Communion of Incorruption: A Theology of Icons and Relics

by

Carole Lynette Taylor

Duke Divinity School
Duke University

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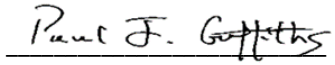
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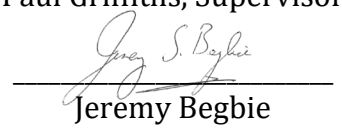
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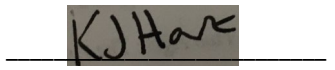
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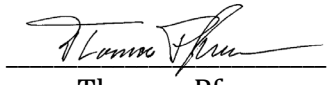
Thomas Pfau

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ABSTRACT

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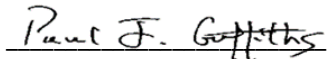
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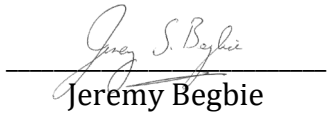
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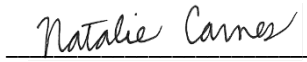
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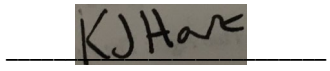
Kevin Hart

Thomas Pfau

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Abstract

This dissertation contributes to contemporary scholarship on the historical and theological significance of Christian iconodulia—the appropriate veneration of holy persons, places, and things. By accentuating the economic aspect of the Byzantine image debates it illustrates how the concerns raised by those defending the holy images in the eighth and ninth centuries proved to be precisely the issues that would accompany the resurgence of Christian iconoclasm in the Protestant Reformation. What should be clearer from the standpoint of this study is that debates concerning the legitimacy of the production and veneration of holy images touch on the fundamental claims of the Christian faith as at the heart of the theological defense is the mystery of God-made-man and the implications of this mystery for how God continues to seek union through his own body, that is, in the sacrifice of the Eucharist and in the Church itself. Attending closely to the economic aspect of the theological defense of iconodulia, we can see that the "economic appropriation" of the incarnation funds theological claims about the ontological stability, or unicity, of the Church. That is to say, to speak about the history and theology of iconodulia in the Christian tradition one must acknowledge the ecclesiological claims inherent to the orthodox defense. Therefore, this dissertation also contributes to contemporary ecumenical discussions and challenges some of the presumptions at the heart of that discussion.

This dissertation is dedicated to my children, Isaac and Sophia. Being your mother is the highest honor and greatest joy of my life.

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Introduction

We seldom think that the status of holy images in Christian tradition is much more than an ancillary issue belonging to the annals of Church history. Consequently, contemporary treatments of the ecclesial icon tend to focus on the historical context of the Byzantine image debates and/or the theological treatments of the icon by Eastern Orthodox theologians. With the former, historians often focus on the political context of the debates and how this informed the theology of the iconoclast parties against the making and venerating of holy images. For those interested in the development of icon theology among the iconodule theologians, much is made of their reliance on Platonic and neo-Platonic concepts for the development of the Christian image. And therefore there is much discussion about the economy of the image itself (image and prototype). In both cases, the centrality of the incarnation is highlighted as there is no question that the mystery of the incarnation of the Word meant new forms of theological reasoning and speculation were in order. However, what is striking among the volumes of scholarship treating the history and theology of Christian icons is the almost complete silence around the economic aspect of the debates. That is to say, when the ecclesiological aspect is treated it is most often done so from a political standpoint and therefore fails to acknowledge the economic stakes internal to the iconodules' defense. Yet a close reading of the iconodule texts reveals they were primarily motivated by a fervent concern to preserve Orthodox reflection on the nature of the Church and the economy of salvation. This dissertation aims to contribute to contemporary discourse on the ecclesial icon by exploring how the theological defense of Christian iconodulia (veneration of holy images

and relics) entails an ecclesiology based on the image-logic central to the doctrine of the Trinity.

Critically, this project is an intervention into contemporary ecumenism, the movement aimed at unifying Christians spread among the disparate bodies that claim to belong to the Church. While the spirit of ecumenism is reflective of Christ's own prayer for unity as related in the Gospel of John— "…that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you"—the methods employed often reveal presumptions that undermine the stated aim. Much of the ecumenical work pursued post-Vatican II proceeds on the assumption that ecclesial unity is something to be achieved and the method for that achievement is presumed to be reasoned argument about doctrinal or procedural disagreements. The correlative presumption, therefore, is that whatever Christian unity is, it is not something integral to the nature of the Church itself. Drawing on the tradition's theological defense of the holy images, I will argue this presumption is misguided as it fails to fully appreciate the Christological nature of the Church.

Constructively, developing a theology of *incorruption*, I will explore how the concept of incorruption guides the ecclesiologies of both the Catholic West and Orthodox East as it stems from Christ's own unicity and is most poignantly displayed in their practices of iconodulia. Conversely, I will argue that it is the rejection of iconodulia that illustrates the unavoidable conclusion that ecumenical efforts must acknowledge that there are fundamentally different economies informing how the disparate ecclesial bodies think about the nature of the Church and that this continues to prevent those very bodies from manifesting the Church's inherent unicity.

In an important sense, my argument is not new; it expresses the views already articulated by both Catholic and Orthodox communions. Most recently, in the summer of 2016 the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church produced a document entitled "Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World." This document contains a statement that articulates the Orthodox view of the ontological nature of the Church or, as I will call it, the theology of incorruption:

> *In accordance with the ontological nature of the Church, her unity can never be perturbed.* In spite of this, the Orthodox Church accepts the historical name of other non-Orthodox Christian Churches and Confessions that are not in communion with her, and believes that her relations with them should be based on the most speedy and objective clarification possible of the whole ecclesiological question, and most especially of their more general teachings on sacraments, grace, priesthood, and apostolic succession.[1]

Similarly, in 2000 the Catholic Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued *Dominus Iesus* which claims:

> Furthermore, the promises of the Lord that he would not abandon his Church (cf. *Mt* 16:18; 28:20) and that he would guide her by his Spirit (cf. *Jn* 16:13) mean, according to Catholic faith, that *the unicity and the unity of the Church* — like everything that belongs to the Church's integrity — *will never be lacking*.

[1] https://www.holycouncil.org/-/rest-of-christian world?_101_INSTANCE_VA0WE2pZ4Y0I_languageId=en_US Emphasis mine. It should be noted that this conciliar statement received much criticism for its "ecumenical" spirit and in November 2016 the commission of the Sacred Community of Mt. Athos released a document calling for the Crete Council to revisit and clarify its position on ecumenism so as to avoid further confusion mounting in dissension. In summarizing the document's main points, "Athonite monks emphasize that the current divisions and conflicts within the Church 'without a doubt contribute to allowing a dual interpretation of the texts of the Crete Council. The ambiguity of these documents creates the prerequisite for interpreting them in an ecumenical spirit and consequently pose a threat to the unity of the Church.'" http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/100123.htm Given the understanding of the Church's ontological stability which cannot be perturbed, the threat identified here relates not to the ontology of the Church but rather the Church's present failure to manifest its unicity.

> The lack of unity among Christians is certainly a *wound* for the Church; not in the sense that she is deprived of her unity, but "in that it hinders the complete fulfilment of her universality in history."[2]

It is clear in both instances, that is, from both Catholic and Orthodox perspectives, that unity is an integral and given attribute of the Church, despite the divisions that presently "wound" her. Yet for many engaged in contemporary ecumenism, it is the division and apparent brokenness of the Church that is taken as given, while the Church's unicity is contested.[3] How then to account for this unity? If given, it is not achieved. Are we at an impasse or might there be another way of understanding how the Church's unity is related to faith?[4] Is there a way to overcome the apparent abyss between an ecclesial order of being and its order of knowing? If the Church's unity cannot be threatened, how are we to understand the current status of Christian bodies not manifesting that unity? A theology of incorruption responds to these questions by exploring how the Church's presence as Christ's own body in the world suggests faith is always a response to an encounter. The Church enables and facilitates a divine encounter through the liturgy centered on Christ's body in the Eucharist. Therefore, discursive reasoning about doctrine

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[2] http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html, 16-17. See also *Lumen Gentium* "The Church, whose mystery is being set forth by this Sacred Synod, is believed to be indefectibly holy," §39.

[3] Contrast this view to Ephraim Radner's *A Brutal Unity: The Spiritual Politics of the Christian Church* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012) wherein he argues that claims to the church's unity are "factual misnomers." In many respects, this dissertation is a response to Radner's book, which has drawn much attention. Although many of our observations concerning the state of ecumenical dialogue and the effects of disunity are similar, ultimately Radner's account and gesture toward a conciliatory resolution is unsatisfactory.

[4] "Theological faith" is contrasted with "belief" in *Dominus Iesus*. According to the document, theological faith is "the acceptance of the truth revealed by the One and Triune God," whereas "belief" is "religious experience still in search of absolute truth" (§7).

and matters of faith is shown to be a response that always incompletely approximates the truth revealed as it entails participation in an endless contemplation of the sacramental mysteries. In the order of being, the incorruptibility of the Church necessitates an epistemology of approximation in the order of knowing. This view underwrites the Catholic and Orthodox claim that the unity of the Church cannot and will not be the result of discursive reasoning and agreement, but rather it is the unity of the Church that determines the parameters for theological reasoning and speculation.

The premise of a theology of incorruption is that the Church's incorruptibility is a feature of its being Christ's body in and for the world. The Church images Christ in the world, through the Holy Spirit, and remains incorruptible because of its relation to its prototype. St. Cyprian's axiom "Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus" or "no salvation outside of the church" is but an expression of this iconological relationship. When the Church fails to image Christ it fails to image salvation. Rather than being exclusionary, Cyprian's statement emphasizes the responsibility placed upon the Church. Sin is confessed and heresy is expunged not because it threatens the Church's unicity but because it inhibits the manifestation of her unity by introducing falsehoods that misconstrue the One who is being manifest through his Church. Revelation is the Lord's self-disclosing; the Church is the site of that revelation. These misconstruals, i.e., sin and heresy, forestall communion with the self-revealing Lord in the very site intended to facilitate that communion. Yet the presence of sin in the Church does not render it unfit for facilitating the communion to which we are called. Speaking iconologically, these misconstruals reveal the temporary disparity between image and likeness. The image has not fully conformed to

the likeness; the Church is not fully Christ-like as its humanity has yet to conform to the humanity of Christ, which is like us in all ways except sin. Christ's unicity as conferred onto the Church provides the condition of possibility for Christian hope, which is none other than the present enjoyment of communion that participates proleptically in the eschatological fulfillment of eternal communion. This is the communion of incorruption, made possible through Christ's resurrection.

I will develop my argument over the course of four chapters.

Chapter One: Incorruption

This chapter elucidates the grammar of incorruption. By revisiting a sixth century debate between Severus of Antioch and Julian Halicarnassus, two members of the Monophysite party, we are able to see what is at stake in theologizing about Christ's flesh in light of his unicity. The Orthodox theology of incorruption is based on Christ's own resurrected incorruptible flesh which must be rightly understood from the perspective of his two natures. The grammar of incorruption then includes the implications of Christ's incorruptible flesh for how Christians understand death and the bodily resurrection. The significance of the bodily resurrection for Christian theology is central to the theology of the Apostle Paul and subsequently those patristic theologians who must defend the faith from Gnosticism, which wants to undermine the essential Christian connection between spirit and the body. We see how the early Church utilized a theological hermeneutic that assumed an essential correspondence between Christ's historical body, Christ's body in the Eucharist, and Christ's body the Church. This grammar of incorruption necessitates that what we say about Christ's incorruptible flesh must be applied to all three bodies of

Christ. Hence it is the unicity of Christ himself that determines how we are to understand the inviolable unicity of the Church, liturgically conferred through the sacrifice of his flesh in the Eucharist.

Chapter Two: Iconomy

This chapter works out the Christological implications of the Byzantine debates concerning the status of the holy images/icons in the worshipping economy of the Church. Focusing primarily on the primary iconodule theologian, John of Damascus, and his contribution of distinguishing *latria* (adoration due to God alone) and *dulia* (veneration of holy persons, places, things) we see how a proper iconodulia relies on and articulates the fundamental theological distinction and relation between *theologia* and *oikonomia*. A brief treatment of Pseudo-Dionysius, Maximus the Confessor, and John of Damascus culminates to accentuate the metaphysics of the sacred economy that legitimizes Christian iconodulia. It is the sacred economy that is being threatened by iconoclast theology, which is none other than the unraveling of the chain of images described in John Damascene's taxonomies of images and veneration, corresponding to the Dionysian celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchies.

Chapter Three: Communion

The third chapter continues to build on the economics of the Church's defense of the holy images by returning to the hermeneutic of the "threefold body" of Christ. It focuses on how the Blessed Sacrament establishes communion and confers unity onto the

Church. Henri De Lubac's *Corpus Mysticum* and G.J.C. Snoek's *Medieval Piety From Relics to the Eucharist* are surveyed to show developments in Eucharistic doctrine as well as developments in practices of Eucharistic adoration. And Theodore the Studite of the second wave of Byzantine iconoclasm is engaged to further contextualize the theological importance of De Lubac's and Snoek's work as the iconodules anticipated the stakes of such developments as can be seen in their distinguishing the Eucharist from the other sacred symbols, thus establishing a holy synecdoche reflective of the divine economy.

Chapter Four: Contested Body

The fourth and concluding chapter shows how the developments described in the previous chapter supply the precondition for Martin Luther's maintenance of the twofold body (historical body and Eucharist) while opposing these to Christ's third body, the Church. Luther's protest and rejection of the ecclesial hierarchy illustrates the desacramentalizing of the Church. This decisive break with tradition can be seen in Luther's rejection of the cult of saints, but more explicitly it is in his polemic against the "sacramentarians" that exemplifies the unfortunate outcome of a theological hermeneutic whereby the threefold body of Christ and sacramental reasoning is not preserved.

Chapter 1

Incorruption

> Don't you dishonor, then, his divinity on account of his human things, but, for the divine's sake, hold in renown the earthly form into which, thoughtful towards you, he formed himself, the Incorruptible Son.
>
> —Gregory Nazianzen, Poem 1.1.2., *De Filio*

> The incorruptible body which is promised the saints in the resurrection cannot, indeed, lose its quality of incorruption, but the bodily substance and the quality of incorruption are not the same thing.
>
> —Augustine, *City of God* XI, Ch. 10

Euphemia's Consent

In 451 the Council of Chalcedon formulated what became the orthodox position on the second person of the Holy Trinity.[1]

> Following the holy Fathers we teach with one voice that the Son [of God] and our Lord Jesus Christ is to be confessed as one and the same [Person], that he is perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, very God and very man, of a reasonable soul and [human] body consisting, consubstantial with the Father as touching his Godhead, and consubstantial with us as touching his manhood; made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted; begotten of his Father before the worlds according to his Godhead; but in these last days for us men and for our

[1] For a thorough and chastened reading of Chalcedon, its prehistory and reception, see Brian E. Daley, *God Visible: Patristic Christology Reconsidered* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). Daley generally concurs with Robert Wilken's caution: "The question one must ask today, as Wilken asked in 1965, is whether a thorough reading of early Christian witnesses to faith in Christ really allows us to call the Council of Chalcedon, on its own, the end or the beginning of any identifiable period in the history of Christian faith, and so whether its formulation really ought to be taken, even with caution, as the summation of ancient thought about Jesus," 10. Daley here refers to Wilken's review of Grillmeier's *Christ in Christian Tradition*. I agree with the attempt to more carefully contextualize Chalcedon and resist the oversimplified designation of "summation." This chapter is an attempt to contribute to further contextualization of the council.

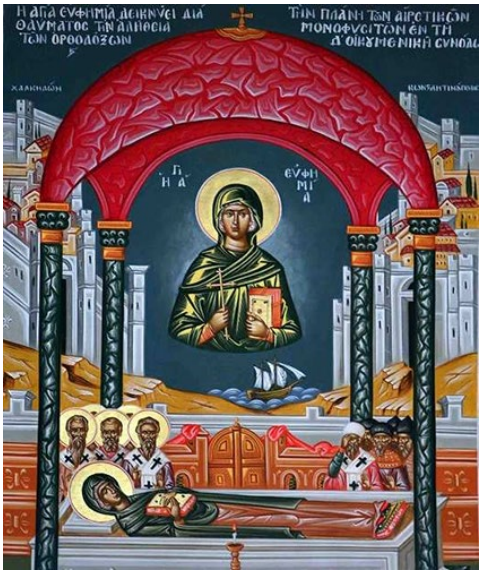
> salvation born [into the world] of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God according to his manhood. This one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son [of God] must be confessed to be in two natures, unconfusedly, immutably, indivisibly, inseparably [united], and that without the distinction of natures being taken away by such union, but rather the peculiar property of each nature being preserved and being united in one Person and subsistence, not separated or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Prophets of old time have spoken concerning him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ hath taught us, and as the Creed of the Fathers hath delivered to us.

The council proceedings entailed the anticipated theological debates, and, despite being the stated objective of Emperor Marcian and Empress Pulcharia who convened the meeting, it did not conclude with a peaceful synthesis of opposing positions. Rather legend holds it was the patron saint of the council, Saint Euphemia (d. 303/304), who cast the deciding vote in favor of the Chalcedonian party.

Who is this saint? And how did she obtain such authority? There are few existing records of Euphemia's martyrdom and the details are not consistent among them.[2] However, we do know she was martyred during the Christian persecution under Emperor Diocletian. And since her death the faithful had developed the typical practices of veneration fitting to martyrs. Hence the council was held in the church built over the martyr's grave. The conciliar miracle attributed to her is included in the *Synaxarion of Constantinople*. According to the story, when the opposing parties could not reach consensus the saint was called upon to choose between the two competing professions of faith. Each profession was put on a scroll and placed on the saint's chest whereupon the larnax (casket) was closed and sealed. After a few days of fasting and praying, the

[2] See Elizabeth A. Castelli, "Asterius of Amasea: *Ekphrasis on the Holy Martyr Euphemia,*" in *Religions of Late Antiquity in Practice*, ed. Richard Valantasis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 464-8.

enclosure was reopened and the scroll containing the Chalcedonian definition was found in the saint's hand, whereas the scroll containing the Monophysite profession was found at her feet. The festal icon of the Great Martyr's miracle features the scene.



"The Miracle of Saint Euphemia the Great Martyr" resulted in widespread veneration of the saint throughout Byzantium and the miracle continues to be celebrated by Orthodox Christians on July 11.[3]

> O Euphemia, Christ's comely virgin, thou didst fill the Orthodox with gladness and didst cover with shame all the heretics; for at the holy Fourth Council in Chalcedon, thou didst confirm what the Fathers decreed aright. O all-glorious Great Martyr, do thou entreat Christ God that His great mercy may be granted unto us.[4]

Yet the legend is often overlooked in theological narrations of the council. This may be because of the spectacular nature of the legend, which from a modern standpoint seems too fantastic. But it is my contention that these omissions consequently misrepresent a

[3] The Great Martyr Euphemia All-Praised is commemorated on September 16.
[4] Apolytikion (Dismissal) Hymn in Third Mode

crucial aspect of the Church and the purpose of doctrinal formulations. That is, to omit such narratives implicitly underwrites the misleading perception that there is little to no substantive connection between the Church as economy and the Church as Magisterium. It is to suggest implicitly that the Church is primarily a repository of ideas/revelations that require epistemic assent (as cognitive act) for membership thereby implying that Christianity posits an artificial dichotomy, one that privileges epistemology over and, when necessary, against metaphysics. This is a profoundly impoverished and incorrect view of the Church. It is a view that undermines the very nature, cause, and end of its presence in the world.

My use of this and other legends attributed to the saints, their relics, and their images does not depend on scientific veracity. I will not be making any attempt to provide proofs or apologetics. Rather it is the interest of this dissertation to reintegrate such narratives when possible in order to illustrate the theological argument I am making regarding the essential role relics and icons play in the economy of salvation, and what this teaches us about the nature of the Church. The Church is an economy centered on the body of Christ, the second person of the Trinity. When doctrine is discerned, debated, and professed it does so as a function of that very economy. Therefore, the economy is the precondition for any doctrinal affirmation, which serves to symbolize the character of the economy for the purposes of evangelization and sanctification—that is, for the purpose of conformity to the Son. Any creed as symbol is meant to provide further clarification of the relation already established by the economy. It does not add to the economy. Nor can it take anything away from it. Thus this feature of the council, that is, the location and

presence of the Great Martyr, would not have been insignificant to the participants straining to articulate the great mystery of the Son's incarnation. Saint Euphemia was venerated by what would be later identified as the Monophysite party as well as the Chalcedonians,[5] a fact that should not be surprising nor overlooked as the saint's cult predates the council. Her presence and participation is an affirmation of the authoritative role the saints have in the holy economy, where worship and belief center on the flesh of Christ.

More particularly, the incorrupt body of the martyr both manifests and represents the communion of incorruption, the economy ordered on the Incorruptible Son, which includes his relationship to all the faithful—those still living, those already awaiting resurrection, and all creatures made and vivified by the Triune Lord. It is none other than this communion that the disparate parties believed they were safeguarding with a truthful description of the mystery of the incarnate One.[6] For the purpose of expressing "truth" is conformity to the Truth (John 14:6). This affirmation accounts for the legend of Euphemia's miracle and its continued celebration today. The saint is called upon and entrusted to uphold the truth because she has earned intimacy with the Truth by shedding

[5] Haim Goldfus, "St. Euphemia's Church by the Hippodrome of Constantinople within the Broader Context of Early 7th Century History and Architecture," in *Ancient West & East*, Vol. 5, Nos. 1-2 (Boston: Brill, 2000), 178-97. Goldfus references F. Halkin, *Euphémie de Chalcédoine* to support this observation.

[6] No one denies there were political motivations involved in this and other conciliar debates. However, it would be misleading and presumptuous to assume that the theological stakes were merely a by-product of this. Rather the complexity of the debate and its consequences for the Church suggest a very real understanding that a definition of faith was in some way ontologically binding. This understanding is the premise from which the Church has the authority to anathematize those who reject official Church teaching. But this, that is the role of epistemic assent, cannot be an essential characteristic of the Church herself. This last point will be addressed in the final chapter.

her blood for the Truth. The communion between the saint and the Lord legitimizes her dogmatic consent, which becomes decisive for the Church's expression of orthodoxy.

Euphemia's role in the Council of Chalcedon indicates a general disposition toward the saints and their active role in the Church. But what is that disposition? And what does it tell us about what the Church is? This dissertation submits that Christians traditionally have understood the economy of salvation—including the Church—according to the *grammar of incorruption*. The aim of this chapter is to survey the grammar of incorruption as it developed among some key thinkers in the Church up through the sixth century. This cannot be a thorough analysis of all patristic writings that invoke the term, although that would make for an excellent study. Rather I will focus on a sixth-century debate in order to briefly trace the development of 'incorruption' as it stems from the early Church's attempt to distinguish Christian doctrine from Gnosticism in order to clarify what is at stake in Christological heresies that lean too far toward either Docetism or some form of Nestorianism. What we will discover is that incorruption was first discussed in early debates concerning the resurrection. Building on apostolic teaching, particularly that of the apostle Paul, it becomes a key term for Irenaeus who expounds a Pauline anthropology and soteriology. This background provides both context and continuity when looking at how the term was later used by Athanasius and later Cyril of Alexandria, the principal theologian appealed to by both parties at Chalcedon. As we shall see, these debates reveal something essential about Christian faith, doctrine, and practice: the economy of salvation is centered on the Incorruptible Son whose body redeems through its trifold presence as Christ, Eucharist, and Church. The three bodies of

Christ are inextricably linked. It is this fundamental point that accounts for the unicity of the Church.

Severus and the Inexpressible Union

In the decades following Chalcedon, ongoing tensions threatened the unity of the Church, as well as the unity among those who had been declared heretical by the council. In 518 Emperor Justin exiled the anti-Chalcedonian priests and the Church experienced what some have called the first Great Schism. Yet the disunity between Chalcedonian Christians and anti-Chalcedonians was not a one-way street. As they believed themselves to be the true Church, having refused to assent to the Chalcedonian definition on Christ's two natures, the anti-Chalcedonians were faced with severe complications. How would they govern themselves having lost the imperial authority to do so?

Severus of Antioch was among the anti-Chalcedonians who fled to Egypt where he would spend the rest of his life—almost twenty years. Prior to his exile, Severus had spent nearly six years as the imperially-appointed patriarch of Antioch.[7] His exilic writings are of great importance for understanding the sixth-century Church and the internal tensions within what is now the Syriac Orthodox Church. Despite having been attributed as the founder of the Syriac Church, Severus's exilic writings reveal he was a staunch opponent of the separatist movement within the anti-Chalcedonian party.[8]

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[7] For a concise tracing of Severus's life, see Iain Torrance, Introduction to *The Correspondence of Severus and Sergius* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011).

[8] This argument regarding Severus as antiseparatist should be distinguished and perhaps contrasted with Robin Darling's argument regarding Severus's separatist attitude while he was still patriarch: "During his patriarchate Severus had come only gradually to see

Whereas one might read his position as mere political savvy—after all, why not resist breaking with the imperial authority when it holds so much power?—Yonatan Moss has recently shown there were deep theological reasons for resisting the separatist movement within the already-exiled community.[9] Those reasons come to the fore in the debate between Severus and Julian of Halicarnassus on the incorruptibility of Christ's flesh—a debate that would consume the last fifteen years of Severus's life.

In Moss's treatment of the debate, he takes what he calls a "stereoscopic approach," which entails "a simultaneous examination of Severus and his opponents through the multiple lenses of theology, ecclesiology, and liturgy."[10] The reason for such an approach is historically grounded. That is, as Moss indicates, a reading of the sources shows

> the fact that within both camps of the anti-Chalcedonian movement the different debates about theology, ecclesiology, and liturgy were thought of as interrelated. One's position on the incorruptibility of the body of Christ was integrally tied to one's position on ordination outside the imperially based canonical system; to

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that the orthodox must separate themselves from the empire, whatever the cost," 159. Cf. Robin Darling, "The Patriarchate of Severus of Antioch, 512-518" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1982). It is a worthwhile query to ask how Severus's separatist attitude prior to his exile relates to his antiseparatist attitude during his exile. Is this simply a change of face now that he had lost favor with the emperor? Or is there a theological explanation for the supposed, rather stark, change in Severus's position?

[9] Yonatan Moss, *Incorruptible Bodies: Christology, Society, and Authority in Late Antiquity* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016). Moss identifies the "potentially distortive" perspective of Severus's successors who "might have had reasons of their own for portraying Severus as a supporter of a campaign that signaled the emergence of an independent anti-Chalcedonian Church. Writing after Severus's death at a time when the independent church was already a reality they would have been eager to claim the great anti-Chalcedonian theologian as a founding father of the new church," 4-5. Moss will contend Severus's own writings do not permit us to identify him as a separatist.

[10] Ibid., 7.

> one's soteriological understanding of the Eucharist; and to one's position on the rebaptism of Chalcedonian converts."

Yet this was not characteristic solely for the anti-Chalcedonians. Rather for those within and outside of the anti-Chalcedonian party,

> [o]ne's view of Christ's physical body informed one's view of the church, and vice versa. In the controversies that developed among the opponents of the Council of Chalcedon, one's attitude toward the imperial church's betrayal of orthodoxy (from the perspective of the anti-Chalcedonians) and the ensuing threat to the continued existence of anti-Chalcedonian church life was symbiotically related to one's theological understanding of Christ's embodiment in this world.[11]

Moss shows how this symbiosis was prevalent, even if implicit, prior to the council in the writings of Cyril of Alexandria—the authoritative theologian for both the Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian parties.[12] Cyril operated with a "three bodies" paradigm as is evidenced in his *Commentary on John*:

> For by one body (sōma), that is, his own, blessing through the mystery of the eucharist those who believe in him, he makes us of the same body (sussōmoi) with himself and with one another…. For if "we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor. 10:17) we are all made one body; for Christ cannot suffer severance…. We are all of us the same body (sussōmoi) with one another in Christ, and not only with one another, but also of course with him who is in us through his flesh.[13]

Therefore, Moss's "stereoscopic approach" is really a reapplication of a theological hermeneutic already present in the church fathers. I have highlighted this aspect of Moss's study in order to support my own argument. Adding to Moss's brief connection with Cyril's theological hermeneutic, I will show how Cyril is himself the inheritor of the

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[11] Ibid., 10.
[12] See Torrance's Introduction for a description of Joseph Lebon's definitive work *Le Monophysisme sévérien* (Louvain 1909) and updated article 'La Christologie du monophysisme syrien' (1951) and the Cyrillian influence on Severus's thought.
[13] Moss quoting Cyril's *Commentary on John*, 15.

grammar of incorruption which *is* the very "correlative" relationship Moss argues for in his book. Contrary to those scholars who have similarly noted a relationship between patristic arguments concerning theological, political/ecclesial, and liturgical matters but who want to argue about "causal" relations, Moss contends it is more proper to recognize this as a "correlative" relationship, "in which the sequential question of 'which came first' is irrelevant." Again, citing Cyril as his example, Moss observes, "Cyril's views of the Eucharist correlate with his views of the incarnation, as well as his views of the church, because all three of these 'topics' pertain to the self-same body of Christ."[14]

The grammar of incorruption submits that Christ's historical body is the site for theologizing about the Eucharist and the Church. Indeed, it is what organizes the entire economy of salvation. Therefore, the debates about Christ's identity as the second person of the Trinity, his two natures, etc. have direct implications for how we think about all things related to the Church, and vice versa. There is no theological or economic topic that does not necessarily stem from and entail an assertion about the very body—the very flesh—of Christ. For this reason, the debate between Severus and Julian concerning the incorruptibility of Christ's flesh is instructive.

The debate between Severus and Julian began within five years of Severus's arrival in Egypt (September 518) and quickly became a "full-fledged controversy with distinct groups of followers on each side. From the mid-520s onward, the threat of Julianism, rather than opposition to Chalcedon, appears to have been the central issue

[14] Ibid., 16.

occupying Severus, until the end of his life."[15] Moss's treatment of the debate provides more historical context than I can permit here. For our purposes, we will focus on the theological content of the debate.

Julian detailed a theological argument about the incorruptibility of Christ's flesh in a *Tome*, which he sent Severus,[16] asking for his opinion. The *Tome* concludes with eight summarizing propositions, detailing the main points of his argument. Severus wrote a *Critique of Julian's Tome* and eventually published it along with a concise *Refutation of the Propositions*. By this point the debate between Julian and Severus was public and widespread.[17] Despite their exilic status and the precarious status of the anti-Chalcedonian body, Moss notes, "this was not just a controversy between men; it was a clash between movements."[18] There was dissension among the Chalcedonian dissenters.

What then was the debate? Based on the surviving letters between the two and the remaining fragments of the treatises, we have a fairly reliable picture of the contours of the theological disagreements, which, for both sides, were firmly situated in patristic writings and, therefore, were as much a disagreement on interpretation as theology. In continuity with the preceding Christological debates, the argument centered on how to make sense of Christ's humanity in light of his divinity. Julian rationalized from the

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[15] Ibid., 21.
[16] Moss dates the letter from Julian, which sparked the debate, to July 522 or perhaps a little earlier that year. See fn. 8, p. 22.
[17] "…[I]t must be stressed that from its very inception the debate was not a private one. Although these bishops were writing in exile and in hiding, they were not acting in isolation from the world. There are numerous indications throughout their dossier that both men had an extensive network of partisans and supporters, some of whom were physically present at their sides and others who acted as agents from afar," Moss, 26.
[18] Ibid., 27.

standpoint of Christ's divinity and therefore argued that Christ's flesh had to be incorruptible from conception. Otherwise, to impose corruptibility on Christ would be to undermine his divinity. Indeed, Julian reasons teleologically, stating that the incorruption revealed in the resurrection only proves that Christ was incorrupt—because divine—all along.

> For corruption did not succeed death, just as it did not precede the Incarnation. And precisely the question they disagree about—namely whether he who took on sufferings is corruptible precisely because he assumed aspects of our weakness during the interval [between incarnation and death]—this question is settled by the end [namely, the resurrection which proves that he was incorruptible all along.][19]

For Julian, corruption is the natural consequence of Adam's first sin. It is *not* a feature of humankind's created natural state. "He [Adam] neither got his constitution from sex nor from corruption—not even for a short moment."[20]

Therefore, for Julian, the created body of Adam and Eve was itself incorruptible: "Julian established a direct, symbiotic link between moral, or spiritual, behavior and the physical condition of the body. Through Adam's disobedience all future bodies brought about by sexual procreation were infected with the disease of corruption—both physical

[19] Yonatan Moss, "In Corruption: Severus of Antioch and the Body of Christ," Yale University, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2013. Cf. *Appendix* for an English translation of fragments from Julian's *Tome*, 338. See Moss's notes on the translation. The meaning of the sentence is obscure. However, given the broader context I think it is simply meant to convey Christ's incorruption is synonymous with the incarnation—not a result of Christ's death and resurrection.
[20] Ibid., 340.

and moral. Sexuality is the cardinal manifestation of that corruption, but so are all other bodily needs and changes."[21]

> But they say that the Word participated in our nature once the latter had already been corrupted. [Thus,] by necessity the signs of nature, such as corruption itself, are naturally found in the body he assumed. They should know, however, that the signs of nature demonstrate a healthy nature, such as was established by the creator at the very beginning, and not as an alteration of that which is within nature, as is corruption. And it is indeed more truthful for us to say that, preserving for nature in his flesh what had become diseased in us due to our irrationality, he demonstrated in himself nature as healthy, without the admixture of corruption. For, wanting to renew our substance (inasmuch as it was of his own making) he raised us by his own person to our original state, outside the damage arising from corruption.[22]

"[I]t was precisely the incorruptibility inherent in the body of Christ that promised humanity the gift of incorruptibility. The incarnation of Jesus in an incorruptible body brought humanity back to its original, prelapsarian state, free from spiritual and bodily corruption alike."[23] Julian's protological argument assumes a particular correlation between the moral and the physical, "[P]hysical corruption is, by its very nature, the result of moral corruption…. Corruptibility is a barometer of the symbiotic connection between body and spirit."[24] We will see how this perspective could be so compelling as it seems, at first blush, consistent with a Pauline soteriology: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 6:23). Julian's "Third Proposition" could be read as a gloss on this Pauline soteriological point: "Let us

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[21] Ibid., 33. See Moss's remarks about the recognized resonances with Augustine. Moss argues ultimately, "Julian's utterly non-Augustinian approach to sin and corruption is in fact key to understanding both the ideological roots of his position and its long-standing and widespread popular appeal."
[22] Moss, "In Corruption," 341.
[23] Ibid., 35.
[24] Ibid., 34.

not state that before the transgression of the commandment death and corruption existed naturally, because God did not make death, as it is written. It only entered into us contrary to nature, after the transgression and due to sin, in accordance with the divine scriptures and the holy fathers."[25]As is evident from the quotes above, Julian sees a direct link between Christ's incorruptibility and creation. For him, to insist that Christ was corrupt because of his humanity, and that humanity is corrupt by nature, is to insist that God's act of creation was imperfect. Again, Julian's position on Christ's incorruptibility seems to be an attempt to safeguard Christ's divinity at all costs. He sees in the opposing position a threat to God's sovereignty over creation.

Yet if Jesus was incorrupt prior to the resurrection—if being incorrupt means he could not suffer bodily—how did he defeat sin and conquer death? How could Julian avoid charges of Docetism? After all, Julian's correlation of corruption with sin and sin with sexual conception seems to preclude Jesus from even the possibility of corruption. If, for Julian, Christ's incarnation precludes even the possibility of corruption, how did Christ enact our salvation? How could we conceive of his passion as sacrifice?

Julian's resolution was to locate Christ's salvific act in his will. That is, Christ's flesh was not *naturally* predisposed to sin yet Christ *willingly/voluntarily* took on the sufferings of flesh. This was a move made previously by Cyril of Alexandria. Both Cyril and Julian reference the burning bush as an exemplification and foreshadowing of this point. For Cyril it illustrates the impassibility of the Logos.[26] For Julian the burning-yet-

[25] Moss, "In Corruption," 345.
[26] Interestingly, by contrast to Cyril, Julian is comfortable with saying Christ is *passible*—but not *corrupt*. See Moss fragment, 21, "I declare the body of our Savior

not-consumed-bush illustrates how Christ could submit to pain and suffering while remaining incorruptible. Julian's soteriology rests fully on his belief that Christ's incorruptibility from the incarnation and Christ's willingness to sacrifice the effectual advantages of his incorruptibility to take on our sin and its bodily consequences (death) in his passion, is precisely how humanity's incorruptibility has been restored. In other words, Christ's incorruptibility was not something he achieved/obtained in the resurrection—as Severus would argue; it was an essential feature of the incarnation from the beginning.

> Now, if it is written: "even if we knew Christ in the flesh, now, however, we no longer know him (in this manner)," this means that he [the resurrected Christ] no longer voluntarily endures sufferings, for he has completed that which he desired by redeeming all of human nature through his voluntary sufferings; and he will no longer return to these sufferings, as if he had not once and for all accomplished that which he desired.[27]

Severus disagreed. The disagreement between the two anti-Chalcedonian bishops may seem to the modern reader inconsequential and a bickering over minutia. One could say that it was merely a matter of defining terms. We have already seen that Julian understood "corruption" to be the effect of Adam's sin. For Severus, by contrast, corruption described the passibility of flesh. Flesh by its very nature is corruptible, which is not a direct result of moral failing but rather a feature of its being creaturely. Severus explains his prelapsarian position in *Against Felicissimus*: "For by its nature the body was mortal and corruptible and it was innately prone to dissolve back into the elements

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passible because it was assumed from a passible and mortal nature, namely from the human race," 342. Compare to fragment 16, "Yes, I say 'passible' but I do not agree to call him 'corruptible,' who conveyed incorruptibility to us," 340.

[27] Ibid., 342-3.

out of which it was composed."[28] The larger passage from which this sentence is taken Moss identifies as the clearest articulation of Severus's view of the natural (protological) human condition. In a complex manner, Severus explains, almost directly inverse of Julian, that Adam and Eve were *preserved* from death—not naturally, that is, not as a natural characteristic of having been created, but *by grace*. It was this grace that was lost in the first transgression: "By the will and grace of God, this evil was not to have any effect on humans. Rather mortality was to be swallowed up by life. For the divine grace was to draw up nature. Sin and transgression initiated the mortality of the body and the realization of its corruption…."[29] The key terms in the passage as a whole appear to be "innately prone" and "realization." But it is not altogether clear how Severus connects corruption and death if corruption isn't an effect of sin. On the one hand, corruption appears to be (merely) a feature of being bodily/composite and is therefore natural. On the other hand, he does find some correlation between corruption and death, which comes about through sin. The correlation stems from Severus's view of the passions.

> For indeed death—that which dissolves composite things in actual reality, began; while the soul, due to the transgression, necessarily suffered separation from God. And the disturbing commotion of the passions—by which the body is known and on account of which it is called "corruptible"—consumed the soul as well. They come into being and grow by means of the passions of nature.[30]

For Severus there are three related yet distinct issues at play: 1) to be human is to be composite thus mortal, given to decomposition because not naturally immortal; 2) corruption is a *propensity* in moral, rational, composite/bodily creatures; 3) death is the

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[28] Moss provides a full translation of this passage preserved in Moses bar Kepha's (d. 903) *On Paradise,* in Moss, *Incorruptible Bodies*, fn. 107, p. 171.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.

result of humankind's submission to corruption—but neither corruption nor death was inevitable given God's preservation through grace. For Severus, sin enacts the "realization" of our corruption, which God had preserved us from purely by grace—and promises to restore incorruption also by grace.

> It is thus clear that it was the transgression that first initiated the condemnation to corruption and death; and it was not the fact that Adam's body had been composite (which made it innately prone to dissolve back into the elements out of which it was composed). For it is not difficult for God, the maker of all, to remove corruption from the life of one who is overcome by corruption—and to preserve him for everlasting life….[31]

The disparity between Severus's and Julian's anthropology creates room for disagreement over the incorruptibility of Christ's flesh. From Severus's perspective, Julian's Christology does not allow for Christ's full humanity, which must take into account the nature of the flesh as composite. The composite, passible nature of the flesh, for Severus contra Julian, does not reflect an imperfection. From a philosophical standpoint it is simply what it means to be human. Humans are not imperfect because composite, nor are they imperfect because they are "prone" to corruption. To be human, as we can see from the quotation above, is not to be *made* sinful. Therefore, to say Christ's flesh was corruptible is not to imply defect—either physically or morally. Rather it is to confess that he became like us in order to save us. In this way, Severus is theologically consistent with the Christology of Hebrews:

> Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters

[31] Ibid.

> in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.[32]

Understanding a little of Severus's Christology as written prior to his debate with Julian is helpful for interpreting the finer points of the disagreement over Christ's incorruptibility. The correspondence between Severus and Sergius the Grammarian had the Chalcedonian threat as its subject—a background quite different from Severus's debate with Julian.[33] Nevertheless, the logic Severus elucidates in these letters informs how he will later respond to Julian. In his correspondence with Sergius we read Severus's Christological views concerning how to understand the distinct properties and therefore the unicity of Christ. He quotes Cyril extensively, showing that Cyril does acknowledge the necessity of upholding what is distinct of divinity and humanity while maintaining, "Nevertheless, to recognize these things is not to divide the natures after the union."[34] Severus provides a lengthy gloss on Cyril comparing the two natures of Christ to the rational and sensible natures of the human. Although these are distinct, we do not understand them distinctly when applying them to human nature. To be human simply *is* to be rational and sensible. For Severus, following Cyril, the incarnation occasions the union of the divine and human in Christ, henceforth, what may apply to these distinctly as natural properties is no longer maintained distinctly once the union has occurred.

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[32] Hebrews 2: 14-18.
[33] Torrance notes the dating of the correspondence between Sergius and Severus is difficult to pinpoint. See xv-xvi for a brief discussion. There is strong evidence that the final letter was written post-518.
[34] Severus quoting Cyril, *Letter I*, fn. 14, Torrance, 12.

> But when the union is professed from the two of them [divine and human], the difference, again, in the quality of the natures from which there is the one Christ is not suppressed, but in conjunction by hypostasis division is driven out…. For if he is divided, the properties of each one of the natures are divided at the same time with him, and what is its own will cling to each one of them. But when a hypostatic union is professed, of which the fulfillment is that from two there is one Christ without confusion, one person, one hypostasis, one nature belonging to the Word incarnate, the Word is known by means of the properties of the flesh, and the properties of humanity will become the properties of the divinity of the Word; and again the properties of the Word will be acknowledged as the properties of the flesh, and the same one will be seen by means of both (sets of properties), both touchable and not touchable, and visible and not visible, and belonging to time and from before time, and we shall not attribute the properties of each nature, dividing them up.[35]

Severus emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the two natures of Christ even while he rejects maintaining the distinction post-union. Severus's insistence on this point translates to his understanding of Christ's actions as well. And it is in his discussion of action that the stakes of the debate become all the more clear. Just as he says, "[f]or if he is divided, the properties of each one of the natures are divided at the same time with him," he must argue that the same would apply to how we understand Christ's activity. That is, Severus contends, to maintain any distinction of natures post-union (as the Chalcedonians do) would lead one to apply those distinctions to individual acts—something that could only lead to a profound confusion and, ultimately, a heretical Christology that would deny the union altogether.

> [E]ven if they are in nature properties of [humanity], they are also properties of God the Word, because of the economy. And he is said to have hungered, and thirsted, and to have been weary from a journey, because he was united hypostatically to a body whose nature it was to suffer these things. And he who divides them, and assigns these separately to the humanity, and estranges them from the only-begotten God—although he is in no way diminished according to the principle of his own impassibility—unties the economy and estranges him

[35] Torrance, 12, 16.

> who is in the likeness of God, and who did not think it robbery that he should be equal with God, from voluntary emptying and humiliation for love of man, which he accepted that he should undergo for our sake.[36]

In his succinct summation of the Monophysite position, John Meyendorff states:

> [T]hey held steadfastly to the theology and terminology of Cyril of Alexandria. Just as the "old Nicaeans" in the fourth century had refused to accept the formula of the three hypostases introduced by the Cappadocian Fathers because Athanasius had not used it, so the leaders of the fifth- and sixth-century Monophysitism—Dioscoros of Alexandria, Philoxenus of Mabbugh, and the great Severus of Antioch—rejected the Council of Chalcedon and the Christological formula of "one hypostasis in two natures" because Cyril had never used it, and because they interpreted it as a return to Nestorianism.[37]

Severus sees Cyril's unitive Christology as the antidote to all Christological heresy. The fear of returning to Nestorianism runs explicitly throughout Severus's letters to Sergius as it, Nestorianism, is representative of any heresy that would divide the incarnate Word, consequently rendering Christ's kenosis meaningless. However, in addressing Sergius it becomes clear that for Severus the opposite is just as dire. That is, Sergius wants to argue a hyper-Monophysitism stating that it is best to describe the incarnate Word as one *ousia*, thereby losing the distinction of the two natures altogether, perhaps out of a radical avoidance of any language of "mixture." But this, Severus argues, is equally heretical as it conflates the two natures, rendering any language of union nonsense and superfluous.

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[36] Torrance, *Letter II*, 100.

[37] John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974), 34. Interestingly, and to underscore Meyendorff's remark, in his second letter to Sergius, Severus calls out even those who say they object to Chalcedon but who also take issue with Cyril's teaching: "… I have heard that some men have read the letter which I sent you earlier, who, from ignorance and a presumptuous lack of culture, do not much agree with the words of holy Cyril…. [H]ow are they not condemned to shame, those who boast that they are zealous in opposition to the Council of Chalcedon, but because of inexperience are not able to put on the armour of the (battle-) rank, which is the teaching of holy Cyril?" Torrance, 104.

It is in the third and final exchange between the two men that we see a more explicit resonance with what would become the disagreement between Severus and Julian on the incorruptibility of Christ's flesh. We can read in Sergius's third letter his view that Christ's flesh must have taken on a special/divine quality precisely because it was Christ's and he was without sin.

> I acknowledge on the one hand that the ensouled flesh which is united to the Word—for I fear after this to say "mixed"!—is human and of our nature, but on the other hand, in so far as it is composed to (be one with) God, it exists (with) those special properties in comparison to our flesh. For it did not accept sin (as a result) of transgression; it was not obliged to hunger and thirst and sleep, but to be occupied with the Word to which it was united, which willed to suffer these things for the sake of the confirmation of the inhomination. Therefore, this is not to change (an) ousia, but accurately to wonder at the mystery, that when the Word was composed in union to dense flesh, he made it more glorious than anything. For he is born without a seed, and a virgin is (his) mother. And he is fed, not needing it, but desiring it.[38]

This passage reads almost as if it had been written by Julian. How does Severus respond? His first move is to accuse Sergius of reasoning according to the pagans rather than the fathers. There is a lengthy discussion of how the fathers have taught us to relate to pagan philosophy, that is, those "outside." Stated succinctly, Severus does not deny there may be some benefit to reasoning with or alongside the philosophers, but the Church must only do so secondarily.[39] He will acknowledge that, following Athanasius and Cyril, "it is

[38] Torrance, *Letter III of Sergius*, 130.

[39] "But because you have written, 'Let us be indulgent to the accurate (findings) of the philosophers, even if they are not of our fold, (and) particularly to (their) interpretations of terms,' know that you have written this outside the law of the Church. For none of the Doctors of true religion said, 'We make pagan philosophy a [leader] in our studies of terms and words,' but they say they accept it subsequently, as a handmaid, in so far as it agrees with the teachings and consideration of truth," *Letter III of Severus*, 153-4.

proper for us to say 'one nature incarnate of God the Word.'"[40] But the fathers' use of "one nature" does not translate to language of one *ousia* when applied to the incarnate Word. Rather, in their wisdom, the fathers carefully distinguish between *ousia* and *hypostasis*.

> Where therefore have you read in their [the Fathers'] compositions that they have called Emmanuel one ousia and quality, or one ousia incarnate of the Word? You are unable to say! For since they knew that the error of confusing the natures is contrary on the other side to those who divide Christ, they used polished and exact terms.
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> …[W]e are instructed by those (Doctors) to recognize the difference of ousia and hypostasis, and we hear holy Basil writing to Amphilochius and saying as follows: (BASIL): "Ousia and hypostasis have this difference, which the common has in comparison with the particular." And because of this, when the Fathers deal with theology, and explain a term concerning inhomination, they use these terms which are rightly distinguished, so that there might be not even one thing not uncovered in these considerations when they are set out. Thus when wise Cyril writes in the second volume against the blasphemies of Nestorius, he says (CYRIL): "Therefore it is right that we attribute all the words in the Gospel to one person, and to one hypostasis, that (hypostasis) of the Word incarnate." [41]

For Severus, Sergius's attempt to apply "special properties in comparison to our flesh" to Christ's flesh, while asserting language of a single ousia, purportedly establishing continuity with the Monophysite position, was ultimately another route to denying the incarnation of the Son. Nestorius's logic relies on maintaining (post-union) a division of natures. Sergius wants to create a special case for the incarnate Son that denies any real communion with human flesh. For Severus both positions completely deny the incarnation altogether. For, again, the incarnation just *is* the inexpressible *union* of divine and human in the person of Jesus Christ. Therefore, rather than speaking of

[40] Torrance, *Letter III of Severus*, 146.
[41] Ibid.

"composition" and attributing "properties" —whether divine or human—to either nature when speaking of Emmanuel, we must, Severus argues, maintain the unicity of the Word in acknowledging:

> [T]he principle of the union, because of the economy, allows those things which in nature are properties of the flesh to be called properties of the Word. In the same way, it made those things which in ousia are properties of the Word to be called properties of the flesh….
>
> The natures are not implied independently and in individual existence, for to say this belongs to (the position of) those who mutilate (Christ) with a duality after the inexpressible union, and not us, who profess him to be one from two.

Sergius's attempt to make Christ an exceptional being/ousia is but another way to circumvent the "principle of the union." For the principle is Christ's unicity—the paradoxical mystery of Christ's being consubstantial with God and consubstantial with humanity. Any attempt to over-rationalize the inexpressible mystery of Christ's unicity will lead to some form of heretical Christology, which, again, has direct implications for how one understands Christ's actions. When Christ acts he always acts as the one incarnate Word—at all times fully human, fully divine:

> Therefore he who divides Emmanuel, and defines him in two natures after the inexpressible union, along with the natures, divides the activities and properties as well and establishes two natures which act and without diminishment undergo those things which are their own…. [H]ow is it not absurd to speak of two properties or two activities? For there are many properties and not just two, of each nature. For example, of his humanity there is perceptibility, and visibility, and mortality, and being subject to hunger and thirst and to other things like it. And there are many properties of the divine nature: invisibility, intangibility, being before the ages, being unlimited. The things which are done are similarly many and various, and all these are as many as the human and divine actions that a man can recount.[42]

[42] Ibid., 24.

This must apply to Christ's salvific action as well, which is where Severus sees Julian going astray. For Christ's salvific act was an act of redemption—not merely the redemption of the soul but also of the body.

We have already seen how Severus disagreed with Julian's protology: for Severus, the first humans were made corruptible—not by defect—but *graced* with incorruptibility in order to enjoy everlasting communion with God. Likewise, Severus maintained Christ became like us with the exception of sin. That is, Christ's flesh was likewise corruptible and susceptible to fleshly suffering. Just as he had vision and perception, Jesus was not spared of experiencing the passions "because these passions have nothing to do with moral failing: they are merely a part of the natural human condition."[43] For Severus, "spiritual transgression had no effect on the *nature* of the body."[44] This is yet another way of insisting on the unitive principle. Whereas Julian's insistence that Christ's incorruptibility upon conception is what signals and restores humankind's original incorrupt state, Severus maintains Christ's flesh was—from the beginning—like ours in every way so that what is revealed in Christ's incorruptible flesh post-resurrection is the same as that promised to the saints who likewise are not separated from God by death. Christ's incorruption is the manifestation of *grace* restored in the resurrection. If Cyril or other fathers referred to Christ's incorruptibility prior to the resurrection, for Severus, this was a reference only to that aspect in which Christ was unlike us, that is, he could not sin.

Moss summarizes the soteriological differences between Severus and Julian:

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[43] Moss, *Incorruptible Bodies*, 35.
[44] Ibid., 33.

> Severus agreed with Julian that salvation consists in the attainment of incorruptibility. But he disagreed on two cardinal points. First, he thought that incorruptibility was not the restoration of an actual condition that had been lost to humanity; it was rather the attainment of a state that humanity had only had the potential to reach prior to the fall. Second, whereas Julian viewed Christ's incarnation as the enabler of human incorruptibility, Severus identified resurrection as the locus of salvation.[45]

On this soteriological point, we can see how Severus's debate with Julian illustrates a culmination of centuries of Christian thought on the bodily resurrection and thus the grammar of incorruption. Severus's insistence on the resurrection as the locus of salvation is in continuity with what Thomas McGlothlin has recently described as the Pauline resurrection schema. In order to more fully appreciate the debate between Severus and Julian, we will now contextualize it by tracing the logic as it appeared in the Apostle's writings and a few key patristic thinkers who continued to work out the doctrine of a bodily resurrection.

Paul, Christian Identity, and the Mystery of Imperishability

The language of incorruption appears early in patristic writings as the early Church grappled with how to understand the resurrection of Christ and its implications for the anticipated general resurrection.[46] In his recent book, *Resurrection as Salvation: Development and Conflict in Pre-Nicene Paulinism,* McGlothlin contrasts the "old" question pursued by scholars treating patristic accounts of resurrection in the second and

[45] Ibid., 36.

[46] I am using 'general resurrection' to refer to the resurrection of those who are not Christ. As McGlothlin shows, there were differing views among both Jews and Christians about who would be resurrected, whether the faithful alone or everyone. My use of the phrase should be taken to apply to either view and I will denote which view in particular when necessary.

third centuries with what he proposes as the "new" question. In short, the old question concerns what early Christians think resurrection is and focuses on the relationship between resurrection and embodiment. Whereas the new question asks *why? how?* and *to whom?* – without neglecting the *what?* The new question allows us to consider what he identifies as "two understandings of the purpose of resurrection in Second Temple Judaism and the New Testament."

> According to the first understanding, resurrection is a prerequisite for judgment. It happens to the righteous and the wicked indiscriminately and is a preliminary step on the way to the reward of the righteous or punishment of the wicked. This view appears in Daniel 4, Ezra 2, Baruch, and, in the New Testament, most clearly in John and Revelation. According to the second understanding, resurrection is God's reward for the righteous. Correspondingly, resurrection is tightly linked to salvation, and the resurrection of the damned is either denied or not mentioned. This view is found in 2 Maccabees and Josephus' descriptions of the Pharisees and receives its fullest development in the Pauline epistles.[47]

McGlothlin's study of the two understandings he identifies is important for our examination and development of the grammar of incorruption. A few general observations are in order. First, noting the two understandings of Jewish thought on resurrection illustrates an essential fact for Christian theological reflection on the resurrection: Christian views of resurrection are an inheritance from Jewish thought—including the diversity of Jewish thought on the topic.[48] The two accounts of resurrection in Second Temple Judaism can be found in the New Testament, as McGlothlin shows. Second, early Christian reflection on resurrection has direct implications for later Christian reflection on the incorruptibility of Christ's flesh and, consequently, that of the

[47] Thomas D. McGlothlin, *Resurrection as Salvation: Development and Conflict in Pre-Nicene Paulinism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1.
[48] See McGlothlin, fn. 1, p. 17.

saints. Third, theological arguments regarding both Christ's resurrection and the resurrection of the saints has direct implications for eucharistic theology, and vice versa. In other words, the soteriological effects of Christ's bodily resurrection and his bodily presence in the Eucharist becomes determinative for how the bodies of the saints function within the Church, regardless of how the general resurrection is understood. While there may be a diversity of views regarding the *why?* (e.g., for reward and/or judgment) and *whom?* (e.g., solely for the saints or for all) of resurrection, there is nonetheless a general consensus within Christian thought that one assurance of the resurrection is that the saints will be made incorruptible. Thus I will proceed having assented to McGlothlin's observation: "Only when the existence of these two views and the important Pauline developments are clearly seen can their significance for second- and third-century Christian theology begin to emerge."[49]

There are three key aspects to what McGlothlin identifies as the Pauline resurrection schema that are taken up by early interpreters of his thought. First, the anticipated resurrection is a trinitarian affirmation. It is enacted by the Father upon those who, empowered by the Spirit, believe in and are conformed to the Son (Rom. 1:4, 4:24, Gal 1:1, 1 Thess 1:10; 4:13-14, Eph 1:20, 1 Cor 15:12-15, 2 Cor 1:9). Second, it is a bodily resurrection (1 Cor 15, 2 Cor 4:14, Rom 6:4-5, 8:18-23). Third, the bodily resurrection indicates a soteriology that entails bodily sanctification in the present (Rom 6, Jas). Thus Christ's bodily resurrection becomes paradigmatic for the resurrection of the saints according to Paul. Christ died to overcome our slavery to sin and was resurrected

[49] Ibid., 18.

by the Father inaugurating newness of life. Because he is the sinless sacrifice, through our baptism into Christ's death and resurrection, the bonds of sin are broken and we are called to newness of life by conformity to Christ, through the power of the Spirit. Through our present participation in Christ, we may live with confidence that we will one day be raised like him—that is, bodily. This is the substance of Christian hope.

There is both an "already" and "not-yet" aspect to Paul's understanding of the resurrection. McGlothlin describes this as a "double conformity to the resurrected Christ."[50] Through our baptism, we receive the preliminary benefits of the glory awaiting us in the final resurrection. In both instances, the effects are bodily. That is to say, Paul's soteriology is fully embodied—it is not simply a matter of belief. Or rather, for Paul belief in Christ is confirmed in the bodies of those who participate in his death and resurrection. It is in our bodies that the Spirit manifests our participation in Christ, making Christ visible through our obedience to him. Our bodies bear witness to our belief. This becomes most clear in Paul's remarks on Christian suffering and his admonishments to abstain from sin.

> But we have this treasure [Cf. v. 6, knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ] in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair, persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh.[51]

[50] Ibid., 37.
[51] 2 Corinthians 4: 7-11.

We will briefly return to this passage below. For now it is important to note the inextricable link Paul makes between 1) knowledge of Christ and 2) suffering for Christ. Christ becomes visible in the sufferings of the saints not because of their knowledge (something they have accomplished) but rather because of God's own power. That is, Christ becomes visible because of their bodily suffering on his behalf. Therefore, knowledge of God can only be confirmed in obedience to God. It is the saints' obedience unto death, through the power of God, that makes Jesus visible in their flesh. To know God is to participate in his sufferings. To know Christ is to be conformed to him. The same logic orders Paul's exhortations to holiness. Faith without bodily works is dead.

> What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder.[52]

For Paul, then, the bodily resurrection is part of a continuum. It reflects the end for which humankind was created—to glorify God through conformity to the Son—and the means of that conformity—present life in the Spirit. Christ becomes "visible" when we submit to the Spirit who enables us to abstain from sin and embody holiness through sacrifice and suffering. The saint is one whose body reflects this process of conformity—enabled by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit—and therefore is one whose body manifests the glory promised to all the faithful in the resurrection.

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[52] James 2: 14-19.

Returning briefly to the passage from the second letter to the Corinthians, it is important to underscore an important feature of the Pauline resurrection schema McGlothlin identifies. As indicated above, there is an important epistemological dimension to Paul's anthropology and soteriology. Knowledge of God is intimately and inextricably linked to the body. Knowledge of God, we might say, just *is* intimacy with God. It occurs because of and, therefore, is expressive of communion with the Triune Lord. To know God is to know oneself as known by him. This view accounts for the authoritative role a saint such as Euphemia continues to have for the Church's doctrinal articulations. She does not receive her authority via learned principles but rather through her intimate communion with the Lord, displayed in her martyrdom. That is, she knows via participation. Whatever a creed symbolizes, it does so as a discursive expression of likeness. How do we know what God is like? We know through communion. As we shall see, this is expressed most fully in the Eucharist where to commune with the Lord is to literally ingest—to partake of him. This is crucial for Paul and those who will develop the Pauline schema because ultimately what is at stake in this affirmation is the identity of Christ, the Son, whose incarnation reveals the Lord's desire for eternal communion with humankind, who must become incorruptible like the Son in order to participate in said communion.

The epistemological dimension of Paul's soteriology is even more evident when placed within its very probable polemical context. While we do not know the precise origin of Gnosticism, it should be taken to be at least as old as Christianity. Based on this observation, historian George W. MacRae suggests, "New Testament writers, including

even Paul, are already in dialogue, not to say competition, with at least an 'incipient' Gnosticism."[53] As the early Church was not monolithic it is possible to recognize how some branches were being enticed and formed by it.[54] MacRae identifies a gnostic influence at the root of Paul's concern for the Corinthians: "The esteem of the Corinthians for *gnosis* is clearly at the root of the problems which Paul regards as a fundamental challenge to his gospel (1 Cor. 8:1)."[55] If we read Paul's first letter to the Corinthians in light of his concern about gnostic influence, we can see more clearly why Paul emphatically denounces immorality—a major point of accusation made by Christian writers against the gnostics—and emphatically asserts the importance of the body for Christians. With its radical dualism, gnostic logic could lead one to act immorally because the body is ultimately unimportant. Knowledge is disconnected from the body. Therefore, one who possesses *gnosis* can be indifferent toward the body (and materiality), thereby indulging in a libertine lifestyle.[56] Not so for Christians. But the issue, as we have seen from our discussion above, is not simply a matter of individual morality. The Christian life is inextricably linked to Christ's own body. For Paul it becomes a matter of divine identity.

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[53] George W. MacRae, "Why the Church Rejected Gnosticism," in *Studies in Early Christianity: Gnosticism in the Early Church,* Vol. V, ed. David M. Scholer (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993).

[54] To acknowledge some Christians were formed by Gnosticism is a very different observation than the claim that Gnosticism is itself a Christian heresy.

[55] Ibid., 382.

[56] MacRae notes that while there may be some statements in the *Nag Hammadi* that could lead one to embrace such a lifestyle, it is more typical of gnostic writings that they praised asceticism: "The evidence that Gnostics did in fact behave in an antinomian manner is virtually confined to the Christian polemical literature," 382. Nonetheless, the argument against the implications of a gnostic Christology for both communal and individual life would hold.

There are two other major contentions Paul would have with the gnostics from which his exhortations to holy living flow. First, the God of Jesus Christ is the Creator—not a lesser god or demiurge. A gnostic exegesis of scripture held that the Creator of the Old Testament was not the same God of the New Testament. For Paul, this was not merely a hermeneutical error but it meant a discontinuity in salvation history. For him, it is of utmost importance that Christians understand their Creator is also their Redeemer. Again, this ultimately had Christological implications. Gnostic dualism led to a Christological docetism.

MacRea notes an important shift occurs in the first and second centuries concerning the use and connotation of the term *sarx*, flesh; a term that was not used univocally in the New Testament.[57] Even for the author of the Fourth Gospel, which has typically been treated as containing strong gnostic influence, MacRae argues, "Among the things that kept the evangelist from becoming a Gnostic in the full sense was his emphasis on the incarnation: 'and the Word became flesh' (1:14)." However, the inconsistent use within the *Fourth Gospel* itself led, MacRae argues, to a shift in the first Johanine epistle where the author attempts to "rescue the language for more orthodox purposes."[58]

> In so doing, he witnesses to the evolution in which "flesh" came to be used as virtually a shibboleth in the argument against Gnostic docetists, leaving far behind the original Johanine, and a fortiori Pauline, understandings of the word. Docetism is rejected, not simply as a denial of the humanity of Jesus, but as a denigration of the flesh, which in Christian thought in the second century is

[57] Ibid., 259. MacRae observes this shift "culminates in the elaborate Pauline exegesis on the part of Irenaeus in *Adversus haereses*, Book V."
[58] Ibid., 260-1.

> increasingly seen as the instrument of salvation itself. The Gnostics, because of their radical dualism of spirit versus matter, are the archenemies of the flesh.[59]

To summarize, let's return to McGlothlin's proposed new question as applied to Paul's resurrection schema, that is, the *why? how?* and *to whom?* of the general resurrection. For Paul, Christ's bodily resurrection is paradigmatic for understanding the general resurrection. There is no question that for Paul the *what?* of resurrection is the bodily/fleshly creature, following Christ's own bodily resurrection. As for the remaining questions: the Spirit of the Father conforms the believer to the Son by enabling a rejection of sin and an acceptance of a life of holiness. The believer's present conformity to Christ (through holiness and suffering, both bodily) forms the substance of her hope in the future fulfillment of her bodily resurrection, the necessary condition granted/graced by the LORD for eternal communion with the LORD—in the flesh.[60]

> What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body will put on immortality. When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:
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> "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

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[59] Ibid., 261.

[60] McGlothlin shows Paul is quite clear about the anticipated resurrection and its outcome for those who participate in the Spirit's work of conformity to Christ. Paul is much less clear, and perhaps intentionally ambiguous, about a resurrection that includes those who have not received the Spirit of Truth. "Late authors … did not explicitly integrate the epistles' schema with the statement of Acts 24.… [T]hey instead turn to Daniel, John, or Revelation for clearer statements substantiating the resurrection of all who face judgment.… But even if early Christian authors had appealed to Paul's voice in Acts 24 to support resurrection to judgment, the fact would still remain that this view was not integrated into the Pauline logic of the Pauline resurrection schema," 42.

> "Where, O death, is your victory?
> Where, O death, is your sting?"
> This sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.
>
> Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.[61]

First Corinthians 15 provides a succinct summation of the Pauline resurrection schema. In it we see all the features McGlothlin identifies as characteristic of Paul's anthropology and soteriology. Humankind has reaped death as a consequence of sin. However, those who believe and participate in Christ's victory over sin may have confidence that their ongoing participation in him, through obedience, will reap life—now, in their becoming slaves to righteousness (Rom 6), and in the future imperishability/immortality/incorruptibility that will one day be granted (1 Pet). Paul's resurrection schema provides the scriptural basis for the theology of incorruption as bestowal and promise. The third characteristic, fulfillment, is witnessed to in Christ's own bodily resurrection.

McGlothlin traces how the Pauline resurrection schema takes shape in early patristic theology as these fathers would continue to combat misinterpretations and misappropriations of the Apostle. Thus we can see how the grammar of incorruption continues to develop along Pauline lines in the writings of fathers such as Irenaeus, Athanasius, and Cyril of Alexandria. We will very briefly trace the grammar in each of these in order to establish continuity and context before returning to the debate between Severus and Julian.

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[61] 1 Corinthians 15: 50-58.

Irenaeus (130-202)

Irenaeus was not the first to make use of Paul, as is clear from Irenaeus's own writings. Nonetheless, McGlothlin notes, "Irenaeus is the first extant Christian author to make extensive use of Paul."[62] The reasons for this are clear in his polemical writings where he takes issue with those who were misinterpreting the Apostle, especially concerning his views on the bodily resurrection. Based on a reading of *Against Heresies* we can deduce there were some who were teaching that Paul's reference to "spiritual body" meant the Apostle did not believe in a bodily resurrection. Irenaeus argues against this by developing a theological anthropology, which is not dissimilar to the one Severus will argue for many centuries later.

In Book 1 of *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus offers a detailed retelling of the gnostic gospel, which includes the creation of man and Church. In reading Irenaeus's description of gnostic anthropology and Christology, we can begin to see why the early debates on Christ's two natures were so fraught.

> Such, then, according to their idea, is man: his soul is from Demiurge, his body is from the earth, his fleshly element is from matter, and his spiritual element is from his Mother Achamoth.
>
> There are, therefore, three elements. First the material, which they also call the left-handed, and which they say must necessarily perish, inasmuch as it is altogether incapable of receiving a breath of incorruptibility. Second, there is the ensouled element, to which they give the name right-handed. Inasmuch as it is between the spiritual and the material, it will go over to that element to which it has an inclination. Third, the spiritual, which has been sent forth that here below it might take on form, having the ensouled element as a consort….[63]

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[62] McGlothlin, 48.
[63] Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, Book 1.5-6, *Ancient Christian Writers* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 36.

Gnostic Christology then follows the above logic of three elements:[64]

> For even the ensouled element needed sentient things as means of discipline. For this reason, they say, the world too was created and Savior came to this ensouled element that he might save it, since it had self-determining power. For they assert that he took the firstfruits from those whom he was going to save: from Achamoth, the spiritual; from Demiurge he put on the ensouled Christ; from the Economy he clothed himself with a body of the ensouled substance, which was prepared with ineffable skill, so that it might be visible and tangible and passible. But he did not take on any material element, since material substance is incapable of receiving salvation.[65]

The Savior's composite nature, according to the gnostics, enables them to maintain that either he did not suffer or that only his "ensoulment" suffered.

> He remained impassible—inasmuch as he is inapprehensible and invisible it would be impossible for him to suffer—consequently, when he was led to Pilate, Christ's Spirit, who had been deposited in him, was taken away. But neither did the "seed" that he received from his Mother [Achamoth] suffer, for it too was impassible, being spiritual and invisible even to Demiurge. For the rest [other gnostics] according to them, the ensouled element in Christ suffered….[66]

Irenaeus sees clearly the connection between gnostic anthropology and soteriology. In Book II.29 he identifies what he takes to be a problematic inconsistency in their thought concerning the salvation of humankind.

> For if it is on account of their nature that all souls attain to the place of enjoyment, and all belong to the intermediate place simply because they are souls, as being thus of the same nature with it, then it follows that faith is altogether superfluous,

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[64] In the following chapter, chapter 7, Irenaeus describes a fourth element that is added by some, namely, "the dove that descended on him," 39.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid. "For nothing of an ensouled nature enters Fullness." See footnote to this remark, "The soul was made by Demiurge whereas the spirit was secretly deposited in humans by Achamoth, as explained previously. At the consummation a separation will take place: the spirit will ascend to Fullness, whereas the soul will remain in heaven, the intermediate region. Nothing merely 'ensouled' can enter the Fullness; so the spirituals discard their 'souls' and then enter." The Christological conclusion would then be that only a part, the ensouled part, of Christ suffered.

> as was also the descent of the Saviour [to this world]. If, on the other hand, it is on account of their righteousness [that they attain to such a place of rest], then it is no longer because they are *souls* but because they are *righteous*. But if souls would have perished unless they had been righteous, then righteousness must have power to save the bodies also [which these souls inhabited]; for why should it not save them, since they, too, participated in righteousness? For if nature and substance are the means of salvation, then all souls shall be saved; but if righteousness and faith, why should these not save those bodies which, equally with the souls, will enter into immortality? For righteousness will appear, in matters of this kind, either impotent or unjust, if indeed it saves some substances through participating in it, but not others.
>
> For it is manifest that those acts which are deemed righteous are performed in bodies. Either, therefore, all souls will of necessity pass into the intermediate place, and there will never be a judgment; or bodies, too, which have participated in righteousness, will attain to the place of enjoyment, along with the souls which have in like manner participated, if indeed righteousness is powerful enough to bring there those substances which have participated in it. And then the doctrine concerning the resurrection of bodies, which we believe, will emerge true and certain [from their system]; since, [as we hold,] God, when He resuscitates our mortal bodies which preserved righteousness, will render them incorruptible and immortal.[67]

For Irenaeus, neither souls nor bodies receive immortality because of their nature, but rather both (souls and bodies) receive immortality from God because of faith and righteousness. McGlothlin argues Irenaeus's anthropology is "guided by two related key principles, which [McGlothlin] calls the 'growth principle' and the 'reception principle'."[68] But both are guided by what I have previously identified as the unitive principle by which the unicity of Christ (fully human, fully divine) is analogous to human nature: humans are bipartite, a body-soul unity.[69] According to Irenaeus, humanity is

[67] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book II.29.1-2
[68] McGlothlin, 58.
[69] McGlothlin offers a brief discussion of differing views on Irenaeus's anthropology as either bipartite or tripartite, 59-60.

"that which grows and matures by receiving gifts from the unchanging God."[70] His emphasis on the maturation of man and man's reliance on God for maturation means Irenaeus had no problem viewing the created state of man as "lesser." However, importantly, McGlothlin explains,

> But neither does he claim that this "lesser" state is one of corruption and estrangement from God. The immature baby enjoys an extremely intimate relationship with the nourishing mother. For Irenaeus, human sin is the refusal to receive from God. In this sense, the economy of salvation effects a return to the primal intimacy, even as it results in a maturity that was not possessed in the beginning.[71]

In his summation of Irenaeus's thought, McGlothlin uses the term 'corruption' similarly to how Julian would use it. However, his description of Irenaeus's account of human infancy and maturation is more resonant with Severus's account of corruption: it is not a defect but indicates humanity's creatureliness and contingency. In fact, it is the necessary precondition for humanity's reception of grace and thus communion with the Creator.

The gnostic dualistic separation of body from soul, for Irenaeus, runs directly counter to a Pauline soteriology that refuses to denigrate the body and instead sees it as the locus of the work of the Holy Spirit. It is his emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in the process of human maturation that McGlothlin identifies as Irenaeus's contribution to the developing Pauline resurrection schema in the early Church. For Irenaeus, reception is an active participation in the Holy Spirit—who brings about maturation in the believer. To receive the Spirit's gifts through participation is obedience, which will be rewarded with immortality. In other words, present life in the Spirit inaugurates a communion

[70] McGlothlin, 56.
[71] Ibid., 57.

between the Christian and the Lord, which will continue even beyond bodily death in the Spirit's gift of incorruption.

> [This was done] that man, receiving an unhoped-for salvation from God, might rise from the dead, and glorify God, and repeat that word which was uttered in prophecy by Jonah, "I cried by reason of my affliction to the Lord my God, and He heard me out of the belly of hell" (Jonah 2:2) , and that he might always continue glorifying God, and giving thanks without ceasing, for that salvation which he has derived from Him, that no flesh should glory in the Lord's presence (1 Cor. 1:29); and that man should never adopt an opposite opinion with regard to God, supposing that the incorruptibility which belongs to him is his own naturally, and by thus not holding the truth, should boast with empty superciliousness, as if he were naturally like to God.[72]

Incorruption, for Irenaeus, is granted the righteous in the resurrection. The closing remark from this passage indicates Irenaeus understood incorruption to be an attribute not natural to man but gifted from God to man to make man god-like. Protologically, this means the first humans were made mortal and corruptible/passible since to be made human is to be made fully reliant on God. This contingency establishes the relationship between creature and Creator. Soteriologically, salvation is a working out of this properly ordered relationship, eventually culminating in the believer's receipt of incorruption as a gift for eternal communion with God.

> This, therefore, was the [object of the] long-suffering of God, that man, passing through all things, and acquiring the knowledge of moral discipline, then attaining to the resurrection from the dead, and learning by experience what is the source of his deliverance, may always live in a state of gratitude to the Lord, having obtained from Him the gift of incorruptibility, that he might love Him the more.…[73]

[72] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book III.20
[73] Ibid.

Athanasius (299-373)

There are three major works attributed to Athanasius the Great: *Contra Gentes*, *De Incarnatione Verbi*, and *Vita Antonii*. The second work, *De Incarnatione Verbi*, has been the most influential. However, it is not discontinuous with the other two and together they illustrate the grammar of incorruption according to Athanasius.[74] Athanasius explicitly indicates the connection between the first work, *Contra Gentes*, and *De Incarnatione*. Both works are apologetic, showing the logic of the incarnation in order to combat accusations of the irrationality (*alogos*) of the cross. In *Contra Gentes* we see already a Pauline pattern, linking anthropology, epistemology, and soteriology. For Athanasius, man is made for communion with God by having been given a soul, which is made in the image of God and whose activity is contemplation of the Image of God, the Word: "For since he has no obstacle to the knowledge of the Divine, through his own purity he always contemplates the Image of the Father, God the Word in whose image he was made."[75] The protological man is fully capable of knowing God through contemplation. This is what it means to be made in the image and likeness of God. The body, while mortal, does not impede man's contemplation of God.[76] The fall, for Athanasius, occurred when man became distracted by his own powers of the will and

[74] It is highly unlikely Athanasius is the author of the *Life of Antony*. However, since the attribution persists despite scholarly speculation, I have included it as it is nonetheless undeniable that it illustrates Athanasius's soteriology as embodied in the iconic figure of Antony.
[75] E. P. Meijering, *Athanasius: Contra Gentes* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984), I.II.
[76] Ibid., Ch. 33, "Now knowledge of this could come nearer from the knowledge about the body and from the fact that it [soul] differs from the body. For if our argument has shown that it differs from the body, and the body is mortal by nature, then the soul must be immortal, since it is not like the body."

began to focus his contemplation on bodily things rather than on God, his original contemplative "destination." Importantly, it is not the body itself that corrupts but the will turned inward, to the self, that disorders one's contemplation toward the body. For Athanasius, the result of this shift is humankind's introduction of evil into God's good creation.

Similar to Irenaeus's motive to reveal the illogic of Gnosticism, in *Contra Gentes* Athanasius aims to discount paganism's heretical dualism that would make evil a part of creation. By showing that evil is humanity's invention, he can then attribute idolatry to man's darkened reason. "But it was human beings who later began to conceive of it [i.e., evil] and imagine it in their own likeness. Hence they fashioned for themselves the notion of idols, reckoning what was not as though it were."[77] As a human invention, evil inverts humankind's right relation to the Creator; sin produces idolatry—which leads men into further darkness.[78]

The latter part of *Contra Gentes* points to creation as evidence for the providence of God, and in particular the Word of God through whom all things were made. The continuity between creation and re-creation is crucial for Athanasius, as it was for Paul, and comes out more fully in *De Incarnatione Verbi*. Indeed that is the stated objective of the follow-up to *Contra Gentes*:

> As we give account of this [Incarnation], it is first necessary to speak about the creation of the universe and its maker, God, so that one may thus worthily reflect that its recreation was accomplished by the Word who created it in the beginning.

[77] Ibid.
[78] Athanasius creates a catalogue of descending pagan idolatries.

> For it will appear not at all contradictory if the Father works its salvation in the same one by whom he created it.[79]

In the opening of the text we read again how humanity was made in the image and likeness of God, through the Word. But here Athanasius offers the reason: "[S]eeing that by the principle of its own coming into being it would not be able to endure eternally, he granted them a further gift … making them according to his image … [that] they might be able to abide in blessedness…."[80] Added to this paradisal gift of abiding in blessedness, Athanasius sees the promise of "their incorruptibility in heaven" to be an additional grace that could be refused should mankind become wicked. That is to say, according to Athanasius, it was God's will that humanity abide in incorruption, avoiding the "corruption of death according to nature." Man is created mortal, "But because of his likeness to the One who Is, which, if he had guarded through his comprehension of him, would have blunted his natural corruption, he would have remained incorruptible, just as *Wisdom* says, 'Attention to the laws is the confirmation of incorruptibility' (Wis 6.18)." In other words, man is by nature corruptible and prone to suffering and decomposition. However, had he abided in the right contemplation of the Creator he would have persisted in the grace of incorruption and avoided death. Unfortunately, humankind would succumb to its mortality. Quoting Wisdom again, Athanasius explains, "Because of the Word in them, just as *Wisdom* says, 'God created the human for incorruptibility and an image of his own eternity; but by the envy of the devil death entered the world' (Wis 2.23-4). When this happened, human beings died and corruption henceforth

[79] John Behr, *On the Incarnation* (Yonkers: St. Vladimir's Press, 2011), 50.
[80] Ibid., 52.

prevailed against them."[81] The onset of corruption was the occasion for the incarnation of the Son.

Athanasius's view of corruption, it must be recognized, has a profoundly metaphysical bent. That is to say, the effect of sin on the "rational race" could not be reconciled through humanity's repentance. Although for man's individual salvation repentance is required, once the grace of incorruptibility was lost through the enactment of corruption unto death, only God himself could restore what humanity had lost. According to Athanasius, the Word becoming flesh was the only way for God to act as the good Creator. For a good Creator would not abandon his creation to nonbeing. "[W]ho was needed for such grace and recalling except the God Word who in the beginning made the universe from non-being? For his it was once more to bring the corruptible to incorruptibility and to save the superlative consistency of the Father."[82]

We can see in Athanasius the Pauline emphasis on divine identity. Man's fall into corruption unto death meant the Creator would act as Redeemer, because the Creator who is good can only act mercifully toward his creation. Moreover, Christ's body is integral to that divine identity. The Word becomes the Savior of humankind precisely because he takes on a body capable of death. Athanasius thus explains how the Savior restored the grace of incorruption for humanity. The logical thrust of Athanasius's argument: "Death must precede resurrection." Christ's victory over death required that the Word endure a bodily death.

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[81] Ibid., 54.
[82] Ibid., 56.

> Therefore the body, as it had the common substance of all bodies, was a human body…. Therefore, as I said earlier, the Word, since he was not able to die—for he was immortal—took to himself a body able to die, that he might offer it as his own on behalf of all and as himself suffering for all, through coming into it "he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage" (Heb 2.14-15).
>
> Indeed, with the common Savior of all dying for us, we, the faithful in Christ, no longer die by death as before according to the threat of law, for such condemnation has ceased. But with corruption ceasing and being destroyed by the grace of the resurrection, henceforth according to the mortality of the body we are dissolved only for the time which God has set for each, that we may be able "to attain a better resurrection" (Heb 11.35). For as seeds sown in the ground, we do not perish when we are dissolved, but as sown we shall rise again, death having been destroyed by the grace of the Savior. For this reason, the blessed Paul, who became a guarantor of the resurrection to all, said, "*For the corruptible must put on incorruptibility and the mortal must put on immortality*…."[83]

In other words, Athanasius acknowledges the obvious: humans die. The Savior did not change human nature, which is mortal. But we no longer die fearful of corruption unto death or nonbeing. Rather we can face death in light of the hope of the resurrection and restored incorruptibility. The saint dies but does not perish.

> The Lord was especially concerned for the resurrection of the body that he was to accomplish; for the trophy of the victory over death was this being shown to all and all being persuaded of the removal of corruption effected by him and of the incorruptibility henceforth of [their] bodies, as a pledge of which for all and proof of the resurrection in store for all, he preserved his own body incorruptible.[84]

A cursory reading of Athanasius could lead some to believe he held a view of Christ's incorruptibility similar to Julian's. The language of "preservation" could read as Christ having been incorruptible upon his incarnation. The Word did take on a body capable of death in order to conquer death. But his death was a sacrificial act precisely because it was a concession. That is, Christ suspended his own incorruptibility only in order to enact

[83] Ibid., 71.
[84] Ibid., 73.

the sacrifice that would restore ours. In responding to the question of why Christ had to die by crucifixion, Athanasius explains any other death would have appeared to be a natural human death, caused by a body susceptible to illness. But Athanasius sees a logical contradiction in viewing Christ susceptible to illness if he was the One capable of healing the illness of others.

> For it was neither fitting for the Lord to be ill, he who healed the illnesses of others, nor again for the body to be weakened, in which he strengthened the weaknesses of others. Why, then, did he not prevent death, just as he did illness? Because it was for this that he had the body, and it was unfitting to prevent it, lest the resurrection should also be hindered. Moreover, it was again unfitting for illness to precede death, lest it be thought a weakness of him who was in the body. Did he not then hunger? Yes, he hungered because of the property of the body, but he did not perish of starvation, because of the Lord wearing it. Therefore, if he died for the ransom of all, yet "he saw not corruption" (cf. Acts 2.31;13.35; Ps 15.10). For he rose whole, since the body belonged to Life itself.[85]

It's a difficult passage that at once seems to suggest Athanasius viewed Christ as corruptible and incorruptible prior to the resurrection. But seen from the perspective of the entire work, it becomes clear Athanasius understood Christ's body to be corruptible according to the natural properties of the human body: he hungered. Ultimately, Athanasius is primarily concerned with how Christ's incorruptibility is to be construed in light of the crucifixion. Christ truly suffered and died the death due to sinful human nature. This is how his victory over the consequence of death was accomplished. For Athanasius, Christ's incorruption becomes evident only in the resurrection as a proof of his victory over death and a foretaste of a future incorruption granted those who participate in Christ. Moreover, Christ had to die a public death, i.e., crucifixion, and rise to be witnessed in the resurrected flesh in order to avoid any "pretext for disbelief."

[85] Ibid, 74.

"How then could the end of death, and the victory over it, be demonstrated, unless summoning it in the sight of all he proved it to be dead, being annulled thereafter by the incorruptibility of his body?"[86] Later, at the conclusion of the work, Athanasius will refer to the resurrection and incorruptibility to be bestowed by Christ as "the fruit of his own cross"[87] in his second, glorious manifestation and final day of judgment.[88] Again, for Athanasius incorruption is the restored grace awaiting those who will die and be resurrected in Christ.

It is in the context of the prior two works that the *Vita Antonii* is recognized to illustrate the ascetic ideal, rendering Antony an icon of incorruption. The monk's body shines with the anticipated incorruption, a reflection of a life dedicated to contemplation of the Lord. In Antony, we witness what awaits anyone whose contemplation is restored to its proper order.

> Nearly twenty years he spent in this manner pursuing the ascetic life by himself, not venturing out and only occasionally being seen by anyone. After this, when many possessed the desire and will to emulate his asceticism, and some of his friends came and tore down and forcefully removed the fortress door, Antony came forth as though from some shrine, having been led into divine mysteries and inspired by God. This was the first time he appeared from the fortress for those who came out to see him. And when they beheld him, they were amazed to see that his body had maintained its former condition, neither fat from lack of

[86] Ibid., 74.
[87] Ibid., 109.
[88] This concluding passage shows Athanasius believed in a final day of judgment for all: in light of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive according to what he has done in the body whether good or evil" (2 Cor 5:10). In the context of the passage, the incorruptibility is bestowed upon those who are "the good" destined for the kingdom of heaven.

> exercise, nor emaciated from fasting and combat with demons, but was just as they had known him prior to his withdrawal.[89]

Once again, the body is the visible site for one's conformity to Christ. The visible manifestation does not change the mortal nature of the body, but rather bears witness to the gift of incorruption. In the case of Antony, the visible supernatural state attests to the incorruption awaiting all the faithful in the resurrection.

Cyril of Alexandria (376-444)

As we have already noted, Cyril of Alexandria was the primary theologian referenced by both those who opposed the Council of Chalcedon and those who accepted it. He was also appealed to by both Severus and Julian in their debate on the incorruptibility of Christ's flesh. We have already seen a quotation from Cyril's *Commentary on John* showing Cyril saw Christ's historical, social, and liturgical bodies as basically one and the same. We will return to this aspect of Cyril's thought later. For now, we will focus on his last work, *On the Unity of Christ*, written in his late years as he reflected on the Nestorian controversy. In his debate with Nestorius, Cyril articulated the unitive principle that would become central to both the Chalcedonians and anti-Chalcedonians.

Against the Nestorians, any suggestion of "association" should be replaced with "union" to ensure the unique status of the incarnation. It was this unitive principle that supplied the logic of his defense of the Theotokos against Nestorius's insistence that Mary be called the Mother of Christ. By calling Mary the Theotokos/Mother of God,

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[89] *Athanasius: The Life of Antony and The Letter to Marcellinius*, trans. Robert C. Gregg, (New York: Paulist Press, 1980).

Cyril was insisting on a Christological point: the incarnation of the Word means not only that the divine and human are united in Christ, but also, consequently, a new linguistic of interchangeability is required to preserve the mystery of the incarnation in the order of knowing.[90] What can be said of Jesus Christ can and must be said of the Word. The unitive principle extends to how we speak about the mystery of the incarnate Word who is at once fully God and fully man.

> B. So even if he is said to have been wearied by the journey (Jn 4:6), to have hungered (Mt 4:2), and to have fallen asleep (Mt 8:24), would it be proper, tell me, to attribute these things which are petty and demeaning to God the Word?
>
> A. Such things would not be at all fitting to the Word, if we considered him nakedly, as it were, not yet made flesh, or before he had descended into the self-emptying. Your thoughts are right on this. But once he is made man and emptied out, what harm can this inflict on him? Just as we say that the flesh became his very own, in the same way the weakness of that flesh became his very own in an economic appropriation according to the *terms of unification*. So he is "made like his brethren in all things except sin alone" (Heb 2:17). Do not be astonished if we say that he has made the weakness of the flesh his own along with the flesh itself.[91]

Again, the theological context of Cyril's dialogue is the Nestorian controversy. The two interlocutors discuss, at times in a circuitous fashion, Nestorian assertions in order for them to be deconstructed and set aright by a proper unitive Christology. The "two Sons" Christology of the Nestorians meant for Cyril that one would always be tempted to attribute some things to Christ's divine nature and other things to his human nature. The result being a constant division of Christ's two natures betraying a rejection

[90] Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 64.
[91] Ibid., 107.

of the unicity of Christ as the incarnate Word, at all times fully God and fully human. It is to unravel the mystery.

> B. Do you mean it would be foolish and in complete disagreement with the sacred scriptures to think or to say that the assumed man used these human expressions as one who was abandoned by the Word who had been conjoined to him?
>
> A. My friend, this would be blasphemy, and a proof of complete madness, but doubtless it would evidently suit those who do not know how to conceive of the matter properly. They split up and completely divide his words and acts, attributing some things as proper solely to the Only Begotten, and others to a son who is different to him and born of a woman. In this way they have missed the straight and unerring way of knowing the mystery of Christ clearly.[92]

One does not get far into the work before coming across the same questions and themes we've previously encountered in Irenaeus and Athanasius when working out the implications of Cyril's Christology for considering Christ's flesh. How should we understand, it is asked, that "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14) when scripture also states Christ "became sin" (2 Cor 5:21)? Apparently the Nestorians maintained that the Word becoming flesh should be taken to mean something *similar* to his becoming sin, that is, not literally. Cyril's response: Christ "became sin" in order to conquer/"suppress" sin. Christ took on flesh in order to glorify it. This was the purpose of the incarnation.

> A. Moreover it is foolish to think or to affirm that the Word became flesh in just the same way as he became curse and sin.
> …
>
> A. Did he not become accursed in order to lift the curse? And did not the Father make him sin in order that he might bring sin to an end?
> …
>
> A. In that case, if it is true that the Word became flesh in exactly the same way that he became curse and sin, which is how they understand it, then surely he

[92] Ibid., 106.

> must have become flesh for the suppression of flesh? But how would this serve to exhibit the incorruptibility and imperishability of the flesh which he achieved, first of all in his own body? For he did not allow it to remain mortal and subject to corruption, those allowing the penalty of Adam's transgression to continue to pass on to us, but since it was his own and personal flesh, that of the incorruptible God, he set it beyond death and corruption.[93]

As Cyril expounds the orthodox position on Christ's flesh, he exemplifies what both McGlothlin and MacRae note as a Pauline shift to view the flesh as the site for salvation, contrary to those who want to oppose the spirit and flesh in a strict dualism. Cyril's unitive principle simply won't allow for any such dualism. The sole purpose of the incarnation is to conquer sin for the glorification of the body conformed to Christ. This glorification is our redemption enacted in Christ's condescension. Stated succinctly: the Word took on flesh not to suppress or condemn it but to glorify it.

> He remained Lord of all things even when he came, for the economy, in the form of a slave, and this is why the mystery of Christ is truly wonderful. For God was in humanity. He who was above all creation was in our human condition; the invisible one was made visible in the flesh; he who is from the heavens and on high was in the likeness of earthly things; the immaterial one could be touched; he who is free in his own nature came in the form of a slave; he who blesses all creation became accursed; he who is all righteousness was numbered among the transgressors; life itself came in the appearance of death. All this followed because the body which tasted death belonged to no other but to him who is the Son by nature.
>
> We are earthly beings insofar as the curse of corruption has passed from the earthly Adam even to us, and through our corruption the law of sin entered in the members of our flesh. Yet we became heavenly beings, receiving this gift in Christ. He is from God, from on high, and naturally God, yet he came down to our condition in a strange and most unusual manner, and was born of the Spirit, according to the flesh, so that we too might abide in holiness and incorruptibility like him. Clearly grace came upon us from him, as from a new rootstock, a new beginning.[94]

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[93] Ibid., 56-57.
[94] Ibid., 61, 64.

As we have seen in the debate between Severus and Julian, both affirm Christ's incorruption and the role of the divine will in the Word's condescension. And both appeal to the fathers in support of their positions on the incorruptibility of Christ's flesh. One way of articulating the locus of their diverging views is not only in their differing definitions of corruption but also the moment in which the Word enacted his kenosis. Or rather, it is in how each views salvation in light of the Word's kenosis. For Julian, who insists on the incorruptibility of Christ's flesh from the beginning of the incarnation, it is as though the kenosis does not occur until Christ momentarily relinquishes his incorruptibility on the cross. On the cross Christ truly does suffer and die, but it would be unbecoming of the Word to submit to suffering prior to this point. Again, because Julian indexes incorruption with moral perfection this must be the case. For Christ was like us in all ways except for sin. Therefore, as the exemplar of moral perfection, Christ must have been incorruptible since infancy. In short, Julian separates the incarnation from Christ's passion. For Severus, as for the fathers we've just briefly surveyed, Christ's kenosis *is* the Word's incarnation, itself a salvific act that culminates in the cross and resurrection. To insist on anything less is to undermine the mystery of the incarnation. Julian's view is but another expression of a heretical Christology that separates Christ's two natures in an attempt to preserve a divine identity that would be marred by any true relation to what is not naturally divine, that is, humanity. Yet the mystery of the incarnation is precisely this: in taking on the likeness of mortality the eternal Word enacts our salvation.

> So it is written: "If we become one being with him in the likeness of his death, so shall we be of his resurrection" (Rom. 6:5). The Word was alive even when his holy flesh was tasting death, so that when death was beaten and corruption trodden underfoot the power of the resurrection might come upon the whole

> human race. It is a fact that "just as in Adam all men die, so all men shall be made alive in Christ" (1 Cor. 15:22). How else should we say that the mystery of the economy of the Only Begotten in the flesh brought help to the nature of man, except that he who is above all creation brought himself down into a self-emptying and lowered himself in our condition? How else could it be except that the body which lay under corruption became a body of life so as to become beyond death and corruption?[95]

Economics of Salvation

The quotation above from Cyril points to an aspect of the debate between Severus and Julian, which we briefly touched on at the opening of this chapter. To contend as Julian does that Christ was incorruptible prior to the resurrection is to misunderstand a central feature of the grammar of incorruption: the economy. Throughout the writings of Irenaeus, Athanasius, and Cyril the incarnation of the Word occurs for the sake of the economy: it is an "economic appropriation." It is for this reason Moss identifies a correlative relationship between the debate on Christ's flesh and Christ's social and liturgical bodies. How we understand the incarnation has direct implications for how we view the Church as the social body of Christ and the site for receiving his liturgical body in the Eucharist. In his *Introduction* to Athanasius's "On the Incarnation," John Behr writes:

> As we can only speak of what the Word has done in the body—conquering death and bestowing knowledge of the Father—in the light of the passion, we cannot separate the body that he has taken from the body in which he effects such works in believers in the present. The scope of what Athanasius means by "incarnation" is thus far broader than is often assumed and, moreover, it has a scope not limited to the past. The body fashioned in the virgin, in which the Word dwells, as is seen in the light of his passion, cannot be separated from the body of Christ, that is, those who by faith in the cross are no longer subject to the corruption of death….

[95] Ibid., 115.

> To separate the "incarnation" from the passion … would be to locate the "incarnation" solely as an event in the past, now further removed than ever, rather than as the transforming work of God, as Athanasius sees it, at work in those who are now his body. [96]

Continuity is key and it is precisely this continuity that forms the economy of salvation, the communion of incorruption, and the theological hermeneutic that forms the basis of orthodox faith and practice. Therefore, we can see why Severus so vehemently opposed Julian's view on Christ's incorruption as his Christology led to a deeply problematic view of the Church, and, importantly, it eventually and logically diverges from a Pauline soteriology that emphasizes the body as the site for salvation—first in Christ's resurrected flesh and consequently in the resurrected flesh of the saints.

Their differing views of the Church could not avoid political expression. Julian endorsed and called for a formal separation from the imperial church, which had adopted the heretical Chalcedonian definition. Although Severus remained staunchly anti-Chalcedonian, he opposed Julian's call for a separatist church.[97] Moss shows how Severus, using the Pauline imagery of the Church as the body of Christ, spoke in terms of sickness and healing when addressing the problem of heresy; having assented to the Chalcedonian definition, the imperial Church has sanctioned infection, which now must be treated from within in order to be removed and the body restored to health. Julian, by

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[96] *On the Incarnation*, 36.

[97] Moss offers a detailed reading of scholarly debates about Severus's ecumenism and posits his own view as an alternative to the two prevailing views: "I would like to argue that at least from the time of his appointment as patriarch, Severus was and remained a staunch supporter of imperial ecclesiology. Although he never veered from his harsh antagonism to Chalcedonian theology, this did not translate into a separatist ecclesiology. On the contrary, through the persecution and exile of the last twenty years of his life, Severus retained his ecumenism even in the face of popular currents that consistently advocated secession from the imperial church," *Incorruptible Bodies*, 45.

contrast, insisted on amputation—a course of treatment Severus saw to be naïve at best. Just as he argued Christ's flesh was, because human, corruptible and susceptible to illness prior to the resurrection, Severus understood "the church could be thought of as suffering a degree of sickness, corruption, even as it remained the body of Christ. Treatment of such a sickness was not a matter of cutting off limbs from the body, but maintaining its integrity by curing it as a whole."[98] Preserving the unity of the body of Christ was, for Severus, paramount.[99] Whereas for Julian it was preserving the body's "purity." Their diverging views are but an expression of their differing ecclesiologies, which again are correlative to their different views on Christ's flesh.

As the anti-Chalcedonians moved closer to separation from the imperial church, the tension between prioritizing unity vs. purity increasingly came to characterize the opposing parties. Moss shows how this manifested concretely in debates concerning how to receive repentant Chalcedonian heretics. This was not a new dilemma, for the Church had been dealing with such questions since the third century. By the time Severus was engaged in the debate in his own context there was precedent for both sides: Cyprian of Carthage had endorsed rebaptism of heretics and his view became widespread in the East, whereas the more lenient view, identified as the "Roman" view, rejected rebaptism and

[98] Ibid., 48.

[99] Ibid., 58. Moss shows how Severus's insistence on preserving the unity of the church entailed an unwaivering loyalty to the imperial Church, as would have been typical for Byzantine political theology. But this was not merely a political stance, rather it was theological insofar as Severus understood the Church hierarchy itself to be ordained and essential to the health of the body. The alternative, as Moss shows, was a displacement of hierarchy with "fantastical" sources that diverged from tradition, another form of revelation that ensured and expressed the unicity of the body.

became the more dominant view in the West ever since the Donatist controversy.[100] Severus argued against rebaptism, reordination, and rechrismation of Chalcedonian heretics seeking communion with the anti-Chalcedonian party. In this sense, Severus was breaking tradition with the dominant view in the East, siding instead with the West's emphasis on unity over purity. Therefore, in order to make his case Severus had to argue for canonical leniency via historical contingency, which he did scripturally by appealing to the Apostle's similar use of Jewish law. Just as we see in Paul varying positions on circumcision, we can make determinations based on circumstantial particularity without this being an inconsistency.[101]

Whereas there is no evidence that Julian was directly involved in the debates over receiving Chalcedonian converts, we can see how the separatist party espoused the same logic Severus opposed in Julian's Christology, and in particular his stance on the incorruptibility of Christ's flesh. Severus's debate with the separatist Theodotus who favored rechrismation shows it too centered on Christ's flesh:

> Severus attributes to Theodotus the notion that it was the Logos alone that took upon itself the passion on the cross…. Just as Theodotus refused to allow the entrance of any corrupt members into the social body of Christ before they were re-marked by the ritual act of chrismation as incorrupt members, so Theodotus refused to acknowledge the presence of any element of corruption within his theological conception of the physical body of Christ.[102]

For Severus, the unity of Christ's social body, even if it entails communion with a heretical imperial head, must stay intact in order to properly reflect Christ's humanity: to

[100] Ibid., 65-66. This is a rather complex history and Moss offers more historical detail to show the varied range of opinions regarding rebaptism, reordination, and rechrismation, the latter becoming the preferred option for certain heretics.
[101] Ibid., 70-71.
[102] Ibid., 73-74.

insist on purity over unity means to deny Christ's consubstantiality with human nature. Ultimately, Severus saw clearly that the consequence of Julian's heretical Christology, which denies Christ's full humanity, is an equally dire ecclesiology that mistakes doctrinal purity as the unitive principle, when in fact it is Christ's own unicity. This leads us to briefly trace the debate's liturgical aspect as Severus and Julian similarly held differing views of the nature and efficacy of the Eucharist.

We can only deduce from Severus's writings what Julian's eucharistic theology was. But given that Severus felt the need to defend his own eucharistic theology and the lengths he goes to do so gives us substantial reason to extend Julian's Christology to its logical conclusion when applied to the Blessed Sacrament. We may recall Julian's protology wherein he contends the first humans were made incorruptible and only lost their incorruption as a result of the first sin. For this reason he indexes corruption to moral failing. Christ's incorruption (at conception) is an image of humanity's restoration as he was like us in every way except sin. Therefore, the Eucharist, for Julian, actualizes a real and present corporeal transformation of the body in those who receive it and remain pure—just as Christ was. This is consistent with his view of the Church as the social and pure body, which must remove any impurities in order to remain incorrupt here and now. By contrast, Severus, in keeping with his Christology, viewed the Eucharist according to Christ's post-resurrection incorruption and therefore as both a promise and a foretaste of the future. In this sense, Severus was in keeping with the Pauline "already" and "not yet" soteriology discussed previously in this chapter. To receive Christ's incorrupt flesh in the Eucharist did not mean an ontological

transformation of our (corrupt) human nature now, but those who remain in communion by receiving the Eucharist now could be assured of their own future incorruption in the resurrection. Summarizing Severus's eucharistic theology as found in *Against Felicissimus*, Moss explains:

> Commemoration of the incarnation could not have provided these gifts, because, in Severus's view, Jesus's body did not itself become immortal and impassible until after its death and resurrection. Yet it was the pre-resurrection Jesus who established the Eucharistic commemoration of his death and resurrection, in anticipation of their future occurrence. Severus interprets this proleptic design of the Eucharistic institution as replicated also in its liturgical observance. Just as Christ commemorated the immortality and impassibility of his own body before those conditions actually were manifested in it, so does the Eucharistic celebration in the churches grant a gift of future immortality and impassibility to the communicants, rather than rendering their bodies immediately immortal and impassible.[103]

In this sense, Moss points out, Severus understands the present communion to be spiritual—but that does not mean unreal. The transformation is a real, spiritual one that begins now and manifests bodily through believers' obedience/conformity to Christ, as discussed previously, through holiness. What Moss describes as the spiritual aspect of Severus's eucharistic theology is expressive of how Severus understood the pneumatological nature of the economy. It is, at all times, Christ who unifies and acts through his body according to the Spirit. Just as our present holiness and future promise of incorruption is graced and not our own doing, just as the bread and wine become the body and blood as transformed by the Spirit, so is the unicity of Christ's body, the Church, maintained by the Spirit and not something we achieve through doctrinal, clerical, moral, or any other kind of purity. This is how he can insist on remaining unified

[103] Ibid., 81.

with a heretical imperial head, and why he argues against rebaptism of converts: "It is not the man who offers the sacrifice, but Christ completes it through the words uttered by the offerer and changes the bread into flesh, and cup into blood, by the power, inspiration and grace of the Holy Spirit."[104] At all times, it is Christ who gives himself and through his Spirit gathers individual believers into himself, transferring his own unicity through their unity. "The point of communion is social unity. Just as the physical body of Christ is one, so must his social body, the church, be one. Thus, abstinence from communion with a priest out of concern for his moral purity defeats the purpose of communion in the first place."[105] This is the communion of incorruption—the communion brought about and sustained by the Incorruptible Son.

We can see in the growing tension between those who would insist on purity over unity a fundamental disagreement about the relationship between spirit and matter. Moss shows how this disagreement was expressed when Severus wrote in response to Julian's *Apology* concerning the role Christ's own body played in the miracles he performed. Not surprisingly, Julian saw Christ's miracles as evidence of his bodily incorruption prior to the resurrection. Just as he saw the Eucharist transferring incorruption to the bodies of believers, so he held that miracles occurred by a literal, corporeal transference of incorruption. By contrast, Severus insisted Christ's miracles were spiritual in nature while being enacted upon material matter/bodies. The Holy Spirit does not change the nature of the matter upon which it acts. This is an important point for a number of reasons. First, it allows Severus to affirm the apostles' miracles as authentic because

[104] Moss quoting Severus, 87.
[105] Ibid., Moss's own summary of Severus's position.

enacted by the Spirit—not derived from some supernatural status they, the apostles, had obtained. They were facilitators, just as the priests are facilitators in the liturgical institution of the Eucharist. Moreover, Severus's rejection of Julian's insistence that the miracles indicate some ontological change in the receiving subject/object is expressive of an economic principle that was operative since nearly the beginning of the Church but would later require further clarification in what has been termed the "iconoclast controversies" of the eighth and ninth centuries. This economic principle accounts for the role Saint Euphemia played in Chalcedon, and the role saints and their relics had played in the Church for centuries prior to her intervention.

In the following chapter we will see how the economic implications of the previous Christological debates discussed in the current chapter become highlighted in the iconoclast controversies of the eighth and ninth centuries. Many of the same arguments as discussed in this chapter will be made, showing that for Christians the body and the image are inextricably linked. In the creation and veneration of holy images, the Church was challenged once again to articulate the difference the incarnation of the Word makes for the worshipping community centered on his incorruptible flesh.

Chapter 2

Iconomy

> Advancing further along in the representation, some executioners scantily clad in short garments had already begun their work. One of them laying hold of her head and leaning it back holds it in readiness for the other who is prepared to punish the virgin's face; the one standing beside her knocked out all her teeth. The tools of this punishment appear to be a hammer and a borer. From this point, I weep and the suffering cut short my discourse. For the painter had smeared drops of blood so manifestly that it seemed to pour truly from the lips and you would depart singing a dirge.[1]

The above quotation is an excerpt from the fourth-century ekphrasis describing a painting of Euphemia's martyrdom. Originally part of a sermon by Asterius, bishop of Amasea, this is one among many such examples read aloud during the proceedings of the seventh ecumenical council. The council was first convened on August 1, 786, at the behest of Emperor Constantine and his mother, Empress Irene. The primary concern to be addressed by the council was the heretical threat of iconoclasm. Thus the council became the first to decree the orthodox position on the holy images.[2]

> To summarize, we declare that we defend free from any innovations all the written and unwritten ecclesiastical traditions that have been entrusted to us. One

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[1] Elizabeth A. Castelli, "Asterius of Amasea: *Ekphrasis on the Holy Martyr Euphemia*," Intro. and trans. from Greek, in *Religions of Late Antiquity in Practice*, Princeton Readings in Religion, ed. Richard Valantasis, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 464-8.

[2] The issue of depictions of Christ had been previously addressed at the Quinisext Synod/Council of Trullo of 691-692. But this was not about the orthodox status of icons themselves. Rather it was about specific renderings of Christ as a lamb. The council declared that Christ should henceforth be depicted in human form. The implicit acceptance of such "reformed" images would subsequently be used to argue in favor of the longstanding tradition of Christian iconography. That is, it was taken as proof that the making and venerating of holy images was not a recent innovation.

> of these is the production of representational art; this is quite in harmony with the history of the spread of the gospel, as it provides confirmation that the becoming man of the Word of God was real and not just imaginary, and as it brings us a similar benefit. For, things that mutually illustrate one another undoubtedly possess one another's message. Given this state of affairs and stepping out as though on the royal highway, following as we are the God-spoken teaching of our holy fathers and the tradition of the catholic church—for we recognize that this tradition comes from the holy Spirit who dwells in her—we decree with full precision and care that, like the figure of the honoured and life-giving cross, the revered and holy images, whether painted or made of mosaic or of other suitable material, are to be exposed in the holy churches of God, on sacred instruments and vestments, on walls and panels, in houses and by public ways, these are the images of our Lord, God and saviour, Jesus Christ, and of our Lady without blemish, the holy God-bearer, and of the revered angels and of any of the saintly holy men. The more frequently they are seen in representational art, the more are those who see them drawn to remember and long for those who serve as models, and to pay these images the tribute of salutation and respectful veneration. Certainly this is not the full adoration [latria] in accordance with our faith, which is properly paid only to the divine nature, but it resembles that given to the figure of the honoured and life-giving cross, and also to the holy books of the gospels and to other sacred cult objects. Further, people are drawn to honour these images with the offering of incense and lights, as was piously established by ancient custom. Indeed, the honour paid to an image traverses it, reaching the model, and he who venerates the image, venerates the person represented in that image.[3]

A close reading of the council's definition, along with its acts and canons, reveals something essential about the Church's stance on the holy images; that is, the Church's defense of the holy images was never merely about images per se. Rather the Church defended the cult of images because the practice of making and venerating the holy images was a fitting and even necessary expression of Christian dogma concerning the incarnation and its implications for the divine economy. In his remarks commemorating the twelfth hundredth anniversary of Nicaea II, Nicholas Lossky reminds us:

> The Second Synod of Nicaea deals with the veneration of images. There is no doubt about that. Yet, this is far from being the whole story. However important the veneration of images may be (and it

[3] https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/ecum07.htm

> is; images are placed on a level with the preaching of the Gospel, as we have seen), the images are only the visible part of the iceberg as it were. The less visible part is that images are important because they point to the reality of the consequences for the salvation of humanity of the Incarnation of Christ. Second Nicaea is primarily, above all, a christological synod.[4]

It is because of its Christological implications that iconoclast theology could be deemed heretical. The matter was not simply one of pietistic preference. As we can see in the Christological debates traced in the previous chapter, the incarnation of the Son has direct ecclesiological implications as the incarnation occurred as an economic appropriation. Again, in his very brief essay of commemoration, Lossky articulates the correlation between Christ's body and its importance for a proper understanding of the Church—including all materiality that, through Christ's gift of salvation, must be seen as the means by which we participate in the salvation already achieved.

> Now, this statement, this confession of the Synod, is not a "restrictive" statement meaning that it is licit, merely "permissable" for Christians to decorate their places of worship with images of Christ, his Mother, the angels, the saints. The implications are much broader and much deeper. Broader, as has been stated earlier, in the sense that it concerns not only pictorial representation but all forms of sacred art. Deeper, in the sense that this "possibility" to represent the person of Christ in his bodily shape in which "the fullness of the Godhead dwelleth," indicates quite clearly that all material reality is concerned: it is a proclamation (in visual form) of the destiny offered to man, i.e., deification; and at the same time, it is a proclamation to the effect that if man is deified in Christ, all creation is transfigured in him.[5]

The Church is concerned with incarnation. The incarnation is concerned with transfiguration. Transfiguration is fitting to the nature of that which is transfigured. In the

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[4] Nicholas V. Lossky, "The Significance of Second Nicaea," *Greek Orthodox-Theological Review*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 1987, 339-340.
[5] Ibid., 338.

previous chapter we saw how some theologians strained to work out how to properly understand how this applies to the human creature; the awaited transfiguration is the gift of bodily incorruption, i.e., deification. For the rest of creation, it is a similar restoration of grace. To denounce Christ as the incarnate Son one thus denounces the entire economy of salvation. And, conversely, to denounce the redemption of creation—to strictly oppose matter to spirit—is to denounce the Son's incarnation and the salvation wrought through his divine condescension. In Jesus Christ, the image and the body are inextricably linked and, consequently, so are creation and redemption. Christ's ascended body becomes the ontological bridge between spirit and matter, soul and body, life and death, those living and those awaiting resurrection. In other words, the entire economy of salvation correlates to Christ's resurrected flesh. Therefore, again, the debate over a proper theology of images touches on the very heart of Christian faith. The high stakes of the debate over the legitimacy of icons are clearly evident in the council's concluding anathemas:

1. If anyone does not confess that Christ our God can be represented in his humanity, let him be anathema.
2. If anyone does not accept representation in art of evangelical scenes, let him be anathema.
3. If anyone does not salute such representations as standing for the Lord and his saints, let him be anathema.
4. If anyone rejects any written or unwritten tradition of the church, let him be anathema.[6]

Just as the debate between Severus and Julian on the incorruptibility of Christ's flesh had implications for how each viewed the nature of the Church, so also the debate between

[6] https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/ecum07.htm

the iconodules and iconoclasts reveals a competing ecclesiology as each position stems from differing views of the paradox of the incarnation. The logic of the iconoclasts would ultimately lead to a rejection of what had become the central feature of Christian hope as discussed in the previous chapter. That is, iconoclasm is ultimately a rejection of the body and the bodily nature of salvation. By consequence, its logic leads to a rejection of the ontological nature of the Church as the body of Christ. The final chapter will show how this assessment has been historically rendered true in the most stark and devastating form of iconoclasm: schism. It is in this sense that a theology of iconoclasm reveals itself as heretical.

A great deal has been written about the political context of the debates concerning the proper status of icons in Christian worship and devotion in the eighth and ninth centuries. I will not be revisiting these discussions as my aim in this chapter is to focus on the theological rationale of orthodox iconodulia as it pertains to orthodox ecclesiology. That is, put simply, I am interested in the theological economics of Christian iconodulia. However, it is important to acknowledge the broader theological and Church historical context as the debates between the iconodules and iconoclasts required once again a clear articulation of not only orthodox Christology but also Trinitarian theology.

John Damascene is the principal theologian appealed to in the subsequent orthodox defense of the practice of making and venerating holy images. One of his major contributions to the debate was the distinction of *latria*—adoration due only to the Lord—and *dulia*—veneration of sacred persons, places, and objects. Despite being geographically removed from the debates, Damascene saw the high stakes of the debates

and was well-equipped to address them and defend the practice of icon veneration from the standpoint of his in-depth knowledge of the preceding centuries' debates concerning the Trinity and the incarnation of the Word.

In his treatment of Damascene's life and work, Andrew Louth emphasizes Damascene's use of the Chalcedonian definition when writing his Trinitarian theology in the seminal work, *On the Orthodox Faith*. John begins with a discussion of the incomprehensibility of God, which stems from the paradox of God's oneness in three persons—a mystery that renders human knowledge and language about God always approximate and inadequate to the task of describing its subject. What we can know about God, we can only know by revelation and, therefore, by mediation—particularly that of scripture and tradition. Here the distinction (and relation) between *theologia* and *oikonomia* becomes crucial and instructive. But, as we shall see, equally important for the development of Damascene's defense of the holy images is how this distinction (*theologia* and *oikonomia*) relates to the distinction between *created* and *uncreated*. Importantly, Louth notes we may be tempted to reason by analogy according to the theological distinction of *ousia* and *hypostasis*, drawing on *hypostasis* to develop a notion of human personhood and communion as it applies, analogously, to the Trinity. But Louth cautions against reading this into Damascene's logic:

> Even though he adopts a uniform "Chalcedonian logic," applying it equally to *theologia* and *oikonomia*, the reality to which this logic is applied is not uniform; it does not even have any kind of analogical continuity. In fact, it is improper to think of reality as divided into uncreated and created reality, for there is no common reality to be thus divided. Uncreated reality is utterly unlike created reality. We use the same terms, *hypostasis*, *ousia*, etc., of both God and created being, but the reality they map on to is quite different: one uncreated and utterly simple, so that the divine Persons are coinherent one in another, the other created,

> occupying space and time, which entails genuine separation, and prevents any genuine coinherence. The distinction between *theologia* and *oikonomia* is reasserted; the application of Chalcedonian logic to both is not allowed to encroach on the ultimate ineffability and incomprehensibility of the divine.[7]

What the above quotation reaffirms is that the mystery of the incarnate Word must determine how we attempt to understand the economy that is ordered according to the divine mystery.[8] The order of divine being determines the order of knowing, and not the other way around. This is what it means to say that we can only know God via revelation. The terms are set by the mystery—not by our own rational capacities. This is not to disparage the human capacity to know rationally. Rather it is to emphasize what we encountered in the previous chapter, that is, when speaking of knowledge of the divine we are necessarily speaking of a relational knowledge. What it means to "know" God is not analogous to what it means to know mathematics or to know I am currently hungry—or sitting in a chair. It is not even to acknowledge an insurmountable chasm between knowledge of the Creator and of the created. There is no chasm. Therefore, there is no epistemological ladder by which I may ascend high enough or far enough to reach God,

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[7] Andrew Louth, *St. John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 114. Louth's cautionary note concerning the difficulty of analogical reasoning when applying terms such as *hypostasis* and *ousia* to both the Creator and created, I take to be driven by a concern about equivocity. This is why he rejects "any kind of analogical continuity." By connecting John Damascene's theology to that of Pseudo-Dionysius and Maximus, I am attempting to support Louth's reading of Damascene even while I recognize it leaves many questions open. For instance, this same concern is expressed in Damascene's taxonomy of images as the Son is the only "undeviating" image—utterly unique—yet capable of funding a grammar whereby we understand the relational economy (prototype and image) inherent to all other images.

[8] This acknowledgement does not preclude the relation of the Lord to Israel, who also knows him via revelation. Rather it is a statement about how Christian theologians must reason according to the mystery of the incarnate Word, the Incorruptible Son of the Father who is revealed through the Spirit.

so to speak. Moreover, to assume such a ladder indicates a breakdown in one's theology as Christian theology relies on the Creator/creature distinction. Idolatry is the insistence on there being a ladder—even if the assumed ladder is used to reject claims of there being a ladder.

The tension rendered Christologically was, as we saw in the previous chapter, a matter of how to understand the unicity of Christ, at once fully divine and fully human. How to understand a paradox where the terms logically appear self-canceling? In attempting to protect Christ's divinity, the heretics would eventually fall back on some form of logic of composites that did away with the mystery altogether. This is none other than to impose a ladder—to reason against rather than according to the divine mystery of God-made-man. One does not reason her way to a paradox; rather one encounters the paradox and may subsequently reason according to it or reject it. This is not an anti-rational stance. Quite the contrary, it is reasoning according to a reality that is not our own—but that has been given via revelation. We come to know it only through reception and participation. This, again, is consistent with the correlation described in the previous chapter when we observed that for the Apostle, to know God is to conform to him via discipleship—suffering and, when necessary, martyrdom. The saints know God. Therefore, just as insisting on an epistemological ladder reveals a form of idolatry, so too does denying that we might know with some certainty something of the divine paradox. The nature of divine mystery, that is, of the incarnation, means that proof of knowledge can only come about through exemplification.

For this reason, because the nature of our knowledge of God is responsive and participatory, it is my contention that John Damascene's theological defense of the holy images is underappreciated and potentially completely misunderstood if the economic aspect is not recognized as the logical outgrowth of his theology, properly speaking, and, therefore, equally important to the theological defense. Stated succinctly, John was not just defending the holy images or even the incarnation: he was—perhaps above all—defending the unicity of the Church as the body of Christ. And he expressed this not only in his explicit defense of the holy images but also in his explicit defense of the practice of holy veneration. Essential to understanding the distinction he makes between *latria* and *dulia* is how these two relate necessarily to each other. *Latria* requires *dulia*. It is an orthopraxy of participation. To have *dulia* without *latria* is idolatry. But to have *latria* without *dulia* is to not have *latria*, and, therefore, it is also idolatry.

In order to make this argument, I will briefly trace the two most influential precursors to John's thought in light of their own defense of the economic/liturgical body of Christ. First, I will briefly attend to Pseudo-Dionysius and in particular his *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. And second, I will treat Maximus the Confessor and his *Mystagogy of the Church*. I will conclude with a gloss of John Damascene's often overlooked treatment at the end of his third oration in *Defense of the Holy Images*, wherein he describes not only the kinds of images but, just as important, the kinds of veneration common to humankind.

Pseudo-Dionysius

In 1928 Joseph Stiglmayr argued that the author of the Dionysian corpus was in fact Severus of Antioch. In his essay tracing the eventual reception of Pseudo-Dionysius in the West, Jaroslav Pelikan summarizes Stiglmayr's rationale, "Severus was the only Christian writer in approximately the time and place of these works whose genius was equal to that of the great unknown author and whose Neoplatonic-Christian spirituality closely paralleled that of the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus."[9] Stiglmayr's thesis was eventually debunked, followed by decades of ongoing attempts to identify the unknown author, but Pelikan still affirms, "[It] is far more the Monophysite and Severian Syriac literature of devotion and theology that we find resonating to the distinctive tones of Dionysian spirituality."[10] In fact, it was Severus's use of Dionysius that led to Dionysius first being challenged as inauthentic and unorthodox by Hypatius of Ephesus in 532. We know from the writings of John of Scythopolis, the first orthodox defender of Dionysius, that Dionysius continued to face accusations of unorthodox theology, particularly in relation to the person of Jesus Christ and the Trinity. Pelikan shows how his orthodox glosses exhibit the great pains he went to in order to show that Dionysius was clearly in line with Niceaen and Chalcedonian teaching. This orthodox-ing of Dionysius would later be taken up by Maximus the Confessor who is most often credited with bringing the mysterious author solidly into the fold of orthodoxy. But already in the hands of John

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[9] Jaroslav Pelikan, "The Odyssey of Dionysian Spirituality," *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 13. I will use Pelikan as my main secondary interlocutor throughout this chapter not because he is representative of current research on these writings, but rather for an informal continuity that avoids becoming sidetracked by secondary issues not immediately pertinent to my treatment here.
[10] Ibid., 15.

Scythopolis, Pelikan observes, "Dionysius the Areopagite emerges as one whose spirituality was exactly the same as that of the Council of Chalcedon and who, in fact, anticipated the key formulations of Chalcedonian spirituality by four centuries or so."[11]

The connection between Dionysius and Monophysite theology is important but requires a note of caution when generalizing about the Monophysite parties, which were by no means uniform. To deem Dionysius "Severian"' may be more accurate and helpful as Severus held views that put him in tension with others in the Monophysite parties. In his introduction to *Christology After Chalcedon: Severus of Antioch and Sergius the Monophysite*, Iain Torrance sympathetically takes up more recent assertions that Severus is not rightly considered a Monophysite. Those, including Torrance, who are sympathetic to lifting the mark of "unorthodox" from the great bishop do so by showing he never denied the "dynamic continuance" of the two natures in Christ. Indeed we saw from our brief survey of his debate with Julian that he was willing to hold extreme opposition to those Monophysites whom he thought were doing just that: that is, in one way or another denying the mystery of the two natures. Torrance, in agreement with those who have more recently defended Severus, shows that "behind Severus' (and Cyril's) insistence on preserving the integrity of the humanity and the divinity, is the fundamental soteriological insight that it is only God who can save, and that it is man who is saved, and that salvation for all men is achieved in the person of Jesus Christ."[12] That is to say, Severus clearly taught the necessity of preserving the mystery of Christ's two natures

[11] Ibid., 17.
[12] Iain Torrance, *Christology After Chalcedon: Severus of Antioch and Sergius the Monophysite* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1998), 76.

because it was a soteriological point. Torrance offers this succinct summary of Severus's soteriology:

> To insist that in the union God the Word remains who he is, and that the humanity assumed is not done away with is to rule out any understanding of the union by mixture or confusion. Should the elements be mixed or confused, they would no longer be intact, so it could no longer be truly God who saves, nor truly man who is saved.[13]

Any mixture or confusion implies a lack of unicity—by which both natures are preserved—for both Cyril and Severus, and, therefore, posits an inadequate soteriology. Recall, it was his soteriology that drove Severus to denounce Julian's insistence that Christ's flesh was incorruptible—because divine—from conception.

In light of this emphasis on the unicity of Christ, one can see why Dionysius was charged with having a Severian theology, although it could just as easily—and perhaps more accurately—be said that Severus had a Dionysian theology/spirituality. Pelikan points to a particular passage in Dionysius to highlight the resonance: "It was not by virtue of being God that he did divine things, not by virtue of being a man that he did what was human, but rather, by the fact of being God-made-man he accomplished something new in our midst—the activity of the God-man."[14] For our purposes, the question that we bring to Pseudo-Dionysius is: how is divine unicity expressed in the hierarchy, and more specifically *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*?

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Quoting Pelikan quoting Dionysius, *Epistle 4*. Pelikan notes that in the history of reception Dionysius somehow avoids any longstanding charges of Monophysitism. That this is the case, given his heavy reliance on Cyril and Dionysius, it is curious that Severus has not also been read more charitably, unless one accounts for the charge solely based on his explicit rejection of Chalcedon.

In what follows, I will show that the unicity of the ecclesiastical hierarchy is viewed by Dionysius to be of divine origin and, therefore, it is to be preserved in every instance. This view runs counter to Pelikan's reading of Dionysius as "puritanical" when it comes to the sacramental character of the Church.[15] Therefore I will have to show not only how the ecclesiastical hierarchy reflects its unicity in terms of the hierarchy, but also what this implies about the politics of the ecclesiastical economy.

In Chapter 3 of *The Celestial Hierarchy*, Dionysius explains what he understands hierarchy to be, "In my opinion a hierarchy is a sacred order, a state of understanding and an activity approximating as closely as possible to the divine. And it is uplifted to the imitation of God in proportion to the enlightenments divinely given to it."[16] It is understood that both the celestial hierarchy and the ecclesiastical hierarchy are divinely ordained and given by God, sharing the same goal:

> The goal of a hierarchy, then, is to enable beings to be as like as possible to God and to be at one with him. A hierarchy has God as its leader of all understanding and action. It is forever looking directly at the comeliness of God. A hierarchy bears in itself the mark of God. Hierarchy causes its members to be images of God in all respects, to be clear and spotless mirrors reflecting the glow of primordial light and indeed of God himself. It ensures that when its members have

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[15] Pelikan points to *Letter 8* as evidence of Dionysius's "puritanical" stance and in doing so contrasts Augustine and Dionysius. Consequently, he credits Augustine with positing the possibility "to root the holiness of the Church in the objective holiness of the sacraments rather than in the subjective holiness of either the minister or the recipient of the sacraments," 18. In my reading of Dionysius, I do not see evidence that Dionysius holds a position opposed to Augustine's. Quite the contrary is true. Dionysius clearly believed in the objective holiness of the Church and its sacraments. This is displayed throughout his corpus and perhaps especially in *Letter 8*.

[16] *The Celestial Hierarchy*, 3, 164D. In fn. 11 of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* the editor notes: "Although the term 'hierarch' had a prehistory designating a cultic leader, the derivation 'hierarchy' was new with Dionysius, at least in the sense that he and subsequent generations used it," *EH*, 197-8. *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987).

> received this full and divine splendor they can then pass on this light generously and in accordance with God's will to beings further down the scale.
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> …
>
> If one talks then of hierarchy, what is meant is a certain perfect arrangement, an image of the beauty of God which sacredly works out the mysteries of its own enlightenment in the orders and levels of understanding of the hierarchy, and which is likened toward its own source as much as is permitted. Indeed for every member of the hierarchy, perfection consists in this, that it is uplifted to imitate God as far as possible and, more wonderful still, that it becomes what scripture calls a "fellow workman for God" and a reflection of the workings of God.[17]

Therefore, because of the nature of hierarchy itself, it is essential to contextualize *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* within the broader Dionysian corpus. With a view to this contextualization, in what follows I will attempt to answer the following questions: 1) *What* is the ecclesiastical hierarchy? 2) *How* is the ecclesiastical hierarchy? And 3) *Why* is the ecclesiastical hierarchy?

What *is the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy?*

Already in the opening chapter of *The Celestial Hierarchy*, Dionysius explains:

> All this accounts for the fact that the sacred institution and source of perfection established our most pious hierarchy. He modeled it on the hierarchies of heaven, and clothed these immaterial hierarchies in numerous material figures and forms so that, in a way appropriate to our nature, we might be uplifted from these most venerable images to interpretations and assimilations which are simple and inexpressible…. Our order and rank here below are a sign of the harmonious ordering toward the divine realm…. He made our own hierarchy a ministerial colleague of these divine hierarchies by assimilation, to the extent that is humanly feasible, to their godlike priesthood. He revealed all this to us in the sacred pictures of the scriptures so that he might lift us in spirit through the perceptible to the conceptual, from sacred shapes and symbols to the simple peaks of the hierarchies of heaven.[18]

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[17] *CH* 3, 165A-165C.

[18] *CH* 1, 121C-124A. He will reiterate this point again: "This arrangement is copied by our own hierarchy which tries to imitate angelic beauty as far as possible, to be shaped by

The ecclesiastical hierarchy is a reflection and extension of the celestial hierarchy, which consists of all heavenly beings who are similarly divided into three groups, organized according to their proximity to the One.[19] In the celestial realm there is the triadic hierarchy of 1) principalities, 2) archangels, and 3) angels. In the ecclesiastical hierarchy there are 1) the sacraments, 2) "those, inspired by God, who understand and purvey them," and 3) "those who are sacredly initiated by these."[20] These triads are not to be understood as a one-to-one correlation. Rather the aim of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* is to show how our human hierarchy participates in communion with the celestial hierarchy, but, importantly, in a way that is fitting/appropriate to our nature. Because of their different nature,

> the most holy hierarchy among the beings of heaven possess the native sacramental power of a most completely immaterial conception of God and of things divine. It is their lot to be as like and as imitative of God as possible. These first beings around God lead others and with their light guide them toward this sacred perfection. To the sacred orders farther down the scale they generously bestow, in proportion to their capacity, the knowledge of the workings of God, knowledge forever made available as a gift to themselves by that divinity which is absolute perfection and which is the source of wisdom for the divinely intelligent beings.[21]

Dionysius here indicates two important aspects of dissimilarity between the two hierarchies: 1) the celestial beings possess a "native sacramental power" and 2) because we lack this "native sacramental power" as beings our hierarchy is organized around the

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it, as in images, and to be uplifted to the transcendent source of all hierarchy," *CH* 8, 241D.

[19] Dionysius credits his own "sacred-initiator" with the triadic division he will go on to describe. His teacher/initiator is elsewhere named Hierotheus.

[20] *EH* 5, 501A.

[21] Ibid.

sacraments which are essential and efficacious for our participation/communion with the heavenly hierarchy. The ecclesiastical hierarchy exists to ensure that those lowest in the hierarchy, that is, the initiates, may participate as fully as their capacity allows in the higher, immaterial communion. Therefore the ecclesiastical hierarchy exists to administer the sacraments and the purpose of this writing is to enlighten the reader as to the sacred symbolism of these divine mysteries.[22]

How *is the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy?*

There is no question, as the author repeats it several times throughout, that the source of this and every hierarchy is God: "The source of this hierarchy is the font of life, the being of goodness, the one cause of everything, namely, the Trinity which in goodness bestows being and well-being on everything."[23] The goodness and knowledge of the goodness that the Trinity bestows comes to us through scripture and divine symbols, as is fitting to our nature:

> The first leaders of our hierarchy received their fill of the sacred gift from the transcendent Deity. Then divine goodness sent them to lead others to this same gift. Like gods, they had a burning and generous urge to secure uplifting and divinization for their subordinates. And so, using images derived from the senses they spoke of the transcendent.… Of necessity they made human what was divine. They put material on what was immaterial. In their written and unwritten initiations, they brought the transcendent down to our level. As they had been commanded to do they did this for us, not simply because of the profane from whom the symbols were to be kept out of reach, but because, as I have already said, our own hierarchy is itself symbolical and adapted to what we are. In a divine fashion it needs perceptible things to lift us up into the domain of conceptions.[24]

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[22] Dionysius only identifies the three sacraments of baptism, the synaxis (which centers on the Eucharist), and ointment/anointing.
[23] *EH* 1, 373D.
[24] *EH* 1, 376D.

For Dionysius, because of the inexpressible nature of God, all words, images, and symbols are divine gifts and concessions granted to ensure we might enjoy full communion with the inexpressible One. Although some read the Dionysian hierarchy as unfortunately anti-materialist, it is clear that his perspective is not that at all. That is, for Dionysius materiality is not something lamentable. To acknowledge the human need for images and perceptible things as a way to participate, intellectually and spiritually, in the divine is not a condemnation. It is the opposite: by acknowledging the human need for materiality and symbols, Dionysius affirms God's love and benevolence for all of his creatures.[25] God does not resent his creatures for the limits appropriate to their nature. This is not dissimilar from Severus's insistence that human corruptibility is but a feature of being creaturely and, therefore, Christ's humanity mustn't preclude the corruptibility of his flesh prior to the resurrection.[26] Nonetheless, the kenosis of Christ reveals God's will for the human creature and itself makes it, that is, the fulfillment of his will, possible.

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[25] "Fittingness" is an essential attribute of both hierarchies throughout the Dionysian corpus. Any being ordered toward union with the One participates in a way fitting to the capacity of their being: "Actually, it is the same one whom all one-like beings desire, but they do not participate in the same way in this one and the same being," *EH* 1, 373B. Moreover, this fittingness has not only to do with the materiality of the lower beings. It is also appropriate to their intellect: "This sacrament symbolizing the sacred divine birth [baptism] has nothing unfitting or profane in its perceptible images. Rather, it reflects the enigmas of a contemplative process worthy of God, and it does so by way of natural reflections suited to the human intellect," *EH* 2, 397B. That is to say, the human intellect requires symbols which are "the perceptible tokens of the conceptual things." The intellect and the body are, importantly, inextricably linked.

[26] Recall from the previous chapter this was also the view Irenaeus held: our limits—our contingency—are the occasion for God's grace and not to be viewed negatively. This is not to say creaturely corruptibility and contingency is the same thing. Rather we might say corruptibility is among the signs of our creaturely contingency: only the Creator is

We have already seen how Dionysius names the Trinity as the source of all hierarchy. Soon after naming the Trinity, and then throughout, he will name Jesus as "the source and being underlying all hierarchy, all sanctification, all the workings of God, who is the ultimate in divine power."[27] And it is Jesus who "assimilates them, as much as they are able, to his own light. As for us, with that yearning for beauty which raises us upward (and which raised up) to him, he pulls together all our many differences. He makes our life, disposition, and activity something one and divine, and he bestows on us [priests] the power appropriate to a sacred priesthood."[28] Jesus is the active agent, drawing all beings within the hierarchies unto himself. He is both the one enacting the union and the one to whom all beings are being united. Christ is the Church's unicity.

For Dionysius, the sacraments are efficacious because through them Christ gives himself, thereby facilitating the gift of the Spirit. It is only because Christ reaches us through the sacraments that they are holy and enable our own participation in Christ. They are symbolic but not in the modern sense of the term, as though they are "merely symbolic." In a beautiful passage Dionysius contemplates the rite of consecration, articulating a Trinitarian Christology, linking Christ's kenosis with the gift of the Spirit. It is a passage worth quoting at length:

> Hence the most sacred order of heavenly beings is not unaware of the fact that the most divine Jesus came down among us to make us holy. It understands well that he in his divine and unspeakable goodness became one of us. It sees him sanctified in human form by the Father, by himself, and by the Spirit. And it

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noncontingent and eternal. This would be the case whether one viewed corruption as natural to creatures or as an artifact of the fall.

[27] *EH*, 372B

[28] Ibid.

> knows that what he is from the beginning as an active divinity remains essentially unchanged. Hence the tradition of the sacred symbols covers the divine ointment with the seraphim even during the sanctification, and it does so to show and to demonstrate that Christ remains forever unchanged even when fully and truly made one of us.
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> …
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> Furthermore, in being initiated in that sacred sacrament of the divine birth, the perfecting anointing of the ointment gives us a visitation of the divine Spirit. What this symbolic imagery signifies, I think, is that he who in human form received the sanctification of the divine Spirit for us, while at the same time remaining unchanged in respect of his own divinity, arranges now for the gift to us of the divine Spirit.[29]

The symbol both signifies and imparts the gift of the Spirit as enacted and activated by Christ himself. We can see in this passage a synthesis of Christ's "economic appropriation" and its production of the Christ-centered economy, that is, the Church as Christ circumscribed in and for the world. Christ empties himself for us by becoming like us while remaining divine, so that we might receive his sanctification, becoming like him, through the sacred symbols. It is through the sacred symbols Christ imparts his Spirit to us. Not only does this passage reflect a rather orthodox Christology, preserving the two natures completely. But it also reflects a consistency with Pauline soteriology. That is, salvation is enacted upon us, for us, and is not achieved by us. The Spirit is bestowed in the sacraments, which are divinely given and ordered on the Son: "For it is on Jesus himself, our most divine altar, that there is achieved the divine consecration of intelligent beings.… For it is the most holy Jesus who consecrates himself for us. It is he who grants

[29] Ibid., 484C

us the fullness of his own consecration and who arranges to offer generously to us, as children of God, whatever is consecrated on him."[30]

The ecclesiastical hierarchy is the divine economy that facilitates our participation in Christ's activity of communion—of facilitating union to himself through the hierarchies. Every being within the triad exists to ensure this economic function, which centers on the proper administration of the sacraments as it is through these that Christ offers himself to us. Recall the triad consists of 1) the sacraments, 2) those who administer the sacraments, and 3) those initiated by the sacraments: "The hierarchy gives to each as he deserves and grants an appropriate share of the divine things to all for their salvation. It deals out the sacred gifts at the right time and in harmonious and fitting measure."[31] All initiates are catechized into the sacraments so that each is prepared to advance toward full communion with the One. Preparation is essential for participation. And, again, the act of preparation is therefore in itself a grace as it culminates in receiving the very body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist.[32] In this manner the hierarchy expresses its sacred purpose:

> The goal of every hierarchy consists of the continuous love of God and of things divine, a love which is sacredly worked out in an inspired way, and, before this, the complete and unswerving avoidance of everything contrary to it. It consists of

[30] *EH* 4, 484D-485A.
[31] Ibid., 432D
[32] I cannot go into detail to describe the various stages of preparation. That is the author's objective and he details the clerical orders to show how each has a sacred function fitting to the needs of those whom they serve. That is, Dionysius shows that the clerical orders reflect the divine will that each being is properly prepared for communion with the One. They, the clerics, exist for this purpose alone—to serve the telos of communion. "[W]hat must now be shown is the manner in which the clerical rank is made up of three harmonious orders—the one which purifies, the one which illuminates, and the one which brings about perfection," *EH* 5, 504C.

> the knowledge of beings as they really are. It consists of an inspired participation in the one-like perfection and in the one itself, as far as possible. It consists of a feast upon that sacred vision which nourishes the intellect and which divinizes everything rising up to it.[33]

Why *is the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy?*

Admittedly, describing the Dionysian hierarchies according to what? how? and why? is artificial and somewhat misleading as, in a sense, the form is the content and vice versa. That is to say, the ecclesiastical hierarchy is its own *how* and *why* insofar as it all leads to a singular subject, the Eucharist. You cannot have the synaxis without the hierarchy that enacts it, nor without the recipients who participate in it.

Here too we see reflected what we previously identified as Pauline soteriology. The goal of all hierarchy is communion with the One. Although this is clear throughout the Dionysian writings, it becomes most evident in his discussion of the rite of the synaxis. Here we learn there is even a hierarchy among the sacraments as it is the Eucharist that perfects all sacramental operations:

> Every sacredly initiating operation draws our fragmented lives together into a one-like divinization. It forges a divine unity out of the divisions within us. It grants us communion and union with the One. But I submit that the perfection of the other hierarchical symbols is only achieved by way of the divine and perfecting gifts of Communion.[34]

As we can see in the above quotation, every operation of the hierarchy is aimed at unifying the bodies that participate in it. In a simultaneous movement, the beings at every level participate as is fitting to their status and in so doing they are forged into a divine unity—with one another and with the One. In the synaxis unity is conferred by the unicity of the One.

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[33] *EH* 1, 376A.
[34] *EH* 3, 424D.

> For the blessed divinity, which transcends all being, while proceeding gradually outward because of goodness to commune with those who partake of him, never actually departs from his essential stability and immobility. Enlightening anyone conforming as much as possible to God, the Deity nevertheless maintains utterly and unshakably its inherent identity. Similarly the divine sacrament of the synaxis remains what it is, unique, simply, and indivisible and yet, out of love for humanity it is pluralized in a sacred variegation of symbols. It extends itself so as to include all the hierarchical imagery. Then it draws all these varied symbols together into a unity, returns to its own inherent oneness, and confers unity on all those sacredly uplifted to it.[35]
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> …
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> The love of the Deity for humanity having been thus reverently celebrated, the divine bread is brought forward, together with the cup of blessing. The divine kiss of peace is exchanged. Then there is the proclamation, mystical and transcendent, of the holy volumes. For it is not possible to be gathered together toward the One and to partake of peaceful union with the One while divided among ourselves. If, however, we are enlightened by the contemplation and knowledge of the One we are enabled to be unified, to achieve a truly divine oneness and it will never happen that we succumb to the fragmentation of desire which is the source of corporeal and impassioned hostility between equals. This, it seems to me, is the united and undivided life prescribed for us by the kiss of peace as it joins like to like and turns the fragmented away from the divine and unique visions.[36]

Stated succinctly, the *why?* of the ecclesiastical hierarchy is so that our divisions may conform to divine unicity. Even the telos of the individual is ordered to this end. That is, whereas divinization is clearly the telos of each being within the hierarchies, even divinization is not an end in itself but rather is the necessary precondition for our union with the One:

> Now this blessed Deity which transcends everything and which is one and also triune has resolved, for reasons unclear to us but obvious to itself, to ensure the salvation of rational beings, both ourselves and those beings who are our

[35] Ibid., 429A.
[36] Ibid., 437A-B.

> superiors. This can only happen with the divinization of the saved. And divinization consists of being as much as possible like and in union with God.[37]
>
> What we must say is this. The blessed Deity which of itself is God, is the source of all divinization. Out of its divine generosity it grants to the divinized the fact of this divinization. It has bestowed hierarchy as a gift to ensure the salvation and divinization of every being endowed with reason and intelligence.[38]

To reiterate, the hierarchy exists for our salvation, which, according to Dionysius, is our divinization. And our divinization consists in being "one-like," that is, in union with the One who grants our divinization out of divine love.

It is hard to read passages like the ones just quoted and conclude as Pelikan does that Dionysius held a "puritanical" view of the Church such that it would logically lead him to endorse division for the sake of purity. In his Introduction, Pelikan offers a brief contrast between the objective sacramentality of the Church as held by Augustine and the subjective sacramentality held by the Donatists, and, to my mind, he mistakenly places Dionysius with the latter. He's not the first to do this as he quotes Stiglmayr who remarked on Dionysius's views on the Church and the sacraments, "only one concept that is emphasized above all: the measure of light imparted is determined by the condition of the subject."[39] Pelikan refers to *Letter 8* to support such a reading and so I will briefly turn to the letter to conclude.

Letter 8 is addressed to Demophilus, a monk who, according to the letter, broke rank and rebuked a priest for pardoning a repentant man, "[Y]our letter clearly shows that when a man whom you regard as an impious sinner threw himself at the feet of the priest,

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[37] *EH* 1, 373D-376A.
[38] Ibid., 376B.
[39] Pelikan, "Introduction," 18.

you took it upon yourself to reject him…."[40] But even more audaciously, the monk then led a group into the inner sanctuary where they took it upon themselves to "save the sacred things" from defilement. If Dionysius had held a puritanical view of the Church, one in which defilement of the sacraments and sacramental acts was to be avoided at all costs, this would lead us to expect him to congratulate this courageous monk who acted in favor of preserving the sacrament from impending defilement. But Dionysius does not do this. Rather he rebukes the monk for taking it upon himself to act out against the divine hierarchy:

> Now hear what I have to say to you. It is not permitted that a priest should be corrected by the deacons, who are your superiors, not by the monks, who are at the same level as yourself, and this is so even if it would seem that he had in some way misused divine things and even if it could be shown that he had violated some other regulation. Even if disorder and confusion should undermine the most divine ordinances and regulations, that still gives no right, even on God's behalf, to overturn the order which God himself has established. God is not divided against himself. Otherwise, how could his kingdom stand?[41]

Pelikan refers to a portion of the letter where Dionysius addresses the issue of impious priests to suggest Dionysius falls in line with a Donatist "puritanical spirituality." He quotes Dionysius who states,

> How could the [impious] priests be interpreters of God?... Living in darkness, how could they bring light to others?… He who does not bestow illumination is thereby excluded from the priestly order and from the power reserved to the priesthood. For he is unilluminated…. This is no priest. He is an enemy, deceitful, self-deluded, a wolf in sheep's clothing ready to attack the people of God.[42]

Pelikan thus concludes, "Now these are ideas, and in some instances even the very phrases, of the rigoristic and 'puritanical' spirituality against which Augustine

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[40] *Letter 8*, 1088B. *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 272.
[41] Ibid., 1088C.
[42] Pelikan quoting Dionysius, 18.

contended at the beginning of the fifth century."[43] But to select this particular excerpt and draw such a conclusion does not accurately reflect Dionysius's argument in this section or the letter as a whole. Worse, it offers a mischaracterization of Dionysius's objective view of the sacramentality of the Church. This will become important as we move on to look at Maximus and John Damascene as they both continue the Dionysian view.

When looking closely at this passage we can see quite clearly that Pelikan's selective excerption has produced a misleading conclusion as it fails to recognize the rhetorical thrust of Dionysius's argument. In order to show this, I must quote the passage in full. After the paragraph where Dionysius rhetorically acknowledges the anticipated interrogative objections, he offers Demophilus the following response—which Pelikan only partially includes:

> Each rank around God conforms more to him than the one farther away. Those closest to the true Light are more capable of receiving light and of passing it on. Do not imagine that the proximity here is physical. Rather, what I mean by nearness is the greatest possible capacity to receive God. If then the rank of priests is that most able to pass on illumination, he who does not bestow illumination is thereby excluded from the priestly order and from the power reserved to the priesthood. For he is unilluminated. A man thus deprived is, in my view, insolent if he muscles in on priestly functions, when, without fear or shame, he unworthily pursues the divine things. He thinks God knows nothing of what he knows is going on within him. He imagines he can deceive the One whom he falsely calls "Father." He dares to be like Christ and to utter over the divine symbols not anything I would call prayers but, rather, unholy blasphemies. This is no priest. He is an enemy, deceitful, self-deluded, a wolf in sheep's clothing ready to attack the people of God. But no law grants Demophilus the right to correct such things.[44]

Let us observe a few things. First, Dionysius does not deny the possibility that there are or can be impious priests. Second, he is clear that as priests they are capable of

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[43] Ibid.
[44] *Letter 8*, 1092B-1092C.

illumination, but in their arrogance and impiety they have rendered themselves "unilluminated" and therefore "insolent" if they continue carrying on their duties "without fear or shame." There is no indication here that the impiety of a priest has any direct effect on the sacraments themselves—nor on the priesthood. Rather what is clear is that a priest's own blasphemy renders him culpable for not fulfilling his priestly duties; he excludes himself from the power reserved to the priesthood thus making himself an enemy of the people of God. Therefore, as we have already seen, the priest's subjective state does not affect the efficacy of the sacrament administered and by which the recipient is drawn into communion with Christ by the Holy Spirit. Nowhere does Dionysius indicate otherwise—even in the case of an impious priest. The hierarchy still functions as it is animated by Christ himself.

Moreover, Dionysius goes on to argue it is only in allowing the hierarchy to function properly—by each member fulfilling and not exceeding his station—that justice can be carried out. One must trust the divinely-ordered hierarchy to administer justice and maintain order. Only the priest's superiors have the authority to determine his fate and the course for justice. Importantly, Dionysius does not rebuke Demophilus for finding the impiety of priests an occasion for anger but rather admonishes him to

> … give the appropriate place to desire, to anger, and to reason. Accept the place assigned to you by the divine deacons. Let them accept what the priests have assigned to them. Let the priests accept what the hierarchs have assigned to them. Let the hierarchs bow to the apostles and to the successors of the apostles. And should one of these last [the hierarchs] fail in his duty then let him be set right by his peers. In this way no order will be disturbed and each person will remain in his own order and in his own ministry.[45]

[45] Ibid., 1093C.

This is hardly a puritanical view of the Church. Rather it is clear that for Dionysius the objective holiness of the ecclesiastical hierarchy is the necessary precondition for justice and the maintenance of harmony. A priest will bring divine judgment on himself for acting impiously, but economic justice can only be carried out by those who have been divinely entrusted with the responsibility to do so. In his conclusion, Dionysius appeals to Christ's mercy toward those who wronged him (Jesus) partly to reiterate for Demophilus that while it may seem a worthy act to protect God and his divine gifts from those who are seemingly undeserving, it cannot be justified when it entails going against God's will as expressed through his divinely-ordained hierarchy: "In your bold letter you say over and over again that you were looking for God's vengeance and not your own. But tell me, is it by wrongdoing that one avenges the good?"[46] There is no good that does not entail preserving the divinely-ordered hierarchies, because they are objectively good; they flow from the Good and all goods return to the Good.[47]

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[46] Ibid., 1096B.

[47] In his essay "'I Rejoice to See Your Order': Paul and the Dionysian Hierarchies," Charles M. Stang argues for a Pauline resonance in the Dionysian hierarchical system and specifically the idea behind Paul's use of sōma as a figure of the ecclesial hierarchy: "Although Paul uses the word 'order' (ταξις) twice in his letters, and appeals to the eschatological 'order' once by another name (ταγμα), the important parallel between Dionysius and Paul has less to do with the use of the term ταξις and more to do with the notion of a divinely sanctioned and ordered arrangement. For this notion Paul prefers the figure of the body (σωμα) and his premier treatment of this figure is 1 Cor 12." Stang goes on to draw a parallel between the Corinthian church and *Letter 8*, pointing out Dionysius uses Paul twice to support his chastisement of Demophilus: "Paul, therefore, provides not only a model for the establishment of a divinely sanctioned and ordered arrangement, but also advice for the continual maintenance of that order." In *Apophasis and Pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite: "No Longer I"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), XX.

Dionysius's remarks on fragmentation and diversity express this same truth and therefore serve to further correct the misleading perception of a subjective holiness as applied to the administrators of the sacraments. Yet this is another point that is best understood from the perspective of the broader Dionysian corpus. Already in the *Divine Names* Dionysius explains, "And so all these scriptural utterances celebrate the supreme Deity by describing it as a monad or henad, by which unifying power we are led to unity."[48] The entirety of chapter 2 is devoted to describing the divine unicity of the One and how this unicity is maintained in differentiation:

> This Godhead is granted as a gift to all things. It flows over in shares of goodness to all. And it becomes differentiated in a unified way. It is multiplied and yet remains singular. It is dispensed to all without ceasing to be a unity.… He is indivisible multiplicity, the unfilled overfullness which produces, perfects, and preserves all unity and all multiplicity.[49]

And it is because of this outpouring of unicity that the hierarchies express the divine will and require participation, according to their capacity, in the unity being imparted. But even here Dionysius acknowledges a distinction between the objective holiness of what is imparted and the potential holiness of those to whom it is given:

> Now this is unified and one and common to the whole divinity, that the entire wholeness is participated in by each of those who participate in it; none participates in only a part. It is rather like the case of a circle. The center point of the circle is shared by the surrounding radii. Or take the example of a seal. There are numerous impressions of the seal and these all have a share in the original prototype; it is the same whole seal in each of the impressions and none participates in only part.… Maybe some will say that the seal is not totally identical in all the reproductions of it. My answer is that this is not because of the seal itself, which gives itself completely and identically to each. The substances which receive a share of the seal are different. Hence the impressions of the one entire identical archetype are different. If the substances are soft, easily shaped,

[48] *DN* 1, 589D.
[49] *DN* 2, 649B-649C.

> and smooth, if no impressions have been made on them already, if they are not hard and resistant, if they are not excessively soft and melting, the imprint on them will be clear, plain, and long-lasting. But if the material is lacking in this receptivity, this would be the cause of its mistaken or unclear imprint or of whatever else results from the unreceptivity of its participation.[50]

He will return to this theme at the end of the book in discussing the meaning of the name "One": "The name 'One' means that God is uniquely all things through the transcendence of one unity and that he is the cause of all without ever departing from that oneness. Nothing in the world lacks its share of the One."[51] All multiplicity and differentiation also belongs to the One and participates in it:

> That which is numerous in its processions is one in its source. For there is nothing at all lacking a share in that One which in its utterly comprehensive unity uniquely contains all and everything beforehand, even opposites. Without the One there is no multiplicity, but there can still be the One when there is no multiplicity….
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> There is something else to remember also. When things are said to be unified, this is in accordance with the preconceived form of the one proper to each. In this way the One may be called the underlying element of all things.… Hence scripture describes the entire thearchy, the Cause of everything, as the One. Furthermore, "there is one God the Father and one Lord Jesus Christ." And "one and the same Spirit," and this is so in the overwhelming indivisibility of that oneness of God within which all things are banded together as one in the possession of a transcendent unity….[52]

I quote him at length here in order to show that it is the unicity of the One that funds his entire hierarchical system, and which consequently provides the logic for his soteriology as expressed through the hierarchies and his understanding of divinization as both the process and telos of our participation in the One. This is the communion of incorruption:

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[50] Ibid., 644A-644C.
[51] *DN* 13, 977C.
[52] Ibid., 980B.

the communion established and maintained by Christ, who grants through his Church that each member, according to capacity, has the possibility of conformity to his likeness.

> For because of his goodness and his love for humanity the simple, hidden oneness of Jesus, the most divine Word, has taken the route of incarnation for us and, without undergoing any change, has become a reality that is composite and visible. He has beneficently accomplished for us a unifying communion with himself. He has united our humility with his own supreme divinity. But we in our turn have to cling to him like members of one body and we do so by the conformity that comes with a divine life of sinlessness. We cannot yield to the death wrought by corrupting passion, or become unable to fit ourselves in with the members of the perfect, whole divine body, unable to be at one with them and live together with them in the one committed life. If our longing is for communion with him, then we must give our full attention to his divine life in the flesh. His sacred sinlessness must be our model so that we may aspire to a godlike and unblemished condition. This is how, in a way that suits us, he will grant us communion with his likeness.[53]

For Dionysius, the hierarchy is at once a divine order, understanding, and activity that reveals divine, salvific beauty: harmony as multiplicity ordered to divine unicity.[54]

Maximus the Confessor (580-662)

Although he undoubtedly earns the high esteem of both the East and West based on his own genius, Maximus Confessor is partly venerated by both because of his efforts

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[53] *EH* 3, 444B.

[54] "Beauty 'bids' all things to itself (whence it is called 'beauty') and gathers everything into itself.… For beauty is the cause of harmony, of sympathy, of community.… This—the One, the Good, the Beautiful—is in its uniqueness the Cause of the multitudes of the good and the beautiful. From it derives the existence of everything as beings, what they have in common and what differentiates them, their identicalness and differences, their similarities and dissimilarities…, the providence of the higher rank of beings, the interrelationship of those of the same rank, the return upward by those of the lower status, the protecting and unchanged remaining and foundations of all things amid themselves. Hence, the interrelationship of all things in accordance with capacity. Hence, the harmony and the love which are formed between them but which do not obliterate identity. Hence, the innate togetherness of everything," *DN* 4, 704B-704C.

to more fully integrate Dionysius into mainstream Christian orthodoxy. In his Introduction to the Confessor's spiritual writings, Pelikan explains:

> In many ways Dionysius may be said to represent the effort, more or less successful, to spell out in greater detail the system of Cappadocian spirituality. But in the process, the liturgical spirituality embodied in the two fundamental dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation was in danger of being engulfed by these Neo-Platonic presuppositions.… As the principal exponent of an orthodox Christological spirituality in the seventh century, Maximus Confessor explained the language of Dionysius in such a manner that he achieved the Trinitarian and Christocentric reorientation of the Dionysian system and thus rehabilitated it.[55]

Our turn to Maximus is not to show the many instances where he draws on Dionysius and accomplishes the aforementioned rehabilitation. Rather in briefly looking at Maximus's *Mystagogy of the Church* I am simply exhibiting the coherence between the two as this will serve to contextualize John Damascene's defense of the iconomy.

The editor notes that Maximus's use of the term "mystagogy" "signifies contemplation of the mystery of the Church, i.e., of the new creation in Christ."[56] Just as Dionysius attributes his knowledge of the divine mysteries to his teacher Hierotheos, Maximus opens by attributing his knowledge of the "holy Church and the holy synaxis performed in it" to an unnamed "grand old man."[57] Maximus addresses his "beloved brothers" and acknowledges that what follows is his attempt to fulfill their request. He then moves to clarify his indebtedness to Dionysius and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* while also distinguishing it from the present work:

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[55] "Introduction," *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 7.
[56] Ibid., fn. 1, p. 214.
[57] *Mystagogy*, 183. It is not known if either is reference to an actual person. We simply do not know.

> Instead, my subject will be those things which God in his goodness wanted him [Dionysius] to leave for others for the interpretation and exercise of the habit of these things in accordance with their desire for divine things. In them the beaming ray of ceremonies, once grasped, becomes understood in proportion to them and draws to itself those who are seized by this desire.[58]

What follows are descriptions of the holy Church as images for contemplation.

> … [A]t the first level of contemplation holy Church bears the imprint and image of God since it has the same activity as he does by imitation and in figure. For God who made and brought into existence all things by his infinite power contains, gathers, and limits them and in his Providence binds both intelligible and sensible beings to himself and to one another.[59]

Chapter One thus describes what that activity is and how it is brought about in the Church. The activity is none other than unifying all members into one body:

> All are born into the Church and through it are reborn in the Spirit. To all in equal measure it gives and bestows one divine form and designation, to be Christs and to carry his name. In accordance with faith it gives to all a single, simple, whole, and indivisible condition which does not allow us to bring to mind the existence of myriads of differences among them, even if they do exist, through the universal relationship and union of all things with it.… Thus to be and to appear as one body formed of different members is really worthy of Christ himself, our true head, in whom the divine Apostle says, "there is neither male nor female, neither Jew nor Greek, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, neither foreigner nor Scythian, neither slave nor freeman, but Christ is everything in all of you." It is he who encloses in himself all beings by the unique, simple, and infinitely wise power of his goodness.[60]

For Maximus, as with Dionysius, the Church images God as through it divine unicity confers unity. Consequently, the unity of the Church enables the unicity of Christ to manifest/appear in the world: "Thus, as has been said, the holy Church of God is an image of God because it realizes the same union of the faithful with God."[61] But how

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[58] *Mystagogy*, 184.
[59] Ibid, 186.
[60] Ibid., 187.
[61] Ibid., 187-188.

does it do this? How does the Church facilitate such unity? The theme of divine unicity and creaturely unity appear again and again throughout the following chapters. Recall in Dionysius that creaturely deification is the process by which we participate in the union bestowed; the same economy of participation and process of deification characterizes Maximus's mystagogy. Whereas contemplation of divine unicity plays a major role in our conforming to the likeness of God, it is equally integral that members participate in the mysteries/sacraments of sanctification as it is through them that we receive the Holy Spirit and the divine grace to continue in the journey. Contemplation and reception are complementary, both being essential for communion with the One—now and eschatologically. That is to say, we contemplate the mysteries revealed in the divine sacraments.

> This, indeed, is why the blessed old man believed that every Christian should be exhorted—and he never failed to do this—to frequent God's holy church and never to abandon the holy synaxis … because of the grace of the Holy Spirit which is always invisibly present, but in a special way at the time of the synaxis. This grace transforms and changes each person who is found there and in fact remolds him in proportion to what is more divine in him and leads him to what is revealed through the mysteries which are celebrated, even if he does not himself feel this.… [62]

This is the communion of incorruption:

> By holy communion of the spotless and life-giving mysteries we are given fellowship and identity with him by participation in likeness, by which man is deemed worthy from man to become God. For we believe that in this present life we already have a share in these gifts of the Holy Spirit through the love that is in faith, and in the future age after we have kept the commandments to the best of our ability we believe that we shall have a share in them in very truth in their concrete reality according to the steadfast hope of our faith and the solid unchangeable promise to which God has committed himself. Then we shall pass

[62] Notice Maximus's coherence with Dionysius in creating a hierarchy of the sacraments wherein the synaxis becomes the location and moment of a "special" grace.

> from the grace which is in faith to the grace of vision, when our God and Savior Jesus Christ will indeed transform us into himself by taking away from us the marks of corruption and will bestow on us the original mysteries that have been represented for us through sensible symbols here below.[63]

This passage recapitulates what we identified in the previous chapter as the Pauline "already" and "not yet" understanding of salvation. Through our present participation in the sacraments we receive a foretaste of the promise of a future communion with the One who is everpresent to us. In both cases our communion is bodily. We shall move from the grace of faith to the grace of vision—from the invisibility of grace bestowed in the sacraments to the beatific vision—and our participation now serves as preparation for this eternal moment.

> The unceasing and sanctifying doxology by the holy angels in the Trisagion signifies, in general, the equality in the way of life and conduct and the harmony in the divine praising which will take place in the age to come by both heavenly and earthly powers, when the human body now rendered immortal by the resurrection will no longer weigh down the soul by corruption and will not itself be weighed down but will take on, by the change into incorruption, potency and aptitude to receive God's coming.[64]

This eschatological vision is more pronounced in Maximus than it was in Dionysius, although it is nevertheless implied in the latter many times. There is another way in which Maximus makes a more explicit connection to the Pauline soteriology we've discussed previously. That is, he makes an explicit connection between receiving the gifts of the sacraments and the "new man who is constantly being renewed in full knowledge

[63] Ibid., 207-8.
[64] Ibid., 210.

according to the image of the one who created him."[65] Just as Paul makes clear that faith without works is dead and therefore an active faith will be displayed in the concrete forms of discipleship, so Maximus states there is a "clear proof" for the grace received through the Church and thus proof of the knowledge of the One who reveals himself through his Church:

> The clear proof of this grace is the voluntary disposition of good will toward those akin to us whereby the man who needs our help in any way becomes as much as possible our friend as God is and we do not leave him abandoned and forsaken but rather that with fitting zeal we show him in action the disposition which is alive in us with respect to God and our neighbor.… For if the Word has shown that the one who is in need of having good done to him is God—for as long, he tells us, as you did it for one of these least ones, you did it for me—on God's very word, then, he will much more show that the one who can do good and who does it is truly God by grace and participation because he has taken on in happy imitation the energy characteristic of his own doing good.… All the more reason, then, will that one be God who by loving men in imitation of God heals by himself in divine fashion the hurts of those who suffer and who shows that he has in his disposition, safeguarding all proportion, the same power of saving Providence that God has.[66]

This exhibition of love, as "proof," toward one's neighbor is further exemplification of the Dionysian–Maximian hierarchical theology whereby the downward descent of the Spirit operates so that those even in the lowest ranks are identified with God and, therefore, the entire hierarchy is aimed at serving "the least of these" as is pleasing to the One. For Maximus, the Spirit images God in the world through the Church's conforming her members to Christ. To love and serve those in need is to order oneself in alignment with the hierarchy; the entire economy exists for this end. The grace bestowed through

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[65] Maximus quoting Paul. The editor's note says, "This is a weaving together of various Pauline texts: Col 3:5-6; Eph 5:6; Col 3:8; Eph 4:22; Col 3:9; 1 Thes 2:12; Col 3: 12-13 (Maximus adds 'in love'), 12-15, 10," fn. 143, p. 225.
[66] Ibid., 211.

the sacraments enables our participation in divine Love's drawing all of creation to himself:

> "For grace," says the divine Apostle, "is with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptibility," that is, those who love our Lord with the incorruptibility of virtue and the pure and sincere dignity of life, or to speak more clearly, those who love the Lord by doing his will and not transgressing any of his commands.[67]

We can see how Maximus synthesizes the Dionysian system with a more explicit Pauline soteriology, thereby enabling a more explicit connection between divine unicity, the hierarchies, and the bodily soteriology so integral to the development of Christian orthodoxy.

One final note about Maximus before moving on to John Damascene's iconomy. I want to draw attention to *The Trial of Maximus* to underscore the significance of the unicity of the Church for the Confessor. Maximus was called to trial twice near the end of his life. The first trial took place in Constantinople in June 654. He was summoned and returned to Constantinople for the second trial in 661/662, after which he was condemned to mutilation. The reason was his refusal to endorse the emperor's heretical *Typos,* which asserted that Christ had one will. Pelikan writes, "The title 'confessor,' which he acquired soon thereafter and which is forever attached to his name, was a tribute to his steadfastness in confessing the faith of the undivided Church in the undivided hypostasis and the distinct natures of the person of the incarnate Son of God."[68]

In the *Trial* there are a number of recounted dialogues between Maximus and his accusers. What I want to point out is the relationship between appeals to an artificial

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[67] Ibid., 213.
[68] "Introduction," 5.

unity and the unity Maximus defends in refusing to endorse such an appeal. In his dialogue with Gregory the son of Photinus this issue comes to the fore. Gregory visits Maximus to tell him he (Gregory) has been tasked with "urging [the Pope] to establish communion with the patriarch of Constantinople."[69] When Maximus asks: by what will this communion be established? Gregory responds, "On the *Typos*." Maximus then denies this as a viable option:

> This, I think, is an impossible thing; for the Romans will not consent that the illuminating statements of the holy Fathers be annulled together with the voices of impure heretics, or that the truth be extinguished with falsehood, or that the light disappear along with the darkness. For nothing will remain for us to worship if we annul the sayings taught by God.[70]

Gregory corrects him stating, "The *Typos* does not prescribe a denial of the holy statements but rather a silence to arrange a peace." To which Maximus replies: silence is denial. Gregory then attempts to mollify the Confessor by saying he (Gregory) is content with the Creed and will hold to it while endorsing the *Typos*—for the sake of peace. Maximus finds this inadequate and shows Gregory how the *Typos* contradicts the Creed and, therefore, one cannot hold the two together. The conversation that ensues reveals that Maximus is not willing to circumvent truth for the sake of so-called unity.

> But if the saving faith should be removed along with heresy for the sake of an arrangement, then the arrangement is a thorough separation from God and not a unity with God.… Once the Arians put this forward in writing at the time of the great Constantine, saying, "Let us remove Homoousion and the Heterousion and let the churches unite." Our God-fearing fathers did not do this; but rather they preferred to be pursued and put to death than to pass over in silence a term indicating the one supersubstantial godhead of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And the great Constantine concurred with those who were putting such suggestions forward, as is recounted by many who diligently wrote of these matters at the

[69] *The Trial of Maximus* in *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings*, 19.
[70] Ibid., 20.

> time. No emperor was able to convince the inspired fathers to come to an agreement with the heretics of that time through the use of equivocal terms. Rather they employed clear and fixed terms corresponding to the dogma inquired about, saying in as many words, "It is for the priests to inquire into and define what concerns the saving dogmas of the Catholic Church."[71]

Later in the dialogue, Maximus is asked by Troilus and Sergius Euchratas whether it is "altogether necessary to speak of wills and energies on the subject of Christ?"[72] In other words, "Aren't you making more of this than is necessary? Does it really matter?"—to which Maximus replies, "Altogether necessary if we want to worship in truth, for no being exists without natural activity.… And if there is no such thing as a nature to be or to be known without its essential characteristic activity, how is it possible for Christ to be known as truly God and man by nature without the divine and human activities?"[73] His interlocutors concede the point but nonetheless implore him to sign onto the emperor's heretical document. Maximus explains:

> Let not the good and pious lord be offended by my lowliness. I cannot grieve God by keeping silent about what he ordered us to speak and confess. For if according to the divine Apostle he is "the founder in the church first of apostles, secondly of prophets, thirdly of teachers" (Eph 4:11), then it is clear that he is the one who spoke through them. Thus through the whole of Holy Writ, both of the Old as well as the New Testament, and also of the holy doctors and councils, we learn that the God incarnate both wills and works in both his divinity and humanity. For he is lacking in nothing of those things by which he is known as God and of those things by which he is known as man by nature except sin. If he is complete according to each nature, as nothing is lacking to either, it is obvious that one is corrupting the whole mystery unless he confesses that he is what he is with the natural properties which belong to him according to each nature in which and which he is.[74]

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[71] Ibid., 20-21.
[72] Ibid., 23.
[73] Ibid., 23.
[74] Ibid., 24.

There is a great deal more to explore in the *Trial* but for our purposes I want to highlight a few features that exhibit how Maximus's convictions stem from his belief in the objective holiness of the Church, which is what he is willing to defend even while being accused of breaking communion. In the passages quoted above, it is clear that Maximus believes the hierarchy is divinely given and operates to dispense illumination of the truth. Recall Dionysius's definition is that a hierarchy is an order, understanding, and activity. Therefore, Maximus cannot be led to accept a falsehood that contradicts what the Lord has taught through his Church. The truth and the Church are inextricably linked. The illumination of orthodox dogma as given and confirmed in the councils has come from God. By it we are enabled to worship truth, which is understanding of the divine mysteries, especially that of the incarnation by which humanity has been restored. Heresy must be expunged because it obscures the truth of our salvation and consequently the enactment of divine love. Because the hierarchy is divinely given and ordered to the truth, any "communion" that would come at the sacrifice of the truth cannot be the divine communion already established by God. Therefore, in defending orthodox dogma Maximus is simultaneously defending the holiness and unicity of the Church and is willing to do this at the expense of his own life—just as the fathers had before him.

In his own faithfulness to the truth, Maximus therefore becomes an exemplar of the Apostle's image of discipleship. Having defended the true Church they (Maximus and his disciple of thirty-seven years) are condemned by those Church officials who take offense and implore the emperor to separate them and send them into exile. The

Confessor and his disciple become "the least of these" and are therefore conformed even more to their Savior. Thus the *Trial* concludes:

> For he allowed them to be tried by a great storm, testing their disposition toward him so that they might cry out with a loud voice, "Lord, save us, we are perishing (Mt 8:25)," and so that they might know enough to attribute all the things concerning their salvation to him alone; nor that they should put their trust in themselves but rather attain great calm while the wind and waves are lulled. And he led them out in the midst of wolves (Mt 10:16) and ordered them to enter through the narrow gate and to journey through the straitened path (Mt 7:14). And he offered them hunger and thirst and nakedness, and bonds and prisons and exiles and scourges and a cross and nails and vinegar and gall and spitting and slaps and blows and mockings. Their end was a radiant resurrection, bringing peace with it to those who had been persecuted on his account, and joy to those who were afflicted for him, and ascension into heaven and accession at the Father's transcendent throne, and an appointed place above every principality and power and virtue and domination, and every name which is named whether in this age or in the age to come. May we obtain all these things through the prayers and intercessions of the all-holy supremely glorious Mary, truly by nature Mother of God and Ever-Virgin worthy of all praise, and of the holy apostles, prophets, and martyrs. Amen.[75]

The Truth does not stand apart from the economy through which it reveals itself. It is through the visible economy that the invisible Truth manifests/appears; Christ makes himself visible in the created, visible world. The Church—through its hierarchy and saints—makes Christ visible: "It is in this way that the holy Church of God will be shown to be working for us the same effects as God, in the same way as the image reflects its archetype."[76] The theology of icon veneration helps us better understand how the Church's unicity is expressed in its iconicity.

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[75] Ibid., 27-28.
[76] *Mystagogy*, 187.

> … I see the Church, which God built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Christ his Son being the head cornerstone, battered as by the surging sea overwhelming it with wave upon wave, tossed about and troubled by the grievous assault of wicked spirits, and Christ's tunic, woven from top to bottom, rent, which the children of the ungodly have arrogantly sought to divide, and his body cut to pieces, which is the people of God and the tradition of the Church that has held sway from the beginning.[77]

Thus John of Damascus opens the first of his three treatises in defense of the divine images, drawing an explicit connection between his defense of the images and his defense of the Church, here imaged as a building with Christ as the head cornerstone, then as Christ's seamless robe and, finally, as Christ's own flesh cut into pieces. Already in these opening remarks we can see an explicit connection between Christology and ecclesiology—Christ's historical body and his mystical body, the Church. Moreover, there is the connection between these things and the truth, which is being threatened—a threat that symbolically renders both Christ's seamless robe and flesh torn to pieces. Once again, these things cannot be separated: Christ is the Truth. Thus all the topics discussed in our brief overview of some of the early Christological controversies, as well as the theologies of Pseudo-Dionysius and Maximus, are encapsulated here in Damascene's opening defense of the sacred tradition of making and venerating holy images. Pelikan offers this lucid summary:

> The Incarnation of the divine and eternal Logos in the historical person of Jesus Christ, which was unanimously taken by orthodox theologians and church councils to require the inseparable union between the divine nature and human nature … was, according to Byzantine liturgical spirituality and liturgical art and therefore according to Byzantine learned theology—the manifestation within the scheme of reality, including all cosmic reality, of nothing less than New Being,

[77] John Damascene, *Treatise I,* in *On the Divine Images*, trans. by Andrew Louth (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 19.

> divinity made human. Coming as it did after more than half a millennium of almost uninterrupted discussion about the various aspects of doctrine of the Incarnation as New Being, the Iconoclast controversy could have been expected at the very least to make use of some of the refinements of technical theological and philosophical vocabulary that had been evolved especially in the Greek-speaking Eastern section of the church during that discussion. But its use of the Christological development went much further and deeper than mere vocabulary, for each of the major dogmatic themes of that development was to make a decisive contribution to the Byzantine apologia for the icons: both the true divinity and the true humanity of the Incarnate One were indispensible not only to the Byzantine understanding of the meaning of salvation but specifically to the defense of the use of images in orthodox worship. To understand the apologia, therefore, it is essential to understand historically the conclusions to which the Christological dogma led, and to see in those conclusions the implications that were drawn from the doctrine of New Being for all of human thought, and in particular for a Christian aesthetics.[78]

John's defense of the holy images is a continuation of what we have discussed up to now as the communion of incorruption: the ecclesial hierarchy as reflective and participatory in the celestial hierarchy, both animated by the Spirit and directed toward communion—simultaneously with one another and Christ. The eschatological dimension of the communion is the bodily resurrection of the saints who are restored by grace to incorruption in order to enjoy eternal communion with the One. Christ's resurrected incorruptible flesh bears witness to this eschatological realization. It is the objective holiness of said communion that Damascene addresses in his defense of the holy images, and particularly in his clarifying distinction of *latria* (adoration due only to the Lord) from *dulia* (veneration of holy persons, places, things).

[78] Jaroslav Pelikan, *Imago Dei: The Byzantine Apologia for Icons* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 70-71.

In his treatment of the Byzantine apologia for icons, Pelikan selects the sixth-century (pre-Iconoclastic) wool tapestry *Icon of the Virgin* as the "iconographic text" for his scholarly engagement. I draw attention to his choice of the tapestry icon for two reasons. First, its dating to the sixth century suggests it is reflective of the theology we have been discussing thus far. Second, in its particularity the *Icon of the Virgin* displays the economy as it would have been understood by the Church at this time. In fact, by way of example, let us briefly recall how the author of the *Trial of Maximus* concludes:

> Their end was a radiant resurrection, bringing peace with it to those who had been persecuted on his account, and joy to those who were afflicted for him, and ascension into heaven and accession at the Father's transcendent throne, and an appointed place above every principality and power and virtue and domination, and every name which is named whether in this age or in the age to come. May we obtain all these things through the prayers and intercessions of the all-holy supremely glorious Mary, truly by nature Mother of God and Ever-Virgin worthy of all praise, and of the holy apostles, prophets, and martyrs. Amen.[79]

Here we find imagery of the divine throne and the presence of the Mother of God, holy apostles, prophets, and martyrs—in other words, the economy. Pelikan briefly describes

[79] *Trial*, 28.

the tapestry as consisting of two "zones" with the lower "being more than four times that of the upper zone" where Christ is seated on a throne, flanked by two angels. The lower zone "presents the Virgin Mary in Majesty, also seated on a throne and also flanked by two angels; the Christ Child is on her lap.… On the three sides not bordering the upper zone there appear twelve medallions, each labeled with the name of an apostle/evangelist."[80] Although there are no other saints pictured in this icon, it is notable that Mary and the angels on each side of her are identified as saints: *hē hēa* [hagia] *Maria* (Saint Mary), *ho hagios Gabriēl* (Saint Gabriel), *ho hagios Michaēl* (Saint Michael).

I will not attempt to interpret the icon in light of the multivalent theological and political meanings within its Byzantine context; Pelikan has done this brilliantly already. However, I do want to draw attention to his concluding chapter, where he provides a helpful description of what he calls a "cosmology of icons" as this cosmology expresses a Dionysian theology that provides the rationale for John's treatment of *latria* and *dulia*. As we shall see, the example of this tapestry icon illustrates the noncompetitive nature of *theologia* and *oikonomia* and hence adoration and veneration. It therefore illustrates how orthopraxy operates in relation to its subject, the worship of the One.

In the iconoclast controversies of the eighth and ninth centuries, it becomes clear that the issues of making holy images and venerating holy images are theologically the

[80] Ibid. Pelikan indicates his reason for selecting this icon, "This is the only pre-Iconoclastic icon known to be in North America. In its composition and motifs it manages to combine many of the ideas that are determinative for the Iconoclastic controversy, fundamental to the Byzantine apologia for icons, and central to the Christian culture of the Eastern Roman Empire and its daughter Christian cultures in Russia, the Balkans, and the Middle East, including Byzantine Egypt, where the tapestry was probably woven and from where it came to Cleveland," XX.

same matter. There is only a defense of the practice of inscribing the invisible because the practice of venerating the invisible is already in play. The invisible economy is the precondition for the making visible of that economy. Therefore, as Pelikan notes, "[T]here could be a total aesthetics of the invisible, not only an aesthetics of the Incarnation."[81] This aesthetics of the invisible is none other than the cosmology of images—the iconomy, which John of Damascus defends.[82] Importantly, lest we fall into viewing the iconomy as mere abstraction, we must recall that the primary characteristic of the economy/iconomy is worship; that is, the economy/iconomy serves one purpose and that is to worship the One who reveals himself in his Church, thereby bestowing the gift of communion. Creatures—all creatures, whether celestial or earthly—exist to worship the Creator. Pelikan notes that doctrinal development concerning the invisible economy, while important, was not the "central locus" of the affirmation of the invisible cosmos: "[T]he central locus of expression for this Byzantine affirmation of the place of angels in the cosmos was not in any theological treatise, neither in *The Celestial Hierarchy* of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite nor in *The Orthodox Faith* of John of Damascus, but in the liturgy, in which angels, apostles, prophets, and martyrs all

[81] Ibid., 169.

[82] Ibid., "Thanks to the development of the doctrine of angels, the Byzantine apologia for icons helped the theology of the church not only to codify for the first time such a Christian aesthetics of the invisible, but also to round out the comprehensive and radical reinterpretation to which Christian doctrine was subjecting the entire system of Classical metaphysics, including ontology and cosmology," 169. It should be noted that the image has already played a crucial role in previous patristic thought and especially in the thought of Pseudo-Dionysius and Maximus Confessor—both authors' writings are replete with talk of "images" and "symbols" as we have seen. We see with Damascene, the literary use of "image" becomes literal as the holy images under attack are merely illustrative of the Pseudo-Dionysian and Maximian images.

participated."[83] Thus the subjugation of the Classical "chain of being" to Christian doctrine and worship leads Pelikan to conclude, "It would probably be much more precise to speak about a liturgical doctrine of the 'great chain of images,' in which each link was, in one or another manner, tied to what was below it and to what was above it."[84] It is this "chain of images" that I refer to as the iconomy.

That the entire iconomy is under attack by the iconoclasts becomes clear in John's defense of the veneration of the saints. Apparently, there were some within the iconoclast camps who argued that images of Christ—but only images of Christ—could be permitted in Christian worship as Christ is God and God alone is to be worshiped. For John, this was unacceptable precisely because of what Christ had accomplished in his life, death, and resurrection. You cannot embrace Christ without embracing the "economic appropriation" of his incarnation. That is, you cannot embrace Christ without embracing that for which he came. This is what sets Christians apart:

> And of old, Israel neither set up temples in the name of human beings nor celebrated their memorial—for human nature was still under the curse and death was condemnation, therefore they were enjoined that one who even touched the body of someone dead was to be reckoned unclean—but now, since the divinity has been united without confusion to our nature, as a kind of lifegiving medicine, our nature has been truly glorified and its very elements changed into incorruption.
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> …
>
> Let everyone know, therefore, that anyone who attempts to destroy an image brought into being out of divine longing and zeal for the glory and memorial of Christ, or of his Mother the holy Theotokos, or of one of the saints, or yet for the disgrace of the devil and the defeat of him and his demons, and will not, out of longing for the one depicted, venerate or honor or greet it as a precious image and

[83] Ibid., 173.
[84] Ibid., 170.

> not as a god, is an enemy of Christ and the holy Mother of God and the saints and a vindicator of the devil and his demons, and shows by his deed his sorrow that God and his saints are honored and glorified, and the devil put to shame. For the image is a triumph and manifestation and inscribed tablet in memory of the victory of the bravest and most eminent and of the shame of the worsted and overthrown. Many times have I seen those who long for someone, when they have seen his garment, greet it with their eyes and lips, as if it were the one longed for himself. It is necessary "to pay all of them their dues," in accordance with the holy apostle Paul, "honor to whom honor is due" and "to the emperor as supreme," and to rulers as appointed through them, to each according to the measure of his worth.[85]

I quote this passage at length as in it is the synthesis of all the points we have identified thus far regarding the consequences of the incarnation for the economy. Here John displays a succinct recapitulation of orthodox Christology, its implications for humanity which express the "already" and "not yet" of a Pauline soteriology, and, therefore, its implications for Christian worship as described by Dionysius and Maximus. In it, we see the implicit operation of *dulia* and *latria*, which is the theology of participation: the operations of the hierarchies. Moreover, the veneration of holy persons (places and things), through their images is an affirmation of a proper theological anthropology as was discussed in the previous chapter, which accepts the human need for sensorial mediation as a divine concession and provision—and therefore a gift by which the One draws humanity into conformity to himself thereby establishing communion. To deny Christians the possibility of communing with the Lord by way of veneration as ordered toward adoration is therefore to denounce all of the above: the human (body and soul), creation (materiality), and the Lord (Creator and Redeemer).

[85] John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images*, *III*, 9-10.

It is, therefore, not only the existence of holy images that is at stake but the practice of veneration. John combats the accusations of the iconoclasts by showing that idolatry has a particular content: that is, idols correspond to that which is not Creator. Responding to the iconoclast accusations of idolatry based on the Old Testament prohibition, "You shall venerate the Lord your God and him alone shall you worship" and "[Y]ou shall not make any likeness, of anything in heaven or on the earth," John further contextualizes their prooftext to show that there was a clear and particular motivation behind the Lord's prohibition. After quoting Deut 4:12, 15-17, 19, John concludes: "You see that the single purpose of this is that one should not worship, or offer veneration of worship, to creation instead of the Creator, but only the One who fashioned all. Therefore everywhere it concerns worship by veneration."[86] In other words, an image of Christ cannot be rightly called an idol within a grammar of orthodox iconology. But in order to understand this one must accept that in the incarnation we "have received the habit of discrimination from God and know what can be depicted and what cannot be delineated in an image."[87] John displays this orthodox discernment of images by then showing that God himself prescribes the inscription of likenesses in his encounter with Moses on Mount Horeb. Invoking Moses's voice, John explains:

> I did not say, You shall not make an image of the cherubim that stand as slaves beside the mercy seat, but "you shall not make any likeness" as of God, nor shall you worship "the creation instead of the Creator." Therefore I did not make a likeness of God, nor of anything else as God or human (for the nature of humanity is enslaved to sin), nor "did I worship the creation instead of the Creator." I have made the tabernacle a likeness of the whole creation "according to the pattern shown me on the mountain" and the cherubim overshadowing the mercy seat as

[86] Ibid., 7.
[87] Ibid., 8.

> standing before God. You know, how the purpose of Scripture is made clear to those who search intelligently.[88]
>
> …
>
> And in the Gospels the Lord himself said to those who tempted him by asking if it was permissible to pay taxes to Caesar, "Bring me a nomisma." And they showed him a denarion. And he asked them, "Whose image does it bear?" And they replied, "Caesar's." And he said, "Give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God." Since it bears the image of Caesar, it is Caesar's, and therefore give it back to Caesar. If [it bears] the image of Christ, give it back to Christ; for it is Christ's.[89]

Idolatry entails a particular trajectory and produces its own economy: idols draw persons away from worship of the true God. The question that arises is: who/what belongs to Christ? And herein lies John's defense of the veneration of the saints. To venerate the Theotokos and the saints cannot be idolatrous as it is through our veneration of them that we draw closer to Christ who has himself deemed these his friends.

> But then they say, Make an image of Christ and of his Mother who gave birth to God, and let that suffice. What an absurdity! You confess clearly that you are an enemy of the saints! For if you make an image of Christ, but in no wise the saints, it is clear that you do not prohibit the image, but rather the honor due to the saints,

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[88] Ibid., 9, ref. Deut 5:8, Exod 37:3. The editor notes that John's use of Exodus here is slightly different from the LXX "which reads 'a work with cherubim woven in,' which is closer to the Hebrew." I point this out as it could have implications for the interpretation of the *Icon of the Virgin* tapestry. Pelikan posits that the angels figured on either side of the enthroned Christ in the upper zone may be the same angelic figures flanking the Theotokos and Christ in the lower zone, that is, Archangels Gabriel and Michael. However, it seems perfectly plausible to view the upper zone as an icon of the *Mercy Seat*, which includes Christ enthroned and surrounded by cherubim. On this reading, Mary in the lower zone represents the ark of the covenant, Christ in the upper zone the mercy seat and fulfillment of the Covenant, and the icon becomes a recapitulation of the imagery of Exodus which John here invokes—nearly literally as here we are observing a tapestry icon: "But these are the things that God commanded, 'they should make,' it says: 'the veil of the tabernacle of witness from aquamarine and porphyry and spun scarlet and twisted flax, woven work of the cherubim,' and 'they made the mercy seat above the ark and the two cherubim out of pure gold.'"

[89] Ibid., 11.

> something that no one has ever dared to do or undertake with such brazenness. For to make an image of Christ as glorified and to spurn the image of the saints as without glory is to endeavor to show that the truth is false. "For I live," says the Lord, "and I shall glorify those who glorify me," and the divine apostle, "So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, an heir of God through Christ," and "if we suffer together [with him], so that we are glorified together." You are not waging war against the images, but against the saints. John the theologian, who leant on Christ's breast, therefore says that "we shall be like him." For just as iron plunged into fire does not become fire by nature, but by union and burning participation, so what is deified does not become God by nature, but by participation. I am not speaking of the flesh of the incarnate Son of God; for that is called God immutably by hypostatic union and participation in the divine nature, not anointed by the energy of God as with each of the prophets, but by the presence of the whole of the One who anoints. Because by deification the saints are gods, it is said that "God stands in the company of gods, in the midst he discriminates between gods…."[90]

We can see here a clear link between the economy and the holy images. The holy images are a further affirmation of the saints' role in the economy—a role that is expressive of a Pauline soteriology. The saints, through their images, are to be venerated because God has glorified them. The veneration of the saints is an expression of the Church's affirmation of 1) the role of death in the life of the Christian and 2) an awaited bodily resurrection for the faithful.[91] That the saints have perished yet remain alive in Christ awaiting resurrection is consistent with the development of doctrine on these matters and, hence, the communion of incorruption.

> For from the time when God the Word became flesh, and was made like us in every respect save sin, and was united without confusion with what is ours, and unchangingly deified the flesh through the unconfused co-inherence of his divinity and his flesh one with another, we have been truly sanctified.… And from the time when he descended into Hades and preached the forgiveness to the souls, who had been bound as captives there for all eternity, like sight to the blind, and, having bound the strong one by his excess of power, rose again and gave

[90] *On the Divine Images I*, 19.
[91] More will be said in the following chapter about the former and how it pertains specifically to the bodies of the saints.

> incorruption to the flesh that he had assumed from us, we have been made truly incorruptible. From the time when we were born of water and the Spirit, we have truly been adopted as sons and become heirs of God. Henceforth Paul calls the faithful holy. Henceforth we do not mourn for the saints, but we celebrate their death.[92]

Supported by the hierarchy, the veneration of holy persons becomes an essential part of what it means to worship Christ and to be conformed to him. In his summary treatment of the kinds of images and kinds of veneration at the conclusion of his third treatise defending the holy images, John exhibits the logic of the iconomy. Central to the iconomy is the unique status of Christ as the only "undeviating image." What follows is a brief gloss on John's taxonomies of icons and veneration.

A Gloss on John Damascene's Taxonomy of Images and Veneration from the *Third Defense*

Concerning the *image*, John asks:

> First, what is an image?
> Second, what is the purpose of the image?
> Third, what different kinds of image are there?
> Fourth, what can be depicted in an image and what cannot be depicted?
> Fifth, who first made images?[93]

And concerning *veneration*:

> First, what is veneration?
> Second, how many kinds of veneration are there?
> Third, how many objects of veneration do we find in Scripture?
> Fourth, that all veneration takes place for the sake of God who is naturally worthy of veneration,
> Fifth, that the honor offered to the images passes to the archetype.[94]

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[92] Ibid., 21.
[93] *III*, 14.
[94] Ibid., 15.

First, *what is an image*? He opens by offering a generic definition: an image is a nonidentical presentation of that which it shows; it is related to but separate from its archetype.[95] "For example, the image of a human being may give expression to the shape of the body, but it does not have the powers of the soul; for it does not live, nor does it think, or give utterance, or feel, or move its members."[96] Interestingly, here John gives the example of a son being the "natural image" of his father. We will see a bit later what John means by natural image but here it is meant to indicate that there is both a degree of participation and separateness between the archetype (father) and image (son). He is not here discussing Trinitarian logic.

Second, *what is the purpose of the image?* The purpose of the image is to reveal what is hidden. This is a general epistemological statement with theological implications, "Every image makes manifest and demonstrates something hidden."[97] This is the case, first, because humans who are restricted to bodily location in time and space cannot know what is not made present to them in some bodily form. To know, for humans, is to attend to what has been made manifestly present. What remains hidden may be other humans or things or events taking place in other times and other places, it may be concepts, or it may be divine actions involving other invisible realities. In any case, the revelation

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[95] As Pelikan notes, this formal relationship between the archetype and image was first detailed by Pseudo-Dionysius, "[I]t was above all Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite in the sixth century who had formulated the definitive view of angels. He had likewise provided the defenders of the icons with a definitive theory of the relation between 'image' and 'archetype' for which they were able to claim him as an authority. This he had done by showing, in the paraphrase of Nicephorus, that 'truth is in the likeness and the archetype in the image, each in the other except for the difference of essence,'" 171.
[96] *III*, 16.
[97] *III*, 17.

conveyed is necessarily made manifest through the image in order to be made known. The subsequent purpose is a matter of sanctification: "[A]s we learn what is hidden from things recorded and noised abroad, we are filled with desire and zeal for what is good, and avoid and hate the opposite, that is, what is evil."[98]

Third, *what different kinds of images are there?* John offers detailed description of six kinds of images: 1) the natural image, 2) divine prefigurations, 3) humankind, 4) scriptural shapes and forms, 5) scriptural prefigurations; and 6) remembrances.

The first, natural image: "In each thing it is necessary that first there is what is by nature, and then what is contrived by imitation…."[99] We have already noted John's example of the son being the image of the father as an instance of this kind of image. At this point, however, John does invoke Trinitarian theology to show in what ways the Son and Spirit are considered "natural images" of a unique sort for only when speaking of the divine persons of the Holy Trinity can we invoke the concept of a "natural, undeviating" image. This characteristic John contrasts to the son who, it was explained earlier, is natural in that he shares his father's nature and likeness but he cannot be said to be "undeviating" because he is essentially separate from the archetype, i.e., the father. Not so with the Holy Trinity.

John uses several scriptural passages to display the unique relations between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and then explains: "[T]he first natural and undeviating image of the invisible God is the Son of the Father, showing in himself the Father." The Son is "the Father's image, natural, undeviating, in every respect like the Father, save for being

[98] Ibid., 17.
[99] Ibid., 18.

unbegotten and possessing fatherhood.…" Likewise, "the Spirit is therefore a like and undeviating image of the Son, being different only in proceeding; for the Son is begotten, but does not proceed."[100] John is clearly grounding his argument and description of the iconomy in a solid orthodox doctrine of God. In so doing, John shows how one cannot speak of the Triune Lord apart from speaking of images, and that scripture sets the precedent for this imagistic grammar. Second, John is establishing the necessary framework for any theological or epistemological claim: although we must utilize imagistic language for contemplating the Lord we must simultaneously maintain the proper distinction between *theologia* and *oikonomia*, that is, speech about God and speech about everything that is not God. This is why John must emphasize the essential characteristic of "undeviation" while ascribing the category of "natural image" to the second and third persons of the Holy Trinity. Nowhere else may this term be properly applied to the image. There can be no other undeviating image even while it is proper to recognize other natural images; hence John concludes with a reiteration of the son being the natural image of the father.

In both cases, divine and human, the natural image is established by the nature shared. The Son and Spirit are undeviating images because they share the divine nature with the Father and the divine nature permits no deviation. Therefore, when applied to the divine nature, "natural" necessitates a rejection of the approximation inherent to all other natural images and instead acknowledges the unchanging nature of the Godhead. The Father is known through the Son who is made known through the Spirit: One Lord, no

[100] Ibid.

degrees of separation. John appeals to Paul who affirms the Son, "who is the image of the invisible God," and also to Christ himself in the Gospel of John: "…[I]n the Gospel according to John, when Philip says, 'Show us the Father and it is enough for us,' and the Lord replies, 'Have I been so long with you, and you have not known me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.'"[101] The shared human nature between father and son entails just the opposite, that is, by their nature the son cannot be an identical image of the father because, as we shall see, the human as image is a mimetic image. Human likeness will always be approximate.

The second kind of image also pertains to the divine Lord. These are images of prefiguration: "[T]he conception there is in God of what he is going to bring about, that is his pre-eternal will, which eternally holds sway … for the divine is unchangeable.…"[102] Because time does not apply to the Lord, all that he wills exists in him as "images and paradigms of what he is to bring about" in time. John notes, these "images and paradigms" are called "predeterminations" by Saint Dionysius.[103] I have called these "prefigurations" according to John's explanation, "For in his will before they come to be there is shaped and imaged what he has predetermined and what will infallibly come to

[101] Ibid. Cf. Col 1:15; John 14: 8-9.
[102] Ibid., 19.
[103] Cf. Pseudo-Dionysius, *DN,* 5. Here Dionysius identifies God as Cause and Preexistent—God is at once the Cause of all things and beyond all things; everything that exists comes from the Preexistent and therefore preexists in him before time: "We give the name 'exemplar' to those principles which preexist as a unity in God and which produce the essence of things. Theology calls them predefining, divine and good acts of will which determine and create things and in accordance with the Transcendent One predefined and brought into being everything that is," 824C.

be."[104] In the Lord conceptions are given shape because they exist prior to their manifestation. Or rather, it is their moment of manifestation, as ordained by the Lord, that occasions their formation in the Lord apart from time. The relation to time and the Preexistent is yet another very complex theological subject that cannot be properly attended to here. Why is it significant for John's defense of the holy images? Two reasons come to mind. First, recall that in John's argument he must show the iconoclasts that their reading of scripture introduces a contradiction into their doctrine of God.[105] John, by contrast, shows that the merciful Lord's prohibition against idols is not inconsistent with the Lord's instructions to create images for use in the temple. By identifying images of prefiguration, John is once again affirming the orthodox position concerning God's changelessness. What manifests in time preexists in the timeless, unchangeable Lord. Only when this is maintained can we discern correctly appearances of change or contradiction in scripture, God's will from not God's will. Consequently, this conception of the image further substantiates the ecclesiological claims inherent to John's position. When John, like the other church fathers, appeals to tradition he is appealing to the will of the Lord. This is why it is central to any theological argument that the weight of tradition is on its side. By drawing a connection between the Logos and that which exists from the Logos, John is connecting the holy images to the Logos by way of

[104] *III*, 19.

[105] This refers to John's argument as discussed previously where he shows that the prohibition against making idols was not a general prohibition against making anything symbolic, as it shown in scripture and the making of the ark of the covenant. John argues, therefore, that the iconoclasts imply God is inconsistent, which God surely cannot be. Therefore, one must attend to the spirit and meaning of the prohibition to understand its aim.

illustrating God's will: first by representing the invisible hierarchy and second by depicting God's will as played out in salvation history. This will become clear as we detail the other types of images. For here, it is important to recognize the metaphysical link John is making and how it helps him avoid charges of innovation. For all of the church fathers, innovation is the mark of anathema.

Finally, to acknowledge these images that exist in the Lord as paradigms underwrites John's claims regarding the veneration of the Theotokos and all of the saints. The saints become paradigmatic and, therefore, necessary for the living faithful to ascend similarly in the life of holiness. By becoming paradigms they cannot be arbitrary for the still-living disciples of Christ; they must be revered/venerated in order to be imitated. The images of prefiguration manifest within time, at the appointed time, and subsequently become experienced by humanity as the sixth kind of image, i.e., images of remembrance. All of this occurs because it is first willed by God and revealed through the Church for our sanctification.

Having established the source of the image in the Triune life, John describes the third type of image as "that brought about by God through imitation, that is, human kind."[106] The human as image entails a mimetic relation to the Creator through whom and according to whom she was created. This mimetic relation establishes the approximate nature of humankind's participation in the divine nature: "For how will the creature be of the same nature as the uncreated save through imitation?"[107] Here John draws an analogy between the psychological reading of the Trinity and the internal

[106] Ibid., 20.
[107] Ibid.

relations between the mind, reason, and spirit in the human. That the human has all three capacities, John suggests, indicates the approximate freedom and sovereignty the human shares with the divine. By making the human according to his image and likeness (Gen 1:26), John contends, the Lord is granting a degree of sovereignty to the human who imitates him (the Lord) in ruling over the rest of creation. Interestingly, humanity's freedom and sovereignty are precisely what make the human an image of imitation; the human is a contingent creature whose freedom is exercised via participation in the divine Image. Sovereignty is contingent upon freedom, which is contingent upon participation. This contingency is the gift of iconicity of the human creature. Here, the orthodox "image-likeness" anthropology correlates the notion of participation with imitation; we participate in the divine nature by imitating it, that is, exercising our freedom and sovereignty according to divine purposes.

We have already seen John place the incarnation of Christ at the center of the debates concerning whether or not God can be depicted. This argument relied on a distinction between depicting the uncircumscribable divine nature—which John clearly rejects as blasphemous—and the circumscribable humanity of Christ. Although the divinity of Christ is not something that can be seen, we nonetheless depict the Word made flesh as he deigned to be seen, that is, as a human. Only through the power of the Holy Spirit can the eyes of faith be opened so that gazing upon the Word the mystery of the divine and human natures of Christ may be revealed. This is precisely what John meant previously when referring to the Spirit as the natural, undeviating image of the Son. The Spirit images the Son, revealing him as the undeviating image of the Father,

that is, as divine. Without the Spirit the divinity of Jesus is not revealed. The Lord remains unapproachable because un-visible. The image of Christ's humanity has the potential to breach the un-visible but cannot do so without the procession of the Spirit. Theological anthropology must follow this Trinitarian logic in order to fully appreciate what has been given humankind in being made in the image and likeness of the Lord. The condescension of the Word in Jesus Christ becomes the form to which the image of humankind must conform. The participation inherent to the freedom granted to each human is precisely a participation in this divine descent. In other words, to be fully human is to imitate Christ via kenosis. There is no theosis/deification apart from kenosis. When John states that the third image is the mimetic image of humankind he is establishing the image of the Son as the center of the economy and the means by which that economy is upheld. Everything centers on the One the human was made to imitate and whether or not she does so.[108]

The fourth type of image is the "use in Scripture of shapes and forms and figures to convey a faint conception of God and the angels by depicting in bodily form what is invisible.…"[109] Scriptural images of this sort are yet another way the Lord provides what is needed so that humans may know and worship him. These are textual images that provide a means for bodily comprehension, often by way of analogy. This divine concession is an act of mercy and reveals to us a Lord who recognizes the impotence of our intellect and reliance on material realities for understanding immaterial realities. The

[108] In John's treatise this is actually a rather brief section. I have done more to try and tie it theologically to what we have covered thus far concerning the soteriological aims of the hierarchy and humanity's place within it.
[109] Ibid., 21.

emphasis here is not negative. Rather John, drawing on both Dionysius the Areopagite and Gregory Nazianzen, affirms the positive nature of the created world. John is fully aware of the various heresies that would deny such a view and he is here implicitly rejecting them as inconsistent with who the Lord is, that is, merciful. Creation is a gift not to be renounced and overcome but to be recognized as a conduit for deeper understanding of the invisible realities shown dimly in the visible.

The fifth sort of image is the typological image "which prefigures and portrays beforehand what is to come, as the [burning] bush and the rain on the fleece prefigure the Virgin Mother of God.…"[110] John does not offer much explanation of this kind of image but it would be helpful to pause for an observation. First, the function of this image reaffirms John's second type of image, i.e., images of prefiguration, which we may recall exist as conceptions in the Lord. And so with these typological images we might read John as implying a theological conception of time in relation to the Preexistent. If the second type of image is preexistent, the only way the burning bush could be said to be a typological prefiguration of the Virgin Mary is if the two exist simultaneously prior to the manifestation of either in created time. And they do exist simultaneously as divine prefigurations in the Lord. There is no difference, then, between the hermeneutic that would read typologies of this sort in scripture and the hermeneutic that would allow for iconographic depiction of similar types. Both are forms of revelation.

[110] Ibid., 22.

The sixth type of image is the image of remembrance "to arouse the memory of past events…."[111] The events may be either glorious or wicked; in either case it is in their remembrance that the attendant is incited to pursue a life of virtue. John states that these kinds of images are "twofold": both written letters and visual depictions are used by the Lord in order that virtuous men and their acts may be recorded for the edification of all. He concludes, "[E]ither destroy every image [written and circumscribed] and establish laws against the One who ordered that these things should be, or receive each in the reason and manner fitting to each."[112] Thus John concludes his taxonomy of images. He then moves on to address the remaining questions previously posed.

John's fourth question on images, *"What is to be depicted and what is not to be depicted, and how is anything depicted?"* he answers succinctly: "To put it simply: we can make images of everything with a visible shape."[113] The only thing that we cannot circumscribe is the divine nature, which is "completely incomprehensible, without form or shape."[114]

And to his fifth question, *"Who first made images?"* John answers, "God himself first begat his Only-begotten Son and Word, his living and natural image, the exact imprint of his eternity; he then made humankind in accordance with the same image and likeness." John immediately links the Trinity to Christology to anthropology. Why?

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[111] Ibid., 23.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid., 24.
[114] Ibid. He will go on to explain how even immaterial bodies (angels, demons) can be said to have bodies even if they are not material like the rest of creation. Only God is completely by nature incorporeal.

Because the Son as the first and only undeviating image became Image for the sake of humanity. Here again we see how this funds John's defense of the veneration of saints:

> And should I not make images of the friends of Christ, and should I not venerate them, not as gods, but as images of God's friends? For neither Jacob nor Daniel venerated the angels who appeared to them as gods, neither do I venerate the image as God, but through the images of his saints I offer veneration and honor to God, for whose sake I reverence his friends also.… The Son of God did not become an angelic nature hypostatically; the Son of God became hypostatically a human nature. Angels do not participate in, nor do they become sharers in the divine nature, but in divine activity or grace; human beings, however, do participate in, and become sharers of the divine nature, as many as partake of the holy Body of Christ and drink his precious Blood; for it is united to the divinity hypostatically, and the two natures are hypostatically and inseparably united in the Body of Christ of which we partake, and we share in the two natures, in the body in a bodily manner, and in the divinity spiritually, or rather in both ways, not that we have become identical [with God] hypostatically (for we first subsisted, and then we were united), but through assimilation with the Body and Blood.… Therefore, I honor the saints and I glorify them together with Christ as his slaves and friends and fellow-heirs: slaves by nature, friends by choice, and sons and heirs by divine grace.…[115]

This is a rare instance where we see John connect the Blessed Sacrament to the veneration of the saints, and it is expressive of the Dionysian emphasis on the Eucharist as that sacrament that facilitates our communion with God and one another in an exceptional way. We partake of the Blessed Sacrament because the Son became one of us, for us, and by it he continually offers himself to us so that we might become like him. The saints exhibit the reality of Christ's binding himself to us—"through assimilation"—for our sake. There is some contrast here with Dionysius, however, in that Dionysius doesn't emphasize humanity as above the angels because we receive the sacraments and they do not. Whereas Dionysius explains that each being participates in the One according to capacity, he does not place a value on the form of participation the way John

[115] Ibid., 26.

does here. This may be yet one more instance where John's vision of the hierarchy could be said to be more Christological, or explicitly Christological, following Maximus.

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John then moves on to discuss *veneration,* which is where we see him develop the distinction and relation between *latria*—worship due to God alone—and *dulia*—veneration of holy persons, places, and things. Again, John addresses five ideas.

How are we to understand veneration? Like the image, veneration should be understood in multiple ways, but John begins again by offering a general definition: "Veneration accordingly is a sign of submission, that is of subordination and humility."[116] Answering his second question he offers that *there are two kinds of veneration*: worship of God and veneration of creation. Within each are "several forms" proper to the object of veneration. The first kind of veneration is worship "which we offer to God, who is alone venerable by nature."[117] However, there are five forms of worship due to God alone. The first is service which all creatures perform, "some voluntarily, some involuntarily." This form of worship is expressive of the Creator/creature distinction John has maintained throughout. To be a creature simply means to be one created for the glory of God. How creatures glorify their Maker varies according to their nature. For intellectual beings created with a free will, service of the Creator will come about either willingly or unwillingly. "Those who worship him voluntarily with knowledge are the pious, those who acknowledge him and involuntarily worship against

[116] Ibid., 28.
[117] Ibid., 29. Pelikan notes John's taxonomies are given in a descending order. Just as the Son is the first Image, so worship of God is the first order of veneration. This ensures the defense is entirely Christocentric.

their will are the demons, others who do not know the one who is God by nature worship involuntarily him of whom they are ignorant."[118] This explanation of service comports with John's emphasis on participation as constitutive of holiness. Because all are animated by the One, existence becomes a form of service to the One. However, our willing participation will lead to conformity to the One, whereas unwillingness or ignorance will undermine the conformity and thus the degree of communion.

The second form of worship is "wonder and desire, in accordance with which we venerate God because of his natural glory."[119] Because God is the source of all glory, he is concurrently the source of all wonder and desire — and the only One truly worthy to receive these. The third form of worship is thanksgiving, particularly for the Son's condescension by which he made us "sharers of the divine nature."[120] The fourth form of worship due to God alone "springs from our neediness and hope in his kindnesses."[121] The fifth is repentance and confession, which John explains is "threefold": "…[F]or some may grieve out of love, or because he may not obtain God's kindnesses, or in fear of punishment. The first arises from prudence and his desire for God and his filial disposition, the second is that of a hireling, the third that of a slave."[122] Notice how resonant these three are with the three detailed in John's explanation of the first form of

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[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid., 29.
[120] Ibid., 30. Cf. 2 Pet 1: 4.
[121] Ibid., 31. Cf. Pseudo-Dionysius on "divine yearning" in *Divine Names* IV, 708A-713C: "And so it is that all things must desire, must yearn for, must love, the Beautiful and the Good. Because of it and for its sake, subordinate is returned to superior, equal keeps equal, superior turns providentially to subordinate, each bestirs itself and all are stirred to do and to will whatever it is they do and will because of the yearning for the Beautiful and the Good."
[122] Ibid., 32.

worship and those who serve God according to their knowledge and will: the pious, the demonic, the ignorant. This is not to suggest there is an explicit correlation intended. However, it is clear that, in the very least, John is realizing how the acts of confession and repentance are expressive of the disposition of the creature toward the Lord. Only the Lord can know whether we approach him as lover or fiend.

Next John asks his third question: "*How many objects of veneration do we find in Scripture, and in how many ways do we offer veneration to creatures?*" The first among creatures to be venerated are "those who, through their own choice and the indwelling and cooperation of God, have become assimilated to God as much as possible," that is, "the Holy Mother of God and all the saints."[123] John reiterates that these are to be venerated not because of who they are by nature, but because of who they have become by grace. "Therefore they are venerated as glorified by God, as those whom God has made terrible to their opponents and benefactors to those who approach them in faith, not as those who are by nature gods and benefactors, but as attendants on God and his servants, who out of love have been granted the good fortune of addressing him."[124] John here acknowledges relics as powerful for healing and miracles, "So those who approached the apostles received healings. Thus from the shadow and the handkerchiefs and aprons of the apostles there gushed forth healings."[125] Relics convey the power brought about by the saints' close proximity to the divine, which comes about by joining their will to his. First, God glorifies them; consequently, we venerate them.

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[123] Ibid., 33.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid. Cf. Acts 5:15; 19:12.

The second group of creatures worthy of veneration are those "through whom and in whom God worked our salvation." This includes holy places that are historically attached to moments in Christ's life, as well as holy temples "and every place in which God is named … because they are receptacles of divine energy."[126] John also reiterates that angels and saints are to be included here as they similarly are receptacles of divine energy.

The third kind of veneration is that "whereby we venerate those things dedicated to God, by which I mean the sacred Gospels and the other books [of scripture]."[127] Along with scripture, however, John also includes "patens and chalices, thuribles, lamps and tables," as all of these are sacred vessels dedicated to God's service.

The fourth kind of veneration is of images "seen by the prophets … and also the images of things to come." This should be taken to include the various holy images John has described previously.

The fifth kind of veneration is that of honoring "one another as having a portion of God and having come to be in the image of God." This he says is a matter of "fulfilling the law of love."[128]

The sixth kind of veneration is the honor due to those put into positions of authority. Although the particular reference isn't made, John is describing the kind of return as when Jesus instructed the disciples to render unto Caesar what is due to Caesar. It is a human convention to acknowledge human hierarchical relations.

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[126] Ibid., 34.
[127] Ibid., 35.
[128] Ibid., 37.

The seventh and final form of veneration is that "whereby slaves [venerate] their masters, and the needy their benefactors…." As stated above, this and the sixth type of veneration acknowledge a form of human convention. Therefore it becomes clear in his treatment of "veneration" that submission to God and to his servants is natural to how humans acknowledge human hierarchies as well. Veneration is not a practice foreign to human societies; the question becomes not *will* you venerate but *who* and *what* will you venerate?

John ends his treatment with a final exhortation that synthesizes his entire defense of the holy images, comparing the common civil acts of veneration to the veneration celebrated by the Church.

> Let us, therefore, brothers, stand on the rock of faith and in the tradition of the Church, not removing the boundaries which the holy fathers set in place, not give space to those who wish to innovate or break up the structure of God's holy, catholic and apostolic Church. *For if license is given to anyone who wishes, little by little the whole body of the Church will be broken up….*
>
> Let us venerate and worship, as God to be venerated by nature, the only creator and fashioner. And let us venerate the holy Mother of God, not as God but as the mother of God according to the flesh. Furthermore, let us venerate the saints as God's chosen friends, who have the right to appear before him. For if to kings, who are destined for corruption and often enough are impious and sinners and also to rulers appointed by them, and to images of these men, wreathed with laurel, human beings offer veneration … how much more is it not necessary to venerate the Lord of Lords, as alone wielding dominion by nature, and also his slaves and friends, who have conquered the passions and been appointed rulers of all the earth … and have received authority over demons and disease, and reign together with Christ with a *kinship incorruptible and unbreakable*, whose mere shadow drives away diseases and demons? Should we reckon the image to be weaker and less honorable than a shadow, for it truly depicts the archetype? [my italics][129]

[129] Ibid., 43. Emphasis mine.

As we can see from John's taxonomies, the iconomy illustrates the Dionysian definition of a hierarchy: a sacred order, a state of understanding, and an activity approximating as close as possible to the divine. Thus Pelikan concludes, "[T]he Iconoclastic rejection of the icons was tantamount to a rejection not only of one link but the entire chain of images."[130] What happens when the chain of images, the iconomy, ceases to exist? To use Maximus's language: Can the Church image God without unicity? If an image no longer corresponds to its archetype—what is it? A different image.

[130] Pelikan, 182.

Chapter 3

Communion

> [T]hat they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.
>
> –John 17:21

> [H]e looks towards his imminent death and burial, and sees this act of anointing as an anticipation of the honour which his body will continue to merit even after his death, indissolubly bound as it is to the mystery of his person.
>
> *–Ecclesia de Eucharistia §47*

Corpus Christi

It is the morning of June 15, 2017. It is a national holiday in most Bavarian towns and Munich is no exception. There is a bustle along the streets and a noticeable display of *dirndls* and *lederhosen,* the traditional Bavarian garments still frequently worn by locals—especially on occasions such as today. The stream of pedestrians builds and becomes concentrated in *Marianplatz*, the city center. Crowds of people stand in organized groups, separately identified by their attire and banners, each displaying a symbol representing a guild, fraternity, parish, or organization. Hovering over the gathering is an enormous crucifix carved out of wood, upheld by five wooden stakes each over ten feet long. A small statue of the crowned Virgin with Christ-child stands on a platform attached to two horizontal poles, the base covered in fresh flowers. Temporarily resting on the ground but watched over by several sturdy men, the Virgin glances down serenely, waiting to be lifted onto their shoulders and processed through Munich's largest

shopping district. She is in good company, surrounded by saints fashioned out of textiles and wood carved to perfection by Bavaria's world-renowned woodworkers. But this is an international affair not limited to the local Bavarians. An opulent black banner decorated in bold golden-embroidered flowers features a painting of Christ's crucifixion at its center with an embroidered inscription above: *Hermandad del Señor de los Milagaos de Múnich*. A nearby group of Liberians stand out with their coordinated outfits made of a vibrant fabric busy with floral motifs and medallions containing an image of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Beneath each medallion is printed *My Heart Praise the Lord*.

The mix of fresh flowers, colorful clothes and banners, and the hum of voices waiting for the liturgy to begin coalesce in stark contrast to the silent, white stage erected in front of the *Neue Rathaus*. The platform is set beneath a large white awning providing shade to the officiants and bishop who sit behind the altar covered in red. Hanging above them is a crucifix upon which Christ appears to look down at the elaborate monstrance placed at the center of the altar. The sacred host has already been processed from the nearby *Frauenkirche*, the archdiocesan cathedral. The scene is at once solemn and celebratory.

Small booklets are passed around the crowd, containing the hymns and liturgy for today's feast of *Fronleichnam*. The Foreword by Reinhard Kardinal Marx, Erzbischof von Munchen und Freising reads:

> *In der Feier der heiligen Eucharistie erfüllen wir den Auftrag, den Christus seinen Jüngern in der Stunde des Abschieds beim letzen Abendmahl gegeben hat: "Tut dies zu meinem Gedächtnis." Dieser Auftrag formt die Kirche und halt sie zusammen: in jeder Messfeier, in besonderer Weise aber beim Hochfest des Leibes und Blutes Christi, dem Fronleichnamsfest.*

An Fronleichnam zeigen wir hin auf Christus. Wir wollen versuchen, in der Öffentlichkeit deutlich zu machen, dass Christus wirlich da ist, dass er existiert, dass man ihm begegnen kann—eine Radikalisierung des Evangeliums, zugespitzt auf dieses Stück Brot, in dem Christus selber gegenwärtig sein will, weil er es so verheißen het, weil wir glauben, dass es wahr ist, was er sagt: Das bin ich für euch. So bekennen wir, dass Jesus Christus die Wege unseres Lebens mit uns geht, dass sein Wort und die Gabe des Eucharistischen Brotes auf allen Wegen unsere Nahrung sind.

Wir preisen den Herrn in Gesängen des Lobes und der Anbetung. Anbetung gehört zum Glauben. Sie ist Antwort auf die Großtaten Gottes. Mögen alle, die inmitten unserer Stadt Eucharistie feiern und die als pilgerndes Volk durch die Straßen ziehen, aber auch alle, die die Straßen unserer Landeshauptstadt München säumen, in den großen Lobpreis miteinstimmen. Das Fest macht deutlich: Es ist eine Freude, Christ zu sein![1]

The throng of people becomes hushed and still as the liturgy begins. After the bishop's homily, the *Eucharistiche Prozession* begins. The bishop carefully carries the uplifted monstrance to the embellished portable awning upheld by four men. Behind the bishop groups of dignitaries, choral singers, priests, orders, fraternities, and then the laity follow in suit, raising their banners and singing as they turn onto Dienerstraβe. Making their way to Odeonsplatz and finally Königsplatz, the procession passes through the elite

[1] "In celebrating the Holy Eucharist, we are fulfilling the mission that Christ gave his disciples at the last supper in the hour of farewell: "Do this in my memory." This mission shapes the church and holds it together: in every Mass, but in a special way at the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, the Corpus Christi Festival."
"On Corpus Christi we point to Christ. We want to try to make it clear to the public that Christ is really there, that he exists, that one can be encountered — a radicalization of the gospel, pointed to this piece of bread in which Christ himself wants to be present because like that promise we believe is true when he says: this is me for you. In this way we confess that Jesus Christ follows the paths of our life with us, that his word and the gift of the Eucharistic Bread are our food in all ways."
"We praise the Lord in chants of praise and worship. Worship is part of belief. It is the answer to the great deeds of God. May everyone who celebrates the Eucharist in the middle of our city and who walks through the streets as a pilgrim people, but also everyone who lines the streets of our state capital Munich, join in the great praise. The festival makes it clear: It is a joy to be a Christian!"*Fronleichnam München*, Erzdiözese München und Freising, Stand 2015.

shopping district. The juxtaposition of traditional liturgical clothing and fanfare against the backdrop of the modern environs appears visually striking. However, in 2017 the religious holiday still translates to closed stores and businesses in Bavaria. The momentary silence of capitalist commerce appears to consent to the ceremonial reminder of Munich's Catholic past and, by all appearances, vibrant Catholic present.

Just a few steps away from the stream of processing bodies is the *Residenz*, the duchal palace. More than an architectural backdrop, the duchal palace stands as a historical testament to Bavaria's devout Catholic rulers. Today the *Residenz* participates in the local economy as a state-owned museum. Yet the state recognizes its importance as a religious site as it houses a tremendous wealth of religious art and artifacts both in the Treasury and the palace itself. The same objects that are now housed behind glass for tourists to view were once crucial features of Munich's *Fronleichnam* as portions of the duke's private relic collection were historically processed through the city's streets on this occasion. Together with the Sacred Host, the holy relics represented the communion of saints under attack by the Protestant reformers. Indeed the celebration of *Fronleichnam* had become an important public demonstration of the Counter-Reformation throughout Bavaria, although the festal celebration and processions date back to the thirteenth century.[2]

The feast of Corpus Christi, the body of Christ, was introduced to the Catholic faithful in 1246 by Robert de Thorete, Bishop of Liége, and in 1264 was instituted for the entire Latin rite by Pope Urban IV. The new feast day is traced back to a Carmelite nun,

[2] "Die Corpus Christi Erzbruderschaft bei St. Peter in München" *Aus dem Pfarrarchiv von St. Peter in München*, Heft 13.

St. Juliana of Liége, who for forty years had developed a special devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. After twenty years of receiving visions of Christ who instructed her to plead for the cause of the feast, Juliana revealed these visions to two entrusted sisters and finally to a priest who then took the petition to the local bishop. Upon the feast's institution Pope Urban commissioned none other than Thomas Aquinas to compose the texts for the Liturgical Office.

Tantum ergo Sacramentum	Down in adoration falling,
Veneremur cernui:	This great Sacrament we hail;
Et antiquum documentum	Over forms of ancient worship
Novo cedat ritui:	Newer rites of grace prevail;
Praestet fides supplementum	Faith will tell us Christ is present,
Sensuum defectui	When our human senses fail.
Genitori, Genitoque	To the everlasting Father,
Laus et jubilation,	And the Son who made us free,
Salus, honor, virtus, quoque	And the Spirit, God proceeding
Sit et benedictio:	From them each Eternally,
Procedenti ab utroque	Be salvation, honor, blessing,
Compar sit laudation. Amen.	Might and endless majesty. Amen.
	(trans. Matt Maher)

Juliana's devotion was in no way unique and indeed in the centuries leading up to hers the significance of the Eucharist and the doctrine of Real Presence was central to much theological debate and doctrinal development. Already in 1215 the Lateran Council IV declared:

> There is one universal Church of the faithful, outside of which no one at all is saved. In this Church Jesus Christ is both priest and sacrifice. In the Sacrament of the Altar, under the species of bread and wine, His Body and Blood are truly contained, the bread having been transubstantiated into this Body and the wine into His Blood by the divine power. In order to complete the mystery of unity, we receive from Him what he received from us. And no one is able to confect this

> Sacrament except the priest who is properly ordained according to the keys of the Church, which Jesus Christ Himself gave to the Apostles and their successors.[1]

Corpus Mysticum

The intricacies of the aforementioned developments are the subject of the seminal work by Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*. In particular he traces the linguistic developments surrounding Catholic understandings of the inextricable nature of the Church and the Eucharist. He does this by focusing on the "three bodies" theology that expresses the relationship between the (1) historical body of Christ (born of a Virgin), 2) sacramental body (Blessed Sacrament), and 3) ecclesial body (Church).

De Lubac painstakingly traces the "three bodies" paradigm, attributing its origin to Amalarius of Metz who in the ninth century debated the theory with Florus of Lyon.[2] Although expressing the unity of the three was the intent behind Amalarius's "three bodies" theory, Florus argued against it precisely because he saw in it an undermining of the unity of the Church: "Indeed no one should ever call the body of Christ triple or threefold, since the Apostle always calls it one and unique, when he says: 'Though many, we are one bread, one body,' etc. Indeed since it has Christ as its one head the body of all

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[1] *Adoration: Eucharistic Texts and Prayers Throughout Church History*, compiled by Daniel P. Guernsey (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999).

[2] Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Gemma Simmonds, CJ, with Richard Price and Susan Frank Parsons (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 23. De Lubac might here be identifying the "three bodies" theory as first formalized by Amalarius in the ninth century. Like Moss he provides ample evidence that there was already operative a theological and hermeneutical correlation between Christ, the Eucharist, and the Church prior to this time.

the elect is one…. How could one divide one heavenly bread into three?"[3] We might detect in the debate between Amalarius and Florus some similarity with the earlier Christological debates and in particular the theology of Severus of Antioch. Severus, as we have already shown, did not deny the full divinity and full humanity of Christ but he insisted on an emphasis of their unity in the incarnation as he felt the Chalcedonian position eventually led to an impotent soteriology. Florus's rejection of the "three bodies" paradigm seems to have been motivated by a similar concern if it meant some form of separation between the historical, sacramental, and ecclesial body. However, as De Lubac points out, despite their disagreements "the mysterious continuity linking the incarnation to the Church was felt by all."[4] This "tenacious" yet controversial theory persisted, generating many centuries-long attempts to maintain both the unity and diversity of Christ's "three bodies." "This is where *corpus mysticum* comes into service in order to specify the sacramental body," De Lubac explains.[5]

The term *mystical* was commonly employed in both Greek and Latin liturgies as it indicates "everything that touches on the mystery of the altar."[6] Therefore it should not be surprising that it was used to distinguish the sacramental body in the Eucharist. Nonetheless, De Lubac observes:

> From St. Paul onward, even in the context of the Eucharist, the name evoked a vaster doctrine, and in cases where it is a question simultaneously of both the Eucharist and the Church, and where the author is concerned to vary the

[3] De Lubac quoting Florus. Cf. *Aversus Amalarium*, I, n.7 (PL, 119, 76-77).
[4] Ibid., 24.
[5] Ibid., 29.
[6] Ibid., 37.

> expression used for both one and the other, there is a noticeable tendency within the tradition to preserve *corpus* for designating the Church.[7]

Because *corpus* was the preferred term for the Church another term was needed that would still maintain the Christological connection between Christ's historical body and Christ's body in the Eucharist. As we saw in chapter 2 there was indeed another scriptural term that could be fittingly applied to the Blessed Sacrament—*σαρχ*. When *flesh* is used to identify the Eucharist, De Lubac shows, it is done so according to the theological grammar exemplified by Augustine: "So we now as the members of Christ are fed with his flesh, so that we may be found to be nothing other than his body and blood, which are the source of our life.… The flesh and blood are made into our eternal food, so that we may be his body."[8]

Identifying the flesh and blood as "our eternal food" accentuates the eschatological dimension that was central to the understanding of Christ offering his flesh in the Eucharist. The eschatological significance of the Eucharistic celebration expresses the grammar of incorruption as detailed in the second chapter.

> The victim is pure since, although it is true flesh and blood, it is yet spiritual and incorrupt.... This victim is flesh, and yet not fleshly, but is untainted light…. It is body, and yet not bodily, but is spiritual light.[9]

De Lubac's discussion of the intricate debates around the Eucharist as "spiritual flesh" is resonant and in some ways a continuation of the early Christological debates discussed in the second chapter as well. That is, the ninth-century debates concerning how to

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[7] Ibid., 42.
[8] De Lubac quoting Augustine, *PL*, 120, 1297 A, 1311-12, 43.
[9] Ibid.,142. De Lubac quoting Blessed Odo of Cambrai's *Explanation of the Canon of the Mass* from the beginning of the twelfth century.

understand the Eucharist in relation to Christ's historical body brought back to the fore a renewed discussion of how to think of Christ's flesh and its soteriological significance. It became, once again, a matter of how to understand the Pauline notion of "spiritual bodies." However, in this debate it was not a matter of denying gnostic tendencies as the bodily resurrection was by this time uncontestable orthodoxy. Rather it was how to understand "spiritual" objectively in light of Christ's transfigured flesh. De Lubac describes the two schools of thought that developed according to Ambrosian "spiritualism" and Augustinian "realism." Ambrose's understanding would be dominant for some time. But, importantly, Ambrose's "spiritual" understanding was not antimaterial, nor antirealist. Rather Ambrose's "spiritualism" relied on

> …the Pauline assertion that "the Lord is Spirit." In the very chapter of *De mysteriis* where he had enumerated the works of divine power that cause us to believe in the sacrament of flesh, passing immediately from the Incarnation to the Eucharist, he urgently called to mind the spiritual state that was Christ's from Easter morning onward:
>
> "Christ is in this sacrament because the body is Christ's. It is therefore not bodily but spiritual food. This is why the Apostle says of its type, "Because our fathers ate spiritual food." … For the body of God is a spiritual body; the body of Christ is the body of the divine Spirit, because the Spirit is Christ, as we read, "The Spirit before our face is Christ the Lord."[10]

"Spiritual flesh" is Christ's resurrected flesh, which is transfigured incorruptible. This transfiguration of the carnal flesh into incorruptible flesh could only be accomplished by divine power and, therefore, "spiritually"—by the Holy Spirit. Consequently, Christ gives his flesh in the Eucharist and by partaking we are transformed "spiritually."[11] On this reading, there can be continuity between Paul's "spiritual bodies" as the resurrected

[10] Ibid., 133. De Lubac is quoting *De mysteriis*, n. 58 (PL, 16, 408-9).
[11] Ibid., 72.

spiritual flesh of Christ is now offered in the Eucharist and received by the living faithful. It is this action that instills in the living the Christian hope in the resurrected flesh of the saints—the gift of incorruption.

The linguistic preference for "spiritual flesh" eventually led to complications as signaled by the Berengarian controversy of the latter half of the eleventh century. The theological-linguistic pendulum would swing away from "spiritual" in favor of "substantial" in order to preserve the realist, bodily aspect of the sacrament. The salvific effect, the eschatological dimension, of the Eucharist is only enacted if it is also the "true" body, which hung on the cross. The emphasis on the substantive relation between Christ's historical body and Christ's bodily presence in the Eucharist became of utmost importance. As a result, the "three bodies"' paradigm was reduced to a "two bodies" paradigm. Again, prior to this moment the integral relation between the Eucharist and the Church was always in play: "The sacramental act would continue to be placed in relation to the necessary union with the body of the Church. In thought as in words, the mystery of the altar would remain close to the mystery of the communion of saints.…"[12] But it is *this* unity that shifts as "the need for unity was being replaced by a need for analysis."

> The reaction against Berengar had only served to strengthen a movement that had been initiated in the time of Paschasius Radbertus, and that was increasingly identifying the first two of the three "bodies" and detaching them from the third.… The Paschasian theory, even when it was still preserving its earlier form, to all extents and purposes became increasingly a theory of the twofold body: the historico-sacramental body and the ecclesial body.[13]

[12] Ibid., 96.
[13] Ibid., 162.

Thus De Lubac argues it is in the late twelfth century that another important shift occurs, precipitated in the prior century, whereby the Church—not the Blessed Sacrament—becomes commonly referred to as the "mystical flesh." He locates the watershed moment to that of Peter Lombard's *Sentences* and claims that although this new usage likely had its antecedents, "[I]t cannot be found anywhere else with such clear ecclesial significance before the time of Peter Lombard."[14]

De Lubac identifies the double symbolism of the Eucharist as the *reality* and *power* contained in its mystery:

> The reality is essentially the unity of the Church, it is the unique body formed by the gathering together of a multitude of members. The power is the spiritual efficacy of the sacrament, considered above all under its aspect of food.… Thus on the one hand we have the food and drink, in relation to everlasting life; on the other, we have the bread and wine, signs of the unity of the body of the Church.[15]

These two aspects of the Eucharist indicate both an objective social reality—the Church—and a subjective reality, the nourishment of the individual believer, each reality corresponding to our two terms *body* and *flesh* respectively. The two are related but, importantly, they remain distinct: "[T]he two Pauline metaphors of the union with Christ and his Church in one single flesh and the union of the members of Christ in one single body did not overlap," but ran "parallel."[16] However, with Lombard, attempting to follow Augustine's synthesis of the realities, any distinction between the two aspects becomes "suppressed."

> Like everyone, Peter Lombard juxtaposed the two symbolisms of species: the nourishment of the inner person, the confection of the unity of the Church. But, in

[14] Ibid.,102. Lombard's *Sentences* were completed in 1152.
[15] Ibid., 169-70.
[16] Ibid., 175.

> the unity of the members of the Church united in one single body, or *unity of the faithful*, he had no hesitation perceiving the mystical flesh of Christ, in which consists the final 'reality' of the sacrament. *Reality-and-not-sacrament, its mystical flesh*. In this way the terminology was unified. The *mystical flesh* and the *mystical body* would become interchangeable.[17]

In his commentary on the *First Letter to the Corinthians* and later in the *Sentences*, Lombard would distinguish the *twofold flesh* of Christ: "the first, the '*sacrament and reality*,' which he calls *proper flesh*, and the second, '*reality and not sacrament'*, which he calls '*mystical flesh'* …. Now, in both works, this *mystical flesh* is the Church: the '*unity of the faithful*,' the '*ecclesial union*,' the '*unity of the Church in those predestined*.'"[18]

Lombard's interpretation is not merely a matter of semantics; it indicates the opening for possible doctrinal shifts with potentially disastrous consequences for ecclesiology. Ironically, by suppressing the distinction between *flesh* and *body*, Lombard introduced a disassociation between the "second" and "third" bodies; that is, the *sacramental* body of the Eucharist and the *mystical* body of the Church. Whereas initially there had been a common understanding that the second and third bodies were distinct but mutually constitutive—both being mystical/sacramental realities—now the second body was viewed *sacramentally,* whereas the third was viewed *mystically*. Thus De Lubac notes, "It should be noted that *sacramental* and *mystical*, which until recently had still been considered synonymous, and are basically the same word, were now

[17] Ibid. Italics his. Importantly, De Lubac identifies this as a misappropriation of Augustine's theological understanding of *symbol*.
[18] Ibid., 102. Italics his.

separated and placed in opposition to one another."[19] The Church, as *mystical body*, now described a "*reality signified and not contained*" in the Eucharistic mystery. By the fourteenth century, "It would become common to speak of the 'mystical body' without any reference to the Eucharist, to the same extent that theories concerning the Church, whether in its visible form or in its hidden life, would develop outside the sacramental framework."[20] In opposing the *sacramental* and *mystical*, Lombard paved the way for the gradual loss of the tradition's metaphysical framework that had undergirded the entire sacramental system—the hierarchy.

This new opposition between the Blessed Sacrament and the "mystical body" of the Church creates the unfortunate condition of possibility whereby the term "body"

> … could be nothing more than a huge collection, called a body by use of a banal metaphor.… Speaking of the body of the Church could therefore be nothing more than a slightly more descriptive way of talking about the "body of Christians," as the Romans used to speak of the "body of the Greeks," or the "body of the Jews"….There is nothing mysterious in this, nothing "mystical," any more in the "body of the Church" than in the "body of Scripture."[21]

The term "body" now only operated as an analogy to that of the general human body or political body. Moreover, the new fundamental disassociation between the Church and the Eucharist meant a soteriological disassociation between Christ's "three bodies," which had hitherto been essential to Christianity; even when technical semantics were debated, the inextricable nature of the three was not.

> Over and above the institutional unity that was clear to any observer, from the time of St. Paul faith recognized within it an internal unity. It assigned to it a mysterious source of life: the very Spirit of Christ…. Now, the Eucharist is the

[19] Ibid., 103. See 45 onward for discussion of the terms *mysterium* and *sacramentum*.
[20] Ibid., 114.
[21] Ibid., 85, 87.

> mystical principle, permanently at work at the heart of Christian society, which gives concrete form to this miracle…. Literally speaking, therefore, the Eucharist makes the Church.[22]

The developments traced by De Lubac correspond to subtle yet substantive shifts indicative of a "fatal dichotomy" that would eventually lead to a rejection of the holy economy previously taken for granted as unshakeable. In their preoccupation with defending the objective reality of Christ's bodily presence in the Eucharist, theologians inadvertently introduced a "new departure" from the traditional understanding at the heart of Christianity: "Apology for dogma succeeded the understanding of faith."[23]

In the following section I will show how the consequences of the new departure were anticipated by the iconodules during the Byzantine iconoclast controversies. The historical consequences would come to fruition in the Reformation as illustrated by the resurgence of iconoclasm by the Protestant reformers. Without making the same historical connections, De Lubac nonetheless gestures toward the conceptual connections that came to bear out concretely, the background for which I have attempted to describe

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[22]Ibid., p. 88. See also, *Catechism of the Catholic Church, Part Two: The Celebration of the Christian Mystery*, 1396, "*The unity of the Mystical Body: the Eucharist makes the Church*. Those who receive the Eucharist are united more closely to Christ. Through it Christ unites them to all the faithful in one body—the Church. Communion renews, strengthens, and deepens this incorporation into the Church, already achieved by Baptism. In Baptism we have been called to form but one body. The Eucharist fulfills this call: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread: If you are the body and members of Christ, then it is your sacrament that is placed on the table of the Lord; it is your sacrament that you receive. To that which you are you respond "Amen" ("yes, it is true!") and by responding to it you assent to it. For you hear the words, 'the Body of Christ' and respond 'Amen.' Be then a member of the Body of Christ that your *Amen* may be true."
https://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c1a3.htm

[23] Ibid., 220.

in the preceding chapters, that is, the metaphysical realism assumed by the Church and articulated by Pseudo-Dionysius, Maximus the Confessor, and John Damascene corresponded to an ontological symbolism that centered on the Eucharist and took for granted the inextricable nature of Christ, the Blessed Sacrament, and the Church itself. Once the symbolism breaks down, the metaphysical understanding of the divine economy follows in suit. The false dichotomy that interjected an opposition between *sacramental* and *mystical* meant *mystical* was now opposed to the *real*/*true*: "… [T]he fact is that the invasion of *true* caused *mystical* to give way."[24]

Moreover, the same linguistic developments reveal a fundamental change in the discipline of theology. In particular, the role of reason and its proper object, i.e., contemplation of the divine mysteries, grew further and further apart to the point where reason and contemplation were now at odds with one another—something that would have been incomprehensible to the church fathers.

> For the Fathers, the essential mainspring of thought was not identity, or analogy, but *anagogy*.… From creation it reached up towards Christ, and through Christ had access as far as to the *invisible things of God*.… In the broadest sense, and according to an interpretation by St. Jerome of an idea of Origen's, it was therefore perspicacity in the contemplation of the sacraments. Being "rational" or "contemplative" therefore meant fundamentally the same thing. The reason that defined humanity was its aptitude for contemplation: it is proper to humanity to be rational and contemplative. Do we think there were no consequences for the whole of intellectual life that the same word should designate human reason and the Word of God? The uncreated image of the Father and the created creature "in his image" share an intimate relationship that the activity of reasoning had the aim of bringing to perfection.[25]

[24] Ibid., 221.
[25] Ibid., 235.

In other words, for the patristic era knowledge of God was essentially relational and participatory. To know God was to contemplate the mystery of God's relationship to his creation, primarily through the sacraments. The aim of contemplation was to be drawn even deeper into the mystery—not to resolve it. The concept of *theosis* is precisely this: we become like God by conforming to God. Conforming to God requires participation, first, in the liturgical worship of God and, second, in the contemplation of God. *Likeness* is thereby displayed by virtue, which is the effect of the Holy Spirit's imaging Christ in the participant. *Theosis* is the outcome of anagogy: a movement within the divine mysteries. The Dionysian hierarchies describe this movement. The "threefold body" of Christ was an expression of the real mystical union brought about by Christ's kenosis, that is, the incarnation, and continued in Christ's gift of himself in the Blessed Sacrament, thereby incorporating Christians into his body, the Church. But in order to understand how the incarnation mutually constitutes the second and third bodies, a symbolic/sacramental reasoning is required, that is, contemplation.

De Lubac's narrative of the breakdown of this symbolic reasoning centers on Augustine, or rather misinterpretations of Augustine's sacramental theology. For Augustine, *sacramentum* means *sign* and designates *mystery*. The terms are often used interchangeably. Yet, De Lubac observes, *mysteries* denotes an action: "It focuses less on the apparent sign, or rather the hidden reality, than on both at the same time: on their mutual relationship, union and implications, on the way in which one passes into the other or is penetrated by the other."[26] It is this constitutive mutuality of the mysteries that

[26] Ibid., 49.

becomes dissected by the rational reduction of apologetics, creating an ontological chasm between the "three bodies." The sign and signified no longer denote union and mutual participation whereas before, "it is the accomplishment of the mystery which produces the sacrament."[27] It is this mysterious action that solicits contemplation; thus the sacramental economy produces the fecundity of the corporate body of Christ. This was Augustine's understanding of the Eucharist and the Church: they constitute one another.

Augustine's symbolic reasoning became misunderstood and then distorted, De Lubac suggests, by those who misinterpreted Augustine's stance concerning those who unworthily partake of the Eucharist. In a way not too dissimilar from Pelikan's misreading of Pseudo-Dionysius as a "puritan" theologian, interpreters of Augustine missed the subtle nuance in his response to the problem. When Augustine responds that *He does not admit them into his body*, he was not endorsing a puritan theology. Rather De Lubac contends, "The problem, for Augustine, was that of the fruitfulness of the sacrament, that of its spiritual fruit (*being transformed into the body of Christ*) what happens is that this is made into a problem of validity, a problem of sacramental presence. It was indeed a question of communion; but it would primarily become a question of the effect of the consecration."[28] Therefore, in the ensuing attempt to protect the sacrament from ineffectiveness, the Augustinian symbolic synthesis would give way to an Anselmian apologetics: knowledge demands rational demonstration. Rationality, not contemplation, would now become the path to understanding. Conversely, those who were wary of a hyperrationalism resorted to antirationalism by promoting a return to the

[27] Ibid., 50.
[28] Ibid., 258. Italics his.

simplicity of faith. But having accepted the premise of a "new rationality" (opposed to contemplation) the very concepts of "faith" and "understanding" had undergone significant changes.

> Thus the mystery to be understood gave way before the miracle to be believed, because the very idea of what "understand" means had changed. Faith does not open up a path to contemplative understanding: it is an obstacle, set up by God himself, to cut across the appetite for rational speculation. There was therefore no longer any question of raising oneself from faith to understanding: from an understanding that had become dialectic [as opposed to symbolic] it was clear that on the contrary, we should say: "*understanding transcends faith*." If, despite everything, there was still some talk of "understanding," only one thing was now understood by it: the development of a correct idea of the object to be believed.… The end being pursued was no longer dogmatic or contemplative but purely apologetic.[29]

Once rational dialectic has replaced symbolic synthesis, "[t]he essential link that bonded the Eucharistic rite to the unity of the Church has disappeared." De Lubac concludes, "[S]ymbolism became something artificial and accessory.… We are no longer dealing with anything except a consequence in the practical order, a moral exhortation, applied to an 'elegant comparison.'"[30]

De Lubac's study of Eucharistic developments should resonate with those familiar with the Byzantine iconoclast controversies. There is indeed a theological resonance between the early iconodules' defense of the holy images and De Lubac's defense of the inextricable nature of the "three bodies" of Christ. It is the same symbolic reasoning, based on orthodox Trinitarian doctrine and Christology, that underwrites the privileged status of the Eucharist and, consequently, underwrites the legitimacy of the holy images. And it is the rejection of this sacramental logic that once again precipitates a breakdown

[29] Ibid., 240. Italics his.
[30] Ibid., 245.

of the holy economy centered on Christ's body. It is necessary, therefore, that we revisit the early iconoclast controversies in order to have a deeper understanding of the nature of communion before drawing attention to the new economy that would manifest in the Protestant Reformation. The question before us is the one De Lubac poses at the conclusion of his study: *Could Eucharistic realism not have been safeguarded without the virtually total abandonment of symbolism?*[31]

A Holy Synecdoche

There is no doubt that the developments traced by De Lubac are a natural outgrowth of the Christological debates we've already discussed. Already with Cyril and Irenaeus we saw the implicit connections being made between the "three bodies" of Christ and how this shaped their theology. De Lubac is confident describing the "three bodies" paradigm as the common patristic hermeneutic, although he locates its first explicit articulation to the ninth century. This date coincides with the second wave of Byzantine iconoclasm (813-843), which also had the relationship between the Blessed Sacrament and the holy images at its center. How to conceive of the relationship between the two was a point of acute disagreement between the iconodules and the iconoclasts. Interestingly, the character of the Eucharist as "true" would be used by the iconoclasts to contest the iconodule position regarding the sanctity of the holy images. What would count as a "true" image of Christ was debated and already, by contrast to De Lubac's timeline, in the ninth century we can see an anticipation of the breakdown of the symbolic synthesis that would eventually—many centuries later—materialize in a

[31] Quoting De Lubac. Ibid., 259.

breakdown of Christian metaphysics and thus the visible Church. Just as we saw in the above narrative how a "fatal dichotomy" that opposed *true sacrament* to *mystical body* led to the desacramentalizing of the Church, the iconodules understood in defending the holy images against the theology of the iconoclasts that they were preserving the holy economy, centered on the Eucharist. Once again, the question being debated was the nature of knowledge and the role of mediation. Once again, it was an issue concerning the relationship between matter and divinity, or, divine circumscription. Once again, the boundary between *theology* and *economy* would be pressed. Could a manmade image of Christ facilitate union with Christ and therefore be worthy of veneration? Or was the practice of Christian iconodulia a blatant indulgence in idolatry?

We have already discussed the arguments of John Damascene, the main defender of the holy images in the first wave of iconoclasm (726-787). In particular, we saw how his taxonomies of images and veneration were based on the hierarchies of Pseudo-Dionysius and the mystagogy of Maximus the Confessor. In his taxonomies, we could see a defense of the Christian economy which is expressed as a chain of images, each finding their origin in the Godhead and therefore necessarily linked to one another. It is for this reason, that is, their shared divine origin, that each type of image warrants veneration that is fitting to its role in the economy. The practice of proper veneration participates in the anagogical ascent—the entire activity of worship becoming the proper object of contemplation. That is, by venerating those persons, places, and things that are worthy of veneration because of their place within the economy we participate in the movement that leads us to commune with the One who alone is worthy of adoration. The

relationship between *latria* and *dulia*, once again, is Damascene's major contribution that leads to Nicaea II's pronouncement in 787 concerning the legitimacy of the holy images. Damascene had died by the time of the council. In the second wave of iconoclasm, his successors would have the advantage of appealing to the council. Many of the same issues would be repeated and taken up by both parties. However, the form of argumentation would change from that employed by John Damascene. The iconodules of the second wave would rely on Aristotelian categories to combat the faulty logic of their opponents. But it was still symbolic reasoning that they were defending using their training in classical Aristotelian logic.[32]

A great deal has been written about the technical nuances of the iconoclast debates. For our purposes, I will primarily focus on one aspect of the debate, that is, the

[32] Kenneth Parry, *Depicting the Word: Byzantine Iconophile Thought of the Eighth and Ninth Centuries* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1996). "One of the most significant developments in iconophile thought of the eighth and ninth centuries is the introduction and utilization of Aristotelian logic terminology by Theodore the Studite and the patriarch Nikephoros. Although John of Damascus composed an enchiridion of Aristotelian logic terminology, his *Dialectica*, he made no attempt to apply this terminology to his own apology for the holy images," 52. Parry notes that even so, Theodore also expresses some reservation about using the "technical skill of the Aristotelian system." In an essay published in 2018, Parry revisits the role of Aristotelian logic in the Byzantine debates, "The new dating puts a different complexion on the question regarding when this terminology was first adopted by iconophile authors. In the absence of other evidence, I am inclined to think it was on the curriculum of higher learning in the second half of the eighth century, when the iconophiles of second iconoclasm received their education, and that it became a focus of attention around the time of Nicaea II. In support of this I would cite the epitomes of Aristotelian logic terminology coming through from the sixth and seventh centuries, based mainly on Ammonius of Alexandria and his school." Parry concludes that although Damascene clearly knew and utilized Aristotelian logic elsewhere, he did not use it to defend the holy images. However, the above cited evidence indicates Theodore may have used it because it was an integral part of his formal education and therefore not "extraneous" to his thought. "Theodore the Stoudite: The Most 'Original' Iconophile," in *Jarbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 68. Band/2018, 261–75.

relationship between the Eucharist and the holy images, in order to draw out the economic implications. We learn from the writings of Theodore the Studite and patriarch Nikephoros how the iconodules understood the relationship, and it is primarily from their writings that we can surmise their opponents' views.[33] In Theodore's *Three Antirrhetici* the Orthodox respondent argues against the "Heretic" who represents the iconoclast position. Responding to the heretic's insistence that Christ can only be circumscribed in the Blessed Sacrament for it is here that Christ is "truly present" and in it alone "the act of representing is holy," Theodore responds by pointing out the reverse is actually true; that is, it is the Eucharist that legitimizes the veneration of the holy images (and other consecrated items):

> …[I]ndeed, the very body and Blood of Christ are acknowledged in the reception on the part of the faithful, according to the words of divine origin—why then do you talk nonsense taking as types (*topoi*) the sacraments (*mysteria*) of truth? "Do this in remembrance of me" is what the word says, and rightly so; indeed, this mystery is the recapitulation of the whole economy, signifying the whole by means of a synecdoche through the most important part.… Yet at the same time, he did not forbid us to celebrate the other mysteries.… The Word should be understood to have meant, "Do *all* these things in memory of me," including them through a sort of reticence under the heading of the most important mystery.[34]

From the outset of the *First Refutation*, Theodore invokes the previously established grammar of the worshipping economy: adoration of God includes veneration. "You should know, my hearers, that among us Christians there is one faith, and one adoration (*latreia*), and one veneration (*proskynesis*): the one that is addressed to the Father, and to

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[33] There are two primary iconoclast texts taken up by the second wave iconodules. The first is the *Enquiries* of Constantine V, which is preserved by Nikephoros's refutation of it. The second is the iconoclast Council of 754 contained in the sixth and seventh sessions of the Seventh Ecumenical Council in 787.

[34] Theodore Studite, *First Refutation of the Iconoclasts* in *Theodore the Studite: Writings on Iconoclasm*, trans. by Thomas Cattoi (New York: The Newman Press, 2015), 53.

the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.…"[35] And he will repeat this throughout: "Worship (*hē latreutikē*) is only of one type, and it belongs to God alone; to others, however, different types of honor."[36] We will return to the issue of veneration shortly. I mention it now as in the quotation above we can see clearly that it is the context of the *economy* that the iconodules insist must determine how we reason concerning the mysteries, as the mysteries are given for the benefit of the economy. As we saw in the earlier Christological debates, most often what determines a heretical Christology is a refusal to take into account the epistemological implications of the incarnation for the economy. The same can be said of the iconoclast: "The error in the iconoclasts' position … is that they do not distinguish between *theologia* and *oikonomia*."[37] The result is the iconoclasts' inability to accept the participatory relational character of the mysteries, including the holy images, because they insist on an economy of competitive agency—*dulia* threatens *latria*.

The iconoclast believes by insisting on the Blessed Sacrament as the only "true image" they can thereby reject all other images on the basis of their artificiality. It is a very similar move made by the theologians who would eventually oppose "true" and "mystical" when describing the Eucharist as the iconoclasts based their argument on the premise that "the true image must be of the same essence (ομοουσιος) with the prototype."[38] The bread and wine of commemoration becomes the "true image" once it is

[35] Ibid., I.I., 45.
[36] Ibid., I.XIX., 59.
[37] Ibid., *Introduction*, 29.
[38] Parry, 178. This argument is taken from Nikephoros's preservation of Constantine V's *Enquiries*.

liturgically transformed into the *real* body and blood of Christ. Through the *epiclesis* the elements become an "image" (εικων) of Christ's body. Because it is the Holy Spirit's work, the Eucharist is not artificial, that is, not manmade. And therefore it can even hold a special status as an icon "not made by hands" (αχειροποιητον).[39]

It would appear then that the iconoclasts were primarily concerned about figural representations. But this was not a tenable position as they made an exception for the cross. Therefore, the iconoclasts' "realist" argument had to be corrected by a symbolic argument that would require that the iconodules once again articulate the economy of the image itself, which requires placing it within the sacramental economy.[40] The heretic has claimed:

> Heretic: Let it be conceded that Christ can be represented, yet this should be according to the sacred words of divine origin: "Do this in memory of me," he said, clearly indicating that he could not be represented in any other manner than by commemoration, only in the act of commemoration what is represented is truly present, and the act of representing is holy.[41]

Let us recall De Lubac's discussion of *mysterium* wherein he describes its original connotation as an action: it is the act that *realizes* the symbol—there is no dichotomy between what is *true/real* and what is *symbolized* in the sacraments. This is important for understanding Theodore's response as he rejects the heretic's misapplication of the term types (*typoi*) for the sacraments (*mysteria*). Here Theodore's logic employs "truth" in the

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[39] Parry notes that the "tradition of designating certain images as αχειροποιητον was well established by the outbreak of iconoclasm in the eighth century," 181. Therefore this iconoclastic logic would have resonated with both camps.
[40] Cf. Charles Barber's chapter, "Truth and Economy," in *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm* for a fuller treatment of this claim. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002.)
[41] Theodore Studite, *First Refutation* I.X., 52.

sacramental sense and juxtaposes it to the heretic's use of "image": "What have you to say about these things that are reverently pronounced and sung by the priests? Do you call them image, or truth? If you call them image, what nonsense!"[42] In a clever move, Theodore undercuts the iconoclast argument that the Eucharist is the "true image" by insisting that in the case of the sacraments "truth" indicates the *mystical reality* established in the sacrament, whereas "image" is a relative term. He uses the orthodox symbolic synthesis argument to point out that the iconoclast has misunderstood what makes the sacrament "true" and, consequently, what an image is. He underscores the argument by noting: "And the fact that he said 'Do this in memory of me' is not said for everyone, but only for those who received the sacred orders."[43] The sacrament is "true" because it is liturgically enacted/realized by the priest—not because of shared essence.

It is not clear that Theodore is wading into a debate about the nature of the Eucharist here. In fact, it would be something of a stretch to suggest he is. Rather he is more likely expressing the sacramental theology of his day in order to clarify terms as the iconoclasts' argument would otherwise appear to be legitimate. By contrasting Eucharistic theology and a theology of the image, Theodore is able to make a crucial distinction: the "truthfulness" of the sacrament is precisely in its *not* being an image. However, by contrasting Eucharistic theology and icon theology he is not suggesting a complete incommensurability. Quite the contrary. Eucharistic theology properly understood is the necessary condition for a proper icon theology. The symbolic function

[42] Ibid., I.X., 53.
[43] Ibid.

of the image is itself *real* not because of a shared essence or nature with the prototype but insofar as it participates in the *reality* established by the Eucharist.

The "Heretic" in Theodore's text is restating the argument articulated in the iconoclast Council of Constantinople (754), which we find contained and refuted in the sixth session of Nicaea II.

> Gregory the Bishop read:
> *If anyone depicts in an icon the flesh which was deified by the union with the divine Logos, let him be anathema, because he separates the flesh from the divinity that assumed and deified it, and as a consequence he renders it undeified.*[44]

Again, the premise of the argument relies on a notion of shared essence. Since the divine essence is uncircumscribable the iconoclast insists any figural representation of Christ's flesh undermines his divinity. Theodore's response is also a restatement of the previous iconodule response:

> Epiphanius the Deacon read:
> Even though the catholic Church depicts Christ in human form, she does not separate this from the divinity united to it. Rather, she believes that this is deified, as she confesses it to be one with God, according to Gregory the Great, the Theologian, and according to the truth. Not, as they have said, speaking like barbarians with no knowledge or training, that the flesh of the Lord is a consequence [of the icon] rendered undeified. For, just as when one paints a man, one does not render him without a soul, but he remains one who has a soul and that the icon is called his because of his resemblance, so it is when we make an icon of the Lord. We confess the Lord's flesh to be deified, and we know the icon to be nothing else but an icon, signifying the imitation of the prototype, which is the only thing that it has in common with the prototype. That is why it is venerable and holy. However, if the icon is of a cursed man, or of a demon, then it is profane and defiled; for so is the prototype.[45]

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[44] Daniel J. Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eighth-Century Iconoclasm* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 159. Italics his.
[45] Ibid.

The icon of Christ no more separates the divinity from the flesh than the incarnation itself. The false premise of the iconoclast presumes what is circumscribed negates what is not circumscribed (not circumscribable), which is none other than a rejection of the mystery of the incarnation. Again, it is this logic that defined previous heretical Christologies and that fueled Severus's debate with Julian. Severus feared the Chalcedonian definition would lead to such nonsense as separating the two natures of Christ such that one could speak of one without the other. In looking at an icon of Christ, the iconoclast separates the natures and insists that he is seeing only the human nature; therefore concluding it must be anti-Christ. The iconodule's argument relies on the unicity of Christ, which makes it impossible to gaze upon Christ's flesh—however it is circumscribed—without encountering the divine.[46]

If the bread and wine cannot properly be called "images" they are nonetheless a form of circumscription, which means the iconoclast has opened himself to an inconsistency. If Christ is circumscribed in the Eucharistic elements, why not in images as the divine nature is no more visible in the former than the latter? By making "shared essence" the only permissible criterion for circumscription the iconoclast introduces a fatal dichotomy just like the one that would later befall Eucharistic theology. That is, the iconoclast permits the *twofold body* while imposing a dichotomy between this and the *third body*. This is what is meant by noting that the iconoclast fails to distinguish between

[46] Parry notes, "Because iconoclasm is generally thought to have originated in the Eastern provinces of the empire, it has been suggested that the Monophysite churches may have influenced the movement. However, there is no proof that the Monophysites ever supported iconoclasm.… It is interesting to observe that the arguments used by the Monophysite catholicos [e.g., John of Odsun (717-728)] are the same as those of his Byzantine contemporary, the patriarch Germanos (715-730)," 8-9.

theology and *economy*; a failure that signals a breakdown in the symbolic synthesis required to understand the relation between the *threefold* body of Christ.[47] In his treatment of this aspect of the Byzantine debates, Charles Barber observes:

> The iconoclasts did not reject the Incarnation, but they did question the economic implications that were drawn from it by the iconophiles. The iconophiles argued that the Incarnation changed the conditions for human knowledge. Christ became visible in the flesh. This basic fact made his representation in icons not only possible, but also necessary. This necessity rested on the need to affirm the continuing saving link between man and God that the incarnate Christ embodied.[48]

The Byzantine debates must be understood to have exceeded concerns about images or Christian piety. If the debate concerned Christology and its implications for the worshipping community, it was necessarily a debate about the whole economy of salvation. Again, that is why a proper understanding of the Eucharist and its function within the sacred economy is absolutely crucial. How is it that the Eucharist "is the recapitulation of the whole economy, signifying the whole by means of a synecdoche through the most important part"? The Eucharist can only be understood a *synecdoche* if it functions sacramentally, that is, according to the symbolic synthesis whereby sacramental reality and ecclesial reality are mutually constitutive. This is what Theodore indicates when stating the "most important mystery" is "the recapitulation of the whole economy." If the Blessed Sacrament becomes an image it ceases to fulfill this function.[49]

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[47] Recall that by "symbolic synthesis" we are referring to the sacramental reality whereby partaking of Christ's *flesh* the Church is made his *body*. The two are always mutually constitutive.

[48] Barber, 80-81.

[49] It is here we can see the resonance with Theodore's use of "image" and what would eventuate in Eucharistic theology when the dialectic replaces the symbolic. That is, *true* becomes opposed to *symbolic*. As De Lubac shows, when *truth* and *mystery* are opposed,

That is, the Eucharist is no longer understood as what constitutes the body of Christ, the Church, if in it the mystery of communion is not enacted but only signified/represented. The entire liturgical rite, centered on the synaxis/communion, would no longer have any ontological significance. "Communion" could only designate an abstraction with no concrete bearing as the term would no longer designate a work of the Holy Spirit binding believers by means of partaking of Christ's divine flesh. Nor could it fulfill the eschatological hope of receiving incorruption upon the resurrection if the sign and signified were divided.

It is ironic that in their misunderstanding or misappropriation of the economy of the image it is the iconoclasts and not the iconodules who attribute to the image undue significance—only to use this to reject the significance they attribute to it. By contrast, it is the iconodules who insist on a more modest understanding of the image such that there can be no confusion between the Eucharist and holy images worthy of veneration—just as there can be no confusion between *theology* and *economy/latria* and *dulia*. But then how does the Eucharist become the necessary condition for the holy images? Again—precisely by sacramentally establishing the sacred economy, that is, the Church. This point has already been made, perhaps implicitly, by John of Damascus in his taxonomy of images. Recall in the taxonomy that the Son is the only "undeviating image" of the Father—a Trinitarian affirmation regarding the Son's shared nature with the Father (John

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the *symbol* becomes an *image*, which introduces an ontological distance between the sign and the signified. The traditional ontological realism of the sacramental mystery is replaced with a dialectical realism that replaces contemplation with rationality.

14:8-9).[50] Yet for the Damascene it is precisely his status as "undeviating image" that provides the theological foundation for the rest of the chain of images. That is, the incarnation of the "undeviating image" establishes the economy of deviating images—including humanity—insofar as the created economy participates in him by way of the Holy Spirit who, it is crucial to remember, is the "undeviating image" of the Son. Just as the Holy Spirit descends upon Mary and incarnates the Son within her, so also does the Holy Spirit descend upon the Eucharistic elements, incarnating Christ in those who receive him, thereby manifesting Christ through his body, the Church. The unity of the Trinity enacts the unicity of the incarnation and, consequently, the Church. This is not "mere symbolism" or "elegant comparison"; this is the metaphysical realism made possible in the sacraments—the enacted *mysterium*.

Therefore, what Theodore articulates in calling the Eucharist a *synecdoche* is none other than the same logic we encountered in Pseudo-Dionysius. In describing the priest's role in performing the "most divine acts" (consecration of the Eucharist) he writes:

> Reverently he cries out: "It is you who said, 'Do this in remembrance of me.'" He prays, then, to be made more worthy to do this holy task in imitation of God. He prays that, like Christ himself, he might perform the divine things.… Then he performs the most divine acts and lifts into view the things praised through the sacredly clothed symbols. The bread which had been covered and undivided is now uncovered and divided into many parts. Similarly, he shares the one cup with all, symbolically multiplying and distributing the One in symbolic fashion. With

[50] See Gerhart B. Ladner, "The Concept of the Image in the Greek Fathers and the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 7 (1953), 1-34, for a fuller treatment of the Trinitarian background of the Christian concept of the image: "The truth is that the Greek Christian concept of the image was elaborated, not in the sphere of art, but in close contact with the development of the most fundamental dogmas about God and man," 5.

> these he completes the most sacred act. For because of his goodness and his love for humanity the simple, hidden oneness of Jesus, the most divine Word, has taken the route of incarnation for us and, without undergoing any change, has become a reality composite and visible. He has beneficently accomplished for us a unifying communion with himself. He has united our humility with his own supreme divinity. But we in our turn have to cling to him like the members of one body and we do so by conformity that comes with a divine life of sinlessness. We cannot yield to the death wrought by corrupting passion, or become unable to fit ourselves in with the members of the perfect, whole divine body, unable to be at one with them and live together with them in one committed life. If our longing is for communion with him, them we must give our full attention to his divine life in the flesh. His sacred sinlessness must be our model so that we may aspire to a godlike and unblemished condition. This is how, in a way that suits us, he will grant us communion with his likeness.
>
> This, then, is what the hierarch reveals in the sacred rites, when he uncovers the veiled gifts, when he makes a multiplicity of what had originally been one, when the distributed sacrament and those receiving it are made perfectly one, when a perfect communion of all participants is achieved.[51]

The passage above describes how unity is liturgically conferred through the reception of the most important mystery. In a passage that points to the same action yet is even more closely resonant with Theodore's use of *synecdoche,* Pseudo-Dionysius explains:

> Similarly the divine sacrament of the synaxis remains what it is, unique, simple, and indivisible and yet, out of love for humanity, it is pluralized in a sacred variegation of symbols. It extends itself so as to include all the hierarchical imagery. Then it draws all these varied symbols together into a unity, returns to its own inherent oneness, and confers unity on all those sacredly uplifted to it.[52]

The metaphysical reality of the economy is expressed through the pluralization of the "sacred variegation of symbols," which together lead believers anagogically through the hierarchies. The sacred economy provides the criteria for what is to be worshipped/venerated and how. The Eucharist maintains its "own inherent oneness" even while pluralizing the "variegation of symbols" that include all the "hierarchical imagery";

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[51] *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, 441D-444C in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987).
[52] Ibid., 429A.

it confers its unity by drawing all the imagery into itself. The holy images are among the "variegation of symbols" as is the cross, the scriptures, and all holy persons and things because it is by these sacred symbols that we are drawn into communion. This is the rationale of the sacred economy. In his *Seven Chapters Against the Iconoclasts*, Theodore spells this out succinctly.

> *To those who against the image of Christ oppose the famous saying of the Theologian: "What is venerated is not circumscribed."*
>
> Those who say this say so because they do not understand the actual meaning of polyvalent terms, or rather they do not want to understand how to act properly.… [T]he term *venerated* is correctly understood to be polyvalent, sometimes referring to uncircumscribability, sometimes circumscribability. Indeed, about the Father, if one talks about the divine nature, it is possible to say that what is venerated is not circumscribed, in order to oppose those who would want to restrict the divine within circumscription. And it is true. But what was said before did not refer to the economy. One indeed is the rationale of theology, and one is the rationale of the economy, and speaking dogmatically it is not appropriate to affirm the same in both contexts.[53]

The sacred economy is based on God's own economic appropriation, that is, God's circumscribing God's self in the incarnation. To denounce circumscription is to denounce the economy. To denounce the economy is to denounce the One on whom it is established. It is to denounce communion altogether. In the same passage, Theodore continues:

> And since Gregory of Nazianzos knows quite well that what is circumscribed can be venerated, he himself says, "Worship (*proskynēson*) the manger, through which you, who lacked reason (*alogos*), were fed by the Word (*hypo tou Logou*)." And what must be worshiped, in the same way it must be venerated. I forego to talk of the Body of the Lord: is it not circumscribed? Who can contradict this? So then? Is it not worthy of veneration? Even the stones will shout it. And what will

[53] Theodore the Studite, "Seven Chapters Against the Iconoclasts," in *Writings on Iconoclasm*, trans. by Thomas Cattoi (New York: The Newman Press, 2015), 127. Italics his.

> you say then of the life-giving cross? Of the antitype? Of the altar? Of the holy table? Of the most holy Gospel, or of any other sacred implement? And perhaps the very relics of the saints, are not all of them circumscribed? Of course they are, and in the same way they also are to be venerated, like the icon of Christ; the fathers of the Sixth Holy Council testify together to that in the passages of their writings where they treat of the holy icons.[54]

All sacred symbols reveal the will of a God whose economic appropriation in the incarnation is nothing other than an expression of the Creator's desire for communion with his creation. It is the materiality of the creature that necessitates the need for material mediation, which God, in his love for humanity, provides through the sacred symbols. The criterion for whether or not a symbol is sacred is not its material circumscription, but the communion realized through its fitting veneration. Christian iconodulia is primarily a defense of the discernment required for participating in the sacred economy.[55] In what follows I will treat the implications of this claim as it is exemplified through the cult of saints.

[54] Ibid., 128.
[55] Discernment of images is at the heart of iconodule theology.

Celestial Bodies

The economic implications of the Byzantine debates may be best illustrated by looking at the practice of venerating the saints, a longstanding practice that would have been shared by both parties. Given the widespread acceptance of the practice, the iconodules must show how the iconoclasts' theology leads to a rejection of the saints who represent the eschatological *telos* of the economy. It is they, the saints, who compose the tangible Christian hope of a bodily resurrection granted for eternal communion with God—the communion of incorruption.

Before seeing how Theodore addresses the iconoclast on the subject of venerating the icons of saints, let's briefly look at the history of saintly veneration. The practice of venerating those who have died in Christ has its origin at the very beginning of the Church. In his extensive study, *Medieval Piety from Relics to the Eucharist: A Process of Mutual Interaction*, G. J. C. Snoek shows through historical study what De Lubac has shown through his theological study on the Eucharist. Snoek describes the historical developments as *the process of independence* of the Eucharist, by which he means "*the gradual loosening of the ties, in devotional forms, between the bread and the wine and their sacramental and liturgical context, the communal meal*. From being an 'action' the Eucharist became an 'object.'"[56] In Snoek's treatment, this shift from "action" to "object" stems from the cult of relics.

The beginning of the cult was likely modest due to Roman law, as martyrs were considered political enemies. Nonetheless, there is evidence that Christians gathered

[56] G. J. C. Snoek, *Medieval Piety from Relics to the Eucharist: A Process of Mutual Interaction.* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1995), 4.

discreetly to celebrate the Eucharist at the martyrs' graves. The doctrine of the resurrection meant Christians "regarded the date of death of a martyr as the date of his birth to eternal life.… Appeals for his intercession would create the movement leading to the flowering of his reliquary cult."[57] Once religious freedom was granted by the Edict of Milan in 313, the relics of ascetics, virgins, and bishops were sought after in addition to the martyrs. Altars erected over the martyrs' graves were transferred to the altars in churches. It was, therefore, a natural progression to then require a relic for the newly erected church altars, a practice that was later formalized at Nicaea II. Yet as the Church grew there was still more need for the saintly witness to be spread and so different types of relics were eventually accepted. *Contact relics* or *brandea* such as parts of garments or implements used by the saint were said to possess divine power, which was confirmation of the saint's celestial status and vitality. With the increased availability made possible by the extension of secondary relics,[58] rather quickly relics became a part of individual piety.[59]

The spread of relics was popular in both the West and the East. The practice of dividing and spreading corporeal relics, *dismembratio*, was accepted in the East earlier than in the West—which also had initially forbidden *translatio*, the moving of a saint's

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[57] Ibid., 9.
[58] Ibid., 12. "Secondary relics" came to include "everything that had come into contact with the saint during his life and with his corpse or tomb after his death."
[59] As early as the fourth century there is record of individuals carrying relics on their body for protection. "In the *vita* of St. Makrina, the sister of Gregory of Nyssa, there is talk of a particle of the True Cross that this lady carried around her neck. John Chrysostom reports that both men and women valued this type of adornment, and Augustine, writing around 425, spoke favourably of a widow and her daughter 'who wore the relics of the most holy and glorious Stephen,'" 84.

body to a different locale.[60] Eventually, these practices would become permissible in the West as well, leading to the rise of local cults:

> In translations of this sort the saint became *dominus* and *patronus* of the local community. His triumphal *adventus* recalled the arrival of a prince, celebrated since ancient times, but represented particularly the regal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and His return on the Day of Judgment. The *adventus* took place at the entrance to the city or on the border of the diocese or limits of the monastic lands and proclaimed the start of the saint's spiritual protection, guaranteed by his *virtus* and miracles.[61]

However, Snoek notes, already in the seventh century there is indication of some reservations in the West about the widespread practice. "Pope Boniface V (d. 625) was to attempt to make the *brandea* somewhat more exclusive by deciding that only priests were allowed to take them from the tomb."[62] Gregory of Tours (d. 594) and later Charlemagne both expressed concern about the unwanted entailments of the growing cult.[63]

This history of the active role of the saints who, through their relics, helped to build the Church makes St. Euphemia's role at the Council of Chalcedon much less

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[60] Snoek states both *dismembratio* and *translatio* were practiced in the East as early as the fourth century. Cf., 15.
[61] Ibid., 19.
[62] Ibid., 14.
[63] Ibid., 18. "In his *Admonitio Generalis* of 789, which quoted the Council of Carthage in 401, Charlemagne warned the clergy not to be taken in by "uncertain saints," whose saintliness had not been established by the ecclesiastical authorities." In her recently published book, *Divine Bodies: Resurrecting Perfection in the New Testament and Early Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019) Candida R. Moss opens with a brief retelling of the twelfth-century appearance of the Holy Prepuce, the foreskin of Jesus, and the concerns it raised in light of the doctrine on Christ's Ascension: "Pope Innocent III, too, worries about the ramifications of stating that parts of Jesus's body had been left behind, concluding, 'Better to commit all things to God, than to dare to define something else.'" And Caroline Walker Bynum traces discussions regarding relics, images, and the Eucharist, which show differing attitudes about how each is to be understood theologically, "Theologians and ecclesiastical authorities did not by any means always treat holy objects literally as loci of the divine," *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011), 158.

fantastical. Through their relics the saints were expected to guide and protect the faithful in every respect. Why not in matters of doctrine?

There is obviously much more to the history. This brief background should help to interpret the debate between the iconodules and iconoclasts particularly as it pertains to the saints. But it is also important to note beforehand the historical connection between the saints' relics and their images. The first recorded images associated with Christianity are similarly associated with honoring the dead as they are found in the catacombs. However, we do not have evidence that these images were venerated as holy images would come to be. Historically speaking, the first holy images (i.e., venerated images) were relics. The *αχειροποιητον*, images "not made with hands," were considered contact relics; the most famous being the image of Edessa, which is an image of Christ's face imprinted on a cloth.[64] The first written record of the image dates to around 400 AD. The legend tells of the image being given to King Abgar who had requested a portrait of Christ. When the artist approached Christ, Christ wiped his face with a cloth and gave it to the artist to return to the king. When the king received the cloth it contained the imprint of Christ's face.[65] The first icon made with hands would have also been considered a contact relic as it is an image of the Theotokos with Christ-child said to have

[64] See Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era c. 680-850: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): "The earliest images to acquire cult status were those that most closely approximated relics, the *acheiropoieta* or 'images not made by human hand.' Three of these are attested during the second half of the sixth century," 35.

[65] Cf. Mark Guscin, *The Image of Edessa*, BRILL, 2008. ProQuest Ebook Central, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/duke/detail.action?docID=468115. John of Damascus mentions this legend in chapter sixteen of *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, wherein he defends the practice of venerating the saints and their images, along with other holy things.

been painted by Saint Luke.[66] Therefore, the practice of venerating images came about because holy images were first viewed as relics. In time, however, due to the growing cult of saints and the demand for relics the proliferation of images of saints was a natural means of meeting a need and expressing a form of piety that had become central to Christianity. By the late seventh century, images began taking on the function of relics as miracles became increasingly associated with them and served to underwrite their legitimacy. Images of Christ, the Theotokos, and the saints were associated with protection from both physical and spiritual harm. The examples of their use against military and spiritual aggressors are countless.[67]

Although the holy images were widespread and often functioned similarly to relics, there was nonetheless a preference for the relic prior to the late Middle Ages.[68] The bodies of saints and their images may have both had intercessory power, but there was no question that the body was the primary locus of that power. Even among those

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[66] This legend was so widespread that Byzantine painters would frequently depict the scene, creating icons of the first handmade icon. Cf. Henry Maguire, *The Icons of Their Bodies: Saints and Their Images in Byzantium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[67] Cf. Brubaker and Haldon, 50-66, for an extensive treatment of the rise of the cult of images: "By the year 800, the 'icon' could serve as an intermediary between the viewer and the holy person represented; this was not the case around the year 400, nor even around the year 600. The stages in the development of the sacred portrait have been obscured by an assumption that the evolution was seamless and organic. In fact, however, it was only in the seventh century that all of the features we now associate with holy portraits fell into place, and only in the eighth and ninth that they were codified," 51.

[68] This is the thesis of Caroline Walker Bynum's *Christian Materiality*. She does not deny there are instances where images function similar to relics prior to the late Middle Ages. However, she argues it is not until the fourteenth century that we find an increase in "animated materiality": "Despite the fact that images sometimes replaced relics in healing miracles, these images functioned in a way that suggests that they conveyed power as physical objects. Hence, they are more analogous to the relics they replaced than to the visions they sometimes depicted," 22.

who accepted the veneration of both, between relics and images there was a hierarchy. The iconoclasts would use this against the iconodules as even the iconoclast emperors were known to have relics. Therefore, here too we see in the debates between the iconoclasts and iconodules that the primary issue of image veneration for the iconoclasts was the problem of *similitude* or *likeness*. The material difference between the bodies of saints and their images poses a difficulty for a dogmatic defense of the latter.

Whereas the historical connection between relics and icons has been well established,[69] the theological connection has received much less attention. This is partly due to the difficulty in locating explicit theological treatment of relics in the historical writings themselves.

> In place of treatises on relics, any authoritative pronouncements by theologians, patriarchs, or popes tended to be short, and embedded in works that treat other subjects. And, rather than a phenomenon of popular culture or an unorganized cult, there are clear principles at work in relic veneration in Christian practice, as well as in Islam and Judaism. Reasons for the lack of discussion by theologians lie elsewhere. Ultimately, relics, like art, are resistant to dogmatic understanding, owing to a persistent and longstanding discomfort on the part of church authorities with the role of material things in spiritual affairs.[70]

The "discomfort" concerning the role of materiality in Christian spirituality in theological writings may be more aptly described as a noticeable "tension" when materiality and spirituality are treated theologically. Yet the history of Christian practice is a history of material engagement. That theological treatments of relics are less prevalent itself attests

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[69] In addition to Brubaker and Haldon, and Bynum, see Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); and Patricia Cox Miller, *Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).
[70] Cynthia Hahn and Holger A. Klein, "Introduction," in *Saints and Sacred Matter: The Cult of Relics in Byzantium and Beyond* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2015).

to the extent to which the practice of venerating the bodies of saints was taken for granted by most as a legitimate expression of Christian faith. But there are some early theological treatments that indicate the Church's grappling, not with the fact of saintly veneration, but the modes of perception required for the living to commune with those saints whose bodies convey the divine power to which they are now enjoined. As early as 396 Victricius of Rouen delivered a sermon *De laude sanctorum*, in which he addressed the issue of perceiving the divine in relic fragments:

> There is nothing in relics which is not complete. Where the healing power is intact, the limbs are intact. We say that flesh is held together by the glue of blood, and we affirm that the spirit also, wet with the moisture of blood, has taken on the fiery heat of the Word…. In relics, then, there is a reminder of perfection, not the injustice of division…. Why do we call them "relics"? Because words are images and signs of things. Before our eyes are blood and clay. We impress on them the name of "relics," because we cannot do otherwise with the seal of living language. But now, by uttering the whole in the part, we open the eyes of the heart, not the barriers of bodily sight. Things are not servants of words: words are servants of things and reason with reason…. If we said that relics were divided from the spirit, we would be right to look for all the connection and solidity of body parts. But when we realize that the substance is united [with the spirit], it follows that we are searching for the whole in the whole. Looking for a greater power would be an offense against unity. This confusion is with the eyes: the vision of reason is clearer. We see small relics and a little blood. But truth perceives that these tiny things are brighter than the sun, for the Lord says in the gospel: "My saints shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of the Father" (Matthew 13:43). [71]

Notice here that "reason" is not called upon to rationalize but to facilitate a contemplative form of seeing a mysterious unity that is not physically discernable. This form of contemplative seeing can be appealed to because of the metaphysics presumed to be at work: that is, the relation between *theologia* and *oikonomia,* which we have seen in the

[71] Quotation found in Holger A. Klein, "Materiality and the Sacred: Byzantine Reliquaries and the Rhetoric of Enshrinement," in *Saints and Sacred Matter*, 234-35.

Dionysian hierarchies. The relics of saints display this relation "because the saints have been transformed from earthly to heavenly clarity. They are able to emit celestial light and cause their earthly remains to shine. They illuminate their dead bodies from above."[72] Again, this is not poetics. This is an affirmation of a doctrine central to the Christian faith. The saints participate in the divine logos, to whom they have been united and thereby transformed into earthly witnesses—through their bodily remains—of the heavenly reality awaiting all who die in Christ. The miraculous nature of their bodies testifies to their present participation and union with God. It is in this way that relics are a "reminder of perfection"—the eventual conformity of likeness to which all are called (Matt 5:48).

In Chapter fifteen of *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, John of Damascus writes:

> The saints must be honored as friends of Christ and children and heirs of God, as John the Theologian and Evangelist says: "But as many as received him, he gave them the power to be made the sons of God." "Therefore they are no longer servants, but sons: and if sons, heirs also, heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ".… How, then, should these not be honored who have been accounted servants, friends, and sons of God?… These are become repositories and pure dwelling places of God, for "I will dwell in them and walk among them," says God.
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> …
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> In the relics of the saints the Lord Christ has provided us with saving fountains which in many ways pour out benefactions and gush with fragrant ointment. And let no one disbelieve. For, if by the will of God water poured out of the precipitous rock in the desert, and for the thirsty Sampson from the jawbone of an ass, is it unbelievable that fragrant ointment should flow from the relics of the martyrs? Certainly not, at least for such as know the power of God and the honor which the saints have from him.

[72] Ibid., quoting Thiofrid of Echternach (12c.), *Flores epytahii sanctorum*, 253.

> In the Law, anyone who touched a corpse was accounted unclean. But these of whom we speak are not dead. Because Life itself and the Author of life was reckoned amongst the dead, we do not call these dead who have fallen asleep in the hope of the resurrection and in the faith of Him. For how can a dead body work miracles?[73]

He continues with an exhortation to honor

> the Prophets who preceded the Grace, the patriarchs and just men who announced beforehand the advent of the Lord. Let us carefully observe the manner of life of all these and let us emulate their faith, charity, hope, zeal, life, patience under suffering, and perseverance unto death, so that we may also share their crowns of glory.[74]

Damascene will also address objections to venerating holy images of Christ, his Mother, and the saints. And here too we can see it is once again a defense of the whole economy of salvation, which is safeguarded, not undermined, by venerating those whose faithfulness has earned them honor from God. The logic expressed in Victricius's sermon is transferred to the holy images. In the economy of the image the honor paid to the image is transferred to the prototype[75] so that the honor paid to those made in God's image is transferred to the One to whom they point.

> It certainly happens frequently that at times when we do not have the Lord's Passion in mind we may see the image of His crucifixion and, being thus reminded of His Passion, fall down and adore. But it is not the material which we adore, but that which is represented; just as we do not adore the material of the Gospel or that of the cross, but that which they typify.… It is the same way with the Mother of God, too, for the honor paid to her is referred to Him who was incarnate of her.… For, as we have said, the honor shown the more sensible of

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[73] John of Damascus, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Book IV, Chapter 15, trans. by Frederic H. Chase, Jr. (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1958), 367-68.
[74] Ibid., 370.
[75] Cf. Basil, "…the honor of the image passes over to the archetype. The image is the prototype by way of imitation [in the case of the king and his image]; the Son is this by nature." *On the Holy Spirit,* (New York: St. Vladimir's Press, 2011),18,45.

> one's fellow servants gives proof of one's love for the common Master, and the honor paid to the image redounds to the original.[76]

Here again we see the logic of Damascene's taxonomies playing out. In his treatment of the various types of veneration, he identifies the first among creatures to be venerated as "those who, through their own choice and the indwelling and cooperation of God, have become assimilated to God as much as possible," that is, "the Holy Mother of God and all the saints."[77] Note that their assimilation to God is the result of both their will and God's grace. They are heirs by grace—not by nature.[78] Moreover, recall Damascene's general definition of *veneration* as *submission*. To participate in the sacred economy is a sign of one's humility; to reject it is to presume one has direct access to the divine. The hierarchies, therefore, are divinely ordained to facilitate the proper disposition needed for holy communion:

> The divine goodness will accept him because of his well-shaped disposition, because of the respect he shows for the saints, because of the praiseworthy eagerness with which he begs for those longed-for gifts, and because of the life he lives in harmony with this and conformity to God. For one of the divine judgments has laid down that the gifts of God should be duly given to those worthy to receive them, through the mediation of those who are worthy to impart them. Someone could perhaps show a lack of respect for this divine arrangement and, out of wretched self-regard, could imagine himself capable of disdaining the mediation of the saints and of entering into direct relationship with the divinity.[79]

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[76] John of Damascus, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Book IV, Ch. 16, 370-373.
[77] *III*, 33.
[78] Cf. John of Damascus, *Treatise III*. 26, "Therefore, I honor the saints and I glorify them together with Christ as his slaves and friends and fellow-heirs: slaves by nature, friends by choice, and sons and heirs by divine grace.…" *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, (New York: St. Vladamir's Press, 2003).
[79] Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, 561B-C. This remark is found in a discussion of prayers for the deceased. *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987).

The *synecdoche* articulated in the iconodules' defense of the holy images provides an answer to De Lubac's question: *Could Eucharistic realism not have been safeguarded without the virtually total abandonment of symbolism?*[80] It is precisely in distinguishing the Eucharist from holy images that Eucharistic realism funds a symbolism by which the holy economy is maintained. Here that symbolism is expressed through the iconodules' insistence on the role of likeness/similitude and how this facilitates mediation, that is, communion. Rather than rejecting holy images because unlike relics they are mere representations, the iconodules insist that it is in their symbolic function that the distance between prototype and image becomes the space of communion.

> So it appears that God is venerated in spirit and truth in the image, and in the Gospel, and in the cross, and in any other consecrated object, as the materials have been subjugated by the elevation of the mind toward God. Nor does the mind rest in them, since it has not given them trust—this was the mistake of those who venerate idols; through them [images], in fact, the mind ascends to the prototypes in line with the faith of those who are Orthodox.[81]

In this sense, the icon as *symbol* maintains the metaphysical quality understood by Augustine and later suppressed by Lombard's conflating Christ's *flesh* in the Eucharist and his *body* in the Church.[82] That is, the icon functions sacramentally—something the Christian East has always maintained. The symbolism of the icon participates in the

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[80] Quoting De Lubac, 259.
[81] Theodore the Studite, *First Refutation*, XIII.
[82] This is an essential point often lost in contemporary treatments of the icon. Without understanding the sacramental reasoning that recognizes a symbolic synthesis as constitutive of communion, the discussion of the icon's status relies on the modern distinction between the sign and the signified. See Cornelia Tsakaridou, "Icons in Time, Persons in Eternity," (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2013) wherein she argues the Dionysian hierarchies are anti-materialist and therefore do not permit the icon its proper "autonomy." A sacramental understanding of the icon could never draw such a conclusion. Nor could it allow its premise that the icon should function autonomously—whatever that means.

reality made possible by the Eucharist, thereby making *real* the communion between the celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchies. Icon theology maintains what De Lubac describes as Augustine's "fluid continuity" between the Eucharist and the "fellowship of the saints." Writing before Pseudo-Dionysius, Augustine articulates the orthodox metaphysics of the hierarchies. Here *continuity* is key and is juxtaposed to *conflation*, which loses the distinctive character of the mystery enacted. De Lubac observes:

> The admirable twenty-sixth treatise on the Gospel of St. John considers how the spiritual life drawn from this food which is the flesh of Christ results from being incorporated into the unity of his body, and should consequently be defined as a participation in the "society of saints":
>
> *"For my flesh, he says, is truly food and my blood is truly drink." Although human beings seek through food and drink to allay hunger and thirst, this is not really granted except by that food and drink which makes those who receive it immortal and incorruptible; that is, the fellowship of the saints itself, where there will be peace and full and perfect unity. Therefore, as was already understood before us by men of God, our Lord Jesus Christ entrusted his body and blood to things which are assembled from many to make one entity; for the former from many grains becomes one, while the latter from many grapes flows into one.*

De Lubac continues:

> The last term coincides with the source, the Church is joined to Christ in perfection. The two *matters of the sacrament* are now only one, and in this double and unique participation, each one finds eternal life…. *"[T]he body is perfected in us, we are perfected in the body*.'[83]

Augustine's symbolic synthesis maintains a "fluid continuity" between the mystery of the sacrament and the mystery of communion such that you cannot have one without the other. This sacred fellowship is how "peace and perfect unity" will be realized. De Lubac concludes:

[83] De Lubac, 176-7. Italics his.

> The term that mediates this operation, and which owes its existence to the genius of St. Augustine, is the idea that is expressed in the famous formulation: "*You will not change me into you, as you do with the food of your body. Instead you will be changed into me*." The natural symbolism of food is reversed: "*Those eating are transformed into the nature of the food they eat*." This is because the Eucharistic bread is no ordinary bread: it is the Life in which all living beings participate.[84]

Just as we saw Lombard's "suppression" of the two aspects of the *mysterium* lead to the loss of a sacramental understanding of the Church itself, the logical outcome of an iconoclastic theology would lead to the same.

Icon or Idol?

The sacramental reasoning produced by the distinction and relation between *theologia* and *oikonomia* is also required to discern the difference between the *idol* and the *icon*. Here I return to the claim made in the previous chapter: heresy is the sufficient condition of iconoclasm. Within the Christian tradition, *idolatry* is an improper devotion to that which is not the Lord. Idols are the artifact of a devotion to that which is not the Lord. In other words, idols reveal an economy other than the sacred economy centered on the worship of the Triune Lord. If it is the sacred economy that determines the criteria for the sacred symbols, and *iconodulia* is the term designating proper veneration of the sacred symbols, it follows that the phenomenon of iconoclasm reveals a breakdown of the synecdoche, that is, sacramental reasoning. In his assessment of the Byzantine debates, Parry summarizes,

> What may appear at first to be disparate themes in iconophile apologetic turn out on closer examination to be essential components of Byzantine Christianity. For the Byzantines the image controversy was never the side-issue that it came to be

[84] Ibid., 178. Italics his.

> seen in the West. The fathers of Nicaea II saw clearly that to question the veneration of icons was to question the entire Christian tradition.[85]

The stakes of the debate are most poignantly revealed in the iconoclast's inability to discern the difference between the *idol* and the *icon*. For the iconoclast, they are one in the same. The phenomenon of Christian iconoclasm confirms this observation.

We have already seen how Theodore begins to address the iconoclast's lack of orthodox metaphysics in correcting how the Eucharist creates the holy synecdoche by which the sacred symbols draw all participants into unity with the One who gives himself in the "most important" mystery. He will later respond to the iconoclast's explicit claim that there is no difference between the idol and the icon:

> Heretic: There is no distinction between idol and icon; indeed, they are identical in appellation. One comes from the term *eidos* ("form") in its general meaning—indeed, its chief significance is not "what is seen"; the other comes from the term *eoikos* ("alike"), in its connotation of "likeness." Indeed, a likeness is merely what is not its prototype; in this the idol and the icon do not differ. In both cases, the term refers to the same. But to venerate an idol, thereby claiming to venerate Christ by means of circumscription, is an act of impiety. This is utterly forbidden by the word of truth.[86]

Here again we see the iconoclast's insistence that an image must share the essence of the prototype. Because neither the icon nor the idol share an essence with their prototype, neither is legitimate—or rather both are equally illegitimate—even if it is an icon of Christ. Once again, what appears as a semantic argument actually reveals a metaphysical argument, or rather an antimetaphysical argument. The implication of the heretic's statement, "thereby claiming to venerate Christ by means of circumscription" refers to the same theme that has been raised many times; that is, the divinity of Christ has no

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[85] Parry, 139.
[86] *First Refutation*, XVI.

form, therefore circumscription is impious and forbidden. The iconoclast thereby concludes that the veneration of "material depiction" is idolatrous.[87]

This discussion concerning the nature of the idol and icon is a continuation of a prior objection by the iconoclast who juxtaposes the worship of God in "spirit and truth" with the "lowliness of material depiction." Theodore has already met this objection on multiple fronts. In fact, here the iconoclast's argument is meant to be a clever attempt to show an inconsistency in the iconodule's prior argument. Previously, Theodore responds to the heretic's question: *What then is shown? Is it the image of Christ or Christ? Certainly, it is not the two of them* [together]. In other words, what is shared between Christ and his image if they do not share an essence or nature? How is communion attained? Theodore responds:

> … [A]ccording to nature, Christ is one thing and his image is another, even as there is identity in virtue of the indivisibility of the appellation. In fact, if you consider the nature of the image, you will say that you see neither Christ nor the image of Christ. It will be some sort of wood, or pigment, or gold, or silver, or some different material from which it derives its name. And yet, when you consider the likeness to the original by representation you will see both Christ and the image of Christ. However, it will be Christ by virtue of homonymy; it will be the image of Christ because of the relation. For the copy is a copy of the original, and so the name is the name of the one who is named.[88]

It is the phrase "indivisibility of the appellation" that the iconoclast picks up later and uses to undermine the iconodule's position as the former argues that *eidos* ("form") and *eokois* ("alike") "are identical in appellation." But this is to misunderstand the nature of language itself, the corrective for which we encountered in Victorius's discussion of the

[87] Ibid., XIII.
[88] *First Refutation*, XI. See *Third Refutation* for a lengthier argument concerning the relation of Christ to his image.

power of relics. Words are the servants of things—not the other way around. Words describe realities and therefore they are themselves representations of the realities they describe. In the reality each party seeks to describe, there is particular content and therefore a particular grammar that requires a distinction be made between the idol and icon.

Theodore concedes the point that both *idol* and *icon* etymologically share the characteristic that neither shares a nature with the divine. And it is for this reason the Old Testament was correct to recognize the "danger of idolatry" in any manmade similitude of the divine nature. However, the incarnation has introduced a new distinction between the terms—a new grammar.

> We should rather use the term *icon* to refer to the bodily form of Christ, as this was indicated at the beginning during the creation of the universe at the formation of man. "Let us make man," scripture says, "according to our image and likeness"; and again, at the divine interrogation, "Whose image (*eikōn*) is this?"; because from these passages we see a transposed use, by virtue of a catachresis of the terms form (*charaktēr*) and likeness (*homoiōma*), but nowhere the term *idol*.… The term *idol* is then applied solely to the ancient worshippers of creation and to any such as there might be nowadays, by whom the Trinity, which is undivided in nature and glory and power, is not worshipped, nor is the enfleshment of the Word acknowledged.[89]

The two terms *eidos* and *eokois* are no longer "identical in appellation" as the Word's circumscription gives particular content to the *form*. *Icon* now designates *incarnation*—"the bodily form of Christ" (Col 1:15). Therefore, where the "enfleshment of the Word is acknowledged," the gods "who did not make the heavens and the earth, but are made of wood and of stone and of all sorts of other materials" will perish "[a]nd then they will

[89] *First Refutation*, XVI.

bring out to us, as one brings out freed captives, the icons of Our Lady and of the whole host of saints."[90]

It is part of orthodox grammar that *idol* cannot designate an image of Christ or his saints. For any icon of Christ or the Theotokos or the saints holds the potential for communing with Christ. Stated differently, *icon* designates participation in the sacred economy—for that is what it means to be *Icon*/*icon* within a Christian grammar. To be unable to distinguish between the icon and the idol—or to insist that there is no difference between the two—means one of two things: 1) either one is unable to recognize *the Icon* or 2) one rejects *the Icon*. In either case, one does not willingly worship *the Icon* and therefore does not participate in the communion established by *the Icon*.

In the previous chapter we saw how John Damascene addressed the issue of idolatry similarly. Idols reflect an economy that leads one away from communion with God. One could point to the misuse of an icon of Christ and argue that in misusing the icon of Christ, for example, to oppress a group of people, one is thereby rendering the icon an idol—for it ceases to fulfill its sacred function of facilitating communion with Christ, which would necessarily be liberating as Christ offers only liberation and not oppression. But this is to state the matter in the exact opposite of a proper orthodox iconodulia. The icon of Christ can no more become an idol than Christ himself could become a false god. It is the prototype that determines whether the image is *icon* or *idol*, and it is one's orientation to the image (whether icon or idol) that reflects whether their

[90] Ibid.

disposition is pious or impious. The icon of Christ may be misused, but this does not change the status of the image nor does it change the status of its prototype. If the icon of Christ is not approached with proper veneration, it is the one confronted by the icon who is rendered impious. In other words, the sacramental economy of the icon serves to identify whether one's disposition toward it is pious or impious. Just as we saw in the previous chapter regarding the misuse or wrongful administration of the sacraments, this does not change the nature of the sacrament but rather the one who administers or receives it wrongfully brings judgment on himself—precisely because of the sacramental reality in which each of these (the sacrament, priest, lay person) participate. This is why John Damascene has both a taxonomy of images and a taxonomy of veneration. Within the sacred economy the two are necessarily related. From a Christian standpoint, who/what one does and does not venerate and how determines the degree to which they participate in the sacred economy. That is why it is not only anathema to destroy the holy images but also to refuse their veneration.

> Let everyone know, therefore, that anyone who attempts to destroy an image brought into being out of divine longing and zeal for the glory and memorial of Christ, or of his holy Mother the holy *Theotokos*, or of one of the saints, or yet for the disgrace of the devil and the defeat of him and his demons, and will not, out of longing for the one depicted, venerate or honor or greet as a precious image and not as god, is an enemy of Christ and the holy Mother of God and the saints and a vindicator of the devil and his demons, and shows by his deed his sorrow that God and his saints are honored and glorified, and the devil put to shame.[91]

At the conclusion of his *First Refutation*, Theodore condemns those who would call an icon of Christ an idol; those who refuse to offer appropriate veneration to the images of

[91] John of Damascus, *Treatise III*, 10.

Christ, the Mother of God, and the saints; as well as those who exaggerate the honor that is appropriate veneration.

> If anyone calls the circumscription of the bodily form of the Word neither the image of Christ nor Christ by homonymy, but calls it an idol of deceit, he is a heretic.
>
> If anyone says that the mere exposition of the image of Christ is sufficient, without honoring or dishonoring the image, thereby rejecting the veneration that is relative by honor, he is a heretic.
>
> If anyone does not offer the adequate adoration to the image of the Mother of God and of all the saints, to the Mother of God as it is appropriate for her and to the saints as it is appropriate for them, respecting the difference between the Mother of God and her fellow servants, but were to call the salvific ornament of the church an idolatrous device, he is anathema.
>
> If anyone were to exaggerate the honor that is due to the icon and were to say that he would not walk up to it, given that it would not benefit him until he is purified of all sin, he is a heretic.[92]

In naming those who enact any of the above impious acts a "heretic," Theodore is pointing out that the error of iconoclastic theology is displayed by its inability to recognize the implications of the incarnation for the economy. Whether an image is *icon* or *idol* depends on the economy to which it belongs. The sacred economy based on the body of the incarnate Word receives its rationale from the One who deigned to empty himself for our sake. Acts of impiety—whether refusal or exaggeration—cannot affect a change in the One to whom they are directed, just as heresy does not change who God is. However, acts of impiety do reveal one's spiritual disposition, which itself affects the degree to which one participates in the sacred communion. Stated differently, the sacramental economy is what enables Christians to discern whether an image is icon or

[92] Theodore the Studite, *First Refutation*, XX.

idol and how to engage it as such. Apart from the sacramental economy, discernment is unreasonable—if not impossible.

By contextualizing the Byzantine debates between the iconodules and iconoclasts with De Lubac's treatment of Eucharistic developments, I have attempted show how an iconoclast theology indicates a breakdown in the sacramental reasoning exemplified in the "three bodies" Christological hermeneutic.[93] In their historical survey of the Byzantine "image struggles," Brubaker and Haldon observe: "What we might legitimately call a cult of images did not *lead* to iconoclasm; it was generated by the discourse of the debate about iconoclasm itself."[94] In other words, iconoclasm is the result of competing economic rationales. In what follows, we will see how these claims bear out historically in the Reformation.

The iconodules' success in defending the holy images was their success in defending Christian orthodoxy—that is, sacramental reality. The "three bodies" of Christ persisted in the "fluid continuity" articulated through the orthodox understanding of the iconomy centered on the Eucharist. The victory was solidified in 843 at the Synod of Constantinople convened by Empress Theodora and her son Michael III. The council reaffirmed the legitimacy of Nicaea II and its proclamation concerning the holy images and their veneration. The feast marking the iconodules' triumph has henceforth been celebrated in the Christian East as the *Triumph of Orthodoxy*. The icon commemorating

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[93] The reception of De Lubac's *Corpus Mysticum* has been various. An article by Laurence Paul Hemming discusses the text's reception history and posits a more nuanced reading of the text than the standard reading that has led to its misappropriations. See "Henri de Lubac: Reading *Corpus Mysticum*," in *New Blackfriars*, Vol. 90, Issue 1029, 2009.

[94] Brubaker and Haldon, 63.

the victory includes an icon of the Theotokos and Christ-child, the *Hodegetria* said to have been first painted by Saint Luke. Theodore the Studite stands among other saints holding an icon of Christ.

The liturgy for the feast concludes with a passage from the Synodikon of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, which is read in unison by all.

As the Prophets beheld,
As the Apostles taught,
As the Church received,
As the Teachers dogmatized,
As the Universe agreed,
As Grace illumined,
As the Truth revealed,
As falsehood passed away,
As Wisdom presented,
As Christ awarded,

Thus we declare,
Thus we assert,
Thus we proclaim Christ our true God
and honor His saints,

In words,
In writings,
In thoughts,
In sacrifices,

In churches,
In holy icons.

On the one hand, worshipping and reverencing Christ as God and Lord. And on the other hand, honoring and venerating His Saints as true servants of the same Lord.

This is the Faith of the Apostles.
This is the Faith of the Fathers.
This is the Faith of the Orthodox.
This is the Faith which has established the Universe.

Chapter 4

Contested Body

Herr, unser Gott, von dir kommt die Kraft in der Schwachheit, von dir die Festigkeit im Glauben, wie es uns der Tod deiner heiligen Märtyrer bezeugt. Da wir im Leiden mit deinem Sohn vereint sind, lass uns auch teilhaben an seiner Auferstehung und mit allen Heiligen bei dir vollkommene Freude erlangen, die uns niemand nehem kann. Darum bitten wir durch Christus, unseren Herrn.

Lord, our God, from you comes strength in weakness, from you strength in faith, as the death of your holy martyrs attests. Since we are united in suffering with your Son, let us also share in his resurrection and with all the saints who remain with you, achieve complete joy that nobody can take away from us. We ask this through Christ our Lord.[1]

On the morning of August 6, 2017, a remarkable event took place in the small, quiet town of Waldsassen, Germany—right on the border of the Czech Republic. Once home to a thriving Cistercian monastery, Waldsassen Abbey established in 1133, the quiet but still magnificent *Heilige-Leiber-Fest* hosted a well-attended celebration with an unearthly resonance. Today's *Heilige-Leiber-Fest*, or *Celebration of Holy Bodies,* continues the longstanding tradition of more than 250 years—ever since the feast was approved by the Abbot General of the Cistercian Order, Francis Trouve, on February 13, 1756.[2]

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[1] *Heilige-Leiber-Fest, Heilige-Leiber-Fest, 2017.*
[2] *Beiträge Zur Geschichte Des Bistums Regensburg, Band 38,* by Paul Mai and Karl Hausberger (Regensburg: Verlag Des Vereins Für Regensburger Bistumsgeschichte, 2004), 363.

The first holy body arrived in Waldsassen in 1688. The remaining nine would arrive over the next seventy-seven years, with the last one arriving in 1765. Once welcomed to their new home, the full-body relics would receive exceptional treatment from Adalbart Eder, a lay brother of the former monastery who was a trained goldsmith. Eder was to become "the most famous decorator" of the *Katakombenheiligen*, or catacomb saints. His exquisite work on the ten bodies has remained untouched, according to the basilica's current parish priest, Thomas Vogl.

Today's ceremony would be abbreviated due to the incomplete renovations on the Bavarian Baroque church building. Only the four standing saints flanking the two side altars would receive the ceremonial veneration as the remaining six were sealed off behind thick, white plastic to protect them from renovation dust and damage. However, after the ceremony Fr. Vogl would accompany me behind the plastic curtains to permit me access to three more of the reclining saints. Within the darkness of the enclosures, Saints Ursa and Maximus appear reclining in their glass reliquary *chasse* lavishly decorated from head to toe in jewels and embroidered finery. Maximus rests his head on his right hand while the left hand rests on his hip and holds a golden palm branch. In front of his legs sits an embellished chalice said to contain the martyr's blood. Ursa appears very similar only she holds the golden branch in her right hand while holding a chalice in her left. Behind her head a placard reads: S. URSA V. & M. ORA PRO NOBIS.

After the opening hymn, the priest proclaims:

P: Leibe Schwestern und Brüder!

Wir verehren die Reliquien früchristlicher Märtyrer aus den Katakomben Roms, die wir heir in der Stiftsbasilika Waldsassen als die Heiligen Leiber um ihre Fürsprache bei Gott anrufen.

So wie sie durch ihren Glauben und ihr Zeugnis für Christus Tempel und Werkzeug des Heiligen Geistes waren, so sollen auch wire s sein, damit wir als Kirche in Wahrheit Leib Christi sind.

Wir wollen nun Gott preisen fur die Heiligen Märtyrer und ihre Fürbitte erflehen für alle Christen, unsere Pfarrgemeinde, unsere Stadt, unser Land fur die ganze Welt.[3]

And prays:

Lasset uns beten.
Herr, unser Gott, wir freuen uns über die ruhmreiche Schar deiner Blutzeugen. Die Gemeinschaft mit ihnen gebe unserem Glauben neue Kraft; Ihre Fürbitte schenke Mut und Zuversicht. Darum bitten wir durch Jesus Christus.[4]

What follows is a longer prayer of intercession, which begins with the following proclamation of communion between the celestial and ecclesial faithful gathered before God's throne:

Unzahlbar ist die Schar vor Gottes Thron. Märtyrer and Bekenner, Eheleute, Priester, and Ordensengehörige, Frauen und Männer -- als ein pilgerndes Gottesvolk waren sie unterwegs, als suchende Menschen waren sie vertraut mit

[3] "Dear Sisters and Brothers, We worship the relics of the early Christian martyrs from the Roman catacombs that we have here in the Waldsassen Abbey, which we call the Holy Bodies, for their intercession with God. Just as they were the temple and tool of the Holy Spirit through their faith and witness to Christ, so should we be so that we, as the Church, are actually the body of Christ. We now praise God for the saints and beg their prayer for all Christians, our parish, our city, our country for the whole world." (All translations mine).

[4] "Let us pray. Lord, our God, we rejoice in the glorious host of your martyrs. Communion with them gives our faith new strength. May their intercession give us courage and confidence. We ask this through Jesus Christ."

> *all dem, was auch uns heute bewegt. Deschalb rufen wir zu ihnen, die mit ihrem ganzen Leben das Lob Gottes singen.…*[5]

At the conclusion of the corporate prayer, the *Prozession zu den Altären und Verehrung der Heiligen Reliquien* begins. As the congregation sings, the priest along with four acolytes proceeds to the *Marien-Altar*. Incense is dispensed before the two erect saints.[6] The congregation is led in prayer.

> V: *Sei gepriesen Herr Jesus Christus, Sohn des lebendigen Gottes. Du bist der Erlöser der Welt, unser Herr und Heiland, der uns als Zeugen des Evangeliums sendet.*
> A: *Komm, Herr Jesus, und steh uns bei, dass wir alle Zeit mit dir leben und in Reich deines Vaters gelangen. Amen.*
> V: *Bittet für uns, o heilige Märtyrer Valentinus and Gratianus!*
> A: *Auf dass wir würdig werden der Verheissungen Christi.*

Then all together:

> *Allmächtiger Gott, wir ehren die heiligen Märtyrer Vatalianus and Gratianus, die im Bekenntnis does Glaubens an dich standhaft geblieben sind, und bitten dich: Gib, dass wir ihre mächtige und hilfreiche Fürsprache bei dir erfahren. Darum bitten wir durch Christus, unseren Herrn.*[7]

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[5] "The gathering before God's throne is priceless. Martyrs and confessors, spouses, priests, and religious, women and men—as pilgrims of God they were on the move, as seekers they were familiar with everything that moves us today. We call to them, who sing the praise of God with their whole life."

[6] The four full-body relics above the *Marien-Altar* and *Bernhards-Altar* appear standing while the remaining six are in a reclining position.

[7] "Priest: Praise be to the Lord Jesus Christ, son of the living God. You are the Redeemer of the world, our Lord and Savior, who sends us as witnesses to the gospel."
"Congregation: Come Lord Jesus and help us to come into your father's kingdom and live with you for eternity. Amen."
"Priest: Please pray for us, O holy martyrs Vatalianus and Gratianus!"
"Congregation: That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ."
"All: Almighty God, we honor the holy martyrs Vatalianus and Gratianus, who have remained steadfast in their devotion to you, and ask you: Let us experience their powerful and helpful intercession with you. We ask this through Christ our Lord."

As a second verse is sung, the priest and acolytes proceed to the *Bernhards-Altar* just opposite the *Querschiff*.[8] Again, the thurible is swung before the saints who look indiscernibly similar to the saints standing across from them. The same prayer is spoken before the saints with the exception of the names invoked.

> V: *Bittet für uns, o heilige Märtyrer Viktorius und Maximus!*
> A: *Auf dass wir würdig warden der Verheissungen Christi.*

Then all together:

> *Barmherziger Gott, du hast den Märtyrern Viktorius und Maximinus deine Liebe zugewandt, du hast sie im Leiden gestärkt und sie in deine Herrlichkeit aufgenommen. Auf ihre Fürsprache verzeihe uns alle Sünden und rette und aus jeder Not. Darum bitten wir durch Christus, unseren Herrn.*[9]

The liturgy concludes with *der Prozession zum Hochaltar*. Three more verses are sung as the priest and acolytes proceed to the high altar. After the responsive prayers are spoken the corporate prayer concludes:

> *Herr, unser Gott, von dir kommt die Kraft in der Schwachheit, von dir die Festigkeit im Glauben, wie es uns der Tod deiner heiligen Märtyrer bezeugt. Da wir im Leiden mit deinem Sohn vereint sind, lass uns auch teilhaben an seiner Auferstehung und mit allen Heiligen bei dir vollkommene Freude erlangen, die uns niemand nehem kann. Darum bitten wir durch Christus, unseren Herrn.*[10]

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[8] Trans: *transept.* According to the program this reflects the amended service as normally the procession would move from the *Marien-Altar* to the *Apostel-Altar*, *Johannes-Altar*, *Katherinen-Altar*, *Magdalena-Altar*, *Michaels-Altar*, *Benediktus-Altar*, *Bernhards-Altar*, and conclude at the *Hochaltar*. The *Marien-Altar* and *Bernhards-Altar* each contain two relics while the rest each contain one.

[9] "Merciful God, You have turned your love to the martyrs Viktorius and Maximinus whom you strengthened in suffering and accepted into glory. By their intercession forgive us our sins and save us from every trial. We ask this through Christ our Lord."

[10] "Lord, our God, from you comes strength in weakness, from you strength in faith, as the death of your holy martyrs attests. Since we are united in suffering with your Son, let us also share in his resurrection and with all the saints who remain with you, achieve complete joy that nobody can take away from us. We ask this through Christ our Lord."

A final hymn is sung. The *Wettersegen*[11] is followed by the *Entlassung*. And the service ends with the *Mariengruß*.

The ten *Heilige Leiber* of Waldsassen remain the largest collection of these exceptional relics. Historically their dazzling presence and continued veneration harkens back to a time when these bodies represented far more than the promise of eternal communion with God and his faithful. These spectacular traces of hope became the bulwark of the Catholic faith, which had suffered tremendous loss as a result of the Reformation. As we saw in the previous chapter, relic translation and veneration was a widespread phenomenon that continued to grow in the centuries leading up to the Reformation. Ironically, the piety and zeal attached to the cult of relics, which had been an expression of Christian communion and unity, would become a major impetus for those who would break communion with the Catholic Church. It is this story to which we now turn in order to survey the historical illustration of what is at stake in maintaining the threefold body of Christ.

In his study of the role of religious pilgrimage in Bavaria in the centuries leading up to, during, and after Luther's initiated reform, historian Philip Soergel observes little to nothing had changed in lay attitudes and the much sought after intercession of the

[11] The "weather blessing" is a seasonal prayer formerly meant for weather-related protection and prosperity as agriculture was crucial to communal flourishing. It continues to be used in some regions today as a general blessing for those who labor and gratitude for the earth and its fruits.

saints from late antiquity to medieval and then early modern Europe. What had changed was the political and economic "framework" for these practices.[12] Soergel observes:

> At the level of individual dialogue between saint and votant, the manuscript miracle collections maintained at many of Bavaria's shrines echoed patterns of communication whose origins stretched back even until the time of St. Augustine. Yet more generally, it was obvious that the ways in which miracles and pilgrimage were interpreted for the entire body of Catholic faithful did change dramatically during the early modern period.… But the steadily intensifying and expanding discourse on pilgrimage in early modern Bavaria also revealed the dual efforts of the state and the Church to bring order, discipline, and a new rationale to lay religious life. In Bavaria, as later in Hapsburg Austria, popular rituals like pilgrimage provided the counter-reformers an important way of reviving enthusiasm for the Church and reestablishing its preeminence after the brief but cataclysmic episode of the Reformation. In turn, early modern pilgrimages and their sister phenomenon, the urban procession, came increasingly to fulfill important roles in the extension of state power and order.[13]

Medieval Europe maintained a deep material and therefore visual piety. We have already established the close relationship between images and relics. By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries "people were surrounded by material images as never before."[14] In her study of late medieval devotional art, Caroline Walker Bynum emphasizes the *objectness* of medieval art by contrast to later developments of *mimetic* art in the (upper and lower) Renaissance:

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[12] Philip M. Soergel, *Wondrous in His Saints: Counter-Reformation Propaganda in Bavaria* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 22. This observation should be qualified by noting that Soergel recognizes changes internal to the cult of saints. For example he observes, "After the twelfth century, the popularity of these [international] relic cults waned in favor of new devotions in which miraculous images, statues, and the Eucharist were revered.… As a result of these complex and centuries-long transformations, Europeans gradually transferred their loyalties from local thaumaturgists to universally revered members of a celestial hierarchy that included the apostles, early Church martyrs, the Virgin, and Christ."

[13] Ibid., 4. Soergel limits the period of his study to "roughly 1450-1700."

[14] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion and Late Medieval Europe*, (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2011), 52.

> Indeed, medieval theorists had a far more complex sense than our modern one of what virtues and powers were represented by various gems and colors. But the point of the objects that furnished medieval churches was not what we would call "realistic" depiction of bodies, figures, or events. The point was the power of the materials to evoke, to conjure up—to represent not so much in the sense of "looking like" as in the sense of "manifesting the significance of."[15]

By emphasizing the *objectness* of medieval devotional art, Bynum is drawing attention to the increased centrality of materiality for Christian piety. She identifies two aspects of medieval art to illustrate her argument. First, depictions of saints become increasingly identified with particular objects such that regardless of a mimetic resonance in bodily features the saint can be recognized according to the objects she is associated with. "Even in paint, Catherine is identified by a combination of the torture wheel and the female figure holding it. It is the wheel and Catherine's triumph over it that gives Catherine's devotee access to her experience and her power."[16] Second, medieval artists "expected viewers to notice and admire the stuff they employed *as stuff*."[17] She identifies this as a "self-consciousness" by which the art object does not attempt to transcend itself. It is not pointing beyond itself—it is announcing itself as the site for divine communion in its very materiality.

> However much some recent scholars may have insisted that late medieval practice focused on vision more than object, objects were what the faithful revered, traveled to, and made offerings for. However much medieval intellectuals may have insisted on an ontological gap between image (or sign) and exemplar (or signified), what images displayed was their materiality. And as critics and supporters of images both feared and upheld, matter was not mere dead stuff.[18]

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[15] Ibid., 58-59.
[16] Ibid., 61.
[17] Ibid., 52.
[18] Ibid.

The animate quality of devotional images was not a new phenomenon. We briefly touched on this topic in the previous chapter by noting that it was the increasing testimony of miraculous images that contributed to their widespread acceptance and relative function as relics. However, as we noted, there were growing concerns about the improper veneration of images that stemmed partly from accounts such as the one Patricia Cox Miller retells in her study of *The Corporeal Imagination* in late antiquity. She notes, "In the two centuries prior to the outbreak of iconoclasm, anecdotes about icons began to appear in hagiographies."[19] Miller offers an example from a seventh-century collection of the miracles of Saints Cosmas and Damian. In the story, a devout woman returns home after being healed of "various afflictions" at the saints' shrine. So overwhelmed by her experience and desire to continue seeing the saints, she paints images of them on her wall. When she is later struck with a severe stomach pain, she scrapes some of the paint from the depiction, mixes it with water, and drinks it. The story concludes, "she was immediately cured of her pains by the visitation of the Saints."[20] Stories such as this were used by both the iconoclast and iconodule parties to support their arguments. The iconoclast could easily point to such instances as idolatrous as the woman's actions indicate a misplaced faith in materiality, that is, the curative power of the paint she herself applied. However, Miller points out,

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[19] Patricia Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 131.
[20] Ibid., 132. Quoting Miller quoting *Miracula SS. Cosmae et Damiani* 15, in *Kosmas und Damian: Texte und Einleitung*, ed. Deubner; trans. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453*, (Medieval Academy of America: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 139.

> The text says that the woman was cured of her pains by the visitation of the saints. The word used for visitation—επιφοιτησις—does indeed carry the sense of divine visitation, but it can also mean a haunting or inspiration. Saintly presence is neither fully material nor fully ethereal but something in between. It inhabits an edge that keeps human saint and spiritual power in a tensive relationship.[21]

I draw attention to Miller's work in order to emphasize a contrast with Bynum's account of the *objectness* of medieval devotional art. Bynum does not deny the long history of miraculous events associated with holy images. She is not suggesting that images only begin to take on animate qualities in the late medieval period. Rather what she is arguing is important as it offers further support of G.J.C. Snoek's account we saw in Ch. 3 of the increasing objectification of the Eucharist. I will quote Bynum at length:

> What is striking for my argument, however, is the appearance of a new kind of miracle. To say this is not to claim that miracles generally increased after 1100. Miracles—particularly miracles of vengeance and miracles of healing or resurrection—were from the early Middle Ages associated with relic cult, and some scholars have argued (although this is debated) that there was a decline in such claims after the twelfth century. I point rather to the emergence of a new type of miraculous occurrence: miracles of metamorphosis. By this, I mean miracles that involve transformation (especially the lasting transformation) of holy matter. Stories of relics that bleed, or flower, or shine with light when fragmented are frequent in the later Middle Ages, although found earlier, and claims that Eucharistic elements turn into flesh or blood and endure as such seem to be new in the period after 1050. Miraculous branding or inscribing of wounds or signs on bodies occurs, seemingly for the first time. And … the miracles discussed by university theologians were material miracles—that is, they tended to involve the augmentation of matter and the arresting of the decay it was feared to represent. Hence, the problem and opportunity posed by transformation miracles were special challenges of the later Middle Ages.[22]

Added to these "special challenges" was the introduction of indulgences, which became common in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. John Dillenberger states, "[R]elics, indulgences, and images could not be readily separated in their [lay] common

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[21] Ibid., 132.
[22] Bynum, 128.

understanding."[23] That is to say, whereas there may have been theological distinctions made, at the level of practice among the laity such distinctions were unknown or ineffective for curbing pietistic zeal.

Importantly, there were economic and very physical/bodily reasons lay piety persisted,[24] but those same reasons, it would turn out, contributed to the laity's iconoclastic impulses as well. Carlos Eire,[25] Caroline Walker Bynum, and John Dillenberger, to name just a few, have noted the more grassroots iconoclasm that complemented the iconoclasm of the Reformers. This grassroots iconoclasm occurred because of the dire economic situation much of the laity faced and their eventual resentment of the Church's lavishness, which too often led to more pleas for lay support and was justified as a means for storing one's treasures in heaven, that is, assuring salvation.

In his brief "chronology of reform" Dillenberger proposes three "sequential but overlapping" periods. The first period (1500-1517) is identified with the "initial stirrings" of reform, which focused on "the financial and dubious moral practices of the papacy,

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[23] John Dillenberger, *Images and Relics: Theological Perceptions and Visual Images in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 6. Bynum makes a similar observation. "Although they have been treated by modern scholars as if they were different genres, relics, images, and the Eucharist were revered by the medieval faithful in similar ways—accompanied by incense and candles, displayed in cases of crystal and gems. Bowed down before, and prayed to. Indeed, they were conflated, with no sense of incongruity," 126-27.

[24] Soergel observes, "In Bavaria, shrines were in large part centers of 'faith healing,' revered and prized because the saints resolved certain otherwise insoluble human dilemmas in ways more effective than those of other institutions. In the absence of effective medication, for example, the onslaught of an illness was often perceived as life-threatening, and its cessation a case of supernatural intervention," 20.

[25] Carlos M. N. Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

cardinals, and priests."[26] These stirrings were inextricably linked to artistic developments as the sale of indulgences was used to finance extravagant commissions. Dillenberger notes that both Grünwald's *Isenheim Altarpiece* (ca. 1512-1516) and Michelangelo's *Sistine Chapel* (1508-1512) were commissioned during this period. Thus he concludes, "Throughout this and subsequent periods, financial and moral questions were frequently intertwined. Not only was there the problem of expending funds for works of art; there was also the issue of spending it for art with an overabundance of sexuality."[27]

The second period (1517-1528/1530) sees these issues intertwined with doctrinal issues. Thus this period begins with Martin Luther's Ninety-five Theses in which he expressed concern over the increase of what he took to be a superstitious religion as a result of the Church's abuse of power and exploitation of lay sentiments and their need for both spiritual and bodily assurances. The perceived increased attachment to the intercessory role of the saints was at the center of Luther's concerns and charges of exploitation.

> The intertwined foci of relics, indulgences, and images related to the increasing emphasis on Mary and the saints, took center stage.… In the first two periods under discussion, there was an ever-increasing emphasis on the grace-bestowing power of the saints and the ways of drawing upon it. During these periods, the number of paintings and sculptures of Christ, Mary, and the saints added to churches dramatically increased. The theological distinction between veneration and adoration was blurred in the western church.… That development lies behind the pronounced fury against images on the part of various lay persons and reformers, beginning in 1522. It makes intelligible the notion that images in and of themselves are idols.[28]

[26] Dillenberger, 5.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid., 6-7.

Yet, as Bynum shows, the Church was aware of the need for reform and was already involved in addressing excessive practices of veneration, particularly with respect to the Eucharist and relics. Both Bynum and Soergel show how complicated the Church's internal reform became as, similar to Byzantium, the Church and civil authorities were mutually dependent on one another, and, moreover, they were each mutually dependent on the very laity whose practices they at once needed to encourage—for economic and political reasons—and yet reform for spiritual reasons.[29]

In light of his reforming efforts, Martin Luther is credited as being a more moderate iconoclast. In his Invocavit sermons of 1522, Luther includes images among those things which are not necessary, stating that "it would be better if we did not have them at all."[30] But he admits to a certain level of scriptural "uncertainty" on the matter of making images and in light of this he denounces those who would be so bold as to destroy them. Interestingly, like the iconodules of the eighth and nineth centuries—albeit with much ambivalence—Luther also argues that even the Jews made images. Then,

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[29] Soergel's work is replete with instances of ecclesial attempts to curb lay enthusiasm, particularly enthusiasms attached to unsanctioned shrines which were increasing in popularity in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: "Yet the frequent repetition of these ordinances leads us to conclude that the officials were never particularly effective in curbing the proliferation of unsanctioned shrines.… The Church could do little more than add its stamp of approval—the consecration—as an after-the-fact legitimation to devotions and churches already in existence," 51. It is this complex reality that leads Bynum to conclude, "neither a division between clerical and lay nor one between elite and popular works well to describe the basic contours of medieval culture, and any theory that a uniform Christian belief trickled down from church leaders—or trickled up from folk culture—must be roundly rejected," 129.

[30] Luther returned to Wittenberg in March 1522 to address the unrest in the city, which was undergoing liturgical reforms introduced by the radical Reformers under Karlstadt. He preached eight sermons now referred to as the Invocavit sermons.

referring to the Apostle Paul, he endorses denouncing images (as idols) but doing nothing to them.

This same logic of moderation did not extend to Luther's sentiments about the cult of relics, which, as Eire observes by the Middle Ages had occasioned the promotion of many "pious frauds."[31] Because charges of inauthenticity could be more readily applied to relics than images, the Protestant Reformers targeted the removal and destruction of relics, including them in their denouncement of Catholic idolatry. When Luther was taken under protection by Frederick the Wise after the Diet of Worms (1520), he convinced Frederick to dispense of his expansive relic collection.[32] Around the same time, Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg announced the first "relic show" at the new monastery at Halle on September 8, 1520, offering an indulgence to any who attended. Luther did not initially react,[33] but in 1521 he wrote to George Spalatin, advisor to Frederick the Wise, attacking Albrecht's collection of relics at Halle with their indulgence. Yet it is hard to distinguish which part of the event was most offensive to Luther. Matthias Hamann suggests that Luther's decision to protest the event was partly due to the inclusion of the recently completed paintings of the saints by Cranach, which,

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[31] Eire, 16.
[32] Dillenberger, 86.
[33] Cf. Matthias Hamann, "Reliquienverehrung unter Albrecht von Brandenburg am Neuen Stift zu Halle," in *Liturgisches Jarbuch*, 66 no. 1 2016, 25-40. "Hielt sich Luther 1520 selbst noch zurück, so wares Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, der unter dem Pseudonym Lignatius Sturll (»hölzerne Scheuchstange«) eine Flugschrift gegen den Ablass am Neuen Stift veröffentlichte." Luther's letter known as *Against the Idol at Halle* would later be published in 1522 under the title *Against the Spiritual Estate of the Pope and Bishops*.

Hamann avers, contributed to Luther's charge of idolatry.[34] Moreover, Luther's concern about such events was clearly not limited to the material aspects—whether relics or images. In his Festival Sermons, written for the first period of publication between 1520-1527, Luther expresses explicit rejection of the practice of venerating the dead. In the sermon for November 1, the Feast of All Saints, he states:

> First, before we consider this Gospel [Matt 5] we must say something about today's feast, which is called All Saints Day. It is celebrated all over the world so that you find it everywhere. It is celebrated this very day, and tomorrow is All Souls' Day. I would have both of these feasts done away with everywhere, if for no other reason than for the sake of the abuses associated with them. For even if there are a few who know how to observe them in a godly way, they are but few. Practically everyone abuses it. For you cannot preserve the common man from this dream that he imagines he is doing some kind of good work by it. Churches would not long be supported, altars built, paintings commissioned, Bibles donated, if one did not think that he was performing some sort of service to God by it.[35]

He goes on to state that it is the living saints who should be honored—not the dead. And the "living saints" are our neighbors, those in need, and those who "lie in sin." Here we can see a new economy developing—one in which communion exists horizontally and no longer vertically. One in which mediation is no longer relevant to communion. One in

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[34] Ibid., "Als dann im September 1521 im Neuen Stift zum ersten Mal das Reliquienfest in vollem Umfang durchgeführt wurde, wovon das Hallische Heiltumbuch Zeugnis gibt, sind auch die Entwürfe Cranachs für den Altarzyklus der Stiftskirche mit seinen 108 ganzfi gurigen undz. T. lebensgroßen Heiligendarstellungen fertig. Man konnte diese Bilder mit den Heiligenreliquien in Beziehung setzen. So wird verständlicher, warum Luther in seinem berühmten Brief an Georg Spalatin vom 7. Oktober 1521 eine Schrift »Wider den Abgott zu Halle« erwog und die Kirche des Neuen Stifts, wo gerade die Umbauarbeiten begonnen hatten, als Albrechts »lupanari« (Schandhaus) bezeichnen konnte."

[35] Martin Luther, *Festival Sermons of Martin Luther, The Church Postils, Sermons for the Main Festivals and Saints Days of the Church Year; Winter and Summer Selections*, trans. Joel R. Baseley (Dearborn: Mark V Publications, 2005), 182.

which *dulia* only pertains to "living saints" as Luther will ultimately permit some form of honor of the dead saints but only insofar as they are remembered as exemplars of faith.

Luther's exhortation reduces John Damascene's taxonomy of veneration drastically. Recall Damascene's taxonomy details seven kinds of veneration—each in a manner fitting to its role in the worshipping economy. Luther insists that pure Christian worship is only guaranteed by what scripture reveals as explicitly commanded by God. In light of this, he would maintain those forms of veneration described by Damascene as the fifth, sixth, and seventh forms of veneration: veneration of one another "as having a portion of God and having come to be in the image of God, humbling ourselves before one another and fulfilling the law of love"; veneration of "those in positions of rule and authority"; and whereby "slaves [venerate] their masters and the needy their benefactors." But, importantly, Luther's *sola scriptura* significantly revises Damascene's second and third types of veneration: "whereby we venerate things dedicated to God, by which I mean the sacred Gospels and the other books [of scripture]" as Damascene goes on to include all those sacred vessels used in worship. Scripture is not the only artifact worthy of reverence. The emphasis in Damascene's taxonomies is clearly the whole economy of salvation, which includes all persons, places, and things that enable us to participate in that economy because participation *is* salvation—union through communion with God. Damascene's second kind of veneration is "that whereby we venerate creatures, through whom and in whom God worked out our salvation" and in this he includes all those persons, places, and things that have participated in salvation history,

> either before the coming of the Lord, or in his incarnate dispensation, such as Mount Sinai and Nazareth, the manger in Bethlehem, and the cave, and the holy

> place of Golgatha, the wood of the cross, the nails, the sponge, the reed, the holy and saving lance, the apparel, the tunic, the linen clothes, the winding sheet, the holy tomb, the fountain head of our resurrection, the gravestone, Sion the holy Mount, and again the Mount of Olives, the sheep gate, and the blessed precinct of Gethsemane. These and suchlike I reverence and venerate and every holy temple of God and every place in which God is named, not because of their nature, but because they are receptacles of divine energy and in them God was pleased to work out our salvation.[36]

Recall Jaroslav Pelikan's observation in Ch. 2 that Damascene's taxonomies are written in descending order and therefore are reflective of the Dionysian hierarchies. The sacramental economy consists of each person or thing that facilitates participation, union, and ascent toward unity with the One. Without mediation the hierarchy, that is, the sacramental economy is flattened, cutting off the vertical from the horizontal. This is not a mere restructuring of a political façade. This is a metaphysical shift that indicates an epistemological rupture. The very notion of revelation must change in order for such a shift to occur. And it did. This is why it is difficult to accept Dillenberger's observation that prior to the Council of Trent, "Luther's thinking could still have been incorporated into the Catholic Church."[37] This observation may be simply reflective of the fact that there was already reform happening within the Church and, therefore, there might have been more sympathy with Luther's concerns. However, Dillenberger also acknowledges:

> Between circa 1525-1530, more radical reformation thinking expressed itself. In the midst of nonacceptance of reform views by the church on the one side and sectarian theological views on the other, Luther's view of faith was increasingly spelled out in terms of a fully formed theology that rejected both paths and demanded forms of the church grounded in the early church.[38]

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[36] John of Damascus, *Treatise III*, 33.
[37] Dillenberger, 8.
[38] Ibid.

Indicative of the epistemological rupture and hence the change in understanding of revelation is the new ecclesiology introduced by Luther and espoused by the more radical Reformers. The Church was no longer understood to be the ecclesiastical hierarchy sanctioned by God and mirroring the celestial hierarchy. The Church as hierarchy became that which stood in the way of the Christian's union with God. Now there was a definitive break between all three bodies of Christ. What had been the metaphysical mystery of Christ's threefold body centered on the Eucharist was replaced by an unmediated relationship between God and the individual believer. The "free" Christian had been released from "captivity" to an oppressive system. But, as we shall see, the freedom Luther envisioned for the individual Christian would lead to an unraveling of the whole sacramental economy, which would necessarily change how the individual experiences and understands communion with God and her fellow Christians. Now, rather than being unified by partaking of Christ and contemplating the divine mysteries that facilitate union with him and one another, what would bind Christians is left to individual reason, that is, theological agreement. The essential unicity of the Church as the Body of Christ is replaced with a notion of "body" that can no longer recognize unicity as anything other than artificial. Sacramental reasoning becomes accidental and therefore opposed to faith. One needs to look no further than Luther's own struggle to maintain some form of sacramental reasoning regarding the Eucharist, having already dispensed with a sacramental understanding of the Church itself.

Luther's ideas on the sacraments developed over time. Already in 1519 he had expressed his belief that there were only three sacraments authorized by scripture:

baptism, penance, and the Lord's Supper.[39] However, with the publication of *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* in 1520 his views on the sacraments and in particular the Eucharist were more fully articulated and "had the effect of galvanizing both opponents and supporters."[40] In this work, Luther addresses the "three captivities," each pertaining to the Eucharist: 1) withholding the cup, 2) transubstantiation, and 3) the Mass as sacrifice. The first captivity deals with the issue of communion in both kinds, which had already been a matter of some debate within the Church. Here he responds to those who have defended the practice of withholding the cup from the laity and distributing the bread alone. Luther finds the practice illogical, unscriptural, and unpastoral as Christ clearly says, "This is my blood, which is poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt 26:28).

There are two aspects of Luther's argument in this text that bear noting for our purposes. The first indicates the significant shift in understanding how truth is revealed and, therefore, how the Church is to be understood. The second is Luther's view of the sacramentality of the Eucharist. As we saw in previous chapters, earlier theological debates entailed appeals to scripture *and* tradition from each of the parties involved. Tradition was appealed to because it was understood that the Spirit reveals God's will through the Church. The Spirit's activity within the Church includes its activity in guiding scriptural interpretation. These are not separate operations as though one could

[39] See the editor's introduction to "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," in *The Annotated Luther*, *Church and Sacraments*, Vol. 3 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 10.
[40] Ibid., 11. This particular text "became the central work for which Luther had to answer at the Diet of Worms in 1521."

be opposed to the other. Scripture is to be read in light of tradition. It is the same Spirit at work in both (scripture and tradition), which is why the Church cannot be understood apart from the Trinity. The Church is the Body of Christ because it is the Holy Spirit, who images Christ in his Church and conforms the Church to his image and likeness. Tradition is the imaging of Christ in his Church through the Holy Spirit. When Pseudo-Dionysius describes hierarchy as an activity, it is precisely this activity; that is, the activity of the Holy Spirit enacting the sacramentality of the Church by illuminating human knowledge of the divine mysteries disclosed through scripture and dispensed through the sacraments. This is not to suggest there is never error in the Church, as it remains both human and divine. However, it is tradition that bears witness to the Spirit's assurance that those who participate in Christ's body, through the sacraments, are incorporated into that very body and conformed to its likeness. The Spirit provides both continuity and communion. Thus the discernment reflected in tradition includes addressing error. The process of conformity allows for acknowledgement of aberrations. This is why innovation is always to be avoided and charges of innovation indicate the introduction of an idea or practice that contradicts the Spirit of Christ—God's revelation through tradition. This does not preclude development as development and innovation are not the same thing.[41]

Now, Luther's polemic shifts away from giving any theological interpretation of tradition and instead renders it as merely human. Scripture alone can reveal God's will. Thus scripture and tradition are opposed with little to no nuance. In arguing against his

[41] Cf. *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, John Henry Cardinal Newman (South Bend:University of Notre Dame Press, 1994).

opponent at one point of the text concerning communion in both kinds, Luther states: "But listen to our distinguished distinguisher of 'kinds,' to whom the decision of the church and the command of Christ are the same thing, and again the command of Christ and no command of Christ are the same thing."[42] It should be noted that Luther's polemic is thoroughly pastoral, showing his concern that the sacrament is being withheld from those who desire it. The critique of his position is not meant to dismiss his sincerity in holding accountable those who have endorsed a practice that he takes to be directly counter to Christ's own desire to give himself, through his body and blood, to those who seek him. Nonetheless, as we shall see, his effort to remove the sacrament from the sacramental context of the Church would have dire consequences that even Luther would eventually decry.

The second captivity is the doctrine of transubstantiation, which Luther sees as an unnecessary opinion of "the Aristotelian church."[43] Having been trained in Scholastic theology, Luther was well acquainted with both Aristotle and the Thomistic tradition. As such, he deems the matter (doctrine of transubstantiation) lamentable insofar as he takes Thomas's reading of Aristotle to be mistaken. Moreover, for Luther, it seems ill-advised to rely on philosophy for explaining what is otherwise plainly attested to in scripture—

[42] Ibid., 18.
[43] Cf. footnote 59,"The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," in *The Annotated Luther*, *Church and Sacraments*, Vol. 3 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016). The term "transubstantiated" was first used in 1215 at the Fourth Lateran Council. An official decree on the doctrine of transubstantiation was not arrived at until the Council of Trent in 1551.

even if it remains a mystery.[44] Luther concludes, "I at last found rest for my conscience in the above view, namely, that it is real bread and real wine, in which Christ's real flesh and real blood are present in no other way and to no less a degree than the others assert them to be under their accidents."[45] As Luther expounds his argument, we can see in it the very concern Henri De Lubac expresses in *Corpus Mysticum*. That is, that the mystery of the sacrament has been subjected to an overrationalizing philosophy by appealing to Aristotle's distinction between substance and accident. Specifically, Luther is responding to Aquinas's discussion of the Eucharist in *Summa Theologia* III, Question 75:

> We have now to consider the change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ; under which head there are eight points of inquiry: (1) Whether the substance of bread and wine remain in this sacrament after the consecration? (2) Whether it is annihilated? (3) Whether it is changed into the body and blood of Christ? (4) Whether the accidents remain after the change? (5) Whether the substantial form remains there? (6) Whether this change is instantaneous? (7) Whether it is more miraculous than any other change? (8) By what words it may be suitably expressed? [46]

Aquinas draws on scripture, tradition, and Aristotle to respond to each question and its objections. In brief, Aquinas concludes that the substance of the bread is changed after consecration but the accidents of the bread and wine remain. In this way, the sacrament is

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[44] We have seen a similar issue raised regarding theology's use of philosophy when we looked at Severus's critique of Sergius's employment of philosophical terms. Recall Severus does not reject the use of philosophy outright, but only insofar as it introduces innovations that contradict proper theology. In the case of Luther's critique of the Thomists, Severus's position would not apply as Luther is not addressing what he takes to be a theological innovation but rather an unnecessary explanatory confusion occasioned by the introduction of Aristotelian terms. Both Luther and the Thomists are affirming the doctrine of Real Presence. The quibble is about how to explain—or not explain—the mystery.

[45] Ibid., 32.

[46] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologia* III, q. 75. http://www.newadvent.org/summa/4075.htm#article2

truly the real body and blood of Christ—and no longer bread and wine—but those who partake can only know this by faith and not according to the senses. This is what is meant by receiving the sacrament "spiritually." In response to those who would misinterpret Augustine on the matter of receiving the sacrament spiritually, Aquinas replies:

> From this authority the aforesaid heretics have taken occasion to err from evilly understanding Augustine's words. For when Augustine says: "You are not to eat this body which you see," he means not to exclude the truth of Christ's body, but that it was not to be eaten in this species in which it was seen by them. And by the words: "It is a mystery that I put before you; in its spiritual sense it will quicken you," he intends not that the body of Christ is in this sacrament merely according to mystical signification, but "spiritually," that is, invisibly, and by the power of the spirit. [47]

As we shall see, Luther ends up settling for a notion of signification. Nonetheless what De Lubac describes as the shift in Eucharistic theology from Augustine's sacramental reasoning to a rational dialectic is expressed in Luther's critique as well.[48] Luther's concern is that the mystery of the sacrament has been subjected to a philosophy that attempts to rationalize the mystery, which is ultimately of no benefit to the life of faith:

> I rejoice greatly that the simple faith of this sacrament is still to be found, at least among the common people. For as they do not understand, neither do they dispute whether accidents are present without substance, but believe with a simple faith that Christ's body and blood are truly contained there, and leave to those who have nothing else to do the argument about what contains them.[49]

Luther engages the Thomistic argument and points to perceived logical inconsistencies. Among them is Luther's observation regarding Aquinas's concern about idolatry. In Article 2, among his reasons for insisting that the substance of the bread and wine are

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[47] Ibid., Article 1.
[48] They are not the same argument, however. And the difference is what I am attempting to describe in my treatment of Luther's failed attempt to preserve the sacramentality of the Eucharist.
[49] Ibid., 35.

changed, Aquinas states: "Thirdly, because it would be opposed to the veneration of this sacrament, if any substance were there, which could not be adored with adoration of latria."[50] Once again, we find ourselves returning to the issues central to the debates between the iconoclasts and iconodules. In response to Aquinas, Luther states:

> Perhaps they [the Thomists] will say that the danger of idolatry demands that the bread and the wine should not be really present.… [T]here is the same danger in the accidents which remain and which they see, as in the case of the substance which they do not see. If they do not worship the accidents, but the Christ hidden under them, why should they worship the substance of the bread, which they do not see? And why could not Christ include his body in the substance of the bread just as well as in the accidents? … Why is it not even more possible that the body of Christ be contained in every part of the substance of the bread?[51]

In Article 2, Aquinas is appealing to the orthodox distinction of *latria* and *dulia*. For Aquinas, *latria* is only appropriate if the substance of the bread and wine is actually—and not symbolically—the body of Christ. This is the same argument we witnessed in Theodore's defense of the holy synecdoche. The Blessed Sacrament is not to be understood as functioning the same way as images. In images, the visible accidents facilitate an invisible communion with the prototype. In this way, as Theodore argues, the image and prototype share an identity, but only by virtue of homonymy—not by nature. Therefore it is appropriate to say both "This is an image of Christ" and "This is Christ." However, when Christ instituted the Eucharist he stated, "This is my body," by which he did not mean "this signifies my body," nor did he mean "this bread is my body."

In Luther's critique of Aquinas's position he focuses on Aquinas's use of philosophy and dismisses it. However, when read in the broader context of Aquinas's

[50] *STh* III, q. 75, a 2.
[51] Ibid., 34-35.

treatment of the questions, one finds that he (Aquinas) relies primarily on scripture to support his argument. Aquinas is using Aristotelian categories to offer an understanding of a literal reading of Christ's words of institution found in scripture. And he does this precisely to argue in continuity with tradition that the sacrament is not merely a sign but rather is the real body of Christ. Should any of the substance of the bread remain after the consecration, the body would be mingled with the bread. Thus whereas Luther's objection, "And why could not Christ include his body in the substance of the bread just as well as in the accidents?" seems logical enough, it poses problems from a Christological standpoint. At the conclusion of his argument about the second captivity Luther attempts to make this Christological turn. It is important to look at his remarks closely.

> Thus, what is true in regard to Christ is also true in regard to the sacrament. In order for the divine nature to dwell in him bodily [Col 2:9], it is not necessary for the human nature to be transubstantiated and the divine nature contained under the accidents of the human nature. Both natures are simply there in their entirety, and it is truly said, "This man is God; this God is man." … In like manner, it is not necessary in the sacrament that the bread and wine be transubstantiated and that Christ be contained under their accidents in order that the real body and real blood may be present. But both remain there at the same time, and it is truly said: "This bread is my body; this wine is my blood," and vice versa.[52]

In other words, Luther is trying to make an argument by analogy. Since Christ is at once God and man without his human nature being subsumed or transubstantiated, we can say the same of the bread and the wine in the sacrament. That is, the bread and wine are analogous to Christ's human nature. But this will not work. An analogy cannot be drawn between Christ's human nature and the separate natures of bread and wine. Christ is not

[52] Ibid., 37.

enjoined to these in the same way that the divine and human natures are unified in Christ. The unicity of Christ is unique. In the order of being, there is nothing analogous. It is precisely for this reason that the bread and wine cannot be understood as mere signs—pointing to rather than participating in the divine mystery. In order to understand this we must once again recall Pseudo-Dionysius's emphasis on the synaxis as the fulfillment of all the other mysteries, as well as Theodore's holy synecdoche wherein the Blessed Sacrament is the capitulation of all the mysteries and therefore all other sacraments derive their significance from this most important sacrament. Aquinas reasons in continuity with tradition when he replies to Article 2, Objection 2, which states:

> Further, there ought to be conformity between the sacraments. But in the other sacraments the substance of the matter remains, like the substance of water in Baptism, and the substance of chrism in Confirmation. Therefore the substance of the bread and wine remains also in this sacrament.

Aquinas responds:

> Reply to Objection 2. Christ is not really present in the other sacraments, as in this; and therefore the substance of the matter remains in the other sacraments, but not in this.[53]

Christ is present in the Blessed Sacrament in a unique way, which consequently requires that it stand apart from the other sacraments—not to diminish them but to aid our contemplation of them. Our contemplation of this divine mystery in the order of knowing must be derived from its reality in the order of being. Here again, the Byzantine debates concerning the orthodoxy of holy images are helpful. There's no question that the debates centered on the incarnation. The divine economic appropriation means the Creator united himself to his creation through his own kenosis, thereby enacting redemption. Matter is

[53] *STh* III, q. 75, a 2.

not transcended but redeemed for humanity's sake. However, in the order of knowing the mystery of God-become-man creates a rational tension. How are we to speak of the Incarnate One when predication follows from two different natures—one divine, one human? The iconoclasts took issue with circumscription precisely because the divine nature cannot be circumscribed. The iconodules argued that Christ's two natures in one hypostasis means we must say that he is both, at once, circumscribed and uncircumscribed—uncircumscribed in his divine nature, circumscribed in his human nature. Thus Theodore shows what is at stake in insisting, as Severus does, on one nature. By maintaining the two natures as affirmed at Chalcedon, we can avoid the unseemly suggestion that either nature undergoes any substantial change in the incarnation. All predication of either nature must be maintained and yet held together only when applied to the person of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word. If the two natures are conflated or mixed, Christ's unicity would mean no predications of either nature would pertain to him as he would be neither fully divine nor fully human. Therefore he would not be both circumscribable and uncircumscribable. He would be circumscribable and something other than fully divine or fully human. In the context of the second wave of Byzantine iconoclasm, Theodore writes:

> Do you not think that what is simple and what is composite are different things, or do you think that they are the same? If the former, you will say with us that Christ is entirely circumscribed, and entirely uncircumscribed, as he is from both. Indeed, in the properties that are opposed to one another, one can see the nature of both the aspects of Christ—I mean, the simple and the composite, the divinity and the humanity. As in the example of the fire and the water, fire does not go downward, nor does water go upward; dryness is not humidity, nor is humidity dryness. Thus, circumscribability is different from the inability to be represented, and the inability to be represented is different from circumscribability. Indeed, one is opposed to the other as much as possible by a natural opposition.… If,

> instead, you think that Christ was only uncircumscribable, why then do you not affirm the latter? And even if you do not say that, you will say that the divinity and the humanity will be one nature that will be simple and composite at the same time, as if, with Severus, you were affirming in a mixed manner the existence of aqueous fire. The structure of the nature is proved to be unique from the uniqueness of its set of properties.[54]

Returning to the Christological aspect of the Eucharist, therefore, we must maintain that what takes place in the consecration of the bread and wine is not correlative to what takes place in the incarnation. Although this is not to say that the Eucharist is not ontologically bound to the incarnation. That is to say, the priest is not here reenacting the incarnation. It is Christ in his fullness, fully God and fully man, who becomes present under the species of the bread and wine. And it is only because the substance of bread and wine cease to be present, through transubstantiation and not annihilation, that the priestly act of consecration in the Mass reenacts Christ's sacrifice—not the incarnation—allowing our present participation by receiving the fulfillment of Christ's sacrifice made for us for the sake of communion with him.

Whereas Luther wants to preserve the mystery of how Christ is present in the bread and wine, he is nonetheless committed to releasing the sacrament from any notion that the mystery involves a sacred action involving the priest. Luther is correct in observing, "[W]hat is true in regard to Christ is also true in regard to the sacrament." What he fails to recognize fully are the implications of this statement for how we understand the sacramental nature of the Church as Christ's third body. For him, the mystery of the sacrament no longer has anything to do with the Spirit working through

[54] Theodore the Studite, "Some Questions Posed By the [Same] Theodore to the Iconoclasts," in *Writings on Iconoclasm*, (New York: The Newman Press, 2015),132.

liturgical action in the context of worship. He does not want to do away with the latter, but he fails to see how his own argument renders it superfluous.

This brings us to the third captivity, which is "the Mass as sacrifice." It is in his discussion of the Mass that we see more clearly what can only be described as an illustrated breakdown of the threefold body of Christ. Recall De Lubac indicating a shift wherein the twofold body of Christ's historical body and the Eucharist are no longer essentially linked to the third body of the Church. My aim in focusing on Luther is not to present him as a scapegoat. If anything is clear from both De Lubac's and Snoek's treatment of developments in doctrinal and liturgical understandings of the Eucharist, Luther is an inheritor of that fundamental shift which became the condition of possibility for his definitive break from the Church. Luther is but an exemplification, a very concrete exemplification, of the tragic outcome of forms of reasoning that fail to espouse the hermeneutic of the threefold body, that is, sacramental reasoning.

Luther's third captivity continues his discussion of the Eucharist, but in this section the ecclesiological implications of Luther's position become clearer. Here again, Luther makes a stark demarcation between the words attributed to Christ in scripture and the work of humans: "For in that word, and in that word alone, reside the power, the nature, and the whole substance of the Mass. All the rest is the work of human beings, added to the word of Christ, and the Mass can be held and remain a Mass just as well without them."[55] For Luther, it is Christ's words that establish the sacrament as nothing

[55] "The Babylonian Captivity," 39. Luther goes on to quote the words of Christ he refers to specifically which are actually a conflation of Christ's institution of the sacrament in Matthew, Mark, Luke and 1 Corinthians. See editor's footnote 90.

other than a promise for which the elements of bread and wine are the commemorative "sign." Once again, Luther imposes a hierarchical opposition between word and sign. This is not sacramental reasoning as Augustine understood it when describing "spiritual eating." On Luther's account, although he will continue to defend the doctrine of Real Presence in the Eucharist, the Eucharist is but an outward sign of a promise and "spiritual" becomes once again something opposed to the material. In this case, however, the "spiritual" is the "real" and refers to Christ's promise, and the material is therefore rendered in no way a substantive aspect of the reality of the sacrament itself. Ultimately, for Luther, neither the substance nor the accidents have lasting effect other than to signify the fulfillment of Christ's promise of the remission of sins. In other words, the reality of the sacrament becomes something different in its liturgical context; the priest does not enact anything other than a presentation of a commemorative sign in the bread and wine that points to the promise which alone is "real." The emphasis is on the proclamation of the promise. The material sacrament, that is, the consecrated bread and the wine, becomes nearly superfluous. But it is still used because scripture tells us Christ used it, identified himself with it, and commanded that it be continually offered in the remembrance of him. By "superfluous" I mean that Luther's emphasis on the words of Christ as the promise signified in the Eucharist leads him to state that the only thing necessary for the Mass is one's faith in that promise:

> From this you will see that nothing else is needed for a worthy holding of Mass than a faith that relies confidently on this promise, believes Christ to be true in these words of his, and does not doubt that these infinite blessings have been

> bestowed upon it.… Hence the only worthy preparation and proper observance is faith, the faith by which we believe in the Mass, that is, in the divine promise.[56]

I want to reiterate that Luther's stance is clearly motivated by his pastoral concern that the laity was not being taught and fed the most basic elements of what it means to be Christian. The Eucharistic doctrines and liturgical developments in his time were worrisome because he saw in them a spirit that ran directly against the Spirit of Christ by which God the Father draws all people to himself by faith. Luther saw the theological discussions to be utterly unhelpful to the laity who meanwhile were being kept from receiving the sacrament and even hearing the proclamation of the Word in the priestly handling of the sacrament.[57] In addition to this, he saw in the surging piety of the laity around the Eucharist an indication that Christ's sheep had been misled into believing they must earn their salvation through such works (and indulgences) whereas the gospel proclaims this has already been freely given. In short, the spirit behind Luther's convictions and demand for reforms is one of compassion and charity towards Jesus's flock. The ignorant and hungry sheep have been led astray by the very shepherds who were commissioned to protect and feed them. Yet, tragically, the outcome of Luther's protest is a wholesale rejection of that very body, Christ's third body, into which the individual bodies are united to the Lord—hence the breakdown of the threefold body and the traditional understanding of the economy. By insisting that it is by Christ's words alone that unite us to him, Christian unity is no longer an act of the Spirit's drawing us

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[56] Ibid., 43, 45.

[57] Ibid. Luther critiques the practice of *secreta,* which were prayers spoken quietly by the priest before the canon of the Mass and then later the canon itself. See footnote 100 where the editor explains, "The reason for this is probably a combination of priestly piety and a pastoral concern for profane usage by the common people."

into communion with the Son and therefore each other through the reception of the Son's gift of himself in the Eucharist. Now, union (with Christ and one another) is a matter—an achievement—of individual belief. The unitive principle is no longer Christ conferring his own unicity to his Church through the Eucharist. Now, the unitive principle becomes theological agreement among autonomous believers. Ironically, in Luther's attempt to spare Christians of meritorious works, faith (right belief) itself becomes precisely that. In the context of this particular writing, Luther is at such pains to preserve the sacrament from being a work that Augustine's "spiritual eating," in Luther's interpretation, now emphasizes the individual's belief and has little to nothing to do with the mystery enacted by receiving Christ's real body and blood in the sacrament.[58]

> So in the Mass also, the foremost promise of all, he adds as a memorial sign of such a great promise his own body and blood in the bread and wine, when he says: "Do this in remembrance of me" [Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24-25]. And so in baptism, to the words of promise he adds the sign of immersion in water. We may learn from this that in every promise of God, two things are presented to us, the word and the sign, so that we are to understand the word to be the testament, but the sign to be the sacrament. Thus, in the Mass, the word of Christ is the testament, and the bread and wine are the sacrament. And as there is greater power in the word than in the sign, so there is greater power in the testament than in the sacrament; for a man can have and use the word or testament apart from the sign or sacrament. "Believe," says Augustine, "and you have eaten." But what does one believe, other than the word of the one who promises? Therefore I can hold Mass every day, indeed, every hour, for I can set the words of Christ before me and with them feed and strengthen my faith as often as I choose. This is truly a spiritual eating and drinking.[59]

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[58] As we will see, Luther's later treatment of Augustine's "spiritual eating" becomes more nuanced and almost reads antithetical to how we see it here. This can likely be attributed to the specific polemic he is engaged in. I am comparing "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church" to his 1527 treatise on the Eucharist "That These Words of Christ 'This is My Body,' etc., Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics."
[59] Ibid., 46.

In short, as long as you believe rightly, neither the priest nor the sacrament is necessary. This has direct ecclesiological implications, which we shall see in his subsequent debates with the radical Reformers. The understanding of Mass as sacrifice is a form of captivity for Luther as it requires liturgical enactment by the priest. Again, Luther's pastoral concern leads him to a reactionary stance whereby he tragically throws out the baby with the bathwater. Faith in God's promise, which is commemorated by the sign of the Eucharist, is juxtaposed to the liturgical act of the priestly consecration and offering and the communicant's receiving of the same gift. New terms have been set not only for liturgical theology but ecclesiology. We can see this most clearly in Luther's rejection of *opus operatum* and the very notion of sacrifice.

The Scholastic distinction of *opus operatum* and *opus operantis* was initially made to distinguish the sacrifice of the Old Testament from that of the New Testament. *Opus operantis* referred to the sacrifice of the Old Testament, which was an anticipation of the sacrifice of Christ. Because it was a sign that pointed to the fulfillment of the sacrifice in Christ, the sacrifice of the Old Testament was not intrinsically efficacious and therefore its effect did depend on the right standing of the one offering the sacrifice. By contrast, *opus operatum* means that since the Eucharist is the fulfillment of the promised sacrifice anticipated in the Old Testament, its efficacy is intrinsic to the sacrament as it is Christ himself and, therefore, its efficacy does not depend on the priest's disposition.[60] By insisting that the Mass does not entail a sacrifice but rather that the Eucharist is merely a sign of a promise fulfilled, Luther is not only rejecting the distinction but

[60] Ibid., see editor's footnote 140 for an explanation of this view, 58.

interestingly he inverts it. For Luther, it is because the sacrament is a sign and not a sacrifice that its efficacy remains intrinsic. However, for Luther, if it is viewed to be a sacrifice that would necessarily mean that its efficacy is affected by the purity of the one enacting the consecration.

> Therefore, just as a wicked priest may baptize, that is, apply the word of promise and the sign of water to the candidate for baptism, so he may also set forth the promise of this sacrament and administer it to those who partake, and even partake himself, as did Judas the traitor at the supper of the Lord. It still remains the same sacrament and testament, which works its own work in the believer but an "alien work" in the unbeliever. But when it comes to offering a sacrifice the case is quite different. For not the Mass but the prayers are offered to God, and therefore it is plain as day that the offerings of a wicked priest avail nothing, but, as Gregory says again: When an unworthy person is sent as the intercessor, the heart of the judge is only turned to greater disfavor. Therefore these two things—Mass and prayer, sacrament and work, testament and sacrifice—must not be confused; for the one comes from God to us through the ministration of the priest and demands our faith [i.e., promise of the forgiveness of sins in the sign of the sacrament], the other proceeds from our faith to God through the priest and demands his hearing. The former descends [from God to believers], the latter ascends [from believers to God]. The former, therefore, does not necessarily require a worthy and godly minister, but the latter does indeed require such a one, for "God does not listen to sinners" [John 9:31]. He knows how to do good through evil people, but he does not accept the work of any evil person; as he showed in the case of Cain, and is said in Prov. 15: "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord," and in Rom. 14: "What does not proceed from faith is sin."[61]

Therefore, Luther rejects the notion of sacrifice both because it places undue power on the priest (no one could be so worthy) and it turns the reception of the sacrament into a meritorious work, as though participating in the paschal mystery is itself efficacious. If

[61] Ibid., 58-59.

Luther at times uses the language of sacrifice, he is referring not to the Mass but to prayers of praise and thanksgiving.[62]

Once he has concluded his description of the three captivities Luther goes on to describe the sacraments he endorses as well as those he does not. Here again, it is clear that Luther is creating a new ecclesiology and, therefore, a new economy. Although most of his remarks throughout this text are framed by his anti-hierarchical polemic, relating to the radical departure of a sacramental understanding of the Church Luther's innovation becomes most clear in his remarks on the sacrament of ordination. Here there is a painfully explicit demonstration of the demise of the threefold body hermeneutic:

> The church has no power to make new divine promises of grace, as some prate, who hold that what is decreed by the church is of no less authority than what is decreed by God, since the church is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. For the church was born by the word of promise through faith, and by this same word is nourished and preserved. That is to say, it is the promises of God that make the church, and not the church that makes the promise of God. For the Word of God is incomparably superior to the church, and in this Word the church, being a creature, has nothing to decree, ordain, or make, but only to be decreed, ordained, and made.… The church can give no promises of grace; that is the work of God alone. Therefore she cannot institute a sacrament.[63]

Luther now explicitly opposes the Church to the Word of God and the work of God. Although Luther would not have outright rejected the notion of the Church, he nonetheless reconceives it such that it no longer resembles the ecclesiology that came before him. It should come as little surprise, then, to find that Luther endorses an outright rejection of Pseudo-Dionysius's hierarchies in the very same passage. After

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[62] Ibid., 52-53. Also see editor's footnote 118, "In his early writings (e.g., *First Lectures on the Psalms, 1513-1515*), Luther can talk about the Mass as a sacrifice but limits the language to sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving … (*sacrificium confessionis … laudis*)."
[63] Ibid., 111-12.

acknowledging that it is Dionysius who is attributed with identifying the six sacraments of the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, Luther states:

> Indeed, to speak more boldly, it greatly displeases me to assign such importance to this Dionysius, whoever he may have been, for he shows hardly any signs of solid learning. I would ask, by what authority and with what arguments does he prove his hodge-podge about the angels in his *Celestial Hierarchy*—a book which many curious and superstitious spirits have cudgeled their brains? … But in his *Theology*, which is rightly called *Mystical*, of which certain theologians make so much, he is downright dangerous, for he is more a Platonist than a Christian. So if I had my way, no believing soul would give the least attention to these books.[64]

Luther continues, "It would not be difficult for me to compose a better hierarchy than that of Dionysius."[65] And that is exactly what Luther does. He reckons ordination a rite rather than a sacrament and decries any ecclesiastical hierarchy as it undermines the priesthood of all believers. In so doing, he rather ironically creates his own hierarchy:

> Let all, therefore, who know themselves to be Christian, be assured of this, that we are all equally priests, that is to say, we have the same power in respect to the Word and the sacraments. However, no one may make use of this power except by the consent of the community or by the call of a superior. (For what is the common property of all, no individual may arrogate to himself, unless he is called.)[66]

Five years after his excommunication in 1521, Luther publishes *The German Mass and Order of the Liturgy*. He does so partly as an attempt to chasten the rapidly growing and dispersed Evangelical orders, which have been producing their own orders, new liturgies, and pious practices—including the removal and destruction of images and relics from churches.[67] While I will not treat the entire Mass here, there are a few observations to

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[64] Ibid., 113-14.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid., 119.
[67] See *Introduction* to "The German Mass and Order of the Liturgy": "Already in 1521-22, the radical reformers in Wittenberg under Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt's (1486-

make from Luther's comments in the *Preface*. First, Luther is clearly concerned to preserve the liberty of the Christian, which means that no liturgy should "be made into a law or bind or entangle anyone's conscience, but use it ["this order of service"] in Christian liberty as long, when, where, and how you find it to be practical and useful."[68] The individual Christian is to decide whether the liturgy is "practical and useful." And yet, Luther goes on to exhort his readers,

> Seeing then that this external order, while it cannot affect our conscience before God yet can serve the neighbor, we should seek in love, as St. Paul teaches, to be of one mind and, as far as possible, observe the same ways and practices, just as all Christians have the same baptism and the same sacrament and no individual has received a special one from God.[69]

The external order of the Mass can/should have no bearing on the individual's conscience, but rather Christian unity is conceived as being brought about through agreement and consent to uniformity of "ways and practices." Unity is a purely human achievement and we seek it for the sake of our neighbor—not for our own sake. "In short, we prepare such orders not for those who are already Christians; for they do not need them. We do not live for the orders but they live for us who are not yet Christians so that they may make Christians out of us. Those who are already Christians have their worship in spirit."[70]

1541) leadership were forcing a form of worship practices: requiring communion of both kinds, dismissing fasting and confessing, and beginning to remove images from the churches. The city, its churches, and university were in upheaval," 131.
[68] Ibid., 138.
[69] Ibid., 139.
[70] Ibid.

The Church has become accidental to salvation—if not an obstacle to it, as participation in salvation is now conceived apart from the Church and has become a matter of the liberty of the individual Christian's belief. The contradiction inherent to Luther's position is displayed in the very movement he started. If the Word and individual faith alone is authoritative, but interpretation of the Word is left to individuals, the autonomy of the individual Christian will undermine any appeals to authority—including authoritative interpretations of scripture. Therefore, it is not at all surprising to find Luther later embroiled in the Eucharistic controversy beginning in 1524.

Once again, the doctrine of Real Presence was being debated, but this time the debate was among those who had already broken with Rome. Luther had his work cut out for him for if, in his own words, the Church "cannot institute a sacrament" and faith alone is required for right worship, there is little authority to appeal to when debating *how* to interpret a sacrament. That is, when the third body of the Church ceases to be essentially bound to the other two bodies of Christ, all sacramental reality folds—including sacramental reasoning. The economy becomes a ship without a rudder—or rather, a ship with infinite rudders: a sinking ship. Nonetheless, Luther attempted to enter the fray and in 1527 he published *That These Words of Christ, "This is My Body," etc., Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics*. In this text Luther addresses the "sacramentarians," the Reformers who "regarded the bodily presence as a medieval invention that enhanced the tyranny of the clergy and encouraged popular superstition and idolatry, since it led to

worship of bread."[71] The "worship of bread" refers to the practice of Eucharistic adoration.

The practice of Eucharistic adoration is a significant moment in what Snoek calls the "process of independence" of the Blessed Sacrament. This process of independence refers to developments whereby the consecrated Host was treated as a relic and began extending its role in lay piety beyond the context of the Mass. Snoek identifies this process as beginning with the elevation of the Host within the context of Mass which began around 1300. Subsequently,

> visits to the Blessed Sacrament, kept on or close to the altar, were adopted on a wide scale from the 14th century by the secular clergy and the religious orders. To the extent that locked church doors made this sort of devotion impossible for the laity, they indulged in the practice only sporadically from the 15th century onwards until it became generalized towards the end of the Middle Ages. The lamps which used to burn at the martyr's graveside and which were lit in honour of the saints and the deceased were now transformed into the sanctuary lamp, burning in a sacred silence. Its use was sparse in the 11th century, more frequent after that and practically general in the monastery and collegiate churches after the 14th century. The reverence paid to the altar, directed towards the saints and their relics, now turned into reverence paid to the tabernacle, concentrating on the sacred Host, which pushed the relics into the background.[72]

As we've noted previously, near the beginning of these developments was also the introduction of the feast of Corpus Christi in 1246. It was the introduction of this feast that led to Eucharistic processions which then led to "exposition," "a kind of static 'elevatio,' consisting of placing the Eucharistic bread on or above the altar, either invisible in a *ciborium* covered with a *velum* or visible in a rebuilt reliquary-ostensory

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[71] Ibid., 165.

[72] Snoek, (New York: E. J. Brill, 1995), 60.

(the forerunner of the monstrance), for the purposes of adoration and meditation."[73] The exposed Host would become more common outside of the context of Mass, eventuating in the practice of "perpetual adoration," which was introduced in 1435 by the Premonstratensians.[74] Snoek concludes, "The 'perpetual adoration' or year-long exposition was the crown on the increased 'process of independence of the Eucharist.' And of course this gave further impetus to the practice of visits to the Blessed Sacrament."[75]

Thus by the time Luther was in the spotlight, practices involving Eucharistic adoration were common and widespread. Luther had written concerning his own position regarding Eucharistic adoration in his "The Adoration of the Sacrament" of 1523. In it he expressed his typically moderate stance, stating that he did not have a problem with the practice per se but felt it was best to keep it in the context of the Mass. His concern was that the laity should always connect the sacrament with the Word, something that could be more challenging if adoration took place outside of the Mass where the Word was proclaimed. Again, his was a pastoral—not theological—concern. His defense of the practice stemmed from his position on the doctrine of Real Presence. Since Christ is truly present in the sacrament (regardless of how), it is appropriate to offer *latria* before the consecrated Host.[76] Obviously, if one did not believe in the doctrine of Real Presence this

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[73] Ibid., 62.
[74] Ibid., "From the archbishop of Trier they obtained the privilege of introducing the practice on days when the Mass was not celebrated."
[75] Ibid., 63.
[76] Even when he took issue with Aquinas's concern about idolatry as one reason for endorsing transubstantiation, Luther did not take issue with the practice of *latria* when applied to the sacrament.

would lead one to conclude practices such as Eucharistic adoration were idolatrous. This was the position of the radical Reformers Luther addressed.

The "sacramentarians" were Reformers of various convictions concerning the Eucharist, but they all rejected the doctrine of Real Presence and insisted that the bread and wine are only signs. Although Luther had used the language of sign as well, he nonetheless understood the sacrament to be Christ's body and blood even if we cannot understand how it becomes this. The sacramentarians' use of "sign" went further to reject any substantial "real" content of Christ's self in the sacrament. For them, "sign" meant empty signifier. In Luther's written response, interestingly, he blames the devil both for tradition's undermining of scripture in the development of the ecclesial hierarchy and magisterium and the present dissension among the Reformers who are now rejecting the tradition's interpretation of Christ's words, "This is my body."

> It is precisely the same devil who now assails us through the fanatics by blaspheming the holy and venerable sacrament of our Lord Jesus Christ, out of which they would like to make mere bread and wine a symbol or memorial sign of Christians, as they dream or fancy. They allege that the Lord's body and blood are not present, even though the plain, clear words still stand right there: "Eat, this is my body," and those words still stand firm.[77]

In the context of the Eucharistic controversy among the Reformers Luther was given an opportunity to clarify his own views on the sacrament and in reading his defense of Real Presence we can see that we have come full circle as Luther articulates tradition's position on the sacrament by making explicit the connection between Christ's historical body and the sacrament. How to understand the scriptural account of "flesh"; the relationship between spiritual and corporeal; "spiritual eating"; and how to think of the

[77] Ibid., "That These Words of Christ … Still Stand Firm," 175.

ubiquity of Christ's post-Ascension body are all topics Luther must take up against his opponents. By all accounts, in this work Luther stands firm within tradition in insisting that the literal reading of "This is my body" means what we say about Christ's historical body must be applied to his presence in the Blessed Sacrament. He even appeals to Tertullian, Irenaeus, and the Apostle's Creed to accentuate the significance of Christ's bodily resurrection and its implications for the efficacy of the Eucharist and the eschatological hope of a bodily resurrection:

> Irenaeus also is one of the most ancient teachers. He had to fight the Valentinian heretics who taught that Christ is not God's son and that there was no resurrection of the flesh. They also held that the body would not be saved, but only the soul, because St. Paul says, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" [1 Cor 15:50]. Against this Irenaeus writes that the body will also be saved, and that there is a resurrection of the flesh, as our Creed confesses. Among other things he cites proof against them: If the body is not to be saved also, why should it be fed with the body and blood of the Lord in the sacrament? If it eats an eternal food there, it will surely live eternally by means of it. But let us hear his own words. In the fourth book, chapter 5, he says, "Just as the bread which is produced from the earth, when it receives the naming of God is no longer mere bread but a sacrament, consisting in two things, an earthly and a heavenly, so also our bodies, when they receive the sacrament, are no longer corruptible, because they have the hope of the resurrection."[78]

However, importantly, what is missing in Luther's polemic is the ecclesiological dimension of the traditional interpretation. He preserves the hope of incorruption as given from Christ to the individual believer through the Eucharist. But the traditional understanding that this is accomplished corporately in the Mass for the sake of Christian unity—Christ's unicity is conferred to his body the Church granting unity in communion—is lost. Toward the end of the treatise, in addressing the usefulness of the sacrament, Luther writes:

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[78] Ibid., 248-49.

> I wrote diligently against Dr. Karlstadt concerning this point, that external things are of no use, and explained the proper distinction: outward things apart from God's Word, such as the pope's laws, are of no use. But outward things connected with God's Word are salvation and blessedness, because they inhere in the Word and bind our faith, as I have just said concerning Isaac and the rainbow.… The devil along with his fanatics, however, so hates the Word that he always seeks to sever it from outward things, but God seeks to keep these unsevered, and connects them to each other. What we say, that here we have something not merely outward but connected with the word, "This is my body," they do not hear, but rage past it like madmen crying, "Outward things are of no use, outward things are of no use!"[79]

What is perplexing is how, for Luther, the "outward" Church, that is, the ecclesiastical hierarchy, is viewed as an exception to his defense of those things God preserves unsevered. If the Church is the body of Christ, as the Apostle says, how does Luther justify severing its humanity from its divinity? Is it not the Church's humanity that he repeatedly holds up as the reason for rejecting it? And yet at the same time, Luther can maintain a strict adherence to civil authority as it is "encompassed in God's Word":

> From such a spirit[80] it must follow that civil government is of no use, being an outward thing, since people are unwilling to hear or see that it is encompassed in God's Word and must be believed to be God's ordinance, Rom 13 [….] Now see, civil order is an outward thing, yet it binds our faith, and is also an article of faith on account of the word in which it is contained, Rom.13: "All authorities that exist everywhere are of God." But this is of no help for those who are mad, until they knock their heads against it.[81]

Luther was unsuccessful in persuading his radical Reformer opponents. They held fast in their rejection of Real Presence and along with it the Mass and all those practices of veneration which had traditionally facilitated communion with Christ and his saints. The

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[79] Ibid., 263.
[80] Luther is referring to the "Muntzer-like spirit" he has just referred to. Muntzer was a leader of the Peasant's War, which Luther had spoken out against.
[81] Ibid., 264.

rest is history. Christendom has become an endless cascade of dissension, which eventually received (by the dissenters) the modifier "diversity."[82]

In order to accentuate the radical departure Luther's Reformation represents from what had been traditionally accepted by the Church, recall in the previous chapters the two ultimately incommensurable ideals of ecclesial unity versus purity. As we have seen, it was Augustine's stance, and subsequently the prevailing stance in the West, that the Church's unicity cannot be altered in the face of its impurity. To be the Church simply is to be divine and human because of Christ's own unicity, which he bestows on his Church through the Holy Spirit. Where there is differentiation within the body of the Church, this does not indicate fragmentation as Christ's body "cannot suffer severance." Recall *The Trial of Maximus* wherein we learn Maximus was willing to die to preserve unity with tradition rather than confess against truth in order to secure a "false unity." He knew that

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[82] There is not room here to discuss this point at length. However, it is crucial to distinguish the difference between "differentiation" within the body of Christ and "diversity" as a modern term applied to the brokenness characteristic of Christendom today. Pseudo-Dionysius provides a rich theological rendering of "differentiation" in light of the unity of the One, which then applies to the differentiations within the hierarchies. See *The Divine Names*, 644A, as well as *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*: "Every sacredly initiating operation draws our fragmented lives together into a one-like divinization. It forges a divine unity out of the divisions within us. It grants us communion and union with the One" (424D) and "For it is not possible to be gathered together toward the One and to partake of peaceful union with the One while divided among ourselves. If, however, we are enlightened by the contemplation of and knowledge of the One we are enabled to be unified, to achieve a truly divine oneness and it will never happen that we succumb to that fragmentation of desire which is the source of corporeal and impassioned hostility between equals. This, it seems to me, is the united and undivided life prescribed for us by the kiss of peace as it joins like to like and turns the fragmented away from the divine and unique visions" (437A). Note that these remarks fall within Pseudo-Dionysius's explanation of the rites of synaxis. The kiss of peace comes just before the reading of the names of saints. The underlying aim of every sacred act is peaceful communion, which occurs simultaneously with God and one another within the liturgy.

unity did not come from man but rather is bestowed on the Church by Christ himself. Recall Pseudo-Dionysius's pastoral letter to the monk Demophilus. He rebukes the monk who has broken rank out of righteous anger because he (Demophilus) disagreed with a priest's decision to forgive a sinner the monk deemed unrepentant and felt compelled to preserve the Blessed Sacrament from corruption. Pseudo-Dionysius responds, "Even if disorder and confusion should undermine the most divine ordinances and regulations, that still gives no right, even on God's behalf, to overturn the order which God himself has established. God is not divided against himself. Otherwise, how could his kingdom stand?"[83]

But let us reiterate that Luther's reform did not happen in a vacuum. It happened in response to changes that had occurred in the Church in the centuries leading up to his. De Lubac traces this history, and Snoek provides an even more in-depth overview of the "process of independence of the Eucharist," which is precisely what Luther was reacting against from a pastoral perspective. The desacramentalizing of the Church was a centuries-long process which became the condition of possibility for Luther's renunciation of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Snoek shows how the process of independence of the Eucharist took place within the Mass itself and in particular the introduction of private Mass:

> The situation thus came about that the priest celebrated Mass no longer with the faithful present but in their name. The Canon, recited out loud by the celebrant in the Roman church up to about the 8th century, was now whispered inaudibly. After the change undergone by the Eucharist in early Christian times from liturgy to individual food had detracted from the communal character of the meal, and subsequently the allegorical interpretation had deprived the symbols of their

[83] Pseudo-Dionysius, *Letter Eight*, 1088C.

> communal significance—the table became the tomb—the intensification of the priestly relationship to the Eucharist isolated the people even more from the liturgy of the Mass. The alienation was revealed in the descriptions given to how communion should be received, the failure any longer to understand the liturgical language, the private Mass and the priest's private prayers uttered with his back to the people.[84]

Luther's concern was precisely this: the Church had turned its back on the people. Unfortunately, in his attempt to rectify the error Luther's "priesthood of all believers" resulted in the breakdown of the sacred economy. Individual belief replaced communion as the objective of faith, communion became ancillary but nonessential to worship, and theology ceased to be the practice of contemplating the divine mysteries and instead became a matter of rational discourse accountable only to human reason.[85] Moreover, in removing the vertical dimension of communion, in rejecting the longstanding practice of venerating (communing with) the saints, Luther's new horizontal economy inadvertently vitiated the entire synecdoche of sacred symbols—the proof of which can be found in his inability to win over the radical Reformers whose rationality permitted a complete

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[84] Snoek, 44. In the pages leading up to this summary statement, Snoek provides more detailed historical description of each of these developments.

[85] Contrast with Pseudo-Dionysius, *Letter Nine*, "Theological tradition has a dual aspect, the ineffable and mysterious on the one hand, the open and more evident on the other. The one resorts to symbolism and involves initiation. The other is philosophic and employs the method of demonstration. (Further, the inexpressible is bound up with what can be articulated.) The one uses persuasion and imposes the truthfulness of what is asserted. The other acts and, by means of a mystery which cannot be taught, it puts souls firmly in the presence of God. This is why the sacred initiators of our tradition, together with those of the tradition of the Law, resorted freely to symbolism appropriate to God, regarding the sacraments of the holy mysteries," 283.

rejection of sacramental reality.[86] The chain of images has been broken and John Damascene's cautionary exhortation reverberates across the centuries:

> See how much strength and what divine energy is given to those who with faith and a pure conscience approach the images of the saints. Let us, therefore, brothers, stand on the rock of faith and in the tradition of the Church, not removing the boundaries, which our holy fathers set in place, nor giving space to those who wish to innovate or break up the structure of God's holy, catholic and apostolic Church. For if license is given to anyone who wishes, little by little the whole body of the Church will be broken up.[87]

In 1545 the Council of Trent was convened in response to the upheaval caused by Luther and in 1563 the Twenty-Fifth Session reaffirmed what had been initially confirmed at Nicaea II (787) and Constantinople (843). Once again, the Church calls on its bishops to

> instruct the faithful teaching them, that the saints, who reign together with Christ, offer up their own prayers to God for men; that it is good and useful suppliantly to invoke them, and to have recourse to their prayers, aid, (and) help for obtaining benefits from God, through His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who is our alone Redeemer and Saviour; but that they think impiously, who deny that the saints, who enjoy eternal happiness in heaven, are to be invocated; or who assert either that they do not pray for men; or, that the invocation of them to pray for each of us even in particular, is idolatry; or, that it is repugnant to the word of God; and is opposed to the honour of the one mediator of God and men, Christ Jesus; or, that it is foolish to supplicate, vocally, or mentally, those who reign in heaven. Also, that the holy bodies of holy martyrs, and of others now living with Christ—which bodies were the living members of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Ghost, and which are by Him to be raised unto eternal life, and to be glorified—are to be venerated by the faithful; through which (bodies) many benefits are bestowed by God on men; so that they who affirm that veneration and honour are not due to the

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[86] We have already noted previous occasions where Luther spoke out about the veneration of non-living saints. In 1524 he wrote his most staunch rebuttal of saint canonization and veneration largely in response to Duke George of Saxony's campaign for the canonization of Bishop Benno of Meissen (11-12c.). Luther was incensed when the canonization was approved and wrote "Against the New Idol and the Old Devil," which is believed to have been published that June, just weeks before the scheduled celebration on June 16. Cf. Ronald C. Finucane, *Contested Canonizations: The Last Medieval Saints, 1482-1523* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University Press of America, 2011).

[87] John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images*, *Treatise III*, 41.

> relics of saints; or, that these, and other sacred monuments, are uselessly honoured by the faithful; and that the places dedicated to the memories of the saints are in vain visited with the view of obtaining their aid; are wholly to be condemned, as the Church has already long since condemned, and now also condemns them.[88]

But a cautionary admonishment is added that no doubt reflects the council's attempt to respond to the Reformers' critiques of abuses attached to practices of veneration:

> Moreover, in the invocation of saints, the veneration of relics, and the sacred use of images, every superstition shall be removed, all filthy lucre be abolished; finally, all lasciviousness be avoided; in such wise that figures shall not be painted or adorned with a beauty exciting to lust; nor the celebration of the saints, and the visitation of relics be by any perverted into revellings and drunkenness; as if festivals are celebrated to the honour of the saints by luxury and wantonness.
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> In fine, let so great care and diligence be used herein by bishops, as that there be nothing seen that is disorderly, or that is unbecomingly or confusedly arranged, nothing that is profane, nothing indecorous, seeing that holiness becometh the house of God.[89]

Historian Paul Koudanaris notes that in response to Trent precautions were instated to ensure regulations of relics as had never been seen before: "Henceforth all relics were to be authenticated according to strict guidelines and any that were not legitimately confirmed should not be offered for veneration. Local bishops were to ensure that their parishes were properly instructed in the use of sacred remains in order to prevent future incidents of superstitious practice."[90] But it was too late. Despite Rome's attempts at internal reform the Protestant Reformers continued their program of iconoclasm. Therefore, it is little surprise that in 1578—fifteen years after the conclusion

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[88] https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/trent/twenty-fifth-session.htm
[89] Ibid.
[90] Paul Koudanaris, *Heavenly Bodies: Cult Treasures and Spectacular Saints from the Catacombs* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2013), 30.

of Trent—when two Roman vineyard workers accidentally discovered a catacomb filled with the bodies of what were thought to be Christian martyrs, the Catholic faithful took these catacomb saints to be a sign of the Lord's response to the iconoclasm of the Reformers. Indeed, the recovery and translation of these relics from Rome into Bavaria, Austria, and Switzerland signified a staunch rebuttal of Protestantism's new economy, and the practice of relic recovery became a central focus for the devout Bavarian dukes.

In response to Protestant iconoclasm and Trent's reaffirmation of orthodox iconodulia, together the pious Catholic laity and Bavarian rulers sought to bolster the Church's material witness to tradition and thus the holy economy. Whereas the translation and installation of the *Katakombenheiligen* was usually the result of local parish efforts, historian Jeffrey Chipps Smith shows how the Bavarian dukes made relic recovery a central part of their efforts to maintain Bavaria's Catholic identity and consequently the legitimacy of their rule as devout Catholics.

> The collection of relics in the Munich Residence was begun during the Counter-Reformation. In 1577 Duke Wilhelm V was given the required permission to acquire relics by the pope. Wilhelm's son, Maximilian I, expanded the collection and housed the reliquaries (precious containers made for relics) in the Rich Chapel, his private place of worship. In the 19th century the reliquaries were still regarded as the most valuable treasure in the Residence. Some sixty reliquaries have survived from a period dating from around 1590 to 1640.[91]

In both cases, that is, relic acquisition among laity and the dukes, there is evidence of much skillful negotiation and cost. Also in both cases, Trent's admonishment

[91] Jeffrey Chipps Smith, "Salvaging the Saints: The Rescue and Display of Relics in Munich during the Early Catholic Reformation," in *Art, Piety and Destruction in the Christian West, 1500-1700*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010), 33.

to avoid practices of excess, either through luxuriance or superstition, seems to have been simultaneously heeded and ignored.

Despite the post-Tridentine regulations put in place, the authenticity of many catacomb saints was eventually contested. Koudanaris includes many such reports in his book on the subject. Yet, again, authenticity was a major concern for the Church as well.

> [I]n 1588 the Church had established the *Sacred Congregation of Rites and Ceremonies* for the oversight of relics, and a new office, the *Custode delle Catacombe* (Custodian of the Catacombs), to take general charge of the passageways. The *Custode* administered twenty-four *Cavatori* (Excavators), who explored the galleries to identify potential sacred remains.[92]

Smith similarly reports that authenticity was of paramount importance to the dukes. In a letter dating 1591 Duke Wilhelm writes to inquire about some relics in the Protestant duchy of Wurttemberg. In the letter he expresses "great concern about the authenticity of relics, demanding documentation about his relics to counter any possible Protestant claims that they were bogus."[93]

Aesthetically, what may be perplexing to the uninitiated or impious eye is the way all of these relics were adorned with such luxuriance. The *Katakombenheiligen* were lavishly decorated, covered in intricate lace, beadwork, jewels, as well as elaborate costumes.[94] Wilhelm and other Bavarian Catholic rulers celebrated their relics by commissioning elaborate reliquaries. One such commission in particular exemplifies the fervent faith of the devout rulers. Having received the gift of a relic of St. George,

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[92] Koudanaris, 35.
[93] Smith, ibid.
[94] Koudanaris devotes an entire chapter to detailing how these magnificent full-body relics were reconstructed and embellished, mostly by nuns who were well-versed in handling relics. Yet he also notes the local laity were deeply involved, donating funds, noble clothing, and even precious family jewels.

acquired from a monastery in 1586 by his brother Ernst, Duke Wilhelm commissioned a reliquary made of gold, silver, and enamel, beset with 36 large and 2,613 small diamonds in addition to emeralds, rubies, pearls, and polished stones. Completed in 1590 the impressive work was installed in the duke's private oratory in the Jesuit church of St. Michael. One feature stands out, however, and in itself speaks of the complex historical moment. Mounted atop his steed and slaying the dragon is a figure who is at once St. George and Duke Wilhelm. Built into the reliquary, the visor of the saint can be lifted to reveal the face of the duke who, like St. George, vigilantly defended the Catholic faith against the heretical dragon of Protestantism. During the height of Munich's *Fronleichnam* celebration, itself a Counter-Reformation demonstration, the duke's relics would take part in the procession—including this remarkable bedazzled reminder of the Church triumphant.

The relics of Counter-Reformation Germany played a crucial role in bulwarking the Catholic faith that had faced a challenge unlike any other. While previous iconoclasms had threatened the unity of the Church, none had threatened the holy economy to this degree by denying the saints an efficacious role. This was indeed an innovation. Therefore, the elaborate decoration of the catacomb saints as well as the countless other relics rescued from impinging destruction by the Protestants, speaks not of wanton excess. Rather the risk, expense, labor, and finished magnificence dedicated to these contested bodies bear witness to "the unbroken heritage of the post-Reformation

Church and the early Christian world, thus affirming the eternal truth of Catholic doctrine"[95] —the communion of incorruption.

[95] Koudanaris, 14.

Conclusion

> For while there still survives a false *rationalism*, which ridicules anything that transcends and defies the power of human genius, and which is accompanied by a cognate error, the so-called *popular naturalism*, which sees and wills to see in the Church nothing but a juridical and social union, there is on the other hand a false *mysticism* creeping in, which, in its attempt to eliminate the immovable frontier that separates creatures from their Creator, falsifies the Sacred Scriptures. [9]
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> …
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> It was possible for Him of Himself to impart these graces to mankind directly; but He willed to do so only through a visible Church made up of men, so that through her all might cooperate with Him in dispensing the graces of Redemption. As the Word of God willed to make use of our nature, when in excruciating agony He would redeem mankind, so in the same way throughout the centuries He makes use of the Church that the work begun might endure. [12]
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> …
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> That the Church is a body is frequently asserted in the Sacred Scriptures. "Christ," says the Apostle, "is the Head of the Body of the Church."[13] If the Church is a body, it must be an unbroken unity, according to those words of Paul: "Though many we are one body in Christ."[14] But it is not enough that the Body of the Church should be an unbroken unity; it must also be something definite and perceptible to the senses as Our predecessor of happy memory, Leo XIII, in his Encyclical *Satis Cognitum* asserts: "the Church is visible because she is a body."[15] Hence they err in a matter of divine truth, who imagine the Church to be invisible, intangible, a something merely "pneumatological" as they say, by which many Christian communities, though they differ from each other in their profession of faith, are united by an invisible bond. [14][96]

In June 1945 Pope Pius XII released his encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*, on the nature of the Church as the mystical Body of Christ. Once again, the Church must address misconstruals that either over-rationalize or over-spiritualize the mystery of Christ's presence. With the former, the Church is reduced to instrumentalization, useful

[96] https://m.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_29061943_mystici-corporis-christi.html

insofar as it maintains some form of organization. With the latter, the Church is not to be found in the visible structures but exists as a spiritual reality that can only be seen with the eyes of faith. In either case, the position can only be intelligible if sacramental reasoning has broken down: that is, if the divine and human, invisible and visible, uncircumscribed and circumscribed aspects of the mystical reality of Christ's historical body, the Eucharist, and in the Church are no longer held together essentially but rather are held in opposition. Perhaps it is unavoidably a consequence of sin that we should resist sitting in the silence of contemplating the divine mysteries, preferring instead to explain them or render them inconsequential. We are restless creatures of meager faith.

With this dissertation I have attempted to contribute to contemporary scholarship on the historical and theological significance of Christian iconodulia—the appropriate veneration of holy persons, places, and things. I have done this by accentuating the economic aspect of the Byzantine image debates, illustrating how the concerns raised by those defending the holy images in the eighth and ninth centuries proved to be precisely the issues that would accompany the resurgence of Christian iconoclasm in the Protestant Reformation. What should be more clear from the standpoint of this study is that debates concerning the legitimacy of the making and venerating of holy images touch on the fundamental claims of the Christian faith as at the heart of the theological defense is the mystery of God-made-man and the implications of this mystery for how God continues to seek union through his own body, that is, in the sacramentality of his body, the Church, and its liturgical sacrifice of his body in the Eucharist. In other words, what should be clear is that the debates concerning the proper status of icons in Christian worship and

devotion were never solely about images. Rather they were about the soteriological implications of the Lord's economic appropriation—the kenotic descent of the Son in the incarnation.

In addition to this, this project has intended to allow the economic aspect of the debates concerning Christian iconodulia to articulate an uncomfortable yet unavoidable fact: the Protestant Reformation occasioned the creation of a new economy that no longer participates in the previous economy represented by the traditional threefold body hermeneutic. It has not been my attempt to create a superficial grand narrative by creating a caricature of Martin Luther. Rather I have attempted to read Luther as charitably as possible, recognizing his pastoral motivation in confronting abuses within the Church. De Lubac, Snoek, and Bynum each illustrate the complex doctrinal, liturgical, and lay practices that precipitated Luther's protest. And yet, the decisive break was made with Luther wherein we see the threefold body irretrievably broken and the consequences of this for Christian unity still today.

By emphasizing the Church's unity as derived from Christ's unicity, I have attempted to make intelligible the Catholic and Orthodox claims concerning the ontological stability of the Church. I have also illustrated how this is in continuity with tradition by drawing attention to the tension within tradition between those who would prioritize purity over unity. Moreover, icon theology can be a helpful way of reasoning with the Church about the "already" and "not yet" soteriological reality which Christians participate in through reception of the Eucharist. The Pauline "already" and "not yet" soteriology can be understood from the iconological distinction between image and

likeness. That the Church awaits eschatological perfection means that there will be a disparity between the Church as the image of Christ and the Church manifesting the likeness of Christ, as fulfillment would mean a Church without sin. The liturgical action of the Church's hierarchy provides the means by which we are continually conformed to Christ in joyful anticipation of being granted the restored grace of incorruption for eternal communion with him.

Nonetheless, questions remain. And this dissertation does not purport to resolve all the issues raised by these claims and observations. Can ecumenical efforts proceed if it is acknowledged that there are competing economies at play? If so, how? Is there more for the West to learn from the rich tradition of icon theology about the Catholic Church's role in contributing to the Reformation? Theologically speaking, what are we to make of Severus of Antioch in light of current scholarship that reads him more sympathetically and in line with Chalcedon? Is there room for reworking a Severian Christology that helps us to think about the Christological implications for the Church today? Practically, in light of the argument given here, what are we to make of the contemporary interest in ecclesial icons among Protestants? Have we reached a point of historical amnesia where Protestants no longer recall how iconoclasm was integral to the formation of their identity? Does the fact that this history may be irrelevant to many Protestants today indicate something about the status of Protestant theology and/or ecclesiology? And what might that mean for contemporary ecumenical dialogue?

These are just some of the questions raised and left unanswered by this project. However, despite these unanswered questions and quandaries, one thing should provide

tremendous hope and courage for those of us willing to take them up. That is, the unicity of Christ's body in the Church is not threatened by our present woundedness, nor the questions occasioned by it. Christ does not suffer severance. To meditate on this mystery is to be invited to participate in full communion with the One who alone is our salvation.

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Biography

Carole Taylor was born in Nashville, TN. She received her bachelor of arts in Religious Studies from Trevecca Nazarene University in 2000; her master of Theological Studies from Duke Divinity School in 2003; and her Doctorate in Theology from Duke Divinity School in 2020. She has two children.

Carole has published a chapter and articles including: "The Idolatry of Work" (2018); "Traversing Marian Economics" (2018); "Madness and Iconicity: The Erotic Reduction of Donald Draper" (2016); "Must We Mean What We *Make*?: Freedom and Responsibility in Artistic Practice or Can We Think Ethically about Depicting the Prophet Muhammad?" (2015); "Florensky and the Matter of Icons: Some Considerations for Modern Christian Culture" (2012); "Celebrity and Iconicity: Some Preliminary Sketches" (2011); "What Should We Say About Mary?" (2009); "Messiahs, Mimicry, and Meaning: Lessons in Visual Literacy" (2009). She was awarded a fellowship from the SIAS Summer Institute "Scenes from the History of the Image," National Humanities Center, sponsored by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung (2013-2014); a "Conversions" Research Grant, Duke Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (2015, 2017); and was a Research Scholar, Society of Fellows, Council for European Studies, Duke University (2016-2017).

Carole is a student of the Prosopon School of Iconology and has exhibited large scale multimedia solo installations including "Mary: The Paper Doll Project" sponsored by the Mary Duke Biddle Foundation, and "The Confessional."