

**UNIVERSITY „LUCIAN BLAGA”
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THEOLOGY**

Thesis:

**The Christology of Saint Cyril of Alexandria in
the context of theological disputes in the fifth
century and the first half of the sixth century**

(Summary)

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Sibiu, 2015

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Keywords:

Christology, St. Cyril of Alexandria, Theotokos, union, Ecumenical Councils

Introduction

The term „Christology” is not merely a evasive reflection that has Christ in the center, but focuses its attention on the messianic character of Jesus Christ. Thus to understand Christology means on the one hand to ask questions about the relationship between Jesus and God, and secondly to understand His divine nature represented in a human form. This requires from the beginning a certain logic in Christology.

The subject of Christology in the strict sense is represented by the relationship between the human and divine nature in the Person of Jesus Christ. The reference period in the history of the Church that I deal with in this work was vital in forming and shaping the Christological doctrine.

The research methods underlying the development of this work are: diacritic-patristic, theological and comparative analytic.

This work plan is structured as follows: introduction, six chapters and sub-chapters, followed by conclusions.

Chapter I: The emergence of Nestorianism

To understand how the Nestorian heresy arose, it is necessary to give a brief review of Christology in the late fourth and early fifth century, which coincided with the last phase of the Trinitarian dispute. After fixing the dogma of the divinity of the Logos at the Council of Nicaea, the problem of defining the relationship between human and divine nature in the person of Jesus Christ occurred. This issue was raised by Apollinaris (+390), Bishop of Laodicea, who has the merit to provoke (by the wrong answer he gave) all those called to take a precise attitude regarding Christology.

Apollinaris was based in his Christology on Greek philosophy. Starting from the Platonic trichotomism, he shows that it is tripartite, i.e. composed of: body, animal soul, and rational soul. In Christ the rational soul was replaced by the Logos. This view was condemned at the Council of Constantinople, because without a rational soul, Christ could not have been regarded as truly human. Moreover, if the integrity of human nature of Christ is not recognized, His sacrifice for the people would be relative.

In this situation, the representatives of the school of Antioch from the late fourth and early fifth century thought that it is necessary to give a new explanation of the relationship between the two natures of Jesus. Two theologians, Diodorus of Tarsus (394) and Theodore of Mopsuestia (428) gave a new form to Antiochian Christology.

Diodorus's Christology was regarded as being in all respects antithetical with the Apollinarian conceptions. The Christological frame that has built the theology of „differentiation” or „separation” distinguishes him from Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius. What is missing in his Christology is the „theological factor ” of the soul. During the talks they had with the Apollinarians the soul of Christ do not take a central stage.

Theodore of Mopsuestia has built a very strong Christological system with a rationalist character. He therefore emphasizes the integrity of the human nature of Christ, but do not explain very clearly how human and divine natures constitute one person. The union between man Jesus and Logos accomplished by inhabitation which was preached by Theodore led him to affirm that in Jesus Christ there would be only a moral, relative union. The Orthodox world took note of the heretical teachings through Nestorius, Theodore's disciple, who became one of the chief representatives of this school.

These debates have had as protagonists the representatives of the two theological schools of the East: the school of Antioch and the school of Alexandria. The school of Antioch, influenced by the philosophy of Aristotle, was based on the historical-grammatical or literal

interpretation of Holy Scripture, emphasizing the full humanity of Christ, while the school of Alexandria, influenced by Platonism, was based on the allegorical interpretation of Holy Scripture, putting more emphasis on the divinity of Christ. The first is focused on the humanity of Jesus Christ, reaching up to deny His deity, and it facilitated the Nestorian formulations, while the second side emphasizing Christ's divine and humanity sides and leaving His humanity, it favored Monophysite formulas.

Based on the binomial „Logos Anthropos”, the Christological model of the school of Antioch is *anagogic* or *upward*, starting from the bottom up, meaning that insists on taking into account the humanity in the person of the Logos. In its view, the human nature of Jesus Christ is autonomous, following a development and an independent work, assigning it the merit of our salvation. In order to give a rational explanation of the Incarnation, Antiochian Christology has lost sight of the unity of the Person of Christ. At the opposite extreme is the Alexandrian school. Starting from the binomial „Logos-sarx”, the Christological model is *katagogic* or *downward*, meaning that the Logos incarnate, acquiring a full humanity. Alexandrian school thinking is mainly based on the *Theanthropos* or *theandria* of Jesus Christ, God and man, and the deification of man, two new dimensions in the history of Christian spirituality. Between the two theological schools, with different exegetical traditions and methods of interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, was finally created two different Christological systems, which led to the Christological conflict of the fifth century.

Chapter II: Combating Nestorianism until the III ecumenical council

In 428, Emperor Theodosius II (408-450), son of Arcadius, appointed in the seat of Constantinople a Syrian monk, Nestorius, known for his ascetic life and his qualities as a Antiochian preacher, who soon had to provoke a rebellion in the Church, leading a campaign to reform his new church with the main aim to combat heresies. In Constantinople, Nestorius found two rival groups, which were related to the attribute „Mother of God” for the Virgin Mary: one who held the title *Theotokos* and another who held the title *Antropotokos*. As a compromise, he proposed to better use *Christotokos* term, as the most suitable to express simultaneously both the human and divine nature of Jesus.

The opinions related to the beginning of the outbreak of dogmatic controversy are different, but the conclusion is the same. The historians Socrates and Evagrius say that it began when a priest named Anastasius, who accompanied Nestorius in Constantinople, delivered a sermon in which he attacked the term *Theotokos* assigned to Virgin Mary. St. Cyril of

Alexandria presents in a different way the event that sparked the starting of the controversy. He says that Bishop Nestorius allowed to Marcianopolis Dorotheos to anathematize in the Church of Constantinople anyone would say that Virgin Mary is „Mother of God”.

All this led to disturb both the clergy and laity of Constantinople. Many clerics, breaking the communion with their bishop, have found a leader of opinion in person of Proclus, bishop of Cyzic, who defended the divine maternity of Mary in a sermon, calling her „Mother of God”. At the imperial court, Theodosius II and his wife Eudoxia defended Nestorius, while the emperor’s sister, Pulcheria, reckoned to him as a heretic.

The heresy of Nestorius soon spread beyond the boundaries of the empire to Egypt. St. Cyril of Alexandria, well-informed about everything that happened in the capital through its agents, was annoyed by the attitude towards the new bishop of the term *Theotokos* and immediately began to engage in this matter. Thus, St. Cyril defends in a Paschal letter the personal unity of Christ and he called the Virgin Mary „Mother of God”. He also rejected the doctrine of Nestorius in the second letter called dogmatic, where he broadly outlines his doctrine of hypostatic union.

Meanwhile, Cyril composed three treated to the imperial family, outlining his doctrine of the Incarnation and combating various Christological heresies, especially that of Nestorius. They were sent to Theodosius II, to the queen Eudoxia, wife of Emperor and to his sister, Pulcheria, and also to the royal princesses Arcadia and Marina.

After the correspondence between Cyril and Nestorius, Bishop Celestine of Rome intervenes at the insistence of the two opponents. Celestine instructs the monk John Cassian to study in depth the issue. Once he translated into Latin the letters of Nestorius, Cassian composed an important work „About Incarnation of God against Nestorius”, in which he combat the heresy of Nestorius, also marking the traditional teachings of the Church's doctrine. Celestin, aided by the work of John Cassian and by the clarifications of Cyril, convened a synod in Rome (August 11th 430), where he approved the teaching of St. Cyril and condemns the Nestorios one as heretical.

Cyril, receiving the assurance of Rome, gathers in October 430 a synod in Alexandria, condemning the Nestorianism. The decisions of the council were included in a letter, in which Cyril annexed also 12 chapters or anathemas which Nestorius had to accept to remain in the communion of the Church. This letter of Cyril, and also the one of Pope Celestin were sent to Nestorius by an Alexandrian legation, asking him to retract his errors. The theological

confrontations that were specifically trained Churches of Alexandria, Constantinople and Rome imposed stringently the convening of an ecumenical council.

Chapter III: Combating Nestorianism of the III Ecumenical Council

Emperor Theodosius II issued on 19 November 430 an imperial decree to all metropolitans, where he asked them to inform the suffragan bishops of the empire to take part in ecumenical council that had to take place in Ephesus on Pentecost (7 June 431). In the letter was mentioned the Emperor Valentinian III, the leader of the Western Empire to give the synod an ecumenical nature. Nestorius arrived in Ephesus before the date fixed for the council, immediately after Easter, accompanied by sixteen bishops, and by his friend, Irenaeus, as a high dignitary of the imperial palace. Candidian, the commander of the imperial guard also arrived in Ephesus, who received the emperor's mandate to maintain order in the city during the unfolding of the council. However, he received instructions not to interfere in discussions on faith, since it is not allowed that one that is not bishop to interfere in ecclesiastical matters.

A few days before Pentecost came to Ephesus St. Cyril, accompanied by a group of about fifty-five bishops, a large number of monks and other supporters, who maintain an unfavorable atmosphere for Nestorius. Also, Pope Celestine sent as delegates to synod the bishops Arcadius and Proiect, and the priest Philip, to whom he gave instructions on how to behave, following entirely St. Cyril, but preserving at the same time the dignity of the Apostolic Seat. As John of Antioch with Syrian bishops has not come, Cyril decided the official opening of the council, on June 22, 431, in the Church of Virgin Mary in Ephesus. Discussions focused on the letters of Cyril sent to Nestorius during the beginning of the Christological controversy. After a detailed presentation of their council members they have unanimously decided that the Christology of Cyril is in harmony with the teaching formulated at the Council of Nicaea.

In order to prove the legitimacy of using the term *Theotokos* for the Mother of God, bishop Favian of Philippi asked to read a patristic anthology (*Florilegium*) containing extracts from the works of the Fathers, where are brought arguments to support this teaching. They were compared with extracts from the writings of Nestorius, and it was found that they were inconsistent with them. The same day Nestorius was deposed and excommunicated from the bishop dignity. The decision was officially announced to Ephesus and Constantinople.

Shortly after the condemnation of Nestorius, finally arrived in Ephesus John of Antioch and his bishops. Finding the condemnation of Nestorius, he decided to convene immediately a counter synod (*conciliabulum*) on 26 June 431, where 43 bishops were in favor of Nestorius, condemning the anathemas of Cyril and the decisions of the Council of Ephesus, excommunicating St. Cyril of Alexandria and Bishop Memnon of Ephesus. Both decisions of the councils were sent Theodosius II, who declared null the decisions of the council of 22 June and urged bishops to reopen discussion of the problem of faith. Meanwhile arriving at Ephesus Pope Celestine delegation, it was also held six meetings all under the leadership of Cyril, after which the synodals approved all resolutions passed at Ephesus and they excommunicated Nestorius and John of Antioch and their supporters.

After the closing of the synod it continued the schism between the two churches of Alexandria and Antioch. With the aim to restore peace and obedience in the Church, the emperor approved both condemnation of Nestorius and that of Cyril and Memnon, and decides to imprison them. But after the examining of the case, St. Cyril and Memnon are released and resettled in their seats, and Nestorius exiled to St. Euprepiu monastery in Antioch. However, the disputes have not ended immediately. The Antiochenes group, failing to convince the emperor of the decisions the Council of Ephesus, on their way home, they held a series of counter councils in Caesarea, in Tarsus in Cilicia and then in Antioch, where they condemned Cyril as a heretic. To settle disagreements between Alexandria and Antioch, Theodosius II decided to send letters to Cyril of Alexandria and John of Antioch, inviting them to a theological meeting in Nicomedia. Although the meeting did not take place, thanks to an intense correspondence between John of Antioch and St. Cyril of Alexandria it has reached reconciliation. On 12 April 433 was signed by the two hierarchs the union formula, by which was restored the communion between the two Churches.

Unfortunately, the union formula of 433 could not satisfy the extremists of both parties, but rather it caused further dissension that led to their separation from the Church. In Constantinople, it stands now Eutychios from amongst extremists, and a new phase of the Christological disputes arises. Eutyches pushed to extreme the Alexandrian school teaching about the union of the two natures in the Person of Christ, supported by Cyril of Alexandria. Leaning on some Docetist, Modalistic, Sabellians and Aryan positions, Eutyches asserted that our Lord Jesus Christ is not consubstantial with us in the flesh and He had flesh from the heaven. Before the union He had two natures, and after the union it results one nature. Thus in trying to combat nestorianism by exposing St. Cyril's Christology in its own conception, Eutychian contributed to the birth of the Monophysite heresy. Eusebius of Dorylaeum asked on the endemic Synod of Constantinople,

opened on 8 November 448, the hearing of Eutychian accused of Monophysitism. After one confession, the council excommunicated Eutychios for heresy.

In order to review the sentence of excommunication of Eutychian, a new council convenes. This „second council of Ephesus” (August 8th 449), called by papa Leon „thievish”, has gathered an Alexandrian majority. Being invited by the emperor to attend the council, Leon sent a letter to the papal legates, known as *Tomos faith* or *Dogmatic epistle*. This attempts to trace a middle path between the two extremes Christology, the one of Nestorius and the one of Eutyches. Within the council, Flavian of Constantinople and other bishops were convicted, although they interpret very fair the Christology of Saint Cyril.

But the decisions taken at the Council of Ephesus (449) triggered a series of negative consequences because soon thereafter the bishops from Syria, Asia and Pontus, followers of the middle Christological line, separated from the Egypt, Palestine and Thrace. Thus the reconciliation achieved between Alexandrian and Antioch 433 was canceled.

Chapter IV: The Christology of Nestorius

Being faithful to the school of Antioch, Nestorius took as a starting point in terms of Christology the teaching about the two natures in Christ. In Jesus Christ, says Nestorius, are two natures and two hypostases united by courtesy in one person. But, whereas any nature has necessarily a person, the two natures in Christ also have two real and true persons. But the way in which it has occurred the union of the two natures is „a kneaded and sometimes confused chapter in Christology of Nestorius”. The terms used by Nestorius to express the union of the two natures are (*henosis*), especially (*synapheia*). The latter term, which is preferred by Nestorius, is a kind of conjunction, overlapping, in which each nature retains its essential properties. He wanted to avoid in this way any suspicion of interference or confusion of the natures.

According to Nestorius, the union of two natures in Christ can not be called neither hypostatic (*henosis kath'hypostasin*) nor existential, but voluntary, based on kindness and condescension of God. By this kind of union Nestorius wanted on the one hand to have a guarantee that the two natures keeps intact their attributes, and secondly to emphasize that human nature was not passive, an inert organ of the Logos, like a lifeless instrument in the hands of a worker. Throughout his treatise, Liber Heraclidis, Nestorius criticizes the Cyril's notion on the Christological union based on nature (*physis*) or hypostasis (*hypostasis*) as a mixture, a combination of chemical elements, that would create a third nature.

Insisting on the *voluntary union*, Nestorius tries to prove that the two natures further maintain their natural persons. If natural persons are maintained, then it is hard to talk about a unitary principle in Jesus Christ, resulting from the union of natures. But without this unitary principle, the whole soteriology Church crumbles.

However, to describe the unity of Christ, Nestorius finds a solution that is taken and developed from Theodore of Mopsuestia. Thus he shows that besides the two natural persons, corresponding to the two natures, there is also a person called „of the union "or „of the economy". This person forms the basis itself of the unity in Jesus Christ. She is the unique person of God-Man. The text of Philippians 2:7 is often invoked by Nestorius as an argument to substantiate his theory. This form of a servant is not the essence of man, but the One who has got this form made it His form and His person. The man who had been taken had the essence and the nature of man, and the one who took was found man by his appearance.

Hence the personal union in Christ is constituted by „a taking” and by „a giving". The Person of the Logos takes Himself human person and gives Himself to that person as compensation. Through this the two people are intertwined, are „one another”, forming a single person, the person of Christ. In this way the unity in Christ is achieved in two ways: through „people compensation” and through mutual interpenetration and or *perichoresis*.

In constructing of his theory of prosopic union, Nestorius borrows many Christological terms from the patristic Cappadocian tradition, especially from St. Gregory of Nazianzus. To explain the relationship between the two natures in Christ, Nestorius transfers the Trinitarian concept of *perichoresis* used by Cappadocians in Christology. But when he addresses this issue, due to its preference for prosopic theory, it can be seen how much Nestorius distances itself from the Cappadocian. The corollary of Nestorius's teaching about the so-called „person of union” is achieved in his treating related to the *communication of attributes*. Nestorius did not speak clear about a communication of attributes, but suggests that it is achieved through the „person of union”. The names that designates it are those of Christ, Son and Lord. The persons receive the communication of attributes from each other through the person of the union, not by nature. If the communication occurs at the nature level, the divine nature would change in essence, wrongly assumed Nestorius. In conclusion, he excluded the communication of attributes or he presented it as insignificant and this exclusion totally destroyed the unity of the person of Christ.

The theory of Nestorius about prosopic union lead implicitly to the disproof of the attribute „Mother of God” conferred by the Church to Virgin Mary. Remaining faithful to Antiochian

Christological tradition, Nestorius separated the natures and divided the unitary person of our Lord Jesus Christ, teaching that the human person of Him was only theophoric united with the divine person. The consequences that naturally arise from such orientation was that Virgin can not be called „Mother of God” because she born the man Jesus, and in him is the Son of God.

In the first homily of Nestorius, we find a very clear rejection of the expression „Mother of God”: „*God has a mother? So the Greeks excusable for awarding mothers to gods?*”. The first objection of Nestorius against the term *Theotokos* was that it is not scriptural, as Scripture repeatedly referred to the human experience of Christ as a man, not God. Instead, he showed that the term *Hristotokos* could be argued in scriptural way. It is speaking about it everywhere in Scripture, which called the Virgin, by the angels and Apostles mouth, always „Mother of Christ”, not Mother of God-Logos.

However, Nestorius shows that everywhere was used the expression *Christotokos*, as a defense against danger and suspicion of heresy. It cannot be Manichean, neither follower of Paul of Samosata, neither Aryan nor Apollinarians, the one who recognize this term. As shown, Nestorius rejected the term *Theotokos* where it has a heretical sense, being antithetical to the whole system of Christology. Therefore, Nestorius believed that this phrase would be susceptible to an Aryan or Apollinarian interpretation. Behind this teaching, he said, would hide Arian principle that the Son was a creature or Apollinarian idea that humanity was incomplete.

Although he not accepted the term *Theotokos*, Nestorius, however, has not been a hostile attitude towards the cult of Mary, but he tried to give to Our Lady the proper veneration. This is also seen in his statements: „*The fact that she has become the temple of the Lord meat, it raises her to the highest honor*”.

Beyond the theological speculations, the fact that Nestorius did not accept the term „Mother of God” was considered by many specialists in patrology to be an unfair rejection of a kerygmatic tradition of the Church. In other words, Nestorius attacked what underlies the faith and teaching of the Church, as the term *Theotokos* was considered to be a keyword for the faith in Incarnation.

Chapter V: The Christology of Saint Cyril of Alexandria

The christology of Saint Cyril of Alexandria is based on that of St. Athanasius the Great and of the Cappadocian Fathers. Studying the vision of St. Athanasius, Cyril presents the Mystery of the Incarnation in a soteriological light. It was seen as an act of restoration designed

entirely for ontological reconstruction of human nature which has fallen into an existential degradation, as a result of its alienated from God. This plan of restoration, announced beforehand by the prophets was realized when the world felt deep its misery and helplessness. And to restore the man, to return the fallen race to the original condition and to reconcile the world with God was not enough the death of an ordinary man, even the death of the apostles, it was necessary the Incarnation and death of the Son of God.

Like the other Fathers of the Church, the Incarnation of the Saviour appears in a kenotic way in the Cyril's thinking. The whole mystery of economy, says St. Cyril, consists of the depletion and the decrease the Son of God. The kenosis of the Saviour consisted of the voluntary submission of the human laws. Through this word He assumes Himself everything that belongs to humanity: birth, growth, hunger, thirst, fatigue, suffering, death and resurrection. The teaching about kenosis provides to Cyril a basis to argue that the objections made by his opponents who suspected him wrongly by teopashism, i.e. transferring the suffering to the divine nature of Jesus. He points out that his opponents want to transfer the sufferings of the Saviour exclusively on human nature, so that the Logos is no longer recognized as Savior. Such thinking, says Cyril, compromise the God's economy plan on the mystery of the Incarnation and translates our divine mystery into anthropolatry.

One of the decisive elements for the celebrity of Saint Cyril in Christology is the way in which he conceives the union of two natures in the person of Jesus. In the Cyril's conception, the two natures do not go parallel and independent, but in a so perfect union that they make one single nature or a single Logos. According to Cyril, the two natures of the Saviour, divine and human, can not be separated, but it is the mind which distinguishes them.

Cyril opposes to the Antiochian concept that speak about a conjunction (*synapheia*), based on a harmony of God's wills.. Such a union it seems to be artificial. But the union which he preaches is real, natural or hypostatic. Often he uses the expression „hypostatic union” (*henosis kath'hypostasin*), showing that this union is real, natural, true, substantial, but not moral, purely extrinsic, as Nestorius claimed.

So the development of the „hypostatic union” concept requires a clear statement, that the incarnate Word of God is a unique subject at the same time God and man, one single person. This seems impossible to be accepted by Nestorius. St. Cyril shows that hypostatic or physical union does not mean a mixing and a blending of natures as Nestorius claimed, but by using this expression he wanted to indicate that: „*nature of the Word, the hypostasys, which is the Word*

Himself, was merged indeed with the human nature, without change and without confusion. By this means Christ is One, at the same time God and man “.

The formula that gave the exegetes of Saint Cyril much trouble was: „mia physis Theou logou sesarkomene”. There are studies that affirm that although Alexandrian theologian believed that this formula belongs to St. Athanasius, the formula had been actually invented and used by Apollinaris, which identifies the nature with the person, claiming that Christ had only one nature. It can be noted from this that the formula „mia physis” does not have for Cyril a monophysite meaning, like for Apollinaris, but aims an union not by composition, but a union of simplicity, a single nature of the Word, but incarnated. For St. Cyril the human nature of the Savior is always present as being made up of body and rational soul, the Logos is not substitutable in any way any to one of the elements of Christic humanity.

The human nature of the Saviour is not decreased or removed by the expression „mia physis Theou logou sesarkomene”, but it represents the most perfect proof that He was man, that He incarnate Himself. Facing Nestorianism, which from two natures makes two persons, and then a confused person, the Patriarch had to find a formula, especially an explanation to guarantee the dogma of a single person or individual in Jesus Christ. The Orthodox parents and theologians post Cyril understood its formula obviously to mean one hypostasis, one Person of the incarnate Logos and it united himself in undivided and inseparable way the divinity and complete humanity. They found that expression identical to that of the Evangelist John: “The Word became flesh” (John 1:14).

The hermeneutical key for understanding Cyril's Christology is the teaching about the *communication of attributes*. According to him, the communication of attributes must be real not by the report of the natures, but in relation with the single hypostasis in which those natures are physically united. Saint Cyril emphasizes his teaching about the communication of attributes in his anathemas. Especially in the fourth anathemas, Cyril rejects Nestorius's theory that attacks the traditional doctrine of the communication of attributes. The indestructible foundation of communication of attribute in the person of Christ is for Cyril the unique person of the Word of God. Emphasizing the teaching about the communication of attributes, Cyril defends himself against the accusations of Theopaschism.

In St. Cyril's Christology an important role plays the doctrine about *the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist*. In the dispute between St. Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius, the Eucharistic doctrine of everyone is related less to the issue of the real presence, which was already assumed

as a result of the identity of Eucharistic body with the historic one, but mostly to the state of the Savior's body in the Eucharist and its effects on the believers.

The biblical texts that speak about the Holy Eucharist were explained by Nestorius in terms of his Christological theory. He argued that between the Divine Logos and the Eucharistic elements there is only a moral union. This results in two consequences: first, that the Eucharistic Body not being not physically united with that One who is Life itself, it does not possess life *ad intra*, but giving the Life to it from outside, is not life-giving and it could share us life; second, that the Holy Eucharist does not unite us physically with the Logos, but only provides us the body that is morally united. We are not nourished by God, do not eat or drink life, we only eat the Body and the sanctified by the Logos, but they remain foreign to Logos.

Against this false teaching St. Cyril protested. He would shatter the Nestorian concept of person applied to the human nature of the Saviour, which led to fanciful conclusions related to the Holy Eucharist. He emphasizes the union between Logos and the human nature and the special circumstances of this union. Life-giving power of the Eucharistic Body is conferred as a result of the union of Logos and flesh.

According to Cyril, the Body of Christ is not an ordinary body, as alleged Nestorios, but it is that of a man sanctified and deified through its union with the Word. So, the Eucharistic communion, says Cyril, is not an act of cannibalism, as Nestorius claimed.

St. Cyril demonstrates the close connection that exists between the Eucharistic body and the Incarnation of the Word, founded on the close and enhypostatically union between human nature and the divine Logos. His concern is to show against Nestorius that the Eucharistic body, like the historical body, is not a mutual body, but a body that has the power to give life. Cyril does not insist in his doctrine on the Eucharist on teaching about transformation because these issues were not brought into question. However, Nestorius, taking care not to mix the natures, in this case the nature of the body and bread, pushed it to the denial of the Eucharistic elements's transformation and to the admission of the presence by impanation.

By means of some comparisons, St. Cyril tried to make us to understand which is the union that is realized between believers and Christ in the Eucharist. Since we receive the real physical body of Christ, the Eucharistic union that is realized between Christ and believers can be called relative union, not substantial, compared to the hypostatic union.

The union of the believers with Christ, says Cyril, is twofold: spiritual (*pneumatic*) and physical (*somatic*). The first is union with Christ as God, participation to the deity of Christ; the second is the union with Christ as a man, participating in life-giving body of Christ.

Thus the Eucharistic doctrine of St. Cyril about the life-giving body that we must share and about the effects of sharing, oppose to the Nestorian conception about mutual body, both historical and Eucharistic. The Eucharistic body is the same human-divine presence as the historic body of the Savior. The extending of the historic body into the Eucharistic body aims to transmit the whole life in our bodies.

A careful treatment of St. Cyril is the *teaching about the Virgin Mary*. The central idea of Mariology of St. Cyril, which was highlighted at the Council of Ephesus in 431, was that of the divine motherhood of the Virgin Mary. Mary's divine motherhood, the idea that occurs in Cyril's writings in the Nestorian controversy and in the first anathema, is inseparable from the unity of person of Jesus Christ dogma. Denying the title *Theotokos* means to call into question the unity of the Person of Christ as incarnated God. Those who rejected the term, fell in diteism, the error of those who say two sons of God. So the mariological teaching of St. Cyril is implicitly linked to the dogma of the Incarnation of the Logos. And to refuse to award the title „Mother of God “ to Virgil Mary is to reject the mystery of the Incarnation, because in Christ there is no other topic but the Word and she was able to give Him birth.

As for the virginity of Our Lady, Cyril shows that this is an inseparable prerogative from the divine motherhood, having a basis in many passages of Scripture, which he interprets in an allegorical sense. To support the Virginity of the Theotokos, St. Cyril brings into question the testimonies of the prophet Ezekiel (Iez.44, 2), who speaks about: „Closed door, which will not open and no man shall enter through it, because the Lord God of Israel enter through it. Therefore it will be closed”. Mary gave birth without her virginity broken.

One of the teachings of St. Cyril related to the Mother of God is that linked to its role in the soteriologic plan. Therefore St. Cyril, in his commentary on the miracle from Cana, emphasizes the honor of the Virgin Mary brought by her son: „*Christ shows also the honoring worthy of appreciation of those who born, getting to do what He do not want to do in deference to His Mother*”. It can be observed in sermons of rare beauty the devotion of Saint Cyril to the Virgin Mary. A clear example is the sermon of St. Cyril at the Council of Ephesus, which was considered by many researchers the „most famous sermon about Mary from antiquity”.

The Council of Ephesus solemnly proclaimed that it is an obligation for all believers to call Virgin Mary „Mother of God”, dogmatic formalizing what already the Orthodox piety stated, by the means of the first anathema of Cyril of Alexandria against Nestorius.

Chapter VI: The Reception of St. Cyril's Christology

St Cyril of Alexandria's Christology is implicitly linked to the Council of Chalcedon or to the theological developments that followed, and also to the complexity of theological, social and cultural-historic disputes of the time. That's why I wanted first to make in this chapter a comparative analysis between the Christology of St. Cyril and Pope Leo I (400-461) to understand to what extent was imposed at the Council of Chalcedon.

The Christology of Pope Leo I was a dogmatic authority equal to that of the writings of St. Cyril, containing a simple teaching, almost schematic, without the originality and depth of the Cyrillian Christology, but precise and categorical. This Christology has the advantage of being uncomplicated, clear and easy to understand. But to make a full assessment of the Christology of Pope Leo should consider not only his famous Epistle dogmatic or Tomos addressed to Flavian and at the same time to the Council of Ephesus in the year 449, but also its entire corpus consisting of the letters and sermons.

The dogmatic core of Pope Leo's Christology is formed by the doctrine of double consubstantiality of Jesus Christ with God and with men. Following the Latin tradition, Pope Leo wanted to emphasize (by double formula of consubstantialism) the distinction of the two natures in Christ, while stressing the personal unity (*unitas personae*). This formula was a way of expressing the double union of Christ with the Father and the Holy Spirit on the one hand, and with the humanity on the other hand, becoming a mediator between God and humanity. Therefore, Christ finished the work of God because it was fully God, and at the same time accomplished the human works and suffered, because he joined completely with the humanity.

For emphasizing the distinction of the two natures in Christ, Leon uses in his Tomos to Flavian the formulas related to the ones of Antiochians, sometimes even eith with Nestorian resonance: „*While it retains the distinction of the two natures and substances, both are meeting in one person*”. Several critics of Leon suggested that in this regard, as well as Antiochenes, he kept too much the separation of natures, which made the bishops of Illyria and Palestine to worry about the apparent Dyophysitism from the Tome to Flavian .

Regarding to the *communication of attributes*, Pope Leo exhibited in the best way this doctrine in the Tomos to Flavian. But what is most praised in the epistle, this is expressed in a way that is closer to nestorianism: „*Each nature works which is own to it in communion with the other, the Word working that which is the Word, and the flesh carrying out what is of the body*”. In the Christology of Saint Cyril of Alexandria, it cannot speak of a parallel work of the Word and body. To the person of the Incarnate Word are attributed the works, sufferings and properties belonging to both divinity and humanity. By articulating the doctrine of communication of attributes, Leo wanted to defend the impassibility of divine nature of Christ and to emphasize the integrity of his human nature. However, it does not occur in his writings a theology of communication of attributes fully developed.

Another aspect that is address by Pope Leo is related to the kenosis of the Son of God. Following to St. Augustine, Pope Leo understand the Incarnation as the voluntary drain, through which the Savior empties voluntarily from His deity to receive the form of a servant. This voluntary action was needed to people who had no the ability to receive His deity. Also, the teaching about deification plays an important role in the Christology of Pope Leo. His Christology, in fact, serves as a support for soteriology. But in some sermons, Leon is very close to the Latin concept that sees human redemption as a legal one based more on the idea of the sacrifice and reconciliation, rather than on the Eastern concept of deification.

Although Cyril's Christology was strongly confirmed at the Council of Chalcedon, the Western theologians considered for a long time this council as a victory of Pope Leo and Western Christology. The Orthodox Non-Chalcedonians rejected the Council of Chalcedon and accused him of nestorianism since he accepted the Tomos of Leon, who spoke about two natures after the union and he omitted from the definition of faith some expressions favorite to Cyril of Alexandria, including „one incarnated nature of God-Word”.

In order to precisely describe the presence of the two natures in Christ, the constitutive of dogmatic definitions of Chalcedon used several texts from Confession of Basil of Selefkia from the Council of Constantinople (448) and from the confession of Illyrian bishops, modified by the Imperial commissioners when they was asked to recognize the Tomos of Pope Leo to Flavian. In both confessions was used the phrase „in two natures”.

Therefore, the majority of parents present at the Council of Chalcedon, preferred to use that phrase because they think that the formual „from two nature” used by St. Cyril of

Alexandria could not provide protection against the threatening Monophysitism of Eutychian and Dioscorus.

But it appears that between the expression of St. Cyril and the one launched by the dogmatic definition of Chalcedon there is no difference, but they overlap in their meaning. In drafting the dogmatic definition of Chalcedon, they were avoided only more personal Cyrillian formulas that had a tint monophysitic. Therefore, in formulating the dogmatic definition of Chalcedon, parents wanted to maintain everything that was exposed to the Council of Ephesus in matters of faith. And the only documents that could express the Christological thinking of the Council of Ephesus were the two canonical letters: Second letter of Cyril to Nestorius and the Letter 39 of St. Cyril's to John of Antioch, used in the formula of unity in 433. St. Cyril of Alexandria's Christology was different from that of the dogmatic definition of Chalcedon only in terminology, otherwise the Alexandrian spirit was dominant.

However the period of time between the Council of Chalcedon (451) and that to be held in Constantinople in 553 was marked by a series of fierce theological disputes between Chalcedonians and Monophysites caused by receiving different the Christological definition formulated at Chalcedon.

Defeated in terms of doctrine to Chalcedon, Monophysitism continued to exist, supported sometimes by some Byzantine Emperors and taking the advantage of imposing it in the provinces jurisdictionally subjected to the Patriarchates of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch.

Undoubtedly, however, the fiercest opposition against Chalcedon took place in Egypt, which already has a long tradition against imperial power and of the dogmatic judgments sustained with the support of the authorities. Egyptian bishops did not agree with the condemning of Dioscorus bishop and they considered the doctrinal formula of Chalcedon as favoring Nestorianism, and therefore they sought to raise their believers against the decisions and the measures that were taken to comply with the council. They opposed the Chalcedonian definition, since no matter how balanced and positive it was, still did not possess charismatic and soteriological tint which was in Cyril's Christology.

In Alexandria small group was founded, supported by authorities, seeking support of Chalcedon by maintaining Proterius (451-457) on the Patriarchal Throne. But outside the capital, almost the entire population that was anti-Chalcedonian has coalesced around an Egyptian priest, faithful to the memory of Cyril and Dioscorus, Timothy Elurul (457-460; 475-477) which, after

he was ordained patriarch, he led the opposition against the council, including the theological plane. By his appointment was formed the Egyptian Monophysitism as a distinct national Church.

The theological disagreements provoked through the monophysite heresy, worried both the leadership of the Church and the Byzantine state. Under these conditions the Byzantine emperors tried to reestablish the ecclesiastical unity of the empire. Thus, after Marcian's death, the first Byzantine emperor crowned by the patriarch of Constantinople was Leon I (457-474), who started up a generalized practice in time, in the whole Christian world. Even from the beginning of his reign, Leon I created a favorable climate for non-Chalcedonians. The problem that the new emperor faced was the establishment of a balance between the religious and political forces presented in the capital and the oriental provinces. A new and original initiative taken by the emperor Leon consisted in the organization of a sort of referendum, by sending encyclical letters to the bishops from the whole empire, in order to consult concerning two issues: the decisions of the synod of Chalcedon and the validity of Timothy Elur's consecration as patriarch of Alexandria.

It is important to remark that the majority of the oriental bishops who answered to the emperor, decided, in great number, in favour of the synod of Chalcedon and rejected the validity of Timothy Elur's consecration. The letters in which the authors do try to explain, to justify and interpret the formula from Chalcedon come from Asia Minor, from an area where Chalcedonians and monophysites were in conflict.

Under the reign of the other emperors we can see a change of the ecclesiastical politics. At the beginning of 474 the emperor Leon I died and his nephew Leon II, son of Zenon and Ariadna, came after. This last one died in the autumn of the same year and Zenon became the only emperor on the throne of Constantinople. But in January 475, subsequent to a conspiracy, Zenon was rejected from the throne and he was replaced by Basiliskos, Leon I's brother-in-law. The new revolution which throned Basiliskos had profound repercussions on the religious life in the whole empire. In 475 Basiliskos issued *Imperial Encyclical* containing monophysite knowledge.

This edictum considered monophysitism as being state religion, as the only one accepted. He condemned the dogmatic decisions of the Synod of Chalcedon and the Tome of Pope Leon I and approved the Chyryl's Christology about the union of the two natures of Jesus Christ. However, the emperor's try, tactless enough, to cancel the decisions of the Synod from Chalcedon, failed in

the end, due to the firm reaction of the patriarch Acacius of Constantinople (472-488), who refused to sign the encyclical, advising the people to sustain the synod from Chalcedon. Under these conditions, in 476 Basiliskos issued an *Antiencyclical* containing orthodox knowledge, which refer to the keeping of the doctrine established at Chalcedon.

Returned in Constantinople in 476, the emperor tried to adopt a new politics in order to reestablish peace in the Church. He tried to make an agreement between the monophysites from Orient and the dyophysites from Constantinople, on the base of a compromise. In October 482, Zenon promulgated an edictum of union (*Henotikon*), which represented until 518 the normative act concerning the ecclesiastical relationships between chalcedonians and non-chalcedonians. Through this edictum, there were accepted the first three ecumenical synods, the 12 anathemas of Saint Chyryl of Alexandria. Nestorios and Euthychius and all who would have preached different doctrines in Chalcedon or anywhere were anathematized. It was acknowledged the union of the divinity and the humanity in Jesus Christ, but there were avoided the use of Chyryl's expression "a nature" and the chalcedonian one "two natures" in the person of the Savior Jesus Christ. Under the aspect of terminology, the edictum presents a Christology similar to the one of saint Chyryl's.

Although the Zenon's "Henotikon" was received everywhere and signed by the majority of bishops, orthodox and monophysites, it was noticed soon that it did not aim its goal, that of the union, because it did not please any party. On the contrary, it complicated further the existing disagreement and it caused concretely the scission also known as the Acacian schism.

Within the theological disputes between chalcedonians and non-chalcedonians during the first half of the VIth century the Scythe monks had an important role. They arrived in Constantinople, during the reign of the emperor Justin I (518-527), in a period when Constantinople, after a long schism with Rome, waited papal legates in order to restore the unity on the base of reaffirmation of the definition from Chalcedon. They brought a theological formula "The One in the Holy Trinity who suffered in His body", which they wanted to impose in the whole Church.

The formula seemed to have a monophysite tendency, since it had a formal similarity with the theopaschite increase of Petru Gnafeus: "the One who were crucified for us" in the hymn "Holy God". But the Schyte monks used it as a formula of balance between the Alexandrian and

Antiochian definitions in order to combat the Nestorianism and the monophysitism. The king Justinian will adopt this formula in the edictum from 527 and in the one of 15 March 533 and he will impose it in the whole empire since he was agree with the entire trinity and Christological teachings of the Church.

Thus, at the beginning of Justinian's reign (527-565), there was a series of interpretations of the dogmatic definition from Chalcedon. Therefore, it was imperiously necessary to clarify this definition. And this issue could have been done through a deeping of Chyrl's Christology only. In this context two tendencies come out: chalcedonism and neochalcedonism.

The first one formed by strict dyophysites, who sticked to the Antiochian Christology, but they refused to incorporate in their Christology the Chyrl's 12 anathemas and also the formulas: "a single incarnated nature of the Verb" and "One in the Trinity suffered". The second one, the neochalcedonism, which triumph in the Byzantine Empire in the VIth century, tries to incorporate the saint Chyrl's formulas in the definition of the Synod from Chalcedon. According to neochacedonians, the Chyrl's terminology, including the expression "an incarnated nature of God the Verb", keeps its value, even after the synod from Chalcedon, in an anti-Nestorian context, while the formula "the two natures", used at Chalcedon is essential in so far as it combats the eutychianism.

The most important representative of this tendency was Leontius of Byzantium, whose contribution is significant in the development of the Christology, through an agreement between saint Chyrl's teachings and the dogmatic decisions of the IVth synod from Chalcedon. He contributed in the clarification of certain controversial problems, being considered the synthesizer of the orthodox postchalcedonian Christology.

Through the philosophical demonstration of the possibility of assuming the human nature in the only one hypostasis of the Verb, he wanted to reinforce the dogmatic definition from Chalcedon against the Nestorianism and monophysitism, keeping it in between the lines established by Chyrl of Alexandria and making it approachable to the Orient. Leontius of Byzantium is a fervent supporter of the chalcedonian doctrine concerning "the two natures", dedicating a significant part of his work to it.

Studying further the union of the two natures, Leontius precised minutely the sense and the relation of the terms “substance”, “nature”, “hypostasis” and “person”, which he applied to the definition of Chalcedon. In order to explain the existence of the Christ’s real humanity, Leontius of Byzantium uses the concept of *enypostasis*. Thus, the Christ’s humanity is not defiled at all, since it is not anypostatic, because it exists, but it is not hypostatic because it does not exist by itself, but it is enypostatic because it exists in the Logos it belongs to.

These explanations helped very much Leontius clarify the disagreements between Nestorianism and monophysitism. In the same time, using the theory of enhypostasis, Leontius of Byzantium could present entirely the teaching about the hypostatic union with all its redeeming consequences.

Conclusions

Among the theological controversies from patristical era of the Church, the Christological controversy from the Vth century was one of the most important ones.

Despite the unfortunate circumstances concerning this controversy, the Church was determined to extend its Christological terminology undefined yet at the first two synods and to develop an understanding more profound concerning the union between the divine and human nature in the Person of Savior Jesus Christ.

It is important to remark the fact that Saint Chyryl of Alexandria founded once and for all the base of the orthodox teaching about the relation between divinity and humanity in the unique Person of Savior, which was the core of the Nestorian controversy.

The later researches revealed that Saint Chyryl succeeding in enunciating the traditional existential perspective of the Church in an audacious and admirable synthesis. He allowed himself to contest the ontological, rationalist frame, specific to the Antiochian way of thinking and to introduce an existential one, more traditional in the domain of Christology, specific to the Alexandrian school.

