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Divine Inspiration and Christology in the Thought of Theodore of Mopsuestia

Abstract

The theological methodology of Theodore of Mopsuestia depends to a great extent on his Christological views. The Christological model created by him actually presents a distinct, eternally predestinated righteous man, in whom the Word of God dwells by grace in the form of a continuous and deepening inspiring presence in his thoughts and will. Christ represents God the Word in the world as his visible image, inasmuch as He restores the lost moral image because of first Adam's violation, who had been called to that role but did not fulfill it. The understanding of the indwelling of the Word of God in the Anointed One, i.e., Jesus Christ, as a



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state of *divine inspiration*, though in an immeasurably higher degree than that of the prophets and apostles, combined with the concept of gradual development of the Savior to full union in will, action and thought with the Word of God following Resurrection, leads to a conclusion. This conclusion invalidates all theories created by Theodore that in the image of Christ may be observed, on the one hand, an actual individuality in which the Word of God and human nature are united, and, on the other hand that this individual person possesses both a divine and a human will. On the contrary, in Theodore's thought, the will of Christ, like every other human will is consolidated gradually, in its path of moral perfection, until finally, after the Resurrection, it becomes unified with the divine will, and finally reaches a completeness, where it is not distinct at all from this divine will. In such a way Theodore of Mopsuestia's view on Incarnation of the Divine Word closely depends on his view of the Divine Inspiration. In this way, Theodore places the principle of Divine Inspiration in the Bible as the basis of all his theology.

Keywords

Theodore of Mopsuestia, Antiochian School, Church of Antioch, Patristics, Late Antiquity

In the history of the Church Theodore of Mopsuestia (352-428) is not related only to the heresy of Nestorius as its theological inspirer but he is also remembered for his significant interpretive work on Holy Scripture. It is no coincidence that even after his condemnation at the Fifth Ecumenical Council (553), some of his commentaries on the Scripture continued to be copied and translated both in East and West. Moreover, during the Late Byz-

antine Era, fragments of his commentaries continued to be reproduced in a number of interpretive *catenae*, sometimes under a different name, along with other important commentaries of the Holy Fathers.

Scholars of the exegetical writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia are unanimous in their view that the *Interpreter* (Ἰερμηνεύς), as he is known in the Nestorian tradition, considers the whole of Scripture in a systematic perspective, which reveals God's plan of salvation, and if anyone undertakes the mission to delve into a literal and rational interpretation of a single text of the Holy Scripture, he will find ample evidence and information of this divine plan. This is because God has put into the Holy Scripture, via the sacred writer, a series of prefigurations (τύποι) of events, persons and traditions, because both image and archetype clarify, through mutual illumination, God's plan for humanity. In other words, they clarify different elements of God's plan of salvation illuminating each other within the collection of sacred texts.¹

According to Theodore, who explicitly states that he follows the Apostle Paul in this line of thought, the criterion of what typology

¹ See D. Zaharopoulos, *Theodore of Mopsuestia. A Study of His Old Testament Exegesis* (New York: Paulist Press 1989), pp. 103-205; R. Devréese, *Le méthode exégétique de Théodore de Mopsueste*, *Rbibl* 53 (1946), pp. 207-241; R. Devréese, *Le Commentaire de Théodore de Mopsueste sur les Psaumes*, *Rbibl* 38 (1929), pp. 35-62; as well as the outdated but otherwise useful for their specific methodology works of R. Bultmann, *Die Exegese des Theodor von Mopsuestia* (Marburg: Helmut Feld und Karl Hermann Schelkle, 1912) и L. Pirot, *L'œuvre exégétique de Théodore de Mopsueste (350-428 après J.-C.)* (Romae: Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 1913), pp. 177-301. See also: Е. Трайчев, Към въпроса за типологическото тълкуване на Свещ. Писание [On the question of the typological interpretation of the Holy Scripture], in: *Сборник от международна научна конференция: религия, образование и общество за един мирен свят (31 октомври-1-2 ноември, 2003)* (Кърджали: ПУ 2004), pp. 113-126.

and allegory can be found in the fact that a typological relationship can only exist between real historical figures – for example between Sarah and Hagar, between Adam and Christ; a relationship, which is revealed precisely in the Holy Scripture.² These typological relations have been inspired by God and inserted into the mind of the sacred writer in order that the latter to place them in their proper relation of one another.³ This typology that explains the different components of salvation history is particularly revealed in the relationship between Adam and Christ (cf. Rom. 5:14)⁴. Theodore of Mopsuestia insists that just as Adam was the first born mortal and Eve was flesh of his flesh she shared his mortal existence too; in this respect Christ is the first born to immortality and all who are members of His body (according to Apostle Paul) become partakers of the Grace that Christ has. Both Adam and Christ are described in Scripture, they are actually existent in history, while the latter is the perfect fulfiller of this image – Adam, i.e. Christ is the sublime image– the prototype of this plan.

Particularly important for Theodore’s typological exegesis is his view of the division of human history in two epochs or states

² See the notes on what τύπος is according to Theodore: Theodorus Mopsuestenus, *Commentarius in Jonam prophetam. Prooem.*, in: *Theodori Mopsuesteni Commentarius in XII Prophetas*. Einleitung und Ausgabe H. N. Sprenger (Bibliotheca Biblica et Patristica 1, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1977), pp. 170-173; the same text also in: PG 66, 320A-324B; *Commentarius in Michaeam prophetam*, 4, 1-3, in: *Ibid.*, pp. 206-207; the same text also in: PG 66, 364BD; Theodor von Mopsuestia, *Fragm. 1 Kor. 1, 2-4*, in: K. Staab, *Pauluskommentare aus der griechischen Kirche*. Aus Katenenhandschriften gesammelt und herausgegeben (Münster i. W.: Aschendorff, 1933), p. 185.

³ See H. B. Swete (ed.), *Theodori episcopi Mopsuesteni in epistolas B. Pauli Commentarii*, Vol. I (Cambridge: CUP, 1880), pp. 73-74.

⁴ “Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come”.

(καταστάσεις) – mortal and changeable, and unchangeable after the resurrection.⁵

Theodore of Mopsuestia, follows the teaching of Apostle Paul on sin and redemption⁶ in his understanding of the salvation of the human being. Actually, he conceives salvation as a journey from the mortal and changeable state to the future immortal and unchangeable state of all the faithful in the Kingdom of God, following the resurrection. The future state is mentioned by Theodore of Mopsuestia by several adjectives: he identifies it with “the new covenant (agreement) [...] the new creation” and “the kingdom of Heaven [...] the heavenly Jerusalem”⁷.

⁵ In the words of Richard Norris, “the so-called doctrine of the ‘Two-Ages’ [...] it supplies the basis at once of his soteriology and of his picture of the redeemed state of man. The scheme presupposes Theodore’s view of the human constitution and of the nature of the soul” (R. Norris, *Manhood and Christ. A Study in the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Oxford: OUP, 1963), p. 160; *ibid.*, p. 191; cf. D. Fairbairn, *Grace and Christology in the Early Church* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), pp. 28-34). The significance of this concept of Theodore of Mopsuestia for the history of humankind is also important for his synthesis that includes it in the Creed that he composes (in the case that he is the original author). See: *Exemplum expositionis symboli depravati*, in: PG 66, 1016C-1020C.

⁶ See Phil. 3:20-21: “But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.” (ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει, ἐξ οὗ καὶ σωτῆρα ἀπεκδεχόμεθα Κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, ὃς μετασχηματίσει τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν εἰς τὸ γενέσθαι αὐτὸ σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ δύνασθαι αὐτὸν καὶ ὑποτάξαι αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα); Ephes. 5:23: „For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior” (ὅτι ὁ ἀνὴρ ἐστὶ κεφαλὴ τῆς γυναικὸς ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐστὶ σωτὴρ τοῦ σώματος). Cf. Ephes. 1:7-10; 20-23.

⁷ See Al. Mingana (ed.), *Theodore of Mopsuestia, Commentary on the Nicene Creed* (Woodbrooke Studies 5, Cambridge: CUP, 1932; I, p. 19: „He gave us a New Testament that is proper for those who are renewed”;

The main characteristic of the future age, or future state, is immortality (implying by itself immutability and incorruption). In his own words: "at [our] resurrection from the dead He [God] will make us new instead of old and imperishable and immortal instead of corruptible and mortal"⁸. According to Theodore, the faithful will

"be completely transformed into new human beings and will acquire an immense number of virtues through the gift of divine grace, which they will receive. In fact, they will become immortal instead of mortal, incorruptible instead of corruptible, dispassionate instead of passionate, immutable instead of mutable, free human beings instead of slaves; friends [of God] instead of enemies; from strangers they will become sons [of God], and will no longer be regarded as belonging to Adam but they will belong to Christ"⁹.

This, however, is granted to the human being through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is a much more complex concept and goes beyond the opposition between mortality and immortality. Christ Himself has been raised by the power of the Holy Spirit:

"He [the Apostle Paul] shows by these words¹⁰ that in the resurrection from the dead Christ our Lord and His body is transfigured by becoming immortal by the power of the Holy Spirit".¹¹

Mingana (ed.), *Theodore of Mopsuestia, Commentary on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist* (Woodbrooke Studies 6, Cambridge: CUP, 1933), II, pp. 23-24.

⁸ *Commentary on the Nicene Creed*, I, p. 19.

⁹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 20.

¹⁰ It is about the line quoted above by him in 1 Cor. 15:45: "Thus it is written, 'The first man, Adam, became a living being' (οὕτω καὶ γέγραπται· ἐγένετο ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος Ἀδὰμ εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν· ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδὰμ εἰς πνεῦμα ζῶοποιουῦν).

¹¹ *Commentary on the Nicene Creed*, X, p. 110.

As the preceding lines in the quoted text of Theodore show, this change in the Savior's corporeality is intimately connected with the creative activity of God, which is affected by the life-giving and power of the Holy Spirit.¹² In the words of Apostle Paul: "Who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (ὃς καὶ ἰκάνωσεν ἡμᾶς διακόνους καινῆς διαθήκης, οὐ γράμματος, ἀλλὰ πνεύματος· τὸ γὰρ γράμμα ἀποκτέννει, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ζωοποιεῖ), Theodore recognizes the role of the Holy Spirit in bestowing immortality on the resurrected righteous human beings.¹³ Almost the same is asserted by him in his *Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*.¹⁴

The new state in which human beings find themselves, is not limited to immortality. The latter is closely tied, as it is in Theodore's understanding of original sin, to the possibility of sinning. Here, this possibility would no longer exist. Acquired immortality is intimately bound up with acquired immutability, which in turn closes the gap through which sin can penetrate human existence. In order for the human being to not sin, the prospect of death must not weigh upon him and inasmuch as sin is in a large extent identified with disobedience against the will of God in the thought of Theodore of Mopsuestia, the cause of sin, i.e., mutability and mortality that allows disobedience, should first have to be removed, and then sin itself as a possibility will fall away.

In his *Commentary on the Epistle of Apostle Paul to the Colossians*, he explains the meaning of the passage: "in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin" (ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν) (1:14), exclaiming,

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ See J. M. Vosté, (ed.), *Theodori Mopsuesteni Commentarius in Evangelium Joannis Apostoli*, CSCO, Scr. syr., ser. IV, t. III, Lovanii 1940: X, 31, text. lat., p. 153; text. syr., p. 215.

“[By these words], however, he [the apostle] signified the future state, in which, following the attainment of the resurrection, our nature became immortal and we can sin no more”.¹⁵

In the same spirit are the explanations concerning the worlds of Apostle Paul: “for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death” (ὁ γὰρ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἠλευθέρωσε με ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου) (Rom. 8:2).¹⁶

This is, what will also be overcome in the new state is the strictness of the Law. In the coming century we will not need laws and scriptures to teach us how to shun evil, for we will not be subject

¹⁵ In ep. ad Colossenses, 1,14-15, in: Swete, *Theodori ep. Mops. in ep. B. Pauli Commentarii*, Vol. 1, p. 261: dicit autem futurum statum, in quo per resurrectionem effecti, natura nostra immortali extante, peccare ulterius non poterimus. See also: In ep. ad Coloss., 2,11, in: *Ibid.*, p. 287: uult enim dicere quoniam ‘immortalitatem adsecuti estis, in qua constituti ultra non peccabitis, quod ex mortalitate sustinebatis necessitatem; itaque conuenit et propter hoc non ingratos uos uideri erga illum, qui tantorum uobis bonorum extitit prouisor.

¹⁶ See *Fragm. Röm 8,2*, in: Staab, *Pauluskommentare*, p. 133: Τῆ τοῦ πνεύματος μετουσίᾳ τὴν ἀνάστασιν γίνεσθαι ὁ ἀπόστολος φησιν· σπεύρεται γάρ, φησί, σῶμα ψυχικόν, ἐγείρεται σῶμα πνευματικόν, ὡς ἂν αὐτοῦ τότε κρατοῦντος ἡμᾶς ἐν ἀφθαρσίᾳ τε καὶ ἀτρεπτότητι πνεῦμα οὗν αὐτὸ ζωῆς καλεῖ, ὡς ἂν τῆς ἀθανάτου ζωῆς παρεκτικόν ἦς τότε τευξόμεθα. τὸ τοίνυν πνεῦμα, φησί, τὸ ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι τῆς ἀθανασίας ἡμῖν δεδομένον, οὗ τὴν ἀπόλαυσιν ἢ ἐπὶ τὸν Χριστὸν πίστις παρέσχηκεν ἡμῖν, ἀπήλλαξέν με τοῦ τε θανάτου καὶ τῆς ἁμαρτίας. δῆλον δὲ ὅτι ἀπὸ τῶν μελλόντων ποιεῖται τὴν ἀπόδειξιν τῶν διὰ Χριστοῦ παρασχεθέντων ἡμῖν, ὅτε ἐπὶ τῶν πραγμάτων τὴν ἔκβασιν λήψεται, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἡ τοῦ θανάτου ἐλευθερία τότε ἡμῖν προσγενήσεται, οὐκ ἀνισταμένοις μόνον, ἀλλὰ γὰρ καὶ ἀθανάτου ζωῆς ἀξιουμένοις. τότε δὲ καὶ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἀπαλαττόμεθα, τότε ἄτρεπτοι γεγονότες τῆ τοῦ πνεύματος χάριτι, ἁμαρτεῖν οὐκ ἐπιδεχόμεθα· κατὰ γὰρ τοὶ τὸν παρόντα βίον πρόδηλον ὡς θνητοὶ τέ ἐσμεν καὶ ὑπὸ τὴν τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἐνόχλησιν κείμεθα.

to sin.¹⁷ The educational value of the law will fall away. Inasmuch as mortality has been the main cause of the sin of human being, the need for the prevention of sin by means of rules and laws will be overcome. Consequently, Theodore points out that

“the law has been necessary for those who have been subject to sin, restraining them and preserving them away from sin. But since those who have been risen from death, became immortal, they will no longer be able to sin. Therefore, the law is superfluous for them in this state”.¹⁸

On the basis of this concept of the “two ages” or “states,” the Antiochian teacher considers the Old Testament exclusively as a “shadow” of what is fulfilled in the New Testament. The Law is but a foreshadowing and a pledge of the future truth of the New Covenant, which in turn will be a figure of the final blessings of immortality and dispassion.¹⁹ Theodore asserts that the prophecies are only riddles (αίνίγματα) hinting the future truth.²⁰ In

¹⁷ Fragm. Röm 7,6, in: Staab, *Pauluskommentare*, pp. 125-126: ἀνακαινισθέντες γὰρ τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ πνεύματος καὶ ἕτεροι μὲν ἀνθ’ ἐτέρων γεγονότες, μεταστάντες δὲ εἰς ἄφθαρτον ζῶην ἀπὸ τοῦ παρόντος βίου, οὐδεμίαν ἁμαρτημάτων ἐνόχλησιν ὑπομένομεν. οὐκοῦν οὐδὲ νόμων δεόμεθα καὶ γραμμάτων τῶν διδασκόντων ἡμᾶς τοῦ κακοῦ τὴν ἀποχίην.

¹⁸ In ep. ad Coloss., 2,14, in: Swete, *Theodori ep. Mops. in ep. B. Pauli Commentarii*, Vol. 1, p. 290: Quoniam lex necessaria erat illis qui subiacebant peccato, retinens ac prohibens eos a peccato; quia autem resurgentes effecti sunt immortales, peccare ultra non poterant. Itaque et lex superflua est illis qui huiusmodi sunt.

¹⁹ See Commentarius in Jonam prophetam. Prooem., in: *Theodori Mopsuesteni Commentarius in XII Prophetas*. Einleitung und Ausgabe H. N. Sprenger (Bibliotheca Biblica et Patristica 1, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1977), p. 169; PG 66, 317C-320B.

²⁰ Commentarius in Joelem prophetam, 2, 21-27, in: *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94; PG 66, 228AB; cf. Commentarius in Zachariae, 9, 8-10, in: *Ibid.*, pp. 366-367; the same text in: PG 66, 556AC. Prophecies about the Messiah in the Old Testament are so limited by Theodore’s historical approach that he does not see the messianic character in the song of the suffering servant of the Lord in Isaiah 53 and the vision of Malachias 3:2-4. This is about

the same vein he also considers the *Book of Psalms*. Theodore observes as messianic just few Psalms: 2, 8, 15, 44 (45) и 109 (110), while he interpreted typologically only the Psalm 15. In this interpretation the image of the Servant who has not been corrupted is fulfilled in the person of the Risen Christ.²¹

Generally, the Antiochian commentators try to adhere to the text and search for its historical meaning, thus attempting to derive all of its theological ideas by delving deeper into the “contemplation-examination” (θεωρία) or lifting up to a higher meaning (ἀναγωγή) that is embedded in a given passage of Scripture by establishing various typological connections between events, places and persons. In accordance to this concept Theodore of Mopsuestia searches continually for interconnections throughout the biblical texts by rejecting the tendency of the authors of the so-called Alexandrian school, who ascribe an allegorical meaning to the Scripture.²² The greatest problem for Antiochians about Origen’s allegory is his desire to de-historicize Scripture and transform all of salvation history into non-history.²³ In this regard, Theodore, like other representatives of the Antiochian interpretive tradition has a particular interest in textual-

the quoted line by him: (Comm. in Malachiae, 3, 2-4, in: *ibid.*, pp. 419-421; PG 66, 620C-624C).

²¹ See R. Devréese, *Le méthode exégétique*, p. 221; cf. H. Pappas, Theodore of Mopsuestia’s Commentary on Psalm 44 (LXX): A Study of Exegesis and Christology, *GOTR* 47/1-4 (2002), pp. 55-79.

²² See In epistolam ad Galatas, 4,24, in: Swete, *Theod. Mops. in ep. B. Pauli Commentarii*, Vol. 1, pp. 73-74, the same text in PG 66, 908; cf. Commentarius in Oseam prophetam, 4,5, in: PG 66, 148B. More detailed analysis in: Br. Nassif, Spiritual Exegesis in the School of Antioch, in: Nassif, Br. (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Theology. Essays in Memory of John Meyendorff* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 343-377, particularly on the opposition to the allegorical method of interpretation see pp. 367-370.

²³ See Fr. McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia (Early Church Fathers)* (London&New York: Routledge 2009), pp. 19-21.

critical problems.²⁴ Theodore of Mopsuestia aspires to find out exactly what God says in the Scripture, what He reveals to His chosen people. In this way, the “Interpreter” focuses primarily to the actual words and grammatical features of the Scripture, which for him are true revelations of God’s saving plan for the human being and the universe in general.

The quest for historicity in the text of the Scripture by the Antiochian interpreters has been identified by Rudolf Bultmann as a legacy of an observed tendency in ancient Christian writers to construct a history of religiosity.²⁵ However, Demetrios Zacharopoulos²⁶ and Frederick McLeod²⁷ trace back the root of this historical and typological interpretation of Scripture in another direction. According to them, this understanding of prefigures and the rational interpretation as well are directly related to

²⁴ Ив. Димитров, История на новозаветното тълкуване. Тълкуване на евангелията през III-XI в. на Изток [History of New Testament interpretation: The Interpretation of the Gospels from 3rd until 9th century in the East], *Духовна култура* 8 (1995), pp. 4, 14. For the other more prominent representations of the so-called Antiochian school see: С. Риболов, Видни представители на Антиохийската духовна традиция преди св. Йоан Златоуст (личности, съчинения и влияния) [Prominent representatives of the Antiochian spiritual tradition before St. John Chrysostom (persons, writings and influences)], in: *Supplementum на БМ – 1600 години от Успението на св. Йоан Златоуст* (София: Университетско издателство „Св. Кл. Охридски“, 2008), pp. 163-210.

²⁵ R. Bultmann, *Die Exegese des Theodor von Mopsuestia*, p. 126. In this respect see: Л. Тенкеджиев, *Утвърждаване на апостолското предание през II век. Богословската мисъл през първите три века*, [The Affirmation of the apostolic tradition in the 2nd century: Theological thought in the first three centuries] т. I. (София: Добротолюбие, 2008), pp. 101-113, which examines the hierarchization and historicization of religiosity in the second-century Christian apologists.

²⁶ D. Zaharopoulos, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, pp. 79-98.

²⁷ Fr. McLeod, *The Roles of Christ’s Humanity in Salvation. Insights from Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), pp. 17-23.

Theodore's understanding of divine inspiration.²⁸ In short, it corresponds to the mechanical theory, which characterizes the Western Christian World, mostly after the Reformation.²⁹

For Theodore, divine inspiration represents a mechanical penetration of the Holy Spirit into the sacred writers, whereby everything written by them represents a true trace that expresses the revelation of God in human words. Consequently, it becomes quite clear why Theodore strives to ascertain the exact meaning of each word within its historical context (the particulars in each situation of the biblical narratives) by seeking to establish the exact purpose of each of the sacred writers in writing each distinctive biblical text. It could even be said that in Theodore's early writings it is difficult to distinguish between revelation and divine inspiration; he seems to share the idea of a completely literalistic divine inspiration, in which the sacred writer has only an assisting role in the divine inspiration.³⁰

In his later writings, however, Theodore seems to take a more moderate stance on divine inspiration, considering it in a much more complex way bound up with the distinctive individuality of the sacred writer. Thus, the individuality plays a much greater

²⁸ Frederick McLeod even detects the reason for the Antiochians to place such a strong emphasis in their interpretations on the historicity of biblical events in the attack of the emperor Julian (331/332 – 26 June 363) to historicity of the Gospel (ibid., p. 20).

²⁹ I have addressed the question of the Western mechanical theory and the Orthodox understanding of divine inspiration in relation to the Orthodox view of Tradition in: *Свещеното Предание – битието на Църквата в историческото време* [Sacred Tradition – the Being of the Church in Historical Time], in: *БМ 1-4* (2008), pp. 174-204 (especially, pp. 177-187); see too D. Zaharopoulos, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, p. 90. On the Orthodox view of the unity of the Revelation see D. Popmarinov Kirov, *The Unity of Revelation and the Unity of Tradition*, in: Kimbrough, S. T., *Orthodox and Wesleyan Ecclesiology* (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimirs Seminary Press, 2007), pp. 105-117.

³⁰ See D. Zaharopoulos, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, pp. 80-90.

role in the choice of the expressive means. For example, this understanding allows him to approach the texts of St. Paul critically (especially given the style and a number of obscure places, according to him, in the epistles).³¹ Related to this development in his understanding of divine inspiration is the note in the prologue of the *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, where it is stated that St. John, unlike the other gospel writers, wrote this text in order to accentuate the divine nature of Christ. Absent from his entire approach to this problem, however, is an understanding of the synergistic involvement of the sacred writer, which represents in fact, so to speak, the “traditional” explanation of divine inspiration in the Eastern Orthodox tradition and is closely tied to the phenomenon of holiness.

This specific methodology of Theodore of Mopsuestia and his distinctly “mechanical” understanding of divine inspiration form a distinctly characteristic concept of the relationship between divinity and humanity in the person of the Savior. In general, his concept of the “Savior” is profoundly influenced by this understanding of divine inspiration as a paradigmatic mechanism for the relationship between God and human being as a whole.

For the salvation of humankind, the lost image of God has to be restored in the human being through the New Human who has overcome sin and death—this is Christ, the New Adam. This, however, is not God the Word. On the other hand, if the bishop of Mopsuestia, as some modern scholars and defenders of him claim,³² use the term “nature” and “hypostasis” quite equivalently (in a Christological context), there would be no problem in

³¹ See Fr. McLeod, *The Roles of Christ's Humanity in Salvation*, p. 46.

³² See R. Devrèese, *Essai sur Théodore de Mopsueste* (Studi e Testi 141, Citta del Vaticano: Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, 1948); É. Amann, *Trois-Chapitres*, *DTC* 15, pp. 1901-1903; É. Amann, *Théodore de Mopsueste*, *DTC* 15/1, p. 277; É. Amann, *La doctrine christologique de Théodore de Mopsueste* (A propos d'une publication récente), *RSR* 14

introducing two “hypostases” in Christ in order to preserve the individual subjects necessary to his teaching of the salvation economy. However, given the fact that he was somewhat aware of the meaning of the term of hypostasis (ὑπόστασις) and its relation to the term of essence (οὐσία) that were developed at least a quarter of a century earlier by the Cappadocians, he seems to be scared of being accused in introducing a new fourth hypostasis (human) into the Trinity. It is no accident that in several places in the retained part of his writings he explicitly states that there are no two sons.³³ For this reason, he preferred the declarative and functional notion of “person” (πρόσωπον), known as possible term derived from the Stoic philosophical tradition marking some kind of individuality. Actually, the use of it represented the kind of compromise that Theodore needed. Trying to keep the traditional gospel statement, where it is obvious that Christ is only one, Theodore strives in every way to avoid the obliteration of the second subject that has already appeared, the

(1934), pp. 161-190; M. Richard, *La Tradition des fragments du traité Περὶ τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως* de Théodore de Mopsueste, *Mus* 56 (1943), pp. 55-75; Richard, M., *Le néo-chalcedonisme*, *MSR* 3 (1946), pp. 156-161.

³³ See *De incarnatione*, XII, in: Swete, *Theod. ep. Mops...*, Vol. 2, p. 303; *De incarnatione*, VII, in: *ibid.*, p. 298; In ep. ad Coloss., I,15, in: *ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 264: *sed interrogant, quemadmodum susceptus homo primogenitus potest uideri totius creaturae, cum non sit ante omnem creaturam, sed ut esset in nouissimis accepit temporibus; non intellegentes, quoniam primogenitus non tempore dicitur solum sed et prae honore frequenter, eo quod primogenitus dicitur ueraciter illorum, qui post illum geniti fuerint; see In ep. ad Coloss. I,15, in: ibid., Vol. 1, 264; Epistola ad Artemium, in: ibid., Vol. 2, 338: quomodo itaque possibile est quartam personam super has [Patrem et Filium et Spiritum sanctum] addere illam quae assumpta est serui formam? As well as: *Commentary on the Nicene Creed*, III, p. 39. Cf. *interp. of Ephes. 1:22* in: *In ep. ad Ephesios*, I,22,23, in: *ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 139-141.*

adopted human being. He is trying to preserve the two individualized natures of the Savior, but covered under an external common factor– the “person”.

In the places where Theodore speaks of this phenomenon, but does not use the term “person”, we find expressions such as in the following passage from the 10th Book *On the Incarnation of God the Word* cited by Fecundus of Hermiane:

“...the divine Scripture has brought together the properties of the two natures, and speaks as it were of One.” (Scriptura divina... ambarum naturarum proprietates in unum conducit, et sicut de uno quodam eloquitur).³⁴

For example, he states as he interprets the Creed,

“...justly they [the Fathers] said firstly the *Only-begotten* and then the *Firstborn*. In fact, they wanted to show us first who He was in human likeness (Phil. 2:7) and whom He, because of His goodness, assumed from our nature. The fathers then spoke of this likeness of a servant that has been assumed for our salvation. In this way, and by changing the terms they used, they made evident to us the two natures and their differences. And also, the unity of sonship, which resulted from the close union of the natures and has been accomplished by the grace of God”.³⁵

³⁴ Facundus Herm., Pro defensione, PL, 67, 751D. Attested also is a single use of “a mixture of the Word of God and a man whom he has assumed” (commixtio et Dei Verbi et hominis quem assumpsit) – Vosté, *Comment. in Evangelium Joannis Apostoli*, XVI, 28, text. lat., p. 217; text. syr., p. 302.

³⁵ *Commentary on the Nicene Creed*, III, pp. 39-40. See also: “The blessed Fathers who wrote the Creed [...] said the above things [divine and human] as of One, in accord with the teaching of the Scripture... (ibid., VI, p. 67). In every other case where the Scripture calls the One who has adopted the Son, it will be seen that He is called the Son because of the close union with Him who adopted Him... (ibid., VIII, p. 91). Their union by which they became one, does not take away the difference of natures, which prevents them for being one... (ibid., p. 90). Whenever the Scripture wishes to speak of things done by human nature, it rightly refers to

Francis Sullivan thinks that in these reflections Theodore of Mopsuestia means by the term “firstborn” of all creation, namely, “adopted/assumed man”, who is the first regenerated and first assumed by God human creature. He represents the new creation. Hence the reason for the use of human attributes for God the Word by the fathers and sacred writers is to emphasize the close union of natures in Christ, but he is also the New Adam needed for the concept of Salvation.

Another example of this compromising union is the use of the interchange of the properties of the natures, considered as a way of showing to humans the salvific economy of God Himself³⁶. By clarifying the statement “I am the living that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh” (John 6:51),³⁷ Theodore states:

“[By this] he does not mean that the body has descended from there, but [so he speaks] because by its nature this gift

them to the divine nature, because they surpass our nature; in this relation is shown the union [of the divine nature] with this man, so the deeds done by him may be made credible” (ibid., p. 89). Cf. Justinianus Imp., *Epistola adversus nonnullos impium Theodorum atque iniqua ejus dogmat, et epistolam Ibae dictam, nec non Theodoretis libros contra catholicam Fidem, scriptis propugnantes*, PG 86, 1071B, who quotes the 4th book from *Against Apollinarius* of Theodore.

³⁶ Vosté, *Comment. in Evangelium Joannis Apostoli*, III, 16, text. lat., pp. 51-52 : Solet enim liber sacer, quotiescumque magnitudinem passionis describit, de divinitate mentionem facere in confirmationem sermonis. Et sicut beatus Paulus, magnitudinem passionis significare intendens, dicit: Si enim cognovissent, numquam Dominum gloriae crucifixissent, ut ipso hoc titulo indicet magnitudinem passionis; ita et Dominus noster, volens significare abundantiam dilectionis suae ex eo quod est passus, egregie dicit: Unigenitum dedit. *Text. syr.*, p. 73.

³⁷ Greek text: ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος ὁ ζῶν ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς: ἐάν τις φάγη ἐκ τούτου τοῦ ἄρτου, ζήσεται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. καὶ ὁ ἄρτος δὲ ὃν ἐγὼ δῶσω, ἢ σὰρξ μου ἐστίν, ἢν ἐγὼ δῶσω ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ζωῆς.

is sublime. He confirmed His thought in that it is necessary to allude to the greatness of the divinity”.³⁸

We notice a similar statement in the interpretation of the Colossians 1:13: “He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved son”:

“He did not say *of son* but *of his beloved son*, because we did not become partakers of the kingdom of God the Word, but of the assumed man, with whom we share honor by natural likeness, when we show likeness to him in our deeds; by

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 105-106: Non vult igitur significare corpus inde descendisse; sed [ita loquitur] quia natura sua sublime est donum istius rei. Alludendo ad magnitudinem divinitatis, confirmat verbum suum. Cf. ibid., p. 82: Solet enim liber [divinus] referens ea quae humanae naturae Domini contigerunt, si quid superat naturam de qua agitur, statim mentionem facere de magnitudine divinitatis, indeque auditoribus indubium facere sermonem. Ita verbi gratia apud beatum Paulum; cum enim dixit: [Deus] locutus est nobis in Filio, quem constituit heredem universorum, intendens hominem assumptum, et significans eum humano modo esse locutum, ipsumque, quamvis non esset rerum dominus, dominationem in eas recepisse per unionem suam cum Deo Verbo, quia Verbum tamquam rerum auctor etiam dominatur illis; - intellegens hoc dictum superare naturam eius de quo sermo erat, adiecit dicens: per quem fecit et saecula, ut ex attributo naturae divinae demonstraret etiam huic visibili [Christo] competere posse dominationem universalem. Cf. Cyrillus Alex., Contra Diodorum et Theodorum, in: PG 76, 1446D-1447A: De Incarnatione, lib. XII: Multifarie multisque modis olim Deus locutus patribus in prophetis, in novissimis diebus his locutus est nobis in Filio (Hebr. 1,1-2), per Filium enim locutus est nobis: certum est vero, quod de assumpto homine. Cui enim dixit aliquando angelorum: Filius meus es tu, ego hodie genui te? (ibid., 5) Nullum dicit, participem fecit dignitatis Filii. Hoc enim quod dixit, genui te, quasi per hoc participationem filiationis dedit: omnino vero aperte nullam habens ad Deum Verbum communionem, apparet hoc quod dictum est.

them He called him the beloved Son, since he is not by nature the Son of the Father, but was honored by love with adoption on account of these things”.³⁹

It is evident from the passages of Theodore’s writings, which we have considered that the two natures of Christ during the union retain their individual properties completely, forming apparently a fictitious person, for whom the actions and properties of both are assumed, but who is a new phenomenon, a new reality that in no way coincides with the eternally begotten Son of God. He is only one by nature and there is another who is son of God by “grace”. The nullity of the assumed person is indicated by the analogy, which Theodore draws in his treatise *Against Apollinarius* (book IV) stating that as the soul of human being does not become mortal like his body, and the body does not become immortal like the soul, so God the Word cannot have become actually a human.⁴⁰ Moreover, in the book *On the Incarnation of the Word of God* he mentions the following, “... [Divine Scripture] brings together the properties of the two natures, as if it were speaking of the same [being]...”.⁴¹

³⁹ In ep. ad Coloss., I, 15-16, in: Swete, *Theodori ep. Mopsuesteni*, Vol. 1, pp. 259-260: Οὐκ εἶπεν τοῦ Υἱοῦ, ἀλλὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ· οὐ γὰρ κοινωνοὶ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου γινόμεθα, ἀλλὰ τοῦ ἀναληφθέντος ἀνθρώπου, ᾧ κοινωνοῦμεν τῆς τιμῆς διὰ τὴν φυσικὴν ὁμοιότητα, ὅταν πρὸς αὐτὸν διάθεσιν ἐπὶ τῶν ἔργων ἐπιδειξώμεθα· ὅθεν καὶ Υἱὸν ἀγάπης αὐτὸν ἐκάλεσεν, ὡς οὐ φύσει τοῦ πατρὸς ὄντα υἱόν, ἀλλ’ἀγάπῃ τῆς υιοθεσίας ἀξιωθέντα (PG <τούτων>). The same text in: PG 66, 926D-928A.

⁴⁰ Facundus Herm. Pro defensione, PL 67, 755C-756B. Cf. Commentary on the Nicene Creed. VII, p. 78; X, p. 112.

⁴¹ De incarnatione, X, in: Swete, *Theod. ep. Mops.*, Vol 2, p. 301: [Scriptura divina] ambarum naturarum proprietates in unum conducit, et sicut de uno quodam eloquitur. Lat. in: Facundus Herm. Pro defensione..., in: PL 67, 751D; the same text in: PG 66, 983A.

We also have a passage with similar content in the *Catechetical Homelies*:

„Our blessed Fathers wrote in the Creed something that is in harmony with this. They first taught us about the nature of the Godhead of the Only Begotten, that He is from the Father before all the worlds, that He is born of the nature of the Father and not made, and that He is a true God and consubstantial with God because He is born of His Father. After having taught us these things concerning the divinity of the Only Begotten they proceeded to teach us concerning the Economy of His humanity and said: *Who for us human beings, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, and was made a human like us in order to effect salvation for all the human race. And they taught all those things that happened to the human nature: things through which God wished His Economy to be accomplished on our behalf. And He who was assumed for our salvation bore upon Himself all things affecting humankind, and because worthy of perfection and a source of benefits for us through our communion with Him. They said the above things as of one in conformity with the teaching of the Books; not that human acts were affecting God in His nature, but they referred these human acts to Him because of the close union, so that the high things that happened to Him after the Passion– things that transcend human nature– might be believed, and so that all might accept them when learning that it was Divine nature which put on human being and that by its union with Him he received all this honour and glory*”.⁴²

⁴² *Commentary on the Nicene Creed*, VI, 66-67. Cf. *ibid.*, III, VI, VIII, 37, 42; 64, 65, 66; 90-91.

Having considered all these examples, the main question remains. To what extent is the act of the Incarnation itself real for the bishop of Mopsuestia? Is not this “indwelling” of the Word of God in a chosen human being of whom he speaks correlative with the indwelling in other human beings glorified as saints?

The Fathers of the Fifth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (553) considered that Theodore and the Nestorians called Jesus Christ God the Word only by homonymy and pretended to consider Him as one Person, while in fact they distinguished in Him two persons and two hypostases. In so doing, they quite clearly and unequivocally condemn the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia as substituting some other kind of relationship between divinity and humanity in the history of divine Economy. This different relationship lies in the following concept: in the course of His earthly life the man Jesus grew progressively in virtue because of the indwelling of the Word of God in Him. In this regard He is something more than the Old Testament prophets, yet there is a certain similarity between them and Him⁴³.

The entire movement for the rehabilitation of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius in the 20th century is based on the understanding that these accusations are the product of a misunderstanding of their writings and that both, while in fact using different terminology and criteria in forming the concept of personality/person, confess unquestionably the unity of the person of the Savior and perceive the full reality of the Incarnation of the Word of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, analogies with

⁴³ See Ὅρος πίστεως τῆς ἐν Κων/πόλει πέμπτης Οἰκουμενικῆς Συνόδου. In: Ἰωάννης Καρμίρης, *Τὰ Δογματικά καὶ Συμβολικά Μνημεῖα τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, Τόμος Α', Ἐν Ἀθήναις, 1960², pp. 185-193. Also: δ', ε' ἀναθεματισμοί, in: *ibid.*, pp. 193-194.

the prophets and the apostles are completely inappropriate representing the product of malice or simply a misunderstanding of Antiochian tradition.⁴⁴

However, in respect to the analogy of the indwelling of the Word of God in the prophets and the apostles, the matter turns out to be very complicated. On the one hand, we notice certain similarities in Theodore's language between his concept of Divine inspiration and the indwelling in the savior, but until recently there has been no positive evidence apart from the conciliar documents that he himself created this analogy. In 1996 Gerrit Reinink wrote a paper of a minor hitherto unknown fragment of the treatise *Against the Magicians* of the Bishop of Mopsuestia, which is found in a yet unpublished Syriac manuscript.⁴⁵ This is one of the alleged late writings of the Antiochene teacher and we may therefore expect from it clear positions on important theological-methodological issues.

Shortly after this text that we referred to, the fragment itself was published.⁴⁶ It was identified by Gerrit Reinink in a volume with Christological writings with the title *On the unity* (ܐܢ ܩܕܝܫܘܬܗ). The volume has been edited by Simeon Redipa, a monk of the Abdisho monastery of Qom near the city of Amadiya on the occasion of the arrival of monk George Vashnaya at the monastery,

⁴⁴ Concerning the irrelevance of the thesis of a totally different Antiochian tradition, which is incomparable with the basic tenets of Orthodox Christology see the study of Θ. Ζήσης, Ἡ περὶ τῆς ἀρχηγόνου καταστάσεως τοῦ ἀνθρώπου διδασκαλία τοῦ Θεοδώρου Μοψουεστίας, *Κληρονομία* 3 (1971), pp. 179-193. Cf. Στ. Παπαδόπουλος, Θεόδωρος Μοψουεστίας (π. 352/3-428), *Θεολογία* 75 (2004), p. 560.

⁴⁵ See G. J. Reinink, The Quotations from the lost Works of the Theodoret of Cyrus and Theodore of Mopsuestia in an Unpublished East Syrian Work on Christology, *Studia Patristica* 33 (1996), pp. 562-567.

⁴⁶ G. J. Reinink, A Fragment of Theodore of Mopsuestia's *Contra magos*, *Mus* 110/1-2 (1997), pp. 63-71, and the fragment on 68.

who began to preach the teachings of Origenism.⁴⁷ The volume is dated somewhere in between 1190-1370.⁴⁸

The text of this fragment is indicative of Theodore's view on the Incarnation of the Word of God and fully supports the assessment given by the Fathers of the Fifth Ecumenical Council. The text of the Syriac fragment states the following:

“See, I will bring for you and me this trustworthy testimony, I mean the blessed Interpreter, who, presented for me, the fact that the greatness of the Son,⁴⁹ cannot be expressed in words⁵⁰ – in this book [compiled] for Mastubya,⁵¹ he states: He united with Him to such an extent that He made Him a treasure of thoughts,⁵² by whom the Economy of the whole creation has been accomplished (Cf. Ephesians. 1:11); a treasure, which cannot be degraded nor robbed, and also He [the adopted man] no longer has human thoughts, but only thoughts that originate from Him [Word of God]– divine opinions (ܐܘܨܘܪܝܘܬܝܗ), precisely these, through which He (ܐܘܦ) ⁵³ continually and inexpressibly carries the work of the divine Economy of all things. For this is also happened quickly to those who received divine revelations– that is, whether they were divine prophets or holy apostles– as it also happened to the blessed Peter, when he saw a vessel like a large sheet

⁴⁷ Reinink, *A Fragment of Theodore*, pp. 64-65.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁴⁹ He probably means his affiliation with the Nestorian tradition.

⁵⁰ It is about the “adopted man”, and not about God.

⁵¹ This is the name of the man who commissioned Theodore to write the work *Against the Magi*. See *CSCO 327* (1972), p. 208.

⁵² ܐܘܨܘܪܝܘܬܝܗ “thoughts”, “reflections” or „movements of the will” – Reinink, *A Fragment of Theodore*, 63; cf. Brockelmann, C. *Lexicon Syriacum*, Edinburgh 1928, p. 379b.

⁵³ The pronoun “he” (ܐܘܦ) can refer to God the Word, but also to the “accepted man”. It is more likely to be the latter.

Conclusion

The view so far shared by most scholars that have been involved with Theodor's Christology is that philosophical presuppositions underlie the formation of his views on the division of Christ's person. For example, "for Theodore each hypostasis has its own person. Thus, the perfection of nature presupposes the perfection of the person".⁵⁸

As we saw, however, the perfection of nature is not a prerequisite here but a consequence of the specific understanding of salvation, according to Theodore, which requires that Adam's path be followed again by the New Adam, who is also human, changeable, subject to passions and death, and who overcomes them as a human in order to attain perfection, and, accordingly, to deepen his (volitional) relationship with God. God is not being involved hypostatically into this process, but rather gives moral support to this person by His power and inspiration, protecting him from alterations of will and sins, by giving him also spiritual support. God also informs this person about future goods, which in some measure also apply to the sacraments of the Church. This in turn strengthens his hope and endows him with more strength in the struggle against sin.

The Christological model created by Theodore of Mopsuestia actually presents a distinct eternally predestinated righteous man, in whom the Word of God dwells by grace in the form of a continuous and deepening inspiring presence in his thoughts and will. Christ represents God the Word in the world as his visible image, inasmuch as He restores the lost moral image because of

⁵⁸ Χρ. Σταμούλης, *Ἀνθρώπινη φύση τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἁμαρτία στοὺς Ἀντιοχειανούς θεολόγους τοῦ 5^{ου} αἰ. Συμβολὴ στὴ μελέτη τοῦ Θεοδώρου Μοψουεστίας, τοῦ Νεστορίου καὶ τοῦ Βασιλείου Σελευκείας*, in: *Πρακτικὰ τοῦ ΙΑ' Θεολογικοῦ Συνεδρίου πρὸς τιμὴν τοῦ Παμβασιλέως Χριστοῦ*, Θεσσαλονίκη 1991, p. 572.

first Adam's violation, who had been called to that role but did not fulfill it.

The understanding of the indwelling of the Word of God in the Anointed One, i.e. Christ, as a state of Divine Inspiration, though in an immeasurably higher degree than that of the prophets and apostles, combined with the concept of gradual development of the Savior to full union in will, action and thought with the Word of God following Resurrection, leads to a conclusion. This conclusion invalidates all theories created by Theodore that in the image of Christ may be observed, on the one hand, an actual individuality in which the Word of God and human nature are united, and, on the other hand that this individual person possesses both a divine and a human will. On the contrary, in Theodore's thought, the will of Christ, like every other human will is consolidated gradually, in its path of moral perfection, until finally, after the Resurrection, it becomes unified with the divine will, and finally reaches a completeness, where it is not distinct at all from this divine will. This however reminds us, curious it may sound, the Monothelitic concept of one will and one action in the Lord Jesus Christ, a theory that would be condemned as heretical in the 6th Ecumenical Council of Constantinople. Consequently, the basic theological resolutions of Theodore of Mopsuestia are based on a methodology involving a specific understanding of divine inspiration, which provides the directions for the relationship between God and human being on the cosmological as well as on the Christological and soteriological level.

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