

TO EXTEND THE SIGHT OF THE SOUL:
An Analysis of Sacramental Ontology in the Mystagogical Homilies of
Theodore of Mopsuestia

by

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Introduction

Introductory Remarks

This thesis consists of an identification of the presence of Platonist-Christian sacramental ontology within the mystagogy of Theodore of Mopsuestia. Mystagogy, a common catechetical practice of the early church, particularly that of the fourth and fifth centuries, was the teaching on the meaning of the ecclesiastical sacraments given, usually by a bishop, to those undertaking pre-baptismal catechetical training. This special teaching was distinct from, and given in addition to, the basic catechetical program which centred around Scriptural teaching and instruction on the Nicene Creed. The text we shall consider in this investigation is Alphonse Mingana's original translation of Theodore of Mopsuestia's *Commentary on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*.¹

The specificity of the current question requires that we "zoom out," so to speak, in order to familiarize ourselves with the objects of our investigation. We take our cue from Florovsky, who writes, "In the liturgy in particular, will be found the definitive formulation of the typical Hellenic devotion to the holy mysteries – so much so, that it is practically impossible to appreciate the inwardness of liturgical praxis without some initiation into the mystique of Hellenism."² As such, the first two chapters of this thesis really serve as a necessary and thorough *prolegomena* which prepares us to enter into Theodore's mystagogical thinking. Chapter One deals with the question of defining the "Platonist-Christian synthesis," as Boersma calls it,³ which to an immense extent colours all of Patristic Christian thought. In order to accomplish this we must first begin with establishing a broad grasp of the

¹ Alphonse Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist* Woodbrooke Studies 6 (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 1933)

² As quoted in Jean Daniélou, *The Lord of History: Reflections on the Inner Meaning of History*, trans. Nigel Abercrombie (Cleveland: World Pub. Co., 1968), 42.

³ Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids: Williams B. Eerdmans, 2011).

philosophical/metaphysical landscape of the early church, especially as it pertained to questions of ontology, anthropology, epistemology and eschatology. We will discover that the aforementioned “ologies” all bore a distinctly Platonic flavour. In a very general sense, what we find in this chapter is the working out of Platonic dualism, that is, the relationship between the earthly and the divine, the sensible and the intelligible, throughout various layers of philosophical implications. Through an investigation into some of the basic Platonic tenets which formed the foundation of Patristic ontological thinking, we may gain the contextual familiarity needed to be able to access Theodore’s theology, and his mystagogy in particular.

Chapter two will serve as our introduction to Theodore, by means of a discussion of some of the more ontologically oriented aspects of his Christology. We use Christology as the conduit through which to enter into Theodore’s mystical theology because, as we shall see throughout our discussion of the sacramentality of the created order, there is a relationship of likeness between the way that the created realm is understood to contain revelations of eternal truths and the way that Christ, by his union of divine and human natures, is the definitive revelation of the eternal God in sensible, physical and visible human form. By investigating Theodore’s Christology through the lens of sacramental ontology we are also able to come to a better understanding of some of the particularly Antiochene Christological emphases which caused Theodore’s approach to become a source of controversy and ecumenical condemnation after his death. This latter question, however, is not of primary concern for this thesis. Viewing Theodore from the (often neglected) angle of sacramental ontology does nevertheless allow us a greater appreciation for his approach, including those elements within it which made Theodore into a stumbling block a generation later.

In Chapter Three we consider Theodore’s mystagogical catechesis itself. Here it will be our task to highlight the ways in which the patristic sacramental ontology which we discussed in the first chapter is seen to be operative throughout Theodore’s mystagogy. Mazza writes, “the distinction between two

levels of reality, the intelligible and the sensible, is truly the master thread running through all of Platonic thought. We should, therefore, not be surprised to find that when the Fathers of the Church were faced with an analogous problem in connection with the ontological value of the sacraments, they made use of concepts already developed by Plato and Platonism.”⁴ We shall find in the following that Theodore is no exception. Moreover, through this survey of Theodore’s mystagogical commentary we hope to illuminate the subtle impression that sacramental ontology serves as a kind of “unwritten teaching”⁵ attendant to the sacramental doctrines which he offers. Mary Ann Clarahan, drawing upon Mazza’s work, suggests that there are three components contained in fourth century mystagogy: “The starting point was the actual experience of the liturgy; secondly, interpretation of the rites called upon a variety of methods, particularly the genre of typology; and thirdly, mystagogy operated within a particular worldview: the platonic.”⁶ She goes on to summarize this formula as the “tripartite framework of experience, interpretation and articulated worldview.”⁷ This third component of “articulated worldview” contains the crux of this thesis. I put forward that this “contextual element” is itself an invaluable interpretive key to appreciating the Patristic view of liturgy and sacrament, and Theodore’s in particular. More importantly, though, I would argue that, within mystagogy, Platonist-Christian sacramental ontology goes beyond mere *context*; that it is indeed a genuine *content* of mystagogy, and as such in our approach to the Patristic mystagogies it ought not to be disregarded as mere ancillary

⁴ Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1989), 169.

⁵ I liken it to the idea of the so-called “unwritten teachings” of Plato – a (perhaps dubious) theory regarding a set of oral Platonic teachings which undergird all the dialogues and which contain the sense and philosophical heart common to all of Platonic thinking. Proponents of the idea of the unwritten doctrines of Plato, the proposed existence of a comprehensive philosophic vision which was articulated orally in the Academy and is preserved ensconced in the written material, include John Niemeyer Findlay, *Plato: The Written and Unwritten Doctrines* (New York: Humanities Press, 1974); and Giovanni Reale, *Toward a New Interpretation of Plato*, trans. John R. Catan and Richard Davies, 10th Edition (Catholic University of America Press, February 1997). Enrico Mazza makes the link between the theory of the “unwritten teachings” of Plato and fourth century mystagogy in *Mystagogy*, 170.

⁶ Mary Ann Clarahan, “Mystagogy and Mystery,” *Worship* 83 no 6 (2009): 511.

⁷ Clarahan, “Mystagogy and Mystery,” 511. This 3-part framework is actually Clarahan’s summary of Mazza’s *Mystagogy*.

cultural debris. Leaning heavily on Boersma's synopsis of patristic sacramental ontology as given in *Heavenly Participation*,⁸ I will endeavour to use Theodore as a test case for the presence of just such an "articulated worldview."

Historiography

The Christology Debate

With regard to scholarship dealing with Theodore of Mopsuestia, and his mystagogical catecheses, we may note that discussions of Theodore and his contribution to patristic history and thinking were sparse to non-existent prior to Alphonse Mingana's publication of Theodore's two volumes of catechetical homilies (the first being on the Nicene Creed, and the second being the set of commentaries which we are concerned with here, his mystagogy), which survived in their entirety as Syriac translations of the original Greek, in 1933. We do find, in 1927, Leonard Patterson's "The Scholar-Saints of Antioch,"⁹ in which he attempts to promote a greater understanding of the Antiochene tradition and its higher emphasis on human nature and free will, as an early scholarly work on the subject; but beyond this there is not much scholarship on the topic. Mingana's publication of Theodore's catecheses in 1932-33 served as a catalyst for the re-evaluation of Theodore's posthumous condemnation at the Fifth Ecumenical Council. A decades-long debate ensued over the justice of Theodore's condemnation as the "Father of Nestorianism." Scholars during this time, roughly between the 1930s – 1950s, fell into two camps, one in favour of the status quo, that is, Theodore's condemnation as a heretic, and the other supporting his orthodoxy; or at least suggesting a more tempered and contextual understanding of Theodore's Christological position.

⁸ Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*.

⁹ Leonard Patterson, "The scholar-saints of Antioch': an address given at St. Mary's Church, Selly Oak, August 23rd, 1927," *Modern Churchman* 17 no.6-8 (1927): 469-474.

The main debate was between Robert Devreesse¹⁰ and Francis A. Sullivan.¹¹ Sullivan wrote in favour of the continued legitimacy of Theodore's condemnation in his *The Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia* (1956).¹² Devreesse argued for the theory that many, if not most, of the fragments which remained of Theodore's works (the so-called *hostile florilegia*) were corrupted and edited by Theodore's historical adversaries with the view to make Theodore's Christology to appear even more heretical. In 1951, Sullivan wrote an article rejecting Devreesse's idea of the falsification of the fragmentary evidence, suggesting rather that, if anything, the Syriac versions had been whitewashed to erase the more incriminating phraseologies.¹³ McNamara also wrote in favour of the reliability of the fragmentary evidence in the *Irish Theological Quarterly* 1948-53.¹⁴

In 1948, J.L. McKenzie joined the fray and rebutted some of Sullivan's arguments, attempting to give further examples of falsification.¹⁵ In 1958 he again challenged the "status quo" argument by dealing with some of Theodore's most incriminating phraseology, his "Assumed Man and Assuming Word" and the "union of good pleasure," attempting to give a better understanding of them, calling them at worst "accidentally defective."¹⁶ Also in favour of giving Theodore the benefit of the doubt, Paul Galtier, in his article entitled "Théodore de Mopsueste, sa vraie pensée sur l'Incarnation" (1957),¹⁷ argued that if understood in terms of geography, chronology and linguistics, Theodore's teachings were not really different from those of Cyril of Alexandria, whose Christology won out. John S. Romanides'

¹⁰ Robert Devreesse, *Essai sur Theodore de Mopsueste* (Città del Vaticano : Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1948).

¹¹ Romanides gives an excellent summary of the scholarly back-and-forth of this period. The following is summarized from his synopsis as found in: John S. Romanides, "Highlights in the Debate over Theodore of Mopsuestia's Christology and Some Suggestions for a Fresh Approach," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 5, no 2 (1959-1960): 140-185.

¹² Francis Aloysius Sullivan, *The Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Universitatis Gregoriana 1956).

¹³ John L. McKenzie, "Annotations on the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia," *Theological Studies* 19, no. 3 (September 1, 1958): 348.

¹⁴ See Romanides, "Highlights."

¹⁵ John L. McKenzie, "A New Study of Theodore of Mopsuestia," *Theological Studies* 10, no. 3 (1948): 394-408.

¹⁶ McKenzie, "Annotations." 373.

¹⁷ Paul Galtier, "Théodore de Mopsueste, sa vraie pensée sur l'Incarnation," *Recherches de science religieuse* 45 (1957).

“Highlights in the Debate over Theodore of Mopsuestia's Christology and Some Suggestions for a Fresh Approach” gives an excellent and detailed summary of past scholarship on Theodore, and he himself concludes in favour of Theodore’s condemnation; in fact, he seems to have great difficulty concealing his disdain for Theodore’s approach.¹⁸

What is striking about this period of the scholarly treatment of Theodore is that all of the research seems to treat the previously unknown and unpublished catechetical writings as repositories of textual data through which scholars could comb in order to gather arguments for or against Theodore’s Christological orthodoxy; that is, the mystagogical catecheses were simply used as a welcome addition to the primary source data – in other words, they were not really “read.” McKenzie’s comment here is a perfect example of this: “The errors with which Theodore has been charged touch principally the doctrines of original sin and the Incarnation; his teaching on these doctrines can now be largely reconstructed from his catechetical homilies.”¹⁹ This whole period was really an exercise in “reconstruction” aided by the new textual data which Mingana had released into the scholarly world.

Subsequent Approaches to Theodore

After the Sullivan-McKenzie debate subsided, from the 1960s until about 2000, a handful of works came out which set out to examine Theodore from new, previously over-looked or under-appreciated angles. Arthus Vööbus published a unique article in 1969 in which he discussed Theodore in terms of his theological anthropology.²⁰ Rowan A. Greer’s *Theodore of Mopsuestia: Exegete and Theologian* (1961) is also an excellent endeavour to give greater context for Theodore, highlighting in particular the Scripturally-bound nature of his Christology and also the impact of his Antiochene

¹⁸ Romanides, “Highlights.” Romanides argues that Chalcedon is a perfectly acceptable Christological standard by which to judge Theodore, and he finds that Theodore does not measure up. He paints many of Theodore’s Christological ideas as basically proto-Nestorian heretical assertions.

¹⁹ McKenzie, “A New Study.” 399.

²⁰ Arthur Vööbus, “Regarding the Theological Anthropology of Theodore of Mopsuestia,” *Church History* 33, no. 2 (June 1, 1964): 115-124.

exegetical method upon his theology.²¹ Greer also included many helpful references to philosophical influences upon Theodore's approach. Dimitri Z. Zaharopoulos' *Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Bible* (1989) similarly sought to examine Theodore through the lens of his particular brand of Antiochene biblical exegesis.²² Joanne McWilliam Dewart took a novel approach in her book, *A Theology of Grace in Theodore of Mopsuestia* (1971), and her article, "Christological Particularity : Need It Be a Scandal?" (1980), in which she presented Antiochene (Theodorean) Christology, that of "graced humanity," as compatible with modern liberal theology.²³ All of the above works afforded the scholarly landscape new and thorough, or at least inventive, contributions; most trying to achieve a more nuanced understanding of Theodore and his context. Still, none really dealt with Theodore's mystagogy as mystagogy. Frederick G. McLeod's *Theodore of Mopsuestia* (2009) is the most recent example of this trend of re-assessing Theodore, and it is an excellent contribution to the discussion, as McLeod provides a large Appendix of his own translations of various passages from Theodore, large chunks of text, which he offers to facilitate his readers in gaining a better understanding of the context for some of the more confusing quotations from Theodore. He also enters into very helpful discussions of the different meanings of various ontological terms (*ousia*, *hypostasis*, *prosopon*, etc.) as they pertain to questions of the Christological union as found across different regions and theological streams during Theodore's time.²⁴

²¹ Rowan A. Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia: Exegete and Theologian* (Westminster: The Faith Press, 1961).

²² Dimitri Z. Zaharopoulos, *Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Bible* (New York: Paulist Press 1989).

²³ Joanne McWilliam, "Christological Particularity: Need It Be a Scandal?," *Anglican Theological Review* 62, no. 1 (1980): 64-74.

My assessment: she anachronistically presents Antiochene (Theodorean) Christology as compatible with modern liberal theology – painting Theodore's Christ as a common man who enjoyed a special reciprocal-love-based relationship with the Divine, a union of reciprocal love which is of the "same order as that to which man is to be brought." McWilliam, "Christological Particularity," 68.

²⁴ Frederick G. McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia* (New York: Routledge 2009); also, Frederick G. McLeod, "Theodore of Mopsuestia Revisited" *Theological Studies* 61, no. 3 (2000): 447-480.

Theodore's Mystagogy and Sacramental Theology

Turning to those who have actually dealt with Theodore's mystagogy in its own right, one finds the list of contributors to be fairly short. In the realm of Liturgiology we find Francis J. Reine's 1942 work in which he scours the mystagogy for evidence of Theodore's specific doctrine of the Eucharist.²⁵ His investigation is thorough and he produces evidence for various propositional (fairly Roman Catholic) Eucharistic convictions. He also systematically goes through the liturgy as found in Theodore and compares it, in parallel columns, with those found in Chrysostom, Cyril of Jerusalem and the Apostolic Constitutions. He does not really delve too deeply into any underlying philosophical or ontological currents, as we are attempting to do in the following thesis.

Mathai Kadavil's *The World as Sacrament*, begins to approach the kinds of questions which this thesis seeks to investigate. His discussion of St. Ephrem the Syrian, although not specifically about Theodore, offers an excellent exploration of the idea of sacramentality within the Syrian context, and he does make mention of Theodore, as both Ephrem and Theodore are major contributors to the Syrian theological tradition.²⁶ J. Quasten compares the "peculiar religious sentiment and attitude" of Theodore and his Antiochene contemporaries as found in his mystagogy with regard to the concept of the *mysterium tremendum*, the idea of approaching the Eucharist with holy fear and reverence, with the more positive Latin tendency to view the Eucharist as a celebration or a wedding feast.²⁷

Enrico Mazza's seminal *Mystagogy* is one of the only scholarly works to consider Theodore's mystagogy from the point of view of sacramental theology, and really, sacramental ontology, although he does not use this term. Mazza's discussion of all four patristic, fourth-century, mystagogies (those of

²⁵ Francis J. Reine, "The Eucharistic Doctrine and Liturgy of the Mystagogical Catecheses of Theodore of Mopsuestia" (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 1942).

²⁶ Mathai Kadavil, *The World as Sacrament: Sacramentality of Creation from the Perspectives of Leonardo Boff, Alexander Schmemmann and Saint Ephrem* (Leuven : Peeters : Abdij Keizersberg, Faculteit Godgeleerdheid, 2005).

²⁷ Johannes Quasten, "The Liturgical Mysticism of Theodore of Mopsuestia," *Theological Studies* 15, no 3 (S 1954): 431-439.

Theodore of Mopsuestia, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Jerusalem and Ambrose of Milan) is perhaps the only work which really delves into the question of an underlying ontological framework. He tries to express the “sacramental realism” which is an integral part of the ontological fabric of mystagogy and he also discusses the interpretive tools used by the mystagogue bishops, namely typology. Mary Ann Clarahan’s article, “Mystagogy and Mystery” is really just a summary of Mazza’s work with a view to offer applications for developing mystagogical renewal in Catholic circles. It is, however, still a very helpful synopsis of the force of Mazza’s contribution.²⁸

Lastly, Mar Bawai Soro, of the Assyrian Church of the East, offers a unique and important perspective on Theodore’s mystagogy, one which understands Theodore’s approach more as an “insider” than any of the other above-listed scholars. I should note that gaining access to Soro’s works in English is quite difficult. I was fortunate enough to have encountered the papers and minutes from one particular ecumenical dialogue of the Syriac Orthodox Tradition in English.²⁹ It seems very likely that there is a wealth of scholarship on Theodore within the Assyrian tradition which has remained isolated within their own in-house discussions and of which most western and other Orthodox scholars who wish to pursue study of Theodore have remained largely ignorant.

My own work here falls mostly in line with Mazza’s analysis of Theodore’s mystagogy from the perspective of sacramental and mystical theology. It is my hope that it may encourage scholarship to further appreciate Theodore’s catechetical works for what they are: mystagogy; sacramental theology expressed within the context of an ancient sacramental ontology and excellent primary sources of ancient episcopal training on the mysteries.

²⁸ Clarahan, “Mystagogy and Mystery”.

²⁹ Mar Bawai Soro, “Understanding Church of the East Sacramental Theology: The Theodorian Perspective,” in *Syriac Dialogue: Fourth Non-Official Consultation on Dialogue within Syriac Tradition*, eds. Johann Marte & Gerhard Wilflinger (Vienna: Pro Oriente, 2001), 22-52.

Chapter One: The Platonist Christian Synthesis and Sacramental Ontology

Introduction

The theological writings of the early Church stand against what may be called a 'Platonic' background. When the word 'Platonic' is used in this sense, it refers to a series of assumptions about man and the world in which he lives, rather than to any coherent philosophical system. The Platonic background for Theodore's theology was simply the particular *weltanschauung* common to the Hellenistic age.¹

The purpose of the following chapter is to set the stage for entering into an understanding of the patristic world, and, further, for entering into an understanding of the mystical, philosophic and theological context which undergirds Theodore and his mystagogy. This will consist, at this early stage of our investigation, of drawing in broad strokes a picture of the Hellenistic worldview, and, narrowing our focus slightly, of the Platonist-Christian sacramental ontology which emerges out of such a view. There is, of course, something inherently problematic in the intent of undertaking to define and delineate a worldview, which is, by definition, implicit. Nevertheless, there are some foundational lines of thinking which we are able to highlight here, and which will serve us well in our study of Theodore's Christological and mystagogical approaches in the following chapters.

Much of the following chapter consists of discussions concerning particular tenets which characterize the "Platonist-Christian synthesis," as Boersma calls it.² As Père Festugière writes, "when the Fathers 'think' their mysticism they Platonize."³ Our task here will involve the identifying of particular Platonic or Neo-Platonic ontological assertions, which to a great degree comprise the well-spring from which Christian sacramental ontology is drawn, and the skeleton upon which Christian mysticism develops its own unique form. We will consider the effect which sacramental ontology, as

¹ Rowan A. Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia: Exegete and Theologian* (Westminster: The Faith Press, 1961), 13.

² Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

³ Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), xii.

proceeding out of the Platonist-Christian framework, had upon the patristic concept of the natural material world, upon the concept of humanity and our epistemological faculty, and upon the ideas of sacred time and eschatology. In all this we may observe a thoroughgoing sense of sacramental presence being worked out throughout all the various levels of the philosophical edifice of early Christian thinking.

Appropriating Hellenism

In this section we will outline some of the foundational aspects of Platonic thinking which provided the natal environment for early Christianity. One historical detail to be noted is that the Platonism, more precisely Neo-Platonism, which the early church encountered had a much more theological and poetic character than the stricter, more rationalist Platonism of early Hellenism.⁴ We must state at the outset that the purpose here is not to isolate Platonic accretions from the “pure” historical Christian core,⁵ but rather to see that as Christianity conversed with its Hellenistic context, the resultant “Hellenized” character of the faith indeed became an authentic expression of Christianity. That is, as both Wilken and Boersma assert, we may see the resulting *weltanschauung*, the “Platonist-Christian synthesis,” as something truly “Christian.”⁶ Boersma continues, “the so-called Hellenization of the gospel simply does not do justice to the judicious, careful use that the fathers made of the Platonic

⁴ Louth writes that the Platonism encountered by Christianity, “was characterized by its predominantly religious and theocentric world view... [It] is theological and otherworldly” – quoted from R.E. Witt, *Albinus and the History of Middle Platonism* (reprint, Amsterdam, 1971) 123. As found in Louth, *Origins*, xii.

⁵ As in the approach of Adolf Von Harnack for instance.

⁶ In response to criticisms of the “Hellenization” of Christianity, as if this were a betrayal of some pure, perhaps Jewish or simply moral, core, Wilken prefers to view it this way: “a more apt expression would be the Christianization of Hellenism, though that phrase does not capture the originality of Christian thought nor the debt owed to Jewish ways of thinking and to the Jewish Bible” – Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003.), xvi

tradition.”⁷ As such, let us examine some of the foundational concepts within Platonsim which patristic Christianity found to be useful and compatible.⁸

Dualism

To encapsulate one of the most primary aspects of Platonism in a single statement is to say that ancient Hellenism is foundationally dualistic. The Platonist vision of reality consisted of two parallel realms: the lower sensible realm of matter, movement and change, and above it, the higher eternal, immutable level where the “true” Ideas and Being reside. These levels of reality were not equivalent or autonomous, however: the Platonic framework maintained an idea of communication and communion between the two; the lower being a shadow, a miniature expression, of the higher; the quintessential Platonic idiom of “the moving image of eternity.”⁹ This starting point of duality and hierarchy colours all facets of Hellenistic philosophy and mysticism.

As illustration, Plato’s allegory of the cave proves unendingly useful.¹⁰ It imagines humanity as a group of slaves imprisoned in a dark cave. They are only able to perceive shadows cast on the cave wall by firelight; and these shadows they mistake for reality. When one prisoner is freed, he realizes the error

⁷ “Furthermore, [Wilken’s] mention of Adolf von Harnack – one of the stalwarts of the German liberal school – should give evangelicals pause. If Harnack, as a liberal theologian, thought it prudent to remove Platonic notions (such as creations’ participation in eternal forms) from Christian theology, evangelicals should perhaps consider the consequences of the “Hellenization” thesis before simply adopting it. – Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 38.

⁸ We should note that this pragmatic view is only half the story; the other half sees in Platonism God’s own gracious communication with the Greek philosophers; cf. Justin Martyr’s concept of the *logos spermatikos*, or the idea of “plundering the Egyptians” advocated by some of the church fathers (e.g. Gregory of Nyssa’s *Life of Moses*). The early Christians argued that they recognized their own truth within Platonism, not simply an approximation which, after compensating for the state of impaired and immature philosophical vision and partial truth as found among the Greeks, could be exploited.

⁹ “When the father creator saw the creature which he had made moving and living, the created image of the eternal gods, he rejoiced, and in his joy determined to make the copy still more like the original; and as this was eternal, he sought to make the universe eternal, so far as might be. Now the nature of the ideal being was everlasting, but to bestow this attribute in its fullness upon a creature was impossible. Wherefore he resolved to have a moving image of eternity, and when he set in order the heaven, he made this image eternal but moving according to number, while eternity itself rests in unity; and this image we call time.” – from Plato, *Timaeus*, 37c-e, trans. B. Jowett, online: <http://www.elopos.net/elpenor/greek-texts/ancient-greece/plato-time.asp>

¹⁰ See Book VII of Allan Bloom trans., *The Republic of Plato* 2nd edition (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 193-220.

of this view and proceeds to move toward the sunlight outside the cave, and to observe “true” objects by the light of the sun.¹¹ Plato’s allegory recognizes humans as beings which possess the faculties to access the eternal realm. It presents the sensible world as one where the true Ideas/Forms are seen as shadowy spectres through the phenomena of the natural world, and the human soul, the organ of contemplation may, if it is willing, turn from the sensible towards the truer reality of which the shadows have only been the image.¹²

This was the raw Hellenistic material which the Church utilized to express her own unique philosophical and theological identity. And just as with Platonism, this basic dualistic framework provided a foundational anchoring point for patristic sacramental ontology. The basic notion that there exists a shadowy, lower reality and a higher, more “real,” reality, and that there is a link of “likeness” between the two, lies at the heart of the ancient Christian worldview.

Creation: Matter as Good and “Derived Being”

With regard to the Platonist-Christian doctrine of creation as it was developed in the early Church Boersma writes that there were three important modifications that the early Church made to the Platonic schema.¹³ Firstly, Christianity saw creation as a volitional act on the part of God, as opposed to an impersonal, automatic and necessary emanation from divine being. Secondly, Christianity affirmed the goodness of matter, as being an intentional creation which God proclaimed as “good,” and not

¹¹ “[T]his image as a whole must be connected with what was said before. Liken the domain revealed through sight to the prison home, and the light of the fire in it to the sun’s power; and, in applying the going up and the seeing of what’s above to the soul’s journey up to the intelligible place, you’ll not mistake my expectation, since you desire to hear it... in the knowable the last thing to be seen, and that with considerable effort, is the *idea* of the good;” Bloom, *The Republic of Plato*, 196.

¹² Louth writes concerning the ascent of the freed prisoner from Plato’s allegory, “Once out of the cave, he will only be able to grasp the reality now within his reach by a gradual process of becoming accustomed to it. First he looks at shadows – shadows of real things this time – and reflections. Then at the night sky, and at the world by the light of the stars and the moon. Finally he will be able to see things as revealed by the Sun itself, and actually contemplate the Sun and its nature, and see that it is from the Sun that the seasons and the course of the year and everything in the visible world proceed.” – Louth, *Origins*, 5-6.

¹³ Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 33-36.

merely the loathsome material which comprises the lowest ontological rung. And thirdly, Christianity rejected the Neo-Platonist equation of perfection with simplicity and oneness, as the idea of “the many,” of community, in the form of the Trinity comprises an irrevocable part of the Christian picture of divinity. “Father, Son and Spirit were consubstantial, Christian orthodoxy insisted. The one and the many both went back to the heart of who God is.”¹⁴

While the disdain for matter that often accompanied Platonism was specifically rejected by early Christianity, another related element of the Neo-Platonic doctrine of creation which the church fathers recognized as compatible was the idea of all created being as *derived being*.¹⁵ Boersma also calls this the “participatory” sacramentality of the cosmos; “the participatory anchoring of the created order in the eternal Logos.”¹⁶ That is, that the created realm exists only because its being is derived from eternal being, as, in the Christian sense, God’s gracious and voluntary sharing of His own being with the created realm, by which it is made alive and is sustained.¹⁷

As a classic articulation of sacramental ontology, Boersma offers the example of Saint Augustine, who taught that,

The life of the triune God was the only ultimate end. Since all other realities had their being only inasmuch as God graciously granted participation in his own being, those realities could never be ultimate in character. Created objects and earthly ends have never more than penultimate significance; they were always ordered to something greater – the life of God himself. Their

¹⁴ Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 36.

¹⁵ Of course, a gnostic denigration of the material was an ever-present temptation, and numerous examples exist of the church fathers courting this idea. On the whole, though, it is still foundationally rejected.

¹⁶ Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 52. See also: “The reason for the mysterious character of the world – on the understanding of the Great Tradition, at least – is that it participates in some greater reality, from which it derives its being and its value. Hence, instead of speaking of a sacramental ontology, we may also speak of a participatory ontology.” Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 24.

¹⁷ Boersma writes that the idea of derived being, or sacramental participation, also established and maintained matter’s proper value: “This same sacramental ontology prevented the Great Tradition from valuing the created order for its own sake. Since its being – as well as its goodness, truth and beauty – was simply derived existence, one could not legitimately assign ultimate value to it... its goodness stems from its sacramental sharing in the mystery of Christ.” Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 52, 53.

anchoring in the eternal Word or Logos meant that their truth, goodness, and beauty both originated in and aimed at the truth, goodness and beauty of the Son of God himself.¹⁸

The Ontological Gulf

As a balance to the affirmation of God as the one source of being, and all creation deriving its being from participation in God's being, as found in Christianized Platonism, we have the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. This aspect of the doctrine of creation is an important point of departure from Platonism. While an intimate relationship between creator and creation is affirmed, the flip side of the coin, so to speak, is simultaneously maintained in the Christian system: that is, the safeguarding of the "ontological gulf."¹⁹ A defined ontological distinction between God and creation is held in tandem alongside the doctrine of derived being.

Christianity brokers an intricate balance between the absolute ontological *dependence* of all being upon God and the vast ontological *distinction* between creator and creation. And, to complicate matters further, at the core of Christianity resides, of course, the Incarnation which seems to transgress, or perhaps supersede, these categories altogether. As Louth writes,

But, for Christianity, man is a creature; he is not ultimately God's kin, but created out of nothing by God and only sustained in being by dependence on His will. There is an ontological gulf between God and his creation, a real difference of being. Only in Christ, in whom divine and human natures are united, do we find One who is of one substance with the Father. At this point Christianity and Platonism are irreconcilable.²⁰

Interestingly, on this question of the ontological divide between the divine and the created orders we find some diversity within early Christianity. Generally speaking, the Alexandrian patristic

¹⁸ Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 69.

¹⁹ "Central to Platonism is its conviction of man's essentially spiritual nature: it is in virtue of his having a soul that man can participate in the realm of eternal truth, the realm of the divine. The mystical strand in Platonism (which is proper and fundamental to it) develops from this notion of man's essentially spiritual nature, from the belief of his kinship with the divine. But, for Christianity, man is a creature; he is not ultimately God's kin, but created out of nothing by God and only sustained in being by dependence on His will. There is an ontological gulf between God and his creation, a real difference of being." – Louth, *Origins*, xiii.

²⁰ Louth, *Origins*, xiii.

tradition tended to be comfortable with a less stark, and thus more Platonic, concept of the ontological gulf.²¹ The Antiochene approach, on the other hand, to which Theodore belonged, can be characterized as being much more cautious and concerned with the explicit preservation of the ontological distinction. To put it another way, while the Alexandrians did not deny the distinction, they were much more inclined to speak of participation; and the Antiochenes, while not by any means denying participation, seem to have a much greater emphasis upon the distinction.²² The implications of these differing emphases can be seen to be worked out and wrestled with throughout the historical disagreements between the two schools of thought and are made manifest across a broad spectrum of theological concerns: soteriology, Christology, anthropology, etc.²³ We will see evidence of some of these implications as we move further in our discussion of Theodore.

The Sacramentality of the Material World

Natural Theology and *Analogia Entis*

Saint Ephrem the Syrian wrote that creation gives birth to Christ in symbols, as Mary did in the flesh.²⁴ The Syrian Patristic tradition often referred to the physical world as the ‘book of nature,’

²¹ The Alexandrians, for instance, are more prone to speak of *divinization*, a concept which the Antiochenes found suspicious and tended to reject. (See Rowan A. Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia: Exegete and Theologian* [Westminster: The Faith Press, 1961], 19.) The Alexandrians, perhaps drawing more from Philo than their Antiochene counterparts, also seem to have had a much more developed concept of participation in the *energies* of God. (See Louth’s discussion of Philo in Louth, *Origins*, 20.)

²² I am, indeed, speaking in generalities here, and do not intend by this to over-simplify, nor *overstate*, the Alexandrian/Antiochene divide. I would suggest that what the two share in common, this Platonist-Christian heritage and, most importantly, its idea of sacramental participation (differing emphases within this concept notwithstanding) is of much greater significance than what separates them.

²³ With regard to Theodore’s view of divinization, cf. Greer, “Theodore everywhere emphasizes man’s creatureliness. Man, including his soul, is *genetos*, while only God Himself is *agenetos*. This denies neither the immortality of the soul, nor man’s immutable destiny; but it does draw the distinction between redemption as a union with the Godhead and as a communion with God.” Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 17.

²⁴ Ephrem, *Hymnen De Virginitate* 6:8, as found in Mathai Kadavil, *The World as Sacrament: Sacramentality of Creation from the Perspectives of Leonardo Boff, Alexander Schmemmann and Saint Ephrem* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 235.

Saint Basil also calls creation a “book.” “This whole world is as it were a book that proclaims the glory of God” (*Hex.* 11:4). See Stephen M. Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 37.

alongside the ‘book of Scripture,’ as a parallel source of revelation of God.²⁵ This section will explore the sacramental role of the physical and sensible world within the Christian-Platonist synthesis. Here we move a step further from the foundational dualism of eternal/temporal, material/immaterial, which we discussed earlier, into the question of the nature of the relationship between the two realms. We have already established that the early Christians appropriated the Platonic idea of the temporal and physical realm being a ‘moving image of eternity.’ Here we will consider how the ‘image’ of the material world represents to us the truth of the eternal and how, as ‘image,’ it re-presents that of which it is the image because of its participatory character.

Daniélou frequently points out that the idea of the cosmos communicating eternal truths is foundationally familiar to us; it belongs to the primordial development of the religious mind.²⁶

In the first place, there is an element of truth in the nature-cults as they belong to the earliest of all the covenants, that made with Noah, wherein God is revealed through the regularity of natural processes, but not yet, as in the covenant with Abraham, through the singularity of historical events. In the rhythms of bodily life, and the movements of the stars, and the succession of the seasons, we can learn something of God and his ways: they are *hierophanies*, affording us the knowledge of a personal Providence whose faithfulness is attested by their unvarying recurrence.²⁷

²⁵ “Furthermore, the Syrian tradition sees creation as the source of revelation together with Scripture, and it is often referred to as the book of nature.” Kadavil, *The World as Sacrament*, 18-19.

²⁶ Daniélou makes frequent reference to the work of Mircea Eliade, whose research pointed out deep similarities between early nature religions across history and geography, seeing common concepts derived from/assigned to various physical phenomena. “The only acceptable conclusion is that the existence of a common set of symbols in the various religions is due to the parallelism of mental processes; but this means that the objective reality of the symbols themselves must be common ground as well. The argument is set out in Mircea Eliade’s *Traité de L’histoire des religions*. Owing to the immense collection of historical data, it has become possible to relate patterns of ideas to groups of symbols” (e.g.: the sky as divine transcendence, water as death and fertility). Jean Daniélou, *The Lord of History: Reflections on the Inner Meaning of History*, trans. Nigel Abercrombie (Cleveland: World, 1968), 134.

²⁷ Daniélou, *The Lord of History*, 17-18. N.B. *hierophanies* is the term which Eliade often uses to refer to these common ancient sentiments.

The language which the fathers used to express their sense of the participatory character of the sensible world is that of typology and analogy.²⁸ We use the term ‘typology’ here in a more general sense than its specific designation as a textual exegetical approach. Typology in this more general sense can be understood as a hermeneutic approach to the cosmos which utilizes the type/archetype structure as the framework for understanding the natural world. It is a means of interpreting the world sacramentally, of perceiving and recognizing the participation of the created realm in the life of the Creator, and a means of expressing the “contingency and dignity” of the created order.²⁹ Natural theology, then, is the natural result of this worldview. We find, in this framework, the idea of one ascending towards the divine by means of a typologically laden cosmos. This idea is at home in Platonism and further developed in Christianity.

Plato could understand the soul’s assimilation to God not simply as rejection of the world, but as *transcending the cosmos by means of the cosmos itself*. It is also important as an early witness to the idea that God is perceptible through the cosmos and that contemplation of the cosmos (and especially of the heavens) could lead the soul to God. This tradition, further developed in *Epinomis* (whether Plato’s or not), and the early Aristotle’s *De Philosophia*, and found in Cicero, Philo, and the treatise ascribed to Aristotle, *De Mundo*, had great influence between the time of Plato and the beginning of the Christian era.³⁰

The concept of *analogia entis* is a further articulation of this sense of the general sacramentality of the cosmos discussed above. Ambrose of Milan writes that the soul may “represent to itself the incomprehensible by the analogy of the things it can grasp... [which are] a feeble residue of the divine perfume.”³¹ Clement of Alexandria similarly speaks of the “reflective” or “transparent” quality of the

²⁸ And, by extension, what have nowadays been defined as natural theology and *analogia entis* – but it would of course be anachronistic to say that the fathers employed natural theology or subscribed to *analogia entis* as such, though the sense of each was clearly present for patristic thinkers.

²⁹ “But the dogma of creation has profoundly and permanently transformed the idea philosophers must have, whether of individual natures or of the totality of the universe. Creation is not simply something that happened to every being in the past, a cause or precondition for existence, it is something that affects it totally and at every moment; it confers on things both a contingency and a dignity undreamt of in pagan antiquity.” – Henri DeLubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Crossroad Pub. 1993), 19-20.

³⁰ Louth, *Origins*, 15. (Emphasis mine).

³¹ Ambrose, *De Myst.*, (29, XLIV, 781 D) as quoted in Jean Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959) 124. Also, “Gregory of Nyssa compares what we perceive to the scent which

world “by which the most penetrating of the Greek philosophers see God.”³² Consider also Saint

Bonaventure’s affirmation of the same:

All created things of the sensible world lead the mind of the contemplator and wise man to eternal God... They are the shades, the resonances, the pictures of that efficient, exemplifying, and ordering art; they are the tracks, simulacra, and spectacles; they are divinely given signs set before us for the purpose of seeing God. They are exemplifications set before our still unrefined and sense-oriented minds, so that by the sensible things which they see they might be transferred to the intelligible which they cannot see, as if by signs to the signified.³³

Beauty

It is this sense of the permeating sacramentality of the created world which inspired the patristic worldview to “see the Holy lurking in creation;”³⁴ to see the cosmos as ‘mysterious.’ Boersma writes, “‘Mystery’ referred to realities behind the appearances that one could observe by means of our senses. That is to say, though our hands, eyes, ears, nose, and tongue are able to access reality, they cannot fully grasp this reality. They cannot comprehend it.”³⁵ But paired with this affirmation of the “basic incomprehensibility of the universe,”³⁶ we find also the ancient concept of beauty as its counterbalance. The ‘information’ which is received by viewing the world sacramentally, what we could call the

remains in a flask from which the perfume has been emptied: it is not the perfume itself, which is the inaccessible essence of God, but it is His perfume which manifests His presence and which allows us to know something about It.” Jean Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), 124.

³² Jean Daniélou, *A History of Early Christian Doctrine Before the Council of Nicaea*, trans. John Austin Baker (vol.2 Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture; London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd 1973) 50. Further, Clement says, “a reflection (εμφασις) of the one omnipotent God is natural (φυσικη) among all men everywhere who think rightly” (*Strom.* V, 13:87, 2) Daniélou, *A History of Early Christian Doctrine*, 50.

³³ Saint Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis ad Deum*, 2.11, as quoted by Matthew Milliner, “Who’s Afraid of the Analogia Entis?” December 16, 2006, online: <http://www.millinerd.com/2006/12/whos-afraid-of-analogia-entis.html>

³⁴ This is quoted from a wonderful description which Andrew Greely gives concerning the ‘Catholic imagination;’ and I would argue that his description may just as easily be asserted of the ancient patristic imagination as well. “Catholics,” he writes, “live in an enchanted world, a world of statues and holy water, stained glass and votive candles, saints and religious medals, rosary beads and holy pictures. But these Catholic paraphernalia are mere hints of a deeper and more pervasive religious sensibility which inclines Catholics to see the Holy lurking in creation. As Catholics, we find our houses and our world haunted by a sense that the objects, events, and persons of daily life are revelations of grace.” Andrew Greely, *The Catholic Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) 1. As quoted in Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 10.

³⁵ Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 21.

³⁶ Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 21.

‘typological data,’ is also seen in the patristic framework as the activity (*energeia*) of the divine. And, for the church fathers, humanity recognizes the expression of divine life in the form of beauty. As Von Balthasar so poetically puts it, “the level at which form makes its appearance transcends itself interiorly, or better, it does not so much or so obviously transcend itself as the spirit which is immanent in it manifests itself radiantly through it.”³⁷ It is the real expressing itself in the sensible; as he says, the “sunrise of the spirit’s splendor in the beauty of form.”³⁸

The Incarnation as the Archetype for Sacramental Ontology

At the heart of Platonist-Christian sacramental participation, and its perception of the world as “transparent” and pregnant with meaning, stand Christology and the pattern of the Incarnation. Beyond simply the appreciation of the beauty of the cosmos as an expression of its sacramental nature, we also have at the core of Christianity the person of Christ, the Logos and self-expression of the Father, entering into the physical world in reality and not just in symbol. In a way, the Incarnation is both the beginning and end of sacramental ontology; both its blueprint and its *telos*. The Incarnation is the fulfillment of the sacramental presence of eternal being by means of symbols; Christ is the final revelation. But the Incarnation is also spiritually and logically primary; and, in a paradoxical way, it is also the pattern upon which sacramental ontology itself is based. In other words, the pattern of the eternal expressing itself in the realm of the sensible has as its chief exemplar Christ’s Incarnation; a paradox in which a universal principle is subservient to the particular and historical.

This view sees sacramental ontology itself as an imitation or image of the Incarnation. The Incarnation of Christ is the foundation, centre and model of other, what we could call, “lesser” revelations – the Son condescends to be united to human nature in order to reveal Himself/the Father

³⁷ Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol.1, *Seeing the Form* (Great Britain: T. & T. Clark, 1982), 22.

³⁸ Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 22.

to us. In a similar fashion, but on a more general scale, He condescends to be clothed in sensible symbols so that we may seek understanding and relation to Him – as Kadavil says, “God humbly clothing himself in our symbols and language.”³⁹ This does not in any way lessen the particularity and uniqueness of the Incarnation, or deem it as only one incarnation among a generally incarnational cosmos. As Milliner writes,

The *analogia entis* is related to the logos - the ordering principle by which God created all that is. And this logos is none other than *the* Logos, Jesus Christ. The reason the analogy of being makes sense, even after God has definitively revealed himself in Jesus Christ, is because Christ is the one ‘through whom all things were made’ and in whom ‘all things hold together.’ Therefore to contemplate an analogy between the being of the created world and the being of God is, properly understood, not something done independently of the Logos, Jesus Christ.⁴⁰

Reason, *Theoria* and Epistemology

We come now to the question of how humanity may access the intelligible realm. Consider Louth’s excellent summary of the Platonic mystical contemplative framework:

Man, it says, lives in a transient world of sensible phenomena and of conjecture, or opinion, based on it. But his soul belongs to a higher, truer world which is eternal and immutable. To regain its kinship with that world the soul must purify itself from this world; it must seek to die to this world, to live now the life it hopes it may lead after death. ...When the soul has sufficiently purified itself it may – suddenly and without warning – attain contemplation, *theoria*, of the highest of the Forms, the Beautiful or the Good, for which it has longed. In this gratuitous act of *theoria* the whole world of ultimate reality is seen as a single whole, and the meaning even of sensible reality becomes clear. This sudden ultimate act of *theoria* is experienced as ecstasy: the soul seems to transcend itself, to be rapt out of itself. At the same time, this ecstasy is a sort of home-coming. The soul becomes what it truly is in its deepest self; its kinship with ultimate reality becomes something experienced. ...This final ecstasy for Plotinus really transcends *theoria*: it is contact or presence or ecstasy, inexpressible and ineffable.⁴¹

³⁹ Kadavil, *The World as Sacrament*, 263.

⁴⁰ Matthew Milliner, “Who’s Afraid of the Analogia Entis?” December 16, 2006, online: <http://www.millinerd.com/2006/12/whos-afraid-of-analogia-entis.html>

⁴¹ Louth, *Origins*, 189. He clarifies regarding Neo-Platonism, “In Plotinus we find all this with two refinements: the ascent of the soul is seen more as withdrawal into itself than as ascent; and secondly, the nature of Ultimate reality – the One – is beyond the Forms instead of only equivocally so as in Plato’s idea of the Good, and is more clearly defined.”

The Christian mystical tradition had an affinity for much of the Platonic mystical elements delineated above, but with some important adjustments. The Christian system saw the reason behind the human ability to perceive intimations of the eternal realm, at least to recognize hints and shadows of these, as due to our being created in the image of God. In opposition to the Platonic notion of eternal pre-existing souls which belong by nature to the realm of the eternal, being thus attuned to the “Forms” with which they share kinship, the patristic concept of the soul viewed it as *created* and absolutely distinct from divinity on the ontological level.⁴² And yet the presence of God’s image within the nature of man, and the church fathers often related the idea of image with man’s rational intellect, transcends to a degree the ‘ontological gulf.’ Further to this, also, is the affirmation that human reason (λογος) is a participation in the Word (Λογος) of God.⁴³ Thus we have the world suffused with *logos*, with reason, design and intentionality, which communicates to humanity divine truths; and we have humans by means of their bearing the image of God, endowed with the capacity to recognize this communication and to respond with thanksgiving, and by contemplation to increasingly align ourselves with that which we ‘see.’⁴⁴

⁴² Certain church fathers, such as Origen, still maintained the Platonic idea of the kinship of the soul with the divine, but see Louth’s discussion: “But such an idea of the soul’s kinship with the divine was destroyed by the doctrine of creation ex nihilo. Neither for Plato nor for Origen were souls created: they were pre-existent and immortal. The most fundamental ontological distinction in such a world was between the spiritual and the material. The soul belonged to the former realm in contrast to its body which was material: the soul belonged to the divine, spiritual realm and was only trapped in the material realm by its association with the body. But the doctrine of creation ex nihilo implies that the most fundamental ontological divide is between God and the created order, to which latter both soul and body belong. The soul has nothing in common with God; there is no kinship between it and the divine. Its kinship is with its body, in virtue of their common creation, rather than with God. Contemplation can no longer realize a kinship with the divine, for there is no such kinship: and once this is understood, this particular premise of the doctrine of contemplation for such as Origen is removed.” Louth, *Origins*, 75.

⁴³ Daniélou, *A History of Early Christian Doctrine*, 42. See Justin Martyr, “But it is one thing to possess a seed (σπέρμα), and a likeness proportioned to one’s capacity, and quite another to possess the reality itself, both the *partaking* and the *imitation* of which are the results of the grace which comes from him.” (*II Apol.* XIII, 4-6).

⁴⁴ With regard to the fathers’ idea of “seeing,” Wilken points out that for Origen, “when the gospels talk about ‘eyewitnesses’ it does not mean only those who physically saw the events of Christ’s life and death and resurrection, but those who perceived Christ as the son of God,” and further, with Gregory the Great, seeing “transforms the beholder,” he writes, “we are changed into the one we see.” Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*, 21.

Theoria

We have discussed *why* we are able to see, now let us consider the question of *how* we see within the Platonist-Christian synthesis. This is *theoria*, contemplation, the faculty of spiritual mystical perception.⁴⁵ As Von Balthasar explains, *theoria* is that intuitive ability to respond to symbol and perceive meaning: “The same Christian centuries which masterfully knew how to read the natural world’s language of forms were the very same ones which possessed eyes trained, first, to perceive the formal quality of revelation by the aid of grace and its illumination and, second (and only then!), to interpret revelation.”⁴⁶ Humans are the only material creatures which may access both the sensible and the intelligible;⁴⁷ humanity alone possesses the faculty to recognize and interpret the relation between the two realms and to observe and contemplate the eternal through the moving images which bear its likeness. Humanity possesses this unique ability because of reason and we exercise this ability by means of *theoria*, contemplation, that intuitive capacity to recognize a likeness as a likeness, an analogy as an analogy. Daniélou calls this the “optimism which Christianity professes about the intellect.”

For Christian optimism believes that the human intellect has been made to know reality, and to know it at all levels: the level of material reality and scientific knowledge, and the level of metaphysics, and that is, of the structures of man. But beyond metaphysics, it can scan the world which Christ opens to it, the world of the very depths of reality, the depths of God, and of that element in us which plunges into the depths of the Trinity, and we are those complex beings who exist at successive levels: an animal and biological level, an intellectual and human level, and an ultimate level in those very depths which belong to the life of God, the Trinity.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Lampe’s definitions of *theoria* include: contemplation in general; intellectual perception; in the spiritual sense, contemplation of scripture (C.1); with reference to Theodore, contemplation which is nourished by dogma (C.1.f); with reference to Theodore, pursuit of purity of heart: detachment from sensible things (C.1.c). G.W.H. Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: 1961), 696.

⁴⁶ Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 29.

⁴⁷ See the section entitled *Man as Bond of the Universe* in Chapter Two of this thesis for further discussion.

⁴⁸ Jean Daniélou, *Myth and Mystery*, trans. P. J. Hepburne-Scott (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1968), 136.

Grace: Divine Self-Revelation

As a significant departure from the Platonic contemplative system, in which humanity ascends toward the higher reality by contemplation of either the Forms (Plato) or by turning inward in contemplation of the soul (Plotinus), the Christian framework places as the primary notion and the 'first cause' of contemplation/*theoria* not man's ascent, but Christ's *descent*. While Neo-Platonist mystical theology may have an idea of the contemplating soul experiencing a sudden ascent toward the divine realm in a kind of philosophic ecstasy, there is not the idea that this ascent is a gift, or is intentional at all, on the part of divine being, or the One. That is, there is not a concept of grace providing the *raison d'être* of *theoria*. Wilken writes, "for the Greeks, God was the conclusion of an argument, the end of a search for an ultimate explanation, an inference from the structure of the universe to a first cause. For Christian thinkers, God was the starting point, and Christ the icon that displays the face of God."⁴⁹ He continues, "Unlike other forms of knowledge, the knowledge of God begins with God's movement toward human beings, what in the language of Christian theology is called grace."⁵⁰

With regard to intentionality, we must note that in the Christian contemplative world, God is not only the philosophical starting point of contemplation, but is also willing and desirous of man's knowledge of Him (to whatever extent that can be). This is not the deterministic epistemology of Platonism, nor impersonal, un-volitional necessary emanations, but an intentional self-disclosure within the cosmos and particularly in Christ; and it is caused by the love of God for us and our reciprocal love of Him that enables us to know Him.⁵¹

To review, then, sacramental ontology contains a concept of the created world filled with *intentional* communication, it contains a view of man's intellect which sees it as possessing the ability to

⁴⁹ Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*, 15.

⁵⁰ Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*, 19.

⁵¹ Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*, 22.

perceive this communication, and, anchoring these, the causal element of God's grace which undergirds this whole system.

Divinization, Participation and Union

A final element in this question of Platonist-Christian *theoria* is its aim and purpose. Festugière writes, "It is one thing to approach truths by reason, it is quite another to attain to them by that intuitive faculty called *nous* by the ancients, the 'fine point of the soul' by St Francis de Sales, and the 'heart' by Pascal."⁵² By means of *nous*, Festugière goes on to say, the soul "aspires to a knowledge that is a direct contact, a 'feeling' (sentiment), a touching, something seen. It aspires to a union where there is total fusion, the interpenetration of two living things."⁵³ This idea of contact or participation is key; the 'seeing' and perceiving implied by *theoria* is hardly passive. The pursuit of the Beatific Vision deifies the contemplator, it "transforms the beholder," as Gregory the Great (c.540-604) says, and "we are changed into the one we see."⁵⁴

The purpose of Christian contemplation as 'contact,' as union or participation, is divinization, by means first of the realigning and restoring of the divine image.⁵⁵ An important point to note here is that

⁵² Louth, *Origins*, xv.

⁵³ Louth, *Origins*, xv.

⁵⁴ Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*, 21.

⁵⁵ Note that there has been development and refining of the idea of divinization throughout the patristic mystical tradition: "Contemplation is no longer a means of divinization: it is simply one of the activities of the divinized soul. No longer is the soul made divine by that which it contemplates, as in Origen. Rather, to quote Athanasius: 'The Word became man that we might become divine; he revealed himself through a body that we might receive an idea of the invisible Father' (*De Incarnatione*, 54)... The premises of the Platonist doctrine of contemplation are now systematically denied. The soul is not, after all, connatural with the divine, and contemplation, therefore, is not that activity by which it becomes divine. Divinization is a result of the Incarnation: it is an act of grace, in the fullest sense of the word. And divinization is not about some direct relationship between the soul and God, as in Origen's theory of contemplation. The soul is divinized, or better, man is divinized, as he is restored to conformity with the image of God, that is, the Word, by the condescension of the Word himself to our fallen state in the Incarnation." Louth, *Origins*, 76-77.

the union which is sought in the Christian mystical tradition is not one where the individual is absorbed into an incorporeal, homogenous mass that is “Being.” As Pope Benedict XVI writes,

There [in “Plotinian” mysticism], union signifies deliverance as far as finitude (self-awareness) is concerned, which in the final analysis is seen to be a façade, the abolition of myself in the ocean of the completely other, which, as compared to our world of façades, is nothingness but nonetheless is the only true being. In the Christian faith, which fulfills the faith of Abraham, union is seen in a completely different way: it is the union of love, in which differences are not destroyed but are transformed in a higher union of those who love each other, just as it is found, as in an archetype, in the Trinitarian union of God. Whereas, for example in Plotinus, finitude is a falling away from unity, and so to speak of the kernel of sin and therefore at the same time of the kernel of all evil, the Christian faith sees finitude not as a negation but as a creation, the fruit of a divine will that creates a free partner, a creature who does not have to be destroyed but must be completed, must insert itself into the free act of love. Difference is not abolished, but becomes the means to a higher unity.⁵⁶

Time and History

The Ancient Concept of Time

Thus far we have discussed the sacramental character of the “sensible world,” the conviction that the sacramental nature, the eternal meaning, behind the appearances is mediated to us through the physical “senses” and interpreted through the lens of reason and spiritual intuition, or *theoria*. But alongside the familiar senses of experience, we find another aspect of embodied life which we shall see also expresses to us sacramental truths: time. The patristic Christian framework was able to broker between two ancient concepts of time which at first glance may seem to be incompatible with each other. These two concepts are 1) the idea of time as cyclical, where meaning is expressed to us through

⁵⁶ John F. Thornton and Susan B. Varenne eds., *The Essential Pope Benedict XVI: His Central Writings and Speeches* (New York: HarperOne 2007), “The Liturgy” 149. Note, however, this optimism about the Beatific Vision and the union which is possible through contemplation is held in balance in the Great Tradition by the more apophatic approaches of the likes of Gregory of Nyssa: Louth writes, “there is no final vision, for the soul’s experience in the darkness is not – cannot be – *theoria*, for there is no possibility of sight in this darkness. God’s presence cannot be seen or comprehended, but only felt and accepted. This denial of the ultimacy of *theoria*, of contemplation, is what arks Gregory off most sharply from Origen and Evagrius. The Platonic doctrine of contemplation is left behind; it is beyond *theoria*, in the darkness of unknowing, that the soul penetrates more and more deeply into the knowledge and presence of God through love.” Louth, *Origins*, 94.

recurrence, and 2) the idea of time as history, the arena of events and particularity.⁵⁷ For the church fathers, one is able to find sacramentally communicated truths in both aspects of time. Daniélou notes, with regard to the movement from the subtle sacramental revelation expressed through recurrence to the more explicit expression found in the particularity of history,

It meant that God is revealed not only in the rhythm of cosmic cycles, but also in the contingent singularity of historical events. There is, then, a sacred history of successive individual acts of creative power: the election of Abraham, the exodus from Egypt, the kingdom of David, the incarnation of Christ, and his resurrection, the sacraments of the Church, and the Last Judgment. In this wholly new point of view, the meaning of creation itself is altered, for it can now be seen as the first event in a homogeneous series of divine historic actions.⁵⁸

What we must see here is that the Platonist-Christian synthesis of the fathers was able to envelop and interpret both aspects of time: its repetitive nature (which we may point to as a Greek inheritance) and also its being the arena for unique “events” (time as history, or “the God of history” as a more Jewish notion);⁵⁹ Christianity may say both point to Christ.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ These two concepts of time are sometimes assigned one to the Greek mindset (the ideas of recurrence and Eternal Return) and the other to a Jewish mindset (the Jews having the “God of history”). George Grant’s *Philosophy in the Mass Age*, Chapters 2 and 4, offer a good description of this dichotomy. While, of course, this is not an absolutely strict delineation between the two, the interesting point to note is how Christianity is able to broker between the two and, it seems, effectively envelop both points of view within the sacramental system. George Grant, *Philosophy in the Mass Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

⁵⁸ Daniélou, *The Lord of History*, 139.

Daniélou goes on to deal with the question of historical particularity superseding natural recurrence: “At first sight it might appear that this revolution of religious thought would leave no room for nature symbolism, which, as we have seen, is essentially an intuition of the divine through the regular repetition of cosmic phenomena; whereas it is the essence of historical events to be unique, unrepeatable, and new. And it is true, as Mircea Eliade has shown, that the symbolic approach to reality always shows an inherent tendency to eliminate the individual peculiarities of things as they actually occur, being concerned exclusively with the repetitive aspects of its subject-matter. The climax of this tendency is reached when the temporal process itself can be interpreted as reflecting even in its own mobility, through the myth of eternal recurrence, the changelessness of eternity.” 139.

⁵⁹ See George Grant, *Philosophy in the Mass Age*, Chapters 2 and 4.

⁶⁰ We do not have time to discuss it here, but one of Daniélou’s ideas in *Myth and Mystery* (1968) is that of successive stages of revelation; an idea of a pedagogical movement through philosophic/theological/mystical developments which move in greater levels of clarity – beginning with the ways in which God may be found in the nature cults, and then the Greek idea of eternity communicated through recurrence, followed by and built upon in the Jewish concept of God acting in history and salvific events, to the Christian concept of Christ’s acts being so sacramentally laden such that they envelop all previous intimations of truth and offer a fulfillment and ultimate meaning and revelation of God’s being and life.

Sacred History

The patristic concept of sacred history is greatly concerned with recognizing the recurrence of symbolic patterns and types throughout the medium of historical events. This is seen most obviously in patristic scriptural exegesis, in the typological (and to a certain extent allegorical) readings of Scripture offered by the fathers. Another place where this is perfectly at home is in patristic liturgical theology and mystagogy. We find among both patristic exegetes and catechists a teasing out of apparent recurring symbols within the unique events of salvation history as found in the Scriptures and sacramentally represented in the liturgy of the Church. The fathers move freely from history to sacrament, as if to assert that the sacraments give the participant access to the significance and power of all the echoes of eternal truth seen in sacred history. The rationale behind this reading of history is explained by Daniélou in the following:

In the gradual unfolding of God's design, there appears a system of analogies between his successive works, for all their distinct self-sufficiency as separate creative acts. The Flood, the Passion, Baptism and the Last Judgement, are closely linked together in one pattern. The same divine characteristics are revealed in the successive strata of history. The typological interpretation of events does not in any way tend to ignore or mask their individual existence or value, but affords a frame of reference for intelligible co-ordination.⁶¹

This brings us to what Daniélou calls the “paradoxical originality” of the ancient Christian interpretation of time. Two of these “original” concepts, which themselves are interrelated, are the “beginnings that have no end” and, most importantly, the “already-not-yet.” Both of these are perfect examples of the patristic working out of the relationship between the eternal realm and the temporal realm. We find in the Christian framework the emergence of a new ontological category with regard to time: things that may exist in both the temporal and eternal orders, which seem to transgress the strict delineation between the two. These concepts arise, of course, because of their relation to the pattern of the Incarnation, which at its core is an ontological transgression, the divine intersecting, piercing the

⁶¹ Daniélou, *The Lord of History*, 140.

mundane. The first example of these concepts is what Daniélou (drawing from Gregory of Nyssa) calls “beginnings which have no end.” He writes, “formerly there were two orders of things, eternal and temporal: there are things that have neither beginning or end, which Philo called *Θεία*, the things of God, and there are things that have a beginning and an end, namely corruptible material things. The possibility of things that have a beginning but no end is offensive to reason: it seems to derive directly from Christian thought.”⁶² The prime example of this, of course, is the Christological union of human and divine natures in Christ. Thus we have an intersection between the eternal and temporal, producing temporal events, or “beginnings” which are also eternal. “So the union of the divine and human natures in Christ, which took place at a given moment in time, is thenceforward permanent, irrespective of all the possible sinfulness of mankind.”⁶³ Christianity is constantly confronted with these beginnings which have no end: God’s creative acts and redeemed humanity both have beginnings and no end; and also Christ’s resurrection as a moment, a unique temporal event, which is also eternal and unending. The mystagogy of the fathers is quite familiar with this concept, with the sacraments of the church, in their very essence, paradoxically transgressing the temporal ontological categories.

Eschatology: Already-Not-Yet

The second unique Christian paradox which we must discuss is the idea of “already-not-yet.” Similar to the above concept of “beginnings which have no end,” this idea represents a working out of the relationship between eternal and temporal ontological categories, and this concept, like the former, applies very much to the theology of the sacraments of the Church. We will find this concept dealt with often by the mystagogues, and Theodore is no exception; and while they may not use the terminology of “already-not-yet,” one finds in the mystagogical catecheses a definite attempt to reconcile the idea of

⁶² Daniélou, *The Lord of History*, 3.

⁶³ Daniélou, *The Lord of History*, 3-4.

temporally tied ritual with its corresponding eternally present eschatological reality.⁶⁴ Daniélou refers to the “antinomy which is the tragic drama of Christianity, for the Christian belongs at once to a world that has ceased to be, and to a world that is not yet... they are two successive periods of history, in dramatic conflict.”⁶⁵ Daniélou further makes particular mention of the “constant eschatological reference” of the Church’s mystagogy.⁶⁶ The patristic idea of eschatology is not simply the era of earthly time followed, in time, by the era of the eternal. It is, as mentioned above, a ‘piercing’ of the eternal into the temporal, or perhaps an even better analogy would be the ‘infection’ of the temporal with the eternal, an infection which expresses itself through sacraments.⁶⁷ The sacraments are, so to speak, the ‘symptoms,’ with a view to bring about a full assumption of the temporal by the eternal and divine.

Pope Benedict XVI, in his *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, explains the role of the church’s sacraments as existing within a three-fold progression of sacred history: that of shadow, image and reality. The Church and her sacraments exist in the middle, the “in-between” stage of image. Benedict portrays the liturgy, functioning within the era of image, as containing within it both the past (the shadow of the Institution of the Eucharist) and the future reality, the eschatological consummation. He thus relates the liturgy to the concept of “already-not-yet” in the following:

It becomes clear that the liturgy gives precise expression to this historical situation. It expresses the “between-ness” of the time of images, in which we now find ourselves. The theology of the liturgy is in a special way “symbolic theology”, a theology of symbols, which connects us to what is present but hidden... Yes, we do need them [i.e. mediating symbols], precisely so that, through the “image”, through the sign, we learn to see the openness of heaven. We need them to give us the capacity to know the mystery of God in the pierced heart of the Crucified... We do indeed participate in the heavenly liturgy, but this participation is mediated to us through earthly signs, which the Redeemer has shown to us as the place where his reality is to be found... The immediate event – the liturgy – makes sense and has a meaning for our lives only

⁶⁴ “Profane history covers the whole period of this world’s existence, but Christianity is essentially the next world itself, present here and now in a mystery.” Daniélou, *The Lord of History*, 24.

⁶⁵ Daniélou, *The Lord of History*, 16-17.

⁶⁶ Daniélou, *The Lord of History*, 8.

⁶⁷ Cf. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), Book 4, Chapter 4, entitled “Good Infection.”

because it contains the other two dimensions. Past, present, and future interpenetrate and touch upon eternity.⁶⁸

What we have discussed here with regard to the Platonist-Christian concept of the relationship between time and eternity is, in summary, the affirmation that the *eschaton*, as union with divine life, is already here and present, and accessed by worshipping Christians, albeit veiled, by means of the sacraments.⁶⁹ We should note, that, as Daniélou suggests, Christianity both exists within history, and simultaneously transcends history – it is both incarnate and eternal (and one cannot help but notice the image of Christ’s Incarnation in this statement).⁷⁰ And here we must recognize again, with the idea of “already-not-yet” along with the sacramental life of the Church, the unique and paradoxical meeting and mingling of ontological categories which is found in Christianity.

The reason for this interpenetration of the ontological categories of temporality and eternity is Christological. The fact of the union between human nature and divine nature in Christ means that his human, temporal and historical, actions have eternal power and significance. And so as the church’s sacraments symbolically present in figures the historical events of Christ’s earthly life (foremost among these are of course His death and resurrection), *the eternal meaning and eschatological purpose of these is made present also*. Thus the participant in the liturgy stands at once in their own time and simultaneously beyond time with Christ, who draws us to Himself. Pope Benedict writes regarding this presence of eternity within time, “it is still only the time of dawn, when darkness and light are

⁶⁸ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 60-61.

⁶⁹ “Profane history covers the whole period of this world’s existence, but Christianity is essentially the next world itself, present here and now in a mystery.” Daniélou, *The Lord of History*, 24.

⁷⁰ “Christianity emerged at a given point in the sequence of historical eventuation. It provides a constituent part of the fabric of recorded facts... [But] the fundamental reality of Christianity is ‘to come,’ not just in a relation to a particular moment of time, but in relation to all historical time, past present and future. It is indeed *εσχατος*, the last thing: with Christianity, the end is already achieved. But in the mystery of the being and working of the Christian Church, this thing which is beyond history exists now in historical fact.” – Daniélou, *The Lord of History*, 24.

intermingled. The sun is rising, but it has still not reached its zenith. Thus the time of the New Testament is a peculiar kind of ‘in-between’, a mixture of ‘already and not yet.’”⁷¹

Conclusions

To summarize, then, what we have observed here: We find that the Platonist-Christian synthesis contains some basic assertions about reality. It operates within a foundationally dualistic framework, which maintains the “ontological gulf” which separates Creation from the Creator. The patristic ontology, however, is not left at this strict delineation, but is also concerned with the relationship between the eternal realm and the sensible realm. This relationship is conceived, via the doctrine of creation, as creation’s being as “derived being.” Not only is the sensible realm considered a gift of participation in the being of God, but it is also expressed by means of image. Here we have sacramental ontology, the participation of the sensible world, creation, both animate and inanimate, in eternal being, representing it through types and imitation, and by doing so moving beyond simple symbolism to a making-present of the eternal reality. We say “animate and inanimate” creation because the implications of the idea of sacramental ontology colour the entirety of existence; from the general sacramental and theological patterns expressed in the natural world, interpreted through natural theology and *analogia entis*, to the concept of humanity bearing the image of God, which is often equated with reason and our ability to recognize and contemplate (*theoria*) the sacramentality of nature, time and history.

The doctrine of the Incarnation, for Christianity, uniquely complicates this system, although it is not foreign to it. The Incarnation, the union of divinity and humanity, Christ as the “image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15), is the archetypal pattern on which sacramental ontology is based. It exists both within the system and is simultaneously exterior and primary. Further, the Incarnation as union

⁷¹ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 54.

between Divinity and Humanity is the content of eschatology. It is the inauguration and the *telos* of the *eschaton*, and it is the reason for the patristic sense of initial possession of the next age, or eternity, while still in time, especially by means of the church's sacraments.

The practical application of these concepts to Christian life and worship consists of recognizing the intentionality of God, through His deliberate placing of typological patterns into the sensible world, and also the Christian response, which is to contemplate and imitate these received truths. To summarize, sacramental ontology is the idea that the image, or type, which we encounter through the senses, participates in the archetype and makes it present. This applies not only to the physical world and the sensible patterns of the cosmos and biological life, it applies to Scriptural exegesis, and the patterns and analogies between historical events which seem to punctuate the text, always pointing to Christ, and which may be interpreted best through Christological reading.

The further step, however, is beyond simply attuning the eyes of the soul, or reason, to the recurrence of divine patterns, or exercising *theoria*. It is also aligning one's life and soul according to the pattern of the mystery revealed through the signs and types by means of imitation. And, of course, this idea of imitation is found most clearly in the Church's sacraments. We can see at once, then, the rationale for mystagogy; admitting the initiated into a greater appreciation for, and participation in, the typological ontology of the sacraments. Mazza expresses this idea of sacramental imitation and its deep significance for Christian worship beautifully: "In the biblical and earliest patristic traditions, the theological theme of imitation does not refer solely to externals but concerns the innermost being; in other words, imitation is of the ontological order. Imitation makes one like the object imitated, by

means of a real change of being. A liturgical action is a 'likeness' (we today would say a 'sacrament') because it is an imitation."⁷²

⁷² Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy* (New York: Pueblo, 1989), 72.

Chapter Two: Sacramental Ontology within the Christology of

Theodore of Mopsuestia

Introduction

In the Fifth Century, the most complete exposition of the sacramental beliefs of the Church of the East was presented by the Antiochene theologian and exegete, Theodore of Mopsuestia, through a theological approach that draws upon scriptural, patristic (Niceno-Constantinopolitan) and liturgical language.¹

The following chapter consists of an examination of the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia. His doctrine of Christ bears quite a few peculiar² and unique elements, most of which became material that Theodore's critics could point to as evidence of his heterodoxy during the controversies which led up to his posthumous condemnation at the Second Council of Constantinople (The Fifth Ecumenical Council, 553 C.E.). Theodore most notably was condemned at the Constantinopolitan Council in 553 as the "Father of Nestorianism." The most damning element of his Christology was his reticence to accept both the Marian designation as *theotokos* and the Christological definition of the "hypostatic union," both of which became hallmarks of Chalcedonian orthodoxy. There is much that could be dealt with concerning Theodore's condemnation: an exploration of his suspicion-arousing vocabulary of "Assumed Man and Assuming Word;" a contextual investigation which highlights the developing nature of Christology and better appreciates the fact that Theodore died before even the Council of Chalcedon, let alone the Ecumenical Council which condemned him 125 years later; an assessment of Theodore's exegetical approach, with special attention given to the presence and effect of the typical Antiochene concerns and emphases within his Christology. Many of these elements are dealt with adeptly by scholars such as

¹ Mar Bawai Soro, "Understanding Church of the East Sacramental Theology: The Theodorian Perspective," in *Syriac dialogue: Fourth Non-Official Consultation on Dialogue within Syriac Tradition*, eds. Johann Marte & Gerhard Wilflinger (Vienna: Pro Oriente, 2001), 22.

² I say "peculiar" partly because some Christological elements are genuinely unique to Theodore, and, on the other hand, they are peculiar for the simple fact that because of his anathematization, his Christological approach became taboo and later simply unknown outside of the Orthodox Church of the East which preserved his exegetical and doctrinal heritage in high esteem all along.

Greer, McLeod, Zaharopoulos, etc., who are among a modern wave of scholars calling for a re-evaluation of the justice of Theodore's condemnation.³ The purpose here will not be to add another assessment of his condemnation to the discussion, but to illuminate certain elements within Theodorean Christology which give evidence of the ancient patristic sacramental ontology (as described in Chapter one). In doing so, we will be better equipped to move in our analysis towards Theodore's mystagogy, which is significant if we recall our earlier discussion of the notion of the Incarnation (hence, Christology) serving as the archetype for the sacramentality of reality. This investigation will also be helpful to us by revealing how Theodore subscribed to a general 'sacramentality,' and notably one which reveals some of his Antiochene tendencies, beyond the more specific and explicit concept of sacramentality which attends his mystagogy. In this endeavour we will depend largely on the translations of primary source texts as given by McLeod in the appendices of his *Theodore of Mopsuestia* (2009), and, to a lesser extent, those given by Greer in his *Theodore of Mopsuestia: Theologian and Exegete* (1961).

What is of particular concern in this chapter is Theodore's theological anthropology, as, in general, we find sacramental ontology to be couched in anthropology, Christology and soteriology. We take our cue from Mar Bawai Soro, who writes, "the sacramental theology of the Church of the East [as the one tradition which has preserved Theodore's theological heritage] has not been elaborated systematically by the Fathers of this Church. Instead, the understanding of the sacraments in this tradition came to be articulated in connection with other aspects of the Faith, most notably Christian anthropology, Christology and soteriology."⁴ There are two concepts which we encounter when looking at Theodore's Christology which offer some fairly explicit evidence of the character of Theodore's sacramental

³ Rowan A. Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia: Exegete and Theologian* (Westminster: The Faith Press, 1961); Dimitri Z. Zaharopoulos, *Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Bible* (New York: Paulist Press 1989); Frederick G. McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia* (New York: Routledge 2009).

⁴ Soro, "Understanding Church of the East Sacramental Theology," 22.

worldview. They are: his anthropological concept of man as the “Bond of the Universe,” and further Christ as the *true* Bond of the Universe; and secondly, Theodore’s idea of sacred history consisting of two phases, the “two *katastaseis*,” a notion which reveals the interactions between the concept of time, eschatology, sacramental theology, and soteriology.

We must note also that this investigation into Theodore’s approach reveals to us more than merely the isolated theological framework of the post-Nestorian-schism Church of the East. Theodore stands as an excellent source of evidence of Greek and Antiochene thinking in general. Although Theodore’s perspective may, mistakenly, be viewed as belonging only to the Syrian, “Nestorian,” tradition, due to the impact of the councils of both Chalcedon and Constantinople II, Theodore’s own context places him squarely within the Greek, albeit Antiochene, patristic milieu. As Brock asserts, “much of what the Church of the East has taken over from Theodore is in fact the common heritage of the Greek East”⁵ and is not indeed natively “Syrian” at all. Theodore reveals to us the theology and metaphysics of Antioch, and as such he stands as an excellent source of evidence of patristic sacramental ontology in the form of “Hellenized Antiochene thought.”⁶

A Brief Summary of Theodore’s Life

Highly esteemed by his contemporaries, he was condemned as a heretic 125 years after his death. His works, as those of a heretic, have mostly perished; and he has borne the reputation, for 1400 years, of the father of Nestorianism, the patron of Pelagianism, and the first rationalist interpreter of the Bible.⁷

⁵ Sebastian Brock’s comment from the panel discussion following Mar Bawai Soro’s presentation of his paper. Soro, “Understanding Church of the East Sacramental Theology,” 52.

⁶ Mar Bawai Soro’s comment from the post-presentation panel discussion. Soro, “Understanding Church of the East Sacramental Theology,” 52.

⁷ John L. McKenzie, “A new study of Theodore of Mopsuestia,” *Theological Studies* 10, no. 3 (1948): 394. Since we will not give any further attention to the charge of Pelagianism, we must make a quick explanatory note here. As Leonard Patterson writes, “Theodore was not afraid to welcome and protect Julian of Eclanum and the other Pelagian leaders when it would, no doubt, have been more worldly-wise to ignore or disown them.” Patterson notes that their positive teaching regarding human free-will likely appealed to Theodore (human free will being an important element in his theological anthropology and his Christology), but Patterson is quick to note that Theodore avoided their extreme conclusions. Leonard Patterson, “‘The scholar-saints of Antioch’: an address given at St. Mary’s Church, Selly Oak, August 23rd, 1927,” *Modern Churchman* 17 no.6-8 (1927): 471.

Theodore was born in the year 350 in Antioch to a family of some prominence. He received an education in Greek rhetoric under Libanius, alongside his life-long friend, John Chrysostom. Theodore and Chrysostom then entered the monastic life under the tutelage of Diodore of Tarsus, who is generally considered the founder of the School of Antioch, and its exegetical approach in particular.⁸ Theodore witnessed and waded into the theological convulsions caused by the Arian controversy in Antioch during the decade of the 370s. Following the First Council of Constantinople, Theodore was ordained a priest in 383. Theodore made a name for himself during this time, engaging the heresies prevalent in Antioch at the time, and especially as an exegete through his biblical commentaries. Theodore remained under the mentorship of Diodore for nine more years until he was consecrated bishop of Mopsuestia in 392. Theodore died in 428, beloved, at least within Eastern Christianity, as a defender of orthodoxy and an eminent biblical scholar.

The Nestorian and Monophysite controversies began almost immediately following Theodore's death, and Theodore's orthodoxy was drawn into question and his memory and writings used as tools in the arguments on both sides of each of these theological struggles. Theodore was ultimately condemned; his works and his person anathematized at the Second Council of Constantinople (The Fifth Ecumenical Council) in 553.⁹ And there the issue laid to rest¹⁰ until, in 1932-33, Alphonse Mingana published two volumes of Syriac texts of Theodore's catechetical homilies (Ms. Mingana Syr. 561) and the debate over Theodore's condemnation was revisited by scholars of early Christian history. The Catechetical Homilies represent some of the only works of Theodore which have survived in their

⁸ Frederick G. McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia* (New York: Routledge 2009), 3.

⁹ From the Fifth Ecumenical Council: "First we brought into review the matter of Theodore of Mopsuestia; and when all the blasphemies contained in his writings were made manifest, we marvelled at the long-suffering of God, that the tongue and mind which had framed such blasphemies were not immediately consumed by the divine fire." *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series, Volume XIV the Seven Ecumenical Councils*, eds. Philip Schaff and Rev. Henry Wallace (New York: Cosmio, 2007), 307.

¹⁰ With the dawn of the Muslim conquests into the Eastern Christian realms, further debate over these issues essentially ceased. Similarly in the West, the question of Theodore's orthodoxy was superseded by other theological and political concerns.

entirety, since his writings had been banned and mostly destroyed following the Fifth Ecumenical Council.¹¹ Theodore has, however, been upheld consistently in good favour in what is now the Orthodox Church of the East (especially the Assyrian Orthodox Church), where he is, and always has been, known as “The Interpreter,” a primary patristic source of doctrine and exegetical practice.

Bond of the Universe

Let us turn first to the question of Theodore’s theological anthropology. An important aspect of Theodore’s anthropology was his view of man as the “bond of the universe,” and this is one area of his thinking where his sacramental ontology can be seen to express itself. As the divine image bearer, humanity has the unique position of being the locus of cosmic unity, linking the temporal with the eternal, the visible and the invisible, the mutable and the immutable, by means of relationships of likeness and image. In Theodore’s commentary on Romans he writes,

God made the whole of creation one cosmic body, containing all things, both visible and invisible... Although these differ among themselves, with some visible and others invisible [God’s] intent is that all things be bound into one reality. For he created the human being to be fashioned with a visible body that is related to the material creation – for it is constituted of earth, air, water, and fire – and of an invisible soul that is akin to those invisible [spiritual beings]. He has also made [Adam] to be the pledge of His friendship to all.¹²

One can, of course, see a very obvious indebtedness to Platonism when Theodore speaks of the kinship¹³ of the soul with the invisible creation, but more importantly we must note Theodore’s concept

¹¹ Almost all of the documentary evidence of Theodore’s works exists in fragments or secondary quotes (mostly preserved in the writings of his detractors). The only complete work in Greek is his commentary on the 12 Minor Prophets. There exist Syriac versions of his catechetical homilies and his confrontation with the Macedonians, and there is a Latin version of his commentary on the minor epistles of St. Paul. This list of extant works comes from: www.nestorian.org/Theodore_of_Mopsuestia.html

¹² McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 92. Theodore’s commentary on Romans 8:19 as found in Staab 1984: 137. Also: “For God made Adam to be a being composed of an invisible, rational, immortal soul and a visible mortal body. His soul possesses a likeness to the invisible [angelic] natures, while his body is closely akin to the visible [material] beings. For God willed to gather all of creation into one “reality,” so that, though constituted from different natures, creation might be gathered into this one bond. (Sachau 1869: fol. 22a/Latin:pp.7-8) McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 27.

¹³ Theodore appears to be one of the fathers who maintained the idea of the kinship of the soul with the invisible realm. He does not, however, go so far as to say that the soul is or can ever become consubstantial with the

of humanity in which mankind is at once a part of the created realm, and also by being made in the image of the eternal and ineffable God, humanity expresses some of the invisible reality through its temporal and concrete existence. In short, humanity functions *sacramentally* in creation. Theodore continues in his commentary on Ephesians to explain the effect of sin upon man's role as bond of the universe,

But death was brought into (this scheme) when we sinned; moreover, from this there resulted a kind of separation of the two orders of creation. For the soul was separated from the body; and after this, the harmonious union of the creation began to be dissolved.¹⁴

We should note that when Theodore says death entered as a result of sin, he does not mean mortality as such, but rather the separation of body and soul, the bringing of disharmony and estrangement into the system, where the "visible" and "invisible" elements of man were previously existing in harmonious unity. The above quotation, of course, begs the question of the role of Christ in this "scheme." And thus we are led naturally to the unique role of Christ as the *ultimate* bond of the universe, and as the *true* Image who is the healer of this dissolution of the harmonious union of creation wrought by mankind.

Christ as the True Bond of the Universe

In dealing with Christ bringing redemption through his identity as the ultimate and true bond of the universe, Theodore takes the Platonic idea of death as separation of body and soul and modifies it according to his dualistic concept of creation. Human death is a microcosm of the fractured and disharmonious state of the universe as a result of the Fall. Christ is the true bond of the universe because he contains within himself the divine and human in perfect union. Thus, Christ's life lived as this perfect union, and his conquering of death, serve as a correction of the estrangement between the

eternal (as in Plotinus), nor does he affirm the pre-existence of souls. The soul, albeit "allied" to the invisible nature, remains ontologically different from divine being.

¹⁴ Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 21. Quotation from Theodore, *In Epistolam ad Ephesianos* (Swete, 120).

visible and invisible realms; the reconciliation achieved first individually in Christ is communicated to humanity and to the whole cosmos. Greer writes,

Man is the "*amicitiae pignus*," the pledge or token of the harmony of the universal order... The dissolution of the *pignus* resulted in death, that is, the separation of body and soul. Death in the individual resulted in a corresponding cosmic dissolution, viz., the dissolution of the visible and the invisible orders of creation. Order became chaos. In Christ the relationship is restored, first for the *homo assumptus*, and then by participation for the whole of creation... Harmony in man as a creature involves harmony in the whole created order. The disharmony wrought in Adam is corrected in Christ. And that harmony in Christ acts as a nucleus to which all creation is drawn.¹⁵

Here we may point out how Theodore's apparent sacramental ontology, or sacramental anthropology, which produces the concept of man as bond of the universe and Christ as the ultimate bond of the universe, can be seen to necessitate Theodore's (characteristically Antiochene) emphasis upon the humanity of Christ. As Christ stands as the locus of connection between the visible and invisible realms, and as the restorer of order and harmony to that system, it follows that He must genuinely participate in the natures of both realms. That is, he must possess an authentic and complete human nature. This relates also to Theodore's concept of redemption: Christ's humanity, being much more than an empty shell which housed the divine, had an essential role to play in Christ's redemptive work.¹⁶ Theodore elevates the human in Christ not only by insisting that Christ's humanity comprised a complete "man," but also by affirming the very real volitional contribution of his humanity to the redemption of creation. As Greer writes,

The action of Jesus Christ is an action governed by the grace of God the indwelling Word, by whose 'co-operating energy' the purpose of God was maintained and brought to fruition. But it is equally an action of Jesus' own ('himself'), and is a 'purpose he held himself.' The completion of the action depends on this autonomous exercise of the *homo assumptus*' moral freedom toward the good... freedom exercised in the context of God's grace.¹⁷

¹⁵ Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 21,22.

¹⁶ McLeod points out how Theodore insisted that any Christological formulation "must preserve and express the full integrity of Christ's humanity, especially his human free will. He believed that Christ's humanity had an essential role to play in God's plan for universal salvation." McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 54.

¹⁷ Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 52. Greer quotes from Theodore, as found in Migne vol. 66 PG 977 AB: "On the one hand, this was a purpose he held himself; and, on the other hand, it was something he kept faithfully according to the purpose and by the co-operating energy of God the Word."

If we reflect this Christological picture back upon his sacramental ontology we may assert that an Antiochene or Theodorean approach would possess a greater sense of “contribution” from the temporal and sensible realm as well.¹⁸ In another way, we may say that a Theodorean sacramental ontology may contain a view of the created realm which affords it a greater sense of existence, perhaps a greater sense of its own *hypostasis* and *prosopon*.¹⁹

The Two *Katastaseis*

Theodore’s view of Christ as the bond of the universe (and as the healer of the rift in the unity of the cosmos) is accompanied by a view of history which is referred to as the system of the two *katastaseis*.²⁰ Theodore is somewhat unique in his development of this view; while one can find inferences of this kind of view of history among the Church Fathers,²¹ Theodore does seem to stand alone in his explicit development of these ideas. Vööbus offers a helpful explanation of Theodore’s “two *katastaseis*”:

Usually, the fathers were accustomed to divide this history into three periods: the *katastasis* of the paradise, the *katastasis* of the present life beginning with Adam's fall, and the *katastasis* of the future; or in other words: the ideal status, the struggle under the burden of the lost status,

¹⁸ A more Alexandrian, or at least Monophysite, picture may be seen to collapse the dualism of sacramental ontology. It would really be only one reality, the divine one, and all sacramental expression would be a sort of divine puppetry. This does not strictly contradict the description of sacramental ontology which we discussed in chapter 1; there is, however, something to be said for the harmony and completeness of a sacramental ontology which gives existence, or, one could say, which gives *hypostasis*, to the mortal category.

¹⁹ As it is explained by Greer and McLeod, Theodore’s (Antiochene) understanding of *hypostasis* was a little adverse to the idea of *hypostasis* in abstract, and preferred to always pair *hypostasis* and *prosopon* together. For Theodore, a thing which possesses *hypostasis* also has a *prosopon*, an outward expression of its own reality/existence. Greer writes, “Theodore is quite clear that no *hypostasis* can exist without a *prosopon*... In other words, something that is described as a reality (*hypostasis*) must express that reality outwardly, to us.” Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 54. Similarly, McLeod notes how Theodore seems to feel it is “not correct to speak of an *hypostasis* without a *prosöpon*,” a *prosopon* being a nature’s “unique individual way of manifesting itself.” Frederick G. McLeod, “Theodore of Mopsuestia revisited,” *Theological Studies* 61, no. 3 (2000), 463.

²⁰ *Katastasis* here refers to an era, an age or phase of history. See the discussion of Theodore’s system of the two *katastaseis* in Arthur Vööbus, “Regarding the Theological Anthropology of Theodore of Mopsuestia,” *Church History* 33, no. 2 (1964): 115-124. See also, Hanneke Reuling, *After Eden: Church Fathers and Rabbis on Genesis 3:16-21* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 121-122.

²¹ Reuling, *After Eden*, 137. – “Although John [Chrysostom] does not use the word *katastasis*, his distinction between the ‘present’ life and the ‘future’ life immediately brings to mind the dual model of salvation history which was fully developed by Theodore of Mopsuestia.”

and the restoration into the status of the paradise. Theodore envisaged the history of salvation quite differently. For his basic conceptions the scheme of two periods only is congenial. All the attempts to squeeze in the third *katastasis* must fail. The first *katastasis* is the present one of mortality. This spans the period beginning with Adam and ending with the coming of Christ. The second period is that of the future, the *katastasis* of immortality inaugurated by Christ.²²

Reuling explains it similarly, and notes Theodore's emphasis on Christ's position as the meeting place between the two ages.

Theodore's formulation of divine history distinguishes between the present age, i.e. life in the earthly realm of history, and the eschatological one, i.e. the life of heaven. In this two-stage model, the loss of Paradise represents no radical rupture in human history, but rather the beginning of a damaged variety of the same sort of human existence. All emphasis is on the only true turning point in sacred history, which is Christ.²³

The majority of the evidence for Theodore's two *katastaseis* comes from his commentary on Galatians as preserved in Swete's critical edition of Theodore's commentary on the minor Pauline Epistles (1880).²⁴ Theodore writes,

All of us who believe in Christ are living now between our present and future lives. We are accordingly mortal by nature and bear the mutable traits accompanying it. Because we possess such a nature, we usually need law, instructing us what is the right thing to do and what is to be avoided... But we will see that we have now been transferred by faith into a future life and have been brought all the way to baptism (which is a type of Christ's death and resurrection). At the same time we also receive the Holy Spirit who is given at our baptism. [The Holy Spirit] is the first fruits of [promised] future things, because He has to be given to us for [the attainment of] our complete immortality. We thus speak of the Spirit as One who regenerates, because His operating mode is to regenerate us in our second life.²⁵

There are two important conclusions we must make in light of the influence which Theodore's system of the two *katastaseis* had upon the whole of his theology and Christology. Firstly, we must note the relationship that this concept has with Theodore's Antiochene, typologically sensitive, style of exegesis. McLeod points out how much of Theodore's interpretation of Genesis can be attributed to his great

²² Vööbus, "Theological Anthropology," 120. References given by Vööbus: Theodore, *In Jonam*, ed. Migne, col. 317; cf. col. 634.

²³ Reuling, *After Eden*, 137.

²⁴ H. B. Swete, *Minor Epistles of St Paul* (Cambridge: 1880-2).

²⁵ McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 118. Theodore's Commentary on Galatians 2:15-16 as found in Swete, 1880:30.

affinity for the typological relationship between Adam and Christ, as type and archetype, as offered by Paul in Colossians.²⁶ It may be appropriate to suggest that the Adam/Christ Scriptural type, one which implies the duality between a miniature and immature image and a perfect and fulfilled Image, is the lens through which Theodore interprets not only Genesis, but many other major theological concepts, and which produces this particular kind of dualistic view of history. Indeed, the idea of recapitulation in Christ makes the most sense within a dual view of sacred history such as Theodore's "two *katastaseis*."

Secondly, we should note that this concept re-affirms the mortality of not only Adam at his creation, but also the mortality and mutability which characterizes the whole first *katastasis*.²⁷ Recalling Theodore's view of Christ as the bond of the universe, bringing two realities which are in all respects distinct into union and harmony, we must also see that the profoundness of the union requires the completeness of each "portion" of this system. The first *katastasis* is wholly mortal, mutable, temporal etc., and the second is wholly immortal, immutable and eternal, and these two things come together as a union of distinct realities in Christ. In other words, we find evidence within this philosophical scheme of Theodore's concern over preserving the "ontological gulf" between the two realities, while Christ resides as the emblem of unity and coherence between all levels of reality.

We may perceive that this same picture of two separate and wholly distinct realities is mirrored in Theodore's Christology. Just as Christ stands as the point of convergence and union between the *katastasis* of temporality and mortality and the *katastasis* of eternity and immortality, He also stands personally as the point of union between a whole and complete human nature, consubstantial with the

²⁶ Mcleod, "Theodore Revisited," 459. – "What Theodore seems to have done was to derive his meaning of image not from the Genesis text as such but from the typological relationship he detected existing between Adam's image and the Pauline understanding of Christ's image in Colossians. For Theodore, both Adam and Christ are real historical figures whose inner spiritual relationship to each other has been divinely sanctioned by Paul as being a type and archetype. From Colossians he accepted the roles that Christ plays as the perfect archetypal image."

²⁷ Vööbus suggests that we must infer that Adam "inaugurated the first *katastasis* as a mere mortal." Vööbus, "Theological Anthropology," 120.

rest of humanity, and a whole and complete divine nature, consubstantial with the Holy Trinity. Soro describes Theodore's view in the following:

He is the Word of God who dwells among us through the humanity of Jesus Christ. He is the Second Adam, the true and the uncorrupted image, the bond and communion who unites horizontally creatures among themselves, and vertically all creation to its Creator. Christ is the one who restores unity and reconciliation between God and man and brings sanctity to man's condition... In his body and soul (i.e., humanity), Christ is the likeness of Adam so that He might renew the body and soul of all men and bind the universe in love to Himself, again.²⁸

To reiterate, the unity between two absolutely distinct ontological categories as we find in Theodore's concept of the two *katastaseis* is echoed also in the microcosm of the incarnate Christ. And thus we see again how Theodore's theology, and cosmology, require Christ to possess a complete human nature. We can perhaps now begin to appreciate the force of this recurring metaphysical pattern upon Theodore's thinking. We see this idea of opposing universal categories being held together in a particular locus (humanity, or truly in Christ) in a harmonious and united relationship appearing again and again for Theodore. We see it in his "bond of the universe" anthropology, in his Christology and here in the two *katastaseis*, affirming Reuling's comment (quoted earlier) in which she notes that "[a]ll emphasis is on the only true turning point in sacred history, which is Christ."²⁹

The Two *Katastaseis* and Eschatology

Theodore's system of the two *katastaseis* also implies a teleological destiny for the initial or "lesser" category – the moving from the temporal *katastasis* into the eternal one, or the drawing up of human nature to share in divine honour by grace. Thus it is a complicated and paradoxical relationship between the temporal world and the eternal world which we find in this system: On the one hand, we may think of each "half" of this equation in an abstract sense as static, complete and whole portions of an ontological equation, which are subjected to no mixture, confusion or absorption. And of course in

²⁸ Soro, "Understanding Church of the East Sacramental Theology," 30.

²⁹ Reuling, *After Eden*, 137.

this “abstract” thought exercise, we can see clearly also Theodore’s Christological convictions which absolutely necessitate Christ to have a complete and distinct human nature in a union with his divine nature which contains no mixture, confusion or absorption as well. On the other hand, when considered as a moving ontological process, rather than a static ontological equation, we can see that the concept of teleology, indeed eschatology, bears some weight on the philosophical picture. That is to say, while we must keep in the back of our minds the two complete and distinct realities of each *katastasis*, there is simultaneously the idea of the *telos* of the whole system exerting force and producing a *dynamic* aspect of movement from the first to the second, from the temporal to the eternal, and this “activity” and movement is located within and hinges upon Christ as the bond between the two.

This is not quite a rejection of the first *katastasis*, nor its absorption, but rather a fulfillment of the nature of the first, which always bore the image and promise of the reality of the second.³⁰ As Soro writes, “through his victory Christ, in his Person, provides a bridge between the ‘Two Ages’ namely, this world and the world to come. He himself becomes the ‘earnest’, or ‘pledge’ of man’s salvation, and through him, man participates in the foretaste and promise of the coming age, which is mediated in the sacraments.”³¹ With Christ standing as the hinge between the two *katastaseis*, we find the coming together of Christology and eschatology, and we can see these ideas as also entangled with the concepts of “already-not-yet” and ecclesiology. As Theodore continues on in his commentary on Galatians he says as much when he speaks of how those who are in Christ may possess the future life through participation in His Resurrection.

Adam exists as the one beginning the present life for all. We are all one human being by reason of our nature. For all other humans who are known to have been born in the present life possess a common essence with him. Thus, on the level of nature, we are all one human being. Yet, as regards our common humanity, each of us also fills a membership role. In a similar way, the beginning of that immortal future life that is to take place after the resurrection *has started* in

³⁰ Nor, we should say, is this teleological/eschatological aspect of the system of the two *katastaseis* anything which resembles the 19th century eschatological invention of “dispensationalism.”

³¹ Soro, “Understanding Church of the East Sacramental Theology,” 24.

Christ. For all of us who participate both in his resurrection and in that immortality that is to be experienced after the resurrection are now one with him, provided that each of us likewise fulfils our membership role in communion with him.³²

We can see in the above quotation Theodore's starting point of the Adam/Christ typology. We can also, I would suggest, assume that Theodore is speaking of the church's sacraments when he talks about participating in Christ's resurrection or "fulfilling our membership role in communion with Him." The "already-not-yet" aspect of the system of the two *katastaseis* can also be discerned in the above. Theodore states that the "beginning of that immortal future life" has (already) started in Christ. He asserts the participation of the Christian in both the resurrection of Christ and the future immortal life, as two separate truths which are part of one continuum of a greater and increasingly penetrating reality. We observe Theodore holding in tension the future, not-yet, aspect of the second *katastasis* of immortality, while still affirming the beginnings of its breaking into the first as already present. Again, Christ functions as a unique turning point, the point of eschatological transition. Consider the following quotation from Reuling which highlights the interweaving of all these concepts:

Theodore's theology is remarkably future-oriented, and has been described as a considerable modification of the Platonic emphasis on escape into the spiritual world. In Christ, the *homo assumptus*, a new *katastasis* (state) has been realized; he personifies the new creation and the inception of a new period in the history of salvation. Yet immortality and immutability will not be given to the sons of God before the eschatological time has come. Only in Christ is the future actualised, and for the baptised there is no present 'other' life than that which exists through the Church and its sacraments and in which they participate, as yet, only in hope.³³

Conclusions

To summarize, we find converging within Theodore's Christological thinking the following: an approach to Christology which is concerned with the preservation of the "ontological gulf" (heavily emphasizing the sovereignty of each nature within the Christological union); an anthropology which views humans as creatures who possess the unique sacramental role of expressing the relationship

³² McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 119. Theodore's Commentary on Galatians 3:27-28 as found in Swete, 1880: 1:57 [Latin]. (Emphasis mine)

³³ Reuling, *After Eden*, 121.

between the visible and invisible realms; the system of the two *katastaseis* and eschatology, because the second *katastasis* is in fact the *eschaton* inaugurated by Christ; and finally a sacramental theology which contains the concept of “already-not-yet,” because, as we saw in the above quotations from Theodore, Soro and Reuling, the “foretaste” of the *eschaton* is mediated through the sacraments.

In Daniélou we find an excellent expression of the peculiar reality, or better, the paradox, which is produced by the meeting of sacramental ontology with eschatology; this mix of teleology and “already-not-yet.” Daniélou’s discussion concerns the patristic concept of sacred history in general, with Christ as the “point of intersection,” but we may, I think, quite easily apply Daniélou’s explanation to our own examination of the particular lines of thought which we have highlighted within Theodore’s Christology. While Daniélou doesn’t himself use the terminology of *katastaseis* or “Ages,” he points out the movement from the era of history, development and time into an era beyond history and, just as Theodore characterizes Christ as the bond of the universe, Daniélou describes Christ as the place where history and beyond-history meet.

...this is not simply a point among others, a term of reference for a continuous line, but an absolute termination, in the sense that there can be nothing beyond: the possibilities of development are exhausted. Here we face a characteristic paradox of Christianity. Although the time-process continues, and the last day, or chronological end of the world, is in the future, yet the ultimate reality is already present, in the person of the incarnate Word: there is not, because there cannot be, anything beyond this.³⁴

And thus to call the patristic (and Theodorean) sacramental worldview “Christological” is a vast understatement, since in this scheme Christ stands as the hinge of every ontological assertion. Christology colours sacramental ontology, since, as we have discussed in the previous chapter the sacramental presence of eternal truths within the created realm is patterned after Christ’s Incarnation.

³⁴ Jean Daniélou, *The Lord of History: Reflections on the Inner Meaning of History*, trans. Nigel Abercrombie (Cleveland: World, 1968), 190.

Further, the Christological union of divinity and humanity is also, as Daniélou notes, the content of Christian eschatology.

...the Incarnation, the union of the two distinct natures without confusion, belongs with 'the last things', to eschatology, being the goal and conclusion of God's plan, subsisting for ever in its own unique reality... Christian eschatology requires for its right understanding a knowledge of the truly human origin of Christ's humanity, and of the persistence of this humanity to the end.³⁵

From Daniélou's description, we may get an inkling of the rationale behind Theodore's particular concern over preserving the integrity of Christ's human nature. All of Theodore's thinking, his Christology, his sacramental ontology, his theological anthropology, his two *katastaseis* eschatology, resonate with the pattern of a dualism between two whole and complete ontological divisions meeting within Christ as the point of their (already-but-not-yet) persistent and eternal union; a union which preserves unto eternity the distinctness of each. As Pope Benedict XVI says, "the Christian faith sees finitude not as a negation but as a creation, the fruit of a divine will that creates a free partner, a creature who does not have to be destroyed but must be completed, must insert itself into the free act of love. Difference is not abolished, but becomes the means to a higher unity."³⁶

³⁵ Daniélou, *The Lord of History*, 195.

³⁶ John F. Thornton and Susan B. Varenne eds., *The Essential Pope Benedict XVI: His Central Writings and Speeches* (New York: HarperOne 2007), 149.

Chapter Three: The Mystagogical Catechesis of Theodore of Mopsuestia

Introduction

In the second homily of his mystagogical catechesis, Theodore offers a definition of “sacrament” which serves as a kind of maxim for the entire work. He writes,

Every sacrament consists in the representation of unseen and unspeakable things through signs and emblems. Such things require explanation and interpretation, for the sake of the person who draws nigh unto the sacrament, so that he might know its power. If it only consisted of the (visible) elements themselves, words would have been useless, as sight itself would have been able to show us one by one all the happenings that take place, but since a sacrament contains the signs of things that take place or have already taken place, words are needed to explain the power of signs and mysteries.¹

Already at the outset we can see hints of Theodore’s sacramental ontology undergirding the *raison d’être* of mystagogy. His mystagogy navigates the relations between the visible signs contained in the liturgy and the invisible realities which they represent. And Theodore’s faith in “words” and “explanation and interpretation” to give the catechumens an appreciation for the “power of signs and mysteries,” belies also his belief in the competence of human reason and *theoria*² in the pursuit of understanding and participation in the eternal referents behind the baptismal and Eucharistic symbols.

Lest we should, however, leave our characterization of Theodore’s mystagogy as a celebration of rationality, we must also present the counterpart and complement to reason which accompanies mystagogy, and that is: participation and experience of the rites themselves. It should be noted that it was common practice for mystagogical training to occur *after* the neophytes’ participation in the rites of

¹ Alphonse Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist* Woodbrooke Studies 6 (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 1933), 17.

² This is not to say reason alone. As we shall see, Theodore’s main concern is the experience of and participation in the rites, and not mere philosophizing. I single out reason only to point out that Theodore’s confidence in human reason is revealed by the mere fact that mystagogical teaching exists in the first place.

initiation.³ It is not absolutely clear from Theodore's commentary at what point this teaching is being given, but we may suggest that it is probable that Theodore's teaching on Baptism was given *prior* to participation in that rite, since he tends to speak in the future tense, for example, "you are by the grace of God about to participate in the holy baptism."⁴ His teaching on the Eucharist, on the other hand, appears to have been given *after* the neophytes have received both baptism and their first Eucharist.⁵ This makes sense, since what Theodore will discuss in these final two homilies is the content of the Eucharistic liturgy, or what is commonly called the "liturgy of the faithful," from which the catechumens have until now been excluded. What we must conclude from this aspect of the timing of mystagogical training is that the structure of patristic catechesis recognized, alongside the capacity of human rationality to grasp some measure of the meaning of the sacraments, also the power of *experience* to communicate the "ineffable" realities expressed in the liturgy. It is an affirmation of other faculties of perception, subtler senses which differ from, circumvent or perhaps surpass reason altogether. Further to this, it is an affirmation of an objective power residing in the rite itself, autonomous, and independent of the subjective experience of the participant. There is a sense, in the fact that initiation should precede mystagogy, that the sacraments themselves possess a pre-requisite power to awaken in the baptizand a capacity for understanding.

³ Mary Ann Claharan, "Mystagogy and Mystery," *Worship* 83 no 6 (2009): 507. Claharan affirms mystagogy as a "post-baptismal" venture.

⁴ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 17. Theodore also begins his commentary on the Lord's Prayer (his first mystagogical homily) by saying that "yesterday" he had finished his teaching on the Nicene Creed. Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 1.

⁵ Consider the following introductory remarks which Theodore makes before embarking on his commentary on the Eucharistic liturgy: "In this same way we have also tightly wrapped in our teaching, as in swaddling clothes, those who were newly born of baptism so that the memory of the grace vouchsafed unto them might be firmly established in them; and we soothed them by the cessation of our speech, because the measure of things that were said was adequate. To-day, however, I am contemplating to draw you, by the grace of God, to the nourishment of a bread, the nature of which you must know and the greatness of which you must learn with accuracy." Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 71.

A reading of Theodore's mystagogy with sacramental ontology in mind reveals the recurrence of three particular themes: 1) the ideas of *physicality and imitation*, which we will find correspond with our earlier discussions of the sacramentality of the material world, *analogia entis* and natural theology (see Ch.1); 2) Theodore's concept of the invisible heavenly liturgy; and 3) the *already-not-yet*, which conveys ideas of teleology, soteriology and eschatology. The following discussion will consist of an identification and analysis of some pertinent examples of each of these three themes, and we shall see through them how alongside the doctrinal teaching which Theodore wishes to impart, sacramental ontology is irrevocably contained in the mystagogy which he offers.

Imitation and Physicality

Theodore's concept of the physical realm imitating the eternal hinges upon his dualistic framework. It has been noted that Theodore's mystagogy in particular, among those of the other mystagogue bishops of the fourth century,⁶ contains a greater focus on the type-archetype relationships between the "visible" and "invisible" throughout his discussion of the liturgy and sacraments than do those of his contemporaries.⁷ In Chapter One of the mystagogy, on the Lord's Prayer, in his discussion of the petition, "thy will be done," Theodore writes, "(this will happen) if in this world we strive as much as possible to imitate the life which we shall live in heaven... When all earthly things have ceased to exist we shall rise from the dead and dwell in heaven in an immortal and immutable nature."⁸ We can see here quite plainly Theodore's orientation toward the heavenly realm, and we should take note of how Theodore characterizes it as "immortal and immutable," designations which he favours in his descriptions of the eternal realm and life. We ought also to notice his exhortation to "imitate the life which we shall live in heaven." Although it may not be explicitly obvious in the above quotation that

⁶ Including also John Chrysostom, Cyril of Jerusalem and Ambrose of Milan.

⁷ Jean Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), 13.

⁸ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 9.

Theodore links imitation with participation in heavenly realities, we shall see, in many of the following examples in which Theodore makes reference to both the words of the liturgies of Initiation and the Eucharist and the *physical* actions of the baptismal candidates, a recurrence of this idea of imitation of spiritual or eternal realities affording one access and participation in the realities themselves.

In Chapter Two, with regard to the enrollment rites, as the candidate is presented and requests to be enrolled in the baptismal process, Theodore explains how the physical demeanor of the candidate imitates the spiritual reality of the servitude and desperateness of the un-baptized. The purpose of this is not only, as Theodore says, to incite the pity of God, but also to communicate the reality of the spiritual situation to the soul of the candidate through the visceral experience of the body.

You stand, therefore, with outstretched arms in the posture of one who prays, and look downwards and remain in that state in order to move the judge to mercy. And you take off your outer garment and stand barefooted in order to show in yourself the state of the cruel servitude in which you served the Devil for a long time... You stand also on garments of sackcloth so that from the fact that your feet are pricked and stung by the roughness of the cloth you may remember your old sins and show penitence and repentance of the sins of your fathers, because of which we have been driven to all this wretchedness of iniquities, and so that you may call for mercy on the part of the judge and rightly say: 'Thou has put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness.'⁹

In his discussion of the liturgy which immediately precedes the actual rite of baptism, Theodore continues in this vein of expressing with our physical bodies elements of the reality of redemption,

Because all these things have to be performed by us all, who 'are fallen to the earth' according to the words of the blessed Paul, it is with justice that you, who through the Sacrament become partakers of the ineffable benefits to which you have been called by your faith in Christ, bow your knees, and *make manifest your ancient fall*, and worship God, the cause of those benefits.¹⁰

The candidate must "make manifest," must represent or recapitulate the "Fall" of humanity from the book of Genesis. We may also notice that prior to the baptismal rite proper, the symbolic actions of the

⁹ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 31, 32.

¹⁰ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 36. (Emphasis mine)

candidate are always to express spiritual poverty, captivity and lowliness. This is contrasted starkly with the imagery which is enacted by the neophytes (the clergy as well) after having received baptism.

The positive, eternal and salvific imagery expressed in the rites and prayers which follow baptism is displayed well in the following from the Fourth Chapter which deals with the immersion, robing and anointing of the candidate:

After you have received the grace of baptism and worn a white garment that shines, the priest draws nigh unto you and signs you on the forehead and says: 'So-and-so is signed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.' When Jesus came out of the water He received the grace of the Holy Spirit who descended like a dove and lighted on Him, and this is the reason why He is said to have been anointed: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because of which the Lord hath anointed me," and "Jesus of Nazareth whom God hath anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power": texts which show that the Holy Spirit is never separated from Him, like the anointment with oil which has a durable effect on the men who are anointed, and is not separated from them.¹¹

There are a few elements to notice in the above quotation which illuminate Theodore's mystical theology. Firstly, we must note the saturating presence of Biblical imagery (and, more explicitly, Scriptural quotation) which punctuates Theodore's mystagogical commentary. Theodore makes very clear that the baptized must identify themselves not only with the death and resurrection of Christ, which is of course the major symbolical object of Baptism, but also with Jesus' own baptism in the Jordan, such that the sacrament affords the baptizand participation also, to a certain degree, in that historical, Trinitarian, scene. Theodore says as much in his *On the Incarnation*: "In relation to His baptism, ours has become a type. The Father's voice has attested to the rebirth that is taking place [here] when He asserts: 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.' Then, after the Spirit descended, He remained with him, just as we too are going to share in his baptism, although his remains

¹¹ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 68.

far superior to our own.”¹² Thus we have the sacrament being able to reach backward in time and make present to the participant some of the sacramental/mystical content of the historical event.

We must also take note of Theodore’s mention of the “durable effect” of oil. More than once in his mystagogy, Theodore makes note of the natural appropriateness of the physical elements of the sacramental rites, and suggests that God has by grace intentionally afforded these items particular attributes which allow them to serve effectively in their sacramental function. Thus here, with oil, by its nature having a “durable effect” (that is, its hydrophobia and viscosity), it is able to communicate to the baptized and anointed the now-irreparable and persistent gift of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Theodore seems to suggest that the many layers of symbolic usefulness which an element possesses are not mere coincidence.

Similarly, in Theodore’s discussion of the waters of baptism and the font, with which he draws analogy to the womb, we find again Theodore pointing to the sacramental aspect of the physical world and its pedagogical function; that is to say, intimations of salvation are communicated to humanity subtly again and again through our experience of embodied life. In the following example Theodore presents an ancient (albeit not quite scientifically accurate) understanding of human conception and explains how this reproductive process also reflects to us the sacramental birth in baptism along with the true second birth at the resurrection.

As even in our carnal birth we receive a two-fold birth, one of which from the male and the other, which comes later, from the female. We are first born of the male in the form of human semen, which has not a single vestige of human form. It is indeed clear to every one that the semen has no human form of any kind, and that it receives the form of the human nature according to the laws formulated by God for our nature after it has been conceived, fashioned, formed and born of a woman. It is in this same way that we are also born, first the in the form of semen through baptism, before we are born of the resurrection, and have taken shape in the immortal nature into which we expect to be changed.¹³

¹² Frederick G. McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia* (New York: Routledge 2009), 135. Theodore’s *On the Incarnation* Bk.8 as found in PG 66:980.

¹³ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 69.

Further to this, when Theodore discusses the Eucharist, he is even more explicit in this expression of the concept of the sacramentality of the natural world, where he implies that God has designed certain elements to have particularly sacramental attributes. In discussing the nourishing nature of bread, and that Christ called himself the “Bread of Life,” Theodore suggests that the things which are familiar to us contain shadows and images of eternal truth; that God uses “things belonging to this world” to impart truth to humanity:

He called Himself bread as an allusion to the things that were to be given, as He wished to convince us, from things belonging to this world, that we shall receive also without doubt the benefits that are high above words. The fact that in order to sustain ourselves in this life we eat bread, and the fact that bread cannot fulfill this function by its nature, but has been enabled to do so by order of God who imparted this power to it, should by necessity convince us not to doubt that we shall receive immortality by eating the sacramental bread... If it is capable of sustaining us in this life by a decree of God, although not possessing this power by nature, how much more will it not be capable, after it has received the descent of the Holy Spirit, of helping us to assume immortality. It does not do this by its own nature but by the Spirit who is dwelling in it, as the body of our Lord, of which this one is the symbol, received immortality by the power of the Spirit, and imparted this immortality to others, while in no way possessing it by nature.¹⁴

The fascinating point to notice here is how Theodore reveals in these quotations a sacramental ontology which contains a deep sense of *intentionality* within its concept of the natural world. We can observe this when, above, Theodore says that bread is “capable of sustaining us in this life by a decree of God.”¹⁵ When Theodore mentions the aspects of the natural world such as the “durable effect” of oil, the (albeit erroneous) ancient concept of a two-fold pattern to human conception, or the nourishing attribute of bread, he implies that God has willfully designed the cosmos to contain sacramental patterns, more specifically, reflections of the church’s *Sacraments*. That is to say, then, that it is not that the Church (or the Lord at the Institution of the Eucharist) has chosen bread to be an element of the Sacrament

¹⁴ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 77.

¹⁵ Cf. also the following: “Every animal is born of another animal and feeds on the body of the animal that brings it forth, and *God has so arranged it at the beginning*, with the creatures, that every animal that brings forth possesses food suitable to those that are born of it. In this same way it is necessary for us, who have symbolically received the grace of God, to receive our food from where we had our birth, and the death of Christ our Lord, when abolished by His resurrection, showed to us the birth that will come to us in the next world through the resurrection.” (Emphasis mine.) Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 73.

because of its nourishing nature, but rather that bread has been given a nourishing nature “by a decree of God” with the Eucharist, and all its symbolic meaning, in mind.¹⁶ This is to assert that Christian theology drawn from natural theology is not a projection of our own perception of the natural world upon the rituals and sacramental elements; it is not a projection of the seen upon the unseen. Neither is it that bread *happens* to be nourishing, or oil *happens* to be hydrophobic, and that, through convolutions of worship history, we then project our theological conclusions from the material upon the immaterial. It is to assume exactly the opposite, that the immaterial and unseen, the eternal, willfully projects itself (Himself) upon the material, within an intentional and specific design of sacramental communication. Soro also draws attention to this aspect of Theodore’s mystagogy when he writes, “Theodore’s sacramental theology is typified from historical patterns present in common human experience. He establishes his sacramental analogy from the world’s natural reality, which he later connects to the salvific plan that has been revealed by God through Christ.”¹⁷

To express it another way, and recalling our discussion of natural theology and *analogia entis* from Chapter One: God has ordained that analogy should permeate the sensible world; he has made something as simple as food being nourishing into a pedagogical tool. The very pattern of sustaining physical life through eating was ordained from before time to impress upon us the patterns of salvation, or more generally the patterns of spiritual life, in order that we should recognize them when we see them in their focused form – that of the Eucharist and the idea of taking Christ into ourselves in order to

¹⁶ “Debates surrounding the real presence (or, we might say, participation) in the Eucharist were but the particular instantiation of a much broader discussion about real presence. While the church fathers and medieval theologians did look to the bread and wine of the Eucharist as the sacrament in which Christ was really present, in making this point they simultaneously conveyed their conviction that Christ was mysteriously present in the entire created order. Christ’s sacramental presence in the Eucharist was, we might say, an intensification of his sacramental presence in the world.” Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids: Williams B. Eerdmans, 2011), 26.

¹⁷ Mar Bawai Soro, “Understanding Church of the East Sacramental Theology: The Theodorian Perspective,” in *Syriac dialogue: Fourth Non-Official Consultation on Dialogue within Syriac Tradition*, eds. Johann Marte & Gerhard Wilflinger, (Vienna: Pro Oriente, 2001), 35.

sustain spiritual life.¹⁸ The above examples give evidence that Theodore was of this same mind, and further wished to impart to the catechumens an awareness and sensitivity to the typology operative within a sacramental natural theology.

The Invisible Liturgy

Ecclesiology: The Church is in the Business of “Image”

When Theodore begins to discuss the mystagogy of the Eucharist, found in chapters five and six of the present catechism, we find his predilection for focussing on the type-archetype relationship between the “invisible” heavenly Eucharist and the “visible” earthly sacrament to be most pronounced. Here we find Theodore also revealing his ecclesiology, in which the Church is the location and mediator of a particularly intense closeness and affinity within the type-archetype relationships drawn out throughout the Eucharistic liturgy/Anaphora. The Anaphora is also the “liturgy of the faithful,” the initiated and admitted, consisting of the most powerful, as Theodore says “awe-inspiring,”¹⁹ words and rites. Consider the following, where Theodore compares the typological effectiveness of the Jewish rites as compared to those of the Christian Church.

The Jews performed their service for the heavenly things as in signs and shadows, because the law only contained the shadow of the good things to come, and not the *very image* of the things as the blessed Paul said. A shadow implies the proximity of a body as it cannot exist without a body, but it does not represent the body which it reflects in the same way as it happens in an image.²⁰

To re-state it another way, the Church is in the business of “image,” “very image” as Theodore says above, and the resultant ecclesiology is one which holds the unique role of the Church in high esteem.

He who wishes to draw near to the gift of the holy baptism comes to the Church of God, which Christ our Lord showed to be a symbol of the heavenly things to the faithful in this world, when

¹⁸ See Daniélou’s discussion in *The Bible and the Liturgy* 139.

¹⁹ “The body which is lying there is high, awe-inspiring, holy and truly Lord through its union with the divine nature, it is with great fear that it must be handled, seen and kept.” Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 87. See also pp. 83, 85, 99, 103, 116, 118.

²⁰ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 18. (Emphasis mine)

He said: "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, and I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." He showed in this that He granted to the Church the power that any one who becomes related to it should also be related to the heavenly things, and any one who becomes a stranger to it should also be clearly a stranger to the heavenly things.²¹

The Heavenly Eucharist

Theodore says of the ritual patterns and prayers surrounding the Eucharist that they are both an image of the historical content of the Christian gospel, "we believe these to be the remembrance of His Passion,"²² and also the image of the eternal worship within the heavenly realm.²³ We see this concept of heavenly participation clearly in his discussion of the *Sursum Corda*, or "lift up your minds" as Theodore/Mingana have recorded and translated it, which is the introductory exhortation of the Anaphora. The Eucharistic prayer begins in this way, explains Theodore,

...in order to show that although we are supposed to perform this awe-inspiring and ineffable service on earth, we, nevertheless, ought to look upwards towards heaven and to *extend the sight of our soul* to God, as we are performing the remembrance of the sacrifice and death of Christ our Lord, who for us suffered and rose, is united to Divine nature, is sitting at the right hand of God, and is in heaven, to which we must extend the sight of our soul and transfer our thoughts by means of the present remembrances. And the people answer: 'To Thee, O Lord,' and in this they confess with their voices that they are anxious to do so.²⁴

With this in mind, Theodore presents the deacons, for example, to function symbolically in two ways: as enacting historical types, and as representing eternal types. Firstly, as the deacons prepare the

²¹ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 23.

²² Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 79.

²³ "Because the priest performs things found in heaven through symbols and signs, it is necessary that his sacrifice also should be as their image, and that he should represent a likeness of the service of heaven. It would be impossible for us to be priests and do priestly service outside the ancient law if we did not possess the likeness of heavenly things." Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 79.

²⁴ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 99. (Emphasis mine)

Daniélou points also to Cyril of Jerusalem, who exhorts his hearers to the same inclination: "the priest then cries: *sursum corda*. Yes truly at this moment, filled with holy fear (*phrikodestaton*) we must hold our hearts raised on high to God and turned no longer toward the earth and earthly things." (xxxiii, 1112 B) Daniélou, *The Bible and The Liturgy*, 134.

Eucharistic altar, Theodore urges that the congregation see Christ's burial enacted and made present before them:

When [the deacons] bring out (the Eucharistic Bread) they place it on the holy altar, for the complete representation of the Passion, so that we may think of Him on the altar, as if He were placed in the sepulchre, after having received his Passion. This is the reason why those deacons who spread linens on the altar represent the figure of the linen clothes of the burial (of our Lord).²⁵

Secondly, Theodore points to the deacons as representing the "invisible hosts," who worship in eternity.²⁶

This is the reason why through the priest we picture Christ our Lord in our mind, as through him we see the One who saved us and delivered us by the sacrifice of Himself; and through the deacons who serve the things that take place, we picture in our mind the invisible hosts who served with that ineffable service.²⁷

Theodore's discussion of the *Trisagion* also contains an interesting mixture of symbolism which reaches backwards into history, or Scripture, and forwards or upwards into the heavenly realm where the *telos* of Christian worship lies. From his discussion of the *Trisagion*, which is a recitation of the praise of the Seraphim from Isaiah's vision (Isa.6:1-7),²⁸ Theodore moves to a sacramental and typological exegesis of the second portion of the Isaiah vision, the Seraph's purification of the prophet with the live coal from the altar. Theodore quite boldly suggests that this scene is a typological symbol of the Eucharist and as such the content of this vision offers a lesson on the content and meaning of the Christian sacrament.

There were, therefore, live coals on the altar: a figure of the Sacrament that was given unto us. A piece of coal is at first dark and cold, but when it is brought to the fire it becomes luminous and hot. The food of the holy Sacrament was going to be similar to this: at first it is laid upon the altar as mere bread and wine mixed with water, but by the coming of the Holy Spirit is

²⁵ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 86.

²⁶ Notice he also points out the priest's role as representing the image of Christ as the sacramental re-enacting of the story of His death and resurrection is performed.

²⁷ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 85.

²⁸ As quoted in Mingana, "Holy, holy, holy the Lord of Sabaoth, the heaven and the earth are full of His praises." Theodore, not unlike his contemporaries, suggests a Trinitarian meaning for the prophetic hymn found in Isaiah 6:3. Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 118.

transformed into body and blood, and thus it is changed into the power of a spiritual and immortal nourishment. As the Seraph drew nigh, purified, and forgave all the sins of the prophet, so also we ought to believe that by participation in the holy Sacrament our trespasses will be completely wiped out, if we repent and are grieved and afflicted in our mind for our sins.²⁹

We ought to notice how the sacramental content of the Eucharistic rites and attendant prayers, as described here by Theodore, contains layers of intertwining meaning and typological relations, which Theodore is trying to illuminate for his readers. The result for the congregation, those initiated into the mysteries of the Church, is that when they pray or sing the *Trisagion* they should recall and feel a sense of possession of Isaiah's vision, linking them to the spiritual history of the Jews; they also should feel as though they are admitted to participation in the worship of God offered by the Seraphim in the eternal realm. By the typological relation drawn between the fiery coal of Isaiah's vision and the Epiclesis of the Eucharistic prayer, Theodore intends that the congregation should also feel some anticipation for the promise of absolution and salvation contained in both Isaiah's vision and in the Eucharistic rite.³⁰

Theoria: The Eyes of Faith, The Sight of the Soul

We may relate the above discussion of Theodore's exposition of the Anaphora to our discussion of *theoria* found in the first chapter of this thesis. Theodore's systematic and methodical presentation of the ascending layers of typology within the liturgy reveals some of the epistemological assumptions which were highlighted previously. For instance, Theodore's mystagogy assumes intentionality and coherence on God's part, in His ordaining of prophetic and eschatological types to be present in history and within the Church's rites; it assumes also the innate ability of humans to exercise their faculty of perceiving and receiving these mystical typological patterns, a faculty which it is the mystagogue's duty

²⁹ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 118.

³⁰ Daniélou, in his discussion of the *Trisagion*, points out the same themes found among Theodore's other mystagogue contemporaries: Chrysostom, "man is as it were transported into heaven itself... he stands near the throne of glory. He flies with the Seraphim. He sing the most holy hymn." (xlvi, 734 C); also Cyril, "We speak of the Seraphim that Isaias saw in the Holy Spirit surrounding the throne of God and saying 'holy, holy, holy is the Lord, the God of hosts.'" (xxxiii, 1114 B) Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, 135.

to encourage.³¹ Thus Theodore exhorts his readers to “use their imagination,” so to speak, as in the following quotation:

As often, therefore, as the service of this awe-inspiring sacrifice is performed, which is clearly the likeness of heavenly things and of which, after it has been perfected, we become worthy to partake through food and drink, as a true participation in our future benefits - we must *picture in our mind* that we are dimly in heaven, and, through faith, *draw in our imagination* the image of heavenly things, while thinking that Christ who is in heaven and who died for us, rose and ascended into heaven is now being immolated. In contemplating with our eyes, through faith, the facts that are now being re-enacted: that He is again dying, rising and ascending into heaven, we shall be led to the vision of the things that had taken place beforehand on our behalf.³²

We must not conceive Theodore’s meaning to be merely “pretend,” as he calls the Anaphora above a “true participation in our future benefits,” and encourages all who participate in the liturgy to “contemplate with our eyes, through faith.” We must notice Theodore’s high esteem for “imagination,” or the eyes of faith, which may, through instruction on the mysteries (mystagogy) and by the grace of God, be trained to recognize the typological relation of the sacraments to the past, and to perceive the sacraments as also making present, to a degree, the eschatological future. One may think Theodore is promoting a kind of elaborate religious double-think, but he does take care to establish these rituals as not merely commemoration but as the firstfruits of obtaining the reality hidden within their symbols.³³

We become, therefore, worthy of this awe-inspiring Sacrament if we think of things of which we spoke above; and if we acquire in the measure of our power, a mind higher than earthly things; and if we contemplate heavenly things, and think continually that it is in their hope that we have received this sacrament.³⁴

³¹ Recall, for instance, above where Theodore says we must “extend the sight of our soul.” Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 99.

³² Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 83. (Emphasis mine.)

³³ C.f. Daniélou, “It is not a matter of the emotions. It is really a matter of an intelligible grasp of a content of knowledge. It is absurd to confine the content of our knowledge to what is simply rationalist or scientific. In sensibility or imagination there is an infinitely precious grasp of the real, provided that we develop it into an intellectual grasp, and do not leave it on the level of evanescent affectivity, but extract from it its ‘noetic’ content.” Jean Daniélou, *Myth and Mystery*, trans. P. J. Hepburne-Scott (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1968), 19.

³⁴ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 116.

At the completion of the Eucharistic prayer, just prior to the reception of the Eucharist itself, Theodore tells us, a deacon calls out “Let us be attentive!” following which the priest presents the consecrated elements to the people, saying, “the holy thing to the holies.”³⁵ It is interesting to note that Mingana points out that the Syriac text literally reads, “let us contemplate,”³⁶ or, given all we have discussed here, let us exercise *theoria*. Theodore urges contemplation of the Eucharistic elements because of his deep sense of the sacramental weight which they bear: that is, the depth and breadth of inter-related layers of meaning, making present a reality which is far beyond the scope of their unassuming and ordinary nature.

Theodore goes on to reveal this conviction in a robust sacramental framework when discussing the efficacy of the Eucharist in the fact that although received by each individual in the form of a very small portion of bread, the whole of Christ is present. Theodore points to the analogy of a kiss or an embrace to demonstrate this. He writes, “this is also illustrated by the fact that when we kiss we are in the habit of kissing only with the mouth, which is but a small part of the body, but we believe that we embrace all the body. Furthermore, how many times do we not hold one another by the arms in walking together, and show our whole fellowship with one another through parts only?”³⁷ McLeod points out that by these somewhat mundane examples, that of a kiss or an embrace, Theodore is expressing something much more significant, and here we come again to the idea that sacramental ontology is patterned after the Christological union. The analogy of a kiss reflects the idea of the relationship between the transcendent reality and its sensible image, the paragon of which is, of course, Christ’s role as the “image” of the invisible God (Col.1:15). McLeod suggests that Theodore’s analogy is intended to reveal, as he writes,

³⁵ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 108.

³⁶ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 108. Footnote 4.

³⁷ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 108

[T]he presence of a truly permanent relationship existing between God's transcendent nature and the image that God chose from all eternity to be the visible way for all other creatures to satisfy both their intellectual and affective desires to know and worship God both on earth and in heaven. In other words, to confront Christ's humanity is, for Theodore, to experience the hidden reality of the Word in a way similar to how the human body as an historical reality provides knowledge of the soul's existence, and a kiss can symbolically express one's innermost love for another.³⁸

Already-Not-Yet

The third and final theme which emerges in Theodore's mystagogy which we will discuss here is that of inaugurated eschatology, or already-not-yet. Recalling our discussion of the concept from Chapter One of this thesis, in which we noted that a mystagogy which hinges upon a sacramental ontology is one which will be concerned with working out and affirming the relationship between the temporal and sensible rites and liturgy of the Church and their corresponding, eternally present, eschatological realities, we will offer some examples below in which Theodore expresses this paradoxical sense of simultaneous possession and anticipation of the eternal referents of the sacraments. Evidence of this concept is, by necessity, most plentifully found among Theodore's references to the *eschaton*, to the "invisible and immutable" realm, the "future benefits" and so on.

We find our first example of this in Theodore's discussion of the rites of Enrollment. Speaking of the candidate's registration for baptism, Theodore says,

It is for this reason that as regards you also who draw near to the gift of baptism, a duly appointed person inscribes your name in the Church book, together with that of your godfather, who answers for you and becomes your guide in the city and the leader of your citizenship therein. This is done in order that you may know that you are, *long before the time and while still on the earth, enrolled in heaven*.³⁹

In Chapter Four, in his discussion of the baptismal rite, we find evidence of Theodore's eschatology among the instances where he highlights the symbolic role of baptism as representing the second birth.

³⁸ Frederick G. McLeod, "Theodore of Mopsuestia Revisited" *Theological Studies* 61, no. 3 (September 1, 2000): 461.

³⁹ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 26. (Emphasis mine)

You will, therefore, have the second birth, at the resurrection, when you will be given to be in the state in which you were after you were born of a woman, and of which you were deprived by death. All these things will happen to you in reality at the time appointed for your birth at the resurrection; as to now you have for them the word of Christ our Lord, and in the expectation of them taking place you rightly receive their symbols and their signs through this awe-inspiring Sacrament, so that you may not question your participation in future things.⁴⁰

Here we have Theodore drawing the connection between the sacraments and “participation in future things,” in eschatological realities, and we should notice how Theodore says that a candidate “rightly” receives these symbols and signs by which they are given assurance or confidence in their future hope of resurrection. We may argue that in the above quotation Theodore does not mean that the sacraments are merely a ‘reminder’ of Christian eschatological beliefs, and that this reminder helps the baptized remain steadfast in their hope, as this would assume a fairly weak and segregated view of the type-archetype/ sacrament-reality relationship. If we take our cue from Mazza, who writes that “imitation is of the ontological order,”⁴¹ it may be suggested, rather, that participation in the Church’s sacraments, which is precisely an imitation of such Christian convictions as resurrection, is a means of progressive ontological change from one state to another, from mortality to immortality.⁴² Theodore says as much in the following:

Since, however, all this is done in symbols and in signs, in order to show that we do not make use of vain signs only, but of realities in which we believe and which we ardently desire, he said: 'For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death we shall be also (in the likeness) of His resurrection.' In using the future tense he confirms the present event by the future reality, and from the greatness of the coming reality he demonstrates the credibility of the greatness of its symbols, and the symbol of the coming realities is baptism.⁴³

⁴⁰ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 49.

⁴¹ “In the biblical and earliest patristic traditions, the theological theme of imitation does not refer solely to externals but concerns the innermost being; in other words, imitation is of the ontological order. Imitation makes one like the object imitated, by means of a real change of being.” Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company Inc. 1989) 72. See Mazza’s footnotes 101-104

⁴² “Indeed, at present you only receive symbolically the happiness of the future benefits, but at the time of the resurrection you will receive all the grace from which you will become immortal, incorruptible, impassible and immutable; even your body will then remain for ever and will not perish, while your soul will be exempt from all inclination, however slight, towards evil.” Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 69.

⁴³ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 52.

We find in Theodore's mystagogy both the idea of straightforward/immediate possession of future realities by means of the sacraments and the concept of progression and development into them, or teleology. To illustrate, Theodore draws the analogy of an infant, who has potentially in him or her all the faculties of human activity, but is weak and small and will grow into these acts at the time God has decreed. Of the newly baptised, he says:

This one [the just baptised] has indeed in him and possesses potentially all the faculties of an immortal and incorruptible nature, but is not now in a position to make use of them and put them into a complete and perfect act of incorruptibility, immortality, impassibility and immutability. He who receives through baptism the potential faculty of performing all these acts, will receive the power of performing them in reality at the time when he is no more a natural but a spiritual man, and when the working of the Spirit renders the body incorruptible and the soul immutable.⁴⁴

Building upon this idea of the potentiality which the neophyte possesses, we later have Theodore speaking of their "progressing gradually" toward the complete fulfillment of the future immutable and immortal life of which they possess the firstfruits now through symbols and images. It is also interesting to note, in the following quotation, that Theodore asserts that the Sacrament possesses this power of moving the participant along in this eschatologically oriented teleological process precisely because it contains the image of the *past*, of the "ineffable Economy of Christ" and "the happenings which took place." He writes,

Because the things performed for us by Christ our Lord are awe-inspiring, and because we expect their complete fulfilment in the next world, we receive them now only by faith, and we *proceed gradually* in this world in a way that we are in nothing absent from our faith in them. This being the case, we are necessarily confirmed in the faith of the things revealed to us through this ministry of the Sacrament, as we are led through it to the future reality, because it contains an image of the ineffable Economy of Christ our Lord, in which we receive the vision and the shadow of the happenings that took place.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 55.

⁴⁵ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 85. (Emphasis mine).

Theodore's Mystagogy and the Two *Katastaseis*

We find these ideas developed further throughout Theodore's discussion of the Eucharist, where the imagery of eating as the means of maintaining and supporting the growth and maturation of biological life plays a significant role. We also find evidence which points to Theodore's concept of the two *katastaseis*, which, as per our earlier discussion on this topic, is not one phase followed chronologically by the next, but a teleological and over-lapping development of the first *katastasis* into the second. As we will see shortly, below, Theodore sees the second *katastasis* to have been fully inaugurated in Christ, and yet also as still progressively being actualized and developed; truly and completely existing, and simultaneously being brought to fruition by means of the sacraments. The second *katastasis* exists alongside the first *katastasis*, progressively pervading it, until it will finally, eschatologically, become the only reality. As Soro writes:

Through his victory Christ, in his Person, provides a bridge between the "Two Ages" namely, this world and the world to come. He himself becomes the 'earnest', or 'pledge' of man's salvation, and through him, man participates in the foretaste and promise of the coming age, which is mediated in the sacraments.⁴⁶

Thus, in Theodore's discussion of the Eucharist, we find him explicitly teaching that the "next world," which Christ has already brought about, is accessed through participation in this sacrament.

Our Lord also testifies to this, because in the institution of the Sacrament He said: "Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you for the remission of sins," and: "Take, drink, this is my blood which is shed for you for the remission of sins." He said this because in His death He *gave us the next world* in which there will be abolition of all sins. As to us it is right for us to perform symbolically the remembrance of His death by our participation in the Sacrament, from which we derive the possession of the future benefits and the abolition of sins. The food of the holy Sacrament possesses such a power, and fits the birth of those who eat it.⁴⁷

Again, we find with regard to the Eucharistic rite, Theodore trying to elucidate for his catechumens the paradoxical intersection of these ontological categories, that is, the invisible and divine realm

⁴⁶ Soro, "Understanding Church of the East Sacramental Theology," 24.

⁴⁷ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 74. (Emphasis mine.)

expressing itself by means of image and imitation through the visible and sensible sacraments. We find, in such quotations as that which is offered below, Theodore revealing his Platonist-Christian sacramental ontology here in his mystagogical semeiotics, which contains also a clear expression of already-not-yet eschatology.

We strive, therefore, to partake of the Sacrament because we believe that through symbols, as through unspeakable signs, we possess, sometime beforehand, the realities themselves, and also because after having received the firstfruits of the Holy Spirit, in our participation in the Sacrament - firstfruits which we obtain when we are baptised into the second birth - we believe that, when we receive the communion, we do receive it for the nourishment and the sustenance of our (spiritual) life.⁴⁸

It follows, then, that the sacraments have a unique and temporary function. We must draw here the connection with our earlier discussion of Pope Benedict XVI's rubric of three phases of sacramental and semeiotic development (as discussed in Chapter One) – the *shadow*, the ritual prefigurings of the Old Testament along with the historical institution of the sacraments in Christ's Passion; the *image*, or sacraments, which function in the "in-between" time of the Church; and the *reality*, toward which all the former levels and stages have been pointing and progressing. The purpose of the sacraments, as Theodore presents them, is, by mediating the ever-increasing presence of this final phase of development, the eternal reality, the second *katastasis*, to render themselves unnecessary.

For this reason the blessed Paul said: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do remember the Lord's death till He come." He shows that when our Lord shall come from heaven, and make manifest the future life, and effect the resurrection of all of us—from which we shall become immortal in our bodies and immutable in our souls—the use of sacraments and symbols shall by necessity cease.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 115.

⁴⁹ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 72.

Conclusions

We may conclude this chapter with the following from Theodore, in which he affirms the ontological position of the sacraments as the “firstfruits” of salvation, or the first measure of possession of heavenly life, which he so beautifully characterizes as by no means a static arrival at an eternal state, but rather as the beginning of “our journey to the Lord.” He writes,

We walk by faith and not by sight because we are not yet in the reality, as we are not yet in the heavenly benefits. We wait here in faith until we ascend into heaven and set out on our journey to the Lord, where we shall not see through a glass and in a riddle but shall look face to face. These things, however, we expect to receive in reality through the resurrection at the time decreed by God, and now it is only by faith we draw nigh unto the firstfruits of these good things: to Christ our Lord and the high priest of things that belong to us. We are ordered to perform in this world the symbols and signs of the future things so that, through the service of the Sacrament, we may be like men who enjoy symbolically the happiness of the heavenly benefits, and thus acquire a sense of possession and a strong hope of the things for which we look.⁵⁰

Given all that we have considered here with regard to the expression of sacramental ontology as observed within Theodore’s mystagogy, through our discussion of Theodore’s conviction of sacramental presence within physical phenomena of the natural world and within the physical actions undertaken by participants in the liturgy, his explanation of the Eucharistic imitation of the heavenly liturgy, and his view of the eschatological content of the Sacraments, we may conclude that to “be like men who enjoy symbolically the happiness of the heavenly benefits” is to both have a true, although immature, possession of this future reality and to progressively and ever increasingly move into it.

⁵⁰ Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 82.

Concluding Remarks

The investigation of this thesis has taken us from the very broad description of the Platonist-Christian synthesis and its attendant sacramental ontology, which comprise the foundational content of the patristic worldview, through the narrowing of our focus upon Theodore and some of the more ontological elements within his Christology, in order to admit us into the particularity of his mystagogy. The first two chapters of this thesis have served, in a way, as deepening layers of initiation and immersion into the patristic mystical, and specifically Theodorean, context which has allowed us to gain better insight into Theodore's mystagogical method and intentions.

In Chapter One we considered how some basic Hellenistic ontological tenets were appropriated and modified by Christianity and, additionally, the effect that this synthesis had upon concepts of nature, anthropology, epistemology and eschatology. Some of the most pertinent concepts we highlighted were: the foundational dualism of the Platonist-Christian synthesis; the concept of derived being, in which the "lower" ontological realm exists because it is endowed with participation in the Being of God; and this participation as expressed in the form of analogy, type, likeness, etc., giving the sensible world a pedagogical and sacramental function. We discussed the idea of the permeating sacramentality of the material world which results in natural theology and *analogia entis* as its most appropriate interpretive framework. Moreover, with regard to anthropology we noted the particular optimism which the Platonist-Christian synthesis professes about human intellect, reason and, especially, *theoria*, as the epistemological faculty which possesses a unique intuitive capacity to recognize and interpret the profuse layers of symbol and type within the recurrent patterns of embodied life and throughout sacred history. Attendant with these ideas, we noted the sense of intentionality in all this; God intentionally imbuing the world with symbol and humanity with reason.

Further, we may perceive this as evidence of God's desire for communion with humanity, hence the specificity of these symbols as *self-revelation* and not mere inferences of abstract, impersonal Ideas.

We also dealt with the concepts of teleology and eschatology and noted that the eschatological picture of the Platonist-Christian synthesis is a moving ontological process which progresses toward the *realities* behind the appearances, which are God Himself and the divine Life. Here we encountered the concept of already-not-yet in which the eternal reality is ever-increasingly made present by means of the participatory nature of the created order. We found in all this a sense of ontological paradox: alongside the complete and whole delineations between the levels of reality, the Platonist-Christian synthesis holds also Christ's Incarnation, Death and Resurrection, which interject the system, which transgress it, yet without contradicting it, but rather giving it its teleological impetus. Finally we noted the unique position of the Incarnation, being the culminating, true and particular self-expression of God within the physical, temporal realm, as also the archetype for the entire ontological structure. That is, the patristic mind realized, as rightly it should if the Incarnation is not merely an historical reality, but an eternal one as well, that the "embodied" or natural communication from God, which is his self-revelation veiled in the "shadows" of the sensible and historical world, is, in all its manifestations, expresses the pattern of the Incarnation. This incarnational pattern, more specifically, is that of God uniting himself to the ontological level of "creature" in order to draw the whole created realm up into the divine life and to allow us access to the higher realms of reality and truth.

Chapter Two served as our introduction to Theodore, his context, his Christological emphases and specifically the elements within his thinking which most explicitly expressed his sacramental ontology. We considered Theodore's theological anthropology in which mankind, as bearing God's image, stands as the bond of the universe, possessing both a visible and an invisible nature, allied with both levels of creation, and as such existing as a symbol of the complete harmonious created reality. Sin and death in humanity represented, in microcosm, the dissolution of the harmonious state of creation

after the Fall and resulted in estrangement between the visible and invisible orders. Christ, as the recapitulation of creation, the second Adam, and through living a life of perfect union between the divine and human natures, effected a restoration of the harmony between the two realms beginning in his own individual person and then, by participation, to all the rest of creation.

We also considered Theodore's system of the two *katastaseis*. In this picture of time and eschatology we observed a very similar pattern of distinct ontological categories having their point of meeting in Christ. We found Theodore's two *katastaseis* to contain very clear dualistic delineations between the first *katastasis* of mortality, temporality and mutability and the second *katastasis* of immortality, eternity and immutability; this second age being the *katastasis* of divine life, or the *eschaton*. As this is a moving teleological process, we also found this view of sacred history to exhibit the same kinds of intertwining interactions (however, without confusion) between the ontological categories as we observed in our earlier discussion of Platonist-Christian, already-not-yet, eschatology. The second *katastaseis* is inaugurated in Christ and punctuates and invades the first; it straddles the divide between time and eternity, and it is a constant reference and guiding force within both Theodore's Christology and his mystagogy.

In Chapter Three we were able to observe how Theodore's mystagogy is saturated with sacramental ontology. We observed this through the prevalent theme of imitation and physicality, where Theodore quite explicitly expressed the idea that the ubiquity of sacramental typology within the physical realm, and the physical elements used in the sacraments in particular, is ordained by God for a pedagogical purpose. Recall the "durable effect" of oil from the baptismal rites or the nourishing nature of bread in relation to the Eucharist, or even the "prickly-ness" or irritating texture of the sackcloth upon which the baptismal candidate stands during his/her renunciation of Satan, all serving the function of communicating to the body intelligible truths; of echoing by means of the sensible experiences of

embodied life, and training the soul to recognize the true image when they encounter it in the sacraments, and as they hope for it in the age to come.

Secondly, we noted Theodore's frequent emphasis upon the "invisible liturgy" of which the earthly is the type and image. He quite unabashedly asserts that the Eucharistic liturgy provides some access to the eternal heavenly worship. This is best seen in the example given of his commentary on the *Trisagion* prayer, which he presents as making present the soteriological content of the Isaiah 6 vision, along with transporting and admitting the congregation to the heavenly praise of the Seraphim. Moreover, we noted Theodore's linking of *theoria* with this access to the eternal in his exhortation to the congregants to extend the sight of their souls, to contemplate with the eyes of faith, to draw in their imaginations the historical and eternal realities which are imitated throughout the Anaphora.

Finally, we surveyed the examples of already-not-yet eschatology which can be found throughout Theodore's mystagogy. In this we saw, again, Theodore's conviction of the efficacy of the sacraments as the means of giving the participants in the liturgy a true and real possession of the future reality, while still in time. We saw Theodore's picture of inaugurated eschatology, as mediated by the sacraments, to be one of teleological progression, and one which agrees with Mazza's assertion that "imitation is of the ontological order."¹ This was most clearly seen in Theodore's persistent analogy of birth, nourishment and development, wherein the newly baptized truly possesses the second birth and new life, but this life is like that of an infant who must yet develop further and further into their own human-ness through nourishing and tending the life they have been given. So it is with the sacraments, which, as typological, imitative links to the higher realities, nourish and promote the ever increasing reality of the life already given in Baptism.

¹ Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company Inc. 1989), 72.

We may conclude this thesis with the following assertions:

Firstly, we have given evidence to support the thesis that the Platonist-Christian sacramental ontology is part of Theodore's intended mystagogical *content*, and not merely its *context*. This is difficult to "prove," as, though it is quite obvious that the mystagogy is saturated in this worldview, Theodore does not come out and prescribe rational or mystical assent to it; he does not say "believe also this ontological doctrine." However, in light of the tri-partite framework of mystagogy offered by Clarahan, that of experience, interpretation and articulated worldview, we may agree that the depth to which Theodore's mystagogy hinges upon Platonist-Christian sacramentality renders it such that a catechumen could not receive the content of Theodore's teaching without also the foundational ontological assumptions which clearly guide the tenor of his mystagogy.

We have also observed in Theodore a sacramental ontology which contains certain emphases which mark it as belonging to the Antiochene tradition. Most strikingly, we have seen recurring evidence of the typically Antiochene emphasis upon a persisting distinction between ontological levels paired with an affirmation of a whole and harmonious union; and in this we have been exposed to a certain diversity within the overarching and unifying sacramental framework of the patristic age.

Secondly, with a view to offer an "application" of sorts for this thesis, I would argue that we have also observed in Theodore a conviction of the *realism* of sacramentality, and, because of this, we may offer up Theodore's mystagogy as a source for promoting the *ressourcement* of sacramental ontology both in general and, more specifically, in liturgical theology. It is appropriate, if I may suggest, to apply the mystagogical, and wider ontological, contribution of Theodore presented here in his mystagogy to the malaise of modern epistemology as described by Daniélou in the following:

Men of our day very often consider that the only objective reality is the scientific and deny that poetry is objective. To them, everything that depends on poetic intuition depends on pure subjectivity, that is, on a domain in which one can say what one likes, merely projecting oneself.

Going further, many of our contemporaries hold that religion is equally subjective, that it is entirely based on a personal need, not on an objective reality, valid for all. The mistake here is to think that science is the only grasp of the real and that everything else is only a grasp of the self.²

Theodore, as we have seen, expresses the conviction that poetry, and we may infer liturgy, symbol and sacrament, is precisely a “grasp of the real.” While I do not suggest that we find in Theodore answers to epistemological and metaphysical questions of our own time, as that would be to commit a certain anachronistic abuse of his works, I would suggest, nevertheless, that Theodore’s mystagogy stands as an ancient affirmation of the objective value of sacramental ontology. As Daniélou continues, “this symbolic theology is not to be regarded as a survival from a supposed ‘pre-logical’ phase of mental development, and thus as something of purely archaeological interest, but on the contrary as a permanently valid category of religious thought.”³ We may also suggest that all this reveals the need for a greater presence of mystagogical catechesis as a source of inspiration and direction in Christian worship. “In sensibility or imagination there is an infinitely precious grasp of the real, provided that we develop it into an intellectual grasp, and do not leave it on the level of evanescent affectivity, but extract from it its ‘noetic’ content.”⁴ This is precisely what mystagogy is; its function is to rouse and spur on the natural human propensity to “see” symbol and to pursue the “more,” the veiled and hidden, yet present, truth; and therein lies its treasury of benefit.

² Jean Daniélou, *Myth and Mystery*, trans. P. J. Hepburne-Scott (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1968), 20.

³ Jean Daniélou, *The Lord of History: Reflections on the Inner Meaning of History*, trans. Nigel Abercrombie (Cleveland: World Pub. Co., 1968), 130-131.

⁴ Daniélou, *Myth and Mystery*, 19. We may note that Eastern Orthodox traditions might not agree with Daniélou’s more “Catholic” inclination toward definition, or the cultivating of sensible intuitions into an intellectual grasp. They might rather prefer to penetrate into the “evanescent” and mystical aspect – but the point remains - the “precious grasp of the real” is something we almost totally lack when we denigrate the aesthetic as “just” subjective.

Suggestions for Further Research

In light of the research presented here on Theodore's mystagogy and attendant sacramental ontology, I offer the following three suggestions for areas of further research:

In the first place, further research into the evidence of Theodore's particular version of the general patristic sacramental ontology is warranted. Alongside his mystagogy, one could examine (the remains of) his other works in a similar fashion as I have done here in order to gain a fuller picture of the unique nuances of an Antiochene Theodorean sacramental worldview. Research in this vein would also prove beneficial by providing a new avenue for promoting the re-introduction of Theodore's valuable theological contributions back into mainstream (liturgically-minded) Christendom, and this familiarity may also aid in the progress of ecumenical dialogue with the Orthodox Church of the East.

Secondly, an analysis of the presence and operation of sacramental ontology within the mystagogies of the other three fourth-century "mystagogue bishops" (Chrysostom, Cyril of Jerusalem and Ambrose) is in order. Enrico Mazza's *Mystagogy* is the only work which contains a survey of the four patristic mystagogies from such a perspective, and more research and discussion on this front would be a welcome addition to the scholarly landscape.

Thirdly, and finally, further analysis of the subtle, yet important, differences between Antiochene and Alexandrian sacramental ontologies would also be a beneficial contribution to patristic scholarship. Such research would, I hope, both more specifically highlight the differing emphases between the two schools, and also offer a greater sense of the unity, despite these differing emphases, between the two approaches, as both operated out of this core sacramental framework. An investigation such as this would be able to point to the inner workings, of patristic thought, to the foundational sources behind the external manifestations of the particularities of each school of thought.

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