THE LAMB OF GOD

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CHAPTER 3

The Incarnation

I. God and the World

God created the world by a single act (the "Six Days"), implanting in it the power of being forever. God's creative word resounds for all time. God "laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever" (Ps. 104:5). The world is real with the reality of God, for God's power sustains it. And the world is real not only for itself but also for God Himself. God does not repent of His works, "for he is not a man, that he should repent" (1 Sam. 15:29). But the reality of the world implies a real density of time, in which *becoming* occurs. Scripture represents God as living in time together with the world and with man and as acting in the *history* of the world.

God's self-positing in time, His going out from eternity into time, is an unfathomable mystery of His life; all we can do is accept this mystery reverently and with faith, as a given of our religious consciousness. Nourished by revelation, our religious thought arrives at this mystery and stops in awe before it. Our religious thought dares not doubt the eternity of God or the reality of time; it does not transform time into a subjective illusion. To recognize that God lives together with the world in time is to recognize that He is the Creator and God of the world, which is real in eternity and created for eternity, although it is becoming in time. Although at its end the spiral of time will be woven into a point, it will not thereby lose reality; the time that has passed will not become an illusion. God's life in eternity, in its fullness and unchangeability, in its nontemporality and supratemporality, transcends the world's being and time. But it is precisely out of the depths of this absolute life that the Ab-

solute posits itself as God and turns its face to the world created by God while *simultaneously* (as man would like to say in his own language) remaining in its absoluteness. But there is no simultaneity here as a correlation in time, in its movement: the one moves while the other remains immobile. In its life, the Absolute is not conceived in time; it is not "simultaneous" with time but is deeper and higher than it. But the Absolute becomes correlative with time once time arises, because even if eternity does not intrinsically need time, time for its reality necessarily postulates eternity. It is "serious" time, not empty time, that thirsts for eternity; and this thirst is already possession. For God, *nothing new* occurs in time in relation to His eternity (which removes the chief difficulty that arises when one hypothesizes the existence of time for God). Even in time God lives by His proper eternity; He just has it a different way.

But as the Creator, God lives not only *in* Himself but also *outside* Himself; that is, He has a relation with the extradivine world, the reality of whose being is temporal becoming. This temporality becomes real for God too, insofar as He lives with the world. For the world each atom of time brings something new, something that has not existed before in the becoming of the world; but for God the flow of time does not and cannot bring anything new, anything that has not already existed in God, since God is "rich" with eternity, and time is totally transparent for eternity. For God in relation to the world, the only novelty time contains is its novelty for the world, insofar as God lives with the world. God is not alone in His absoluteness; rather, He exists together with the world, in *interbeing* and in *interaction* with it. Can the relation of God to the world be understood only as interbeing *without* interaction, in such a way that the world and God are mutually neutral? According to deism, the world resembles a mechanism that has been set in motion once and for all by an artful mechanic and no longer needs repair, so that the relation of God to the world is exhausted by the act of the creation of the world. Nothing contradicts both revelation and the rational understanding more than this theory. First and foremost, the comparison itself is faulty. The creation of the world is not a single act that exhausts itself in a moment of time; rather, it is an act continuing for all eternity. It is the continuing creative relation of God to the world, an *interrelation*. The conception that God-Love is only an artful mechanic who has forgotten about His creation is moral nonsense. God created the world, not to discard it the way a child discards a toy he is tired of, but to love it as His other, to have friends for Himself in the sons of the world (John 15:15), to live with them; for will God forget His creation? Deism is therefore a form of atheism; furthermore, it is an atheism of the worst and

most blasphemous kind, for without denying the existence of the Supreme Being, it in fact blasphemes this Being. Nevertheless, deism does pose a legitimate theme or, rather, question: How is one to understand the autonomous being of the world alongside God? How is the autonomous being of the world preserved in the face of God's absoluteness?

An inequality exists in the relation of God with the world that makes the very possibility of this relation questionable. Can one really understand this relation as an interaction? And what is the nature of this possibility? If it is not the relation of a mechanic to a mechanism, is it not the relation of an absolute despot to a trembling creature? That is, is it not an attitude of arbitrariness that in relation to the creature appears to be predestination? Can this relation be expressed in another way? Are not all other attempts to moderate this radicalism of Calvinism or Islam only indecisive and inconsistent compromises? Can one really understand the interrelation of God and the world as interaction or, according to the Orthodox definition, as "synergism"? Catholic scholasticism attempts to avoid the iron logic of Calvinism (and Jansenism) by means of artificial constructions (the foremost of which is, of course, Molinism) in order to find a place for synergy and rescue the world from the all-engulfing power of the Absolute. But this scholasticism does not know any objective foundations within the world itself that could guarantee its autonomous being in relation to the Creator.

In its being, the world is a creation of God; it is posited by the creative "let there be." But in its content, the world is not an arbitrary invention, a caprice of the Absolute, as it is considered to be by systems of religious determinism or predestination. Instead, it has a divine foundation and a divine content; it contains a certain divine reality. This reality is the Divine Sophia, whose image is precisely the foundation of the world, the creaturely Sophia. In other words, the world contains something divine for God as well, as His self-revelation. The world is therefore not accidental or arbitrary in its existence but has in itself "sufficient grounds" for its being, grounds that, in their divinity, are indestructible even for the Creator. The interaction of God with the world is based on the interrelation of the Divine Sophia and the creaturely Sophia. The world is created, but it is not only created, for in its *proto-image,* in its idea, it is not created at all but exists from all eternity in God as His Divine world in the Divine Wisdom, as the word of His Word and as the breath of His Spirit.

However, if we thus elevate the world in its ontological foundation, does this not irrefutably confirm deism's conclusion that there is no interaction between God and world, since the world is not only a perfect

mechanism but even more than a mechanism, namely the Divine Wisdom in a creaturely form? Is not such a world self-sufficient? Does it admit any action upon itself, and does it need such action? This doubt is easily dissipated if we direct our attention to the actual image of the world. Yes, the world is the creaturely Sophia, who has her foundation in the image of the Divine Sophia; but being creaturely, the world is still only in the process of becoming. As a result, in its being, the world is and is not the creaturely Sophia. In the world the nonbeing, or "nothing," out of which it is created has received the seeds of the Divine Sophia, but they have not yet sprouted. In the autonomous being of the world, a *process* is taking place in which the "nothing," raising its head after being fructified by the creative force and receiving being, does not easily or immediately assimilate its content but even resists it. Although the world was created in its fullness and perfection ("it was good"), in its present state it is not yet finished. It is called to assimilate and cultivate the seeds of being in itself, to become the image of the Divine Sophia. The world left the hands of the Creator not only as a finished given but also as an unfinished *task* that must be accomplished in the world process. The world was supposed to follow the path of its completion under the guidance of man — in and with man. But man stumbled in his vocation and fell, which made the world process infinitely more complicated and arduous. Thus, although the world cannot be destroyed in its sophianic foundation, in its unfinished state it needs divine assistance and government to become complete. The world, therefore, cannot be abandoned by God to its own fate but needs His assistance, which is usually called Divine Providence. The very being of the world includes becoming, and even *self*-becoming, for the world itself must realize its sophianicity in man.

But Divine Providence is not a new creation of the world, since the world is already created. Nor is it a transformation of the world on a new basis, necessitated by the supposed failure of the first creation. All fullness was placed into the world at its creation, and there can be no new foundations for it. Thus, in providentially governing the world, God leaves inviolate its autonomous being; He helps the world only in its becoming, in which it is not finished. The world is too unstable in itself to be able to dispense with this assistance. However, this assistance is not realized through outside interference in the life of the world, nor is it realized by virtue of the divine omnipotence or by cosmic miracles. It can be realized only from inside the world itself, by an action upon its laws through the freedom of created beings. God acts upon the natural world through angels, who protect it and direct it (as is clearly shown in Revela-

tion), whereas upon the human world (and through it upon the natural world) God acts through the human soul, through its freedom, which contains diverse possibilities. In the most general sense, this action can be defined as *grace*, in which man is acted upon by divine thought and will, thereby bringing his will and activity into conformity with God's thought.

This interaction of God with the world, this unceasing communication of God's grace to the world, expresses God's love for creation as well as His condescension. In providentially governing the world, God really enters into its temporality; this intrusion of God into the life of the world is, in itself, an unceasing creative activity, although it is not a creation out of nothing but an *interaction*.

If the time of the world is real for God, what is its relation to God's omniscience? Does this not contradict His omniscience? But omniscience should not be understood anthropomorphically, as knowledge of all the parts of being in time and in space, that is, as knowledge of being as multiplicity. The world is present before God as all-unity, as the connection of all with all, not in the predeterminedness of events, but in the general connectedness or determination (and in this sense predeterminedness) of the *whole*. This "predeterminedness" of the world is its sophianicity: Established on the basis of Sophia, the world is to become Sophia. That is the ontological law of its being and, in this sense, its predetermined necessity. The world is created for the fullness of its being; there is no other being, and all its elements are given from the beginning. But this general predeterminedness, which comprises the given and the task to be accomplished, does not extend to becoming, in which creaturely freedom participates. Here, for time, there is no predeterminedness; God, in His providential government of the world, responds with His salvific action to all the questions of the world's being, questions represented by every act of creaturely freedom. Creaturely freedom is as real as the world, for this freedom is the image of the world's becoming; it is established by God as the condition for the realization of the world's sophianicity.

For this reason, the lawlike regularity of the world's being, despite the unity and predeterminedness of its foundation as entelechy, implies an infinite series of possibilities of realization. The Spinoza-Kant theory (according to which the lawlike regularity of the world is comparable to the motion of a flying arrow or a solar eclipse, or in general to an astronomical phenomenon) does not conform in any way to the concrete reality. Of course, when realized, all the self-determinations and acts of freedom become part of the chain of cosmic causality; they are immanent to this

chain. But causality itself, through freedom, is a variable principle on the pathways of cosmic regularity. However negligibly small these variations might be, they do not allow it to be a purely mechanical regularity. It is precisely at the point of the freedom of the creaturely world — that is, in man — that God's grace, God's Providence, acts, straightening out and correcting the curve of the world by Divine wisdom without destroying or violating the life of this world. The world is never merely immanent to itself, or self-enclosed; it is always open to divine action, which is accomplished within the limits of the world and leads it to the good goal. The world cannot resist this action — not because of God's creative omnipotence, which He does not apply to the already created world, but because of His reason, which, in man, reveals to the world its proper path, its proper sophianic law. Divine Providence acts upon the world within the limits of the variations of its free creative causality, which contains an infinite series of possibilities, and Providence chooses the best possibility for each given case. God never leaves the world He created without providential government, but at the same time He observes the proper laws of the world. The relation of God to the world is therefore defined as an interaction. These actions are sometimes described in anthropomorphic images. (For example, in the story of the Deluge, God says of Himself: "I [will] bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh. . . . I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights . . . and God made a wind to pass over the earth" [Gen. 6:17; 7:4; 8:1].) These images must be understood, however, not in the sense of new creative acts of God, but in the sense of His providential action upon the elements obedient to Him, though within the limits of the life of the world. The idea expressed here is precisely that of the interaction between God and the world, on the basis of which Divine Providence acts in the world. For God knows His creation and all its paths; He established the law of its being. In virtue of this law, despite all the variations of creaturely freedom and of Divine providential government, the world is realizing its entelechic goal, its sophianic becoming, for which it was created by God in the image of the Divine world.[1]

1. This relationship between variations of the cosmic lawlike regularity and the fundamental path of this regularity can be likened (but not more than likened) to a statistical mean, expressing the regularity of a series, given all its variations. It is precisely in this manner (indeterministically, not deterministically) that the world's lawlike regularity must be conceived, and scientific thought is now arriving at such a conception. This results in prophecy's simultaneous unconditionality (with respect to the fundamental goal) and conditionality (with respect to the means of attaining it). See, for example, Jeremiah 18:7-10.

The world therefore cannot contain in itself any being other than that which was predestined for it at its creation (just as man "by taking thought" cannot "add one cubit unto his stature" [Matt. 6:27]). But the world can and must contain the *entire* fullness of this being. We would erroneously understand the relation between God and the world, however, if we defined it only as the action of God in the natural world, assuming the natural world to be self-enclosed and self-sufficient (i.e., postulating total cosmic immanence). This would still be a form of deism. Such a self-enclosed cosmism is the aspiration of the false "prince of this world," who desires to ravish the world for himself and become its pseudo-god. But not only is the world not self-enclosed; it is predestined — given the absolute inviolability of its proper being as world and creature — to communion and union with God, to the point where "God will be all in all," that is, to the point of the total deification of the creature. God created the world, not only for His self-revelation in it, not only for the manifestation of the Divine Sophia in the creaturely Sophia, but also for personal spiritual communion with it through human beings and angels. The world has a composite structure, for in its created substance it contains divinely uncreated human and angelic spirits; God Himself descends into the world through them. In the human spirit, the world is open for divine grace, inspiration, and life. In this general sense, the world is already divine-human in its foundation. Divine life and creaturely life are united and identified at this point of the world's being, and rays of the deification of the world emanate from there. A personal meeting with God takes place in creation through the human soul; God's self-revelation is accomplished. The direct action of God takes place, and it is supramundane, supracreaturely, and free of the immanent laws of the world.

This action of God is *grace*. In the human monad, windows are open into eternity, into the heavens, for this monad is the image of God. There is therefore in man (and through him in the world) a double life, a double process. This deification of man is not an act of ontological coercion over him, for in his being he has the image of God and even is the image of God. It is natural for this image to identify itself, in an asymptotic approach, with the Proto-Image, without ever merging with it. This is the postulate of man's being and, in him, of all creaturely being, for man is the high priest of all creation. The divine-human foundation of creation is herein expressed. God created the entire world in its fullness and beauty, but only man did He create for communion with Himself. If we liken creation and the Creator to clay and the potter, we can say that both man and the last blade of grass in creation are separated from their Cre-

ator by the same abyss. From this point of view it might appear that, in virtue of His power in the world, God could as readily choose Balaam's ass for communion with Himself (or as the instrument of His will) as the prophet himself (see Numbers 22–24). However, even though man is immeasurably far from God, as all creatures are from their Creator, only man in the world (and only through him the world itself) is close to God as His image. Only man is predestined to be the son of God and the friend of God. It is through man that divine life enters into the world.

The history of humanity therefore *begins* with direct communion with God: In the figurative language of the Bible, God comes into the garden "in the cool of the day" (Gen. 3:8) in order to converse with man, and the judgment pronounced upon fallen man is depicted as a conversation with God. The memory of paradise, the rays of the initial divine revelation, is preserved even in fallen man in so-called natural revelation. Even though fallen man became a cosmic being by losing direct communion with God, the image of God in him nevertheless makes him a religious being; even in his natural state he is not deprived of a certain consciousness and knowledge of God. Even the frenzied atheism of our day bears negative witness to this: man desires to destroy in himself that which is indestructible.

After being expelled from paradise and deprived of direct communion with God, humanity *seeks* God – in itself and in the world. Humanity finds Him in a sophianic image, but the human spirit cannot be satisfied solely with the sophianicity of nature, which bears the imprint of the spirit, its revelation, but not the spirit itself. This is because nature lacks a soul. Man, condemned to the merely natural veneration of God, is therefore led by the force of things to pagan naturalism: the natural elements of the animal and material world are taken to be deities only because, in their sophianicity, they are revelations about God. Likewise man, as the image of God, in the fullness of his powers but also in his damaged fallen essence, becomes a god for man. On the one hand, therefore, fallen humanity has, in its sophianicity, a natural revelation about God; but on the other hand, it almost inevitably falls into religious aberrations, given its inability to distinguish the divine from the creaturely, and even from the sinfully creaturely. This desire of man to ascend above the world, to overcome cosmism, is touching; but his impotence to realize this desire is tragic.

If, however, paganism did not possess the *direct* revelation of God, God's word, does this mean that it was completely deprived of the breath of the Spirit of God, which "bloweth where it listeth"? There are neither biblical nor theological grounds for a negative answer to this question.

The Apostle Paul says of the pagans, "That which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them" (Rom. 1:19). These words attest to more than just the revelation of God through the examination of creation (Rom. 1:20). They also attest to a certain active manifestation that can be understood as a particular religious inspiration, the breath of the Holy Spirit. No dogmatic grounds can be adduced to deny this. On the contrary, it is impossible to admit such an exclusion of the whole of humanity from all grace, for, according to the Apostle Peter, "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted [by] Him" (Acts 10:34-35).[2] Nor does such an exclusion conform with the Church's recognition that there were pagan "Christians before Christ," that there was a "pagan" church, although it was "barren." Paganism is therefore not only a history of religious errors but also a positive religious process that has its revelations. But all these revelations belong to the realm of the Divine Sophia, who reveals herself in the world; they refer not to the hypostasis but to the hypostatizedness of God. They are cosmic and religiously immanent, for they contain neither the *personal* encounter between God and man nor God's *personal* revelation about Himself. Such revelation is already the action of God in man.

Revealed religion is conditioned by the *personal* action of God in man, as if in a return to that Edenic state where God conversed with man, and man was capable of hearing God and withstanding His burning proximity, the *pati Deum*. However great man's fall might have been in the sense of the weakening of his spirituality and the corresponding corruption of his nature, the image of God, as the foundation of communion with Him, was indestructibly preserved in him. And more than anything else, the very fact of revelation attests to this indestructibility. God reveals Himself to man "at sundry times and in divers manners" (Heb. 1:1), and this entire revelation is reducible to two forms: God *speaks* to man, and He *inspires* him. God is revealed to man as the word of God and the action of the Spirit. This refers to the content of revelation, which is clothed in humanly accessible forms of divine action: signs. On the pathways of God's

2. The pagans are guilty only of the fact that, having gained knowledge of God, they did not glorify Him as God but complicated this knowledge and "became vain in their imaginations" (Rom. 1:21) as a consequence of the delusions of their fallen essence. They sinned before the Divine Sophia, for they "changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image" (1:23) resembling man and animals. That is, they did not distinguish the Glory of God, the Divine Sophia, from the creaturely Sophia, fallen in man.

providential government, this revelation is not universal but limited. The chosen nation, the small island of salvation, is raised from out of the depths of the pagan sea, and in a land overgrown with weeds and tares the Lord establishes and protects His vineyard. He creates the Old Testament church in order to live in *personal* communion and revelation with it.

God speaks with man in the person of the patriarchs, who are pleasing to Him (Noah, Abraham, and others), as well as with the prophet Moses. God reveals Himself to man, shows him palpable signs of His presence in theophanies, gives him the law, and institutes divine worship. He directs the course of history of the chosen nation, making it the *sacred* history of the education of this nation, designed to serve the economy of salvation. We do not need to consider here the particular elements of this history, but we cannot escape the question: *Who* was the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob"? *Who* appeared to Moses in the Burning Bush and gave the law on Sinai with the assistance of the angels?[3] Providence, as well as the creation of the world, is the work of the entire Holy Trinity; each of the hypostases, however, acts in a particular and different way. The opinion that the God revealed in the Old Testament is the Logos acting in the world prior to His Incarnation is widespread in the patristic literature. (This opinion is clearly incompatible with the suspect schema according to which the Old Testament is the revelation of the Father, just as the New Testament is the revelation of the Son.) In the Holy Trinity, the Father is the revealed hypostasis, not a revealing hypostasis, and He is revealed in the Son. Even in the New Testament, the Father is revealed in the Son while remaining transcendent in relation to the world, not manifesting Himself in it. And this transcendental character of the Father in relation to creation is even more salient in the Old Testament. If the Father creates the world by His Word, He also provides for it and reveals Himself to it through this same Word. The direct divine subject of the Old Testament is therefore the same as that of the New Testament: the Second hypostasis, the Logos. He is the demiurgic hypostasis *par excellence,* and the economy of salvation belongs to Him. Furthermore, the Old Testament revelation of God to man, being divine in its source and content, was also human, because otherwise it could not have been received by man and would have remained transcendent for him. In other words, this revelation was already *divine-human:* the divine-humanity of the Word anticipates here the hypostatic manifestation of the Logos.

However, the revelation of the Word in the Holy Trinity is accomplished in bi-unity with the revelation of the Holy Spirit, who reposes upon the Word. Therefore, the Old Testament revelation could not remain only a revelation of the Word (i.e., only a doctrine). It had to be accompanied by the direct, accomplishing action of the Holy Spirit, by His inspiration. We know in fact that the Holy Spirit had manifested His action in various gifts and that He "spoke by the prophets" (according to the Creed) in the Old Testament. The revelation of the Word in man never was and never could be a mechanical communication from outside, as if it were a dictation. It could only be an inspiration. The Spirit therefore descended upon the prophets who spoke the Word of God, and in their inspiration they gave utterance to Him. One can even say that the inspiration of the Spirit preceded and was the condition for the revelation of the Word. This corresponds to the fact that, in the Holy Trinity, the Spirit reposes upon the Son and manifests the Son. However, this order is naturally reversed in creaturely revelation: first the Spirit for the reception of the Word, and then the Word. This is sometimes directly indicated in the prophetic books: "The spirit entered into me . . . [and] I heard [the Lord] that spake unto me" (Ezek. 2:2). But even when this is not directly indicated, it is implied. If he is not overshadowed by the Spirit of God, man cannot see and hear God. The God of the Old Testament is thus the revelation of the Holy Trinity, of the Father *through* the Son and the Holy Spirit.[4] It is only through these hypostases that we have the mysterious revelation of the Father in a divine-human aspect, that is, in an aspect conforming with that of the Son. We see this in the prophet Daniel, in the vision of "the Ancient of days," to whom the Son of Man is brought (Dan. 7:13), as well as in the appearance of the three angels (which, however, certain fathers of the Church understand as the appearance of the Logos with two angels). The Holy Spirit is not revealed in the Old Testament as a hypostasis, as the Divine I; in the personal Yahweh the Holy Trinity manifests itself by the hypostasis of the Logos.

In the Old Testament we have not only the hypostatic revelation of the Logos and the grace-bestowing revelation of the Holy Spirit but also the revelation of the Divine Sophia. We see this in the appearance of the Glory of God to Moses, to Ezekiel, and to Isaiah, as well as in the direct revelation about Wisdom in Proverbs 8–9, Job 28, and the Wisdom of Solomon 7. The Glory of God is the Heavenly Wisdom in the image of which

3. This question is considered by Augustine in *De Trinitate,* book 2.

4. Cf. 1 Peter 1:11-12, which speaks of the revelation in the prophets by the Spirit of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Also cf. 1 Cor. 2:10-13, 16, which speaks not only of the revelation by the Holy Spirit but also of "the mind of Christ" given to the Apostle.

the human world is created; the Glory is therefore human and can be encompassed in the revelation to man. (For this reason, the apostles could see the Glory in the Transfiguration of the Lord.) But Wisdom-Glory is not only human; it is also heavenly humanity itself, and it is in this human character that it is revealed in the Old Testament. The image of man participates precisely in the manifestation of the Glory in Ezekiel's vision (1:26): "Upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it." This manifestation of the humanity of the Glory is also that of the Heavenly Adam, the Son of God, the Son of Man, the God-Man, the coming Christ. This image is fully incorporated in the prophet Daniel's vision of the Son of Man being brought to the Ancient of days (Dan. 7:13). This is the Old Testament Gospel about the God-Man, although it does anticipate His New Testament name, the Son of Man, which Christ applied to Himself on earth. Here in Daniel He is seen in heaven: "one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven." And Christ Himself, in His conversation with Nicodemus, confirms this connection of heaven and earth in the Son of Man: "no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13). Along with this direct revelation about man's divine-humanity, the Old Testament is also full of indirect revelations, in the form of prefigurings and prophecies that are explained only in the New Testament. Such, above all, is the tabernacle, with all its institutions (as explained in Hebrews 9); but there are also many other examples of persons, events, and symbols.

II. The Foundations of the Incarnation

According to the direct testimony of Scripture, the coming of Christ into the world, the Incarnation, is predetermined before the creation of the world. That is, it is included in God's pre-eternal plan for the world, in His counsel concerning the world. Christ is the "lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was made manifest in these last times for [us]" (1 Pet. 1:19-20). Thus was manifested "the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory" (1 Cor. 2:7). In Christ, God "hath chosen us . . . before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4); He "predestinated us unto the adoption . . . by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (1:5-

6). God thus makes "known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth" (1:9-10). And this is "the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the pre-eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (3:9-11). In this sense Revelation calls the Lord Jesus "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" (22:13; see also 1:8, 11, 17; 2:8). God's pre-eternal design manifested His love for creation, which did not stop at the creation but went beyond it; as the act of the new creation of the world, it determined the descent into the world of God Himself, that is, the Incarnation. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son . . . that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:16-17). "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. . . . We love him [God], because he first loved us" (1 John 4:9, 19).

These texts make clear that the coming of the Son into the world is not only an act of God's *providential* government of the world, an act proceeding from God's interaction with the world. It is also God's primordial grace, existing before the creation of the world, that is, constituting the very foundation and goal of the world. One can even say that God created the world in order to become incarnate in it, that He created it for the sake of His Incarnation. The Incarnation is not only the means to the redemption; it is also the supreme crowning of the world, even in comparison with its creation. In the Incarnation, God showed His love for creation.

The most general and preliminary question that arises here is whether the Incarnation is only the means to the redemption and the reconciliation of God with man, that is, whether in this sense it is a consequence of the Fall ("O happy guilt of Adam!"), a soteriological act, or whether in a certain sense it is independent of soteriology and is an act predetermined in itself. That is how this question is usually posed in theology and in patristics, and it is answered in both ways, although the soteriological interpretation of the Incarnation predominates (especially in patristics).

Apart from the texts presented above, the Incarnation is also often represented in Holy Scripture as the salvation of man from sin by the Lamb of God's sacrificially taking upon Himself the sins of the world. This

corresponds to the real and concrete accomplishment of the Incarnation "for us men and for our salvation." But the first half of this formula of the Nicene Creed, "for us men," has a more general meaning than its particular application in the second half, "for our salvation." Furthermore, the texts presented above indicate not the immediate, redemptive goal of the Incarnation but its final and universal goal: the goal of uniting all heavenly and earthly things under Christ. In the juxtaposition of these two goals, there is no either/or; there is only both/and. More precisely, the soteriological problem is included in the eschatological one, as the means in the goal: the redemption is the path to "our glory." Therefore, perhaps the best way to answer the question of whether the Incarnation could have occurred without the Fall is to reject the question itself as a *casus irrealis,* or as an inappropriate anthropomorphism in relation to the works of God.

The Incarnation was accomplished in all its significance as it was pre-eternally established in God's counsel, but it was accomplished for the sake of fallen humanity. As a result of the Fall, the Incarnation was, first of all, the means to salvation and redemption. It preserved the totality of its significance beyond the limits of redemption, however, for the Incarnation is not exhausted by redemption. The *casus irrealis* here consists in supposing that, if man had not sinned, God could have left Himself unincarnate. The Incarnation is thus made dependent on man, and in particular on his fall, on original sin, and, in the final analysis, even on the serpent. But the testimonies of Scripture cited above indicate that, to the contrary, the mystery of the Incarnation was decided "before the foundation of the world"; that is, it expresses the most fundamental and determining relation of God to the world and not only to a particular event in the life of the world, even if an event that is of capital importance for us. The world did not use man's fall to compel God to make Himself incarnate. (For how could the world compel God to do anything?) Rather, God created the world for the Incarnation. Concretely, however, the Incarnation was accomplished precisely as redemption, and it must also be understood as such. God's *foreknowledge* is often invoked in this connection: It is ascribed to Him that He knew in advance that man would fall, and He thus included the Incarnation in His plan for the world before its creation. Such a hypothesis is not ontological but anthropomorphic. And the anthropomorphic character of this theory is intensified by supposing that God could have saved man by means other than the Incarnation. This theory attributes to God a humanlike choice between different means and possibilities. The only thing indisputable is that, in its creatureliness, the creaturely world contained the possibility of the Fall.

But God nevertheless decided to create the world, which in its freedom contained the *possibility* of falling away from Him. As a response to this possibility, God supra-eternally made His determination concerning the Lamb of God, sacrificed before the foundation of the world; consequently, He made this determination, to a certain degree, independently of whether this possibility would become a reality. God, so to speak, took upon Himself in advance the responsibility for the possible fall of man, who was subject to change because of his creatureliness. This would result only in the possibility of the Fall, however, not in its predeterminedness, which would shift to the Creator the responsibility for the fall of the creature. But if this possibility is not a necessity, which would be equivalent to the necessity of the Incarnation decided by Divine counsel, one must acknowledge that the Incarnation expresses a relation of God to the world more general than only redemption (although it does in fact also signify redemption).

It is therefore necessary, first of all, to examine the Incarnation with reference to its *general* ontological foundations. In what does the inexorable predeterminedness of the Incarnation consist? Its predeterminedness follows from the general relation of God to the world, which is the outward outpouring of His love for creation. This love, whose nature is sacrifice, renounces itself for the world, not only in that it posits the being of the world *alongside* God, making God correlative to the world, and not only in that God creates the world in man in His image (and that, in virtue of this conformity, the Divine Sophia is revealed in the world), but also in that God as Person enters into *personal* communion with man. God wants to communicate His divine life to the world and to make His abode in the world; He wants to become man in order to make man god. This surpasses the limits of all human imagination and audacity; this is the mystery of God's love, "which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God" (Eph. 3:9), a mystery that even the angels do not know (see Eph. 3:10; 1 Pet. 1:12; 1 Tim. 3:16). There is no limit to God's love, and it cannot fail to reach its culmination in the fullness of God's self-renunciation for the world, that is, in the Incarnation. And if the very being of the world, in its creatureliness called out of nonbeing, is not an obstacle here, its *fallen* state is not an obstacle either. God comes even into the fallen world; God's love is repulsed neither by the infirmity of the creature nor by its fallen image. He is not repulsed by the sinfulness of the world but condescends to the point of taking upon Himself its sins: The Lamb of God, who takes upon Himself the sins of the world, comes into the world. God thus gives everything for the deification of the world and

its salvation; there is nothing that is not given. Such is God's love; such is love. Such is love in the intratrinitarian life, in the mutual giving of the three hypostases; such is love in the relation of God to the world.

If we understand the Incarnation in *this* way, which is how Christ teaches us to understand it (see John 3:17), then there is no reason to ask whether the Incarnation would have occurred if the Fall had not taken place. The greater includes the lesser; that which follows presupposes that which precedes; the concrete contains the general. God's love for *fallen* man, which is so great that He even assumes Adam's fallen essence, certainly already includes love for the uncorrupted man. This is expressed in the wisdom of the brief words of the Nicene Creed: "for us men and for our salvation." This "and," in all the diversity and generality of its meaning, contains the theology of the Incarnation. Precisely this "and" can be understood in the sense of identification (in the sense of "that is"). It is understood in this way by those who consider *salvation* to be the foundation of the Incarnation, and this is in fact what it concretely means for fallen man. But the "and" can also be understood as a differentiating element (as in the phrase "and in particular"), in which case it separates the general from the particular; that is, it does not limit the power of the Incarnation to redemption alone. "The Word was made flesh" (John 1:14) must be understood in the totality of its content: it must be understood theologically, cosmically, anthropologically, christologically, and soteriologically. Soteriology, being the most concrete of these, does not exclude but includes all the others; for this reason, it is erroneous to limit the theology of the Incarnation to soteriology. It is even impossible to so limit it, as the history of dogma attests.

The Incarnation presupposes the presence of "flesh," that is, of the creaturely world and of man in it, in all his indestructibility. In the Incarnation, God does not create the world out of nothing by His omnipotence but has before Himself the image of the world that He has called into being. Being the new Divine act in the world, the Incarnation does not represent an ontological coercion over the world, a coercion that God's love could not admit. The Incarnation is the revelation of the image of God in creation, which is ready to meet the descending Divinity. God cannot become incarnate in or be united with just any creature: Angels, animals, minerals, or things cannot encompass Divinity, despite all the limitlessness of God's omnipotence, which is silent here. The Incarnation is an act of God not *upon* the world but *in* the world. This act has not one but two aspects: The world, in the person of man, receives God; and God seeks this reception. The limitlessness of God's self-renunciation, His self-

humiliation before the creature, reaches the point where the Incarnation itself depends, not only on God, who desires it in His love for the creature, but also on the creature itself, in its nature as well as in its freedom. The creature must be capable of and worthy of receiving God; it must desire Him by its will (the "two wills" in the divine-humanity, even prior to the Incarnation).

The Incarnation is the inner foundation of creation, its *entelechy*. God did not create the world to keep it from Himself at the insurmountable metaphysical distance that separates the Creator from creation. He created it in order to surmount this distance and to become perfectly united with the world, not only externally, as Creator and even Provider, but also inwardly: "the Word was made flesh." Therefore, the Incarnation is pre-inscribed in man.

The image of Divine-Humanity in man is imprinted in his entire psycho-corporeal organism. By his body man belongs to the creaturely world, which he, as microcosm, has in himself and unifies and generalizes. In his soul, animal man lives the life of this world, which also lives in him. The soul is the creaturely principle in man, which unites him with the entire animal world, that is, with the entire world that lives the life of this world. To be sure, the soul of man has reached the highest degree of the development of the world compared to the degrees of development attained by the souls of the various animals. The soul of man is "rational"; it possesses the faculties man needs in order to live in this world: the lower reason, which, in the wakeful human state, makes up for the absence of the instincts that are proper to animals and constitute their supra-animal wisdom. The fleshly, or "natural," man, in the capacity of a higher animal, possesses all the faculties needed for life in this world. There is a natural wisdom that "descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish" (James 3:15); and there are thus those who are "sensual, having not the Spirit" (Jude 19), about whom it is said that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:14). However, if in its bad application this natural or sensual element represents hostile negation of and antagonism to the spirituality proper to man, in its normal relation it represents the foundation and possibility of spiritual life; in this sense it is said about man: "that [is] not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual" (1 Cor. 15:46). When this natural element in man occupies its legitimate, hierarchical relation to the spirit, for which it is the pedestal, it represents in him the life of the world. But just as the creaturely world is created in the image of the divine world and is thus the creaturely Sophia, so the sophianicity of man is re-

vealed, in this sense, in man's psycho-corporeal organism, through which his life is identified with the life of the world. Of all the creaturely forms of sophianicity, only man represents its full realization: In his relation to the world, man, as a microcosm, is the creaturely Sophia, and as such, he bears the image of God; for just as God *has* the Divine Sophia or the Divine world, so man too has her in himself, as the image of the entire creaturely world.

The image of God in man, however, manifested in its relation to the world, would be imperfect and even totally distorted if this sophianicity were expressed only in man's natural animalness. For, having being in God *according to herself* as the Divine world, the Divine Sophia is eternally hypostatized in belonging to the trihypostatic Divine Spirit. Spirit is the *unity* of hypostasis and nature, and Sophia is the nature of the Divine Spirit. As such, she is inseparable from the Spirit and belongs to it: she is not self-sufficient. In man as the image of God there is a relation that corresponds to this relation of the Divine Sophia to the hypostatic spirit. According to his creation, which establishes the normal hierarchy of soul and spirit, man has in his soul a dwelling for his uncreated-created, originally divine, and therefore immortal hypostatic spirit; in this sense he himself is an incarnate spirit or spiritualized flesh. In the normal relation that is preestablished for man at his creation, the spirit is the governing principle, the master of the "flesh." Man deviated from this norm in his fall by first immersing himself in the psychical element and then in the corporeal element. This relation, which is normal for man, is restored by the Second Adam, Christ, the spiritual man. "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul [see Gen. 2:7]; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual" (1 Cor. 15:44-46). The Second Adam is also the first normal man, who has realized in Himself the ontological image of man and revealed the truth about him. And if man bears the image of the God-Man, the converse is also true, that is, it is true that the God-Man Christ Himself is man: "one man, Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:15); "the first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven" (1 Cor. 15:47). The Proto-Image of man in his sophianicity is the Divine-Humanity or the Heavenly Divine-Humanity of the Logos, Sophia, the Divine world reflected in the creaturely world. In the Holy Trinity, the Logos, the Second hypostasis, as the self-revelation of the Father, is Sophia par excellence, whereas the Proto-Image of man, of Adam, is the image of the *Logos in Sophia.*

The foundations of the in-humanization of the Logos are thus already included in the very creation of man, who, as it were, awaits the reception of the Logos and calls Him. This is man's inner call to heaven, the task that is proposed for him. But this task cannot be realized by man himself; it can be realized *only* by God, for it surpasses the limits of the world and man. This alone is sufficient to prevent us from understanding the Incarnation solely from the soteriological point of view as a means for the restoration of fallen man, a means expressly found for this purpose by Divine Providence. After the fall of man, the Incarnation truly became, first of all, a means for his restoration; but this means is included, solely as a particular possibility, in the general relation of God and man. We have no data to judge how this relation might have unfolded if man had not fallen. But in the consciousness of the *fallen* Adam this striving for union with God was expressed in the waiting for the Redeemer (Job 19:25-27) and in the higher prophetic illuminations of the Incarnation. Such is Isaiah's prophecy about Emmanuel, "God with us," which the Evangelist interprets as a prophecy about the Incarnation (Matt. 1:23). The prophecy is, of course, inspired by the Holy Spirit, but He reveals what is precontained in man himself and thus can be encompassed by him. The entire Old Testament is full of foreknowledge of the mystery of the Incarnation and its prefigurings.

The aforesaid is sufficient to provide an answer to a question sometimes posed in patristics and dogmatics: Why was it precisely the Son of God who became incarnate and not another hypostasis of the Holy Trinity? To the extent that the human *why* is appropriate here (and it is appropriate insofar as man, as the image of God, bears within himself the living revelation of Divinity), here is the answer that is generally given: The Son becomes incarnate as the demiurgic hypostasis, the Logos of the world, by whom all things were made and who reveals in the Father this divine All. In this sense, the Logos is the hypostatic Wisdom of the Father, which reveals itself first in the Divine Sophia and then in the creaturely world. This predemonstrates the Incarnation precisely of the hypostasis of the Logos. In contrast, incarnation is absolutely excluded for the hypostasis of the Father because of the transcendental character of this hypostasis, both in the Holy Trinity and in creation. The Father is revealed through the Son in the Holy Spirit, while remaining closed in Himself. In the Holy Trinity, the Father pre-eternally begets the Son, proceeding upon Him in the Holy Spirit; in creation, the Father creates the world by His Word and completes the world by the Holy Spirit. In both cases the Paternal hypostasis is the *subject* of revelation, not the revelation itself. The Father contains the unuttered and unexperienceable Mystery of Divinity, which

becomes manifest in the Son and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Father *begets* the Son and *sends* Him into the world. The Father is the first will; His is the power and the principle. But the world knows Him only in the Son, not only at the beginning of creation but also at its completion.

Nor does the Holy Spirit become *hypostatically* incarnate, although He is the cosmourgic hypostasis by which the creative Word is accomplished. Being inseparable from the Logos in the Divine Sophia, the hypostasis of the Spirit occupies the second place in this dyad of hypostases that reveal the Father (and the third place in the Holy Trinity as a whole). The action of this hypostasis presupposes the already accomplished revelation of the Word (and in the Holy Trinity His eternal begetting). The Third hypostasis *participates* in the Incarnation together with the Second; that is, the Incarnation itself is the proper work of the Third hypostasis through the sanctification of human flesh by descent upon the Virgin Mary, upon the Divine Infant, and then upon Christ, baptized in the waters of the Jordan. But the participation of the Holy Spirit in the work of the Incarnation has an accomplishing significance. Their interrelation in the work of the Incarnation can be defined as follows: the Son becomes incarnate as a person, whereas the Holy Spirit participates in the Incarnation through the "flesh" sanctified by Him, that is, through psycho-corporeal *humanity* (just as at the creation of the proto-earth, which was destined to become the matter-mother for the creation of man from "the dust of the ground," "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," anticipating His descent upon the Ever-Virgin). We can use a grammatical analogy to express the mystery of the Incarnation: the participation of the Holy Spirit is the copula ("is") linking the subject (the hypostasis of the Logos) with Him Himself in His Word, which is the universal *all.* In order that the hypostasis of the Logos, His Divine I, become the hypostasis for creaturely being, it is necessary that this creaturely being, the word of the Word in creation, be *united* with the Divine hypostasis, that it ascend to this union. This is what the Holy Spirit accomplishes as far as creation is concerned.

The Incarnation should thus not be understood as the work of the hypostasis of the Logos alone. It necessarily presupposes the participation of the Second hypostasis and the Third hypostasis: the Second hypostasis becomes incarnate, becomes the *subject* for creation, whereas the Third hypostasis, without becoming incarnate, descends upon the Virgin Mary for the sake of the Incarnation of the Logos and then in general is sent into the world by the Father through the Son in order to reveal and definitively accomplish the Incarnation.

The inseparability of these two hypostases in the Incarnation is attested in the Creed by the words: "made incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary." This expresses with great clarity the idea that the Incarnation is composed of two acts: the *introduction* of the divine hypostasis into man and man's *reception* of this hypostasis. The first of these acts is the proper work of the Logos, sent into the world by the Father, whereas the second is the work of the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father upon the Virgin Mary, in whose flesh the Incarnation is accomplished. Therefore, in no wise should this be understood to signify the paternity in some sense of the Holy Spirit, who supposedly takes the place of the husband. On the contrary, there is here a certain identification, as it were, of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary in the conception of the Son: the Virgin Mary conceives the Son not by Her human powers but because the Holy Spirit reposes in Her and upon Her. But the fact that the Holy Spirit co-participates in the Incarnation (with this participation being a necessary condition for it) absolutely excludes the Third hypostasis's own incarnation. Hypostatic incarnation, which is perfectly appropriate for the Second hypostasis as hypostatic *sonhood,* is inappropriate for the Third hypostasis. Sonhood is hypostatic kenosis in the Holy Trinity, and the Son of God is the kenotic hypostasis, the eternal Lamb. And this eternal kenosis of sonhood is the general foundation for the kenosis of the Son that is the Incarnation: "great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16).

Regardless of how we might understand the general connection between the Incarnation and man's fall, the Fall, even though it is the concrete foundation for the Incarnation, is also an obstacle for it. The Logos could not assume a flesh stained by the Fall, burdened by original sin, just as the sinful flesh could not find in itself the will or the power to receive the Incarnation. If Adam's first impulse after the Fall was to hide from the face of the Lord (Gen. 3:8), this urge became a fixed one in his descendants, being transformed into a fearful consciousness: "We shall surely die, because we have seen God" (Judg. 13:22). In amazement Moses said about himself to the people: "we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth" (Deut. 5:24), just as Isaiah cried out after the theophany that had been accomplished before him: "Woe is me! for I am undone . . . mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Isa. 6:5). And the Lord Himself attests to this alienation of man from God that has replaced the Edenic possibility of direct conversation with God: "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live" (Exod. 33:20). In order to enable the creature to receive the Incarnation, it was

necessary to overcome the creaturely trepidation of "the children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3), of the "enemies" of God (Rom. 5:10), by love for the Lord, for only "perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18). But the only way to accomplish this was to overcome the sin that alienated man from the Lord. In order to liberate man from original sin and to reconcile him with God, a liberation and reconciliation that could only be accomplished through the Incarnation, it was necessary to weaken this sin to the point of rendering it inactive, although it retained its reality.

This was in fact accomplished in the Most Pure Virgin Mary, whose appearance in the world was the main *work* of the Old Testament church. A hereditary holiness, assisted by the grace of the Holy Spirit, had accumulated for centuries and millennia in the Old Testament church; this holiness, tried by fate and temptations and formed by the entire gracious life of the Church, had ascended higher and higher above the level of fallen humanity. In this way, in its creaturely and human aspect, the Incarnation was prepared from ancient times by the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, the action of the Third hypostasis. The peak of this holiness was attained in the Most Holy Virgin, whose purity was such that She was "full of grace," overshadowed even prior to the Incarnation by the constant illuminations of the Holy Spirit. In Her, original sin *lost its power* as an obstacle to the Incarnation. Being *personally* sinless, She was not subject to the power of original sin, although it lived in Her as the universal human destiny, as the hereditary illness of man's nature, which She bore in Herself. But in Her this sin was reduced to pure potentiality and did not exert any influence on Her will.[5] Her personal sinlessness opened a path to the unceasing action upon Her of the Holy Spirit. In the fallen, sinful world, She already manifested the original sophianic image of man, although She was united by fleshly and spiritual ties with fallen humanity and shared its sinful illness in Her love for it. Her holy soul, chosen from all eternity in the womb of the Lord, entered the world by God's will, having received flesh from the holy parents who carried in their loins the hereditary holiness of all Israel. Her coming into the world, preestablished from all eternity, was indeed the appearance of the "Woman" whose enmity for Satan was ordained by God (Gen. 3:15). And when She had attained such spiritual strength that She could withstand the direct overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, not in the separate gifts of grace with which

5. In reference to this, the Roman Catholic Church established its unexamined dogma of 1854 on the absolute exclusion of the Most Holy Mother of God from original sin. (For a critique of this dogma, see my book *The Burning Bush.*)

She was abundantly adorned, but in the reception of the Holy Spirit Himself in all the fullness of His divine nature, it was then that the Incarnation took place. The archangel Gabriel was sent by God (of course, by God the Father, the Principle) to announce to Her the divine counsel: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee" (Luke 1:35). The Holy Spirit, who in the Holy Trinity preeternally overshadows the Son, descends into the creaturely world and realizes this overshadowing of the Son in creation.

The Most Holy Virgin becomes heaven, and Her womb becomes the place of the overshadowing, which also contains the One who is overshadowed: the God-Word who is being begotten. And in response to God's question, asked through the archangel, whether she wants to serve the Incarnation, to receive God, the Virgin answers: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38). The "New Eve" does not seek to hide amid the trees from the face of God but obediently goes forth to receive the Lord. The answer of the Most Holy Mother of God manifested the very same creaturely human freedom that, in the person of Eve and then Adam, defined itself against God's will. But now, in the person of the Most Holy Mother of God, the creature realizes its freedom not in willfulness but in the obedience of love and self-renunciation. Divine Maternity is the human side of the Incarnation; it is the condition without which the Incarnation could not have been accomplished. Heaven could not have come down to the earth if the earth had not received heaven. The Most Holy Virgin Mary is therefore the eternally foreseen and preestablished center of the creaturely world.

One should remember, however, that, in general, no creaturely holiness is capable of encountering God — and *a fortiori* of supporting the birth of God — without being annihilated. Only God Himself can sanctify and deify a creature to the point where it becomes strong enough and worthy of the Incarnation. If the Son of God is made incarnate, it is the Holy Spirit, descending upon the Virgin and making Her the earthly heaven, who renders Him incarnate. In the Holy Trinity the Holy Spirit is the Third hypostasis; He follows the Second hypostasis and reposes upon it. But in the work of the Incarnation the Holy Spirit *anticipates* by His action the Son who is made incarnate. Just as in human birth the mother comes first and the child follows, so in the divine birth the Holy Spirit, descending upon the Mother of God, gives Her the power of Divine Maternity.

Through the Virgin Mary's reception of the archangel's annunciation, the Logos is born as Man, and the Son of God becomes the Son of Man. The Lord repeatedly applies to Himself the name "Son of Man" in

all the multiplicity of its meanings. But in this case its most direct meaning is that the Incarnation is an *adoption* of the hypostasis of the Logos by the human race. Consequently, this is not a new creation but an inclusion into the already existing human race, an engendering from it. The Incarnation cannot be other than this, and thus the name "Son of Man" is, above all, an attestation of Christ's authentic humanity. When it is unfolded, so to speak, this name expresses the Gospel genealogies, which clearly show Jesus' human "parentage." The first of these genealogies, which is in Matthew 1, is in descending order and represents Christ as "the son of Abraham" (1:1) through "Joseph the husband of Mary" (1:16). The second genealogy, in Luke 3, is in ascending order and represents Him as "the son of Adam," "the Son of God," through Joseph, who was thought to be His father (3:23). Both genealogies are testimonies about Jesus, the Son of God, the Son of Man.

This testimony about the authenticity of Christ's humanity has, of course, a very great soteriological significance, according to the principle of "that which is not received is not redeemed." But here it has significance, first of all, in relation to the Incarnation itself: The Incarnation is not only the reception of men into the Divine race, making them into sons of God as a result of the redemption; before that, it is also the reception of the Son of God into the sons of men, His in-humanization through His birth from the Virgin. The Logos could truly become incarnate and human only by becoming the *Son* of man, that is, by entering into the already existing human race and not beginning it out of Himself. It is true that, as the New Adam, Christ *begins* the new race of the Sons of God, but this is only a *renewal* of the old, already created race and does not destroy the authenticity of His human genealogy. "The Word was made flesh" (John 1:14) signifies, above all, this human sonhood, and it eliminates all docetism in relation to the Lord's humanity, for an illusory shadow of humanity cannot be considered a human son.

A question can arise, however, concerning the "virginal conception" without a father and the birth "from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary" (according to the Creed). Is this compatible with authentic human sonhood, and does it not abolish it? A *formal* answer to this question is given by the genealogies that include Jesus in the lineage of Joseph, although both of the Evangelists (Matt. 1:1-16; Luke 3:23-38) are certain that Joseph was not Jesus' father according to the flesh but that, as the husband of Mary, he was legally considered Jesus' father, even in the eyes of His Mother (see Luke 2:48). This inclusion in the lineage was not only a juridical act; it had a certain mystical reality, consisting in the *recognition* of son-

hood or adoption for both the parents and the Son. By His fleshly birth from His Mother, Jesus became the Son of Man. The absence of an earthly father and of fleshly conception, which, *ontologically,* clearly does not exclude the possibility of virginal conception from the Mother through Her being overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, does not diminish the fact that the "flesh" Mary gave to the Infant is the common human flesh. If it is sometimes called the "likeness of . . . flesh" (Rom. 8:3; see also Phil. 2:7), this is not intended to diminish its authenticity but rather to indicate that sin, both original and personal, is absent from it. Begetting through fleshly union was only a consequence of original sin; it replaced *spiritual* begetting, which is unfathomable for us and which remained unrealized by man before the Fall. Hereditary sin, the envelopment of spirit by flesh, is transmitted through fleshly begetting, which corresponds to man's sinful state: "I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5). However, this did not come into man at the beginning, at his creation; it came into him only in the Fall. God did not create sin together with its consequences; they are not ontological in man. For him they are only a modality that can be removed without destroying humanity or diminishing its authenticity. On this basis, Jesus is the true Son of Man, even though He is begotten without a human father from His Mother; in relation to *sinful* flesh, however, His flesh, which is free of original sin, turns out to be only a "likeness of flesh." In a certain sense, this birth can be equated with a new creation in which God took the place of the father. But the first Adam was created by God directly from the "earth," and therefore he was not the son of man, but "the son of God" (Luke 3:38). However, the New Adam, as the Son of God but also the Son of Man, could now not be created directly from the earth. Rather, He was born from the Virgin Mary, who carried within Her the whole of human nature except sin, which does not belong to the essence of man.

The two names of Jesus that we find in the Gospels, "Son of God" and "Son of Man," express, when taken together, the mystery of the Divine-Humanity. What strikes one above all is that the two names designate the same thing but in different ways: *sonhood.*[6] Precisely the Son is the kenotic hypostasis in the Holy Trinity itself, as well as in the creation of the world and in the sending into the world. And in the fact that the in-

6. In scholastic dogmatics, one sometimes encounters the idea that it was precisely the Son of God who had to become incarnate because, in the Incarnation, He also had to become the Son, even if the Son of man. This idea, however, true in and of itself, has never been examined in depth.

carnate Logos becomes the Son of Man, one cannot fail to see the revealed kenosis of the sonhood – the divine obedience of the Word. He, the Creator of the world *par excellence* as the demiurgic hypostasis, comes into this world not as the Creator but as a creature, subject to the laws of this world and of this humanity that He Himself created. The Son of God, the New Adam, comes into the world in a different manner from Adam, the original man, who was the forefather of man, not the son of man (although he was "the son of God" [Luke 3:38]). And He becomes the Son of Man in order to be our co-human brother who has acquired knowledge in Himself of all things human and who has experienced all human experience, as the hymn of the Incarnation in Heb. 2:10-18 says: "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee [see Ps. 22:22]. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me [see Isa. 8:18]. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. . . . For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."

III. The Divine-Humanity

After a centuries-long dogmatic struggle, the Church established the fundamental christological dogma of the *God-Man* at the Fourth Ecumenical Council, at Chalcedon (although the expression "God-Man" is not used in the Definition of Chalcedon, which speaks simply of Christ). According to the Chalcedonian dogma, the structure of the God-Man Christ consists not in a simple relation (as in the case of Divinity or in the case of humanity as such) but in a *complex* relation, namely the unity of the hypostasis in the case of the duality of the natures. This hypostasis is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Logos. The unity of the hypostasis

guarantees the unity of the life, and the duality of the natures guarantees the complexity and duality of the life; but the union of the natures, headed by the one divine hypostasis, establishes a new and particular biunity, which exists neither in Divinity nor in humanity. For in Divinity we have unity of nature in the case of hypostatic triunity, with each hypostasis entirely possessing the nature; and in humanity we have unity of nature in the case of the multiplicity of hypostatic centers, each of which has the nature in its personal possession. But in Christ's Divine-Humanity we have two distinct natures, united without separation in one hypostasis, but with each preserving its autonomous being.

At first glance the Chalcedonian dogma looks like an ontological paradox that appears to negate all our initial definitions concerning the interrelation between nature and hypostasis. In fact, all spiritual being is an inseparable unity of hypostasis and nature, which can exist only in mutuality: the hypostasis in the nature and the nature in the hypostasis. Therefore, the hypostasis and the nature are by no means mutually independent principles or primordial elements of being that can be arranged and rearranged in different ways to form completely new combinations (in a kind of "in-hypostatization"). They are not at all flexible and do not allow themselves to be coerced in any way; the idea that they could be coerced is an ontological absurdity. And if it is impossible to attach the head of a dog to a man, it is even less possible to make the hypostasis of one entity the hypostasis of another entity. (When Apollinarius attempted such an unnatural unification, St. Gregory of Nyssa accused him of inventing minotaurs and other imaginary hybrid beasts.) The hypostasis and the nature do not exist separately but compose one *living* spirit; this unity of life is their inseparability, for separation here could only signify destruction.

In the Definition of Chalcedon, however, the divine hypostasis of the binatural Divine-Humanity – its subject, so to speak – is simultaneously the subject of both the divine nature and the human nature; and the two natures are united without separation in the unity of the life of this one hypostasis. The divine hypostasis of the Logos is also the human hypostasis, in the capacity of the subject of the human nature as well. The human nature, as the fathers of the Church explain, does not remain nonhypostatic, insofar as, in general, there cannot be any extrahypostatic natural being; rather, it is hypostatized by the divine hypostasis. If one insists in this case on the concept of "in-hypostatization," one must not give it an abstract, formal-logical definition without any relation to its ontological meaning; rather, one must show its concretely ontological signifi-

cance. If we understand "in-hypostatization" to mean only a union of things different in essence and not unitable in life, this would be an empty logical abstraction based on the acceptance of what is ontologically impossible and erasing the boundaries of being in a universal mixing. However, beyond the limits of its formal application, the idea of in-hypostatization is *devoid of content,* and therefore it cannot help us to understand the Incarnation with the assumption of the human nature into the divine hypostasis.

The Chalcedonian definition concerning the unity of the hypostasis in the case of two natures is a theologically unclarified schema that still requires dogmatic clarification; without clarification it remains a "tinkling cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1), even given the most sincere and zealous desire to uphold the Orthodox doctrine. To be sure, one can hide in *asylum ignorantiae* (the refuge of ignorance) and proclaim the Incarnation to be an unfathomable mystery, which in its essence it certainly is. However, reason can discover the dogmatic lineaments of this mystery – this is confirmed by the very existence of the dogmatic definition. Reason discerns in this definition the norm of the true doctrine, which our rational understanding can grasp, of course, only if there is the belief that it is true (for belief never establishes prohibitions for reason in its *proper* domain but, on the contrary, condemns lazy obscurantism). Moreover, it is now too late to prohibit the rational analysis of the dogma, after such an analysis has been attempted in the doctrine of in-hypostatization, a doctrine that not only has not been condemned as an illegitimate rationalization of the mystery but has even been approved by such ecclesiastical authorities as St. John of Damascus. Clarification of the Chalcedonian dogma by the analytic powers of reason, to the extent such clarification is possible, is therefore a pious duty for theology; the failure to fulfill this duty will be tantamount to burying the treasure of the dogma in the ground in the name of its illusory preservation, in the same way that the lazy servant buried the treasure entrusted to him.

What then does this "in-hypostatization" of the Logos in the human nature signify? Is it ontologically possible, and why is it possible? The question we pose concerns specifically *ontological* possibility, proceeding from the interrelation of the essences; we thus exclude the unanswerable reference to God's omnipotence as such, for which *all* things are assumed to be possible. Yes, all things are possible for God's omnipotence in creation, for God as the Creator. But after God had created the world and endowed it with indestructible being in its proper ontology, He accepted this ontology, and His relation to the world is now based not on omnipotence but on providential interaction. This also holds for the Incarnation. Although the Incarnation is, in a certain sense, a new creation, and one that is even more miraculous and unfathomable than the first, it is not a creation out of nothing and therefore cannot be understood solely as a manifestation of God's omnipotence. On the contrary, just as in relation to the world God posits its being as a condition and a boundary for Himself, so in the Incarnation He does not abolish the ontology proper to the world and, in particular, to man's nature. For his part, man coparticipates in the Incarnation as such; he cannot be abolished or destroyed in his nature by God's omnipotence for the sake of the Incarnation, for if the Incarnation were realized at *such* a cost, it would not be the Incarnation. In the Incarnation the human essence is surpassed, not destroyed. Therefore, the Incarnation cannot include any act that would contradict man's nature, that would be ontologically impossible for man.

The first condition of the true Incarnation is that man remain himself, and that which is impossible for man cannot be included in the Incarnation. This ontological postulate of the Incarnation is recognized in the dogma by the attestation of the union in Christ of perfect God and *perfect* man, that is, man undiminished in his ontological fullness and with his humanity intact. This postulate possesses both christological and soteriological certainty. As far as Christology is concerned, it would be impossible to speak of the *in-humanization* of God if the human essence assumed by Him were substantially different from the human nature created by God; if it did so differ, the Incarnation would be impossible and would be a failure (but to assert this would, of course, be the greatest of blasphemies, the extreme of disbelief). As far as soteriology is concerned, the assumption by Christ of a nonhuman man would clearly not be salvific for man in his authentic essence. Thus, even in the Incarnation, man must not be diminished or surpassed, but remain himself, that is, "perfect" *(teleios).*

If the human essence of the God-Man is thus "in-hypostatized" in the Logos in such a way that the hypostasis of the Logos has become the *proper* hypostasis also of His human nature, this is therefore ontologically possible and preestablished. But the question arises: How is this possible, and why could this have been preestablished? Could man's nature have received and encompassed within itself – *instead of* the human hypostasis or, rather, *in the capacity of* the human hypostasis – the hypostasis of the Logos? And how could such a descent have been possible for the Logos Himself? A general answer that refers to the image of God in man is insufficient here. It is necessary to show in what precisely the power of the im-

age of God is manifested in the case of this "in-hypostatization," and what aspect of it is revealed here.

The human nature can live only in the human hypostasis, and it cannot receive even the angelic hypostasis (despite the proximity of this hypostasis to man), for the hypostasis of an immaterial spirit cannot encompass within itself the life of an incarnate spirit; it cannot truly receive human "flesh." It is thus necessary to conclude that, insofar as it hypostatizes the human nature, the hypostasis of the Logos *is,* in a special sense, a human hypostasis too, that it is proper not only to God but also to Man, that is, to the God-Man. In order to be a human hypostasis, the hypostasis of the Logos must be human or, more precisely, *co-human;* and for this reason the hypostatization of man's nature by this hypostasis does not destroy or coerce it but corresponds to a primordial interrelation between the two. On the other hand, man must also be capable of *receiving* and *encompassing* within himself, in the capacity of the human hypostasis, the divine hypostasis. In other words, by his initial essence man must already be divine-human in this sense; he must bear hypostatic divine-humanity within himself and represent, in this capacity, an ontological "site" for the hypostasis of the Logos.

Therefore, as far as the in-hypostatization of the Logos in man is concerned, the postulate of the Incarnation is a certain primordial identity between the Divine I of the Logos and the human I; this identity, however, does not exclude the essential difference between them. This is precisely the relation of the image to the Proto-Image, the relation that unites the identity existing generally between the image and the Proto-Image with the difference existing between eternity and temporality, between the Creator and creation. The human hypostatic spirit, which lives in man and which fundamentally distinguishes him from the animal world, has a divine, uncreated origin from "God's breath." This spirit is a spark of Divinity that is endowed by God with a creaturely-hypostatic face in the image of the Logos and, through Him, in the image of the entire Holy Trinity, insofar as the trihypostatic Face can be reflected in the creaturely consciousness of self. Through his spirit, man communes with the Divine essence and is capable of being "deified." Being united with and living by the divine nature, man is not only man but also potentially — by predestination, by his formal structure — a god-man. At the same time, in his nature, as the soul of the world, as "flesh" (i.e., through his animate body), man unites in himself the entire world, which in this sense is his humanity. Man consists of an uncreated, divine spirit, hypostatized by a creaturely I, and of a created soul and body. This humanity of his has, in

its cosmic being, the image of the creaturely Sophia; and he himself therefore contains the creaturely Sophia, who is hypostatized in him. As a result, he is the sophianic hypostasis of the world.

To be sure, the state of sin obscures in man's consciousness his divine homeland and also deprives him of the fullness of sophianic being. This state makes him subject to the elements of the world, which appears before him not as Sophia but only as *natura* (which is to become itself, to engender itself) or as the elementally chaotic Achamoth. But this darkened state is not man's true state; it does not conform with his essence. Man needs to be restored, and this restoration consists in salvation from sin. He desires to become a son of God and to enter into the glory of creation, for he is predestined to this. Out of natural man he is called to become a god-man; he is called to surpass himself in the true God-Man. That is man's inner postulate. Man bears within himself the coming Christ; and prior to Christ's coming, man does not have the power to become himself (i.e., true man) or to realize in himself the new spiritual birth that is not of flesh and blood, but of God.

Not only is man the god-man by calling, but the Logos is the pre-eternal God-Man as the Proto-Image of creaturely man. The Logos is the demiurgic hypostasis whose face is imprinted in the Divine world, as in the Divine Sophia, by the self-revelation of Divinity through the Logos. The hypostasis of the Logos is *directly* connected with Sophia. In this sense the Logos *is* Sophia as the self-revelation of Divinity; He is her direct (although not sole) hypostasis. The Logos is Sophia in the sense that He *has* Sophia as His proper content and life, for in Divinity, Sophia is not only the totality of ideal and nonliving images but also the organism of living and intelligent essences that manifest in themselves the life of Divinity. Sophia is also the heavenly humanity as the proto-image of the creaturely humanity; inasmuch as she is eternally hypostatized in the Logos, she is His pre-eternal Divine-Humanity.

If we examine this series of propositions concerning the heavenly God-Man and the earthly, creaturely God-Man, we will understand and consider natural the Apostle Paul's fundamental anthropological doctrine that there is not one Adam, but two Adams; not one man, but two men: "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. . . . And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Cor. 15:47, 49). The anthropological meaning of what the Lord told Nicodemus is in conformity with this: "no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13). And this duality of

the images of the God-Man, the heavenly Man and the creaturely Man, is confirmed in the single image of the Man who unites in Himself the heavenly humanity and the creaturely humanity: "one man, Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:15).

For this reason, the hypostasis of the Logos, of the heavenly Man, could become the hypostasis of the creaturely man and make him the true God-Man, realizing his original Divine-Humanity. The hypostasis of the Logos is human from all eternity and could therefore become the hypostasis for creaturely humanity as well, elevating but not abolishing it. One could say that the Logos simply and naturally replaced the creaturely hypostasis for Christ's human nature. But this turned out to be possible because this creaturely hypostasis itself was *supernatural,* representing the divine principle in man. In Christ, the uncreated-created, divine-human hypostasis of Adam was replaced by the divine hypostasis of the Logos. The significance of this is, of course, immense: in place of the creaturely hypostasis (although one that is of divine origin), man's nature receives the hypostasis of the Logos Himself. But this does not destroy man's general structure, which consists of two parts: his psycho-corporeal nature, created out of nothing and thus creaturely in the full sense of the word; and a hypostatic spirit of divine origin, which is created by God *not* out of nothing but has received life from God's own life.

Man's nature is united with the hypostatic spirit; and the hypostatic spirits that proceed from God are distinct and multiple, although they are interconnected in the multi-unity of humanity. The Logos includes Himself among these hypostatic spirits; in Christ's humanity He has replaced the personal human hypostasis. The human nature in Christ could receive this replacement and contain within itself the Divine Person in the capacity of its own person. We therefore confess Christ as the *perfect* man, in whom the human composition is fully preserved, for the inhabitation of the Logos in man has a sufficient ontological basis. The human spirit in man, which originates from God, is in Christ the Pre-eternal Logos, the Divine Spirit, the Second hypostasis of the Holy Trinity. The New Adam, Christ, who in His human essence is hypostatized by the Logos, is the perfect man; formally, in his composition, He does *not* differ from other men except by this particular hypostasis, which is proper to Him. The Logos receives man's psycho-corporeal essence *(sarx)* while preserving His Divinity, which is proper to Him in inseparable union with His hypostasis. In assuming "flesh" (i.e., the human essence), the Logos, in the capacity of divine hypostasis, is not separated from His divine nature; as a result, Christ has one hypostasis but two natures. In creaturely man, this "bi-

naturality" is analogous to the fact that, being a creaturely hypostasis that hypostatizes the human nature, he is turned toward God according to the divine essence of his admittedly creaturely hypostasis, and he can commune by grace with the life of the divine essence. This possibility of communion with God, which in Christ is a reality, is in man the *formal potentiality* of binaturality or Divine-Humanity. Here too in Christ, therefore, no coercion is applied to the human essence; no incompatible element is introduced into His life. Rather, the true, pre-inscribed image of the old Adam is realized in the New Adam. For man is the ready form for true divine-humanity, for which he is created and to which he is called, though he is not able to realize it by his own powers. The Incarnation is not a catastrophe for the human essence, not a violence done to it. On the contrary, the Incarnation is the fulfillment of the human essence. Christ, being perfect God, is therefore also true man.[7]

The foundation of the Incarnation must be sought not only in the relation of the hypostatic principles in the Logos and in man but also in the relation of the divine and human natures. Clearly, the Logos could not have become a human hypostasis, could not have hypostatized the human nature, if in some sense He were not co-human with us, if the pre-eternal image of humanity were not imprinted in His proper life. Conversely, the human essence could not contain within itself the hypostasis of the Logos, could not be hypostatized in Him, if it did not bear His seal and contain His image. The interrelation of the divine and the human is ontologically revealed here: *humana natura capax divini* (the human nature received the divine nature). The world was therefore His own *(idios)* for the Logos, and when He came into the world, "He came unto His own [*ta idia*]," although "His own received Him not" (John 1:11). This "own-ness" of the world and of man's nature for the Logos constitutes the natural foundation of the Incarnation: not only the fact that man is co-hypostatic with the hypostatic God but also the fact that he is co-natural with Him (although he does not share one nature with Him), as is attested by the assumption of flesh by the Logos: "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

A final question remains. The hypostasis of the God-Man is the Logos, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, who bears in Himself His divine nature. We know from the general doctrine of the Holy Trinity that God is a trihypostatic hypostasis. The Divine Subject has three hypostatic

7. I omit here a two-and-a-half-page excursus in which Bulgakov tries to show that the theory he is developing is not a form of Apollinarianism. — Trans.

centers that coexist in Him, not destroying but revealing the autonomous being and uniqueness of the hypostatic Subject. These three centers in the Holy Trinity are equally real and equally subjects, so to speak. Each of them is a separate, equally divine I, but all three are one Divine I in its absoluteness — the consubstantial and indivisible Trinity. No difficulties regarding the unity of the Divine Subject and the trinitarity of the hypostatic centers arise insofar as we concern ourselves with the life of the Holy Trinity in itself (the life of the "immanent" Trinity, in the usual terminology of Western theology). Equilibrium is maintained between them, such that the unity exists in the union of three, and three are identified in one. Triunity is a particular absolute relation existing in the Holy Trinity, its sacred number, simultaneously 3 and 1. This number does not exist in human arithmetic, which is based on the rationalistic differentiation of things that are separate and similar in one way or another and on their placement in series or juxtaposition (i.e., on counting). In this sense, the Divine Three is not even a number, but a supernumber, obtained not through the rationalistic operation of counting but through an intuitive understanding of the absolute relation that the Holy Trinity presents, which is not subject to arithmetical definition.

However, it is not so simple to define the relation of the Holy Trinity to the world (the "economic" Trinity in contrast to the "immanent" Trinity) without introducing a certain differentiation, a new distinction, if not a separation. We know that the personal properties of the separate hypostases and their interrelations determine the character of the participation of each hypostasis in the creation and life of the world: The Father is the creator; the Son is the image of creation; the Holy Spirit is the life of creation, the giver of life. Creation, as becoming, exists in time; and therefore, as we have seen, it also draws God's being into time and, in particular, differentiates the action of the different hypostases not only according to their hypostatic character but also in a definite sequence. The Holy Trinity with its eternal *taxis* (the order of the hypostases) exists supratemporally, and in this sense the *taxis* is the determinate, concrete interrelation between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Creation, drawing God's being into temporality, defines the *taxis* in its own way, differentiating the interrelation of the hypostases into a temporal sequence.

In the relation of God to the world there are unitary and collective acts of the entire Holy Trinity, defined by the concrete hypostatic action of all three hypostases: such, for example, is the creation of the world and of man by the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. But this is not the case with Divine Providence for the world, which God accomplishes

not only in a trinitarian manner but also in separate hypostatic acts, by the action of the separate hypostases. In particular, the Logos is the hypostasis that acts and reveals itself in the Old Testament as God. At the beginning He comes into paradise to converse with the original man and woman, and He pronounces His sentence over our fallen progenitors. Over the course of the entire Old Testament He reveals Himself as Jehovah, Adonai, Sabaoth, and so on. He appears to man in various theophanies and doxophanies; and this does not include cases of divine manifestation specially marked by the trinitarian image: Genesis 18; Exodus 6; Daniel 7. Likewise, the Holy Spirit acts and reveals Himself in the Old Testament as the giver of gifts of grace for different ministries (that of kings, elders, high priests, prophets, military leaders, architects, artists, etc.).

In its relation to the world, the "immanent" Trinity thus assumes the aspect of the "economic" Trinity. What is the ontological relation between the two, and how should this distinction be understood? This question is usually not posed in such a general form either in cosmology or in Christology, except in certain particular cases. One must certainly exclude for dogmatic reasons any change in the Holy Trinity caused by the distinction between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity and, so to speak, by the transition from the one to the other. The Holy Trinity is one and identical to itself; and this distinction arises from the life of the creature and from its relation to Divinity, precisely to that image in which the creature receives the revelation of Divinity. The creature divides and multiplies this one revelation, which results in different modes of the participation of the separate hypostases in its life. However, it is precisely eternity that is the true foundation for revelation in time. It is necessary to postulate a direct connection between the immanent Trinity and the actions and revelations of the separate hypostases in the economic Trinity. Each hypostasis, as a concretely qualified subject, acts in conformity with its immanent hypostatic properties. Here we are not sundering the Holy Trinity into two; rather, we are distinguishing that which the Holy Trinity itself was pleased to distinguish in itself and thus to divide into two: life in itself and life in and with creation — God as the Absolute and God as the Creator. Ontologically, this distinction or division does not introduce anything new for the Holy Trinity itself, for in its positive content, temporality is adequate to eternity and, in the end, merges with it. In God, "Alpha and Omega," First and Last, beginning and end are identical. But looking out from the world, we receive for the world the revelation of Divinity as a reality that is revealed in time for us and that is *new* at each of its points, a reality that is in a state of becoming, that is being accom-

plished but has not yet been accomplished. In other words, from the point of view of the world, the world process with its accomplishments is reflected in the "economic" Holy Trinity itself. Eternity is identical to temporality; immobility is identical to becoming; the economic Trinity is identical to the immanent Trinity.

This general relation of God to the world in the economic Trinity is accompanied by the fact that the individual hypostases are separated out from this Trinity's unity and manifest their hypostatic action upon the world. In their being, the hypostases abide unchangeably in the bosom of the eternal interrelation of trinitarian, intrahypostatic love. But in their *action* in the world, they are, as it were, distinguished and isolated from each other; for these actions, differing in virtue of the properties of the individual hypostases, are manifested and differentiated for the world in its cosmic time and are incorporated in the history of the world. There is of course no trace of tritheism here; there is, however, undoubtedly not only a triune but also a trinitarian, separately hypostatic revelation of God to the world. In relation to the world, not only are the divine hypostases effectively united in *we* or *us* ("Let us make man in our image" [Gen. 1:26]), but they are also separated, as it were, so that that which the Father accomplishes is accomplished neither by the Son nor by the Holy Spirit, and *each* hypostasis has its particular mode of action in the world. The economic Trinity thus not only consists of "separate persons" but is also characterized by separate actions.

Based on these general considerations, it is possible to resolve a particular question of Christology, namely: In what manner could *one* of the hypostases of the Holy Trinity become incarnate and thus be separated, as it were, out of its triunity? Does this not introduce, in a hidden form, a real separation of the hypostases, a tritheism, a polytheism? And if it does not, how can the incarnation of only one of the hypostases be possible without the co-incarnation of the other two hypostases, with which the first is united without separation? This leads to further questions: How does the trinitarian divine life take place when one of the hypostases is absent from heaven (because it has "come down from heaven") and is made incarnate on earth? How is the participation of this hypostasis in the one consubstantial life of the Holy Trinity possible after it has left the unity of the latter? Furthermore, how is the Ascension to heaven of the Second hypostasis, which in contrast to the other hypostases bears human flesh, possible? And so on.

All these questions can be answered on the basis of the general principle of the interrelation of God and the world. As the Creator and Provi-

dence, God is revealed to the world, on the one hand, as consubstantial and indivisible and as manifesting His "properties" in the world; on the other hand, He is revealed as three divine hypostases, each of which reveals itself and acts in the world in its own manner. The Incarnation is the particular mode of relation to and action in the world that is proper precisely to the Second hypostasis. The ways of His general relation to the world include the Incarnation, and this Incarnation precisely of the Second hypostasis has its foundation in the pre-eternal sonhood of the Word. The Incarnation cannot be understood in the sense that, decided in the Divine counsel, it could be the work of any other hypostasis except the Second, since it follows precisely from the personal property of this hypostasis, sonhood, both in relation to the world and in relation to God. Imprinted in the world is the Face of the Logos, who in the fullness of time descends from heaven to earth in order to be "in-humanized" in it.[8]

However, the indivisibility of the Holy Trinity in the work of the Incarnation is manifested in the fact that it is accomplished with the participation of the entire Holy Trinity and of each of its Persons, in conformity with the personal property of each: The Father sends, and He sends not only the Son but also the Holy Spirit, who descends into the world upon the Virgin Mary, upon Jesus, and upon the apostles; the Son is made incarnate; and the Holy Spirit completes the work of the Incarnation. This does not diminish the personal Incarnation of the Logos, but His work on earth cannot be separated to any degree from the life of the entire Holy Trinity. Christianity is the religion of Christ, the incarnate God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity; but precisely in virtue of this it is also the faith in the Holy Trinity, consubstantial and indivisible.

IV. Two Natures in Christ: The Divine Sophia and the Creaturely Sophia

The Incarnation is not only the assumption of man's nature by the hypostasis of the Logos, which thus becomes also a human hypostasis. It is also the union of two natures: of the divine nature, which is inseparable from the hypostasis of the Logos, with the creaturely human nature. How should this union be understood ontologically? We already know from the

8. It is not an accident that the two annunciations concerning the Logos, as cosmourgic and incarnate hypostasis, are placed next to each other in the prologue to the Gospel of John (1:3 and 1:14).

history of dogma that this union must not be viewed as the identification of the two natures or as the abolition of the difference between them; that is, it should not be understood monophysitically. The divine nature does not dissolve or abolish the human nature, for that would abolish their very union in their difference. Nor, of course, can the human nature abolish the divine nature. If the first notion was a great temptation not only for militant monophysites but in fact also for the orthodox (it is sufficient to remember the constantly fluctuating position of St. Cyril and his followers), the second notion could not have any adherents because of its evident absurdity, or it led beyond the bounds of Christianity, as in the case of the Ebionites, ancient and modern. At the same time, this union does not tolerate the kind of diminution that occurs in all types of Nestorianism (or adoptionism), where the union is effectively supplanted by the coexistence or juxtaposition of the two different natures. Finally, the union of the two natures should also not be understood as their *mixing*, as a kind of chemical synthesis resulting in a certain new nature that is neither divine nor human.[9] That, in a stylized form, would be "Apollinarianism."

The dogmatic efforts of the epoch of the ecumenical councils were in fact directed at preserving the equilibrium in the relation of the two natures, by suppressing deviations that would favor one or the other, or even their separation. Divine wisdom, guiding these efforts, maintained this equilibrium, and it was precisely the principle of the equilibrium of the two natures in their distinctive character and autonomy that the Council of Chalcedon proclaimed as a fundamental dogmatic definition. This principle of *equilibrium* is expressed, naturally, only in negative definitions, which prevent deviations in either direction: without separation, without confusion, without change, without division. Negative definitions are fully adequate for this goal. But it is just as natural to feel a certain dissatisfaction with these negative definitions, which, as we know from logic, cannot yield positive knowledge (the so-called infinite judgment in logic). To be sure, historical commentary renders instructive not only the negative meaning but also the concrete, positive meaning of this definition, since the negations eliminate here a certain type of christological judgment, which receives a negative assessment. But since these negations go in opposite directions, it is logically impossible, and dogmatically difficult, to extract a *positive* definition from these opposite negations. These oppositely directed negations do not, however, constitute a logical contradiction, which would exclude their compatibility and reduce the judgment itself to the absurd. The oppositely directed negations in the Definition of Chalcedon involve not so much contradictory judgments (such as yes and no) as *different* judgments, although they go in opposite directions. They admit some middle or third — *synthetic* — judgment, although this judgment is *not expressed* in the definition. In fact, the expression "without separation and without confusion" eliminates both *total* separation and *total* fusion. But this expression still leaves a place both for differentiation of being (otherwise there could be no union) and for union, which is directly proclaimed in the dogma.

9. In modern theology, we find a curious variant of this doctrine in Dorner, who conceives the Incarnation as a process of the temporal interpermeation of two independent natures. This process results in the appearance, in and from them, of the divine-human personality, uniting the two of them.

Thus, after having extracted the positive content from the negative definitions given in the Chalcedonian dogma, we arrive at the following conclusion: The *total* fusion of the natures being excluded, their *union* is proclaimed; that is, a certain *form* of fusion or identification is affirmed, but with the differences entirely preserved. And *total* separation being excluded, a certain *form* of differentiation is preserved, although with essential inseparability. In other words, what is sought and proclaimed here is a certain form of union in the case of inconfusability and a certain form of distinction in the case of inseparability; this form of union and this form of distinction do not produce a disequilibrium in one direction or the other.

The dogma is silent, however, on the *positive* interrelation of the two natures. What does this silence mean? Should it be dogmatically interpreted as a way of refusing to understand, of prohibiting definition? Or should it be understood only historically, as a de facto absence of definition? We have no doubt that only the second hypothesis provides the right answer. First of all, this second hypothesis is supported by the history of the Council, as well as by the entire set of circumstances in which this definition was worked out. We can even find among these circumstances an element of historical chance; for although the Spirit of God acts without regard to the chain of contingent causes, it is still necessary to take these into account. Second, the *unfinished* definition of the Fourth Council was effectively continued and completed by the definition of the Sixth Ecumenical Council concerning the two wills and energies, from which it follows that this question was by no means dogmatically resolved. Third, and most importantly, this question was subsequently subjected to continual dogmatic examination; in essence it was the only question being examined. Thus, the negative formula of the Council of

Chalcedon cannot be understood as a *prohibition* against positive definitions; it can be understood only as a *preliminary* definition, incomplete, inexhaustive, awaiting continuation. The apophatic position, which excludes the problem of the positive relation between the two natures, is therefore unfounded here.

In the dogma of the Incarnation we truly encounter something that is inaccessible to the creaturely understanding, but we must first explore everything that *is* accessible to us. Thus, the dogmatic question of the *positive* interrelation of the two natures in Christ is posed before us. Christ did not assume the human nature by an arbitrary act of abstract omnipotence, by an act that did not take into account the nature of things. He assumed it in conformity with the nature of things, for precisely the human nature was *appropriate* for this assumption, was ontologically capable of receiving it. Again, the Logos became the hypostasis for this nature not in virtue of abstract omnipotence but because precisely the human nature was called to be hypostatized by the hypostasis of the Logos. He could become a human hypostasis because it was the calling and predestination of the human nature to be united with the Logos. From the beginning, the Logos finds Himself in a positive relation with the human nature, just as, in its depths, the human nature bears His image and awaits His coming into the world. Therefore, the fact that "the Logos was made flesh" (i.e., the fact that He had assumed the human nature) was not, so to speak, something ontologically unexpected but, on the contrary, was the fulfillment of the predestination inscribed in heaven and on earth. But in becoming a human hypostasis, the Logos not only hypostatically united the human nature with Himself but also united it with Himself naturally, bringing into this union His proper divine life, or divine nature. Uniting His proper nature with the human essence, the Logos, as Christ, includes both of these natures in His life. Therefore, not only should one understand these two natures in their inseparability, inconfusability, and unchangeability (i.e., in their *autonomous being*), but one should just as forcefully affirm their union, which is accomplished no less than in the *unity of the life* of the God-Man, in virtue of the unity of the hypostatic center of this life. Christ is one; being in two natures, He lives one life, which attests to the very possibility of their union. The two natures, which are included in the one life of one hypostasis without dividing the personality, must in some way be kindred to one another, must be capable of this living identification. In the two natures, Divine and human, uncreated and created, there must be something mediating or common that serves as the unalterable foundation for their union.

This common principle is the *sophianicity* of both the Divine world (i.e., of Christ's divine nature) and of the creaturely world (i.e., of His human nature). The creaturely world is created on the basis of the protoimages of the Divine world as the creaturely image of Divine Sophia in her becoming, but this Divine Sophia is the divine nature of the Logos. Thus, in their *foundation* and *content,* the Heavenly Sophia and the earthly, creaturely, and human Sophia are identified, differing only in the *mode* of their being: that which in heaven is the Majesty, Glory, Wisdom, and Beauty of the images of the Divine self-revelation finds itself in a state of *becoming* or process in the creaturely world, on earth, and it finds itself there in the capacity of eternal seeds of creaturely being submerged in nonbeing and sprouting on the basis of creaturely freedom. The Logos pre-eternally reveals the Father as the Word of all words, that is, of all the divine ideas and images in their all-unity; by the will of the Father He decrees that this All should have *creaturely* being: "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3). In other words, He repeats in a creaturely manner, as it were, that which is His own. The *relation of identity* between the Divine Sophia and the creaturely Sophia is for this reason just as natural and inevitable as the entire *difference* between eternal, uncreated being and creaturely, becoming being, which has not yet become itself but which will become itself, in order to then become identified with its Proto-Image and attain the fullness of its sophianization or deification. This makes it possible to understand how the Logos could assume the human essence without ontologically contradicting His own essence. The obstacle here would be not the incompatibility of the natures but only the difference between the two modes of natural being. Having the Divine Sophia as His nature, the Logos enters, through the Incarnation, into the process of her creaturely becoming and is thus diminished in the fullness of His proper being.

In essence, the Incarnation, considered as the condescension of God's eternity to becoming in time, is identical to God's creation of the world as Divinity's going out of itself into the extradivine domain of creaturely becoming. The only difference is that, in the creation of the world, the world remains outside of God, solely as the *object* of His salvific action, whereas, in the Incarnation, God receives creaturely becoming into His own life and thus becomes the *Subject* of this becoming, while preserving the eternal fullness of His proper natural-sophianic essence. That is what the dogma of the two natures with one hypostasis signifies. The eternal God becomes the becoming God and receives the becoming of the world into Himself and for Himself, into His proper life; He first of all in-

troduces times and seasons into His life. The Logos becomes Jesus, who is born, lives, and dies in a particular place and at a particular time.

This antithesis of eternity and time, of fullness of being and becoming, is the limiting concept with which human thought collides when it attempts to fathom the mystery of the Incarnation. The Incarnation truly does remain a mystery for the human understanding, insofar as, in it, the unchangeability of eternity inaccessible to man is united with temporal becoming, which is the only thing man knows. It is a mystery because, in itself, such a union surpasses the proper *measure* of man and thus remains ontologically transcendent for him. This mystery is also a source of revelation for him, however, insofar as it is directed toward man himself and his life. For man too, in the deepest depths of his temporality, under the veil of becoming, knows and touches eternity. Thus, having his homeland in heaven and not only on earth, man carries within himself the image of the two natures and manifests the noncreaturely Sophia in his creaturely essence. Such is the very foundation of his being, which is revealed even to natural man in mystical and philosophical contemplation (to which prophetic God-seeing mystics and philosophers of all epochs attest). But the authentic revelation concerning the compatibility of eternity and becoming, of the divine and the creaturely in man, is given by the Church. This life in Christ – where "not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20); this gracious illumination by the Spirit, from which man is born spiritually; and generally, this *deification,* already begun in the militant Church – gives man the experience of his two united natures, of this union of divine eternity and creaturely becoming. But an immeasurable difference certainly exists between creaturely man, who knows the divine principle only as a gift and a task to be accomplished, and the God-Man, who has this divine life as His proper nature and human becoming as the work of salvific love and self-humiliation. That which in man is always an ascent is, in the God-Man, only a divine condescension. The union of the two natures in Christ is therefore not only an abstract dogmatic schema but also a truth of life that we receive on the pathways of our religious experience.

Understood in this way, the dogma of the duality of the natures in Christ in the case of their unity of life in the one hypostasis of the Logos is also revealed to us by the four negative definitions. Their general meaning consists in establishing the inseparability and inconfusability of the two natures as uncreated principle and created principle. They are *inseparable* in the unity of Christ's life, for they do not differ but are identical in their content as noumenon and phenomenon, as foundation and consequence, as the principle and the revelation of the principle. This in-

separability is not an external and arbitrary given – it is the immanent, inwardly motivated norm of the interrelation of the Divine Sophia and the creaturely Sophia, who are united in the unity of the life of the incarnate Logos. But the norm of *inconfusability* is no less immanent or inwardly motivated, for how can time and eternity, unchangeability and becoming, be confused (i.e, mixed or mechanically combined)? They therefore have their norm of interrelation, which permits neither their conjunction in the same ontological plane nor their mixing or alternation. An additional notion is implied by the four negative definitions: the unchangeability of the natures. This is only another way to express their inconfusability, for illegtimate fusion can change the natures. Unchangeability is already implied by inconfusability, and the union of the two natures, in virtue of which the Logos became Christ, is neither their change nor their confusion.

But at the same time it is impossible not to see that the two united natures do not possess an equal dignity, for one of them is uncreated, whereas the other is created, and this difference is reflected in the character of their interrelation. Although they are inseparable, they are not equal. The primacy of the divine nature is also manifested in the fact that the hypostasis of the Logos belongs precisely to it. The dogma of the Sixth Ecumenical Council concerning the two wills underscores this inequality of the natures by noting that human will, despite its autonomy, "follows" the divine will.

The assumption by the Logos of the human nature is associated with human nature's sophianicity. This sophianicity is precisely that *tertium comparationis* in which the image and the Proto-Image are identified with each other. However, we know that the human nature's sophianicity, which is ontologically indestructible, was damaged in its being by the power of original sin; and the world, sophianic in its foundation, became asophianic and even partly antisophianic in the mode of its being. Thus, can the "fallen Sophia," which is the human nature in the state of sin, be received into the hypostasis of the Logos? Is she worthy of being united with the divine nature, which possesses sophianic fullness and purity? Has the "fallen Sophia" not lost her dignity and the possibilities associated with it?

The preparation of the human race for the reception of the Incarnation was accomplished in the Old Testament church by God's providential government. This preparation was crowned by the appearance of the New Eve, the Most Pure Virgin Mary, in whom original sin was rendered impotent. The Most Pure Virgin was worthy of becoming the receptacle of

the Holy Spirit and the Mother of the Lord. This fact should also be understood from the point of view of the sophiological doctrine of the two natures in Christ. The Virgin Mary was the adequate and worthy instrument of the Incarnation because the maximal sophianization of the human nature was realized in Her by the Holy Spirit's descent upon Her at the Annunciation and at Pentecost; then, after Her death, this sophianization was manifested by Her resurrection and Her assumption to heaven. She was thus placed above Adam and Eve in their condition *before* the Fall, for She overcame the temptation of disobedience that they had not overcome: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord" (Luke 1:38). As the Mother of the Lord, She fully manifested in Herself the image of the creaturely Sophia. Mary is precisely that human nature that was worthy of being united with the divine nature of the Logos through the reception of His hypostasis. In this sense, She is truly the Theotokos. Christ could receive the human nature only through birth. But the human nature does not exist extrahypostatically. Therefore, the New Adam could come into the world only through the New Eve.

The incomprehensible blindness and insensitivity that Protestantism manifests with regard to the Most Holy Mother of God prevent it from seeing this personal participation of the Virgin Mary in the Incarnation. Protestantism sees here only a natural act of birth without any everlasting significance and without any everlasting consequences either for the Mother or for the One born of Her. Protestantism does not understand that Mariology must necessarily be included in Christology as an inseparable part of it, for Christ, as the Son of Man, is the Son of Mary. Mary is His hypostatic humanity, the "second" nature that He assumed in the Incarnation. In this sense, the Incarnation is not only a binatural union in one hypostasis but also a bihypostatic union in one nature. Christ did not bring His human nature down from heaven, and He did not create it anew from the earth; rather, He took it from "the most pure flesh and blood of the Virgin Mary." And this "taking" is not an external and mechanical borrowing or coercion on the part of the Divine omnipotence; instead, it is a mutually hypostatic act: The Logos could *take* His flesh from the Virgin Mary only because She *gave* it, desiring to become the creaturely Sophia, the sophianic Mother of Christ's humanity, which must possess the fullness of sophianicity. That which was lacking for this even in the Virgin Mary's humanity (because She too was burdened by the weight of original sin) was provided by the Holy Spirit, who descended upon Her at the Annunciation. On the one hand, this descent of the Holy Spirit depended on Her spiritual openness to Him, on Her sophianic ma-

turity, so to speak; on the other hand, His descent crowned Her sophianicity, so that the ontological postulate became a reality.

Taken in all its breadth and power, the Incarnation cannot be reduced solely to the birth of Christ, the incarnate Logos. It must also necessarily include the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Virgin Mary. We see the full image of the Incarnation only in this bi-unity: the inhumanized Christ and Mary, His hypostatic humanity, the Virgin Mother of God, overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. The human nature assumed by the Logos exists not only *in* Him but also *outside* of Him, as Mary's hypostatic humanity. (His divine nature, on the contrary, does exist only in Him.) His human nature must somehow become fused or identified with this *hypostatic* humanity; otherwise, it will not be our true humanity. The creaturely Sophia, in the capacity of Christ's human nature, is destined to be hypostatized not only in the Logos, elevated to participation in the Divine life; she is also hypostatized into her proper and therefore creaturely hypostasis. Therefore, the two natures in the one hypostasis of Christ correspond to the two hypostases that hypostatize His human nature: alongside the hypostasis of the Logos, there is the proper, creaturely hypostasis of the creaturely Sophia, the Virgin Mary. The Mother of God therefore participates in the Incarnation not only by Her flesh, which would be a natural, instinctive, unfree, uncreative, and even blind act (which is Protestantism's de facto opinion concerning this act). She also participates in it by Her hypostasis; that is, She participates in it spiritually, consciously, in an inspired and sacrificial manner. This was a new birth from the Woman – independent of the flesh of the male because it was due to a virginal conception – that conformed with the original, divinely established norm of spiritual conception and birth for the virginal couple Adam and Eve *before* the Fall. Sophianic humanity in the person of the Virgin Mary gave to the Logos His human nature, and this birth was Her personal, spiritual-corporeal work. She received the strength for this work from the Holy Spirit, who pre-eternally reposes upon the Logos and who, in the temporal birth of the Logos, overshadowed the Mother of God and brought the Logos to Her.

The divine birth is therefore the spiritual meeting of the hypostatic creaturely Sophia with the Logos, and in this meeting the hypostatic creaturely Sophia manifests herself as the Soul of the world, the Queen of all creation, of heaven and earth. This dignity is not only the *recompense* given to Her for Her services; it is also the revelation of what is immanently contained in the virginal conception of the Son overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. What does it matter if the whole meaning of what was ac-

complished did not become immediately clear to the Virgin Mary, since, as the creaturely Sophia, She too was subject to temporality and becoming? It does not matter, because that which was contained in the divine birth was already manifested in the glorification of the Most Holy Mother of God. In the capacity of the One who *gave* to the Logos His human essence, the Virgin Mary is His Most Pure Mother, the Blessed Theotokos. In the capacity of the One who *received* Him into the perfect unity of life by the self-renouncing love of the "handmaid of the Lord," She is the Bride of the Logos or His Wife, who has made Herself ready for marriage (Rev. 19:7; 21:9). In the capacity of the bearer of the creaturely human essence in its intact state, restored by the Holy Spirit, She is the personification of the Church. She is also the Queen of Heaven, who cannot remain on earth after the ascension of Her Son to heaven, and She too is raised to heaven by Her Son.[10]

Thus — and this is the most important thing — the Incarnation of Christ is realized not in one Person but in two: in Christ and in the Virgin Mary. The icon of the Mother of God with Infant is therefore the true icon of the Incarnation (and thus of the Divine-Humanity). This duality corresponds not only to the duality of the natures of Christ in their union but also to the duality of the hypostases of these natures in their separateness; and the human nature, being in-hypostatized in the Logos, must have its fullness and autonomous being prerealized in its proper hypostasis, the Virgin Mary. Thus, Christ has His humanity in a double manner: in Himself, included in His proper hypostasis, and outside of Himself, hypostatized in the female hypostasis of Mary (for His humanity is not only flesh in the physical sense; it is also a *living* humanity in the totality of its spiritual-psychical-corporeal being). Connected with this is the revelation concerning the participation in the Incarnation not only of the Second hypostasis, the one made incarnate, but also of the Third hypostasis, the one that makes incarnate: The image of the Logos is the male Infant, maturing into the image of the perfect Male, whereas the image of the Spirit-bearer is the Virgin-Mother, who bears in Herself the One who is born of Her. This part of the dogma was not *directly* stated in the Definition of Chalcedon, which did not by any means pretend to be exhaustive, but it is precontained in the glorification of the "Theotokos" at the Third Ecumenical Council, as well as in the Church's entire veneration of the Mother of God, which veneration has not been adequately explored and clarified in its dogmatics.

10. Concerning all of this, see my book *The Burning Bush*.

Christ — the incarnate Logos, who has His divine nature, Sophia, and who Himself reveals her ideal content — manifests the hypostatic image of the Heavenly Sophia in His earthly Incarnation. In this sense the Apostle calls Him "the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24). But precisely as the hypostatic Sophia, He unites in the unity of His two natures the Divine Sophia, as His Divinity, and the creaturely Sophia, as His humanity. For this reason He can be called the Wisdom of God in a double capacity: as the hypostasis of the Heavenly Sophia and of the creaturely Sophia. But the creaturely Sophia, whom He hypostatizes in His humanity, is also hypostatized in her autonomous being; this creaturely hypostasis of the creaturely Sophia is the Virgin Mary. Therefore, it is in no wise a contradiction to call both Christ and the Mother of God Sophia, although they are called Sophia in different senses. But in the Mother of God, as the Spirit-bearer, we venerate also the hypostatic revelation of the Holy Spirit (although not His incarnation). Thus, by confessing that the Mother of God is the creaturely Sophia, we attest that also the Holy Spirit — together with the Son, although differently from Him — is the hypostatic Wisdom of God.

In connection with the question of the Mother of God as the bearer of creaturely sophianicity, one can also resolve the controversial question of the Lord's *human individuality*. In entering into the world with its temporality and spatiality and in assuming the human essence, which is subject to history, the Lord also assumed an *empirical* form, became a historical individual. He was born in a particular place and at a particular time from particular parents; He belonged to a particular nation with its culture and spoke a particular language, and so on. In other words, He was a historical individual, and with respect to all empirical definition, the following principle is applicable: *omnis definitio est negatio* (all definition is negation [i.e., limitation]). He was not a Greek, Roman, or Slav, for example; and if He spoke Aramaic, this means that He did not speak other languages (perhaps not even Greek, in which language His words have come down to us). But this empirical individuality is only, so to speak, a mask of history or a formal empirical passport without which it is impossible to enter the empirical world.

In reality, Christ's individuality does not know any *ontological* limits. He was not a mere man, as one of a multitude of people. He was Man in the sense of Universal Man, and His personality contained all human forms; it was the All-Personality. There was nothing local, limited, or particular in Him. His empirical envelope was perfectly transparent and imperceptible. He was *equally* close and accessible to anyone who scrutinized

Him closely. In Jesus Christ there is truly neither Greek nor Scythian, neither slave nor free man, even neither man nor woman, since for each and for all He is the image that speaks directly to mind and heart, that penetrates into the hidden places. This is the basis of the universality of the Gospel, of its supreme all-humanity. In the person of Christ all people who come to Him will see themselves as they should be, as God desires them to be; and there is no one who will be nearer to us than He if only in our life we *meet* Christ, who is the *Neighbor* for every man. The testimony of religious experience affirms that, in Christ, we truly see the "perfect" man *(Ecce Homo),* with the fullness of humanity and without any individual limitations. It affirms that nothing human except sin is alien to Him, and therefore no man whose authentic being is contained in His humanity is alien to Him. Dogmatically, this can be expressed as follows: Christ assumed the entire human nature without any limitation. Developing this idea further, one must say that in assuming the human nature, Christ also assumed all of cosmic being, insofar as man is the microcosm. Christ was the new, "last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45). Although before the Fall our progenitor was a particular person, a concrete I, nevertheless he bore within himself the fullness of humanity: he was the universal man, and the entire human race with all its possible persons effectively lived in him. In this sense, even though he was a person, Adam did not have individuality in the negative, limiting sense of the word, in the sense of being a product of disintegrated all-unity, which has become the bad multiplicity of egocentrism. Our fallen humanity knows the personality as individuality, which we are proud of as the only form of personality accessible to us. But this was not the case at the beginning, when man was in his sophianic condition. Persons must be transparent for one another: all in all and everyone in all. That is the ontology of personality. With the Fall the image of all-humanity was obscured in Adam; he became an individual who could beget only individuals. And the firstborn of Adam was Cain, in whom egocentrism was manifested with maximal force, to the point of fratricide. Cain was the first individualist, with his descendants, the Cainites. Such an individuality is associated with the Fall, with humanity's loss of the sophianic image. But this image of sophianic humanity is realized in the New Adam; bad individuality is overcome in Him ("I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him [the Father] that sent me" [John 6:38]; "if any man will come after me, let him deny himself" [Matt. 16:24] — such are the principles of the new life in Christ).

Empirically, Christ is one of many in historical mankind, but in reality He contains all of historical mankind in His humanity. That which is revealed in history in chronological succession is conjoined in Him in metaphysical unity: All humanity without any exception is contained in Him — the humanity of the past, of the present, and of the future. All of human nature is metaphysically integrated in His nature, and all the human persons called to being find themselves in their authenticity in the person of Christ. This metaphysical fact, this ontological relation, remains transcendent for the sinful, fragmented state of man; it is only a religious postulate. Nevertheless, this metaempirical fact is realized for us even in empirical reality, and this postulate is nothing other than the Church, the body of Christ, in which "Christ is all, and in all" (Col. 3:11).

In order to redeem the entire human essence and to transform the entire human race, the Lord had to assume human flesh. This flesh was Adam's, but He took it not from the fallen Adam but in another manner: "in the likeness [*homoiōmati*] of men" (Phil. 2:7). Christ did not assume the human essence in the manner that every man has it; His assumption of the human essence was not limited, truncated, or egocentric — in a word, it was not *individual* or atomistic. He assumed it in the manner in which it was possessed by the original Adam, who came out of the hands of the Lord. That is, He assumed it *integrally,* and this nature, this "flesh," was given to Christ by His Most Pure Mother. The negative condition for this was the absence of human conception "in sin," that is, conception without a father. Original sin is transmitted precisely through human conception, and with it are transmitted bad multiplicity, egocentrism, and limitation. The absence of natural conception was compensated for by the Holy Spirit, who inspired the Virgin Mary to spiritual conception, which consisted in the fact that self-renouncing love for the One who was to be born flamed up in the One who was giving birth. This love for the Son led to a total commonality of life, and even of corporeal life (i.e., conception without seed). However, a positive condition was necessary for this: The proper nature of the Most Holy Theotokos with Her personal and generic holiness was restored in its sophianicity and purified and integrated to a such a degree that the descent upon Her of the Holy Spirit could occur, communicating perfect sophianicity to Her. When the Most Holy Virgin Mary gave birth to the Lord, She bore within Herself the image of Sophia; She was the personification of the creaturely Sophia. The fruit of Her birth-giving was thus the sophianic man, the New Adam, who was distinguished from all men by the *form* of His humanity. This was true humanity, identical with the humanity of each of us (which is why we are Christ's "brethren" [Heb. 2:12]), but it differs from our humanity by the fact that it

excludes no one and includes everyone, by the fact that it is not limited by anything but bears the image of chaste and wise Integrity. And it was the Virgin Mary who gave this to Her Son.

Protestant Christology allows that, in His human essence, Christ necessarily includes the whole Adam. Otherwise, the redemption of the whole human race would be totally incomprehensible: the individual man — the partial man, so to speak — cannot have such a significance. But because of its insensitivity to the Mother of God, Protestant Christology cannot understand *how* Christ could have assumed all of humanity. It has to attribute this to a miraculous coercion over man's nature, to a *deus ex machina,* but such a hypothesis inevitably leads to docetism: Christ assumed an essence that was different from the human essence, and as a result He was not a true man and therefore could not be the Redeemer. Catholic theology, in its 1854 dogma of the immaculate conception, introduces this element of divine coercion over the human nature into the very origin of the Virgin Mary, who is thus extracted from the human race. This shakes the whole edifice of the Incarnation. However, the universal veneration of the Mother of God in Catholicism is better testimony to Her significance in the work of our salvation than this unsuccessful dogma.[11] The Orthodox veneration of the Mother of God as the Queen of Heaven and the creaturely Sophia contains sufficient grounds for a dogmatic understanding of the idea that humanity as a whole could be assumed only from the One in whom it was restored in its sophianic image. However, Orthodox theology has yet to dogmatically clarify the treasure of revelation about the Mother of God that is contained in the Church's veneration of Her; this is partly because of antagonism to sophiology and partly because of tendentiousness in the polemic against Catholic one-sidedness. And so, we still await dogmatic clarification of the significance of the Mother of God as the creaturely Sophia, who in the capacity of Sophia was thus able to give the sophianic image of integral humanity to the One born of Her. Thus, the objective interrelation of the two natures in Christ and the foundation of their union consist in their *sophianicity:* the Divine Sophia is united with the creaturely Sophia, the Eternal Sophia with the becoming Sophia, the Proto-Image with the image.

Such is the *yes* implied by the four *no's* of the Chalcedonian dogma.

11. She is sometimes even called the co-redemptrix. This is an imprecise and ambiguous expression, although it could mean that the Most Holy Mother of God participates directly and positively in the Incarnation in the capacity of the reception of the integral Adam.

There remains a final question about the two natures in Christ: the question of their union. The Chalcedonian dogma limits itself to establishing the fact of the presence of two natures in Christ in one person, but it does not touch upon the mode of their union. This question remains the subject of theological investigation. One must first summarize what had been done and — more importantly — what had not been done with regard to this question in the patristic period. Although it is customary to consider (or at least to give the impression) that all the christological questions have, in substance, been decided, this is in fact far from the truth, especially with regard to the most central point: the Gospel figure of Jesus Christ in the light of the dogmatic definitions established by the Church. It is still necessary to compare and to harmonize, so to speak, the christological dogmas and the Gospels with the aim of elucidating the biblical meaning of the dogmas. We find ourselves here in virtually unexplored territory, and the situation is made more acute by the fact that the "Bibleism" on which the modern Christian consciousness has been nurtured (an unparalleled investigation of biblical texts having been conducted in the modern period with all its exegetical capacities) makes us particularly sensitive to any lack of harmony and to any obscurity in this regard.

The Chalcedonian dogma does not touch upon the mode of the union of the two natures, but from this dogma there indisputably follows the fact of the *unity of the life* of Christ in two natures, but with one hypostasis living in both of them. How should one understand this composite life in relation to the participation of the two natures? In and of itself, this duality of the natures of one life presents unprecedented difficulties for thought, since the life of the natural world does not know such a duality. But the main difficulty here is that these two natures belong to different domains of being: divine and creaturely. How can they be harmonized? How can they act together and interact? How can the fire of Divinity engulf, without consuming, the "burning bush" of creaturely being, and how can this creaturely being ascend to a condition where it is harmonized with the life of the divine nature? Do we not have an incompatibility here that makes this very inquiry illusory, an exercise in myth-making similar to the numerous pagan myths concerning the descent of gods to earth and their union with mortals?

After the dogma of the two natures in one hypostasis was established, the center of gravity of Christology, the core of its problematic, was found precisely here, in the problem of divine-human life as it is revealed to us in the Gospels. We already know from the history of dogma what attempts were made to treat this problem of the mode of the union

of the two natures. The first attempt that merits attention is, of course, Apollinarianism. Apollinarius resolved this question by effectively depriving the human essence of hypostasis. *Formally,* he did not do this to a greater degree than Alexandrianism and Chalcedonianism, insofar as he effectively understood the hypostasis of the Logos as a human hypostasis. However, the intention of his Christology was not to manifest the hypostasis of the Logos *also* as a human hypostasis, but to abolish with this hypostasis the human hypostasis and thus to diminish the fullness of Christ's humanity, so that one would no longer be able to recognize the presence of the "perfect man" in it.

Apollinarius's doctrine is the nodal point, as it were, from which the paths diverge in different directions: in the direction of Alexandrianism and various nuances of monophysitism and in the direction of the Chalcedonian theology (only not in the direction of Antiochianism). Alexandrian theology with St. Cyril at its head was full of a sincere striving to demonstrate the truth of the Incarnation as the authentic union of Divinity with authentic (not imaginary or docetic) humanity. In practical terms, however, the dogmatic equilibrium could be maintained here only by means of inconsistency or logical irresponsibility. Cyrillian theology was characterized by a tendency to monophysitism, which St. Cyril resisted but which, after him, became a type of Eutychianism that dissolved the humanity in the Divinity and understood the relation of the two natures in terms of a fire consuming brushwood.

The second approach to resolving the problem of the two natures of Christ can be found in the school of Antioch. It sought the solution to the problem of the bi-unity in an original duality — not only of the natures, but also of the hypostases, which, via moral union, harmony in love, form a new hypostasis: the hypostasis of union. This last idea constitutes, without doubt, the weak side of Antiochianism, attesting to a meager conception of personality.

According to the Antiochene conception, the christological problem involves the unification of two subjects that have not only different hypostases but also different natures, whereas in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, as well as in the doctrine of the Church, we have a multihypostatic unification in the case of the unity and identity of nature and life, although the nature is hypostatized not by one but by many hypostases. This difference has a decisive significance, and it shows the Antiochene schema's inadequacy for understanding the union of the two natures in Christ. The union of different subjects with different natures, in particular the relation of man to God, is accomplished on the basis of a mutual

penetration of the natures, or more precisely on the basis of the entering of one nature into the other (which is what we have in the *deification* of man), but with the absolute difference between the hypostases preserved. In relation to God, man does not in any sense lose his personal I; it is not extinguished in the light of God or drowned in His abyss. Even when there is perfect deification, man's relation to God is that of person to Person, of I to Thou. Nor does churchly love, uniting many hypostases in multi-unity, abolish personality; rather, it reveals it.

The Definition of Chalcedon gave a dogmatic schema, but it did not provide anything toward a dogmatic interpretation of this schema. It left such an interpretation for subsequent theology.[12] But the patristic thought of the epoch did little to clarify the Chalcedonian dogma of the two natures; specifically, it failed to elucidate the *mode* of the union of the natures in relation to one hypostasis. The patristic thought went in different directions and attempted to use different means to resolve the question. But failing to achieve any palpable success, it finally reached a point of exhaustion and even abandoned the domain of Christology.

On this subject, however, a highly significant word was pronounced that was capable of becoming the true banner of a future Christology. This was literally only a single word in a letter from Pseudo-Dionysius to Gaius: "theandric energy." "Theandric" means "divine-human," and so the word *divine-humanity* was pronounced as a certain key to the mystery. And this word, which expresses the initial concept of modern Christology (and which was already contained in a concealed manner in Apollinarius's doctrine), was heard at once. St. John of Damascus received it as an indisputable and self-evident doctrine (although it expresses only the beginning of the christological problematic), and he devoted a paragraph to it in book 3 of his *Critical Exposition of the Orthodox Faith,* where we find an extended commentary on this term. Through John of Damascus, the idea of "divine-human action" was received as a kind of *dogmatic testament* of the entire patristic epoch, but to this day it remains a capital that is yet to be exploited.

The idea did find partial application, however, in the doctrine of *metadosis tōn idiōmatōn* (*communicatio idiomatum,* or communication of properties). John of Damascus also devotes particular attention to this doctrine. He interprets the communication of properties, first of all, as

12. Alexander Bruce calls the image of Christ prevalent in this epoch "an anatomic figure in place of the Christ of the Gospel history." (See Bruce, *The Humiliation of Christ,* p. 66.)

the influence of the divine essence on the human essence as the result of the union of two unequal natures: the human nature receives certain properties of the divine essence, which is called deification *(theōsis)*.

The general theme of deification can be treated from the christological or from the pneumatological point of view. John treats it only from the christological (and of course indisputable) point of view, in relation to the perfect sanctification of the human essence of the Lord Jesus, as a result of which He is venerated, without distinction, both in His divine essence and in His human essence. Here, it is of course necessary to distinguish between the Lord's abiding *in statu exinanitionis* and His abiding *in statu exaltationis,* between His humiliation and His glorification, which John does not do. However, when applied to deification, the principle of *communicatio idiomatum,* which in itself is indisputable, can receive a correct interpretation only when it is also considered from the point of view of the influence of the human essence upon the divine essence. But here the discussion becomes totally obscure. When St. John of Damascus (as well as the entire scholastic theology that is based on his ideas) considers the influence of the human nature on the Divine, he does not go beyond vague generalities. John is content to affirm that, alongside His divine nature, the Logos receives or assumes a human nature that is external and foreign to Him; this nature is a habitation or garment for Him, or a necessary means for the redemption of that which He has received. The two natures are *statically* juxtaposed, so to speak, without any internal interrelation. But the two natures are, in essence, unequal. Thus, the divine nature influences the human nature, deifying it (just as fire makes iron red-hot), but there is no reverse influence of the human nature, no dynamic interaction. In reality, therefore, we get neither "theandric" energy nor communication of properties here. The duality of the natures is not overcome, and the only practical conclusion here is a more or less veiled monophysitism.

Patristic theology thus did not find its way to a doctrine of the God-Man and Divine-Humanity. It knew only God and man, Divinity and humanity, outwardly conjoined but not inwardly united. It should also be noted that the state of affairs created by the Definition of Chalcedon was not altered by the definition of the Sixth Ecumenical Council concerning two energies and two wills. Promulgated in a period when christological thought was in decline and lacking sufficient theological preparation, this definition was only a new and triumphant confirmation of the Chalcedonian dogma and a certain concretization thereof. It did not introduce new elements of the problem, which is true to an even greater degree for the theology of the dogma of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. These two definitions proclaimed inspired truths, but they left them in the form of dogmatic schemata for future theological development.

The union of the divine and human essences, understood not statically but dynamically, inevitably leads us to ask *how* this union was accomplished and *what* it represented for Divinity and for humanity. To be sure, a certain general and preliminary answer to these questions was offered by patristic theology, in particular by St. Cyril. The reception of the lower essence by the higher, of the human essence by the divine, clearly represents a certain condescension on the part of Divinity, a humiliation, a kenosis. This is so clearly indicated by Holy Scripture that its testimony is impossible to miss. Patristic thought also developed a doctrine of the Incarnation as the kenosis of Divinity (we find this not only in St. Cyril but even prior to him, in the Western writings, particularly in St. Hilary). However, given the static understanding of the Incarnation and the general lack of clarity that reigned in Christology and that led to constant deviations toward docetism (particularly in Cyril and Hilary), the most that can be said about the idea of kenosis is that it was affirmed but not developed in the patristic theology. However, the entire christological problematic of the Chalcedonian dogma necessarily leads to the doctrine of the *kenosis* of Divinity in the Incarnation, which indeed is the foundation and premise of this problematic.

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