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UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM  
DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY

GEORGE METALLIDIS

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**The Chalcedonian Christology of St John  
Damascene: Philosophical Terminology and  
Theological Arguments**

PhD Thesis/Fourth Year

Supervisor: Prof. ANDREW LOUTH



- 1 OCT 2003

Durham 2003

*To my Mother Despoina*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

### Works of St John Damascene

- Aceph.*        *De natura composita contra acephalos* (CPG 8051): Kotter IV, pp. 409-17.
- Dial.*        *Dialectica* (CPG 8041): Kotter I, pp. 51-146.
- Dorm. I-III*   *Homiliae I-III de dormitione B.V. Mariae* (CPG 8061-3): Kotter V, pp. 483-500, 516-40, 548-55).
- Expos.*       *Expositio fidei* (CPG 8043): Kotter II, pp. 7-239).
- Fides*        *De fide contra Nestorianos* (CPG 8044): Kotter IV, pp. 238-53.
- Haeres.*      *Lider de haeresibus* (CPG 8044): Kotter IV, pp. 19-67.
- Hypap.*      *Sermo in hypapanten Domini* (CPG 8066): Kotter V, pp. 381-395.
- Imag. I-III*   *Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tres* (CPG 8045): Kotter III, pp. 65-200.

- Instit.*        *Institutio elementaris ad dogmata* (CPG 8040): Kotter I, pp. 20-6.
- Jacob.*       *Contra Jacobitas* (CPG 8047): Kotter IV, pp. 109-53.
- Manich.*      *Dialogus contra Manichaeos* (CPG 8048) Kotter IV, pp. 351-98.
- Nestor.*      *Adversos Nestorianos* (CPG 8053): Kotter IV, pp. 263-88.
- Sarac.*        *Disputatio Saraceni et Christiani* (CPG 8075): Kotter IV, pp. 427-38.
- Trisag.*      *Epistola de hymno Trisagio* (CPG 8049): Kotter IV, pp. 304-32.
- Volunt.*      *De duabus in Christo voluntatibus* (CPG 8052): Kotter IV, pp. 173-231).

#### Other Patristic abbreviations

- Chron.*        Theophanes, *Chronographia*, C. de Boor (ed.), 2 vols., (Leipzig, 1883-5), (repr. Hildesheim, 1963), in PG 108, 56-1009.
- CNE*          Leontius of Byzantium, *Libri tres contra Eutychianos et Nestorianos*, PG 86, 1268-1357.
- De Sectis*    Ps-Leontius of Byzantium, *De Sectis*, PG 86, 1193-1268.
- Ep.*            Maximus Confessor, *Epistolae*, PG 91, 364-657.
- Fragm.*       Leontius of Byzantium, *Fragmenta*, PG 86, 2004-2016.
- Hodeg.*       K-H. Uthemann ed., *Anastasius Sinaita, Viae Dux*, CCSG 8 (Brepols, 1981).



*Opusc. theol. et polem.* Maximus Confessor, *Opuscula Theologica et Polemica*,  
PG 91, 9-285.

### Other abbreviations

- ACO* *Acta Consiliorum Oecumenicorum*, ser. 1, E. Schwartz (and later J. Straub and R. Schieffer) 19 vols. in 4 (Berlin and Leipzig 1927-74); ser. 2, ed. R. Riedinger, 4 vols. in 2 (Berlin, 1984-95).
- BMGS* *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* (Oxford, 1975-83; Birmingham, 1984 ff.).
- CCSG* *Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca* (Turnhout-Brepols, 1977 ff.).
- CPG* *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, 5 vols., ed. M. Geerard and F. Glorie, CCSG, Turnhout: Brepols, 1974-87 (cited by item number); supplement, ed. M. Geerard and J. Noret, 1998.
- CSCO* *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, (Paris etc., 1907-19; Louvain, 1919 ff.).
- DTC* *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, ed. A. Vacant, E. Mangenot and É. Amman (15 vols., 1903-50); Tables Générales by B. Loth and A. Michel (3 vols., 1951-72).
- Θ.Η.Ε.* *Θρησκευτική και Ήθική Έγκυκλοπαίδεια* (12 vols., Athens 1962-68).
- GOTR* *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* (Brookline, 1954 ff.).

- GCS Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten [drei] Jahrhunderte, ed. by the Kirchenväter-Commision der Königlichen Preussichen Akademie der Wissenschaften [later, the Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin], (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich [later, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag], 1897ff.) [Neue Folge, 1995ff.]
- Islam D.J. Sahas, *John Damascene on Islam, The Heresy of the Ishmaelites* (Leiden, 1972).
- JLW *Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft* (Münster i.W., 1921-41).
- JÖB *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* (Vienna, Cologne and Graz, 1951 ff.).
- JTS *Journal of Theological Studies*, (Oxford 1900 ff.).
- Kotter I-V B. Kotter (ed.), *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, 5 vols., Patristische Texte und Studien 7 (Berlin-New York, 1969), 12 (1973), 17 (1975), 22 (1981), 29 (1988).
- L.Th.K. *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. by J Höfer and K. Rahner (10 vols. And index, 1957-67, + 3 supplementary vols., *Das zweite vatikanische Konzil*, 1967-8).
- Mansi J.D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima Collectio* (31 vols., Florence 1759-98).
- OrCh *Orientalia Christiana* (Rome, 1923-1934).
- OCP *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* (Rome, 1935 ff.).
- OC *Oriens Christianus* (Leipzig, 1901 ff.).

<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologia curcus completus, series Graeca</i> , ed. J.P. Migne (162 vols., Paris 1857-66).
<i>PO</i>	<i>Patrologia Orientalis</i> , ed. R. Graffin and F. Nau (Paris 1907 ff.).
<i>POC</i>	<i>Proche-Orient Chrétien</i> (Jerusalem, 1951 ff.).
<i>REG</i>	<i>Revue des Études Grecques</i> (Paris 1888 ff.).
<i>RHE</i>	<i>Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique</i> (Louvain, 1900 ff.).
<i>SC</i>	Sources Chrétiennes, (Paris: Le Cerf, 1942 ff.).
<i>SP</i>	Studia Patristica.
ΦΘΒ	Φιλοσοφική καὶ Θεολογική Βιβλιοθήκη.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Many individuals have assisted the production of this thesis. The help and encouragement I received are greatly appreciated and are here acknowledged. I cannot thank all personally but do wish to recognise some at this time. Prof. Demetrios Tseleggidis began my voyage of discovery on St John Damascene. The following people all aided in the research and the gathering of materials: Anastasia Karagianni, George and Ria Bithos, Anna Soumeke, Evaggelia Gregoropoulou, Gregory Wellington, Antzela Salpistis. My special thanks go to Hieromonachos Efraim and Theokletos for their support and prayers.

I would also like to mention and thank the State Scholarship Foundation (IKY) for its financial support and the scholarship which allowed me to study at the University of Durham.

A few people have been at my side and inspired me throughout this entire process. I offer my thanks to Dr. Carol Harrison for her help and

encouragement. Most especially to my supervisor and friend, Professor Andrew Louth my heartfelt thanks for his insight, guidance and assistance.

Lastly and most importantly, to my mother, Despoina, this effort would not have been possible without her love, support and caring. Thank you.

## INTRODUCTION

St John Damascene (8<sup>th</sup> century) remains one of the most influential Greek authors of the Christian Church. His teaching continues to be the foundation of all Eastern Orthodox theology. He became the focal point in the defence of Orthodox doctrine in the centuries that followed, both through his own Christological works and through his influence on other key figures such as St Gregory Palamas.<sup>1</sup> Yet his Dyophysite belief is only part of a much wider teaching about salvation, which has its own distinctive perspective. Not only does this research place St John's teaching on the two natures and one hypostasis of Christ into its wider dogmatic context, but also into the context of the very foundations of the Eastern Orthodox Churches' belief about salvation and the role of Christ.

Syria and Palestine, during John's time, were at the centre of all Christological disputes. The most important of these were between the Orthodox and the anti-Chalcedonians. In addition, there were a small number of

Nestorian and Monothelite communities. However, it is important to consider these collisions and disputes with reference to the new situation caused by the extension of Islam.

Between these two worlds, Christian and Muslim, St John Damascene's personality and works provoked a number of difficulties in the ecclesiastical policy of Constantinople. In addition, his contribution to the struggle against the iconoclasts and the works that he wrote to establish Orthodox Dyophysitism in Syria and Palestine have evoked a great deal of scholarly interest.

Moreover, we cannot overlook his poetic talent which produced a large number of hymns still used in the Orthodox Church today, and his discussions on Islam which have attracted the interest of many scholars.

It was in this milieu that the monk and priest St John Damascene lived and wrote, influencing the theological thought not only of the eighth century but also, as we have said, influencing the generations of Greek and Arab Fathers among others of the Eastern Orthodox Church who came after.

But what is most important in the theological thought of St John is his unique mission to synthesize and to develop the thought of the Church fathers and to present this florilegia in a new form in order to face all kinds of theological disputations. All of his writings, and the *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* in particular were translated and read both in the East and West. John is not only recognized by all, but his writings are also the basis of the dialogue between the Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches and the Eastern

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<sup>1</sup> For the influence of St John in the following centuries (11<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>) see the article of Georg Hofmann, 'Johannes Damaskenos, Rom und Byzanz (1054-1500)', *OCP* 16 (1950), pp. 177-90.



non-Chalcedonians. Even although we have so little information about John's life, in contrast to the other Fathers, his personality, I think, is much greater than the others, if we only reflect on his influence on the thought of later centuries. Indeed, John is one of the greatest ecclesiastical authors of the Orthodox Church and his teaching played and continues to play a leading role in the dialogues among the Eastern Churches and, consequently, in the ecumenical movement.

For my doctoral thesis, I followed a variety of research methods. More precisely, I placed the first two chapters in a historical perspective trying to find the historical events which marked both the life of St John Damascene and his theological thought as a typical Chalcedonian Father. In chapters three and four, I examined John's philosophical thought in its wider frame of patristic florilegia. A philological analysis of terminology with a historical comparison was also necessary. In the last chapter, with the philosophical overturn of the identification between hypostasis and nature by John, I juxtapose the author's arguments against Monophysitism from a theological perspective.

In fact I attempted to offer John's understanding of Monophysite teaching, and to clarify his positions on terminology and theology. In my opinion, we should examine the Damascene's thought from two different perspectives. The first relates to the polemical tone of his arguments against Monophysitism itself, and the second refers to his desire to persuade the Orthodox that the Monophysite party, regardless of its inconsistency in Christology, in his opinion, is close to the Orthodox Church because, for example, the anti-Chalcedonians accept the great Alexandrine Fathers and the

Cyrillic *mia-physis* formula.<sup>2</sup> I tried to write a thesis which would offer assistance to the dialogue between the Eastern Churches, marking, as I have already said, the main features of John's theology in his anti-Monophysite philosophical terminology and theological arguments. I hope that my dissertation will contribute positively to the attempts at reunion in the Christian East.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See John's work *Haeres.*, chapter 83. The *mia-physis* formula was a favourite expression of Cyril's. Using this formula he tried both to express the doctrine of Christ and to face the relative union of Christ's natures which was a concept introduced by the Nestorians. According to J. Pelikan, this formula "was the very hallmark of Jacobite, Monophysite doctrine. There was no denying that the phrase had been fundamental to the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria, to whose paternity the Chalcedonians no less than the Jacobites laid claim", see his work *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 2, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 79. About the Orthodox see John Damascene, *Jacob.*, (52):1-2; *Aceph.*, (3):1-3; *Nestor.*, (43):53-54.

<sup>3</sup> I would like to note that when I use the terms 'Monophysites', 'Monophysitism' and 'Jacobites' to denote the opponents of the Dyophysite St John Damascene, I do it in order to keep my dissertation closer to St John's terminology and texts. During the centuries many names were used to characterize the opponents of the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon. The most important of them were: 'anti-Chalcedonians' and 'non-Chalcedonians'. In our age of ecumenical sensitivity, the modern term which the anti-Chalcedonians use for themselves is 'Miaphysites'.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **The Life of St John Damascene**

#### **1. St John Damascene's Life**

##### *Overview*

St John Damascene is a well known and famous ecclesiastical author and, at the same time, a personality of whom we know so little. All the information that we have about St John Damascene's life is insufficient for us to get a clear picture of his person as there are only a few concrete references to him in his works and in the writings of contemporary authors. From all these we should note that Nicephorus of Constantinople (802-811) and Theodore the



Studite (759-826) make only a few references to John's works while Photios of Constantinople (858-886) makes none at all.<sup>4</sup>

The first biographies in Arabic were the sources for the Greek ones<sup>5</sup>. These, although important, were characterized by lack of exactness in respect to St John's life and achievements. On the other hand the biographies in Greek were compiled centuries after John's death, and, recent studies on St John's life reveal a scepticism among modern scholars concerning the descriptions of John's person that his hagiographers presented.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Andrew Louth, 'St Denys the Areopagite and the Iconoclast Controversy', in Ysabel de Andia ed., *Denys L' Aréopagite et sa postérité en orient et en occident*, Actes du Colloque International, Paris, 21-24 Septembre 1994, Collection des Études Augustiniennes Série Antiquité, 151, (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1997), p. 334. According to A. Louth, there are only two references to St John's work *On Heresies* from chapters 102 and 88 in the works of Nicephorus of Constantinople (*Antirheticos* 3,83 PG 99, 528C from chapter 102) and St Theodore of Stoudios (*Epistle 48* according to the critical edition of Theodore's letters by George Fatouros *Theodori Studitae Epistulae* (CFHB 30.1 and 2, Berlin 1992) from chapter 88).

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. *Greek Vita*, PG 94, 433B. According to Chrestus *Θ.H.E.*, vol. VI (Athens: Martinos, 1967), p. 1219: "σύντομοι παλαιαί εἰδήσεις περὶ αὐτοῦ ἐνεσώματώθησαν εἰς τὰ συναξάρια, PG 94; 501-504. Ἐκτενεῖς δὲ βιογραφίαι... μία ἐξ αὐτῶν... ἔδωσεν ὑλικὸν εἰς τὴν σύνθεσιν τοῦ ἀξιολογωτέρου ἑλληνικοῦ βίου, συνταχθέντος... Ἐκ τοῦ βίου τούτου ἔξαρτῶνται πρῶτον μὲν ὁ ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἰωάννου Μερκουροπῶλου, πατριάρχου Ἱεροσολύμων, συνταχθεὶς βίος, ('Α. Παπαδοπούλου - Κεραμέως, Ἀνάλεκτα Ἱεροσολυμιτικῆς Σταχυολογίας 4 (1897), 302-350)... δεύτερον δὲ τὸ Ἐγκώμιον ὑπὸ Κωνσταντίνου Ἀκροπολίτου, PG 104; 812-885. Ἄλλος ἀνώνυμος βίος ('Α. Παπαδοπούλου - Κεραμέως, ἔνθ. ἀν., 271-302) ἀγνοεῖ πολλὰ στοιχεῖα... ἐν χειρογράφῳ Μαρκιανῷ τοῦ IB' αἰῶνος (Mauritius Gordillo 'Damascenica, I. Vita Markiana, II. Libelous Ortodoxiae', *OrCr* VIII (1926) pp. 45-103), ...αἱ λατινικαὶ βιογραφίαι, PG 94; 489-498, 497-500".

<sup>6</sup> See A. Cameron's review, 'Jean Damascene: Ecrits sur l'Islam', *JTS* 46 (1995), p. 370.



## Origin

John Damascene was born in the second half of the seventh century into a distinguished family of Damascus. The exact day of his birth is in doubt. Many scholars place the year sometime between 675-680<sup>7</sup> though others agree with the years 655-660<sup>8</sup> and others with the year 652.<sup>9</sup>

Although it was believed that John was Greek<sup>10</sup> or Greek-Syrian by some older scholars,<sup>11</sup> his name reflects the Arabic-Syrian or simply the Arabic provenance of his family. The name 'Mansur' was the family name of John given initially to his grandfather.<sup>12</sup> The origins of this surname seemed to be connected with an Arabic tribe because many Syrian Christians were characterized with Arabic provenance.<sup>13</sup> Further evidence brought by the Melkite Patriarch Eutychius attributed the Arabic origin to Mansur B. Sargun who handed over

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<sup>7</sup> D. J. Sahas, *John Damascene on Islam, 'The Heresy of the Ishmaelites'* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), pp. 38-9, Sahas quotes all opinions of scholars before him "Jugie, *DTC*, VIII (1924), p. 695; Altaner, *Patrology*, p. 635; Amantos, *Ἱστορία*, I, 338; Hitti, *Syria*, p. 449; Adel-Théodore Khoury, *Les Théologiens Byzantins et l'Islam, Textes et auteurs* (VIIIe-XIIIe S.) (Éditions Nauwelaerts, Louvain, Béatrice-Nauwelaerts, Paris, 1969), p. 47; Panagiotes K. Christou, 'Ioannes o Damaskenos', in the *Θ.H.E.*, vol. VI, Athens 1965, p. 1218".

<sup>8</sup> P. J. Nasrallah, *Saint Jean de Damas Son Epoque - Sa Vie - Son Oeuvre*, (Harissa, 1950), pp. 58-9.

<sup>9</sup> D. J. Sahas, *Islam*, p. 39.

<sup>10</sup> G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968), pp. 163-4.

<sup>11</sup> P. Chrestus, *Θ.H.E.*, vol. VI (Athens: Martinos, 1967), p. 1219.

<sup>12</sup> Mauritius Gordillo 'Damascenica, I. Vita Markiana, II. Libelous Ortodoxiae', p. 63.

<sup>13</sup> P. J. Nasrallah, p. 16.

the city of Damascus to the Muslims.<sup>14</sup> But the above information is insufficient to establish a complete account of John's person and origin.

Another hypothesis that reveals John's Arabic - Syrian origin derives from the evidence of Constantine Acropolite. According to him St John learnt the Greek language very quickly.<sup>15</sup> This evidence suggested he was not a Greek,<sup>16</sup> although it was a common phenomenon for a specific language not to be restricted to a single national origin. More precisely the Seventh Ecumenical Council named St John as 'Mansur' because the Arabs attributed this name to him.<sup>17</sup> The same name was known among the Muslims and it meant 'victorious'.<sup>18</sup> According to the chronographer Theophanes (760-817) whom many scholars have followed, the name 'Mansur' meant "the saved".<sup>19</sup> The confusion about this name and other contrasting evidence found expression in many theories characterizing the relationship between John's family and Greek culture as "skin deep".<sup>20</sup> Against this position we can say that it is worth noting

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<sup>14</sup> B. Carra de Vaux, *Les penseurs de l' Islam*, III (Paris: Librairie Paul Geuthner, 1923), p. 204 in D. J. Sahas, *Islam*, p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> PG 140, 829D, "ἐν ἀκαρεῖ γὰρ καὶ μετρίῳ πάνυ τῷ χρόνῳ πρὸς ἑλληνισμόν τε τὴν γλῶτταν ἐρρύθμισε". According to D.J. Sahas, 'John Damascene on Islam. Revisited', *Abr-Nahrain* 23 (1984-5), p. 107, St John spoke a lot of languages. According to Aziz S. Atiya, John "spoke Syriac and Knew Arabic, although he was a prolific writer in Greek", 'St John Damascene: Survey of the Unpublished Arabic Versions of his Works in Sinai' in *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of Hamilt A.R. Gibb*, ed., G. Makdisi, (Leidein: E.J. Brill, 1965), p. 74.

<sup>16</sup> P. K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (London: MacMillan, 1937), pp. 245-6.

<sup>17</sup> Mansi, 13, 357.

<sup>18</sup> D. J. Sahas, *Islam*, p. 7. See also M. Jugie, 'La Vie de saint Jean Damascène', *Échos D'Orient* 23 (1924), p. 139.

<sup>19</sup> D. J. Sahas, *Islam*, p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> S. Griffith in Averil Cameron, p. 370.



that many eastern cities in this period, including Damascus, were populated by an élite class of Christians who were highly educated in Greek letters.<sup>21</sup>

This position must be examined in connection with John's father's position in the government of the Caliph of Damascus Abd al Malek as minister of finance and war, and his attempt to give his son the best possible education. His high position in Damascus, and the appointment of the monk Cosmas, who had been liberated from Sicily, as the teacher of his son, brought John Damascene closer to Greek culture. It is very difficult to believe that John, having encountered Greek civilization and language, was not influenced by them.<sup>22</sup> At least he was a Greek within the "Isocratic meaning" of the term.<sup>23</sup>

One further point is that John's works were written in the Byzantine Greek language even though he was a Syrian -hence the more fluent usage of his mother tongue. Moreover it is necessary to note the style of his signature: John Damascene or John the monk and Presbyter. His preference for the Christian name in comparison to the name 'Mansur' used by the Councils of Hieria (754)

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<sup>21</sup> According to Cyril Mango, "it does not require great perspicacity to discover that the most active centre of Greek culture in the 8<sup>th</sup> century lay in Palestine, notably in Jerusalem and the neighbouring monasteries. We have all heard of St. John Damascene... Andrew, who became bishop of Crete, Cosmas of Maiuma, Stephen the Sabaite and Theophanes Graptos". See his article 'Greek Culture in Palestine after the Arab Conquest', *Scritture, libri e testi nelle aree provinciali di Bisancio, Atti del seminario di Erice* (18-25 settembre 1988), eds. G. Cavallo, G. de Gregorio, M. Maniaki (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1991), pp. 149-50.

<sup>22</sup> The contact of John with the Greek culture must have started very early as his family belonged to the Hellenized élite of Damascus, see Andrew Louth, 'St John Damascene: Preacher and Poet', in *Preacher and Audience: Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics*, eds., Mary B. Cunningham and Pauline Allen (Leiden: Brill, 1998), p. 248.

<sup>23</sup> N. Matsoukas, ed. and tran., *Ἰωάννου Δαμασκηνοῦ, Διαλεκτικά*, ΦΘΒ 28 (Thessaloniki: P. Pournara, 1995), p. 5.

and the Seventh Ecumenical (787) is clear. However this difference between the names that John uses for himself and those that both Councils use must be examined very carefully. Some hypotheses could be suggested.

We could suppose, on the basis of the few references to St John's works by the iconoclast and iconodule authors of the eighth and ninth century<sup>24</sup> (at least there is no citation of John's works written in defence of the Holy icons), that his works were not known in the area of Constantinople, where his name 'Mansur' and his activity against iconoclasm were known. In any case, the Greek *Vita* (12<sup>th</sup> century?),<sup>25</sup> the Greek translation of John's first biography, written initially in the Arabic language by a certain John the Patriarch of Jerusalem,<sup>26</sup> coupled the name 'Damascene' with St John instead of the name 'Mansur', although the association of John with Damascus is very old as we can see in Theophanes' *Chron.* 'Damascene' is the name under which the vast majority of his works is titled. This Greek *Vita* was followed by all later authors who wrote biographies referring to St John's life. In fact, we must not expect John to be characterized by a cognomen during this period, as, according to C.

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<sup>24</sup> See A. Louth, 'St Denys the Areopagite and the Iconoclast Controversy', p. 334.

<sup>25</sup> We do not know the exact date and the author of this *vita*. According to Andrew Louth's recent book: *St John Damascene, Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 16, n. 2, "The Greek *vita* is reprinted in PG 94. 429-89. It is said to have been written by John, patriarch of Jerusalem, and to have been based on an Arabic *vita*. Possible Johns of Jerusalem are John VII (964-6) and John VIII (1106-56). An Arabic *vita* of the eleventh century was discovered earlier this century. If this is the *vita* used by John, then it must be the later John...; but it is possible that an earlier Arabic *vita* (no longer extant) was the exemplar, which would make possible an earlier date for the Greek life".

<sup>26</sup> R. Le Coz, *Jean Damascène Ecris Sur L'Islam*, SC 383 (Paris: Les Éditions Du Cerf, 29, 1992), p. 41.



Roueché “it is a remarkable feature of late Roman prosopography that, in formal inscriptions at least, the name of a man’s father or other relations is hardly ever given; thus at Aphrodisias in our period only two benefactors give a patronymic”.<sup>27</sup> Concerning the Arabic names of St John, Andrew Louth has this to say: “they are in turn taken from the Arabic sources. The Greek sources, notably Theophanes, here drawing on an Arabic source, simply give Greek versions of the Arabic names. There is some confusion in the Greek sources (e.g., John is sometimes referred to as Μανσοῦρ, sometimes as ὁ τοῦ Μανσοῦρ), perhaps because the Greeks were no longer familiar with patronymics, which seem to have fallen out of use in the later Roman empire”.<sup>28</sup> In the Acts (*praxeis*) of the Councils of Hieria (754)<sup>29</sup> and Nicaea II (787),<sup>30</sup> we observe that both Councils know only the name ‘Mansur’.<sup>31</sup> If we examine the

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<sup>27</sup> *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity*, Journal of Roman Studies Monograph 5 (London, 1989), p. xx.

<sup>28</sup> A. Louth, *Preacher and Audience*, p. 248, n. 4.

<sup>29</sup> Mansi 8, 1184E.

<sup>30</sup> Mansi 8, 1185D and PG 94, 504C-505B.

<sup>31</sup> In PG the fragments that come from the Seventh Ecumenical Council, and characterize John as ‘Damascene’ are a later addition. Not only there is no evidence that John was called ‘Damascene’ in Mansi, where there are all *praxeis* of the Councils, but also the Latin translation in PG does not contain the name ‘Damascene’. Moreover, the word ‘Damascene’ in the text cited from the Council in PG is within the parenthesis as an elucidation. Besides, in the main corpus of the text there is no evidence of the use of the cognomen ‘Damascene’. The same ignorance is displayed in the writings of the Ecumenical Patriarch Nicephorus (758- 828), one of the most important leaders of the iconodule party in the second period of the iconoclast controversy. In his work *Short History*, PG 100, 976A, he made reference to the persons who were condemned by the Iconoclastic Council of Hieria in 754. Their names were Germanus of Constantinople, George of Cyprus and John “who was called Mansur”. In this little passage, Nicephorus simply noted that St John was named ‘Mansur’ and he came from the city of Damascus in Syria. We read: “καὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν ἀπὸ Δαμασκοῦ τῆς

evidence we have, John started to be recognized and called 'Damascene' sometime before John of Jerusalem wrote the Greek *Vita*.<sup>32</sup>

Another question arises because of John's characterization as 'Chryssoroas'. We do not know why John was first called 'Chryssoroas' and latterly 'Damaskenos'.<sup>33</sup> We do not have any clear historical evidence of the reasons for the replacement of this local tradition with another one, the name

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Συρίας τὸν ἐπὶ κλὴν Μανσοῦρ". The above fragment appears in the texts that accompany the Greek *Vita* in PG 94, 505C. Nevertheless, there are some mistakes in this text. We must read "τὸν ἀπὸ Δαμασκοῦ" instead of "τὸν ἀπὸ Δαμασκηνοῦ". Also, there are some other less important mistakes.

<sup>32</sup> However, when John of Jerusalem wrote the Greek *Vita* the cognomen 'Damascene' was the principal name of John universally (PG 94, 432B, "ὁ πολὺς Ἰωάννης, ὃ τὸ ἐπώνυμον ἐκ τῆς πατρίδος τῆς Δαμασκοῦ πόλεως ἐπισυνήπται περιφανῶς"). According to this piece of information, we could suppose that the appearance of the cognomen 'Damascene' is connected with the Greek practice of the tenth and eleventh century to give cognomens to important persons. Consequently the vast majority of titles in the works of St John were revised sometime earlier or later when the *Greek Vita* appeared. In fact we may accept as valid the titles that characterize him as 'monk' and 'presbyter' as they seem to be the original signature of St John in his works.

<sup>33</sup> Theophanes in his *Chron* seems to be informed about the names attributed to St John by the Emperor Constantine V such as: 'Mansur', 'Manzer', and also the other famous name of St John 'Χρυσορόας', 'Chysorroas'. He calls John by the name 'Damaskenos' just once, and it is used in combination with the name 'Chysorroas' (A.M. 6245, C. de Boor, p. 428), while the latter name is used by Theophanes in each of the three references that he makes to John (*ibid.*, A.M. 6221, p. 408; A.M. 6234, p. 417; A.M. 6245, p. 428). As regards the name *Chryssoroas*, he declares that it expresses a tradition in respect of St John's personality, when he says that John has been rightly called *Chryssoroas* (*ibid.*, A.M. 6234, p. 417, "ὁ καλῶς ἐπικληθεὶς Χρυσορόας"). We must connect this tradition with the local area of Palestine as we meet this name neither in the acta of the Council of Hieria (754) nor of that of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (787). So, on this point we must imagine that Theophanes expresses a local tradition in respect of John established, possibly, among the Hellenized communities in Syria- Palestine.



‘Chysorroas’ for the name ‘Damascene’.<sup>34</sup> It is possible that we shall remain in ignorance of some very important historical events in John’s life, as we know more about his family than we do about St John himself.<sup>35</sup> Regarding the names, it could be, simply, that the name ‘Damascene’ prevailed over the name ‘Chysorroas’ sometime in the tenth century, although in ecclesiastical history it is a common phenomenon that some saints are named not from the place of their origins but from some characteristics of their personality like St John Chrysostom (354-407).<sup>36</sup> But what is certain is that John’s works were disseminated<sup>37</sup> and found their wider echo in an era during which John’s general reputation was recognized by all under the name of ‘Damascene’,<sup>38</sup> and mainly after the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Of course, there was no question about the name ‘Mansur’ as the Iconodules considered it as an abuse and defamation of St John.

<sup>35</sup> Thanks to A. Louth for this suggestion.

<sup>36</sup> A very interesting clue about the decline of the name ‘Chysorroas’ and the stabilization of the cognomen ‘Damascene’ in Byzantium, is offered by the monk Georgios in his *Chronikon*. He says: “Ἰωάννην δὲ τὸν Δαμασκηνὸν, ὃν Χρυσορρόαν ἐκάλουν διὰ τὴν ἐνυπάρχουσαν αὐτῷ σοφίαν”, PG 110, 941: 42- 4.

<sup>37</sup> According to S. Griffith the works of John Damascene “were carried to Constantinople by refugee monks from Palestine”, ‘Theodore Abu Qurrah’s Arabic tract on the Christian practice of venerating images’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105 (1985), p. 54.

<sup>38</sup> This hypothesis seems to be logical as, according to Byzantine sources, the works of John were ignored in Constantinople during the eighth-ninth century, see p. 19, n. 4. In addition, we have said that St Photius does not seem to express any knowledge of St John’s works (see also the article of B. Anagnostopoulos, ‘Ἰωάννης ὁ Δαμασκηνός’, *Ὁρθοδοξία* 31:1 (1956), pp.338-9). Kotter argued that, although there were some references to John in the eighth century, John’s main work the *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* was translated into other languages after the tenth century, according to the surviving manuscripts II, p. xliii-xliv. B. Anagnostopoulos, ‘Ἰωάννης ὁ Δαμασκηνός’, pp. 332-3, argues that the works of St John Damascene were unknown among his contemporaries because “ἰὸν) ...ἔζησεν εἰς ἐποχὴν παρακμῆς τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς φιλολογίας... Πάντες σχεδὸν ἐδείκνυνον

Another problem arises because of the deficiency of information from the Councils of Hieria and Nicaea II about St John Damascene's personality. The Synod of Hieria ignored the fact that John was monk and priest,<sup>40</sup> although in the East it was a common phenomenon not to distinguish a monk from a monk who was a priest, as both were known as fathers. In addition, another question arises concerning the possible connection between Caliph Walid's II local order for the destruction of the icons in 721 and that of the iconoclast Emperor Leo III in 726 but this is a matter that needs further research.

In order to understand John's personality we can bring forward John's testimony, as it appears in his writings. He says in his treatise *On the Trisagion*, that John V, the Patriarch of Jerusalem "πώποτε", "never" decided on anything

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ἡδιαφορίαν πρὸς κάθε νέαν διδασκαλίαν... 2ον) Εἰς τὴν κατάληψιν ὅλης σχεδὸν τῆς Μέσης Ἀνατολῆς ὑπὸ τῶν Ἀράβων κατὰ τὴν ἐποχὴν, καθ' ἣν ἐξησεν ὁ Ἰωάννης ὁ Δαμασκηνός. 3ον) Εἰς τὴν ὑπαρξιν ἐνὸς διώκτου αὐτοκράτορος εἰς τὸν θρόνον τῆς Βυζαντινῆς αὐτοκρατορίας τοῦ Λέοντος Ἰσαύρου...".

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 335, n. 5. Once again B. Anagnostopoulos is informative: "τὰ συγγράμματα τοῦ Ἰωάννου τοῦ Δαμασκηνοῦ ἐπισήμως ἐχρησιμοποιήθησαν ἐν τῇ Ἀνατολῇ ἐπὶ τῆς ἐποχῆς τοῦ Ἐμμ. Κομνηνοῦ (1156-1170) εἰς τὰς δύο Συνόδους, αἵτινες συνεκλήθησαν ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει κατὰ τὴν ἐποχὴν ταύτην καὶ ἐξήτασαν τὴν ἔννοιαν τῶν ρητῶν : 'Σὺ ὁ προσφέρων καὶ προσφορόμενος καὶ προσδεχόμενος', καὶ 'Ὁ πατήρ μου μείζων μου ἐστίν'. See also, *ibid.*, pp. 340-1. In the thirteen century St John's great personality and holiness is also recognized, see I. Anastasiou, *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἱστορία, ΙΑ' αἰῶνας μέχρι σήμερα*, vol. II (Thessaloniki), p. 62. However, we should note that some of John's works were known in the East. At least the work *Jacob.* was one of the most important works of the Dyophysite party in the bishopric of Harran in about 900, see A van Roey, 'La Lettre Apologétique d'Élie à Léon, syncelle de l'évêque chalcédonien de Harran. Une apologie monophysite du VIII-IXe siècle', *Le Muséon* 57 (1944), p. 20 and 51.

<sup>40</sup> Mansi 13, 356. We must note that the Council of Hieria refers not only to John Damascene, but also to the other two condemned iconodules (Germanus of Constantinople and George of Cyprus).



connected to faith without referring it to John.<sup>41</sup> According to this passage, the Patriarch had St John as his *right hand*. If so, in the person of John Damascene, we can recognize one of the most important inspirations of the iconodule party in Jerusalem. The bitterness of John's condemnation by the Council of Hieria testifies not only to his struggle against the iconoclasts but also that he was the most important leader of the protest in the area of Syria and Palestine, which resisted the orders of the emperor of Constantinople for the destruction of holy icons.<sup>42</sup>

John's great reputation in matters of faith and theology generally is also proved by another event as described in the same work *On the Trisagion*.<sup>43</sup> In order to strengthen his opinion that the holy hymn does not refer to Christ but to the Holy Trinity “Ὁ κύρις ἀββᾶς Ἀναστάσιος, ὁ κλεινὸς τῆς Εὐθυμίου τοῦ μάκαρος καθηγεμῶν”, “Father Anastasius the abbot of the monastery of St Euthymios” insisted that John Damascene “καθυπέκυψε”, “inclined” and

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<sup>41</sup> Kotter IV, *Trisag.*, p. 329 (26):13-15, we will develop this clue further on, in the chapter on St John's entrance to the monastic life.

<sup>42</sup> What D. J. Sahas says in his article ‘John Damascene on Islam. Revisited’ is very interesting, pp. 105-6: “in reference to his (John Damascene) dealing with Islam, even as a heresy, he was too analytical and factual for the prevalent populist and official mentality of ‘do not bother me- I have made up my mind’ ! Here is, I think, the key to understanding the personal character of the iconoclast Byzantine emperors’ opposition to John Damascene. The latter was a theologian who transcended the limitations of an Empire. The former were rationalists who confined religion to political expediency. Iconoclasm and Islam- two contemporaneous developments in Byzantium at the time of John Damascene- were, for some like him, as much matters of *theological* heresy, as they were for others matters of political ideology. The line between a theological and political doctrine was a very fine one at the time”.

<sup>43</sup> See Kotter IV, pp. 305-6 (1):32- 44; p. 329 (26):9-22.

became “σύναινος” and “σύμψηφος”, “of the same opinion” with him.<sup>44</sup> It is impossible to suppose that the abbot Anastasius chooses a father at random to support his positions and not a person with the capacity to have authority over the Church of Jerusalem.

In respect of the connection between Walid’s order for the destruction of the icons and that of Leo, some scholars believe that John was known in Constantinople as ‘Mansur’, and was connected with both Emperor Leo III’s order in 726<sup>45</sup> and the Muslim order in 721,<sup>46</sup> although the date of John’s arrival from Damascus and his entrance to the monastic life must be taken into consideration. Besides, we must not overlook the position of some other scholars who believe that John wrote his treatises in defense of the Holy Icons because of the local reaction against the icons which found expression in Walid’s II order.<sup>47</sup> This argument confines the reason for the composition of the

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 305-6 (1):36-44.

<sup>45</sup> We refer to Leo III’s order to remove the icon of Christ from the Chalke gate in 726. But this incident has recently been questioned. See Leslie Brubaker, ‘The Chalke gate, the construction of the past, and the Trier ivory’ *BMGS* 23 (1999), pp. 279-80. Brubaker supports her thought by referring to M-F Auzépy’s opinion, see her article ‘La Destruction de l’icône du Christ de la Chalce par Léon III : Propagande ou Réalité’, *Byzantion* 60 (1990), pp. 491-2, “La destruction de l’icône du Christ de la Chalce par Léon III n’a jamais eu lieu, pour l’excellente raison que cette icône n’existait pas. L’affaire de la Chalce... est née de la conjonction des intérêts des deux personnages les plus importants de l’empire: l’empereur, en la personne de l’impératrice Irène... le patriarche, en la personne de Nicéphore”.

<sup>46</sup> D.J. Sahas, *Islam*, pp. 9-10 agrees that there was a connection between the Christian and the Muslim iconoclastic movements. However on p. 12, he says that “the relation between Byzantine and Muslim Iconoclasm is still under debate”.

<sup>47</sup> S. Griffith in A. Cameron, p. 369. This position is the result of the question of the removal of Christ’s icon from the Chalke gate. See note 45. The wider significance of this point of view is that it questions completely the early manifestation of Iconoclasm under Leo III. Some scholars believe that if it is true, then this would seem to support the position that John



three treatises of St John to the narrow area of Syria - Palestine isolating it from the imperial policy of Constantinople.<sup>48</sup> Besides, we should take note of the surmise that Walid's order was the "next logical step... Such policies were entirely consistent with Abd al-Malik's earlier reforms".<sup>49</sup>

Even although the arguments on each side are strong, the question remains as the arguments of the homilies have the perspective of a Christian theological debate rather than that of a discussion between Muslims and Christians. The comparison between the Old Testament and the New has as central point the Person of Christ as the incarnated God,<sup>50</sup> or the tradition of the Church Fathers<sup>51</sup>. On the other hand, if St John had been answering the Monophysites in these homilies, he would surely have mentioned them by name, and it is significant that in the three treatises which he directed against them he does not equate Monophysitism with iconoclasm. In fact, we do not know against whom the Walid's degree was addressed, although it seems possible that it was a general order for the destruction of all icons of all religions.

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began writing in defence of icons as a reaction to local, rather than imperial iconoclasm. This point of view narrows John's reaction to the area of Syria-Palestine isolating it from the imperial policy of Constantinople. However it creates a number of questions as to why St John refers so many times to the Emperor of Constantinople as well as his policy of interfering with the Church. We shall analyze it in more detail.

<sup>48</sup> But Walid II did not order only the destruction of the Christian icons, but also every kind of religious pictorial representation.

<sup>49</sup> S. Griffith, 'Theodore Abu Qurrah's Arabic Tract on the Christian Practice of Venerating Images', p. 64.

<sup>50</sup> Kotter III, *Imag.*, p. 78 (I 4):82-85, "οὐ τὴν ἀόρατον εἰκονίζω θεότητα, ἀλλ' εἰκονίζω Θεοῦ τὴν ὁραθεῖσαν σάρκα...".

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67 (I 2):20-22.

However, we could claim that the Greek Language, although it was well-known by an élite class of Christians in many near Eastern cities, gives an *ecumenical perspective* to the homilies if they are for the ears of a Greek educated audience in the area of Palestine or Damascus. The use of the Greek language represents John's attempt to give an answer to that imperial policy of Constantinople against the icons which convulsed the whole imperial territory. John Damascene would not have found it easy to ignore the imperial policy though his name was known by the Council of Hieria. Besides, the reference to iconoclast emperor Leo<sup>52</sup> and to Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople who was in exile confirms the fact that St John was aware of imperial actions concerning icons.<sup>53</sup> In addition, Kotter argues for c. 730 as the date in which the works were written because he thinks they are directed against Byzantine iconoclasm.<sup>54</sup> Consequently we should be very cautious about seeing a connection between the orders of Walid II and Leo III.

Another clue that reveals that John had information about the events in Constantinople is the testimony of the Council of Hieria itself. The phrases that this Council uses to condemn John denote that i) it is known to the Council that

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117 (II 18):31-33; p. 113 (II 16):65. But what is more evident in the work *On the Holy Icons* is that John tries to prevent the emperor being involved in the ecclesiastical legislation. See *ibid.*, p. 167 (I 66):19; pp. 102-3 (II 12):1-13. The most important passage which expresses the knowledge St John had about the imperial iconoclast policy is when he says that: "γράψατε καὶ ὑμεῖς τὸ κατὰ Λέοντα εὐαγγέλιον. Οὐ δέχομαι βασιλέα τυραννικῶς τὴν ἱερωσύνην ἀρπάζοντα. Οὐ βασιλεῖς ἔλαβον ἐξουσίαν δεσμεῖν καὶ λύειν", pp. 113-4 (II 16):65-70. It is obvious from this passage that John, once again, uses ironic words to describe a situation which is against the patristic tradition. Once again he confirms that tradition is the stable foundation of originality.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*



he has written some works<sup>55</sup> and ii) in this way John is characterized as “the abuser of Christ and the conspirator of the kingdom”.<sup>56</sup> What did the accusation that St John was “conspirator of the Kingdom” mean?

We could give two possible answers. According to the first, with his iconodule position John had undermined the ecclesiastical policy of the empire since Leo III claimed for himself to be ‘Emperor’ and ‘High Priest’.<sup>57</sup> The second is connected with John’s nationality and his cognomen ‘Mansur’ as a testimony of his Arabo-Syrian origins; or the contacts of Mansur’s family with the Caliphate of Arabs in Damascus. It is also known that the offensive cognomen ‘bastard’ was given to John by the Emperor Constantine V.<sup>58</sup> This fact is also reinforced by another insult to John by the iconoclastic Council of Hieria. This Council calls him ‘Saracen-mind’ and this accusation refers to the contacts John had with the Muslims, as Dyobouniotes and Anastos believe.<sup>59</sup> On this occasion the bitterness of John’s condemnation by the Council of Hieria is a reaction to John’s intervention in the ecclesiastical policy of the capital of Byzantium.

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<sup>54</sup> Kotter III, *Imag.*, p. 7.

<sup>55</sup> Mansi 13, 356, “τῷ εἰκονολάτρῃ καὶ ψαλσογράφῳ Μανσοῦρ, ἀνάθεμα”.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, “τῷ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὑβριστῇ καὶ ἐπιβούλῳ τῆς βασιλείας”.

<sup>57</sup> Mansi 12, 975.

<sup>58</sup> Theophanes, *Chron.*, A.M. 6234, C. de Boor, p. 417.

<sup>59</sup> According to D. J. Sahas, *Islam*, p. 13, the characterization of St John Damascene by the Council of Hieria (754) as ‘Saracen-mind’ does not seem to be connected with his origins but with his contacts with the Moslems. He quotes from C. Dyobouniotes, *Ἰωάννης ὁ Δαμασκηνός* (Athens, 1906), p. 6 and M. Anastos, *Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. I, pt i, p. 67.

However, all these details of John's condemnation by the Council of Hieria do not prove that the Iconoclasts had a clear picture of John's personality. In fact the condemnation of John in the terms of the Council of Hieria seems to say more about the Council's attitude to its opponents than it does about John's position or actions vis à vis the imperial government. It was common for Iconoclasts to accuse their ideological opponents of treason as well as heresy. It is very interesting that they also see John's connections with the Arab world as threatening.<sup>60</sup>

*St John Damascene as a layman in the city of Damascus*

A very important role in St John's spiritual development and in the formation of his theological and philosophical background was played by the noble origin of his grandfather Mansur B. Sargun.

Mansur B. Sargun was a person who belonged to the high society of the city of Damascus. The handing over of the same city by him and the local bishop to the Muslim troops testifies his origin.<sup>61</sup> In addition, he retained a lofty place in the administration of Damascus during Muslim reign. He was the governor of Damascus during the reign of Yazid B. Ab. Soufgian.<sup>62</sup> A few years later he became responsible for matters of finance and war under the Caliph Mu'awiya I

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<sup>60</sup> I would like to thank M. Cunningham for this suggestion.

<sup>61</sup> D.J. Sahas, *Islam*, p. 17.

<sup>62</sup> Eutychius *Annales* II, ed. Louis Cheikho, Carra de Vaux and H. Zayyat, CSCO 51 (Louvain: Imprimerie Orientaliste, 1954), p. 15.

(661-680).<sup>63</sup> This responsibility was characterized as a threat against Byzantium.<sup>64</sup>

The successor of Mansur B. Sargun was St John Damascene's father, Sargun Ibn Mansur<sup>65</sup> (Sergius according to Christian tradition). The evidence concerning Sergius Mansur is clearer, and is found during the reign of the Caliphs Mu'awiya (661-680) and mainly Abd al-Malik (685-705). In the Greek *Vita* Sergius is called the administrator of public matters.<sup>66</sup> The anonymous *Vita* in the *Analecta* of Papadopoulos - Kerameus calls him a "nobleman" in Damascus.<sup>67</sup> The most correct information seems to be that of Theophanes. According to him, Sergius was *general Logothetes*.<sup>68</sup> This position could be similar to that of the Byzantine administrative system.<sup>69</sup> The authority of St John's father with his high position in the Caliphate of Damascus did not extend only to territories under Arabic rule but also to those that came after the Caliph's conquests.<sup>70</sup>

Sergius' successor, according to the Greek *Vita*, was our Church Father, St John Damascene. Is this correct or not? The uncertainty arises for two reasons, first from the evidence itself that comes from the Greek *Vita*, a later

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<sup>63</sup> D. J. Sahas, *Islam*, p. 26.

<sup>64</sup> R. Le Coz, p. 46.

<sup>65</sup> 'Ibn' in the Arabic language means 'Son'.

<sup>66</sup> PG 94, 437, "governor of public things".

<sup>67</sup> "Ἀρχοντι ὄντι τῆς Δαμασκοῦ", *Ἀνάλεκτα Ἱεροσολυμίτικης Σταχυολογίας* IV, p. 272.

<sup>68</sup> *Chron*, A.M. 6183, C. de Boor, p. 365.

<sup>69</sup> D. J. Sahas, *Islam*, p. 27. "We must suppose that, when Theophanes calls Ibn Mansur 'general logothetes' he is referring to a position similar to that of the Byzantine administration".

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25-6.



composition, two or three centuries after John's death, and secondly from the fact that John had at least, another brother called Theodore who would have succeeded his father in the public administration of Damascus instead of him. In reality, Theophanes in his *Chronography* speaks of Theodore Mansur who was exiled to the "warm climates of Arabia".<sup>71</sup> This element leads to another hypothesis concerning John's political position; that he did not gain an administrative place in Damascus or he kept it for such a short period that contemporary sources do not refer to it. However, we cannot be sure of any hypothesis; whether John was in the public administration or not, as the clues and their validity from those times do not permit us to reach a definitive conclusion. But let us examine all the evidence we have.

In the oldest testimonies there is no reference to St John's political offices. In Theophanes' *Chronography*, although we find allusions to the reputation of John's grandfather and to the political authority of his father, there is not the slightest evidence of John's participation in the Caliphate. In contrast, the only thing that Theophanes does is to characterize John with the name that he inherits from his ancestors as the sons of Mansur.<sup>72</sup> This reference to the power and the magnificence of the name 'Mansur' in connection with the complete lack of any evidence of St John's high office creates a number of questions. However, in Theophanes' *Chronography* we cannot expect a detailed analysis of 'ὁ τοῦ Μανσοῦρ', 'the son of Mansur's' life as some of Theophanes' proofs are in doubt.

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<sup>71</sup> A.M. 6226, C. de Boor, p. 410.

<sup>72</sup> A.M. 6221, C de Boor, p. 408.



From the same perspective, the Seventh Ecumenical Council does not speak clearly about John's political position. In the sixth act (praxis) where we find all the evidence concerning St John, we hear of John's abandonment of society in imitation of the apostle Matthew, and there are hints at his entrance into the monastic life, with reference to John's abandonment of wealth. What this Council actually wants to declare is John's preference to follow Christ and his choice

“to suffer with the people of God rather than to enjoy sin briefly”.<sup>73</sup>

Maybe this point hints at the beginning of the persecution of the Christians by the Caliphate because of which, as we shall see later, John possibly chose to leave Damascus and the Caliphate where he could have inherited a place.<sup>74</sup>

The same ignorance about St John's high offices exists in the *Menologion*. In essence the *Menologion* would not overlook such an important period in St John's life.

But we must also examine the evidence for John's place in the public administration given by the Greek *Vita* which is followed by all later biographers. First of all we must note the confession of the author of this biography John of Jerusalem, that the first text that he used to compile his *Vita* was

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<sup>73</sup> Mansi 8, 1185D.

<sup>74</sup> A. C. McGiffert, p. 308. See also D. J. Sahas, *Islam*, p. 26.

“written in rustic, having been overlooked, and mainly written in the Arabic dialect and letters”.<sup>75</sup>

We do not know this original Arabic text.

In respect of the Greek *Vita*, we could characterize it as a hymn about St John’s admirable life. Nevertheless, the historical clues remain very sparse, as are the previous sources of John’s life, while the centre of interest is focused on a threefold glorification of John: i) his education (PG 94, 436B - 449B), ii) the miracle of the re-attachment of St John’s hand after its severance by the Caliph because of his slander of the iconoclast Emperor Leo III (PG 94, 449C-460C), and iii) his monastic virtues (PG 94, 460D-484C). These three parts make up the largest part of this biography, while the reference to John’s political high offices does not exceed six lines.

What is the high office held by John Damascene according to the author of this *Vita*? The high office that he inherited, was that of the ‘πρωτοσυμβούλου’, ‘first counsellor’, a higher office than that of John’s father.<sup>76</sup> On this point we must be aware of two things: i) the inherited high office of the Mansur family and ii) why John is described as the first counsellor of the Caliph.<sup>77</sup> As we have said, the Greek *Vita* is mainly a hymn to three events of St John’s life, that is his very strong education, his monastic virtues and his action against iconoclasm. Some clues from John’s family or from John

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<sup>75</sup> PG 94, 433B and 489B, “ἔσχεδιασμένον ἀγροικιστί, παρορατέον, καὶ μᾶλλον μόνον διαλέκτῳ καὶ γράμμασι τοῖς Ἀραβικοῖς”.

<sup>76</sup> PG 94, 450B.

<sup>77</sup> PG 94, 460C.

himself must have been used in order to strengthen this threefold hymn. When we observe the flow of the text we see that John's characterization as 'first counsellor' is at the end of the part where John is praised for his education, and at the beginning of the second part. John is once again called 'first counsellor' at the end of the second part after the refutation of Leo's III accusation against John by the Caliph.

The counsellor, in our case St John, is the person who personifies what is true and right while Leo III defames him. The slander is rejected "those [things] you suffered, you suffered in innocence"; it is proven that John spoke the truth "so forgive us because we punished thoughtlessly and inconsiderately", and John's reward is his restoration to the position of counsellor "we shall never do anything without your consent and advice".<sup>78</sup> So John alone speaks the truth and is attended to by the Caliph, and the iconoclast Emperor Leo III is ignored. At this point we can see clearly the attempt of St John's biographer to undermine the personality of the iconoclast Leo III. We could advance the hypothesis that the few pieces of information given by the Greek *Vita* two to three centuries after St John's death create a number of doubts about the reality of the evidence. The information was: the difference between the high offices of Sergius Mansur and his son John Damascene where it is an inherited high office also known to the Greek *Vita*,<sup>79</sup> and the account of John's high office by his biographer in order to support the Damascene's struggle against the iconoclasts

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, "ἐπ' ἀνευθύνοις δ πέπονθας, πέπονθας, λοιπὸν ἡμῖν σύγγνωθι, ἐφ' οἷς ὑπερισκέπτοις καὶ ἀλογίστοις τοῖς ἀποφάσεσιν ἐπηνέγκαμεν σοι τὴν τιμωρίαν οὐ γὰρ πράξαιμὲν τι πώποτε τοῦ λοιποῦ ἀνευ σῆς παραινέσεώς τε καὶ συμβουλῆς".

<sup>79</sup> PG 94, 449B.



and to undermine Leo III. On this occasion the author of the Greek *Vita* influenced by the historical events of Mansur's family invented an argument to glorify John.

In this confusion we need also to examine the date of John's succession to his father's post. The assumption of his duties may have taken place during the reign of Walid I (705-715) or earlier, when the Caliph was Abd al-Malik (684-705),<sup>80</sup> though we cannot define it more precisely. The death of his father Sergius is dated between 691-695, in any case no later than 705.<sup>81</sup> At this point it is necessary to make reference to the temporary order of Walid II to replace all Christians with Muslims in the public administration.<sup>82</sup>

Even though it was temporary, it created a number of questions about the concrete time of John's accession to his high office. R. L. Coz's view that this order may not have had any negative consequences for the Christian family of Mansurs who had traditionally received the right to collect taxes from the Christians<sup>83</sup> seems to have been accurate,<sup>84</sup> although it is necessary to connect

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<sup>80</sup> R. Le Coz, p. 52, claims that John entered into public administration when he was twenty years old during the reign of Abd al-Malik (684-705) replacing the Muslim who kept the high office of his father.

<sup>81</sup> D. J. Sahas, *Islam*, p. 42.

<sup>82</sup> R. Le Coz, p. 52. However, orders like it, were also published during the life of Abd al-Malik (see A-T. Khoury, *Les Thélogiens Byzantins et l'Islam*, pp. 34-5). All these orders, possibly, did not, according to Le Coz, p. 52., undermine the trust of the Caliph placed in St John's father, although his high office was given to a Muslim. At this point we should note that Arab expansion in Palestine "does not prevent the Christians from leading a nearly normal life", C. Mango, 'Greek Culture in Palestine after the Arab Conquest', p. 150.

<sup>83</sup> R. Le Coz, pp. 52-3.

<sup>84</sup> It must have been connected with the fact that John's brother, Theodore, remained in Damascus until his exile, according to Theophanes (*Chron*, AM 6226, C. de Boor, p. 410). Any persecution of Christians did not affect John negatively.

this with the sixth act (praxis) of the Seventh Ecumenical Council and the reasons for John's abandonment of the Caliphate in Damascus. Were they personal or was he under pressure? According to the Second Council of Nicaea, St John 'εἴλετο', 'chose' to put himself on the side of Christians rather than on the side of the wealth of Arabia.<sup>85</sup> According to this testimony, the reasons why John remained outside the public administration in Damascus or abandoned it at some stage were personal and not the result of persecution or orders, as he could have chosen to remain in the city of Damascus. Consequently we agree with the position of Le Coz that St John Damascene's choice reveals that neither Walid's II order nor any other persecution on the part of the Arabs had any negative results on Mansur's family.

Besides, some other historical testimonies must be examined in respect of the question about John's place in the public administration in Damascus. If John held, before his entrance to the monastic life, a high office then his presence there must have had negative consequences for Byzantium as Le Coz insists, just as had happened to John's grandfather. Much more so if we

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<sup>85</sup> Mansi 8, 1185D; PG 94, 504C, "Ἰωάννης δὲ... Χριστῷ ἠκολούθησε, μείζονα πλοῦτον ἡγησάμενος τῶν ἐν Ἀραβίᾳ θησαυρῶν τὸν ὀνειδισμόν τοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ εἴλετο μᾶλλον συγκακουχεῖσθαι τῷ λαῷ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἢ πρόσκαιρον ἔχειν ἁμαρτίας ὑπόλαυσιν". Despite the exaggerations that the hagiological texts could have in their praise of St John's personality, we cannot overlook those testimonies that seem to be correct. The inheritance of the high office in the administration of the Caliphate in Damascus or at least the wealth of Mansur's family strengthen John's personal choice to abandon Damascus. This is testified by the fact that John's brother remained in Damascus in the administration.



consider the campaigns of Walid I against the Byzantine Empire.<sup>86</sup> But we cannot see any reference to this topic in the sources<sup>87</sup> while it could have been used by the iconoclast Emperors as an accusation against St John.<sup>88</sup>

The only argument by which historians conclude that John had a high position in Damascus is the comparison between him and St Matthew made by the Seventh Ecumenical Council. According to D. J. Sahas and P. Chrestus<sup>89</sup> St John was in charge of economic matters in the Caliphate and was especially concerned with the collection of taxes among the Christians. They made the comparison and connection with Matthew the customs officer and John Damascene as it is described in the *praxis* six of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. St John imitated Matthew who abandoned everything and followed Christ.

Against this argument we have to say that the main emphasis of the acta of the Second Council of Nicaea is John's abandonment of the wealth of Arabia, imitating St Matthew who did the same.<sup>90</sup> Both of them followed Christ. Consequently it was unnecessary to make a direct connection between the two persons regarding their high offices. Besides, the proceedings of the same

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<sup>86</sup> A-T. Khoury, *Les Théologiens Byzantins et L' Islam*, p. 35, "après lui, Walid (705-715) poursuivit le regime des vexations. Il expédia une puissante armée contre Byzance, ravagea les provinces de l'Asie-Mineure jusqu'aux côtes de la Mer Noire".

<sup>87</sup> The condemnation of John by the Council of Hieria as "τὸ τῆς βασιλείας ἐπιβούλῳ" (Mansi 8, 1184E), would from the whole flow of the text seem to be connected only with his anti-iconoclast policy, and the results that it had on the imperial policy of the Byzantine iconoclast Emperors.

<sup>88</sup> Especially when we consider that the Council of Hieria calls John 'Saracen-mind' and 'bastard'. It seems odd to omit such an important fact.

<sup>89</sup> P. Chrestus, *Θ.Η.Ε.*, p. 1220 and D.J. Sahas, *Islam*, p. 42.

Council prefer to connect Matthew's person with his sudden decision to follow Christ. The reference that they make to St Matthew a few lines further down, as a prototype for the persons who view his image, refers to the abandonment of St Matthew's miserliness in order to follow Christ.<sup>91</sup> Nowhere is there a reference to his abandonment of high office in order to follow Christ, although the Seventh Ecumenical Council could have used his image as a prototype for those who suffer from the passion of conceit due to temporal high offices. It seems very difficult to accept that two references with the same contents mean two different things leaving the reader to guess where they actually refer.

In contrast to this, there is the question why the author(s) of the acta of the Seventh Ecumenical Council chose St Matthew's personality to compare with John Damascene. It is true that St Matthew was a tax collector, although the Gospels themselves give emphasis to Matthew's decision to follow Christ,<sup>92</sup> just as the Second Council of Nicaea does. But the civil administration of any late ancient state was mainly concerned with raising taxes, so it seems that the comparison between John and St Matthew could probably suggest that John was in the civil administration. In any case, this point strengthens the argument that John could have a financial position in Damascus and reveals the difficulty of

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<sup>90</sup> Mansi 8, 1185D.

<sup>91</sup> Mansi 8, 1188D, "ὅταν δὲ ἐκ πλεονεξίας καὶ φυλαργυρίας ἀρπάσῃ τινά, ὑποδείκνυσιν αὐτῷ ἐν εἰκόνι Ματθαῖον τὸν ἐκ τελωνῶν ἀπόστολον, τὸν τῆς φιλαργυρίας μανίαν καταλιμπάνοντα, καὶ Χριστῷ ἀκολουθοῦντα" The identity of meaning between that passage and this one from the sixth praxis of the Seventh Ecumenical Council is characteristic: "Ἰωάννης... Χριστῷ ἠκολούθησε, μείζονα πλοῦτον ἡγησάμενος τῶν ἐν Ἀραβίᾳ θησαυρῶν τὸν ὀνειδισμόν τοῦ Χριστοῦ".

<sup>92</sup> See Mt 9, 9; Mr 2, 14; Lc 5, 27.

specifying the historical events of those times and of finding out clear details of John's life.

In conclusion we can say that there is no clear evidence in the sources close to St John's time that he was or was not a member of the public administration of the Arabian Caliphate in Damascus as all information we have on this topic comes from the Greek *Vita*. One more hypothesis is that John might have been in the public administration for such a short period that the sources do not mention it. This is supported by the testimony of Theophanes that St John's brother Theodore was exiled to Arabia. Although Theophanes does not name the city where Theodore lived before his exile, we must suppose that it was Damascus as the activities of the Mansur family are focused in this city. It could be this person Theodore who succeeded Sergius Mansur in the high office of collecting taxes among the Christians, who was the person to whom John left his high office after his decision to become a monk.

### *St John Damascene's Monastic Life and Death*

Some years later, St John, according to the *Horos* of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, abandoned the treasures of the Arabs and followed Christ.<sup>93</sup> He retired to a Monastery which is traditionally identified with the Monastery of Mar Saba. The testimony of the Second Council of Nicaea (*Praxis* 6) refers only to a general abandonment of everything by St John without a

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<sup>93</sup> Mansi 13, 357.



special mention of his entrance to the monastic life or of the name of his monastery.<sup>94</sup> This point creates a number of questions about John's residence after his consecration to Christ as a monk.

Let us examine the evidence that we have. Like the above mentioned Council, the other closer source to John's life, Theophanes' *Chronography*, does not refer either to Jerusalem or to the monastery of Mar Saba. What Theophanes says, is that:

“in the city of Damascus in the area of Syria, the presbyter and monk John Chrysorroas, son of Mansur, the best teacher, shone brilliantly with his life and words”.<sup>95</sup>

From this passage we conclude that John was a monk and presbyter in the area of Damascus before his departure to Jerusalem. However, what Theophanes seems to suggest is not the place of John's residence but just his ordination as monk and Presbyter. Theophanes, in his *Chronography*, seems to be acquainted with the historical events of Mansur's family<sup>96</sup> and at the same time, he is the closest source, with the Acta of the Councils of Hieria (754) and

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Chron.*, A.M. 6221, C. de Boor, p. 408, “ἐν δὲ τῇ κατὰ Συρίαν Δαμασκῷ Ἰωάννης ὁ Χρυσορρόας, πρεσβύτερος καὶ μοναχός, ὁ τοῦ Μανσοῦρ, διδάσκαλος ἀριστος, βίῳ καὶ λόγῳ προέλαμπεν”.

<sup>96</sup> Theophanes in his *Chronography* gives more accurate information about John and his family. He speaks of the high office of John's father (A.M. 6182) and the exile of Theodore, John's brother (A.M. 6226). Besides, and that is the main difference with other authors, Theophanes speaks of John in such a way that we understand that he knows the established tradition on the great personality of John Damascene, e.g. A.M. 6234.



Nicaea II (787), for John's life, but what he says is in contrast to what St John says for himself.

Nevertheless, John's testimony that he was very close to John V,<sup>97</sup> and the *Vita* of Stephen the Sabbaita<sup>98</sup> testifies to his residence in the region of Jerusalem.<sup>99</sup> In any case the evidence that comes from John himself, that the Patriarch John V said nothing on matters of dogma without John's opinion and advice<sup>100</sup> means that he was constantly close to the Patriarch.<sup>101</sup> In any case, according to John Damascene's writings his activity is focused on the district of Jerusalem.

In contrast to Theophanes, the Greek *Vita*<sup>102</sup> speaks of St John's decision to abandon Damascus not as if he were a monk and Presbyter but as if he were a member of the public administration of the Caliphate in Damascus. Then he moved to Jerusalem and entered the monastery of Mar Saba<sup>103</sup> where he became a monk. Later, John V consecrated him as Priest. His service as Priest was connected with the Church of Jerusalem though he continued to live in the

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<sup>97</sup> Kotter IV, *Trisag.*, p. 329 (26):13-14, "τίς γάρ οἶδε τοῦ μακαριωτάτου Ἰωάννου τοῦ πατριάρχου νόημα ἑμοῦ πλέον;".

<sup>98</sup> Leontius Sabaita, 'Vita Sancti Stefani Sabaite Thaumaturgi Monachi', *Acta Sanctorum* (1867), t. III, pp. 504-84.

<sup>99</sup> Both testimonies seems to be more accurate than Theophanes' one. It is very difficult to agree with Theophanes' piece of information with regard to John's move to Jerusalem as a monk and presbyter.

<sup>100</sup> Kotter IV, *Trisag.*, p. 329 (26):14-15. "οὐκ ἀνέπνευσεν πνοήν δογματικὴν πώποτε, ἦν ἑμοῖ ὡς μαθητῇ οὐκ ἀνέθετο". The same thing testifies also to the other phrase of John *ibid.*, lines: 13-4.

<sup>101</sup> John went to John V, Patriarch of Jerusalem. "Probably shortly before 720 (though it could be earlier or even later)", Andrew Louth, *Preacher and Audience* p. 248.

<sup>102</sup> PG 94, 461B and 480A - 481A.

monastery, according to A.C. McGiffert.<sup>104</sup> According to the title of John's homily *In Ficum Arefactam et in Parabolam Niveae* the Damascene's service is connected with the Church of Anastasis. In this case the period between his service at this Church and his residence in the monastery could not be long.

But where is the place where St John became a monk? Kotter in his critical edition refers to the monastery of 'Palaias Luras', 'the Old Laura'.<sup>105</sup> It seems to be a mistake. According to Andrew Louth: "there is hitherto unnoticed evidence earlier than the *Vita*, but it only confuses the issue: the tenth-century manuscript in the Vatican Library, gr. 2081, describes John, in the heading of its text of John's first sermon on the Dormition,<sup>106</sup> as τῆς παλαιᾶς λαύρας, 'of the Old Laura', which Kotter glosses as 'des hl. Saba'. However, Mar Saba was not the 'Old' Laura, but the 'Great' Laura: the Old Laura was the monastery of St Chariton".<sup>107</sup>

There is very little evidence about the monastery in the primary sources. Apart from Theophanes, the Council of Hieria, and the Seventh Ecumenical Council which make no reference, neither do the testimonies in the *Menologion*

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<sup>103</sup> PG 94, 461B.

<sup>104</sup> *A History of Christian Thought* vol. I (London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), p. 308.

<sup>105</sup> Kotter V, *Dorm. I*, p. 483.

<sup>106</sup> According to *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, "Sermon (λόγος) or homily (ὁμιλία), an ecclesial discourse for instruction, exhortation, edification, commonly in the context of a liturgical service, often commenting on the lections just read... Sermons, which customarily opened with a set greeting and concluded with a doxology, comprised several standard types... on sacred Scripture... hortological, on a feast; theological, on a point of doctrine; panegyrics, on a saint; eulogies, or funeral orations; socio-ethical; occasional and mystagogic", see vol. 3, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 1880-1.

<sup>107</sup> Andrew Louth, *Preacher and Audience*, p. 249.



refer to John's monastery.<sup>108</sup> Besides, John says nothing about it. The main reference to the monastery of Mar Saba, as we saw, exists in the Greek *Vita*<sup>109</sup> and in the Greek translation of the biography by Stefanus, nephew of John Damascene, written by Leontius Sabaïtes.<sup>110</sup> These clues, although of a later date are the only information we have about John's residence as a monk. The Greek *Vita* on this point expresses an older tradition.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Marie-France Auzepy believes that the evidence of John's residence in the monastery of Mar Saba comes from the 11<sup>th</sup> century, from the Greek *Vita*, 'De la Palestine à Constantinople (VIII-IXe siècles): Etienne le Sabaïte et Jean Damascène', *Travaux et mémoires* 12 (1994), pp. 183-218.

<sup>109</sup> PG 95, 462C.

<sup>110</sup> Another testimony that must be examined carefully, is Theodore Abu Qurrah's residence in the Monastery of Mar Saba. Theodore is recognized to be a follower of John. Although this testimony does not mean that the Damascene lived in the same monastery, it implies and brings close the monastery of Mar Saba and the monastery as the residence of St John. What S. Griffith says is interesting: "by the end of the eighth century, John Damascene's younger confrere at Mara Sabas' monastery, Theodore Abu Qurrah, wrote in Arabic, and relied on the services of a translator for Greek versions of his work", 'Eutychius of Alexandria on the Emperor Theophilus and Iconoclasm in Byzantium: a 10<sup>th</sup>-century moment in Christian apologetics in Arabic', *Byzantion* 52 (1982), p. 163.

<sup>111</sup> John of Jerusalem's biography of John, using the previous Arabic *Vita*, presupposed a long period of time, before the author of the Greek *Vita* wrote the biography, during which no one could dispute over the Damascene's life. The Arabic *Vita* as the basis of the Greek one, also presupposed some time until the creation of the tradition that it contains respecting of John's life. Sahas, *Islam*, pp. 33-4, following B. Hemmerdinger, 'La *Vita* arabe de Saint Jean Damascène et BHG 884', *OCP* 28 (1962), p. 423, says: "the Arabic text mentions the *Vita* of St Stephen the Young, which was written by Stephen the Deacon in 808, a fact which indicates the *terminus post quem*. On the basis of this evidence Hemmerdinger holds that, as far as the translator is concerned, the only possible John Patriarch of Jerusalem in the period from 808 to the tenth century who would have translated the *Vita* into Greek, would have been Patriarch John who died in 969; which gives us a more specific *terminus ante quem* for the original. Therefore, according to Hemmerdinger's argument, the Arabic *Vita* was written sometime between 808-969". The fact that John of Jerusalem made references to the Arabic *Vita* and not to evidence that he might have collected from the places where John's memory



We could also make another hypothesis for the testimony of which the Greek *Vita* speaks. John's biographer, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, the author of the Greek *Vita*, presupposed that St John's relics were in the Monastery where St John lived and was buried. If the relics had not been there, John of Jerusalem would have examined any evidence that called into question the transport of the Damascene's relics to the Monastery of Mar Saba. But he did not. He felt sure about the monastery where St John lived as we can see in his biography. But in the eyes of a scholar this confidence is doubtful. We can neither be sure of the historical events of this period nor of the authenticity of the testimonies as they are presented in the Greek *Vita*. After all it was written three centuries after John's death.

About St John's death, it is difficult to be exact. It is dated by the vast majority of scholars between the years 749 -750.<sup>112</sup> In any case, St John certainly died before 754<sup>113</sup>. "His life coincided with almost the whole of the Umayyad Caliphate in his native town of Damascus".<sup>114</sup>

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was vivid like the monastery of Mar Saba is very strange. It seems that he found an Arabic manuscript on the life of a Saint which he did not like and on the basis of this, he wrote something else better than the previous one.

<sup>112</sup> Sahas supports this position on the biography of Stefanus, nephew of John Damascene. Narsallah says the same p. 128. In 735 John's brother Theodore was exiled. His son Stefanus entered the monastery of St Sabas in the age of 10. He stayed with his uncle John for 15 years, until the year 750. This position seems to be correct, although, according to the original Arabic *Vita*, the uncle of Stefanus is a monk called Zacharias. (Leontius Sabaite, *The Life of Stephen of Mar Sabas*, tran. J. C. Lamoreaux, *Scriptores Arabici* vol. 51, in CSCO vol. 579 (Lovanii: In Aedibus Peeters, 1999), p. 8 (6):3-4 and mainly in p. 10 (9):1.

<sup>113</sup> A. Louth, *Preacher and Audience*, p. 249, n.10. He claims that St John "died, certainly before 754 and almost certainly after 743". See also B. Anagnostopoulos, "Ἰωάννης ὁ Δαμασκηνός", *Orth* 32:1 (1957), pp. 491-3. He argues that if John had lived after 754 he would have replied to the Council of Hieria about his condemnation. For further discussion

*St John Damascene's educational background.*

St John's origins and his father who held a high office in the administration of the Caliphate in Damascus in particular, contributed decisively to the formation of his personality and education. The Arabic environment where John was born and grew up, presupposed that he had many close contacts with Arabic civilization. However, we cannot be sure whether John was educated according to Arab prototype. Moreover, we are not sure about the kind of education he had.<sup>115</sup> The later source, that of Constantine Acropolite gives emphasis to the intellectual abilities of John,<sup>116</sup> while the *Menologion* gives emphasis to his Greek education.<sup>117</sup>

However the most important testimony of St John's educational background is his works, which appear to have an excellent knowledge of the Greek language as we can see, for example, in the work *On the Trisagion* 4:9-6:21, where he expresses his grammatical and philological abilities in the Greek

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see the old article of S. Vailhè, 'Date de la Mort de Saint Jean Damascène', *Échos D'Orient* 9 (1906), pp. 28-30 and Vas. Stefanidis' book, *Εκκλησιαστική Ιστορία, 'Απ' αρχής μέχρι σήμερον* (Athens: Aster, 1990), p. 258.

<sup>114</sup> Aziz S. Atiya, p. 74.

<sup>115</sup> D.J. Sahas, 'John Damascene on Islam. Revisited', p. 106, supporting his opinion on the anonymous *Vita* published by A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, (*Ανάλεκτα Ἱεροσολυμίτικης Σταχυολογίας*, Culture et Civilization, vol. IV, (Bruxelles, 1963), p. 273), says that "John was educated originally with 'the books of the Saracens'. Whether the expression implies Muslim books, or Oriental (Christian) literature is not certain".

<sup>116</sup> PG 140, 829B-D.

<sup>117</sup> *Menologion* 4<sup>th</sup> December, PG 94, 501A.



language as well as his mathematical achievements. He also knew astronomy<sup>118</sup> and he was educated in natural philosophy and science.<sup>119</sup> Looking at his *Paraklitiki*, *Troparia* and canons we clearly understand his poetic talent. Furthermore the philosophical background of John on Platonism, Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism is clear throughout his works and in *Dialectica* in particular. John's theology appears to be not only well informed but also expert in the knowledge of previous patristic florilegia.<sup>120</sup>

John's contact with Greek culture and education must have started early, as his family belonged to the Hellenized élite of Damascus<sup>121</sup> and it must have been completed after Cosmas' arrival, a liberated Sicilian monk in the same city if we follow the Greek *vita*.<sup>122</sup> Cosmas' liberation<sup>123</sup> by Sergius was a very important fact for John's future. Sergius' search for a proper teacher for his son led him to set free the monk Cosmas. According to the Greek *Vita*,<sup>124</sup> the story of the Sicilian monk Cosmas is quite interesting, as it presents John's teacher as

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<sup>118</sup> As we can see from chapter 21 of the *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, chapters 19-24. Of course we cannot overlook John's knowledge of human psychology, but this knowledge depends, mainly, on Nemesius' work *On human Nature*. Of course he quotes some passages from Galenus, Maximus and others. See *ibid.*, Kotter II, pp. 80-96 (27-38).

<sup>120</sup> According to A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christ Tradition*, vol. 2 part 1, trans P. Allen and J. Cawte (Oxford: Mowbray, 1975), p. 76, who quotes from K. Holl, "after Maximus Confessor (*Opusc. Theol. et polemica*), it is John Damascene who exhibits the greatest patristic learning".

<sup>121</sup> Andrew Louth, *Preacher and Audience*, p. 248.

<sup>122</sup> *Menologion* 4<sup>th</sup> December, PG 94, 501B; PG 94, 440D-5B.

<sup>123</sup> The anonymous *vita* of Papadopoulos - Kerameus refers to the fact that Cosmas comes from Crete. (*Ἀνάλεκτα Ἱεροσολυμίτικης Σταχυολογίας* iv, p. 271). According to Theophanes (*Chron.*, A.M. 6064, C. de Boor, pp. 244-5) in the year 664 many people were transferred as slaves by Muslims from Sicily to Damascus.



being full of knowledge which he wanted to pass on to someone else. The monk was transported from Sicily to Damascus as a slave, where he appeared to have tears in his eyes, which St John's father Sergius noticed. Approaching the monk in order to ask the reason for his tears, Sergius learnt his story and his educational background. He saw in the person of this monk the future teacher of his children. Gaining permission from the master of the Saracens, Sergius liberated the Sicilian monk to educate John and his adoptive son Cosmas.

The question which arises at this point refers to the truth of the legend concerning Cosmas of Maiuma as it is represented in the Greek *Vita* and the *Menologion*. I think that some doubts should be expressed about these later hagiographical sources, instead of accepting them at face value.<sup>125</sup>

The education that St John received with Cosmas Melodus,<sup>126</sup> later bishop of Maiouma, was the classical education of Byzantine times. It contained not only theological studies but also Geometry, Algebra, music, astronomy, rhetoric, dialectic and studies of the works of Plato and Aristotle.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> PG 94, 440D-449B.

<sup>125</sup> Thanks to M. Cunningham for this suggestion.

<sup>126</sup> Greek *Vita*, PG 94, 445.

<sup>127</sup> P. Chrestus, *Θ.H.E.*, p. 1220. See also D.J. Sahas, 'John Damascene on Islam. Revisited', p. 106.

## **2. The Importance of St John Damascene's Background in Damascus and Palestine in Shaping his Theological Ideas. The Religions and their Movements. John's *Opera Polemica***

### ***Overview***

In Palestine and Syria during St John's life, disorder at a political, national and religious level was a common phenomenon as in previous and later centuries. Disputes over religion were not less important than national differences and wars. All religions and heresies, as we have said, had communities that supported their doctrines. The very strong communities of Monophysites and the less important Nestorian and Monothelite ones can be seen. Besides, Manichees seem to have made some attempts to establish their presence in the same area. Moreover, the iconoclast controversy did not leave Palestine indifferent. But the new religion was Islam. Arabs invading and conquering other nations in all this area not only established their presence there but also their religion. In essence, although Syria and Palestine was a region governed by Muslims, it was populated by a very diverse population.

*I. St John Damascene and Islam.*

The Muslims spread throughout Palestine and Syria with amazing speed in the 630s, conquering the area by the end of the decade, despite the resistance of Herakleios and the Byzantine army. “The battle of Yarmuk, on 20<sup>th</sup> August 636, marked the end of the Byzantine presence in Syria”.<sup>128</sup> During the reign of Caliph Umar, firstly Syria and then Palestine subjected to the Muslims.<sup>129</sup>

An important question arises about the rapid Muslim expansion and conquest of the area of Syria and Palestine during the 7<sup>th</sup> century. How fast and to what extent did Arab culture and the religion take over? How were Syria and Palestine and their societies affected? Can we assume a fairly lengthy process of assimilation or a rapid cultural transformation?

In essence we do not know the reasons for the rapid spread of Islam. Some hypotheses have been made such as Patricia Crone’s: “The Prophet’s conquests came out of the Prophet’s imagination. Muhammad having fused a jealous God and a peninsular identity, *something* had to happen”.<sup>130</sup> From Crone’s point of view you clearly understand that Arabic culture was completely influenced by the Prophet’s ‘jealous’ orders. As these orders were the commands of the Prophet, the Arabs “ordered the rulers of the Middle East to

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<sup>128</sup> Sahas, *Islam*, p. 19, also W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement, Chapters in the History of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 352.

<sup>129</sup> In the case of Jerusalem, Sophronius, its Patriarch, handed over the city in 637.

<sup>130</sup> Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses, the Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 26.



convert and martyred the garrison at Gaza ; and in the name of their peninsular identity they withdrew into the conquest ghetto".<sup>131</sup> The result was a rapid extension of the new religion of Islam in Syria.<sup>132</sup> Although Crone's position is important for understanding one of the reasons for the expansion of Islam, we would question her argument as Islam was not so irreversible at the beginning of its expansion as the same author claims.<sup>133</sup> In essence for most of its first century, Islam expanded politically, but did not seek to convert all its subject to Islam. Islamization only begins in the eighth century, and even then, Christians and Jews were allowed to exist, though they had to pay a poll tax that ordinary Muslims did not have to pay.<sup>134</sup> This means that Christian societies continued to live a normal life during this period.<sup>135</sup> Of course, the Christians were living under the pressure of a new, non-Christian religion and its effects. However, the imperial policy of Constantinople seems to have been more pressing to some Christological parties. We could offer two pieces of evidence to this effect. For a start the continuance of normal life by the Christians is confirmed by the fact, as we shall examine later, that Mansur's family continued to keep high positions in the Caliphate of Damascus at least for two-three generations. Secondly, the iconoclast emperors of Constantinople could not press the iconodules in Palestine to accept their theological innovations. Furthermore they found them

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism, the Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 92-5.

<sup>133</sup> Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses*, p. 26.

<sup>134</sup> That means that one needs to distinguish between the political and the religious expansion of Islam.

<sup>135</sup> C. Mango, 'Greek Culture in Palestine after the Arab Conquest', p. 151.

to be opposed to Constantinople as in the case of St John Damascene who lived and worked outside the Byzantine Empire. But above all, during the life of John Damascene, Islam fixed its power in Syria and Palestine. John Damascene was born and brought up, and later became active, in this Muslim and Arabic environment.

Two texts written by John against Islam survive. The first is the work with the title *Διάλεξις Σαρακηνοῦ καὶ Χριστιανοῦ*, *Dialogue between a Saracen and a Christian*<sup>136</sup> and the second is the last part (100) of St John's work *On Heresies*.<sup>137</sup> In these two writings John seems to be well-informed about what he regarded as the heresy of Islam. "The documentations indicated from the Qur'an show that John Damascene was not without sources of correct information",<sup>138</sup> although some points are not found in the Qur'an.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Kotter IV, pp. 420-38; PG 96, 1336-1348. The *Dialogue between a Saracen and a Christian* is probably not by John, at least in its present state, though it may reflect John's teaching. See A. Louth, *St John Damascene, Tradition and Originality*, pp. 77 and 81.

<sup>137</sup> Kotter IV, pp. 60-7. For a discussion of the works of St John against Islam see A-T. Khoury, *Les Théologiens Byzantins et l'Islam*, pp. 47-67; Le Coz, pp. 67-87; P. Khoury, 'Jean Damascène et l'Islam', *POC* 7 (1957), pp. 44-63.

<sup>138</sup> J.E. Merrill, 'Of the Tractate of John Damascene on Islam', *The Muslim World* 41:2 (1951), p. 89.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid* and p. 96. For an analysis of these two works see A. Louth, *St John Damascene, Tradition and Originality*, pp. 77-82. Another interesting point is that John describes Islam as a 'Christological heresy', 'as a precursor (*prodromos*) of Anti-Christ', see J.E. Merrill, p. 89.

## *II. St John Damascene and the Imperial Iconoclast policy of Constantinople.*

Three works against the Iconoclasts are known to be written by John. They are called *Λόγοι ἀπολογητικοί πρὸς τοὺς Διαβάλλοντας τὰς ἁγίας Εἰκόνας I, II, III, Three Apologies Against Those Who Attack the Holy Icons.*<sup>140</sup>

These works were John's reaction to the destruction of the icons by the Iconoclasts. Iconoclasm was an attempt by the emperors of Constantinople to stop the veneration of God through material objects and icons in particular. There are two periods in the iconoclast controversy. The first was during John's life, 726-787, and the second was one century later, 815-843. Although the main purpose of both the iconodules and iconoclasts during these two periods was the consolidation or the destruction of the icons, the arguments have a different perspective. In the first period, as we can see from John's writings, the main accusation against the veneration of the icons is idolatry, a position supported from the practice of the Old Testament.<sup>141</sup> In the second period the arguments of the iconodules refer to Christology in general<sup>142</sup> and to the natural or hypostatic relationship between the icon and its archetype in particular.

With regard to John's opposition to the first period of iconoclasm, he offered a large number of arguments through which he connected both the

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<sup>140</sup> Kotter III, pp. 65-200; PG 94, 1232-1420.

<sup>141</sup> Based on the commandment of Ex. 20:4.

<sup>142</sup> Of course Christology was referred to in the first period of Iconoclasm. See e.g. the Acts of the Council of Hieria (e.g. Mansi XIII, 256). Arguments were certainly refined during the ninth century, but the basic Christological dimensions are already there in eighth-ninth century debate.



Christian practice of venerating icons with the holy objects which were venerated in the Old Testament, and the reality of having icons with previous ecclesiastical and patristic tradition. But his action in defending the icons was taken by the iconoclast emperors as a threat against the ecclesiastical and secular policy of Constantinople as we have seen. So the iconoclast Council of Hieria in 754 condemned John Damascene among others.

The Council was called by Constantine V (741-775), the successor and son of the first iconoclast emperor Leo III (717-741) in order to consolidate iconoclast actions and to condemn the iconodule authorities with a synod. In the Horos of this Council we observe, as Sahas argues, that “out of six anathemas that the Synod reserved for three persons, one of whom was the Patriarch of Constantinople and the other the Patriarch of Cyprus, John Damascene, a simple presbyter and monk, received four!”.<sup>143</sup> In fact, although it was not to be expected that John’s works *On the Holy Icons* would annoy Constantinople so much because of the distance between Constantinople and Palestine where John was living, the iconoclast Council of Hieria condemned John very harshly.

### *III. Nestorianism*

Two works written by John have survived against the Nestorians. Looking at the texts as a whole, they seem to be homilies rather than simple

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<sup>143</sup> *Islam*, p. 5. However we must note that there has never been a Patriarch of Cyprus but an Archbishop.

theological treatises. The first has the inscription *Λόγος περί πίστεως κατὰ Νεστοριανῶν*, *On faith, against the Nestorians*<sup>144</sup>, while the second is called *Λόγος κατὰ Νεστοριανῶν*, *Against the Nestorians*.<sup>145</sup> The first work develops Nestorian teaching. There is also an unfolding of the main philosophical terms that are generally used in the interpretation of the mystery of incarnation by all Christological parties such as: *hypostasis*, *ousia*, *prosopon* and *nature*.<sup>146</sup> Among these we must add the references to Christ's flesh. In the second treatise, there is a brilliant collection of passages chosen from the Old and the New Testaments in order for St John to prove the truth of the Orthodox understanding of Christ. However, it is characteristic that he does not use passages from the Church Fathers although he confesses that there are a large number of them that could be used against Nestorianism.<sup>147</sup> In this treatise, John

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<sup>144</sup> Kotter IV, pp. 234-53; PG 95, 561-583.

<sup>145</sup> Kotter IV, pp. 256-88; PG 95, 188-224. Despite the credal character of *De Fide* and the occasional direct address to the Nestorians in *Contra Nestorianos*, both these works are theological treatises.

<sup>146</sup> One of the most important points in the clash between the Orthodox Church and the Nestorians, was on the one hand the distinction by the Nestorians between *prosopon* and *hypostasis* (see Nestorius, *The Bazaar of Heracleides* II, i trans. G.R. Driver and L. Hodgson (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1925), p. 172) and on the other their definition as identical by the Orthodox (Kotter IV, *Fides*, p. 251 (48):1-3).

<sup>147</sup> Kotter IV, *Nestor.*, p. 276 (35):13-15. In the text of this treatise there does not seem to be a concrete reason why the Damascene avoids using passages from the Church Fathers (in his treatise *On Faith against the Nestorians*, there is only one patristic reference taken from St Gregory the Theologian. See Kotter IV, p. 252 (50):7-8). We could suppose that John either believed that it was sufficient to support this argument from passages of the Holy Scriptures, or that he intended, in another work, to make reference to patristic florilegia. The second work against the Nestorians that contains a number of passages taken from the Two Testaments, has the shape of a completed work. It also contains the invocation of the Holy Trinity with the ending 'Amen'. We cannot discover whether John intended to offer another



concludes all that he has said about the Nestorians and there is the ending *Amen*, which does not exist in the first one, and this I think, shows that the two are a continuation of each other. Besides, at the end of the first work there is the encouragement to the congregation to keep to whatever the holy scriptures say about the Holy Trinity, and the second work elaborates on the Holy Trinity as seen in the Old and New Testament. However, the inaugural phrase “begging the speech” in the first line of the second work reveals its independence. Perhaps John is simply making the start of a new section and distinguishing it from the first. This is confirmed by the fact that he does not repeat the arguments of the first work. In any case the question is why St John wrote the two works.

The effect of the Christological problems of the fourth and the fifth centuries concerning the co-existence of Christ's two natures (divine and human) in His Person (or Hypostasis) was very vivid in the East. “In response to the challenge of Arianism the Church formulated the doctrine of the complete Godhead of the Son and His consubstantiality with the Father; the question now at issue was the relation of the divine and human natures in Christ. The theological School of Antioch taught that there were two separate natures co-existent in Christ”.<sup>148</sup> To the Nestorians, Mary was not the Mother of God

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work in which he would include patristic florilegia. In any case it must not be overlooked that John has an excellent knowledge of the Fathers and their texts.

<sup>148</sup> R. V. Sellers, *Two Ancient Christologies* (London: SPCK, 1940), pp. 109-10. “let us begin... with an inquiry into the fundamental ideas of the Antiochenes- their ideas, that is, concerning God and man and the relations between them. Now it has to be granted that there are passages in their writings which at first sight seem to show that to these teachers God and man are essentially ‘the one’ and ‘the other’... It is well known that the One who is eternal, and the one



(Θεοτόκος) but the Mother of Christ (χριστοτόκος). In sharp opposition to this concept was the Alexandrian teaching of Christology. The divine Logos assumed humanity. In His unique hypostasis the divine and human natures were unified.

The first tendency led to the appearance of Nestorianism. The distinction of Christ's two *ousiai* and the aggressiveness of the School of Alexandria led to the condemnation of Nestorius (Patriarch of Constantinople, fl. 428), the leader of this Christological party at the Council of Ephesus (431) and of Nestorianism by the Council of Chalcedon (451). After their condemnations by the Ecumenical Councils and the aggression of Monophysitism, the Nestorians left in large groups and reorganized as a Church in the territories of Persia.<sup>149</sup>

This situation changed after the victories of the Persians and their invasion of the eastern borders of the Byzantine Empire, more precisely in the area of Syria and Palestine. The consequence of this invasion was the return of

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whose existence came into being later, are separated from each other, and the gulf between them unbridgeable".

<sup>149</sup> R. Le Coz, p. 27. "En 431, Nestorius est condamné par le concile d'Ephèse et déposé. L'Eglise qui regroupe ses partisans portera désormais le nom du patriarche déchu, et ses membres doivent chercher refuge en Mésopotamie située alors en territoire perse. Les Monophysites, responsables de la condamnation de Nestorius, deviendront leurs ennemis mortels. Edesse ayant été conquise par les Byzantins, les nestoriens fuient à Nisibe, puis s'établissent enfin à Séleucie. Pour cette raison leur Eglise prendra également le nom d'Eglise de Perse". But we cannot agree with R. Le Coz that the Monophysites were responsible for the condemnation of Nestorius for two reasons: first, the Fathers who condemned Nestorius in Ephesus were recognized as Orthodox (e.g. St Cyril) and second there were no clues that distinguished the Monophysites from the Orthodox Church from which they separated, until the Ecumenical Councils of 431 and 451.

the Nestorians to Syria and their encouragement of the persecution of the Monophysites and Melkites.<sup>150</sup>

Although their communities were not so numerous they had some influence in Palestine during the eighth century. It could be that their slight influence explains the attempt by St John to keep his audience aware of all Christological problems, and was one of the reasons for him to write his treatises against the Nestorians. In fact, during St John's life both Nestorianism and Monothelitism were very weak and they did not represent a real 'enemy' of Orthodoxy. On the other hand, the parties that accepted the Monophysite Christological teaching established a very strong influence among the local populations and their activity was more dynamic than that of the Nestorians and Monothelites who did not constitute so direct a threat against Orthodoxy as did Monophysitism. Proof of this is the two letters, written and sent by John, to the Jacobite Bishop of Daraia and to Arcihmandrite Jordan *On the Trisagion*, which reveal, (as we can see from the letters themselves as well), the activity and the influence of the Monophysites in the area of Syria and Palestine. In contrast, the treatises against the Nestorians and Monothelites seem to be written by John to inform the Orthodox population and just to make them more aware. However, this does not mean that Nestorianism had no members of the local population in its ranks as the presence of this Christological party in the area of Syria and Palestine was established.

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<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27-8. At this point Le Coz may be right, though he cites nothing in support, but other sources give the impression that Chorsoes achieved a *modus vivendi* between the Monophysites and the Nestorians, at the expense of the Melkites. See J. Meyendorff, *Imperial*

#### *IV. Monophysitism*

But what played the most important role in the configuration of John's background was, apart from the expansion of Islam, the fact that both Syria and Palestine were centres of Monophysite and other non-Chalcedonian groups. All these groups shaped and influenced John's theological ideas. This was because the Monophysite communities in the area where John lived were very strong and had an important number of believers. And most importantly, the anti-Chalcedonians denouncing the Council of Chalcedon were for the Chalcedonian John Damascene the most important challenge to a dialogue. Indeed, as we shall examine later, John's correspondence with the Jacobites established a basis for a dialogue beyond its results for the union of the Christian East.

Monophysitism and its attempt to express the modes of existence of Christ's two natures in His unique person faced the strong reaction of the Orthodox party, nevertheless it spread not only to Egypt but also to Syria. The belief in Monophysitism was so strong in the territories of Syria and Palestine that even the teaching of Muslims was influenced by it if Ostrogorsky is correct.<sup>151</sup>

The general ecclesiastical policy of Constantinople for those who were against the Chalcedonian credo led to hostility between the Capital of the

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*Unity and Christian Divisions: the Church 450-680 A.D.* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), pp. 340ff.



Byzantine Empire and Syria.<sup>152</sup> This hostility obliged Monophysitism to organize its own hierarchy.

It is significant that from John Damascene's three treatises against the Monophysites, one referred to the Jacobites<sup>153</sup> and the other two were written against the Akephaloi<sup>154</sup> and to Archimandrite John.<sup>155</sup>

The leader of the Jacobite Christological party was Jacob Baradaeus who became bishop of Edessa in central Syria in 543.<sup>156</sup> Although the basis of Jacobite Christology was the anti-Chalcedonian Christology of Severus of Antioch (465-538),<sup>157</sup> it received its name from Jacob Baradaeus<sup>158</sup> who organized its hierarchy and priesthood in the sixth century.<sup>159</sup> Until then, the Monophysites despite having a lot of communities in Syria under their

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<sup>151</sup> P. 172. At least four centuries after the conquest of Syria by the Arabs the Jacobite Michael the Syrian celebrated this event as it considered the invasion of the Muslims to be the reason for the liberation of Syria from the Byzantine empire. See R. Le Coz, p. 26.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> Kotter IV, pp. 100-53; PG 94, 1436-1501.

<sup>154</sup> Kotter IV, pp. 400-17; PG 95, 112-125.

<sup>155</sup> Kotter IV, pp. 290-332; PG 95, 21-61.

<sup>156</sup> R. Le Coz, p. 26.

<sup>157</sup> See John's confession in his work *Haeres.*, Kotter IV, pp. 49-50 (83):10-4, when he says that: "σκαίους αὐτοὺς καὶ ματαιόφρονas ἀποδείξαντες. Ὡν ἀρχηγοὶ Θεοδοσίος ὁ Ἀλεξανδρεὺς, ἐξ οὗ Θεοδοσιανοί, Ἰάκωβος ὁ Σύρος, ἐξ οὗ Ἰακωβῖται. Τούτων δὲ συνίστορες καὶ βεβαιωταὶ καὶ ὑπέρμαχοι Σευήρος, ὁ τῆς Ἀντιοχείων φθορεὺς, καὶ ὁ τὰ μάταια πονέσας Ἰωάννης ὁ Τριθεΐτης, οἱ τὸ τῆς κοινῆς ἀρνούμενοι σωτηρίας μυστήριον".

<sup>158</sup> W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, p. 285.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287. But the features of its piety were formed by another Jacob, by Jacob of Edessa, see J. Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom*, p. 50, "although Severus was a founding father... Jacob Baradaeus, whose action in filling vacancies in the West Syrian hierarchy 'was the establishment of a new church' [called Jacobite]... it was, however, a third Jacob, Jacob of Edessa, who gave the Jacobite communion the stamp of his piety and erudition".

leadership did not have a separate hierarchy from the Orthodox Church.<sup>160</sup> The main position of Jacobite Christology, apart from the distinction between 'economy' and 'theology'<sup>161</sup> and its polemic against the Nestorians, is the identification between essence and hypostasis, as there is no nature without a hypostasis or essence without a person. This kind of Monophysitism which denounced Eutychian Monophysitism, laid stable foundations in Syria and Egypt that have survived until today. In the area of Syria two big parties were organized - the first between the city of Antioch and the Euphrates river and the second among the Arab nomads in the desert of Syria.<sup>162</sup>

John lived among the Jacobites as they operated in the same area as he did. So, as an authority in the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem and Damascus, he was obliged to write in order to guide and to protect the Chalcedonian Christians who also live among them.

The letter *Against the Jacobites* has a specific significance as it is a letter with a real polemical tone addressed to the anti-Chalcedonians themselves.<sup>163</sup> Writing this letter, John was conscious that his arguments would be read by the Jacobites. Although we do not know the reply of the Monophysite bishop of Daraïas to John, we could suppose that, if the Damascene did not keep a copy

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<sup>160</sup> H.W. Haussig, *A History of Byzantine Civilization*, p. 43. "Under Jacob Baradaeus they formed their own Christian Church in the region of Edessa and seceded from the imperial Church".

<sup>161</sup> J. Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom*, pp. 54-5.

<sup>162</sup> R. Le Coz, p. 26. "Leur territoire se trouve partage en deux zones d'influence. Au nord de la Syrie, dans la region qui s'etend d'Antioche aux rives de l'Euphrate... La deuxieme branche est constituée par les Arabes nomades du desert de Syrie".

<sup>163</sup> This work has a strong polemic tone, as it cites the Jacobite positions that it refutes.



of this letter for himself or someone from the local bishopric of Damascus,<sup>164</sup> then this work survived and was maintained in its present form initially in the Monophysite bishopric of Daraia.

The epistle can be divided into four parts; i) chapters 1-4, which give a general introduction, ii) chapters 5-12. In this part, St John analyzes the most essential terms in both the Monophysite and Orthodox Christological teaching. Although we can distinguish John's personal contribution, we can also repeat what John says for himself in *Pege Gnoseos*, "ἐρῶ δὲ ἐμὸν μὲν οὐδέν", "I will say nothing of mine", iii) chapters 13-88. In these chapters there is the analysis of the Monophysite positions and John's arguments. Although there are some patristic quotations, we observe mainly John's original thought, iv) chapters 89-129. The last part contains the patristic florilegia followed by St John's comments.

About the other two Monophysite works, *Against the Akephaloi* and *On the Trisagion*, it is characteristic that John does not deal with and elaborate on the teaching of the equivalent heresies in the second part of *Pege Gnoseos*, in *On Heresies*, although in *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* he refutes the teaching of Peter the Fuller, the proposer of the formula 'ὁ σταυρωθεὶς δι' ἡμᾶς', 'Who was crucified for us' to be added to the Holy hymn.<sup>165</sup>

In the work *Κατὰ Ἀκεφάλων*, *Against the Akephaloi* which is the briefest text against the anti-Chalcedonians, John presents the main accusations

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<sup>164</sup> The letter was sent by St John "ὅς ἐκ προσώπου Πέτρου... ἐπισκόπου Δαμασκού", Kotter IV, p. 109.

<sup>165</sup> Kotter II, *Expos.*, pp. 129-31 (54):1-54.



of the Orthodox party against Monophysitism.<sup>166</sup> In the letter *On the Trisagion* John appears himself in a tone of entreaty in order to reprove Father Anastasius, the abbot of the monastery of St Euthymius.<sup>167</sup>

Concerning the work *On the Trisagion*, the disputation is connected with Peter the Fuller, Patriarch of Antioch (471, 475-477, 485-488), who introduced, as we have said, the formula 'Who was crucified for us' to this hymn before the ending phrase 'have mercy upon us'. His purpose was, in this way, to bring closer together the Chalcedonians and the anti-Chalcedonians in the area of Syria. This addition caused a strong reaction on the Orthodox side as, according to St John Damascene,

"it introduces a fourth person into the Trinity, giving a separate place to the Son of God, Who is the truly subsisting power of the Father, and a separate place to Him Who was crucified as though He were different from the 'Mighty One,' or as though the Holy Trinity was considered

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<sup>166</sup> It does not seem that John faces 'Akephaloi' as a real enemy of the Orthodox Church in eighth century Palestine as it was a heresy of the fifth and sixth centuries. It is possible that he refers to the Monophysites using a traditional name like the 'Akephaloi'. In fact, according to W.H.C. Frend in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, Aziz S. Atiya (ed.) (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company), p. 55, "at the end of the ACACIAN CHISM, 'Akephaloi' was used as a term of abuse by the Jerusalem Chalcedonians against SEVERUS OF ANTIOCH and his followers". So John might have been speaking ironically against the Monophysites to his Orthodox audience.

<sup>167</sup> Kotter IV, p. 329 (26):1-9.

changeable, and the Father and the Holy Spirit suffered on the Cross along with the Son”.<sup>168</sup>

John wrote this letter because Anastasius, the abbot of the monastery of Euthymius<sup>169</sup> collected a number of patristic florilegia in order to prove that this hymn referred not to the persons of the Holy Trinity but to the Son.<sup>170</sup> The Damascene directly connects Abbot Anastasius’ position with that of Peter the Fuller and refutes it in order to prove its Trinitarian meaning.

Another reason that led St John to write this letter was the accusation by the [same] abbot that the Damascene himself and John V, Patriarch of Jerusalem had the same opinion as the abbot Anastasius.<sup>171</sup> Consequently the composition of this work was necessary not only for the restoration of the truth but also for the refutation of the defamation of St John Damascene himself.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Kotter II, *Expos.*, p. 129 (54):3-7. The translation by S.D.F Salmond, *John Damascene, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, series 2, vol. ix, H. Wace and P. Schaff (eds.) (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), p. 53.

<sup>169</sup> Kotter IV, *Trisag.*, p. 305 (1):18-25, “γράμμασι γὰρ ἡμῖν κατεμήνυσεν ὁ θεοσεβέστατος ἡμῶν ἀδελφὸς ὁ ἀββᾶς Σέργιος... ὡς ὁ ἱερώτατος ἡμῶν πατὴρ ὁ κύρις ἀββᾶς Ἀναστάσιος, ὁ κλεινὸς τῆς Εὐθυμίου τοῦ μάκαρος καθηγεμῶν, χρήσεις τινὰς τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων προκεκόμικε δῆθεν εἰς τὸν υἱὸν μόνον ἀναφερούσας τὸν τρισάγιον ὕμνον. Οὐ δοθέντος οὐδὲν κωλύσει τὴν ἐκ τοῦ κναφέως κακῶς ἐπείσφρήσασαν λύμην πάντας ἄρδην καταλυμήνασθαι”.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 306 (1):41-44; *ibid.*, p. 329 (26):9-12 “τῆς αὐτῷ [abbot Anastasius] γεγενῆσθαι ἐννοίας”.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 329 (26):9-12.

### *V. Monothelitism*

Monothelitism appeared as an attempt by the Byzantine Emperors and Patriarch Sergius to reconcile the differences between Monophysitism and the Chalcedonian party. Peace between the parties was essential for the eastern provinces of the Byzantine empire in order that they might remain under the rule of Constantinople after the attacks of Persians and then of Arabs.<sup>173</sup> This compromise solution, because it had not satisfied either Orthodoxy or Monophysitism, was rejected by both sides. In fact, the results of the Monothelite teaching of the existence in Christ of two natures and one will, brought greater confusion in place of the reconciliation that, initially, was expected. In any case, their small communities in Syria and Palestine suggests that their activity was insignificant and that they had little influence among the local population.<sup>174</sup>

Only one treatise has survived against the Monothelites, *On Two Wills in Christ*, and this and the letter to the Jacobite bishop of Daraïas are the greatest Christological texts of St John.<sup>175</sup> The way that the teaching unfolds with many details about the two wills in Christ, the human and the divine, gives this treatise a Trinitarian and anthropological perspective with references to angelology.

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<sup>173</sup> G. Ostrogorsky, pp. 107-9.

<sup>174</sup> For a more detail analysis of the historical events concerning Monothelitism see chapter two.

<sup>175</sup> Kotter IV, pp. 156-231; PG 95, 128-185. It has the title: *Περὶ τῶν ἰδιωμάτων τῶν ἐν τῷ ἱνὶ Χριστῷ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν δύο φύσεων, ἐξ ἐπιδρομῆς δὲ καὶ περὶ δύο θελημάτων καὶ ἑνεργειῶν καὶ μιᾶς ὑποστάσεως.*



Regarding the contents, we could suggest a separation of the treatise into two parts. In the first chapters 1-20, there is, mainly, a brief summary of Monophysite teaching with general references to Nestorianism and especially to the relationships between natural properties and natures. In the second part, chapters 21-44, St John analyzes the faith of the Monothelites, as he declares in chapter 20.

#### *VI. Manichees and Manichaeism*

There is little information about the reasons why John Damascene wrote the treatise *Κατὰ Μανιχαίων, Against the Manichees*.<sup>176</sup> Manichaeism was developed in many areas including Syria. Although it was an older heresy, especially of the fourth century, it continued to exist for centuries. According to Theophanes in the eighth century, the Manichees were active in Damascus and they were opposed by the local bishop.<sup>177</sup> Another testimony in Theophanes's *Chronography* speaks of the emigration of a number of Syrians and Armenians from their homes to Thrace after the order of the Emperor Constantine V.<sup>178</sup> But can we speak of Manichees in eighth century Palestine?

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<sup>176</sup> Kotter IV, pp. 334-98; PG 94, 1505-1584. John also "included Manichaeism in his *On Heresies*, as it was present in the epitome of Epiphanius's *Panarion*", see A. Louth, *St. John Damascene, Tradition and Originality*, p. 61.

<sup>177</sup> *Chron.*, A.M. 6234, C. de Boor, p. 416.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, A.M. 6247, p. 429.

Some scholars believe that in Byzantium during the eighth century the names Manichee and Paulician were interchangeable.<sup>179</sup> In this case the Byzantines called the Paulicians Manichees. But the Paulicians were not real Manichees. Many theories have been formulated about Paulician teaching. Some scholars, like Runciman and Lemerle who follow the Greek sources believe that the Paulicians were dualists,<sup>180</sup> while others like Milan Loos, believe that the Paulicians were a branch of Marcionism,<sup>181</sup> and their teaching was the diarchy between a good and a bad God.<sup>182</sup> Recently both theories were reconsidered as being from Armenian sources, and the idea that Paulicianism was Armenian in origin does “not, however, sustain these conclusions, although they do confirm the Iconoclastic beliefs of the Paulicians”.<sup>183</sup> Instead these sources characterise Paulicianism as Adoptianism.<sup>184</sup> In fact we do not have a clear picture of the Paulician religion. According to Claudia Ludwig “the Paulician movement began as a simple heresy. The intention was merely to reform Christianity by recalling

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<sup>179</sup> See Samuel N.C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China*, (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1992), p. 7. In pp. 215-6, Lieu says that: “the term ‘Manichaean’ nevertheless remained as an epithet of opprobrium for many more centuries and was used by Byzantine churchmen to castigate novel heretical sects like the Paulicians and the Bogomils... The refutation of Manichaean dualism also became a standard form of rhetorical training for the theologians. The anti-Manichaean works of Byzantine theologians like John of Caesarea, John of Damascus, Photius and ‘John the Orthodox’ are statements of orthodoxy *vis-à-vis* Manichean dualism as popularly conceived”.

<sup>180</sup> *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 1606. See also Steven Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee, A Study of the Christian Dualist Heresy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 60.

<sup>181</sup> *Dualist Heresy in the Middle Ages* (Prague: Academia, 1974), pp. 29-30.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>183</sup> *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, p. 1606.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

the origins of Christian faith and especially by reviving the teaching of the apostle Paul. On the authority of Paul himself, the Paulicians were thoroughly convinced of their own orthodoxy in its literal sense, that of adhering to the right dogma or belief... The Byzantine reaction (against the Paulicians)... was based less on the deeds of the Paulicians than on the needs of ninth-century Byzantine ideology".<sup>185</sup>

The centre of the leader of Paulicianism, during St John's time, was a city in Armenia. From here its leader, Gegnesios, gave sermons and the heresy spread to the eastern provinces of the Byzantine empire.<sup>186</sup> In any case the Arabic invasion terminated the persecution Paulicians by the Byzantines.<sup>187</sup>

From a more theological perspective we could connect the iconodule arguments in the treatises in defense of the holy icons and their anti-Manichaeism spirit with the treatise against the Manichees. The characterization of iconoclasm as 'Manichaeki Airesis', 'Heresy of Manichaeism' reveals its Manichaeistic perspective with the underestimation of matter.<sup>188</sup> Although many other parties of Gnosticism underestimate matter, John's focus on Manichaeism maybe declares that Manichaeism could describe his feelings against iconoclasm in the best way.

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<sup>185</sup> 'The Paulicians and ninth-century Byzantine thought', in L. Brubaker, ed., *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), pp.34-5.

<sup>186</sup> V. Feidas, *Εκκλησιαστική Ιστορία*, vol. I (Athens, 1992), p. 768.

<sup>187</sup> R. Le Coz, p. 136, n. 1.

<sup>188</sup> According to N. Matsoukas ed., *Ἰωάννου Δαμασκηνοῦ Ι. Κατὰ Μανιχαίων Διάλογος II. Πρὸς τοὺς Διαβάλλοντας τὰς ἁγίας Εἰκόνας Λόγοι τρεῖς*, ΦΘΒ 8 (Thessaloniki: P. Pournara, 1988), p. 29, "τὸ κύριο νεῦρο παραμένει ὁ Μανιχαϊσμός, ἡ ἄκρα ὑποτίμηση τῆς ὕλης, ὁ ὀξύς διαχωρισμός αἰσθητοῦ καὶ νοητοῦ".



It seems that the treatise *Against the Manichees* is a teaching against dualism rather than a polemical work against a real enemy in Palestine and Syria. A. Louth also suggests that this work and the question which it discusses sometimes seems to hint that the treatise has an anti-Islamic character.<sup>189</sup> John could not answer the Muslims and their doctrines directly, so he found another way of fighting them. In fact, we cannot overlook the possibility that the Damascene characterizes the Paulicians as Manichees as the other Byzantines did in order to write a treatise against them or a Paulician movement could not have existed in eighth century Palestine.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> *St John Damascene, Tradition and Originality*, pp. 66, 70-1.

<sup>190</sup> The historian Theophanes notes that (*Chron.*, A.M. 6234, C. de Boor, p. 416) Walid cut off the tongue of Peter Bishop of Damascus (John wrote the letter on his behalf to the Jacobite bishop of Daraïas). The reason for doing it, was his criticism against the Arabic religion and Manichees. Although we should be very sceptical of Theophanes' testimony as there is no point for the Arabs to punish Peter on behalf of the Manichees, we cannot refute any influence of Islam by the Manichean group against the bishop of Damascus. I cannot imagine Theophanes writing this clue without hearing something about this. If so, the Manichees defamed Peter in the court of the Caliph. In addition, according to G. Widengren, *Mani and Manichaeism* tran. Charles Kessler (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965), p. 127, during the life of the first four caliphs of Omayyad dynasty in Damascus the Manichees lived within an environment of freedom and reorganization. These caliphs from Omar to Abd al Malik permitted them to live in peace. This, viewed alongside the attempts of Walid (705-715) to convert the local populations to Islam, suggests that the peaceful period for Manichees was replaced by another in which measures were taken against them. Although Widengren's position presupposes that among the other religious movements in the area of Syria, during John's life, must be enumerated the heresy of Manichees, however we must note that Peter was punished by Walid who persecuted the Manichees among others. See also A. Louth's interesting remarks on this point, *St John Damascene, Tradition and Originality*, p. 64.

### 3. The rest of St John's works

The most famous of the other writings composed by John is the three-part work *Pege Gnoseos*.<sup>191</sup> It is 'habitually' distinguished in three parts: i) *Dialectica*, ii) *On Heresies* and iii) *The Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*.<sup>192</sup> It is more widely read than the other works of the Palestinian monk. In particular *The Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* has been translated many times.<sup>193</sup>

This work was sent to John's adoptive brother and later bishop of Maiouma, Cosmas,<sup>194</sup> even though the intended readers must be far more in number as is testified in the introductory chapter.<sup>195</sup> It is a synthesis of previous patristic and philosophical florilegia as we can see in Kotter's critical edition of this work.<sup>196</sup> John asserts the same. The "I will say nothing of mine" is characteristic and expresses a position that is found in some other places in his

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<sup>191</sup> Kotter I, *Dial.*, pp. 20-173; II, *Expos.*; IV, *Haeres.*, p. 1-67, PG 94, 524-1228.

<sup>192</sup> St John himself testifies this threefold classification, see Kotter I, *Dial.*, pp. 52-3 (προοίμιον):43-60. This classification is found only in the above mentioned passage.

<sup>193</sup> *Θ.H.E.*, p. 1222.

<sup>194</sup> Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 51 (προοίμιον). We do not know the exact date of the compilation of this work see A. Louth, *St John Damascene, Tradition and Originality*, p. 33.

<sup>195</sup> Kotter I, *Dial.*, pp. 51-3 (προοίμιον):6, 63-65.

<sup>196</sup> Kotter I, p. 29. According to A. Grillmeier, in the *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* alone there are: 194 passages from St Gregory Theologian, 92 from St Athanasius of Alexandria, 73 from St Cyril of Alexandria, 70 passages from Maximus Confessor, 70 from Nemesius of Emesa, 49 passages from St Gregory Nyssa, 38 from Ps. Dionysius the Areopagite and 18 from St John Chrysostom, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 76.



work also.<sup>197</sup> Although this work is an attempt at a synthesis by John, it still seems to have John's personal stamp of following the traditional way of choosing and synthesizing texts. This work "does not compose an artless compilation of foreign ideas".<sup>198</sup>

In this 'customary' three-part work the Damascene makes an effort i) to present a collection of philosophical positions and ii) to express the Orthodox faith by collecting Patristic passages as well.<sup>199</sup>

Other authentic works:

i) Hymns and Poems: There is probably a huge number of them referring to Pentecost, Epiphany, Christmas, Easter, Antipascha, Ascension, Transfiguration. Eustratiades classifies a lot of others in *Nea Sion*.<sup>200</sup>

ii) Homilies: *Εἰς τὰ βάρια* (Kotter V pp. 65-90), *λόγος εἰς τὴν ξηρανθεῖσαν συκὴν καὶ εἰς τὴν παραβολὴν τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος* (Kotter V pp. 93-110, PG 96, 576-588), *Εἰς τὸ ἅγιον σάββατον* (Kotter V pp. 113-146, PG 96, 601-644), *Εἰς τὸ Γενέθλιον τῆς ἁγίας Θεοτόκου Μαρίας* (Kotter V pp. 149-182, PG 96,

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<sup>197</sup> Kotter I, *Dial.*, pp. 52-3 (προοίμιον):39-42, 60. See the interesting remarks of M. B. Cunningham, 'Innovation or Mimesis in Byzantine Sermons', *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art and Music*, Oxbow Monograph 50 (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1995), p. 76. "The originality of Byzantine sermons rests ultimately on their Christian content. This conclusion may seem obvious... not only with regard to homiletics but in the case of most other Byzantine literary forms as well. Christian homilies (apart from anti-heretical polemic) do not seek to persuade; they rather remind their hearers of a truth which is already believed".

<sup>198</sup> N. Matsoukas, *Ἰωάννου Δαμασκηνοῦ, Ἐκδοσις Ἀκριβῆς τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Πίστεως* (Thessaloniki: P. Pournara, 1983), pp. 16-7.

<sup>199</sup> John himself testifies it. See Kotter I, *Dial.*, pp. 53-5 (α'):18-25, 52-65.

<sup>200</sup> "Ὁ ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Δαμασκηνὸς καὶ τὰ ποιητικὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ", vol. 26 (1931), pp. 385-401, 495-512, 530-38, 610-17, 666-81, 721-36; *ibid.*, vol. 27 (1932), pp. 28-44, 111-23, 165-77, 216-24, 329-53, 415-22, 450-72, 514-34, 570-85, 644-64, 698-719; *ibid.*, vol. 28 (1933), pp. 11-25.



661-680), *Εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν Χριστοῦ γέννησιν* (Kotter V pp. 305-347), *Εἰς τὴν ὑπαπαντὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* (Kotter V pp. 371-395), *Ὑπόμνημα εἰς τὸν μέγαν προφήτην Ἡλίου τὸν Θεσβίτην* (Kotter V pp. 397-418), *Εἰς τὴν μεταμόρφωσιν τοῦ κυρίου καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* (Kotter V pp. 419-459, PG 96, 545-576), *Εἰς τὴν κοίμησιν τῆς ἁγίας Θεοτόκου λόγοι τρεῖς* (Kotter V pp. 461-555, PG 96, 700-761).

iii) Opera hagiologica: *Ὑπόμνημα ἡγουν ἐπεξηγήσεις τοῦ μαρτυρίου τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ ἐνδόξου μεγαλομάρτυρος καὶ θαυματουργοῦ Ἀρτεμίου* (Kotter V pp. 185-245, PG 96, 1251-1320), *Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν καὶ ἐνδοξον τοῦ Χριστοῦ μάρτυρα Βαρβάραν* (Kotter V pp. 249-278, PG 96, 781-813), *Εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν μάρτυρα Ἀναστασίαν* (Kotter V pp. 281-303), *Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὸν ἕγιον Ἰωάννην τὸν Χρυσόστομον* (Kotter V pp. 349-370, PG 96, 761-781).

iv) Others: Paschalion PG 95, 239-242, *Εἰσαγωγή δογμάτων στοιχειώδης ἀπὸ φωνῆς Ἰωάννου ταπεινοῦ μοναχοῦ πρὸς Ἰωάννην τὸν ὀσιώτατον ἐπίσκοπον Λαοδικείας*, Kotter I, pp. 20-26, PG 95, 100-112. *Sacra Parallela*, PG 95 & 96: 95.1040-1588; 96.9-441, although some scholars believe that is not authentic.

Dubia: the novel *Vita Barlaam and Joasaph*, PG 96, 859-1241 is almost certainly not by John.

Many scholars have attempted to produce a complete collection of St John's works. Among other attempts, C. Dyobouniotes published a text on the *Hexaemeron*,<sup>201</sup> P. Chrestus in Θ.Η.Ε. and in his Patrology makes some

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<sup>201</sup> "Ἰωάννου Δαμασκηνοῦ, Λόγοι ἀνέκδοτοι εἰς τὴν ἑξαήμερον", *Ἐκκλησιαστικὸς Φάρος* 13 (1914), pp. 53-69 and pp. 119-49.

references to the authentic and inauthentic works of St John.<sup>202</sup> M. Jugie,<sup>203</sup> P. J. Nasrallah,<sup>204</sup> and others tried to distinguish them. But the best of these is Kotter's critical edition.<sup>205</sup> Although it is incomplete, it is brilliant. This critical edition is the basis of the present research.

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<sup>202</sup> P. Chrestus, *Θ.H.E.*, vol. V, pp. 1221-6.

<sup>203</sup> 'Jean Damascene', *DTC* 8 (1924), pp. 693-751.

<sup>204</sup> pp. 137-67.

<sup>205</sup> There is also a very interesting article written by B. Kotter in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* Band XVII (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), pp. 127-9. In this article, Kotter classifies the works attributed to John into three categories i) Authentic, ii) Dubia and iii) Spuria.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **The Eastern Church from the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon to St John Damascene's Time**

#### **(Historical Events)**

##### *Overview*

A chain of events from the Council of Ephesus (431) to the eighth century fashioned Jacobite teaching as it was represented in Palestine. Before we proceed to examine John's thought against seventh-eighth century Monophysitism, it is necessary to refer to the events that marked the relationships between the Chalcedonians and the anti-Chalcedonians from the fifth century onwards. This brief analysis with its introductory role will help us to understand John's historical background and what his arguments against the Monophysites both theologically and philosophically, were like.



Chalcedon (451), although it faced Eutychianism successfully, left Eastern Christianity divided into two Christological parties: the Dyophysite and the anti-Chalcedonian. The initial differentiation between them principally referred to the words that were used to describe *the mysterium Christi*, and the disagreement lay in the prepositions ‘έν’, *en* and ‘έκ’, *ek*.<sup>206</sup> The anti-Chalcedonians, agreeing with the union of humanity and divinity in the one hypostasis and *physis* of Christ, denounced any clear distinction between them as two separate realities after the incarnation. So the preposition *ek* could express the union of the two natures in a better way as the result is one<sup>207</sup>.

The new formulation έν δύο φύσεσιν introduced a new period of Christological disputations which the Fathers of the Fourth Ecumenical Council probably did not expect. While the *Tome* of Leo was basic for the acceptance of the formulation ‘in two natures’ by Chalcedon, it seems that it was Basil of Seleukeia who first introduced the formula ‘in two natures’ officially to the

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<sup>206</sup> The ‘Horos’ of the Council of Chalcedon that created all disagreements with the Monophysites is characteristic: *ACO* II, 1,2 p. 129:30-130:2, “ένα καί τόν αὐτόν Χριστόν υἱόν κύριον μονογενή, έν δύο φύσεσιν άσυγχύτως άτρέπτως άδιαιρέτως άχωρίστως γνωριζόμενον, οὐδαμοῦ τής τών φύσεων διαφοράς άνηρημένης διά τήν ένωσιν, σωιζομένης δέ μάλλον τής ιδιότητος έκατέρας φύσεως καί εις έν πρόσωπον καί μίαν υπόστασιν συντρεχούσης, οὐκ εις δύο πρόσωπα μεριζόμενον ή διαιρούμενον, άλλ' ένα καί τόν αὐτόν υἱόν μονογενή θεόν λόγον κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν”. See also the article by Sebastian Brock ‘The Orthodox-Oriental Orthodox Conversations of 532’, *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1984), p. 219, “the decision at the Council of Chalcedon to adopt the formula *en duo physisin*, instead of the *ek duo physeon* of the first draft led to the withdrawal of considerable numbers of Christians in the Roman East from communion with the ‘Synodites’ on grounds of conscience”.

<sup>207</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 57. “The difference, according to Severus, was that the preposition ‘in’ meant ‘a duality, representing separation,’ while ‘from’ indicated ‘composition and a union without confusion’”.

theological disputations.<sup>208</sup> In any case the acceptance of the formula *ἐν δύο φύσεσιν* meant that nature is not the principle of union in Christ but the unimpaired principle of the distinction as Grillmeier argues.<sup>209</sup> However, the non-Chalcedonian Jacobites could not accept this kind of distinction of Christ's natures expressed with this formula. For them the *ἐν δύο φύσεσιν* led to Nestorianism.<sup>210</sup> Moreover, they accused the Chalcedonians of abandoning the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria (370-444) who, for them, clearly speaks of one nature after the incarnation.<sup>211</sup> We shall look later at John's attempt to face this accusation by trying to prove that Chalcedon was in step with Cyril's Christology: he said that the word 'incarnate' in the *mia-physis* formula meant the assumption of another nature which is in an unconfused and undivided union with the divinity in the hypostasis of the divine Logos.<sup>212</sup>

John, from his perspective, does not reject the formula 'from two natures' in the case of Christ, but he considers it to be always accompanied by

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<sup>208</sup> For the history of the 'in two natures' formula see G. Martzelos, *Γένεση καὶ Πηγὴ τοῦ Ὁρου τῆς Χαλκηδόνας. Συμβολὴ στὴν Ἱστορικοδογματικὴ διερεύνηση τοῦ Ὁρου τῆς Δ' Οἰκουμενικῆς Συνόδου*, ΦΘΒ 7 (Thessaloniki: P. Pournara, 1986), pp. 173-6 who refers to R.V. Sellers, *The Council of Chalcedon. A Historical Doctrinal Survey* (London, SPCK, 1961); Šagi-Bunić, 'Deus perfectus et homo perfectus' a Concilio Ephesino (a. 431) ad Chalcedonense (a. 451) (Romae, 1965), p. 219ff.; M. van Parys, 'L' évolution de la doctrine christologique de Basile de Séleucie', *Irénikon* 44 (1971), p. 405ff.

<sup>209</sup> A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition, From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, vol. 1, tran. J. S. Bowden (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co. Limited, 1975), p. 549.

<sup>210</sup> See the Monophysite Elias' accusations against St John Damascene in Roey A van, 'La Lettre Apologétique d'Élie à Léon, syncelle de l'évêque chalcédonien de Harran. Une apologie monophysite du VIII-IXe siècle', *Le Muséon* 57 (1944), p. 32.

<sup>211</sup> *To Acacius of Melitene*, in L. R. Wickham, ed. and tran., *Cyril of Alexandria, Select Letters*, Oxford early Christian Texts (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 48 (12):22-25.



the other formula 'in two natures'.<sup>213</sup> The latter formula not only has a clear anti-Monophysite meaning but also is the only expression which denotes how Christ's natures exist in His hypostasis as an unconfused reality. For John the preposition *ek* simply denotes the elements from which something is composed, while the *en* characterizes the existent reality of these elements which are distinguished from one another.<sup>214</sup> Thus for John the distinguishable role of the preposition *ek* is effective until the natures unite as it denotes the elements that are to be composed, while the role of the preposition *en* starts from where the *ek* stops, from their union. In essence the 'in two natures' formula for John is the criterion for the description of Christ's mystery as it both denotes the real presence of humanity and divinity in Christ which are in an unconfused union and opposes the Jacobite understanding of the existence of humanity and divinity in Christ's compound hypostasis and nature.<sup>215</sup>

In no way could Dyophysitism which believed in the impossibility of the communion of opposite natural properties, agree with the existence of one compound nature out of two. Indeed, in St John's works written against the Monophysites we see, very characteristically, this strain of thought and the refutation of any kind of compromise. The strong Monophysite communities in Syria-Palestine obliged him to write in a polemical style when he elaborated

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<sup>212</sup> See *Jacob.*, Kotter IV, pp. 126-7 (52):29-35.

<sup>213</sup> See e.g. Kotter II, *Expos.*, p. 111 (47):19-21.

<sup>214</sup> Kotter IV, *Volunt.*, p. 185 (8):11-21, "οὐκοῦν δύο φύσεις ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ, καὶ ἐν δύο φύσεσιν ὁ Χριστὸς μετὰ τὴν καθ' ὑπόστασιν ἔνωσιν, εἴπερ θεὸς ἐστὶ τέλειος καὶ ἄνθρωπος τέλειος μετὰ τὴν ἔνωσιν καὶ τέλειος ἐν θεότητι καὶ τέλειος ἐν ἀνθρωπότητι. Καὶ πάλιν· Ἐκ δύο φύσεων ὁμολογοῦμεν τὸν Χριστόν; Πάντως. Διὰ τί ἐκ δύο; Ὅτι ἐκ θεότητός ἐστι καὶ ἀνθρωπότητος".



Orthodox Christology in detail, while at the same time refuting the Monophysite perspective. But let us examine the historical events themselves from Chalcedon to St John Damascene's times.

From the Fourth Ecumenical Council onwards many attempts made by bishops, patriarchs and emperors tried to find a compromise in the Christological disputations and to establish permanent peace in the Byzantine State in general and in the Eastern provinces in particular. The results were always negative. All attempts failed under the pressure of Monophysite mysticism and Dyophysite scepticism because of the abstractness of the Monophysite use of Christological terminology. The leaders of the two parties claiming the true faith refuted any compromises to their credos. Clear evidence is the so-called *Acacian Schism* and Monothelitism.<sup>216</sup> We could also mention the Fifth Ecumenical Council and the efforts of the Emperor Justinian I. But, beyond all these unsuccessful attempts, Monophysitism remained a challenge for Orthodoxy until the eighth century, as we can see in the works of the Palestinian monk.

The Council of Chalcedon, although it condemned Eutychianism, did not satisfy all eastern bishops with its definitions.<sup>217</sup> St Cyril of Alexandria, on the other hand, continued to remain the crucial authority for all Christological

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<sup>215</sup> See *Aceph.*, Kotter IV, p. 410 (2):1-7.

<sup>216</sup> Referring to these historical events we cannot overlook the others, like the opposition between the Alexandrine and Antiochian Fathers, but as our subject is the Jacobite and the Orthodox Christological teaching, we tried to keep the analysis close to the historical facts that marked the relationships between the two parties.

<sup>217</sup> For example the Antiochian theologians.

parties (except Nestorianism).<sup>218</sup> But the different approaches to his Christology and the *mia-physis* formula in particular stopped any expected reunion. So the only solution would have come from the secular power of the emperors and patriarchs. In fact, all attempts were made in vain. Once again the wrong belief or the true faith appeared to be stronger than the threats and the violence of the Byzantine emperors and later the Arabs.

The first real attempt at reunion was made by the emperor Zeno (474-91). A plethora of historical facts like the condemnation of Eutychian Monophysitism by the vast majority of the anti-Chalcedonians and the necessity for the reunion of the eastern provinces of the Byzantine Empire and between the Chalcedonians and the anti-Chalcedonians in particular led the emperor Zeno to edit a compromise edict, the *Henotikon*. The manifesto which was issued in 482 expressed the unitive policy of the emperor with the agreement of the Patriarch Acacius (472-89). In essence the *Henotikon* not only condemned Nestorianism and Eutychian Monophysitism but also formulated a kind of union of the two essences of Christ without special reference to one or two natures after the union.<sup>219</sup> In addition, it avoided counting the Council of Chalcedon among the other Ecumenical Councils.<sup>220</sup> The Emperor Zeno (474-491) asked

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<sup>218</sup> Both the Chalcedonians and Dioscorus have supported their positions on Cyril's Christology.

<sup>219</sup> P. Chrestus, *Ἑλληνικὴ Πατρολογία, Πρωτοβυζαντινὴ περίοδος, 4<sup>α</sup> καὶ 5<sup>α</sup> αἰῶνες*, vol. IV (Thessaloniki: Kyromanos, 1989), p. 549.

<sup>220</sup> We need to note that Zeno was defender of Chalcedon at the beginning but as V. Feidas, p. 664 claims he "ἔκρινε ἀναγκαῖα τῇ λήψει ὁρισμένων μέτρων γιὰ τὴν ἀποδυνάμωση τῶν θεολογικῶν ἀντιπαραθέσεων ὡς πρὸς τὴν Δ' Οἰκουμενικὴ σύνοδο". In this perspective it is understandable why Zeno not only did not count Chalcedon among the Ecumenical

all Christological parties to return to the Council of Ephesus, setting aside Chalcedon. The *Henotikon* was signed by the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Acacius, and the Monophysite Peter Mongus, Patriarch of Alexandria who gained, once again, the Ecclesiastical throne of Egypt after the refusal of Ioannis Talaia (482) to sign the manifesto. We observe the same situation in Antioch. The insistence of the Orthodox Patriarch Kalandion (479-484) on the Council of Chalcedon led to his defrocking. He was replaced by the Monophysite Peter the Fuller (471, 475-7, 485-8) who signed the 'Edict of Union' and accepted Peter Mongus as being in communion like the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Martyrius.

In Alexandria the signing of Zenos' *Henotikon* by the Monophysite Patriarch of Alexandria Peter Mongus led to the appearance of the Akephaloi. In Egypt because of Peter's agreement with it, the extreme Monophysites separated from him and severed communion with him. They were organized in new parishes without bishops. So rightly they were called 'Ἀκέφαλοι', 'Akephaloi' which means 'without a leader'. "Their name denoted their community of purpose without the need of a personal leader, and least of all a Henotacist patriarch... It is possible that these dissidents adopted the name of other irreconcilables who after the formula of Reunion in April 433 rejected both Cyril and John of Antioch".<sup>221</sup>

In any case the acceptance of the *Henotikon* by the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople Acacius broke the union between West and East and created

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Councils but also returns to the Council of Ephesus in order to find a solution to the Christological disputations.



the *Acacian schism*. The Pope of Rome Felix III (483-492) repudiated the manifesto. The same Pope gathered a Synod in Rome (484) condemning Acacius for his communion with the excommunicated Peter Mongus.<sup>222</sup> It was this disagreement of the Pope with Constantinople that led to the cancellation of the *Henotikon*, although, at the beginning, it had positive results for the unity of the eastern Churches as a lot of moderate Monophysites returned to ecclesiastical unity.<sup>223</sup> Acacius replied to Rome by erasing Felix's name from the diptychs of the Church of Constantinople (484). The first schism between East and West was a reality. In fact Acacius reflected in his actions the secular thought of a political power that wanted reconciliation between the Orthodox and the anti-Chalcedonians.

The successor of Zeno, Anastasius I Dicorus (491-518) followed the compromised policy of Zeno at the beginning, while, later, he supported the anti-Chalcedonians. Under these circumstances, the result was that the schism remained. The ending of the schism was made by the emperors Justin I (518-27) and Justinian I (527-65).<sup>224</sup>

The *Henotikon*, trying to bring peace to the Church after the disruption which followed the Fourth Ecumenical Council, created a worse situation in the East. It was a cause of problematic situations not only between Rome and

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<sup>221</sup> W.H.C. Frend in *The Coptic Encyclopedia* vol. I, p. 55.

<sup>222</sup> According to P. Chrestus, *Ἑλληνικὴ Πατρολογία*, vol. IV, p. 552, Pope Felix condemned Acacius because Acacius did not want to offer an answer to the Pope about the *Henotikon* when the Pope asked his opinion.

<sup>223</sup> See, A. Louth, *St John Damascene, Tradition and Originality*, p. 151.

<sup>224</sup> A. N. Gero Stergios, *The Religious Policy of Justinian I and his Religious Beliefs*, PhD thesis, (Boston University, School of Theology, 1974), pp. 228-33.

Constantinople but also among the other patriarchates as the edict itself was ambiguous and consequently it was interpreted in many different ways, according to the personal sights of each patriarch.<sup>225</sup>

Another attempt to bring unity to the East was made by the aforementioned emperor Justinian I. He edited the order against the 'Three Chapters' (544) anticipating a precious ecclesiastical peace.<sup>226</sup> This order condemned the common opponents of both Orthodoxy and Monophysitism.<sup>227</sup> However, we should note that "the initial cause of the order must not being confused with the final result".<sup>228</sup>

The introducer of the order was Theodore Ascidas. The order is generally considered to be the result of the conflict between the Origenists and anti-Origenists and an attempt of Justinian I to unify the Church. But all these disagreements between the Origenists and anti-Origenists led to the Fifth Ecumenical Council (553). This Council reaffirmed the great personality of St Cyril, condemned the 'Three Chapters' and confirmed the Cyrillic interpretation of Chalcedon.<sup>229</sup> Besides, the same Council explained the terminology of

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<sup>225</sup> See V. Feidas, p. 667.

<sup>226</sup> According to Sixth *Neara*, Justinian I wanted 'unity' and 'prosperity' for the Church, see P. Chrestus, *Ελληνική Πατρολογία, Πρωτοβυζαντινή περίοδος, 6<sup>ος</sup> - 9<sup>ος</sup> αιώνες*, vol. v (Thessaloniki: Kyromanos, 1992), p. 169.

<sup>227</sup> See A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, vol. i (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), pp. 151-2.

<sup>228</sup> V. Feidas, p. 703.

<sup>229</sup> ACO vol. 1, pt. 4, pp. 235-45. From then until today all attempts at reconciliation between the Chalcedonians and the non-Chalcedonians are supported on the *mia-physis* formula. However, as we can see in John Damascene's writings, the solution to desirable unity in the East is not from the formula itself but through the correct interpretation and understanding of it and through the acceptance of the distinction between *physis* and *hypostasis* as well.

Chalcedon and the formula ‘κατὰ σύνθεσιν, ἡγουν καθ’ ὑπόστασιν’, ‘by composition, that is by hypostasis’ for the union of Christ’s humanity and divinity. We read in the acta of the Fifth Ecumenical Council:

“if anyone shall not acknowledge as the Holy Fathers teach, that the union of God the Word is made with the flesh animated by a reasonable and living soul, and that such union is made synthetically and hypostatically, and that therefore there is only one Person, to wit: our Lord Jesus Christ, one of the Holy Trinity: let him be anathema”.<sup>230</sup>

This kind of union keeps Christ’s natures not only unconfused but also undivided, as

“in the mystery of Christ the synthetical union not only preserves unconfusedly the natures which are united, but also allows no separation”.<sup>231</sup>

But the difference of Christ’s natures must be understood “in a theoretical manner”.<sup>232</sup> Once again, the decisions of this Council did not satisfy the moderate Monophysites, although they had the support of the empress Theodora. The Monophysite party turned away from Orthodoxy again. During

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<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.* The translation under the editorial supervision of the editors, *Acta Ecumenicorum, The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church*, Wace H. And Philip Schaff (ed.), Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, series 2, vol. xiv (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1991), p. 312.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*



this time Jacob Baradaeus, as we have seen, became bishop of Edessa creating and establishing the Monophysite hierarchy. From this point every effort to bring about unity became more difficult.

Returning to the Fifth Ecumenical Council, we observe that it was supported and influenced by Neo-Chalcedonianism. Neo-Chalcedonianism reinterpreted Chalcedon using the Christology of St Cyril.<sup>233</sup> This result is completely different from the initial purpose of imperial policy which wanted the reconciliation of the Eastern Churches on the *mia-physis* formula to be generally accepted by all moderate Orthodox and Monophysites.

In essence Neo-Chalcedonianism was a moderate attempt by the Orthodox in order to attract the moderate Monophysites,<sup>234</sup> although it did not satisfy all Orthodox Churchmen such as Leontius of Byzantium (485-545).<sup>235</sup> We understand then why Neo-Chalcedonianism was used by Justinian to support his unitive ecclesiastical policy. There are four issues. First, Neo-Chalcedonianism tried to solve the unpleasantness of the relationships between Monophysitism and Dyophysitism that the Council of Chalcedon had caused by insisting that the one person of Christ in whom the natures are united is in fact

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<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 313.

<sup>233</sup> A. Louth, *St John Damascene, Tradition and Originality*, pp. 151-2.

<sup>234</sup> Although for some scholars 'Neo-Chalcedonianism' is a new formulation of Chalcedon, we should also note that Orthodox Scholarship (as in J. Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987), pp. 29-30 and *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, pp. 235-50) generally argues that so-called 'Neo-Chalcedonianism' - or 'Cyrilline Chalcedonianism', as Meyendorff prefers to call it - corresponded to the intentions of the original Fathers of Chalcedon. This position does not convince most western scholars, but it should not be ignored.

<sup>235</sup> See A. Louth, *St John Damascene, Tradition and Originality*, p. 152.

the second person of the Holy Trinity.<sup>236</sup> It accepts the use of different formulas according to proper circumstances. E.g. it speaks of 'in two natures', 'from two natures' and 'union by hypostasis'. Second, it concedes that the *mia-physis* formula is acceptable if it is interpreted correctly along with the whole work of St Cyril. Third, it fights against the main supporters of Nestorianism like Theodore of Mopsouestia.<sup>237</sup> Fourth, it speaks of Theopaschitism.<sup>238</sup>

Theopaschitism was supported by Justinian I in the so-called first period of his reign (518-36) and it was an effort to bring both the Orthodox and the Monophysite Church together on the basis of the theopaschetic formula that 'one of the Trinity has suffered in the Flesh' introduced by the Scythian monks Maxentius, Achellius, John, Leontius and Mauritius (519-21).<sup>239</sup> This formula without the word 'flesh' is encountered initially in the works of Proclus of Constantinople who was fighting against Theodore of Mopsouestia. The same word was introduced by the Scythian monks who borrowed it from Cyril of Alexandria.<sup>240</sup>

The theopaschetic formula was at the centre of the theological discussions at the conference of 532 between the Orthodox and the

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<sup>236</sup> ACO vol. 1, pt. 4, p. 241, "σάρκωθέντος τοῦ ἐνὸς τῆς ἁγίας Τριάδος Θεοῦ Λόγου". This formula was characterized as Theopaschetic.

<sup>237</sup> The Second Council of Constantinople condemned among others, Theodoret of Cyrus (393-466). However we should note that it condemned some of his writings and did not condemn him personally. See *ibid.*, p. 245.

<sup>238</sup> A. Louth, *St John Damascene, Tradition and Originality*, p. 152.

<sup>239</sup> See A. N. Gerostergios, pp. 239-50.

<sup>240</sup> P. Chrestus, *Ἑλληνικὴ Πατρολογία*, vol. V, p. 167. A similar theopaschetic perspective is observed in the formula 'ὁ σταυρωθεὶς δι' ἡμᾶς', 'Who was crucified for us' formed by

Monophysites. The delegates (six for each party) agreed on a common understanding of the *Horos* of Chalcedon. After the positive results of this convocation, Justinian edited the theopaschetic edict of 5 March 533, expecting the desirable union of the Eastern Churches. However, the influence of this edict was inconsiderable in Egypt, while it caused the reaction of the *Akoimetoï* monks in Constantinople.<sup>241</sup>

One more attempt at unity was made by the emperor Heraclius (610-41) who supported Monoenergism and Monothelitism. In this way he tried to strengthen the eastern provinces of the Byzantine empire in order to face the Persian invasion as we have seen in the previous chapter.

Monoenergism is the doctrine that Christ had two natures and one hypostasis as Chalcedon taught, and at the same time in His activity there was “a seamless unity-He (Christ) had one theandric energy”.<sup>242</sup> Monothelitism, on the other hand, was a refined Monoenergism.<sup>243</sup> The Monothelite teaching, the doctrine that in Christ there was one will, the divine, became a favourite for the Byzantine imperial policy which wanted to find a formula to reunite the East. John Damascene, following the tradition of the Patriarch of Jerusalem Sophronius (634-638) and St Maximus the Confessor (580-662) the most important theologian who opposed to the Monothelite teaching, struggled against Monothelitism. He insists on the negative consequences of the

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the Monophysite patriarch of Antioch Peter the Fuller. See chapter one, pp. 66-7 of the present dissertation.

<sup>241</sup> V. Feidas, pp. 691-2.

<sup>242</sup> A. Louth, *St John Damascene, Tradition and Originality*, p. 154.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*



Monothelite teaching first for the salvation of human beings and second for the significance of Christ's humanity.

Concerning the former issue, St John believes that, according to Monothelite Christological teaching, human beings cannot be deified as the natural human will is not healed by the passion of Christ.<sup>244</sup> John's opposition to Monothelitism, like his opposition to the other Christological heresies, should be interpreted as an attempt to protect the salvation of all human beings.

As regards the latter issue, for John the weakness of the Monothelite teaching was centred on a doubt concerning the perfection of Christ's humanity. As Christ had only one will, the divine, according to the Monothelites, then His humanity lacked an essential natural property that characterized humanity as such. On this point, for John, the Monothelites did not differ essentially from the Apollinarians.

So John Damascene, like Sophronius and Maximus, speaks of two wills [and energies] in Christ in order to prove the perfection of His divinity and His humanity. Every nature is unique through its natural properties that are incommunicable to other different natures, while the hypostasis (which is nature and accidents) is distinguished from other hypostases of the same kind through the accidents.<sup>245</sup> In the case of Christ, as His Hypostasis is compound of divinity

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<sup>244</sup> Kotter IV, *Volunt.*, pp. 229-30 (44):6-11, “τὸ γὰρ ἀπρόσληπτον ἀθεράπευτον. Ὁ δὲ προσελήφθη, τοῦτο καὶ σώζεται. Τί δὲ τὸ πταῖσαν καὶ πρωτοπαθῆσαν εἰ μὴ ὁ νοῦς καὶ ἡ τούτου λογικὴ ὄρεξις, τουτέστιν ἡ θέλησις; Τοῦτο οὖν ἔχρηζε τῆς θεραπειᾶς· θελήματος γὰρ νόσος ἡ ἁμαρτία. Εἰ οὐκ ἀνέλαβε λογικὴν καὶ νοερὰν ψυχὴν καὶ τὴν ταύτης θέλησιν, οὐκ ἰάσατο τὸ πάθος τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως· διὰ τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ θέλησιν ἀνέλαβεν”.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 177-8 (4):22-33.

and humanity, it is necessary for both natures to have all those natural properties that characterize them as perfect. So Christ's humanity is true humanity because it has all the natural properties that every human possesses,<sup>246</sup> and, of course, natural will or energy. Otherwise the Logos would have assumed a nature that is not human.

The main agitator of both Monoenergism and Monothelitism was Sergius, Patriarch of Constantinople (610-38). Sergius was born in Syria and knew the theological controversies between Orthodoxy and Monophysitism very well. He devoted his life to bringing unity within the Church using Monoenergism at first and Monothelitism later. He informed the Heraclius that it would be possible to reunite the Church under the Christological teaching of Monoenergism. Initially Monoenergism had been accepted enthusiastically. Cyrus, bishop of Phasis, became the new patriarch in Egypt with the support of the emperor after the death of George of Alexandria. He managed to persuade both the Orthodox and the Monophysite party to sign a Monoenergetic formula (633).<sup>247</sup> But "in spite of an agreement reached between Cyrus and the so-called Theodosiani, the Monophysite sect in Egypt, formally announced in a document of union in June 633, no real resolution of the problem was reached".<sup>248</sup> A

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<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198 (13):3-9, "εἰ γὰρ θεὸς ὢν τέλειος γέγονε δι' ἡμᾶς καθ' ἡμᾶς ἄνθρωπος τέλειος, δῆλον, ὥς πάντα ἔχων τὰ φυσικὰ τῆς θεότητος ιδιώματα καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο θεὸς ὢν τέλειος καὶ πάντα ἔξει τὰ φυσικὰ τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος ιδιώματα, τουτέστι πάσας τὰς φυσικὰς δυνάμεις τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος, τὰς ἐνεργητικὰς τε καὶ παθητικὰς, ἵνα τέλειος ᾖ ἄνθρωπος· εἰ γὰρ τι τῶν φυσικῶν οὐκ ἀνέλαβεν, οὐ τέλειος, ἀλλ' ἐλλιπὴς ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος".

<sup>247</sup> V. Feidas, p. 734.

<sup>248</sup> J.F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 301.



second attempt was made by the emperor Heraclius when he published the *Ekthesis* in 638.<sup>249</sup> It was composed on the basis of the Monothelite teaching. However, like all other unitive efforts, Monothelitism created bigger problems than those it tried to solve. Apart from raising a host of new questions about the nature of the human will, Monothelitism was regarded as heretical both by the Orthodox, who regarded the denial of a human will in Christ as tantamount to Apollinarianism, and by the Monophysites, for whom any assent to Chalcedon amounted to heresy. The new Patriarch of Jerusalem Sophronius with St Maximus the Confessor resisted the new sects and dealt with them successfully. Their personalities were remarkable in the seventh century. They suffered persecution and harassment because of their insistence on the Dyophysite teaching. Maximus the Confessor in particular, not only defended the Orthodox faith but also influenced the whole patristic tradition from the seventh century onwards and St John Damascene in particular.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> *Ekthesis* means 'Exposition of Faith'.

<sup>250</sup> See J. S. Romanides, 'The Christological Teaching of St John Damascene', *Ἐκκλησιαστικὸς Φάρος* 58 (1976), p. 232. Michael the Syrian connects the Dyothelite Christological teaching of Maximus with the Christology of St John. In addition, for Michael, Constantine V in condemning John Damascene in the iconoclast Council of Hieria (754) condemned not only an iconodule authority but also the Dyothelite positions of Maximus. According to Sebastian Brock "after briefly reporting the Council itself, Michael adds: 'The Chalcedonians hated this Constantine, calling him icon-hater, because he held this synod and forbade the veneration of images. He anathematized John and George of Cyprus because they upheld the teaching of Maximus... The reference to Maximus provides the key to the proper understanding of Michael's attitude... To the Monophysite Michael, John Damascene primarily meant the upholder of the Dyothelite theology of Maximus the Confessor, and not the defender of images... Accordingly Michael has assumed that the condemnation of John Damascene in fact meant a condemnation of Maximus's Dyothelite teaching...', 'Iconoclasm and the Monophysites' in *Iconoclasm*, eds. A. Bryer and J. Herrin (Birmingham: Centre for



Sophronius was a native of Syria.<sup>251</sup> He was also a monk in the monastery of St Theodore in Jerusalem. In about 580, following John Moschus, he visited the monasteries of Egypt and Palestine while he visited, again with John Moschus, the monasteries of Rome at an earlier date. In fact Sophronius did not stay in one place until he became Patriarch of Jerusalem. Among other places, he went with Maximus the Confessor to Alexandria in order to persuade its Patriarch Cyrus to abandon the unitive attempts with the Theodosians. Another city he went to was Constantinople. This visit was connected with his attempt to prevail on Sergius concerning Monoenergism. Finally, he became patriarch of Jerusalem in 634, until his death in 638.

The anti-Monoenergetic opposition to Sergius of Constantinople was now supported by St Maximus the Confessor.<sup>252</sup> Maximus was not only a strong mind but also appeared to be an expert in the knowledge of patristic florilegia. He was born in Constantinople to a very rich family in 580. Because of his classical and theological education he became *protoasekretes*, that is the chancellor of the Palace. After a few years he left the imperial palace and became a monk in the monastery of Chresoupolis. Later, he moved to the monastery of St George in the area of Kyzikus, possibly because of the Persian invasion of Asia Minor. In 626 he went to North Africa, via Crete, to the

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Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, 1975), p. 55. From this passage we understand that, for the Monophysites, the Dyothelite Christological teaching of Maximus the Confessor survived in the writings of John Damascene.

<sup>251</sup> About St Sophronius' life see J. Moschus' *Pratum Spirituale*, PG 87/3, 2852ff. See also the twelfth century *vita* of Sophronius written by J. Zonaras in A. Papadopoulos-Kerameas, *Ἀνάλεκτα Ἱεροσολυμίτικης Σταχυολογίας* 5 (1898), pp. 137-50.

<sup>252</sup> About St Maximus' life see PG 90, 57-110.

monastery of Eukrata. Founder and abbot of this monastery was St Sophronius who, according to Maximus himself, was 'father' and 'teacher'.<sup>253</sup> His theological struggles against Sergius' Monoenergism at first and Monothelitism later begin from this period. He was also the main leader of the Lateran Council (649) where Monothelitism was condemned. On account of his efforts against the unitive imperial policy of Constantinople, he was arrested and led to Constantinople. Being accused of political plotting, he was exiled to Thrace, to Bizye (655) initially and to Perberis (656) later. After six years he was recalled to Constantinople in order to be persuaded to accept Monothelitism. Again Maximus refuted any compromise to his faith with the result that he suffered, once again, persecution and harassment.<sup>254</sup> Maximus was now led to exile in the area of Caucasus in 662. He died in the August of the same year in the castle of Schimaris where he lived two months in solitary confinement. His great personality and theological works led to the victory of Orthodoxy against the aforementioned heresies.

But the most important historical event which affected the dialogue and the relationships between the different kinds of Christians in Syria and Palestine was the invasion of the Muslims in the middle of the seventh century. We saw in chapter one that, during the time of St John Damascene, Constantinople could not intervene in the theological disputations between the Dyophysites and the anti-Chalcedonians. Moreover the Byzantine emperors could not expect to have

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<sup>253</sup> *Ep. 13*, PG 91, 533.

<sup>254</sup> St Maximus' biographer says that the persecutors cut Maximus' right hand and tongue off. According to P. Chrestus (*Ἑλληνικὴ Πατρολογία*, vol. V, pp. 269-70), this tradition comes from a posterior era.



any influence in the new established political situation which followed the dominance of the Arabs. Of course Sophronius and Maximus faced a very different political situation in Palestine, than that of John in Syria. Indeed, the establishment of the Arabic power during the time of John in Syria-Palestine and his family's political influence in the Chaliphate of Damascus lead us to agree that the dialogue between the Jacobites and the Orthodox was more theological than political. In John's writings we observe the new perspective in the Christological disputations very clearly and the necessity for a solution to their controversies to be found as well. It was only the iconoclast controversy that provoked John's reaction against the Byzantine empire itself. Nowhere in his anti-Monophysite writings does he accuse Byzantine policy of interfering in the disputations between the Orthodox and the Monophysites.

These are the most important theological and historical events that marked the period between the Fourth Ecumenical Council and John Damascene's time. Imperial policy wanted the East to be unified, in order to secure its borders from the Persians and Arabs. However, the reaction of the faithful populations against the compromised credos created bigger Christological dilemmas. We have experienced them not only by reading the works of both Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian Fathers of those times but also from knowing the difficulties of the dialogues between the two Christological parties in the East nowadays. From the eighth century onwards "in the East, on one side Byzantium and Palestine develop as predominantly Chalcedonian regions, whereas on the other Syria, Armenia and Egypt with the Sudan and Ethiopia develop as Severan Churches; finally, in Persia Nestorian



theology and the Nestorian Church attain great significance. Everywhere it was the question of how Christ is to be understood that still taxed people's minds. Before the invasion of Arabs the *Orbis christianus* presented itself in singular wholeness as *Orbis christologicus*, the last vision that history allowed".<sup>255</sup>

Like Maximus and a Maximian theologian, John remained faithful to Chalcedon trying to keep a dialogue open with the Jacobites, without compromising Orthodox Dyophysitism. His dialogue aimed to clarify terminology based on the distinction between the individual and generic terms or the *mia-physis* formula, as Cyril remained the common Father for Orthodoxy and Monophysitism after so many centuries. The strongest supporters and leaders of the two Christological movements were now living free of the imperial pressure of Constantinople as, during John's time, the expansion of Islam and the religion that it represented, left the eastern provinces of Byzantium isolated from the attempts of the imperial policy at compromise.<sup>256</sup> The local Christian populations were living among non Christians without the protection of Constantinople. So a new period of discussions began. These discussions were only theological.

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<sup>255</sup> A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 4.

<sup>256</sup> According to C. Mango "the subjected population (by the Arabs in Palestine-Syria) found itself divided along denominational lines: Orthodox (in a majority in Palestine), Jacobites, Jews. Unable to rely any longer on the exercise of imperial power, the Orthodox were reduced to a footing of equal impotence with their old adversaries. They had to win the favour of their Muslim masters, define their identity and guard against apostasy. Criticism of Islam was unthinkable (hence no anti-Moslem polemic); controversy with Jacobites and Jews was both possible and necessary", see 'Greek Culture...', p. 159.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Philosophical Terminology

#### **1. *Dialectica* and the Development of Philosophical Terminology from the Cappadocians to St John's time**

The development of philosophical terminology to enable the Church to express its doctrines required a number of centuries. We understand that ecclesiastical doctrines needed a kind of terminology that would express Church beliefs in the most accurate way. So it is not unreasonable to say, in the first centuries, philosophical terminology began to develop, and this helped the Church both to express its doctrines and to protect its faith from heresy. According to M. Roueché “from the philosophical section which forms the end of the Προπαρασκευή of Theodore of Raithu..., we can see that as early as the

first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>257</sup> a knowledge of the elements of logic (of the *Categories-Isagoge* sort) was considered essential to the dogmatist and opponent of heresy”.<sup>258</sup> It is a terminology that is adopted from classical philosophy in order to play a specific role in the describing of the gradual revelation of the Holy Spirit.<sup>259</sup> In fact, although the discussions about Christological doctrine expressed different approaches to Christ’s hypostasis, the Christological controversy itself is connected with Greek philosophy and its terminology. It is a debate about the exact meaning of the term *physis* in philosophy generally and in St Cyril’s Christology in particular. Is this term identical or different from the terms *ousia* and *hypostasis*?<sup>260</sup> Besides, more importantly, both Monophysitism and Dyophysitism offered their understanding of terminology without reaching agreement on the exact meaning of each term and of *physis* in particular, or showing a concrete vocabulary, common between them, that would permit them to describe their understanding of Christological dogma in the same words.<sup>261</sup> In addition, these common terms would enable the

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<sup>257</sup> Presumably 7<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>258</sup> ‘Byzantine Philosophical Texts of the Seventh Century’, *JOB* 23 (1974), pp. 64-5. He continues: “this is probably the significance of the ‘logical’ introductory section of the *Viae Dux* of Anastasius of Sinai... it is clear from the style of Maximus Confessor that the Monothelite controversy was fought primarily in the language of logic. The *Doctrina Patrum* is nothing more than a collection of logically based arguments against Monothelitism... the next certain Aristotelian appears over a century later in the person of John Damascene”.

<sup>259</sup> Jo 14,26.

<sup>260</sup> According to A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 54, for both Chalcedon and Severus “the controversy about concepts revolved around the word *physis* and its meaning”.

<sup>261</sup> It is true that the Monophysites who considered themselves ‘traditional’ tried to keep their understanding of Christology close to Patristic formulas, while the Orthodox are accused of innovations because they tried to clarify the terminology by introducing new ideas in general



two parties to offer their explanations for the confused formulas of pre-Chalcedonian and Chalcedonian Fathers. The most important point in the history of the development of terminology for the Dyophysite Orthodox Church was the clarification of the term *physis* to have only one meaning. What the Dyophysites managed to do, in contrast to the Jacobites, was to confine this term to denote only the 'generic'. This clarification had the result, as John Damascene says, that both *physis* and *ousia* were considered as identical in what they characterize. And what they characterize is the generic vis à vis the individual. But we shall examine the generic meaning of *ousia* and *physis* later on, along with their development.

In order to understand *Dialectica*, John's most significant philosophical and terminological work, and his other polemical writings properly we need to analyze his Dyophysite and philosophical background. The analysis of John's sources with special reference to patristic ones is necessary as they influenced and shaped his thought.

In John Damascene's works on terminology, he emphasises: i) the distinction and identification of these terms with each other, ii) the new meaning of each term that the Council of Chalcedon introduced and iii) on the difference of the mode of existence of a hypostasis in Triadology and Christology.<sup>262</sup> Although we can find them in all of his works, it is *Dialectica*, where the most important florilegia on terminology is observed. It is a compilation that, in

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and making the distinction between *physis* and hypostasis in particular, on the basis not of previous patristic florilegia but patristic *consensus*, believing that in this way they would clarify and explain Christ's doctrine.

contrast to the others, includes, mainly passages from Greek Philosophy and the Aristotelian tradition. According to M. Roueché John Damascene was primarily influenced by David's *Prolegomena*,<sup>263</sup> and while reading Kotter's critical edition of *Dialectica* we agree that the reader observes Aristotle's philosophical *Categories* along with identical passages borrowed from the Neoplatonic Porphyry, and the same examples that are used in the annotations of the Aristotelian works by the Aristotelians themselves.<sup>264</sup> However, we cannot overlook the florilegia which has been collected from the Church Fathers. We could mention Leontius of Byzantium.<sup>265</sup> In any case, John's *Dialectica* borrowed a lot of passages from Maximus' *Theological and Polemical Opuscula* and Theodore of Raithu's *Proparaskevi*. Undoubtedly the previous works refer to a kind of philosophy that, as we have already seen in the article by M. Roueché, express "a knowledge of the elements of logic". We will understand *Dialectica* better if we bring to mind how John works and what he tries to say in his works. He always thinks as a Church Father who wants to

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<sup>262</sup> L. Siasos, *Πατερική Κριτική της Φιλοσοφικής Μεθόδου*, ΦΘΒ 15 (Thessaloniki: P. Pournara, 1989), p. 54.

<sup>263</sup> M. Roueché, pp. 65-6. In his critical edition Kotter gives a number of philosophers who influenced John's thought, see Kotter I, p. xiii. See also Gerhard Richter, *Johannes von Damaskos, Philosophische Kapitel*, Bibliothek der Griechischen Literatur 15 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1982), p. 76.

<sup>264</sup> L. Siasos, *Πατερική Κριτική της Φιλοσοφικής Μεθόδου*, p. 14. The same author very interestingly talks in pp. 23-4 about the philosophical loans of John's *Dialectica*. We read: "τον κύριο κορμό των φιλοσοφικών δανείων του Δαμασκηνού αποτελούν οι πέντε φωνές των φιλοσόφων... και οι δέκα κατηγορίες (του Αριστοτέλη)... ο Δαμασκηνός... χρησιμοποιεί σειρά υπομνημάτων που αναφέρονται σ' αυτές". See also the underlying structure of *Dialectica* by A. Louth, *St John Damascene, Tradition and Originality*, p. 40.

<sup>265</sup> See A. Siclari, 'II. Pensiero Filosofico di Giovanni di Damasco Nella Critica', *Aevum* 51:3-4 (1977), p. 359.

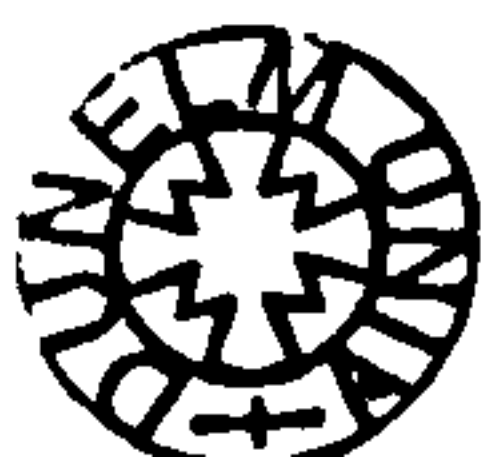


clarify Christian doctrines. So, although John in *Dialectica* presents “the experts from the Alexandrian commentaries on Aristotle’s logical treatises”,<sup>266</sup> he mixes them with ecclesiastical examples to offer a handbook of Christian logical requisite for the clarification of Christological doctrine. In particular, studying the chapters on the terms *physis*, *ousia*, *hypostasis* and *prosopon* from Kotter’s critical edition of *Dialectica* we observe, apart from the afore-mentioned authors, some other philosophers and theologians who influenced the Damascene’s thought. John mentions Elias in *Porphyrii Isagogen et Aristotelis Categorias commentaria*, Anastasius of Sinai (6<sup>th</sup> century) in *Quaestiones et Responsiones*, and others. From all these we clearly observe the Aristotelian influence on the definition of terminology once again. But what is very interesting, reading chapter 31, pp. 93-5 from Kotter’s edition, is that John supports his thought from the crucial points in Anastasius of Sinai and even more so from Leontius of Byzantium and Theodore of Raithu. The last, for John, clearly identifies all terms that express the generic and the particular respectively. All these Fathers and their works come from a later era of Chalcedon.

In addition, in *Dialectica*, John presents his collected florilegia in a way that persuades the reader that firstly, all terms had to be clarified and classified in categories and secondly, they had been clarified with a concrete meaning according to the Church Fathers.<sup>267</sup> John believes that he knows and presents the *consensus patrum*. In this work the Damascene tries the “comparative

<sup>266</sup> A. Louth, *Tradition and Originality*, p. 42.

<sup>267</sup> Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 109 (κζ')μδ':10, “χρη δὲ γινώσκειν, ὡς οἱ ἅγιοι πατέρες”.





presentation” of philosophical and theological datum because he wants to show their relationship and differentiation.<sup>268</sup> In fact the *Dialectica*, as a philosophical work, despite its *anti-heretic* perspective, educates and teaches the reader how to *validate, distinguish* and *abandon* false knowledge.<sup>269</sup> This is the only way for John to prove that his philosophical terminology and theological teaching is patristic. So, as we shall examine later, when John writes he has in mind a twofold kind of terminology used in Christological disputations; firstly, the kind of being in which we classify i) the generic and ii) the individual, and secondly, the quality and the mode of existence of the being.

However, John’s preference for specific meanings for some terms means that he was aware of the difficulties of presenting the exact meaning of each term.<sup>270</sup> In addition to this, we should note that there was a tendency towards an abstract understanding of terminology in Christianity from the sixth century onwards.<sup>271</sup> This abstractness was one of the reasons for the suspicion

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<sup>268</sup> L. Siasos, *Πατερική Κριτική της Φιλοσοφικής Μεθόδου*, p. 31.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33. John says the same in the προοίμιον of *Dialectica*. See Kotter I, p. 52, lines:48-51: “τὸν τῆς μελίσεως οὖν τρόπον μιμούμενος τοῖς οἰκείοις τῆς ἀληθείας συνθήσομαι καὶ παρ’ ἐχθρῶν σωτηρίαν καρπώσομαι, ἀποπέμψομαι δὲ πᾶν, ὃ τι φαῦλον καὶ τῆς ψευδωνύμου ἐχόμενον γνῶσεως”.

<sup>270</sup> See e.g. the analysis of *enhypostatos*.

<sup>271</sup> This could be due to the fact that the Orthodox Fathers did not make a clear distinction between the Monophysite authorities and their understanding of terminology. For instance, in the 8<sup>th</sup> century there was not a clear distinction between the Christology of Dioscorus and Eutyches. St John, for example, in his book *On Heresies*, chapter 83, accepts that Dioscorus of Alexandria and Eutyches share the same faith on Christology. We read in chapter 83:1-14: “Αἰγυπτιακοί, οἱ καὶ Σχηματικοί, μονοφυσῖται... Οὗτοι δὲ προσπαθεῖα τῇ πρὸς τὸν ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ Διόσκορον ὑπὸ τῆς ἐν Χαλκηδόνι συνόδου καθαιρεθέντα ὡς τῶν Εὐτυχοῦς δογμάτων συνήγορον ἀντεπάθησαν τῇ συνόδῳ καὶ μυρίας τότε ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς μέμψεις κατ’ αὐτῆς ἀνεπλάσαντο”.

surrounding the dialogues between Monophysitism and Dyophysitism. It could also be the reason for the attempts to collect previous patristic florilegia as it would support and prove the correct approach to the Christological thought of the main Church Fathers, who were connected with Christological disputations in general and St Cyril's Christology in particular. Both the Monophysite and the Orthodox tried to clarify and to particularize the meaning of each term. But in the former party the great philosophical theorems such as 'there is no *physis* without hypostasis' along with the theological formula as the 'one incarnate nature of God, the Logos' predefined every explanatory attempt at terminology according to John. In this perspective the Damascene's philosophy and patristic florilegia should be considered as an effort not only at the refutation of the Monophysite identification between hypostasis and nature as we shall examine later, but also at presenting the correct understanding of the Fathers' thought and writings. But what is most significant is that in John's opinion philosophy plays an auxiliary role in the expression of dogma and not a leading one. Above all there is, as we have said, the *consensus patrum*, the only safeguard of every deliberation on dogma.<sup>272</sup>

It is essential to examine the progress of the clarification of terminology from the Cappadocians to St John Damascene in order to comprehend John's most important conclusions in *Dialectica*. This should also be done, as

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<sup>272</sup> L. Siasos, *Πατερική Κριτική της Φιλοσοφικής Μεθόδου*, p. 19. "Οι θεοφόροι πατέρες... ξεχωρίζουν την ζωτικής ανάγκης αλήθεια από την... κακοδοξία. Τα αντιαρετικά έργα του Δαμασκηνού είναι γεμάτα από αυτού του είδους τις πατερικές 'χρήσεις'. Τέλος συμβαίνει επίσης οι αιρετικοί να έχουν διαστρεβλώσει απόψεις προηγούμενων πατέρων... Ο Δαμασκηνός και σε αυτή την περίπτωση... αρνείται την παγίδα των αιρετικών και αποδεικνύει περίτρανα την περίφημη *consensus patrum*".



Monophysitism tried to describe Christological dogma using the same Fathers as the Orthodox until St Cyril. But the most important disputations were over the *mia-physis* formula as both the Monophysite and Dyophysite Christological party had a different approach. The former approached this formula through the traditional clarification of terminology giving emphasis to the words ‘one nature’ after the incarnation, while the latter understood the same formula through the distinction between *hypostasis* and *physis* that formed the Council of Chalcedon insisting on the term *incarnate* of this ‘one nature’ on the hypostasis of the Logos. In fact, according to Jaroslav Pelikan “the battle against the doctrine of the two natures in Christ after the incarnation, as formulated at Chalcedon, led to a reopening of the problem of the Trinity”.<sup>273</sup> This is true if we cogitate that the Christological arguments, as we can see in John Damascene’s works, depend on the confusion and the identification between the particular and the individual.<sup>274</sup> In the Trinitarian controversy, it was the clarification of the terms *ousia*, *hypostasis* and *prosopon* and their classification in these two categories that permitted a solution. Now, in Christology, another term needs to be clarified and to be classified. It is the term

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<sup>273</sup> J. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 2, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1971), p. 269.

<sup>274</sup> See *Jacob*, (52): 49s; and mainly *ibid.*, Kotter IV, p. 112 (5):7-16, “τίς οὐκ ἐπιγνώσεται τῆς ἀληθείας ἐχόμενος, ὅση διαφορὰ φύσεως πρὸς ὑπόστασιν; Εἰ γὰρ ταῦτόν ἡ οὐσία καὶ ἡ ὑπόστασις, μιᾶς δὲ οὐσίας ὁ υἱὸς τῷ πατρὶ, μιᾶς ἔσται καὶ ὑποστάσεως, ἢ ἑτέρας τελῶν ὑποστάσεως, ἑτέρας ἔσται καὶ φύσεως... Ὅμοίως καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος· εἰ τὸ ὑφεστὸς ὑπόστασις ἐστίν, ὑφέστηκε δὲ ἡ ἀνθρωπίνη φύσις ὑπόστασις, καὶ ὥσπερ πᾶσα ἡ ἀνθρωπότης μία φύσις ἐστὶν ἀδιαίρετος, οὕτως ἔσται καὶ μία ὑπόστασις ἀδιαίρετος”.



*physis*.<sup>275</sup> Indeed, reading John's works we observe that he refers not only to the meaning of *physis* but also he tries to use a vocabulary and a kind of theology borrowed from the Trinitarian controversies and the Cappadocians in particular.<sup>276</sup> In essence the Christological disputations were between those who accepted the Synod of Chalcedon and the distinction between *physis/ousia* and *hypostasis/prosopon*, and those who rejected the above mentioned scheme and remained faithful only to the Cappadocian distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis* while at the same time being unable to accept the distinction between *physis* and *hypostasis* in Christology.<sup>277</sup> But let us examine the development of

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<sup>275</sup> However the terminology is not so static as we could perceive from its classification in the categories of generic and particular. Comparing Trinitarian and Christological doctrine, first of all, we feel obliged to define the terms which mark the union and the distinction. In Triadology the divine *ousia* ensures the unity and the 'homoousion' of the hypostases, while the personal mode of existence of each Hypostasis plays the role of hypostatic distinction (see Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 140 (v')ξξ':36-38, "ἰστέον δέ, ὡς ἐπὶ τῆς ἁγίας τριάδος ὑπόστασις ἐστὶν ὁ ἀναρχὸς τρόπος τῆς ἐκάστου αἰδίου ὑπάρξεως"). In Christology on the other hand, Christ's compound hypostasis ensures the real union of humanity and divinity, while these two *physes* and their unconfused natural properties play the role of differentiation. In both cases the centre of each deliberation is the union and the distinction in the description of the doctrines. In the case of union (of Christ's natures, Christology) or unity (of the one nature of the Holy Trinity, Triadology) we observe an asymmetrical schema. A hypostatic union is a technical term (we shall examine it) and it would never be characterized as unity as it tries to keep the difference of natures which come to union. This kind of union, simply, proves the possibility that many different natures might exist in one hypostasis, so it expresses plurality. Natural unity, on the other hand, is always identified with number one. It is a reality by itself that shows 'the common' factor in which different consubstantial hypostases participate. On the other hand, the hypostatic distinction expresses the oneness of nature or *eidos* (=it may contain two natures, but its species is unique), while the natural distinction proves the plurality of natures.

<sup>276</sup> See e.g. Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 111 (3):9-14.

<sup>277</sup> A. Louth, *St John Damascene, Tradition and Originality*, p. 113. According to the same author "this was partly because they [Monophysites] made a distinction between *physis* and

the distinction between *physis*, *ousia* and *hypostasis* until their final consolidation.

Athanasius (295-373) who with St Cyril is the most important Alexandrine Father does not distinguish between *hypostasis* and *ousia*. Examining the authentic along with the unauthorized works of St Athanasius that are used by John, we are able to note some passages where there is an identification between essence and hypostasis. In the letter *To the Bishops of Africa*, Athanasius says in respect of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea:

“hypostasis is essence, and means nothing else but very being”.<sup>278</sup>

In another work, the *Tome to the People of Antioch*, he writes of the confession of ‘they who had been blamed’ where we can see clearly the identification between hypostasis and essence, while every misunderstanding of them at a Trinitarian level is dissolved by the confession that:

“but they in their turn assured us that they neither meant this nor had ever held it, but ‘we use the word hypostasis thinking it the same thing to say hypostasis or essence’,”

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*ousia*... and partly because they drew a line between *theologia* and *oikonomia*, a distinction that had a long history, especially in the tradition of Alexandrine theology”, *ibid*.

<sup>278</sup> PG 26, 1036D, “Ἡ δὲ ὑπόστασις οὐσία ἐστὶ, καὶ οὐδὲν ἄλλο σημαίνονμενον ἔχει ἢ αὐτὸ τὸ ὄν”, the translation by A. Robertson, *Select Writings and Letters of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexanria*, Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (eds.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 2, vol. iv (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1991), p. 490.



which proves that the Son is consubstantial with the Father.<sup>279</sup> This passage comes from an authentic work by St Athanasius.

Just from these two passages we can understand that Athanasius identifies the terms *ousia* and *hypostasis*. This is because these terms characterize and denote the 'being' and nothing else, a position somehow different from the Cappadocian distinction between the two terms.

The Cappadocians, after Athanasius of Alexandria, played the most influential role in the description of Trinitarian theology not only because of their insistence on *homoousion*, the most important term during the Trinitarian controversies, but also for their contribution to the clarification of terminology as for them *hypostasis* and *ousia* are not identical by any means. The former denotes the particular while the latter the universal.<sup>280</sup> "While S. Athanasius, on the one hand, using the older terminology, says that ὑπόστασις is equivalent to οὐσία, and has no other meaning, S. Basil, on the other hand, goes far as to say that the terms οὐσία and ὑπόστασις, even in the Nicene anathema, are not to be understood as equivalent".<sup>281</sup> This differentiation between Athanasius and the Cappadocians seems to be the result of their different starting point as

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<sup>279</sup> PG 26, 801:38-41, the translation by A. Robertson, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 2, vol. iv, p. 485.

<sup>280</sup> J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1977), p. 265.

<sup>281</sup> H. Wace and P. Schaff (eds.), *Select Writings and Letters of Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa*, trans. W. Moore and H. A. Wilson, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 2, vol. v (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), p. 24.



Athanasius approaches Trinitarian theology starting from *ousia* while the Cappadocians give emphasis to the term *hypostasis*.<sup>282</sup>

But let us examine some passages from the works of the Cappadocian Fathers. In Gregory of Nazianzus (330-389 or 390), the Father whose passages John quotes more frequently than the other Cappadocians, we observe the aforementioned distinction very clearly. We read in *The Oration on the Holy Lights*:

“and when I speak of God you must be illumined at once by one flash of light and by three. Three in Individualities or Hypostases, if any prefer so to call them, or persons... but One in respect of the Essence- that is, the Godhead”.<sup>283</sup>

It is obvious that in Gregory of Nazianzus’ thought *person*, *hypostasis* and *individual* are identical, and are distinguished from the generic that the term *essence* denotes.

However, we can find this distinction more clearly laid out in the works of St Gregory of Nyssa (335-94). Although his teaching is in harmony with St Basil (329-79) the Great,<sup>284</sup> he insists mainly on the role of number and what is visible in order to offer a clearer description of the Trinitarian doctrine. We read:

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<sup>282</sup> J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 264.

<sup>283</sup> *Homily 39*, The translation by C.G. Browne and J. E. Swallow, *Select Orations of Saint Gregory Nazianzen*, H. Wace and P. Schaff (eds.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 2, vol. VII (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994) p. 355.

“The idea of the persons admits of that separation which is made by the peculiar attributes considered in each severally, and when they are combined is presented to us by means of number; yet their nature is one, at union in itself, and an absolutely indivisible unit, not capable of increase by addition or of diminution by subtraction”.<sup>285</sup>

What is interesting in Gregory of Nyssa’s theological terminology are his references and the importance he gives to the role of properties “for the constitution of the hypostasis as the completion of the substance. The substance as such is first completed in its reality by its particularizing characteristics or its identifying peculiarities”.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> W. Moore and H. A. Wilson, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 2, vol. v, p. 28.

<sup>285</sup> *Ad Ablabium quod non sint tres dei*, 3,1, p. 40:24-41:4 in F. Möller (ed.), *Gregorii Nysseni opera*, vol. 3.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1958). The translation from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 2, vol. v, p. 332.

<sup>286</sup> A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, pt. 1, pp. 287-8. “Hypostasis is visible and recognizable like a countenance, a *prosopon*... Peter, James and John, who are one in substance, are distinguished by the particularizing characteristics of their hypostases...”. The remarks of J. T. Lienhard’s article on the distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis* in St Gregory of Nyssa are also very interesting. We read: “in his *Oratio catechetica magna* he (Gregory of Nyssa) speaks of a ‘distinction of *hypostaseis* in the unity of the nature’. In a passage in his *Refutatio confessionis Eunomii* he does employ both *ousia* and *hypostasis*. In his work *To Ablabius* Gregory writes of confessing three *hypostases*, and recognizing no distinction of nature in them, but one divinity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. In the same work he writes of the doctrine of the *hypostases*, of which the nature is one, and of saying ‘the three *hypostases*’ and the one God”, ‘*Ousia and Hypostasis: The Cappadocian Settlement and the Theology of ‘One Hypostasis’, The Trinity : an interdisciplinary symposium on the Trinity* ; ed. by Stephen Davis, Daniel Kendall, Gerald O’Collins (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 101.

The distinction between essence and hypostasis was essential as there were a number of ecclesiastical authors who identified them, and Cappadocian theology managed to offer some clarification of these terms.

The Trinitarian language of the Cappadocians, although they successfully faced specific theological problems of their times, needed to to be clarified more in general. Indeed Cappadocian theology was opposed to Arianism or, more precisely, to Anomoean Eunomianism.<sup>287</sup> In essence the Cappadocians “above all they remain fast in a realm which we may describe as individuality”.<sup>288</sup> In Christological disputation, on the other hand, the Dyophysite Fathers remain firm in the realm which we can call generic. They tried to remove any individual meaning from the term *physis*.

The distinction between *hypostasis* and *ousia* of the pre-Chalcedonian period introduced a better clarification of terminology. However it was the source of disputes between Monophysitism and Dyophysitism. We shall see later that both Chalcedonians and anti-Chalcedonians claimed themselves to be traditional on the basis of Cappadocian theology and Alexandrine as well. But, beyond all these, terminology was not clarified totally in the following centuries. This perplexity is a testimony to the abstract understanding of the terms in the centuries after Chalcedon in general and the sixth century in particular.

The master personality in the Christological controversies from the fifth century onwards could be none other than St Cyril of Alexandria. We shall develop Cyril’s formula later, but at this point, before we proceed to other

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<sup>287</sup> A. Louth, *St John Damascene, Tradition and Originality*, pp. 97-8.

<sup>288</sup> A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 288.



ecclesiastical authors, we can summarize his thought on the terms *physis*, *ousia*, *hypostasis*, and *prosopon* very briefly. It is also very interesting to give some explanatory comments on his Christological thought and how he perceives the union of Christ's humanity and divinity in His hypostasis.

In his Christological works, Cyril had in his mind neither a Monophysite nor a Chalcedonian approach to the *mysterium Christi*. His Christology should be understood in the framework of a polemical tone against Nestorius and his attempt to support a real union between Christ's natures. So his insistence on the *mia-physis* formula is understandable. On the other hand, this formula introduced the term *physis* officially to the Christological discussions. This term, of course, pre-existed in the previous centuries, but now it claimed to be the official language of the Logos doctrine.

Cyril's use of terminology is not clearly defined, and though he is aware of philosophical discussion of the terms, does not feel obliged to be consistent in his usage.<sup>289</sup> He uses both *physis* and *hypostasis* as generic terms, more or less equivalent to *ousia*, as well as using *hypostasis* to mean an individual reality, but his is (or so A. Grillmeier argues)<sup>290</sup> aware of the etymological meaning of *physis* (from the root *phy-*, to bring forth or produce) as something that actuates or comes into being, a process that ends with an individual concrete reality, i.e. *hypostasis* as it later came to be defined. Later theologians therefore can appeal to Cyril both in support of using *physis* and *hypostasis* as identical -

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<sup>289</sup> See G. Florovsky's interesting remarks on p. 249 of the present dissertation.

<sup>290</sup> *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, pt. 1, pp. 410-1.

as the Monophysites did- and in support of the Orthodox insistence that Christ is the actuation of both divinity and humanity.<sup>291</sup>

In any case Cyril was the last and the greatest Father for both Monophysitism and Dyophysitism. He was the safeguard of the patristic consolidation of the *mia-physis* formula both from a Monophysite or Dyophysite approach. At the same time he has remained at the centre of all discussions, agreements and disagreements between the Eastern Chalcedonian and the non-Chalcedonian Churches from his death until our times.

Whereas St Cyril officially introduced the term *physis* to Christological doctrine, it was the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451) and its definition 'in two natures' which created a number of complications in the use of this term-word for the anti-Chalcedonians. From now on, the dialogues referred to the exact meaning of *physis* as its use became more crucial. 'One physis' or 'two physeis'? Furthermore, do we understand the person of Christ 'from two natures' or 'in two natures'?

During these times "the Alexandrians were shouting *μία φύσις*, the Antiochenes *δύο φύσεις*. Chalcedon made its choice and said: Christ is one and the same Son, Lord, Only-begotten, but *ἐν δύο φύσεσιν*. Christ is one in 'two natures'.<sup>292</sup> The main step was made. The official definition of Chalcedon on Christ speaks of one hypostasis, one person in two natures. The union of Christ's natures does not refer to His one *physis* as the Monophysites claim but to His one compound hypostasis. In this perspective the nature plays the role of

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<sup>291</sup> Thanks to A. Louth for his suggestion. We shall examine some passages of Cyril's works where he seems to identify hypostasis and *physis* in chapter four.

distinction.<sup>293</sup> So, as we shall see in our study of St John Damascene's thought, there is a different starting point between Monophysitism and Orthodoxy in understanding the union of humanity and divinity in Christ. For Orthodoxy Christ's hypostasis is that which supports the union, while for the Monophysites, it is Christ's one nature.<sup>294</sup>

"Chalcedon", according to Grillmeier, "provided new motives for Christological reflection too, and, in addition, impulses for the working out of the concept of person and its differentiation from the concept of nature. The stimulus provided did in fact have some effect, and after careful work first produced some results in the course of the sixth century".<sup>295</sup>

Indeed in the following centuries, the Dyophysite Fathers tried to offer a clearer analysis of all terms insisting constantly on the distinction between *physis* and *hypostasis*. Among the other Dyophysite authorities who worked on terminology and to whom we have already made reference are Leontius of Byzantium, Anastasius I of Sinai, Sophronius of Jerusalem, Maximus Confessor and, of course, the Orthodox Popes of Rome.<sup>296</sup> In all of them *physis* or *ousia* is the generic while *hypostasis* or *prosopon* denotes the individual.

Quoting some passages from the authors who are used by John in his *Dialectica*, like Leontius and Maximus, we can see clearly the concrete meaning

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<sup>292</sup> A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 485.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, "Thus the nature is the unimpaired principle of distinction".

<sup>294</sup> In essence Chalcedon and the Dyophysite Fathers while defending the 'in two natures' formula protect Christ's natures from a *unitive union* in which we observe not real natures but the result of their unification in one nature.

<sup>295</sup> A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 485.



that each term has in the Dyophysite *magisterium*. Leontius denotes that *physis* is the generic in which the homoousion of hypostases is revealed. *Hypostasis*, on the other hand, is either that which participates in the generic of the same nature and differs from the other consubstantial hypostases in number, or that which individualizes different natures into existence. In the latter case, hypostasis denotes a personal mode of existence of different natures which are in union in a hypostasis. As in the case of Christ, hypostasis plays the unitive role in these natures (which remain unconfused in their union).<sup>297</sup> Similarly, Maximus the Confessor identifies clearly *ousia* and *physis*, as well as *prosopon* and *hypostasis*. The first two terms characterize the common and the generic, while the last two the particular and the individual.<sup>298</sup>

Another important position in the development of terminology in the realm of 'economy' from the sixth century onwards is the way in theologians of the age of Justinian, notably the two Leontii applied the distinction between *physis* as generic and *hypostasis* as individual to Christology. They distinguished between the individuating characteristics of each nature from the natures they individuate, and assigned these characteristic properties to the hypostasis [in the

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<sup>296</sup> We mention some positions of Monophysite thought, and Severus in particular, on terminology in chapter four.

<sup>297</sup> *CNE*, PG 86, 1280A, "καὶ συντόμως εἰπεῖν, φύσεως μὲν μιᾶς κυρίως λέγεται τὰ ὁμοούσια, καὶ ὧν ὁ λόγος τοῦ εἶναι κοινός· ὑποστάσεως δὲ ὁρος· ἡ τὰ κατὰ τὴν φύσιν μὲν ταυτά, ἀριθμῷ δὲ διαφέροντα· ἡ τὰ ἐκ διαφόρων φύσεων συνεστῶτα, τὴν δὲ τοῦ εἶναι κοινωνίαν ἅμα τε καὶ ἐν ἀλλήλοις κεκτημένα".

<sup>298</sup> *Opusc. theol. et polem.*, PG 91, 149B, "οὐσία καὶ φύσις, ταυτὸν· ἅμφω γὰρ κοινὸν καὶ καθόλου, ὡς κατὰ πολλῶν καὶ διαφερόντων τῷ ἀριθμῷ κατηγορούμενα, καὶ μήποτε καθοτιοῦν ἐνὶ προσώπῳ περιοριζόμενα" and 152A "ὑπόστασις καὶ

case of Christ to His one hypostasis]. This means that there are natural and particular properties (or characteristics), and that sixth-century thinkers assign natural properties to the natures and particular properties to the hypostasis. In this way the two Leontii distinguish sharply between natures (and their natural properties) and accidental properties.

In essence, concerning Christ's mystery, the two Leontii do not simply speak of the existence of the two natures, but also of the observation of their natural properties in the hypostasis of the Logos. As characteristic properties (the reason for the individualization of a nature) are assigned to hypostasis, then it is possible to observe more than one nature in a hypostasis. Practically, this ensures that divinity and humanity are two real natures and could never become one. Indeed, Leontius of Byzantium's thinking is clear. It is the hypostasis of the Logos where divinity and humanity remain unconfused along with their natural properties after the union.<sup>299</sup> Similar explanatory comments are considered in

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πρόσωπον, ταυτόν' ἄμφω γὰρ μερικόν τε καὶ ἴδιον, ὡς ἐφ' ἑαυτῶν τὴν περιγραφὴν, ἄλλ' οὐκ ἐν πλείοσι τὴν κατηγορίαν φυσικῶς κεκτημένα".

<sup>299</sup> E.g. see *CNE*, PG 86, 1280-1. "...τοῦ αὐτῆ τῇ οὐσίᾳ τὸν Λόγον ἡνωθῆναι τῷ ἐξ ἡμῶν σώματι καὶ μηδ' ἂν ποτε χωρὶς αὐτοῦ τεθεωρηθῆναι, εἰ καὶ σώζει κὰν τῇ ἐνώσει τὸ διάφορον... Ἐν οὐδὲ ποτέρῳ γὰρ συγχυθέντα φαίνεται τὰ ἰδιώματα". *Adversus Argumenta Severi*, PG 86, 1917. "...ὁ Λόγος τοῖς ἀφοριστικοῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ κοινοῦ τῆς θεότητος ἰδιώμασιν, ὡς Υἱὸς καὶ Λόγος κεχωρισμένος, οὐ τούτοις καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς κατ' αὐτὸν ἀνθρωπότητος κεχώριται, ἀλλὰ τούτοις μὲν ἀπὸ τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Πνεύματος, ἐκεῖνοις δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς Μητρὸς καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων κεχωρισμένος, τοῖς τῶν ἁκρῶν ἀφοριστικοῖς ἰδιώμασι, τὴν πρὸς ἑαυτὸν κοινωνίαν τε καὶ ἐνωσιν καταδέχεται... ἐνούμενός τε καὶ διαιρούμενος, καὶ τὴν διαφορὰν ἐναντίως τοῖς ἁκροῖς ποιούμενος... ἐνταῦθα δὲ τὸ ἑτεροῖον τῆς οὐσίας χωρίζων, τὸ ταυτόν συνάπτει τῆς ὑποστάσεως". See also *ibid.*, PG 86, 1945.



Leontius of Jerusalem's works.<sup>300</sup> The explanations on this point by the two Leontii seem to be essential to John's philosophical and theological works.<sup>301</sup>

We shall examine John's similar Christological terminology later.

Interestingly from the sixth century and Leontius of Byzantium's times in particular, another term is introduced into the description of Christological doctrine. It is *enhypostatos*. This term, although it has never managed to receive the significance of *physis*, played an important role in the analysis of the *Mysterium Christi* and the dialogue between Monophysitism and Dyophysitism. It speaks of 'real' and 'existing' nature. In fact it expresses the only way for the generic *ousia* to exist as reality, that is to have existence in a hypostasis either alone or with another *ousia* or in another hypostasis. Although this term means simply 'real', the results from its use in Christology, as we shall see, not only differentiate *physis* and *hypostasis* but also clarify the relationship between the two terms.

This is the philosophical and patristic background of St John Damascene.

A large number of definitions on terminology were collected by the Palestinian

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<sup>300</sup> *Contra Monophysitas*, PG 86, 1785. Leontius of Jerusalem says: "Ἐτι ἐπὶ τῶν φύσεων δηλαδή τὴν σύνοδον ἴστε, καὶ σὺν ἡμῖν τὸ ἀσύγχυτον ὁμολογεῖτε τῶν συνελθόντων, πόθεν τοῦτο θεωρεῖτε, ἀποκρίνασθε ἡμῖν· εἰ γὰρ ὅτι ἀνελλιπὴ τὰ θεῖα καὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ θεωρεῖτε προσώπῳ, σῶον ἐκάστου τὸν φυσικὸν λόγον διὰ τῆς τῶν ιδιωμάτων ἀντιδόσεως ἐν τῷ ἐνὶ συγκρίματι, γινώσκετε, δηλὸν ἐστὶν, ὅτι ἐκ τίνος... ἐπεὶ ἀναγκαῖον καὶ τὰς αἰτίας οὕτως ἔχειν καὶ φυλάττεσθαι διαφόρους καὶ τελείας, ὥσπερ τὰ ἴδια τούτων ιδιώματα καὶ προβλήματα... ταῦτα δὲ τὰ αἰτία τῶν ἰδίων εἶπερ φύσεις εἶναι ὁμολογεῖτε, ἐκ δύο ἄρα τῶν φύσεων προῖέναι τὰς ιδιότηας καὶ ὑμεῖς ὁμολογεῖτε". Leontius of Byzantium also refers to *Communicatio Idiomatum*. See CNE PG 86, 1285.

<sup>301</sup> And it is not only the two Leontii who clarified this point. Maximus the Confessor supports his Christology on this specific position. See e.g. *Ep. 15*, PG 91, 557.



monk in order to offer the consolidation of the Dyophysite teaching to the local population of Jerusalem and Syria. The most important factor in all this, is John's attempt to find a consensus of the Church Fathers and their common belief and teaching on the Christian doctrines in his collections. At this point he introduces another criterion of Orthodoxy. For a doctrine to be Orthodox it must be first patristic, and second this patristic position must be in agreement with the entire patristic tradition.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> See Kotter IV, *Trisag.*, p. 316 (7):34-39, "ἀλλά γε δὴ καί, ὡς προφέρουσι (the heretics) χρήσεις, ἐπισκεψώμεθα καὶ τὴν ἀκριβὴ τούτων ἐξέτασιν ποιησώμεθα. Πατρικαὶ γὰρ αὗται, καὶ οὐδαμῶς ἀντεροῦμεν. Ἀλλὰ χρὴ συμφώνους καὶ μὴ ἀλλήλοις, οὐδὲν δὲ ἑλαττον ἑαυτοῖς ἀντιλόγους καὶ μαχομένους ἀποδεικνύειν τοὺς ἁγίους πατέρας καὶ διδασκάλους, ὧν τὸ περὶ πίστεως φρόνημα ἐνιαῖον καὶ ἀπαράλλακτον ἔδειξεν ἡ μία τοῦ πνεύματος δύναμις τε καὶ ἑλλαμψις".

## 2. Philosophical terminology and St John Damascene

After the introduction in which we saw how important is philosophy and its terminology in the formulation of the Logos' doctrine, it is necessary to analyze and clarify the meaning of each term used by St John. The analysis of *ousia*, *physis*, *hypostasis*, *prosopon* and some others will help us to understand the reasons for John's insistence on the Chalcedonian distinction between *physis* and *hypostasis* along with his explanatory comments on the *mia-physis* formula. In the same context we ought to examine the role of '*ιδιώματα*', *properties* (natural or accidental) or *διαφορῶν*, *differences* that distinguish one nature from another and the hypostases of the same species from one another. One characteristic of John's theological thought is, like some other Church Fathers such as Leontius of Byzantium and Maximus the Confessor, to give very precise definitions of all these terms in order to make the differences and the similarities between them comprehensible.<sup>303</sup> So any conclusion on the philosophical terms and, as a consequence, the refutation of the Monophysite identification between hypostasis and nature arises from a deep knowledge of this terminology.<sup>304</sup> In

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<sup>303</sup> For a discussion of this terminology in Leontius and St John Damascene see the article of Ernst Hammerschmidt, 'Einige philosophisch-theologische Grundbegriffe bei Leontius von Byzanz, Johannes von Damaskus und Theodor abû Qurra', *Ostkirchliche Studien* 4 (1955), pp. 147-54. This terminology for the Church Fathers is an issue not of the science of linguistics but of theology, see Ilona Opert, 'A Christianisation of Pagan Etymologies', *SP* 5 ed. F.L. Cross (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1962), p. 532.

<sup>304</sup> The knowledge of St John's understanding of terminology is essential for the comprehension of his works, A: Tanghe, 'Le lexique du vocabulaire de Jean Damascène' *SP* 7 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1966), p. 409. In fact, the main problem is the focus on the



fact for John, as he confesses in *Dialectica*, the Church Fathers adopted a terminology from philosophy in which they did not see static expressions. All these terms were used to describe the new reality of Christianity that had a fresh perspective in its teaching, moral and dogmatic. So the same terms received a different meaning or kept a similar one to that of Greek philosophy proportionate to the different occasions. At the same time, because of the

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description of the Christological doctrine using Aristotelian logic; something St John suggests, speaking ironically, is true for the Monophysite Christological teaching (Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 113 (10):12-3). (For a discussion of the Aristotelian background of St John see N. Matsouka, 'Φιλοσοφία καὶ Δογματική Διδασκαλία Ἰωάννου τοῦ Δαμασκηνοῦ', *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρὶς Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης* 14 (1969), pp. 256-66). The Monophysites, on this point, are closer to Aristotle's logic, as in the Aristotelian Categories, every *ousia* with *symbebekota* refers to a concrete hypostasis. However, in the thought of an Orthodox theologian the solution is contained in the question as to whether it is possible for the opposite natural differences to exist in one nature. As we shall see, St John places emphasis on the impossibility of the conception of opposite natural properties in one compound nature. On the other hand the Monophysite Elias, criticizing John's Christology says that the union of the Dyophysite teaching is nothing else but 'a union of accidents' ('La lettre...', p. 22). Elias' accusation is logical if we overlook the hypostatic union of Christ's two natures in His compound hypostasis. For Elias the union depends on the natures and not on the hypostasis. If we do not agree with a union by composition of the two natures in which the natural properties remain unconfused, then we accept a union of accidents. We understand that all Monophysites explain the union of Christ's natures through the reality of one *physis*. Any other kind of union is relative. If so it is understandable why the Monophysites accused Orthodoxy of Nestorianism. A union of accidents is always a relative union. Nestorianism, on the other hand, was condemned for this reason. As we shall see later, identifying hypostasis and nature, Nestorianism accepts the distinction between the Son of God and the Son of Mary, and speaks of two hypostases in the One Person of Christ. In fact, Nestorius explains this one person, in which the two hypostases exist "by the theory of a moral union", Nestorius, *The Bazaar of Heracleides*, p. 411. In this perspective the distinction between the terms 'ἡνοίκησις', *dwelling* and 'ἡνωσις', *union* despite being understood differently by St John and the Nestorians, seems to represent an attempt by both parties to support the union of Christ's humanity and Divinity, which means that Nestorianism recognizes Christ's humanity as truly as does Orthodox teaching.



Christological disputations the terms were clarified in the best way in order to say, at least in the Orthodox Church, that they have concrete and specific meanings.

Similarly John's analysis of philosophical terminology is not a simple copying of certain ideas. As we have already shown, Damascene thought does not treat terminology on its own, but seeks to solve some 'problematic' situations in its understanding. This is true if we consider that John's main attempt in his polemical works is to persuade the Monophysites that only through the clarification of terminology, specifying the meaning of each term, and the distinction between hypostasis and nature are we able both to comprehend the Chalcedonian 'tome' and to understand St Cyril's thought on Christology. That means that when John analyzes the terms he has the anti-Monophysite and, at the same time, the Dyophysite perspective of terminology in mind. So philosophical analysis supports and formulates theological thought. In fact, John recasts the distinction between *physis* and *hypostasis*. In addition, his terminology, a collection of philosophical and theological florilegia should be considered in this perspective, and which terms denote 'generic' and which 'individual'. John first classifies the terms into these two categories and then proceeds to the formulation of Christological doctrines. The attribution of a concrete meaning to each term is an essential presupposition. If so, then for John there is no abstractness in terminology. For example, the generic terms play a distinctive role which does not permit confusion; while the individual is the unitive showing the individual mode of existence of the generic. Furthermore, the natural or hypostatic *idiomata* distinguish the consubstantial

or con-hypostatical beings respectively. In essence from John's *Dialectica* and his effort to specify the meaning of each term, we understand his desire to transcend the abstractness of understanding on terminology of the previous centuries.

Furthermore, it seems almost impossible that John would clarify terminology without a specific reason. On this occasion there is no real understanding of terminology as there is no explanatory purpose.<sup>305</sup>

For John, Monophysitism makes the mistake of confusing the terms which denote the 'individual' with those which denote the 'generic'. So John needed to clarify the terms in general and *physis* in particular<sup>306</sup> once again in order to create a stable basis for a dialogue with the anti-Chalcedonians. It is the only way to offer Monophysitism the correct explanation of a common faith as both of them support their Christology in the *mia-physis* formula.

In conclusion we can say that, by analyzing the philosophical terminology John seeks to solve two problems: first the abstractness of terminology,<sup>307</sup> and second the confusion among the terms which denote 'individual' and 'generic' in the ecclesiastical tradition.

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<sup>305</sup> See Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 55 (β'):2-4.

<sup>306</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 110 (2):1, "περὶ φύσεως ὁ σύμπαρ ἡμῖν λόγος κεκρότηται". It seems to me that this passage expresses the main difference on the understanding of the doctrine of Incarnation between Monophysitism and Dyophysitism in the best way. John confirms (after four centuries from the time of the Council of Chalcedon) that the term *physis* is still under debate. So its clarification is necessary.

<sup>307</sup> I repeat that John, despite quoting all the different meanings that each term possesses, always concludes what the holy Fathers believe.

### 3. The Analysis of Terminology

#### *I. The 'generic' and the 'individual' terms*

As John's main effort is to classify the terms into the categories of 'generic' and 'individual' in order to explain not only the Chalcedonian 'Tome' but also the *mia-physis* formula, we are obliged to start analyzing each term from this classification. The basic terms are: 'ὑπόστασις', *hypostasis*, 'πρόσωπον', *prosopon*, 'φύσις', *nature*, 'οὐσία', *essence*, 'ἰδιότητες', *properties* (natural or hypostatic), along with the names 'Χριστός', *Christ*, 'ἡνθρωπότης', *humanity*, 'θεότης', *divinity*, 'ἡνθρωπος', *human* and 'Θεός', *God*. But let us examine any evidence we have about the terminology in John's philosophical and theological writings.

Although the Palestinian monk notes that the Greek philosophers recognize differences between *physis* and *essence*, as well as between *hypostasis* and *person*,<sup>308</sup> he himself, like the 'holy Fathers' identifies the terms *physis*,

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<sup>308</sup> See Kotter I, *Dial.*, pp. 93-5 chapters (ιά)λά, 'Περὶ οὐσίας καὶ φύσεως καὶ μορφῆς ἀτόμου τε καὶ προσώπου καὶ ὑποστάσεως' and (κζ')μέ, 'Περὶ προσώπου'. Besides, for the difference between *ousia* and *physis* see *ibid.*, pp. 106-7 chapters (κγ')μ' and (κδ')μα'. "We recall, just in passing, that St John Damascene shows that οὐσία (essence, being) is something that exists by itself without the need of anything else... It can be identified with φύσις, nature, and it indicates what the existence has in common. 'ὑπόστασις is the individual essence; when it is of rational nature it is identical with πρόσωπον (*Person*)" according to N. Chitescu, 'The Christology of St John Damascene', *ΕΦ* 58 (1976), pp. 309-



*ousia*, *form* and *species*<sup>309</sup> on the one hand, and *hypostasis*, *atomon* and *prosopon* on the other.<sup>310</sup> In both cases although John quotes the different meaning of that term has in philosophy, he works *selectively* formulating the real definition of the terms according to his *consensus patrum*. He says:

“therefore nature and form and essence is the generic, and that which includes the hypostases of the same nature, while hypostasis and individual and person is the particular, that is each one of those that are classified (contained) under the same species”.<sup>311</sup>

<sup>309</sup> Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 98 (ιά)λά:23-25, “οἱ δὲ ἅγιοι πατέρες παρεάσαντες τὰς πολλὰς ἐρεσχειλίας τὸ μὲν κοινὸν καὶ κατὰ πολλῶν λεγόμενον ἡγουν τὸ εἰδικώτατον εἶδος οὐσίαν καὶ φύσιν καὶ μορφήν ἐκάλεσαν, οἷον ἄγγελον, ἄνθρωπον, ἵππον, κύνα καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα”. Although the fact that the term *μορφήν* is identified with *ousia* or *physis* may seem strange, this is logical as, for John, “μορφή ἐστὶν ὑπὸ τῶν οὐσιωδῶν διαφορῶν οἷον εἰ μορφωθείσα καὶ εἰδοποιηθείσα οὐσία, ἥτις σημαίνει τὸ εἰδικώτατον εἶδος”, *ibid.*, p. 107 (κε')μβ':2-3.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109 (κζ')μδ':10-14, “οἱ ἅγιοι πατέρες ὑπόστασιν καὶ πρόσωπον καὶ ἄτομον τὸ αὐτὸ ἐκάλεσαν, τὸ καθ' ἑαυτὸ ἰδιοσυστάτως ἐξ οὐσίας καὶ συμβεβηκότων ὑφιστάμενον καὶ ἀριθμῶ διαφέρον καὶ τὸν τινὰ δηλοῦν... Εἴρηται δὲ ὑπόστασις παρὰ τὸ ὑφεστάναι”.

<sup>311</sup> Kotter I, *Instit.*, p. 21 (2):7-9, “φύσις καὶ μορφή καὶ οὐσία ἐστὶ τὸ κοινὸν καὶ περιέχον τὰς ὁμοουσίους ὑποστάσεις, ὑπόστασις δὲ καὶ ἄτομον καὶ πρόσωπον τὸ μερικὸν ἡγουν ἕκαστον τῶν ὑπὸ τὸ αὐτὸ εἶδος περιεχομένων”. We refer to *ousia* that is characterized as *eidikotaton eidos*, namely the species that does not have under it another species but only hypostases see Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 76 (β')ι':64-83. The difference between hypostasis and nature is described by John through Cappadocian thought. Quoting a passage from the letter of St Basil the Great to Amphilochius in *Contra Jacobites* Kotter IV says, p. 112 (5):2-3, “οὐσία δὲ καὶ ὑπόστασις ταύτην ἔχει τὴν διαφορὰν, ἣν ἔχει τὸ κοινὸν πρὸς τὸ καθ' ἕκαστον”.

Every nature is distinguished from other natures by its natural properties. Because of this, every nature which is perfect and a self-existent reality,<sup>312</sup> does not accept additions to its natural qualities.<sup>313</sup> Moreover “a nature itself will never have natural differences to itself”.<sup>314</sup>

The first category of *ousia* is characterised as the *γενικότατον γένος*, the most general genus from which all species come.<sup>315</sup> This species ends in the most specific species that is also *ousia*.<sup>316</sup>

*Hypostasis*, on the other hand, is something which exists in an individual way and which consists of essence and accidents (*symbebekota*).<sup>317</sup> Every hypostasis is distinguished from other hypostases of the same species through the accidents.<sup>318</sup> The result is, that hypostases differ not ‘τῇ φύσει’, ‘by

<sup>312</sup> Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 106 (κγ')μ':2-6.

<sup>313</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 123 (43):12-13, “τῶν ἐναντίων γὰρ οὐσιωδῶν διαφορῶν δεκτικὴ εἶναι μία καὶ ἡ αὐτὴ φύσις οὐ δύναται”.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121 (34):5-6, “ἡ αὐτὴ γὰρ φύσις οὐσιώδη διαφορὰν πρὸς ἑαυτὴν οὐχ ἔξει ποτέ”.

<sup>315</sup> Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 78 (β')ι':136-139.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79, lines 173-182.

<sup>317</sup> Making a comparison between *ousia* and *symbebekota* John characterizes *symbebekota* as less important than *ousia*. See *ibid.*, p. 112 (λα')μη':3-5.

<sup>318</sup> In *Dialectica* the *symbebekos* or accident is described as that, *ibid.*, pp. 82-3 (ε')ιγ':2-3 and 6-7, “ὃ γίνεται καὶ ἀπογίνεται χωρὶς τῆς τοῦ ὑποκειμένου φθορᾶς... Τοῦτο οὔτε παρὸν σφῆμι τὸ εἶδος, οὐ γὰρ λαμβάνεται εἰς τὸν τοῦ εἶδους ὁρισμόν, οὔτε ἀπὸν φθείρει”. This definition is valid for both cases in which the *symbebekos* is divided (*ibid.*, lines 12-13) in “εἰς τὴν κοινῶς λεγομένην διαφορὰν” and in “εἰς τὴν ἰδίως διαφορὰν”. According to St John, (*ibid.*, lines 13-24): “κοινῶς μὲν οὖν διαφορὰ ἐστὶ τὸ χωριστὸν συμβεβηκός, οἷον κάθηται τις καὶ ἕτερος ἴσταται... Καὶ ἑαυτοῦ δὲ τις λέγεται διαφέρειν κατὰ τὸ χωριστὸν συμβεβηκός· διαφέρει γὰρ ἑαυτοῦ ἐν τῷ καθῆσθαι καὶ ἀνίστασθαι... Ἰδίως δὲ διαφορὰ ἐστὶ τὸ ἀχώριστον συμβεβηκός, οἷον ἐστὶ τις σιμός· ἀδύνατον χωρισθῆναι αὐτοῦ τὴν σιμότητα... Κατὰ ταῦτα οὖν τὰ ἀχώριστα



nature'<sup>319</sup> but 'τῶ ἀριθμῶ', 'in their number' (enumeration).<sup>320</sup> In fact hypostasis characterizes the concrete existence that denotes the individual that differs from the other individuals in number.<sup>321</sup>

The coming into being of a nature presupposes the existence of a hypostasis. Without the latter neither *symbebekota* nor *physis*, (where the *symbebekota* are), exist,<sup>322</sup> even though the essence is a self-existent reality. In this position we observe that hypostasis comes first.<sup>323</sup> However, neither of them exist separately in reality. Furthermore, although the opposite natural properties cannot exist in one nature, they can in a compound hypostasis composed of two different natures (where natural properties are observed). On this occasion there is no place for any identification between hypostasis and nature, as they are not only different things but also we overturn the correct definition as we cannot say that hypostasis comes first. In any other case, every nature must have its own personal or hypostatic appearance (the *koine*, generic *physis* becomes the *merike*, particular *physis*).<sup>324</sup> Consequently the classification

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συμβεβηκότα ἄτομον ἀτόμου τουτέστιν ὑπόστασις ὑποστάσεως διαφέρει, αὐτὸς δὲ ἑαυτοῦ οὐδέποτε”.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 108-9 (κστ')μγ':16-19.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109 (κζ')μδ':12-13. In fact *ousia* or *physis* “οὐ μεταβάλλεται, τὸ δὲ συμβεβηκὸς μεταβάλλεται”, *ibid.*, p. 143 (Ἔτερον κεφάλαιον):19-21.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108 (κστ')μγ': 5-6.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108 (κστ')μγ':8-13.

<sup>323</sup> We understand this position better when we read a passage from Kotter II, *Expos.*, p. 120, (50):11-13. “τὸ κοινὸν μετὰ τοῦ ἰδιάζοντος ἔχει ἡ ὑπόστασις· ἡ οὐσία δέ, καθ' ἑαυτὴν οὐχ ὑφίσταται, ἀλλ' ἐν ταῖς ὑποστάσεσι θεωρεῖται”. Besides, we must note that although the individual hypostasis is the reason for the observation of a nature, the *ousia* itself, Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 164 (11):3, “ἔστιν ἡ ἐκάστου ὑπαρξίς”.

<sup>324</sup> The result is the confession “nature and hypostasis are identical”. It seems that St John hints at it in Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 133 (76):1-3. In the form of a question he accuses



of ‘the generic nature’ in a different category from ‘the individual hypostasis’ ensures that there is the possibility of more than one nature existing in one compound hypostasis as in the case of Christ. On this occasion every nature, is simply observed in a hypostasis but it is not a hypostasis.

We have already said that every nature is distinguished from the others by its properties. The same is true about the hypostases. But let us examine the relationship of nature or hypostasis with natural or hypostatic (accidental) properties respectively.

The properties are given names by the things to which they refer. They are characterized as *natural* or *constituent*<sup>325</sup> when connected with nature and *hypostatic* or *ἐπουσιώδη*, *unessential* that is *symbebekota*, accidents when connected with the hypostases.<sup>326</sup> In the case of nature, the communion of the opposite natural properties is unattainable as:

“every thing, through which a species differs from other species and an essence from another essence, is called essential and natural... difference and quality, and natural property and property of nature”.

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Monophysites that “εἰ μερικὴν καὶ ἰδικὴν οὐσίαν τοῦ λόγου φατὲ καὶ ταῦτόν φύσιν καὶ ὑπόστασιν, δείξατε ἡμῖν τινα τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων τρεῖς φύσεις ἢ οὐσίας ἐπὶ τῆς ἁγίας τριάδος εἰπόντα”.

<sup>325</sup> ‘Συστατικά’. According to G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 1349 *συστατικός* means ‘constituent’. See also Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 82 (δ’)ιβ’:14-18.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, lines:20-25. For John’s dependence on this point from the previous centuries of philosophical and theological thought see *ibid.*

A similar position has validity for the hypostasis as

“every thing, through which, a hypostasis differs from another hypostasis of the same species and a consubstantial hypostasis, is called unessential difference and quality, and also hypostatic property and characteristic property; this is the accident”.<sup>327</sup>

So the properties [along with the terms ‘ποιότητα’, *quality* and ‘διαφορά’, *difference*]<sup>328</sup> describe and distinguish a nature or hypostasis from others. Concerning the natural properties in particular, we can establish from this passage not only their important role in keeping a certain nature intact, but also that they are a completely different reality from the accidental properties.

In fact, following the way of the theologians of the age of Justinian, notably the two Leontii, John applied to Christology the distinction between physis as generic and hypostasis as individual, and assigned the natural properties to natures and the characteristic properties to hypostasis. That means that, having in mind the previous analysis, the individualization of a nature is

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<sup>327</sup> Kotter I, *Instit.*, p. 22 (δ'): 1-3 and 12-15, “πᾶν πρᾶγμα, ὅτινι διαφέρει εἶδος ἑτέρου εἶδους καὶ οὐσία ἑτέρας οὐσίας, οὐσιώδης καὶ φυσικὴ καὶ συστατικὴ λέγεται διαφορὰ καὶ ποιότης καὶ φυσικὸν ἰδίωμα καὶ ἰδίωμα φύσεως... Πᾶν δὲ πρᾶγμα, ἐν ᾧ διαφέρει ὑπόστασις τῆς ὁμοειδοῦς καὶ ὁμοουσίου ὑποστάσεως, λέγεται ἐπουσιώδης διαφορὰ καὶ ποιότης καὶ ὑποστατικὸν ἰδίωμα καὶ χαρακτηριστικὸν ἰδίωμα, τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ συμβεβηκός”.

<sup>328</sup> See Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 81 (δ') ιβ': 2-8. “Διαφορὰ καὶ ποιότης καὶ ἰδίωμα κατὰ μὲν τὸ ὑποκείμενον ἐν εἰσιν, κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἐνέργειαν ἕτερον καὶ ἕτερον· ἡ γὰρ λογικότης λέγεται καὶ ποιότης τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ ἰδίωμα καὶ διαφορὰ, ἀλλὰ καθ' ἕτερον καὶ ἕτερον τρόπον. Ὡς μὲν γὰρ ποιοῦσα καὶ οἶονεὶ μορφοῦσα τὴν οὐσίαν λέγεται ποιότης, εἶτα ὡς ἰδία γενομένη ταύτης τῆς οὐσίας λέγεται ἰδίωμα”.



expressed by the fact that a nature with its natural properties exists in a hypostasis where the characteristic properties are assigned. So it is not necessary to speak of a nature as an individual or accidental differentiation from the other consubstantial beings (here we observe the distinction between the individuating characteristics of each nature from the natures they individuate and the assignation of these characteristics to the hypostasis). Instead we can speak of the observation of this nature in the accidental differentiation of a hypostasis from the other consubstantial hypostases. John knows very well that this situation can explain the Dyophysite understanding of Christ's hypostasis and, furthermore, it helps him to refute the identification between hypostasis and physis.

Another feature of John's philosophical understanding of terminology, which is in step with what we have already said, is his argument that either essence or accident or natural properties exist because there is a hypostasis.<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> We read in *ibid.*, p. 108 (κστ') μγ':8-23, "Χρὴ γὰρ γινώσκειν, ὥς οὐτε οὐσία ἀνείδεος ὑφέστηκε καθ' ἑαυτὴν οὐδὲ διαφορὰ οὐσιώδης οὐτε εἶδος οὐτε συμβεβηκός, ἀλλὰ μόναι αἱ ὑποστάσεις ἦτοι τὰ ἄτομα καὶ ἐν αὐτοῖς αἱ τε οὐσίαι καὶ αἱ οὐσιώδεις διαφοραί, τὰ τε εἶδη καὶ τὰ συμβεβηκότα θεωροῦνται. Καὶ ἡ μὲν ἀπλή οὐσία ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὑποστάσεσιν ὡσαύτως θεωρεῖται... Αἱ δὲ οὐσιώδεις διαφοραί... ἐν ταῖς ἐκάστου εἰδικωτάτου εἶδους ὑποστάσεσιν αἱ αὐταὶ συνάπτουσαι μὲν αὐτὰς ἀλλήλαις τῷ λόγῳ τῆς οὐσίας, χωρίζουσαι δὲ αὐτὰς ἐκ τῶν ἑτεροειδῶν ὑποστάσεων. Ὁμοίως καὶ τὰ συμβεβηκότα ἐν αὐταῖς ἦτοι ταῖς ὑποστάσεσιν θεωροῦνται χωρίζοντα ἐκάστην ὑπόστασιν ἐκ τῶν ὁμοειδῶν ὑποστάσεων. Διὸ καὶ τὸ ἄτομον κυρίως τὸ τῆς ὑποστάσεως ἐκκληρώσατο ὄνομα· ἐν αὐτῇ γὰρ ἡ οὐσία ἐνεργεῖα ὑφίσταται προσλαβοῦσα τὰ συμβεβηκότα". This passage offers another interesting definition about accidents. For John nature exists in reality only in a hypostasis with assumed accidents. See also Kotter IV, *Volunt.*, p. 180 (5):21-34.



More precisely natural properties which create<sup>330</sup> and distinguish a nature from another, are observed with their natures in a hypostasis, otherwise they are considered in thought. In this perspective the real existence of the natures and at the same time their unconfused observation in a hypostasis means that the natural properties of these natures remain unconfused in this hypostasis. This position seems to be at the centre of John's philosophical and theological thought. It is the safe criterion for any clarification of Christ's doctrine and the importance of the natural properties being unconfused in the hypostasis in order to keep the natures intact will be examined later.<sup>331</sup>

Beyond the theory, and from a practical perspective, we can see clearly the consequence of this clarified terminology in John's thought when he insists on two different natures in Christ and not one compound.<sup>332</sup> Divine nature is a different kind of species from that of human nature. The natural properties of Divinity remain unconfused and incommunicable from other kinds of natures, or rather, the most specific species. This means that if divine nature would receive

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<sup>330</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 122 (39):1, "τὰς φύσεις ἥτοι οὐσίας αἱ οὐσιώδεις συνιστῶσι διαφοραί". A similar passage in Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 143 ("Ἐτερον κεφ.):30-37. "Τὰ ὑπάλληλα γένη καὶ εἶδη εἰσὶν αἱ συστατικαὶ καὶ οὐσιώδεις καὶ φυσικαὶ διαφοραὶ καὶ ποιότητες. Αὗται γὰρ συνιστῶσιν τὰ εἰδικώτατα εἶδη· ἐκ γὰρ τοῦ γένους καὶ αὐτῶν συνίστανται τὰ εἰδικώτατα εἶδη... Οἱ πατέρες τὸ εἰδικώτατον εἶδος ἐκάλεσαν οὐσίαν... τὰ δὲ ἐκ τοῦ εἰδικωτάτου εἶδους διαιρούμενα... ἄτομον καὶ ὑπόστασιν καὶ πρόσωπον".

<sup>331</sup> See the interesting passage in *Jacob.*, Kotter IV, p. 122 (39):2-3. "Εἰ οὖν ἐκ θεότητος καὶ ἀνθρωπότητος μία φύσις συνέστηκεν, ἔσονται θεότης καὶ ἀνθρωπότης οὐ φύσεις, ἀλλ' οὐσιώδεις διαφοραί". Consequently when John speaks of natures, he does not identify them with their natural properties.

<sup>332</sup> Although we shall analyze John's arguments against Monophysitism, I considered it beneficial to make an allusion to this, in order to understand that terminology it is not used on its own by John, but only in supporting his theological thought.

addition or subtraction from its natural properties it would change to another nature different from itself. Similarly Christ's human nature is characterized as human because it has all the natural properties that all human hypostases have. In fact the observation of the same natural properties in the consubstantial hypostases define a nature as being perfect and predefine its existence as a separate and unconfused reality.<sup>333</sup> So the existence of opposite natural properties in one nature is incomprehensible for John.<sup>334</sup> For this reason, in Christ the two different natures are clearly distinguishable because of their natural differences. In essence John, following the philosophical and theological arguments of sixth century Christology, elaborates his thought on Christology from an anti-Monophysite perspective on both the distinction between hypostasis and nature and on the role of the natural differences.<sup>335</sup>

The accidents, the hypostatic properties, on the other hand, play a minor role as they do not save or destroy the *ousia* whether they exist or not. They simply distinguish the consubstantial hypostases and indicate Peter, Paul, this horse and so on.<sup>336</sup> So a nature is different from a hypostasis in view of their hypostatic or natural properties as well. This is characteristic of the example that John uses. Although the soul remains unconfused in its natural properties, it can exist in union with the body in a compound hypostasis and not a nature. While soul and body are distinguished through natural properties, their unique

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<sup>333</sup> See e.g. *Dial.*, Kotter I, p. 82 (δ')ιβ':16-20.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 139-40 (ν')ξζ':30-32, "ἐκ δύο δὲ φύσεων ἀποτελεσθῆναι μίαν φύσιν σύνθετον ἢ ἐκ δύο ὑποστάσεων μίαν ὑπόστασιν παντελῶς ἀδύνατον· διότι ἀδύνατον τὰς ἐναντίας οὐσιώδεις διαφορὰς ἐν μιᾷ φύσει συνυπάρξαι ἀλλήλαις".

<sup>335</sup> See e.g. *ibid.*, pp. 107-8 (κε')μβ':16-18.



compound human hypostasis differs from other consubstantial hypostases not in natural properties but in their accidents.<sup>337</sup>

What about the humanity of Christ and its accidental differentiation in the hypostasis of the divine Logos? We read in St John's *Exact Exposition*, chapter 55:

“Nature is regarded either abstractly as a matter of pure thought (for it has no independent existence): or commonly in all hypostases of the same species as their bond of union, and is then spoken of as nature viewed in species: or universally as the same, but with the addition of accidents, in one hypostasis, and is then spoken of as nature viewed in the individual, this being identical with nature viewed in species”.<sup>338</sup>

While in the case of Christ we read:

“God the Word Incarnate, therefore, did not assume the nature that is regarded as an abstraction in pure thought..., nor the nature viewed in

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<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109 (κζ')μδ':10-14.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 108-9 (κστ')μγ':14-21, “αἱ δὲ οὐσιώδεις διαφοραὶ ἄλλαι ἐν ταῖς ἀψύχοις καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἐμψύχοις ἕτεραι,...καὶ ἀπλῶς εἰπεῖν, ἐν ταῖς ἐκάστου εἰδικωτάτου εἵδους ὑποστάσεσιν αἱ αὐταὶ συνάπτουσαι μὲν αὐτάς ἀλλήλαις τῷ λόγῳ τῆς οὐσίας, χωρίζουσαι δὲ αὐτάς ἐκ τῶν ἑτεροειδῶν ὑποστάσεων. Ὁμοίως καὶ τὰ συμβεβηκότα ἐν αὐταῖς ἦτοι ταῖς ὑποστάσεσι θεωροῦνται χωρίζοντα ἐκάστην ὑπόστασιν ἐκ τῶν ὁμοειδῶν ὑποστάσεων”.

<sup>338</sup> Kotter II, *Expos.*, p. 131 (55):4-7. The translation from Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers, series 2, vol. ix, p. 54.



species... but the nature viewed in the individual, which is identical with that viewed in species".<sup>339</sup>

In speaking of Christ's natures we need to begin thinking of His hypostasis and from the position that hypostasis is nature plus accidents. Indeed, the existence of a human being is the result of the individualisation of generic nature through accidents. But the question at this point is: were there accidents in Christ? Christ is humanity plus divinity. His divine hypostasis is distinguished from the Father and the Holy Spirit not through accidents but, through its specific mode of existence. This is the reason the Church does not speak of three Gods within the Holy Trinity but, of one God with Three Hypostases.<sup>340</sup> What about the humanity of Christ? Because the hypostasis of the Logos preexists, then it is this Hypostasis that is the reason for the appearance of Christ's human nature and accidents. In any other case His humanity would be another, separate hypostasis from that of the Divine Logos and it would preexist as an individual nature and hypostasis.<sup>341</sup> The accidental differentiation of Christ's humanity in the hypostasis of the Logos from other human hypostases ensures that His humanity is real as other rational human beings.<sup>342</sup> But we cannot overlook the position that Christ is a unique species. That means that

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<sup>339</sup> Kotter II, *Expos.*, p. 131 (55):8-11. The translation from Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers, series 2, vol. ix, pp. 54-5.

<sup>340</sup> R. Cross, 'Individual Natures in the Christology of Leontius of Byzantium', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10:2 (2002), p. 251.

<sup>341</sup> Kotter II, *Expos.*, p. 131 (55):12-14.

since there are no other Christ(s), it is not necessary for Him to be distinguished through accidents.<sup>343</sup>

Consequently by clarifying the meaning of *physis*, *ousia*, *hypostasis*, *person*, natural and accidental *properties*, John explains the *mysterium Christi* overcoming the abstractness of understanding on terminology which created so much confusion between the Chalcedonians and their opponents. Divine nature is divine because it keeps its natural qualities incommunicable, and the same is true of human nature. Indeed, John would never agree with the Monophysite distinction between the unconfused natures of Christ as one nature because of the identification between hypostasis and nature, as it is reasonless.<sup>344</sup> Humanity and divinity are 'real' natures after the union because they and their natural properties are in a 'real' distinction in Christ's hypostasis. So John could not accept their distinction 'in thought'. Does it mean that John overlooks St Cyril and the seventh canon of the Fifth Ecumenical Council which speaks of the

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<sup>342</sup> For R. Cross, p. 252, "according to John, Christ's human nature, in so far as it includes accidents, is an individual". But his position is wrong as John does not locate the human accidents of Christ in human nature but in the common hypostasis of the two natures.

<sup>343</sup> We must also note that John does not offer an analytical exegesis on this subject. It seems to me that this is logical as it is in accordance with the whole patristic tradition and John's thought. John is interested in proving that Christ's humanity is as 'real' as His divinity. So it seems to be a matter of indifference in his thought that Christ's humanity in the hypostasis of the Logos is distinguished from other human beings through accidents (tall, fat, thin etc). Furthermore the unique species of Christ along with the position that the consideration of His humanity and divinity as "divided" in His hypostasis is impossible help John to avoid questions of this kind like the accidental distinction of Christ's humanity from other human beings.

<sup>344</sup> We shall see that this is the main difference between Monophysitism and Dyophysitism.



distinction of Christ's natures 'in thought'?<sup>345</sup> What does he believe the terms 'κατ' ἐπίνοιαν' and 'θεωρίαν' [in thought] mean?

The explanation of these terms in John's thought seems to be necessary as it will help us to understand more clearly John's accusations against the anti-Chalcedonians for this error.

For John the *epinoia* has a twofold meaning. The first is characterised as "mental speculation" which clarifies, for example, the knowledge we have from our senses which do not offer an analytical explanation. It explains and clarifies something that seems to be simple. The second meaning of *epinoia* which is "fiction" is characterized by John as *psile* [*epinoia*].<sup>346</sup> So when we refer to John's understanding of this term we comprehend that he accepts only the first kind of *epinoia* and not the second one, as the first definition refers to the union

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<sup>345</sup> See e.g. St Cyril's *Second letter to Succensus*, in L. R. Wickham, p. 98 and *Letter to Oualerianos of Iconium*, PG 77, 276B. For the Fifth Ecumenical Council see its seventh canon, ACO, vol. i, pt. 4, p. 242.

<sup>346</sup> *Dial. Kotter* I, p. 135 (μη')ξε': 84-97. "Τὴν ἐπίνοιαν ὁ ἀληθὴς λόγος διττὴν ἀποφαίνεται. Ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἐπέννοιά τις καὶ ἐπενθύμησις ἐστὶ τὴν ὁλοσχερῇ τῶν πραγμάτων καὶ ἀδιάρθρωτον ἐξαπλοῦσα καὶ διασαφοῦσα θεωρίαν καὶ γνῶσιν, ὥς τὸ αἰσθήσει δόξαν εἶναι ἀπλοῦν τῇ πολυπραγμοσύνῃ τοῦ νοῦ πολυμέρες τε καὶ ποικίλον ἀναφαίνεσθαι, οἷον ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἀπλοῦς φαινόμενος τῇ ἐπινόῃ διπλοῦς κατανοεῖται, ἐκ ψυχῆς τε καὶ σώματος συγκείμενος, ἡ δὲ ἀνάπλασμα διανοίας τυγχάνει κατὰ συμπλοκὴν αἰσθήσεως τε καὶ φαντασίας ἐκ τῶν ὄντων τὰ μηδαμῶς ὄντα συντιθεῖσα καὶ δοξάζουσα. Τοιαύτη δὲ ἐστὶν ἡ τῶν ἱποκενταύρων... μυθοπλαστία. Τῶν γὰρ ὄλων τὰ μέρη λαμβάνουσα καὶ ἐκ τῶν μερῶν ἄλλο τι συντιθεῖσα κατὰ πολλὴν ἐξουσίαν τε καὶ εὐκολίαν τὰ μηδαμῶς ἐν ὑποστάσει τε καὶ οὐσίᾳ θεωρούμενα ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ καὶ τοῖς λόγοις ἀνέπλασεν, εἴτα καὶ ταῖς ὕλαις διατυπουμένη ἀνειδωλοποίησεν· αὕτη δὲ λέγεται ψιλὴ ἐπίνοια". This passage is almost a facsimile of Leontius' passages. See e.g. *Fragm.* PG 86, 2013. In essence John follows Leontius of Byzantium step by step in his analysis of terminology.



of real beings.<sup>347</sup> And for John divinity and humanity are two separate and unconfused realities in Christ's hypostasis. Indeed John does not use the term *epinoia* to characterize the natures of Christ in His hypostasis but simply their union.<sup>348</sup> So, we should consider that John understands both Cyril's and the

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<sup>347</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 120 (29):1- 19. John accuses the anti-Chalcedonians "Εἰ δὲ κατ' ἐπίνοιαν τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὰς φύσεις λέγετε καὶ θεωρίαν, εἶπατε ἡμῖν... Ἡ ἐπίνοια ἀληθῶν καὶ ὄντων πραγμάτων ἐστίν, οἶονεὶ τὰ τῇ αἰσθήσει δοκοῦντα ἀπλῶ τῇ νοήσει διαρθροῦσα καὶ διακρίνουσα..., ἡ διανοίας ἀνάπλασμα κατὰ συμπλοκὴν αἰσθήσεως τε καὶ φαντασίας ἐκ τῶν ὄντων τὰ μηδαμῶς ὄντα συντιθεῖσα καὶ ἀναπλάττουσα... Εἰ μὲν οὖν τὸ δεύτερον, φαντασία καὶ φενακισμὸς τὸ τῆς οἰκονομίας μυστήριον· εἰ δὲ τὸ πρότερον, δύο δὲ κατ' ἐπίνοιαν τὰς φύσεις θεωρεῖτε—ὄντων δὲ ἡ θεωρία—, τί τὰ ὄντα μὴ ἀριθμεῖτε, ὅπου γε οἱ πατέρες οἱ ἅγιοι οὐ τὰς φύσεις, τὴν δὲ τούτων διάστασιν κατ' ἐπίνοιαν εἶπον; «Ἦνίκα γὰρ αἱ φύσεις», φησί, «διίστανται ταῖς ἐπινοίαις.» Εἰ οὖν τῇ ἐπινοίᾳ αἱ φύσεις διίστανται, δῆλον, ὥς οὐκ ἐνεργεῖα οὐδὲ ὑπάρξει τὸ ἐπινοίᾳ· εἰ γὰρ τὸ ἐπινοίᾳ ὑπάρξει, ἐπινοίᾳ δὲ ὁ πατήρ τὴν διάστασιν ἔφη, ἐνεργεῖα καὶ ὑπάρξει φησὶν τὴν διάστασιν, ὅπερ ἀμήχανον. Ὑμεῖς τοιγαροῦν ἐπινοίᾳ τὴν θεότητα καὶ τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ μετὰ τὴν ἔνωσιν λέγοντες, οὐκ ἐνεργεῖα οὐδὲ πράγματι ταύτας ὁμολογεῖτε". Here we must note for the Chalcedonians that the 'ἐπίνοια ἀληθῶν καὶ ὄντων πραγμάτων' refers only to the division of natures and it is not connected with the hypostases by any means. See Leontius of Byzantium, *Adversus Argumenta Seviri*, PG 86, 1932-3. The above accusation is not a theoretical argument by John. It is what the anti-Chalcedonians and Severus in particular believe about the distinction of humanity and divinity in Christ using the terms 'κατ' ἐπίνοιαν' and 'θεωρίαν'. See pp. 183-4, n. 464.

<sup>348</sup> See the above note. John refers to Gregory Nazianzen (according to Kotter, John borrows this passage from *Or.* 30, 8:120,5, see Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 120) overlooking Cyril's use of 'θεωρία'. Indeed John in his *opera polemica* never uses or explains Cyril's use of this term. Instead he prefers to make reference to the Cappadocian theologian Gregory Nazianzen. See also the interesting remarks of A. Louth in his book, *St John Damascene, Tradition and Originality*, p. 111. It could be possible that John follows Theodore of Raithu's *Proparaskeuê* on this point without replicating Theodore's words. Louth supported his thought on B. Fraigneau-Julien's article 'Un Traité anonyme de la sainte Trinité attribué à saint Cyrille d'Alexandrie', *Recherches de science religieuse* 49 (1961), p. 391, n. 109. He says that "This seems to be the context of another source for John's use of this distinction, suggested by Fraigneau-Julien: namely, the *Proparaskeuê* of Theodore of Raithu, where in what seems to be a Christological context, Theodore makes the same distinction using slightly different

Fifth Ecumenical Council's use of this term from this perspective, otherwise he would be inconsistent to himself. Furthermore, when John accuses Monophysitism of the 'in thought' distinction of the two natures of Christ, he considers that it speaks of the second definition of this term.<sup>349</sup>

Another theme related to Christological doctrine are the definitions of the terms *Divinity, Humanity, Christ, Human, God* which, as we comprehend from John's explanatory effort and comments, seem to need clarification in order to proceed to the explanation of Dyophysite thought. However, it is outstanding that these terms are analyzed, in contrast to the former (terms), almost exclusively in the theological works and not in *Dialectica*. All of them are classified in the categories of 'generic' and 'individual' as some of them refer to hypostasis while others to nature. In fact, for John, these terms receive their meanings according to what they refer, either to hypostasis or nature but in a more specific way, as they are directly connected with the description of Christ's mystery. The Damascene himself confesses, in the analysis of divinity and humanity, that all Church Fathers interpret the *Mysterium Christi* in these terms.<sup>350</sup> More precisely, the clarification of the above terminology would help John not only to reject the Monophysite understanding of the anthropological model which is used to explain the union of Christ's nature but also to speak in

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terminology, distinguishing between being united in operation and reality (*ergōi kai pragmati*) and divided in thought (*epinoiāi*), and vice versa".

<sup>349</sup> When we refer to John's accusations against the Monophysite 'in thought' distinction of Christ's natures, we need to have in mind the afore-mentioned passages.

<sup>350</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 115 (14):1-3, "ἡμολόγηται τοίνυν παρ' ἅπασιν τοῖς ἁγίοις πατράσιν ἐκ θεότητος καὶ ἀνθρωπότητος γεγενῆσθαι τὴν ἑνωσιν καὶ τὸν Χριστὸν ἐν θεότητι τέλειον καὶ τέλειον καὶ ἀνελλιπὴ τὸν αὐτὸν ἐν ἀνθρωπότητι".



the most specific and concrete language on terminology which is used in Christology.

John is definite. Both divinity and humanity declare nature or essence.<sup>351</sup> They cannot receive the definitions of hypostasis.<sup>352</sup> If so, it is not possible that there should only be one compound nature in Christ as

“if one nature has been constituted out of divinity and humanity, divinity and humanity will not be natures but essential differences”.<sup>353</sup>

According to this passage both divinity and humanity are not simply natural properties or qualities but ‘*ἄλλο*’, *something else* and ‘*ἄλλο*’, *something else*, two different natures with the result that they remain unconfused with each other.<sup>354</sup> Because of this distinction, Christ’s humanity and divinity keep their created and uncreated reality uncompounded.

We can consider a similar position for the terms *human* and *God* that are used frequently by John. These terms describe natures like divinity and humanity.<sup>355</sup> But, is there any difference between these terms? In the texts all

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<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*, line 6.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 115-6, lines 6-12.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122 (39):1-3.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116 (15):1-6. See also G. D. Dragas, ‘Exchange or Communication of properties and deification: *Antidosis* or *Communicatio Idiomatum* and *Theosis*’, *GOTR* 43:1-4 (1998), p. 389.

<sup>355</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 132 (70):5-6, “τὸ δὲ θεὸς ὄνομα δηλωτικὸν οὐσίας ἐστίν, ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ τὸ ἄνθρωπος”. Here we must note that St John mentions in *On Faith against the Nestorians*, the possibility for a hypostasis to be characterized by the name ‘God’. However, on this occasion, it is not a literal but an inexact characterization or identification,



four characterize natures. However, in St John's thinking, it seems that these names can have a slight difference. The name God designates nature because it characterizes all the hypostases of the Holy Trinity that participate in the one nature, namely the divinity. God is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. None of Them, however, is a divinity. The same applies to the name 'human being'.<sup>356</sup> This name characterizes the type of all human beings who are called 'ἄνθρωποι', *humans* (not *ἡνθρωπότητες*) because they participate in humanity. For the latter case St John says that

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if we use Damascene's vocabulary. John himself claims, Kotter IV, *Fides*, p. 252 (50):1-6, "τὸ θεὸς ὄνομα ποτὲ μὲν ἐπὶ τῆς θείας φύσεως τάσσεται, ὡς λέγομεν εἰς θεός, τουτέστι μία θεότης, ποτὲ δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ ὑποστάσεως, ὡς λέγομεν· Θεὸς ὁ πατήρ, θεὸς ὁ υἱός, θεὸς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, καὶ τοῦτο ἐκ τῆς φύσεως παρονομάζομεν, ὁμοίως καὶ τὸ θεός. Λέγομεν οὖν· Ἄλλο θεὸς καὶ ἄλλο ἄνθρωπος, τουτέστιν ἄλλη φύσις θεότητος καὶ ἄλλη ἡνθρωπότητος".

<sup>356</sup> A similar analysis of the same terms we observe in John's works *Against the Nestorians*. In his treatise *On Faith against the Nestorians*, Kotter IV, pp. 241-2 (12-18), the terms *divinity* and *humanity* refer to nature inasmuch as the properties that characterize them are natural and not hypostatic (see *ibid.*, p. 243 (19):16-18, "οὔτε οὖν τὰ θεῖα ὑπόστασιν ἀφορίζουσιν οὔτε τὰ ἡνθρώπινα, ἀλλὰ φύσιν καὶ φύσιν σημαίνουν"). His interest is focused on the fact that divinity declares the nature and not the hypostasis (*ibid.*, p. 242 (18):11) and the word humanity expresses the same thing. Concerning the terms *God* and *human*, St John says that they, also, refer to essence and not to hypostasis, although it is sometimes possible for that to denote hypostasis (see *ibid.*, p. 241 (13):1-3. The usage of this term referring to hypostasis is more clear in Kotter II, *Expos.* p. 116 (48):7-13). Even though John tries to prove this position, in his treatises there is no trace of his having accused the Nestorians of it. It seems to be an attempt to give the original meaning of the terms divinity and humanity in order to prove the real existence of both of them in the one hypostasis of Christ, although the exact meaning of both terms must not be viewed separately from the general position of Nestorian Christology that hypostasis and nature are identical.

“still, Peter, Paul, John and the rest of human individuals are hypostases.

The species that contains them is humanity”,<sup>357</sup>

while for the former case and especially for the relation between God and divinity we read:

“our Lord Jesus Christ Who is composed of divinity and humanity is perfect in divinity and humanity, and He is and is called God and man, and [He is] entirely God and entirely man, something we cannot find in a compound nature”.<sup>358</sup>

Because Christ is composed *ἐκ* divinity and humanity, He is perfect *ἐν* His divinity and humanity. So He is called God and Man.<sup>359</sup> What, then, does the name *Christ* mean and what is its relation with the name *Son*? The names Christ and Son are used, in contrast to previous terms, to designate hypostasis. John says for Christ that He is not nature but hypostasis<sup>360</sup> while for the Son that “He is not nature that is essence, but hypostasis”.<sup>361</sup> The Son of God became the Son of the Virgin Mary. Both natures exist in the one compound hypostasis of

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<sup>357</sup> Kotter I, *Instit.*, p. 24 (ζ'):49-50, “ἔτι ὑποστάσεις εἰσὶ Πέτρος, Παῦλος, Ἰωάννης καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ κατὰ μέρος ἄνθρωποι· περιεκτικὸν δὲ αὐτῶν εἶδος ἡ ἀνθρωπότης”.

<sup>358</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 119 (24):11-14, “ὁ δὲ κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἐκ θεότητος ὦν καὶ ἀνθρωπότητος ἐν θεότητί τέ ἐστι καὶ ἐν ἀνθρωπότητι τέλειος, καὶ θεὸς καὶ ἄνθρωπος ἐστι τε καὶ λέγεται, καὶ ὁλος θεὸς καὶ ὁλος ἄνθρωπος, ὅπερ ἐπὶ τῆς συνθέτου φύσεως οὐκ ἔστιν εὐρεῖν”.

<sup>359</sup> The same in *ibid.*, p. 139 (81):38-43.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128 (54):3.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152 (125):6, “οὐ γὰρ φύσις ἦτοι οὐσία ὁ υἱός, ἀλλ' ὑπόστασις”.



Christ. So after the incarnation there exists only one Son with a compound hypostasis of two distinguishable natures.<sup>362</sup> We can understand from all this that it is essential in St John's thought for all these terms referring to Christ's hypostasis to keep the most precise meaning. At the same time, we understand John's logic. Everything relates to a dependent rationalization. Humanity is connected to nature which denotes the generic which is always incommunicable to its natural properties. The same for divinity (or God). Similarly, Christ characterizes hypostasis as the individual in which the two natures are observed.

In conclusion we could say that the clarification of terminology was necessary since the use of philosophical or Patristic terminology by the Christological parties was sufficiently confused as we can understand from John's philosophy and theology. This is also discernable from the Monophysite claim of the Patristic confirmation of its Christological teaching. Both Orthodox and Monophysites invoked the same Fathers and both of them speak of Christ's hypostasis in a completely different way. However, John claims for himself a kind of terminology which is not only taken from Church Fathers but also clarified and understood in the thought of these Fathers themselves.<sup>363</sup> This kind of reflection is necessary for all Christological parties. In this way, they can perceive what the Fathers tried to describe when using terms and what these terms meant in their thought. For the Damascene it is incomprehensible for there to be any isolation of the terms from the general thinking of the Fathers. In any

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<sup>362</sup> At this point we can find the reason, according to the Palestinian monk, why the second Person of the Holy Trinity took flesh and became man. Only the Son could become Son again (*Ibid.*, p. 136 (79):4-10).

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 125-6 (52):1-11.



other case, the terms lose their meaning and become simple words expressing sometimes something completely different from what a Father wanted to say. It is characteristic that in the formula 'one incarnate nature of God the Logos', John recognizes nothing other than the misunderstanding of St Athanasius and St Cyril's writings by the Monophysites.<sup>364</sup> This isolation led the Monophysites to misunderstand the term *physis* in the *mia-physis* formula.

In any case, for John, the positions of the Fathers must be the key to all ways of thinking in Christological doctrine. We are obliged for all these reasons to characterize John's philosophical terminology above all as Patristic, which is obvious not only through the synthetic ability of St John as found in the work *Pege Gnoseos*, and in particular *Dialectica* but also from his confession in the letter *On the Trisagion* that we must obey the Fathers whose words are law.<sup>365</sup>

Consequently it is easily understandable why the Damascene, as he unfolds the teaching of the Orthodox Church, speaks of the union of Christ's natures in the hypostasis of the Logos, subordinating philosophical terms to the

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<sup>364</sup> The kind of understanding of St Cyril's formula by John is very interesting. In *ibid.*, p. 152 (125):2-11, he says: "Οὐκ εἶπε (St Cyril) γάρ, 'μετὰ μέντοι τὴν ἔνωσιν' οὐχ ὁμολογοῦμεν τὰς φύσεις, ἀλλ' 'οὐ διαιροῦμεν'. δύο γὰρ τὰς φύσεις εἶναι φησιν. "Ἐνα δὲ υἱὸν καὶ Χριστὸν καὶ κύριον', καὶ εἰπὼν 'ἕνα φαμέν υἱὸν' ἐπήγαγε 'καὶ μίαν φύσιν τοῦ λόγου σεσαρκωμένην', φύσιν ἐνταῦθα τὴν ὑπόστασιν ὀνομάσας. Οὐ γὰρ φύσις ἦτοι οὐσία ὁ υἱός, ἀλλ' ὑπόστασις. Εἰ γὰρ φύσις ὁ υἱός, οὐκ ἔστι δὲ ὁ πατὴρ υἱός, οὐδὲ τῆς αὐτῆς ἔστι τῷ υἱῷ φύσεως· ὁμοῦ καὶ τῆς σαρκὸς ἐνδείκνυται τὴν φύσιν πρὸς τὸν αὐτὸν Σούκενσον γράφων· ὥστε, εἰ καὶ καθ' ὑμᾶς οὐσίαν ἐνταῦθα τὴν φύσιν φησίν, εἰσκομίζει καὶ τὴν τῆς σαρκὸς φύσιν διὰ τοῦ εἰπεῖν «σεσαρκωμένην». We shall analyze the formula 'one incarnate nature of God the Logos' later.

<sup>365</sup> Kotter IV, *Trisag.*, p. 308 (3):1, "ὦν νόμος ὁ λόγος".

spiritual experience of Church authors in the description of Christological doctrine.<sup>366</sup>

## *II. 'Enhypostatos' and its crucial role in St John's theological thought.*

### **IIa. Overview**

Beyond the two categories of 'generic' and 'individual', in which philosophical terms are classified, there is in Christology in general and St John's theology in particular,<sup>367</sup> one more term that would be classified in another category. This term plays the distinctive role of characterizing a nature as 'real' in Christ's doctrine. This is very essential if we just ponder on whether John means a term to should receive the meaning of 'real'. From the previous analysis of terminology we understand that a 'real' nature or hypostasis means an 'unconfused' reality. In the case of nature, it also denotes the necessity for all properties to be unconfused. A nature is 'real' when it does not receive addition or subtraction to its natural properties. John's insistence on characterizing Christ's natures as *enhypostatoi* but also his effort to explain that every nature in every mode of its existence in a hypostasis is *enhypostatos* become

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<sup>366</sup> This is why he does not subordinate the Person of Christ to philosophical terminology and predefined theorems, an accusation brought by St John against the Monophysites when he considered the negative consequences of the Monophysite Christological positions, see Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, pp. 113-4 (10):9-14.

<sup>367</sup> See J. Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987), p. 155; N. Chitescu, 'The Christology of St John Damascene', p. 314.



understandable.<sup>368</sup> In fact, *enhypostatos* having the meaning of 'real' is a kind of formula which determines a nature as an "existing reality with the necessity for its own properties to be unconfused". If so, this term becomes a basis for an agreement or disagreement with the Monophysites on the real presence of two *ousiai* in Christ as it does not permit any acceptance of the distinction of Christ's natures in one nature rather than in His one hypostasis as the Monophysites claim. As this is the result of the identification between hypostasis and nature, the proof that nature is real (*enhypostatos*) as a concrete reality lead to the refutation of the identification. It seems that John has found another method of discussion with the Monophysites, beyond the disputations over *physis*, based on the analysis of what should be called *enhypostatos*. This is, to the best of my knowledge the specific reason for John's frequent use of *enhypostatos* in his polemical works against Monophysitism. Consequently a detailed analysis of this term is necessary in order to comprehend its importance

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<sup>368</sup> The term *enhypostatos* is used mainly in St John's work either against the Monophysites (*Against the Jacobites*) or to Orthodox on Monophysitism (see *Against the Akephaloi* and *Dialectica*) in contrast to Leontius who uses it against both Nestorianism and Monophysitism. There is only one occasion when John uses this term in his treatises against the Nestorians. It is in Kotter IV, *Nestor.*, p. 265 (2):14-18, "οὕτω καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ὑπόστασις ὢν μία τῶν τῆς θεότητος ὑποστάσεων πᾶσάν τε τὴν τῆς θεότητος φύσιν ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἔχων ἀνελλιπῆ, προσελάβετο ἐκ τῆς ἁγίας παρθένου σάρκα ἐνυπόστατον, οὐχ ὑπόστασιν, ἐν αὐτῷ δὲ μᾶλλον ὑποστᾶσαν...". As an explanation of John's refusal to make much use of this term against this Christological heresy as he does in the case of Monophysitism, we could say, that this is due to what the term signifies. It means 'real', 'existing'. What St John tried to prove to the Monophysites was the *reality* of the existence of both natures in Christ, as according to the Monophysite Christological teaching, after the incarnation, there was one essence and one hypostasis in Christ. In contrast, against the Nestorians this term does not seem to be so important, as they do not dispute the reality of Christ's natures but their real union in Christ's hypostasis.



in St John Damascene's dialogical works with both the Monophysite party and the Orthodox on Monophysitism.

In the patristic tradition of the Church the first use of this term is observed initially in Trinitarian doctrine<sup>369</sup>. In a later era the same term is used by Leontius of Byzantium on a Christological level.<sup>370</sup> Since then this term has been utilized by many Fathers for the description of the mystery of the Incarnation.

Before we proceed to the analysis of John's text which refer to *enhypostatos* in the frames of Christology, we should study, very briefly, its use by John in the Trinitarian doctrine, as the Damascene like all the Fathers does not confine the use of *enhypostatos* only to Christology, but also utilizes it in a trinitarian context from which it was adopted in order to assist the clarification of Christological doctrine.

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<sup>369</sup> E.g. St Basil the Great, *De Spiritu*, PG 29, 772D. There is also a number of passages in St John Chrysostom, Eusebius etc.

<sup>370</sup> U.M. Lang, 'Anhypostatos-Enhypostatos: Church Fathers, Protestant Orthodoxy and Karl Barth', *JTS* 49 (1998), p. 632.

I Ib. The Trinitarian use of enhypostatos in the works of St John Damascene - the hypostasis is enhypostatos.

In all Trinitarian passages, except one,<sup>371</sup> the references to *enhypostatos* are connected with the hypostasis. The Logos or the Holy Spirit are *enhypostatoi*.<sup>372</sup> As long as these two Hypostases are *enhypostatoi*, then They are real without the hypostasis of either the Logos or the Holy Spirit being undermined.<sup>373</sup> The use of *enhypostatos* in a Trinitarian context is somehow different from its use on a Christological level where the natures of Christ are characterized *enhypostatoi*, although the term itself is constantly used in Triadology, with the meaning of that which is 'real', that is 'having (divine) reality as a hypostasis',<sup>374</sup> as for example in the passage from the *Expos.* (8):18-7. The hypostasis of the Holy Spirit is:

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<sup>371</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 115 (12):4-6, "τὴν τε γὰρ οὐσίαν τῆς ἁγίας θεότητος ἐνυπόστατον ἴσμεν (ἐν ταῖς τρισὶ γὰρ ἐστὶν ὑποστάσεσι) καὶ ἐκάστην τῶν ὑποστάσεων ὡσαύτως ἐνούσιον (ἐν τῇ οὐσίᾳ γὰρ αὐταὶ τελοῦσι τῆς ἁγίας θεότητος)".

<sup>372</sup> U.M. Lang, p. 635.

<sup>373</sup> The only hypostases that are characterized as *enhypostatoi* are the Logos and the Holy Spirit. This emerges in the patristic tradition before the era of St John, e.g. in St Basil the Great, St Athanasius, and others. The reality of the Father as God has not been disputed by any of the Trinitarian heretical parties e.g. Arians and Pneumatomachi. Consequently what needed to be established was the divinity of the Logos and the Holy Spirit. The characterization of these two Persons as *enhypostatoi* is due to their participation in the divine nature, in the sense that They are consubstantial with the Father. According to J. Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom*, p. 88, "in Trinitarian usage 'enhypostaton' implied that the divine *ousia* could not be thought of apart from the three hypostases".

<sup>374</sup> U.M. Lang, p. 652.

“*enhypostatos*, namely existing in its own proper and peculiar hypostasis, inseparable and indivisible from the Father and the Son, and possessing all the qualities that the Father and the Son possess, save that of not being begotten or born”.<sup>375</sup>

Nowhere in St John’s works is the Father characterized *enhypostatos* as no one denied the Father’s divine nature.<sup>376</sup> But let us examine the Christological use of *enhypostatos* in the works of St John Damascene. Nowhere in St John’s writings does there seem to be a confusion between the Trinitarian and Christological use of *enhypostatos* and also the use of *enhypostatos* in Christology when applied to nature is much more important.

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<sup>375</sup> Kotter II, *Expos.*, (8):184-7, p. 26, The translation from Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers, series 2, vol. ix, p. 9

<sup>376</sup> We should note that the lack of characterization of the Father in the Holy Trinity as *enhypostatos* is a basic point in the thought of St John, and is a dependable way of recognizing the authenticity of John’s works. For instance based on this we could dispute the authenticity of the work *Sacra Parallela* as it characterizes the Father as *enhypostatos*, see PG 95, 1076B, “εἷς γὰρ ἐστὶ Θεὸς Πατὴρ ἐν Υἱῷ· Υἱὸς ἐν Πατρὶ σὺν ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι. Καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἅγιος ἐν ἁγίοις ἀναπαύμενος, Πατὴρ ὁ ἀληθινὸς ἐνυπόστατος, καὶ Υἱὸς ἀληθινὸς ἐνυπόστατος, καὶ Πνεῦμα ἀληθινὸν ἐνυπόστατον, τρία ὄντα μία θεότης, μία οὐσία...”.



IIC. The Christological use of 'enhypostatos' in the works of St John Damascene - the nature is enhypostatos.

The analysis of *enhypostatos* has provoked a number of queries as a host of scholars have dealt with it.<sup>377</sup> Apart from some beneficial results their analysis created a number of disagreements.

The vast majority of scholars agree that John derives *enhypostatos* from Leontius of Byzantium. Undoubtedly their comprehension of the term has many points in common.<sup>378</sup> Another point is that Kotter, in his critical edition, refers mainly to Leontius of Byzantium (and Ps-Leontius along with Maximus the Confessor) as the source of *enhypostatos* in the works of St John Damascene, without other references.<sup>379</sup> It could be that this term has not been used by the Church Fathers very frequently. But another question arises, because of

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<sup>377</sup> E.g. A. Grillmeier, B. E. Daley, the Protestant theology of Loofs and others.

<sup>378</sup> E.g. Ps-Leontius and John Damascene say that the two natures of Christ are *enhypostatoi*, see *De Sectis*, PG 86, 1241A and John Damascene, Kotter IV, *Aceph.*, p. 414 (6):11-5. We must also note that "the treatise *De Sectis*, attributed to Leontius of Byzantium by Loofs, is now generally acknowledged to have been written between 580 and 608 by an otherwise unknown author", U.M. Lang, pp. 644-5. Lang supports his opinion on M. van Esbroeck, 'La date et l'auteur du *De sectis* attribué à Léonce de Byzance'. See also M. Richard, 'Le traité "De Sectis" et Léonce de Byzance', *RHE* 35 (1939), pp. 695-723. So when we quote from the work *De Sectis* we refer to an unknown author called Ps-Leontius.

<sup>379</sup> St John Damascene in his writings seems to ignore the use of *enhypostatos* by John the Grammarian (6<sup>th</sup> century). According to A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, pt 2, p. 64. "On this account John the Grammarian is cautious in his application of the predicate *enhypostatos* to the humanity of Christ, because he does not want to represent it as an independent *hypostasis*;... Yet he wants to retain this concept for the human being of Christ, and indeed in its fundamental meaning 'to be real, actual', certainly not in the sense that it is *ousia*, and indeed not a *hypostasis*". This understanding of *enhypostatos* is completely different from John Damascene's account.

comparison with the work *Περὶ φύσεως ἀνθρώπου*, *On human nature* which is under the name of the monk Meletius in vol. 64 of Patrologia Migne.<sup>380</sup> From this text, which is almost a facsimile of what St John says in his *Dialectica* and *Against the Akephaloi*, we could say that we observe another similar text, with a more detailed analysis of what can be called *enhypostatos*, with reference to that of Leontius.<sup>381</sup> Is this true?

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<sup>380</sup> According to Ps-Meletius, PG 64, 1309BC, “ἐνυπόστατον δέ ἐστι κυρίως, ἢ τὸ καθ’ ἑαυτὸ μὲν μὴ ὑφιστάμενον· ὥσπερ τὸ εἶδος ἡμῶν, ἡγουν ἡ φύσις τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἐν ἰδίᾳ ὑποστάσει οὐ θεωρεῖται, ἀλλ’ ἐν Ἀθανασίῳ, ἢ Μελετίῳ, ἢ Κυριακῷ τῷ χρυσογράφῳ, καὶ ταῖς λοιπαῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὑποστάσεσιν, ἢ τὸ σὺν ἄλλῳ διαφόρῳ κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν εἰς ὄλην νοδὸς γένεσιν συντιθέμενον· καὶ μίαν ὑπόστασιν ἀποτελοῦν ὑπόστασιν σύνθετον· οἶον, ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκ ψυχῆς ἐστὶ καὶ σώματος συντιθέμενον, καὶ οὔτε ἡ ψυχὴ μόνῃ γίνεται ὑπόστασις, οὔτε τὸ σῶμα, ἀλλ’ ἐν ὑποστάτῳ· τὸ δὲ ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων ἀποτελούμενον ὑπόστασις ἀμφοτέρων· ἐπεὶ οὖν ὡς ὑπόστασις ἐξ ἐνυποστάτων τουτὶ τὸ νόημα συνείλεκται καὶ συντέθεται”.

<sup>381</sup> In the works of Leontius of Byzantium the use of *enhypostatos* in Christology is observed for the first time. It is certain that this term is derived from Trinitarian doctrine where it means ‘real’ and ‘existing’. It has the same meaning in both Leontius of Byzantium (U.M. Lang, p. 631) and Leontius of Jerusalem (A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christ Tradition*, vol. 2 part 2, p. 286). The transfer of this term from a Trinitarian level to a Christological one, is not a simple transfer of a term to characterize something as ‘real’. What is accomplished by Leontius of Byzantium is the transfer of the same term from the level of hypostasis (the Logos and the Holy Spirit are *enhypostatoi*) to the level of nature (the divinity and humanity of Christ are *enhypostatoi*). A more detailed analysis of the initial meaning of the term in the Christology of Leontius (the term in Leontius has the traditional meaning of ‘real’, a meaning that it had in the Greek language of that period [U.M. Lang, p. 631]) starts appearing in St Anastasius I of Sinai, *Hodeg.*, p. 38 (II,3):119-124 and p. 39, lines: 129-130. This development becomes a reality in the works of St Maximus the Confessor (*Opusc. theol. et polem.*, PG 91, 149C; 152D-153A; 261A-C; *Ep.* 15, 557D-560A; 560C) and is completed in the thought of St John Damascene. In none of them does the *enhypostatos* lose the meaning of ‘real’. Simply, these authors speak of the result of a nature to be *enhypostatos*, that is, its consideration (θεωρεῖσθαι) in a hypostasis, as what is considered in a hypostasis exists in reality.



In the same context we must examine the use of the *enhypostatos* in the works of St Maximus the Confessor. As we shall analyze later, John offers two categories of a list of what is call *enhypostatos*. These are the ‘non main’ and the ‘main’. Only two sub-categories of entities which belong to the ‘main’ category (according to John’s classification) and are styled *enhypostatos* in the work of John exist in St Maximus,<sup>382</sup> while another one, the third sub-category, the one which most elucidates the mystery of incarnation, is ignored.<sup>383</sup> Besides, we can see that although Ps-Meletius expresses a similarity with Maximus on what is called *enhypostatos*, his vocabulary and the explanatory example of Man are identical to John’s texts. Consequently we must suppose that Ps-Meletius and St John use a common source of reference.<sup>384</sup> But who is Ps-Meletius?

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<sup>382</sup> The categories of ‘main’ and ‘non main’ (which contain five sub-categories) [Kotter I, *Dial.*, pp. 109-10 chapter (κη')με'] plus one (there is in p. 165 (12):15-6, “ἐνυπόστατον ἐστὶ τὸ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ ὄν καὶ ἐν ὑπάρξει θεωρούμενον”) which are characterized *enhypostatos* do not all exist in the works of Ps-Leontius and Leontius of Byzantium. There are only: i) the ‘ἁπλῶς ὑπαρξιν’ and ii) the ‘καθ’ αὐτὸ ὑπόστασιν ἡγουν τὸ ἄτομον’, *De Sectis*, PG 86, 1240D and *Fragm.*, 2009D-2012A. John also uses another passage collected from Leontius which he uses more frequently in *Jacob*. It comes from *CNE*, PG 86, 1277D (a similar passage exists in Leontius’ *Fragmenta*, PG 86, 2004C), “Οὐκ ἐστὶ δὲ ταυτὸν ἐνυπόστατον, τουτέστι φύσις, καὶ ὑπόστασις. Τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἐνυπόστατον... οὐσίαν δηλοῖ, καὶ τὸ κοινὸν τοῦ εἶδους σημαίνει”. See also the passage “Πάλιν τὸ ἐνυπόστατον τὸ μὴ εἶναι αὐτὸ συμβεβηκὸς σημαίνει, ἀλλ’ ἐν ἑαυτῷ καὶ ἐν ἰδίᾳ ὑπάρξει θεωρούμενον”. The others do not come from Leontius. They are observed in St Maximus, *Ep.* 15, PG 91, 557D-560A.

<sup>383</sup> What is strange on this occasion is that although Maximus the Confessor is the most well informed Father of the patristic tradition, he ignores the most explanatory sentence of what is called *enhypostatos* in the doctrine of incarnation.

<sup>384</sup> The peculiarity of Ps-Meletius is that he makes reference, like St John Damascene, to what ‘mainly’ can receive the characterization of *enhypostatos*.



According to M. Geerard: "liber de natura hominis Meletii monachi (PG 64, 1076-1309) apographon est libri Nemesii".<sup>385</sup> But this statement is an obvious mistake in CPG by M. Geerard, although John replicates Nemesius of Emesa's thought in his works very frequently.<sup>386</sup> Beyond the disputation over the author of this work, we need to analyse the authenticity of the passage on *enhypostatos*. The passage itself seems not to belong to the authentic Ps-Meletius' text as it has the characteristics of a later addition. It appears in the text without any logical coherence to the rest of the work, as it follows after the analysis of 'energy' and 'will'. Regarding the passage we can consider three possibilities; first, Ps-Meletius is a composition from earlier than John's times, so John refers to it. Second, we can surmise that both John and Ps-Meletius use a similar source, and third, it is not impossible that Ps-Meletius has made use of John, rather than *vice versa*. In the first two cases, although John is encouraged to use the *enhypostatos* in Christology from Leontius' works, he explains the categories of entities which can be characterized *enhypostatos* in a way similar to Leontius of Byzantium and Maximus, using vocabulary and exact passages from another of his works. If we agree with the third possibility, it is John himself who makes a new composition of what can be *enhypostatos*. This possibility is also confirmed by the fact that neither Leontius nor Maximus quote any passage from Ps-Meletius on *enhypostatos*. This also testifies to the

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<sup>385</sup> CPG II, (Brepols-Turnhout, 1974) p. 282.

<sup>386</sup> John has been influenced by Nemesius in many parts of his works. See the article of K. Burkhard, 'Johannes von Damaskus Auszüge aus Nemesius', *Wiener Eranos: zur funfzigsten Versammlung deutsche Philologen und Schulmanner* (Graz, 1909), pp. 89-101. This article is devoted to John Damascene's dependence on Nemesius. However, Burkhard's article refers to loans from anthropology and psychology.

progress that has been made in the understanding of the *enhypostatos* from Leontius of Byzantium's epoch with regard to nature. However this progress is focused on the more detailed analysis of the relationship between the *physis* which is *enhypostatos* and the hypostasis in which nature 'is considered' as, in all Church Fathers, the term *enhypostatos* has the same meaning as that of 'real'.

In this context we could also note some grammatical phenomena which are very informative for an understanding of John's thought on this term.<sup>387</sup> The *enhypostatos* is never used to declare the 'mode of existence' of the two natures in the hypostasis of the Logos.<sup>388</sup> It is used mainly with the verb '*ἔστι*', *is*. In these sentences it should normally be translated as the predicate and not as the subject. It is also used with the verbs '*σημαίνει*', *signifies* or '*λέγεται*', *is called* or '*θεωρεῖται*', *is observed*. In this way John gives emphasis to what can be characterized 'real' (*enhypostatos*) (*ἔστιν*, *σημαίνει*, *λέγεται*) or to the consideration of this reality in a hypostasis (*θεωρεῖται*). The *enhypostatos* is never used having a locative force or to denote a mode of existence, rather it is

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<sup>387</sup> The works of St John testify to an excellent knowledge of the Greek language, see e.g. Kotter IV, *Trisag.*, p. 310 (4):9-25.

<sup>388</sup> The term is used only once as an adverb to express 'made', but it does not originate with St John. It is a quotation from the teaching of the heresy of the Messalians, who believed that the devil dwells in man. "*Ὅτι συνοικεῖ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐνυποστάτως ὁ σατανᾶς καὶ κατὰ πάντα κυριεύει αὐτοῦ*", Kotter IV, *Haeres.*, p. 42 (80):7-8. And in this case, it has the meaning of 'real' as we can understand from the interpretation of this passage, although it answers the question 'how'.



used as an adverb (ἐνυποστάτως). Besides, when the term is found in an indirect case, it is used adjectivally to denote that which is 'real'.<sup>389</sup>

Besides the term *enhypostatos* and 'έν', *en-* as a prefix which has an affirmative significance in contrast to *a-* (or *an-*), the so-called alpha privative in lexicons of classical and patristic terms, like G. W. H. Lampe, indicate something that is 'real' and 'existing'.<sup>390</sup> A similar position is considered in St Anastasius of Sinai's works. According to Anastasius:

<sup>389</sup> Kotter IV, *Trisag.*, p. 328 (25):24-26, "οὐ τρεῖς θεοὶ ὁ πατήρ καὶ ὁ υἱὸς καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, ἵνα μὴ πολυθεΐα νομισθῇ ἡ μοναρχία καὶ διαιρεθῇ ὁ εἷς καὶ ἀδιαίρετος θεὸς τῶν ἑαυτοῦ ἐνυποστάτων δυνάμεων".

<sup>390</sup> *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, pp. 485-6. We can mention some of them: *Subsistent, substantial, existent, being a hypostasis, having independent existence, substantive, real, concrete, actual, being the embodiment of, 'incarnate', being, existing in a hypostasis, subsistent in, established in the very nature*. B. E. Daley is opposed to any different meaning of the prefix *en*, especially to the F. Loof's monograph, *Leontius von Byzanz und die gleichnamigen Schriftsteller der griechischen*. He claims that "one of Loof's most influential mistakes was to take the word ἐνυπόστατον, as it appears in a celebrated passage near the beginning of Leontius' *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos*, not to mean 'hypostatic', 'having concrete existence', as in fact it does, but to mean 'hypostatized' or 'existent within' something else: to take the έν- in the term, in other words, as a localizing prefix rather than as simply the opposite of an alpha privative", "'A Richer Union': Leontius of Byzantium and the Relationship of Human and Divine in Christ", *SP* vol. XXIX, ed. E. A. Livingstone (Leuven: Peeters Press, 1993), p. 241. See also the article by the same author presented in the Ninth International Conference on Patristic Studies in Oxford in 1983, in A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Eastern Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 194. He says: "now the words ἐνυπόστατος and ἐνούσιος seem to me quite clearly to be examples of those Greek adjectival formations in which the prefix έν- is joined to a substantive to signify the possession of some thing or quality, as opposed to an *alpha privative*, which would signify its absence". For St John Damascene, Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 122 (λε')νβ':105-106, "ὅτε δὲ λέγομεν ἄνομος εἶ', τὸ ὃ ἄρνησιν σημαίνει ὡς τὸ οὐδ'".



“although, we call it [essence] *enhypostatos* [we do] not [call this essence] hypostasis. For that which exists is *enhypostatos*. Just as what does not have existence or being is *anhypostatos*, such as a dream, which is imaginary, without being or existence”.<sup>391</sup>

Consequently *enhypostatos* means actually/concretely existing.

But let us examine John’s understanding of this term. There are in John’s *Dialectica* a list of the series of categories of entities that can appropriately be styled *enhypostatos*. In the next stage, the solidification of what can be characterized as *enhypostatos* finds its practical expression in John’s Christological works where he speaks of the anatomy of the human being which is a compound of soul and body and of the reality of Christ’s natures.<sup>392</sup>

Proceeding to the analysis of the term, initially, it is necessary to refer to a general category. We could claim that this category, by virtue of its generality, contains all the other categories:

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<sup>391</sup> *Hodeg.*, p. 38 (II,3):119-124, “ἐνυπόστατον μέντοι αὐτήν [οὐσία] λέγομεν, οὐ μὴν ὑπόστασιν· τὸ γὰρ ἐνυπόστατον, τὸ ὑπάρχον ἐστίν, ὥσπερ ἀνυπόστατον πάλιν, τὸ μὴ ἔχον ὑπαρξιν ἥτοι οὐσίαν, οἷόν ἐστι τὸ ἐνύπνιον ἀνούσιον καὶ ἀνυπόστατον καὶ φαντασιῶδες”. See also Ch. Stamoulis, *Περὶ Φωτός, Προσωπικὲς ἢ φυσικὲς ἑνέργειες; Συμβολὴ στὴ σύγχρονη περὶ Ἀγίας Τριάδος προβληματικὴ στὸν Ὁρθόδοξο χῶρο*, Leimon Amfilaphis 4 (Thessaloniki: To Palimpsiston, 1999), p. 48.

<sup>392</sup> In the work *Against the Jacobites* in particular, we could consider the above mentioned scheme very seriously. Why Christ’s natures can be characterized *enhypostatoi* are explained in this way.

“That which exists in truth<sup>393</sup> and is beheld in reality is real/*enhypostatos*”.<sup>394</sup>

So whatever has no real existence or simply is *symbebekos*, accident,<sup>395</sup> is excluded from its characterization as *enhypostatos*.<sup>396</sup> On this occasion, only nature can be called *enhypostatos* as the only self-existent reality.<sup>397</sup>

<sup>393</sup> We read in Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 57 (α')δ':3-6, “τὸ ὄν κοινὸν ὀνομά ἐστι πάντων τῶν ὄντων. Τοῦτο οὖν τὸ ὄν τέμνεται εἰς οὐσίαν καὶ συμβεβηκός”. According to this passage all beings can receive the meaning of ‘ὄντος’. This ‘ὄν’ is both nature and accident. In another sentence St John says that the ‘ὄν’ is either a self-existent reality (αὐθύπαρκτον) or it has its existence in something else, namely it exists in another being - existence (*ibid.*, p. 77 (β')ι':100-20.). So the ‘ὄν’ is either a self-existent reality or *symbebekos*. But for St John, *ibid.*, p. 86 (ιζ'):4-5, “ἐν αὐτῇ (οὐσία) γὰρ ἔχουσι τὸ εἶναι καὶ ἐκτὸς αὐτῆς οὐχ ὑφίστανται (τὰ συμβεβηκότα)”. Consequently the ‘ὄν’ as nature and accidents, has as its basis the *ousia*.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165 (ιβ'):15-16, “ἐνυπόστατόν ἐστι τὸ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ ὄν καὶ ἐν ὑπάρξει θεωρούμενον”. In this category we can see the tradition of *enhypostaton* as it is recorded in the works of Leontius of Byzantium (‘real’ *Fragm.*, PG 86, 2009D) and St Maximus the Confessor (‘is considered’ *Opusc. theol. et polem.*, PG 91, 261BC). No text of St John Damascene on *enhypostatos* must be read independently from these two Fathers of the Church.

<sup>395</sup> Sometimes the accidents are characterized as *enhypostata* by John (Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 109 (κη')με':4-5), because *ibid.*, p. 86 (ιζ'):4-5, “ἐν αὐτῇ [οὐσία] γὰρ ἔχουσι [συμβεβηκότα] τὸ εἶναι καὶ ἐκτὸς αὐτῆς οὐχ ὑφίστανται”.

<sup>396</sup> E.g., in his work *Against the Jacobites* St John, quoting from Leontius of Byzantium (*CNE*, PG 86, 1277D or *Frag.* PG 86, 2004D), says that “ἡ μὲν ὑπόστασις πρόσωπον ὀρίζει τοῖς χαρακτηριστικοῖς ιδιώμασιν, τὸ δὲ ἐνυπόστατον τὴν οὐσίαν...τὸ δὲ γε ἐνυπόστατον τὸ μὴ εἶναι αὐτὸ συμβεβηκός, ὃ ἐν ἑτέρῳ ἔχει τὴν ὑπαρξιν”, Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 114 (11):13-16. In any case the real- existing has as opposition the unreal. The term is understood in the same way by Anastasius I of Sinai, Leontius of Byzantium, *CNE*, PG 86, 1277D, and Leontius of Jerusalem (A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christ Tradition*, vol. 2 part 2, p. 284). Maximus’ position is also very interesting. He says, *Opusc. theol. et polem.*, PG 91, 261B: “τὸ δὲ ἐνυπόστατον, τὸ μὴ ὄν καθ’ ἑαυτὸ συμβεβηκός δηλοῖ, ἀλλ’ ὅπερ ἐν ἑτέρῳ ἔχει τὸ εἶναι, καὶ οὐκ ἐν ἑαυτῷ θεωρεῖται, οὐδὲ ἐστι καθ’ ἑαυτὸ ὑφεστός,



There is a twofold classification for the other categories which can be styled *enhypostatos* in *Dialectica*. The first category does not receive the characterization of 'main'. Here the *enhypostatos* is connected with the thought of Ps-Leontius. The second is described by John as 'main'.<sup>398</sup>

This distinction would be rather a literal copy from the manuscript that John had in front of him than a personal valuation of what can be characterized *enhypostatos* if we agree that John replicates ps-Meletius' positions or their common source. In the same way John avoids this distinction in *Against the*

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ἄλλὰ περὶ τὴν ὑπόστασιν πάντοτε θεωρούμενον, ὥσπερ οἱ ποιότητες, αἱ τε οὐσιώδεις καὶ ἐπουσιώδεις καλούμεναι, αἵτινες οὐκ εἰσὶν οὐσία, οὐδὲ καθ' ἑαυτὰ, ἀλλ' ἐν τῇ οὐσίᾳ τυγχάνουσι, καὶ δίχα ταύτης τὸ εἶναι οὐκ ἔχουσιν". This passage is collected from Leontius of Byzantium (*CNE*, PG 86, 1277D). For the Maximian distinction of the two terms see *Opusc. theol. et polem.*, PG 91, 152A. John avoids characterizing the accident as *enhypostaton*. Only once in his texts is there a connection between *symbebekos* and *enhypostaton*, but he declares that even in this single case *symbebekos* "κυρίως οὐκ ἐνυπόστατόν ἐστιν ἀλλ' ἐτεροῦπόστατον", Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 109 (κη')με':4-5. John collects this passage from Leontius, see *Fragm.*, PG 86, 2009D.

<sup>397</sup> In fact the position of St John that the nature is *enhypostatos* is due to this fact as "οὐσία ἐστὶ πρᾶγμα αὐθύπαρκτον μὴ δεόμενον ἑτέρου πρὸς σύστασιν· καὶ πάλιν οὐσία ἐστὶ πᾶν, ὅτι περ αὐθύπόστατόν ἐστι καὶ μὴ ἐν ἑτέρῳ ἔχει τὸ εἶναι ἡγουν τὸ μὴ δι' ἄλλο ὄν μηδὲ ἐν ἑτέρῳ ἔχον τὴν ὑπαρξιν μηδὲ δεόμενον ἑτέρου πρὸς σύστασιν, ἀλλ' ἐν αὐτῷ ὄν, ἐν ᾧ καὶ τὸ συμβεβηκὸς ἔχει τὴν ὑπαρξιν", Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 106 (κγ')μ':2-6. As long as the Fathers, according to John, do not identify nature and hypostasis *ibid.*, p. 94 (ια')λα':23-28, nature denotes, *ibid.*, lines 7-9, "τὴν ἀμετάβλητον καὶ ἀμετάθετον ἀρχὴν καὶ αἰτίαν καὶ δύναμιν τὴν παρὰ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ ἐντεθείσαν ἐκάστῳ εἶδει πρὸς κίνησιν". For this reason *ibid.*, p. 165 (11):32-33, "φύσις ἐστὶν ἡ τῶν πραγμάτων ἀλήθεια".

This is confirmed by the Patristic thought of the sixth- seventh century and especially in the works of St Anastasius of Sinai when he says that "nature is truth", see *Hodeg.*, p. 131 (VIII,5):7, "καὶ ἡδυνάμην περὶ τούτου, καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἁγίων Πατέρων πιστώσαι τὴν φωνήν, ὅτι οὐδὲν ἕτερον σημαίνει ἢ φύσις, εἰ μὴ τὴν ἀλήθειαν". It is a common tradition among the Church Fathers generally to identify nature with the 'real'.



*Akephaloi* chapter 6.<sup>399</sup> On this occasion we could say that there is no comparison of what sentence can ‘mainly’ receive the characterization of *enhypostatos*. The Palestinian monk simply writes what he sees in the manuscript which he has in front of him. On the other hand, if we accept that Ps-Meletius replicates John, then *Dialectica*, on this point, expresses John’s personal philological evaluation of *enhypostatos* supported on an existing philosophical evaluation made already by Leontius of Byzantium in his work *Fragmenta*.<sup>400</sup> “The concepts *enhypostatos* and *hypostasis* are sharply distinguished by Leontius, but in *De sectis* they are mixed; according to *De sectis* an accident can be *enhypostaton*, but not according to Leontius”, as A. Grillmeier claims.<sup>401</sup>

In the first category we have: i) ‘that which simply exists’, and ii) ‘the hypostasis on its own or the individual’ which John collects from Ps-Leontius *De Sectis*, PG 86, 1240 and Leontius of Byzantium *Fragm.* PG 86, 2009-

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<sup>398</sup> Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 110 (κη')με':7.

<sup>399</sup> Kotter IV, p. 413-4, lines 4-7, “ἡ μὲν γὰρ ὑπόστασις ποτὲ μὲν τὴν ἀπλῶς ὑπαρξιν δηλοῖ, καθὼς σημαινόμενον οὐ τὴν ἀπλῶς οὐσίαν σημαίνει, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ συμβεβηκός, ποτὲ δὲ τὸ ἄτομον ἦτοι τὸ πρόσωπον, ἥτις καθ' αὐτὸ λέγεται ὑπόστασις”.

<sup>400</sup> Leontius of Byzantium says in *Fragm.* PG 86, 2009D-2012A: “Ἰστέον ὅτι τὸ ἐνυπόστατον διττὸν ἐστὶ, σημαίνει γὰρ τὸ ἀπλῶς ὄν, καθ' ὃ σημαινόμενον οὐ μόνον τὴν οὐσίαν... ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ συμβεβηκότα ἐνυπόστατα λέγομεν... σημαίνει δὲ πάλιν καὶ τὸ καθ' ἑαυτὸ ὄν τοῦτο εἶναι ἰδιοσυστάτως, καθὼς σημαινόμενον καὶ τὰ ἄτομα ἐνυπόστατα λέγονται”, while in the same work (*ibid.*) he says that neither the *symbebekota* nor the hypostasis can be called *enhypostatos*. Only the *ousia* “δι' αὐτὸ τοῦτο τὸ εἶναι καὶ ὑφεστάναι” can be characterized as *enhypostatos*.

<sup>401</sup> *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2 pt. 2, p. 494. Grillmeier quotes from S. Rees, ‘The *De Sectis*: A treatise Attributed to Leontius of Byzantium’, *JTS* 40 (1939), pp. 346-60.

2012.<sup>402</sup> John refers to these sub-categories as if he wants us to overlook them as Leontius does, and indeed in his original theological works he does not quote them. In the latter case in particular, both Leontius and John Damascene prefer to avoid a deeper investigation characterizing it mainly as hypostasis rather than as *enhypostatos*. If we examine the Damascenic works, we can see that the *atomon* declares the hypostasis. However, although John does not give any other explanation beyond what Leontius and Ps-Leontius says, he does not agree absolutely with Ps-Leontius [and with Anastasius I of Sinai as shall see later] in his works. For instance: while Ps-Leontius in his work *On Heresies* says that the hypostasis is *enhypostatos* as the ‘ἁπλῶς ὄν’, ‘simple being’, and the ‘καθ’ ἑαυτὸ ὄν’, ‘the being on its own’ (PG 86, 1240D), in those works which reveal his original thought, John makes the significant change of connecting these sentences only with the hypostasis<sup>403</sup> like Leontius of Byzantium.<sup>404</sup> In order to make a conclusion about the first category, we can say that it is not so concrete nor so effective to define what John has in mind to

<sup>402</sup> Kotter I, *Dial.*, pp. 109-10 (κη')με':2-6.

<sup>403</sup> Ps-Leontius passages are *De Sectis*, PG 86, 1240D, “ἰστέον οὖν, ὅτι τὸ ἐνυπόστατον(ή) ἦτοι ἡ ὑπόστασις δύο σημαίνει. Σημαίνει γὰρ τὸ ἁπλῶς ὄν, καθ' ὃ σημαινόμενον λέγομεν καὶ τὰ συμβεβηκότα ἐνυπόστατα, εἰ καὶ ἐν ἑτέροις ἔχουσι τὸ εἶναι. Σημαίνει καὶ τὸ καθ' ἑαυτὸ ὄν, ὡς τὰ ἄτομα τῶν οὐσιῶν”. St John, on the other hand never identifies hypostasis and *enhypostaton*, Kotter IV, *Aceph.*, pp. 413-4 (6):4-8, “ἡ μὲν γὰρ ὑπόστασις ποτὲ μὲν τὴν ἁπλῶς ὑπαρξιν δηλοῖ, καθὼς σημαινόμενον οὐ τὴν ἁπλῶς οὐσίαν σημαίνει, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ συμβεβηκός, ποτὲ δὲ τὸ ἄτομον ἦτοι τὸ πρόσωπον, ἥτις καθ' αὐτὸ λέγεται ὑπόστασις, ἥτις δηλοῖ Πέτρον, Παῦλον, τόνδε τὸν ἵππον καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα”.

<sup>404</sup> In fact, as we shall see below, the common ground between Leontius of Byzantium and the Damascene is restricted to the connection of *enhypostatos* with nature and its distinction from the *symbebekos* which is *anhypostaton* (compare between CNE, PG 86, 1277D and John Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 114 (11):14-16.).



describe. In fact what John wants to say is that the hypostasis is not *enhypostatos*. Although this is a reality for Christology, John accepts the use of *enhypostatos* in connection with the hypostasis in Trinitarian theology. This leads us to agree that when John wrote the *Dialectica* he had in mind the Christological problems believing that Leontius of Byzantium was the safeguard in the use of terminology in general and the term *enhypostatos* in particular.

The second category is the 'main' and contains three philosophical sub-categories of entities which can be styled *enhypostatos*. All have natures or the species as their common basis: i) that which is considered in a hypostasis is *enhypostatos*,<sup>405</sup> ii) something that, together with something else that has a different nature and creates a whole is also *enhypostatos*. This whole is a compound hypostasis like the man who is composed of soul and body while the different things in his nature, are necessarily natures. The result is that every one of these natures is *enhypostatos*<sup>406</sup> in the common compound hypostasis as it is not an individual hypostasis,<sup>407</sup> and iii) the *physis* that is assumed by a hypostasis is *enhypostatos* as well. This *physis* comes into existence only in this hypostasis

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<sup>405</sup> Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 110 (κη')με':7-10, "κυρίως δὲ ἐνυπόστατόν ἐστιν ἡ τὸ καθ' ἑαυτὸ μὲν μὴ ὑφιστάμενον ἀλλ' ἐν ταῖς ὑποστάσεσι θεωρούμενον, ὥσπερ τὸ εἶδος ἡγουν ἡ φύσις τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐν ἰδίᾳ ὑποστάσει οὐ θεωρεῖται ἀλλ' ἐν Πέτρῳ καὶ Παύλῳ καὶ ταῖς λοιπαῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὑποστάσεσιν".

<sup>406</sup> J. Tixeront, *History of Dogma*, tran. H.L.B (London: B. Herder Book CO, 1926), p. 481.

<sup>407</sup> Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 110 (κη')με':10-15, "ἡ τὸ σὺν ἄλλῳ διαφόρῳ κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν εἰς ὅλου τινὸς γένεσιν συντιθέμενον καὶ μίαν ἀποτελοῦν ὑπόστασιν σύνθετον, οἷον ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκ ψυχῆς ἐστι καὶ σώματος συντεθειμένος· οὔτε ἡ ψυχὴ μόνη λέγεται ὑπόστασις οὔτε τὸ σῶμα ἀλλ' ἐνυπόστατα, τὸ δὲ ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων ἀποτελούμενον ὑπόστασις ἀμφοτέρων".



as in the case of Christ's humanity.<sup>408</sup> This last expression is St John's most important position in his struggle against the Monophysites.<sup>409</sup> It is an adaptation of the second expression<sup>410</sup> applied within the framework of

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*, lines 17-22, "λέγεται πάλιν ἐνυπόστατον ἡ ὑφ' ἑτέρας ὑποστάσεως προσληφθεῖσα φύσις καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ ἐσχηκυῖα τὴν ὑπαρξιν. Ὅθεν καὶ ἡ σὰρξ τοῦ κυρίου μὴ ὑποστᾶσα καθ' ἑαυτὴν μηδὲ πρὸς καιροῦ ῥοπήν οὐχ ὑπόστασις ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ἐνυπόστατόν ἐστιν· ἐν γὰρ τῇ ὑποστάσει τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου ὑπέστη προσληφθεῖσα ὑπ' αὐτῆς καὶ ταύτην καὶ ἔσχε καὶ ἔχει ὑπόστασιν".

<sup>409</sup> Here we can see in the threefold function of the position only nature is *enhypostatos*. The first function has a Trinitarian reference as the one divine nature is in every hypostasis of the Holy Trinity, Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 115 (12):4-5. (It is the only time that John characterizes divine nature as *enhypostatos*. In all other cases the Logos and the holy Spirit are *enhypostatoi*). The second function is used at an anthropological level, maybe as an answer to the Monophysites who, using the same example, speak of the one nature in Christ just as a human being is one nature composed of soul and body (Kotter IV, *Aceph.*, p. 414 (7):1-14). The third function is connected with Christology, as Christ's humanity is called *enhypostatos*. There is the sense in which Leontius of Byzantium ignores this threefold use of *enhypostatos*. See also U.M. Lang, p. 652. John, more than Leontius and Maximus, seems to feel the need to explain precisely the list of series of the different categories of entities that can be styled *enhypostatos* on all ontological levels. We observe it clearly when John uses the analogies: soul+body=man and candle+wick=flame. "In the case of the union of soul and body in a human being, neither soul nor body on its own is the human *hypostasis*, for neither on its own is a human being; it is only as the soul informs the body, and the body is animated by the soul, that we have a human being-each achieves human reality (is *enypostatos*) in conjunction with the other. In the case of the flame of the candle, the candle and its wick are concrete things, they are *hypostaseis*, while the flame exists only in relation to the wick: it is real (*enypostatos*), but depends on the wick for its reality". Although "both these analogies are imperfect", A. Louth, *St John Damascene, Tradition and Originality*, p. 158.

<sup>410</sup> The adaptation of the third position (which is ignored by St Maximus Confessor and Ps-Meletius) "λέγεται πάλιν ἐνυπόστατον ἡ ὑφ' ἑτέρας ὑποστάσεως προσληφθεῖσα φύσις καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ ἐσχηκυῖα τὴν ὑπαρξιν", its lack of patristic consolidation, and the solitary reference in *Dialectica* (chapter κή), together with its omission from the *ἕτερο κεφάλαιο* of *Dialectica* and in the treatise *Against the Akephaloi* where we observe only the first two sub-categories of the 'main' category which denote how a nature can exist as *enhypostatos* (although it could be the best refuge of St John to describe the mystery of Incarnation) create

Christology.<sup>411</sup> Apart from the third sub-category, John follows Maximus in the classification of the other two.<sup>412</sup>

Returning to the analysis of the list of the 'main' categories, we find out that in order for something to be *enhypostatos*, it is necessary for it not only i) to be real, to exist 'ἐν ἑαυτῷ', something that identifies it with the *ousia*<sup>413</sup> but also ii) to be considered in a hypostasis.<sup>414</sup> According to St Maximus' use of the term,<sup>415</sup> the *ousia* is *enhypostatos* with the result that, as it is considered in a

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a number of questions. However, Kotter rightly treats the third and last sub-category as simply a sub-category of the second in the work *Against the Akephaloi* (Kotter IV.414). In any case St John does not make reference to it in his Christological works.

<sup>411</sup> According to U.M. Lang's opinion the passages on *enhypostatos* that are recorded by St John give the sense of their relation with that of Anastasius I of Sinai in his work *Ἱεροσολυμιτικός διάλογος μεῖν Τριθέϊτη*. He says on *enhypostatos*: "εἴτε καθ' ἑαυτὸ εἴτε σὺν ἑτέρῳ ἢ ἐν ἑτέρῳ ἔχον τὴν ὑπαρξιν" ('Anhypostatos-Enhypostatos', p. 652). But John's passages in *Dial.* and *Aceph.* on this point are closer to Maximus than to Anastasius. Beyond this, Lang overlooks the fact that John uses this passages in *Against the Jacobites* replacing the word *enhypostatos* with *ousia*. We shall examine this point later. It is obvious that John, although he knows Anastasius' more explicit passage in the description of what can be styled *enhypostatos*, prefers Leontius and Maximus' ones.

<sup>412</sup> See *Opusc. theol. et polem.*, PG 91, 152D-153A. Maximus says: "ἐνυποστάτου ἰδιόν ἐστι, ἢ τὸ μετ' ἄλλου διαφόρου κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν ἐν ὑποστάσει γνωρίζεσθαι καθ' ἑνωσιν ἄλυτον, ἢ τὸ ἐν ἀτόμοις φυσικῶς τυγχάνειν καθ' ὑπαρξιν". But mainly the passage from *ibid.* PG 91, 149C and *Ep. 15*, PG 91, 557D-560A. It is obvious that Maximus' understanding of *enhypostatos* is clearer than that of Leontius. But in his letter *Against the Jacobites* which is addressed to the Monophysite bishopric of Daraïas, John prefers to quote from Leontius' works.

<sup>413</sup> See e.g. Leontius *CNE*, PG 86, 1277D and *Fragm.*, PG 86, 2009D.

<sup>414</sup> This interpretation and the passages come from St Maximus Confessor, *Opusc. theol. et polem.*, PG 91, 152D-153A.

<sup>415</sup> The first use of *enhypostatos* with the meaning of 'θεωρεῖσθαι' is in Leontius of Jerusalem. According to Grillmeier, vol. 2, pt 2, p. 292, "everything which otherwise is visible and 'idiomatic' in the *idiomata* 'of this humanity in divine hypostasis' is the expression of this *enhypostasis*, and is thus considered on the basis of the divinity". A similar



hypostasis, it cannot be *anhypostatos*.<sup>416</sup> In fact John like Maximus and Leontius insists on the direct identification of *enhypostatos* with that which is not hypostasis.<sup>417</sup> As they are not identified it is not necessary for every *ousia* which is *enhypostatos* to have its own hypostasis as in the case of the human being which is a compound of soul and body. Man has two *ousiai* in his unique hypostasis, consequently soul and body are not two different and separate hypostases.

We can see here the progress made in the characterization of a nature as *enhypostatos*. We could say that the consequences of this understanding are not only explanatory from a Christological point of view but also ontological, as we seem to get a specific answer to a general question. However, the direct result of the distinction of that which is *enhypostatos* from the hypostasis is the refutation of the Monophysite identification between hypostasis and nature, a very important position in the clarification of Christ's doctrine for the Dyophysites.

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use of this term exists in Anastasius I of Sinai, *Hodeg.*, p. 39 (II,3):129-130, "ἡ τὸ κατ' ἀλήθειαν ὑπάρχον, ἡ τὸ ἐν τῇ ὑποστάσει ἰδίωμα". The only difference is that in the latter author this passage refers to Trinitarian doctrine.

<sup>416</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 115 (12):14-16.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114 (11):7-8, "ἐνυπόστατον δὲ οὐχ ἡ ὑπόστασις", In Maximus do we find the formula, "οὐ δέον οὔτε τὸ ἐνυπόστατον εἰς ὑπόστασιν συνάγει", *Opusc. theol. et polem.*, PG 91, 261C. See also *ibid.*, PG 91, 261A "ὅτι οὐσία καὶ ἐνούσιον, οὐ ταῦτόν, ὥσπερ οὐδὲ ὑπόστασις καὶ ἐνυπόστατον". Besides, as we have seen, the refutation of the identification between hypostasis and *enhypostatos* exists in Leontius also. This position is opposite to Ps-Leontius' *De Sectis* who identifies hypostasis and *enhypostaton*, see PG 86, 1240D (compare with Leontius' original work *CNE*, 1277D). In any case St John particularly insists on the distinction between hypostasis and *enhypostaton* and makes frequent references to it.



Regarding the first position (*ousia* is *enhypostatos* = ‘real’), nature is distinguished by *symbebekota* which are *anhypostata* and which can be characterized as *heteroypostata* rather than *enhypostata*.<sup>418</sup> St John says:

“For neither is *ousia* the same as what is *enousios*, nor is *hypostasis* the same as what is *enhypostatos*. For to be in something is one thing, to be that in which it is another. For what is beheld in the *ousia*, that is a collection of accidents, is *enousios*, which manifests the *hypostasis*, not the essence itself (*Jacob.*, (11): 4-7)· but [what is] essence [is *enhypostatos*], that is, in whatever mode it exists, whether by itself or with something else or in something else (*Jacob.*, (11): 8-9). That there is no nature without hypostasis we know clearly, but we say that neither *enhypostaton* and hypostasis are identical, nor nature and *enousion*, but [we call] hypostasis [that is] *enousios*, and [we call] nature [that is] *enhypostatos* (*Jacob.*, (12): 1-3).<sup>419</sup>

<sup>418</sup> Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 109 (κη')με':2-5. John borrows this passage from Leontius of Byzantium's *Fragmenta*. See PG 86, 2009D.

<sup>419</sup> “Οὐ γὰρ ταὐτὸν οὐσία τε καὶ ἐνούσιον οὐδ' ἐνυπόστατον καὶ ὑπόστασις. Ἅτερον γὰρ ἐστὶ τὸ ἐν τινὶ καὶ ἕτερον τὸ ἐν ᾧ· ἐνούσιον μὲν γὰρ ἐστὶ τὸ ἐν τῇ οὐσίᾳ θεωρούμενον, τουτέστι τὸ τῶν συμβεβηκότων ἄθροισμα, ὃ δηλοῖ τὴν ὑπόστασιν, οὐκ αὐτὴν τὴν οὐσίαν (*Jacob.*, (11):4-7). Οὐσία δέ, τουτέστιν ὅπως οὖν ὑπάρχει, εἴτε καθ' ἑαυτὴν εἴτε σὺν ἑτέρῳ εἴτε ἐν ἑτέρῳ (*ibid.*, (11):8-9). Ὅτι μὲν οὖν οὐκ ἔστιν οὐσία ἀνυπόστατος, ἴσμεν σαφῶς, ἀλλ' οὐ ταὐτόν φαμεν ἐνυπόστατον καὶ ὑπόστασιν, οὔτε μὴν οὐσίαν τε καὶ ἐνούσιον· ἀλλ' ἐνούσιον μὲν τὴν ὑπόστασιν, ἐνυπόστατον δὲ τὴν οὐσίαν (*ibid.*, (12):1-3)”.

From the above passages it is obvious that only nature can be characterized *enhypostatos*. The *hypostasis* is called *enousios* with the direct result that *enhypostatos* and *enousios* are not identified with each other.

Hypostasis is, as we have seen, nature with accidents. As the accidents get their existence in a nature and all hypostases of the same kind participate in the same nature then all consubstantial hypostases are distinguished among them 'by the number', that is through accidents and not through nature.<sup>420</sup> It is understandable then why for John the *symbebekos* is *anhypostaton* and the nature as a self-existent reality is *enhypostatos*.<sup>421</sup>

At the same time, a nature cannot be characterized *enhypostatos*, if it is not identified with a nature that is not observed in a hypostasis or together with another one does not lead to the composition of a hypostasis where both natures are considered. This is the case when we speak of *ousia* in thought and not *enhypostatos*. In addition, as there is no nature without hypostasis and impersonal *physis*, it is impossible to conceive of a nature existing in reality without a hypostasis. Indeed, for St John nature can only be *enhypostatos* in

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<sup>420</sup> Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 108 (κστ')μγ':6.

<sup>421</sup> At this point we can make a comparison between the *αὐθύπαρκτον* or *αὐθυπόστατον* *ousia* and *enhypostatos*. As we have seen, Kotter I, *Dial.*, p.164 (11):7-8, "οὐσία ἐστὶ πρῶτως καὶ κυρίως πᾶν, ὅτι περ αὐθυπόστατόν ἐστι καὶ μὴ ἐν ἑτέρῳ ἔχει τὸ εἶναι". This characteristic of *ousia* is close to the meaning of the sentence in *Jacob.* (12):15-16, "τὸ δὲ γε ἐνυπόστατον τὸ μὴ εἶναι αὐτὸ συμβεβηκός, ὃ ἐν ἑτέρῳ ἔχει τὴν ὑπαρξιν". Both *ousia* and *anhypostaton* cannot be characterized as *symbebekota*. According to this perspective, *enhypostatos* means 'real' because it is connected only with the self-existent *ousia* and not the accidents. See *Aceph.*, (6):8-9, "τὸ δὲ ἐνυπόστατον ποτὲ μὲν τὴν οὐσίαν σημαίνει ὡς ἐν ὑποστάσει θεωρουμένην καὶ αὐθύπαρκτον οὖσαν".

Christology (as Leontius of Byzantium believes),<sup>422</sup> and at the same time, this nature is considered in a hypostasis (according to Maximus).<sup>423</sup>

There are a number of passages that refer to this position. We have chosen to quote only from John's personal compositions in order to see his original thought and understanding on this point. He says:

“For if there is no nature without hypostasis, nor *ousia* without person... nevertheless neither essence and hypostasis, nor nature and person, are identical... and not the hypostasis but that which is seen in a hypostasis is *enhypostatos* (*Jacob.* (11): 1-8), and in the inexpressible economy of the Lord that transcends our minds, we say [Christ's] hypostasis is *enousios*, as it exists in [Christ's] natures... and every one of His natures [is] *enhypostatos*. For they [the natures] have His hypostasis in common, His divinity on the one hand from all eternity... and the flesh on the other... recently (*Jacob.* (12): 6-13) [Christ's humanity] has not become a hypostasis with its own essence but a nature which is *enhypostatos*, constituent of Christ's compound hypostasis (*Jacob.* (53): 8-10). On the one hand when a human being is compared with another human being they are called homousioi (of the same nature), as they are classified under the same species; but on the other hand, when [a human being] is looked at [is analyzed to itself] two natures are observed in it. I speak of

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<sup>422</sup> *Fragm.*, PG 86, 2009D.

<sup>423</sup> *Opusc. theol. et polem.*, PG 91, 149BC; 91, 152D-153A; 261A, “...ἐνυπόστατον δὲ, τὸ ἐν ὑποστάσει ὄν καὶ οὐκ ἐν ἑαυτῷ καθ' ἑαυτὸ τυγχάνον”.



soul and body, that they have been composed in one hypostasis, *ibid.*, (7): 8-12)".<sup>424</sup>

From all the above passages again we conclude that every nature considered in a hypostasis, in whatever condition it exists, either alone or with another nature is *enhypostatos*.

If we compare the 'main' list of expressions which are called *enhypostatos* as they are presented in *Against the Akephaloi*, chapter 6 and the passage "*ousia* exists in any mode, either alone or with something or in something else" (*Jacob.*, (11):8-9) that St John takes from Anastasius I of Sinai and where he replaces the word *enhypostatos* with the word *ousia*,<sup>425</sup> we can

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<sup>424</sup> "Εἰ γὰρ μὴ ἐστὶ φύσις ἀνυπόστατος, οὔτε μὴν οὐσία ἀπρόσωπος... ἀλλ' οὐ ταῦτόν οὐσία τε καὶ ὑπόστασις οὐδὲ φύσις καὶ πρόσωπον... Ἐνυπόστατον δὲ οὐχ ἡ ὑπόστασις, τὸ ἐν ὑποστάσει δὲ καθορώμενον, (*Jacob.*, (11):1-8). Καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς ἀρρήτου καὶ πάντα νοῦν ὑπερκειμένης τοῦ κυρίου οἰκονομίας ἐνούσιον μὲν φαμεν τὴν ὑπόστασιν ὡς ἐν ταῖς οὐσίαις τελοῦσαν... ἐνυπόστατον δὲ ἐκάστην τῶν οὐσιῶν αὐτοῦ· ἔχουσι γὰρ κοινὴν τὴν μίαν αὐτοῦ ὑπόστασιν ἢ μὲν θεότης αὐτοῦ αἰδίως... ἢ δὲ σὰρξ... προσφάτως ἐν αὐτῇ ὑποστᾶσα καὶ αὐτὴν κληρωσαμένη ὑπόστασιν (*ibid.*, (12):6-13). Οὐχ ὑπόστασις ἰδιοσύστατος ἐγγόνει, ἀλλὰ φύσις ἐνυπόστατος, συμπληρωτικὴ τῆς συνθέτου τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὑποστάσεως (*ibid.*, (53):8-10). Οὐδ' ὡς ἰδίαν ἐσχηκυῖαν ὑπόστασιν, ἀλλ' ἐν τῇ τοῦ λόγου ὑποστάσει ὑπάρξασαν (*ibid.*, (79):13-14). Ὅταν μὲν οὖν ἄνθρωπος πρὸς ἄνθρωπον συγκρίνηται, ὁμοούσιοι λέγονται ὡς ὑφ' ἐν εἶδος τελοῦντες ὅταν δὲ φυσιολογῇται ὁ ἄνθρωπος, δύο φύσεις ἐπ' αὐτοῦ θεωροῦνται, ψυχῆς λέγω καὶ σώματος, ἐν μιᾷ συντεθειμέναι ὑποστάσει (*ibid.*, (7):8-12)".

<sup>425</sup> This is clear when St John says that "οὐσία δέ, τουτέστιν ὁπωσοῦν ὑπάρχει, εἴτε καθ' ἑαυτὴν εἴτε σὺν ἑτέρῳ εἴτε ἐν ἑτέρῳ", Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 114 (11):8-9. This passage comes from Anastasius I of Sinai who uses instead of the term *ousia* the term *enhypostatos*, see Uthemann, p. 103. It could be that John has another manuscript of Anastasius in front of him, or more possibly, he adapts it to what he believes to be more correct. However there is no real difference between the two positions if we think according to John's work *Against the Jacobites*. He says in chapter 11: "ἐνυπόστατον δὲ τὴν οὐσίαν [φαμέν]" .

see the reason for which the *ousia* is characterized as *enhypostatos*. It is because the nature or *ousia* is the only real thing as self-existent reality.<sup>426</sup> The position that nature is *enhypostatos* is affirmed on the basis that there is no *physis* without hypostasis, a position that neither the Monophysites nor the Nestorians deny.<sup>427</sup> Lang also considers the use of *enhypostatos* in the same perspective. He says: “in Leontius of Byzantium, the concept of the *ένυπόστατον* is employed in order to reconcile the principle that there is no φύσις άνυπόστατος with the definition of Chalcedon”.<sup>428</sup> However, by reading the works of Leontius and John Damascene we understand that the main accusation against the Dyophysites by the Monophysites concerns the misunderstanding of this formula. According to Monophysitism this position leads to an identification between hypostasis and nature while the Orthodox speak of the natures of Christ which are *enhypostatoi* in His hypostasis. In essence for the Chalcedonian theologians it is this formula (there is no *physis* without hypostasis) that makes the distinction between *enhypostatos* and hypostasis and finally produces the confession ‘οὐ ταὐτὸν οὐσία τε καὶ

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<sup>426</sup> According to N. Matsoukas, ‘Φιλοσοφία καὶ Δογματική Διδασκαλία Ἰωάννου τοῦ Δαμασκηνοῦ’, p. 268, “ἡ οὐσία εἶναι πράγμα αὐθύπαρκτον, ἔχον ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὴν αἰτίαν τῆς ὑπάρξεως, ἥτοι ἀποτελεῖ τὴν πρωταρχικὴν ρίζαν πάσης πραγματικότητος”. Reading the passage from Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 106 (κγ’)μ’:2-6, “οὐσία ἐστὶ πρᾶγμα αὐθύπαρκτον μὴ δεόμενον ἑτέρου πρὸς σύστασιν· καὶ πάλιν οὐσία ἐστὶ πᾶν, ὅτι περ αὐθυπόστατόν ἐστι καὶ μὴ ἐν ἑτέρῳ ἔχει τὸ εἶναι”, although the two words *αὐθύπαρκτον* and *αὐθυπόστατον* could be identical, they do differ. The *αὐθυπόστατον* has the meaning that this self-existent reality (*αὐθύπαρκτος*) is perfect, so it is not necessary for it to exist in another nature but existing by itself, it can be a concrete reality on its own.

<sup>427</sup> Kotter IV, *Aceph.*, p. 413 (5):1-6.

<sup>428</sup> ‘Anhypostatos-Enhypostatos’, p. 644.



ὑπόστασις', 'nature and hypostasis are not identical'<sup>429</sup> as the *ousia* is the only reality. Consequently *hypostasis* and *enhypostatos* are not identical, otherwise it would not be possible to posit more than one nature in the hypostasis of Christ.<sup>430</sup>

We clearly observe the aforementioned distinction in *Against the Akephaloi* chapter 6: 1-3. We read that:

“because nature is observed in hypostases, for this reason it is *enhypostatos* but it [is] not hypostasis”.<sup>431</sup>

From the above passage we understand that the ‘is observed’ means first, the nature is not hypostasis, and second it cannot exist without a hypostasis. In fact the *ousia* which really exists, is because it exists in a hypostasis.<sup>432</sup> The hypostasis is the reason for which every nature comes into existence as an individual.<sup>433</sup> In Orthodox theology there is no other possibility as the hypostasis comes first. We read in *Dialectica*:

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<sup>429</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 114 (11):3.

<sup>430</sup> In this way St John gives the most powerful answer to the Monophysites who identify nature and hypostasis.

<sup>431</sup> *Aceph.*, p. 413 (6):1-2, “ὅτι ἐν ὑποστάσεσι μὲν ἡ οὐσία θεωρεῖται, διὸ καὶ ἐνυπόστατός ἐστιν, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὑπόστασις”.

<sup>432</sup> We observe a similar position of G. Florovsky in Emil Bartos, *Deification in Eastern Orthodox Theology, An Evaluation and Critique of the Theology of Dumitru Staniloae* (Paternoster Press, 1999), p. 180. “Florovsky points out that the idea that nature is real only in hypostases, in what is indivisible, is characteristic of Leontius’ concept of hypostasis”. Bartos refers to G. Florovsky’s book *The Byzantine Fathers of the Sixth to Eighth Century*.

<sup>433</sup> A comparison between John Philoponus (490-575) from whose work *Diaitetes* John cites a large passage, and St John himself on *enhypostatos* is very interesting. We read in *Diaitetes*



“We must know that neither *ousia* without form, nor natural difference, nor species, nor accidents exist by themselves. But only hypostases, that is the individuals and in these [individuals] natures and natural differences, and species and accidents can be considered”.<sup>434</sup>

From all these quotations we understand that the *enhypostatos* which is connected with the meaning ‘is observed’ is not a technical term to express the relationship between the nature which is *enhypostatos*, and the hypostasis, as the Protestant theology of Loofs claimed. A. Grillmeier, following B. E. Daley,

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about the relation between beings that are *enhypostatoi*, namely hypostases or things, and *enhypostaton*: “ὁ ὁριστικὸς λόγος οὐκ ἐν ὑπάρξει, ἀλλ' ἐν μόνῃ τῇ ἐπινοίᾳ τὸ εἶναι ἔχει ὥς μέντοι ἐνυπόστατα ὄντα μετὰ τοῦ ὑποκειμένου θεωρεῖται”, (*In Aristotelis physicorum commentaria*, vol. 16 p. 4: 20) while for the connection between *enhypostaton* and nature, John Philoponus says: “περὶ τῶν ἐνυποστάτων πραγμάτων λέγων, ἅπερ ἐστὶ τὰ φύσιν ἔχοντα”, (*ibid.*, p. 205:19-20). What is clear in these texts is that the *enhypostaton* is connected with the nature. On the basis of this consideration the *ἐνυπόστατα ὄντα* cannot be conceived as being separated from nature. Philoponus’ position, although it seems not to identify hypostasis with nature directly is related to the view that there is no *ousia* without hypostasis. All things that have *ousia* or beings that are considered as having *μετὰ* natures are *enhypostatoi*. About the phrase ‘μετὰ τοῦ ὑποκειμένου’ we have to say that in the thought of the seventh-eighth century *ὑποκείμενον* means that which underlies the existence of something else, as in the case of *symbebekota* and nature. See e.g. John Damascene’s *Dialectica*, Kotter I, p. 86 (ιζ’):1-10 and John Philoponus, in *Aristotelis categorias commentaria*, vol.13,1 p. 30:25).

<sup>434</sup> Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 108 (κστ’)μγ’:8-11, “χρὴ γὰρ γινώσκειν, ὥς οὔτε οὐσία ἀνείδεος ὑφέστηκε καθ’ ἑαυτὴν οὐδὲ διαφορὰ οὐσιώδης οὔτε εἶδος οὔτε συμβεβηκός, ἀλλὰ μόναι αἱ ὑποστάσεις ἦτοι τὰ ἄτομα καὶ ἐν αὐτοῖς αἱ τε οὐσίαι καὶ αἱ οὐσιώδεις διαφοραί, τὰ τε εἶδη καὶ τὰ συμβεβηκότα θεωροῦνται”. It seems to me that when we speak of the formula ‘is observed’ in St John’s works, both philosophical and theological,

says that "it was precisely in this regard that Loofs missed the mark. He furnished the prefix *en* with its own dynamic, which expressed a direction through which two independent substances are brought together in an existential relationship... For all that, Loofs presupposed that the term *enhypostatos* referred an essence away from itself to another, instead of allowing it to be in itself, as the prefix *en* expresses, according to B. E. Daley. But for the fact that precisely at the time of Leontius the old meaning of *enhypostatos* as 'in its own reality' still held".<sup>435</sup> We agree neither with Loofs' Protestant understanding of the term *enhypostatos* nor with U.M. Lang's recent article. According to Lang "in order to denote this in-existence of the human nature, the term *ἐνυπόστατος* is explicitly used by Damascene. Especially when it is combined with such formulae as 'ἐν τῇ τοῦ λόγου ὑποστάσει ὑπάρξασα' or 'ἐν αὐτῇ ὑποστάσει', the prefix *ἐν*-in the compound adjective has a localizing sense, wherefore *ἐνυπόστατον* may legitimately be translated as 'in-existent'".<sup>436</sup> Lang separates the term *enhypostatos* in Christology into two meanings; one attributed to Christ's divine nature and another to His humanity. John Damascene on the other hand, speaks simply of the cases of characterizing a nature as *enhypostatos*. Lang's mistake is based on the acceptance of the meaning 'is observed' as an another characteristic of *enhypostatos*. However, the 'is observed' is simply the result of characterizing a nature as *enhypostatos*, 'real'. It is the only way to consider observing a nature as a concrete existence. So

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with regard to *hypostasis*, *ousia* and *accidents* we should examine all terminology having as our basis the aforementioned passage.

<sup>435</sup> *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 194-5.

<sup>436</sup> In U.M. Lang, p. 654.



Daley is once again correct when he says "that there is no need for such a translation (in-existence) here".<sup>437</sup>

But how is it possible for Christ's humanity to exist in the pre-existent hypostasis of the Logos in order to be *enhypostatos* and, at the same time, for His humanity not to be an individual hypostasis? John knows that this point is the reason for the misunderstanding and the collision between Monophysitism and Dyophysitism. Monophysitism understands Christ through the Aristotelian position of characterizing a nature as real, only existing accidentally in its specific and separate individual appearance (hypostasis).<sup>438</sup> On the other hand for John each nature is *enhypostatos* when it is distinguished absolutely from the other natures. There is no meaning in the mode of its existence, either alone, or with another nature, or in another hypostasis as all these occasions are possible. It is necessary for the natural properties to remain unconfused, and it is *enhypostatos* which helps John to explain it very accurately.

We could argue that in St John's thought *enhypostatos* meaning simply the 'real' serves both the distinction between the two natures of Christ as both of them are 'real' and not compound, and, at the same time, shows the quality (without division) of their union in Christ's unique hypostasis.<sup>439</sup> Christ's

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<sup>437</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 650.

<sup>438</sup> It is understandable why the Monophysites accuse the Chalcedonians of speaking of an accidental union of Christ's natures.

<sup>439</sup> John's thought, in fact, is influenced by the scheme: union and distinction. It is not only the term *enhypostatos*, but also, as we shall see later, in the arguments against the Jacobite Christology and especially against abbot Anastasius *On the Trisagion*, that the above scheme is always present. It seems that John believes that a word or a formula must serve the union and the distinction of the two natures of Christ in order to be effective in Christology. John remains faithful to the Maximian way of thinking in the eighth century. He formulates a



humanity is 'real' because it has as hypostasis the hypostasis of the divine Logos.<sup>440</sup> So Christ's human nature is neither *anhypostatos* nor *idiosystatos hypostasis*, its own hypostasis but *enhypostatos*. Through His incarnation, Christ assumed "nature viewed in the individual"<sup>441</sup> as this is the only possibility for 'generic' humanity to exist in reality, as a separate physis which is undivided from the divinity in the hypostasis of Christ.<sup>442</sup> In essence, along with the others,

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system even through the analysis of terminology: the theological system of union and distinction that protects from all heresies and especially Monophysitism.

<sup>440</sup> If we accept that the *enhypostatos* has the meaning of *heteroypostatos* in John because the formula 'is observed', we repeat what we have already said, that this formula is the answer to how it is possible for a nature to exist in reality. Every nature, in every mode of existence, either alone or with another nature or in another hypostasis, is *enhypostatos*, that means simply 'real'. See also A. Grillmeier's understanding remarks of *enhypostaton* in Leontius of Jerusalem. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 284-6, argues that "we shall wait in vain for the famous *enhypostaton*, with the alleged meaning of 'subsisting in', to be inserted between the extremes 'own hypostasis' and 'not-hypostatic' as the solution... He (Leontius of Jerusalem) excludes two characterizations for the humanity of Christ: *ἰδιοὑπόστατος* and *ἑτεροὑπόστατος*. In CN II, 13 there seems to be a last chance for the interpretation of *enhypostatos* as 'subsisting in' (another hypostasis)... But if one looks more closely, it still retains its old meaning of 'real' or 'existing'; it still stands in opposition to *anhypostatos*, meaning 'unreal'".

<sup>441</sup> Kotter II, *Expos.*, p. 131 (55):8-11.

<sup>442</sup> Christ's humanity must be considered from the perspective that "the theory eventually affirmed as orthodox claimed to be defending salvation by a view of the God-man in which he, being fully divine and fully human and altogether one, had within himself both the universal and the particular (Joh. D. *Fidei Expositio*], Kotter 2: 121-22). For what he assumed into unity with his divinity was not a particular human being but 'universal man [τὸν καθ' ὅλου] or universal [human] nature, yet a nature that is seen in an individual' (Thdr. Stud. *Antirr.* I.4 PG 99:33-33)", in J. Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom*, p. 75. But, I think, the best explanation of the thought of St John on this matter can be found in G. Florovsky, *The Byzantine Fathers of the Sixth to Eighth Century* (Farnborough: Gregg, 1972) p. 270, "in the Incarnation God the Logos receives not abstract humanity, as it is perceived by pure speculation, for this would not be Incarnation but a phantom and deceit. Nor did he receive all of human nature as it is realized in all the human race, for he did not

this term is connected with the possibilities of individualising a nature in order for it to exist in reality. In this perspective, the term *enhypostatos* plays the most decisive role in the explanation of both the Chalcedonian 'tome' of 'in two natures' and the *mia-physis* formula.<sup>443</sup>

From the previous analysis we could say that what we consider in the Damascene's works compared with the works of the previous Church authors on this subject is simply a more analytical repetition of the relationship between the nature that is *enhypostatos*, and the hypostasis in the formula 'there is no nature without hypostasis'. In all distinguished Church Fathers the *enhypostatos* keeps the meaning of 'real'. If we speak of St John's main contribution to the analysis of *enhypostatos* we could say that it is focused on the systematic classification of the categories of entities (already existing in the works of Leontius and Maximus) which can be styled as *enhypostatos*.

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receive all the hypostases of the human race. But he receives manhood as it is, in the indivisible. He received it, however, in such a way that by itself it was not and is not a special or preexisting hypostasis but receives its very existence in his hypostasis. Manhood in Christ is hypostasized in the very hypostasis of the Logos". See also N. Chitescu, 'The Christology of St John Damascene', pp. 308-9, and J. Tixeront, *History of Dogma*, p. 480.

<sup>443</sup> In the case of Christ we could also say that the characterization of the two natures as *enhypostatoi* has consequences that refer to: i) the maintenance of each nature in its created or uncreated limits and ii) the characterization of Christ's humanity as consubstantial with all human beings in the same way as His divinity is consubstantial with the other Persons of the Holy Trinity. On the basis of these conclusions we cannot agree with J. Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom*, p. 89, who says following D. Evans, *Leontius of Byzantium: An Origenist Christology* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1970), p. 136 that the conception that both natures in Christ are *enhypostatoi* "was rejected by the Orthodox in favor of the view that the single divine hypostasis of the Logos was constitutive of the union in the God-man, taking up into that union a perfect human nature, which was not a hypostasis on its own but achieved hypostatic and personal reality in the union".



## IId *Enhypostatos* and *Enousios*

In this context we ought to examine the meaning of another term which we shall compare with *enhypostatos* in order to see its contribution to the clarification of Christ's doctrine. Although it is less important than the other terms, it is used by John mainly to specify the exact meaning of *enhypostatos*. This is the *enousios*. We considered that we should examine and analyze this term because of its vital importance to the dialogue between the Jacobites and St John. Indeed, John does not explain the meaning of this term in his philosophy. He makes reference to it only in *Against the Jacobites* and *Against the Akephaloi* where in the former work the *enousios* is connected with the hypostasis (*Jacob.*, 12:1-3) and in the latter, John characterises nature as *enousios* (see *Aceph.*, 3:22-24).<sup>444</sup> In essence John explains the meaning of *enousios* only in *Against the Jacobites*, while in *Against the Akephaloi* he makes a simple reference. But let us examine it.

According to John, as the distinction between *enhypostatos* and *hypostasis* is essential, so the distinction between *enousios* and *ousia* must be examined.<sup>445</sup> In fact the terms *ousia* and *enousios* as *hypostasis* and

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<sup>444</sup> Kotter IV, p. 412. “Ἐχομεν οὖν ‘τὴν μίαν φύσιν τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου’, καὶ διὰ τοῦ ‘σεσαρκωμένην’ ἔχομεν τὴν σάρκα· ἡ δὲ σὰρξ οὐκ ἀνούσιος. Ἡ φύσις οὖν τοῦ λόγου καὶ ἡ ἐνούσιος σὰρξ δύο οὐσίαι ἔσονται”. According to this passage, the human nature of Christ is characterized as *enousios* instead of *enhypostatos*. But this position does not seem to play an important role in what St John really wants to say about *enousios*.

<sup>445</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 114 (11):3-7.



*enhypostatos* differ as to what they express.<sup>446</sup> It is the distinction between the ‘ἐν τίνι’ and ‘ἐν ᾧ’, namely between something that is in something else and that something else in which it is.<sup>447</sup>

But is the meaning of ‘ἐν τίνι’, ‘being observed’ for the *enousios* the original one, or does John consider it simply as the result of a hypostasis which is characterized as concretely existent, namely *enousios* as in the case of *enhypostatos*? We will reply soon after a historical analysis of the development of this term.

Examining the clues related to the *enousios* and its comparison with the *enhypostatos* in the centuries leading up to the Third Ecumenical Council, namely until the beginning of the separation of the Orthodox into Monophysitism and Dyophysitism we are led to some conclusions.

We immediately recognize a confusion in the use of the terms *enhypostatos* and *enousios*. In St Athanasius’ works we could suppose that both terms are identical as they characterize the Logos and have the meaning of ‘real’

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<sup>446</sup> If we refer firstly to the writings of St John for the relationship between *enousion* and *hypostasis* we read in *ibid.*, p. 114 (11):5-8, “ἐνούσιον μὲν γὰρ ἐστὶ τὸ ἐν τῇ οὐσίᾳ θεωρούμενον, τουτέστι τὸ τῶν συμβεβηκότων ἄθροισμα, ὃ δηλοῖ τὴν ὑπόστασιν, οὐκ αὐτὴν τὴν οὐσίαν. Ἐνυπόστατον δὲ οὐχ ἡ ὑπόστασις, τὸ ἐν ὑποστάσει δὲ καθορώμενον”. This basic argument, although it is borrowed from Maximus the Confessor, is analyzed by St John in more detail. See also the interesting interpretation of *enousion* by St Maximus, *Opusc. theol. et polem.*, PG 91, 152A, “ἐνούσιον ἐστὶ τὸ μὴ μόνον ἐνθεωρούμενον ἔχον ἐφ’ ἑαυτοῦ τὸ τῶν ιδιωμάτων ἄθροισμα, καθ’ ὃ ἄλλο ἀπ’ ἄλλου γνωρίζεται, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ κοινὸν τῆς οὐσίας πραγματικῶς κεκτημένον”. See also the passage: “Ἐνούσιον μὲν γὰρ ἐστὶ, τὸ ἐν τῇ φύσει θεωρούμενον, καὶ οὐ καθ’ ἑαυτὸ ὑπάρχον... οὕτως οὐδὲ ἐνυπόστατον ἢ ἐνούσιον ἐστὶν νοῆσαι δίχα οὐσίας ἢ ὑποστάσεως... οὕτε τὸ ἐνούσιον εἰς οὐσίαν διορίζειν”, *ibid.*, PG 91, 261A-C.

<sup>447</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 114 (11):3-7.

and 'existing'.<sup>448</sup> The same position can be seen in St Basil the Great.<sup>449</sup> In addition to these Fathers, St Gregory of Nyssa considers the two terms as identical.<sup>450</sup> In all these Fathers the *enousios* manifests the 'real' and has the same meaning as *enhypostatos*. It is clear enough that there was no distinction between them in the fourth century.

We can also find other original sources that point to the same identification. One of the most characteristic references is found in Theodoret. He calls the Logos *enousios* and the Holy Spirit *enhypostatos*.<sup>451</sup> The same identification of *enhypostatos* and *enousios* with the meaning of real can be found in Didymus Caecus, *Commentarii in Zacchariam*, book 2, section 139: 1-

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<sup>448</sup> *Tomus ad Antiochenos*, PG 26, 801:19-23, "Πατέρα τε ἀληθῶς ὄντα καὶ ὑφεσιῶτα, καὶ Υἱὸν ἀληθῶς ἐνούσιον ὄντα καὶ ὑφεσιῶτα, καὶ Πνεῦμα ἅγιον ὑφεσιῶς καὶ ὑπάρχον οἶδαμεν"; *De Synodis Arimini in Italia et Seleucia in Isauria*, chapter 41, "Ἴνα μὴ πάλιν τις ἀκούων μόνον λόγον νομίση τοιοῦτον εἶναι, οἷός ἐστιν ὁ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀνυπόστατος, ἀλλ' ἀκούων ὅτι υἱός ἐστι γινώσκη τοῦτον εἶναι ζῶντα λόγον καὶ ἐνούσιον σοφίαν". See also *Oratio II, Contra Arianos*, PG 26, 152A and others.

<sup>449</sup> In *Contra Eunomium*, book v, PG 29, 713B we read: "οὕτως ἐν τῷ Θεῷ οὐ πνεῦμα διαχεόμενον, οὐ διαλυόμενος ἀήρ, ἀλλὰ δύναμις ἁγιαστικὴ, ἐνούσιος, ἐνύπαρκτος, ἐνυπόστατος". See also *ibid.*, PG 29, 749B, "Πάλιν ἀγέννητον ἀνούσιον νοοῦμεν τὸ μηδαμῇ μηδαμῶς ὄν. Εἰπέ τις ἀνούσιον, ὑπόστασιν ἀνεῖλε καὶ οὐσίας ὑπαρξιν. Ἀνούσιον, καὶ ἀνυπόστατον, τὴν μὴ ὑπάρχουσαν μήτε οὖσαν ὁλως σημαίνει φύσιν. Τὸ δὲ ἐνούσιον καὶ ἀνυπόστατον λέγων τις, τὴν ἐνυπάρχουσαν οὐσίαν ἐδήλωσε".

<sup>450</sup> He says in *Contra Eunomium* Book 3, chapter 6, section 17:8-10, "πάντοτε γὰρ ἐνεργὸν καὶ ἐνούσιον καὶ ἐνυπόστατον τῇ αἰδίῳ φύσει τὸ ἀγαθὸν τε καὶ τὸ αἰδίων ἐνθεωρεῖται θέλημα".

<sup>451</sup> *Graecarum Affectionum curatio*, Book 2, PG 83, 860AB.



4. We can also refer to Socrates Scholasticus,<sup>452</sup> or to the acta of the Third Ecumenical Council which uses *enousios* in the place of *enhypostatos*.<sup>453</sup>

But when did the distinction between *enousios* and *enhypostatos* occur? Certainly during the period of the Christological disputations. Until the Third Ecumenical Council both terms, at least in the ecclesiastical tradition, meant the same thing that which is 'real', and were used interchangeably. After this period their clarification seems to have started. Although we cannot isolate the distinction between *enousios* and *enhypostatos* from previous patristic understanding, we are nevertheless obliged to accept their different use to denote the same thing, that something is real and exists, from this time. We could make the hypothesis that the distinction between *enousios* and *ousia* as well as between *enhypostatos* and *hypostasis* and consequently between *enousios* and *enhypostatos* could have been invented by the Dyophysite Fathers to denote that every nature is *enhypostatos* and every hypostasis is *enousios* and to operate the Monophysite identification between hypostasis and nature. Indeed, if we search for authorities where we can see the meaning of 'ἐν τίνι', we shall observe that in ecclesiastical tradition until the fourth-fifth century it

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<sup>452</sup> *Church History*, book 7, chapter 32:60-1, PG 67, 812B.

<sup>453</sup> In the *acta*, *ACO* vol. 1, pt 7, p. 51:29-32, we read: "οὕτω γὰρ καὶ μιᾶς τινὸς οὐσίας [θείας] ἡρτῆσθαι πάντα νοοῦμεν. ὥς γὰρ λόγος ἐνούσιος ἐνυπόστατος ὁ μονογενὴς ἐξ αὐτῆς ἀπαθῶς ἐγεννήθη, καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα δὲ καὶ αὐτὸ ἐξ αὐτῆς ἐκπορευόμενον ἐν ἰδίᾳ ὑποστάσει τυγχάνει, ὥς τὴν μίαν οὐσίαν ἐν τρισὶν ὑποστάσεσιν χαρακτηρίζεσθαι". From this passage we recognize the confusion in the use of these terms by the members of the Council, a confusion that does not exist in the Fathers from Leontius onwards.



seems that this meaning does not exist.<sup>454</sup> None of these Fathers tried to offer a deeper analysis of the term.

But what is John's understanding of *enousios*? From *Against the Jacobites* we observe that he uses it in a similar way to *enhypostatos*. In fact what John provides with the use of *enousios* is the characterization of the hypostasis as 'real', like the nature which is *enhypostatos*. The meaning of 'ἐν τίνι' is simply the result of a hypostasis being *enousios*, as the only way for its existence to be an existent reality is to be considered in a nature. What John

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<sup>454</sup> But in Greek philosophy we can discover some information about the additional meaning 'is considered' which as we shall examine soon in the thought of John Damascene is simply the result of a hypostasis being characterized as real (*enousios*). In Porphyrius' (232-304) work, in *Platonis Parmenidem commentaria*, we read: "τὸ δ' ἐνούσιον εἶναι καὶ οὐσιῶσθαι μετέχειν οὐσίας εἶρηκε Πλάτων, (section 12: 6-7)", P. Hadot, ed., *Porphyre et Victorinus*, vol. I (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1968), p. 102. From this passage we can understand two things. First, this passage comes from Plato, although it cannot seem to be found in Plato's writings. Second, the *enousios* points to something that takes part in the *ousia*. In essence, the words 'take part in' and 'is considered' are the same in meaning. Both of them point to something that exists. Although one passage does not mean that it really influences John, (in fact John is influenced more by Leontius than by Porphyry) however, we could claim that there is some connection of Neoplatonic or Platonic philosophy with St John's philosophical background. At least John is not only influenced by Porphyry's *Isagoge* as we said in the analysis of *Dialectica*, but he also classifies the Neoplatonic philosopher among the Philosophers. See. P. Tannery, 'Fragments de Jean Damascène', *REG* 6 (1893), pp. 85-6. Although we dispute the authenticity of Tannery's manuscript (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, grec 2531 fols 32 à 35), it is clear enough that according to the author, John was influenced by Porphyry. In addition, we can find some other passages in the works of Damascius (462-550) that refer to *enousios*. The term is used as a participle in these passages. Damascius gives the meaning of 'existing' in the *enousiomenon*. In *Philebum*, section 175:6-8, he says: "κατὰ δὲ τὸ εἰς ταῦτα ἀποτρέχειν ἅπερ ἴδια κέκτηται ἐνουσιωμένα ἐν αὐτῇ τῶν καθόλου νοήματα, φανερόν ὅτι οἴκοθεν ἐγείρεται". Also in *Principiis*, vol. 1 p. 182:16-19 and p.163:5-6. With the meaning of 'existing' we observe the term in the works of Simplicius (6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.). See his work in *Aristotelis physicorum libros commentaria*, vol. 9 p. 780:2-6 and p. 784: 2-5.

does is to offer a detailed analysis of the characterization of a hypostasis as ‘real’ and nothing else. The rest is explanatory comments about the result of a hypostasis existing in reality. John once again replicates Leontius of Byzantium and Maximus the Confessor in his works.<sup>455</sup>

Indeed, the hypostasis is characterized *enousios* when it exists, that is with its own *ousia* or *ousiai*. If there is no *ousia* then the existence of the hypostasis is impossible. In this case the hypostasis is *anousios*. John refers to *anousios* by defining it as ‘non-existent’ in his works.<sup>456</sup> Once again, we observe the antithesis of the prefixes *an* and *en* to denote the ‘unreal’ and the ‘real’ as Daley agrees about the terms *enhypostatos* and *anhypostatos*.<sup>457</sup> In this perspective, *anousion* is equivalent to *anhypostaton* in John’s thought.<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>455</sup> See for example Leontius, *Fragm.*, PG 86, 2004. See also Maximus passages in *Opusc. theol. et polem.*, PG 91, 261A-C.

<sup>456</sup> Kotter I, *Dial.*, p.165 (11):34, “ἡνούσιόν ἐστι τὸ ἄκτιστον καὶ ἀνύπαρκτον διὰ παντός”. See also Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 114 (11):3.

<sup>457</sup> The dialectic schema as antithesis between *anhypostatos* and *enhypostatos* is also observed in the sixth century. In the work *Disputationes Photini Manichæi cum Paulo Christiano* written by Paul the Persian (6<sup>th</sup> century) *enhypostaton* is contradistinguished to *anhypostaton*. We read: “γίνεται τῶν ἀνυποστάτων καὶ ἐνυποστάτων ἀντιδιαστολή, καὶ τοῦτο ἐν Παύλῳ; M [Manichean]. Οὐκ ἐπίσταμαι εἰ γεγένηται. X [Christian]. Εἰ οὖν κατὰ τὸ ἐνυπόστατον καὶ ἀνυπόστατον ὁ Παῦλος οὐ τίθησι τὴν ἀντιδιαστολήν, ἐνταῦθα δὲ ἡ φθορὰ ἀντιδιαστέλλεται τῇ σαρκί, ἡ δὲ φθορὰ ἀνυπόστατος, κατὰ σέ, καὶ ἡ σὰρξ ἀνυπόστατος”, PG 88, 548A. I quote the passage having corrected it. Replacing the name of Leontius of Jerusalem with that of John Damascene, we could say using A. Grillmeier’s words “once again we encounter the tempting antithesis *enhypostatos-anhypostatos*. What is placed in opposition here does not yet lead beyond the previously known interpretation of the two adjectives. It is a question of the simple realization that what is ‘anhypostatic’, that is, that which does not have any reality, cannot be consubstantial with the ‘enhypostatic’, that is, the real”. See *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 284. Indeed, humanity and divinity are *enhypostatoi* in Christ, so: “Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 115 (12):13-16, “οὕτως οὐτε ἀνυπόστατος οὐθ’ ἑτέρα τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ φύσεων ἐστὶν οὐτε



The question that arises at this point concerns the reason for which some Church Fathers in general and John in particular treat two terms that have the same meaning in a different way. It seems to me that the use of these terms is connected with the noun that they characterize as 'real'. St John, following Leontius seems to believe that it is not only necessary for a term to have a specific meaning for its use, but also a specific reference. The use of *enhypostatos* referring only to *ousia* as its mode of existence in reality is connected with the hypostasis. At the same time, the real existence of a hypostasis is expressed with the *enousios* because it needs *ousia* in order to exist. So we should consider the use of the two terms from a philological point of view as well. According to this perspective both *enousios* and *enhypostatos* join hypostasis and *ousia* in the best way. When we speak of a hypostasis which is *enousios* we presuppose *ousia*. The same applies to the nature which is

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ἐκάστη καθ' αὐτὴν ὑπόστασις ἐστὶν ἢ ἰδίᾳ καὶ ἀνὰ μέρος ὑπόστασιν κέκτηται, ἀλλὰ τὴν αὐτὴν καὶ μίαν ἀμφοτέρᾳ". Christ's humanity was *enhypostatos* from the beginning. So it was with the divine one neither a separate hypostasis nor *anhypostatos*.

<sup>458</sup> In this regard we must examine another question that relates to the difference between *anhypostatos* and *enhypostatos*. As we have seen John tries on the one hand to prove that the *enhypostaton* is not hypostasis while on the other, he opposes the view that there is no *physis* without hypostasis and *ousia* without *prosopon*. From the context of chapters 11 and 12 of the *Against the Jacobites*, it is obvious that *anhypostatos* is equivalent to *aprosopos*, in the sense that that which is *anhypostatos* has no *prosopon* or hypostasis. See e.g. Kotter IV, p. 114 (11):1-4. "Εἰ γὰρ μὴ ἐστὶ φύσις ἀνυπόστατος, οὔτε μὴν οὐσία ἀπρόσωπος οὐδ' αὖ πάλιν ἀνούσιος ὑπόστασις τε καὶ πρόσωπον—οὐ γάρ ἐστιν—, ἀλλ' οὐ ταῦτόν οὐσία τε καὶ ὑπόστασις οὐδὲ φύσις καὶ πρόσωπον". But this meaning of *anhypostatos* is different from that which is expressed in the formula: Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 110 (κθ')μστ':2-5, that the *anhypostatos* "ποτὲ μὲν γὰρ τὸ μηδαμῇ μηδαμῶς ὃν σημαίνει ἡγουν τὸ ἀνύπαρκτον, ποτὲ δὲ τὸ μὴ ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἔχον τὸ εἶναι ἀλλ' ἐν ἑτέρῳ ἔχον τὴν ὑπαρξιν ἡγουν τὸ συμβεβηκός". This description of *anhypostatos* offered by John shows the difference between *anhypostatos* and *enhypostatos* in terms of the distinction between the 'real' and the 'non real', and it is the only description to do so.



*enhypostatos*. We presuppose hypostasis. Otherwise the use of *enousios* and *enhypostatos* would be interchangeable in John's thought as in the writings of the Church Fathers before the Third Ecumenical Council. In fact the two terms both denote the 'real' and, at the same time, indicate the specific necessity for *hypostasis* or *physis* to be characterized as 'real'. On this occasion their use is connected with specific word-terms. So playing the role of reasoning, *enhypostatos* and *enousios* determine concrete terms in order to explain why these terms mean 'real'. This could be the reason for John's insistence on confining the reference of the terms *enousios* and *enhypostatos* to either *hypostasis* or *physis* in *Contra Jacobites*, chapters 11-12.

Concluding our analysis of *enhypostatos* we can repeat what we have already said, that this term in St John retains the same meaning that it has in the works of Leontius of Byzantium and Jerusalem. "For a solution Leontius [of Jerusalem] certainly grasps the word *enhypostatos*, but without changing its meaning (real). There too it forms the counter-term to *anhypostatos* = unreal, not existing, and thus must also be translated as real existing... In short, *enhypostatos* means here once again 'real', and it is related only to Christ's two natures".<sup>459</sup>

But the best description of *enhypostatos* in John's thought is what he claims:

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<sup>459</sup> A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 285.

“Not the hypostasis, but that which is seen in a hypostasis is *enhypostatos*” and “[we say that] the *ousia* is *enhypostatos*”.<sup>460</sup>

In St John’s writings this term finds the most analytical exegesis. The collection of patristic passages, and their classification in John’s philosophical works in connection with their use in his dogmatic works, show the Damascene to be the main user of the term *enhypostatos*. Furthermore, in his works we perceive that he is not only the father who uses this term more frequently than anyone else but also the Father in whom the term attains its final and most complete clarification. The conclusion of the meaning of the term culminates in the insight that that which is *enhypostatos* is not a hypostasis. In this way John insisted on the complete distinction between hypostasis and *enhypostatos* and therefore, between hypostasis and nature, and thereby avoided misinterpreting the general principle that there is no nature without hypostasis. Finally we can assert that, while Leontius of Byzantium is the first person to introduce the term *enhypostatos* into Christology according to its traditional meaning, it is St John Damascene who clarified, as much as humanly possible, the theological significance of the term in order to integrate it into the doctrine of incarnation.<sup>461</sup>

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<sup>460</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 114 (11):7-8 and (12):3.

<sup>461</sup> He based his analysis of this term on passages which were collected from Leontius of Byzantium and Maximus the Confessor.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **The Monophysite identification between hypostasis and nature**

#### *Overview*

As we said in chapter two, the disputations between the Chalcedonians and the anti-Chalcedonians over the interpretation of the mystery of incarnation and the assumption of flesh by the Logos lasted for long periods, with some of them continuing until the present day. During the early centuries and especially the crucial years after the Third and the Fourth Ecumenical Councils until the activity of St John Damascene, the theological disputations between the groups waxed and waned. In any case both groups had their own Christology and understood the mystery of the existence of both humanity and divinity in the one hypostasis of Christ in a different way.



The most important reason, as we can see in John's writings, behind every dispute between the Chalcedonians and the anti-Chalcedonians is the correct explanation and understanding of the formula 'there is no *physis* without hypostasis and essence without *prosopon*'. The reality of this position was the main objection on the part of Monophysites to the Orthodox belief in the existence of the two natures of Christ in His one hypostasis. This objection becomes more vigorous as the Monophysites define by it another theorem, which we have already mentioned, and we shall try to analyze in this chapter, that 'nature and hypostasis are identical'.<sup>462</sup> For instance, on the basis of this formula the Monophysites are led to believe in the existence of one nature and one hypostasis in Christ. As the only acceptable reality is the oneness of nature any distinction between humanity and divinity should be understood *psile epinoia* 'in thought' although the two natures remain unconfused in this one nature.<sup>463</sup>

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<sup>462</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, pp. 112-3, chapters 5-7, 11. Particularly in the work *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, St John charges his opponents that their heretical teaching is due to the identification between hypostasis and nature, Kotter II, *Expos.*, p. 112 (47):39-40, "ἀλλὰ τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ ποιοῦν τοῖς αἰρετικοῖς τὴν πλάνην, τὸ ταῦτόν λέγειν τὴν φύσιν καὶ τὴν ὑπόστασιν". See also Kotter IV, *Volunt.*, pp. 203-4 (20):1-8. See also Kotter IV, *Volunt.*, pp. 203-4 (20):1-8, "εἰδέναι τοίνυν χρεών, ὥς ἡ τῶν ὀνομάτων σύγχυσις ποιεῖ τοῖς αἰρετικοῖς τὴν πλάνην. Καθὼς οὖν τοῖς μονοφυσίταις, τοῖς ἀκεφάλοις φημί, τὸ ταυτὸν λέγειν φύσιν καὶ ὑπόστασιν αἴτιον γέγονε λέγειν ἐπὶ Χριστοῦ μίαν φύσιν, ἵνα μὴ εἰς δύο ὑποστάσεις τὸν Χριστὸν διέλωσιν, ἔτι δὲ καὶ τοῖς Νεστορίου ὁμόφροσι τοῦ λέγειν δύο ὑποστάσεις, ἵνα μὴ τὰς δύο Χριστοῦ φύσεις εἰς μίαν συγχέωσιν, οὕτω καὶ τοῖς μονοθελήταις τὸ μὴ εἰδέναι τὴν διαφορὰν τοῦ φυσικοῦ καὶ τοῦ ὑποστατικοῦ θελήματος, τουτέστι τοῦ γνωμικοῦ, αἴτιον γέγονε τοῦ ἔν λέγειν ἐπὶ Χριστοῦ θέλημα".

<sup>463</sup> Indeed, "the anathema against 'in two natures' was not directed against those who separated the two natures in their abstract thought or theological speculation, but against those who said that there were still in concrete fact two natures after the union", see J.

In the works of the Monophysite Fathers the above mentioned principle can be clearly observed. But what is most important is the reason for the identification between hypostasis and nature, and not only if the Monophysites are right or wrong when they describe the doctrine of incarnation on the basis of it. Another issue that arises concerns the importance of the doctrine in these arguments. Before we answer to these questions, we are obliged to examine some of the Monophysite positions along with their authorities in order to understand the philosophical background of this identification.

The most important Father among the other Monophysites was Severus of Antioch. It was his teaching that was the basis of the Jacobite Christology against which St John wrote the letter addressed to the bishop of Daraïas the Jacobite. Indeed, in the works of this important Monophysite, it is impossible to agree with any other position except the identification between hypostasis and nature.

Severus himself considers the existence of a nature without a hypostasis impossible. He identifies it as nonsense to say anything else. In every nature

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Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom*, p. 58. When John Damascene accuses the Jacobites of the *psile epinoia* distinction of the two natures of Christ in thought, he remains faithful to the previous tradition as he sees it. This distinction by the Monophysites seems to be the result of the identification between hypostasis and nature. For the Orthodox 'in thought' the distinction of Christ's natures can be found in the acta of the Fifth Ecumenical Council (Canon 7): "...ἐπὶ τοῦ κατὰ Χριστὸν μυστηρίου ἡ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τῶν φύσεων ὁμολογῶν ἐπὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἐνὸς κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου σαρκωθέντος, μὴ τῇ θεωρίᾳ μόνῃ τὴν διαφορὰν τούτων λαμβάνει, ἐξ ὧν καὶ συνετέθη, οὐκ ἀναιρουμένην διὰ τὴν ἐνωσιν (εἷς γὰρ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν, καὶ δι' ἐνὸς ἁμφοτέρα), ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τούτῳ κέχρησται τῷ ἀριθμῷ, ὥς κεχωρισμένας καὶ ἰδιοῦποστάτους ἔχει τὰς φύσεις, ὁ τοιοῦτος ἀνάθεμα ἔστω", (ACO vol. 1, pt. 4, p. 242).



there exists a hypostasis.<sup>464</sup> So, in Christ, as He has one hypostasis there must exist only one *physis*, which is identical. In fact, in his attempt to explain how it is possible to have one nature in Christ while we observe two, Severus says that the humanity of Christ does not exist by itself. It came into existence because of the union with the divinity and exists only in this union. It exists only in combination with the divinity after the incarnation. Consequently Christ has one hypostasis and one *physis* composed of divinity and humanity.

Above all Severus uses the anthropological model.<sup>465</sup> Man's composition of soul and body gives an analogy for the existence of one compound nature with two components in Christ. Both humanity and divinity after the union are one nature.<sup>466</sup>

Another accusation against Orthodox Dyophysitism on the part of Severus, was that the Chalcedonians recognized and spoke of the two *ousiai* in Christ after the union, not as 'ψιλῇ ἐπινόϊα', 'in thought' but as a concrete

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<sup>464</sup> PO vii.200, *let.* 7, and *let.* 15, pp. 210-1 in R.C. Chesnut, *Three Monophysite Christologies, Severus of Antioch, Philoxenus of Mabbug, and Jacob of Sarug* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 9.

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-7.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16. She says of Severus of Antioch "propriety follows hypostasis in such a way that to *divide* the properties, setting them apart from each other, implies that we are also thinking in terms of two self-subsistent hypostases, two identities, and two operations: It is as though we were thinking of Peter again in terms of two identities. But in the case of Christ 'Where, then, we confess the one out of two, Lord and Son and Christ, and one incarnate nature of the Word himself, we understand the *difference* as it were in the natural characteristics of the natures from which Christ is. But, if we speak of two natures after the union, which necessarily exist in singleness and separately, as if divided into a duality, but united by a conjunction of brotherhood [i.e. a prosopic union] ... the notion of *difference* reaches to the extent of *division*, and does not stop at natural characteristics' (Letter X, p. 201)".



reality.<sup>467</sup> We observe a similar accusation against Dyophysitism in the Monophysite Elias' letter. Elias' conception refers to the distinction of Christ's natures in thought.<sup>468</sup> This accusation becomes more important if we realise that "...Philoxenus of Mabbug replied that he had in fact merely rehearsed the one faith confessed by many doctors of the church and by the first two Councils. It was the Chalcedonians who were guilty of doctrinal innovation when they invented such neologisms as the term 'homohypostatos' (of the same hypostasis), corresponding to 'homoousios' (of the same *ousia*)".<sup>469</sup> In fact Severus and the Chalcedonian Fathers "agreed that Christ was one *hypostasis* and one *prosopon*, but disputed the meaning of the crucial term *physis*" as we have seen.<sup>470</sup> Having as basis the patristic florilegia, Severus considered the term *ousia* unsatisfactory and unscientific for use at a Christological level because of the variety of meanings that appeared in the works of the Church Fathers. As a result Severus favoured the term *physis* as more appropriate for describing Christ's hypostasis because this term was used by the Alexandrine Fathers St Athanasius and St Cyril.<sup>471</sup>

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<sup>467</sup> John accuses the Monophysites that: "ὁμῆϊς τοιγαροῦν ἐπινοία τὴν θεότητα καὶ τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ μετὰ τὴν ἔνωσιν λέγοντες, οὐκ ἐνεργεῖα οὐδὲ πράγματι ταύτας ὁμολογεῖτε. Οὐκοῦν οὔτε θεὸς ἔσται καθ' ὑμᾶς ἀληθεία καὶ ὑπάρξει οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλὰ τι παρὰ ταῦτα ἕτερον", Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 120 (29):17-20. John believes that: "Ἡ τοίνυν σὰρξ αὐτοῦ κατὰ μὲν τὴν ἑαυτῆς φύσιν, ἂν διέλης ἰσχυαῖς ἐπινοίαις τὸ ὁρώμενον ἐκ τοῦ νοουμένου, ἀπροσκύνητός ἐστιν ὡς κτιστή, ἐνωθεῖσα δὲ τῷ θεῷ λόγῳ δι' αὐτὸν καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ προσκυνεῖται", Kotter II, *Expos.*, p. 174 (76): 6-9.

<sup>468</sup> A. van Roey, 'La Lettre Apologétique d'Elie à Léon', p. 49. Elias affirms that "en effet 'qu'on pense les deux natures par la division en pensée ou à cause de la différence".

<sup>469</sup> J. Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom*, p. 53.

<sup>470</sup> W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, p.210.

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

But how do the Monophysite authorities understand the identification between *physis* and hypostasis? The answer seems to be evident, speaking simply of one compound nature in Christ's unique hypostasis; but, Monophysitism like Dyophysitism teaches the unmingled union of the two natures of Christ.<sup>472</sup> According to this position, the one nature of Christ's humanity and divinity remain unconfused.<sup>473</sup> Could it be possible? To reply to this question we are obliged to examine the meaning of the term *physis* from a Monophysite point of view.

According to A. Grillmeier "the assumption of human being by the God-Logos could not be a *unum simplex*, as the Logos as divine spirit was. It had thus to be shown (by Severus) how Christ is one and how at the same time he is different. This way of putting the question was blocked for Severus by the exclusivity of the *mia-physis* formula. It meant for him a restriction in the use of *physis*, which was employed extensively by him as synonymous with

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<sup>472</sup> A. V. Roey, 'La Lettre Apologétique d'Élie à Léon', p. 38, "l'union hypostatique exige par conséquent l'unité d'hypostase mais elle n'implique nullement la confusion des éléments... Et Élie détermine la différence dont il s'agit. C'est la différence *naturelle*, la différence *comme dans la qualité naturelle*, la différence *substantielle*".

<sup>473</sup> To mention Severus' opinion, the confession of one compound nature in Christ is logical. As the two natures of Christ have all natural properties, then they are not simply generic essences (Chesnut, p. 9, n. 3). They have their own hypostases. Divinity is a 'self-subsistent' hypostasis, while humanity a 'non self-subsistent' hypostasis. The only way for the 'non-self-subsistent' hypostasis of humanity to exist is in its union with the 'self-subsistent' divinity. "A self-subsistent hypostasis is a 'hypostasis existing in individual subsistence'; a non-self-subsistent hypostasis is a 'hypostasis that does not exist in individual subsistence (*ibid.*, p. 10, n. 1)". Consequently, *ibid.*, pp. 10-1, "Peter, as are all men, and Christ, however, are *composite* self-subsistent hypostases: this means that they owe their existence to a union of two hypostases, either two non-self-subsistent hypostases, or a self-subsistent and a non-self-



*hypostasis*”,<sup>474</sup> and “for *physis* means for Severus ‘that which is there from birth’, thus the hereditary being or essence which is the bearer of all life acts”.<sup>475</sup>

It is clear enough that the Monophysites identify *hypostasis* and nature, as the Dyophysites identify *ousia* and *physis* as being identical. Severus of Antioch understands *physis* as a reality ‘after birth’ instead of as a generic essence. However, after birth there exists *hypostasis* in which the essence is observed. So *physis* for Monophysitism denotes *hypostasis* by virtue of essence as it is “that which is there from birth”. In fact, we cannot speak of *physis* before birth. It seems this point is the main difference between the Monophysite understanding of *physis* and the Orthodox identification of essence and *physis*. *Physis* is the hypostasized essence (*physis merike* = particular nature), while for Orthodoxy, *physis* denotes the generic species (*ousia*) in which the *hypostasis* participates.<sup>476</sup> So, for Dyophysitism, it is not necessary for *physis* to exist after birth only. It pre-exists in the consubstantial bearers of a *hypostasis* like *ousia*.

At this point another question arises. What is the meaning of the term *ousia* in Monophysitism? According to Severus *ousia* is not always identical with nature.<sup>477</sup> It signifies the generic<sup>478</sup> that comes into existence only if

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subsistent one. In the case of Peter, this means soul and body; in the case of Christ, the divinity and the humanity”.

<sup>474</sup> A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, pt 2, p. 151.

<sup>475</sup> R. Chesnut, p. 55.

<sup>476</sup> We speak of *physis* according to the meaning that the term has in the Orthodox Patristic tradition of the eighth century. St John is very clear on this point. He quotes the different meanings of the term in philosophy, see Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 107 (κδ')μα':1-11; *ibid.*, p. 109 (κζ')μδ':10-14.

<sup>477</sup> *Against the Godless Grammarian* in I. R. Torrance, *Christology after Chalcedon, Severus of Antioch and Sergius the Monophysite* (Norwich: the Canterbury Press Norwich, 1988), p.



*idiomata* are added to it.<sup>479</sup> So “if Severus wanted to forbid the application of this conceptual word to the humanity of Christ, he would run the danger of denying its reality. Because with *ousia* only the general (be it of divinity or humanity) is denoted, thus the *koinon* without the *idiomata*”.<sup>480</sup>

From Grillmeier’s understanding of *ousia* in Monophysitism, we are led to some inferences. First, the only term that indicates the generic in Christology is *ousia*. Second, *physis* can characterize *ousia*, using the words of St John Damascene, *inexactly*.<sup>481</sup> “Severus can even use the formula ‘from two natures (*physeis*)’ with good conscience only because by *physis* he can understand *ousia*”.<sup>482</sup> This means an *inexact* identification between *physis* and *ousia*: there is no point in using *physis* to denote *ousia* in Christology.<sup>483</sup> In this perspective, *physis* is that which refers to an existent hypostasis, while *ousia* is the generic that can exist in reality only as *physis* or as an individual hypostasis (*physis*

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216, “and again you (Sergius) learned from us (Severus), as we reminded you in a brotherly way, that the term ‘*συνφύτα*’ is not indicative of (just) one meaning, but when it is applied to the holy Trinity, it establishes the equality of *ousia* of three hypostases; but when it is applied in relation to the divine incarnation, it makes known the natural coming together of things of different *ousia*, and not of the same type with each other, from which was completed one nature and hypostasis, that is of the incarnate Word”.

<sup>478</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>479</sup> A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, pt 2, p. 56. Severus according to R. Chesnut, p. 9, n. 3, “rejects any notion that the union was a union of ‘generalities’”.

<sup>480</sup> A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, pt 2, p. 56.

<sup>481</sup> See chapter five.

<sup>482</sup> A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, pt 2, p. 56. For R. Chesnut, p. 9, “unlike the term ‘nature’, which, depending on the context and the preference of the writer (Severus), could refer either to the specific or the generic, the term ‘hypostasis’ always refers to the individual”.

<sup>483</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

*merike*).<sup>484</sup> In addition, *physis* is understood only as a concrete reality,<sup>485</sup> in contrast to *ousia* that can also be comprehended in thought.

This position, for the Monophysites, expresses a correct way of thinking as Christ's humanity must have completely natural properties in order to be real. So the Logos assumed a *physis* or a 'non-self-subsistent' hypostasis and not a generic *ousia* as we have seen. Moreover, for Monophysitism, the only real hypostatic union between humanity and divinity in Christ is the natural union that creates a unique hypostasis and *physis*.<sup>486</sup> It is understandable then, why the Monophysite Elias rejects the hypostatic union of Christ's natures as it is stated by the Dyophysites<sup>487</sup> and John Damascene in particular.<sup>488</sup> He accuses them, as we have already stated, of speaking of a kind of union through accidents, an accidental union as the two natures of Christ remain separate, because, for Elias, the Dyophysites do not accept the notion of the composition of two realities but of characteristic properties.<sup>489</sup> This position leads to Nestorianism<sup>490</sup>

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<sup>484</sup> In fact, *physis*, *hypostasis* and *prosopon*, although they are used to express the same thing, are not strictly synonyms. About the differences between the two kinds of *hypostasis* and *prosopon* in Severus of Antioch see *ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>485</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120, "Jesus is one nature and one hypostasis. Jacob (of Sarug) uses the word 'nature' to refer to a concrete being, an entity which can be counted".

<sup>486</sup> The same position we observe in the Monophysite Elias. For him Christ is one hypostasis and nature in Whom the natural differences remain, A.V. Roey, 'La Lettre Apologétique d'Élie à Léon', p. 38.

<sup>487</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40, "nous disons donc, ô sage, que le Père et le Verbe sont dits une nature par connaturalité, c'est-à-dire par substance; Le Verbe et sa chair au contraire, non par connaturalité mais par composition ou hypostase... mais admettre que le Verbe et sa chair ont une οὐσία différente, n'équivaut-il pas à dire que le Christ est deux οὐσείαι".

<sup>488</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38-9.

<sup>489</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.



as this kind of union is similar to union in love and others that are characterized as qualities according to the terminology of this period. In fact for Elias the Chalcedonian hypostasis is a sum of characteristic properties and not the thing itself namely a concrete reality.<sup>491</sup>

For Monophysitism, the only mode of existence of *ousia* is that it is like *physis* either as a 'self-subsistent' or 'non-self-subsistent' hypostasis. If so, it is logical to say that *physis* and hypostasis are identical. In this instance, we consider one more difference between the Orthodox and the Monophysite

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<sup>490</sup> *Ibid.* "Élie a donc bien compris, semble-t-il, la notion diphysite d'hypostase. Mais son accusation porte plus loin. Ce qui l'intéresse, c'est l'usage que font les diphysites de cette même notion en christologie. L'hypostase du Christ, que les diphysites disent composée, ne sera pas l'ensemble des deux réalités, du Verbe et de la chair, mais celui de leurs propriétés caractéristiques... Théorie troublante à vrai dire: l'union hypostatique expliquée par l'unuon des accidents! N'est-ce pas du pur nestorianisme? Et pourtant c'est bien cela que les diphysites enseignent!". Elias' letter is very interesting. In his apology in defense of the Monophysite positions sent to Leo, a *syngelos* (an office-bearer) in the Orthodox bishopric of Harran, Elias examines the arguments of St John Damascene (*ibid.*, pp.1-52. Elias not only criticizes John's Dyophysite Christology but also quotes passages from his works that refer to nature, accidents and hypostases, *ibid.*, pp. 27-30). According to A. Van Roey, Elias not only appeals to St Cyril's authority to defend the authenticity of the Monophysite teaching, but also unfolds three positions - arguments against Dyophysitism and John Damascene's Christological teaching in particular. These arguments are: i) the union of the two natures in the Dyophysite Christology is a union of accidents (chapter VI and VIII), ii) the Dyophysites accept one hypostasis in Christ because they accept a confusion in it (chapter IV), iii) Elias accuses the Dyophysite Christology of being a form of crypto-Nestorianism. He says that in the Dyophysite teaching the natures of Christ are not in union but separate (chapter V); that is hypostases (chapter VII, *ibid.*, p.22). Besides with reference to the third argument, we can see that there is the possibility of the existence of a crypto-Nestorianism in the first argument, as the union of accidents does not support a real union of the two natures. In the third argument we can also see the identification between hypostasis and nature in the mind of the Monophysite Elias.

<sup>491</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22 and 30. For Elias the natural difference exists only within the hypostasis, *ibid.*, p. 40, n. 157.



understanding of terminology. Natural properties or *idiomata* are added to *ousia* to create a 'non-self-subsistent' hypostasis or *physis* in Monophysitism. In the case of Orthodoxy the creation of a hypostasis is the reason for the appearance of a nature and its natural *idiomata*. At the same time, as we have already seen in the chapter on enhypostatos, every nature or *ousia* is real because it is observed in a hypostasis. The existence of a hypostasis testifies that *ousia* (or *physis*) exists in reality with its natural properties. The natural properties accompany every *ousia* which is *enhypostatos* or 'real', otherwise, we comprehend *ousia* in thought. In fact, what is more apparent in the Monophysite writings, is that all the effort of the non-Chalcedonians is to avoid the so-called secret-Nestorianism of Orthodoxy explaining the same Christological formula as the Dyophysites which is the *mia-physis* formula in a different perspective. St John's position querying the Monophysites is understandable.

"when confessing divine nature and human nature in Christ and when you say [they are] something else and something else you do not say two natures, being afraid where there is no fear".<sup>492</sup>

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<sup>492</sup> Kotter IV, *Aceph.*, p. 412 (4):1-3, "διὰ τί δὲ φύσιν θεότητος καὶ φύσιν σαρκὸς ἐπὶ Χριστοῦ ὁμολογοῦντες καὶ ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο λέγοντες δύο φύσεις οὐ λέγετε, ἐκεῖ φοβούμενοι φόβον, οὗ οὐκ ἔστι φόβος;". Elias the Monophysite uses a similar vocabulary (adopted from St Gregory the Theologian) characterizing the natures of Christ ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο, A. V. Roey, 'La Lettre Apologétique d'Élie à Léon', pp. 39-40. However, he understands the difference of natures, ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο, as different natural qualities, something, as we shall see, that in John's thought is one more inconsistency of the Monophysite Christology, *ibid.*, p. 40, "les éléments dont le Christ est formé, sont ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο disait saint Grégoire; ils ont une autre et une autre qualité naturelle, dit Élie:

In fact, Monophysitism would never have appeared if Nestorianism had not distinguished the two natures of Christ so sharply.

At the same time we need to consider sympathetically the Monophysite understanding of terminology. At those times in the abstractness of terminology, we should also mention the confusion of transferring the same terms from their Trinitarian use to Christology. The Monophysite Fathers know this difficulty. Trying to keep their teaching close to the Alexandrine Fathers sometimes they identify nature and ousia, while others nature and hypostasis.<sup>493</sup>

However it is the *mia-physis* formula that compels Monophysitism to support the union of Christ's essences in *physis*, in contrast to Dyophysitism for which any union of essences refers to hypostasis. In this perspective the Monophysites were simply being traditional (in their terms, i.e., Athanasius and Cyril) without making any distinction between hypostasis and *physis*. This was supported by another traditional argument: namely the distinction between 'theologia' and 'oikonomia', something that John Damascene himself hints,<sup>494</sup> and with the argument that what holds in 'theologia' (e.g. the Cappadocian distinction between hypostasis and *ousia*) does not necessarily apply in the realm of 'oikonomia'. According to J. Pelikan "in this emphasis on knowing the unknowable the Jacobites were stating the common faith which they shared with

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L'expression indique par conséquent la quiddité, l'essence et la *différence comme dans la qualité naturelle*, la *différence naturelle* ou *substantielle* sera une différence de quiddité, d'essence".

<sup>493</sup> J. Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom*, p. 56.

<sup>494</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 112 (6):1-2. "Εἰ δὲ φατε, ὡς ἕτερος λόγος ἐπὶ τῆς ἁγίας θεότητος καὶ ἄλλος ἐπὶ τῆς δι' ἡμᾶς τοῦ κυρίου οἰκονομίας, εἶπατε ἡμῖν διερωτῶσιν".



the other Christians, but it took on a special coloring in their system because of the implication that 'economy' rather than 'theology' was the proper topic of doctrinal affirmations. The distinction between economy and theology was basic to the Jacobite position. Jacob of Edessa took the words of the Gloria Patri:

“‘as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,’ to mean that one was to distinguish between Christ ‘before he became incarnate’ and Christ ‘in his body’”.<sup>495</sup>

In any case the development of terminology in a Monophysite mind stops at the time of St Cyril.<sup>496</sup>

It is true that all confusion in terminology created a number of complications in the dialogue between the Orthodox and the Monophysites and led the two parties to consider each other suspiciously. It seems to me that we should understand the accusation: ‘essence and hypostasis are identical’<sup>497</sup> against the Monophysites by St John Damascene in this perspective. Is this accusation a true statement or is he trying to say something else? In fact, reading the anti-Monophysite letter *Against the Jacobites* and the treatise

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<sup>495</sup> J. Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom*, pp. 54-5.

<sup>496</sup> A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, pt 2, pp. 72-3. “How consciously Severus approached the business of supervising language is evident from his basic comments on his self-imposed task. He discovered in himself the feeling of a ‘vigilant and sensible custody’ which he had discovered before in his great models Cyril and Athanasius. Both teachers, each in the situation of his time, acted ‘in the manner of a doctor’ at the appearance of ‘epidemics’... The conservative Severus, who was particularly when Cyril was up for discussion, thus allowed himself to correct individual Fathers and regarded this procedure as legitimate”.



*Against the Akephaloi*, we observe that John is acquainted with the distinction between hypostasis and essence and the identification between hypostasis and *physis* in Monophysitism.<sup>498</sup> First, when he speaks of Severus of Antioch's Christology he identifies *physis* and hypostasis as the Monophysite Father's position,<sup>499</sup> and second, in *Against the Jacobites*, chapter 9, he accuses the Monophysites of not understanding the meaning of the identification between *physis* and hypostasis in the patristic tradition.<sup>500</sup> From these two passages, and all others, we comprehend that John knows that only *physis* and hypostasis are identical in Monophysite Christological teaching. Why then does he charge the Monophysites with one more accusation, that of the identification between essence and hypostasis? Certainly he must have followed the philosophers he had in mind.

Although there is no clear explanation on the part of John, we might suppose that he uses the term *ousia* indifferently to denote *physis*. The

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<sup>497</sup> E.g., Kotter IV, *Jacob.* p. 112 (5):9-11; p. 114 (11):3-4.

<sup>498</sup> At this point we should note that the identification is not so clear sometimes among the opponents of Chalcedon (Kotter IV, *Haeres.*, p. 50 (83):13-19). The case of John Philoponus is very interesting. In the teaching of the tritheite Philoponus, we consider that Philoponus identifies, on the one hand *ousia* with *nature* and on the other *hypostasis* with *prosopon*. We read in *Diaitetes*, *ibid.*, p. 51 (83b):31-39, "φύσιν μὲν οὖν οἶεται τὸν κοινὸν τοῦ εἶναι λόγον τῶν τῆς αὐτῆς μετεχόντων οὐσίας... Οὐσίαν δὲ καὶ φύσιν εἰς ταυτὸν ἄγει. Ὑπόστασιν δὲ ἡγουν πρόσωπον τὴν ἰδιοσύστατον τῆς ἐκάστου φύσεως ὑπαρξιν...".

<sup>499</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.* p. 111 (2):16-19.

<sup>500</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113 (9):1-4, "ἀφέντες τοίνυν τὸ περισκελές τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας ὀρθοτομήσατε· οὐ γάρ, ὥς οἱ ἅγιοι πατέρες εἰρήκασιν, ταῦτ' ὡς λέγετε φύσιν καὶ ὑπόστασιν, μερικὴν δὲ μᾶλλον τὴν φύσιν ὥς καὶ τὴν καθ' αὐτὸ ὁμολογεῖτε ὑπόστασιν. Ὅτι δὲ οὐ μερικὰς φύσεις λέγειν ἐχρῆν, ἐντεῦθεν εἰσόμεθα". From this passage, we recognize i) the meaning of *physis* as the 'particular' in Monophysitism like hypostasis and ii) John's reaction.

indifferent use of these terms enables him to persuade the Jacobites that *physis* has the meaning as *ousia*, removing any individual meaning from *physis*.<sup>501</sup> In addition, this point seems to be John's main goal when he tries to interpret the Cyrillic formula as 'one incarnate nature of God the Logos'. First, proving that nature and essence are identical and second, as *ousia* and hypostasis do not acquire the same meaning, then *physis* and hypostasis are not identical. In fact, as we shall examine later, the main difference between Monophysitism and Dyophysitism refers to the identification between *physis* and hypostasis in the Cyrillic Christological formula 'καταχρηστικῶς', 'inexactly'<sup>502</sup> or 'κυρίως', 'absolutely'.

From all the above we consider that the Monophysite identification between hypostasis and nature is simply the result of the attempt by the anti-

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<sup>501</sup> Consequently, we could see the identification between hypostasis and essence in the works of John either as a simple reference to denote that hypostasis and nature are identical, or as a reality that serves the dogma from a pastoral perspective giving emphasis to the incorrect understanding of *physis* in Monophysitism.

<sup>502</sup> Using the word 'καταχρηστικῶς' (antonym to 'κυρίως'), St John Damascene means "in a non-technical and inexact sense", see J. Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom*, p. 21. In essence by using this word John believes that he offers the Dyophysite interpretation of the *mia-physis* formula and establishes the 'agreement' between St Cyril and the Dyophysite Fathers. We must note that Cyril knew and spoke of a *katachrestike* usage of the words by the Church Fathers. It could be that the basis of St John's arguments on this point, was Cyrillic. According to Ch. Stamoulis, *Περὶ Φωτός*, pp. 16-7, "ἡ καταχρηστικὴ χρῆσις ὧρων... δὲν εἶναι ἀγνωστὴ στὸ χῶρο τῆς ἱστορίας τῆς θεολογίας τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Βλ. ἐνδεικτικὰ Κυρίλλο Ἀλεξανδρείας, *Κατὰ τῶν Νεστορίου δυσφημιῶν πεντάβιβλος ἀντίρρησις*, PG 76, 33B: 'Τὸ μὲν γὰρ τῆς κράσεως ὄνομα, τεθείκασιν τινες καὶ τῶν ἁγίων Πατέρων ἐπειδὴ δεδιέναι φῆς, μὴ ἄρα τις ἀνάχυσιν συμβῆναι νομισθῇ... κατακέχρηται δὲ τῇ λέξει..., Πρβλ. τοῦ Ἰδίου, *Ἡ βίβλος τῶν Θησαυρῶν περὶ τῆς ἁγίας καὶ ὁμοουσίου Τριάδος* 15 PG 75, 277AB". By using this word Cyril means to offer the 'agreement' between his understanding of the word 'κράσεως' and the Church Fathers.



Chalcedonians to keep their teaching close to the Alexandrian understanding of terminology in order to clarify the doctrine of Christ on the basis of the *mia-physis* formula. On the other hand the Dyophysites introduced a distinction here, arguing or thinking that it had some traditional background, in order to argue in a certain way about Christology. They resist the distinction for various reasons, but they all relate to the matter in hand- Christology.

In conclusion we can repeat that at the centre of all disputations is the exact meaning of the term *physis*. The Monophysites define *physis*, according to John, from the formula 'there is no *physis* without hypostasis'. This position permits them to identify hypostasis and nature, individualizing its generic meaning. In fact, it is the Monophysite suspicion of an Orthodox crypto-Nestorianism and the abstract understanding of terminology of the Monophysite Fathers in general and Severus of Antioch in particular which created a number of complications in the Christological controversies and their opposition to the definitions of Chalcedon.



## **1. The proofs of the Monophysite identification between hypostasis and nature**

### *I. Patristic Authorities*

As we have said, all confusion in the use of terminology and the identification between hypostasis and nature come from the fourth century, from the Christology of St Athanasius and St Cyril.<sup>503</sup> However, we should examine not only the way of thinking by which the Monophysites identify nature and hypostasis, but also the proofs and the Patristic authorities with which they could support this traditional identification. But let us examine the Damascene's works to see how he comprehends the reasons for the Monophysite identification between hypostasis and nature.

In his Christological texts we consider a variety of references to this topic. This variety is not simply made by John, as it is followed by a refutation according to Orthodox positions. Apart from the specific answer to each topic, John refers to all the misinterpretations of Christological doctrine as a

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<sup>503</sup> It is necessary to note that although in the texts we shall read below St Athanasius sometimes identifies both nature and essence with hypostasis indifferently as for Athanasius all of them have the meaning of 'being', we do not observe identification between essence and hypostasis in St Cyril's works. The only position that Cyril accepts is: 'physis and hypostasis are identical'. Consequently, the Monophysite Fathers, and especially Severus, follow Cyril in Christology.

“confusion of names”.<sup>504</sup> Following St Gregory the Theologian,<sup>505</sup> he recognizes in heretical Christology a superficiality in the usage of terminology in the description of the doctrine of Christ. We can see this clearly when he claims that the heretics try to give a description of Christological doctrine through philosophical terminology.<sup>506</sup> According to this we have an adaptation of philosophy as a theological question. At the same time this is a criterion of Orthodoxy as in this way John proves that the heretics understand Christ through philosophical formulas and not through theology. In his mind it declares them cut off from the ecclesiastical body and finally from the truth that only the Holy Spirit offers.<sup>507</sup> This accusation seems to be the most important as it excludes heretics from communion with the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, although their teaching may contain the name of God.<sup>508</sup>

Returning to the question why the Monophysites identify nature and hypostasis, in the works of St John Damascene we consider that the clues, though very dimly, reveal the reasons for this position. According to John it is a

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<sup>504</sup> Kotter IV, *Volunt.*, pp. 203-4 (20):1-8.

<sup>505</sup> *Homily* 30, 8, PG 36, 113B.

<sup>506</sup> Kotter IV, *Volunt.*, pp. 203-4 (20):1-8 and Kotter II, *Expos.*, p. 112 (47):39-40.

<sup>507</sup> According to St John, Kotter IV, *Trisag.*, p. 316 (7):35-39, the fount of every interpretation of the Christological doctrine is the patristic florilegia such as “πατρικαὶ γὰρ αὐταί, καὶ οὐδαμῶς ἀντεροῦμεν. Ἄλλὰ χρή συμφώνους καὶ μὴ ἀλλήλοις, οὐδὲν δὲ ἔλαττον ἑαυτοῖς ἀντιλόγους καὶ μαχομένους ἀποδεικνύειν τοὺς ἁγίους πατέρας καὶ διδασκάλους, ὧν τὸ περὶ πίστεως φρόνημα ἐνιαῖον καὶ ἀπαράλλακτον ἔδειξεν ἡ μία τοῦ πνεύματος δύναμις τε καὶ ἔλλαμψις”.

<sup>508</sup> See e.g. St John’s arguments against the Iconoclasts, Kotter III, *Imag.*, p. 99 (II,10):37-48. The above general condemnation includes the Monophysites, as John considers the undermining of Christ’s humanity to have negative soteriological consequences. See Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 137 (80):3-4. “Εἰ γὰρ ἄλλος καὶ ἄλλος, μάτην μεγαλαυχούμεν τὴν τῆς ἡμετέρας φύσεως θέωσιν διὰ τῆς τοῦ λόγου γεγενῆσθαι σαρκώσεως”.

misunderstanding of the Alexandrine Fathers' teaching:<sup>509</sup> not so much their teaching itself, but the presuppositions of approaching this Christological teaching in general and the *mia-physis* formula in particular. The problem becomes bitter as both Orthodox and Monophysites claim as accurate their interpretation of the same passages of the same Church Fathers.

We read in the work *Against the Jacobites*:

“at this point [one incarnate nature of God the Logos] the blessed Athanasius and Cyril denoted hypostasis, using the name of nature *inexactly* and not in a proper way”, as “[nature is] generic... for hypostasis, that is the individual (atomon) of a nature is nature, but it is not only nature but also [nature] with properties; on the other hand nature is not hypostasis namely individual. Thus [St Athanasius and St Cyril] denote hypostasis through the name of nature using it not absolutely but *inexactly*, as it is said ‘one incarnate hypostasis of God the Logos’”.<sup>510</sup>

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<sup>509</sup> For the Monophysites, as they themselves confess, special honour must be attributed to St Athanasius, St Basil the Great, St Gregory of Nyssa, St Gregory Theologian, St Cyril of Alexandria and of course to Severus of Antioch (Bishop of the Orient, *Epistle*, CSCO 103 (1933): 133 [17: 189-90]).

<sup>510</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 126 (52):9-17, “οἱ μακάριοι Ἀθανάσιός τε καὶ Κύριλλος ἐνταῦθα (one nature of God the Logos) καταχρηστικῶς καὶ οὐ κυρίως τῷ τῆς φύσεως ὀνόματι τὴν ὑπόστασιν ἐδήλωσαν ὡς καθολικωτέρῳ.... Ἡ μὲν γὰρ ὑπόστασις ἦτοι τὸ ἄτομον τῆς φύσεως φύσις, ἀλλὰ οὐ μόνον φύσις, ἀλλὰ μετὰ ιδιωμάτων, ἡ δὲ φύσις οὐχ ὑπόστασις ἦτοι ἄτομον. Οὕτω καταχρηστικῶς καὶ οὐ κυρίως τῷ τῆς φύσεως ὀνόματι τὴν ὑπόστασιν ἐσήμαναν, ὡς εἶναι τὸ λεγόμενον μίαν ὑπόστασιν τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου σεσαρκωμένην”.



The names of St Athanasius and St Cyril and also their definitions of the terms *physis* and *hypostasis* are distinguished clearly in this passage. This identification of *physis* with *hypostasis*, as we can see in the above passage, follows the famous *mia-physis* formula.<sup>511</sup>

There are two passages under the name of St Athanasius that refer to this subject. For one of them Kotter gives a reference but not for the other one. Kotter refers only to the letter *To the Emperor Jovian concerning the Orthodox Faith*.<sup>512</sup> The other passage is almost identical with the Cyrillic formula 'one incarnate nature of God the Logos' and it comes from the work *Sermon on the Annunciation of the Most Holy Virgin*.<sup>513</sup> But both works are Ps-Athanasian and they come from a later era than that of Athanasius. The first is a Monophysite synthesis,<sup>514</sup> while the second comes from the seventh-eighth century.<sup>515</sup>

According to A. Harnack, it was Apollinaris who used the formula for the first time. Harnack claims that Cyril "derived the formula 'μία φύσις...

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<sup>511</sup> The Orthodox Fathers and especially St Maximus the Confessor understood this formula that Cyril elaborated in the second letter to Succensus, in the sense of the difference between the two natures and not with the meaning of their union. According to J. Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom*, pp. 79-80, Maximus "went on to explain the Cyrillian formula to mean that there were two natures before the union, so that the formula was 'a periphrasis...according to the union' (Ep. 12, PG 91, 501)".

<sup>512</sup> PG 28, 532B.

<sup>513</sup> PG 28, 917-940, the passage is on 932.

<sup>514</sup> According to M. Geerard, *CPG* II, p. 47. "Pseudepigraphon est monophysitarum. - Cf. : M. Richard, in *MSR* (1945), p. 30".

<sup>515</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 51. "Auctori ignoto s. Viii exeunte uel s. Viii ineunte tribuitur a M. Jugie (*Deux Homélies patristiques pseudépigraphes*, in *EO* 39, 1940, p. 283-289). - Iuxta R. Caro (*o.c.*, p. 545-554) homilia nostra nucleum continet s. Iv conscriptum, retractatum saeculis sequentibus".

σεσαρκωμένην' from an expression taken from a work of Apollinaris which he [Cyril] considered as Athanasian, because the Apollinarians had fathered it on Athanasius".<sup>516</sup> Moreover, for the anti-Chalcedonians the identification between hypostasis and nature on the basis of this formula claims the authority and the reputation of the Alexandrine Fathers. They were the 'pillars' of the Church as on the one hand St Athanasius described Trinitarian doctrine (Theology) while St Cyril, on the other interpreted Christological doctrine (Economy).

In contrast to St Athanasius who identifies *hypostasis* and *ousia*<sup>517</sup> to denote simply the 'being' as we have seen in chapter three,<sup>518</sup> in St Cyril's works the only identification we observe is between hypostasis and nature.

We can cite, for example, the passage:

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<sup>516</sup> *History of Dogma*, trans E.B. Speiers, and J. Millar, vol. IV (Williams & Norgate: London, 1898), p. 176 n. 1. St Cyril himself confesses this comes from an earlier time, see *First letter to Succensus* in L.R. Wickham, p. 76 (4):2-3. For W.H.C. Frend, pp. 121-2, "by the time of his controversy with Nestorius, Cyril had accepted the formula which he believed to be Athanasian of 'one nature, and that incarnate of the divine Word', and he was using *physis* and *hypostasis* as synonyms". But also in the texts of John there does not seem to be any knowledge that this formula comes from Apollinaris. St John not only ignores the origin of this formula but he also believes in its patristic origin when he says, Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 125 (52):1-2: "μίαν φύσιν τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου σεσαρκωμένην ὁμολογεῖτε, καὶ κοινὴ ὑμῖν τε καὶ ἡμῖν δόξα πατέρων γὰρ ὁ λόγος ἐστίν". In no case would John recognize Apollinaris as a Father of the Church, see Kotter IV, *Haeres.*, p. 41 (77):1-8.

<sup>517</sup> We read in the introduction of *Tomus ad Antiochenos* in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, series 2, vol iv, pp. 481-2, "the word ὑπόστασις had been used in the Nicene anathema as a synonym of οὐσία, and in this sense it was commonly used by Athanasius in agreement with the New Testament use of the word with Dionysius of Rome, and with the West, to whom ὑπόστασις was etymologically identified with 'Substantia' their (perhaps imperfect) equivalent for οὐσία".

<sup>518</sup> See p. 106.

“indeed, by this thing only would be understood the difference of natures, that is hypostases”.<sup>519</sup>

In the same letter to Acacius Melitenes, while identifying nature and hypostasis, he also identifies hypostasis and *prosopon*.<sup>520</sup>

Beyond this direct identification there are many other passages where we understand it indirectly. In *The third letter to Nestorius*, Cyril denotes:

“If someone divides the hypostases in the one Christ after the union... let him be anathema”.<sup>521</sup>

The same confusion can be seen when he claims:

“on the one hand we say that two natures have been unified [in Christ], on the other hand, as the severance in two [natures] had been taken up [refuted] after the union, we believe that the nature of the Son is one, as one [is the Son] but is man and incarnate.”<sup>522</sup>

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<sup>519</sup> *To Acacius of Melitene* in L.R., Wickham, p. 50 (14):13-14, “καὶ κατ’ αὐτὸ δὴ τοῦτ’ ἐκείνου καὶ μόνον νοηθεῖται ὅτι τῶν φύσεων ἡ γοῦν ὑποστάσεων διαφορά”.

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50 (13):1.

<sup>521</sup> In L.R., Wickham, p. 28, “εἰ τις ἐπὶ τοῦ ἑνὸς Χριστοῦ διαιρεῖ τὰς ὑποστάσεις μετὰ τὴν ἔνωσιν... ἀνάθεμα ἔστω”.

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.*, *To Acacius of Melitene*, p. 48 (12):22-25, “δύο μὲν φύσεις ἡνωσθαί φαμεν, μετὰ δέ γε τὴν ἔνωσιν, ὡς ἀνηρημένης ἤδη τῆς εἰς δύο διατομῆς, μίαν εἶναι πιστεύομεν τὴν τοῦ υἱοῦ φύσιν, ὡς ἑνός, πλὴν ἐνανθρωπήσαντος καὶ σεσαρκωμένου”.



In all these passages, we observe the term hypostasis is identified sometimes with the *prosopon* while, at other times, with the *physis*.

At this point we should note that John in *Dialectica* chapter (κστ')μγ' denotes the reason for the identification between hypostasis and nature without special reference to Cyril. He simply says that some Fathers identify hypostasis and *physis* because the term hypostasis has not one specific meaning but two. One meaning of hypostasis is identical with the *atomon*, while the other denotes 'the simple existence'.<sup>523</sup> The latter case is the reason for all confusion. What John rejects is the understanding of this tradition separately from the Alexandrian Fathers' whole work, and secondly its consideration in the light of the more accurate explanatory distinction between *physis* and hypostasis. What John tries to do, as we shall analyse in chapter five, is to persuade the Monophysites not to consider this identification on its own, but in the light of there being many modes of existence of a nature in a hypostasis.

## II. The Human being Example.

Another reason for this identification is the use of the example of human being composed of body and soul, in Christology. The importance of this example is its immediate connection with practical experience we, as people, have from our lives. In the preceding lines we shall see that for John the misunderstanding of this example by the Monophysites is another reason for the

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<sup>523</sup> Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 108 (κστ')μγ': 2-7.

agreement on one nature and hypostasis in Christ. Indeed, the hypostasis of man out of two natures in the Monophysite thought of the eighth century presupposes, and at the same time, testifies that 'nature and hypostasis are identical', as the two natures, body and soul, create one nature, that of man. Similarly, Christ, composed of divinity and humanity, is, after the union, one nature and hypostasis. But what does John say about this example? We read in *Against the Akephaloi*:

"still, they say that the holy Fathers used the example of the human being in Christ's mystery. The nature of human beings is one, so, Christ's nature will be one".<sup>524</sup>

From this passage we understand two effects: first the Monophysite effort to keep its teaching traditional, and second that some Fathers used this example in Christology. John knows very well and believes that any interpretation of the doctrine of Christ would be impossible for the Monophysites without a precedent in Patristic thought.

A similar question faced Leontius of Byzantium in his work *Comments in the First Treatise Against the Nestorians and Monophysites* and in *Capita Trignita contra Severum*. We can distinguish a correspondence between these works and St John's letter against the Jacobites. The main topics are the same,

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<sup>524</sup> Kotter IV, *Aceph.*, p. 414 (7):1-3, "ἔτι φασίν, ὅτι οἱ ἅγιοι πατέρες τῷ ὑποδείγματι τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐχρήσαντο ἐπὶ τοῦ κατὰ Χριστὸν μυστηρίου· μία δὲ φύσις τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐστὶ, μία τοίνυν καὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἔσται φύσις". A similar assertion can be seen in the Monophysite Elias, A. Roey, pp. 39-40.

like the disputation over the Monophysite position on the identification between hypostasis and nature, the interpretation of Cyrillic Christology and, of course, the anthropological example and its use in the case of Christ.<sup>525</sup> The relationship between the works of Leontius and *Against the Jacobites* is so clear that we could say that John's letter is a summary of Leontius' works. The latter author, like John, seems to know the Patristic authorities who use the anthropological model but he avoids naming them.<sup>526</sup> But who are these Fathers?<sup>527</sup> Firstly we should search for clues in Alexandrine theology.

There are references to this example in some Ps-Athanasian works, while in Athanasius' authentic works the comparison of the human being as a compound of soul and flesh with Christ is elucidated according to the Orthodox Christological teaching.<sup>528</sup> Indeed, in Athanasius, this model is emphatically not an attempt to interpret the union of humanity and divinity in Christ as one nature.

Nevertheless, apart from the other ecclesiastical authors, in Cyril there are some passages which the Monophysites could have used to find a practical application of the identification between hypostasis and nature through the anthropological model.

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<sup>525</sup> This is distinguished not only in Kotter's critical Edition (IV, *Index*, p. 449) but also from the correspondence of the arguments of Leontius of Byzantium with those of St John Damascene.

<sup>526</sup> Leontius, *CNE*, PG 86, 1280C, speaks only of "τὰ τῶν θεοσόφων συντάγματα, ἐν οἷς ἐπὶ τῆς ἐνώσεως τῷ κατὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐχρήσαντο παραδείγματι".

<sup>527</sup> In the total Patristic corpus it is very common to discern an example with these characteristics.

<sup>528</sup> *Fragmenta Varia*, 'De exemplo ex natura Hominis Allato', PG 26, 1233:9 - 1240:35



For instance, in a passage where St Cyril tries to explain and elucidate the *mia-physis* formula, it says:

“having brought them to union (the Logos’ nature and flesh) we confess one Christ, one Son, Himself one Lord and then [we confess] the Son’s nature, as one incarnate that is to say in the case of common man for he is from different natures, I mean from body and soul, and only reason and theory know the difference. On the other hand having brought them to union one human nature is made afterwards. So the recognition of the difference of natures does not divide the one Christ in two”.<sup>529</sup>

In truth, this argument is also strengthened by the fact that every human nature composed of soul and body exists only under a hypostasis. What the

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<sup>529</sup> *To Eulogius*, in L.R. Wickham, pp. 63:15-64:4. See also the *Second letter to Succensus* in L.R. Wickham, p. 88 (3):11-18, “ἡμεῖς γὰρ ἐνώσαντες ταῦτα [λόγου φύσις καὶ σάρκα] ἓνα Χριστόν, ἓνα υἱόν, τὸν αὐτὸν ἓνα κύριον ὁμολογοῦμεν καὶ λοιπὸν μίαν τὴν τοῦ υἱοῦ φύσιν σεσαρκωμένην, ὁποῖόν ἐστι καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ κοινοῦ εἰπεῖν ἀνθρώπου, ἐστι μὲν γὰρ ἐκ διαφόρων φύσεων, ἀπὸ τε σώματος φημι καὶ ψυχῆς, καὶ ὁ μὲν λόγος καὶ θεωρία οἶδε τὴν διαφορὰν, ἐνώσαντες δέ, τότε μίαν ποιοῦμεν ἀνθρώπου φύσιν. οὐκοῦν οὐ τὸ εἰδέναι τῶν φύσεων τὴν διαφορὰν διατέμνειν ἐστὶν εἰς δύο τὸν ἓνα Χριστόν”. There are also other passages, e.g. *Third letter to Nestorius* in L. R. Wickham, p. 18 (4):17-20, “ἄλλ’ ἐνωθεὶς (ὁ Λόγος) κατὰ φύσιν καὶ οὐκ εἰς σάρκα τραπεῖς, τοιαύτην ἐποίησατο τὴν κατοίκησιν, ἣν ἂν ἔχειν λέγοιτο καὶ ἡ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ψυχὴ πρὸς τὸ ἴδιον ἐαυτῆς σῶμα”. St Cyril uses the same example in the same work to express the union of the two natures of Christ, *ibid.*, p. 22 (8):27-31 “οὐ γὰρ ἐστι διπλοῦς ὁ εἷς καὶ μόνος Χριστός... καθάπερ ἀμέλει καὶ ἄνθρωπος ἐκ ψυχῆς νοεῖται καὶ σώματος καὶ οὐ διπλοῦς μᾶλλον, ἀλλ’ εἷς ἐξ ἀμφοῖν”. In his *Answers to Tiberius* Cyril says: *ibid.*, p. 162, (*Let.* 9):19-21, “καὶ οὐκ ἂν τις εἴποι ψυχῆς ἔργα μόνῃς εἶναι, εἰ καὶ αὐτὴ κινεῖ πρὸς ἔργα τὸ σῶμα, ἀλλὰ τοῦ συναμφοτέρου, οὕτω νόει καὶ ἐπὶ Χριστοῦ”.

Monophysites claim is supported in the theoretical identification between hypostasis and nature which finds its practical explanation in the empiric reality of life. Beyond the Monophysite understanding of the anthropological example, John does not reject the use of this model in the explanation of the doctrine of Christ. He even makes use of it. But we shall analyse John's thought on this point in chapter five in order to comprehend his understanding of the example of the human being and why he considers the Monophysite understanding of this example to be wrong.

### *III. The term 'enhypostatos'.*

Apart from the practical working of the anthropological model, it seems that there is another philosophical reason for the identification between hypostasis and nature by the Monophysites, as we consider the Damascene's works. It could be the identification between hypostasis and *enhypostatos*.

St John's effort to prove in the letter *Against the Jacobites* (chapters 11-12) and in the treatise *Against the Akephaloi* (chapter 6) that the *enhypostatos* and the hypostasis in Christology are not identical with his insistence on distinguishing these terms from each other, show the different use of the term *enhypostatos* between Dyophysitism and Monophysitism. Indeed, we saw in chapter three that if the nature which is *enhypostatos* happened to be identical with the hypostasis then the Monophysites would be consistent with their principle that 'nature and hypostasis are identical'. In any case we could not

deny that if there were not a problem of identification between hypostasis and *enhypostatos*, then John would not have tried to explain the meanings of these terms giving emphasis to their distinction. He would simply have explained what each of them means.

But the use of the verb *‘φαμέν’*, say in the context:

“we know very well that there is no *ousia* without hypostasis, but we do not say that *enhypostaton* and hypostasis are identical”,<sup>530</sup>

shows John’s vigorous attempt to express his disagreement with the Monophysites as Leontius of Byzantium had done two centuries earlier.<sup>531</sup> In contrast, in the work *Pege Gnoseos*, he does not quote any passage where we can see that the *enhypostatos* and the hypostasis are not identical. John’s insistence on this specific meaning of the *enhypostatos* seems intended to answer the Monophysites, and is dictated by concrete historical circumstances.

From the gist of chapters 11 and 12 it seems very clear that the subject that is elaborated by John, is known to the recipient of the letter. He begins the elucidation of the term *enhypostatos* with respect to its distinction from hypostasis, without giving a previous introduction to the subject in order to

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<sup>530</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 114 (12):1-2, “ὅτι μὲν οὖν οὐκ ἔστιν οὐσία ἀνυπόστατος, ἴσμεν σαφῶς, ἀλλ’ οὐ ταῦτόν φαμεν ἐνυπόστατον καὶ ὑπόστασιν”.

<sup>531</sup> John borrows this kind of deliberation and replicates some passages on this subject from Leontius of Byzantium, *CNE*, PG 86, 1277D. There is no evidence that *enhypostatos* had any independent significance in Monophysite theology, though such passages suggest that Monophysites did criticize the Orthodox recourse to the term as a way of distinguishing between *hypostasis* and *ousia*: see A. Louth, *Tradition and Originality*, pp. 159-60.



guide the recipient of this letter as to what he wants to say and without explaining why he emphasizes this distinction either. On the contrary, he states the points of disagreement such as the identification of nature, hypostasis and *enhypostatos* and then follows them with an explanation. If the subject were not known, the flow of the text would be different. In any case, we perceive from the whole letter that the Monophysites are led to the identification between hypostasis, *enhypostatos* and nature because they misunderstand the general principle that 'there is no nature anhypostatos or without hypostasis' a principle acceptable to all Christological parties.<sup>532</sup>

We need to look at John's comprehension of the Monophysite and the Orthodox understanding of this formula. Every *physis* has a hypostasis and it is not possible to find a *physis* without a hypostasis. Two occasions are possible; the Monophysite identification of *physis* with hypostasis, and the Orthodox 'θεώρηση', *consideration*, of the essence or *physis* in the hypostasis. Indeed, as we have seen, John says that the *enhypostatos* (= real, existing) is connected with the 'real' nature that is considered in a hypostasis, and that every nature that is considered in a hypostasis is *enhypostatos*.

Although John and the Monophysites comprehend these terms differently, we need to understand that a Monophysite use of the term

<sup>532</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 114 (11):1-5, "εἰ γὰρ μὴ ἐστὶ φύσις ἀνυπόστατος, οὔτε μὴν οὐσία ἀπρόσωπος οὐδ' αὖ πάλιν ἀνούσιος ὑπόστασις τε καὶ πρόσωπον -οὐ γὰρ ἐστίν-, ἀλλ' οὐ ταὐτὸν οὐσία τε καὶ ὑπόστασις οὐδὲ φύσις καὶ πρόσωπον. Οὐ γὰρ ταὐτὸν οὐσία τε καὶ ἐνούσιον οὐδ' ἐνυπόστατον καὶ ὑπόστασις". It seems from this passage, that in John's thought the consequences of the identification between hypostasis and *ousia* for the Monophysites are similar to those of the identification between hypostasis and *enhypostatos*. We can also see it in *ibid.*, pp. 114-5 (12):1-3.

*enhypostatos* would have its origins in Alexandrian theology. In the writings of Athanasius and Cyril the *enhypostatos* refers, within the context of Trinitarian theology, to the persons of the Logos and the Holy Spirit.<sup>533</sup>

Similarly, God, according to John:

“He constantly possesses His own Word, begotten of Himself, not as our word is, without a hypostasis and dissolving into air, but *enhypostatos*, alive and perfect, not proceeding out from Himself but ever existing within Himself”.<sup>534</sup>

According to Kotter’s critical edition both this passage and the quotation on line 10 of the same page come from St John Chrysostom.<sup>535</sup> Moreover, the whole text dealing with the Logos which is either *anhypostatos* or *enhypostatos* draws on Cyril, Athanasius, Alexander of Alexandria and Gregory the Theologian. If the *enhypostatos* is connected with the Hypostases in theology and the natures in economy, then both nature and hypostasis can be characterized as *enhypostatoi*, as we see in the confession ‘nature and hypostasis are identical’. If we are to regard this kind of statement as legitimate then we must find patristic authority for characterizing not only the Logos and the Holy Spirit as *enhypostatos* but also the Father within the Holy Trinity.

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<sup>533</sup> See also chapter three.

<sup>534</sup> Kotter II, *Expos.*, p. 15 (6):4-7.

<sup>535</sup> Some Fathers who characterize the Logos and Holy Spirit as *enhypostatos*: St Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio Cathechica Magna*, 8:154; St Irenaeus, *Fragmenta*, 19:5.

John's quotation from John Chrysostom is used in order to characterize the Logos as *enhypostatos*. The same patristic authority calls the Father *enhypostatos*:

“Just as the Father is *enhypostatos*, being in need of nothing in order to exist as a hypostasis, so also is the Son”.<sup>536</sup>

Without claiming that this passage would be a reason for the identification of hypostasis with *enhypostatos* by the Monophysites, it was to a Patristic text that the Monophysites could appeal, replying to the Orthodox argument: *physis* is *enhypostatos* by saying that *enhypostatos* means ‘existing in a hypostasis’ as in the Chrysostom example. We can consider a similar position in Epiphanius Constantiensis (315-403). There are a number of passages that characterize the Father as *enhypostatos*.<sup>537</sup>

In conclusion we can say that Monophysitism, according to John, base the identification between hypostasis and nature on three facts: first, on patristic florilegia, second philosophy, and third on the experience of all human beings. Where it differs from Dyophysitism is in the different approach to these parameters. More precisely: the Monophysites use the identification in their arguments on the description of the *mysterium Christi* in such a way that John believes that their only care is to be characterized traditional in their formulas and not to interpret these formulas in the whole work of Athanasius and Cyril.

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<sup>536</sup> In *epistula ad Hebraeos*, PG 63, 20:35-36, “ὡςπερ ἐστὶν ὁ Πατὴρ ἐνυπόστατος, καὶ πρὸς ὑπόστασιν οὐδενὸς δεόμενος· οὕτω καὶ ὁ Υἱός”.



In fact, for Monophysitism every consideration of Christ should only be understood through the Alexandrine thought of the fourth-fifth century. Indeed, the distinction between *physis* and hypostasis bound the Monophysite teaching of that period. Monophysitism claiming to be traditional, could never accept the afore-mentioned distinction. Furthermore, the only way of opposing this distinction was its insistence on the identification between hypostasis and nature. This position is also strengthened by the formula 'there is no *physis* without hypostasis'. On the other hand suspiciousness of the crypto-Nestorianism of Orthodoxy, because of the formula 'in two natures', obliged Monophysitism to think about Christ on the basis of this presupposition for any of its arguments.

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<sup>537</sup> E.g. in *Ancoratus*, PG 43, 25BC.

## **2. The Nestorian and Monothelite identification between hypostasis and nature**

### *Overview*

At this point we ought to make a brief reference to Nestorianism and Monothelitism and their conception of the identification between hypostasis and nature. We must make this reference as, in John's thought all Christological sects have similar, if not the same presuppositions in understanding Christological doctrine. This is mainly true for the aforementioned identification. The difference is focused on which term is emphasised, hypostasis or nature. For instance, in the case of Nestorianism the union of Christ's essences is understood not by nature but by grace as the hypostases must remain two in accordance with the two natures; in the case of Monophysitism on the other hand the union is established on the one compound nature of divinity and humanity in Christ as the hypostasis is one.

### *I. Nestorianism*

In their effort to explain the existence of both essences in the person of the Logos, the Nestorians separate the humanity of Christ from His divinity and

speak of a relative union between them. For them it is impossible to say that two Hypostases (the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin Mary) are One Hypostasis as hypostasis and nature are identical<sup>538</sup> by virtue of the formula 'there is no nature without hypostasis'. The agreement on the relative union of the two natures of Christ obliged Nestorius to accept two natures and hypostases in the one person of Christ.<sup>539</sup> Although John seems to ignore the Nestorian distinction between hypostasis and *prosopon*,<sup>540</sup> he replies to the Nestorians' teaching by elaborating the Dyophysite classification and distinction of terminology in the categories of 'individual' and 'generic'. Hypostasis and *prosopon* are identical like *physis* and *ousia*.<sup>541</sup> Consequently, for the Palestinian monk:

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<sup>538</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, pp. 111-2 (2):11-16.

<sup>539</sup> Nestorius, *The Bazaar of Heracleides*, p. 172. According to Nestorius "but [there is only] one *prosopon* in the union but in the natures the one and the other, as from the common *prosopon* it is known that he took the flesh, the likeness of a servant, for his own *prosopon*, and thereby he spoke in teaching and working and acting; and he gave his own likeness to the likeness of a servant and thereby he speaks as by his own *prosopon* and by the divinity. For the *prosopon* is common, one and the same. The likeness of the servant belongs unto the divinity and the likeness of the divinity unto the humanity. One and the same is the *prosopon* but not the *ousia*. For the *ousia* of the likeness of God and the *ousia* of the likeness of the servant remain in their *hypostases*".

<sup>540</sup> Maybe John ignored it as St Cyril does. Nestorius wrote the work *The Bazaar of Heracleides* when he was in exile after the Ecumenical Council of 431. Cyril did not know the distinction between hypostasis and *prosopon* in Nestorius as it was represented in *The Bazaar* because he was dead before it was written.

<sup>541</sup> Kotter IV, *Fides*, p. 252 (52):1-2, "ὥσπερ οὐσία καὶ φύσις ταυτὸν ἐστὶ παρὰ τοῖς ἁγίοις πατράσιν, οὕτω καὶ ὑπόστασις καὶ πρόσωπον ταυτὸν ἐστὶ".



“there is no hypostasis without person. If the hypostases are two, the persons are also two at all events”.<sup>542</sup>

Apart from this the reasons why the Nestorians identify nature and hypostasis must not only be examined through the specific meaning of each term but also in the perspective of how a nature exists in a hypostasis.

According to Nestorius himself, every essence has its own hypostasis.<sup>543</sup>

The ‘koine’, ‘common or generic’ essence becomes the specific or individual *ousia* in every hypostasis in order for it to enter into existence. J. Pelikan is informative: “for a hypostasis was to be defined as ‘a singular substance, which subsists in its own unique being and is one in number... it is distinguished from other fellow hypostases through the special property that it possesses in its person.’ The person of each hypostasis, then, was ‘that which keeps it from being another [and which] determines what sort of hypostasis it is’ ... ‘Because the hypostasis exists in its being, it cannot be assumed or added to by another hypostasis and to become one hypostasis with it’”.<sup>544</sup>

In Christology, for instance, the hypostasis of the Logos with its divinity, came into a union with another hypostasis that had an *ousia* similar to that of all human beings. For Nestorius the confession that there exists only one person in

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<sup>542</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248 (32):1-2, “ὑπόστασις ἀπρόσωπος οὐκ ἔστιν. Εἰ οὖν δύο ὑποστάσεις, πάντως καὶ δύο πρόσωπα”.

<sup>543</sup> Nestorius, p. 245, “but thou sayest that he who confesses two natures, one and another, of necessity makes two *prosopa*; for it is not possible that two *prosopa* should become one *prosopon*; but, if it is right to confess one *prosopon*, refer them all to the one *prosopon* of God the Word, in order that they may be predicated of one *prosopon* and not of two”.

<sup>544</sup> *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom*, pp. 44-5.

Christ refers to the relative union of the two essences that have their individual hypostases.<sup>545</sup> The Logos became man and came into union with Christ's humanity relatively,<sup>546</sup> and the Son of the Virgin Mary became God by grace.<sup>547</sup> Consequently, the Nestorians recognize in Christ two Sons: One by nature, the Son of God, and One by grace, the Son of the Virgin Mary.<sup>548</sup> For John this position is a matter of disputation as:

“if the Son of the Virgin Mary became Son of God by grace [then there are] two sonships, and they are not one Son but two as [the sonship] is different by nature and different [the sonship] by grace. The Son by nature and the Son by grace will be called ‘brothers’ but they will never be called one Son”.<sup>549</sup>

<sup>545</sup> Nestorius, pp. 218-9, “it is not indeed that the one *ousia* without *hypostasis* should be conceived, as if by union into one *ousia* and there were no *prosopon* of one *ousia*, but the natures subsist in their *prosopa* and in their natures and in the *prosopon* of the union”. See also G. Martzelos, *Ἡ Χριστολογία τοῦ Βασιλείου Σελευκείας καὶ ἡ οἰκουμένη* σημασία της, ΦΘΒ 17 (Thessaloniki: P. Pournara), pp. 104-5.

<sup>546</sup> Kotter IV, *Nestor.*, p. 271 (22):8-9 and (23):1-3.

<sup>547</sup> About the consequences of the Nestorian teaching for Christ's humanity see Kotter IV, *Fides*, p. 244 (22):8-16.

<sup>548</sup> Of course, for the Nestorians, the human part of Christ as the son of a woman is also son by nature, but this individual hypostasis became the son of God by grace because of the relative union of the two different natures with their hypostases in Christ. This teaching is a consequence of the identification between hypostasis and nature, see Kotter IV, *Haeres.*, p. 48 (81):1-6.

<sup>549</sup> Kotter IV, *Fides*, p. 240 (11):1-4, “εἰ οὖν ὁ υἱὸς τῆς παρθένου ἐγένετο υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ χάριτι, δύο υἰότητες, ἄλλη τοῦ φύσει καὶ ἄλλη τοῦ χάριτι, καὶ οὐχ εἷς υἱός, ἀλλὰ δύο· υἱὸς γὰρ φύσει καὶ υἱὸς χάριτι ἀδελφοὶ μὲν κληθήσονται, εἷς δὲ υἱὸς οὐκ ἂν λεχθεῖη ποτέ”.

In the light of their identification of hypostasis with essence, the Nestorians make every effort to avoid confusing divinity and humanity in. So their confession of the relative union of Christ's *ousiai* is very logical.<sup>550</sup>

## II. Monothelitism

In his treatise written against the Monothelites, *On two Wills in Christ*, as we can see from the title itself, John not only proves the real presence of the divine and human will in Christ according to the two *ousiai*, but he also analyses and makes a general reference to the properties, natural and hypostatic. As we have already said in Chapter one, the Dyophysite conception that each *physis* in Christ has its own natural properties that distinguish one nature from the other,

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<sup>550</sup> Although the confession of the relative union of Christ's *ousiai* and hypostases in His one person on the part of the Nestorians is an attempt to avoid the confusion of the uncreated divinity and the created humanity, it is a result of the acceptance that nature and hypostasis are identical. See the passage from Kotter IV, *Volunt.*, pp. 203-4 (20):2-6 which we have already mentioned. On the other hand the Orthodox party keeps the two natures of Christ intact, simply, by attributing the passions of the flesh to Christ's hypostasis on the grounds that the Logos is the hypostasis of Christ's humanity. See Kotter IV, *Fides*, p. 244 (24):2-6, "οὐ λέγομεν, ὅτι ὁ λόγος εἰς τὴν θείαν αὐτοῦ φύσιν ἐνεπτόσθη ἢ ἔπαθεν, ἀλλ', ἐπειδὴν αὐτὸς ἐγένετο τῇ σαρκὶ ὑπόστασις καὶ αὐτοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ σὰρξ καὶ οὐκ ἄλλου καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλος καὶ ἄλλος, ἀλλ' εἷς καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς υἱὸς καὶ Χριστὸς καὶ κύριος, καὶ τὰ πάθη τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ εἰς αὐτὸν ἀναφέρεται· αὐτοῦ γάρ εἰσι καὶ οὐκ ἄλλου".



created humanity from uncreated divinity, means that this treatise takes a very strong anthropological and Trinitarian character.<sup>551</sup>

Monothelism tried to prove that in the union of the natures in the one hypostasis of Christ, there was only one will. In this way it aims, first to find something unique between the two natures of Christ and second, to explain the kind of union there is between divinity and humanity.<sup>552</sup>

John accuses the Monothelites of claiming that:

“the will does not pertain to the nature but to the hypostasis”.<sup>553</sup>

This refers to confusion between ‘θελητική δύναμις’ ‘the ability of want’ and the ‘ἁπλῶς θέλειν’, ‘simply want’ that are properties of the nature and the

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<sup>551</sup> Although one might expect that John would have developed in more detail the role of the natural properties in his works against the Monophysites as he did against the Monothelites, he did not do so. Maybe in the mind of John the most important thing against the Monophysites, was the elaboration of the teaching that it was possible to consider a nature in a hypostasis and not the natural properties. At least this position appears in his letters addressed to the Jacobite bishop of Daraïas and to Archimandrite Jordan.

<sup>552</sup> According to the Monothelite Patriarch Sergius, in his letter addressed to Pope Honorius, Mansi 11, 533DE: “ἓνα καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν Υἱὸν μονογενῆ τὸν Κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν τὸν ἀληθινὸν Θεὸν ἐνεργεῖν ὁμολογεῖν τὰ τε θεῖα καὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα, καὶ πᾶσαν θεοπρεπῆ καὶ ἀνθρωποπρεπῆ ἐνέργειαν ἐξ ἑνὸς καὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ σαρκακωμένου Θεοῦ Λόγου ἀδιαιρέτως προϊέναι... καὶ ἐνθεν δύο τοὺς τὰναντία θέλοντας εἰσάγεσθαι, ὥστε δυσεβές. Ἀδύνατον γὰρ ἐνὶ καὶ τῷ αὐτῷ ὑποκειμένῳ δύο ἅμα καὶ κατὰ ταῦτον ἐναντία ὑφεστάναι θελήματα”.

<sup>553</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213 (28):71-74. The translation from J. Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom*, p. 70.

‘what someone wills’ (τὶ θέλειν) and the ‘how someone wills’ (πῶς θέλειν) that characterize the hypostasis.<sup>554</sup>

For the Damascene, on the other hand, there is no reason for this confusion, as the will is a natural property and not a hypostatic one; So the assertion of one will in Christ means confusion of His two *ousiai*. As every *physis* exists and is distinguished from the other through natural properties like will and activity,<sup>555</sup> then to affirm one will only [and activity] in Christ, on the grounds that, according to the Monothelites, Christ did not assume a human will, signifies a mixing of these two natures in spite of the Monothelite confession of the difference and the distinction of the divinity and the humanity in Christ.<sup>556</sup> The justification of this position, on the part of the Monothelites, that the will refers to the hypostasis and not to the nature is for John Damascene not only nonsense but also the source of another complication, as it creates confusion between the natural and the hypostatic properties, in fact between the *ousia* and hypostasis. This position is understood better when we observe the Monothelite effort to explain the creation of man according to the image of

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<sup>554</sup> Kotter IV, *Volunt.*, p. 213 (28):79-84, “πᾶς γὰρ ἄνθρωπος ἔχει τὴν θελητικὴν δύναμιν καὶ τὸ ἀπλῶς θέλειν· τὰ δὲ ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὑπὸ τὸ αὐτὸ εἶδος θεωρούμενα ὑποστάσεσι φυσικὰ οὐχ ὑποστατικά. Οὐ πᾶς δὲ ἄνθρωπος τὸ αὐτὸ θέλει οὐδὲ ἕσαστως. Ὡστε ἡ μὲν θελητικὴ δύναμις καὶ τὸ ἀπλῶς θέλειν διάφορον καθ’ ἑκάστην ὑπόστασιν καὶ ὡς συμβεβηκὸς ὑποστατικόν”.

<sup>555</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180 (5):22-27.

<sup>556</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213 (28):71-73, “εἰ οἱ μίαν φύσιν ἐπὶ Χριστοῦ ὁμολογοῦντες σύνθετον καὶ τὰς δύο ἀπαρνούμενοι τὴν τῶν φύσεων διαφορὰν καταδέχονται, πῶς οἱ δύο φύσεις ἐπὶ Χριστοῦ καταγγέλοντες μίαν ἐπ’ αὐτοῦ θέλησιν τερατεύεσθε;”.

God. For them the free will is not a natural gift of God to all human natures but an honorary one.<sup>557</sup>

It is this confession that free will is not a natural property but an honorary gift to humans that leads the Monothelites to the identification between nature and hypostasis as, according to the Damascene's thought:

“if according to the view of the Fathers, those who have one and the same will have also one and the same essence, and if the divinity and humanity of Christ have one and the same will, then assuredly these have also one and the same essence”.<sup>558</sup>

Consequently, confusing the wills means that Christ's humanity is incomplete and is not real humanity. This way of thinking in John's eyes seems to be the most inconsistent attempt at explaining the mystery of incarnation.<sup>559</sup> He seems to think of Monothelitism as a much more serious heresy than Monophysitism.<sup>560</sup>

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<sup>557</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215 (29):1-3, “ἀλλά φασιν· Οὐ κατὰ φύσιν ἐδόθη τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ τὸ αὐτεξούσιον, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τιμὴν ἐν τῷ φάναι τὸν θεολόγον Γρηγόριον· ‘Τῷ αὐτεξουσίῳ τιμήσας αὐτόν’”.

<sup>558</sup> Kotter II, *Expos.*, p. 141 (58):93-95. The translation from Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers, series 2, vol. ix, p. 59.

<sup>559</sup> Kotter IV, *Volunt.*, p. 213 (28):71-73.

<sup>560</sup> As we shall see in John's arguments against Monophysitism, he regards the Monophysite teaching as muddled and obstinate, while the Monothelites he regards as real Apollinarians. See Kotter, *Haeres.*, p. 59 (99):3-5, “οὗτοι δύο μὲν ἐπὶ Χριστοῦ φύσεις πρεσβεύουσι καὶ μίαν ὑπόστασιν, ἐν δὲ θέλημα καὶ μίαν ἐνέργειαν δογματίζουν, ἀναιροῦντες διὰ τούτου τὴν τῶν φύσεων δυάδα καὶ τοῖς Ἀπολιναρίου δόγμασιν ἰσχυρῶς ἀντιποιοῦμενοι”.



Finally, we may draw some conclusions. The effort to express how the Logos took flesh<sup>561</sup> led to a misunderstanding of the explanation regarding the union of divinity and humanity in the Person of Christ. In this chapter we have seen that for John Damascene the main problem is focused on the identification between hypostasis and nature. Because of this, the Nestorians, on the one hand, accepted the full distinction of both essences in Christ agreeing with a moral - relative union of them as every *ousia* has its own hypostasis, while the Monophysites, on the other hand, spoke of one nature in Christ as Christ had only one hypostasis. A similar position is true for Monothelitism. However, this identification is the result of the common philosophical logic, that every essence exists because there is a hypostasis, and John does not dispute this. It is then the different perspective of approaching this general truth that created all Christological differences, and according to John, the obligatory use of the identification between hypostasis and nature in every explanatory effort of the *mysterium Christi*.

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<sup>561</sup> Kotter IV *Jacob.*, pp. 110-1, chapter 2.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### St John Damascene's arguments against the anti-Chalcedonians

#### *Overview*

After the analysis and the examination of John's philosophical terminology and the Monophysite identification between hypostasis and nature because of the formula "there is no nature without hypostasis", we shall now in this chapter juxtapose and analyse the Damascene's arguments against the Monophysite Christological positions as we consider them in his works.<sup>562</sup>

What is evident is that, in his polemical works, John makes an effort to refute Monophysite arguments rather than to present Orthodox doctrine in detail, as in the case of the *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*. In the main, he deserves recognition for his attempt to reject his opponents' positions. The

exposition of Orthodox teaching is not expressed so systematically. This is reasonable. From the polemical tone of the letters *Against the Jacobites* and *On the Trisagion*, we can perceive that all arguments of Monophysitism, refuted by John, express and represent real positions among the Monophysite communities of the eighth century in the region of Syria and Palestine.

More precisely, John's main themes that he elaborates against Jacobite Christology, are the explanation of the role of natural properties, their relation with the hypostatic ones and, mainly, the attempt to prove the impossibility of the existence of opposing natural properties in one nature. This teaching is also visible apart from the letter *Against the Jacobites*, in *Against the Akephaloi*.<sup>563</sup> Reading these two works, one has the impression that Christological disputations are nothing but the clarification of the relationship between the opposite natural properties as the misunderstanding in Christology seems to be based on the acceptance by the opponents of Dyophysitism of the possibility of opposite natural properties existing in only one nature.<sup>564</sup>

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<sup>562</sup> We shall examine St John's thought on the Jacobite Christology and the Trisagion separately, because of their different kind of subjects and arguments.

<sup>563</sup> We could hypothesize that the philosophical work *Εἰσαγωγή δογμάτων στοιχειώδους ἀπὸ φωνῆς Ἰωάννου ταπεινοῦ μοναχοῦ πρὸς Ἰωάννην τὸν ὁσιώτατον ἐπίσκοπον Λαοδικείας*, has an anti-Monophysite meaning. In this work, John developed the main philosophical positions that were in the centre of the Christological disputations. We can connect the analysis of the philosophical terminology with Monophysitism, Monothelitism and Monoenergism. The work refers to the characteristics of hypostasis and nature with emphasis to the natural and accidental properties. In addition the whole work contains two chapters referring to wills and energies. See also Siasos' position that the *Dialectica* has a similar purpose, pp. 36, 45-6.

<sup>564</sup> We have already said that for John "τὰς φύσεις ἥτοι οὐσίας αἱ οὐσιώδεις συνιστῶσι διαφοραί", Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 122 (39):1-3. The same can be said for Monothelitism. For John it is incomprehensible for two different natures to have one will as Monothelitism



Another point is that, in contrast to the *Dialectica* where John gathers the most important opinions of both the Church Fathers and the philosophers, in his anti-Monophysite works his source of reference is, almost exclusively, previous ecclesiastical tradition. This was necessary as, for instance, in John's thinking, the Dyophysite Christological formula 'one incarnate nature of God the Logos', without the 'καταχρηστική', *inexact* identification between nature and hypostasis, creates a number of complications. The same is true for philosophical terminology and its abstract understanding at the time of St John. Only patristic florilegia would enable John to speak with authority of Christological doctrine.

With regard to the arguments *On the Trisagion*, we must examine them as they concern the restoration of truth after the Patriarch of Jerusalem John V and John's defamation by the monk Anastasius. John, as a typical Chalcedonian and opponent of theopaschitism, expresses the Orthodox interpretation of the

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confesses. In the anti-Monothelite work *On two Wills* John speaks of two wills, according to Christ's natures, to prove the perfection of Christ's divinity and His humanity in particular. Although the *διαφορά* of both natures in Christ is not rejected by Monothelitism, John refers to them mainly to support the Dyophysite teaching of the *hypostatic union*, that is the mode of the real existence of divinity and humanity in the one Person of Christ (Kotter IV, *Volunt.*, p. 175 (2):22-25). This teaching helps the Damascene to argue that, in Christ, divinity and humanity exhibit a natural difference. Besides, this natural difference obliges John to speak of the different natural characteristics of both *ousiai* in the Person of Christ in order to keep divinity and humanity intact.

The insistence of the Orthodox position on this point is connected by John Damascene to the reality of the salvation of man. If Christ had not taken all natural human properties and especially the will, humanity would not have been saved by Christ's passion. The first thing that had of necessity to be purified was the Nous or mind and its logical will (*ibid.*, pp. 229-30 (44):7-9).

Trisagion basing his position on the kinds of arguments that reveal the impossible connection of the hymn with the Son only.

### **1. Against the Jacobite Christological teaching**

After the analysis of terminology, it is now essential to answer specific questions which have arisen on John's anti-Jacobite teaching. The most important refers to how the Dyophysite John describes the union of Christ's divinity and humanity in His one hypostasis. In addition, we must make a more detailed analysis of the refutation of the identification between hypostasis and nature. This is because all John's texts against the Monophysites have the same purpose; to establish the Orthodox understanding of the doctrine of incarnation, refuting the formula of one hypostasis and one nature in Christ.

We could classify the Damascene's arguments into two categories. The first contains the development of the Orthodox Dyophysite Christological teaching with emphasis on i) the analysis of the assumption of humanity by the Logos in the womb of the Theotokos, and ii) the Patristic authorities used by St John. All arguments brought by John against the Jacobite positions can be classified in the second category. Here, the emphasis is i) on the refutation of the identification between hypostasis and nature, ii) to prove that the Monophysite conception of St Cyril's formula 'one incarnate nature of the Logos' is wrong and iii) on the refutation of the Monophysite understanding of Christ through the example of man composed of body and soul. Apart from his arguments against the Jacobites, John faces Monophysite Christology sympathetically, trying to bridge the differences between the Dyophysite and the Monophysite parties on the basis of either the clarification of terminology or the



*mia-physis* formula of St Cyril of Alexandria as we can see in his writings. Furthermore, as we have already stated in the introduction, he discusses amicably with the Jacobites expecting a desired reunion, as both of them share the same Fathers and have in common St Cyril's Christological formula. John, either speaking sympathetically to the Orthodox about Monophysitism or rigorously to the Monophysites themselves, does not aim to suggest another Christological formula but to offer the correct explanation of the *mia-physis* formula that is also Orthodox. In fact he wrote his Christological works and developed Christological doctrine for three special reasons. First, to clarify the doctrine itself as we can see in the work *Against the Akephaloi*, second to oppose Monophysitism and third to celebrate Christology.<sup>565</sup> Consequently all St John's arguments should be examined and understood not only from a polemical perspective but also from a pastoral one, as we shall see later.

### *I. The Development of the Orthodox Dyophysite teaching*

#### **Ia. The conception of the Divine Logos. The union of humanity and divinity in Christ**

In facing the Monophysite arguments the Damascene does not omit to refer to the mystery of incarnation itself. Like all Fathers who handled

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<sup>565</sup> Thanks to Andrew Louth for these suggestions.

Christology, John's teaching on Christ should be examined exclusively regarding 'economy', that is the dispensation of God in the world.

After the original sin, God does not abandon His rational human beings and interferes in the human tragedy to restore communion between Himself and His creatures. The only way to true salvation for humanity was the incarnation of the Logos, the second Person of the Holy Trinity.<sup>566</sup> Indeed the reason for God's economy is the salvation of humanity which yielded to temptation and to death. Christ assumed human nature to win over the devil who deceived Adam.<sup>567</sup>

After the Fall and the original sin of man in paradise and his expulsion from it, God promised that He would not forget His creature and He gave promises about this. At first God communicated with people and Israel in particular through theophanies. In this perspective we should consider the law of Israel and the prophets. They reminded Israel of God and His promises about salvation if they followed His orders.<sup>568</sup> In essence all the events of the Old Testament had the purpose of preparing the human race to meet the incarnate God the Logos.

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<sup>566</sup> Kotter V, *Hypap.*, p. 382 (3):1-5, "ὁ πλάστης σπλάχνοις τῆς ἑαυτοῦ χρησιότητος ἐπικάμπτεται καὶ τῷ πεσόντι συγκαταβαίνει, ἵνα κἄν οὕτως ἐκσπάσῃ τοῦ πτώματος καὶ ἄνω θείῃ τὸν ἄνωθεν ὄντα καὶ πρὸς τὰ ἄνω καλούμενον, ἀμέλει καὶ σάρκα τὴν πεσοῦσαν ἀναλαμβάνει καὶ ὅλον ἑαυτῷ συνάπτει τὸ πρόσλημμα".

<sup>567</sup> Kotter II, *Expos.*, p. 134 (56):15-17. In the hypostasis of the Logos fallen humanity was reconciled with God. However, this reconciliation is not an automatic situation. God needs the action of human freedom as only through it can a human being prove his love for God. Repentance and virtues confirm the human's free choice to put himself at God's side.

<sup>568</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 106-7 (45):3-19.



“But when the term was completed, God sent his own Son”.<sup>569</sup> The Logos became flesh.<sup>570</sup> Both divinity and humanity are in union in Christ’s hypostasis.<sup>571</sup> The most important human person in the incarnation was the

<sup>569</sup> Ga. 4,4.

<sup>570</sup> Jo. 1,14.

<sup>571</sup> John uses a variety of expressions to describe the real union without confusion of humanity and divinity in the hypostasis of the Logos. The used terms are: i) ‘καθ’ ὑπόστασιν union’, Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 137 (79):19-21, “ἡ δὲ καθ’ ὑπόστασιν ἔνωσις καὶ τῶν συνελθουσῶν οὐσιῶν φυλάττει τὴν διαφορὰν καὶ τοῦ προσώπου τηρεῖν οἶδε τὴν ἐνότητα”. This kind of union keeps the difference between the two natures intact. John says in *Dial.*, Kotter I, p. 136 (μη’ξε’:110-3, “καθ’ ὑπόστασιν μὲν οὖν ἐστὶ τὸ ἐκ διαφόρων φύσεων ὑφεστὸς πρᾶγμα. Καὶ πάλιν καθ’ ὑπόστασιν ἐστὶ τὸ ἐκ δύο μὲν πραγμάτων, ἐν ἐνὶ δὲ προσώπῳ. Καὶ ἔτι καθ’ ὑπόστασιν ἔνωσις ἐστὶν ἡ ἑτέρα ὑποστάσει προστρέχουσα φύσις”. According to this passage the ‘καθ’ ὑπόστασιν ἔνωσις’ means the union by composition (“αὕτη δὲ ἐστὶν ἡ καθ’ ὑπόστασιν ἔνωσις ἡ κατὰ σύνθεσιν”, *ibid.*, lines 109-110). In this terminology we can see how close the concept of the καθ’ ὑπόστασιν ἔνωσις and the last two ‘main’ definitions of *enhypostatos* come in John’s thought. In fact the term *enhypostatos* and the formula ‘καθ’ ὑπόστασιν ἔνωσις’ express the same thing. ii) ‘οὐσιώδη ἔνωσιν’, Kotter II, *Expos.*, pp. 114-5 (47):66-69, “οὐσιώδη γάρ φαμεν τὴν ἔνωσιν, τουτέστιν ἀληθῆ καὶ οὐ κατὰ φαντασίαν· οὐσιώδη δέ, οὐχ ὡς τῶν δύο φύσεων ἀποτελεσασῶν μίαν σύνθετον φύσιν, ἀλλ’ ἐνωθεισῶν ἀλλήλαις κατὰ ἀλήθειαν εἰς μίαν ὑπόστασιν σύνθετον τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ”. The meanings of the terms *οὐσιώδη* and *οὐσιαστικῇ* are different. The *ousiodes* does not mean composition but just the real union. Also, iii) ‘κατὰ σύνθεσιν ἔνωσις’, Kotter I, *Dial.*, pp. 134-5 (μη’ξε’:104-110, “ἡ δὲ κατὰ σύνθεσιν ἔνωσις ἐστὶν ἡ εἰς ἀλλήλα τῶν μερῶν χωρὶς ἀφανισμοῦ περιχώρησις ὡς ἐπὶ ψυχῆς ἔχει καὶ τοῦ σώματος... Αὕτη δὲ ἐστὶν ἡ καθ’ ὑπόστασιν ἔνωσις ἡ κατὰ σύνθεσιν”. Besides, we must note that St John makes reference to the Cyrillic formulas ‘καθ’ ἔνωσιν ἀδιάσπαστον ἀτρέπτως’, Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 151 (124):3; ‘καθ’ ἔνωσιν οἰκονομικὴν’, Kotter II, *Expos.*, p. 177 (79):12-13; and the formula ‘καθ’ ἔνωσιν ἄρρητον καὶ ἀνέκφραστον καὶ ἀνεκδιήγητον’, Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 150 (115):14. The last one describes the union of the natures in Christ as indescribable.

In the union of the two natures of Christ there was no time during which humanity pre-existed. Created nature came into existence only in the hypostasis of the Logos. So the ‘καθ’ ὑπόστασιν’ union or the assumption of humanity by the Logos became: i) ‘ἐξ ἁκρας ὑπάρξεως’, Kotter II, *Expos.*, p. 165 (66):7-11; ii) ‘ἐξ ἁκρας συλλήψεως’, *ibid.*, p. 136



Theotokos.<sup>572</sup> The second person of the Holy Trinity assumed flesh from the Theotokos through the Holy Spirit.<sup>573</sup>

But, we ask ourselves, what kind of union of divinity and humanity is in the hypostasis of the divine Logos? Their union could be defined either as 'relative' or 'by composition' or 'kath hypostasin'; In essence the dilemma depends on the term which denotes union: Is it nature, hypostasis or person (in this case do we refer to the Nestorian person of Christ)? As we can see in

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(56):68-71; iii) 'ἐξ ἁκρας ἐνώσεως', Kotter IV, *Volunt.*, p. 211 (28):30-33; iv) in 'ἁκραϊφνεστάτην ἐνωσιν', Kotter II, *Expos.*, p. 156 (61):16-19.

<sup>572</sup> Pierre Voulet, *S. Jean Damascène Homélie sur la Nativité et la Dormition* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1961), p. 17, "Jean Damascène, dont l'étude principale fut l'union hypostatique dans son conditionnement concret, est particulièrement sensible à ce rôle nécessaire de la Théotokos".

<sup>573</sup> Kotter II, *Expos.*, pp. 109-10 (46):19-26. "And then was she (the Theotokos) overshadowed by the *enhypostatic* Wisdom and Power of the most high God, the Son of God Who is of like essence with the Father as of Divine seed, and from her holy and most pure blood He formed flesh animated with the spirit of reason and thought, the first fruits of our compound nature : not by procreation but by creation through the Holy Spirit : not developing the fashion of the body by gradual additions but perfecting it at once, He Himself, the very Word of God, standing to the flesh in the relation of hypostasis", (The translation from Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers, series 2, vol. ix, p. 46). In this passage, we observe the actions of God that prepare the Theotokos to enable her to give birth to the Son of God. The action of the Holy Spirit proceeded. John following the gospel of Luke, 1, 26-38 offers a detail analysis of the mystery of incarnation. See *Ibid.*, p. 108 (45):46-51 and *ibid.*, p. 109 (46):17-19. See also Kotter 5, *Dorm.*, pp. 485-6 (3):19-28. "Ταύτην ὁ πατήρ μὲν προώρισε... ἡ δὲ τοῦ πνεύματος ἁγιαστικὴ δύναμις ἐπεφοίτησε ἐκάθηρέ τε καὶ ἡγίασε καὶ οὐνεὶ προήδευσε. Καὶ τότε σύ, ὁ τοῦ πατρὸς ὄρος τε καὶ λόγος, ὑπεριγράπτως κατώκησας ἀνακαλούμενος τὴν ἐσχατιὰν τῆς ἡμετέρας φύσεως πρὸς τὸ ἀπειρον ὕψος τῆς σῆς ἀκαταλήπτου θεότητος. Ἦς τὴν ἀπαρχὴν ἐκ τῶν πανάγων καὶ ἀχράντων καὶ παναμώμων τῆς ἁγίας παρθένου αἱμάτων ἀναλαβὼν σάρκα ἐμψυχωμένην ψυχῇ λογικῇ τε καὶ νοερᾷ σεαυτῷ περιέπηξας ἐν σεαυτῷ αὐτὴν ὑποστήσας, καὶ γέγονας τέλειος ἄνθρωπος οὐκ ἀποβαλὼν τὸ εἶναι τέλειος θεὸς καὶ τῷ σὺ πατρὶ ὁμοούσιος".

John's writings the question, "which kind of union and term gives the most accurate explanation in the case of Christ", depends on the relation of nature and hypostasis.

#### Ib. The Patristic Authorities used by St John Damascene

In the work *Pege Gnoseos*, Kotter proved that the Damascene, saying "I will say nothing of mine", was speaking the truth.<sup>574</sup> He composed his most famous work by collecting Patristic passages. Consequently it was impossible for the Palestinian monk to forget this beloved habit in the other works he wrote. He refers to a number of Patristic texts recognized by the Orthodox and the Monophysite communities and this was necessary not only for the exposition of Christological doctrine, but also for the destruction of the Monophysite arguments. In addition, patristic consolidation became a necessity for John as the Syrian Jacobites accused Orthodoxy of lacking patristic support for its way of speaking of Christ's hypostasis.<sup>575</sup> Besides this, another important accusation

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<sup>574</sup> See Mossman Roueché, 'Byzantine Philosophical Texts of the Seventh Century', pp. 65-7, and D. Stiefenhofer, *Des hl. Johannes von Damaskus genaue Darlegung des orthodoxen Glaubens* (J. Kösel and F. Pustet: Munchen, 1923), p. IX in J.J. Meany, *the Image of God in Man according to the Doctrine of Saint John Damascene*, (Manila: San Jose Seminary, 1954), p. 7.

<sup>575</sup> In John's thought all heresies start from the misunderstanding of the patristic florilegia. John always follows the Church Fathers. This is clearer in the work *On the Holy Icons*. The basis of his iconological teaching from the very beginning is considered ecclesiastically. This is the reason why he insists "τῶν προκαθηγησαμένων ἡμᾶς, ὧν ἐχρῆν ἀναθεωροῦντας τὴν ἀναστροφὴν μιμεῖσθαι τὴν πίστιν", (*Imag.*, I, 2). The belief that he continues the previous



against Orthodoxy was as we have already seen, that in using a new terminology it was guilty of innovations. For all these reasons it was essential for the Dyophysite John to prove the traditional background of his thought in order to speak with authority and originality.<sup>576</sup>

A similar perspective is observed in John's Christological works *Against the Jacobites* and *Against the Akephaloi*. The passages collected by the Fathers<sup>577</sup> serve different purposes. For example in chapter 89 of *Against the Jacobites* the Damascene refers to the reasons for quoting patristic florilegia to

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ecclesiastical tradition is the source of his argumentation. Of course problems arose when the authenticity of the patristic tradition was in question, as for example in the case of Apollinaris' writings being attributed to Athanasius. However, we should not underestimate Byzantine theologians such as John Damascene's critical discernment in their handling of the sources. For example we can refer to passage (I 25):1-8 from the work *On the Holy Icons* where John Damascene disputes the authenticity of a work written by St Epiphanius see Kotter III, p. 116.

<sup>576</sup> For the Byzantines 'originality' depends on tradition as we have said. See A. Louth, *St John Damascene, Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology*, p. viii.

<sup>577</sup> Although John could be characterized as the most important follower of St Maximus' theology, he only makes reference to him once in the works *Against the Akephaloi* and *Against the Jacobites*. There are a lot of passages borrowed from Maximus in the *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* and *On Two Wills*. This does not mean that John overlooks Maximus' Christology against the Monophysites. For the most part, John cites from the writings of Leontius of Byzantium and the Alexandrine Fathers, St Athanasius and St Cyril. The appearance of the Monophysite heresy is connected with Egypt and Syria where the two saints were ordained as Popes. However the most important reason for St John quoting the Alexandrine Fathers seems to be the problem of definition of terms of 4<sup>th</sup> century patristic writings. In addition, John makes references to the Cappadocians, St Basil the Great and St Gregory the Theologian. Also, there are a number of passages drawn from the works of St John Chrysostom, St Gregory of Nyssa, St Ambrosius, St Amphilochius of Iconium, St Irenaeus of Lyon, St Methodius, bishop of Patara and others.



prove the reality of Christ's two natures.<sup>578</sup> Furthermore, in the comments he makes on these passages he puts emphasis on the natural properties of these natures.<sup>579</sup>

Some other quotations refer to the formula 'one incarnate nature of God the Logos'. Using them, especially those of St Cyril, John tries to show that the Church Fathers understand the above-mentioned formula in a Dyophysite way. The two natures exist uncompounded in the hypostasis of the Logos as the word *physis* means the hypostasis of the Logos.<sup>580</sup>

But what is clear from John's anti-Monophysite works is that John replicates Leontius of Byzantium's arguments in these works. For example we can examine chapters 11-12, 50, 52, 54 of *Against the Jacobites*, which is a letter sent to the Jacobites themselves. All this work depends on these central chapters where John as we have seen and we shall examine later, replicates Leontius. Apart from these chapters, the rest of this work is explanatory comments on the consequences of Monophysite Christology either as John's personal synthesis or as a group of passages collected by some other Church authors.<sup>581</sup> John has a very concrete way of thinking. He makes a conscious

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<sup>578</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 143 (89):1-3, "χρήσεις ἁγίων πατέρων ἀποδεικνύουσai, ὡς εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστὸς ἐκ δύο φύσεων καὶ δύο φύσεις καὶ ἐν δυοῖ φύσεσι καὶ μετὰ τὴν σωτηριώδη καὶ ὑπεράγαθον αὐτοῦ σάρκωσιν".

<sup>579</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147 (102):1-5; *ibid.*, p. 147 (104):1-3; *ibid.*, p. 150 (116):1-3; *ibid.*, p. 150 (119):1-2.

<sup>580</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126 (52):21-23, "ὁ δὲ λόγος οὐ φύσις ἐστίν, ὡς ἀνωτέρω δεδήλωται, ἀλλ' ὑπόστασις. Καὶ αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ θεοφόρος Κύριλλος ἐτέρωθι τάδε φησὶν· "Ἡ φύσις τοῦ λόγου ἡγουν ἢ ὑπόστασις, ὃ ἐστὶν αὐτὸς ὁ λόγος".

<sup>581</sup> See e.g. in *Aceph.* chapter 6 where John refers to Maximus' understanding of *enhypostatos*.

attempt to support Chalcedon. For this reason John has found in Leontius a very important supporter of the Fourth Ecumenical Council who has clarified philosophical terminology and faced Monophysitism successfully, in order to express his thought. In essence John both applies the principle "I will say nothing of mine" once again on basic points in his anti-Monophysite works and returns to the theological thought of the sixth century to face eighth century Monophysitism.

In any case, the use of the Patristic florilegia helps us to understand and to explain the hypostasis of Christ correctly, as the Church Fathers are "the mouths" of God in the world. The members of the Church must obey all these Fathers in order to keep their faith accurate.<sup>582</sup> Consequently personal opinions must be connected to previous ecclesiastical and patristic tradition and must not be independent. Under these circumstances the Monophysites had no other choice than to examine the patristic florilegia again and to accept two undivided and separated natures in the one compound hypostasis of Christ.

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<sup>582</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 143 (88):1-6, "πρὸς δὲ τῶν εἰρημένων πίστῳσιν καὶ χρήσεις τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων, ὧν τὸ στόμα θεοῦ κεχηρημάτικε στόμα, ὑπετάξαμεν, ὧν δυσωπηθέντες τὸ αἰδέσιμον μεθ' ἡμῶν καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας ἕνα θεὸν καὶ μίαν φύσιν ἐν τρισὶν ὑποστάσεσι καὶ τὸν ἕνα τῆς ἁγίας τριάδος τὸν μονογενῆ υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ μετὰ σάρκῳσιν ἕνα Χριστόν, ἕνα υἱόν, ἕνα κύριον καὶ μίαν ὑπόστασιν ἐν δυσὶ φύσεσιν ἀσυγχύτως καὶ ἀδιαιρέτως ὀρθοδόξως κηρύξατε".

## *II St John Damascene's Theological and Philosophical arguments against the Jacobite Christology*

### **IIa) The formula 'nature and hypostasis are identical'**

The identification between hypostasis and nature is, as we have seen, the main reason given by the Monophysites to speak of one nature and hypostasis in Christ. This philosophical position formed, *a priori*, any Christological teaching among the Monophysite communities.<sup>583</sup> It is true that the *identification* formula in Monophysitism is due to the experience that all human beings have; there is no nature without hypostasis or *ousia* without *prosopon*.<sup>584</sup> This is also true because human experience is confined to hypostases where natures are observed.<sup>585</sup> When this logic becomes absolute it identifies nature and

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<sup>583</sup> According to John, the formula 'nature and hypostasis are identical' in Monophysite teaching depends on Greek philosophy and especially on Aristotle, see *ibid.*, pp. 113-4 (9):1-(10):14.

<sup>584</sup> This philosophical reality acceptable by all, is adapted to the teaching of each Christological party. The different approach to this, common, experience between the Monophysites and the Orthodox, expressed in a number of arguments, has resulted in speaking of a theological inconsistency in Monophysite Christology. For instance the Monophysites are led to agree with the identification between hypostasis and nature, while the Orthodox Church speaks of *enhypostatos physis*. In the former, every nature must have its own hypostasis. In the latter a nature can exist with another one in a compound hypostasis.

<sup>585</sup> We speak, watch, walk together with concrete hypostases. According to G. Florovsky who speaks of the theology of St John Damascene: "in created existence we at once and in reality see the difference of the hypostases or 'indivisibles'; and then 'with the mind and thought' we perceive communality, connection, and unity. For in the world there exist only



hypostasis, namely the ‘*ἄλλο*’, *something else* and the ‘*ἕλλος*’, *someone else* refusing to recognize any new or existing logical appearance like the existence of *something else* and *something else* which are inseparable but not confused in the one hypostasis of *someone else*.<sup>586</sup>

On the other hand, according to John, Orthodox thought could agree with nothing other than the position that natures, and consequently natural properties, remain unconfused, for natural differences constitute the natures.<sup>587</sup> The unconfused natural properties testify that the two natures in Christ remain separate and intact. In fact the Orthodox party is influenced more from the logic of natural properties than from the combination of the one hypostasis with the formula ‘there is no *physis anhypostatos*’ that easily leads to the identification between hypostasis and nature.<sup>588</sup>

The perfect distinction among all natures leads John to agree with the existence of one compound hypostasis in Christ composed of divinity and

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indivisibles, individuals, hypostases and what is common which does not exist by itself, but only in many, is realized in them. This is based on Aristotle”, *The Byzantine Fathers of the Sixth to Eighth Century*, p. 259.

<sup>586</sup> For the distinction of these terms John says in chapters 48 and 49 of *Jacob.*, Kotter IV, p. 124: “εἰ κατ’ ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο λέγεται ὁ Χριστὸς ὁρατὸς καὶ ἀόρατος, θνητὸς καὶ ἀθάνατος, ψηλαφητὸς καὶ ἀνέπαφος, καὶ οὐ κατ’ ἄλλον καὶ ἄλλον· τὸ δὲ ἄλλο οὐσίαν σημαίνει. Τί μὴ δύο οὐσίας φατέ; Τὸ ἄλλο οὐσίας ἐστὶ σημαντικὸν κατὰ τὴν λογικὴν, ἄλλος δὲ ὑποστάσεως· εἰ οὖν ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο λέγοντες τὸν Χριστὸν οὐκ ἀναγκασθήσεσθε δύο φύσεις λέγειν, εἶπατε καὶ ἄλλον καὶ ἄλλον· οὐ γὰρ σημανεῖτε δύο ὑποστάσεις”.

<sup>587</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122 (39):1.

<sup>588</sup> As there is no *physis* without hypostasis and our experience refers always to only one hypostasis (there are no two hypostases in one) then the hypostasis reveals only one nature, otherwise nature cannot exist or two different natures would need to have two different hypostases.

humanity.<sup>589</sup> In this way he attains the complete distinction of created nature from uncreated nature and it avoids the negative consequences of Monophysite Christology both within the Holy Trinity and in Christology.<sup>590</sup> It avoids both the danger of polytheism (many instead of three Persons in the Holy Trinity) and of idolatry (created humanity becomes uncreated). But let us examine more precisely the reasons for which John refutes the identification between hypostasis and nature.

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<sup>589</sup> Another question that arises, is the meaning of the technical term 'compound hypostasis' in John's writings. First of all we must reject any equivalence between a compound nature and a compound hypostasis. Compound nature means composition of two natures, as equivalent compound hypostasis would mean composition of other hypostases. This kind of logic does not exist in John Damascene. Consequently, the 'compound hypostasis' is a technical term used by the Orthodox party to express the real union of the two natures in Christ. In fact the Orthodox party by using the term 'compound hypostasis' natures that come into union can be enumerated. There are a lot of passages related to this subject. Among others we can quote a very informative one, Kotter IV, *Aceph.*, p. 409 (1):16-18, "διὸ οὐ μία ἐστὶ σύνθετος φύσις, ἀλλὰ μία ὑπόστασις ἐν δυσὶ φύσεσι γνωριζομένη καὶ δύο φύσεις ἐν μιᾷ συνθέτῳ ὑποστάσει".

<sup>590</sup> The clear distinction between humanity and divinity in Christ results in 'theosis', 'deification' of created nature because of its union with uncreated nature. If the two natures are one after the union, then we cannot speak of "ὁλος θεὸς καὶ ὁλος ἄνθρωπος, ὁλος θεὸς καὶ μετὰ τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ ὁλος ἄνθρωπος μετὰ τῆς ὑπερουσίῃς θεότητος αὐτοῦ. Φαμὲν καὶ τοῦτο δηλοῦντα τὸν θεολόγον Γρηγόριον εἰρηκέναι· "Ὦν τὸ μὲν ἐθέωσε, τὸ δὲ ἐθεώθη", καὶ 'τολμῶ λέγειν ὁμόθεον'. 'Ὡς γὰρ τὴν σάρκωσιν ἄνευ τροπῆς τοῦ λόγου καὶ μεταβολῆς οἶδαμεν, οὕτω καὶ τὴν θέωσιν", Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 140 (83):4-8. John makes reference to this formula borrowed by St Gregory the Theologian four times in three works (In *Jacob.*, *Expos.*, and *Aceph.*). M-F. Himmerich, *Deification in John Damascene* (Milwaukee: Wiscousin, 1985) p. 56, notes that "according to Wolfson (*The Philosophy of Church Fathers*), Gregory Nazianzus was the first Christian theologian to use this concept in an explanation of the union of the two natures of Christ. John uses the term to explain a union (ἐνωσις) by composition (σύνθεσις)".



Firstly, for John the inconsistency of Monophysitism at this point has practical consequences. For instance, if this identification had been real, then we would have confessed one nature in Christ composed of divinity and humanity as a consequence of there existing one hypostasis, or two hypostases if divinity and humanity remained unconfused.<sup>591</sup> John insists on this accusation although he knows that Monophysitism, speaking of the composition of Christ's natures, accepts that divinity and humanity keep their natural properties unconfused in this one compound nature. For John this is a theoretical assertion and not a reality as two different natures in composition, distinguished *psile epinoia*, 'in thought' through their natural properties, create a compound unity in which the two natures do not remain unconfused.<sup>592</sup> So John starts thinking about the natural properties in order to speak of the duality of natures, while the Monophysites start from the compound nature in which, simply, according to John, they add unconfused natural properties. The result is that the formula 'nature and hypostasis are identical' in order to confess one hypostasis and

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<sup>591</sup> This position seems to be the Damascene's main accusation against the Monophysite reasoning. See Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 112 (6):2-6, "εἰ ταὐτὸν φύσις καὶ ὑπόστασις, ἐκ δύο φύσεων τὸν Χριστὸν ὁμολογοῦντες, οὐχὶ καὶ ἐκ δύο λέγειν ἀναγκασθήσεσθε ὑποστάσεων καὶ ἢ οὐδέποτε δύο λέγειν φύσεις ἐπὶ Χριστοῦ θρασυνθήσεσθε ἢ καὶ δύο λέγειν ἐπ' αὐτοῦ τὰς ὑποστάσεις ὑπὸ τῶν ἡμετέρων ἐκβιασθήσεσθε θέσεων;", and *ibid.*, p. 113 (7):4-5, "εἰ ταὐτόν ἐστι φύσις καὶ ὑπόστασις, τί μὴ διαφορὰν ὑποστάσεων ὥς καὶ τῶν φύσεων ἐπὶ Χριστοῦ καταφάσκετε;". When setting out the two natures of Christ, our only confession is two hypostases with a relative union. In contrast, starting off with one hypostasis, the only acceptable reality is number 'one' with respect to the natures in a kind of union that we could call 'singular union'.

<sup>592</sup> See Kotter IV, *Volunt.*, p. 188 (8):84-87.



nature in Christ is called 'confusion' in the Damascenic works,<sup>593</sup> for neither of the two natures of Christ remain intact.<sup>594</sup>

The existence and the perfection of a nature presupposes its maintenance in its natural limits,<sup>595</sup> that means that it cannot be composed with another nature in any way, even if the natural properties in this composition remain unconfused. This is for two reasons: i) if we speak of the duality of natures in the one compound nature, then we cannot understand the difference of natures in reality,<sup>596</sup> and ii) if we insist on the incommunicable nature of the different natural properties in order to conceive this duality, then we are obliged to accept the complete distinction of the two natures.<sup>597</sup> The creature cannot become the Creator as the properties of each nature are incommunicable.<sup>598</sup>

All of John's theological struggles against the Monophysites are based on this position.<sup>599</sup> Consequently the philosophical formula 'there is no nature without hypostasis or *ousia* without person' must be interpreted by means of

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<sup>593</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 124 (46):1-2, "εἰ ἕτερόν τι μετὰ τὴν ἔνωσιν γέγονε παρὰ τὴν ἔνωσιν, σύγχυσις δηλαδὴ καὶ οὐχ ἔνωσις".

<sup>594</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122 (36):1-3, "εἰ ἐκ θεότητος καὶ ἀνθρωπότητος μία φύσις ἐστὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, μέρος φύσεως καὶ οὐ τελεία φύσις ἡ θεότητος ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ, ὁμοίως καὶ ἡ ἀνθρωπότης".

<sup>595</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>596</sup> See e.g. *ibid.*, p. 120 (29); *Ibid.*, p. 121 (34).

<sup>597</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123 (43):11-13, "τὴν γὰρ αὐτὴν φύσιν παθητὴν ἅμα καὶ ἀπαθὴ εἶναι, ἀμήχανον· τῶν ἐναντίων γὰρ οὐσιωδῶν διαφορῶν δεκτικὴ εἶναι μία καὶ ἡ αὐτὴ φύσις οὐ δύναται".

<sup>598</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122 (39):1.

<sup>599</sup> He also uses this argument to describe the relation between hypostasis and nature in Christ.

natural properties. This understanding proves the weakness of the *identification* formula.

It is self-evident from the above that John considers the composition of Christ's two natures in one as impossible, even if, as the Monophysites say, the different natural qualities remain intact in this composition.

#### Iib. The number two in Christology (the relation between number and union)

In its attempt to face the Orthodox understanding of the union of Christ's two natures in His one composed hypostasis, not one nature out of two, Monophysitism invokes another theorem that of 'the division introduced by number'. Although it is a philosophical argument, it was used in Christology as an analogy between the duality of Christ's natures and the mathematical conception of number. But why do the Monophysites insist on the number 'one' in order to explain the existence of one nature and hypostasis in Christ?

It seems that their insistence on the number one and their accusation that number means division, is the result of the Orthodox formula used by the Council of Chalcedon 'in two natures'. The Monophysites accuse the Orthodox that the 'en dyo physessin', 'in two natures' is connected with Nestorian teaching. They prefer the formula 'ek dyo physeon', 'from two natures'.<sup>600</sup> One compound nature out of two can be mentioned and the result can be observed in

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<sup>600</sup> John's explanatory comments on what the number means should also be understood in the perspective of his struggle to defend the Council of Chalcedon.

Christ as one nature and one hypostasis. So using this connection, Monophysitism easily could accuse Orthodoxy of Nestorianism because if we accept the two natures in Christ after the incarnation, we speak of a relative union between them. In addition, it is evident from this kind of argument that this Monophysite position is directly connected to the formula 'hypostasis and nature are identical'<sup>601</sup> as we observe in *Against the Jacobites*, chapters 16-19 and *Against the Akephaloi*, chapter 4.<sup>602</sup> So it is very important to analyse John's thought on this point.

According to Monophysite reasoning, as John claims, there is real union only when we speak of a *singular unity* that must be identified with number one. Indeed, for the Monophysites those that are joined are one according to John.<sup>603</sup> The acceptance of any other number manifests the division and separation of those that constitute the union.<sup>604</sup> But what does John answer to the Monophysites?

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<sup>601</sup> The position that "number introduces division" is a common reality among all sects. According to John the reason why the sectarians misunderstand the Person of Christ, is, as we have seen, that all these Christological parties recognized "the natures numbered along with the hypostases". The rubric of the Damascene is very interesting, *ibid.*, p. 110 (2):13-20, "ὁ ἀνθρωπολάτρης Νεστόριος καὶ ὁ Διόδωρος τε καὶ ὁ Μομψουεστίας Θεόδωρος δύο τὰς φύσεις εἰδότες διαιροῦσι καὶ τὴν ὑπόστασιν καὶ συναριθμοῦσι ταῖς φύσεσι δύο καὶ τὰς ὑποστάσεις φασὶ καὶ τὸν ἕνα υἱὸν καὶ Χριστὸν καὶ κύριον εἰς δύο υἱοὺς καὶ δύο κατατέμνουσι πρόσωπα διὰ τὸ ταῦτὸν ὑποτοπᾶσαι τῇ φύσει καὶ τὴν ὑπόστασιν, Διόσκορος τε καὶ Σεύηρος... μίαν ὑπόστασιν θέμενοι μίαν καὶ τὴν φύσιν ὥρισαντο... μίαν γὰρ καὶ οὗτοι περὶ τὴν φύσιν καὶ τὴν ὑπόστασιν τὴν δόξαν ἐνόησαν".

<sup>602</sup> Kotter IV, *Aceph.*, p. 412 (4):3-4, "καὶ φασιν, ὅτι ὁ ἀριθμὸς ἀρχὴ ἐστὶ διαιρέσεως, καὶ τὴν διαίρεσιν φεύγοντες οὐ φάμεν δύο τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὰς φύσεις".

<sup>603</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 116 (16):1, "τὰ ἐνούμενα ἓν εἶναι".

<sup>604</sup> See for example the position of the Monophysite Elias, A. Roey, 'La lettre...', pp. 37-8, "il s'ensuit que l'union n'a pas de plus grand ennemi que le nombre: en effet ce qui est



All of the objections brought by the Damascene are connected, as in the case of the identification between hypostasis and nature, with natural properties. Speaking of a unity identical with number 'one', Monophysitism overlooks the reality of the natural properties that distinguish one nature from another and do not permit two different natures to become one.<sup>605</sup> For John the Monophysites do not examine the natural properties of each nature but just their number<sup>606</sup> with the result that the natural properties of each nature communicate with those of the other nature.<sup>607</sup>

However, in the Dyophysite Christology of John the number does not express *relationship* and instead of union, it expresses unity but shows the number of things that have come into union.<sup>608</sup> So it describes neither division,

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absolument un, ne peut être deux d'aucune façon. Encore faut-il savoir ce que cette unité signifie pour les Monophysites. Élie le dit d'une façon très concise: la vraie union n'ignore pas la différence mais exclut la division, et, avec elle et par elle toute dualité qu'elle introduit".

<sup>605</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 116-7 (16):2-7, "εἰ γὰρ τὰ ἐνούμενα κατὰ πάντα ἓν εἰσιν, ἐπειδὴ ἐξ ἀνομοίων φύσεων ὁ ἄνθρωπος σύγκειται, ἀνάγκη λέγειν, ὡς ψυχὴ καὶ σῶμα κατὰ πάντα ἓν εἰσι, καὶ ἔσται τὸ ἀσώματον σῶμα, καὶ τὸ σῶμα ἀσώματον· καὶ ἐπειδὴ θεότης καὶ ἀνθρωπότης ἡνῶνται, ἔσονται ἓν κατὰ τὴν οὐσιώδη διαφοράν, καὶ ἡ τὸ θεῖον κτιστὸν ἡ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον ἄκτιστον".

<sup>606</sup> Kotter IV, *Aceph.*, p. 412-3 (4):8-21.

<sup>607</sup> And consequently the hypostases. See Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 117 (17):1-2, "εἰ τὰ ἐνούμενα ἓν εἰσι κατὰ πάντα, τὸ δὲ σῶμα ἐξ ἐναντίων ποιοτήτων σύγκειται, ἐροῦμεν, ὡς θερμότης καὶ ψύξις ταῦτόν καὶ ξηρότης καὶ ὑγρότης ὁμοίως ταῦτόν, καὶ Πέτρος καὶ Ἰωάννης, ἐπειδὴ τῇ φύσει ἡνῶνται, ἄρα καὶ τῇ ὑποστάσει εἰς οἱ δύο τυγχάνουσιν".

<sup>608</sup> Kotter IV, *Aceph.*, p. 412 (4):5-6, "πᾶς ἀριθμὸς τῆς ποσότητος τῶν ἀριθμουμένων ἐστὶ σημαντικός, οὐ τῆς σχέσεως". The passage in *Jacob.*, Kotter IV, p. (21):9-11 is also very interesting. "Τὰ γὰρ διαφέροντα τοῦλάχιστον δύο· τὸ γὰρ ἓν, καθὸ ἓν, οὐ διαφέρει. Συνεισφέρειν γὰρ οἶδεν ἐξ ἀνάγκης τὸν ἀριθμὸν ἢ διαφορά". John insists on the

nor relationship.<sup>609</sup> In contrast the counted natures are characterized as ‘one’ because “they are in union”.<sup>610</sup> Moreover, when the number refers to natures, it shows the difference of genus and in the case of the incarnation it shows the different species of Christ’s natures.<sup>611</sup>

In conclusion we can say that in the case of the number of natures, St John’s objections are connected with the impossibility of the composition of opposite natural properties. In this way, he tries, once again, to prove that Christ’s divinity and humanity remain intact. The agreement with the position that the ‘number’ of natures in Christ declares division leads to the refutation of the natural difference between the natures that have been numbered. An argument like this, if it wants to be consistent with itself, must speak of a composition of different natural qualities. Consequently this could not be acceptable to John Damascene.

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counting of natures to explain the incommunicable of the opposite properties of different natures.

<sup>609</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125 (50):12-22. John once again replicates Leontius of Byzantium’s passages. He borrows this passage from the work *Adversus Argumenta Severi*, PG 86, 1920. It is obvious that John keeps his thought on the explanation of the doctrine of incarnation close to this Father.

<sup>610</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 116 (16):1-2, “εἰ δέ φατε τὰ ἐνούμενα ἓν εἶναι· ἀλλ’ ἀκούσατε, ὅτι τὰ ἐνούμενα οὐ κατὰ πάντα ἓν εἰσιν, ἀλλὰ καθὸ ἥνωται”.

<sup>611</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125 (50):26-28. See also *ibid.*, lines 32-37, “ἐπὶ μὲν τῆς ἀγίας καὶ ὁμοουσίου τριάδος τρεῖς τὰς ὑποστάσεις κηρύττοντες μίαν τούτων οὐσίαν καὶ φύσιν ὁμολογοῦμεν. Ἐπὶ δέ γε τῆς σωτηρίου οἰκονομίας δύο λέγοντες φύσεις τὸ ἑτεροειδὲς αὐτῶν, οὐ τὸ κεχωρισμένον σημαίνομεν ὡς ἐκείσε τῶν οὐσιῶν τὸν ἀριθμόν, κἂν μηδεμία ὑπόστασις εἴη ἀνούσιος, οὕτω κἂν ταῦθα τῶν ὑποστάσεων, κἂν μηδεμία φύσις ἀνυπόστατος εἴη, δικαίως ἐκβάλλοντες”.



## IIc. John's Dyophysite interpretation of St Cyril's 'mia-physis' formula

The formula 'one incarnate nature of God the Logos' used by Cyril of Alexandria to explain the mystery of incarnation, was essential, as we saw, for both the Orthodox and the Monophysites. This formula made it possible for both parties to speak of Patristic consistency in their Christological formulas.

For Monophysitism, this formula describes the union of humanity with divinity not in one hypostasis but in one nature, something that in John's *consensus patrum* is identified with *ousia*.<sup>612</sup> This kind of understanding in John's opinion means that: first, the Monophysite union of Christ's natures means the confusion of natural properties, so the hypostasis is one because the nature is one. Second, the terminology is used by the Monophysites in an absolute way. That means that the Monophysites reject the new, more analytical understanding of terminology introduced by the Council of Chalcedon preferring definitions from a previous era. Third they overlook St Cyril's explanatory comments of the *mia-physis* formula.<sup>613</sup>

Beginning his analysis of the *mia-physis* formula in chapter 52 of *Against the Jacobites*, John makes three hypotheses concerning the meaning that this formula would receive. The first is connected with the Orthodox understanding, while the other two describe the Monophysite one. These two refer either to

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<sup>612</sup> We should note that most Monophysites identified between hypostasis and nature, but distinguished between hypostasis/nature (in relation to Christ) and *ousia*, as between individualized and generic.



one simple nature in Christ or to one compound.<sup>614</sup> In both cases the centre is the one nature. Furthermore, if we call to mind the identification between hypostasis and nature in the writings of Athanasius and Cyril we are obliged, according to Monophysitism, to accept a 'κύρια', *exact*, use of nature in the *mia physis* formula<sup>615</sup> with the result that we accept one nature and hypostasis in Christ. In this the Monophysites tried to keep their understanding of Christ traditional.

In contrast, John Damascene refutes the Monophysite understanding of the Cyrillic formula resorting to the explanations that the Alexandrian Father offers himself on the mystery of the Logos' incarnation.<sup>616</sup> In this way he concludes in his work *Against the Jacobites* that the formulation *mia physis* refers to hypostasis by showing that *physis* in this formula is identical with

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<sup>613</sup> We understand the third occasion of John's interpretation of the Cyrillic formula *mia-physis* was not being used in a literal way but inexactly in order to denote hypostasis.

<sup>614</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, pp. 125-6 (52):1-11. The whole text says: "μίαν φύσιν τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου σεσαρκωμένην ὁμολογεῖτε, καὶ κοινὴ ὑμῖν τε καὶ ἡμῖν δόξα· πατέρων γὰρ ὁ λόγος ἐστίν. Ἄλλ' εἰ μὲν δύο τὰς φύσεις δηλοῦν διὰ τούτου βούλεσθε, εἰκαῖος ὑμῖν ὁ πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν πόλεμος. Εἰ δὲ ὡς μιᾶς ἐμφαντικὸν τοῦτο ἀπλῶς ἀντιφατικῶς κατὰ τῶν δύο προΐσχεσθε, μάτην ὑμῖν τὸ 'σεσαρκωμένην' παρέρριπται. Εἰ δὲ μήτε μίαν ἀπλῶς μήτε δύο ἡνωμένας παράστησι, πάντως, ὃ τί ποτε ἐπιμόριον μεταξὺ τῆς μιᾶς καὶ τῶν δύο παραληφθῇ, τοῦτο ὑμῖν δηλώσει τὸ 'σεσαρκωμένην', εἴτε δίμοιρον, εἴτε ἡμισυ". According to G.D. Dragas, 'Exchange or Communication of properties and deification', p. 386, "St John stresses against the notion of 'one nature,' 'composite' or 'simple' the two natures, the divine and the human, which are united in the one hypostasis of the Son and the Logos of God and on account of which he is and is called both true God and true man".

<sup>615</sup> This is the reason for John's accusations against the Monophysites see Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 126 (52):23-28.

<sup>616</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 149-52, chapters 114-127.

*hypostasis*, and by claiming that Cyril uses *physis* inexactly or *katachrestikos*.<sup>617</sup>

This position gives the sense that the answer to the Jacobites is concrete and simple. However, it is necessary to examine John's conclusive reply to understand the reasons for his rejection of the Monophysite way of thinking.

We can classify the analysis of St John's thought into two parts: i) in the first part, we shall examine the reasons for recognizing the hypostasis with the formula *mia physis* and ii) in the second part, we shall refer to his anti-Monophysite arguments on St Cyril's formula.

Concerning the position that St Cyril used '*καταχρηστικῶς*'; *inexactly*, where the word *physis* means hypostasis, John unfolds a kind of argument which he takes basically from Cyrillian Christology as we have said.<sup>618</sup> Apart from this understanding there is also John's personal contribution as he expresses Cyrillian thought in a kind of terminology and vocabulary that should be considered as a personal synthesis. Nowhere in Kotter's critical edition, can be found an example of where the Damascene borrows the distinction between the *katachrestike* and the *kyria* usage of the word *physis* in Cyril's works from the Fathers. In addition, we could claim that the formulas: "the generics are predicated of particulars"<sup>619</sup> and "essence is predicated of hypostasis"<sup>620</sup> are not used by other ecclesiastical authors to explain the *mia-physis* formula.<sup>621</sup>

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<sup>617</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127 (52):46-9 and p. 152 (125):3-6.

<sup>618</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 126 (52):22-23.

<sup>619</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126 (52):11, "κατηγοροῦνται τὰ καθολικώτερα τῶν μερικῶν".

<sup>620</sup> Kotter II, *Expos.*, p. 119 (50):6-7.

<sup>621</sup> At this point we should note that John borrows the aforementioned passages from Leontius of Byzantium, *Frag.*, PG 86, 2012. But Leontius does not explain the *mia-physis* formula using these explanatory comments. On the other hand in *Dial.* we find another definition of



According to St John, this formula was understood by the Alexandrine Fathers on the basis of the philosophical position according to which the particular can receive the name of the ‘γενικόν’, ‘generic form’, under which it is classified and within which it is contained. The predication of particular from general (although it does not mean that they are the same) cannot be seen *vice versa*. A hypostasis, as it is an *atomon* of a nature, admits the name and the definition of this nature. The opposite cannot occur as the hypostasis has not only nature but also accidental properties, *symbebekota*. Consequently, a hypostasis can receive a definition of nature as it is also nature but a nature cannot be called hypostasis as in this case it must contain the accidental properties of the hypostasis according to this definition.<sup>622</sup> The result is to allow a *katachrestike* usage of the term *physis*, something St Cyril did according to

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hypostasis as being identical with nature brought by Leontius of Byzantium, or Eulogius the Alexandrine according to Kotter’s critical edition. The passage is, Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 108 (κστ’)μγ’:2-4, “τὸ τῆς ὑποστάσεως ὄνομα δύο σημαίνει· ποτὲ μὲν τὴν ἀπλῶς ὑπαρξιν, καθὸ σημαινόμενον ταῦτόν ἐστιν οὐσία καὶ ὑπόστασις, ὅθεν τινὲς τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων εἶπον αὐτὰς φύσεις ἡγουν τὰς ὑποστάσεις”.

<sup>622</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 126 (52):14-19, “Ἡ μὲν γὰρ ὑπόστασις ἦτοι τὸ ἄτομον τῆς φύσεως φύσις, ἀλλὰ οὐ μόνον φύσις, ἀλλὰ μετὰ ιδιωμάτων, ἡ δὲ φύσις οὐχ ὑπόστασις ἦτοι ἄτομον”. At this point we should note the notional and the lexical dependence of John on Leontius of Byzantium. The philosophical position “κατηγοροῦνται γὰρ τὰ καθολικώτερα τῶν μερικῶν καὶ ταῦτόν μὲν παντάπασιν οὐκ ἔστιν, ὁμῶς δὲ δέχεται τὸ τε ὄνομα καὶ τὸν ὅρον τοῦ καθολικοῦ, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἀντιστρέφει” comes from Greek philosophy as we can see in Kotter’s critical edition, see Kotter I, *Dial.*, p. 71 & 86, however, Leontius refers to this and John’s thought is closer to Leontius’. See CNE, PG 86, 1280A. I quote the passage: “οὐ μὴν ἡ φύσις ὑπόστασις, ὅτι μηδὲ ἀντιστρέφει· ἡ μὲν γὰρ ὑπόστασις καὶ φύσις, τὸν τοῦ εἶναι λόγον ἐπιδέχεται· ἡ δὲ ὑπόστασις καὶ τὸν τοῦ καθ’ ἑαυτὸν εἶναι... Καὶ ἡ μὲν καθολικοῦ πράγματος χαρακτήρα δηλοῖ, ἡ δὲ τοῦ κοινοῦ τὸ ἴδιον ἀποδιαστέλλεται”. A similar position is observed in Leontius’ *Fragm.*, PG 86, 2005A.



John.<sup>623</sup> This way of thinking presupposes that, at the time of St Athanasius and St Cyril, the terms nature and hypostasis had not received so concrete a meaning as to be completely distinguished in their usage, a position which we have already examined,<sup>624</sup> while it was self-evident that Cyril along with Athanasius infers hypostasis by the word *physis*. But the latter position in particular creates a number of questions. Would the Monophysite leaders (who lived in the time after St Cyril) not recognize the *katachrestike* usage of the term *physis* in the formula ‘one incarnate nature of God the Logos’? What is certain, is that St Cyril had chosen a Patristic formula which he believed to be Athanasian, approaching it through personal understanding, something John Damascene does some centuries later. In any case, it is either a conscious attempt by St Cyril to designate nature through the word *physis* (very difficult John Damascene to agree with, as for him, Cyril speaks clearly of one

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<sup>623</sup> According to G Florovsky, ‘the Christological Dogma and its Terminology’, *GOTR* 13 (1968) p. 192, “it has been suggested that Cyril was interested neither in exact terminology nor in scholastic definitions. There are examples in which the term *physis* and adjectives related to it are used in a non-exact sense and objections have been presented at this level. It is suggested that *physis* is used to emphasize that Christ was truly man. Cyril was not concerned with terminology but with truth and more attention should be given to the soteriological intuition of Cyril”. About the origins of the identification between *hypostasis* and *nature* in the Alexandrine tradition see G. Martzelos, *Γένεση καὶ Πηγὴς τοῦ Ὁροῦ τῆς Χαλκηδόνος*, pp. 187-9.

<sup>624</sup> Maybe there had not been a necessity for a clear distinction between these terms before the appearance of the Christological disputations. We can also note that in *Against the Jacobites* the lack of systematic theological reference to St Cyril’s formula reveals that the main problem between the Orthodox and the Monophysite communities in Palestine, at the time of John, is the specific meanings of Patristic terminology.

hypostasis and two natures in Christ),<sup>625</sup> or an attempt to keep his teaching traditional in step with Alexandrine theology. The latter occasion would be a reason for John to give a personal interpretation of why St Cyril characterized the hypostasis using the word *physis*.

But, what is more important is the interpretation of the *mia-physis* formula. Does it express the integrity and the union of Christ's natures in His one compound hypostasis? We shall answer this question right away.

The basic presupposition in order to understand John's reasoning on the *mia-physis* formula is to comprehend the meaning of the term *incarnate* because:

“incarnation is the assumption of flesh and those [things] of the flesh. Therefore, the *enousios* [real] hypostasis of God in the Logos, that is the divine Logos, incarnates and is made corporeal and becomes a hypostasis of the flesh, and being God previously, He becomes flesh, namely human afterwards, and so He is called one compound hypostasis of the two natures. And, in this [hypostasis], because of the incarnation, the two natures of divinity and humanity come into union..., and [they] interpenetrate each other”.<sup>626</sup>

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<sup>625</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 152 (124):11-14. But Cyril was ready to speak of one nature as of one hypostasis, and he sometimes spoke of two hypostases, meaning two natures as we have seen.

<sup>626</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, pp. 126-7 (52):29-35, “σάρκωσις γάρ ἐστι τὸ μετασχεῖν σαρκὸς καὶ τῶν τῆς σαρκὸς. Σαρκοῦται τοίνυν ἡ ἐνούσιος τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου ὑπόστασις ἥτοι ὁ θεὸς λόγος καὶ παχύνεται καὶ ὑπόστασις τῇ σαρκὶ γίνεται, καὶ ὢν πρότερον θεὸς σὰρξ ἥτοι ἄνθρωπος ὕστερον γίνεται καὶ μία τῶν δύο φύσεων χρηματίζει ὑπόστασις



According to this passage the term *incarnate* denotes; first the assumption of flesh with its all natural properties, that is the Logos assumed a perfect human nature,<sup>627</sup> and second the reason for speaking of union and not unity of Christ's natures in His one compound hypostasis.<sup>628</sup> This double meaning of *sarkosis* is connected in John's thought with the hypostasis of the Logos only.<sup>629</sup> On any other occasion the term would be referred to and

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σύνθετος, καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ διὰ τῆς σαρκώσεως ἐνοῦνται αἱ δύο φύσεις τῆς τε θεότητος καὶ τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος καὶ περιχωροῦσιν ἐν ἀλλήλαις". The term 'περιχώρησις', *interpenetrate* is essential to John's Christology. He uses it very often against the Monophysites and the Monothelites. As we can understand from the above passage the *περιχώρησις* is used by John to describe the union of divinity with humanity. So we cannot agree with Leonard Prestige who considers the term *περιχώρησις* in John as "the actual process of their union". We read in Prestige's article, 'ΠΕΡΙΧΩΡΕΩ and ΠΕΡΙΧΩΡΗΣΙΣ in the Fathers' *JTS* 39 (1928), pp. 243-4, that "John Damascene in his turn found the terms *περιχωρέω* and *περιχώρησις* in Maximus, from whose writings he quotes the latter (Max. C. *Pyrrh.* 191D = Joh. *Fid. Orthod.* 3. 19, 243A). But he entirely missed their sense, being misled by the uncompounded verb *χωρέω* (= hold, contain) into thinking that they indicated a sort of penetration or permeation. Applied to the two natures this idea made of the *περιχώρησις* the actual process of their union, whereas in Gregory and Maximus it had been the result of their union". The remarks of K. O. Nilsson's approach are also very interesting: 'Perichoresis' in St John Damascene - an Incarnational Theology for our Time?' in *Xenia Oecumenica* 39 (Vammala: Vammalan Kirjapaino Oy, 1983), pp. 160-1, "the idea of *communicatio idiomatum* or *perichoresis* has to do with the whole basic relationship between God and man, the divine and the human...".

<sup>627</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 152 (127):2-5, "ἴδε γάρ, σαφῶς εἶρηκε 'διὰ τοῦ σεσαρκωμένην' εἰπεῖν 'τὴν ἐν ἀνθρωπότητι τελειότητα καὶ τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς οὐσίας τὴν δῆλωσιν εἰσκεκομίσθαι' καὶ ὡς οὐ 'μία φύσις τὸ ὅλον' ἐστίν".

<sup>628</sup> The term *sarkosis* is more accurate than the term *union* as St John explains in *Expos.*, Kotter II, pp. 131-2 (55):22-26.

<sup>629</sup> Grillmeier's interpretation of Cyril's *mia-physis* formula is very interesting. He argues what St John claims for the same formula. See, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 411, "so in the end the formula of the one physis-hypostasis necessarily leads to the idea of a



connected with the *physis*, with the result we can neither distinguish divinity from humanity nor speak of Christ's perfect human nature.<sup>630</sup>

We have seen that the formula *mia-physis* is used *καταχρηστικῶς* to refer to the hypostasis of the Logos. However, beyond this philosophical explanation that John repeats twice in chapter 52 of *Against the Jacobites*, there is also a theological one particularly in the *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*. In the former work John discusses the usage of the term *physis κυρίως* or *καταχρηστικῶς*. In the latter, he makes a systematic analysis of the *mia physis* connecting it with the formula 'of God the Logos'. We read:

"so that 'the nature of the Logos' means neither the hypostasis alone, nor the common nature of the hypostases, but the common nature viewed as a whole in the hypostasis of the Logos".<sup>631</sup>

So the 'one nature of God the Logos' means the common divine nature 'viewed as a whole' in the hypostasis of the Logos,<sup>632</sup> something that differentiates the

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unity of a person, even if Cyril does not bring the element of person sufficiently into play, and in particular does not distinguish it either in language or concept from the concept of nature".

<sup>630</sup> In chapter three, Kotter IV, *Aceph.*, p. 412: lines 4-7, St John says: "μίαν οὖν φύσιν τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου γινώσκομεν, τουτέστι τῆς θεότητος αὐτοῦ σεσαρκωμένην, τουτέστι ἡνωμένην σαρκί, καὶ μίαν φύσιν τῆς σαρκὸς τοῦ λόγου τεθεωμένην, τουτέστι ἡνωμένην θεότητι. Ὡστε δύο εἰσὶ φύσεις ἡνωμέναι ἀλλήλαις. Εἰ μὲν γὰρ εἶπε μίαν φύσιν τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου καὶ σεσαρκωμένου, ἀναντιρρήτως μίαν ἐδήλου φύσιν τὸ συναμφοτέρον. Εἰπὼν δὲ 'μίαν τοῦ λόγου φύσιν' καὶ προσθεὶς τὸ 'σεσαρκωμένην', διὰ τοῦ εἰπεῖν 'σεσαρκωμένην' ἐδήλωσε τῆς σαρκὸς τὴν οὐσίαν".

<sup>631</sup> Kotter II, *Expos.*, p. 132 (55):42-44. The translation from Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers, series 2, vol. ix, p. 55.

Second person of the Holy Trinity from the other Two, while the term *incarnate* adds one more nature, that of the human to this divine Hypostasis. This does not mean that divinity incarnates but rather the hypostasis of the Logos. Incarnation of divine nature for John is incomprehensible.<sup>633</sup> The assumption of humanity by the Logos is described by John as a “mode of existence” which is distinct from the modes of existence of the other Divine Hypostases [although it remains in an unconfused union with divinity in Christ].<sup>634</sup> The hypostasis of the Logos must be recognized neither independently of the divine nature nor in opposition, as divine nature exists in all three Hypostases under which it comes into existence.

In terms of ‘economy’ the Hypostasis under which human nature comes into existence, exists through all eternity. It is in this way that John interprets the passage from Jo 1,14 “the Word became flesh”. He says:

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<sup>632</sup> See also Kotter II, *Expos.*, p. 122 (50):60-68, “Καὶ ὅτε εἶπωμεν τὴν φύσιν τοῦ λόγου σεσαρκῶσθαι κατὰ τοὺς μακαρίους Ἀθανάσιόν τε καὶ Κύριλλον, τὴν θεότητα λέγομεν ἡνῶσθαι σαρκί... Ὡστε φύσιν τοῦ λόγου λέγοντες αὐτὸν τὸν λόγον σημαίνομεν. Ὁ δὲ λόγος καὶ τὸ κοινὸν τῆς οὐσίας κέκτηται καὶ τὸ ἰδιάζον τῆς ὑποστάσεως”, According to J. Romanides, ‘The Christological Teaching of St John Damascene’, p. 258, “if the term nature here [one incarnate nature of God the Logos] signifies the common nature of the Holy Trinity we would have an incarnation not of the Logos but of what is common to the Three Persons of the Trinity. St John Damascene proves that this is certainly not what St Cyril teaches. At the same time, however, St John does not accept the interpretation that ‘Nature of the Logos’ means simply ‘Hypostasis of the Logos’”.

<sup>633</sup> Kotter II, *Expos.*, p. 122 (55):45-55.

<sup>634</sup> John interprets the *sarkosis* as ‘mode of existence’, a characteristic that connects it with a concrete hypostasis of the holy Trinity and not with the divine nature. Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 127 (52):55-58, “οὐκ ἔστιν οὖν εἰπεῖν μίαν τῶν τῆς θεότητος ὑποστάσεων ἔχειν τι, ὅπερ οὐχὶ πᾶσαι αἱ ὑποστάσεις κέκτονται, πλὴν τοῦ τρόπου τῆς ὑπάρξεως. Καὶ ἡ σάρκωσις δὲ τρόπος δευτέρας ὑπάρξεως πέφυκε μόνῳ τῷ μονογενεῖ υἱῷ καὶ λόγῳ ἀρμόζουσα, ὥς ἂν ἡ ιδιότης μείνῃ ἀκίνητος”.



“for the hypostasis of God the Word in itself became the hypostasis of the flesh, and accordingly ‘the Word became flesh’ clearly without any change, and likewise the flesh became Word without alteration, and God became man”.<sup>635</sup>

By this explanation any confusion and composition of the two natures is avoided. Divine nature comes into union with human nature because of the incarnation of the hypostasis of the divine Logos.<sup>636</sup>

For John any other exegesis of the *mia-physis* formula was incomprehensible as this position is in agreement with the situations: first, there is no confusion over the natural properties that distinguish one nature from another and characterize them as real and perfect, and second that:

“The divine nature does not admit of any kind of addition or subtraction; it bestows [participation], it does not receive it”.<sup>637</sup>

In fact what John tries to prove is that when Cyril accepts two unconfused natures in Christ in the *mia-physis* formula, the Alexandrine Father means that the two natures “do not admit of whatever addition or subtraction in their natural properties”. Through this explanation the incarnation of the divine

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<sup>635</sup> Kotter II, *Expos.*, p. 131 (55):14-16.

<sup>636</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 128 (53):11-14.

<sup>637</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127 (52):43-45, “οὐ γὰρ δεκτικὴ ἡ θεία φύσις τῆς οἰασοῦν προσθήκης ἢ ὑφαιρέσεως, καὶ μεταδοτικὴ μὲν, οὐ μεταληπτικὴ δέ”.



Logos is not described as natural composition but as a way for the economic appearance of God in the world in order to offer salvation to all human beings.<sup>638</sup> In addition, the *mia physis* characterizes the hypostasis of the Logos who is all divinity as are the other Persons of the Holy Trinity. In any case this kind of understanding overthrows any syllogism for a compound nature in Christ out of two. From all we have mentioned we understand that John accepts the *mia-physis* formula as it belongs to tradition, but, as with the Fifth Ecumenical Council of 553, he accepts it only if it is interpreted correctly.

#### IId) The human being example and its analogy with Christ

As we saw in the chapter that refers to the reasons by which the Monophysites identify nature and hypostasis, there is also the anthropological example, although both Monophysites and Orthodox agree with its limited ability to describe the doctrine of incarnation.

According to Monophysitism, an analogy could be found between the one nature of human beings composed of body and soul and the one nature of Christ composed of divinity and humanity. This interpretation of the anthropological example caused the reaction of Orthodoxy. Is it possible for Orthodox theology to find an analogy between the natures of man and Christ? How does St John understand the soul-body analogy in Christology?

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<sup>638</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127 (52):53-55.

Every human being, as hypostasis, is a composition of two natures, soul and body. Both of them keep their perfection,<sup>639</sup> that is to say their natural properties remain unconfused and intact, otherwise we would have to agree with the existence of opposite natural properties in one nature.<sup>640</sup> But as this is unthinkable in all human hypostases, body and soul remain intact. It is only this interpretation of the anthropological example that can express an analogy with Christ's hypostasis. It is a relation between the hypostatic interpretation of a human being and Christ, or on the contrary as John says, it is an analogy between the unique hypostasis of Christ and a human hypostasis that "φυσιολογῆται πρὸς ἑαυτόν", "is examined according to its nature", and it is not compared with another human hypostasis in order to be classified as being the same species<sup>641</sup> and to be characterized as the same nature.<sup>642</sup> John, for instance, quotes a passage from St Gregory the Theologian in order to prove the relation between the duality of natures in Christ and the man composed of body and soul. We read:

"for God and Man are two natures, as also soul and body are; but there are not two Sons or two Gods".<sup>643</sup>

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<sup>639</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129 (56):6-9.

<sup>640</sup> Kotter IV, *Aceph.*, p. 415 (8):1-5.

<sup>641</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 414 (7):8-12. The same in Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 130 (57):8-11.

<sup>642</sup> Kotter IV, *Aceph.*, p. 414 (7):4-6. John refers to Leontius' *CNE*, PG 86, 1289D-1292C at this point.

<sup>643</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 129 (55):13-14, "φύσεις μὲν γὰρ δύο, θεὸς καὶ ἄνθρωπος, ἐπεὶ καὶ ψυχὴ καὶ σῶμα, υἱοὶ δὲ οὐ δύο οὐδὲ θεοί" from the *let.* 101 of St Gregory the Theologian. We also observe similar positions in Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 146 (98):1-5; *Aceph.*, p. 415 (7):17-18.

In fact according to John what the Monophysites do is to use this example to compare two different things, the human species and the hypostasis of Christ in order to speak of one compound nature in both human beings and Christ.<sup>644</sup> However, comparison of the human species with Christ would be possible only if there were many beings like Christ to be classified under the same species, which is unthinkable as there is no species of Christ.<sup>645</sup>

Consequently for the Dyophysite thought of John the anthropological example expresses an analogy with the hypostasis of Christ; a human hypostasis is compared with Christ's hypostasis where the natures remain unconfused. Virtually both Monophysitism and Dyophysitism make use of this analogy, but what matters is how it is used, and not the mere fact of its use. It is necessary to have the right consideration of the human example in the case of Christ and to recognize the confined limits of this comparison.<sup>646</sup>

### *III. St John Damascene's real anti-Monophysite Emotions*

At this point, we have to ask whether the Monophysites' thinking is the same as John's concerning their teaching, and why does he accuse them so

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<sup>644</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 129 (56):10-15.

<sup>645</sup> Kotter IV, *Aceph.*, pp. 414-5 (7):14-17, "ἐπὶ δὲ Χριστοῦ εἶδος οὐκ ἔστιν· οὐ γὰρ πολλοὶ Χριστοὶ ἐκ θεότητος συντεθειμένοι καὶ ἀνθρωπότητος, ἵνα πάντες ὑπὸ τὸ αὐτὸ εἶδος ταττόμενοι μιᾶς λεχθῶσι φύσεως, ἀλλ' εἷς ἔστι Χριστὸς ἐκ δύο καὶ ἐν δυσὶ γνωριζόμενος φύσεσι".



vigorously? For instance Monophysite reasoning according to John has negative consequences both in Christology and Triadology,<sup>647</sup> although at the same time he says that Monophysitism is Orthodox in its Triadology.<sup>648</sup> What is the reason for this antithesis? We shall reply right away. John's desire as we have already said has a twofold expectation: first to inform the local Orthodox communities in the region of Palestine on the differences between Monophysitism and Dyophysitism and second to help the Jacobites to understand the obscure and muddled concept of their Christology. On the latter occasion in particular it seems that John's imputations could also be considered from a pastoral perspective, as his emphasis of the negative consequences of the Monophysite teaching in Triadology might have facilitated their return to Orthodoxy. Otherwise we cannot understand why John insists on the Monophysite accuracy in the Trinitarian doctrine in *Pege Gnoseos*, while in the polemical works, he declares that Monophysitism's formulas create a number of problems within the Holy Trinity. In fact there is no antithesis in John's writings if we see the anti-Monophysite works from a pastoral perspective. He tries to persuade the Monophysites to understand the inconsistency of their understanding in the *mia-*

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<sup>646</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 128 (54):1-8.

<sup>647</sup> We must note that the Monophysites who followed St Cyril and identified the terms nature and hypostasis, were obliged, according to John, to accept the incarnation of the Father in the formula 'one incarnate nature of God the Logos'. See *ibid.*, p. 118 (22):1-4, "τὰ ὁμοούσια τὸν αὐτὸν ἐπιδέχεται λόγον. Εἰ οὖν ὁ Χριστὸς μία φύσις ἐστὶ σεσαρκωμένη καὶ οὗτος, ὥς φατε, τῆς αὐτοῦ οὐσίας ὁ ὅρος ἐστίν, ὁμοούσιος δέ ἐστιν τῷ πατρὶ καὶ ἡμῖν ὁμοούσιος, ἄρα ἔσται καὶ ὁ πατὴρ καὶ ἡμεῖς μία φύσις θεότητος σεσαρκωμένη". Apart from this, at this point, John overlooks the fact that the Monophysites do not accept the identification between hypostasis and nature within the Holy Trinity.

<sup>648</sup> Kotter IV, *Haeres.*, p. 49 (83):1-5.

*physis* formula and the Orthodox to see Monophysitism sympathetically. Here, we ought to note the difference that exists on this position between John's anti-Monophysite works and Chapter 83 in *Haeres*. He urges in *Haeres*. that the Monophysites are in all respects Orthodox save for refusing to accept the 'Tome' of Chalcedon.<sup>649</sup> When John discusses with the Orthodox about the Monophysites, he speaks of them in a moderate way. When he addresses letters to the Monophysites themselves, he accuses them of overturning not only Christological doctrine but also Trinitarian. But I think we could understand John's feeling against the anti-Chalcedonians better from what he himself says about the purpose of writing the letter *Against the Jacobites*. He did not write this letter in a polemical tone simply to express his opposition to Jacobites in the field of Christology. It was the true love of Christ that encouraged St John Damascene to write this letter in order to help the Monophysites to return to the Orthodox Church.<sup>650</sup>

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<sup>649</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49 (83):1-5, "Αἰγυπτιακοί, οἱ καὶ Σχηματικοί, μονοφυσῖται, οἱ προφάσει τοῦ ἐν Χαλκηδόνι συντάγματος τοῦ τόμου ἀποσχίσαντες τῆς ὀρθοδόξου ἐκκλησίας... τὰ δὲ ἄλλα πάντα ὀρθόδοξοι ὑπάρχοντες". It is very interesting to note that this position expresses John's original thought as he does not collect it from another author as he does in other passages. Apart from this we should note that this passage does not offer a deep theological analysis of the differences or similarities between the two Christological parties. The passage simply gives historical information on the reasons for the disagreements between the Chalcedonians and anti-Chalcedonians.

<sup>650</sup> Kotter IV, p. 109-10 (1):18-9, 26-8. "Ταῦτά με πρὸς τὸ γράφειν παρώρμησεν· οὐκ ἔρις, οὐ ζῆλος, οὐκ ἔλεγχος, οὐ νίκης ἔφεσις, οὐκ ἐπιδείξεως τρόπος, οὐ μῖσος, ἀλλ' ἔλεος ἐκ πόθου θείου καὶ τοῦ πλησίον ὁρμώμενος... Δέξασθε τοίνυν λόγον ἰάσεως τῇ τοῦ πνεύματος κροτούμενον χάριτι, ὥς ἂν ἡσθῇ μὲν θεός, κοινωνὸν δὲ τῆς εὐφροσύνης τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ποιήσητε".



Both Orthodox and Monophysites speak of the human and divine nature in Christ.<sup>651</sup> In addition, the two parties accept one hypostasis and share the same faith on the basis of the *mia-physis* formula. But from this point a differentiation starts. For John, it is not only the acceptance of a formula but also its correct understanding which characterizes someone as heretic or not. In fact the disagreement with the Monophysites refers to the mode of distinction of the two natures in the hypostasis of Christ; *psile epinoia* 'in thought' or 'in reality'. On this point we must consider the main contrast between Orthodox Dyophysitism and Jacobite Monophysitism. We could claim that when St John encounters the Monophysite Christological teaching he tries to persuade the Monophysites that a distinction of Christ's two natures in thought is not only muddled and nonsensical but also without reason. So, if the Monophysites do not reject the distinction of divinity and humanity 'in thought' and accept the 'real' one in the Cyrillic formula for example, then John would never expect a reunion with them. In fact John does not try to persuade the Monophysites to change their belief not to rewrite and recast their Cyrillic Christological formula, but he makes an effort to offer the correct explanation of this doctrine on the basis of the real distinction of the natural properties of divinity and humanity.<sup>652</sup>

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<sup>651</sup> We should also mention here the importance for John of Christianity as a religion that meets the double nature of humanity (soul and body), which needs a double remedy. Part of his objection of Monophysitism was that its emphasis on the 'unique' unity of Christ's natures ran the risk of missing the genuine duality of Christianity (spiritual and material) as answering to the double condition of humanity. The double nature seem to be the underlying theme in *Expos.*, chapters 82-100, and also in the transition in *Imag.*, III: chapter 12. Thanks to Andrew Louth for this suggestion.

<sup>652</sup> This is also true if we consider John's approach to the Monophysite philosophical terminology. We may connect the philosophical inconsistency of Monophysitism with its



For John, the safe criterion for the Monophysites is either the agreement that *physis* means 'the generic' that is completely different from hypostasis that denotes the 'the individual', or the acceptance of the Council of Chalcedon in order for their terminology and understanding of the *mysterium Christi* to be more concrete, logical and clear. Apart from that, the preposition *en* in the formula 'in two natures' means the absolute and the real distinction of the natural differences between the two natures in Christ. On all occasions of his dialogue with Monophysitism, John Damascene remains a typical Chalcedonian. For him, Chalcedon and the distinction between *physis* and hypostasis is the absolute criterion even if he talks about the *mia-physis* formula. So when John either speaks of the 'Tome' of Chalcedon or analyzes the meaning of the *mia-physis* formula, his purpose is the refutation of the statement that 'nature and hypostasis are identical'.

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historical confrontation of, first, Nestorianism and its teaching of the relative union of Christ's natures, and second, the alleged cryptonestorianism of Orthodox teaching. In any case, for John, Monophysitism is a sect with confused Christological teaching, merely Orthodox (the two natures survive in the one hypostasis) and merely unorthodox (identification between hypostasis and nature resulting in their acceptance of one nature and hypostasis in Christ, distinction of the natures in thought).

## 2. St John Damascene's Thought on the Trisagion.

Apart from the letter *Against the Jacobites*, John sent another letter which is also a real polemical issue. It is the letter addressed to the Abbot Anastasius on the Trisagion. Before we proceed to an analysis of John's arguments against Anastasius and the attribution of the Trisagion only to the incarnated Logos, we should examine the reason behind the rejection of the addition 'ὁ σταυρωθεὶς δι' ἡμᾶς', 'Who was crucified for us' in the Trisagion by Peter the Fuller. It is necessary to do this because of the relationship between Peter the Fuller and the abbot Anastasius, as both of them attributed the Trisagion only to the Son. This relationship is confessed by John himself.<sup>653</sup>

According to this letter, the addition 'Who was crucified for us' to the Trisagion is not acceptable because it either introduces a fourth person within the Holy Trinity or it characterizes the Trinity as 'παθητή', 'being changed'.<sup>654</sup> In both cases, for John, the connection of this teaching with the Monophysite Christological teaching is clear. The addition presupposes that in Christ there is only one nature as the crucifixion of Christ's humanity is put on the same level as the divinity of the other Hypostases of the Holy Trinity. It is logical therefore that Peter the Fuller's addition is attacked by the Damascene first with theological arguments and second with Patristic florilegia.

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<sup>653</sup> Kotter IV, *Trisag.*, p. 329 (26):9-13, "μήτε ἡμῶν κατηγορεῖν μήτε τοῦ τρισμάκαρος Ἰωάννου τοῦ πατριάρχου ὡς πεπεισμένων ἐπὶ μιᾷ τῶν θεαρχικῶν ὑποστάσεων λέγειν τὸν τρισάγιον ὕμνον. Πᾶς γάρ, ὅστις οὕτω φρονεῖ ἢ λέγει, κοινωνός ἐστι τῆς τοῦ κναφέως τοῦ βαναύσου σκαιότητος".

Moreover, in the context of *Against the Jacobites* we must consider that the refutation of Peter the Fuller's addition is followed by an elaboration of Orthodox teaching concerning the person of the Theotokos. As the most holy Virgin Mary gave birth to the incarnate Son of God, then the only acceptable position is the existence of one hypostasis and two natures in Christ. In this way St John avoids the attribution of the passions to the Holy Trinity. In addition, in the same letter, we consider the negative consequences that the addition has for both Christology and Theology.<sup>655</sup> We read:

“in consequence we define the addition to the Trisagion as blasphemy, because it interposes a fourth person in the Holy Trinity, and it places on the one side the real power of God and on the other side the crucified Christ, as if He is someone else upon [next to] the Mighty [God] or it [the addition] thinks that the Holy Trinity is passible and it is crucified with the Son, the Father and the Holy Spirit or it manifests the Holy and Immortal Spirit as being changeable”.<sup>656</sup>

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<sup>654</sup> Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, p. 141 (85):1-6.

<sup>655</sup> The arguments in the letter *on the Trisagion* are theological and Patristic. In *Jacob.*, we observe mainly the negative theological and soteriological consequences of Peter the Fuller's addition, see Kotter IV, *Jacob.*, pp. 141-3, chapters 85-88.

<sup>656</sup> *Ibid*, p. 141 (85): 1-6, “έντεϋθεν καί τήν έν τῷ τρισαγίῳ προσθήκην βλάσφημον ὀρίζομεθα ὡς τέταρτον έν τῇ τριάδι παρεντιθεῖσαν πρόσωπον καί άνά μέρος τιθεῖσαν τοῦ θεοῦ τήν ένυπόστατον δύναμιν καί άνά μέρος τόν έσταυρωμένον ὡς άλλον ὄντα παρά τόν ίσχυρόν ἢ παθητήν τήν άγίαν τριάδα δοξάζουσιν καί συσταυροῦσιν τῷ υἱῷ τόν πατέρα καί τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ άγιον ἢ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ άγιον καί άθάνατον παθητόν άποδεικνύουσιν”.



This kind of understanding given by John presupposes that the Trisagion refers to the Holy Trinity. But the additional formula ‘Who was crucified for us’ by Peter the Fuller which attribute the Trisagion only to the Son does not lack traditional support. A similar explanation of the Trisagion is also found in the gospel of St John 12, 39-41.<sup>657</sup> It is this point that influenced some theologians of the Christian East and Syria in particular to attribute the revealed hymn to the Son. In Constantinople, on the other hand, the Trisagion was connected with the Holy Trinity. Apart from the theological disputations the misunderstanding on the Trisagion should be understood from a historical perspective as well. Sebastian Brock argues that: “it is clear that originally different geographical areas understood the Trisagion in different ways. At Jerusalem, Constantinople and in the West, it was taken to be addressed to the Trinity, whereas in Syria, parts of Asia Minor and Egypt it was understood as referring to Christ”.<sup>658</sup> From this perspective, St John either ignores the Syriac tradition or simply refutes both the addition made by Peter the Fuller and Anastasius’ arguments on attributing the Trisagion only to the Son. In the latter case we could suppose

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<sup>657</sup> “Διὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἠδύναντο πιστεύειν, ὅτι πάλιν εἶπεν Ἡσαΐας, Τετύφλωκεν αὐτῶν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς καὶ ἐπώρωσεν αὐτῶν τὴν καρδίαν, ἵνα μὴ ἴδωσιν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς καὶ νοήσωσιν τῇ καρδίᾳ καὶ στραφῶσιν, καὶ ἰάσομαι αὐτούς. ταῦτα εἶπεν Ἡσαΐας, ὅτι εἶδεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐλάλησεν περὶ αὐτοῦ”.

<sup>658</sup> ‘The thrice-holy hymn in the Liturgy’, *Sobornost* 7:2 (1985), p. 29. Reading the rest of the article we hear: “the Christological understanding of the Trisagion is earlier than the trinitarian, and that its original context was indeed that of the crucifixion... The Syrian understanding of the Trisagion, then, offers further evidence for a Christological interpretation of the threefold ‘holy’ in Isaiah 6:3, hints of which we have also found in connection with the Sanctus”. See also the article of Hieronymus Engberding, ‘Zum formgeschichtlichen Verständnis des ἁγίος ὁ Θεός, ἁγίος ἰσχυρός, ἁγίος ἀθάνατος - ἡλέησον ἡμᾶς’, *JL Band 10* (Münster: verlag Aschendorff, 1930), pp. 168-74.

that in doing so, John believes that he is refuting any Monophysite influence in the understanding of the Trisagion. Indeed “the addition in Syria, by Peter the Fuller, patriarch of Antioch (d.488), of the words ‘Who was crucified for us’, in order to enforce a Christological interpretation, only made the matter more inflammatory, especially in the eyes of those who disapproved of theopaschite language. Eventually, because Constantinople represented the centre of Chalcedonian Orthodoxy in the East, and Syria the stronghold of opposition to the Chalcedonian definition that ‘the Incarnate Christ is one *in* two natures’, this division of opinion, originally a purely geographical matter; took on ecclesiastical overtones, and a Trinitarian interpretation of the Trisagion came to be seen as a hallmark of chalcedonian orthodoxy”.<sup>659</sup> And it is also the Damascene who as a typical Chalcedonian Father follows the *Acta* of this Council and those after Chalcedon, and aims to reject the attribution of the Trisagion to the Son.<sup>660</sup>

Peter the Fuller, as we have said in chapter one, tried to bring unity and peace to the schism in the East, compromising the differences between the Chalcedonians and the non-Chalcedonians, using the before-mentioned addition to the Trisagion. Therefore we can suppose that the reaction to Peter’s addition by John is also connected with Peter’s Monophysite thought.<sup>661</sup> Before the addition the Trisagion could receive a lot of interpretations and meanings. After the addition its interpretation was confined to and connected with the Son,

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<sup>659</sup> S. Brock, ‘The thrice-holy hymn in the Liturgy’, p. 29.

<sup>660</sup> *Expos.*, Kotter II, p. (54):43-6. “Καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀγία δὲ καὶ μεγάλη τῇ οἰκουμενικῇ τετάρτῃ συνόδῳ, τῇ ἐν Χαλκηδόνι φημί, οὕτως ὑμνηθῆναι ὁ τρισάγιος οὗτος ὕμνος παραδέδοται· οὕτω γὰρ τοῖς πεπραγμένοις τῆς αὐτῆς ἀγίας συνόδου ἐμφέρεται”.



meaning that it received a Christological interpretation. Moreover, we should mention what we have already stated, that the addition was accepted as a theopaschetic formula, an important reason for its rejection by the Chalcedonians and John Damascene.<sup>662</sup> In essence, John condemns Peter the Fuller because he has already been condemned by the Orthodox Church. For John, Peter is a heretic for two reasons; first his Monophysite positions and second the testimony of the previous Ecumenical Councils.

In the case of the letter *On the Trisagion*, we consider a similar position. What the monk Anastasius tried to prove was that this hymn should be attributed only to the incarnate Logos. John's main theological arguments against Anastasius can be found in chapters 2-7 and 27-28 *On the Trisagion*. John elaborates his understanding of the Trisagion in 4:8-27 in the *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* as well.

As we read in the letter *On the Trisagion*, the monk Anastasius, the abbot of the Monastery of St Euthymios, defamed both St John Damascene and the Patriarch of Jerusalem John V as follows:

"I am [John Damascene] inclined to this opinion [that the Trisagion refers to the Son only]... and the most blessed Patriarch Ioannis of the holy city of Christ and our God... had the same thought as him".<sup>663</sup>

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<sup>661</sup> About Peter the Fuller's historical events see chapter two.

<sup>662</sup> About theopaschitism in general see also chapter two.

<sup>663</sup> Kotter IV, *Trisag.*, p. 306 (1):36-44, "καὶ ἡμεῖς (St John) τῇ γνώμῃ ταύτῃ καθυπεκύψαμεν, σύναινοι καὶ σύμψηφοι αὐτῷ περὶ τούτου γενόμενοι,...καὶ τὸν τρισμακάριστον δὲ πατριάρχην τῆς ἁγίας Χριστοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν πόλεως Ἰωάννην... τῆς αὐτῆς αὐτῷ γεγενῆσθαι ἐννοίας".



From this passage, we understand John's insistence on clarifying his thought *On the Trisagion* in a different way than Anastasius. So his efforts are focused on proving that the word *holy* refers to all three Hypostases of the Holy Trinity. But let us examine John's theological positions.

The Trisagion is found in the book of Isaiah 6,3.<sup>664</sup> According to this book, the hymn originated from God and was revealed to Isaiah through the Seraphim. The purpose was the revelation:

“through the Trisagion, the one Divinity and Lordship that has three hypostases as in a mathematical revelation”.<sup>665</sup>

The triple repetition of the word ‘*ἅγιος*’, *holy* in the phrase:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory”

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<sup>664</sup> The whole text says: Is. 6,1-6,3, “καὶ ἐγένετο τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ, οὗ ἀπέθανεν Ὁζίας ὁ βασιλεὺς, εἶδον τὸν κύριον καθήμενον ἐπὶ θρόνου ὑψηλοῦ καὶ ἐπηρμένου, καὶ πλήρης ὁ οἶκος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ. καὶ σεραφίμ εἰστήκεισαν κύκλῳ αὐτοῦ, ἕξ πτέρυγες τῷ ἐνὶ καὶ ἕξ πτέρυγες τῷ ἐνὶ, καὶ ταῖς μὲν δυσὶν κατεκάλυπτον τὸ πρόσωπον καὶ ταῖς δυσὶν κατεκάλυπτον τοὺς πόδας καὶ ταῖς δυσὶν ἐπέταντο. καὶ ἐκέκραγον ἑτερος πρὸς τὸν ἑτερον καὶ ἔλεγον Ἄγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος κύριος σαβαώθ, πλήρης πᾶσα ἡ γῆ τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ”.

<sup>665</sup> Kotter IV, *Trisag.*, p. 306 (2):8-10, “διὰ τοῦ τρισαγίου ὕμνου τὴν μίαν τρισυπόστατον θεότητά τε καὶ κυριότητα ὡς διὰ τινος ἀριθμητικῆς ἐκφαντορίας”.

refers to the Hypostases of the Holy Trinity, while the unique usage of the word ‘κύριος’, *Lord* characterizes their common divine nature.<sup>666</sup> Holy is the Father, holy is the Son, holy is the Holy Spirit. The source of this holiness is only one, the divinity. Consequently the Trisagion cannot refer only to one hypostasis of the Holy Trinity.<sup>667</sup> In this way John explains that the revelation of the Trisagion is, simply, a proof that the one divine God is of three Hypostases.<sup>668</sup> Moreover, the one Divinity is glorified only in a triadic way according to the three Hypostases, while, at the same time, these Hypostases are glorified through the worship of the one Divinity.<sup>669</sup> In fact for John any kind of understanding the Trisagion presupposes must be considered in two frames: first, the second Person of the Holy Trinity remains inseparable from the other Two and second, whether it is mentioned in Patristic florilegia that the hymn must be attributed only to the Son.<sup>670</sup> Supporting his thought on these frames, he unfolds all of his arguments against the addition to the Trisagion.<sup>671</sup>

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<sup>666</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 306-7 (2):13-32.

<sup>667</sup> In fact the problem of the addition ‘ὁ σταυρωθεὶς δι’ ἡμᾶς’ in the *Trisagion* arises because the hymn is attributed to the Holy Trinity.

<sup>668</sup> Kotter IV, *Trisag.*, p. 307 (2):13-21.

<sup>669</sup> *Ibid.*, lines: 22-27. “Καὶ ἡ μὲν θεότης τριαδικῶς ἀγιάζεται καὶ δοξάζεται ‘ἅγιος, ἅγιος, ἅγιος’, καὶ αἱ τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις μοναδικῶς δοξολογοῦνται ‘κύριος σαβαώθ- πλήρης ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ’”.

<sup>670</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 308-9 (3):6-14.

<sup>671</sup> John’s philosophical approach to the Trisagion is also very interesting. If the hymn related only to one hypostasis, then it would be called *Trisagios* with only one hypostasis (*Ibid.*, p. 309 (3):17-19). On this point, he considers it necessary to offer a grammatical analysis of the word *Trisagion*.

When the diphthong *ei* is used, the number three is understood. When it is written with *i* (psilo giota), it means ‘many times’ and it is used as an adverb (*ibid.*). In addition, in the case of number three, when it is used as an adverb, it is written with *i*, while in

But what is John's position on patristic florilegia used both by him and Anastasius? John does not contradict that the abbot Anastasius has found Patristic authorities to verify that the hymn refers to the Son alone.<sup>672</sup> Indeed he has had contacts with Anastasius as we read in chapter 1, 38-40. There, he denoted that Anastasius 'προκεκόμικε', 'brought' to his notice Patristic passages regarding the Trisagion. But John's reply was clear:

"we [I] did not accept that the sayings [of the passages] denote that the Trisagion refers to the Son only".<sup>673</sup>

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composition with another word, it shows either number three or many (*Ibid.*, p. 310 (4):9-14). However, for John, beyond all these grammatical explanations, the real meaning of number three should be identified with the mathematical quantity three (3) see *ibid.*, p. 311 (4):15-22. According to the Orthodox understanding, the number three and its relation with the persons of the Holy Trinity has a deeper connection as it declares the perfection of God. See John's preference for the theological thought of St Gregory the Theologian, *ibid.*, p. 331 (28):9-20.

In the case of the *Trisagion*, if the hymn related to only one hypostasis, it would lead us to conclude that this hypostasis had either three natures or hypostases (*ibid.*, p. 311 (4):22-25). Consequently there is no possibility for the hymn to be connected with only one hypostasis of the Holy Trinity. We are obliged to interpret any other addition to the formula 'Δόξα Πατρί καὶ Υἱῷ καὶ ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι', 'Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit' with phrases that are related to Christ's passions or resurrection in this way. Although the Damascene recognizes cases like this, he replies by saying that they cannot create a new tradition for there is neither Patristic support nor any direct connection between them and the formula 'Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit' (*ibid.*, p. 313 (6):1-14).

<sup>672</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 306 (1):38-40.

<sup>673</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 306 (1):40-41, "οὐ μὴν εἰς τὸν υἱὸν μόνον δηλοῦν ἀναφέρεσθαι τὸν τρισάγιον ὕμνον τὰς χρήσεις συνηνέσαμεν". From this passage we realise that John cannot have ignored the passage from Jo 12,41, or at least it is very unlikely that he did.



From this passage we comprehend the different approach to these passages by Anastasius and John. But what is interesting is that John, while knowing and accepting these authorities, speaks of them generally and vaguely without naming them as in the case of the soul-body analogy in Christology.<sup>674</sup> In essence, this silence on Anastasius' patristic florilegia is John's only answer according to chapter 4, *On the Trisagion*.<sup>675</sup> He hints that none of the Church Fathers attributed the triple usage of the word *holy* to the Son, as Anastasius believes.<sup>676</sup> This inconsistency between Anastasius and previous ecclesiastical tradition is thoroughly exploited by John. We have already made reference to the way John looks at the words of the Fathers. It is in this work what he stresses that "the word of the Fathers is law".<sup>677</sup>

This point leads us to agree with the little echo of both Peter the Fuller and Anastasius' teaching at the time of John and make a hypothesis as others have done. It is possible, that if this letter did not survive, we would know nothing of this matter. Furthermore, it is possible that if Anastasius had not

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<sup>674</sup> At least in *Against the Jacobites*, John tries to give the correct meanings of the passages, common to Orthodoxy and Monophysitism.

<sup>675</sup> Kotter IV, *Trisag.*, p. 308 (3):1-4, "εἰ δὲ λέγοιεν οἱ θεοφόροι πατέρες, ὧν νόμος ὁ λόγος, ὅτι τὸν υἱὸν ὑμνοῦντά φασιν 'ἅγιος, ἅγιος, ἅγιος', εἰ μὲν ἔφησαν, ὅτι τὸν υἱὸν μόνον ὑμνοῦντα, εἶχεν ἄν ὑποψίαν καὶ εἰς τὸν υἱὸν μόνον εἰρῆσθαι τὸν τρισάγιον ὕμνον".

<sup>676</sup> The Patristic authorities used by St John *On the Trisagion* are: St Athanasius and St Cyril of Alexandria, St Proclus of Constantinople, St Epiphanius, St John Chrysostom, St Basil the Great, St Gregory the Theologian and St Gregory of Nyssa. Apart from this we must note that the Damascene does not make reference to the passage in Jo 12, 41 where the Trisagion is connected with only the Son.

<sup>677</sup> Kotter IV, *Trisag.*, p. 308 (3):1.

slandered the Damascene and the Patriarch of Jerusalem, the Palestinian monk would never have bothered with this question.

We could say that in John Damascene's thought, *the Trisagion* has a clear anti-Monophysite meaning when it refers to Peter the Fuller's addition 'Who was crucified for us' and a clear Trinitarian meaning when it refers to abbot Anastasius' thinking. As the triple usage of *holy* in the hymn refers to the hypostases of the Holy Trinity, while the unique reference to *Lord* is related to divine nature, then the Trisagion serves to designate unity (generic) and distinction (particular) in the Holy Trinity.<sup>678</sup> Consequently, for John, this hymn does not refer to Christology but only to Trinitarian doctrine.<sup>679</sup>

In fact John deals with Anastasius as being a follower of the Monophysite Peter the Fuller's addition. On this occasion John refutes any possibility of justifying Anastasius along with Peter the Fuller concerning their preference of following the ancient, local Syrian custom to attribute the Trisagion to the Son. So John not only overlooks the 'habitual' interpretation of the Trisagion in Syria in order to emphasize another 'habitual' understanding of the same hymn as it was represented in Constantinople and Jerusalem which

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<sup>678</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 315 (7):6-15, "ἡ δὲ θεότης καὶ ὁ ἁγιασμός καὶ ἡ κυριότης, εἰ καὶ ὑφ' ἐκάστης τῶν ὑποστάσεων μετέχεται, ἀλλὰ κοινὴ τῶν τριῶν ἐστὶν ὑποστάσεων μία τυγχάνουσα... Αἱ δὲ ὑποστάσεις οὐχ οὕτως, ἀλλ' ἑτέρα πατρός, ἑτέρα υἱοῦ, ἑτέρα ἁγίου πνεύματος. Ἐκάστη μὲν οὖν ὑπόστασις καθ' αὐτὴν θεὸς καὶ ἅγιος καὶ κύριος λέγεται καὶ εἴ τι τοιοῦτον".

<sup>679</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 313 (5):32-34, "εἰ γὰρ εἰς τὸν υἱὸν μόνον τὸν τρισάγιον φήσομεν ὕμνον, λέλυται τὸ ἀμφίβολον ἀνενδοιάστως, καὶ ἡμεῖς μαρωνήσωμεν, προσθῶμεν τῷ τρισαγίῳ τὴν σταύρωσιν".

attributed it to the Holy Trinity,<sup>680</sup> but he also classifies the addition 'Who was crucified for us' as a Monophysite teaching. However it could be said that John was not living in Syria but in Palestine close to Patriarch of Jerusalem John V, a Chalcedonian Patriarch. In this perspective an ancient traditional habit was rejected for the sake of Christological disputations. But we cannot ignore the fact that John's main effort is to face the addition theologically and not from a historical perspective. At least his confession that there are no Fathers who accept a similar interpretation of *the Trisagion* like Anastasius, testifies that St John Damascene ignores or does not agree with any historical and patristic attribution of *the Trisagion* to the Son.

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<sup>680</sup> John's preference for a specific understanding of the Trisagion, is clear in Kotter II, *Expos.*, p. 130 (54):27-46.



## CONCLUSION

St John Damascene is the greatest Byzantine theologian of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. His theological works influenced many Fathers in the centuries that followed. John was born, grew up, educated and died in a non Christian state. The new religion of Islam stamped his personality both positively and negatively.

The new historical and cultural circumstances which accompanied the religion of Islam, established a negative environment where John was obliged to live, protecting the local Orthodox Christians from all kinds of sects, and at the same time, he could not really express himself freely against Islam. On the other hand, it left him free of the imperial ecclesiastical policy of Christian Byzantium which made compromises between the different Christological parties in general and between Chalcedonian Dyophysitism and anti-Chalcedonian Monophysitism in particular (p. 96). Moreover John lived at a safe distance from Constantinople and its attempts to establish the iconoclast policy and he was able to write, teach and support Orthodox Byzantine theology. John's freedom to fight against

Byzantine iconoclasm was due to the fact that he lived in the Umayyad empire, which seems to have allowed Christians to get on with their own lives for the most part. Moreover, he could also defend his faith by writing just to protect the local Dyophysite populations in Syria-Palestine. He participates in the Christological disputes of his times, playing a very active role. This is clear from his theological treatises, where we can recognize his distinguished personality in the Orthodox Church of Palestine. We could say that in his works, he discussed real arguments that were at the centre of the dialogue between the Orthodox and the Jacobites (e.g. the anthropological example, the Cyrillian Christological formula, the clarification of philosophical terminology used in Christological doctrine, Patristic Authorities) (pp. 198-213 and 236-57).

In essence John knows that Severian Monophysitism and its contemporary representatives in Syria, the Jacobites, accept the hypostatic union of divinity and humanity in Christ. Furthermore, for the Damascene's Christology, Monophysitism does indeed speak of two natures in Christ with their natural properties remaining unconfused (p. 183). This is a good starting point for John's discussion with the Monophysites. But John insists on the *Tome* of Chalcedon as he is also a typical Chalcedonian. The Jacobites believed that, though the natures and their natural properties in the one nature could be distinguished, they could only be distinguished conceptually, not in reality, as they were united in the one nature (p. 183). John, on the other hand, postulated the oneness of hypostasis. This is logical for John, as following Byzantine Fathers like Leontius of Byzantium, he assigns natural properties to the natures and particular properties to the hypostasis (pp. 114-5). So the individualization

of a nature is the result of the existence of a nature and its natural properties in a hypostasis where the characteristic properties are assigned. The real distinction between divinity and humanity is expressed by the fact that their natural properties are not mixed in the hypostasis of the divine Logos (pp. 239-41).

Concerning the *mia-physis* formula, John interprets it from a personal perspective. He agrees that the Alexandrine Fathers identify nature and hypostasis 'καταχρηστικῶς', *inexactly* (pp. 246-50). The formula 'one nature' refers to the divine nature of God in the hypostasis of the Logos and not to divine nature in general (pp. 252-3). The divine hypostasis of the Logos assumed human nature in order for both natures to be hypostasis. In this case, the formula 'Christ's compound hypostasis' is a technical term (p. 105). With regard to John's position on the Monophysite understanding of the *mia-physis* formula, he accepts that Monophysitism shares the same faith as Dyophysitism. The misunderstanding concerns the meaning of *physis*. John feels it essential for a clear distinction to be made between the generic nature and the individual hypostasis. Any possible distinction of Christ's natures in theory (*psile epinoia*) because of the *mia-physis* formula is not only muddled but also against Cyrillic Christology. According to the Damascene, Cyril gives emphasis not to 'one nature' but to the incarnation of this nature (pp. 250-2).

The Monophysite Elias, who criticized John's Christology, accused the Dyophysite Damascene of understanding *hypostasis* as merely the sum of accidents rather than the thing itself it was supposed to characterize. Such an abstract conception of what is meant by hypostasis means that for the



Monophysite Elias the Dyophysite John has not only abandoned the tradition of the great Church Fathers but also understands Christological terminology abstractly, an accusation which John makes to the Monophysites (pp. 120-1). John, clarifying the Logos doctrine, bases his thought mainly on Leontius of Byzantium's understanding of terminology and secondarily on Maximus. In fact, as A. Louth points out "John seems to be closer to the sixth century, in which such abstraction is rife, than to Maximos".<sup>681</sup>

St John considers almost all Christological expressions that disagree with the Orthodox Dyophysite position as being the consequence of a wrong understanding and interpretation of the philosophical formula 'there is no nature without hypostasis or *ousia* without person'. This generally acceptable formula leads to the identification of nature with hypostasis both in Monophysitism and Nestorianism (p. 183 and 215). In John's thinking, although the aforementioned formula is at the centre of his Christology, every Christological definition depends on the reality that Christ's divinity (ἄλλο, something else) remains unconfused and undivided from created flesh (ἄλλο, something else). Divinity and humanity are in real union, but distinguished (one from another) without confusion. More precisely, John replies to the Monophysites with a specific reference to the term *enhypostatos*, elaborating on the Orthodox Dyophysite Christological teaching which supports the real existence of Christ's natures. John gathers and classifies previous patristic tradition that refers to this term. Although Leontius of Byzantium introduced the *enhypostatos* to Christology, nevertheless its most detailed analysis can be found in the works of John

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<sup>681</sup> A. Louth, *Tradition and Originality*, p. 166.

Damascene (p. 172). Christ's human nature, as it is observed in the hypostasis of the Logos, is *enhypostatos*, in other words 'real'. The description of *enhypostatos* in Christology, meaning 'real' and 'existing', depends on the relationship between hypostasis and nature. In order for a nature to be *enhypostatos*, it must be observed in a hypostasis (pp. 162-5). In essence John's point is that the proposition, 'There is no nature without hypostasis and ousia with prosopon' does not mean that nature is the same as hypostasis, or ousia the same as prosopon, and he uses the term *enhypostatos* to affirm this (pp. 142-3). There is no nature without hypostasis, because without hypostasis it would be simply abstract (kat'epinoian, in thought). If a nature is real, then it is real because it exists in a hypostasis. The most important example of this is in Christ, where human nature only has reality as the human nature of the Incarnate Word, the Second Hypostasis of the Trinity, but another example might be the flame of a candle, which only exists because of the candle (p. 159). John uses this term very fully. The result is his personal contribution to the clarification of *enhypostatos*, a clarification taking its reference from both Leontius of Byzantium and Maximus the Confessor and referring to the most detailed analysis of the series of categories of entities that can appropriately be styled *enhypostatos* (p. 172).

John wrote a letter against the addition 'ὁ σταυρωθεὶς δι' ἡμᾶς' in *the Trisagion* by Peter the Fuller which was adopted by Abbot Anastasius. In this letter we consider that John remains faithful to the tradition of *Trisagion* as it was accepted by the Chalcedonians: that is the attribution of the holy Hymn to all Hypostases of the Holy Trinity. John could not agree with Abbot Anastasius



as the attribution of *the Trisagion* to the Son only received a Monophysite perspective and was characterized to be a theopaschetic formula as well (pp. 270-2).

Another question arises. How original was St John Damascene's contribution to Byzantine theology? What does 'originality' mean to the Byzantines? In fact originality and being original in the modern sense were not important for Byzantine theologians, who were concerned to keep as close as possible to patristic heritage.<sup>682</sup> As the truth of the Church is one and the Fathers have experience of it, then to be 'original' means to be 'traditional' as, in this way, we participate in and express the truth which has already been revealed by the Holy Spirit through the Church Fathers. Indeed John believed this axiom, and tried to apply it in his life, a position which is in contrast to the modern concept of originality as A. Louth suggests.<sup>683</sup> Furthermore, by appealing not only to Patristic terminology but also, and most importantly to Patristic understanding of the *Mysterium Christi*, John tried to persuade his Christian opponents about the *consensus patrum* of his Dyophysite faith. Indeed this is the reason, I think, why the theology of St John Damascene is so up to date in the dialogue of the Christian East which has been going on since 1960.

In this dialogue the Orthodox party has been encouraged to talk to the anti-Chalcedonians on the basis of St John Damascene's phrase "Egyptians, also called schematics or Monophysites, who, on the pretext of the document, the *Tome*, which was agreed at Chalcedon, have separated themselves from the

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<sup>682</sup> See the analysis of A. Louth on this point in his recent book *St John Damascene, Tradition and Originality*, pp. 15-6.



Orthodox Church... But in every other respect they are orthodox” (*Haeres.* 3. 1-5).<sup>684</sup>

But above all John is up to date because despite the passing of the centuries the Christians of the East have not changed their minds. They think as they did in the age of John. They have tried to resolve their theological and historical differences on the basis of their traditions. And if a solution is never found it would be because of the recognition of the different traditions among them.<sup>685</sup> If unity does come about, then it will be because a genuine agreement has been recognized. I think this is the reason why John’s theological perspective and Christological arguments are always fresh. In his works, John analyzes both the similarities and differences between the Dyophysite and the Monophysite Christological teaching. His arguments reply to specific questions

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<sup>683</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>684</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158. The translation of the above passage from the same book, pp. 157-8. Louth refers to the Greek Orthodox theologian J. Karmiris who was one of the most important committee members in the dialogue between the Orthodox and the anti-Chalcedonians. See P.M. Gregorios, W.H. Lazareth, N.A. Nissiotis, *Does Chalcedon divide or unite? Towards convergence in Orthodox Christology* (Geneva: World Council of Churches), pp. 30-1. Many modern Orthodox theologians use John’s phrase as their starting point. See Ch. Konstantinidou, ‘Αξιολογήσεις καὶ προοπτικαὶ τοῦ διαλόγου μεταξύ τῆς Ὁρθόδοξου Ἐκκλησίας καὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων Ἀνατολικῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν’, *Θεολογία* 51:1 (1980), p. 24. For a discussion on this dialogue see the article by G. Martzelos, ‘Ὁ θεολογικὸς διάλογος τῆς Ὁρθόδοξης Ἐκκλησίας μὲ τὶς Μὴ Χαλκηδόνιες Ἐκκλησίες τῆς Ἀνατολῆς, Χρονικὸ - Ἀξιολόγηση - Προοπτικές’, *Ὁρθόδοξο δόγμα καὶ θεολογικὸς προβληματισμός, Μελετήματα δογματικῆς θεολογίας Β’*, (Thessaloniki: P. Pournara, 2000), pp. 247-82.

<sup>685</sup> To inject a note of realism here, we should note that the accord of the sixties has been rejected by much of the Orthodox world (see for example the Russians, Mount Athos and others).

**which have been discussed in the past and they are up to date in the dialogue between the Orthodox and the anti-Chalcedonians.**

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**Word count: 81315**

