both to the Transfiguration story and to the earthly ministry of Jesus and His apostles. Leaving behind idle cares on earth (a vital condition of spiritual contemplation according to ascetic tradition, and, perhaps, an echo of the Cherubic hymn), the Apostles followed Christ to the divine way of life, the way to Theophany, that is far above this earthly world.³ Also having renounced everything, they followed Jesus until death. The Theophany of the Transfiguration was an encouragement for them: “Since they would all look upon His sufferings it was fitting that they should all have looked upon His glory, and for this reason He took with Him the chief apostles to be the witnesses of His own glory and radiance”.⁴ So the *troparion* also alludes to the Passion.

Corresponding with the eighth biblical canticle, the refrain of the ode is slightly modified in each *troparion*. It would be interesting to speculate on this. In TC 8:1 the apostles sing: “Priests, bless, people, highly exalt Christ...” It can appear that from the

¹ *Transfig.*13.23-5.

² Cf. *Transfig.*9-10; 14-15. For the origins of this interpretation see *The Transfiguration in Patristic Tradition*, above.

³ Cf. *Transfig.*5; 10. For the analysis of Christian notion of the way of life, see EC 7:2 in the previous chapter.

⁴ *Transfig.*7.27-9. John also compares the ministry of apostles and Christians, cf. *Transfig.*14.12-32; 16.1-15. See also Louth, *John*, 273-4; Nikodimos, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 3.313-14.

point of view of the apostles Moses and Elias are the priest of Christ. In TC 8:2 the apostles and, perhaps, Moses and Elias shouted: "Children, bless, priests raise a hymn, people highly exalt Christ..." The word "children" (recalling of course the three youths), might be addressed to all the apostles and to other people implying that they are Children in faith "since they had not yet participated perfectly in the Spirit."¹ This echoes the first canon for the Transfiguration: "Moses and Elias cried out to the disciples *instructed* on the saint mount Tabor: "This is the Saviour, Christ whom we before proclaimed as God who is" (5:2). At the same time they can already bless Him as priests do in TC 8:1, whereas now priests praise by hymn, which might be an echo of some Palestinian custom of singing the canon. In TC 8:3 all five sing together: "People, highly exalt Christ...", thus calling the congregation to partake in the mysteries revealed on Tabor. Finally in TC 8:4 the apostles sing the same exaltation, which in the context of the *troparion* might echo the apostolic message of the Gospel. Altogether these refrains underline that God will be praised eternally by all people.²

Ode 9

That you might show plainly your unutterable Second Coming, how God Most High will be seen, standing in the midst of gods, you shone forth ineffably to the Apostles on Tabor, to Moses with Elias; therefore we all magnify you, O Christ (TC 9:1).

Come and listen to me, people: ascending the holy and heavenly Mount, let us stand immaterially in the city of the living God, and contemplate with our minds the immaterial Godhead, of the Father and the Spirit, shining forth in the only-begotten Son (TC 9:2).

You have cast a spell of longing (πόθος) over me, O Christ, and changed me with your divine yearning (ἔρωτι); but burn up my sins in immaterial fire, and make me worthy to be filled with delight in you, that, dancing, I may magnify your two comings, O Good One (TC 9:3).

¹ *Transfig.* 19.5-6. Cf. 1 Corinthians 3:1-2.

² For the significance of refrains in Byzantine poetry see С.Аверинцев, *Поэтика ранневизантийской литературы*, (Москва, 1997), 230.

TC 9:1 adds a concluding detail to the liturgical interpretation of the event celebrated: the Transfiguration is an anticipation of the Second Coming of Christ in glory (this detail appears in all the aforementioned Patristic sources).¹ In the *parousia* God will be standing in the midst of gods or all people (cf. Psalm 81:1, 6; John 10:34).² For this, however, people should be well prepared. John summons the congregation to ascend “the holy and heavenly Mount” or the mount of virtue (cf. Isaiah 2:3): “Divine Scripture figuratively calls the virtues “mountains”, and the pinnacle and citadel of all virtues is love... whoever arrives at the summit of love, stands out of himself and perceives the invisible One.”³ Virtues lead to “the city of the living God” or the heavenly Church (cf. TC 7:2; Apocalypses 21:1-27).⁴ Having ascended thither, Christians can behold with their minds “the immaterial Godhead, of the Father and the Spirit”, manifest in the Incarnate Son. Thus John maintains in accordance with ascetic tradition that such contemplation is possible not only in the eschatological perspective but always. He might have appealed to people’s or monks’ personal spiritual experience (cf. ecstasy in TC 5:3).

The last *troparion*, which is a very personal prayer to Christ, concentrates on “the pinnacle of all virtues”, love (cf. 1 John 4:18; 1 Corinthians 13:13). John expresses the love of Christ with the terms πόθος (“longing”) and the divine έρως (“yearning”). The lofty Christian meaning of the latter term, is well explained and substantiated by

¹ The word κατάβασις is not a usual word for Christ’s coming, but cf. Chrysostom, *Joan.* PG 59.75A and Eusebios, *Commentaria in Psalmos*, PG 23.800D.

² Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.*40.6; ps.Dionysios, *d.n.*1.4 (Suchla, 114.7-11). See Nikodimos, *Εορτοδρόμιον*, 3.314-15.

³ *Transfig.*10.1-3. In *Transfig.*20.1-29 John counts these virtues. The spiritual ascent is also connected with love, prayer, and ήσυχία – 10.1-43.

⁴ “Mountain” and “the city of God” might also recall Tabor and Jerusalem for the pilgrims to the Holy Land.

ps.Dionysios which sees in it the highest manifestation of love.¹ God Himself is Yearning and Love, and He is the yearned-for and the beloved. "The divine yearning brings ecstasy so that the lover belongs not to self but to the beloved".² Implanted by Christ, this love or yearning changes the human being, to which the author witnesses. In this yearning he prays to Christ to burn up his sins in immaterial fire (cf. "coal" in TC 5:3; Isaias 6:6-7, which might be a reference to the ascetic theme of repentance), and make him worthy of Christ and His two comings, the first in humility, the second in glory. Also, the language of the last *troparion* seems to refer metaphorically to the Eucharist, in which sins are burned and the transfiguring deification of the human person takes places.³ The emotion expressed in the last *troparion* is quite characteristic of John's liturgical writing.

The Transfiguration and the Veneration of Icons

We have seen that the canon conveys the whole spectrum of theological and ascetic themes found in tradition. But in particular I would like to concentrate on some possible reflections of the Iconoclast controversy which was welling up in the period when the canon was composed.

Iconoclasm⁴ was among the threats to the Orthodox tradition opposed by John. The origins of Iconoclasm are much debated. The official history of Iconoclasm begins

¹ D.n. 4.11-18 (Suchla, 156-62).

² Ps.Dionysios, d.n.4.13 (Suchla, 158.19-159.1).

³ Cf. *Transfig.* 1.1-16; 5.1-16. The last *troparion* is actually included in the Orthodox office of the preparation before the Eucharist. Cf. Nikodimos, *Εορτοδρόμιον*, 3.318-20.

⁴ On the veneration of icons and Iconoclasm see E.Martin, *A History of the Iconoclastic Controversy*, (London, 1930); M.Anastos, *Iconoclasm and Imperial Rule 717-842 in Cambridge Medieval History*, 4.1. (Cambridge, 1966), 61-104; S.Brock, *Iconoclasm and the Monophysites*, in *Iconoclasm*, ed. A.Bryer and J.Herrin, (Birmingham, 1975), 53-7; J.Hussey, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 30-68; T.Noble, *John Damascene and the Iconoclast Controversy* in T.Noble and Contreni (eds.), *Religion, Culture and Society in the Early Middle Ages: Studies in honour of Richard*

with a ban on Christian religious imagery and its veneration, issued by the Byzantine Emperor Leo III in 726, but it is not actually known whether Leo III issued an edict or whether this was a fiction invented later. Gradually, Iconoclasm became settled policy, and it was to hold sway in the Byzantine Empire for more than a century, until the death of the last iconoclast Emperor, Theophilos, in 842 (apart from a period when the veneration of icons was restored between 787 and 815).¹ As Fr Andrew Louth writes, there is also

a local Palestinian variety of Iconoclasm that seems to have occurred during John's lifetime, and probably during his time in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem (the earliest evidence dates from the 720s, though there are difficulties about connecting it exclusively, if at all, with the notorious edict of Caliph Yazīd II). Archaeological evidence makes clear that such iconoclasm involved the disfiguring of images of living beings, animal and human, hence probably inspired by Muslim beliefs, though the care with which much of the obliteration of living images was carried out suggests that it was done by Christians to prevent more extensive destruction.²

The heart of the Iconoclast controversy was a matter of tradition. The issue was whether the veneration of icons belonged to Church tradition or was an innovation. It definitely had been part of tradition from the very beginning of Christianity.³ Yet by the seventh century, icons assumed a more prominent role in religious devotion. The number of wonder-working icons and icons that assumed the role of protectors of cities

E.Sullivan, (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Press, 1987), 95-116; M.Auzépy, *La Destruction de l'icône du Christ de la Chalcé par Léon III: propagande ou réalité?*, *Byzantion*, 60 (1990), 445-92; G.Dargon, P.Riché, A.Vauchet, *Histoire du christianisme des origines à nos jours*, iv: *Évêques, moines et empereurs (610-1054)*, (Paris: Desclée, 1993), 93-165; Н.Сахаров, О причинах иконоборческих споров согласно трактату преподобного Иоанна Дамаскина «Первое защитительное слово против отвергающих святыне иконы», *Альфа и омега*, 28.93-116, 29.102-19, 30.67-81, (Москва, 2001), Louth, *John*, 193-222.

¹ See Louth, *John*, 193-4.

² Louth, *John*, 196-7; cf. R.Schich, *The Christian Communities of Palestine from Byzantine to Islamic Rule: A Historical and Archaeological Study*, *Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, 2, (Princeton: Darwin Press Inc., 1995), 180-219.

³ See M.Murray, "Art and the Early Church", *JTS* 28 (1977), 303-45; P.Finney, *The Invisible God: The Earliest Christians on Art*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

had increased.¹ It might well happen that the focus of the devotion of simple people had shifted to the icon itself and not to God whom it depicted, and thus faith in God might be confused with faith in magic.² In this sense Iconoclasm simply banned Christian idolatry. However the theological basis of the controversy was not that simple, but unfortunately it remains unclear despite many competent theories on the origins of Iconoclasm. For example, some scholars think that Iconoclasm might have appeared under the influence of Monophysitism.³ On the contrary, S.Brock demonstrated that Monophysites did use icons.⁴ At the same time the majority of scholars admits to some link between Iconoclasm and Islam or Islamic expansion (but the detail is not clear). Following the Semitic idea of transcendentalism, Islam prohibits imagery of God. Perhaps Byzantine imperial policy was intended to rival expanding Islam by prohibiting Christian images too.⁵ Another clue to the theological background of Iconoclasm can be found in the long surviving influence of Neoplatonism on Christianity, and in particular, in the Neoplatonic “negative” attitude to matter (also reflected in Manichaeism), and to the idea of the deification of matter.⁶ On the other hand some of Neoplatonic ideas are behind the theology of the Iconodules. Unfortunately, the analysis of these theories is beyond the scope of this chapter. Perhaps, it would be sufficient just to mention the obvious issue of Iconoclasm: transcendent God cannot be depicted.

¹ See Louth, *John*, 195-6.

² Cf. Сахаров, *Слово*, 29.106.

³ See G.Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, (Oxford, 1968), 161; L.Barnard, *The Graeco-Roman and Oriental Background of the Iconoclastic Controversy*, (Leiden, 1974), 61, 143.

⁴ Brock, *Iconoclasm*, 57; Сахаров, *Слово*, 28.105-8. Possible sources of Iconoclasm can be found in Aphthartodocetism, Monenergism-Monothelitism, and even in some premises of Cyrilline Chalcedonianism.

⁵ On Islamic roots of Iconoclasm see Сахаров, *Слово*, 28.109-16.

⁶ See Сахаров, *Слово*, 30.68-72.

John Damascene composed three treatises against Iconoclasts,¹ for which he was anathematised by the iconoclast synod of 754 and praised by the Seventh Oecumenical Council in 787. In response to Iconoclasm, John developed the theology of image and the concept of veneration. They are integral to the idea of the Incarnation which seems to be fundamental for his theology of icons. The Incarnation makes God circumscribable. God incarnate can be depicted: "In former times God, who is without form or body could never be depicted; but now when God is seen in the flesh conversing with men, I make an image of the God whom I see".²

It is obvious that when you see the bodiless One becoming man, then you may depict Him clothed in human form. When the invisible One becomes visible in the flesh, then you may draw the likeness of how He was seen. When the One, bodiless and formless, immeasurable, boundless and limitless by His supreme nature, being in the form of God received the form of a servant or appeared in the body which can be measured, bounded and characterised, then you may draw icons of how He was seen and show them to everyone. Draw His unspeakable condescension, His birth from the Virgin, His baptism in the Jordan, His transfiguration on Tabor, His suffering, releasing from passions, His death, His miracles – symbols of His divine nature worked by the divine energy through the activity of the flesh, His saving Cross, tomb, resurrection, and ascension into heavens. Depict everything in word and in painting (*Imag.* 1.8.39-74).

This passage implies that the whole life of Christ can be depicted (and actually was depicted) in icons, including His transfiguration. The Transfiguration was a popular subject for icons. There are two famous examples from the sixth century: the apsidal mosaic in the church of the monastery of St Catherine at the base of Mount Sinai, and the apsidal mosaic in the church of Sant' Apollinare in Classe in Ravenna.³

Possible references to icons and reflections of Iconodules *versus* Iconoclasts polemics can be observed in many canons of John Damascene.⁴ If we interpret the

¹ The critical edition is in B.Kotter, PTS 17; the analysis is in Саваров, Слово; Louth, *John*, 193-222.

² *Imag.* 1.16.1-4.

³ See Louth, *John*, 268; J.Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer. The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 97-124.

⁴ See also *Icons of the Passover* in the next chapter.

canon for the Transfiguration in this light, we can see that it explains why the Transfiguration (and other events) may be depicted, it makes clear the meaning of what is depicted, and, perhaps, contributes to the development of the iconography of the feast. As we have seen, John's contemplation of the Transfiguration dwells on the idea of the hypostatic union of the Incarnation, as does his theology of icons. But primarily it is just a matter of logic. The Apostles, Moses and Elias saw the hypostasis or the particular, which is Christ – the Son of God. It does not matter how many natures coinhere in this hypostasis and how they coinhere, the hypostasis can be depicted anyway because it was seen. Throughout his life Christ was seen as one hypostasis. The depiction does not separate the hypostasis. Moreover they saw not merely the circumscribable aspect of the hypostasis of Christ, or His body, but also the divine energies radiating through His body. These, too, can be depicted. Moses is actually a witness of both the transcendentalism of God and His incarnate immanence. Thus through the figure of Moses John implies the reconciliation of iconophilism with the Old Testament Law, which commands not to depict God. But in general it is only the language of Neo-Chalcedonian Christology that actually makes clear who or what was seen and therefore can be depicted.¹

Conclusion

The entirety of the comprehension of the Transfiguration in Christian tradition is preserved in scriptural commentaries and homilies, John's homily being one of the best examples. His homily corresponds with his canon and fills many of its lacunas. The relation between the homily and the canon strongly supports the authenticity of the latter. However, as an exegetical instrument the homily is rather meditative and

¹ This assumption is equally important if we interpret the canon's picture of Transfiguration in the light of mystical visions of God described in ascetic tradition.

speculative compared to the canon which concentrates precisely on dogmatic statements and the most important details. In the canon John seems to direct the traditional approach to the Transfiguration to the most important theological point: the manifestation of the hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ. This is explored in Chalcedonian terms identically with the canons for the Nativity and Epiphany. In the hypostatic union the transcendent God becomes perceptible; human nature becomes deified. Anticipating the themes of Palamism, John extensively explores the manifestation of the divine energies in this union. Thus he emphasises the openness and accessibility of God in the Church of the New Testament and the harmonisation of Old Testament and New Testament themes and theology.

IV. The Canons for Pascha and Antipascha

Introduction

In the previous chapters we have considered the liturgical reflections of the fundamental Christian belief in the appearance of God on earth for the salvation of humanity. Now we have come to salvation itself, the initial implication of which is the resurrection of man. When speaking of the Resurrection of Christ and of the dead, St Paul asserts that faith in the Resurrection imparts meaning to Christianity (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:13-17). This faith has a practical expression: from the very beginning the Church has commemorated the Resurrection every Sunday. *Pascha* is the climax of this commemoration and the heart of the whole liturgical year,¹ “the feast of feasts and the festival of festivals”, as Gregory Nazianzen calls it.² The liturgical way to it progresses through Lent and the Holy Week.

Melito maintained that the term *Pascha* was derived from the Greek verb πάσχειν (“to suffer”), while Origen was the first Christian writer to define *Pascha* as “passage”, *transitus* into the kingdom, its actual meaning in Hebrew. Gregory Nazianzen mentions both interpretations. Passover is the name of the Jewish festival celebrated every spring in connection with the Exodus. But it can also acquire Christian significance. Easter is another name for the feast of the Resurrection of Christ. Its origins may be connected with an Anglo-Saxon spring goddess “Eostre”. It seems that the Christian feast of Easter has superseded an old pagan festival.

Based on the Old Testament and Gospels, the Christian *Pascha*, commemorated for three days, usually called the *triduum*, recalls for the Christian the culmination of the

¹ For the history of *Pascha* celebration see G.Bertonière, *The Historical Development of the Easter Vigil and Related Services in the Greek Church*, OCA 193, (Roma, 1972); R.Taft, *Liturgy in Byzantium and Beyond*, (Aldershot:Variorum, 1995), V, 71-91, VI, 21-41; Talley, *Origins*, 1-77.

² Or.45.2 (PG 36.624C).

saving ministry of Christ: the voluntary suffering and the sacrifice of the crucifixion on Holy Friday, the victory over hell and death and the deliverance or mystical passage on Holy Saturday, and the Resurrection on Easter Sunday.¹ The celebration continues for eight days called the “octave,” and the *Paschal* festival in general continues for a period of fifty days.²

Some details of the Paschal rite can be found in Melito who reworks the reading from Exodus 12-15 and associates it with the redemptive ministry of Jesus.³ Appearing in the fourth century, fuller accounts of the rite are connected with Jerusalem. Apart from the catechetical lectures of Cyril from which one can get the idea of the scriptural readings during Holy Week, the most valuable is the account of Egeria. In her diary every element of the Paschal liturgy is related to a certain location within Constantine’s complex at Calvary: *Anastasis*, Cross, *Martyrium*, and Sion. The rite includes two Vigils: one on Holy Friday night, dedicated to the Passion of Christ, and another on Holy Saturday night, dedicated to the Resurrection. During the latter service the sacrament of illumination or baptism takes place, conducted by the bishop.⁴ The newly baptised Christians listen to the final catechetical lessons during the octave, on the last day of which the story of Thomas, accompanied by the appropriate Gospel reading, is commemorated in the church of Sion. According to Egeria this is the universal custom.⁵ Her picture is complemented by the Old Armenian Lectionary reflecting the rite of

¹ Christian *Pascha* and the Resurrection have always been associated with Sunday, the first day of the week, which is carefully computed for each year. For some period (II-IVcc.) *Pascha* was locally celebrated on different days which gave rise to some controversies, for instance, Quartodecimanism (see Eusebios, *h.e.* 5.23-25; John Damascene, *Haeres.* 50). The traditions based on Roman pattern were unified at the Council of Nicaea (325) – cf. Tanner, *Decrees*, 19.

² For an outlook see, J. Gunstone, *The Feast of Pentecost: The Great Fifty Days in the Liturgy*, (London: Faith Press, 1967) 11-65.

³ Melito, *Pascha*, 1 (Perler). See also *Didascalia Apostolorum*, 21 (Connolly, 178-92).

⁴ *Diary*, 37-8. Cf. Hippolytos, *Dan.* 1.16.1-3; Tertullian, *Baptism*. 19 (Refoulé).

⁵ *Diary*, 38.

Jerusalem between the years 417 and 439. It gives among others the following readings, preceded by Psalm 118, for the first Vigil: Genesis 1:1-3:24 (creation); 22:1-18 (the binding of Isaac); Exodus 12:1-18 (Passover); 14:24-15:21 (the passage through the sea); Jonas 1:1-4:11; Isaias 60:1-13 (the promise of Jerusalem); Joshua 1:1-9 (the command to possess the land); Daniel 3:1-90 (three children); Corinthians 15:1-11; Matthew 28:1-20 (Resurrection),¹ – which clearly focus on the themes of sacrifice, deliverance, and the Resurrection as the content of *Pascha*. The rite of *Lucernarium* in which the bishop lights the candle from the lamp in the holy tomb is also a substantial element of the first Vigil as appears from the Armenian and Georgian lectionaries.² From the ninth century it was associated with the miraculous descent of the holy fire.³

The Georgian lectionary witnesses to the solemn second Cathedral Vigil on Easter night,⁴ dedicated to the day of Resurrection – the climax of *Pascha*. Describing the rite probably from the ninth century, Jerusalem *typikon* HS 43 indicates the central role of the Easter canon in this Cathedral Vigil at the *Anastasis* and Mar Sabas Laura.⁵

“Everyone in the world touched by Byzantium knows John’s great Easter canon ‘The Day of Resurrection’ sung at midnight as part of Easter Vigil,” which is the “Queen of Canons”.⁶ One can also find several commentaries on the canon.⁷ However,

¹ See Renoux, *PO* 36.281-311.

² See Bertonière, *Easter*, 29-40. Georgian lectionaries highlight the rite from the fifth to the eighth century, cf. Tarchnischvili, *Lectionnaire*, I.2.107-114. From the *Orations* 1 and 45 by Gregory Nazianzen one can see that the tradition of the Passover celebration in Constantinople was very similar and included the same basic elements and readings.

³ See Bertonière, *Easter*, 40-58.

⁴ Bertonière, *Easter*, 76.

⁵ Bertonière, *Easter*, 94.

⁶ Louth, *John*, 252, 258. For the critical edition of the canon see Gahbauer, *Osterkanon*, 133-74. For the English translations see E.Lash, *The Services for the Great Sunday of Pascha*, (Manchester: Saint Andrew’s Monastery, 2000), also available online at <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/PaschaCan.htm> 27.07.2004; and Louth, *John*, 258-68.

⁷ See Nikodimos, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 2.277-336; the commentaries of Fr Andrew Louth and Fr Ephrem Lash are largely based on Nikodimos (Louth, *John*, 258-68; Lash,

the Easter canon is rarely considered together with the canon for Thomas Sunday or New Sunday.¹ Apparently composed by John Damascene, these poems belong to the opening and the closing days of the Easter octave. The first canon is supposed to signify the pinnacle whereas the second draws a line under the Easter octave. Based on earlier commentaries my theological research into the Easter canon will include the canon for Thomas Sunday. Then I shall draw their theological emphases into further discussion placing them into the context of traditional issues of the Easter festival in order to reveal why the Church sees in John's canons the criterion of Easter theology.

The Canon for Pascha

Ode 1

The day of Resurrection, let us be radiant, O peoples! Pascha, the Lord's Pascha; for Christ God has brought us over from death to life, and from earth to heaven, as we sing the triumphal song (1,1, *irmos*).²

The opening line draws together two expressions from two Easter homilies by Gregory Nazianzen: "The day of Resurrection, let us be radiant"³ and "Pascha, the Lord's Pascha".⁴ Explaining the meaning of the word "*pascha*" Gregory sees its origins in the Hebrew word, *pesach* ("passover"). In this connection large parts of his homilies explore the meaning of Christian *Pascha* in the figurative light of the Old Testament Passover – the passing from Egypt into Canaan. For Christians this is the passing over

<http://www.anastasis.org.uk/Paschal%20Canon%20Noted.pdf> 27.07.2004); also cf. Wellesz, *History*, 206-16.

¹ For the origins of the feast of Antipascha see А.Пономарев, *Антипасха*, in *Православная энциклопедия* 2, (Москва, 2001), 544-8; V.Permiakov, *The Historical Origins of the Feast of Antipascha*, *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 47 (2), (2003), 155-82.

² I use the English translations of the canon by Fr Andrew Louth and Fr Ephrem Lash.

³ *Or.*1.1.1-2.

⁴ *Or.*45.2 (PG 36.624D).

“from below to above, the ascent to the land of promise, and the return to the original condition.”¹ The *irmos* fully represents this idea of Gregory. Thus the traditional reference of the *irmos* 1 to the story of the Passover and the first canticle of Moses unfolds here to a great depth. As well as Gregory, John is concerned with the redemptive significance of the type for Christians, and the *irmos* appears to be our triumphant song (cf. Exodus 14:31; 15:1-21).² The *irmos* also indicates the redemptive significance of the Resurrection thus setting the theological thesis of the whole poem: “Christ God has brought us from death to life, and from earth to heaven” (cf. John 5:24; 1 John 3:14; Romans 6:4). John does not limit these changes to the human nature of Christ but emphasises their cosmic dimension. The call to be radiant is the issue of these changes.

Let us purify our senses, and in the unapproachable light of the resurrection we shall see Christ shining forth, and we shall clearly hear Him saying “Rejoice!”, as we sing the triumphal song (1,1:1³; cf. the refrain of 1,1, *irmos*).

Unfolding the theme of light, John stresses its association with the Resurrection: Christ is shining in the unapproachable light of Resurrection (cf. 1 Timothy 6:16). The *troparion* lays down the condition: in order to see Him we need to purify our senses, which echoes Gregory’s assertion that the paschal sacrifice is offered “for the purification of the senses”.⁴ The human being is twofold possessing both spiritual and bodily senses⁵ subject to purification.¹ The purification of spiritual sight refers to

¹ Or.45.10 (PG 36.636CD); Or.45.12 (PG 36.640A). Cf. Nikodimos, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 2.279-82; Louth, *John*, 259-60; Lash, <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/Paschal%20Canon%20Noted.pdf> 27.07.2004, 1; See below “Christ-our Passover”.

² The triumphant song of Moses, echoed throughout the ode, is part of the vesperal liturgy of Holy Saturday and therefore is fresh in the memory of the congregation – Louth, *John*, 261. This is also the case for the feasts analysed in the previous chapters.

³ Hereafter the first figure will indicate either the Easter canon (1) or the Thomas Sunday canon (2), the second figure will indicate the ode, and the third figure – the *troparion*.

⁴ Or.45.14 (PG 36.641C). Cf. “the mountain of virtues” in TC 9:2 in Chapter III, above.

⁵ Cf. *Expos.*32.

Matthew 5:8: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”. When speaking of the purification of spiritual hearing, John compares “us” with the myrrh-bearing women who heard Jesus saying “rejoice” (Matthew 28:9). Appealing to “us” John clarifies that purification has to be our effort connected with prayer. Canon is a prayer.

Let the heavens, as is fitting, rejoice and let the earth be glad. Let the whole world, both seen and unseen, keep the feast: for Christ has risen (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:20), our eternal joy (1,1:2).

The verse of Psalm 95:11, emerging in Gregory’s homily on Theophany as a metaphor of the reconciliation of God with man in the Incarnation², is now placed in the context of the resurrection as the final stage of reconciliation. It should be linked with our ascent from earth to heaven in *irmos* 1. The *troparion* associates the earth with the seen world, initially implying humanity, and the heavens with the unseen world or the realm of spiritual beings. Like Maximos John affirms the cosmic dimension of the Resurrection of Christ.³ Joy – the call of 1,1:1 – is now equally shared by the whole cosmos.⁴ More precisely, the *troparion* implies the rising of Christ as the subject of joy, whereas *irmos* 1 anticipates its cosmic implications: we are brought from death to life.

Ode 3

Come let us drink a new drink, not one marvellously brought forth from a barren rock, but a Source of incorruption, which pours out from the tomb of Christ, in whom we are established (1,3, *irmos*).

The last word links the *irmos* with the canticle of Anna (1 Kings 2:1). However, “more immediately it relates to the water Moses struck from the rock during the desert

¹ Gregory Nazianzen emphasises the necessity of purification for theologising in *Or.*27.3.1-24. Cf. Nikodimos, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 2.283-5; Louth, *John*, 260.

² *Or.*38.1.4.

³ Louth, *John*, 260. Cf. Nikodimos, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 2.285-7.

⁴ Gregory, *Or.*45.2 (PG 36.626B).

wandering” (cf. Exodus 17:1-6; Numbers 20:2-11).¹ *Irmos* 3 refers to the story of the water from the rock because historically it follows the crossing of the Red Sea. Also it relates to the canticle of Anna through the notion of the rock. In the first case the rock pours water, in the second it is the foundation on which everything is established, but “the rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:4; cf. 3:10-11). His tomb is such a rock, too. “A new drink” recalls that mentioned by Christ at the Mystical Supper before His passion, which He drinks with the apostles or Christians in His Father’s kingdom (cf. Matthew 26:29). According to John Chrysostom, this kingdom is associated with the Resurrection of Christ.² In the second line of the *troparion*, the source of incorruption pouring out from the tomb is Christ Himself whom the congregation is summoned to drink. This is a reference to the Eucharist appearing both in the Old Testament type and in the *irmos*. Christ with His risen and deified human nature is shared in the Eucharist.

Now all things have been filled with light, both heaven and earth and the things beneath the earth (cf. Isaias 9:2; Philippians 2:10); so let all creation sing Christ’s rising, in whom (or by which)³ it is established (1,3:1).

The theme of light flows into the *troparion* from ode 1, and so does the idea of the cosmic dimension of the Resurrection (cf. 1,1:2). Comparing to ode 1, the *troparion* does not limit the destinations to heaven and earth but unfolds another, the underworld. Altogether they are filled with light. This is the allusion to the traditional Christian concept of the *Höllenfahrt*.⁴

Yesterday I was buried with you, O Christ, today I rise with you as you arise. Yesterday I was crucified with you; glorify me with you (cf. Romans 8:17), Saviour, in your kingdom (1,3:2).

¹ Louth, *John*, 261.

² *Matt.* 82.2 (PG 58.739-40).

³ On the difference see Lash, <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/Paschal%20Canon%20Noted.pdf> 27.07.2004, 2.

⁴ See Chapter V, below.

In this *troparion* John focuses on the personal plan of redemption. His idea in general refers to Romans 6:4 and 8:17. At the same time the text in particular is derived from Gregory Nazianzen: “Yesterday I was crucified with Christ, today I am glorified with Him; yesterday I died with Him, today I am given life with Him; yesterday I was buried with Him, today I am raised with Him”.¹ According to Nikodimos the sharing with Christ refers to our ascetic burial with Him through Lent, to the identification of Christ with us in the Incarnation, and to those baptised during Easter night.² It can also be a reference to the order of the divine office in which the crucifixion and burial are remembered the day before Easter. Both Nikodimos and Fr Andrew Louth propose the explanation for the burial unhistorically placed by John before the crucifixion, suggesting that in our case the Resurrection precedes glorification.³ Alternatively I can suggest that John has creatively altered the whole of Gregory’s passage. The first line of the *troparion* reproduces the last expression of Gregory. Thus both authors emphasise their relation with Christ, and indeed Gregory places himself on the scene. At the same time the reverse order of the second line can imply that John (unlike Gregory) humbly associates himself with the thief crucified with Christ, and like the thief he asks Christ to remember or glorify him in His kingdom (cf. Luke 23:42). These explanations may well supplement each other.

Ode 4

Let the prophet Avvakum, inspired by God, keep the divine watch with us, and show forth the radiant Angel, who with resounding voice declares, “Today is salvation for the world, for Christ has risen as omnipotent” (1,4, *irmos*).

¹ Or.1.4.1-3.

² Nikodimos, *Εορτοδρόμιον*, 2.290-1; Louth, *John*, 262.

³ Nikodimos, *Εορτοδρόμιον*, 2.290; Louth, *John*, 262.

The verse of Avvakum 2:1 used by Gregory Nazianzen in the context of the Resurrection¹ appears in the opening line. John modifies the idea of Gregory. Whereas Gregory places Avvakum in the centre, John places us, keeping the divine watch, in the focus which may well refer to the Midnight Easter Vigil. Nevertheless both authors are concerned to show that the prophet foresees Pascha.² Derived from the same passage of Gregory the second part of the *troparion* describes the appearance of an Angel at the tomb declaring the resurrection (Matthew 2:7; Mark 16:5-7; Luke 24:4-7). John relates the congregation to the myrrh-bearing women (cf. 1,1:1). As well as 1,1:2 and 1,3:1, the present *troparion* emphasises the cosmic dimension of salvation commencing “today” in the Resurrection accomplished by omnipotent Christ-God (cf. Ephesians 1:19-21). Since the vision of Avvakum is initially concerned with the Incarnation one can also compare the birth of Christ with His Resurrection as the second birth.

Christ appeared as a “male” who opened the virgin womb. As our food³ he is called “lamb”; “unblemished”, as our *Pascha* without stain; and “perfect”, for He is true God (1,4:1).

The idea of birth appears in the opening line derived from Exodus 13:12 and 34:19. The *troparion* in general explores the teaching on the sacrifice of Christ. In doing so it develops the introduction of *irmos* 1 referring to fundamental Christian idea that “Christ our *Pascha* is sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7), unfolding the Old Testament figure of the paschal lamb “without blemish, male, a year old” (Exodus

¹ Or.45.1 (PG 36.624A).

² In NC and EC the same prophetic vision is interpreted with reference to the Incarnation.

³ Nikodimos points out that in some sources the word βρωτός (“food”) is erroneously replaced by βροτός (“mortal”) – *Εορτοδρόμιον*, 2.294. For example, this is the case for the Slavonic translation. Such replacement can dramatically alter the meaning of the idea of sacrifice.

12:5).¹ Asserting with Gregory² that Christ-Lamb is our food John refers to the Eucharist (cf. 1, *irmos* 3).

As a yearling lamb, for us a crown of goodness, the Blessed One, the cleansing *Pascha* has been willingly sacrificed for all; and from the tomb the fair Sun of justice has shone for us again (1,4:2; cf. "light" in ode 1 and 1,3:1).

Fr Andrew Louth points out the voluntary nature of Christ's sacrifice restoring the divine justice.³ Its central role typified in the Law is stressed in this *troparion* derived from the following passage of Gregory:

Of a year old, because He is the sun of righteousness (Malachi 3:20/4:2) setting out from heaven, and circumscribed by His visible nature, and returning unto Himself. And the blessed crown of goodness (Psalm 64:12), being on every side equal to Himself and alike; and not only this, but also as giving life to all the circle of the virtues, gently commingled and intermixed with each other, according to the law of love and order.⁴

God's forebear David, dancing, leaped before the Ark, mere shadow, but seeing the fulfilment of the types, let us, God's holy people, inspired, rejoice, for Christ has risen as omnipotent (1,4:3).

The *troparion* immediately follows the theme of the Resurrection from the previous text while referring to the general typological meaning of the Old Testament and the theme of joy from previous odes. The ark is the figure of Christ. In the context of 1 Kings 5:3 in which it destroys the idols of Dagon it foreshadows the humanity of Christ accomplishing the victory (cf. John 2:19). The return of the ark (2 Kings 6) typifies the bodily Resurrection of Christ. The joyful celebration of David (2 Kings

¹ Louth, *John*, 262.

² *Or.* 45.16 (PG 36.644D).

³ Louth, *John*, 263.

⁴ *Or.* 45.13 (PG 36.641AB). Cf. Louth, *John*, 263; Lash, <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/Paschal%20Canon%20Noted.pdf> 27.07.2004, 3.

6:16-19) is the figure of our joyful celebration.¹ The refrain similar to *irmos* 4 emphasises the accomplishment of the Resurrection by the omnipotent Christ-God.

Ode 5

Let us arise in the early dawn, and instead of myrrh, offer praises to the Master; and we shall see Christ, the Sun of Justice, who causes life to dawn for all (1,5, *irmos*).

John associates the night from the prayer of Isaias 26:9 with the early dawn of the Gospels (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1-2; Luke 24:1) when the women came to the tomb bearing myrrh, which relates to the time of the Paschal Vigil when the canon is sung. This is a familiar analogy of Christians with fervent myrrh-bearing women (cf. 1,1:1; 1,4, *irmos*) who together anticipate the meeting of Christ. One can notice the privileged position of Christians who actually know the Resurrection and therefore sing to Christ, whereas the women went to anoint Him as dead. Like in 1,4:2 Christ is called the Sun of Justice (Malachi 3:20/4:2; cf. Psalm 18:6). However the *irmos* unfolds this idea further, clarifying what the light brings: the Sun of Justice “has shone for us again” (1,4:2) causing “life to dawn for all”. Echoing Gregory² John stresses the universal vitality of the divine light.

Those who were held by Hades’ bonds (cf. Psalm 145:7), seeing your measureless compassion, press forward to the light, O Christ, with joyful steps, praising an eternal Pascha (1,5:1).

As Fr Andrew observes, the prayer of Isaias closes by celebrating the redemption of the dead (Isaias 26:19) which is picked up in the *troparion*³ also echoing the illumination in Isaias 9:2 (echoed in Matthew 4:16), and the deliverance in Isaias 49:8-9. One can notice the development of the three central notions occurring above: 1.

¹ Gregory, *Or.*38.4.13-14. Cf. Nikodimos, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 2.298-300.

² *Or.*45.2 (PG 36.626B).

³ Louth, *John*, 264.

Christ is the *Pascha* (cf. 1,4:2), and His sacrifice is offered also for those in Hades. Moreover it is of eternal value or super-temporal. 2. Christ is the Sun or the source of light (cf. 1,5, *irmos*). Repeating 1,3:1, John emphasises that this light appeared in Hades and snatched the prisoners thereof. 3. The joy of the Resurrection (cf. 1,4:3) is shared by the dead.

With torches in our hands let us go out to meet Christ as He comes from the grave like a bridegroom, and with the festive ranks of Angels,¹ let us together feast God's saving *Pascha* (1,5:2).

According to Fr Andrew, "the theme of rejoicing is tied to that of the wedding banquet, a favourite symbol of the coming of the Kingdom in Gospel parables."² In particular the *troparion* reminds us of the parable of ten virgins meeting the bridegroom with lamps (Matthew 25:1-13) which could echo the story of the myrrh-bearing women (cf. 1,1, *irmos*). Christ's tomb becomes a bridal chamber (Psalm 18:6), the Church is the bride. Applying the image to the Resurrection (and the Second Coming), John borrows its matrix from Gregory who applies it to the newly baptised Christians.³ So the opening line of the *troparion* could likewise relate to the newly baptised. Simultaneously it depicts the rite as practised in Jerusalem until present, when the crowds lighten candles to celebrate the Resurrection at the *Anastasis*.

Ode 6

You went down to the deepest parts of the earth, and you shattered the everlasting bars, which held imprisoned those fettered there, O Christ (cf. Isaias 45:2-3; Psalm 106:16), and on the third day, like Jonas from the whale, you arose from the tomb (1,6, *irmos*, cf. 1,4:2; 1,5:2).

¹ Cf. John Chrysostom, *Pascha*, 3 (PG 52.768). Chrysostom says that Christ too is rejoicing. His usage of the word συνεορτάζοντα is similar to that of the *troparion*.

² Louth, *John*, 264.

³ *Or.*40.46.

Typically for the *irmos* 6, John employs the image from the story of Jonas and its interpretation by Jesus (cf. Jonas 2:7; Matthew 12:39-40) when depicting the *Höllenfahrt* and the Resurrection. Explaining why it became possible for the imprisoned to hasten towards the light, the *irmos* logically unfolds the theme of 1,5:1: Christ-Light descended into the underworld, crushed the bars and released the prisoners of Hades.¹

Unbroken you preserved the seals, O Christ, in your rising from the tomb, nor injured the locks of the virgin womb in your birth, and have opened to us the gates of Paradise (1,6:1).

To illustrate the message of the *troparion*, we can conditionally distinguish three kinds of entrances: 1. entering the world in the Incarnation and preserving virginity, Christ passed through the virgin womb, metaphorically called the “gate” by Ezekiel 44:2 and so understood by the Fathers.² 2. The sealed entrance of the tomb (cf. Matthew 27:66) remained intact because the risen body of Christ became transcendent to earthly limits. Nobody stole it. After the Resurrection the Angel rolled back the stone (cf. Matthew 28:2). John draws a parallel between these two entrances thereby defining the Resurrection as the new birth (similar to 1,4:1). Altogether they lead to the major redemptive achievement: 3. the entrance of Paradise was closed by Adam in the Fall, but was reopened by Christ in the Resurrection. The pivotal detail of this achievement is that Paradise is welcomingly opened for us all.³

O my Saviour, the living Victim, and as God unsuitable for sacrifice, yet to the Father willingly offering yourself, you raised with yourself all Adam’s race, in rising from the tomb (1,6:2).

¹ For example, see *The Gospel of Nikodimos*, 18-25 (Elliott 191-6), and the analysis of the theme in Chapter V, below.

² See the analysis of the image in *The Role of the Mother of God in the Incarnation*, in Chapter I, above.

³ See the analysis of the idea of the universal salvation in Chapter V, below.

Both “we” and the dead are consubstantial with Adam as his race and with Christ accordingly. Therefore John emphasises the universal implication of the rising. Simultaneously he goes on meditating on the sacrifice of Christ, the reason of the universal salvation. In doing so he refers to Gregory’s association of the sacrifices of old with Christ: “the great and in its first nature *unsuitable for sacrifice sacred offering* (ἄθυτον ἱερεῖον) was mingled with the sacrifices of the law, and was a purification not for a small part of the world, nor for a brief period of time, but for the whole cosmos and for ever.”¹ John also refers to Gregory’s reasoning on the question to whom the sacrifice was offered: if to the Father, it can be only the voluntary sacrifice of love for the salvation of people.²

Ode 7

He who of old delivered the young men from the furnace, becoming man suffers as a mortal, and through suffering He clothes the mortal with the glory of incorruption, the only blessed and most glorious God of our fathers (1,7, *irmos*).

The deliverance of old, the theme of the seventh canticle (Daniel 3:25ss), is compared with the salvation of new, – both accomplished by Christ. God Himself became a mortal man and went through the furnace of sufferings in order to give us our former incorruption. Thus stressing the reality of the sufferings and therefore the reality of their achievements, John reminds us that that the glorious Resurrection had in fact an agonising prelude.³ This is the expression of the sacrificial divine love referred to in 1,6:2, above. The *troparion* displays what can conventionally be called the Orthodox Theopaschism, namely, that it was the suffering of the mortal nature and not the

¹ Or.45.13 (PG 36.640D). Fr Andrew Louth points out that the italicised expression of Gregory is exactly the same with the *troparion* – *John*, 265.

² Or.45.22 (PG 36.653).

³ See *Redemptive Changes* in Chapter V, below.

Godhead in one hypostasis of Christ God. This can be an argument against Monophysites and Aphthartodocetists.

The godly minded women hastened after you with fragrant myrrh. The One whom they sought with tears as a mortal, they worshipped with joy (1,5:2) as the Living God, and they proclaimed the mystic Pascha (cf.1,5:1-2), O Christ, to your disciples (1,7:1).

The role of the myrrh-bearing women in the Resurrection cannot be underestimated. Again John refers to their apostolic ministry (cf. 1,5:2; Matthew 28:7-10; Mark 16:7; Luke 24:5-9; John 20:17-18), seeing them in the light of the Song of songs 1:2-4 (cf. Psalm 44:10): “your anointing oils are fragrant, your name is oil poured out; therefore your maidens love you. Draw me after you, let me run after the fragrance of your oils”.¹ For example, Gregory applies the image of the women (implying that they redeemed the disobedience of Eve), for Christians celebrating the Resurrection:

If you be a Mary, or another Mary, or a Salome, or a Joanna, weep in the early morning. Be first to see the stone taken away and perhaps you will see the Angels and Jesus Himself... Keep the feast of the Resurrection; come to the aid of Eve who was first to fall, of her who first embraced the Christ, and made Him known to the disciples.²

In his turn John summons the congregation to meditate on the feelings of the women in order to comprehend the joy of change from death to life.

We feast death's slaughter, the overthrow of hell, the first fruits of a new eternal life: and dancing we hymn the cause, the only blessed and most glorious God of our fathers (1,7:2).

Echoing the disposition of the Song of the youths the *troparion* goes on exploring the theme of joy (cf.1,7:1). Our reason for that is the slaughter of death and

¹ Cf. Louth, *John*, 265-6.

² Gregory, *Or.*45.24 (PG 36.656). Nikodimos points out that similar interpretation can be found in Athanasios and Chrysostom – *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 2.314-5.

the destruction of hell already implied in 1,5:1 and 1,6, *irmos*.¹ Moreover, as human, Christ is the first fruit of our eternal life (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:20,23; Colossians 1:18; John 10:10), the Resurrection thus being the beginning of eternal life. As stressed in the refrain Christ accomplishes everything as God (cf. 1,7, *irmos*).

How truly holy and all-festive is this night of salvation, how full of light, the herald of the bright day of the resurrection, in which the timeless Light shone bodily for all from the tomb (1,7:3).

Unfolding traditional teaching on God as light (cf. John 1:9; 1,5, *irmos*) and echoing the story of the myrrh-bearing women (1,7:1), John describes the radiant and joyful celebration (cf. “joy” in 1,7:2) at the Church of *Anastasis*. He also refers to Gregory who contrasts yesterday, “beautiful with its celebrations with candle and fires” with today, “even more beautiful” since we celebrate the Resurrection itself “no longer as something hoped for, but already happened and drawing the whole world to itself”.² The pivotal theological idea stressed by John is that “the timeless Light shone bodily for all”. The Resurrection is therefore the event and the feast in which this light can be universally shared by humanity.

Ode 8

This chosen and holy day is the first of Sabbaths, the Queen and Lady, the Feast of Feasts and the Festival of Festivals on which we bless Christ to all the ages (1,8, *irmos*).

Referring to the praise of the youths as well as 1,7, *irmos*, *irmos* 8 describes the day of paschal sacrifice in the terms of Leviticus 23:36: “the eighth day is a chosen and holy day for you”. This is also used by Gregory with the reference to *Pascha*: “the feast

¹ Cf. Osee 13:14; 1 Corinthians 15:54. See *The Questions of Bartholomew, The Book of the Resurrection* (Elliott, 655-72); *The Gospel of Nikodimos*, 17-29 (Elliott 185-98). For the analysis of the theme see below Chapter V.

² Or 45.2 (PG 36.624D-625A), quoted from Louth, *John*, 266.

of feasts and the festival of festivals¹; the queen of times pays homage to the queen of days and bestows on her all that is most beautiful and pleasant”,² thereof John borrows.

Come, let us share the new fruit of the vine, in divine joy, and in the kingdom of Christ, on the glorious day of the Resurrection, as we sing His praise as God to all the ages (1,8:1).

This *troparion* is influenced by the eschatological theme of the eighth day from the previous *irmos*. Furthermore, it directly reflects the theme of 1,3, *irmos* and 1,3:2. “A new drink, a source of incorruption” is clearly shown as “the new fruit of the vine”. This Eucharistic imagery originates from Matthew 26:29: “I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” Thus the *troparion* brings together several important ideas: 1. the resurrection is the beginning of the heavenly kingdom; 2. it happened in the past but simultaneously it is universal, super-temporal and eschatological; 3. it is shared in the Eucharist.

Lift your eyes around you, Sion, and see, for behold, like beacons shedding light divine your children (cf. Matthew 13:43; Philippians 2:15) have come to you (cf. Isaias 60:4), from West and North, from the Sea and from the East (cf. Isaias 49:12), blessing Christ in you to all the ages (1,8:2).

Immediately continuing the theme of the new kingdom, the *troparion* is composed from Isaias: 60:4 and 49:12, and demonstrates the fulfilment of the eschatological prophecy of Christ in Matthew 13:43: “Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father”.³ John applies all these figures to the Christians and not necessarily in the eschatological perspective. Sion is the name of Jerusalem and more precisely the upper part of the city. In Christian Jerusalem Sion was the name of

¹ Or.45.2 (PG 36.624C).

² Or.44.10 (PG 36.617C).

³ Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *In sextum Psalmum*, (*Opera*, 5.189-90).

the “upper church” at the spot of the “upper room” where Christ accomplished the first Eucharist, where He appeared to His disciples on the day of His Resurrection, and where the disciples were gathered on Pentecost (cf. Acts 1:13; 2:1). Sion is traditionally interpreted as the Church. In this light one may see the artistic appeal of John to Christian pilgrims in Jerusalem – the children of the Church of Christ from the four corners of the earth. Sion is also frequently used as an epithet for the Mother of God. The central message of the *troparion* is in accord with the teaching of the canon on the divine light which illuminates Christians in the Resurrection.

Almighty Father, Word and Spirit, nature united in three Persons, transcending being, and transcending Godhead, into you we have been baptised, and we bless you to all the ages (1,8:3).

Echoing the baptism at Easter, the *triadikon* affirms the fulfilment of the commandment of Christ: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19), the central New Testament manifestation of the Trinitarian teaching making the *troparion* pivotal to the canon. With dogmatic clarity John sets forth one nature in three persons, yet refers to the apophysis of Trinitarian faith: it is nature beyond the notion of nature and God beyond the notion of God. He borrows the apophatic terms (Τριάς) ὑπερούσιε καὶ ὑπέρθεε from the *Mystical theology* of ps.Dionysios also using them in *Expositio fidei* and in *Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tres*.¹ The refrain “to the ages” underlines the eschatological nature of the resurrection² and also the infinity of God.

¹ Ps.Dionysios, *De mystica theologia*, 1.1 (Ritter, 141.2); John Damascene, *Expos.* 8.14-15; *Imag.* 1.4.34.

² Louth, *John*, 267.

Ode 9

Shine, shine, O new Jerusalem, for the glory of the Lord has risen upon you (cf. Isaias 60:1)! Dance now and be glad, O Sion, and you too rejoice, pure Mother of God, at the arising of Him to whom you gave birth (1,9, *irmos*).

The *troparion* underlines the joy of Sion (cf. 1,8:2; 1,7:2), which is the Church, the New Jerusalem, and the kingdom of God radiant with light (1,7:3; 1,8:2). Also as Fr Andrew Louth suggests, the expression “shine, shine” very likely contains a reference to baptism, the sacrament of enlightenment, which was anciently celebrated as part of the Easter Vigil (cf. 1,8:2; 8:3).¹ The first part of the *troparion* represents Isaias 60:1, “looking beyond the end of the exile to the Resurrection.”² Referring to *Magnificat* (Luke 1:47), John also unveils the feelings of the *Theotokos* who has gone through the suffering of her Son’s death and now is sharing her maternal joy of His resurrection with us.

O divine! O beloved! O sweetest voice! You have truly promised that you will be with us unto the end of time, O Christ. And we the faithful rejoice, having this as an anchor of hope (1,9:1).

John expresses the deep personal love of Christ when recalling His promise from Matthew 28:20 made after the command to baptise (1,8:3). Thus he puts the reality of the presence of Christ in the heart of the Christian faith exceeding the idea of time. This can equally refer to the divine omnipresence, to the Eucharist, and to the presence of God in the faithful heart, the presence which is “an anchor of hope”. Thus John echoes two Pauline ideas: hope (1 Corinthians 13:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:8; Titus 1:2), and anchor (Hebrews 6:19). They both find expression in the early Christian symbol of anchor.

¹ Louth, *John*, 267; cf. John Damascene, *Expos.* 82.57.

² Louth, *John*, 267.

O great and most sacred Pascha, Christ! O Wisdom (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:23) and Word and Power of God! Grant us that we may partake of you yet more clearly in the day which has no evening of your Kingdom (1,9:2).

The Eucharist is the Passover sacrifice (cf. 1,7:1; 1 Corinthians 5:7) in which Christians participate in Christ. Following the eschatological idea of divine omnipresence of the previous *troparion* and unfolding the perception of the divine kingdom (cf. 1,3:2; 1,7:2), John asserts that our participation in God will be fuller in the eschatological reality. This is the traditional meditation on 1 Corinthians 13:12: “Now we see through a glass, dimly, but then we will see [God] face to face”, and 15:28: God will be all in all. John draws the epilogue from Gregory’s last homily: “O Pascha, great and sacred and cleansing the whole cosmos – for I will speak to you as to a living person! O Word of God and Light and Life and Wisdom and Power! I rejoice in all your names.”¹ As Fr Andrew rightly observes, “the canon begins acclaiming the “day of resurrection”, which foreshadows the “day without evening” of the Kingdom” (in the end of the poem).² Likewise the canon gradually unfolds the meaning of *Pascha* and the Eucharist as the participation of God and deification.

The Canon for Antipascha³

Ode 1

Today is the spring of souls, for Christ, shining from the tomb like the sun, has dispelled the foggy winter of our sin. Let us sing to Him, for He has been glorified (2,1:1).⁴

¹ Or.45.30 (PG 36.664A).

² Louth, *John*, 268. Also Fr Ephrem Lash notes that “the word ἀνέσπερος (day “without evening”) is exclusively Christian, and is common in the liturgical texts. It is used by Basil in his treatise on the Holy Spirit in speaking of the “eighth day” (27.66) and also in the second homily of the Hexaemeron in explaining why Genesis 1 speaks of “one day”, rather than “first day”. Both these refer to the titles of Psalms 6 and 11” – Lash, <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/Paschal%20Canon%20Noted.pdf> 27.07.2004, 6.

³ I use the English translation of Fr Ephrem Lash, <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/thomcan.htm> 27.07.2004, but omit the *irmoi* for they follow the traditional pattern which has already been thoroughly discussed. The correspondence of the canon with that for Easter and with *Expositio fidei* which will be indicated below, supports its authenticity.

⁴ The refrain echoes the song of Moses.

John borrows the opening expression “today is the spring of souls” from Gregory Nazianzen.¹ At the same time he recalls the image of Christ, the Sun shining from the tomb, from 1,4:2 and 1,5, *irmos*. As spring opposes winter, so the Resurrection opposes and dispels the fallen sinful state.

The queen of seasons, filled with light, as escort to the brilliant queen of days, delights the chosen people of the Church, as it unceasingly praises the risen Christ (2,1:2).

John goes on to depict spring full of sunshine, the season when Easter takes place. He directly recalls 1,8, *irmos* and borrows the opening line of the present *troparion* from the same homily of Gregory.² He places the feast in its seasonal context entertaining the idea that spring, “the queen of seasons”, blossoming with life, is a natural manifestation of the Resurrection to the world.

Neither death’s gates, O Christ, nor the seals of the tomb (1,6:1), nor the bolts of the doors stood in your way; but having risen you came to your friends, O Master, giving them the peace which passes all understanding (2,1:3).

From the introduction reminding the congregation of the first canon, John gradually moves to the theme of the Easter octave. Having accomplished the storming of hell (cf. 1,6 *irmos*; 1,6:1), the risen Christ came to His friends. Calling the disciples friends, the author refers to John 15:14-15: “I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father”. At the same time the *troparion* dwells on the story of the first appearance of Christ to His disciples from John 20:19-23, and on Philippians 4:7 (“peace which passes

¹ Or.44.12 (PG 36.621A).

² Or.44.10 (PG 36.617C).

all understanding", cf. John 14:24). The *troparion* speaks of the three "doors" which Christ breaks through: Hell, Tomb and Cenacle.

Ode 3

When by your cross, O Christ, you had made us new instead of old, instead of corruptible incorruptible, you commanded us to live worthily in newness of life (2,3:1).

The way to the resurrection lies through the cross. Through His suffering, Christ renews us and grants incorruption (cf. 1,3, *irmos*; 1,7 *irmos*). We begin sharing His way in baptism. John borrows directly from Gregory's description of the implications of baptism which "makes us new instead of old."¹ He also reminds us of the ultimate course: to live in the resurrection, or, as Paul called it, "in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

Though you had been locked in the tomb with your circumscribed flesh, O Christ, as uncircumscribed you arose; and when the doors were shut you came to your disciples, O All-powerful (2,3:2).

Identically with 2,1:3 John draws attention to the appearance of Christ to His disciples (John 20:19). Unfolding the mystery of resurrection, he implies the duality of natures in the words "circumscribed" and "uncircumscribed" echoing Gregory: "Christ is one and the same... circumscribed according to the body and uncircumscribed according to the spirit".² John comments on that in *Expositio fidei*:

We look upon the union as essential, as true and not imaginary. We say that it is essential not in the sense of two natures resulting in one compound nature, but in the sense of a true union of them in one composite hypostasis of the Son of God, and we hold that their essential difference is preserved. For...the mortal remains mortal; the immortal, immortal; the circumscribed, circumscribed; the uncircumscribed, uncircumscribed; the visible, visible; the invisible, invisible. The one part is all glorious with wonders, while the other is the victim of insults (*Expos.* 47.64-74).³

¹ Or.40.8.

² Ep.101.14 (Gallay), Cf. Or.28.36; *De patre (carm.1)*, (PG 37.400A); Gregory of Nyssa, *Adv.Arium et Sabellium*, (*Opera*, 3.1.73.26).

³ Cf. *Expos.* 13.42-46; cf. Gregory Nazianzen, Or.28.36.

Likewise in the *troparion* he emphasises the omnipotence of Christ-God as the main source of every supernatural activity (cf. 1, ode 4). As the story goes on in John 20:19-20, so it unfolds from 2,3:2 into 2,3:3:

By keeping your wounds, O Christ, which you had borne voluntarily for our sakes, you gave your disciples proof of your glorious resurrection (2,3:3).

Now John points out the purpose of Christ: to prove His bodily resurrection by demonstrating His real wounds, which, however, do not affect ultimate life. In the idea of the reality of suffering, emphasised by John, one can observe an Orthodox argument against the docetism of Christ's bodily suffering in Manichaeism and Aphthartodocetism.

Ode 4

He tasted gall, healing the tasting of old; but now with honeycomb Christ gives the forefather a share in illumination and His sweet participation (2,4:1).

John alludes to the Pauline concept of Christ-Adam borrowing the opening expression from Gregory: "He tasted gall for my taste".¹ In addition he repeats two themes of the Easter canon: illumination (cf. 1,1, *irmos*; 1,5:1) and Eucharist (cf. 1,3:1; 1,4:1; 1,8:1; 1,9:2), as the achievements of the resurrection, shared by our forefather-Adam. The word "honeycomb" recalls Luke 24:32, and also some early baptismal rites, which gave milk and honey at Baptism.

You rejoice as you are searched; because for this, O Lover of mankind, you invited Thomas, offering your side to the disbelieving world, confirming, O Christ, your rising on the third day (2,4:2).

Having given the introduction to the story in ode 3, the author turns to the axis of the feast in John 20:26-28. Thomas clearly represents the whole unbelieving world. As far as John is concerned, it is important for Christ to demonstrate for the world the

¹ *Or.* 37.4.9-10 (Moreschini); *Or.* 38.18.16-17; *Carm.moral.* (PG 37.960A); cf. Matthew 27:34; Psalm 68:22.

reality of bodily resurrection, which imparts meaning to the earthly life. The following *troparia* unfold the idea, and the last *troparion* of the ode focuses on the proclamation of Thomas in John 20:28, which is the beginning of the apostolic preaching of the resurrection (however the Gospel does not clearly state whether Thomas handled Christ or not):

The Twin, drawing wealth, O Benefactor, from the *inviolable treasure*¹ of your side pierced by the lance, has filled the whole world with wisdom and knowledge (2,4:3).

Your all-blest tongue is hymned, O Twin, for, being filled with grace from the touch, it was the first to devoutly proclaim Jesus the giver of life to be God and Lord (2,4:4).²

Ode 5

Coming to His disheartened friends the Saviour by His presence drives away all dejection and rouses them to leap for joy at His Resurrection (2,5:1).

Following the same narration, John enters the realm of human feelings, describing how Christ draws away all dejection in His disheartened friends (cf. 2,1:3) by His Resurrection, rousing them to leap for joy. The word σκιπτᾶν makes one recall David dancing and leaping for joy at the return of the ark in 1,4:3, and Christians celebrating the victory of life in 1,7:2.

O truly laudable, dread enterprise of Thomas! For boldly he handled the side which blazed with the divine fire (2,5:2).

Echoing 2,4:3, John focuses on the idea of deification: the risen body of Christ is deified and blazing with the divine light.³ As we have seen, this is extensively explored

¹ This expression occurs in John Chrysostom, *De adoratione pretiosae crucis* 4 (sp., PG 52.840), with reference to the cross, in Ephrem the Syrian, *De iudicio et compunctione*, (Phrantzoles, 2.398.9), with reference to repentance, in the Greek *Apocalypse of Ezdra* (Tischendorf, 25.14), with reference to virginity, and in ps. John Damascene, *Vita Barlaam et Joasaph*, 14, (Woodward, 212.9), with reference to future life.

² The language of this *troparion* recalls Romanos, *Cant.*46.

³ Romanos similarly meditates on this theme in *Cant.*46.1-2.

in his canon for the Transfiguration. Moreover, whereas the chosen apostles only saw Christ in radiance on Tabor, Thomas touches His radiating side, as John implies. At the same time the example of Thomas encourages the faithful to approach Christ with boldness. However, Thomas approached Christ with doubts, and only after touching Him he confessed his faith. John leaves it for the people to prove their personal faith. But in the next *troparion* he implies that unbelief is not disastrous but was in fact “mother of belief”, arranged for good by the Lover of mankind:

You showed us that Thomas’ unbelief was mother of belief, for in your wisdom you arrange all things for good, O Christ, as Lover of mankind (2,5:3).

Ode 6

You did not leave Thomas, Master, baptised in the deep of unbelief when you stretched out your palms for investigation (2,6:1).

Our Saviour said, “Handle me and see that I have bones and flesh. I am not altered” (2,6:2; cf. Malachi 3:6).¹

Thomas, who was not present at your first entrance, handled your side and believing acknowledged you (2,6:3).

The *troparia* of ode 6 present one picture derived from John 20:26-28 and Luke 24:38-43 and focus on the role of Thomas in establishing Christian faith. *Troparion* 2,6:1 echoes the story of Jonas in the expression “baptised in the deep of unbelief” in which John intriguingly associates unbelief with baptism. Unbelief appears to be a kind of purification, the exit out of which is offered by God. *Troparion* 2,6:2 is concerned with the bodily resurrection, and with the reality and fullness of humanity of Christ. It has not been ontologically altered even after the resurrection, which can be an argument against Aphthartodocetism. Moreover, one can also see a strong opposition to the Monophysites in the affirmation that even after the resurrection there was no confusion or change in the human nature of Christ. Although originally the expression “I am not

¹ Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.*36.9.7-8; *Or.*40.38.23-4; Romanos, *Cant.*48.9, 10.

altered”, derived from Malachi 3:6: Διότι ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν, καὶ οὐκ ἡλλοίωμαι, refers to the immutability of God, John Damascene uses it in the context of the story of Thomas in order to attest the resurrection of the real body.¹

According to *troparion* 2,6:3 (referring to the first part of the story in 2,3:2), Thomas was virtually the first to acknowledge the divinity of Christ and His identity with us after the resurrection. John Chrysostom highlights another dimension of the story apart from the manifestation of the bodily rising. He is concerned with the constant presence of Christ with His disciples, either visibly or invisibly. The fact that He invites Thomas to do what Thomas wanted to do eight days ago, persuades the latter to believe in the bodily resurrection and in the omniscience of Christ-God:

Jesus again presents Himself to them, and waits not to be requested by Thomas, nor to hear any such thing, but before he had spoken, Himself prevented him, and fulfilled his desire; showing that even when Thomas spoke those words to the disciples, He was present. For He used the same words, and in a manner conveying a sharp rebuke, and instruction for the future.²

Ode 7

It is first and lady of days, this light-bringing day, on which it is fitting for God’s new people to rejoice, for with trembling it bears the type of the age to come, as it completes the eight. O highly exalted, our God and the God of our fathers (2,7:1).

In this *troparion* John recalls the description of Pascha in 1,8, *irmos*, and of New Sunday in 2,1:2 borrowed from Gregory.³ Now he clearly refers to the Easter octave, the origins of which can be seen in the eight day festival of Leviticus 23 and in Jesus’ appearance on the first and on the eighth day in John 20.⁴ As the beginning of a new

¹ *Expos.* 100.86-90.

² *Joan.* 87.1 (PG 59.473).

³ *Troparia* 2,1:1; 2,1:2; 2,3:1; 2,4:1; and 2,7:1 reflect the original content of the celebration of the New Sunday (in IV-Vcc.) primarily connected with the idea of baptismal renewal and the new age. See Permiakov, *Antipascha*, 160-73, 179-81.

⁴ On the Easter octave see Egeria, *Diary*, 39.

week, number eight bears the type of eternity which is explained by Gregory with reference to New Sunday.¹

Thomas the Twin, who alone was bold, and brought blessing by his faithless faith, banished misty ignorance in all the ends of the earth by his believing unbelief; while for himself he wove a crown as he wisely said, “You are our God, O highly exalted, our God and the God of our fathers; blessed are you” (2,7:2).

Not in vain did Thomas doubt your rising, not in vain declare, but he hastened, O Christ, to show to all the nations that it was undoubted; and so having through unbelief come to belief he taught them all to say, “You are our God, O highly exalted, our God and the God of our fathers; blessed are you” (2,7:3).

Exploring the same story these two *troparia* echo the preceding texts of odes 4 and 5. They affirm that doubting unbelief of Thomas became in fact the foundation of faith in the Resurrection² subsequently spread among the nations. *Troparion* 2,7:2 seems to refer directly to the missionary activities of Thomas.

Fearfully placing his hand, O Christ, in your life-bearing side, trembling he felt the twofold energy, O Saviour, of the two natures united unconfusedly in you, and with faith he cried, “You are our God, O highly exalted, our God and the God of our fathers; blessed are you” (2,7:4).

Referring to the same story and to odes 5 and 6, this text obviously focuses on the duality of nature and energy expressed in Cyrilline Chalcedonian terms against the Monophysites and Monoenergites. Two natures united without confusion³ have two natural energies expressed here by “twofold energy” (ἐνεργείας διπλῆς). This

¹ Or.44.5 (PG 36.612C). On the mystery of number eight also see Barnabas, *Ep.* 15.8-9; Justin, *Dialog.* 24; 41; 138; Cyril of Alexandria, *De adoratione et cultu in spiritu et veritate*, (PG 68.1104-5; 1108-9; 1116-17).

² Cf. John Chrysostom, *In novam dominicam et in apostolum Thomam* (sp., PG 63.930).

³ See the definition of Chalcedon in Tanner, *Decrees*, 86.

expression, originally found in Gregory of Nyssa,¹ is used in the context of Orthodox Christology in the *Doctrina patrum*² where it is ascribed to John Chrysostom.

The refrain of the ode, derived from the canticle of the three youths (cf. Daniel 3:26,52), emphasises the divinity of Christ in the context of the story of Thomas (cf. 1,7, *irmos*; 1,7:2).

Ode 8

Longing for the joy of seeing you, at first Thomas did not believe; but when found worthy he called you, Master, Lord and God, whom we highly exalt to all the ages (2,8:1).

Praise and highly exalt to all the ages the Lord who bore with Thomas' unbelief, showed him His side and was closely examined by his hand (2,8:2).

Your curiosity, O Thomas, opened for us the hidden treasure (cf. 2,4:3), for with a tongue inspired (cf. 2,4:4) you declared Him God and said "Praise Christ and highly exalt Him to all the ages" (2,8:3).

The disposition of the *troparia* of ode 8 is very similar to that of ode 6. Now John highlights how the unbelief and enterprise of Thomas turned into our faith and theology, implying that faith is the knowledge and experience of God. For example, Gregory Nazianzen meditates on how that can be reflected in the life of the Christian thus:

If, like Thomas, you were left out when the disciples were assembled to whom Christ showed Himself, when you do see Him be not faithless; and if you do not believe, then believe those who tell you; and if you cannot believe them either, then have confidence in the print of the nails.³

Ode 9

We magnify your shining and brilliant day, O Christ, the grace, all light, in which, lovely in your beauty, you came to your disciples (2,9:1; cf. the refrain of *Magnificat* in Luke 1:46,48).

¹ *De infantibus praemature abreptis*, (*Opera*, 3.2.95.2).

² *Doctrina patrum* 15 (Diekamp 92.7).

³ *Or.*45.24 (PG 36.657A).

Just as the first ode praises the shining day of the Resurrection, as the last ode concludes by praising the final day of the Easter octave in which Jesus appeared to His disciples, including Thomas. The theme of light is dominant on this day as on the day of Easter. This light is associated with Christ “lovely in His beauty” (cf. Psalm 44:3) and with the fire of His divine essence as appears from the next *troparion* echoing 2,5:2. John demonstrates that human nature is able to approach the fiery Godhead thus encouraging the congregation:

You whose side was handled by a hand of dust and did not burn it with the fire of your divine and immaterial essence, in hymns we magnify (2,9:2; cf. the canon for the Transfiguration).

You, O Christ, who arose from the tomb as God, we who see not with our eyes, but who have believed with the longing of the heart, in hymns we magnify (2,9:3).

In conclusion of the canon and of the Easter octave the last *troparion* associates the congregation with those whom Christ calls blessed, “who have not seen and yet have come to believe” in the resurrection (cf. John 20:29). The faith in Christ is not superficial but is transformed into the longing of the Christian heart (cf. “longing” in TC 9:3, above).

Summary

The canons analysed here belong to the first and to the last day of the octave during which Easter – the chief Christian festival – is solemnly celebrated. The canons refer to the Old and New Testament readings mentioned in the Armenian and Georgian lectionaries which reflect both the universal tradition and the Jerusalem rite.¹ Since the first canon addresses the masses, it is very likely that it was originally sung in the Church of *Anastasis* in Jerusalem. These poems contain the issue of the traditional

¹ See Renoux, *PO*, 36.281-329; Tarnischvili, *Lectionnaire*, I.2.97-123.

theological perception of the feast selected by John Damascene. We have seen that his theological selection apart from the Holy Scripture is largely drawn from the homilies of Gregory Nazianzen. John and his congregation consider them to be the most popular and familiar source, which is typical for Byzantium and for John's environment. The homilies of Gregory had provided the basis for earlier hymnographic pieces such as "Gregory's hymn", paraphrasing the fourth paragraph of *Oration* 1 and known at least as early as the sixth century. Such pieces could definitely influence or be incorporated by John.¹ He sees in them the criterion of Easter theology. John's canons are, perhaps, the most obvious witness to the influence of the works of Gregory Nazianzen on the Orthodox divine office. John strives to keep his poetry as close as possible to the universal liturgical tradition, and the works of Gregory can be considered as the criterion of this tradition.

Canons convey several theological emphases. The first and probably the central of these, is based on the typological comparison of the paschal sacrificial lamb of the Old Testament with Christ: Christ is our saving *Pascha* (1 Corinthians 5:7). Here John explores the nature and meaning of the sacrifice of Christ, the subject of Eucharist. *Pascha* is both the culmination of the mournful days of Holy Week and the beginning of the new reality to which sorrow is totally alien. The Easter canon explicitly expresses the joy of paschal sacrifice revealing the new reality, which is then touched by the canon for Antipascha.

The second emphasis is concerned with the achievements of Christ: in the Resurrection the divine light is revealed. Divine nature is associated with light and fire. John stresses that the light is shared by the human nature of Christ and also is accessible to the faithful. Integral to Christian mystical teaching, the theme of light and the

¹ On the influence of Gregory on Easter hymnography see O.Strunk, *St Gregory Nazianzus and the Proper Hymns for Easter*, in *Late Classical and Medieval Studies in Honour of Albert Mathias Friend*, (Princeton, 1955), 82-7.

contemplation of the divine light dominate in the canons. The language of light echoes the baptismal illumination and unveils the mystery of deification.

In order to comprehend and experience the achievements of the resurrection, one has to believe in it. So the third emphasis can be drawn from the canon for Thomas Sunday meditating on disbelief and faith. The example of Thomas unfolds the negative and positive aspects of disbelief, and the nature of faith. However, everyone has to decide for himself if the canons add more assurance to his/her faith. First we shall turn to the analysis of the opening emphasis.

“Christ – Our Pascha”

The origins of the Christian *Paschal* celebration obviously relate to the Old Testament festival of Passover, the origins of which are described in Exodus 12. As mentioned above, the term *Pascha* is the transliteration of the Aramaic form of the Hebrew *pesach*. Its biblical meaning refers to the passage of the angel of death over Hebrew houses in Egypt marked with the blood of the lamb, sacrificed to God according to His command. In Exodus 12:1-20 this command also includes celebrating the Feast of the Unleavened Bread – one of the three agricultural festivals adopted by Israel in Canaan. Thus *Pascha* or Passover can refer to the whole complex of the spring festival, to the sacrifice of the lamb itself, and to the redemption of Israel out of slavery in Egypt, celebrated in Judaism till the present. In some way it leads to the remembrance of the desert wandering, the giving of the Law, and the inheritance of Canaan. As T. Talley also remarks, since the dawn of the first century A.D. Passover has focused on messianic expectation on par with the aforementioned themes.¹ The central figure of the festival is God saving His people.

¹ Talley, *Origins*, 1-3.

The Old Testament Passover relates to the Christian *Pascha* in many ways. For example, some background can be observed in John 1:45: “Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him about whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus.” It is confirmed by Jesus: “If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me” (John 5:46). Jesus applied an image from Exodus for Himself: “Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life” (John 3:14-15; Numbers 21:9). Before His death Jesus celebrates the Old Testament Passover together with His disciples at the Mystical Supper (Matthew 26:18; Mark 14:14; Luke 22:8-15), when He also establishes the Eucharist. In this, even without allusion to any exegesis one can clearly see symbolic relation between the Passover and the Eucharist as the manifestation of the sacrifice of Christ, His death and resurrection (Matthew 26:18-29; Mark 14:12-25; Luke 22:7-20; 1 Corinthians 11:25-26). The sacrificial death of Christ takes place during the festival of Passover on Nisan 15 according to the synoptics. According to the chronology of John (sometimes questioned by scholars) the crucifixion happens on Nisan 14 at the time of the slaying of the lambs (cf. John 18:28). Moreover, the command that no bone of the paschal lamb shall be broken (Exodus 12:46) is associated with the failure of the soldiers to break Jesus’ legs in John 19:32-36.¹ Thus the identification of the paschal lamb with Jesus is generally clear in the Gospels.

St Paul declares this identification to be a corner stone of Christianity integral to the Christian *Pascha*: “Our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed [for us]” (1 Corinthians 5:7). Paul extends the typology further, describing how the passage through the sea and desert wandering prefigure baptism and acquaintance with Christ (1 Corinthians 10:1-4,6). The Old Testament history acquires its importance for Christians

¹ See Talley, *Origins*, 3-4. More recent exegetical opinion has been less inclined to reject the historicity of the Johannine chronology.

thanks to its figurative and preparatory meaning. Hence the whole context of Exodus in Christian tradition has always been considered as the image of the redemptive ministry of Christ for the people. Christ was the same God who gave the Old and founded the New Covenant, the Old in every respect being the image and preparation for the New.¹ So this identification indicates the accomplishment, the embodiment of the image, which has been at the heart of Christian faith. The whole Christian faith and tradition largely dwells upon this identification. Passover is probably one of the few Old Testament fundamental types that was openly understood from the first century onwards and retained its place in the divine office. So a large part of the poem of Melito on Easter (1-34; 44-45; 60-71) is dedicated to the comparison of the sacrifice of the paschal lamb with Christ:

The Scripture about the flight of the Hebrews has been read,
And the words of the mystery have been explained,
How the sheep is slaughtered,
And how the people are saved...
Corruptible sheep – incorruptible Lord,
Slaughtered as lamb – risen as God...
For God was instead of the lamb,
And man was instead of the sheep,
In the man – Christ who contained everything in Himself.² (*De Pascha*, 1-5).

Justin also demonstrates to the Hebrew how the paschal lamb prefigures Jesus.³ Almost all Christian authors writing about the redemption employed it⁴ (let alone the first biblical canticle used in the canons). In his *Paschal Orations* Gregory Nazianzen elaborately illustrates the meaning of the image for Christians:

Yesterday the lamb was slain and the door-posts were anointed, and Egypt bewailed its firstborn, and the destroyer passed us over, and the seal was dreadful

¹ This theme has already been approached in the analysis of the canon for the Transfiguration in Chapter III, above.

² Melito, *Pascha*, 1-5.

³ *Dialog.* 86; 90; 91; 94; 97.

⁴ For the general example see Athanasios of Alexandria, *Ep.fest.* 10.10; Gregory of Nyssa, *Moses*, 2.89-130, 149, 269; John Damascene, *Expos.* 84.74-85.

and reverend, and we were walled in with the precious blood. Today we have clean escaped from Egypt and from Pharaoh; and there is none to hinder us from keeping a feast to the Lord our God – the feast of our departure; or from celebrating that feast, not in the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but in the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, carrying with us nothing of ungodly and Egyptian leaven. Yesterday I was crucified with Christ, today I am glorified with Him; yesterday I died with Him, today I am given life with Him; yesterday I was buried with Him, today I am raised with Him (*Or.* 1.3-4).

Then comes the sacred night, the anniversary of the confused darkness of the present life, into which the primeval darkness is dissolved, and all things come into life and rank and form, and that which was chaos is reduced to order. Then we flee from Egypt, that is from sullen persecuting sin; and from Pharaoh the unseen tyrant, and the bitter taskmasters, changing our quarters to the world above; and are delivered from the clay and the brick making, and from the husks and dangers of this fleshly condition, which for most men is only not overpowered by mere husk like calculations. Then the lamb is slain, and act and word are sealed with the precious blood; that is, habit and action, the side posts of our doors; I mean, of course, of the movements of mind and opinion, which are rightly opened and closed by contemplation, since there is a limit even to thoughts (*Or.* 45.15).

If you do this, and come out of Egypt thus, I know well that you will be guided by the pillar of fire and cloud by night and day. The wilderness will be tamed for you, and the sea divided; Pharaoh will be drowned; bread will be rained down: the rock will become a fountain; Amalek will be conquered, not with arms alone, but with the hostile hand of the righteous forming both prayers and the invincible trophy of the Cross... and all the other events which are told in the history after these and with these (not to make a long story) will be given you of God. *Such is the feast you are keeping today*; and in this manner I would have you celebrate both the birthday and the burial of Him who was born for you and suffered for you. *Such is the mystery of the Passover*; such are the mysteries sketched by the Law and fulfilled by Christ, the Abolisher of the letter, the Perfecter of the Spirit, who by His passion taught us how to suffer, and by His glorification grants us to be glorified with Him (*Or.* 45.21).

From this extensive allusion and from the poem of Melito we can see that certain elements of the type were associated with certain liturgical occasions: the sacrifice of the lamb was remembered on Friday, the flight from Egypt on Saturday and the Resurrection on Sunday. We have seen that John Damascene in his contemplation of *Pascha* largely relies upon the matrix of the clear theological language of Gregory. Similarly to any other Christian writer, John considers the Old Testament story as the image. Hence we need to make clear John's approach to the notion of image.

A Plato-based definition of the image appears in the context of John's polemics with Iconoclasts: Εἰκὼν μὲν οὖν ἐστὶν ὁμοίωμα χαρακτηρίζον τὸ πρωτότυπον μετὰ τοῦ καὶ τινὰ διαφορὰν ἔχειν πρὸς αὐτό· οὐ γὰρ κατὰ πάντα ἡ εἰκὼν ὁμοιοῦται πρὸς τὸ ἀρχέτυπον" ("an image (or icon) is likeness with characteristics of the prototype, but with a certain difference from it; the image is not like its archetype in every way" – *Imag.*1.9.3-4; cf. 3.16). Originated by God, image is an integral element of the universe. The universe is full of images. The Son is the image of the Father, and the Spirit is the image of the Son. The world is created according to the divine image. The human being is the image of God.¹ So the image as such does have its integral place in the Christianity.² When listing the examples of the images, John says that the Old Testament images mystically prefigure the things that will come to pass.³ The Old Testament Passover is obviously among such images. Therefore it took place because of the Christian *Pascha* which is its prototype and not the *vice versa*. Thus the universal principle that through the image we are led to the prototype works in the case of the *Pascha*. This principle is employed throughout the first canon. This is John's illustration of the role of image in Christianity. Christian *Pascha* for John and other Fathers is the culmination of world history. This is the event when a super-temporal eternal prototype actually appears in the temporal world. The Christian can also see the Old Testament Passover as an image of his spiritual life.

Following Gregory, John applies different names to Pascha. Pascha is the event, the Eucharist and the Person of Christ. Throughout the canon in these names he unfolds the systematic theological concept of Pascha. Its significance is introduced in the first

¹ Excepting the Father, the Son, and Spirit, images are not of the same essence with their prototypes – D.Anderson (tr.), *St John of Damascus, On the Divine Images*, (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980), 8-9.

² This is one of John's arguments against Iconoclasts.

³ *Imag.*1.12; 3.22.

irmos of the canon: “Pascha, the Lord’s Pascha; for Christ God has brought us from death to life, and from earth to heaven”. *Troparion* 1,4:1 leads into the Christological realm: “Christ appeared as a “male” who opened the virgin womb; as our food He is called “lamb”; “unblemished”, as our *Pascha* without stain; and “perfect”, for He is true God” (1,4:1). The names “male”, “unblemished”, “perfect”, “our” refer to the humanity of Christ, whereas “He is true God” according to His Godhead.

John frequently contemplates the sacrifice of Christ and seems to answer the question of Gregory as to whom the sacrifice was offered. Gregory hesitates to point to the Father¹ while for John this is an inevitable outcome of the *kenosis* of Christ: “O my Saviour, the living victim, and as God unsuitable for sacrifice, yet to the Father willingly (ἐκουσίως) offering yourself, you raised with yourself all Adam’s race” (1,6:2). Yet he implies that it is the human nature of Christ which is primarily sacrificed to the Father.

In the Orthodox context the word ἐκουσίως (“willingly”, “voluntarily”) can mean the single outcome of two wills in Christ: the divine will naturally wishes to sacrifice because of the divine love, and the human will (perhaps, having struggled) naturally does not contradict with divine will but also results in the act of the sacrifice of love. At the same time the word indicates the presence and activity of full human will in Christ which is not consumed by divine will. So in 1,4:2 the word ἐκουσίως can be associated with human will, with divine will which in this case acts as gnomic will, and with the Dionysios-like theandric result of two natural wills: “As a yearling lamb, for us the blessed crown, Christ was *willingly* sacrificed for all, a cleansing *Pascha*”. In the case of 1,6:2 this is supported by the personal address σεαυτόν pointing to the theandric act. Thus John emphasises that the sacrifice is actually a theandric act, manifesting the hypostatic union (of course, in the Orthodox sense in which the humanity remains

¹ Or.45.22 (PG 36.653).

active, and not in the Monophysite-Monenergist sense). Distinguishing “God, unsuitable for sacrifice” and “the living victim,” John uses the phrase “ἐκουσίως offering” to demonstrate the fullness and freedom of human will, expressing in the sacrifice. In *troparion* 2,3:3: “By keeping your wounds, O Christ, which you had borne *willingly* for our sakes, you gave your disciples proof of your glorious Resurrection”, - ἐκουσίως demonstrates precisely the activity of human will resulting in voluntary suffering, which follows John’s traditional exposition of two wills:

When He prayed that He might escape the death, it was with His divine will naturally willing and permitting it that He did so pray and agonize and fear, and again when His divine will willed that His human will should choose tire death, the passion became voluntarily (ἐκουσίως) Him. For it was not as God only, but also as man, that He voluntarily surrendered Himself to the death (*Expos.* 62.36-41).¹

Other names highlight soteriological dimension of Pascha: “eternal *Pascha*” is employed when John depicts the salvation of those in Hades (1,5:1), yet certainly it has a wider universal application, and so does “God’s saving *Pascha*” in 1,5:2.

The sacrifice of the lamb, “most sacred Pascha”, is the image of the Eucharist – the mystery of the participation in God. Yet since it belongs to the material realm it also prefigures (according to the theology of image) the ultimate participation in God. The last *troparion* unfolds this notion stressing the pivotal thesis that Pascha is Christ: “O great and most sacred Pascha, Christ! O Wisdom and Word and Power of God! Grant us that we may partake of you yet more clearly in the day which has no evening of your Kingdom”² The canons reveal the mystery of the participation in God further when contemplating the participation of light.

¹ Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.* 30.12 (Gallay). For two wills in Christ see also *Christology of John Damascene*, in Chapter I, above.

² Cf. Gregory, *Or.* 45.30 (PG 36.664A).

“God is Light”

The second emphasis – the theme of light – appears in 24 *troparia* of both canons, which is more often than in the canons for the Epiphany (in 9 *troparia*)¹ and Transfiguration (in 14 *troparia*) let alone other liturgical texts. Obviously, the theme of light dominates during the *Paschal* celebration wherein its role seems to be more important than in any other liturgical festival. In recent years there has been a growing interest in Eastern Christian theology in the divine light. It is sometimes considered as an alternative to the theology of the divine darkness. The “darkness” language is used by Gregory of Nyssa and Dionysios the Areopagite as a metaphorical expression of divine incomprehensibility. But for them the concept of God as light is still indispensable, and divine darkness is actually an overwhelming light which “exceedingly illuminates”.² We need to look at the place of the theology of light in Christian tradition in order to demonstrate what the canons make of it. First, the traditional concept of the divine light from theoretical and practical perspectives will be outlined.³

John the Theologian was the first Christian writer to explicitly articulate the theology of light, which he claimed to receive from Jesus Himself: “This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). Jesus is the true light which shines in the darkness and lightens every man (cf. John 1:4-9); He is the light of the world, the light of life (cf.

¹ See, for example, É.Mélia, *Le thème de la lumière dans l'hymnographie byzantine de Noël*, in *Noël-Épiphanie, retour du Christ*, *Lex Orandi* 40, (Paris, 1967), 237-56.

² Dionysios the Areopagite, *Ep.5; De mystica theologia*, 1. 1.

³ For the latest discussion of the theology of light, see Alfeyev, *Symeon*, 169-74, 226-41; Алфеев, *Грузопуѣ*, 355-70; N.Sakharov, *I Love, therefore I am. The Theological Legacy of Archimandrite Sophrony*, (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 181-6; A.Kordochkin, *John Climacus and the Spiritual Tradition of the IV-VII Centuries*, University of Durham, Ph.D. thesis, 2003, 141-8. See also the background discussion of the theme in EC 9:1 in Chapter II, and throughout the canon for the Transfiguration in Chapter III, above.

John 8:12; 9:5; 12:35-46).¹ After John the Theologian the idea of light has always been present in Christianity: the early Christian hymn to Christ as light sung at Vespers descends to his language; according to the Nicæan Creed, Christ is begotten of the Father as light from light.²

The theme of the divine light is the leitmotif present in all the works of Gregory the Theologian. As Bishop Hilarion Alfeyev points out, Gregory has worked out an elaborate terminology of light and associates the divine nature primarily with light.³ The exposition of Gregory's teaching on light most elaborately appears in his *Oration* 40 on Illumination:

God is Light: the highest, the unapproachable, the ineffable, that can neither be conceived in the mind nor uttered with the lips, that gives life to every reasoning creature. He is in the noetic world, what the sun is in the sensible world; presenting Himself to our minds in proportion as we are cleansed; and loved in proportion as He is presented to our mind; and again, conceived in proportion as we love Him; Himself contemplating and comprehending Himself, and pouring Himself out upon what is external to Him. That light which is contemplated in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, whose riches is their unity of nature, and the one outleaping of their brightness. A second light is the Angel...A third light is human being; a light which is visible to external. For they call human being light because of the faculty of speech in us. And the name is applied again to those of us who are more like God, and who approach God closer than others. I also acknowledge another light, by which the primeval darkness was driven away or pierced. It was the first of all the visible creation to be called into existence; and it irradiates the whole universe, the circling orbit of the stars, and all the heavenly beacon fires. Light was also the firstborn commandment given to the firstborn man...A light typical and proportionate to those who were its subjects was the written law... It was light that appeared out of fire to Moses, when it burned the bush but did not consume it to show its nature and to declare the power that was in it. It was light that was in the pillar of fire that led Israel and tamed the wilderness...It was light that shone round the shepherds when the eternal light was mingled with the temporal...Light was that Godhead which was shown upon the mount to the disciples and too strong for their eyes...Light is also the brilliancy of heaven to those who have been purified here, when the righteous will shine forth as the sun, and God will stand in among them, gods and kings...Light beside these in a special sense is the illumination of

¹ For the analysis of the theology of light in John see C.Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, (Cambridge, 1953), 201-6, 345-61.

² Tanner, *Decrees*, 5.

³ Алфеев, Григорий, 355.

baptism...for it contains a great and marvellous sacrament of our salvation (*Or.*40.5-6).

Gregory illustrates a hierarchy of lights and different kinds of light, demonstrating that the light is not merely a symbol but certain reality either transcendent and spiritual, or immanent and corporeal. Light is probably the most powerful expression worked out in cataphatic theology which can be easily comprehended by human mind.¹ Recalling Platonic and Neoplatonic image of God as the sun,² Gregory associates the Godhead with primary supreme light. Speaking in the language of “image-prototype” of the previous part, this light is the prototype of all other kinds of light. The light of the Godhead is equally shared by all three persons of the Trinity, so it belongs to the divine nature.³ It is the common divine energy (this idea was popular in hesychasts). This light is identical with fire just as in the example of the burning bush. Yet Gregory sometimes clarifies that God is light for the just but fire for the sinner.⁴ He points out that after baptism the human being, which is also light, can clearly contemplate the divine light. As the theologian of light Gregory became the most popular author in Eastern Christianity. “After him the theme of light became pivotal in Eastern mystical tradition”.⁵

Hence the theoretical theology of light has practical application (if I am allowed to make a distinction between theory and practice in this matter). The human being is called to be a light: to see the divine light and to reflect it (cf. Matthew 5:14).⁶ This

¹ However, ps.Dionysios, exploring the apophatic principle, reminds us that the divine light is equal with the divine darkness because God is beyond any human idea of light – *Ep.*5 (Ritter, 162-3); cf. *De mystica theologia*, 1.3 (Ritter, 143-4).

² Cf. Plato, *Respublica* 6, 508c; Plotinus, *Enn.*6.7.16. Cf. C.Moreschini, *Il platonismo cristiano di Gregorio Nazianzeno*, *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa* III, 4, (1974), 1347-92, 1369ff.

³ Cf. *Or.*31.3.11-22.

⁴ *Or.*40.36.15-24. See EC 9:1 in Chapter II, above.

⁵ Алфеев, Григорий, 360-1.

⁶ *Or.*40.38.1-40.

happens inasmuch as man gets closer to God. This is only possible through the purification of mind, soul and body.¹ So the appearance and the vision of the divine light for Gregory is a practical experience achieved through ascetic efforts. This is the meeting of man with God, light with Light. This experience is only partial in the present life, and it will be fuller in eternity.²

From the fourth century onwards monastic sources provide ample information about the visions of the divine light, which is a genuine traditional experience of many generations of ascetics. The theme of light in this context frequently appears in Evagrios who distinguishes the divine light of the Trinity³ and the own light of the mind created as the image of the former.⁴ A person through purification and prayer with the help of God can see its own light and, moreover, the light of the Trinity.⁵ This vision is the achievement of ascetic exercises.

We find a detailed account of such experience in Makarios. In one place he describes the state of the soul which participates in the divine light of Christ and becomes light itself.⁶ In other places he counts different appearances of this light.⁷ Like Evagrios, he mentions some mystical organs with which person sees the light: the inner eyes of the mind,⁸ the eyes of the heart,⁹ the eyes of the soul.¹

¹ *Or.*32.15.1-13; *Or.*39.8.13-18.

² *Or.*7.17.13-21. Bishop Hilarion points out certain parallels between Neoplatonism and Gregory in the idea of purification. But unlike Plotinus, Gregory is concerned with the purification of the body, which also shares the divine light – Алфеев, *Григорий*, 366-9.

³ *Thoughts* 42 (Muyldermans, 55).

⁴ *Gnost.*45, (Guillaumont, 178).

⁵ *Antirr.*6.16, (Frankenberg).

⁶ *Hom.*1.2 (Dörries).

⁷ *Hom.*8.3; 4.11 (Dörries).

⁸ *Hom.*26.6.36 (Desprez).

⁹ *Hom.*16.8.14 (Desprez).

Diadochos also distinguishes the divine light and the light of the mind² and asserts that without the light of the Holy Spirit none can acquire spiritual love and the divine likeness.³ On the contrast, there is another false demonic light of which one should be aware.⁴

John Klimakos uses the language of fire and light quite often and in a way systematises the foregoing ascetic experience. His practical ascetic ascent includes bodily and spiritual chastity,⁵ humility and obedience,⁶ spiritual struggle,⁷ mourning,⁸ prayer,⁹ - which altogether lead to the experience of the divine light or fire, which is “an ineffable activity unknowingly perceived and invisibly seen”.¹⁰

The participation of light according to Maximos the Confessor is acquired through the yearning of love (τῷ ἔρωτι τῆς ἀγάπης).¹¹ It places the mind above all desires, passions, senses and feelings into the light of the Trinity.¹² Thereby the mind is transfigured and radiant.¹³ Such illumination is the purpose of prayer.¹

¹ *Hom.*15.1.14-15 (Desprez).

² *Cap.gnost.* 8.9; 40.59 (Places).

³ *Cap.gnost.* 89.

⁴ *Cap.gnost.* 36; 40.

⁵ *Scala*, 1 (PG 88.633); 20 (PG 88.941D).

⁶ *Scala*, 4 (PG 88.696D); 25 (PG 88.989A).

⁷ *Scala*, 26 (PG 88.1013CD); 26 (PG 88.1025D).

⁸ *Scala*, 7 (PG 88.808D); 7 (PG 88.804C).

⁹ *Scala*, 19 (PG 88.937C).

¹⁰ *Scala*, 7 (PG 88.813B). As Fr Andrew Kordochkin notes, Klimakos often leaves it for the reader to unveil the precise meaning of his words; for him the light seems to be the experience of the few which is not vital for salvation - *Climacus*, 148.

¹¹ *Cap.carit.*i.10, (Ceresa-Gastaldo). For the “yearning” see also TC 9:3 in Chapter III, above.

¹² *Cap.carit.*i.97.

¹³ *Cap.carit.*ii.48.

This tradition, analysed above, was also unfolded by Isaac the Syrian, Symeon the New Theologian, Gregory Palamas, and inherited by hesychasts.

Although in *Expositio fidei* John displays insight into the mystical and spiritual realm, he mainly deals with the theme of light from the theoretical angle which nonetheless makes Gregory's concept more concrete. Cataphatically God the Trinity is called light, intellectual light, fire, sun: these are His names.² Yet from the apophatic point God exceeds all essences and notions defined with names.³ Nevertheless unlike ps.Dionysios, John explains more clearly that apophatic darkness, if applied to God, just means not the light in our sense but the ineffable light.⁴ In the realm of Trinitarian theology John compares the Father with the source of light and the Son with the beam of light such as fire and its light.⁵ This illustrates consubstantiality and indivisibility, but unlike fire and light, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are hypostases. The association of God and his energies with light is expressed in the traditional Christian liturgical worship towards the East (where the sun rises).⁶ John's theoretical exploration provides explanation for those who practically experience the light.

More complicated than just apophatic and cataphatic, the theology of light in the canons (deriving from Gregory) combines theory and practice. Encompassing most of the relevant mystical themes, it integrates Trinitarian teaching and Christology into the mystical tradition, "since God is life and light, those who are in God's hand are in life

¹ *Cap.carit.ii.6.*

² *Expos.8.6; 12b.12, 26. Light and fire are identical in John – Expos.21.3-7.*

³ *Expos.12b.12-14.*

⁴ *Expos.4.36-8.*

⁵ *Expos.8.96-107, 147-71. Cf. Cyril of Alexandria, Thesaur.trinit. 5 (PG 75.61BC).*

⁶ *Expos.85.8-11.*

and light”.¹ Besides, the language of light echoes baptism – the sacrament of enlightenment celebrated as part of the Easter Vigil, and certain liturgical customs of Jerusalem Church and other Churches, as described by Egeria, when people “with torches in their hands go out to meet Christ” (1,5:2).

Following Gregory and the aforementioned ascetic writers, John calls Christ-God light and sun, associating His divine nature with light and fire (1,4:2; 1,5, *irmos*; 1,7:3; 2,1:1; 2,5:2; 2,9:2). Therefore such expressions as “bright day”, “the day of Resurrection”, frequently used in the canons, do not merely point to the day of the feast but through the images of daylight and rising sun refer to God as light (1,1, *irmos*; 1,7:3; 1,8, *irmos*; 1,8:1; 2,1:1; 2,1:2; 2,7:1; 2,9:1). John creatively approaches the theme of light from the Christological perspective. Humankind became especially acquainted with the divine light after the Resurrection because the risen humanity of Christ became unbound by earthly reality and became openly radiant with the light of the divine nature “the timeless light shone bodily for all from the tomb” (1,7:3). As said above, this was partly unveiled in the Transfiguration. From this point of view a new dimension can be revealed in the ascetic experience of light. The divine nature emitting light cannot be considered apart from the three undivided divine hypostases wherein it exists. Can therefore the visions of light be personified? If they can, then when the ascetic sees the light of Christ, he sees the theandric light of His hypostasis. This theandric light does not merely imply the activity of the Godhead through the human nature, or the *περιχώρησις* of two natures. Such twofold light – the energy of the Godhead and the energy of humanity (which is also light, as Gregory and other ascetic writers maintain) – can be illustrated by the example of Thomas who “handled the side which blazed with the divine fire” (2,5:2); placing his hand in the life-bearing side, he felt the twofold energy of the two natures united unconfusedly in Christ (2,7:4). Thus with the help of

¹ *Expos.* 88.28-9.

the canons we come to conclusion that the theology of divine light and the possibility of its vision are conditioned by the Incarnation in which human nature became capable of such experience, and in the Resurrection this participation is fully revealed.

Following Gregory, John emphasises that the divine light fills everything and is shared universally by “heaven and earth and those beneath the earth” (1,3:1). Those who were in hell pressed forward to the light (1,5:1); “Christ gives the forefather a share in illumination and His sweet participation” (2,4:1); Mother of God is called the shining lamp (2,9, *irmos*). From the mystical point John describes the feelings of the apostles at the appearance of the Christ-Light: He has brought them the peace which passes all understanding (2,1:3), which echoes ἡσυχία.

This language is not allegorical. It demonstrates author’s acquaintance with the ascetic tradition of light. First of all, Lent which precedes the *Pascha* is the period of purification, repentance and other ascetic exercises mentioned, for example, by Gregory and John Klimakos. That is why John Damascene encouragingly demonstrates that the divine light is accessible to all of the faithful, appealing to the congregation in the beginning of the canon: “The day of Resurrection, let *us* be radiant” (1,1, *irmos*); “Let us purify our senses, and in the unapproachable light of the Resurrection we shall see Christ shining forth”(1,1:1), “the Sun of Justice, who causes life to dawn *for all*” (1,5, *irmos*); “from the tomb the fair Sun of Justice has shone for *us* again” (1,4:2). This light destroys sins (cf. 2,1:1), which echoes Maximos, but does not consume the human being as is demonstrated by Thomas whose “hand of dust” was not burned with the fire of divine and immaterial essence (2,9:2; cf. 2,5:2). This implies bodily participation (and not merely intellectual) in the divine light, as was underlined by Gregory in contrast to Plotinus.¹ John maintains that this light is present in all the faithful: “Lift your eyes around you, O Sion, and see, for behold, like beacons shedding light divine your

¹ See Алфеев, Григорий, 366-9.

children have come to you" (1,8:2). So the *Paschal* service unfolds the universal extent of the mystery of light. It unveils the personal mystical experience of the few for the others and demonstrates that after the Resurrection it is given to all as a sign of deification. The *Pascha* and the Eastertide is the period of the annual liturgical life when the divine light can be openly experienced by everyone. People just have to recognise this light inside themselves. Echoing Gregory, John nonetheless reminds us that the fullness of the participation in God-Light will come in the eschatological kingdom (1,9:2) symbolised by the eighth radiant day of the *Paschal* feast (2,7:1).

One may wonder how far the theme of light may correspond with the rite of *Lucernarium* which in Jerusalem is now associated with the miraculous descent of the holy fire into the tomb of Christ on Holy Friday or Saturday.¹ This fire is received by the Patriarch and distributed to people holding candles. The earliest clear written evidence of the alleged miracle can be found from the ninth century onwards.² By this time of origin (VIII-IXcc.) it is possible to link the transformation of the rite of *Lucernarium* to the miracle (or the appearance, or invention of the miracle), with the Triumph of Orthodoxy after the Seventh Oecumenical Council and in particular, with the Triumph of Iconophiles, after which the role of image in faith, tradition and worship was properly recognised. Also it could have been supportive of Christian faith in a world of rapidly expanding Islam. If such a miracle appeared earlier, could it be neglected by earlier witnesses such as John Damascene? Do his canons shed light on its origins? Unfortunately, they do not openly answer either of these questions, but

¹ For the scientific "exposure" by an atheist see <http://www.krtdiv.narod.ru/book1/kr/index.htm>, 27.07.2004.

² Bertonière, *Easter*, 40-41. See, for example, Bernardus monachus, *Itinerarium* (870 A.D.), *Itineraria Hierosolymitana*, ed. T. Tobler and A. Molinier, (Geneva, 1879), 307-20, 315; and the analysis of another important account of Russian abbot Daniel in А.Пентковский, *Историко-литургический анализ повествования игумена Даниила «О свете небеснемъ како сходитъ ко Гробу Господню»*, *Богословские труды*, 35, (Москва, 1999), 150-60. There is a popular tradition among Orthodox to interpret the miracle of turning water into candle oil by Narkissos, patriarch of Jerusalem, described by Eusebios, *h.e.* 6.9.1-3, (Bardy), as an indirect evidence of the miracle of fire.

theologically they focus on Christ as light and sun, meditate on the divine light, and depict radiant people with candles, which are likely to reflect the traditional rite of *Lucernarium*.

Faith

However, in order to contemplate and, perhaps, experience the achievements of Christ, such as light, one has to believe in Him. Any religion can have elaborate Scripture, tradition, theology, rites, but they mean nothing without people's faith. The origins, meaning and nature of this phenomenon have been extensively discussed.¹ The whole Bible is about faith. The New Testament, in particular, is rich with illustrations of this. It teaches the faith in the Holy Trinity (Matthew 28:19), in the Incarnation of the Son of God, in the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:14-17). The apostolic message of the Gospels has resulted in Christianity becoming the largest religion in the world. Declaring the Creed, people confess their faith every liturgy. Yet faith is a dynamic process,² "the path on which an encounter takes place between us and God".³

Our interest can obviously be drawn by the second canon because the theme of faith (which I have defined as the third theological emphasis) is central to the story of Thomas and, therefore, to the liturgical texts of Antipascha. Before examining the canon, we have to approach John Damascene's definition of faith. He says that faith is twofold. One side is concerned with the apostolic message and the teaching of the Church, the acceptance and confession of which and therefore our faith can be witnessed by our deeds. It is under our control, and it commences with the baptism:

¹ See, for example, *TDNT*, 6.174-228.

² Cf. the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:18-23; Mark 4:14-20; Luke 8:5-15.

³ H.Alfeyev, *What is Faith* in An Online Orthodox Catechism (an abbreviated version of the English translation of the book the *Mystery of Faith*), <http://www.orthodoxeurope.org/page/10/1.aspx#2> 27.07.2004.

Faith comes by hearing (Romans 10:17). For by hearing the divine Scriptures we believe in the teaching of the Holy Spirit. The same is perfected by all the things enjoined by Christ, believing in work, cultivating piety, and doing the commands of Him who restored us (*Expos.*83.2-5).

For faith apart from works is dead, and so likewise are works apart from faith. For the true faith is attested by works (*Expos.*82.60-2; cf. James 2:26).

Another side is concerned either with spiritual progress or with regression in faith. The former makes it an ontological basis of life leading to the complete hope and love of God. The latter converts it into routine and even atheism. Thus, faith is the divine gift and subject to dynamism:

Also faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1) or undoubting and unambiguous hope alike of what God has promised to us and of the good issue of our prayers. The first [side of faith] therefore, belongs to our will, while the second is of the gifts of the Spirit (*Expos.*83.8-12).

John does not artificially divide faith into two parts but reminds us that apart from our own assurance and deeds, faith as a divine gift is nurtured by God. On the contrary, John defines the unbeliever simply: “He who does not believe according to the tradition of the Catholic Church, or who has intercourse with the devil through evil deeds, is an unbeliever” (*Expos.*83.6-7).

As human beings apostles also had such a “twofold” faith, and the story of Thomas illustrated its progress. So generally the canon gives a historical reminder and a pattern for the faithful and those who doubt. But what if we speculatively approach the canon from the point of view of different groups of people, who might they have been? I shall conditionally divide them into the following categories indicated with figures:

1. Representatives of other religions – Jews, Muslims, Manicheans –could theoretically be present in Jerusalem and addressed by John, but it seems to be unlikely that they constituted part of his audience. John Whereas for Jews and Muslims the Orthodox vision of the story is meant to emphasise that Christ is God and Saviour, for Manicheans it declares the reality of His Incarnation, passion and bodily resurrection.

At first doubting the witness of the apostles and boldly examining the Lord in search for proof, Thomas can well represent their “disbelieving” world. John implies that even their “unbelief” if it is not hardened but inquisitive can be pleasing to God and lead to the true faith:

You rejoice as you are searched; because for this you invited Thomas, offering your side to the disbelieving world, confirming, O Christ, your rising on the third day (2,4:2; cf. 2,3:3; 2,8:2).

Thomas, who alone was bold, and brought blessing by his faithless faith, banished misty ignorance in all the ends of the earth by his believing unbelief (2,7:2).

Not in vain did Thomas doubt your rising, not in vain declare, but he hastened, to show to all the nations that it was undoubted; and so having through unbelief come to belief he taught them all to say, “You are our God... and the God of our fathers” (2,7:3).

2. John draws from the story certain Orthodox apologetic details appealing to the Christians other than Cyrilline Chalcedonians: Monophysite, Monothelite, Aphthartodocetists and Origenists – the latter two doubting the reality of the bodily resurrection:

Placing his hand... in your side, [Thomas] felt the *double energy, of the two natures united without confusion in you*, and with faith he cried, “You are our God” (2,7:4).

By keeping your wounds, O Christ, which you had borne voluntarily for our sakes, you gave your disciples proof of your glorious Resurrection (2,3:3).

3. The Paschal Vigil was the time of baptism, and the Easter octave was the period of the induction of the newly baptised into the depths of faith.¹ New Sunday was the end of the period of induction. Lectures for this period are usually called the mystical catechesis or mystagogy. However, “as a result of the Church’s status as the “majority religion,” and the spread of infant baptism, catechetical instruction gradually

¹ See Permiakov, *Antipascha*, 160-73.

lost its place in the life of the Church.”¹ Yet in some form it could be extant locally, for example, in Palestine at the time of John. At least his canon echoes a catechetical lecture. It reminds the baptised of the essentials of Christian faith such as the belief in the bodily resurrection of Christ and in the eschatological resurrection and refers to the story of Thomas as to its proof and people’s encouragement.

4. Everyone in the congregation is called to identify himself with the apostles and with Thomas in order to revive the progress of his/her own faith, to renew the faith into which all were baptised. Everyone is called to trust Christ and the apostles. Everyone can touch Christ in the Eucharist, like Thomas. John Damascene recalls John 20:29: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe” (cf. Hebrews 11:1): “We who see not with our eyes, but who have believed with the longing of the heart, in hymns magnify Christ, who arose from the tomb as God” (2,9:3). The *troparion* implies that this hymn (as well as other hymns), is the actual expression of faith. It is addressed to everyone, reminding us that on the one hand faith is transcendent and cannot be fully approved by immanent proofs and on the other, referring to the Thomas story, the canon explains that faith is not merely “the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”, but the knowledge of God, or true theology: “The Twin, has filled the whole world with wisdom and knowledge” (2,4:3).

5. In order to understand the canon from the point of view of an “advanced” believer or monk we ought to approach it through the prism of Godforsakenness as occurring in the ascetic life. In particular it relates to the second part of John’s definition

¹ Permiakov, *Antipascha*, 173. See also M.Dujarier, *A History of the Catechumenate: The First Six Centuries*, (New York, 1979); R.Taft, “Catechumenate” in A.Kazhdan *et.al.*, *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol.1, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 390-1; П.Гаврилик, *История катехизации в древней Церкви*, (Москва, 2001), 258-76.

where faith is the gift of the Spirit. The various aspects of Godforsakenness have been covered by Fr Nicholas Sakharov,¹ and here I shall give their outline.

The development of the idea of Godforsakenness or abandonment (present in Scripture, for example in the stories of Job, Jonas, and in certain Psalms), begins with Origen who describes God's temporary withdrawals from man.² A classical example is found in the *vita* of Anthony.³ Unfolding its comprehension further, Evagrios believes that Godforsakenness humbles the ascetic, helps him to realise his lack of virtues and reveals hidden virtues.⁴ In Makarios abandonment by God comes about because of one's sins. But he avoids speaking of God's complete rejection of man because grace always works in various ways for the benefit of man.⁵

An elaborate view of Godforsakenness is found in Diadochos. He defines the actual withdrawal of God, when He "turns away" from man, as ἡ κατὰ ἀποστροφὴν παραχώρησις,⁶ which takes place if the soul is not willing to receive God in itself. Such a soul "is delivered to the demons". Yet God's apparent withdrawal may be only a concealment of grace: divine grace remains present⁷ and effective, "supporting the soul in an ineffable way".⁸ He calls it ἡ παιδευτικὴ ("pedagogical") παραχώρησις.⁹

¹ Sakharov, *Sophrony*, 171-97.

² *Hom. Cant.* 1. 7, (Rousseau); *Princ.* 3. 1. 12 (Crouzel).

³ Athanasios, *Vita Antonii*, 10. 1-3 (Bartelink).

⁴ Evagrios, *Gnost.* 28, (Guillaumont, 134). The abandonment is associated with ἀκηδία - "the feeling of futility, despair, Godforsakenness" - H. Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, trans. A. Nichols, (Edinburgh, 1990), 77. 'Ακηδία is also an active negative force, the demon - *Pract.* 12, (Guillaumont, 520-26); *Antirr.* 6, (Frankenberg, 520-31); *Spirit.* 13-4 (PG 79.1157C-1160C). According to A. Guillaumont, Evagrios was the first to identify ἀκηδία as a demon - SC 170, 86.

⁵ *Brief.* 4. 9. 1 (Berthold).

⁶ *Cap.gnost.* 86; 87.

⁷ *Cap.gnost.* 85.

⁸ *Cap.gnost.* 87.

⁹ *Cap.gnost.* 86-7.

Diadochos offers criteria for discerning whether παραχώρησις is only παιδευτική (concealing of grace) or κατὰ ἀποστροφὴν (withdrawal of grace). In the former case the sufferings inflicted upon the ascetic result in humility, tears, and fear and longing of God. In the latter case the soul is “left to itself and filled with despair, *unbelief*, pride and anger”.¹ The idea of Godforsakenness rests on the concept of man’s freedom, and it is inevitable for ascetic progress. As Fr Nicholas points out, Diadochos draws a threefold scheme of ascetic life. In the first stage the Holy Spirit gives the soul a full and conscious taste of God’s sweetness.² Later, grace works its mysteries for the most part without its knowledge, sometimes turning into Godforsakenness.³ Finally when the ascetic has acquired virtues, grace illumines his whole being with a deeper awareness, warming him with great love of God, so that he becomes a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.⁴

In Maximos who recapitulates the preceding patristic ideas we encounter a classification of the various categories of abandonment: a test, a purification, edificatory punishment, and Christ-like abandonment.⁵

Similar to the Fathers mentioned above, the idea of providential abandonment is also found in Isaac of Nineveh who gives advice on how to overcome it.⁶ Isaac persistently contrasts abandonment with faith: Godforsakenness can lead to the wrecking of faith. In its extremities it is characterised by *unbelief*, despair, and

¹ *Cap.gnost.* 87.

² *Cap.gnost.* 90.

³ *Cap.gnost.* 69.

⁴ *Cap.gnost.* 82; 85. See Sakharov, *Sophrony*, 349-50.

⁵ *Cap.carit.* ii. 67.

⁶ For Godforsakenness in Isaac the Syrian see Alfeyev, *Isaac*, 101-9.

blasphemy,¹ whereas in the opposite state the divine grace endows the soul with faith, hope, and love. Yet as we have seen from tradition, even in such negative extremities divine grace is implicitly present, and therefore salvation is accomplished in some peculiar way.

As the opposite to the experience of the divine light, the phenomenon of Godforsakenness came to be well integrated into the Byzantine ascetic tradition, and either theoretically or practically was familiar to John Damascene as a monk.² So our expectations of the presence of this theme in the canon can be justified. Indeed, the story of Thomas and the apostles is virtually about Godforsakenness and faith. Christ corporeally abandoned them. However, as the omnipresent God, He remained with them, but hidden. They did not have enough faith to restrain from lamentation and despondency. They all and especially Thomas doubted His resurrection. Nonetheless after this providential test of abandonment they received the grace of the Spirit and the gift of ultimate faith. This story perfectly corresponds with the three staged scheme of spiritual life of Diadochos, but more likely itself provides the matrix for the scheme. In John's exposition of the story the overtones of ascetic Godforsakenness are clear: "Coming to his *disheartened* friends the Saviour by His presence drives away *all dejection* and rouses them to leap for joy at his Resurrection" (2,5:1). Primarily, John focuses on Thomas. Although Thomas longs for Christ, he does not at first believe the apostles. Yet having passed through the *pedagogical* abandonment, so called by Diadochos, Maximos and John Damascene, he is "found worthy to call Christ, Master, Lord and God" (2,8:1). John stresses that in the story Christ shows us that even extreme abandonment and unbelief (mentioned, for instance, by Isaac), is providential and leads

¹ Cf. I.1. (Miller, 3-4); I.50 (Miller, 241); II.26.6 (Brock).

² John Damascene, *Fragm.Matt.*27.8 (PG 96.1412AB). The fragment echoes Diadochos.

to salvation: “You showed us that Thomas’ unbelief was mother of belief, for in your wisdom you arrange all things for good, O Christ, as Lover of mankind” (2,5:3).

The idea of such an extreme *pedagogical* abandonment, recalling the story of Jonas, unfolds further. Comparing it to baptism, John implies its saving importance. At the same time he repeats the crucial idea found in all the aforementioned ascetic writers that God does not completely abandon but gives His hand to the tempted man: “You did not leave Thomas, Master, baptised in the deep of unbelief when you stretched out your palms for investigation” (2,6:1).

John also mentions the divine grace of faith given to Thomas after he “arrived” at the third stage of Diadochean scheme: “*being filled with grace from the touch*, [Thomas] was the first to devoutly proclaim Jesus the giver of life to be God and Lord” (2,4:4). His example edifies the congregation, in particular monks, in the things which lie on their spiritual way and suggests how to cope with unbelief and despair: by keeping in mind that the risen God is always at hand. Any such temptations are not in vain and will be rewarded with the gifts of faith: “Not in vain did Thomas doubt your rising... so having through unbelief come to belief he taught all to say, “You are our God” (2,7:3).

Icons of Pascha

As Fr Andrew Louth observes, some expressions in the Easter canon recall the icon of the *Anastasis*.¹ Icons visualise faith, and it is not surprising that a certain relation can indeed be seen between icons and hymns which verbalise the same faith. In the previous chapter we have discussed just such a relationship between the canon and icon

¹ Louth, *John*, 261, 264.

of the Transfiguration. Before approaching similar evidence in the canons for Pascha and Antipascha, we need to outline the role of the icon of *Anastasis* in tradition.

Since the culmination of *Pascha* falls on the *triduum*: Holy Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday, we can provisionally expect the use of three related icons: Crucifixion, Entombment and Resurrection. Different types of these images were equally popular from the earliest times, but by the seventh century they acquired elaborate Christological meaning.

In chapter twelve of his *Hodegos*, Anastasios of Sinai proposes the use of material figures and examples (πραγματικῶν σχημάτων καὶ ὑποδειγμάτων), as being as convincing as words, in the defence of Orthodoxy against Monophysite Theopaschism, which was “trying to prove God the Logos passible and mortal along with His own flesh”.¹ Demonstrating the unity of hypostasis, the passion and death and therefore the fullness of the humanity of Christ, Anastasios first refers to the icon of the Crucifixion, actually depicted in the *Hodegos*,² with the inscription “The Word of God and the body and the reasonable soul”:³

Look at Christ, the Son of the living God, complete and indivisible on the cross; that is God the Logos and the reasonable soul which is hypostatically united to Him and the body. Which one of these three was mortified and died and became inert and immobile?... The heretics answered in unison utterly dishonoured: “The body of Christ died”... Maybe His soul was killed or died or suffered? They answered: “Impossible” (*Hod.* 12.3.16-28).

Anastasios expands his anti-Monophysite argument further by pointing to the icon of Entombment (which is not depicted in the *Hodegos*):

In the likeness of dead men God became truly a corpse in the flesh. In the likeness of man He was laid in the grave. And we saw Him lying dead full of divinity, divorced from the soul... the body of God truly dead like all corpses.

¹ *Hod.* 12.1.1-30 (Uthemann, CC Series Graeca 8). For the analysis of Anastasios’ Christology, see Hovorun, *Controversy*, 267-354.

² *Hod.* 12 (Uthemann, 204-5).

³ *Hod.* 12.3.1-12.

...We questioned heretics again perplexed while observing intently the all holy body of Christ: "If the Logos became flesh, so that His body may become Logos, how does not the body of Christ, which spoke from the cross a short while ago, utter one word now in the grave even though it has in itself the unsilenceable God Logos... And if the body has become such as the God Logos who deified it, it is self-evident that it did not die but remained immortal in the tomb... And if the flesh were blended into the ocean of divinity as a drop of vinegar... Nikodimos and Joseph rolled up in linens and deposited in the tomb either a ghost and a shadow, or again they rolled up in the winding sheet the ocean of the lone divinity and shut it up after tying it together... [If so] how does [the body] not watch and see as the divinity which watches everything, but... has the eye closed? How it does not live... [or] breathe?... His body did not become uncircumscribable, invisible, uncreated, and without beginning as the Logos who deified it. Neither was it blended as a drop of vinegar, and altered and changed into an uncircumscribable, consubstantial ocean of divinity. But, after the union, in accordance with their natural properties, the divinity remains invisible, and the body remains visible, circumscribable and created... (*Hod.*13.9.29-100).

Anastasios similarly opposes the Monoenergism of the Jacobites, referring them to the icons one of which is the *Anastasis*, illustrating the energies of the two undivided natures and in particular, the activity of Christ's humanity:

If Christ's nature and energy were one, and that were divine, Christ ought to be present as God altogether everywhere... But heretic, come here with me... to some four locations in Christ's Passion: Joseph's tomb, Hades, Paradise, the garden outside the tomb where Mary Magdalene beheld Him in the likeness of a gardener. If Christ were only divinity, as you claim, He would be everywhere present as God... So how is it possible that Christ is incomplete in the tomb, since His intellectual soul was separated from Him when He said: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit"? Let us also descend to Hades and see there how Christ despoils the prison. Let us ask Adam, let us ask the bodies and mouths of the resurrected saints to tell us how they saw Christ in Hades... Could they have seen the divine nature bare? Begone! "No man has seen God at any time". Could it have been the flesh of Christ that they beheld? Not at all. For that was lying full of God, dead and motionless in the tomb... We saw Him in the tomb, and He had no soul, nor the spirit of man. And we saw Him in Hades...[not in] a material form, but the intellectual soul alone, full of God, separated from the body (*Hod.*13.6.17-102).¹

¹ For the analysis of the iconography of the *Hodegos*, see A.Kartsonis, *Anastasis – the Making of an Image*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 40-67.

Canon 82 of the Council of Trullo (691-2) prescribes precisely the same kind of images in which Christ is depicted as human.¹ Thus, by the time of John Damascene we have an established iconographic cycle of the *Pascha* intertwined with contemporary Orthodox Christology. John knows this cycle and recognises its Christological significance commanding to “depict [it] in word and in painting”.² Pursuing the goal of refuting Iconoclasm, John demonstrates that such icons – the books for the illiterate – are a vital part of liturgical worship, which fortifies “our faith from hearing”:

God in His bowels of pity became truly man for our salvation... suffered, was crucified, rose again... since all these things actually took place and were seen by men, they were written for the remembrance and instruction of us... in order that though we did not see, we may still, hearing and believing, obtain the blessing of the Lord. But since not everyone is literate or has time for reading, the Fathers gave their sanction to depicting these events on icons... in order that they should form a concise memorial of [these acts]. Often when we do not have the Lord’s passion in mind but see the icon of Christ’s crucifixion, and His saving passion is brought back to remembrance, we fall down and worship not the material but that which is depicted (*Expos.* 89.27-40).

Imparted with Christological meaning, the iconographic cycle of the *Pascha* played certain role in the festal liturgy in Jerusalem and elsewhere at the time of John. Since the Crucifixion and the Entombment precede the theme of Easter Sunday, any reference to the appropriate icons is basically found in the texts of Holy Friday and Holy Saturday (once on Thomas Sunday John recalls the cross – 2,3:1). Also the clear reflection of these icons can be found in the Resurrection canons of the *Oktoechos*. We shall approach them in the next chapter, whereas now we need to concentrate on the hymnographic reflections of the icon of the *Anastasis*.

In her book dedicated to the formation of this icon, Anna Kartsonis mentions several popular images representing the event, which have been in use from the mid-third century (apart from various symbolic images of the Resurrection such as phoenix

¹ Quinisext Synod, canon 82, P.Joannou, *Discipline Générale Antique* (II-IXs), i/1:Les Canons des conciles œcuméniques, Fonti, fasc.IX, (Grottaferrata: Tipografia Italo-Orientale “S.Nilo”, 1962), 219-20.

² *Imag.* 1.8.38-74.

or cross with a crown). Dominant among them is the Myrophores, particularly widespread in Palestine.¹ The other one unfolding the same theme is known as the Chairete – Christ appearing to the Marys after greeting them.² The fact that such icons were very popular and familiar to people partly explains John's frequent references to the story of the myrrh-bearing women in the first canon (1,1:1; 1,4, *irmos*; 1,5, *irmos*; 1,5:2; 1,7:1; 1,7:3). This story is obviously among the first thoughts which appear in the mind of a Christian in front of the holy tomb in Jerusalem on Easter night. "The Incredulity of Thomas offered a third alternative for such a historical reference. However this scene never rivalled the popularity of the Myrophores, but rather reinforced its message by appearing next to it".³ We have seen that the description of the story and the scene of the Incredulity dominates in the second canon (2,4:1-3; 2,5:2-3; 2,6:1-3; 2,7:2-4; 2,8:1-3). John does not merely describe these popular icons – in words he expresses more elaborate theological ideas than those which can be depicted. Yet in the light of his theological contemplation, for example, of the story of Thomas, the corresponding icon, too, acquires a more elaborate Christological meaning, highlighting the duality of nature and activity in Christ, and the deification of human nature.

The tomb exploding with light is another popular iconographic theme.⁴ Proper images of Christ rising from the illuminate tomb appeared as early as the mid-seventh century simultaneously with the development of Christological arguments concerned with the fullness of humanity and the reality of the bodily Resurrection.⁵ Referring to

¹ Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, 19-20.

² Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, 21.

³ Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, 21.

⁴ Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, 21-2.

⁵ Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, 69-70.

them, John depicts in words the Resurrection from the tomb, echoing the argument of Anastasios of Sinai: “though you had been locked in the tomb with your *circumscribed* flesh, O Christ, as *uncircumscribed* you arose” (2,3:2; cf. 1,3, *irmos*; 1,6, *irmos*; 1,6:1; 1,6:2; 2,1:3; 2,9:3); “from the tomb the fair Sun of Justice has shone for us again” (1,4:2; cf. 2,1:1). Apart from or along with the tomb shining with light, the Resurrection images of that period also included locks and doors of hell trampled by Christ, who at the same time drew out Adam and Eve.¹ From the canons we can conclude that such an icon, referred to above by Anastasios, was in use in John’s environment. At least some expressions indicate that: “You went down to the deepest parts of the earth, and you shattered the everlasting bars which held imprisoned those fettered there, O Christ, and on the third day... you arose from the tomb” (1,6 *irmos*); “those who were held by Hades’ bonds... press forward to the light” (1,5:1; cf. 1,3:1); “you raised with yourself all Adam’s race, in rising from the tomb” (1,6:2); “neither death’s gates, O Christ, nor the seals of the tomb, nor the bolts of the doors stood in your way; but having risen you came to your friends” (2,1:3).

Elaborate verbal descriptions of the Christian *Pascha* appeared earlier than the corresponding images. Iconography certainly borrowed from written sources, for example, from the same orations of Gregory which John quoted in his canons. The expressions of the canons that clearly recall the images could imply that such images already have their proper place in the liturgy. John treats the icon and the word as means serving one purpose, the word reflecting the icon and *vice versa*. The risen Christ is the central figure of both the images and the canons. Perhaps, one of John’s purposes was to embody the concept of the integrity of word and icon in the Orthodox liturgy which Iconoclasm threatened to destroy. At the same time his polemic purpose is apparently

¹ The earliest surviving example is Fieschi Morgan Reliquary dated about 700A.D. See Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, 94-125, illustration 24a-i.

similar to that of Anastasios of Sinai. The edifying results of these purposes can be both simple and complex. As Anna Kartsonis concludes, for the untutored Christian, the icon is a potent illustration of Christ's sacrifice and Resurrection, the act which promised redemption for everyone, the spectator included. For the learned theologian or advanced believer, the representation of the *Anastasis* is also a microcosmic and macrocosmic review of the Christological and soteriological doctrines as well as the services of the Church which encapsulate them.¹

Conclusion

The hymnographic evolution of the Easter Sunday Vigil reached its completion in the Easter canon of John Damascene to which other texts of the office are related. The Easter canon virtually forms one context with John's canon for Thomas Sunday. The Easter canon expresses the joy of paschal sacrifice – the central theological theme of the feast since the beginning of Christianity, built up on the Pauline thesis that Jesus is our saving *Pascha* – and its achievements revealing new reality, which is then touched by the Thomas Sunday canon. When John unfolds the achievements of the Resurrection, he popularises the traditional mystical teaching on the divine light. Besides, the language of light may recall the Easter baptism and *Lucernarium*. When John meditates on faith and unbelief in the second canon, he touches the traditional phenomenon of Godforsakenness found on the way to the light. Eastern Christianity still relies upon the exposition of Easter theology given in these canons, thus witnessing to its perfection. We have seen that this attitude is largely conditioned by the popular works of Gregory Nazianzen influencing John's poems. John sees in Gregory's works

¹ Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, 236.

the criterion of Easter theology, and so does the Church in the canons of John. This shows the living continuity of tradition.

Icons also have their proper place in the liturgy which is illustrated by reference to them in the canons. Thus the integrity of word and icon is embodied in the liturgy which serves the purpose of the Triumph of Orthodoxy. The *Paschal* themes unfold further in the *Oktoechos*.

V. The Canons for the Resurrection in the Oktoechos

Introduction

From the very beginning the Church has commemorated the Resurrection of Christ every Sunday. Every Sunday is a “little” Easter. At some stage the *Oktoechos* with its Sunday canons became pivotal for this commemoration. Unfortunately one can barely find any serious scholarly work dedicated to a historical or theological analysis of such a significant repository as the *Oktoechos* and specifically its canons for the Resurrection (which are likely composed by John Damascene). Therefore many questions remain unanswered. What is the role of the *Oktoechos* in Orthodox Christology? What is the contribution of John Damascene, and what is John’s personal experience of the Resurrection? The present chapter will be aimed at these questions and lacunae. The history of the *Oktoechos* will be approached first. Then the scriptural and theological imagery of the canons for the Resurrection, including the idea of *apokatastasis*, will be discussed. Finally I shall focus on redemptive changes to which the poems draw particular attention: from passions to dispassion, from corruption to incorruption and from death to life.

History of the Oktoechos

It is important to clarify terms before proceeding. A musical system of eight modes distinguished by their characteristic melodic formulas, intonations and cadences is called a musical or modal *oktoechos*. An arrangement of hymnographic texts in sets of eight, meant to be sung to melodies in a given mode of an octonary modal system and to succeed one another cyclically, is called the liturgical or hymnographic *oktoechos*. A book containing texts for the Sunday office, so arranged, is called the

Oktoechos. Its later additions supplied hymns for the weekdays as well, thus the whole compilation received the name of *Great Oktoechos* or *Paraklitiki*.

Much scholarly attention has been paid in the past to the history of the *Oktoechos* in Syria.¹ However it has been demonstrated by Aelred Cody that the Syrian history is not relevant to the development of the Byzantine *Oktoechos*.² His analysis also demonstrates that both the musical and the hymnographic *oktoechal* principles originally belonged to Greek canons, *stichera* and *kathismata*. Yet Modern research has contributed little to the history of the *Oktoechos*.³ Its origins remain rather obscure. We have to admit that the lack of earlier sources makes any discussion speculative. Nonetheless, I shall attempt to outline some stages of integration of the *Oktoechos* into Orthodox tradition. The origins of the *Oktoechos* lead us to Palestine.⁴

Although the celebration of Sunday is the earliest regular Christian feast, it became elaborate and solemn in Palestine only after the restoration of Jerusalem by Constantine and Helena. There is a description of the rite of Sunday Matins as early as

¹ Some of the manuscripts: J. Assemanus, *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-vaticana*, I, (Rome, 1719), 487, 613; E. Brooks, *The Hymns of Severus and Others in the Syriac Version of Paul of Edessa as Revised by James of Edessa*, PO 6.1; 7.5 (Paris, 1910-11); W. Wright, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum Acquired since the Year 1838*, 3 parts, (London, 1870-2); S. Euringer, *Die neuen "Töpferlieder" des Simeon von Gêšîr*, OC, n.s. 3, (1913), 221-35; S. and J. Assemanus, *Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae codicum manuscriptorum catalogues*, I/2, (Rome, 1758), 499. "Oktoechos of Severos": A. Baumstark, *Festbrevier und Kirchenjahr der syrischen Jakobiten*, Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums III/3-5, (Paderborn, 1910), 46, index; *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, (Bonn, 1922), 374; J. Jeannin, J. Puyade, *L'Oktoëchos syrien*, OC, 3, (1913), (82-104, 277-98), 86-7; Wellesz, *History*, 44, 140.

² A. Cody, *The Early History of the Oktoechos in Syria*, in *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period*, ed. N. Garsoïan, T. Mathews, R. Thomson, (Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks, Center for Byzantine Studies, 1982), 89-113. Also Cody analyses the origins of the anecdote found in the *Plerophoriai* of John Rufus, a contemporary of Severos, in which a monk tells the fourth century Abba Silvanos that he is singing "the office of the canon and the hours and the elements of the *Oktoechos*." Cody demonstrates that it was drawn from an eleventh century Greek collection of *apophthegmata* ed. by F. Nau, *Jean Rufus, Évêque de Maïouma: Plérôphories*, PO 8 (Paris, 1911), 10, 179-80, – Cody, *History*, 102.

³ See recent article with very full bibliography by P. Jeffery, *The Earliest Oktoechoi: the Role of Jerusalem and Palestine in the Beginnings of Modal Ordering*, in P. Jeffery (ed.), *The Study of Medieval Chant, Paths and Bridges, East and West*, (Boydell Press, 2001), 147-209.

⁴ Cf. Jeffery, *Oktoechoi*, 179-81, 186-8, 190-1, 207-9.

the fourth century in the *Diary* of Egeria. The story of the Resurrection from the Gospel was read every Sunday throughout the year:

Knowing how pleased your charity would be to learn what is the ritual observed day by day in the holy places, I considered it my duty to make known to you the details... On the seventh day, that is on Sunday, before the cockcrow, a whole multitude... as many as at Easter gather outside the forecourt adjoining the Anastasis... As soon as the first cock has crowed, the bishop immediately comes down to the church... takes up the Gospel, and goes toward the door; there the bishop himself reads the Resurrection of the Lord (*Diary*, 24).

When the season of Lent is at hand, it is observed in the following manner. Now *whereas with us the forty days preceding Easter are observed, here they observe the eight weeks before Easter*. This is the reason why they observe eight weeks: On Sundays and Saturdays they do not fast, except on the one Saturday which is the vigil of Easter... And so, when *eight* Sundays and seven Saturdays have been deducted from the *eight* weeks... there remain forty-one days... of Lent. On each day of each week [out of these eight] this is what is done. On Sunday, at the first cockcrow, the bishop inside the Anastasis reads from the Gospel the passage of the Resurrection of the Lord, as is done on every Sunday throughout the year; and all the same ceremonies are performed until daybreak at the Anastasis and at the Cross as are performed on every other Sunday during the year (*Diary*, 27).¹

From the second passage it is evident that the cycle of the eight weeks of Lent occurs only in Palestine (for example, Sozomen describes a seven-week period of five days a week in the orbit of Syrian Church).² The reference to an eight-week Lent has been the subject of extensive commentary and some controversy.³ The Lenten fast evolved over several centuries and now the Orthodox Church observes a seven-week Lent. For us it is important to note that the Gospel readings on Sunday Matins (with accompanying hymns) were somehow associated with these eight Sundays of Lent.

¹ It is very likely that Severos who introduced Gospel readings on Sundays at Antioch and composed accompanying hymns (see Severos, *Hom.* 77, *PO* 16.794; *Cant.*, *PO* 6.120-30), derived this custom from Palestine where he spent several years of his monastic life. See J. Tabet, *Le témoignage de Sévère d'Antioche* (+538) *sur le vigile cathédrale*, Melto, 4, (1968), (5-12), 6. Cf. C. Luming, *The liturgy of Antioch in the Time of Severus* (513-518), in J. Alexander, *Time and Community*, (Washington, D.C., 1990), (83-103), 96.

² *Hist.* 1.7.

³ See: G. Gingras, *Egeria: Diary of a Pilgrimage*, (New York, 1970), 225-6 (f.221); Talley, *Origins*, 214-22.

However the expression “as is done on every Sunday throughout the year” primarily refers to the reading as such and not necessarily to the cycle of eight.

A similar cycle of eight Sundays associated with the Resurrection is seen in Eastertide consisting of seven weeks and seven Sundays (49 days) plus one Sunday of Pentecost. This is not said directly by Egeria but is clear from the following passage:

On the feast of Pentecost, which falls on Sunday, everything is done exactly according to custom from the first cockcrow. The vigil is held in the Anastasis, so that the bishop may read the passage from the Gospel which is always read on Sundays, *that of the Resurrection of the Lord (Diary, 43)*.

So the dominant feast of the Resurrection was celebrated every Sunday, and we already have two cycles of eight Sundays: Lent and Eastertide in fourth century Palestine clearly distinct from Syrian cycles of seven weeks as indicated by Sozomen and later lectionaries. Also, the cycle of eight as related to the Resurrection is clearly displayed during the Easter week:

The *eight days of Easter* are observed just as at home with us. The liturgy is celebrated in the prescribed manner throughout the *eight days of Easter* just as it is celebrated everywhere from Easter Sunday to its octave. There is the same decoration, and the same arrangement for these *eight days of Easter*, as for the [*eight days*] of Epiphany (*Diary, 39, cf. 25*).

As appears from the Gospel readings mentioned by Egeria,¹ the origins of this octave are found in John 20:19-29:

When it was evening on that day, *the first day of the week*, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you” (John 20:19).

And *after eight days* again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then Jesus came, the doors being locked, and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you” (John 20:26).

Speculations on the mystery of the eighth day as a figure of the age to come exceed the precise meaning of this Gospel story. Christ rose on the first day after the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, and the Resurrection took place either on the first

¹ *Diary, 39-40.*

or on the eight day of the week. Barnabas and Justin already speculate on the mystery of the eighth day of the Resurrection.¹ It is popular in Alexandrian exegetical tradition. For instance, Cyril of Alexandria writes that the day of rest is also the eighth day in which Christ rose from the dead, which was the beginning of the new age.² Gregory Nazianzen applies the figure to the Sunday after Easter,³ but also to Pentecost, a Sunday concluding seven weeks of seven days forming a period of fifty days with Easter as the first day and with the eighth Sunday representing the future age sacramentally breaking into this world already in the life of the Church.⁴ This new age began on the first Christian Pentecost.⁵

E.Werner finds a decisive clue to the origin of *oktoechos* in the period of seven weeks plus one day between Easter and Pentecost.⁶ A.Cody admits this possibility and suggests that “the *oktonary* calendar order and the *oktoechos* were probably applied first to Easter week and to the Easter pentecostade”.⁷ Above I have demonstrated that two octaves (Epiphany and Easter) and two cycles of eight Sundays (Lent and the fifty days of Eastertide) are displayed in the *Diary* of Egeria. However, there is still a long way to *Oktoechos*.

¹ Barnabas, *Ep.* 15.8-9; Justin, *Dialog.* 24; 41; 138.

² See: Cyril of Alexandria, *De adoratione et cultu in spiritu et veritate*, (PG 68.1104-17); John Damascene, *Expos.* 15.14-18.

³ *Or.* 44.5 (PG 36.612C).

⁴ Cody, *History*, 97.

⁵ Cf. *Or.* 41.2 (Moreschini).

⁶ E.Werner, *The Sacred Bridge*, (London-New York, 1959), 381-2. For the origins of *oktoechos* in general see *ibid*, 373-409. For the origins of pentecontades see H.Lewy and J.Lewy, *The Origins of the Week and the Oldest West Asiatic Calendar*, Hebrew Union College Annual, 17, (1942/43), 1-146. Cf. speculations on this theme in C.Hannick, *Oktoechos*, 22-3.

⁷ Cody, *History*, 97.

It is not clear if such cycles corresponded with the Sunday Gospel at earlier stages, but later the Gospel readings became eleven in number,¹ which formed two independent cycles: the *Oktoechos* and Sunday Gospel readings. This fact may imply that the proto-*Oktoechos* mainly included hymns and not the readings. According to Egeria, the divine office consisted of scriptural readings, prayers, psalms with responses, antiphons and hymns.² By analogy with later *Oktoechos* it can be suggested that only antiphons and hymns were subject to assigning modes. Egeria does not clarify if there were any modes, but during the Easter octave certain hymns were assigned to certain days:

On Easter Sunday, after the dismissal from vespers at the Anastasis, all the people singing hymns conduct the bishop to Sion. When they have arrived there, *hymns proper to the day and the place are sung*, and a prayer is said [followed by the first part of the story of Thomas in John 20:19-23] (*Diary*, 39).

Then on Sunday, on the octave of Easter, immediately after the sixth hour all the people go up to Eleona with the bishop. First of all everyone sits down for a time in the church which is there; *hymns are sung as well as antiphons proper to the day and to the place, and prayers also that are proper to the day and the place* [followed by the second part of the story of Thomas in John 23-29] (*Diary*, 40).

Both passages are concerned with the celebration of the Resurrection, but the italicised expressions clearly indicate the hymnographic difference of these two Sundays. Of course this evidence is insufficient for the existence of proto-*Oktoechos* during the octave, but it clearly indicates the existence of different hymns for the Resurrection assigned to certain Sundays. This might be a clue to the Palestinian origin of the hymnographic *oktoechos*, particularly if we consider it in the light of the above assertion concerning the correspondence of *proto-Oktoechos* with the Easter octave and

¹ For example, the cycle of eleven is indicated in the eighth century Gospel, Моск.Синод.библ. 42.XLIII.11, 241-246. Архимандрит Владимир, *Систематическое описание рукописей Московской Синодальной библиотеки*, (Москва, 1894), 12.

² Cf. *Diary*, 24; 25.

the fifty days after Easter. The texts of *proto-Oktoechos* were contained in the Sunday office.

Despite the possible antagonism of early monasticism towards hymnography,¹ the divine office of Jerusalem greatly influenced monastic communities in that region. For example, Mar Saba (d.582) introduced Vigils on Sundays and Great Feasts in his coenobitic monastery.² Such Vigils were gradually getting more elaborate. From the account of a visit paid by Abbots John and Sophronios to the anchorite Abbot Nilos of Sinai, a Greek source of the late sixth or early seventh century,³ we can see that apart from the readings of Psalter and nine biblical canticles which was common for Palestinian and Sinaite office, the Sunday Vigil in Palestine included liturgical poetry: at Vespers *troparia* with Psalm 140; at Matins *kathismata anastasima*, certain readings or hymns after the third and sixth biblical canticles, *troparia* with the seventh, eighth and ninth canticles, the responsory “Let everything that has breath” (Psalm 150:6) before the Gospel, and Sunday *troparion* after *Gloria in excelsis*.⁴ Thus, although the narration is silent regarding musical or hymnographic *oktoechos*, many basic elements of the *Oktoechos* are present.

Perhaps, the earliest evidence of the *oktoechal* system being established within the Greek liturgical world by the end of seventh to the dawn of the eighth century, is a lectionary Sin.Gr.212 which includes a list of the modes to be used in a consecutive order on Sundays of Eastertide (first the authentic modes, then the plagal ones). However, the exact origins of the musical system still remain obscure: “It appears to

¹ Cf. W.Christ, M.Paranikas, *Anthologia graeca carminum christianorum*, (Leipzig, 1871), XXIX-XXX; the aforementioned anecdote in Nau, *Jean*, 179-80; Alfeyev, *Symeon*, 75-6.

² *Vita Sabae*, (Schwartz, 118). See above *Palestinian Liturgical Tradition* in the general Introduction to the thesis.

³ See Longo, *Narrazione*, 223-67.

⁴ Longo, *Narrazione*, 251-2. See above *Biblical Canticles and the Canon* in the general Introduction.

owe little if anything directly to the classical and Hellenistic Greek tonal system, despite the assignation of classical names to modes”.¹ “The musical system of eight modes may have existed before the hymnographic grouping of texts according to eight modes.”² Alternatively my consideration above may suggest both reverse and simultaneous processes, namely, the aforementioned octaves firstly witness to a consecutive order of Sunday hymns but they keep silence regarding different modes or melodies which could well be assigned either simultaneously or later. The origins of these modes could be connected with the origins of the texts. E.Wellesz suggests that the melodies originally sung to the words and stanzas of the *kontakia* were set to new texts and sung as melodies of the odes, the canons and *stichera*³ (but one may wonder if *kontakia* might have influenced the canon at all). It remains a question whether musical *oktoechos* preceded or might influence the western musical system based on the eight plus one mode, ascribed to Gregory the Great (540-604).⁴ Whatever the issue is, musical and hymnographic *oktoechos* did not appear suddenly at the dawn of the eighth century, although “there is no real evidence for its existence before the eight or seventh century”.⁵ Its origins were certainly connected with Palestinian liturgical tradition.

At this point I should mention an unreliable but popular clue found in the *Arabic vita* of John Damascene that “John began composing canons for the holy Resurrection with *stichera* and *troparia*”.⁶ What is true of this remark is that a relatively elaborate

¹ J.Thomas, *Oktoechos*, in the *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, 10.640-1. Cf. Hannick disagrees – *Oktoechos*, 23.

² Cody, *History*, 102-3. Cody alludes, however with doubts, to a tenth century Georgian Typikon containing eight modes based on the seventh-eight century Jerusalem tradition (see Tarchnischvili, *Lectionnaire*, II, sections 1679-92).

³ Wellesz, *History*, 128.

⁴ Cf. Jeffery, *Oktoechoi*, 163-71.

⁵ Cody, *History*, 102.

⁶ Portillo, 184. Cf. Raasted, *Hagiopolites*, 9-11; Jeffery, *Oktoechoi*, 185-8.

Oktoechos indeed appeared at the era of John Damascene in Palestine, even if some kinds of hymns for the Resurrection had existed before.

As said in the Introduction to the thesis, John was nurtured in the Palestinian liturgical tradition which was equally spread in city churches and in monasteries. His hymnographic work cannot be considered apart from this context. As a hieromonk he belonged either to the community of the Cathedral of *Anastasis* or to a Palestinian monastery. As a preacher he certainly participated in the Cathedral office in Jerusalem.¹ He was familiar with all details and rites of the contemporary divine office and contributed to it with hymns of his own. If a kind of *proto-Oktoechos* existed, John used it as a basis for developing his work; he might have borrowed traditional hymnographic expressions and pieces, such as the Easter hymn of Gregory mentioned in the previous chapter. But he is definitely one of the first composers of the full canon in its present form of nine odes.² Canons are the most important, central part of the *Oktoechos*, and the canons for the Resurrection are mainly attributed to John. If these canons or their parts are authentic, John can well be considered as a composer of the *Oktoechos* and the elaborator of both musical and hymnographic *oktoechos*.³ As C.Hannick believes, the creation of the *Oktoechos* is a long process of gathering together the pieces of hymnography existing separately in different places and times.⁴ Certainly John was an important figure in this process.

The authorship of the canons and other hymns is a very complicated issue, and any discussion is speculative. S.Eustratiades optimistically attributes to John a huge

¹ Louth, *John*, 6.

² Hannick, *Oktoechos*, 56. See also *Biblical Canticles and the Canon* in the general Introduction above.

³ Perhaps the earliest evidence of the attribution of the *Oktoechos* to John can be found in Peter Damascene (XIc.) who several times quotes from John, and in virtually every case it is the *Oktoechos* that he is quoting – see *Philokalia*, iii.122, 142-3. See Louth, *John*, 252-3.

⁴ Hannick, *Oktoechos*, 43.

collection of *irmoi*, the canons for the Resurrection, *stichera anatolika*, *aposticha alphabetika* and *theotokia dogmatika* – the basic elements of Sunday office, and the *stichera nekrosima* of Saturday office.¹ C.Hannick is less optimistic because attribution to John or John the Monk does not necessarily mean John Damascene, and many texts do not have any individual title at all. Also there are no acrostics in the canons and therefore their *troparia* could be easily intermixed. Nevertheless, in general he does not reject the authorship of John for the Resurrection canons (and of Cosmas for the canon for Cross and Resurrection). The same canons for the Resurrection are present in earliest manuscripts.² The majority of manuscripts do not contradict this in assigning modes to these poems, thus witnessing to their originality. John's theological ideas are recurring in all of them, which will be pointed below. There are anti-heretical arguments³ and Christological terms (for example, οὐσία, φύσις, μορφή, ὑπόστασις, ἐνυπόστατος, ἐκουσίως, βροτός, φθορά, διαφθορά, ἀφθαρσία, πάθος, πάθη, ἀπάθεια), typical for John Damascene in most of the Resurrection canons. They are employed with a clarity characteristic of him. There is no other contemporary author or poet known for such Orthodox theological clarity. Some idioms and expressions are typical for John's treatises and homilies.⁴ Although the authenticity of the canons or

¹ Eustratiades, *Ἰωάννης, Νέα Σίων*, 1931, 26, 502-12, 530-8, 610-17, 666-8, 732-5; 1933, 28, 11-25 (see also 1932, 27, 415-22, 450-72, 514-34, 570-85, 644-64, 698-719).

² Sin.Gr.776+Sin.Gr.1593+Br.Lib.Add.26113 (VIII-IXcc.); Hannick, *Oktoechos*, 45-50, 55.

³ For example, *versus* Monophysite: *Oktoechos* (O) 3,9:1; 4,9:1; 4,9:3; 5,8:1; 5,9:1; 5,9:2; 6,3:1; 6,9:2; 7,9:1; 8,9:1; 8,9:2; Monothelite: O 5,8:1, cf. John Damascene, *Expos.*68.19-30; Maximus, *opusc.*3, (PG 91.48A-49B); Aphthartodecetes: O 5,5:2; 6,9:2; 7,8:2; 8,8:2, cf. *Expos.*72; Nestorians: O 3,4:1; 8,9:1; Origenists and Manicheans: 7,9:2, cf. *Expos.*100.

⁴ The expressions which include the word ἄχραντος appear in O 1,1:1; 4,1:1; 5,4:1 and in *Fides* 20.4; *Expos.* 52.26; 71.19; 82.32 but the the most striking similarity can be seen between O 2,3:2 and *Sabbat.* 21.10-11. The idiom τρισόλβιος with reference to the cross in O 2,9:1 is similar to *Imag.*I.16.18; II.14.21. In *Trisag.*4.2, 13 it refers to the Trinity. The use of idioms ἐμπτύσματα καὶ ῥαπίσματα in O 3,4:1 is similar to *Fides* 46.15. The following words are also typical both of John's poetry and prose: παντεπόπτης - O 3,5:1 = *Expos.*2.15; καταχθόνια - O 6,7:2; TC 8:3; Pascha 1,3:1 = *Fides* 22.16; *Sabbat.* 22.25; προφητοκτόνος - O 6,8:1 = *Ficus* 4.40; κριτός (judged) - O 7,4:2 = *Sabbat.*21.6; φρενοβλαβῶς - O 1,4:2 = Vita Barlaam et Joasaph, 186.27 (sp.).

troparia in many cases is impossible to fully establish, for the purposes of this chapter I shall conventionally assume the authenticity of the Resurrection canons.

Structurally the earliest *Oktoechos* proceed by generic sections, keeping *stichera* and *kathismata* in one section and canons in another, and letting the procession from mode to mode take place independently in each section sometimes constituting separate collections,¹ for example, *Irmologion*, *Sticherarion*, *Theotokarion*.² Among the canons and the *stichera* and the *kathismata* in the early Melkite *Oktoechos* are the strophes for use on various days of the week, with topical appellatives: *anastasima* on the Resurrection, *theotokia*, *martyrika*, *katanyktika* on repentance, *nekrosima* on the dead but they are free from the later organisation of *Paraklitiki*.³

The tradition of the *Oktoechos* evolved and spread. After the resolution of the iconoclastic controversy in the ninth century, the *Oktoechos* was completed by the addition of *stichera* and canons for the *Theotokos*, and the weekday hymns – the work of monks of the Studios monastery in Constantinople, in particular Joseph the Hymnographer (d.883). The final canon in the series has the acrostic τῆς ὀκτώηχου τῆς νέας θεῖον τέλος (“the divine conclusion of the new *Oktoechos*” – in fact *Paraklitiki*), perhaps, the earliest known instance of the term referring to a corpus of hymns.⁴ Subsequently, Sunday office was contributed with *stichera* and *exapostilaria* related to

¹ Hannick, *Oktoechos*, 41-3.

² For the authorship of *Theotokarion* see: S.Winkley, *The Canons of John of Damascus to the Theotokos*. D.Phil thesis, (Oxford, 1973). There are various collections with this name, for example: the collection of the canons of the Mother of God, and the collection of *Theotokia* or *troparia* of the Mother of God are called *Theotokaria*.

³ Sin.Gr.776+Sin.Gr.1593+Br.Lib.Add.26113 (VIII-IXcc.); Sin.Gr.779 (Xc.); Sin.Gr.794 (992); Sin.Gr.780 (X-XIcc.); see Cody, *History*, 99.

⁴ Thomas, *Octoechos*, 549.

eleven Sunday Gospels by Emperors Leo VI the Wise (886-913) and Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (913-959).¹

Consequently, the *Oktoechos* was a creative product of the Hellenistic mind, probably the practical expression of the Christian contemplation of Sunday as the eighth day. The origins of the musical *oktoechos* are obscure but the the origins of hymnographic *oktoechos* certainly relate to the Palestinian liturgical tradition in which the integration of the *Oktoechos* was gradually taking place. Without doubt John Damascene made a significant if not fundamental contribution to this process. Finally, the *Paraklitiki* or the *Great Oktoechos* became the book that covers every single day of Christian life providing hymns for daily office and focusing on the Resurrection as the axis. Both the *Oktoechos* and *Paraklitiki* became an integral part of the liturgical tradition of Eastern Christianity. In addition to Syriac they were translated into Slavonic and Georgian in the ninth and tenth centuries and adopted by all the Local Churches in Slav countries and elsewhere not to mention the ancient patriarchates of Alexandria and Antioch loyal to Chalcedonian Orthodoxy.² Moreover some parts of the books were used by Jacobites and Armenian Non-Chalcedonians which witnesses to a certain universality of the language and images of hymnography exceeding divisions.³ Now I shall turn to the theological examination of the Resurrection canons which for some reason remained ignored by scholars.⁴

¹ Hannick, *Oktoechos*, 53-7.

² Cf. conclusion in Jeffery, *Oktoechoi*, 207-9.

³ See O.Heiming, *Syrische Eniânê und griechische Kanones*, Liturgiegeschichtliche Quellen und Forschungen, XXVI, (Münster, 1932), 47-51.

⁴ For example, there is a commentary by Zonara (XI-XIIcc., introduction in PG 134.421-8, description in Lauriot, *Athos*, I, 1920), and in Hannick, *Oktoechos*.

The Imagery of the Canons for the Resurrection

These poems present to us a highly elaborate systematic theological contemplation of Christ and Resurrection which follows the same traditional redemptive pattern already familiar from the canons for the Nativity and the Epiphany: creation → Fall → Incarnation → passion → cross → descent into hell → resurrection. The picture of Christ and the Resurrection is expressed in scriptural and theological images. In the canons we find something more than the exposition of Old Testament images and their fulfilment in the New Testament: we find their integrity. These are not just images and prototypes but a single integral history of humanity,¹ history surpassing time. The canons are intended to be sung every Sunday, thus repeating the whole of this history which prefigures and unveils the redemption of humanity in Christ. Indeed, resurrection is concerned with the very heart of our being. Faith in the risen Christ is faith in what we actually are to be, in the meaning and purpose of human existence.

The first basic and large-scale event in this history is the creation of the human being, its existence in Paradise and its Fall. It is opposed by the greater event of the Incarnation of the Son of God, His life on earth, His crucifixion, death and resurrection, leading to the salvation of the human being. St Paul expressed the integrity of both events in the idea of Christ—the second Adam. There are two passages which hardly need any commentary:

Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned [through the one]. But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. So that, just as sin exercised dominion in death, so grace might also

¹ For the liturgical theology of image see above "*Christ – Our Passover*" in Chapter IV.

exercise dominion through justification leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 5:12-21).

Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through man, also the Resurrection of the dead came through man. For as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruit, then at His coming those who belong to Christ. The first man, Adam, became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven (1 Corinthians 15:21-23, 45-49).

The mid-second century poem of Melito on Easter witnesses to the liturgical use of the Pauline idea:

[The Lord] is suffering for the sake of the suffering one,
[He is] Bound for the sake of the bound one,
Buried for the sake of the buried one...
I freed the condemned one,
I revived the dead one,
I raised the buried one... (*Pascha*, 100, 101).

The image included the typology of Paradise because it is impossible to consider Adam apart from his context. Thus the crucified Christ was symbolised by the tree of life already in Justin.¹ Referring to Paul, Irenaeos in his teaching on recapitulation explores the whole image in detail in order to circumscribe the humanity of Christ and the redemptive implications for us. The first Adam was defeated by the serpent.² His disobedience by the tree resulted in sin and death.³ Through the food corruption came.⁴ We have all inherited sin, corruption and death through Adam as consubstantial with him⁵ and have lost our image and likeness.⁶ In His person Christ saves everything that

¹ *Dialog*.86.

² *Haer*.3.23.7.

³ *Haer*.3.18.2,7; 5.23.1-2.

⁴ *Haer*.5.21.2.

⁵ *Haer*.3.22.4; 3.23.2; 5.21.1.

⁶ *Haer*.3.18.1.

has perished in Adam.¹ He restores our relationship with God at every stage of His earthly life; every mistake is corrected and every sin is healed.² Christ defeated the serpent.³ He obeyed on the tree of the cross, condemned sin in His flesh and deactivated death. He wrought deliverance, salvation and life.⁴ Through His abstinence came incorruption.⁵ It was necessary for Christ to raise Adam because of human consubstantiality.⁶ When he was raised, death was destroyed.⁷ His resurrection becomes the second birth.⁸ Consubstantial with Christ we all inherit the image and likeness, salvation and eternal life,⁹ being united with Him in the Eucharist.¹⁰ Irenaeos complements the idea with a similar analogy between Eve and Mary: the obedience of Mary heals the disobedience of Eve.¹¹ By the end of the fourth century this typology was equally widespread both in Alexandrian and Antiochene tradition and everywhere in the Christian East.¹² For example, Cyril of Jerusalem refers to it as to something evident and summarises thus: “In Paradise was the Fall, and in a garden was our

¹ *Haer.* 5.14.1; 5.15.1.

² *Haer.* 3.18.7.

³ *Haer.* 3.23.7; 5.21.1.

⁴ *Haer.* 3.18.2,7; 3.23.1; 5.19.1; 5.23.1-2.

⁵ *Haer.* 5.21.2.

⁶ *Haer.* 3.23.1-2.

⁷ *Haer.* 3.23.7.

⁸ *Haer.* 5.14.1; 5.15.1.

⁹ *Haer.* 3.18.1; 3.22.4.

¹⁰ *Haer.* 5.2.

¹¹ *Haer.* 3.22.4; 5.19.1. See above *The Role of the Mother of God in the Incarnation* in Chapter I.

¹² Cf. Athanasios of Alexandria, *Incarn.* 10.38-52; Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyr. Genes. Or.* 1.5 (PG 69.28-32); John Chrysostom, *Rom.* 10.1 (PG 60.475); Ephrem the Syrian, NH 3; *Carm.* 3.4; 4.1; 36.1-3, 9; 41.12-13 (Beck); Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.* 2.23; *Or.* 39.13.

salvation; from the tree came sin, and until the tree sin lasted”.¹ As we have seen from the previous chapters, the majority of liturgical texts operate within the framework of this image. So it emerges in almost one third of the *troparia* of the Resurrection canons of the *Oktoechos*: 1, 1:1-2; 3:1-2; 6:1; 2, 3:2; 6:1-2; 9:1; 3, 1:1; 5:1; 8:2; 4,1:1; 3:1; 5:1-2; 6:1; 7:2; 5, 1:1-2; 4:2; 6:1-2; 8:2; 9:1; 6, 3:2; 4:1-2; 5:1-2; 6:1-2; 7, 1:1; 3:1-2; 4:1-2; 7:1; 8, 3:1; 4:1-2; 5:1-2; 6:1; 8:2. Here are some instances:

Troparia O 1,1:1-2; 1,3:1-2 and 2,3:2 (cf. O 7,4:2) are based on the story of the creation of man and his Fall: man is created by Christ out of dust and returns to the dust of death in the Fall. At the same time the soul which God breathed into him becomes imprisoned. On the contrary, incarnate Christ in His human nature calls back the body from the earth and, delivering His soul to death, releases it. The author often uses the pronouns “me” and “my” when speaking of fallen and raised humanity. On the one hand he thus is speaking on behalf of Adam, in which case this is typical for the Hymns of Romanos.² On the other, it is typical for John Damascene’s poems to speak in the first person (as Gregory Nazianzen eloquently does in his poetry), identifying himself with the fallen and raised one. These pronouns convey the idea of human consubstantiality. Thus he involves the congregation in the history of the Fall and salvation because “we all were wounded by the fault of the first formed one but we are healed by the wounds of Christ” (O 1,6:1; cf. Isaiah 53:5; 1 Peter 2:24). In O 2,9:1 and O 6,4:1 Paradise is compared with Calvary and the tree of life with the cross. Also found in *Expos.*84 this idea is the direct allusion to Cyril’s *Catechesis* 13.19, and reminiscent of Justin, Ephrem, and Romanos.³ Apparently the first people had not eaten from the tree, and they were deprived of it immediately after the Fall (Genesis 3:22).

¹ *Catech.*13.19; cf. *catech.*13.1-2. Romanos, *Cant.*38; *Cant.*44; John Damascene, *Expos.*84.74-6

² Cf. *Cant.*38; 44.

³ Cf. Justin, *Dialog.*86; Ephrem, *EH* 13; *Pearl* 4.1; Romanos, *Cant.*38.15-16.

Similarly to Ephrem, John uses this in his analogy, saying that the tree “blossomed with life” only after being nurtured by blood and water in the crucifixion, and Christ is the fruit of this tree (O 4,3:1; 6,4:1). So the actual meaning of the tree of life is revealed by the cross. However, the Fall and destruction were wrought by the tree of knowledge (O 3,8:2; 4,1:1). This tree is opposed by the saving cross on which Christ was crucified (O 4,1:1; 5,4:2; 8,6:1). Such an antitype is common for the aforementioned authors.¹ Referring to Romans 5:13 and Irenaeos,² John similarly compares fatal disobedience and saving obedience in O 7,7:1.³ Likewise the nakedness of Christ covered the nakedness of Adam (8,5:1).⁴

Explaining the meaning of the crown of thorns in line with the general analogy, Cyril of Jerusalem writes:

The crown itself was a mystery; for it was a remission of sins, a release from the curse. Adam received the sentence: “Cursed is the earth in your labours; it will bring forth to you thorns and thistles” (Genesis 3:18). For this cause Jesus assumes the thorns, that He may cancel the sentence; for this cause also was He buried in the earth, that the earth which had been cursed might receive the blessing instead of a curse.⁵

This image is repeated by John in O 3,1:1 and O 5,1:1. Moreover, we all share Adam’s condemnation, that was abolished by the crucifixion of Christ and piercing in the side (O 4,5:2; 6,6:1).⁶ In O 2,6:2 John directly quotes 1 Corinthians 15:21: “Whereas death entered the world through Adam, through the Son of God the Resurrection has been revealed.” The contrast between the Fall and death of the first

¹ Irenaeos, *Haer.* 5.19.1; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.* 13.2; Ephrem, *NH* 3; *Carm.* 36.9; 41.13 (Beck); Romanos, *Cant.* 38.1, 4-5, 8.

² Cf. *Haer.* 3.18.2, 7.

³ This may recall the idea of monastic obedience.

⁴ Cf. Ephrem, *Carm.* 36.3 (Beck).

⁵ *Catech.* 13.17-18.

⁶ Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.* 2.23; Ephrem, *Carm.* 36.1-2 (Beck); John Chrysostom, *Matt.* 2.1 (PG 57.23-5).

people, and the death and Resurrection of Christ is fundamental for the canons (cf. O 5,6:1; 5,9:1; 6,3:2; 8,8:2).

The Christ-Adam imagery is not a mere typology or allegory generated by exegetic traditions. It is the evidence of what humankind was created for, what happened to it, and how Christ saved it.¹ Pivotal for the canons, the idea approaches the destiny of humankind from the opposite perspectives of Adam and Christ, recalling for the congregation what is false and destructive, and emphasising what is true and saving. It is fundamental to tradition, and in his canons John Damascene displays its Christological significance: the identification of Christ with Adam implies the fullness of Christ's humanity and its consubstantiality with us and therefore the fullness of our salvation.²

The second basic and large-scale event in redemptive history is the story of Exodus: the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, the flight of Israel from Pharaoh, crossing the Red Sea, journeying in the desert, granting of the Law, and inheriting the promised land. This event typifies the redemptive ministry of Christ for people, His crucifixion, death and resurrection in particular. In the part "*Christ – Our Pascha*" (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:7; 10:1-6) of the previous chapter we have already considered the origins of the image and its place in tradition. Here I would like to mention additional details in its liturgical interpretation.

Thus Justin, for whom the paschal lamb prefigures Jesus, goes further into the desert in order to demonstrate to the Hebrew the images of the cross and crucifixion

¹ Cf. Athanasios, *Incarn.* 1-10; Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.* 2.37; *Or.* 38.12-13.

² This identification was equally popular in any Christological tradition both Nestorian, Monophysite, and Orthodox. For example, it proved to be particularly useful for the Orthodox polemics with the Monothelites in the seventh century: since human will was first to suffer in Adam, it had to be assumed and healed in Christ. See ACO 2.II.1.248.6-8; Hovorun, *Controversy*, 208-11.

found in the rod of Moses, the tree that sweetened the waters of Mara,¹ Moses stretching out hands in the battle with Amalek,² serpent on the tree,³ – all leading to the granting of the Law and to the land of promise. As the image of the new Adam above, the figurative meaning of the story of Exodus is universal for tradition. Virtually all Christian authors writing about redemption employed it.⁴ It plays a significant role in the divine office. The catenae of the scriptural readings of most of the feasts include it. It is the theme of the first biblical canticle.

The *Oktoechos* is actually supposed to be a continuous celebration of the *Pascha* every Sunday. It unfolds many ideas of the initial *Paschal* celebration and especially, the imagery of Exodus. This imagery explicitly appears in the first ode of most of the canons, but implicitly it is present in many *troparia* of other odes. For example, it is recognised in the idea of slavery in O1,5:2, in the image of tyrant and enemy in O2,1:1; 2,4:2; 2,5:1; 7,1:1, in the picture of Christ leading out from the earth in O6,5:2, in the illusory loyalty of Hebrews in O 5,1,*irmos*; 5,1:1, in the picture of Christ nailed to a cross and saving the faithful as the serpent on the tree in O7,3:1; 8,7:1, in the figure of Christ pouring out gifts like water in the desert in O 8,1:1, in the idea of the renewal of Sion in O 8,6:1. Whereas the first *irmos* of any canon generally expose the meaning of the crossing of the Red Sea and the destruction of Pharaoh, that of the canon of the fourth tone draws the figure of the cross from the battle with Amalek: “Moses’ hands, outstretched in the form of a cross, routed the power of Amalek.”⁵ As said above, the

¹ *Dialog*.86.

² *Dialog*. 90; 91; 97.

³ *Dialog*. 91; 94; cf. John 3:14-15.

⁴ Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Or*.1.3-4 (Bernardi); *Or*.45.15, 21 (PG 36.644, 652CD); John Damascene, *Expos*.77.43-5; 84.74-85.

⁵ Cf. Justin, *Dialog*.90; 91; 97; Gregory Nazianzen, *Or*.45.21 (PG 36.652C); Gregory of Nyssa, *Moses* 2.147-151; John Damascene, *Expos*.84.81.

sacrifice of the paschal lamb preceded the flight of Israel. John refers to this Easter type twice: in O1,9:2 following John the Baptist we recognise Jesus as the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world, and in O7,8:1 we call Christ the spiritual Lamb “slaughtered for the sake of the world bringing to an end the offerings according to the Law and purifying as God without transgressions the world”.¹ Rich with such allusions is the canon of tone five, yet it also exposes their “negative” side: “They who of old were protected by a cloud of light laid Christ, who is life, in a tomb” (O5,3:2); “The ungrateful children of Israel, who sucked the honey from the rock, offered you gall,² and gave you vinegar instead of manna” (O5,3:1). But for the faithful “the bitter waters of Mara, sweetened by God through wood, as in an icon prefigured immaculate cross, which slays the taste of sin” (O5,4:1), which recalls a remark by Gregory of Nyssa: “hearing about the wood you surely understood the cross”.³ Finally such language appeals to the monastic environment to which John Damascene belonged. For instance, John Klimakos uses the imagery of Exodus in reference to ascetic life: the “strange land” of Psalm 136:5 is the land of passions,⁴ the struggle with the Amalek of the passions⁵ leads to Jerusalem, to “the land of dispassion”.⁶

Employing it explicitly and implicitly throughout the canons, John assumes that this imagery is very popular among and familiar to the congregation of both laymen and monks. Echoing Gregory Nazianzen, the canons present the landmarks of the story of Exodus and their fulfilment. John emphasises the identification of the old Passover with

¹ Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Moses*, 2.95; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.* 13.3; Ephrem, *Carm.* 36.11; 41.14 (Beck). This may be a reference to the Mystical Supper.

² Cf. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.* 13.29.

³ *Moses*, 2.132. Cf. Justin, *Dialog.* 86; Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyr.Exod.Or.* 2. (PG 69.441-9); Ephrem, *NH* 13.25; Romanos, *Cant.* 38.15; John Damascene, *Expos.* 84.81.

⁴ *Scala* 7 (PG 88.805D).

⁵ *Scala* 1 (PG 88.636A).

⁶ *Scala* 3 (PG 88.665B).

Jesus as “our saving *Pascha*”, and of Israel with Christians – the new Israel. However, the canons remind the Christians that they ought to avoid the failures of Israel because Christ–God is now corporeally present among them.

The author of the canons stresses the significance of Jesus’ hands outstretched on the cross. Apart from the obvious reference to the icon of Crucifixion,¹ this image indirectly corresponds with the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-20-32), the image of the good shepherd, and the analogy of Christ-Adam. Altogether they can be united by the idea of reconciliation with God on the cross (cf. Isaiah 65:2; Romans 5:10; 10:21; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:20), witnessed by the “welcoming” hands. Echoing Justin and Cyril of Jerusalem,² the *Oktoechos* puts it thus: stretching His hand on the cross Christ “called back my corruptible body taken from the Virgin” (O 1,1:1), “filled all with the goodness of His Father thus reconciling us with God” (O 6,1:1), “gathered all the nations in one Church” (O 4,8:1).

Already discussed in the previous chapters, the image of Jonas is a traditional image employed in the sixth ode of the canons of the *Oktoechos*. Christ interpreted the story of Jonas with reference to His death and resurrection: “For just as Jonas was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so for three days and three nights the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:40). Hence in tradition (which is well represented, for example, by Cyril of Jerusalem³), and in the *Oktoechos* the story and the prayer of Jonas is primarily associated with the descent of Christ into

¹ Cf. *Icons of the Passover* in Chapter IV, above.

² Justin, *Dialog.*97; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.*13.28, 33.

³ *Catech.*4.12; 14.17-18, 20.

hell and resurrection, but it also provides some metaphors of human existence.¹ Adam fell into the depth of hell (O 6,6:2), which is metaphorically called the whale (O 1,6:2). “The souls of the righteous, shut up and forsaken in hell” pray like Jonas for salvation (O 7,6:1). Jesus descends into hell, destroys the “whale” and grants salvation to Adam, those in underworld and to us (O 1,6:2; 5,6:2; 6,6:2; 7,6:1). “The death-dealer underwent death when he saw the one who had been put to death restored to life” (O 3,6:2), and Christ rose from the tomb (O 4,6:2). The *irmos* of the sixth ode mainly applies the image to human existence: together with the author we find ourselves in the sea of passions (O 5,6,7), in the abyss of sins (O 1, 2, 3, 7, 8; cf. the opposite abyss of mercy in O 3,6:1), swallowed by corruption (O 2, 5, 6), and we pray for salvation like Jonas.

The good shepherd as the opposite of negligent shepherds is a very popular Old Testament image (cf. Isaias 40:11; 56:11; 63:11; Jeremias 2:8; 3:15; 10:21; 22-25; 31:10; 50:6; Ezekiel 34; 37:24). Jesus applies it to Himself (cf. John 10:1-30; Hebrews 13:20) clarifying in the parable that the good shepherd has to find the lost sheep (Luke 15:1-7; Matthew 12:11; cf. Psalm 118:176; Ezekiel 34:4). It is present in many Christian writings, the lost sheep being the figure of Adam or fallen human nature.² Whereas above this image was applied for the Incarnation, in the *Oktoechos* it is associated with resurrection: “Adam fell into the depth of hell, but you, God by nature, descended therein in search for him and taking upon your shoulders you raised him” (O6,6:2). “Jews betrayed their Lord and Shepherd to death through the cross but Christ-

¹ Cf. Justin, *Dialog.* 107; Romanos, *Cant.* 44.9.

² It was extensively analysed in EC 5,1 in Chapter II, above. Cf. 1 Peter 2:25; 5:4; Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 1.9; Basil the Great, *Hom. Psalm* 48:15 PG 29.452-3); (Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.* 38.14; *Or.* 45.26 (PG 36.657D-660AB); Gregory of Nyssa, *Ascension*, (*Opera*, 9.1.324.1-8); Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.* 13.31; Romanos, *Cant.* 40.10.

Shepherd saved the dead buried in hell as sheep from death” (O1,5:1 cf. also O4,5:1; 5,5:1; 6,5:2; 6,8:2.). In connection with the assumption of humanity by God and its salvation from hell John employs another image borrowed from Gregory of Nyssa: “Wrapped in flesh, like bait for a hook, you drew down the serpent by your divine power and brought up those who cry” (O 5,7:1; cf. Job 40:12).¹

The idea of divine omnipresence emerges in many images. The omnipresence of God in everything or the presence of everything in the unbound God is a fundamental doctrine of Christianity.² Also it is fundamental for Christology and the contemplation of resurrection. Gregory of Nyssa meditates on the question how Christ could simultaneously be in the heart of the earth, in Paradise with the thief and with the Father, drawn from three scriptural verses: 1. “For three days and three nights the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:40); 2. “Today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43); 3. “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46), - all three relate to the period between crucifixion and resurrection. For Gregory it is the indication of the duality of human nature assumed by Christ. His Godhead is present simultaneously in soul and in body without separation. During the sufferings and death God parted neither from His body nor from His soul when the soul and body were separated. This is the basis of human resurrection:

With the body which did not take the corruption of death, the Godhead crashed the power of death, and with the soul it took the thief to the entrance of Paradise. Because of the duality of human merging and the simplicity and homogeneity of the Godhead, the indivisible is not divided with the composite during the parting of soul and body, but remains united. So because of the unity of the divine nature equally inherent in soul and body, parted, they are reunited one with

¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *De tridui inter mortem et resurrectionem* (*Opera*, 9.1.281.13-15); cf. John Damascene, *Expos.* 71.11-14.

² See: John Damascene, *Expos.* 13.

another. *Just as death is the separation of soul and body, the Resurrection is the union of the separated soul and body.*¹

John Damascene echoes Gregory in his *troparion* O 4,1:2: “With your body, O Christ, you were in the tomb, with your soul in hell as God, in Paradise with the thief, on the throne with the Father and the Spirit, filling all things”.² The *troparion* describes the divine hypostasis of Christ and how His human nature, both soul and body, exists in this hypostasis (being ἐνυπόστατα). Addressing one Christ, it emphasises the hypostatic union as the main condition of the resurrection of human nature: although separated by death, His soul and body, are still united in His divine hypostasis (cf. O 6,9:2).³

All scriptural and theological images of the *Oktoechos* in one form or another serve the purpose of contemplating *Höllenfahrt*⁴ and resurrection. For the modern mind, it may be difficult to understand the literary meaning of the mystical imagery of the *Höllenfahrt*. Nonetheless, from the first century onwards, for many generations of Christians, including John Damascene, the descent of Christ into Hades, the victory over devil and death followed by the resurrection of Christ Himself and the dead, has been the indisputable truth integral to the traditional teaching of Church.⁵ The roots of this teaching can be found in the Old Testament allusions (cf. Job 38:17; Psalm 15:10;

¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *De tridui inter mortem et resurrectionem* (*Opera*, 9.1.293.16-294.4).

² This *troparion* is used at the end of the Proskomidi and in the Easter Hours. It recalls the exposition of Orthodox Christology by Anastasios of Sinai, *Hod.*6-9. See *Icons of the Passover* in Chapter IV, above.

³ Cf. *Expos.*71.18-29.

⁴ Alternatively Bishop Hilarion uses the word *Höllensturm* (“the storming of hell”) in his book dedicated to the descent of Jesus into hell (*Χρυσμοc*).

⁵ For the theological analysis of this doctrine see J.MacCulloch, *The Harrowing of Hell*, (Edinburgh, 1930); J.Kroll, *Gott und Hölle, Der Mythos vom Descensuskampfe*, (Leipzig, 1932); W.Maas, *Gott und die Hölle, Studien zum Descensus Christi*, (Einsiedeln, 1979); Алфеев, *Χρυσμοc*; R.Gounelle, *La Descente du Christ aux Enfers, Études augustinienes, Série Antiquité 162*, (Paris: Institute d’Études Augustiniennes, 2000).

Hosea 13:14; Isaiah 14:9-15 – with the reference to Babylon). This doctrine is outlined in the New Testament (cf. Matthew 12:40; 27:52-53; Acts 2:22-24; 29-32; 1 Peter 3:18-21; 4:6; Romans 10:6-7; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57; Ephesians 4:9). It was developed further in the Apocrypha, especially in the Gospel of Nikodimos,¹ and became fully consistent by the end of the fourth century,² largely through the influence of Syrian hymnography, presenting its most sophisticated layer.³ The general pattern of the canons of the *Oktoechos* is that almost every second *troparion* in the ode refers to the *Höllenfahrt*. From their context we can draw the following picture: Jesus becomes acquainted with death in a mortal body delivering His soul to death (cf. O 1,1:2; 1,7:2; 2,5:2; 3,4:2; 3,9:1; 5,5:2; 8,8:1); He descends into hell (or into “the dust of death” – cf. O 1,3:2; 5,6:2; 5,8:2; 6,6:2; 6,7:2; 6,8:2; 7,6:1; 8,7:2; 2,3:2 – adds “with me”). This is common to all the aforementioned sources, though the mention of the soul is more typical for anti-Apollinarian writers starting with the Cappadocians.

The *Höllenfahrt* or *Höllensturm* goes as follows: “The gate-keepers of hell trembled, seeing Him as He came to worst the tyrant” (O 2,7:2); Hades drew near and having no strength to crush His body with its teeth it broke its jaws (O 7,1:2); the devil assaults Christ but having no power over Him is defeated (O 2,1:1; 7,1:1); Jesus gripped with the tyrant, hurled him from on high (O 2,4:2; 3,1:2; 4,6:1; 8,8:2), and bound him (8,3:2; cf. Ephesians 4:8); Hades is destroyed, deprived of its power and emptied (O

¹ *The Gospel of Nikodimos* 17-27 (Elliott 185-98); cf. *The Questions of Bartholomew, the Book of Resurrection* (Elliott, 655-72); *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, Levy 4.1; Dan 5.10-11; Benjamin 9.4-5 (ANF 8).

² See, for example, Melito, *Pascha*, 102; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6.6 (Stählin); Athanasios of Alexandria, *Ep.fest.* 10.10; Cyril of Alexandria, *Ep.pasch.* 5.1 (PG 77.472-3); 7.2 (PG 77.544-8); John Chrysostom, *coemeterio et cruce*, 2 (PG 49.394-5); *Matt.* 36.3 (PG 57.416-17); Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.* 45.1 (PG 36.624AB); Gregory of Nyssa, *De tridui inter mortem et resurrectionem* (*Opera*, 9.1.281-3, 293-4); Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.* 4.11-12; 14.1-19. For a brief summary see John Damascene, *Expos.* 73. For the analysis of these sources see Алфеев, *Христомос*, 9-123.

³ Cf. *The Odes of Solomon*, 15.8-10; 17.9-11; 22.1-7; 24.5-7; 42.11-20 (Charlesworth, 68, 75, 89-90, 98, 145-6); Ephrem, *Carm.* 36.11-18; *Carm.* 37-41; *Carm.* 52-68 (Beck), reproduced by Romanos, *Cant.* 38-45. For the analysis of Eastern Christian hymnography see Алфеев, *Христомос*, 149-96.

1,5:2; 1,6:2; 1,8:2; 3,4:2; 4,3:2; 8,8:1). So Christ “overthrew the strong one and declared me victor over death through His Resurrection” (O 7,5:2). Simultaneously, death and its power is abolished (cf. O 1,3:2; 1,4:2; 2,1:2; 2,8:2; 4,4:2; 4,5:2; 6,3:2; 7,1:2; 8,8:2). Full of fear, death as servant approaches Christ (O 6,1:2).

There are some fluctuations in the imagery. For example, sometimes we encounter the idea of the destruction of hell and death, and sometimes of the deprivation of their power. This displays the author’s dependence on different sources, or even different authorship. However, the general picture seems to be inspired by the Gospel of Nikodimos and Syrian hymnography.

Although John retains a certain anthropomorphism in the canons, he avoids artistic dialogues between the devil, hell and death, such as appear in Ephrem and Romanos,¹ because he is concerned to show that evil has no essence² (only the devil does). Death and hell are evil, but they have no essence, they are separations and condition, respectively. Neither hell nor death were created as hypostases with their own essence able to manifest themselves in some activity. Otherwise it might echo dualism. Thus it would be dogmatically incorrect to endow them with activity. In this case speaking would be such an activity. However, earlier hymnography under the veil of eloquence does not seem to consider this point.

As the result of the storming of hell light has shone in darkness (cf. O 6,7:2; 7,3:2; 8,3:2; 8,7:2).³ Having released the following groups from eternal bounds, hell and death, Christ finally rises on the third day raising with Himself His “soul”, “human nature”, “the whole man”, “me”, “the fallen and crushed”, “Adam”, “forefathers”, “the souls of righteousness”, “those in darkness”, “prisoners”, “the dead”, “the slain who

¹ Cf. Ephrem, *Carm.* 36.11-18; *Carm.* 37-41; *Carm.* 52-68 (Beck); Romanos, *Cant.* 38-45.

² See *Expos.* 92; 93.

³ See “*God is Light*” in Chapter IV, above.

slept forgotten in the tombs”, “all”, “us all” (cf. O 1,1:2; 1,3:2; 1,4:2; 1,5:1-2; 1,7:2; 2,3:2; 2,5:2; 2,9:2; 3,1:2; 3,4:2; 3,9:1-2; 4,6:1; 5,5:2; 5,8:2; 6,3:2; 6,5:2; 6,8:2; 6,6:2; 7,1:2; 7,6:1; 7,7:2; 8,4:2; 8,7:2; 8,8:2). So hell is emptied and resurrection is given to all. Appearing throughout all the aforementioned sources, the idea of the resurrection and salvation in general does not need to be questioned.¹ However, we have to consider the question: who has been raised,² which has always been topical in tradition. For example, Gregory Nazianzen asks: “What is the providential purpose of the double descent,³ to save all absolutely by His manifestation or only them that believe?”⁴ Unfortunately he leaves it unanswered, summoning his audience to meditate on it.

Although the discussion operates within the terminological framework of tradition adopted for the human mind, we have to remember that any meditation in this sphere will inevitably be under the influence of the human idea of materiality which is hardly compatible with the immaterial realm. Even *apophatic* and *cataphatic* theological principles have their own limits, since they are human. The full, ultimate meaning of Paradise, hell and resurrection is surely beyond our understanding. It is a mystery, but what follows below may seem too scholastic.

Perhaps firstly we need to give a brief answer to the question: what is the resurrection? In contrast to death which is the separation of soul and body, theoretically it is the reunion of soul and body⁵ in which the body somehow acquires immaterial properties as implied by Paul: “It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:44). In this light the bodily resurrection primarily took place in the

¹ Cf. *Expos.* 73.

² The same question is the leitmotif of the book of Bishop Hilarion Alfeyev – Алфеев, *Христос*.

³ The “double descent” in Gregory refers to the Incarnation and the descent into hell.

⁴ *Or.* 45.24 (PG 36.657A).

⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *De tridui inter mortem et resurrectionem* (*Opera*, 9.1.293.16-294.4); John Damascene, *Expos.* 71.18-20; 100.5-6.

human nature of Christ. As said above, it was conditioned by the unity of His hypostasis, wherein this resurrection is eternal. Also, Christians believe that such bodily resurrection has been given to those mentioned in Matthew 27:52: “The tombs were opened, and *many bodies of the saints* who had fallen asleep were raised”, and to the *Theotokos* and John the Theologian. At the same time not even the bodies of John the Baptist, the thief from cross, Apostles, let alone other saints, are raised but are present as relics. In this sense the bodily resurrection was an isolated event. In no way did it affect the bodies of all the dead at the time of Christ (billions of rising bodies would certainly have left a more significant trace in the world history of that period). So for the rest of the people the bodily resurrection will take place in the eschatological perspective at the second coming of Christ:

Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed (1 Corinthians 15:51-52, cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17).

According to the Creed, Christians believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ and expect the eschatological bodily resurrection of all the dead.¹ This is mentioned in the canons as well (cf. O 7,9:2). So the first answer to our question is this: the human nature of Christ, soul and body, was raised: soul from hell and body from the tomb. Hence we need to concentrate on the rising of soul from hell. To put it simply there are two principal destinations for the soul in the afterlife: hell and Paradise.² After the Fall Paradise was closed, and all souls after death descended into hell or Hades.³ This is a fundamental tenet of Eastern Christian theology. As we have seen from the *Oktoechos*, Christ with His soul descends into hell too, but He undertakes the storming of hell,

¹ See the Creed of the second Oecumenical Council in Tanner, *Decrees*, 24.

² Paradise can be compared with being in or with God, and hell with deprivation of God.

³ In English “hell” usually connotes the place of eternal punishment, but it is probably better to use “Hades” for the place where the righteous await the resurrection.

raises the souls of the dead together with His soul and reopens Paradise for them. Consequently, the souls are raised from hell into Paradise, but not necessarily all of them being reunited with their bodies as in the case of Christ. This might be called the spiritual resurrection, which is virtually identical with what is usually called salvation.

Now we have to appeal to the aforementioned research of Bishop Hilarion Alfeyev. Having analysed the sources of eastern and western tradition including hymnography (many of which were referred to above), he concludes that the Church teaching on the descent of Christ into hell is universal for any tradition. Christ destroyed hell and death, preached to the dead (cf. 1 Peter 3:18-21; 4:6) and gave salvation to all. However, there are different opinions: 1. some authors believe that Christ raised all from hell. This opinion is widespread and dominant especially in hymnography. 2. Others believe that Christ raised the righteous ones of the Old Testament including Adam. This opinion is dominant both in eastern and western tradition and is implied in iconography,¹ but it does not exclude other opinions. 3. Those who believed in Christ in hell after His preaching and followed Him from hell, were raised (cf. John Damascene, *Expos.*73). 4. Only those who had shown faith and piety in their lives followed Christ from Hades and were raised. This is dominant in western tradition.²

If we consider these points in the light of the two definitions of the resurrection, bodily and spiritual, it is possible to reconcile these opinions. It is very likely that the primary source of the second and fourth opinions is Matthew 27:52. It has been pointed out above, that this verse is concerned with bodily resurrection. Thus, “many *bodies* of the saints” can easily be identified with Adam, forefathers and righteous ones. But the bodily resurrection of some saints does not exclude the spiritual resurrection of all souls as expressed in the first opinion. Yet some souls could willingly reject the resurrection

¹ See above *Icons of the Passover* in Chapter IV.

² Алфеев, *Христос*, 304-6.

and not follow Christ, which is implied in the third opinion. So in my opinion such a variety could have appeared because of certain fluctuations in the commentaries on the precise meaning of Matthew 27:52.¹

Consequently, the second answer of *Oktoechos* to our question is: after Christ preached in hell (O 1,5:2), Adam (cf. O 2,3:2; 4,6:1; 6,5:2; 6,6:2; 8,8:2), the forefathers (O 3,9:2) and the souls of righteous (O 7,6:1) were definitely raised,² but very likely they also experienced the bodily resurrection as implied in Matthew 27:52. At the same time the majority of the Patristic and liturgical texts, including the *troparia* of the *Oktoechos*, indeed witness to universal spiritual resurrection: all the dead and prisoners were raised, and hell was left empty (cf. O 1,3:2; 1,5:1-2; 1,7:2; 2,5:2; 3,1:2; 3,4:2; 3,9:1; 5,8:2; 6,3:2; 7,7:2; 8,4:2; 8,7:2).³ Nowhere in the *Oktoechos* have we encountered an idea that anybody was deprived of this salvation.⁴

The idea of universal salvation unfolds further when the author identifies himself with Adam and Christ (or more precisely with Christ's human nature), saying that "I" have been raised (cf. O 1,1:1; 1,3:1-2; 2,3:2; 2,8:2; 5,1:2; 6,4:2; 6,5:1-2; 7,3:2; 7,5:2; 8,5:2; 8,6:1), or "we have all been raised" (cf. O 1,6:2; 1,7:2; 6,9:2). This is of course conditioned by the idea of human consubstantiality as the central principle of Orthodox Christology. This idea implies that any saving achievements of Christ spread in human nature and can be shared by all. The sharing of bodily resurrection of course primarily refers to the eschatological perspective. Simultaneously, spiritual resurrection already

¹ Cf. John Chrysostom, *Matt.*88.2 (PG 58.776-8); Cyril of Alexandria, *Matt.*314 (Reuss).

² Cf. Matthew 27:52; Hippolytos of Rome, *antichrist*, 26 (Achelis); Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.*14.19. The idea of the raising of Adam occurs in the *Oktoechos* very often, whereas the raising of the righteous only in the five out of a hundred texts – Алфеев, *Христос*, 215-20.

³ Cf. 1 Peter 3:18-21; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.*6.6; Athanasios, *Ep.fest.*10.10; Ephrem, *Carm.*36.11-18; *Carm.* 37-41; *Carm.* 52-68 (Beck); Romanos, *Cant.*45. The idea of the universal salvation from hell occurs approximately in seventy five out of hundred texts of the *Oktoechos* – Алфеев, *Христос*, 228, 237, 244. It is also central for *Triodion* and *Pentecostarion*.

⁴ Алфеев, *Христос*, 245.

belongs to “me” and to “us all.” Since death and hell have been defeated and Paradise reopened, there are no objections for our souls to be raised, unless it is against our will.

The Resurrection is a transcendental event not limited by time. It belongs equally to those who were in hell when Christ descended therein, and to all the following generations of people as appears from the *Oktoechos*.¹ Commencing in baptism as in burial, spiritual Resurrection unfolds in the life of the Christian, reaching its culmination in the union with God after death.

Apokatastasis

In order to establish the place of this teaching of the *Oktoechos* in tradition, we need to compare the universal salvation of the *Oktoechos* with eschatological *apokatastasis*.

Proposed by Origen² as the idea of the cyclic restoration of pre-existent souls, *apokatastasis*³ made its way to Gregory of Nyssa who attempted to cleanse it from Origenism and to incorporate it into tradition. In the final resurrection all souls will be united with their bodies but not all of them will be counted worthy of God and Paradise. Nevertheless, God is Love and created all for communion with Him. So Gregory suggests that those unworthy of God will be obliged to undergo purifying punishment in order to reach *apokatastasis* or final restoration of the union with God. This should also be the case for the devil and demons.⁴ Thus Gregory echoes 1 Corinthians 15:22-28.

The fifth Oecumenical Council (553), however, anathematised Origen and confirmed the anathemas (of 543) of Emperor Justinian against him. One of Justinian’s anathemas reads thus:

¹ Алфеев, *Христос*, 224.

² Cf. *Princ.* 2.8.3 (Crouzel).

³ The term is derived from Acts 3:21.

⁴ *Or.catech.* (Opera 3.4.45-9, 86-93).

If anyone says or thinks that the punishment of demons and of impious men is only temporary, and will one day have an end, and that a restoration (*apokatastasis*) will take place of demons and of impious men, let him be anathema (9).¹

The Anathemas were intended against Origenism which was especially widespread in sixth century monastic circles, where it served as the basis of a certain type of spirituality. The Origenist tradition was stronger in Palestine than elsewhere.²

The *apokatastasis* of Origenism is largely platonic and based on the ideas of the pre-creation of souls, their cyclic return or restoration to the original spiritual state, and their final dissolution in the Godhead. On the other hand the *apokatastasis* of Gregory of Nyssa is not totally alien to Eastern Christianity, being based on the fundamental Christian premises that God is Love, that the perfect human being is twofold consisting of body and soul subject to deification, and that evil is not co-eternal with God and has its end. Moreover, such *apokatastasis* can be found in Gregory Nazianzen.³ We need to distinguish these two branches of *apokatastasis* and remember that the Council condemned that of Origenism.⁴

From the Palestinian *Oktoechos* we have assimilated the idea of universal salvation. Might it echo the universal restoration in Palestinian Origenism? It is unlikely. The *Oktoechos* is concerned with the bodily resurrection and the risen body will be subject to universal salvation as well as the soul, while the *apokatastasis* of Origenism involves souls only. Also there is no single text in Christian hymnography

¹ ACO 1.III.214.4-6.

² Origenism had been propoganded especially in the new Laura. Origenist monks split in two parties: the Isochrists and the Protoktists. See Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Sabae*, 197; *Vita Cyriaci*, 230 (Schwartz); J.Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1975), 47-52; D.Hombergen, *The second Origenist controversy: a new perspective on Cyril of Scythopolis' monastic biographies as historical sources for sixth-century origenism*, *Studia Anselmiana* 132, (Roma: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 2001); *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church*, 1195.

³ Cf. *Or.*30.6.

⁴ Cf. Алфеев, Григорий, 394; В.Лурье, *Святой Григорий Нисский, Об устройении человека, Послесловие*, (Санкт Петербург, 1995), 157.

concerned with the salvation of demons. Finally, John Damascene knew the danger of Origenism and would not allow its ideas to flow into Orthodox hymnography:

Origenists... reject the [bodily] resurrection of the dead (*Haeres*.64).

You that reject the resurrection of bodies go to the grave of Christ and be taught that the flesh of the Giver of life was slain and rose again in confirmation of the final Resurrection, for we hope (O 7,9:2).

On the other hand, it can echo the “human component” of *apokatastasis* of both Gregories as it is based on the same premises. The *Oktoechos* is concerned with the Love of God which saves man, duality of human nature, its deification and the destruction of hell whose power over humankind will not last forever.¹ However, the *Oktoechos* does not clarify whether it means the end of punishment. Salvation and punishment are a matter of free will. What if the Love of God is a punishment for those who reject it, or is conscience a punishment? John Damascene in the chapter on the final Resurrection does not speak of hell but of the eternal fire as the means of punishment.² We have already seen that tradition associates the Godhead with fire.³ Will this fire be comforting for the righteous and punishing for sinners?⁴ “Again we face questions that do not have simple answers.”⁵

Redemptive Changes

The theme of redemptive changes runs in all the *troparia* and their imagery. The canons gain theological significance largely through this theme. The changes are not

¹ Cf. *Triodion, Holy Saturday, Matins, canon*, ode 6:3 (E.Lash <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/HWSat-M.htm> 27.07.2004).

² *Expos.* 100.123-31.

³ Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.* 40.36. See above EC 9:1 in Chapter II and “*God is Light*” in Chapter IV.

⁴ Cf. Basil, *Hom. Psalm* 28:7, (PG 29.297AC).

⁵ Алфеев, *Христос*, 272.

abstract, and three of them can be put forward as theological emphases of the *Oktoechos*: 1. from passions to dispassion, 2. from corruption to incorruption, 3. from death to life.

Passions – Dispassion

Πάθος is a complex term, the analysis of which is a theme for a separate dissertation.¹ Here I shall only briefly outline its meaning. The term has been present in anthropology from the time of early Greek philosophy. For Plato it implies different emotions or desires in human soul. They are positive if kept in harmony.² Aristotle produces the following list of πάθη: “desire, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, friendship, hatred, longing, jealousy, pity, and generally those states of consciousness which are accompanied by pleasure or pain.”³ Unlike virtues and vices, which imply our personal choice, πάθη, being present within us without choice,⁴ are neutral. For the Stoics it was characteristic to use the language of disease for passion. According to Stobaeos, Zeno gave the following definition of passion: “πάθος is an excessive impulse,”⁵ the movement contrary to nature. In the vast majority of instances of Philo’s use of πάθος, the meaning is “emotion” in the sense of the Stoic doctrine of πάθη.⁶

Πάθη in Septuagint are emotions, bad rather than pure natural impulses. The plural of πάθος is almost exclusively used in 4 Maccabees. In origin a “passion” is

¹ For the theme in general see R. Sorabji, *Emotions and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000).

² Cf. *Phaed.* 253d–254b (Burnet).

³ *Eth. Nicom.* 2.4.1105b (Bywater).

⁴ *Eth. Nicom.* 2.4.1106a.

⁵ *Testimonia* 1, 206 (Arnim). See J. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 27.

⁶ See *TDNT*, 5.904–7.

something that one suffers, something that happens to one. In the New Testament πάθος is mainly associated with libido (cf. Romans 1:26; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:5), whereas suffering or natural passion is usually associated with πάθημα (cf. Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 1:5–7; Galatians 5:24; Philippians 3:10; Colossians 1:24; 2 Timothy 3:11; Hebrew 2:9; 10:32 and 1 Peter 1:11; 4:13; 5:1–9).

For the Fathers πάθος was the usual word to convey the disfigured condition of the emotional life, although the term was understood with great fluidity.¹ Clement of Alexandria gives a definition of passion very similar to that of the Stoics: “Passions are a movement of the soul contrary to nature, in disobedience to reason”.² Gregory of Nyssa affirms that passions are essentially inevitable attributes of the soul’s embodiment, which the soul shares with animals and that initially man did not have “the elements of passion and mortality,”³ which would be incompatible with his divine image.⁴ Nonetheless they can be transmuted to a form of virtue, “for anger produces courage, terror caution, fear obedience, hatred aversion from vice, the power of love the desire for what is truly beautiful; high spirit in our character raises our thought above the passions... and so we find that every such motion, when elevated by loftiness of mind, is conformed to the beauty of the divine image”.⁵

The concept of passions became integral to asceticism, its precise manifestation being found in John Klimakos. He compares the domination of man by passions to slavery,⁶ reflecting the fallen state of humankind. He also uses the language of “disease”

¹ See Lampe, *Lexicon*, 992.

² *Strom.*2.13 (Stählin).

³ *Virg.*12 (*Opera*, 8.1.298.5-6).

⁴ *Dialogus de anima et resurrectione*, (PG 46.57C).

⁵ *De opificio hominis*, 18.5 (PG 44.192-6).

⁶ *Scala* 27 (PG 88.1096C).

for passions¹ like the earlier authors.² Sometimes πάθος is synonymous with vice,³ or with demons.⁴ The idea of eight passions is integral to monasticism,⁵ and goes back to Evagrius who gives a list of eight evil λογισμοί: gluttony, πορνεία, avarice, sadness, anger, ἄκηδία, vainglory and pride.⁶ It corresponds to the eight major sins. Referring to Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor is also concerned that the misuse of natural impulses originates and constitutes passion.⁷ So in monastic outlook passions are the result of the Fall, and signify the loss of the primordial beauty of the soul; they are natural impulses, distorted by human misbehaviour.⁸

Πάθος is also a very important Christological term. Here is its definition by John Damascene:

Πάθος is a word with various meanings. It is used in regard to the body, and refers to diseases and wounds, and again, it is used in reference to the soul, and means desire and anger. But to speak broadly and generally, passion is an animal affection which is succeeded by pleasure and pain. Again, the definition of passions of the soul is this: passion is a sensible activity of the appetitive faculty, depending on the presentation to the mind of something good or bad. But passion in general is defined as a movement in one thing caused by another. But in another sense energy is spoken of as passion. For energy is a movement in harmony with nature, whereas passion is a movement at variance with nature. Energy may be spoken of as passion when it does not act in accord with nature. But it is not every energy of the passionate part of the soul that is called passion, but only the more violent ones, and such as are capable of causing sensation: for the minor and unperceived movements are certainly not passions, therefore it is a sensible activity or energy (*Expos.* 36.1-29).⁹

¹ *Scala* 1 (PG 88.636A); 26 (PG 88.1016B); 27 (PG 88.1097C).

² Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 1.2.

³ *Scala*, 26 (PG 88.1028A).

⁴ *Scala*, 4 (PG 88.688C); 26 (PG 88.1025D).

⁵ *Scala*, 26 (PG 88.1013B); 26 (PG 88.1021C); 27 (PG 88.1109A); *Ad Past.* 100 (PG 88.1205A).

⁶ *Pract.* 6. For the origin of the scheme of seven or eight passions see Kordochkin, *Climacus*, 77-78.

⁷ *Cap.carit.* ii.15-17, 33, 75; iii.3-4, 86; iv.14.

⁸ Kordochkin, *Climacus*, 87.

⁹ Cf. Nemesios, *nat.hom.* 16-17 (Morani, 73-6).

Concerning the Natural and Innocent Passions

We confess that Christ assumed all the natural and innocent passions of man... save sin. For the natural and innocent πάθη are those which are not in our power, but which have entered into the life of man owing to the condemnation by reason of the transgression; such as hunger, thirst, weariness, labour, the tears, the corruption, the shrinking from death, the fear, the agony with the bloody sweat, the succour at the hands of angels because of the weakness of the nature, and other such like passions which belong by nature to every man. Our natural passions were in harmony with nature and above nature in Christ. For it was with His will that He hungered and thirsted and feared and died (*Expos.64*).¹

When John speaks of “natural” he means twofold human nature consisting of soul and body. Referring to the bodily passions or those of the soul we can attribute them equally to soul and body within one hypostasis.² Natural passions, whatever meaning we take, belong to the humanity of Christ. Passions in Christ are controlled by His will and do not, therefore, result in sin. “Blameless passions” are among the activities or energies of human nature of Christ.

As we have seen, the meaning of πάθη also includes suffering. It became central yet controversial to Christology. On the one hand God is dispassionate, on the other, God suffered. Thus Paul speaks of the crucified Lord of Glory (1 Corinthians 2:8). In Ignatios of Antioch we find πάθους Χριστοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ.³ Gregory Nazianzen makes it essential for the doctrine of salvation: “We needed a God made flesh and put to death,”⁴ or “θεῷ παθητῷ κατὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας”.⁵ He also uses such expressions as τοῦ ἀπαθοῦς πάθουσιν,⁶ blood of God, or crucified God.⁷ The Creed proclaims faith in

¹ Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.45.27* (PG 36.660CD-661A).

² Cf. *Expos.27.1-6*.

³ *Rom.6.3* (Funk).

⁴ *Or.45.28* (PG 36.661C).

⁵ *Or.30.1.10-11*.

⁶ *Or.30.5.29*.

⁷ *Or.45.19, 22* (PG 36.649C, 653AB).

the incarnate Son of God crucified, suffered and buried.¹ This is precisely what Cyril of Alexandria was concerned with in his anathematism twelve against Nestorios affirming the suffering of the Word in the flesh.² The followers of the Antiochene tradition ascribed all sufferings to human nature and could not accept the explanation of Cyril.³ Indeed, as Orthodox and Nestorians concluded, in Monophysitism suffering threatened to pass to the divine nature.⁴ However, seventy years later after Chalcedon the idea of *Theopaschism* was intended to become the means of reconciliation rather than debate. Proposed by the Scythian monks,⁵ *Theopaschism* was taken up by Justinian as a promising point of reconciliation of Orthodox and Monophysite. Both Orthodox and Monophysite accepted the formula “one of the Trinity suffered in the flesh” (its core – “*unus ex Trinitate passus*”), and neither of them accepted any suffering of the Godhead.⁶ The formula was harmless for Orthodoxy, if understood with reference to the two natures coinhering in one hypostasis. And so it became part of Cyrilline Chalcedonianism affirmed by the fifth OEcumenical Council (553). However, S.Hovorun points out, there is still a difference between Chalcedonian and Severan *theopaschism*: whereas the former is dyenergist, the latter is monenergist.⁷

John Damascene’s contemplation of the suffering of Christ dwells on the hypostatic unity of two coinhering natures and the principle of *communicatio idiomatum*, which are vital for interpreting Cyrilline Chalcedonianian *theopaschism*:

¹ See the definition of the second Oecumenical Council in Tanner, *Decrees*, 24.

² Tanner, *Decrees*, 61.

³ See above *Christology of John Damascene* in Chapter I.

⁴ See Meyendorff, *Christ*, 72.

⁵ They ascribed their theopaschite formula “*unus ex Trinitate incarnatus et passus*” to Proklos of Constantinople. See M.Richard, «Proclus de Constantinople et le theopaschisme», *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 38 (1942), 303-331; Hovorun, *Controversy*, 62-3.

⁶ Therefore “theopaschism” can be used only as a technical term.

⁷ Hovorun, *Controversy*, 61 see also 61-75.

When we speak of His hypostasis, whether we give it a name implying both natures, or one that refers to only one of them, we still attribute to it the properties of both natures (*Expos.*48.27-9).

The Word appropriates to Himself the attributes of humanity: for all that pertains to His holy flesh is His: and He imparts to the flesh His own attributes by way of communication in virtue of the interpenetration of the parts one with another, and the oneness according to hypostasis, and inasmuch as He who lived and acted both as God and as man, taking to Himself either form and holding intercourse with the other form, was one and the same. Hence it is that the Lord of Glory is said to have been crucified, although His divine nature never endured the Cross... For the Lord of Glory is one and the same with Him who is in nature and in truth the Son of Man, that is, who became man, and both His wonders and His sufferings are known to us, although His wonders were worked in His divine capacity, and His sufferings endured as man. (*Expos.*47.75-87).

The Word of God suffered all in the flesh, while His divine nature which alone was dispassionate remained void of passion. For since the one Christ, who is a compound of divinity and humanity, and exists in divinity and humanity, truly suffered, that part which is capable of passion suffered as it was natural it should, but that part which was void of passion did not share in the suffering. We say that God suffered in the flesh, but never that His divinity suffered in the flesh, or that God suffered through the flesh (*Expos.*70.1-14).¹

Since the hypostasis of the incarnate Christ consists of His two natures, "Christ acts according to both His natures, and either nature acts in Him in communion with the other".² "His divinity was joined to the suffering flesh, yet remaining without passion fulfilling the saving passions".³ The climax of suffering is achieved in Gethsemane and on Calvary. The sufferings leading to death followed by the resurrection, resulted in the abolishment of passions and the ἀπάθεια of Jesus' humanity. This ἀπάθεια can be shared by all.⁴ Thus the anthropological concept of πάθος is integral to the Christological concept of suffering.

Dispassion or ἀπάθεια can be considered as the opposite to πάθος, whatever meaning we take. The term ἀπάθεια occurs in Plato, where it signifies being unaffected

¹ See above *Christology of John Damascene* in Chapter I.

² *Expos.*59.177.

³ *Expos.*59.165.

⁴ cf. *Expos.*74.

by either pleasure or pain.¹ It became central to the Stoic philosophy.² The terminology of ἀπάθεια is absent from the Scripture yet present in Christianity. Ignatios of Antioch,³ Athanasios⁴ and Gregory Nazianzen⁵ apply it to the divinity or to Christ as God. Justin Martyr spoke about ἀπάθεια (and ἀφθαρσία) of “the worthy”⁶ not only in eschatological terms, but also as categories of pre-fallen human nature.⁷ Clement of Alexandria⁸ was the first to introduce ἀπάθεια into Christian ethics as a central term. It became fundamental to Evagrios, designating, for instance, a solid emotional stability.⁹

Monasticism distinguishes two different spiritual levels: controlling passions and destroying them, the latter being superior to the former, resulting in ἀπάθεια. For example, for Klimakos this means gathering all disorientated impulses, and transforming them into the single impulse of love.¹⁰ Humility follows obedience, ἀπάθεια follows humility,¹¹ but above all it is the result of divine collaboration. As Fr Andrew Kordochkin also writes, “defining ἀπάθεια as “Heaven on earth,”¹² the “celestial palace of the Heavenly King,”¹³ “Heaven of the mind within the heart”,

¹ *Philebus* 21e (Burnet).

² See F.Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms: a Historical Lexicon*, (NY: New York University Press, 1967), 18-19.

³ *Eph.*7.2; *Polycarp* 3.2 (Funk).

⁴ *Incarn.*26.1; 54.3.

⁵ Cf. *Or.*17.12; *Or.*26.13; *Or.*29.2,4; *Or.*30.5; *Or.*39.13; *Or.*40.45.

⁶ Cf. *Apol.*1.10.2; *Apol.*1.58.3; *Apol.*2.1.2; *Dialog.*45.4; 46.7.

⁷ *Dialog.*124.4.

⁸ *Strom.* 6.9.71-2.

⁹ *Pract.*56; 67.

¹⁰ Kordochkin, *Climacus*, 92.

¹¹ *Scala*, 4 (PG 88.709D).

¹² *Scala*, 29 (PG 88.1148B).

¹³ *Scala*, 29 (PG 88.1149D).

Klimakos immediately makes the reader recall the “Kingdom of heaven” of the Gospels”.¹ So in general ἀπάθεια is the natural harmonic state of the soul or human nature. However, in Christianity and in asceticism it does not mean insensibility, or total suppressions, or inactivity.

In John Damascene ἀπάθεια is an ontological concept largely associated with Christ. Primarily ἀπάθεια is characteristic of the Godhead and of the pre-eternal birth of the Son.² God wanted Adam to be dispassionate³ but turning his mind from God in the Fall, he became passionate instead.⁴ Incarnate Christ is passionate according to His humanity and dispassionate according to His Godhead,⁵ yet these properties interpenetrate.⁶ Moreover, after the resurrection ἀπάθεια also ontologically belongs to His human nature (which we share), but it does not mean human inactivity.⁷ Universally ἀπάθεια will be ontologically present in humanity only after the eschatological bodily resurrection.⁸ As a monk John, of course, is familiar with the ascetic notion of ἀπάθεια which primarily belongs to the soul and can reflect on the body. But because he is concerned that ontological ἀπάθεια takes place after the resurrection, since human nature is twofold, for him ascetic ἀπάθεια in this life is only part of the ultimate ἀπάθεια. Yet even in its ultimate form ἀπάθεια of humankind differs from the ἀπάθεια of the Godhead.

¹ Kordochkin, *Climacus*, 93. Cf. Evagrius, *Pract.*2.

² Cf. *Expos.*8.5; 8.63-5; 8.81-3; 14.4.

³ Cf. *Expos.*25.25.

⁴ Cf. *Expos.*44.64.

⁵ Cf. *Expos.*48.31.

⁶ Cf. *Expos.*48.42; cf.70.

⁷ Cf. *Expos.*72.27.

⁸ Cf. *Expos.*100.97.

On the basis of this exposition we shall now look at how the *Oktoechos* operates with πάθος and ἀπάθεια. In the majority of instances πάθος appears in the Christological context where it means suffering. John frequently employs such *theopaschite* expressions as crucifixion of the Lord (cf. O 1,9:1; 2,6:1; 5,5:1; 6,3:1; 6,6:1; 6,8:1; 7,3:1; 7,7:1; 8,7:1); wounds of the Lord (cf. O 1,6:1; 1,7:2; 2,5:2; 3,4:1; 6,6:1); blood of the Lord and God (cf. O 2,6:1; 2,7:1; 3,7:2; 4,7:1; 5,4:2; 5,9:2; 8,6:2); πάθει of the Word (O 1,8:1), of Christ (O 3,6:2), of the Creator (O 2,3:1; 8,5:1), of God (O 2,4:1; 6,7:1), that could be derived from similar expressions of Paul, Gregory Nazianzen and Cyril of Alexandria, mentioned above. They are typically Alexandrian but operate within the framework of Cyrilline Chalcedonian *theopaschism* displayed above in the exposition of John Damascene: in the same hypostasis of the Word one nature suffers and another is above all suffering. In the context of the *Oktoechos* the aforementioned expressions appear together with images clearly demonstrating the duality of natures: *God* took *animated flesh* subject to suffering (cf. O 3,1:2); He willingly assumed passion of His immaculate *flesh* (cf. O 4,4:1); the *Word of God and Maker* is hung on a tree, suffering in the *flesh* (cf. O 3,9:1); He gives salvation through His suffering, which He underwent in the *body* on the cross (cf. O 4,9:1; 2,4:1); His *living temple* (humanity) is destroyed by sufferings, the saving suffering of the *flesh* of Christ (cf. O 7,6:2; 8,3:1).

However, the intrigue unveils when we read the hymns of Severos *On the Passion of Christ who is God*, expressing *theopaschism* almost identically to the *Oktoechos*. The phrases italicised below did not belong to Severos' Greek hymns but were added by the Syrian translator. Nevertheless, these hymns clearly reflect the Monophysite tradition:

... You took upon you *to suffer* death by means of the cross *on our behalf in the flesh*, Christ, God... (66).

The earth saw and quaked – the signs, O Saviour, *that happened* after the cross showed that you suffered all in the flesh of your own will for us... (67, cf. O 1,7:1; 2,3:1; 6,7:1).

... I *now* await the trial of death in order that after undergoing it in the flesh I may render it dead and inoperative among you... (68, cf. O 4,4:2; 6,3:2).

...Even in the very sufferings, *mean and vile and very lowly which you endured* voluntarily *on our behalf* showed that you are Creator *and Lord* and renovating *artificer* of this universe. You took upon you *for the sake of our salvation* to be crowned with a crown of thorns; and *by this means* you signified that, having gathered *and compressed* together the sins of the *whole* circuit of the world, and having taken *these* upon yourself you carried them up *with you* upon the *revered* cross. Wherefore also you tore up *and blotted out* the handwriting of sin that was *laid* upon us... and having gone down *in your soul* to Sheol, you freed them that were *there* bound... (69).

Lord, who... stretched out your hands on the *wood of the venerable* cross, and *hung extended* upon it *of your own will*, and by the *same type* and figure showed *us* that you are the God of *all* the ends of the earth, who suffered *on our behalf* in the flesh by a voluntary passion... (70).¹

Although there may be some monenergist overtone that flesh for Severos and the Monophysite is merely a passive instrument of God the Word, the expressions of the last two *maneyātā* are particularly familiar to us from the analysis of the Christological imagery of the *Oktoechos* and the canons for Pascha and Antipascha. What is common to Severos and Monophysite and their opponent, John Damascene, using, as they do, similar expressions? How could John choose language in danger of being discredited? The obvious explanation is that they all referred to similar sources, those of universal authority. In addition to Scripture we can name Melito,² Gregory Nazianzen,³ Cyril of Jerusalem,⁴ Ephrem the Syrian, Cyril of Alexandria⁵ and other authors referred to up to the time of Justinian. In them we can find expressions and imagery equally recognised

¹ Brooks, *Severus*, PO 6.110-14.

² Cf. *Pascha*, 66; 100.

³ *Or.*30.5; *Or.*45.19, 22, 28 (PG 36.649C, 653AB, 661C).

⁴ Cf. *Catech.*13.12-29.

⁵ *Anath.* 12 (Tanner, *Decrees*, 61).

by Severos and John. I can also suggest that it was due to common popular sources that the Jacobites later adopted many Orthodox canons for their own use, albeit with slight modifications.¹ For the sceptic, however, these facts witness to a certain inefficiency of Melkite Orthodox hymnography in the employ of Melkite Orthodox Christology. Nonetheless these expressions may be controversial only when apart from their context, while they are perfectly Orthodox within the context of the *Oktoechos*. From this perspective, in the *Oktoechos* we can find texts unacceptable to Severos and Monophysites, which provide solid Orthodox background for a proper perception of the aforementioned controversial *troparia*. These texts (below) are integral to Neo-Chalcedonian Christology as reflected, for instance, in Maximos the Confessor and John himself. But in particular they dwell on the concept of two energies and wills. So the integrity of all *troparia* both controversial and non-controversial makes the *Oktoechos* an efficient instrument of Orthodox Christology:

As if it was not willed, you prayed that the wished for cup of your saving passion might pass; for you bear *two wills*, O Christ, corresponding to your *two natures* to the ages (O 5,8:1).

Christ remained untouched by passions as *impassive God* but in His *flesh* He undertook sufferings (O 6,9:1).

Shut your mouths, all you that with minds gone astray make sufferings harmonise with the Godhead; for it is the Lord of glory, crucified in the flesh, but not crucified in His divine nature, as One in two natures (O 7,9:1).

Giving to humanity hypostasis in yourself, O Word of God, and having suffered as man, you remained beyond suffering as God and so in two essences inseparably and unconfusedly we magnify you (O 8,9:1).

Christ's passions or sufferings have an ontological effect for human nature and for humankind: His suffering defeated the enemy (O 2,4:2); through His suffering death was destroyed and changed into life (cf. O 1,8:1; 8,4:2); His suffering justified Adam and returned him back to life (cf. O 5,6:1; 8,3:1); His blood redeemed the guilty (O

¹ See Heiming, *Kanones*, 47-51.

2,6:1); His wounds raised the dead (2,5:2); His suffering saved (2,7:1; 3,4:1; 6,6:1). Such redemptive implications are only possible if it is precisely the human nature of Christ consubstantial with us that undergoes suffering, and suffering is the voluntary activity of His human nature. In this connection John explores the philosophical idea, reflected by Gregory of Nyssa and John Klimakos, of the disharmony of human passions. The suffering of Christ restores their harmony: Christ “ascended the cross to cure my passions by the suffering of His willingly assumed immaculate flesh” (O 4,4:1). Here “my passions” are not abolished but cured, which means that they originally belong to human nature yet were damaged. This is also implied by the expression “we were *healed* by the wounds (O 1,6:1)”. The *Oktoechos* sums up this redemptive change by which the fallen man was freed from passions through sufferings and regained ἀπάθεια:

O Word of God, you remained free of passions when you participated in the sufferings of your flesh, but you release the humanity from passions, yourself becoming *Suffering for passions*, our Saviour, being the only dispassionate and all-powerful (O 6,9:1; cf. O 5,9:1).¹

How can we not marvel at Christ’s all-powerful divinity? To the faithful it pours out dispassion from His passion, while from His holy side it sheds a fount of incorruption and from His tomb eternal life (O 8,1:1).²

So the change from passions to dispassion in the *Oktoechos* is an integral part of the Orthodox contemplation of the Person of Christ. This change happens in the human nature of Christ and means the regaining of the primordial condition. The liturgical contemplation of the suffering of Christ in the terms of Orthodox *theopaschism* brings Christ-God nearer to the congregation. The language of “passions – dispassion” also betrays the monastic implications of the *Oktoechos*: the *Oktoechos* was a part of monastic daily office. In this light the ascetic message which the canons convey may be

¹ The last line emphasises that ἀπάθεια is δύναμις.

² Cf. Romanos, *Cant.* 44.prooim.

summarised thus: the struggle with passions and sufferings had already been experienced by Christ in its highest form and had resulted in salvation. Suffering is a necessary stage towards dispassion, and there is no dispassion without Christ. Any personal ascetic struggle with the passions is to be encouraged by His example. Dispassion and harmony are already potentially present in human nature, and Christ helps everyone to achieve them.

The change from passions to dispassion in the canons corresponds to the change from corruption into incorruption.

Corruption – Incorruption

The term φθορά basically means destruction, killing, death, decay, decease and corruption, and can be used both in a physical and an ethical sense. In Greek philosophy the term signifies the tendency of destruction as opposed to construction or coming into being. So φθορά is necessarily the antithesis of ἀφθαρσία. The main concern of philosophy is to know what abides and is immutable in the cosmos (ἀφθαρσία) during the states of changing, rising and perishing (φθορά). Φθορά characterises material while ἀφθαρσία the immaterial realm.

The meaning of φθορά as destruction or corruption of matter is common in Scripture (cf. Luke 12:33; 2 Peter 1:4; 2:12; 2:19; 1 Corinthians 3:17; Colossians 2:22). Sometimes it designates corruption of mind (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 4:22). In Galatians 1:8 it means eternal destruction. So it is used to denote the corruptibility of man, his subjection to death. However, the corruptibility must pass away, the dead will rise again as ἄφθαρτοι (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:50-52). Human ἀφθαρσία thus belongs to the eschatological realm (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:42, 50, 53). Man is corruptible in

antithesis to the incorruptible God, and ἀφθαρσία above all characterises the Godhead (cf. 1 Peter 1:4; 1 Timothy 1:17).¹

For example, John Chrysostom highlights various aspects of the terms and distinguishes different levels of corruption: corruption of the material body and corruption of the immaterial soul. The latter does not mean the dissolution of the soul but its eternal suffering:

Sin is corruption... The corruption of the body is the dissolution of the whole frame, and of its union. This then is what takes place also in the soul when sin enters. That sins work corruption is evident from that they render men base, and weak, and cause them to be sick and diseased. When we say that a virgin is corrupted, we say so, strictly speaking, not only because the body is defiled, but because of the transgression. And again, what would be corruption in the case of a house? Its dissolution. And so, universally, corruption is a change which takes place for the worse, a change into another state, to the utter extinction of the former one... Our body is corruptible, but our soul is incorruptible. Let us not make soul corruptible also [through sin]. The corruption of the body was the work of former sin; but sin which is after the Laver, has the power also to render the soul corruptible. However, this corruption of the body will put on incorruption, but the other of the soul, never; for where incorruption is, there is no corruption [in the soul]. Now if we shall depart into the next world having no corruption, we have that corruption [of the soul] incorruptible and endless; for to be ever burning, and not burnt up, ever wasted by the worm, is corruption incorruptible (*Ephes.* 24.5 PG.62.174-6).

Gregory of Nyssa often uses ἀφθαρσία in connection with ἀπάθεια and purity. 'Αφθαρσία is the divine property extending to those who are holy.² In Klimakos incorruption corresponds with purity too: "He who has achieved purity, while still living in the flesh, has died and risen, and from now on experiences the taste of future incorruptibility".³

Having given the background of Monophysitism it is quite easy to suggest that sinless Jesus the Son of God was incorruptible. This opinion was articulated by Julian of Halicarnassus (died after 527), the disciple of Severos and the head of

¹ Cf. Ignatios, *Rom.* 7.3; *Eph.* 17.1.

² Cf. *Dialogus de anima et resurrectione*, (PG 46.157A–160C).

³ *Scala*, 15 (PG 88.904C).

Aphthartodocetism.¹ As a starting point, he took Severos' idea of the dominating divine energy,² and developed it into his own conception of Christ's body. According to this conception, the body was completely incorruptible at all stages of Christ's life from the moment of the Incarnation. It was not subject to suffering and was always immortal. So Julian closely linked the single nature of Christ and its property: the single property of the incarnate Word implies bodily incorruptibility. Once the property is single, either the passions or the actions of Christ's single nature constitute a single energy.³ On this basis the followers of Julian maintained that Christ's suffering and crucifixion were illusory or seeming.

Indeed it is tempting to deprive deified humanity of passions and corruption, "so the doctrine of incorruptibility accommodates equally well with the Chalcedonian formula of two natures and with Monophysite Christology. It can be noticed from the mere fact that it drew followers as much from the ranks of those who favoured the Council of Chalcedon as among the Severan or Jacobite Monophysites".⁴ On the contrary, both Severos⁵ and Chalcedonian theologians⁶ asserted against Julian that corruptibility belonged to human nature as its property (both Severos and Chalcedonians admitted a duality in Christ's property: corruptibility of the body and incorruptibility of the Godhead), that Adam before the fall was incorruptible because he

¹ For the history of the controversy see Grillmeier, *Christ*, 2.2.79-110; 213-29; 2.4.45-52; Hovorun, *Controversy*, 53-6.

² See Grillmeier, *Christ*, 2.2.84.

³ See Grillmeier, *Christ*, 2.2.86.

⁴ Meyendorff, *Christ*, 88.

⁵ Severos declared Julian a follower of Eutyches and Manes – *Cens.lul.* (CSCO 245, 125.31-126.12); Cf. An article on the polemics of Severos and Julian with the translation of the arguments of the latter by О.Давыденков, *Юлиан Галикарнасский, Богословский вестник*, 9 (Москва, Православный Свято-Тихоновский Богословский Институт, 2002), 47-58.

⁶ Cf. *Doctrina patrum* 16 (Diekamp, 111-14).

participated in divine incorruptibility, but after the Fall his nature became corruptible. So corruption and natural mortality was transmitted from generation to generation, as a consequence of the separation between God and man after the Fall. Christ assumed the same corruptible human nature and gave it incorruption only in the resurrection.¹

The theme of φθορά in John Damascene initially appears in *Dialogus contra Manichaeos*, where he philosophically defines it thus:

Ἡ γένεσις ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ εἶναι παραγωγή, ἡ δὲ φθορὰ ἐκ τοῦ ὄντος εἰς τὸ μὴ εἶναι διάλυσις (“generation is the process of bringing from non-existence into being, but corruption is decay from being into non-being”).² Manichaeism is concerned that the evil principle or matter is characterised by φθορά.³ Here John points to the contradiction: if matter is corruptible how it can bring anything into being⁴ and how it can exist or pre-exist if it is corruptible of itself.⁵ So corruption implies that matter is not eternal. Matter was brought into being by God. God is the only ultimate origin.⁶ Corruption can virtually belong to anything that was originally brought into being by God and is separated from Him. So Adam was “supernaturally” incorruptible in Paradise, but due to the separation from God he returned to the corruptible mode.⁷

¹ Cyril of Alexandria, on whom both parties relied, is concerned that the body of Christ was corruptible by nature yet became incorruptible in the resurrection, which actually confuses Julian. Cf. Cyril, *De recta fide ad Theodosium*, (PG 76.1164C; 1165A); *Scholia de incarnatione Unigeniti*, 12 (PG 75.1383A). See R.Draguet, *Julien d'Halicarnasse et sa controverse avec Sévère d'Antioche sur l'incorruptibilité du corps du Christ*, Louvain, 1924, 130-1. In this connection J.Mejendorff discusses the role of the concept of the original sin and concludes that Christian East ignored, as a whole, that the original sin can be transmitted in nature – *Christ*, 88.

² *Manich.* 63.50-2.

³ Cf. *Manich.* 2.4.

⁴ Cf. *Manich.* 24.1-27.

⁵ Cf. *Manich.* 63.25.

⁶ Cf. *Manich.* 22.21-7; 57.1-9.

⁷ Cf. *Manich.* 70.14.

According to Manicheans, Christ could not share in the evil of matter and was fully good and incorruptible. Therefore “to Christians, Manichaeism meant first of all a docetic understanding of Christ”.¹ In this one can see common basis between Manichaeism and Aphthartodocetism, and in fact, Severos indeed called Julian a Manichee.² Aphthartodocetists can hardly be called dualists, but they appear to share with Manichees a similar view on the transmitting of sin in matter and on the incorruptibility of Christ which results in docetism of His humanity.

The contrast of φθορά and ἀφθαρσία unfolds in *Expositio fidei*. Ἀφθαρσία is an apophatic property of the Godhead displaying total transcendence of its being.³ But ἀφθαρσία could be inherited instead of primarily affecting the corporeal realm or the body, φθορά, if Adam would obey the commandment and grow in virtue.⁴ However, after the separation from God, φθορά took over human nature.

The meaning of φθορά is to some extent interchangeable with πάθος. Thus above we have seen that John mentioned φθορά among the natural or blameless passions voluntarily assumed by Christ.⁵ Encompassing all the passions, φθορά reaches its climax in the death and separation of soul and body.⁶ Displaying his involvement in the problem of Aphthartodocetism and referring to the aforementioned anti-Aphthartodocetic source of *Doctrina patrum*, John distinguishes φθορά, which implies not only the ability to corrupt, but also the whole spectrum of the consequences of sin in

¹ Louth, *John*, 61.

² *Cens.lul.* (CSCO 245, 125.31-126.12); cf. Meyendorff, *Christ*, 88.

³ Cf. *Expos.* 9.22-5.

⁴ Cf. *Expos.* 44.50-60.

⁵ *Expos.* 64.9.

⁶ *Expos.* 72.3-4.

the life of man, including passions and death, and διαφθορά - the complete dissolution of the body into elements. Christ underwent φθορά but not διαφθορά:

Wherefore to say, with that foolish Julian and Gaianos, that our Lord's body was incorruptible, in the first sense of the word (φθορά), before His Resurrection is impious. For if it were incorruptible it was not really, but only apparently, of the same essence as ours, and what the Gospel tells us happened: the hunger, the thirst, the nails, the wound in His side, the death, did not actually occur. But if they only apparently happened, then the mystery of the dispensation is an imposture and a sham, and He became man only in appearance, and not in actual fact, and we are saved only in appearance, and not in actual fact. But in the second meaning of the word "corruption" (διαφθορά) we confess that our Lord's body is incorruptible, that is, indestructible (*Expos.* 72.12-22).

Nonetheless, the change from φθορά into ἀφθαρσία did happen in the humanity of Christ in the resurrection, and this change is the mystery of human salvation (but it does not imply the confusion of divine and human properties):

After the resurrection of our Saviour from the dead, our Lord's body is incorruptible even in the first sense of the word (φθορά). For our Lord by His own body bestowed the gifts both of resurrection and of subsequent incorruption even on our own body, He Himself having become to us the first fruit both of resurrection and incorruption, and of dispassion (*Expos.* 72.23-7; cf. 74; 77.14-16).

Later on John explains that through the Eucharist we inherit incorruption as well.¹ Yet ultimate bodily incorruption will take place in the eschatological resurrection² after which bodies are no more subject to destruction.

Central to the mystery of the resurrection of Christ, this change is to be inevitably reflected in the *Oktoechos*. Echoing what can be called the fundamental assertion of any philosophy and religion, the author is concerned with the incorruption of the Godhead – the source of ἀφθαρσία (cf. O 3,9:2; 4,3:2; 5,1:2; 8,5:2; *Expos.* 9.22-5). On the contrary, Adam's body was created out of dust and returned to the same dust after the Fall.³ Several references to this dust illustrate the process of corruption or

¹ *Expos.* 86.37-9.

² *Expos.* 100.7-8, 92-106.

³ Cf. *Expos.* 44.50-60; Ephrem, *Carm.* 41.14.

disintegration as the property of human nature (cf. O 1,1:1; 1:3:2; 5,6:1; 5,6:2; 6,5:2).¹ Because of the Fall initiated by the devil, man or "I" became exposed to corruption and remain corruptible (cf. O 1,1:1; 5,1:2; 5,9:1; 7,3:2). Above we have seen that corruption was primarily the property of the material realm, but there is no objection to reading *troparia* through the prism of Chrysostom's quotation above concerned with the corruption of soul by sin. The climax of corruption for the human being is the corruption of death,² which apparently means the separation of soul and body followed by the dissolution of the latter (cf. O 3,9:2; 5,4:2; 5,5:2; 6,9:2; *Expos.* 72.3-4). In accord with Orthodox Christological teaching opposing Aphtharodocetism, the canons emphasise that the humanity of Christ was corruptible in this way. The change from corruption into incorruption is precisely the saving remedy that fallen humanity needed, as some *troparia* demonstrate, clearly reflecting the language of *Doctrina patrum* and *Expositio fidei*. Such a change was only possible in Christ because He was also the incorruptible God:

You have changed my clothing for incorruption, for incorruptibly you tasted in the flesh the corruption of death (5,5:2).

Christ assumed the corruption of death but preserved the body untouched by διαφθορά (6,9:2).³

Our flesh, assumed by the Creator, which was corruptible before the passion, after his passion and His rising was rendered inaccessible to corruption, and it makes mortals new (7,8:2).⁴

A very important message is that this redemptive change is accomplished by the passions or sufferings which somehow oppose corruption and initiate incorruption (cf. O 5,4:2; 5,6:1; 5,9:1; 8,1:1; 8,4:2). So in the resurrection the human nature of Christ

¹ Cf. Irenaeos, *Haer.* 5.21.2; Melito, *Pashca*, 49.

² Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. catech.* (*Opera*, 3.4.82); John Damascene, *Expos.* 77.45.

³ Cf. Leontius of Constantinople, *Hom.* 9.101-2 (Datema, 276).

⁴ Cf. O 1,1:1; 5,1:2; *Doctrina patrum* 16 (Dickamp, 111-14); *Expos.* 72.12-22.

became incorruptible. This change is shared by "me" and to a great extent associates with divinisation (cf. O 1,1:1; 1,1:2; 3,9:2; 5,1:2; 5,9:1; 6,5:2; 8,8:2).¹ It also immediately affects the dead and the forefathers (cf. O 1:3:2; 3,9:2). If in this instance the *troparion* is concerned with bodily incorruption, this contributes to our discussion above regarding those who experienced the bodily resurrection. Thus we have another indication that bodily incorruption after bodily resurrection was shared by the forefathers, whereas the rest enjoy spiritual incorruption. Some *troparia* may also imply that the incorruption of Christ, the source of Resurrection, is shared by the faithful in the Eucharist (cf. O 4,7:1; 5,6:2; 7,8:2). Nonetheless, the faithful die, which indicates that bodily corruption still prevails (however, this can be questioned in the case of the saints and incorruptible relics). If we take the idea of universal incorruption before bodily resurrection into account, we have to speak of partial spiritual and moral incorruption which for instance, according to Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa and Klimakos can be identified with control over passions, with purity, virginity, and inaccessibility to disease. Such contemplation of the change through familiar ascetic terms would be more appropriate for the monastic environment of John Damascene.

Consequently, the *Oktoechos* associates the change from corruption into incorruption both with the corporeal and spiritual realm. This is an ontological change of the whole matter which was corruptible as such but after the union with incorruptible God shares incorruptibility too (cf. O 3,9:2). Primarily concentrating on the human body, the change of corruption into incorruption echoes the change from passion to dispassion. By affirming that "one of the Trinity suffered in the flesh", one confesses precisely the corruptible state of human nature that God the Word came to save by

¹ Cf. *The Odes of Solomon* 15.8-10 (Charlesworth, 68); Romanos, *Cant.* 44.10; *Expos.* 72.23-7; 74; 77.14-16.

assuming it in the very condition in which Adam's sin had left it.¹ Thus the *Oktoechos* opposes docetism and monenergism in Christology. Finally, the changes from passion to dispassion and from corruption into incorruption display what we are and will be when death is no more.

Death – Life

Death is an inevitable ontological reality and fear of death is a natural property of the human being. However, from time immemorial death has not been seen merely as a limit but as the edge. Thus Plato defines death as separation of the soul from the body² after which the soul is free. Christianity considers death as a positive experience. The death of Christ puts the fact of death at the centre of theological attention, so much so that J. Pelikan calls the New Testament – “the gospel of death”.³ Christianity calls the faithful to participate in the death of Christ. Martyrs witness to their eagerness to accept death for Christ as a manifestation of such participation.⁴ The expectation of physical death was largely associated with the second coming of Christ.

The Fathers mention death in order to spell out the hope for life after death that is given by the Gospel message.⁵ In Christian ascetic tradition the memory of death is an ever-present leitmotif embodied in the concept of μνήμη θανάτου,⁶ which can be

¹ Meyendorff, *Christ*, 89.

² *Phaed.*67d; Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.*4.3.12; Gregory of Nyssa, *De tridui inter mortem et resurrectionem*, (*Opera*, 9.1.293.16-294.4); John Damascene, *Expos.*71.18-20; 100.5-6.

³ J. Pelikan, *The Shape of Death*, (London, 1962), 5.

⁴ Cf. Philippians 1:21; Ignatios, *Rom.*7.1-3.

⁵ See J. Pelikan's discussion of the Early Fathers' message in *death* (on Tatian, 11; on Clement of Alexandria, 33; on Cyprian, 55; on Origen, 77; on Irenaeos, 101). On Ignatios of Antioch, see T. Preiss, *La mystique de l'imitation du Christ et de l'unité chez Ignace d'Antioche*, *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 18, (1938), 197-241; on Gregory of Nyssa: J. Cuesa, *La angustia de la muerte*, in *La Antropología y la Medicina Pastoral de San Gregorio de Nisa*, (Madrid, 1946), 74-5; on Gregory Nazianzen: J. Mossay, *La mort et l'au-delà dans Saint Grégoire de Nazianze*, (Louvain, 1976), 46.

⁶ A summary can be found in N. Vassiliadis, “The Memory of Death”, in *The Mystery of Death*, trans. P. Chamberas, (Athens, 1991), 273-86. For example, Klimakos witnesses that remembrance of death and

defined as a disposition towards being ready to stand before God, associated with sorrow and discontent in the earlier stage, while in the later stage with love and desire for union with God.¹ Klimakos also summarises: “Remember your last end, and you will never sin”.² The attitude to death receives articulate expression in the liturgy which offers escape into the resurrection.³

We encounter both the moral and ontological meaning of death in John Damascene. But in *Expositio fidei* he seems to make little of the ascetic concept of μνήμη θανάτου. He primarily concentrates on the ontological meaning of death which he defines as the separation of soul and body along with Plato and Gregory of Nyssa. Death is put into the context of the Fall and redemption, and thus can be associated with φθορά, which entered into the world with the Fall.⁴ Elsewhere in the canons John emphasises the fallen state of humanity by appealing precisely to the language of mortality.⁵ Death is connected with sin, but since Christ was sinless death did not have any power over Him and He received it voluntarily in order to destroy it.⁶ The fact of His death also manifests the fullness of His humanity. The hypostatic union is what overcomes death:

He died as man and His holy soul was severed from His immaculate body, yet His divinity remained inseparable from both, from His soul and His body...

eternal judgment is an “incessant and ceaseless” topic of conversations between monks in a monastery which he had visited – *Scala* 4.15 (PG 88.685B).

¹ Kordochkin, *Climacus*, 110. Cf. the three theses of the concept of the mindfulness of death in Sakharov, *Sophrony*, 224-5.

² *Scala* 6, (PG 88.800A); cf. Sirach 7:36. Both N.Sakharov (*Sophrony*, 231-2) and A.Kordochkin (*Climacus*, 107-17) agree on the outstanding role of John Klimakos in the presentation of memory of death in the ascetic tradition.

³ Cf. P.Fedwick, *Death and Dying in Byzantine Liturgical Traditions*, in *Eastern Churches Review* 18, (1976), 152-61.

⁴ Cf. *Expos.* 42.5-8.

⁵ See “βροτός” in NC and EC above.

⁶ Cf. *Expos.* 71.4-17. See also *Christology of John Damascene* in Chapter I, above.

Although the soul was separated from the body topically, yet hypostatically they were united through the Word (*Expos.* 71.18-29).

The redemptive change from death to life unfolds in the life of Christ, achieving its fulfilment in the resurrection.¹

Through His incarnation, and baptism and passion and resurrection, He delivered our nature from the sin of our first parent and death and corruption, and became the first-fruits of the resurrection, and made Himself the way and image and pattern, in order that we, too, following in His footsteps, may become by adoption what He is Himself by nature (*Expos.* 86.30-4).

So the gloomy destiny of humanity was finally changed. The victory over death accomplished with the help of the cross is a fundamental principle of the Christian faith. This victory is shared by all in the same way as incorruption, i.e. in the Eucharist and at the *parousia*, but has to be initiated in baptism which symbolises death.² In the case of the saints John compares death with sleeping.³ The fact that people still die receives a new meaning: "Death is not the sealing of man's final destiny. It is the beginning of liberation, a passageway, a mysterious and inscrutable event that brings man closer to his final destiny, the deifying union, the transformation of his body-soul entity through the Resurrection".⁴ However, it is not death but life, and more precisely eternal life, which is the ultimate ontological reality in Christianity. God the Trinity is the only source of eternal life, and man is alive inasmuch as he participates in God.⁵ Theoretically the soul cannot die and therefore is initially subject to eternal life, but Christianity maintains that the ultimate eternal life commences in the bodily resurrection.

¹ See the image of Christ-Adam in *The Imagery of the Canons for the Resurrection*, above.

² Cf. *Expos.* 82.3-4.

³ Cf. *Expos.* 88.25-7; *Dorm.* 1.10.39.

⁴ Fedwick, *Death*, 156. cf. Athanasios, *Incarn.* 27.

⁵ Cf. John 11:25; 14:6; 17:3; *Trisagion Hymn* (Holy immortal); *Expos.* 8.19; 14.25; 59.155.

Now I shall put the canons into the framework of the change of death into life as explored in tradition. One may be surprised by the absence of allusions to the traditional concept of μνήμη θανάτου in the Resurrection canons and even find the opposite expression: “No more I am afraid of the return to the ground” (O 6,5:2).¹ This phenomenon can be easily explained by the structure of *Paraklitiki*. The ascetic memory of death and the remembrance of the dead is the theme of the Saturday office which contains, for instance, the famous *stichera nekrosima* attributed to John Damascene: “I weep and sob whenever I meditate on death”.² Thus μνήμη θανάτου operates throughout weekly services and especially in Saturday office. Yet it recedes on Sunday, when the Resurrection canons declare the concept of μνήμη ἀναστάσεως,³ breaking through with joy on the day of Resurrection. The joy of Resurrection is supposed to dispel the fear of death.⁴ Thus both concepts coexist in the liturgy and in monastic life.

Throughout the canons John proposes an indisputable and fundamental Christian thesis that Christ-God is the only source of life and resurrection (cf. O 1,6:2; 2,1:2; 3,4:2; 3,9:2; 4,3:1; 4,4:2; 5,3:2; 5,6:2; 6,1:2; 6,3:2).⁵ We also encounter the expression “Life ἐνυπόστατος” identical with *Expositio fidei* 59.155. On the contrary, John reminds us of that universal mortality or corruption which entered into the world with the Fall and is shared by “me” (cf. O 1,3:2; 1,5:1; 2,3:2; 2,6:2; 2,8:2; 3,9:2).⁶ In order to accomplish redemption, in His human nature Christ voluntarily underwent death but being the source of life He abolished it and rose from the dead: “death is abolished by

¹ *Oktoechos, Tone 8, Saturday, Vespers.*

² See *Arabic* (Portillo, 182) and Greek (27-28) *Vitae* of John Damascene.

³ As an independent concept it exceeds the boundaries of the third thesis of μνήμη θανάτου: mindfulness of eschatological bliss serves to maintain the ascetic’s inspiration and helps to avoid despondency, drawn by N.Sakharov, *Sophrony*, 225.

⁴ For the love of life and the fear of death in Christ see Hovorun, *Controversy*, 330-8.

⁵ Cf. Melito, *Pascha*, 103.

⁶ Cf. Melito, *Pascha*, 49.

death”,¹ “death is consumed in a victory”, “mortality is swallowed up by life” (cf. O 1,1:2; 1,3:2; 1,4:2; 2,1:2; 2,8:2; 3,4:2; 3,6:2; 4,4:2; 4,8:2; 6,3:2; 7,1:1; 7,9:2; 8,8:2).² Likewise with dispassion and incorruption, achieved in the resurrection, immortality or eternal life is shared by “me” and by mortals universally: “by your rising you have clothed my mortality in immortality”, “changed the shadow of death into everlasting life” (cf. O 1,3:2; 1,5:1; 1,8:1; 2,1:2; 2,6:2; 2,8:2; 3,1:2; 3,4:2; 3,9:2; 6,1:2; 6,4:2; 7,5:2; 7,7:2; 8,1:1).³ The bodily resurrection of Christ is a confirmation of the final resurrection when the ultimate eternal life will commence for all (cf. O 7,9:2).

Conclusion

It is very difficult to produce a brief summary of such a significant theological repository as the *Oktoechos*. Nevertheless, I shall make a few general observations.

The *troparia* of the *Oktoechos* can be scrutinised both independently and consecutively. Being a complete piece, each *troparion* at the same time is integrated in a larger picture. From their analysis we have seen that the Scripture of the Old Testament is of great importance for Christianity. The integrity of the Old and New Testament is achieved in the liturgy where it appears as an integral redemptive history. Everyone is part of this history. Many images and scriptural interpretations in the *Oktoechos* might have been derived from or influenced by Cyril of Jerusalem.⁴ It is reasonable to suggest that the contemporary divine office of the Holy City already contained the scriptural readings and the appropriate images embodied in a hymnographic form. Palestinian liturgical tradition very likely preserved many such images from the time of Cyril to that of John Damascene who inherited them and incorporated into his canons. So the

¹ Cf. John Chrysostom, *Matt.*2.1 (PG 57.25) and *Easter Apolitikion*.

² Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:53-57; *Expos.*71.4-17.

³ Cf. Melito, *Pascha*, 101; Irenaeos, *Haer.*3.23.1; *The Odes of Solomon*, 15.8-10 (Charlesworth, 68); Ephrem, *Carm.* 36.18 (Beck); Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.*13.19; John Damascene, *Expos.*86.30-4.

⁴ See our references to Cyril in the course of the analysis of the *Oktoechos* and other canons.

origins of the *Oktoechos* obviously relate to the Palestinian liturgical tradition, and the Palestinian hieromonk, John Damascene has made a significant contribution into the formation of the *Oktoechos*.

The Resurrection canons are an elaborate and integral theological repository of scriptural and patristic allusions and imagery. All of them concentrate on the contemplation of the Person of Christ, yet this simultaneously implies the contemplation of human salvation. Moreover the canons emphasise the most important points in both contemplations. Cyrilline Chalcedonian Christology operates more efficiently in these canons even compared to those analysed above, because it employs the notions of two energies and two wills. In this connection the three redemptive changes clearly unfold Cyrilline Orthodox Christology to the extent that we can evaluate the apologetic significance of the canons.

Some *troparia* of the canons are iconographic in the sense that they correspond to the appropriate icons: the Crucifixion, the Entombment, and the *Anastasis*, which were already in use in Palestine at the time of the composition of the *Oktoechos*.¹

The canons display relevance for the monastic environment, yet their simple and popular traditional imagery prove their universal importance both for lay people and monks. This was undoubtedly so for the contemporaries of John Damascene for whom he composed these poems as prayers. The cyclical use of these poetic prayers in the context of the *Oktoechos* is also intended to keep the Person of Christ in the minds of the congregation. Subsequently the Great *Oktoechos* or *Paraklitiki* became the book that provides hymns and prayers for every single day of the year, thus making the life of the Christian a constant contemplation of Christ, His redemption, and His Church.²

¹ See above *Icons of the Passover* in Chapter IV.

² It is interesting to note that in medieval Russia where literacy and theology were far from being accessible to everyone, such liturgical books as the *Great Oktoechos* were virtually the only comprehensive source of Patristic theology and theological literacy available to everyone.

General Conclusion

The Church and its divine services are an embodiment and realisation of everything in Christianity. Here, in words and actions, are told the entire economy of our salvation, all of Sacred and Church history, all the goodness, wisdom, faithfulness and immutability of God in His deeds and promises, His truth, holiness and eternal might. Here we encounter a wonderful harmony in everything and an amazing logic both in the whole and in the parts. It is the divine wisdom, accessible to simple, loving hearts.¹

Those who touch the depths of Orthodox Christian liturgy, whether it be scholar, theologian, believer, or, perhaps, unbeliever often become fascinated by its treasures, as, for example, the famous Russian spiritual writer of the last century, John of Kronstadt, quoted above. The canon is a unique part of this treasure. Being a concise and precise exposition of theology, it opens a new dimension in Orthodox Christian tradition, as our exploration of the main Christological feasts of the liturgical year demonstrates. The liturgical evolution of these feasts, their content and theology, had reached its completion by the time of John Damascene, as was echoed in the canons, composed or influenced by him. The present thesis analyses thirteen canons. Those for the Nativity, Epiphany, and Transfiguration set out the criteria of the Orthodox liturgical contemplation of the Person of Christ. One of the Trinity, the Son of God and God, in His kenosis was incarnate and assumed complete human nature so that He became one person in two perfect natures, Godhead and humanity. The truth of the Incarnation and His redemptive ministry were manifest in the Epiphany and Transfiguration. The Transfiguration in particular revealed the truth about His transfigured and deified humanity. Moreover, in both events God the Trinity was clearly manifest to all. The canons for Easter, Thomas Sunday and eight Resurrection canons of the *Oktoechos* unfold the truth of human salvation accomplished by Christ, truth which from earliest times was recognised in the mystery of *Pascha*. They explain the saving achievements

¹ Иоанн Кронштадтский, *Мысли о Церкви и православном богослужении*, т.1, (Санкт Петербург, 1905), 185.

of Christ: restoration of fallen humanity, incorruption, resurrection, deification. Altogether the canons express the Church's faith in "God becoming man" and "man becoming god." This happens "today" in liturgical time, in which Christ is always present in His Church.

It is likely that these poems were contributed to the treasury of liturgical tradition by the Palestinian theologian and hieromonk, John Damascene. The original authorship of the first five canons appears to be highly possible. This is particularly evident from the correspondence of the canons to *Expositio fidei*. The rest of the poems bear strong evidence of John's authorship, corresponding to his theological prose and reflecting his apologetic interests. However, they largely incorporate the ideas and, perhaps, verses of earlier authors. In this sense John's authorship might include bringing together pivotal Orthodox ideas and giving them poetic shape. Byzantine hymnographers such as John used a rich array of literary techniques not least since they spoke about mysteries beyond the limits of human reason, grasped only by faith. These are difficult to explain in prose, but better served by poetry to help the faithful to comprehend.

The Holy Scripture is the main primary source of John's canons. These are largely based on scriptural images and allusions and often use the same plain scriptural language. Canons also operate as exegetical instruments. Moreover, liturgical poetry can be considered as the repository of the Orthodox exegetical tradition. The Old Testament allusions interpreted or referred to in the canons usually provide a figurative background for all redemptive events and corresponding feasts. In addition to the biblical canticles, canons operate within same set of Old Testament allusions. They unfold different aspects of the same stories in connection with different feasts. The general exegetical pattern for many of the stories, let alone the biblical canticles, initially appears in the canons for the Nativity and Epiphany. This conclusion echoes

Maximos' thought that "the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word contains the meaning of all enigmas and types of the Scripture".¹

The poems contain interpretations of and reflections on many episodes from the life of Christ and aspects of His teaching. The New Testament stories provide the actual framework for the canons which commemorate the event described. The Pauline comparison of Christ with Adam seems to be the most popular universal image, which unites Old and New Testament. Supplementing the New Testament stories, apocrypha are also not neglected. This is clearly seen in the Resurrection canons of the *Oktoechos* largely derived from the Gospels of Bartholomew and Nikodimos. So the Scripture lives in the divine office.²

From this perspective liturgical hymnography may well be seen by the Church as the continuation of scriptural divine revelation: "One can say that liturgical texts are a "Gospel according to the Church".³ The poems demonstrate the integrity of Old and New Testament and Christianity presenting one history of humanity and its salvation by God. Christ is one and the same God of the Old and New Testament. Considering the place of both the Old and the New Testament in hymnography and particularly in the canons, one can also metaphorically call the Orthodox liturgical texts the Bible of the Church.

Dominant among the primary patristic sources of John's canons are works of the Cappadocian Fathers and especially Gregory Nazianzen. Some influence of John Chrysostom and Romanos the Melodist can also be discerned. There are many striking similarities with Ephrem the Syrian. It seems that some of Ephrem's ideas could have come to John through Romanos. Thus the canons inherit many homiletic features.

¹ Maximos the Confessor, *Cap.theol.*i.66 (PG 90.1108A).

² For the role of Scripture in the divine office see Taft, *Hours*, 367-73.

³ Alfeyev, *Worship*.

John's laconic verses contain a synthesis of ideas that were the subject of entire theological treatises over many centuries. The canons of John Damascene acquired such significance in tradition that he can be placed alongside his favourite authors such as Gregory Nazianzen. John sees in the treatises and homilies of the Fathers theological criteria established in tradition and so does the Church in the works and canons of John. This shows the live continuity of Ecclesiastical tradition.

The present thesis has demonstrated the integrity of *troparia* within the canon, so that the canon could be analysed as an integral theological unit, albeit a compressed one. Its compression points to what is really vital for Church tradition and absorbed by the liturgy – Christian teaching on Christ and salvation is expressed in liturgical texts in theses. The canons correspond to many of John's *œuvre*, the correspondence with *Expositio fidei* being the most striking. The canons and *Expositio fidei* are united in some sense: the poems may seem to refer the listener or reader to this treatise for more explanations, details, and sources. Thus the compressed theology of the canons unfolds with the help of the treatise. Perhaps, such was John's original intention.

Throughout this thesis the nature of Christian tradition has been gradually unveiled. So tradition can be identified as that which is adopted and absorbed by the divine office. John's canons are integral to tradition: particularly to Palestinian theological and liturgical tradition. Moreover the exposition of Orthodox faith found in the canons make them a vital part of universal Orthodox tradition. So by the time of John Damascene and largely through his contribution, tradition was embodied in hymnography, and the divine office and liturgical feasts became an elaborate exposition of Christian teaching. In this respect the canons are theological repositories that actually encompass almost every Orthodox concept. The poems analysed in the present thesis should be especially valued for presenting the authentic Orthodox picture of Christ and a balanced Chalcedonian contemplation of His hypostasis. The Christology of the

canons is intertwined with Orthodox soteriology where a special role is given to the idea of the cosmic dimension of salvation, particularly to be found in Maximos the Confessor.

As we have seen, John Damascene belonged to the Orthodox Church that had to withstand the Nestorians, Monophysites, Aphthartodocetists, Monenergists, Monothelites, Origenists, Iconoclasts, Manicheans and Muslims. Therefore his poems reflect some apologetic implications, especially evident in the sphere of Christology. However, they also refer to more comprehensive Christological sources.

The theological significance of the canons, as demonstrated, strongly supports the theory of Bishop Hilarion Alfeyev that "liturgical texts are for Orthodox Christians an incontestable doctrinal authority, whose theological irreproachability is second only to Scripture. The theological authority of liturgical texts is even higher than that of the works of the Fathers because they have been accepted by the whole Church as a "rule of faith" leaving only pure and authoritative doctrine clothed by the poetic forms of the Church's hymns".¹

Although in some way the canon stands out in the liturgy, it is to be considered in the context of other liturgical elements: scriptural readings, hymns, prayers. Among hymns there are many *stichera*, probably, also written by John. In general these either echo or unfold the ideas of the canon: it becomes more comprehensible only in the company of other texts. In the feasts, we have analysed, John's canons usually accompany those of Cosmas. All these texts are supposed to provide a single integral picture of the feast. Above all, this picture is Eucharistocentric since the Eucharist is the axis of Christian life and the pinnacle of the liturgy. In many poems one can find an explicit or implicit reference to the Eucharist. Often such a reference provides a link

¹ Alfeyev, *Worship*.

between the event celebrated and this mystery. Similarly the poems regularly refer to the mystery of baptism.

Our selection of feasts and canons concentrates on Christology. Nevertheless, these feasts and canons are included in larger liturgical cycles: weekly and annual, and should be always considered in their contexts. The present thesis is in no way exhaustive. The restrictions imposed on its size did not allow us to include the analysis of other texts, not even those of Assumption¹ and Pentecost,² which continue the story of Jesus ministry and the cycle of the Twelve Great Feasts.

There are some ascetic ideas in the canons which could make them particularly acceptable to monks. Also the canons would seem to be more accessible to people with some theological education, or at least to those who have been through catechism. This is not surprising because helpful manuals of logic and theology such as *Expositio fidei* mentioned above, were quite popular at that time. Yet the simple and popular traditional language and imagery of the poems prove their universal importance even without auxiliary literature. They were certainly intended for everybody, both laymen and monks, since everybody in the Church prays and participates in the liturgy. With the help of hymnography, which is a variety of prayer, the Church applies the life of Christ to the life of its faithful. At the same time everyone can find in the liturgical poetry something special for his soul, a unique pattern of how to follow Christ and pray to Him.

Verbal images in the poems recall corresponding icons. By the time of John Damascene iconography was quite elaborate and had taken up its proper place, at least

¹ For the patristic comprehension of the Assumption see J.Davies, *He Ascended into Heaven, A Study in the History of Doctrine*, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1958). For the commentary on John's canon see Nikodimos, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 3.13-70; E.Lash, <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/asccan01.htm> 27.07.2004.

² For the commentary of the second canon by John of Arklas see Nikodimos, *Ἑορτοδρόμιον*, 3.167-220; E.Lash, <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/PentCan02noted.pdf> 27.07.2004.

in the Palestinian liturgical tradition. The integrity of word and icon is embodied in the liturgy serving the purpose of the Triumph of Orthodoxy.

The Palestinian liturgical tradition gradually influenced the Byzantine liturgical tradition, and the canon gradually replaced the *kontakion* which was used in the Byzantine Cathedral office even in the twelve century.¹ On the one hand, it is possible that the *kontakion* could have influenced the canon in some way, however, it is unknown if Palestinian authors composed kontakia. On the other hand, Germanos, the patriarch of Constantinople (deposed in 730, mentioned by John Damascene), did compose Palestinian-like *stichera* and canons: for example, some *stichera* for the Nativity and Epiphany, the canon for the Forefeast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross are attributed to him. Although he is only one individual, the case of Germanos may well indicate that the influence of Palestinian *typikon* on the Constantinopolitan office had begun at least half a century earlier than is usually considered.² John's poetry provided basic criteria for future liturgical development. Nonetheless, the massive influence began when Theodore (d.826) introduced Sabaïte practice, which was likely brought by Michael the Synkellos and his fellow-monks, to the Studios monastery. Studios monks not only adopted it, but also developed it further, composing many more canons and hymns. For example, the *Oktoechos* the origins of which are connected with Palestine and John Damascene, was developed into the *Great Oktoechos* or *Paraklitike* by Studios monks, not least of whom was Joseph the Hymnographer (d.883). Thus evolved, it then made its way back to Palestine in the X-XI cc.³ During that period and

¹ Louth, *John*, 253-5. Cf. A.Lingas, *The liturgical place of the Kontakion in Constantinople*, in C. Akentiev (ed.), *Liturgy, Architecture, and Art in the Byzantine World, Papers of the XVII International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Byzantiorossica*, (Moscow, 8-15 August 1991), 50-7.

² Cf. for example, Taft, *Hours*, 276.

³ А.Пентковский, *Константинопольский и иерусалимский богослужебные уставы*, 4.3, Журнал московской патриархии, 4, 2001, <http://212.188.13.168/izdat/JMP/01/4-01/14.htm> 27.07.2004.

later there appeared many hymns which under the famous name of John were struggling to find their way into the liturgy.

The tradition originating from Palestinian practice, in which canons play a significant role, spread to other local Orthodox Churches, where it still retains its vital place. It is interesting that in medieval Russia where literacy and theology were far from being accessible to everyone, liturgical books were virtually the only comprehensive source of Patristic theology and theological literacy widely available.¹

Moreover, some of *troparia* and hymns of John and Cosmas from earlier Melkite liturgical books took root in the Jacobite Church despite their Chalcedonism. This could be an indication that the universality of liturgical language could indeed help to overcome present divisions among Christians.

Unfortunately, the contents of liturgical books are not always accessible even to the average Orthodox believer. For example, take the problem of Church Slavonic – the language which is not understood by everyone. This is not to make a plea for reform of Orthodox services, but to suggest adopting practices, such as translations into modern languages, that would make their riches more accessible.

A long time ago John Damascene made the riches of theology accessible through the liturgy. He was one of those who greatly contributed to the union of theology and liturgy. Covering every single day of the year, the liturgy thus makes the life of the Christian a constant spiritual and theological contemplation of his or her faith. This is why it can be called the highest manifestation of Christianity, the ultimate living theology, which unites God and humankind.

¹ For example, the correction of the translations of liturgical texts by Russian patriarch Nikon in the seventeenth century caused the schism because people considered any amendments of liturgical books threatening to the Orthodox faith.

Abbreviations

ACO	Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum, E. Schwartz, J. Straub, R. Schieffer, eds., ser. 1, 19 vols. in 4, Berlin and Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter, 1927-74; R. Riedinger, ed., ser. 2, 4 vols. in 2, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1984-95.
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers, Edinburgh – Peabody, Massachusetts, 1885 - , repr. 1995 - .
CC (SG/SL)	Corpus Christianorum (Series Graeca/Series Latina), Turnhout: Brepols (1977-/1954-).
CPG	Clavis Patrum Graecorum, 5 vols., ed. M. Geerard, F. Glorie, CCSG, Turnhout: Brepols, 1974-87; supplement, ed. M. Geerard and J. Noret, 1998.
CS	Cistercian Studies, Kalamazoo, Michigan.
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, early vols. Paris, later vols. Louvain: E. Peeters.
DS	Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, ed. M. Viller <i>et al</i> , 16 vols. + index, Paris: Le Cerf, 1937-95.
DTC	Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique, Paris.
GCS	Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten [drei] Jahrhunderte, ed. By the Kirchenväter-Commission der Königlichen Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften [later, the Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin], Leipzig: J.C. Hinrich [later, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag], 1897 ff. [Neue Folge, 1995 ff.]
ICC	The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, Edinburgh.
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies, London.
LCL	Loeb Classical Library, London: Heinemann/Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1912ff.
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (2 series), Edinburgh – Peabody, Massachusetts, 1885 - , repr. 1995 - .
OC	Oriens Christianus, Leipzig: O. Harrassowitz, 1901 - .
OCA	Orientalia Christiana Analecta, Rome.
PG	Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca, 162 vols., ed. J. Migne, Paris, 1857-66.

PO	Patrologia Orientalis, Paris.
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien, im Auftrag der Patristischen Kommission der Akademien der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Heidelberg, München und der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur zu Mainz, ed. K. Aland and E. Schneemelcher, Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1964 - .
SC	Sources Chrétiennes, Paris: Le Cerf, 1942 ff.
SP	Studia Patristica
SVF	Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta, 4 vols, Leipzig, 1923-38.
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. G. Kittel, tr. G. Bromiley, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1965 - .
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur, founded by O. Von Gebhardt and A. Harnack, Leipzig, 1882-1943; Berlin, 1951 ff.

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- Sabel.* *Contra Sabellianos* [sp.], PG 28.96-121.
- Serap.* *Epistulae quattuor ad Serapionem*, PG 26.529-648.
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