

9: The Christ of Chalcedon

Introduction: The Search for Apostolic Legitimacy

By the end of the second century, as Father John McGuckin has lucidly explained:

. . . a system of guarding orthodoxy was practically elaborated. Its chief elements were threefold: [1] the upholding of a canon of Scripture to serve as an authoritative paradigm of the apostolic teaching; [2] the putting forward of the senior priests (the bishops) as the successors of the apostles, and affording them the authority to govern the churches according to this apostolic standard; [and 3] the setting up of a system of synods of bishops (at first province-wide, then growing in a wider international remit) to ensure common teaching and harmonious traditions among all the local churches.¹

Thus, the focus of the Orthodox Church was initially and has remained on the apostles, their teaching and their authority, as set out in the Bible and Tradition and interpreted by numerous synods of local, regional and international composition. This perspective is not so much hierarchical as collegial, because no single Orthodox Patriarch is “the leader of the Orthodox Church.” To the question “who leads the Church?” the answer can only be “Christ, and Christ’s inspired people in their various offices and duties (bishops, priests, deacons, ascetics, married couples, prophets, martyrs among them).”² All Christian Orthodox jurisdictions would claim to be led in some way by Christ; however, their understandings sometimes differ within acceptable parameters as to precisely who is the person of Christ, what St. Augustine called *totus Christus*—“Christ in all his fullness, complete with his mystical body.”³

In different cultures, confronted with different challenges, the hopes and behaviour of Christ’s people in their different roles has differed significantly, but the attempt to retain the apostolic relevance has remained a central tenet of the Orthodox Church. This attempt to define and implement what might be termed “apostolic legitimacy” was initially coordinated by the early gatherings of the Church to resolve any disputes that arose. Of special significance were those

¹ Father John Anthony McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to its History, Doctrine, and Spiritual Culture* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 11.

² McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, 29.

³ The quotation is drawn from McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, 29, but used in a different context here.

councils which were termed “Ecumenical” provided the faithful had confirmed the decisions of a particular Council. During the years from 325 to 787, seven gatherings were held in three cities—Nicaea, Ephesus and Constantinople (including Chalcedon in its suburbs)—and it was these gatherings that were later to become the key ecumenical councils of the early Church. This particular lecture will not consider in depth either the decisions of the seven key councils, nor the canons relevant to the visible organisation of the Church, both of which will be considered in future lectures. However, in this first series of E-Quip Lectures, it is important to understand precisely who Christ is. This understanding can be gained through looking closely at the Christ of Chalcedon and how the Church chose to communicate the meaning of His life.

The Council of Chalcedon, 451

The Council of Chalcedon, the 4th Ecumenical Council, tells us a lot about how we should view not only our Lord Jesus Christ, but also His Church and the whole of creation. It has become rather fashionable now in Protestant and Catholic circles to distinguish the "Jesus of History" from the "Christ of Faith." In a British context, this invalid distinction might be called the "Channel 4 Jesus"—that is the crazy idea that the "real Jesus" has been buried by the Church, (the Protestant version), or that He has been extended and developed by the Church, (the Catholic version). This Nestorian heresy of having two separate persons in the incarnate Christ, one human and the other divine, and here allocated between genuine and inauthentic (the Protestant version) or primitive and developed personas (the Catholic version) is precisely what the Council of Chalcedon anathematised. This is what the Council said:

"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 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, distinctly, 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.⁴

Thus, the Creeds issued by earlier Ecumenical Councils were affirmed, with further clarification of the two natures—human and divine—in the one person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Council of Chalcedon was called by the emperor Marcian, against the wishes of St. Pope Leo I, However, it was the pope's letter to St. Flavian, Patriarch of Constantinople, about the heretical views of a priest, Eutyches, that almost all the 500 plus bishops who were to attend this largest of all the ancient councils affirmed *before* the Council was held. That letter set out an understanding of Jesus Christ to which the subsequent Council was to agree unanimously. As one of the bishops wrote to Pope Leo: "This is the faith we have long held; in this we were baptised; in this we baptise."⁵ That faith, expressed in the creeds of earlier councils focused, according to Pope Leo, on three key statements in "which the whole body of the faithful confess that they believe in (1) God the Father almighty and in (2) Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord, (3) who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary."⁶ Pope Leo insisted:

These three statements [above] wreck the tricks of nearly every heretic.. When God is believed to be both almighty and Father, the Son is clearly proved to be co-eternal with him, in no way different from the Father, since he was born God from God, almighty from the Almighty, co-eternal from the Eternal, not later in time, not lower in power, not unlike in glory, not distinct in being. The same eternal, only-begotten of the eternal begetter was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary. His birth in time no way subtracts from or adds to that divine and eternal birth of his. . . .

And the fact that the birth was miraculous does not imply that in the Lord Jesus Christ, born from the Virgin's womb, the nature is different from ours. The same one is true God and true man. There is nothing unreal about this oneness, since both the lowliness of the man and the grandeur of the divinity are in mutual relation. As God is not changed by showing mercy, neither is humanity devoured by the dignity received. The activity of each form is what is proper to it in communion with the

⁴ Philip Schaff and Rev. Henry Wallace (eds.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series, Vol XIV: The Seven Ecumenical Councils, Acts of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, The Council of Chalcedon*, 264-265. Full text online free at:

www.papalencyclicals.net/Councils/ecum04.htm .

⁵ Schaff and Wallace, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 244.

⁶ Schaff and Wallace, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 254-258. Available online, "The Council of Chalcedon – 451 A.D. at:

www.papalencyclicals.net/Councils/ecum04.htm .

other: that is, the Word performs what belongs to the Word, and the flesh accomplishes what belongs to the flesh. . . . We must say this again and again: one and the same is truly Son of God and truly son of man. [This oneness arises because] God, by the fact that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; man, by the fact that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. . . .⁷

Pope Leo I concluded his letter to his fellow saint, Patriarch Flavian, with the words: “God keep you safe dearest brother.”⁸

Fighting for Your Theology

It is difficult for us to understand now both the vehemence and sometimes even the brutality associated with the theological debates that took place in the Roman Empire. Emperors were often drawn by Church officials into resolving theological disputes and vice versa; however, these imperial initiatives were often linked to political and social issues, rather than strictly and only theological questions. Shortly before the Council of Chalcedon, a council had been held in Ephesus in August 449 in which the priest Eutyches had emerged victorious against Patriarch Flavian, with the council refusing to read the letter from Leo to Flavian. This was the council that was to become known as “a Council of Robbers” (*latrocinium*), in Pope Leo’s phrase. In *The Church of the Ancient Councils: The Disciplinary Work of the First Four Ecumenical Councils*, Archbishop Peter L’Huillier, Archbishop of the New York and New Jersey Diocese of the Orthodox Church of America, has written vividly of the first day of that council:

The meeting took place in a very heated atmosphere. . . .Dioscorus [Patriarch of Alexandria] proposed that Flavian [Patriarch of Constantinople] and Eusebius [Bishop of Dorylaeum] be deposed. The Bishop of Constantinople immediately protested, and Deacon Hilary then cried out ‘*Contradictur.*’ Certain bishops, seeing that things were taking a definite turn for the worse, approached Dioscorus to plead with him not to do anything irregular. [However,] claiming to have been threatened, Dioscorus asked that the doors of the basilica be opened: immediately the church

⁷ Schaff and Wallace, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 254. Available online, “The Council of Chalcedon – 451 A.D. at: www.papalencyclicals.net/Councils/ecum04.htm .

⁸ Schaff and Wallace, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 254. Available online, “The Council of Chalcedon – 451 A.D. at: www.papalencyclicals.net/Councils/ecum04.htm .

was invaded by soldiers, monks, and laymen, all very excited. Violence, especially against Flavian, resulted.⁹

In the midst of the theological and practical confusion, Flavian was deposed, sent into exile and died from his injuries *en route* to Hypaepa. Thus St. Flavian became a martyr for seeking to uphold St. Pope Leo's correct understanding of the person of Christ—one person with two natures, human and divine—while Dioscorus installed his representative in Constantinople as successor to St. Flavian.¹⁰ Such was the ambience of some of the early Christological debates—bishops were fighting for their ideas, their offices, and at times their lives.

In the midst of these years of disagreement about the person and nature of Christ, the Council of Chalcedon was primarily concerned with the heresy of Monophysitism (the heresy of Eutyches) who believed that “the human nature of the Saviour had been absorbed by His Divine Nature; and, therefore, they acknowledged in Christ only *one nature*.”¹¹ The heresy of the Monophysites had arisen as a reaction against the Nestorians who believed that “there were two separate Persons in the Incarnate Christ;”¹² and insisted that “the Most Holy Virgin Mary was *Christokos*, but not *Theotokos* (as having given birth to Christ but not to God).”¹³ Just as the Third Ecumenical Council at Ephesus had condemned the heresy of Nestorianism, so the Fourth Ecumenical Council at Chalcedon condemned the heresy of Monophysitism.

Christ: The Bridge between God and Humanity

In considering the achievements of the Council of Chalcedon, it is important to appreciate the underlying Christology—the significance of Jesus Christ for the Christian faith. Metropolitan Kallistos has given a balanced reflection on the nature of Christ:

... Christ the Saviour must be both fully human and fully God. No one less than God can save humanity; therefore, if Christ is to save, He must be God. But only if He is truly human as we are, can we humans participate in what He has done for us. A

⁹ Archbishop Peter L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils: The Disciplinary Work of the First Four Ecumenical Councils*, 183-184 (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996).

¹⁰ L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils*, 185.

¹¹ Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology: A Concise Exposition*, trans. and ed. Hieromonk Seraphim Rose, 3rd ed. 380 (Platina, CA: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2005). Emphasis in original.

¹² Entry for “Nestorius,” 1138-1139 in F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (eds.), *Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997). [This is the same work in paperback originally published in hardback by Oxford University Press as *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*].

¹³ Pomazansky, 380.

bridge is formed between God and humanity by the Incarnate Christ who is divine and human at once.¹⁴

The Church gained the beauty and the balance of this understanding of the person and nature of Christ by meeting in various Councils to defeat numerous heresies, in the midst of quite vicious personal and theological disputes. Long before the humanism of the so-called Renaissance period that rejected divine intervention in human affairs, the Incarnate Christ had proclaimed the glory of both God and man.

Each Council confronted and resolved a specific heresy, as well as dealing with a variety of disciplinary and liturgical issues. As Metropolitan Kallistos has pointed out, an awareness of the presence of heresy can be helpful to build up an understanding of the person of Christ:

Christ must be fully God and fully human. Each heresy in turn undermined some part of this vital affirmation. Either Christ was made less than God (Arianism); or His humanity was so divided from His Godhead that He became two persons instead of one (Nestorianism); or He was not presented as truly human (Monophysitism, Monothelitism [which acknowledged two natures in Christ but taught there was only one Divine will]). Each council defended this affirmation [that Christ must be fully God and fully human]. The first two, held in the fourth century, concentrated upon the earlier part (that Christ must be fully God) and formulated the doctrine of the Trinity. The next four, during the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries, turned to the second part (the fullness of Christ's humanity) and also sought to explain how humanity and Godhead could be united in a single person. The seventh council, in defence of the Holy Icons, seems at first somewhat apart, but like the first six it was ultimately concerned with the Incarnation and with human salvation.¹⁵

At times, these substantive theological disputes began with linguistic misunderstandings, as when the Greek word *hypostasis* which literally means "that which stands underneath something" was translated into Latin as *substantia*, meaning "substance" or "an individual reality." To some extent, St. Gregory of Nazianzus (329/330-389/390) resolved this misunderstanding by showing that *hypostasis* indicated in a Trinitarian context the "dynamic of distinctness (the threeness) [of God], whereas in Christology it [i. e. *hypostasis*] was the principle and dynamic of union (the

¹⁴ [then] Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church, New Edition*, 21 (London: Penguin, 1993).

¹⁵ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 21-22,

oneness).”¹⁶ However, the dispute about how to interpret the theology of St. Cyril of Alexandria (c. 315-387) led to a division between Orthodoxy and the non-Chalcedonian Eastern churches which has still not been fully resolved.¹⁷ Nevertheless, Father John McGuckin has pointed out that “the two significances of *hypostasis* grew together, and marked a monumental change in philosophy that is perhaps one of the most distinctive contributions of Christianity to the history of philosophy.”¹⁸ The crucial change was the new focus on the person as a relational being made in the image and likeness of the tripersonal God who has within Himself the perfect relations of Love. Such was the ultimate significance and achievement of the Council of Chalcedon.

The Christ of Chalcedon: A Demographic, Theological and Biblical Reflection

Oriental Christians (or non-Chalcedonians) accept the validity of only the first three ecumenical councils, because of their interpretation of St. Cyril of Alexandria’s formula: “one Nature of God the Logos Incarnate”. Their interpretation ignored Cyril’s own acceptance of two natures terminology in the confession of faith he agreed with of John of Antioch which had brought about the reconciliation of 433.¹⁹ This first truly major schism in the east has remained to this day. However, after various dialogues between representatives of the Oriental Orthodox and the Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches, there is a looming consensus (without full communion) that “both communions now share a common Christology with differing terminology.”²⁰ Rather than delve further into this theological dispute that arose after the Council of Chalcedon, it is of interest to affirm the glory of the Christ of Chalcedon upon whom a possible reconciliation might be based between the estimated 210 million Orthodox Christians and some 86 million Oriental Christians, who are led by the hierarchs of the Coptic, Ethiopian, Eritrean, Indian, Armenian Apostolic and Syriac Orthodox Churches. If unity could be achieved among these more than 300 million Christians, this would be a significant event given the highly unlikely possibility of institutional unity or doctrinal agreement among any of the other major groups of Christians—some 1.2 billion Roman Catholics, 600 to 800 million Protestants and 85 million Anglicans—who

¹⁶ Father John Anthony McGuckin, entries for “Hypostasis” and “Hypostatic Union,” 173-175 in McGuckin, *The Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004).

¹⁷ McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, 25. For a detailed discussion and texts, see McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy: Its History, Theology, and Texts* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1994/2004).

¹⁸ McGuckin, “Hypostasis,” 175. *Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology*.

¹⁹ See Fr. John Romanides article on St. Cyril’s formula here:

http://www.romanity.org/htm/rom.08.en.st._cyrils_one_p_hysis_or_hypostasis_of_god_the_log.htm

²⁰ “Oriental Orthodox” web entry at: http://orthodoxwiki.org/Oriental_Orthodox . Cf. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 4; and McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, 25.

together comprise approximately 2.6 billion people—nearly one third of the world’s population of 8.1 billion people.²¹

The theology that the Council of Chalcedon affirmed may well contain some linguistic ambiguities, but its theological meaning is abundantly clear: Our Lord Jesus Christ is One Sacred Person, embracing equally and without tension:

- The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, God the Son;
- The Co-Creator of the universe with the Father and the Holy Spirit;
- The God-Man conceived of the Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit, one Person of human and divine natures;
- The historical Christ who was born, lived, died, rose again and ascended into heaven; and
- He who is to come again to judge the living and the dead.

All of these attributes belong to one and the same Person—our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. In Him there is no confusion in the union of human and divine, temporal and eternal, personal and cosmic, nor is there any separation of these dimensions of His existence. All form one coherent whole which is His Person.

That this doctrine of Chalcedon is taught by Scripture is plain to see. Jesus the Carpenter of Nazareth is also the God of the Cosmos. In his single Person he gathers together and unites all things heavenly and earthly:

For He has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of His will, according to his purpose which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth (Ephesians 1:9-10).

As St. John Chrysostom states: “The *fullness of time* was the Son’s appearing. . . . The *fullness of time* is that divine wisdom by which, at the moment when all were most likely to perish they were saved.”²² Christ has a Body in which all this gathering together takes place—the Church--in which all the fullness of God for the whole Universe is manifest:

²¹ The numbers have been drawn from a number of different websites and represent very rough estimates. Cf. McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, 24 whose data is now at least seven years old. However, Father McGuckin’s estimate that Christians comprise one-third of the world’s population is still sound.

²² *Homily on Ephesians* l.1.10.

He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the Church, which is His Body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all (Ephesians 1:22-23).

St. John Chrysostom boldly sets forth the thinking of the Father on how Christ was to be honoured:

God set [Christ] above so as to be honoured before the rest, not merely to distinguish Him but to make all things His servants. Truly this is an awesome reality—that the whole power of creation should finally bow before a man in whom God the Word dwells.²³

These are not isolated references in the New Testament. Listen to St. Paul again in Colossians as he paints Christ on a cosmic canvas.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the Body, the Church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of his cross. (Colossians 1:15-20).

Reflecting on the meaning of “the image of the invisible God,” St. Basil places each of us before “a polished mirror” and then offers a commentary on these Biblical verses that confronts us with a comparison of our “represented face” with the relationship between the Father and the Son:

Just as he who in a polished mirror beholds the reflection of the form as plain knowledge of the represented face, so he, who has knowledge of the Son, through his knowledge of the Son receives in his heart the express image of the Father’s hypostasis. For all things that are the Father’s are beheld in the Son, and all things that are the Son’s are the Father’s, because the whole Son is in the Father and has all the Father in Himself [John 14:11]. Thus, the hypostasis of the Son becomes as it were form and face of the knowledge of the Father, and the hypostasis of the Father is known in form of the Son, while the proper quality which is contemplated therein remains for the plain distinction of the hypostases.²⁴

²³ *Homily on Ephesians* 3.1.20-21.

²⁴ St. Basil, *Letter 38, To His Brother Gregory*, 8 in *Nicene, 2nd Ser.*, IV:382.

Underlying St. Basil's reflection is the profound hypostatic union in which "the divine Logos is the sole personal subject (hypostasis) of the Christ;" and in that union "the deification of humanity [is] effected by the incarnation of God in human history."²⁵

The Council of Chalcedon affirms that this "image of the invisible God" is no different from the Christ who became Incarnate of the Ever-Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. It is the same Christ who loved, laboured, died and rose again. He came amongst us on account of the inherent tragedy of the Fall which touched upon not only human life but the whole of creation as well. They cannot be separated. Human redemption leads to a cosmic restoration. This is how St. Paul sees it in Romans:

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. (Romans 8:18-21).

The Church Fathers offered different interpretations of these verses from Romans.²⁶ One interpretation was that of St. John Chrysostom: "Where man leads, the creation will follow, since it was made for man."²⁷ It is clear that salvation in Orthodoxy does not stop at the human level. It proceeds in and through the human realm to embrace the whole cosmos; and thus, the Cosmos will also receive its freedom from corruption and death in the New Creation.

In the Church, this redemption of matter, space and time—this sanctification of all things is achieved in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, regenerating and making all things new through his People. A redeemed humanity has, therefore, as a priestly order, a crucial role to play in the healing of the universe with every Orthodox Christian becoming God's agent for the renewal of creation. We are called to be God's gardeners in a new Eden. Incidentally, this explains why we Orthodox are so concerned about the environment and ecological concerns.²⁸ The rape of

²⁵ Father John McGuckin, *The Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology*, "Hypostatic Union," 175.

²⁶ See *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament, VI, Romans*, ed. Gerald Bray (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 220-225.

²⁷ *Homilies on Romans 14*. Quoted in reference 25 above, p. 225.

²⁸ See Anestis G. Keselopoulos, *Man and the Environment: A Study of St. Symeon the New Theologian*, trans. Elizabeth Theokritoff (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001); and Elizabeth Theokritoff, *Living in God's Creation: Orthodox Perspectives on Ecology* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009).

the earth is a consequence of the Fall and a shameful example of Man's alienation from his Creator.

The precise mode of this priestly service requires us to understand the relationship between humanity and creation. The Scriptures speak of Man as "a little lower than the angels" and "crowned with glory and honour." (Psalm 8:5). Humankind, therefore, spans two connected realms that, in us, can and should be united—the spiritual and the material. That these can be united is witnessed by the Incarnation. In Christ there is no division between the spiritual and the physical, between the human and the divine. As Chalcedon affirms, in His one sacred Person, all things are reconciled, all things are one. This is because the God-Man, Christ, is fulfilling the task of Creation's High Priest by restoring the unity that was lost at the Fall. To use language borrowed from Greek Platonic and Stoic philosophy, entirely appropriate here, Christ—and now also His Body—is the microcosm of a New Creation. This means that in each saved human being one may see the whole universe restored. The salvation of the human race is therefore instrumental to the restoration of all things in Christ. We have a divine vocation as priests to be God's agents in the healing of the universe.

St. Maximus the Confessor (c. 580-662) was later to see this great task of humanity as to become the *microcosmic* priest to the *macrocosmic* universe in terms of overcoming a number of polarities caused by the Fall:

- God and creation;
- spiritual and material;
- heaven and earth;
- paradise and world; and
- man and woman

This cannot be done theoretically. It has to be done in practice. 'Humanity', St. Maximus writes,

... clearly has the power of naturally uniting at the mean point of each division since it is related to the extremities of each division in its own parts...For this very reason the human being was introduced last among beings as a kind of natural bond mediating between the extremities of universals through their proper parts, and leading into unity in itself those things that are naturally set apart from one another by a great interval.²⁹

²⁹ Ambigua 41, Translated in Cooper, *The Body in St Maximus*, Adam G. Cooper, *The Body in St Maximus the Confessor: Holy Flesh, Wholly Deified*, The Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 104.

In the midst of the second decade of this twenty-first century, the insight of St. Maximus remains important guidance on how to live our lives. The nature of our humanity is clearly set out in Genesis, Chapter 1, Verse 26, in the Septuagint translation: “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind according to our image and according to [our] likeness.’” As Metropolitan Kallistos has reminded us, since every human person has been created in the image and likeness of God this means that “each of us is nothing less than a living icon of the living God, a created image of God’s uncreated infinity. That is why we are free and creative; that is why we reach out beyond space and time, that is why [each of us] are ‘divine and blessed.’”³⁰

The mission of Church then is to show the world in her common life an entirely new order of things in which division has no place, and death is no more. This mission places a great responsibility on each one of us who have become members of the Church through baptism to live up to the great dignity of our calling from God. To this end, we have God’s promise of the Kingdom that one day His great purpose will be fully worked out. Until then, we labour with grace to open up within ourselves and for others the dynamics of a new resurrection life against which corruption and death is utterly powerless. Such a change within ourselves—such a metanoia—is entirely possible, as we gain a fuller understanding of the Christ of Chalcedon, because, like St. Paul, each of us has the God-given ability to gain “the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2.16)—to see the world with spiritual eyes, as Christ sees it. St. John Chrysostom reminds us that: “This does not mean that all the things that He knows, we know, but [rather] that all the things that we know are not belonging [solely] to what is human, so as to be open to suspicion, but [what we know is] of [Christ’s] mind and spiritual things.” It is helpful and humbling to see with St. John Chrysostom that even as each of us gain “the mind of Christ,” we do not see with our newly found spiritual eyes *everything* that Christ sees.

Our newly gained spiritual vision remains firmly grounded in earthly relationships; and this vision is precisely what Christ offered to His first disciples and what He offers to us today now that we understand better who this Christ of Chalcedon is. Christ told His disciplines what He now tells us::

You did not choose Me but I chose you and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. This I command you, that you love one another (John 15:16-17).

³⁰ Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, *Orthodox Theology in the Twenty-first Century*, “Living Icon of the Living God,” (World Council of Churches Publications, 2012), p. 37.

It is important to understand that the “three present subjunctives [in this Biblical passage from the Gospel of St. John] emphasise continuance—*be* going, *be* bearing fruit, and *be* abiding.”³¹ All of us are works in progress, growing in human competence and in the experience of divine grace. Yet we can be confident that the work that is now in progress within each of us will be completed in our own lifetimes. As St. Gregory the Great reflected on this passage:

I have appointed you for grace. I have planted you to go willingly and bring forth fruit by your works. I have said that you should go willingly, since to will to do something is already to go in your heart . . . Your fruit is to endure. . . What we do for eternal life remains even after death. Let us work for the fruit that endures.³² Thanks be to God!

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³¹ *The Holy Gospels, Vol. 1*, Second ed. (Buena Vista, CO: Holy Apostles Convent and Dormition Skete, 2000), Note on John 15:16a, 536.

³² St. Gregory the Great, *Forty Gospel Homilies*, 216. Quoted in reference 25 above.