

Reclaiming Creation through the Incarnate Logos: A Theological Critique of Fr. John Meyendorff's "Christ the Savior Today"

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Abstract: *This review offers a reflective theological analysis of Fr. John Meyendorff's lecture "Christ the Savior Today", focusing on the role of the incarnate Logos in the renewal of Creation. Drawing from patristic theology and Eastern Orthodox tradition, the article underscores the philosophical essence of Christ's salvific mission and its implications for contemporary Christian thought. The review also addresses the rationalization of Creation, the union of divine and human natures, and the ontological role of the Church in transmitting divine grace. Through this critique, the author invites deeper engagement with the theological legacy of Meyendorff in a secularized world.*

Keywords: Christology, Eastern Orthodox theology, incarnation, Logos, Fr. John Meyendorff

In an era of secularization, postmodernism, and globalization, the significance of theological discourse on the person of Christ as Savior continues to grow in relevance. This review presents a theological analysis of Fr. John Meyendorff's lecture titled "Christ the Savior Today." The author looks to attribute a philosophical-theological practical quality and essence to the historical Jesus based on the writings of John the Evangelist. This, however, constitutes an integral part of Christ's salvific mission within the structure and creation of the cosmos. At the outset of the book, there is an inextricable interweaving of the Logos with the person of Christ (pp. 7–10). This article aims to critically evaluate Fr. John Meyendorff's theological perspective in his lecture "Christ the Savior Today," with a focus on the incarnate Logos and its implications for the renewal of Creation and Christian identity in a secularized world.

The revelation of the meaning of Creation, according to the liturgical tradition interpreting John's Gospel, is found in the Logos of Jesus. Everything in the world regains functional significance through the Word of the Lord, which is why divine or magical attributes should not be ascribed to various phenomena, objects, or conditions. Through the strength derived from the Word of Jesus, people are called to exercise their dominion over creation with reason, purpose, and responsibility. The concepts of "Speaking" and "Creating" are identical for Christ the Savior. Thus, all human-driven processes that lead to self-improvement. These efforts represent the renewal of creation, which can only be fully achieved through the Logos through the consubstantial and uncreated Spirit and Word of the Lord (Zizioulas, 1982). This analysis is particularly relevant in addressing contemporary questions surrounding ecclesiastical secularization and the enduring significance of Christ's salvific mission in modern theological discourse.

The world as sacred, in other words, is revealed as Creation through the Logos of the Lord. The fall of creation is reversed by the Savior through an opposite motion, which is the "rationalization" of the world. Therefore, creation must be governed by the Word of the Lord. The salvation of creation is essentially restored and acquires meaning and direction through Christ's Logos. Furthermore, the author asserts that the recreative and transcendent nature of the unique divine

Logos is manifested and materialized through Christian mission. In this sense, humanity is at the center of God's Creation, as this relationship, though not always apparent, is unbreakable and inevitable (pp. 11–20).

The incarnation of the Logos, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, served as a tool for reclaiming and restoring the "image and likeness" of humanity following the tragic fall of creation. The Logos of Jesus expresses His will for the existence of His creation so that it may exist "in Him" rather than apart from Him. In patristic theology, as articulated by St. Maximus the Confessor, elements of divine rationality concerning the origins of the world's creation are found in his doctrine of the "logoi" of beings. Regarding the state of the world, Christ's Logos enables Christians to comprehend what the world "should be," contrasting with secular existentialists who merely describe "what the world is." Essentially, St. Maximus acknowledges that humanity experiences its sinful condition due to its mortality (Florovsky, 1989).

The fall of the world resulted from the dysfunction of Creation, as natural pairs (man-woman, paradise-world, heaven-earth, etc.) were transformed into competing contradictions rather than being maintained in harmony. Through the incarnate Logos of Jesus, harmony is continuously restored in all these fundamental conditions and principles. Consequently, Christ is not only present in heaven but also beside us, as He became man and serves as the paradigm of Creation. This means that even in death, Jesus takes part in every human experience through the incarnation of His Logos, as this event does not signify the death of an ordinary human being but rather the death of the incarnate Logos (pp. 21–30).

Due to His immense compassion and love for humanity after the fall, Jesus became like us so that humanity, through virtue, could become like Him. Thus, theosis and the continuation of spiritual ascent are realized through the incarnation. By assuming human nature, God ensured that the purpose and process of human Creation were not nullified. Therefore, the purpose of the incarnation lies in humanity, not in Christ. After the original sin ruptured the bond between God and humankind, this condition was restored through the incarnation of the Logos. Additionally, through His

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incarnation, Christ, being both one with God and one with humanity, leads us to salvation by conveying His sanctifying power. The incarnation of the Logos results directly in the union of divine and human natures (Giagakazoglou, 2001).

The dissemination of the Word and the truth of God's Creation is actualized through the Church in all ages. Hence, there is no Creation independent of Christ. Consequently, nothing created by God is legitimate for secularization, as He is the sole Creator of beauty. The Church remains one and unique, as there is only one Lord and one Spirit. The "Apostolic Sacramental Succession," representing fidelity to the Apostolic teachings, ensures the Church's continuity throughout history. Thus, as the Temple of God and the Body of Christ, the Church is entirely, fully, and eternally present everywhere. Furthermore, infallibility is an attribute of God that is imparted to those who accept His life and grace, making it a characteristic of the entire Church. The grace of God, therefore, is transmitted through the Church's faithfulness to Apostolic tradition and teachings (pp. 31–34). The union and communion of the Church's members with Christ and with one another are based on uncreated Divine Grace. However, believers participating in the Church and receiving divine grace do not partake in His essence, as they are not gods by nature, though they receive theosis as a divine gift. Theosis of all Church members remain its primary and ultimate goal throughout time. Within the Church, the existential integration and renewal of humanity are realized. In essence, the ontological interweaving of fallen humanity with the Triune God and His communion is accomplished through participation in the Church. Consequently, the Church alone offers the correct path to salvation by adhering devoutly to its tradition (Chaillot, 2016).

The existence of the Church is signified and revealed through the sacraments. Specifically, the Church is ontologically and existentially constituted and operates through its sacraments, rather than merely symbolically, thereby ontologically binding its members to Christ, its head. The sacraments have a dual character: therapeutic and ecclesiological. Through the sacraments, humanity is granted the opportunity to receive divine grace without coercion, which transforms them into partakers of divine life and incorruptibility. The sacramental life thus leads all Church members toward their true destiny, which is the fully rational worship of God (pp. 35–37).

Through willful disobedience, fallen humanity tarnished its "image of God" and distorted its "likeness," having rejected the spirit of God. Consequently, the harmonious communion with fellow humans was disrupted, alongside humanity's relationship with God. Regarding the secularized Church, the historical trajectory of events from Christ's appearance to the establishment of His kingdom on Earth is evident. The questions directed at Fr. John Meyendorff revolved around ecclesiastical secularization, the role of Christian civilization in the West, differences between Eastern and Western Christianity, and the foreign imposition of revolutionary ideological movements originating in the United States upon other nations (Torrance, 1975).

Fr. John Meyendorff's responses to these inquiries were clear, rational, well-articulated, and grounded in the incarnation of the Word of God. Above all, his answers emphasized Christ

as Savior and Creator of the world for all times and societies. In conclusion, this review of "Christ the Savior Today" highlights Fr. John Meyendorff's enduring theological contribution through his affirmation of Christ as the incarnate Logos and Savior of Creation. Drawing from Eastern Orthodox tradition, the analysis reaffirms the ontological and sacramental foundation of the Church and its mission. The work remains a vital resource for understanding the theological integration of Christ's salvific mission in an age of growing secularism and philosophical disorientation.

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