

Why Did God Become Man?

The Unconditionality of the Divine Incarnation



Redemption or Deification?*

Anselm's Question,
“Why Did God Become Man?”
and Nicolas Cabasilas

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I. The Problem

1. The History and Significance of the Problem.

THE QUESTION “Cur Deus homo?” [“Why did God become man?—Trans.”], as is well known, was brought to the very forefront of theological debate by Anselm of Canterbury, in the eleventh century, in his famous work of that name.

The equally well-known answer that he gave to this question is that Christ became incarnate in order to redeem man from sin. This notion was indispensable for Anselm’s entire system and was used as a basis for his juridical teaching concerning redemption.

What Eastern theologians noticed, and correctly reacted against, is Anselm’s **juridical theory of satisfaction**. However, proper attention has not yet been given, in our own more recent times, to the very answer that Anselm gave to the question, that is, to the thesis that God became man **in order to redeem man from sin**.

This thesis has passed, without discussion, into our own contemporary theology, preaching, and ecclesiastical and spiritual life, with **very serious consequences**, as will become evident in what follows.

In the thirteenth century, Duns Scotus, in the West, challenged Anselm's response, and, placing the question in the context of his own reflections concerning the will of God, advocated the view that the Incarnation was independent of the Fall and, in accordance with the scheme of Divine *prædestinatio* [predestination], would have occurred in any event.

This gave rise, in the ensuing centuries, to a great debate, in which Malebranche spoke of the “metaphysical necessity” of the Incarnation, Westcott about the “absolute motive” of the Incarnation, *et al.*¹

In this debate Patristic texts were deployed, the most important being the well-known texts of St. Maximos the Confessor. This led certain Orthodox theologians to address the issue and to ask themselves whether St. Maximos professed the “unconditionality or conditionality of the Incarnation of the Divine Word.”

Perceiving difficulties, however, in this typically Western formulation of the issue, the aforementioned Orthodox theologians preferred to leave the matter open, characterizing it, for the most part, as a *theologoumenon*.²

Four years ago [1979], in my book *Zōov Θεούμενον* [A deified creature],³ I maintained that this matter is not a *theologoumenon* and that, in fact, the response to the question “Why did God become man?” has been given by the Orthodox Tradition in a most pellucid way; that it is different from those of Anselm and Scotus; and that it lies outside the boundaries defined by the formulation of a “conditional or unconditional Incarnation.”

The Orthodox response is clearly contained in the Epistle to the Ephesians (“according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world” [I:4]; “That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ” [I:10]; “In Whom also we have obtained an inheritance” [I:11]), in the Epistle to the Colossians (“Who is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation, for in Him were all things created, that are in Heaven, and that are in earth,... all things were created through Him, and for Him.... And He is the Head of the Body, the Church” [I:15-I8]), and in many other passages of Scripture, and is superbly expressed in the

phrase most widely used and unceasingly repeated by the Fathers in every age: “*God becometh man, that He might make Adam God.*”⁴

The true axis on which the Orthodox Tradition locates all the truths of the Faith, spiritual life, and all ecclesial realities is the axis of **Creation-Deification, or the Kingdom of God, or the realization of the purpose of creation**, or whatever else we call it.

The limitation of this axis solely to the **Fall-Redemption** polarity leads to a mutilation and distortion of the truths of the Faith, of the content of spiritual life, and of the various dimensions of the Church.

The alterations that eventuated in Western Christianity in all of these spheres after the eleventh century were inevitable. The attempt made by Duns Scotus did not succeed, first because he was working within an already-established framework, but primarily because Scotus posed a theological question—whether the **Incarnation constituted the purpose of the Word**—, whereas the question is exclusively anthropological and cosmological: whether it was possible for man to achieve his purpose—to be saved—without being united with God and enhypostatized in the Word; whether the created realm could attain to its fullness without becoming the body of the Word.

It is not without merit for the significance of this issue to point out that Professor Dumitru Staniloae immediately adopted my proposition in his review of *Zῶον Θεούμενον*, and that Professor Panagiotes Chrestou, in his important study “Ανθρωπος ἄναρχος καὶ ἀτελεύτητος — Ἀπὸ τὴν ἀνθρωπολογία τοῦ Μαξίμου ‘Ομολογητοῦ” [Unoriginate and unending man: From the anthropology of Maximos the Confessor] (*Κληρονομία*, Vol. XII, No. 2 [1980], pp. 251-281), interprets the crucial passages of Maximos in an **anthropological, not a theological perspective**, though without reference to the aforementioned proposition.

We will return to the problem of confining the Divine Economy to the **Fall-Redemption** polarity and its tragic consequences.

It needs to be stated, in concluding this introduction, that it was our study of the texts of Nicholas Cabasilas that led us to pinpoint this problem, and that it was through him that we arrived at our re-

interpretation of the texts of St. Maximos the Confessor. It is our concern, here, to speak about the Divine Cabasilas.

2. The Historical and Theological Context of the Problem in the Fourteenth Century.

WE WILL not deal with Cabasilas' life or his personality. Enough has already been written about the theological profundity, the Christlike demeanor, and the noble modesty of this holy man. Although he played an important rôle in every facet of the public life of his day—political, social, cultural, theological, and spiritual—, this very modesty caused him, concerned as he always was with the essence and not with the superficies of problems, to remain so inconspicuous that today we cannot determine with precision either the time of his death (after 1391) or whether he was Ordained a clergyman, tonsured a monk, or remained a layman to the end of his life. An objective investigation of the data compels the honest scholar to leave the matter open, in the hope that new evidence will emerge from hitherto unknown sources.

Two facets of his public life are of interest for our subject. First, his relationship to the intelligentsia of his era, and especially the Westernizers. His intimate friendship with Kydones,⁵ and also his personal interests—chiefly in his youth—led him to pay close attention to the fascination that Western theological thought exerted on the circle of Western-minded intellectuals. He followed step by step the translation of the *Summa contra gentiles* [by Aquinas—*Trans.*] that Kydones was producing. Thus, Cabasilas was informed about developments in the West. This is demonstrated also by a careful study of his works, even though, for reasons that we will explain, he rarely refers directly to Western teachings. This knowledge is important with regard to the relationship of Cabasilas to St. Gregory Palamas and, more generally, to the Hesychast controversy. Enough has been written about this issue, too.

Our conclusions so far may be summarized as follows. First, that Cabasilas had a profound knowledge of the teaching of Palamas—indeed, he had been a close disciple of his for nearly a year on the Holy Mountain. However, since Palamas' battle had in essence been

won—Cabasilas was some fifteen years his junior—he did not deem it expedient to become actively involved in the controversy, although he dedicated his efforts to transmitting the deep dogmatic truths formulated by St. Gregory to the broad ecclesiastical public. Thus, he became a pioneer in the transmission to the people of the great Hesychast renaissance of the fourteenth century as a liturgical and spiritual renaissance—a work of obvious importance.

The **second** conclusion has to do with theological terminology and all that this entails. It is well known that St. Paul categorically and decisively defined **union with Christ** as the **core and purpose of Christian life**. No ancient heretic has dared, and no Christian confession today dares to call this purpose into question.

Nevertheless, it was disputed early on that Christ is God. The thesis that Christ is a creature, aside from placing the foundation of the Faith, the truth of the Holy Trinity, in doubt, also jeopardized the salvation of man. For, if Christ is a creature, man is not united with God through union with Him.

To the first aspect of this danger the Fathers responded with the dogma of the Nicene Synod, and to the second by interpreting Paul's phrase "to live in Christ" as true and real **deification**. The doctrine of deification subsequently saw great and brilliant elaboration as a genuine expression of Orthodox Christianity, and St. Gregory Palamas very clearly upheld it and wonderfully expounded it in confronting the Arianizing heresy that man is united with created Divine Grace.

Cabasilas was in total agreement with Palamas, but at the same time, he brought the terminology of the Apostle Paul back to the theological forefront and, proceeding further along these lines, interpreted deification as true and real **Christification**.

By this inestimably important shift, aside from linking the struggle for **deification with the Mysteriological (Sacramental) life of the Church**, and showing with repeated, penetrating, and extraordinarily realistic observations that **all believers** can attain to the heights of deification, regardless of whether they live in the desert or in the world, he brought the discussions between Christians back to their **Biblical foundation**—a momentous achievement.

Moreover, in anticipating the times and offering, especially to us twentieth-century Orthodox, I would say, the **practical content of deification**, he safeguards us from employing deification as a nebulous and indeterminate concept, as a mere slogan.

The shift in terminology from deification to **Christification** further led Cabasilas to formulate an **anthropology** exceptionally penetrating in both its phenomenological and ontological dimensions. It also enabled him, by giving currency to the dogmatic theses of Palamism and applying them in life and culture, to exalt the Orthodox vision of a **theocentric humanism** before the dawning Western humanism, the first glimmers of which he discerned clearly, thanks to his contacts. All of the foregoing has already been published.⁶

But the subject that we are treating here requires us to indicate a third aspect of Cabasilas' relationship to Palamas.

St. Gregory in the fourteenth century was confronted with the suppurating sore of Barlaam. He opened the wound, dissected the problem, revealed and overcame the heresy of the doctrine of created energies and created grace. He was faced with an immediate and deadly peril, and by God's Grace he saved Eastern Christianity from heresy.

But the Westerners' doctrine of created grace is an inevitable symptom of the truncation of the axis of Divine Economy from **Creation-Deification to Sin-Redemption**. St. Gregory saw this very grave symptom and dealt with it.

Cabasilas, protected from the rear thanks to Palamas' victory, was able to see the problem in its **entirety** and its **essence**; and with his distinctive sobriety and profundity, he confronted it as a whole.

Thus, just as Athanasios was succeeded by Basil and Gregory the Theologian, we might say, Palamas was succeeded by Cabasilas—not to compare one with another, but to make a simple analogy. And just as we cannot comprehend the fourth century by studying Athanasios alone without the Cappadocians, or by studying Gregory of Nyssa in isolation from the other Cappadocians, in the same way our knowledge of the fourteenth century is inadequate—we would venture to say, totally inadequate—if we study Palamas alone without at the same time studying Cabasilas in depth.

Palamas revealed the depth of the Orthodox Faith with incomparable insight. Cabasilas endowed this depth with the breadth and ecumenicity that befitted it. His accomplishment consisted in relocating all of the theological, spiritual, and ecclesial realities of Christianity along the axis of **Creation-Deification or perfection in Christ**; and his primary instrument was the **Orthodox response to the fundamental question of why God became man.**

After the foregoing historical orientation, it is time to deal with the theological problem in and of itself, as Cabasilas resolved it. We shall focus our inquiry on one fundamental passage in his oeuvre.

II. Cabasilas' Answer

1. The Bottomless “Natural” Distance Between God and Man. Union “According to Energy” and Union “According to Hypostasis.”

God did not differ from men by place, since He occupies every place, but was separated from them by dissimilarity. Our nature kept itself apart from God through being dissimilar to Him in everything that it possessed and having nothing in common with Him. God remained Himself alone; our nature was man, and nothing more (572A).⁷

This passage creates some fundamental difficulties. For, if Cabasilas is referring to the postlapsarian state of man, the passage is of course comprehensible. But if he is referring to our prelapsarian nature, if from the beginning human nature “kept itself apart from God,” then what is the meaning of the revealed truth that man was created “in the image and likeness of God,” of St Maximos’ phrase “we are God’s portion,” or of so many other phrases in the Fathers which speak of man as “godlike,” etc.? According to his favorite method, without posing the question openly, Cabasilas deals with it in depth and with astounding dogmatic thoroughness.

It is clear in principle that here he is faithfully following St. John of Damascus, who, summarizing the entire Patristic Tradition be-

fore him, teaches that “*all things are distant from God not by place, but by nature.*”⁸ The natural, essential distance between created and uncreated nature is bottomless and unbridgeable. The creature can in no way on its own participate in the Uncreated.

The Divine goodness, however, has been pleased to span that bottomless natural distance from the beginning through the uncreated Divine Energies. Thus, as soon as He had fashioned man as “*dust from the earth,*” God breathed into him a “*breadth of life,*” and man became a “*living soul*”—that is, a being in communion with God, because only God is living, and only in God and through God can a soul be living.

However, the fact that the chasm is bridged through the Divine Energies does not remove it completely. They really do span it, but only to the extent of being a “*betrothal.*” Here, too, Cabasilas presupposes John of Damascus, who teaches that there are three kinds of union: “according to essence,” “according to hypostasis,” and “according to energy.”⁹

Only the three Persons of the Holy Trinity are united **according to essence**; the Divine and human natures in Christ are united **according to hypostasis**. Union **according to energy** is preparatory to hypostatic union; it is the union and communion of a betrothal. This holds good both before and after the Fall; both before and since Christ. Energetic communion with God flows from the Incarnation both before and since Christ and activates the Incarnation. Communion according to energy is oriented and activated as **hypostatization into Christ**. This is the **content of deification**; this is what the uncreated Divine Energies effect and manifest.

We find ourselves, quite evidently, at the heart of the teaching of St. Irenaeus and the other Fathers, especially St. Maximos and St. Symeon the New Theologian, for whom, as is well known, the Divine light, visions of God, etc., are always person-centered, Christocentric events; and equally at the heart of St. Gregory Palamas’ teaching about uncreated Energies.

If St. Gregory insisted more on the dogmatic question of whether the Divine Energies are created or uncreated, this is because it was on this point that he had to oppose Barlaam and the doctrine of cre-

ated Divine grace. But a careful study of his works shows the hypostatic union of Divine and human nature in Christ to be the fundamental assumption and the core of his teaching, a core which the Divine Cabasilas expounded and developed with precision.

2. The Importance and Significance of Union “According to Hypostasis.”

THIS SECOND great theologian of the fourteenth century examines the entire issue, employing the Biblical category of the image and delving into its depths. He writes:

Indeed, it was for the sake of the new man that human nature was formed at the beginning, and for him both mind and desire were fashioned. We received reason, in order that we might know Christ, and desire, in order that we might hasten to Him; we have memory, in order that we might bear Him within us, since He Himself was the archetype for us when we were being created. For it is not the old Adam that was the paradigm for the new; rather, the New Adam was the paradigm for the old (680A).

Consequently, the Archetype of man is Christ. Not simply the Word, but the incarnate Word. For

‘Man yearns for Christ, not only on account of His Divinity, which is the goal of all things, but also for the sake of His human nature’ (681AB). *‘The old [Adam] was an imitation of the second [i.e., the incarnate Word], and the first was fashioned according to His form and image’* (680B).

It is of no importance, continues Cabasilas, that Christ did not exist historically at the time when Adam was created. The Divine Economy radically transforms the natural division of time into past, present and future, and introduces a different conception of history. The Incarnate Word is the “Firstborn of all creation.” And the “introduction of the Firstborn into the world” (Hebrews 1:6) constitutes the preëternal counsel of God, the “mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations” (Colossians 1:26). This mystery has been fulfilled in Christ. But this constituted Adam’s

original destiny. On this point Cabasilas is categorical: In relation to Christ, man

*'was originally fashioned according to a kind of yard-stick and criterion... so as to be capable of receiving God (56oD). And 'God did not create human nature with any other purpose in mind... rather, He created it with this end in view, that, when it was fitting for Him to be born, He might receive His Mother from it; having first established this purpose [the Incarnation] as a kind of standard, He then fashioned man in accordance with it.'*¹⁰

This trajectory leads to the establishment of an anthropological dimension to Christology which is not unrelated to the events of the fourteenth century. We shall not concern ourselves with this here.

It is sufficient for our subject to remember that “according to the image,” for Cabasilas, contains two elements. The first is that of likeness or, as we would say today, a structural correspondence between the image and the Archetype, leading to a phenomenological anthropology which is profound and very apropos for our own day, and about which we have spoken in detail elsewhere. The second element is that of the nisus from within the image towards the Archetype, a nisus which pertains to the ontology of man. We should say something about this second element.

Inasmuch as man was “*originally fashioned*” in order to be united with God, insofar as he inclined towards God and his purpose was union, as long as that union remained unfulfilled, he was still imperfect. Even before the Fall, before Christ, man was an infant; he stood in need of completion, i.e. salvation (“*he started to move towards [this purpose],... but failed to attain it,*” writes Cabasilas (68oB). He lacked the intrinsically human, Christlike “*form,*” Cabasilas explains, the Christlike “*likeness,*” and, even more fundamentally, “*existence in accordance with Christ.*”

The ontology of man in the teaching of Cabasilas, and of the whole Patristic Tradition for that matter, is dynamic, iconic; it consists in nisus-towards-being. Man finds his existence and **being** in Christ. Before and outside Christ, his being is a being-unto-Christ.

And when it is not oriented towards Christ—when, to be more precise, it is defined in freedom and consciousness independently of Christ—then it is a being-unto-death, as Heidegger called it, quite correctly according to his own perspective. United with Christ, the iconic biological being of man becomes a true being-in-Christ. In Christ, man discovers his **true ontological meaning**.

Of course, these are not the words that Cabasilas uses. But his own words are more radical. Insofar as Christ is “*the Head of the Body, the Church*,” he says, it is evident that as long as human nature had not received the Hypostasis of the Word, it was **devoid of genuine hypostasis**, and the body of humanity was in some sense without a Head.

This is why believers

‘were born when Christ entered this life and was born into it.’ For ‘the birth of the Head was the birth of the blessed members. For it was the birth of the Head which brought the members into existence’ (604A).

Such is the fundamental position and importance that the Incarnation of the Word possesses in Cabasilas’ teaching. The “mystery of Christ,” which constitutes the preëternal counsel of God—**how, indeed, could Christ be the result of the Devil’s wickedness?**—, and is, therefore, transhistorical and independent of the temporal falls and vicissitudes of creatures, forms the central standpoint and the core of his theology. It would not, in fact, have been possible for him to construct his entire synthesis of spiritual life on the basis of the mysteries as paths to incorporation in Christ, if Christ had not occupied this ontological position in his anthropology. Cabasilas’ answer to the question “Cur Deus homo?” and its importance are already apparent from this. But there is more.

3. A View of the Mystery of the Incarnation Independent of the Fall, and Its Significance.

THE PASSAGE by this theologian quoted at the beginning of Part II continues as follows:

When flesh was deified and human nature obtained an hypostasis, God Himself... there was no room for that dissimilarity, since the single Hypostasis, being one thing [Divine], became the other [human] (572A).

The bottomless natural distance which energetic or iconic (the terms are synonymous) prelapsarian communion had been insufficient to remove, had to be, and could be, removed, in accordance with God's preëternal counsel, by hypostatic union.

Hypostatic union, more perfect than energetic union, completely abolishes the distance; it unites the natures "indivisibly"—according to the Divinely-inspired formulation of the Fathers of Chalcedon—, yet without confusing them in essence, without change or alteration.

The one hypostasis, as Cabasilas explains in a clearly Chalcedonian vein, "*removes the distance separating Godhead and manhood, being a point of contact between the two natures,*" precisely because "*there could be no point of contact when they were separated*" (572AB).

One example that he gives is exceptionally eloquent. Let us imagine, he says, a phial containing myrrh. Naturally enough, the sides of the phial separate the ointment from the surrounding atmosphere. But if in some way the sides themselves turn into myrrh, then far from being a separation, they actually become the means whereby the myrrh pervades the whole atmosphere, to such an extent, indeed, that if one comes into contact with the sides of the phial, he comes into contact with the myrrh itself and is anointed with it.

It is evident that we are presented with a brilliant vision of the mystery of the Incarnation. Absorbed, as we habitually are, by the fact of the redemption of sinful man in Christ, we view the unconfused mingling of the two natures in Christ from the standpoint of the consequences of the Fall, and with this postlapsarian vision we correctly call it the entry of the Word into history.

The Fathers, and Cabasilas himself, zealously insist on this crucial aspect of the mystery. Nor should it in any way be thought that we downplay it here; besides, we shall return to it. But history, and

time more generally, as we know these realities today, are for the Fathers “garments of skin”; that was not their nature prior to the Fall.

On the basis of this truth and in view of the peril of curtailing the axis of the Divine Economy from **Creation-Hypostatic Union/Deification to Sin-Redemption**, with the result that everything is relativized, Cabasilas insists, in the fourteenth century, on the other aspect of the mystery, which is likewise of the utmost importance.

Prior to the Incarnation, the Word was myrrh ‘*remaining in Himself*’ (i.e., in the Holy Trinity, with the Father), he writes. But when ‘*the blessed flesh which received all the fullness of the Godhead was created... at this time the myrrh, being poured out upon it,... both is, and is called, chrism. For being imparted [to the flesh] meant that He became chrism and was poured out. For He did not change place, nor did He breach or pass over a wall; but showing what stood between Him and us [human nature] to be what He is, He left no barrier*’ (569-572A).

Consequently, it is not a question merely of the entry of the Word into history. This is absolutely real, as we shall see below, but it does not exhaust the mystery. And, of course, there is certainly no question of the Word being changed ontologically into flesh.

The core of the mystery resides in the fact that the Word “*assumes*” flesh—Cabasilas also uses the term “*takes up*.” The ontological change occurred not to the Divine nature, but to the human. This fundamental truth is presupposed in all the Fathers, who, though they insist so much on the “Incarnation” of the Word, nonetheless never forget that the other, primary aspect of the mystery is the “assumption” of the flesh—just as the best of astronomers talk, in everyday life, about the rising of the sun, even though they know that it is the earth that changes position.

In his *Interpretation of the Divine Liturgy*, Cabasilas makes this point very clear in his analysis of the Service of the *Prothesis*:

The ‘*Lord’s Body*,’ he says, ‘*was set apart from those of the same kind and consecrated to God*.’ For He Who assumed it was the Word, Who was ‘*never separated from*

the bosom of the Father.’ ‘He Himself,’ as Cabasilas summarizes the matter, ‘gave this, the Lord’s Body, as a gift to God... placing it in the bosom of the Father’ (380C).

Consequently, in historical terms we do indeed see “the Lord’s body” conceived and growing, first in the blessed womb of the Virgin and then in Bethlehem, Nazareth, Tiberias, etc.; but in God’s reality, which transcends history, this Blessed Flesh is created through the assumption of human nature by the Word into the bosom of the Father.

Cabasilas is clear:

“There He created this [body] and clothed Himself in it, so that it was given to God as soon as it was fashioned” (380C).

In this way the “myrrh” became “chrism” and anointed humanity with Divinity. The movement is twofold: The Word “takes up” the created human nature and places it “there” in the uncreated bosom of the Father. Thus *“He changes and transforms it into Himself, as a small drop of water is changed by being poured into a boundless ocean of myrrh”* (593C). At the same time, thanks to the created nature that He has assumed, the myrrh is changed impassibly and immutably into chrism and is poured out upon creation; and the bottomless chasm between created and uncreated is closed in a way that is no longer external, through the energies, but from within, hypostatic.

The Son according to nature, the icon and express image of the Hypostasis of the Father (Hebrews 1:3), the coëssential Word, bestows adoption into sonship upon the created human nature that He has assumed. In Christ, man is exalted from being “in the image” to being an image; the creature is changed into a child according to Grace; the most crucial and fundamental antitheses—those that are ontological, and therefore unbridgeable in philosophical terms—are removed; the circle is squared. This is what is meant by the transformation of the creature into an offspring, a child by Grace—which is the true content of adoption or deification by Grace.

Furthermore, humanity “*anointed with Divinity*” is exalted, through the hypostatic union, into the medium which henceforth truly unites

God with man, into a conduit through which the life of the Divine nature flows and vivifies creation, *into a mystery, into a Church. It becomes the “raiment” and “body” of the Word.*

In order for man to be Baptized, to put on God in Christ, to be deified, it was first necessary for God to have been Baptized or have emptied Himself in man, for the Word to have put on man, for there be an hypostatic union.

Thanks to the hypostatic union, God

imparts Himself to us by giving us what He had assumed from us. As we partake of [His] human flesh and blood, we receive God Himself into our souls, and God’s body and blood, and God’s soul, mind, and will, no less than those of His humanity (593B).

If man can address to God the words “*Thine own of Thine own,*” it is because God first addressed the same to man. He took “*fleshy flesh*” and gave us “*spiritual flesh*” in return.

Thus, “*it is possible for the Saints,*” Cabasilas writes, “*not only to be disposed and prepared for that life, but also even now to live and act in accordance with it*” (496D). For the present and the future have been “*joined,*” “*mingled,*” and “*blended together.*”

The uncreated has permeated creation, the uncontainable is contained, space and time have been expanded, the created has transcended its limits, the life of the last times can be lived in the present:

That future [life] is as it were infused into this present life and mingled with it, and that Sun has risen upon us also in His love for mankind; and the heavenly myrrh has been poured out into the malodorous places; and the bread of Angels has been given to men (496CD).

This is the mystery of God’s love: the marriage of the Creator with His creation, which takes place within time, but in its inner nature transcends history. All the rest are historical events.

The preëternal counsel of God which “*before the foundation of the world*” “*hath chosen us in Him,*” (Ephesians 1:4) which willed “*that*

all things might be gathered together in Christ" (Ephesians 1:10), was realized thanks to the hypostatic union in the Blessed Flesh of the Lord in the reign of Cæsar Augustus.

This is why the conception of the Blessed Flesh is the good news of the ANNUNCIATION to mankind, and the birth of the Blessed Flesh was greeted by the Angels as the manifestation of the Glory of the Most High God, as peace on earth and the realization of God's good pleasure—which was before the foundation of the world—among men.

This hypostatic, complete mingling of created and uncreated natures without division or confusion—as complete as it could possibly be—had as its direct consequence the deification of the created nature in Christ; and it is the presupposition for the twelve-year-old Jesus' manifestation of the **Wisdom** of God in the Temple, the revelation of His **almighty power** in miracles, of His uncreated **Glory** which shone forth at the Transfiguration and, *par excellence*, of the revelation of the Triune God at His Baptism in the Jordan, i.e., the THEOPHANY.

Thus, one might be so bold as to say, as an indication and pure hypothesis (not, of course, as an opinion or view),¹¹ that if the other two factors separating man from God had not existed (i.e., sin and death [527BC]—the first being, as we saw, our very nature which "*was separated by dissimilarity because it had nothing in common with Him*")—if, in other words, the Fall had not occurred first, the hypostatic union of the two natures in the Word would have shone out as an ASCENSION¹² of human nature as it is taken up by the Word "there," "*into the bosom of the Father*"; this would have bestowed upon man the INCORRUPTION which he had received only potentially at his creation. And it would, at the same time, have shone forth as the "*anointing of humanity*" by the "*Myrrh*," in other words as an outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh and "*Spiritification*" of the universe, as PENTECOST.

4. The View of the Mystery of the Incarnation in Relation to the Fall, and Its Significance.

Man's temporal Fall, however, created two other impediments, which in a tragically real way obstruct the outpouring of the Spirit and the full realization of salvation (or completion, recapitulation, deification, or whatever we may call it). And these real impediments, which exist within time, need to be dealt with in a way which is equally real and temporal.

This is why the Son of Man comes

as a giant to run the course of our... nature and through suffering to make His way to death, and to bind the strong man and plunder his goods... and lead the erring sheep back to the heavenly land,

as St. John of Damascus writes poetically.¹³

And, as the Divine Cabasilas says,

This is what happens, then. God makes His own the struggle on behalf of men, for He is man. Man, being pure from all sin, overcomes sin, for he is God (513B).

Thus we arrive at the postlapsarian, historical view of the mystery of the Divine Incarnation, and the postlapsarian application of the passage of Cabasilas which we quoted at the beginning of the theological section of our study.

We shall not concern ourselves in detail here with this postlapsarian view of the mystery of the Divine Incarnation—not because it does not bear on our subject, but for the sole reason that space is limited.

For it is a truth just as fundamental as that previously stated that man, broken, degraded, and enslaved to sin, the Devil, and death on account of the Fall is in need of redemption. And he cannot achieve redemption on his own. Man was obliged to “retrieve his defeat,” Cabasilas says. But he was unable to win the battle.

Indeed, no human wisdom, strength, virtue, or righteousness could overcome death, a boundary which, by historical standards, is fundamental and decisive.

On the other hand, God, Who could have destroyed sin, the Devil, and death by a single thought did not do so, because that would have been unjust; it was man, and not God, who had been defeated, and man had to retrieve the situation.

It is at this point that Cabasilas sums up the second aspect of the mystery of the Incarnation, that “*God makes His own the struggle on behalf of men, for He is man,*” and its corollary: “*Man, being pure from all sin, overcomes sin, for he is God.*”

Cabasilas dwells at length on this postlapsarian aspect of the mystery, and in my book *Ἡ περὶ δικαιώσεως τοῦ ἀνθρώπου διδασκαλία τοῦ Καβάσιλα* [Cabasilas’ teaching on the justification of man] I expounded it in detail.

It would truly be a grave spiritual, pastoral, and also theological error to ascribe a secondary importance to the reality of sin and the need for redemption. From this standpoint, we would not have had the right to treat the subject as we do here if we had not previously written an entire book on the **Sin-Redemption** dimension. Yet it would be an equally grave error to limit salvation, that is, deification, to redemption alone.

In the first case, Christianity would be transformed into an unrealistic mysticism; in the second, it would be degraded to a legalistic ethical system.

As a true theologian of the Catholic Church, Cabasilas took into account both of these truths; and, in contrast to Anselm, who restricted Christianity and man to the **Fall-Redemption** polarity, he gave this polarity the attention that it merits and, at the same time, placed it in its proper context, at the same stroke giving man his true scope.

After this crucially important observation, to which we ask the reader to pay special attention, it is time to return to studying more directly the problem that we posed at the outset, that of narrowing the axis of the Divine Economy from **Creation-Deification** to **Fall-Redemption**.

III. The Significance of Cabasilas' Response

1. *The Spectre of a Truncation of the Divine Cconomy from Creation-Deification to Fall-Redemption: Eastern and Western Christianity.*

CABASILAS beheld the spectre of this truncation extending over the West and, in the fourteenth century, reaching the East as well. In the face of this suffocating cloud, he raised up his inspired teaching as a purifying filter.

He did not do this in a contentious spirit: on the one hand because no one had directly attacked the Orthodox teaching on this point, no one had discredited as heretical the saying that “*God becometh man, that He might make Adam God,*” as Barlaam had done with the uncreated Divine Energies, and on the other hand, because he had not lost hope of the Christian West returning to the Catholic Faith.

He spoke with a Catholic voice, overbalancing Anselm, the starting point of Scholasticism; and, in overbalancing him, he exposed Anselm’s tragic error, at the same time leaving the way open for its amendment. Thus, he proved himself a true ecumenical theologian, and there is hope that once his teaching has been scrutinized and evaluated from a dogmatic perspective, it could become the starting point for a productive dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the other Christian confessions.¹⁴

But the West did not pay attention to Nicholas Cabasilas to the extent, and, above all, in the way, that it should have done. It did not push him aside, to be sure; nor did it regard him as a heretic, as it did Palamas. It published his writings, it translated them, but it did not understand them. And it continues to this day to asphyxiate within the narrow confines of the Sin-Redemption axis.

This mutilated understanding of the Divine Cconomy has passed to us, too, as we have already said, as part of the general syndrome of the captivity of Orthodox theology to Scholasticism and its ramifications, and so much so that St. Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain, who spoke the language of the Eastern Fathers, was misunderstood on this point.

He was subjected by certain persons “who devote themselves, in particular, to sacred theology,” as he describes them, to the attack that Cabasilas had escaped. And he responded with a work entitled “*A Defense of My Annotation Concerning Our Lady, the Theotokos, in the Book Unseen Warfare*,” an exciting text for our subject, in which he poses the problem openly for the first time.¹⁵

But what actually is the problem? More precisely, what are the consequences of Anselm’s erroneous answer to the question “*Cur Deus homo?*” and what is the significance of Cabasilas’ different response? Is the expansion of the axis, from **Fall-Redemption** to **Creation-Deification**, really the core of his teaching? In the final part of our study we will be an attempt to answer these questions.

2. Overcoming the Idea that the Mysteries are Mere Religious Obligations. The Church as the World United with God, and the World as the House of God.

FIRST, Cabasilas’ teaching on the mysteries and the Church expounds precisely this core theme.

As is well known, the Scholastics, operating on the **Sin-Redemption** axis, defined the Sacraments (Mysteries) as the visible rites whereby the sacred institution of the Church, in which Divine Grace is in some way stored up, imparts this Grace to the faithful. And they distinguished two elements in the Sacraments: the sensible signs and their essence, which was the invisible, but not uncreated Divine Grace. The faithful are obliged to have recourse to Sacraments performed by Priests in order to receive Divine Grace from the Church and thus be not in a state of sin but in a state of grace, in other words, a state of redemption. For the Scholastics, and also for many contemporary Eastern theologians and preachers, the sacraments are the quintessential religious obligations of the faithful. The Church is understood, and functions within this perspective as religion.

But Cabasilas, operating on the **Creation-Deification** axis, views the Mysteries and the Church in an entirely different perspective.

The primary and supreme Mystery of our Faith, which, according to the Apostle Paul, is Christ, the Incarnation and the Divine

Economy of the Word, is seen by the Byzantine mystic as refracted in such a way that it becomes concrete and active within time through the Mysteries.

Following the Fathers, and in particular St. John Chrysostomos, Cabasilas teaches that there is an inner identity between the historical body of Jesus and the Church, between the energies of the actual body of the Lord and the Mysteries.

The Mysteries extend the functions of that body in a real way and make available its life in very truth. *"The rites that are celebrated belong to the Mystery of the Lord's Incarnation itself"* (392D).

Participating in the Bread of the Eucharist, we are grafted into the Body of Christ, and that same Body is the Body of the Church. For this reason, the Church is created, organized, and lives within the Mysteries.

The Church is represented in the mysteries not as in symbols, but as the members are in the heart and as the branches of a plant are in the root, and, as the Lord has said, as the branches are in the vine. For here there is not merely a commonality of names or an analogy by resemblance, but an actual identity (452CD).

Cabasilas' ecclesiology is clearly Mysteriological. In this area, he anticipates the twentieth century, in which Orthodoxy has made its great contribution to Christianity as a whole, the so-called Eucharistic ecclesiology. Indeed, he gives the latter its true foundation: The Body of Christ, grafting into which transforms a social whole, precisely through the Spirit, into the people of God. For it is certainly not the gathering of the people from which the Eucharist derives, but Christ. It is He Who gathers, and He Who celebrates the Eucharist. Contemporary Eucharistic ecclesiology, which perhaps manifests a certain weakness on this point, could gain much from giving due attention to the teaching of Cabasilas, that great Eucharistic theologian of Christianity.

The central ecclesial Mystery, according to Cabasilas, is the Divine Eucharist, which re-presents (i.e., actively presents anew in each

specific place and time) the Economy of the Savior, the assumption, cleansing, and transfiguration of creation into his Body.

But from the Eucharist flow a multitude of sacred rites, whose purpose is to sanctify life, to transfigure all the actual structural elements in people's relationship with each other and with the world. The Mysteries are the "gate" and the "way"—elsewhere Cabasilas also calls them "windows"—through which God's life comes into the world.

This way the Lord traced by coming to us, this gate He opened by entering into the world. When He returned to the Father, He did not allow it to be closed, but from Him He comes through it to sojourn among men; or rather, He is constantly present with us and will be forever.... Therefore, 'This is none other than the house of God....' (Genesis 28:17; 504CD).

God, Who before the Incarnation was "*homeless*" in regard to creation, now finds a created place in which to sojourn, a created dwelling.¹⁶ Thus, there is now within creation not only the altar at which God is worshipped—a typical feature of religion—but God Himself, and humanity becomes God's family. The transformation goes even deeper. The Church is not only God's house and His family, but His Body.

This complete union of created and Uncreated does not destroy the bounds of space and time, but stretches them, makes them transparent, and transfigures them. Creation, reconstituted and restructured through the Mysteries—which is called Church—has new dimensions, functions, and life; the dimensions, functions and life of the Body of the Risen Lord.

Henceforth, everything can be gathered together and can live within creation in a new way; neither human only nor exclusively Divine, but Theanthropic.

The reality of religion, that is, the organization of life in view of or in relation to God, and simple worship of God, is radically transcended; in the Church, we have union with God.

As a genuine Father of the Catholic Church, Cabasilas reveals the entire breadth of Christianity. The exclusiveness which is equally a typical feature of religion is also transcended. Orthodox ecclesiology is shown to be a new, Theanthropic cosmology.

It is obvious how far we are from the Scholastics' understanding, and what height and depth and breadth we are called to attain once we find our place on the axis of **Creation-Deification**.

This leads us to the second problem, crucial both for the fourteenth century and for our own—that of the relationship between Church and world, which Cabasilas places on the axis of **Creation-Deification** and solves in a remarkable way.

3. Overcoming the Conflict between Church and World. The Opposition Between Church and World Ontologically Non-existent on the Unifying Axis of Creation-Deification. The Danger on the Antithetical Axis of Sin-Redemption of Reducing the Church to a Mere Religious, Worldly Institution.

THE CHURCH, for Cabasilas, is not in the world simply as an ark. Cosmologically speaking, there is no difference between world and Church. The created nature of the Church is the world.

Within the segment of creation that the Word assumed at His Incarnation, sin was crushed and creation realized the purpose for which it had been created from the beginning. With the hypostatic union, the Word's creation became His Body; it found its true center, which is external to creation.

Its nature does not alter, but is cleansed and restored, since sin is contrary to nature; and, furthermore, the world in Christ is perfected, it fulfills its destiny.

The Church is the world which has attained to its destiny, fully realized and truly living through the life of the Flesh of the Lord, the life of the Spirit.

The portion of creation initially assumed by Christ became henceforth “chrism” for the rest of creation. The movement is two-fold. Christ is extended within time, and the world is assumed. Christ is extended as He assumes the world. The Church is not a

static condition, simply and solely a sacred institution in the world. It is a dynamic, transforming movement.

It is the everlasting marriage within time and space of the Creator with His creation, the enduring mingling of the created with the Uncreated. In this unconfused mingling in Christ of created with uncreated nature, creation is recast within the flesh of the Lord; it is reconstructed Mysteriologically, transfigured without being destroyed—it is sin that is destroyed—and it becomes Body of Christ and lives as such.

Cabasilas can say this because on the axis of **Creation-Deification** evil does not change creation ontologically, being as it is something relative and accidental. However great may be the Devil's dominion over creation—and it is great; whatever disfigurement may be caused by sin—and it causes truly tragic distortions; in its innermost, true nature creation remains “very good.”

If we add to this truth the realities of the “garments of skin,” which Cabasilas also talks about, i.e., the fact that even the postlapsarian functioning of the world becomes, through God’s compassionate intervention, a gift and a blessing, despite being the natural consequence of the process of the Fall, and that in this postlapsarian world the Word became incarnate without sin and assumed this world, without confusion, but also without division, then we understand why Orthodox theologians from Paul to the Cappadocians, John of Damascus during the Iconoclast controversy, and Gregory Palamas strove to safeguard against heretics **the participation of the body and of matter in the union with God.**

On the axis of **Creation-Deification**, which is not antithetical, but unifying and catholic, the chasm between Church and world is shown to be ontologically non-existent. The problem which has been the scourge of the West for centuries, and for us Easterners in our century, is demonstrated to be, in essence, a **pseudo-problem**. It remains solely as a **moral problem**.

Turning to the truncated, radically antithetical axis of Sin-Redemption, here the world is understood within the Fall, and the Church can only function as a religious institution, stronger or

weaker according to the circumstances, which tries to impose itself and, when it cannot, to compromise with the world.

Correspondingly, if the Church gives the impression that its sole purpose is the redemption of the world from sin, the world declines this offer, not understanding even what sin is, and sees the Church as one ideology among others, with its own religious presuppositions and aims. It is a fact for historians that this point marks the birth of atheism.

But if the Church sees the world as God's creation and helps it to correct its orientation and the distortions that evil causes for it, to find its true way of functioning which is fitting to its real nature, and to achieve completeness in Christ, if Christ is presented not as the leader of the Christian faction or of the ideology of Christianity, but as **the purpose towards which the world tends**—then the attitude of the world may be different.

It was the axis of **Creation-Transfiguration of creation, or grafting of all created realities into the Body of Christ, or Deification**, that the Fathers of the Church took as their basis; and they achieved the magnificent task of taking up the elements of their age and building up the Church with the same materials that their age offered them, and thus revealed God as truly incarnate within their actual world, as Savior not only of souls but also of bodies, in other words, Savior of life.

This was the task that the Holy Fathers from Thessaloniki, Gregory and Nicholas, accomplished in the fourteenth century. This is what we twentieth-century Christians are called to undertake.

But in order for this to happen, it is clear that we must first of all rid ourselves of the idea that Christ is solely the Redeemer from sin, and see Him once again as Alpha and Omega, as the true Savior, which is to say at once Redeemer and Recapitulator of the entire world. **We must restore to the Divine Economy all of its breadth and meaning.**

4. Overcoming the Fear of Sin as the Central Motive of Spiritual Life. Christ, the Beginning, Middle, and End of Spiritual Life.

BUT Cabasilas' correct answer to “Cur Deus homo?” also brings the liberation of man from evil and sin. No matter how terrifying evil may be, since it, and not Christ, is merely an episode and an event, it proves, in the final analysis, insignificant. The understanding of man—of salvation, spiritual life, and so forth—is disjoined from evil and joined to Christ.

Ascesis, charity, etc. are not the “good works” that will counterbalance our sins before God’s justice and in that way offer Him satisfaction.

God is not a “sadistic father” who takes satisfaction in torturing his children. Ascesis is a vigorous struggle against evil. And man can throw himself into this struggle much more easily, with hope and joy, if his aim is to develop the seeds of godlikeness that he has within him, a longing for all the elements of his being to be united with Christ, and not simply fear of sin.

The real sin, for Cabasilas, is for man to remain outside Christ, to consider that he is sufficient on his own, i.e., autonomy. Adam’s greatest sin, the sin that engendered all of the others, was that he wanted to live with the life of his nature, to exist independently of God. This led him to death.

Cabasilas is unambiguous on this point. If man is not alive with the life of Christ, he is dead, even if he is a fine and good person socially or religiously, even if he formally observes the prescriptions of the law. On the axis of **Fall-Redemption**, justice and law are dominant. On the axis of **Creation-Deification**, sin consists in making oneself **autonomous**, in **self-sufficiency**. And this, according to the ascetic Fathers, was the greatest danger lurking even for the redeemed. The dominant figure on this axis is Christ.

Therefore, the ethos of Orthodox believers is not legalistic, but **theocentric**. Any virtue in man has value to the extent that it is a virtue of Christ, says Cabasilas. For only what is incorporated in Christ and, consequently, spiritual (“born from above”) is able to sur-

mount the biological boundaries of corruption and death. “*In this way the Saints are blessed, because of the blessed One Who is with them*” (613A).

The holiness of the saints is due to the fact that they have united their will to the will of Christ. The wisdom of the truly wise, those who uncover the truth by Divine inspiration, is due to their having united their mind with the mind of Christ. “*From themselves and from human nature and effort there is nothing whatever... Rather, they are holy because of the Holy One, righteous and wise because of the righteous and wise One Who abides with them*” (613A).

For this reason, Cabasilas advises, “*be merciful*” not in a human way “*but as your Father is merciful.*”

The faithful are called to love “*in the love with which Paul ‘yearned with the affection of Jesus Christ’*” (Philippians 1:8), and to have the love “*with which the Son loved the Father,*” and the peace that is not human, but of Christ. For, as the birth is “*Divine and preternatural,*” so also “*the new life, its regime and philosophy, and all these things are new and spiritual*” (616A).

This **Pauline Christocentricity** which places Christ as the beginning, middle, and end of the world and of history is the core of Cabasilas’ work. This is the basis on which he gave a correct answer to the question, “*Cur Deus homo?*,” confined the Fall-Redemption axis to its proper bounds and revealed the true breadth of the Divine Economy, which begins from Creation and reaches to Deification, that extension without end of created man within the uncreated God.

As has become evident from the few examples that we have been able to give within the scope of this study, Cabasilas placed on this axis all the realities of faith, spiritual life, and the Church, and revealed their true nature and their extraordinary transformative dynamism.

5. The Exodus of Today’s Faithful into the Open Horizon of the Divine Economy.

IN AN AGE when everything was changing, when Byzantium was collapsing, when the modern era was being born, God, through

His faithful servant Nicholas, left this great truth as a dowry, we might say, for His people.

And in our own days, when the modern era is showing its true face, it seems that God is moving our theology and our Church to discover and exploit this treasure that He has bequeathed to us.

He is moving us to free ourselves at last from the bonds of the Western Middle Ages and cease to be tormented by their consequences, to escape from the framework of the Sin-Redemption axis, from academicism, from the “religious” conception of the Church, and so much else, and to venture into the open horizon of the Divine Economy, to sense its grandeur, and to participate according to our calling in the work that the Father has been accomplishing “until now” for the transfiguration of the world—including our own contemporary world—through the Spirit into the Body of His Son.

* **Source:** Panagiotis Nellas, “Λύτρωση ἢ Θέωση; Τὸ ἐρώτημα τοῦ Ἀνσέλμου ‘Τιατὶ ὁ Θεὸς ἔγινε ἀνθρωπός, καὶ ὁ Νικόλαος Καβάσιλας” [Redemption or deification? Anselm’s question, “Why did God become man?” and Nicolas Cabasilas], *Σύναξη*, No. 6 (Spring 1983), pp. 17-36.

Notes

1. See Father Georges Florovsky, “*Cur Deus Homo?* The Motive of the Incarnation,” in *Creation and Redemption*, Vol. III in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky* (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1976), pp. 163-170; http://www.synodinresistance.org/Theology_en/E3c8002aGiatiEnsi.pdf.

2. *Ibid.*; Nikos Nissiotes, *Προλογόμενα εἰς τὴν θεολογικὴν γνωσιολογίαν* [Prolegomena to Orthodox gnosiology] [Athens: 1965], p. 67; Andreas Theodorou, *Cur Deus Homo? Ἀπροϋπόθετος ἢ ἐμπροϋπόθετος ἐνανθρώπησις τοῦ Θείου Λόγου;* [*Cur Deus Homo?* Was the incarnation of the Divine Word unconditional or conditional?], *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρίς τῆς Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου Ἀθηνῶν*, Vol. XIX (1972), pp. 297-340; Artemije Radosavljevic, *Tὸ μυστήριον τῆς σωτηρίας κατὰ τὸν ἄγιον Μάξιμον τὸν Ὄμολογητήν* [The mystery of salvation according to St. Maximos the Confessor] (Athens: 1975), pp. 181-196.

3. *Zῶον Θεούμενον—Προοπτικὲς γιὰ μὰ ὁρθόδοξη κατανόηση τοῦ ἀνθρώπου* [The deified creature: Perspectives on the Orthodox understanding of man] (Athens: Ekdoseis “Epopteia,” 1979). For an English version, see *Deification in*

Christ: The Nature of the Human Person, trans. Norman Russell (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987).

4. Feast of the Annunciation of the *Theotokos*, March 25, *Doxastikon* at the Praises.

5. Demetrios Kydones (ca. 1324-ca. 1398), who translated several works by Thomas Aquinas into Greek and who subsequently converted to Roman Catholicism—*Trans.*

6. In our works: *Προλεγόμενα εἰς τὴν μελέτην Νικολάου τοῦ Καβάσιλα* [Prolegomena to the study of Nicholas Cabasilas] (Athens: 1968), p. 84 (also in the *Θρησκευτικὴ καὶ Ἡθικὴ Ἐγκυροπαιδεία*, Vol. XII, cols. 830-857); *Ἡ Θεομήτωρ, κείμενο, μετάφραση, εἰσαγωγή, σχόλια στὶς Θεομητορικὲς ὄμιλίες τοῦ N. Καβάσιλα* [The Mother of God: Text, translation, introduction, and notes on the homilies on the Mother of God by N. Cabasilas] (Athens: 1968), p. 232; “Ἄνθρωπος καὶ Θεάνθρωπος” [Man and God-Man], *Κληρονομία*, Vol. III (1971), pp. 111-124; “Ἡ Μητέρα τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ ὁ θεοκεντρικὸς ἀνθρωπισμός” [The Mother of God and theocentric humanism], *Γρηγόριος Παλαμᾶς*, Vol. LVI (1973), pp. 324-328; “Ο θάνατος τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ ἡ ἀνάσταση τοῦ ἀνθρώπου” [The death of God and the resurrection of man], reprinted from *Κοινωνία*, Vol. V-VI (1974), p. 16; *Ἡ περὶ δικαιώσεως τοῦ ἀνθρώπου διδασκαλία τοῦ Νικολάου Καβάσιλα. Συμβολὴ εἰς τὴν ὁρθόδοξην σωτηριολογίαν* [Nicholas Cabasilas' teaching on the justification of man: A contribution to Orthodox soteriology] (Piraeus: 1975), p. 184; “Αἱ θεολογικαὶ πηγαὶ Νικολάου τοῦ Καβάσιλα. Ἀναφοραὶ καὶ ἔξαρτήσεις” [The theological sources of Nicholas Cabasilas: References and supporting materials], *Κληρονομία*, Vol. VII, No. 2 (1975), pp. 327-344; “Ἡ ἔνωση μὲ τὸ Χριστὸν κατὰ τὸν Νικόλαο Καβάσιλα” [Union with Christ according to Nicholas Cabasilas], *Ἐποπτεία*, No. 27 (October 1978), pp. 773-781; “Ἡ ἐν Χριστῷ δικαιώσις τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κατὰ τὸν Ἀπ. Παῦλον” [Man's justification in Christ according to St. Paul], in *Χαριστήρια εἰς τιμὴν τοῦ Μητροπολίτου Γέροντος Χαλκηδόνος Μελίτωνος* [Festschrift in honor of Metropolitan Meliton of Chalcedon] (Thessaloniki: 1979), p. 320.

7. References for passages cited from *Cabasilas* are to the *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. CL; i.e., 572A = *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. CL, col. 572A. Furthermore, as the reader will have noticed, we avoid supplying footnotes of a scholarly nature here; such references may be found in the works listed in note 5.

8. St. John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, I.13, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XCIV, col. 853C.

9. St. John of Damascus, “Third Apologetic Discourse Against Those Who Slander the Holy Icons,” §26, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XCIV, col. 1348AB; St. Gregory Palamas, “Epistle to John Gabras,” §29, in *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα* [The writings of Gregory Palamas], ed. Panagiotis K. Chrestou (Thessaloniki: 1966), Vol. II, pp. 356-357.

10. *Ἡ Θεομήτωρ. Τρεῖς Θεομητορικὲς ὄμιλίες* [The Mother of God: Three homilies on the Mother of God], ed. and trans. Panagiotis Nellas, 2nd ed., Vol. II in *Ἐπὶ τὰς Πηγάς* (Athens: Ekdoseis Apostolikes Diakonias tes Ekklesias tes Hellados, 1974), pp. 150-152.

11. We would ask that in this article the reader distinguish between its central theses, which are worked out in detail with supporting documentation and offered

for discussion in full responsibility, and ideas peripheral to the central thesis of the article, which could be formulated differently, and certainly more correctly.

12. Cf. the following phrase from the Eighth Pre-Communion Prayer, by St. Symeon Metaphrastes: “[B]y Thy glorious Ascension [Αναλήψει] Thou didst deify the flesh that Thou hadst assumed [τῆς σαρκὸς θεώσας τὸ πρόσλημμα] and didst honor it by seating it at the right hand of the Father” (*Ωρολόγιον τὸ Μέγα*, 9th ed. [Athens: Ekdoseis Apostolikes Diakonias tes Ekklesias tes Hellados, 1986], p. 516)—*Trans.*

13. St. John of Damascus, *H Θεοτόκος*, Vol. III in *Ἐπὶ τὰς Πηγάς* (Athens: 1970), p. 70.

14. It is quite literally a shame and an error that in the contemporary dialogue between Orthodox and Roman Catholic theologians on a subject which was central for Cabasilas, that of the Mysteries, this great theologian and Church Father has been ignored. In an era not long after the schism, when discussions concerning union were at their height, Cabasilas, certainly not by chance, elaborated an entire theology of the Mysteries. In this theology, which superbly draws together the whole Patristic tradition before him, he also takes into account and adopts organically whatever can be adopted of the inquiries of the early, and not yet completely schematized Scholasticism. It is a purely Orthodox theology, a profound theology, which views the Mysteries at once in their ontological and ethical dimensions. Indeed, since Cabasilas, as an Orthodox, operates on the theological and cosmological-anthropological planes simultaneously, his theology leads clearly to deification, and calls to deification all human beings and all the world. This dimension of good news for the world is yet another reason why Cabasilas is particularly relevant today, quite literally modern. If we add to this the fact that up until now Roman Catholic theologians have not reacted negatively to his theology, we can understand how fruitful it could prove if his teaching were to be taken seriously in the current dialogue concerning the Mysteries.

15. For an English version of this text, see *Deification in Christ*, pp. 227-237—*Trans.*

16. “After the Fall and before the Virgin came into existence, God was ‘homeless’ [ἄστοιχος] (which means without a hearth, one who has no family or fatherland) and it is precisely the Virgin who prepares a place and a dwelling for Him, that is, introduces Him into the human family” (Nellas, *H Θεομήτωρ*, p. 128).