

SEVERUS OF ANTIOCH: EASTERN AND ORIENTAL ORTHODOX PERSPECTIVES

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Severus of Antioch (c465-538) is one of the key figures in the study of the development of post-Chalcedonian Christology and, consequently, also for our modern dialogue. It is with Severus' place both in history and in our contemporary theological dialogue that this paper is concerned.

In his life and work, Severus struggled against two opposing tendencies. On the one hand, his first major treatise, the *Philalethes* (c508-511), was written against the anonymous pro-Chalcedon *Florilegium Cyrillianum*, a list of extracts from the writings of Cyril attempting to demonstrate that Cyril had spoken of two natures after the union. This was then followed by his treatises against the monk Nephalius, who had attempted, more thematically, to combine dyophysite and monophysite Christology, and, about a decade later, by his work *Against the Impious Grammarian*, that is, John of Caesarea, who was also looking for a resolution between Chalcedon and the teaching of Severus, again on the basis of Cyril. On the other hand, however, after his flight to Egypt in 518, Severus found himself in a position of having to contend against those non-Chalcedonians who, as he saw it, had misunderstood in various ways the basic Cyrillian *mia physis* christology, that is, Julian of Halicarnassus with his assertion that Christ's body was incorruptible before the resurrection, and the extreme monophysitism of Sergius.

This two-sided defence, against both Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian theologians, had a two-fold effect. Firstly, Severus forged, in a clear, precise and consistent manner, the terminology and expression for Cyrillian *mia physis* christology, in a way which thereafter became standard for the non-Chalcedonian tradition. It was Severus, more than any other, who, as Lebon put it, transformed the *mia physis* formula of Cyril from a battle cry to a philosophical

formula.¹ Secondly, and perhaps unexpectedly, it was his considered attack against the Chalcedonian theologians who were tentatively trying to reclaim Cyril, that prompted the further development of what has since become known as "neo-Chalcedonian" theology.² Indeed, in the estimation of Samuel, the Christology maintained by "neo-Chalcedonianism" is essentially that worked out by Severus in his two-fold activity: "If the key role which he played in this field has not been recognized by the Chalcedonian side, that is because of misunderstanding, if not of prejudice."³

In the last years of his life it seemed that reconciliation between the two sides was possible. In the winter of 534/5, Severus finally accepted Justinian's invitations to attend the conferences which he was hosting in Constantinople. Severus and Anthimus, who had just been transferred from Trebizond to Constantinople, managed to come to an agreement on the substance of Christology. However, the arrival of Pope Agapetus in Constantinople in 536, requesting Justinian's aid against the Goths, reversed the situation; Anthimus resigned the patriarchal throne and Menas was consecrated by Pope Agapetus in his place. At a synod from May to June of that year, Severus and his companions were condemned.⁴ The synod was then confirmed by an edict of the Emperor on the grounds that he had fallen into both Nestorianism and Eutychianism (!),⁵ his books were banned and he was banished.⁶ This was followed by his condemnation, along with Dioscorus, at the Council of Constantinople in 680-1. With the help of Theodora, Severus managed to return to Egypt, where two years later, according to Athanasius, "the Lord visited him with a light disorder, and ... he fell asleep," joining the company of holy fathers.⁷

¹J. Lebon, "La christologie du monophysisme syrien," in A. Grillmeier and H. Bracht eds., *Das Konzil von Chalkedon*, vol.1 (Würzburg, 1951), 450.

²Cf esp. C. Moeller, "Le chalcédonisme et le néo-chalcédonisme en Orient de 451 à la fin du VI^e siècle," in *Das Konzil von Chalkedon*, 669.

³V.C. Samuel, "The Christology of Severus of Antioch," *Abba Salama*, 4 (1973), 132.

⁴For a discussion concerning the various charges raised against Severus at this synod, and later at the Council of Constantinople 680-81, cf. V.C. Samuel, "Further Studies in the Christology of Severus of Antioch," *Ekklesiastikos Pharos*, 58:3-4 (1976), esp. 283-296.

⁵ACO3, 121.5-9.

⁶*Ibid*, lines 22-27, 30-34.

⁷PO 4.716.

Although continuously revered as a Father by the non-Chalcedonian churches, it is only during the course of this century that Severus' christology, and his place within history, has come to be appreciated anew. At the beginning of this century, the Russian church historian Bolotov acknowledged that if Severus condemned Chalcedon, he did so not because he considered that the Council's phrase "in two natures" was itself heretical, as it was held by some more extreme monophysites, but because he regarded this as being a "one-sided, clumsy choice of dogmatic words" when compared to the more traditional expressions of Cyril of Alexandria.⁸ The most important work on Severus in the early part of this century was the extensive and systematic investigation of Lebon.⁹ He concluded his study by asserting that the Christology of the non-Chalcedonians, as represented by Severus, was "absolutely correct and complete," and that there is no Westerner "who would not accept and defend, as they do, the unity of the incarnate nature after the union, if one understands by the term 'nature' the concrete and individual reality that is otherwise designated by the term 'person.'"¹⁰ Nevertheless, despite acknowledging that Severus had carefully differentiated himself from the monophysitism of Eutyches and Sergius, Lebon, with a certain lack of sensitivity, continued to refer to the Christology of Severus as "monophysitism."

The most important stage of the Chalcedonian reassessment of the Christology of Severus began, of course, in 1964 with the first of four Unofficial Consultations between Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian theologians, and then in 1989 with the first of three meetings of the Joint Commission. Building upon the work of earlier scholars, and with contributions now from both traditions, the theologians present began, from the first meeting, to recognize the basic unity they shared with regard to Christology, despite the various formulae used to express the same truth. This modern consensus, as was earlier anticipated by both Severus and the "neo-Chalcedonian" theologians, was grounded upon the fundamentally Cyrillian basis and perspective of each tradition.

Already by the time of the second Unofficial Consultation,

⁸See the use of Bolotov made by N.A. Zabolotsky, "The Christology of Severus of Antioch," *Ekklesiastikos Pharos*, 58:3-4 (1976), 357-386; the quotation is given on p.358, fn.5.

⁹J. Lebon, *Le Monophysisme Sévérien*, (Louvain, 1909), and "La christologie du monophysisme syrien," in *Das Konzil von Chalkedon*, 425-580.

¹⁰"La christologie du monophysisme syrien," p.575.

discussion had progressed to the point of asking about what, given this Christological consensus, was the status of the four Councils, from Chalcedon to Second Nicaea, not regarded as Ecumenical by the non-Chalcedonians, and what should be done about the various anathemas placed by each side upon the other. A further problem arising from this concerned the delicate issue of "tradition," both in the sense that it has now become a "tradition" for the non-Chalcedonians to reject Chalcedon and for the Chalcedonians to reject those rejecting Chalcedon, but more importantly in the sense of what Zizioulas, at the third Unofficial Consultation, called "the problem of traditional minimalism"¹¹: to what extent, and in what way, are the Councils of the Church part of the tradition of the Church, such that we can now reevaluate, or historically contextualize, some of their pronouncements, in order to enter into communion with other Churches who have a different historical expression, if not theological content, for their tradition? On what basis can this be done?

Whilst the issue of the meaning of "tradition" was never further addressed directly, and this is certainly beyond the scope of this paper, the resolution of the predicament involved a careful differentiation between the Council itself and the faith that it proclaimed: both Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians condemn the teaching attributed to Eutyches, but the latter do not do so on the basis of the Fourth Council; both sides have continued in the same faith, but differ in their acceptance or rejection of certain Councils, indeed, for both of them to maintain the same faith, historical circumstances have required them to speak in different terms.¹² It is in this sense that section 8 of the Second Agreed Statement, issued in 1990, stated:

Both families accept the first three Ecumenical Councils, which form our common heritage. In relation to the four later Councils of

¹¹J.D. Zizioulas, "Ecclesiological Issues Inherent in the Relations between Eastern Chalcedonian and Oriental non-Chalcedonian Churches," *GOTR* 16.1&2 (1971), 144-162.

¹²Cf. esp. G. Konidaris, "The Inner Continuity and Coherence of the Trinitarian and Christological Dogma in the Seven Ecumenical Councils," *GOTR* 13.2 (1968), 263-73, and K.N. Kella, "Do the Four Later Councils Prevent Reconciliation by the Orthodox Churches?" *Ibid.*, 278-82; and the later reflection by P. Verghese, "Ecclesiological Issues Concerning the Relation of Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches," *GOTR* 16.1&2 (1971), 133-143.

the Orthodox Church, the Orthodox state that for them the above points 1-7 [the kernel of the agreed Christological position – JB] are the teachings also of the four later Councils of the Orthodox Church, while the Oriental Orthodox consider this statement of the Orthodox as their interpretation. With this understanding, the Oriental Orthodox respond to it positively.¹³

That is, the four later Councils are regarded by the Eastern Orthodox Church as an interpretation of the faith of the first three Councils, which, while not adding anything to that common faith, nevertheless clarify certain points in response to particular developments within the Chalcedonian Church. As these developments were not necessarily paralleled within the non-Chalcedonian Churches, the acceptance of these later Councils is not required of the Oriental Orthodox, yet they respond favourably towards them. On the basis of this, the Agreed Statement then goes on to propose that the anathemas and condemnations against each other should be lifted, "on the basis that the Councils and fathers previously anathematized or condemned are not heretical." (Section 10).

The point of this digression into the conclusions of the Unofficial and Official dialogues is not to comment on them themselves – this is the topic for others more competent than myself, later this morning – but to set the context for discussing a particular aspect of the Christology of Severus. Whilst the issues addressed by the Council of Constantinople in 680/1 may be particular to the Chalcedonian tradition, and as such may not need to be formally recognized by the non-Chalcedonian Churches, the question must be asked whether the theology which it affirms, that of the reality of a human will and energy together with the divine will and energy in Christ, is indeed also affirmed, at least implicitly, by those traditions which stand outside of this development?

Already in response to the first Unofficial Consultation, this question was raised by Trembelas and Verhovskoy.¹⁴ However apart from one paper giving a brief historical survey of the Monothelite controversy,¹⁵ this issue was never fully addressed. Nevertheless, in

¹³Text given in *St. Nersess Theological Review* 1:1 (1996), 106.

¹⁴Cf. Met. Emilianos, "From Aarhus to Bristol," and P.N. Trembelas, "Some Observations on the Aarhus Consultations," *GOTR* 13.2 (1968), 137-42, 143-47.

¹⁵P. Verghese, "The Monothelite Controversy - A Historical Survey," *GOTR* 13.2 (1968), 196-208.

the Second Agreed Statement of the Joint Commission, it is asserted that both families affirm that the Hypostasis of the Logos became composite (σύνθετος), by uniting to His divine nature, with its natural will and energy, a created human nature with its natural will and energy; that these are united hypostatically, without confusion, change, division or separation, but distinguished in thought alone; and that it is the Hypostasis of the Logos incarnate who alone wills and acts (sections 3-5). This certainly reflects the Christology of Severus as it is presented by the non-Chalcedonian theologians, in particular V.C. Samuel, but, it must be admitted that this does not reflect his Christology as it is presented in the standard Orthodox textbooks on the subject nor by the latest tome in the already voluminous work *Christ in Christian Tradition* by A. Grillmeier. The late Fr. John Meyendorff, in his book *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, presented Severus as being a forerunner of monoenergism, thereby casting a doubt on his teaching concerning the reality of the human nature of Christ.¹⁶ Grillmeier goes even further: "Without a doubt Severus already contributes to the monoenergist, monothelite controversy of the seventh century." For this particular "slant" of Severus, Grillmeier spurns Severus as offering "little help in constructing a modern Christology with a stronger appreciation of the uncurtailed humanity of Christ."¹⁷ By this expression, Grillmeier seems to demand a Christology in which the human will of Christ is seen as spontaneous and autonomous, a "principle of choosing which functions by itself," and, ultimately, possessing its own consciousness.¹⁸

Grillmeier's presuppositions about what constitutes an adequate Christology are all too clear from his comments. However, this acknowledgment does not soften the fact that such works now form the basic textbooks introducing students to the Christology of Severus and others. As such, and as a very practical contribution towards reconciliation and mutual understanding, it is incumbent on scholars of both traditions to investigate such issues thoroughly and to produce satisfactory, and recognized, textbooks establishing their position.

The suspicion that there might be a possible implicit monoenergism in the Christology of Severus seems, in fact, to be based

¹⁶ *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, (rev. ed. SVS, 1975), 43.

¹⁷ A. Grillmeier, with T. Hainthaler, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol.2, pt.2, *The Church of Constantinople in the Sixth Century*, (London: Mowbray, 1995), 149, my emphasis.

¹⁸ Cf. *Ibid* p.152, 168-9.

on a misunderstanding parallel to that of earlier accusations of his "monophysitism." In giving a brief sketch of how this is so, there is one further issue that I would like to raise, concerning the identity of the hypostasis of Christ in Severus' Christology and in "neo-Chalcedonian" Christology.

For Severus, the term *ousia*, essence, applies to that which is common or generic, and *hypostasis* to that which is particular, while *physis*, nature, can apply to either: inclusively, for instance, to all mankind, or particularly to one individual human being.¹⁹ The *ousia* of a being is not simply an abstraction, it is real: it is what a particular being is; but it does not, however, have concrete existence in or of itself – for everything concrete is particular. The *ousia* is, as it were, the reality which is particularized or individuated as particular, individual objects or hypostases. With regard to the final important term in Christology, *prosopon*, Severus gives it a slightly different emphasis than hypostasis: while the individuated *ousia*, the hypostasis, represents the internal reality of a particular object, the *prosopon* designates its external aspect.²⁰

One final distinction must be drawn for a proper understanding of Severus' Christology: that is, the distinction between a "simple" and a "composite" hypostasis.²¹ As an example of a simple hypostasis, Severus gives the three Persons of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and as an example of a composite hypostasis, a human being, such as Peter or John, who are composed of body and soul. In a human being, the *ousia* of the body and the *ousia* of the soul, as generic realities, are individuated together in a union of both, while each remaining what they are according to their own principle. However, it is not simply as two *ousiai* that the body and soul are brought together in union, but rather as hypostases – that is, as individuated *ousiai*, but *ousiai* which have been individuated by one and the same unifying act:

The body and the soul of which a man is composed, each of them preserves its hypostasis, without either being confused, or changed over to, the other. Since, however, they have come into concrete existence in composition and not separately, to neither of

¹⁹ Cf. Ep.5, PO 12.195-6.

²⁰ Cf. Samuel, "The Christology of Severus of Antioch," 136.

²¹ Cf. *C. imp. Gram Or.2.4, CSCO 111, p.76-77.*

them can a distinct prosopon be assigned.²²

The body of a particular man has never, and never will, exist outside of the union with the soul, the union in which both ousiai are particularized or concretized; the body is not, what Severus describes as a "self-subsistent" (ἰδιοσυστάτως) hypostasis, as are simple hypostases, such as the Father and the Holy Spirit, who exist in their own right.²³ Only in and through this union does the composite hypostasis of man acquire a prosopon. If the body had come into existence by itself, it would be a simple self-subsisting hypostasis or nature, with its own prosopon.

A human being, as a "composite hypostasis," or alternatively a "composite nature," is the result of the union of two individuated ousiai, and as such can be described as being "from two natures" or "from two hypostases." But as these two ousiai are individuated together, through the same union, resulting in one and the same prosopon, a human being cannot be said to be "in two natures" or "hypostases." This, for Severus, is the essential characteristic of the hypostatic or natural union:

The particularity of the natural union is that the hypostases are in composition and are perfect without diminution, but refuse to continue in an individual existence so as to be numbered two and to have its own prosopon impressed upon each of them...²⁴

A natural or hypostatic union of two natures or hypostases results in a composite nature or hypostasis, with its prosopon; although the individuated ousiai remain undiminished and fully real, they can no longer be counted as two – they only exist in the one unity. The duality can be perceived, according to Severus, like most post-Chalcedonian Christology, in thought alone (τῇ θεωρίᾳ μόνῃ).²⁵ In contrast to this natural or hypostatic union, a prosopic union results in

²²*Ibid*, cited in Samuel, "The Christology of Severus of Antioch," 136.

²³Cf Ep. 2, PO 12.189-190.

²⁴Ep. 15, PO 12.210.

²⁵In Lebon's somewhat extreme estimation this implies that there the distinction is merely a "creation of the intellect," rather than a reality in the object itself. "La Christologie du monophysisme syrien," 500.

no more than a union of love or association between two self-subsisting hypostases, each with their own prosopa – for example the fellowship in apostleship of Peter and Paul.²⁶

Building upon such analyses, Severus presents his Christology in the following terms²⁷: When the simple hypostasis of the Word of God, who is before all things, united manhood to himself, it is not possible that a specific prosopon could be ascribed to either the Godhead of the Word nor to the manhood which is united unchangeably to the Word. Both the Godhead and the manhood are only perceived in their composition, not as having concrete existence apart from each other. It is by the coming together, in a natural or hypostatic union, of the Godhead and manhood, each remaining without change or diminution, that the one composite hypostasis of the incarnate Word receives His prosopon. As Severus writes in ep.15:

For those hypostases or natures, being in composition without diminution, and not existing separately and in individual existence, make up one prosopon of the one Lord and Christ and Son, and the one incarnate nature and hypostasis of the Word.²⁸

The "one" of the Cyrillian *mia physis* formula cannot, for Severus, any more than it can for Cyril himself,²⁹ be separated from the qualifying term, "incarnate." It is a unity of two natures, or, for Severus, two hypostases, which results, not in their undifferentiated merger, but in the "one incarnate nature," or the one composite nature or hypostasis.

That Severus speaks quite plainly of the union "from two hypostases," is probably what gave occasion to the charge levelled at him by Justinian – that he has fallen, somehow, into the opposite errors of Nestorianism and Eutychianism. It is interesting to note that a similar charge of "sounding Nestorian" was made by Romanides in response to Samuel's papers presenting the Christology of Severus at the Unofficial Consultations in Aarhus and Bristol.³⁰ For those not familiar with the particularities of Severus' language, it must indeed seem so.

²⁶Cf Ep. 2, PO 12.189-190.

²⁷Cf Samuel, "The Christology of Severus of Antioch," 137.

²⁸PO 12.210.

²⁹Cf esp. ep.46.4 (the second letter to Succensus), cited by Severus, to demonstrate this point, in ep.2, PO 12.193.

³⁰Cf GOTR 10:4 (1964-5), 52, and 13:2 (1968), 166-7.

However, a further, more important, issue was raised by Samuel in his subsequent publications, to which I alluded earlier: the question concerning the identity of the hypostasis of Christ in Severan and "neo-Chalcedonian" Christology. Samuel is emphatic that Severus draws a clear distinction between the hypostasis of the Word of God and the hypostasis of Christ: "the hypostasis of Christ is not simply the hypostasis of God the Son, but it is the hypostasis of God the Son in His incarnate state,"³¹ that is, it is the composite hypostasis formed from the union between God and man in the Incarnation. Severus states his position emphatically:

The natures and the hypostases, of which He has been composed, are perceived irreducibly and unchangeably in the union. But it is not possible to recognize a prosopon for each of them, because they did not come into being dividedly either in specific concretion or in duality. For He is one hypostasis from both, and one prosopon conjointly, and one nature of God the Word incarnate.³²

In asserting that "they did not come into being dividedly," so that one cannot recognize a prosopon for each separately, Severus is clearly not denying the eternality of the Word of God: what he is insisting upon, however, is that the one composite hypostasis of Christ, with its one prosopon, is the result of the union, the Incarnation.

In the Second Agreed Statement, it is affirmed that both families agree that "the *Hypostasis* of the Logos became composite (σύνθετος) as a result of the Incarnation, and that it is the "one *Hypostasis* of the Logos incarnate" who alone wills and acts (section 4, 5) – statements which fully accord with Severus' position. However, the basic axiom in modern Orthodox presentations of "neo-Chalcedonian" Christology is the complete identification of the hypostasis of union with the pre-existent hypostasis of the Word.³³ This is, of course, worked out through the doctrine of the *enhypostasia*: the Word of God, at the incarnation, assumed human nature or ousia, which was without its own hypostasis, and gave it His own hypostasis, "hypostatizing

human nature into His own hypostasis."³⁴ Although John of Damascus, when discussing the hypostatic union, refers in passing to the union of the two natures "in one composite hypostasis,"³⁵ it is more characteristic of the post-Chalcedonian writers to deny the very possibility of a composite hypostasis, and to speak instead of the "properties" of the hypostasis of the Word as becoming more composite through the Incarnation: of the three Persons of the Trinity, the Word alone is now visible and palpable.³⁶

Samuel raises certain questions concerning this theory of *enhypostasia* as viewed from a Severan perspective³⁷: firstly, does it ensure anything more than the mere presence of an abstract human nature in Christ? And secondly, if human nature is incapable of existing by itself without its own hypostasis, does its subsistence in the hypostasis of the Word of God, who is beyond all the spatial and temporal limitations of the created world, actually make Jesus Christ a concrete reality in this world? If one really accepts what is implied by the theory of *enhypostasia*, could Jesus Christ have lived in this world at all?

Clearly these are serious questions, which it is beyond the scope of this presentation to resolve. It is possible that the problem might simply be due to continued terminological misunderstandings, or, alternatively, that it is the result of different ways of expressing the same truth. Yet the issues raised cannot be ignored.

Returning to the question of a possible latent monoenergism in the Christology of Severus. I have mentioned how Severus emphatically affirms the unimpaired continuity of the two realities out of which the

³⁴As expressed by Leontius of Jerusalem, cf. Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, 74.

It is perhaps pertinent to note that this understanding of "enhypostasis," stemming from the work of F. Loofs, and popularized by H. Relton, has in recent years, particularly through the work of B. Daley, been increasingly seen as a misunderstanding of the patristic texts. For discussion and references, cf. Grillmeier, *op. cit.*

³⁵*Ex. fidei*, 47; III.3, ed. Kotter (Berlin, 1973), 114-5.

³⁶Cf. Leontius of Jerusalem: "The natures were not composed in mixing; there is also no composite hypostasis, because it is not from hypostases; rather the *idioma* of the hypostasis of the Logos becomes more composite." *PG* 86.1485d4-7; following the emended text proposed by C. Moeller, "Textes 'monophysites' de Léonce de Jérusalem," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, 27 (1951), 474, fn.18.

³⁷Cf. "Further Studies in the Christology of Severus of Antioch," 290-291.

³¹"The Christology of Severus of Antioch," 168.

³²*C. imp. Gram. Or.2.22, CSCO* 111, p.187; following the translation of Samuel, "The Christology of Severus," 168.

³³Cf. Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, 73.

one hypostasis of Christ is composed. It is in this sense that Severus can affirm that Jesus Christ had both a human will and a human energy, although they are no more self-subsistent than His human hypostasis: they exist within, and are operated by, the one composite hypostasis of Christ. Using his favoured analogy, Severus explains how while a composite human being does some things which are intellectual and some that are sensible and bodily, yet it is, nevertheless, the same man who acts in both: one does not say that the body of Peter eats, if by that one means that his body eats somehow apart from Peter himself, nor that his mind prays – it is Peter himself who eats and prays. Similarly, Severus explains:

One can see the same in the case of Emmanuel. For there is one who acts, that is the Word of God incarnate; and there is one active movement which is activity, but the things which are done are diverse, that is, (the things) accomplished by activity. ... And just as no-one divides the Word from the flesh, so also it is impossible to divide or separate these activities.³⁸

Severus is clearly concerned to exclude the possibility, which he sees in the Tome of Leo, which he cites several times, of the natures acting of themselves.³⁹ There are certainly, according to Severus, two types of activity, yet it is one and the same who works both:

Between the things performed and done by the one Christ, the difference is great. Some of the acts are befitting the divinity, while the others are human. ... Yet the one Word performed the latter and the former, ... Because the things performed are different, we shall [not however] on this account rightly define two natures or forms as operating.⁴⁰

This difference between the activities appropriate to each nature is simply a consequence of the fact that the two natures united are radically different: uncreated and created. Yet while the difference in the properties of the natures remains, the natures have nevertheless been united without confusion or division. As such, Severus is able to

³⁸ *Ep. 1 ad Sergium*, CSCO 119, 83; translation in I. Torrance, *Christology after Chalcedon* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1988), 153.

³⁹ *Cf. Ibid.* 84; trans. 154; *Ep. 1*, PO 12.182-4.

⁴⁰ *Ep. 1*, PO 12.181-2.

embrace fully the principle of *communicatio idiomatum*:

When a hypostatic union is confessed, of which the fulfilment is that from the two natures there is one Christ without confusion, one prosopon, one hypostasis, one nature belonging to the Word Incarnate, the Word is known by means of the properties of the flesh, ... and again the properties of the Word will be acknowledged as the properties of the flesh, and the same One will be seen by means of both [sets of properties].⁴¹

In this union without confusion, the properties and faculties distinguishing each nature are preserved, yet united without division, and are employed by one and the same Christ, the Word Incarnate. The human nature of Christ is not reduced to a merely passive instrument used by the Word in His work of salvation, for it is in, through and as a human being, endowed with will and reason, that the Word Incarnate effects our salvation.⁴²

I hope that in this paper I have managed to convey something of the importance of Severus of Antioch, both within the historical contexts of his own times and our own times, and in terms of his contribution to the development of Christology, both non-Chalcedonian and Chalcedonian. It is clear, from the various Unofficial and Official Agreed Statements, that real progress has been made towards a genuine theological consensus. I hope that I have also made it clear that such statements do not, however, lessen the need to return to the sources of our theology, to study them ever more diligently and to produce the basic textbooks that are sorely needed if we are to overcome the “slanted” way in which much of patristic theology has been presented, and so also to continue to work towards increased mutual understanding.

⁴¹ *Ep. 1 ad Sergium*, 79; trans. 151.

⁴² *Cf. Ep. 1 ad Sergium*, 85, trans. 154; Hom. 83, PO 20.415-7: “the Word of God is united hypostatically not only to flesh, but also to a soul endowed with will and reason, for the purpose of making our souls bent towards sinfulness incline towards the choice of good and the aversion to evil.”