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The Shifting Tones of Pope Leo the Great's Christological Vocabulary

PHILIP L. BARCLIFT

Over the past several decades Leonine studies have focused attention on Pope Leo the Great's Christology, noting the influence his *Tomus ad Flavianum* had at the Council of Chalcedon. In fact, because of this strong influence twentieth-century scholars have studied the *Tome* nearly exclusively in order to identify the heart of Leo's Christology. There can be no question, of course, that the *Tome* should be consulted in order to understand Leo's Christology, but it marks only one phase in the ongoing development of the ways he chose to express his christological insights. In part the *Tome* itself precipitated this development insofar as it opened up his Christology to scrutiny in the East. The tone of Leo's insights and the language he used to express them shifted and acquired greater precision over time in his letters and sermons in direct response to the dynamics of the christological controversy in the East, of which Leo's *Tome* made him a part. This development is most evident in three areas: his avoidance of the "Mother of God" title for the Virgin Mary after initially using it early in his pontificate; his use of the terms *homo* and *humanus*, which Leo learned to distinguish later in his pontificate; and his adoption of the Antiochene *homo assumptus* formula late in his pontificate to emphasize the fullness of Christ's human nature. These phenomena reflect the pope's careful attempt to distance himself from the rising tide of the Monophysite movement in the East, as he began to channel his traditional, Western Christology more through formulae used by Antiochene theologians. These phenomena can only be observed through careful, chronological analysis of the broader corpus of Pope Leo's works.¹

There are several reasons to question whether Pope Leo's *Tome* should be considered the summation of his Christology. As J. Gaidioz shows, Leo's *Tome* was almost certainly edited for him by his theological advisor, Prosper of Aquitaine. Moreover, as Herbert Arens and C. Silva-Tarouca demonstrate, the vast majority of the *Tome* is compiled and heavily edited from the pope's own early sermons, combined with citations on the Incarnation from Western theologians. The near certainty that Prosper of Aquitaine compiled the *Tome* for

1. All citations from Pope Leo's *Tome* are based on the critical edition of C. Silva-Tarouca, ed., *S. Leonis Magni: Tomus ad Flavianum Episc. Constantinopolitanum* in *Textus et Documenta (TD)*, Series Theologica, tome 9 (Rome, 1932). See esp. Silva-Tarouca's notes on pp. 24–32 for a careful analysis of the contents of the *Tome*.

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Leo begs the question whether the pope had *any* substantive part in selecting citations either from his theological predecessors or even from his own sermons. The fact that Prosper cited and carefully edited selections only from Pope Leo's earliest sermons merely deepens the problem of whether the *Tome* should be used as Leo's final word on the doctrine of Christ, especially regarding the language he uses to express it.²

That Pope Leo sanctioned and signed the *Tome* before publication in 449 suggests, of course, that he had no theological reservations with it at the time, and the fact that he fought for its continued acceptance late in his pontificate indicates that Leo never rejected the *Tome* in its substance. It represents the heart and soul of the Western christological tradition of which Leo is a part. Summarizing Pope Leo's *Tome*, Leo Davis shows that on the one hand, in keeping with the Western tradition, Leo maintains that the incarnate Jesus is continuous with and identical to the divine Word. In fact, according to Leo, the unity of Jesus' person is so close that it is permissible to interchange the predicates used for Christ's two natures. This is the Western *communicatio idiomatum* formula, which Western theologians held in common with the Eastern theologians affiliated with Alexandria.³ On the other hand, as W. H. C. Frend observes, Pope Leo maintains the Western tradition's insistence that Christ's two natures are distinct, devoid of blending or confusion: Christ is both truly divine and truly human, composed of the divine Word, a human body, and a human soul. This latter emphasis of the Western tradition is shared by the theologians affiliated with Antioch. Therefore, as Frend comments, Leo in this fashion satisfies both the Antiochene emphasis on the reality and independence of Christ's two natures and the Alexandrine contention that "the person of the Incarnate is identical with that of the divine Word."⁴

When Pope Leo commissioned Prosper to edit his *Tome* in 449, the pope intended this discourse to mediate the Eastern christological crisis that was coming to a head at the Second Council of Ephesus. Leo consistently viewed this crisis as a conflict between two extreme factions, the followers of Nestorius and the followers of Eutyches. As Leo saw it, one side overemphasized the distinction between Christ's natures to the point of denying the unity of his person and of doubling the persons in Christ. The other side overemphasized the unity of Christ's natures to the point of blending them and of denying

2. J. Gaidioz, "Saint Prosper d'Aquitaine et le Tome à Flavien," *Revue de sciences religieuses* 23 (1949): 270–301. For additional commentary on the relationship between Pope Leo and Prosper of Aquitaine, see N. W. James, "Leo the Great and Prosper of Aquitaine: A Fifth Century Pope and His Adviser," *Journal of Theological Studies* 44 (1993): 554–584; Herbert Arens, *Die christologische Sprache Leos des Großen: Analyse des Tomus an den Bischöfen Flavian* (Freiburg, Germany, 1982), p. 110; and N. Ertl, "Diktatoren frühmittelaltlicher Papstbriefe," *Archiv für Urkundenforschung* 15 (1938): 56–61.

3. Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325–787): The History and Theology* (Wilmington, Del., 1987), p. 176.

4. W. H. C. Frend, *Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, 2d ed. (New York, 1979), p. 131.

Christ's authentic humanity, asserting instead the possibility that the impassible God could suffer.⁵ Leo expected his *Tome* to be read at the council in defense of Flavian, the bishop of Constantinople whom Leo believed to be wrongfully accused of heresy. But Dioscorus, then bishop of Alexandria who presided over the council, had Leo's *Tome* suppressed throughout the session. As Frend observes, however, it was probably fortunate that Leo's *Tome* was not read at that time, since within the climate of this council Leo "and his representatives would have been excommunicated then and there."⁶ Two years later, when Pope Leo and Empress Pulcheria agreed to call a new council at Chalcedon, his *Tome* was read in a very different climate and became one of the foundation stones of the council's Definition of Faith.

The christological controversy in the East interested Leo long before his pontificate (440–461). Around 430, during Celestine's pontificate, then Archdeacon Leo commissioned the theologian John Cassian to compile a *florilegium* against Nestorius on the Incarnation.⁷ In accordance with Leo's wishes, Cassian added his own condemnation of Nestorius's teachings in this work entitled *De incarnatione Domini contra Nestorium*. Throughout Cassian passionately defended the title "Mother of God" (*Theotokos*) for the Virgin Mary in order to emphasize the unity of Christ's person, since Nestorius, once bishop of Constantinople, had objected to that term and argued instead that Jesus' mother should be called "Mother of Christ" (*Christotokos*). Notwithstanding his misunderstanding of Nestorius, Cassian wished to emphasize a traditional tenet: that when God the Son assumed human nature into the unity of his person, somehow God himself was born of the Virgin Mary, since the child she bore was both true God and true man. According to Cassian, it is incorrect to say that only the human Christ (and not God) was born of Mary, since both Scripture and tradition speak unequivocally of Christ as God. If we can say that Christ was born of the Virgin, then we must also say that God was born of her.⁸

In his defense of the *Theotokos* title, Cassian borrowed his terminology from the Eastern fathers, most notably from Gregory of Nazianzus and Athanasius.

5. See Leo's sermon 28.5 for his description of both extremes. All citations of Pope Leo's sermons are from the critical edition *Sancti Leonis Magni. Romani Pontificis Tractatus Septum et Nonaginta*, Corpus Christianorum series Latina 138, ed. Antonius Chavasse (Turnhout, Belgium, 1973). Because of the relative brevity of each sermon, I cite them only by sermon and chapter number.
6. W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia, Pa., 1985), p. 768.
7. "Praefatio," *De incarnatione Domini contra Nestorium* in J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* (hereafter *PL*) (Paris, 1844–), 50.11.
8. *Ibid.*, 2.3 (*PL* 50.39). Cassian mistakenly interpreted Nestorius's statement as a denial that Christ was a divine-human unity, that he was merely human, as the Arians had claimed (2.2; *PL* 50.31–32). Cassian also charged that Nestorius's doctrines smack of Pelagianism insofar as they seem to suggest that Christ as a mere human lived a perfect life, of which other humans are capable (1.3; *PL* 50.20). Indeed, these links to Arianism and Pelagianism form the chief basis of Cassian's entire attack against Nestorius and his *Christotokos* formula.

The title was not yet in use in the West when Cassian compiled his *florilegium* of Western theologians in support of his position, even though the concept was already firmly established. Augustine had affirmed on several occasions the notion that God could be born of a woman; however, Augustine never used the title “Mother of God” for Mary. Up to the time Cassian compiled his *florilegium* for use in *De incarnatione Domini*, *Theotokos* was used almost exclusively in the East. In a sense Cassian introduced the Greek term *Theotokos* to the Latin West, where Pope Leo initially welcomed use of its Latin equivalent, *Dei genetrix*.⁹

One wonders how much impact a commissioned work such as this one might have had on the person who commissioned it. Since he was at this time inclined toward Alexandria for other reasons, to some extent Leo was already predisposed to accept a more Alexandrine slant on Christology. For instance, in 431, while Leo was archdeacon in Rome, Bishop Cyril of Alexandria presided over the Council of Ephesus, for which Cassian’s *De incarnatione Domini* was hastily prepared at Leo’s request. That same year Cyril appealed to Archdeacon Leo to help him resolve a jurisdictional dispute with Juvenal, bishop of Jerusalem, and Leo never hesitated in siding with Cyril against the ambitious Juvenal. During this time Leo acquired a good deal of respect for Cyril, enough so that when Leo, early in his pontificate, needed to settle the recurring dispute over the correct date of Easter, he consulted Cyril. Leo and Cyril completely agreed on the matter. So it is not surprising to us that in his first Christmas sermon (440) Pope Leo would adopt the title “Mother of God” (*Dei genetrix*) for Mary—the title for which Cassian pleaded in *De incarnatione Domini* and which was a central issue in the debate between Cyril and Nestorius. This sermon (21.1) marks Leo’s first good opportunity to offer his own exposition on the Incarnation.

For Leo, this traditional title for Mary underscored a fundamental doctrine which the pope would hold throughout his pontificate: the two natures of Christ are so indissolubly united in his single person that they share a *communicatio idiomatum*, or interchange of predicates. Andrea Valeriani succinctly summarizes Leo’s understanding of this formula: “in Christ the humanity and the divinity each operate distinctly, yet in communion with the other. Because of the unity of the person [of Christ] the acts of one [nature] become attributed also to the other nature.”¹⁰ This formula enabled Leo to reconcile paradoxical

9. Cassian cites Augustine’s lectures on John, *In Joannis Evangelium* 2.15, in his *florilegium*; see *De incarnatione Domini* 77.27 (PL 50.260–262). For additional examples of Augustine’s doctrine that God was born of a woman, see *De trinitate* 8.5.7 (PL 42.952); and *De Genesi ad litteram liber imperfectus* 1.4 (PL 34.221). Based on these texts, there can be little doubt that Augustine would have welcomed the *Dei genetrix* title as a theological postulate of his own Christology.

10. Andrea Valeriani, *Il Mistero del Natale* (Madrid, 1984), p. 31: “in Cristo operano l’umanita e la divinita ciascuna con operazione bensì distinta, ma con comunione dall’ altra ‘cum alterius comunione’. A motiva dell’ unita di persona le azioni dell’ una vengono attribuite anche all’ altra natura.”

statements in Scripture, such as the Johannine passages in which Jesus is reported to have said on one occasion that he and the Father are one (John 14:28) and on another occasion that the Father is greater than he (John 10:30), as Leo does in a sermon, delivered in 442.¹¹ In fact, early in his pontificate, the pope used enough hyperbole to express the *communicatio idiomatum* between Christ's two natures that he nearly confused them. For example, Leo stated in a sermon delivered during the third year of his pontificate that the Son of God allowed his divine impassibility to be affected by all the miseries of human existence: "He assumed [into himself] not only the substance but also the conditions of our sinful nature, to such an extent that he permits his impassible divinity to experience all the miseries that pertain to mortal humans."¹² This statement resembles some of Cassian's hasty statements in *De incarnatione Domini*.¹³

In 444 Leo guarded his hyperbole somewhat in sermon 72.5, but he still explained that the unity of Christ's two natures is so close that in Christ "the invisible rendered its substance visible, the nontemporal temporal, and the impassible passible, not that power might sink into weakness, but that weakness might pass into indestructible power!"¹⁴ Again Leo's use of hyperbole creates the mistaken impression that he believes the impassible God was caused to suffer by his assumption of human nature. In Pope Leo's early inclination toward Alexandria and Alexandrine Christology, he emphasizes the unity of Christ's person so much that he relaxes the line between the transference of predicates and the blending of properties. Jose Martorell captures Leo's early intent, then, when he interprets the pope to say in this context that the Son of God therefore suffered on the cross just as much as his flesh suffered.¹⁵ During this period the pope does not hesitate to speak of Mary as *Dei genetrix*, since that title expresses so powerfully the unity of Christ's person and the interchange of predicates in his selfsame person.

As important as the *Dei genetrix* title is to the exposition of the *communicatio idiomatum* doctrine, however, it is interesting to note that only once does Leo use the title "Mother of God" for Mary in any of his letters or sermons after the Council of Chalcedon convened in 451. In a *florilegium* he had compiled in 458

11. Serm. 23.2 (delivered in 442): "quam idem Filius Dei ut ostendat in se non discretae neque alterius esse personae, sic cum eadem dicit: 'Pater maior me est' [John 14:28], quemadmodum cum eadem dicit: 'Ego et Pater unum sumus' [John 10:30]."

12. Serm. 71.2: "ut non solum substantiam, sed etiam conditionem naturae peccatricis adsumeret, et ea sibi pateretur inferri diuina impassibilitas, quae miserrime experitur humana mortalitas."

13. See, for example, *De incarnatione Domini* 3.3 (PL 50.19).

14. Serm. 72.5: "inuisibilis uisibilem, intemporalis temporalem, impassibilis passibilem substantiam suam fecit, non ut uirtus deficeret in infirmitate sed ut infirmitas in incorruptibilem posset transire uirtutem!"

15. Jose Martorell, *Mysterium Christi (Leon Magno)*, (Valencia, Spain, 1983), p. 39.

for Emperor Leo in defense of the Definition of Chalcedon, Leo used the title only to explain the basis of Nestorius's condemnation.¹⁶ Besides this one instance, however, the pope did not use *Theotokos* again after Chalcedon, even though he spoke frequently, within the context of the interchange of predicates, of the Son of God assuming human nature from the virgin who bore him.¹⁷ As Augustine had done before him, Leo provided the content of the doctrine but not the title. Augustine seemed unaware of any use of the *Dei genatrix* title in theological discussion; Leo knew the title and its proper use, yet for some reason he avoided using it.

Many scholars might wish to look to Prosper of Aquitaine's influence for Pope Leo's shift away from the *Dei genatrix* title. Given that Prosper certainly edited the *Tome* for Leo, at least the title's absence from that document could be explained this way. However, N. W. James believes that Prosper also had a hand in the composition of the pope's earliest Christmas sermons, which constituted the primary platform for the pope's annunciation of the *Dei genatrix* title.¹⁸ But why, then, would Prosper and Leo together include this title in his first Christmas sermons and edit it out of their citations of these sermons in the *Tome*? James's observation does not greatly alter the question before us. To be sure, it is quite possible that what is said for Leo must also be said for Prosper, but the problem remains. Why did Pope Leo, even under Prosper's influence, surrender the *Dei genatrix* title for Mary in his later sermons and letters?

This much is clear: with Prosper's help on the *Tome*, Pope Leo avoided most of the hazards that the language of his earliest sermons might have caused if Prosper had quoted them all verbatim. The *Dei genatrix* title is edited out, as are numerous other expressions which use hyperbole to make a point. Word-for-word quotations of these sermons with all their hyperbole could have been disastrous for Leo at the Council of Chalcedon. Both factions in the East could have found reason enough in his sermons to suspect his orthodoxy. In the *Tome*, however, there is no question either of division in Christ's person or of the blending of his two natures:

Therefore, because of this unity of the person whom we understand to be in both natures, we read about the son of man descending from heaven, when the Son of God assumed human nature from the virgin who bore him. Likewise, the Son of God is said to have been crucified and buried, even though it was not really in his deity, in which the only-begotten is coeternal and consubstantial with the Father; rather he suffered these things in his weak human nature. Still, we all confess in the Symbol that the only-begotten Son of God was crucified and buried.¹⁹

16. See Epist. 165.2 (*PL* 54.1157).

17. See for example, serm. 28.2.

18. See note 2.

19. Epist. 28.5. (*TD* 9.28.126–131): "Propter hanc ergo unitatem personae in utraque natura intellegendam, et filius hominis legitur descendisse de caelo cum filius Dei carnem de ea uirgine de qua est natus adsumperit. Et rursum filius Dei crucifixus dicitur ac sepultus,

Leo skillfully balanced the *communicatio idiomatum* with a declaration that Christ's two natures remain distinct and unaffected by each other.

The theologians in the Eastern church, however, were not all interested in balance. After the Council of Chalcedon closed, Pope Leo's own theology fell under scrutiny in the East, precisely due to the weight he gives to the distinction of Christ's natures in the *Tome*. In 452, the year just following the Council of Chalcedon, a controversy was brewing among the Palestinian monks who believed they saw Nestorian tendencies in Pope Leo's *Tome*. On 13 June 453 Leo responded to their concerns, expressing his frustration over the language barrier between the Latin West and the Greek East and suggesting that the problems the monks have with his *Tome* result from faulty Greek translations rather than actual problems with his orthodoxy.²⁰ But Leo took great care just the same to ensure that his own Latin vocabulary was as precise as possible.²¹

With his wary eye on the growing Monophysite movement in Egypt and Palestine, Pope Leo expounded in a sermon delivered in 453 that "the virgin Mary, who was fecundated by the Holy Spirit, brought forth at one and the same time, without corruption, both her biological child and the Creator of her race, indissolubly united together in his single person; even though, in fact, Jesus' divinity has no mother, and his humanity has no biological father."²² Here again Leo described the *Dei genetrix* doctrine without the title, and he qualified his statement as soon as he delivered it. Mary is the "Mother of God" insofar as she is the biological mother of Jesus, who is both divine and human; however, Jesus' divinity has no real mother. Nestorius could have agreed with this statement! By this time the Monophysite monks of Egypt and Palestine were already using the "Mother of God" title as their slogan. Leo sought to take this slogan away from them by reminding them that Mary is not technically the mother of Jesus' divine nature.

That same year Pope Leo explained that Christ's humility is complete in his majesty, and his majesty is complete in his humility. The pope wished to

cum haec non in diuinitate ipsa qua unigenitus consepiternus et consubstantialis est Patri, sed in naturae humanae sit infirmitate perpassus. Unde unigenitus filium Dei crucifixum et sepultum omnes etiam in symbolo confitemur."

20. Epist. 124.1 (*PL* 54.1062): "Sollicitudini meae, quam universali Ecclesiae omnibusque ejus filiis debeo, multorum relatione patefactum est dilectionis vestrae animis quiddam offensionis illatum, dum aut imperiti, ut apparet, interpretes, aut maligni, quaedam vos aliter intelligere, quam a me sunt praedicata, fecerunt, non valentes in Graecum eloquium apte et proprie Latina transferre, cum in rebus subtilibus et difficilibus explicandis, vix sibi etiam in sua lingua disputator quisque sufficiat."
21. For an analysis of Pope Leo's use of *substantia* rather than the term *natura* in this letter, which the Palestinian monks found particularly objectionable since it gives the impression that Christ was composed of "two persons," see R. V. Sellers, *The Council of Chalcedon* (London, 1953), pp. 110–111.
22. Sermon. 28.2: "ut in uno Dei atque hominis filio, et sine matre deitas, et sine patre esset humanitas. Simul enim per Spiritum fecundata uirginitas sine corruptionis uestigio edidit et sui generis sobolem et suae stirpis auctorem."

establish his orthodoxy with the monks in Palestine at the same time as he maintained his orthodoxy at home and in Antioch. Thus Leo built on the traditional *communicatio idiomatum* formula to express the mystery that Christ is a unity of two natures, yet the pope immediately qualified this statement with his reminder that Christ's two natures remain distinct: "One nature is truly passible, while the other is impassible; but both the humility and the glory belong to the same person who is simultaneously weak and powerful, subject to death and victor over death. The Son of God received a complete human nature and so united the two natures in himself that each nature was present in the other, even though neither nature transferred its essential properties into the other."²³ To be sure, Leo wanted to establish his orthodoxy with the monks in Palestine and Egypt, but he would only bend so far to do it.

In the first Christmas sermon Pope Leo delivered after hearing about the problems in Palestine, he attempted to establish his orthodox position against Nestorius by stating unambiguously that Nestorius should be condemned for suggesting that the Blessed Virgin Mary was only the mother of Christ the man, as if his humanity were not united to his divine nature in the Incarnation. To the contrary, Leo argued, "there is no hope of salvation for the human race if the son of the Virgin were not also the Creator of his mother."²⁴ Here again we find the *Dei genetrix* formula without the title. Why does Leo not use the *Dei genetrix* title in such a strong statement of the Son's unity when he assumed human nature from his mother? Back in the second chapter of this same sermon Leo had already prepared his audience to distance itself from the more extreme implications one might draw from statements pertaining to the role of the Virgin. In that section he reminded his audience that "Jesus' divinity has no mother, and his humanity has no biological father."²⁵

Once Pope Leo established his opposition to Nestorius, he turned his attack on Eutyches and his Monophysite followers. Leo was fully aware by this time that the "Mother of God" title for Mary had become a slogan for the followers of Eutyches, emphasizing their conviction that one can speak only of Christ's two natures *before* the union, whereas *after* the union only one incarnate nature,

23. Serm. 54.1: "Tota est in maiestate humilitas, tota in humilitate maiestas . . . nec infert unitas confusionem, dirimit proprietates unitatem. . . Aliud est passibile, aliud inuiolabile, et eiusdem est contumelia, cuius et gloria. Ipse est in infirmitate qui et in uirtute, idem mortis capax, et idem uictor est mortis. Suscepit ergo totum hominem Deus, et ita se illi, atque illum sibi misericordiae et potestatis ratione conseruit, ut utraque alteri natura inesset, et neutra in alteram a sua proprietate transiret."

24. Serm. 28.5: "Nam ille beatam Mariam uirginem hominis tantummodo ausus est praedicare genetricem, ut in conceptu eius et partu nulla Verbi et carnis facta unitio crederetur, quia Dei Filius non ipse factus sit hominis filius, sed creato homini sola se dignatione sociauerit. Quod catholicae aures nequaquam tolerare potuerunt, quae sic euangelio ueritatis inbutae sunt, ut firmissime nouerint nullam esse humano generi spem salutis, nisi ipse esset filius Virginis, qui Creator est matris."

25. Serm. 28.2: "ut in uno Dei atque hominis filio, et sine matre deitas."

whose sole operating principle was the divine Word, remained.²⁶ God the incarnate and God alone was born of the Virgin Mary. Leo now had to combat this notion with as much or even greater vigilance than he used to establish his argument against Nestorius. Therefore, in the same place in this sermon, Leo turned immediately to condemn Eutyches for teaching that only Christ's divine nature remained intact after the union: "If the Incarnation of the Word is the unity of the divine and the human natures, yet through this concurrence the two distinct [natures] became only one, his divinity alone was born of the Virgin's womb; and [Christ's] subjection to being nourished and to bodily growth amounts only to play-acting. Moreover, besides all the other changes of his human condition, only his divinity was crucified; only his divinity died; and only his divinity was buried." In this sermon Leo identified the heart of the danger he found in Eutyches's Monophysite Christology: if Christ was not fully human, his life on earth was merely a charade, and the force of God's plan of salvation is ultimately lost. If Eutyches is correct, Leo explained, all hope for the resurrection is lost, "since [the Son] had no need to be raised, if he were not capable of dying."²⁷

A new theological climate had emerged in the mid-fifth century, in which it was no longer safe for theologians to use the long-held, traditional *Dei genetrix* title for Mary without fear of trumpeting the Monophysite call to arms. Consequently, Pope Leo found himself forced to give up the title with which he crowned his first Christmas sermon on the Incarnation. In this new theological climate, brought about by the rising tide of the Monophysite movement in the East, continued use of this title would have only fanned the flames of the Monophysite heresy. Thereafter Leo described the Son's birth from Mary only in such a way as to explain pragmatically the source of the Son's authentic human nature in the unified person of Christ. As important as Leo found the continuity of the Son's existence in Christ, and as critical as the pope found the unity of Christ's person, Leo now found himself forced to protect the doctrine of Christ's real humanity.

26. See Eutyches' declaration in *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum: Concilium Universale Chalcedonense* (hereafter *ACO*), vol. 2, part 4, ed. Edward Schwartz (Berlin, 1932), 1.2.143: "homologō ek duo phuseōn gegenēsthai ton kurion hēmōn *pro pēs enōseōs, meta de tēn mian enōsin phusin homologō*" (emphasis mine). For additional comments on Eutyches's declaration, see Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, p. 524; and Czesław Bartnik, "Wcielenie Jako Podstawa Teologii Historii u Leona Wielkiego," *Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne* (Lublin, Poland, 1960), pp. 33–34.

27. Serm. 28.5: "Si enim Verbi incarnatio unio est diuinæ humanæque naturæ, sed hic ipso concursu quod erat geminum factum est singulare, sola diuinitas utero Virginis nata est, et per ludificatoriam speciem sola subiit nutrimenta et incrementa corporea, utque omnes mutabiles humanæ conditionis omittam, sola diuinitas crucifixa, sola diuinitas mortua, sola diuinitas est sepulta, ut iam secundum talia sentientes sperandæ resurrectionis nulla sit ratio, nec sit *primogenitus ex mortuis* Christus, quia non fuit qui deberet reuscitari, si non fuit qui posset occidi."

As a further indication of his movement away from the Alexandrine emphases which colored his earlier christological descriptions, Pope Leo began to clarify his position in chapter six of the same sermon by using the *homo assumptus* formula, which the Antiochenes (and Nestorius) also used to speak of the Son of God assuming a human being, body and soul:

The man, therefore, who *was assumed* into the Son of God, was received into the unity of the person of Christ at the very moment his body came into being, such that neither was he conceived without his deity, nor was he born without his deity, nor was he nurtured without his deity. The same person in the miracles is the one who suffered scorn. He was crucified, dead and buried through his *humanity*; he was raised on the third day, ascended to the heavens, and sat down at the right hand of the Father through his divine power; and he received in his *human* nature from the Father what he himself gave in his divine nature.²⁸

Up to this time Pope Leo had used *homo* and *humanus* interchangeably to designate “humanity” or “human nature.” Because of Leo’s consistent confusion of the terms, Herbert Arens and M.-J. Nicolas argue that Leo intended to use the term *homo* abstractly of humanity, humankind, or human nature in this sermon as well.²⁹ They contend that Pope Leo is not a speculative thinker with a mature metaphysical vocabulary; rather, he is a pastor and a preacher whose theology has always been credited more for the force of its simplicity than for its subtle nuances. In contrast, Czeslaw Bartnik suggests that Leo used the term *homo* here in order to stress the moral and psychic autonomy of Christ’s humanity, by which he asserted that the Son assumed a complete man, body and soul, as Augustine had done before him.³⁰ In *Confessions* 7.19, for example, Augustine carefully distinguished between the terms *homo* and *humanus*. In this text Augustine consistently used *humanus* generally to designate attributes that all humans hold in common, and he used *homo* whenever he wished to indicate the man Jesus in his concrete reality as a human individual, consisting of body, soul, and mind.³¹ For Augustine this kind of precision is second nature, but

28. Serm. 28.6: “*Adsumptus igitur homo in Filium Dei, sic in unitatem personae Christi ab ipsis corporalibus est receptus exordii, ut nec sine deitate conceptus sit, nec sine deitate editus, nec sine deitate nutritus. Idem erat in miraculis, idem ubi contumeliis; per humanam infirmitatem crucifixus, mortuus et sepultus, per diuinam uirtutem die tertia resuscitatus, ascendit ad caelos, consedit ad dexteram Patris, et in natura hominis a Patre accepit quod in natura Deitatis etiam ipse donauit*” (emphasis mine).

29. Arens, *Christologische Sprache Leos*, pp. 453–475; and Nicolas, “La doctrine christologique,” pp. 640–641.

30. Bartnik, “Wcielenie Jako Podstawa Teologii Historii u Leona Wielkiego,” pp. 32, 37–38. I wish to express my gratitude to James Wojtkowski for his invaluable assistance in the translation of this important article.

31. Augustine, *Confessions* 7.19 (PL 32.745): “His flesh did not join to your Word without a human soul and mind (*anima et mente humana*). All who know the immutability of your Word know this fact, which I myself have come to know, as best I could, but without the slightest doubt about it. Indeed, in order for him to move parts of his body by his will or at other times to refrain from moving them, to be aroused with affection at certain times or not to be aroused at others, to proclaim wise judgments sometimes or to remain silent at others, these are all manifestations of a mutable soul and mind. . . . Consequently, I

throughout the first decade of his pontificate, Pope Leo was either unconcerned with or unaware of the precise ways Augustine used these two terms. Leo simply used them as synonyms all this time. In sermon 22.2, for example, Leo used *homo* when describing Christ's *communicatio idiomatum* to express that the impassible God did not consider it unworthy of himself to become a passible human (*homo*).³² And throughout the third and fourth chapters of this sermon Leo used *humanum genus* interchangeably with *homines omnes* in speaking of the human race. Moreover, throughout sermon 23 the pope interchanged *hominis natura*, *humana natura*, and *humanae substantiae natura*, among others, to designate human nature, to which the pope adds *homo carnis substantia* in sermon 24.2. At 24.5 Leo interchanged the phrases *uerum . . . nostrae substantiae hominem* and *ueram humanae carnis . . . naturam* with reference to Christ's authentic human nature. In sermon 27.1 Pope Leo claimed that the Son "renewed humanity in his human nature (*in homine hominem renouans*), even though he remained unchanged in himself"; whereas in 27.2 Leo explained that "when God descended into human nature (*ad humana*) he elevated humanity (*homines*) to his divine station."³³

Further examples of this kind of interchangeability between the terms *homo* and *humanus* are too numerous to list here. The point is this: in his early sermons Pope Leo consistently used these terms as synonyms to designate the abstract concepts of "human" or "humanity," as Arens and Nicolas have noted. Therefore, if Pope Leo used *homo* in sermon 28.6 (composed in 452) to designate a concrete human individual, this use would reflect a remarkable shift in the pope's christological vocabulary. Of course in view of the growing Monophysite movement in the East, Leo really had no choice but to alter his language in order to avoid being identified with that movement.

When Leo finally responded directly to the Palestinian monks in letter 124, edited from his sermons 64 and 65 delivered in spring of 453 and published in June of that same year, he addressed their concerns in such a way that safeguarded the balance achieved in the *Tome*; at the same time, he strengthened his position regarding Christ's complete humanity. In 124.4 he spoke only of the reality of the Savior's "human" substance (*humanae substantiae*).³⁴ In

acknowledged in Christ a complete man (*totum hominem*), not merely the body of a man (*hominis*), or even one with a sensitive soul which is not also rational, but a real man (*ipsum hominem*), whom I have deemed worthy to be esteemed above all others, not because he is a person of truth, but because of the great and excellent human nature (*naturae humanae*) that was perfected in him" (my translation).

32. Serm. 22.2: "inpassibilis Deus non dedignatus est homo esse passibilis."

33. Serm. 27.1: "in homine hominem renouans, in se incommutabilis perseuerans. . . . ut Dei ad humana descensio fieret hominis ad diuina proectio."

34. Epist. 124.4 (*PL* 54.1064): "Quam itaque sibi in huius sacramenti praesidio spem relinquunt qui in Salvatoris nostri corpore negant humanae substantiae veritatem?" Compare sermon 64, which is a particularly significant source for this chapter of Leo's letter: "neque ullum nostrae religionis officium est quo non tam mundi reconciliatio quam humanae in

124.6 he stated on the one hand that there is “no division between Christ’s divine and human substance (*divinam humanamque substantiam*),” while he argued on the other hand that Christ’s divine actions do not affect those of his humanity (*humanitas*). Nor do his human (*humanus*) acts affect those of his deity. Instead, both natures co-inhere in the same person. Neither are his twofold attributes absorbed by one another, nor is his individuality doubled.³⁵ And in 124.7 Leo explained that the Lord Jesus Christ is one, and in him true deity and true “humanity” (*humanitas*) form one and the same person, in whom there is no division at all.³⁶

When Leo uses *homo* later in the same chapter of this letter he contextualizes it with a threefold use of *humanus* or its derivatives in order to show that he is attempting to distinguish his terms: “The impassible God’s condescension into the form of a slave [see Phil. 2:1 6–11], through which he fulfilled his great sacrament of love, elevated human (*humanus*) weakness into the glory of divine power, since Christ’s deity and humanity (*humanitas*) were united so completely in the virgin’s conception that Christ performed neither any of his divine acts apart from the man (*homo*) nor any of his human (*humanus*) acts apart from God.”³⁷ Is Leo using *homo* to designate more than simply “human” here? Although he still used the terms more fluidly in other contexts, it is interesting that in this letter and in the two sermons on which it is based, Leo finally used *humanus* or one of its derivatives when he wished to emphasize elements that all humans have in common with Christ in his humanity, such as “human weakness,” “humanity,” and “human acts,” and he now uses *homo* when addressing the actual human person of Christ.

In order to emphasize the distinction Pope Leo was trying to make between these two terms, he takes the step—unusual in the West—of phrasing the term *homo* together with the term *assumptus*, a combination the pope had previously avoided. In the East Antiochene theologians were using the *homo assumptus*

Christo naturae adsumptio celebretur” (64.1); “Solus enim beatae Virginis natus est filius absque delicto, non extraneus ab hominum genere, sed alienus crimine” (64.2); and “Cum ergo in uno Domino Iesu Christo uero Dei atque hominis Filio, diuinam confitemur de Patre naturam, humanam de matre substantiam” (64.3).

35. Epist. 124.6 (PL 54.1065): “Quamvis ergo ab illo initio, quo in utero virginis ‘Verbum caro factum est’ [John 1:14], nihil umquam inter divinam humanamque substantiam divisionis exstiterit, et per omnia incrementa corporea, unis personae fuerint totius temporis actiones; ea ipsa tamen, quae inseparabiliter facta sunt, nulla permixtione confundimus; sed quid cuius formae sit, ex operum qualitate sentimus. Nec divina enim humanis praepjudicant, nec humana divinis, cum ita in idipsum utraque concurrant, ut in eis nec proprietates absumatur, nec persona geminetur.”
36. Epist. 124.7 (PL 54.1066): “Quamvis ergo unus sit Dominus Jesus Christus, et verae Deitatis veraeque humanitatis in ipso una prorsus eademque persona, neque huius unitioni soliditas ulla possit divisione sejungi.”
37. Epist. 124.7 (PL 54.1066): “Forma autem servi, per quam impassibilis Deitas sacramentum magnae pietatis implevit, humana humilitas est, quae in gloriam divinae potestatis evecta est, in tantam unitatem ab ipso conceptu Virginis Deitate et humanitate connexu, ut nec sine homine divina, nec sine Deo agerentur humana.”

formula to emphasize the reality and distinction of Christ's two natures in his single person. In order to stress this point they spoke of the Son of God assuming "a man"—a concrete human individual, with a body and a soul—into the unity of his being. Prior to the year 452, however, Pope Leo himself only spoke of the Son of God assuming human nature—and even all humankind—into the unity of his person, and with one exception he abstained completely from using *homo* in conjunction with the term *assumptus* prior to this time. For example, in sermon 21.1, delivered in the first year of his pontificate, Leo spoke of the Son assuming "the nature of the human race into himself" and a little more ambiguously of the Son assuming "what he was not, the actual form of a slave." In his Christmas sermon 22.3 delivered the following year, Leo explained that the Son assumed "the nature of the Lord's mother, without the fault." Two years later Pope Leo stated in another Christmas sermon (24.1) that "the Word who is coeternal and equal with the Creator assumed our humble nature into the unity of his deity." Then in 444, the pope explained in his Christmas sermon that God elevated "our nature" when he assumed it into himself.³⁸

The only occasion when the pope used *homo* in conjunction with *assumptus* prior to this time was in his sermon 72.6 on the Passion, delivered in 444, and in this case *homo* seems to represent either "humanity" or "humankind":

Because the Word and the flesh constitute one person, the received nature is not divided from the receiving nature; and the honor of the elevated nature is spoken of as an augmentation of the one that promoted it. . . . 'Therefore, God exalted him and gave him a name which is above every name' [Phil. 2:9], which refers to the exaltation of his assumed humanity (*homo*) such that the one who remains indivisible from God in his sufferings is nonetheless coeternal in God's glory.

That Leo intended to use *homo* to represent "humanity" rather than a concrete human individual is clear from a warning with which he caps this statement: "No one who denies that human nature (*humanam . . . naturam*) remains in the Son of God, who is true God, can share in this union."³⁹ Pope Leo is convinced that the *communicatio idiomatum* of Christ's two natures also passes through Christ to all humans who believe, precisely because all humans share a solidarity

38. Serm. 21.1: "auctori suo naturam generis adsumpsit humani"; 21.2: "ut manens quod erat adsumensque quod non erat, ueram serui formam"; 23.3: "Adsumpta est de matre Domini natura, non culpa"; 24.1: "ut Verbum illud coaeternum et aequale genitori in unitatem deitatis suae naturam nostrae humilitatis adsumeret"; and 25.3: "In adsumptione enim naturae nostrae nobis factus est gradus quo ad ipsum per ipsum possimus ascendere."

39. Serm. 72:6–7: "Sed quia Verbum et caro una persona est, non diuiditur a suscepto, et honor prouehendi prouehentis nominatur augmentum, dicente Apostolo quod iam commemorauimus: *Propter quod et Deus illum exaltauit et donauit illi nomen quod est super omne nomen*. In quo utique adsumpti hominis exaltatio commendatur, ut in cuius passionibus indiuisibilis manet Deitas, idem coaeternus sit in gloria Deitatis. . . . Cuius unitatis nullum poterunt habere consortium, qui in Dei Filio Deo uero humanam negant manere naturam."

with Christ's human nature. Because Christ was exalted in his human nature, then, all who believe can share in his exaltation. The sense of this argument is lost if *homo* is rendered concretely as a human individual rather than as human nature in which all humans share. In fact, prior to the year 452, every time Pope Leo used a derivative of *assumptus* with reference to the Son's Incarnation, the pope spoke of the Son assuming human nature or humanity as a whole into the unity of his person. And prior to that time Leo purposely refrained from using *homo* in conjunction with *assumptus*, probably to avoid any affinity with the language of Nestorian Christology.

The fact that Pope Leo used *homo* at all in conjunction with *assumptus* in sermon 28.6, then, should alert us to the possibility of something different there. Taken in the context of sermon 28 as a whole and in the immediate context of 28.6 in particular, all doubt fades concerning Leo's intent to employ *homo* in terms of a concrete human individual. As noted above, in 28.2 he reminded his audience that Jesus' divine nature had no mother and his human nature no father in order to take away the common Monophysite weapon—the traditional "Mother of God" title underscored their contention that only one, divine nature existed in the incarnate Son. Once the pope established the unity of Christ's person in 28.5 he then moved immediately to condemn those who contend that in Christ only the divine nature remained, showing them that if Christ did not have an authentic human nature, all of his human acts were merely play-acting. Leo is now ready in this sermon to establish the full reality of Christ's humanity by declaring that the Son of God assumed a complete man into the unity of his person.

Confronting the Monophysite monks in the East, Pope Leo began to develop the precision in his christological terminology that Augustine had used. But more than that, Leo did not settle with Augustine's vocabulary. As Leo's contact with the Monophysite monks in Palestine and Egypt increased both in frequency and tension, the heat of controversy pushed him to embrace language that is more noticeably in line with Antiochene modes of expressing the Incarnation. He now welcomes the Antiochene *homo assumptus* formula, which he and Cassian earlier feared would lead to the doubling of Sons in Christ, the one who assumed and the one who was assumed.⁴⁰

Pope Leo would eventually discover that the language of his *Tome* had been purposely altered by some of the Egyptian monks in order to emphasize what they considered its Nestorian tendencies.⁴¹ In 457 when these monks murdered the orthodox bishop of Alexandria, Proterius, and filled his seat with the usurper Timothy the Cat, the angry pope responded with his bitter Christmas

40. See Pope Leo's *Epist.* 59.5 (*PL* 54.872); and Cassian's *De incarnatione Domini* 6.15.

41. See G. L. Prestige, "The Greek Translation of the Tome of St. Leo," *Journal of Theological Studies* 31 (1930): 183–184.

sermon against the "Eutychians."⁴² There can be no question by this time that Leo had acquired the more precise sense of *homo* as a fully viable human being when he accused the Egyptian monks of denying the full reality of Christ's "human flesh" (*carnis humanae*) and of making him instead a "fake man" (*falsum hominem*) and a passible God.⁴³

In the same sermon Pope Leo condemned the Egyptians "who nullify the sacrament of the Lord's Incarnation." He contended that the entire gospel teaches that

the human race (*humanum genus*) is saved by means of this one sacrament of divine mercy toward those who believe that in the only-begotten Son of God, being equal in everything with the Father and remaining what he was in the assumption of our substance, true God deigned to be what he was not, undeniably a real man (*uerus scilicet homo*), except for the stain of sin. He truly united into himself the reality of our whole and complete nature, consisting in both flesh and soul, when he was conceived in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mother by means of the Holy Spirit's power.⁴⁴

Pope Leo added unequivocally in the same place that Jesus' humanity governs all the actions that pertain to the properties of his human body, such as sensing hunger, sleeping, weeping, being crucified, dying, and being buried. Likewise, his deity governs all the actions that pertain to the properties of his divine nature, such as performing miracles, rising from the dead, and ascending in his flesh into the heavens. On this basis, the pope contended, it is possible to distinguish Jesus' two natures. Moreover, Leo argued, it is possible to distinguish the operations and the wills of two natures in the single person of Christ; thus the pope answered in advance the Monothelite question of whether Christ has only one will or two. Important to this notion of Christ's two wills is Leo's contention that Jesus' moral decisions pertain to his human will. This moral dimension of the human soul, expressed in Jesus' human will, is now fully integrated into Leo's understanding of the concrete human being that the Son assumed into the unity of his person.⁴⁵ At this point Bartnik seems correct that Leo used *homo* to designate the moral and psychic autonomy of Christ's humanity.⁴⁶ Here the pope's christological language reached its maturity. When

42. It should be noted that the Egyptians did not identify themselves with Eutyches but with Cyril of Alexandria. The title "Eutychians" is Leo's own caricature of them.

43. Serm. 96.1: "asserentes solam deitatis in Christo fuisse naturam, nec carnis humanae, quam sumpsit ex beata Maria uirgine, habuisse penitus ueritatem, quae impietas at falsum hominem et Deut dicit esse passibilem."

44. Serm. 96.2: "qui incarnationis dominicae denegant sacramentum: quod unigenitus Dei Filius, aequalis per omnia Patri, nostrae adsumptione substantiae, manens quod erat, dignatus esse quod non erat, uerus scilicet homo, uerus Deus, qui absque cuiusquam sorde peccati, integram sibi nostram perfectamque naturam ueritate et animae at carnis uniuert, et intra uterum beatae uirginis matris Spiritus sancti uirtute conceptus, nec editionem partus, nec primordia fastidiuit infantiae."

45. *Ibid.*

46. Bartnik, "Teologii Historii u Leona Wielkiego," pp. 37–38.

discussing the Incarnation, Leo now consistently uses *humanus* or one of its derivatives when he wishes to emphasize elements that pertain to human nature generally, and he uses *homo* when addressing the person of Christ in his concrete human situation.

In an attempt to guard his language from the charge of Nestorianism, Pope Leo assured his congregation in the same place that there is no reason to wonder what actions to ascribe to Christ's humanity or what we ought to assign to his deity, "because Christ is one and the same person who did not lose the power of his deity when he assumed the reality of a complete human being (*perfectus homo*) at his birth."⁴⁷ Notice the clear use of *homo* to indicate a complete human being in this expression of the unity of Christ's person. Leo used *perfectus* to intensify the fullness of Christ's authentic humanity. Leo insisted on the presence of Christ's two natures in his self-same person, at the same time as he stressed forcefully the absolute completeness of Christ's human nature.

When Leo began his pontificate in the year 440, the christological controversy in the East was in a period of relative calm. Nestorius had been condemned nine years earlier by the Council of Ephesus, at which John Cassian's *De incarnatione Domini*, commissioned by then Archdeacon Leo, was read and received. Rome was indebted to the Alexandrine theologians for their carefully chosen language regarding the unity of Christ's person, for integrating the devotional "Mother of God" title into proper theological usage, and for revealing the dangers inherent in the Antiochene *homo assumptus* formula. It apparently seemed that the Alexandrine theologians provided the terminology with which to frame Western Christology in the East, and their descriptions of the unity of Christ's person seemed unrivaled in Christendom. Sensing the value of Cyril's contribution to Christology, Pope Leo adopted it all into his own vocabulary. He instinctively used the Eastern *Theotokos* title in his own letters and sermons as a means of expressing his own understanding of the indissoluble unity of Christ's person, and he avoided the Antiochene *homo assumptus* formula because of its inherent emphasis on the distinction of Christ's two natures, for which Nestorius was accused of teaching two Sons.

Pope Leo's Western thought patterns could not be fully contained in Cyril's language, however, as Leo slowly came to realize. Following the pattern set for him by Tertullian and Augustine, he also felt it necessary to distinguish Christ's natures and to plead for recognition of the full authenticity of Christ's humanity. Tertullian stated it clearly in *Adversus Praxeas*: "We see the twofold constitution (*statum*), which is not confused, but conjoined in one person, Jesus, God and human. . . . Now the properties of each substance are fully preserved, such

47. Ibid.: "ut qui haec credunt, dubitare non possint quid humanitati adscribere, quid debeant adsignare deitati, quia in utroque unus est Christ, qui et Deitatis suae potentiam non amisit, et veritatem perfecti hominis nascendo suscepit."

that the Spirit [that is, the divine substance] executed everything in Jesus that corresponds to [his deity], such as miracles and works and signs, whereas the flesh governed his passions: sensing hunger under the devil's [temptation], being thirsty with the Samaritan woman, weeping over Lazarus, being anxious about his own death, and finally dying."⁴⁸ Tertullian's bitter struggle with Gnosticism brought him to emphasize the distinction between Christ's two natures in order to underscore the reality of Jesus' true humanity, but he did not consider Christ's distinct natures separable; so also the African theologian rejected the notion that there are "two Christs."⁴⁹ In fact, he argued that the unity of Christ's natures is so intimate that we may use the *communicatio idiomatum* to describe it; as a result, Tertullian attributed the crucifixion and death of Christ to the Son of God himself.⁵⁰

Bishop Augustine of Hippo closely followed the course set by Tertullian. According to Augustine—in a passage Pope Leo cited in a *florilegium* he collected for Emperor Leo the Great—we ought to

recognize the twofold substance of Christ: the divine, through which he is equal to God; and the human, to which the Father is superior. Yet together they are not two, but one Christ, lest God become fourfold rather than threefold. Just as the rational soul and the flesh constitute one human, so there is one Christ, God and human. On this basis, Christ is God, rational soul and [human] flesh. We confess Christ in this totality and in each constitutive part (*in singulis*). Who is the one, therefore, through whom the world was made? Christ Jesus, but in the form of God. Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate? Christ Jesus, but in the form of a servant. In the same way, who, being of the same constitutive parts of which a human consists, was left in hell (*in inferno*)? Christ Jesus, but only in his soul. Who was resurrected after lying in the tomb for three days? Christ Jesus, but only in his flesh. Thus he is called Christ in each of his constitutive parts. Yet the totality of these parts is not two or three, but one Christ.⁵¹

Herein Augustine carefully balanced the recognition of Christ's two natures

48. Tertullian, *Adversus Praxeas* 27.6 (*Corpus Christianorum*, series Latina [hereafter *CCL*] [Turnhout, Belgium, 1953–]2.1199–2000): "Videmus duplicem statum, non confusum sed coniunctum in una persona, Deum et hominem lesum . . . et adeo salua est utriusque proprietates substantiae, ut et Spiritus res suas egerit in illo, id est virtutes et opera et signa, et carro passiones suas functa sit, esuriens sub diabolo, sitiens sub Samaritide, flens Lazarum, anixa ad mortem, denique et mortua est."

49. Tertullian, *De carne Christi* 24.1–4 (*CCL* 2.915–916).

50. *Ibid.*, 5.1–4 (*CCL* 2.880–881).

51. Augustine, *Tractatus* 78: *Comm. in Joann.* 14.27.28: "Agnoscamus geminam substantium Christi, divinam scilicet qua aequalis est Patri; humanam, qua maior est Pater. Utrumque autem simul non duo, sed unus est Christus: ne sit quaternitas non Trinitas Deus. Sicut enim unus est homo anima rationalis et caro, sic unus est Christo, Deus et homo: ac per hoc Christus est, Deus, anima rationalis et caro. Christum in his omnibus, Christum in singulis confitemur. Quis est ergo per quem factus est mundus? Christus Jesus, sed in forma Dei. Quis est sub Pontius Pilato crucifixus? Christus Jesus, sed in forma servi. Item de singulis quibus homo constat. Quis non est derelictus in inferno? Christus Jesus, sed in anima sola. Quis resurrecturus triduo iacuit in sepulchro? Christus Jesus, sed in carne sola. Dicitur ergo in his singulis Christus. Verum haec omnia non duo vel tres sed unus est Christus." Compare Pope Leo's citation of this passage in *Epist.* 165 (*PL* 54.1181).

and the intimate unity these natures share in his single person. Christ's natures are united and woven together from both his humanity and his deity into the same person, Jesus Christ.⁵² As Tertullian had done before him, Augustine explained this unity by way of the *communicatio idiomatum* formula. The unity of Christ's person consists in each nature, the divine and the human, such that each of them shares its predicates with the other.⁵³

Pope Leo followed this tradition and intensified it by using the Alexandrine "Mother of God" title to express it. Through his theological advisor, Prosper of Aquitaine, Pope Leo should have had access to Augustine's precise christological vocabulary. Prosper is famous for his defense of Augustine's doctrine of grace and for his friendship with the great bishop of Hippo. By dint of his relationship with Augustine, Prosper was able to compel the aging bishop to write two works against the Semi-Pelagians in Gaul.⁵⁴ In the first of these two works, written for Prosper and for his friend Hilary, Augustine outlined the sum of his christological vocabulary as his Christology impinges on his notion of grace.⁵⁵ It is surprising, then, that it took Prosper and Leo so long to develop the kind of precision found throughout Augustine's works, since the two could have had this precision all along by referring more closely to documents they had at their disposal, one of which was written directly to Prosper by Augustine. If the chorus of scholars who suggest that Prosper took an active role in helping Leo write many of his letters and sermons is correct, one would expect to see greater evidence of Augustine's precision of thought and expression in these documents; but there is no such evidence until very late in Leo's pontificate. Perhaps Prosper and Leo were unaware that Augustine's christological language was as finely tuned as was his language on grace, although it seems just as likely that both Prosper and Leo were satisfied with the more devotional terminology the pope was using in the pulpit and in his letters. Either way, it is clear that Leo made no progress toward greater precision until he was dragged into the christological controversy in the East after his *Tome* was published. Eventually Leo and Prosper discovered that his devotional language was insufficient in those mean times and that greater christological precision was needed.

After Pope Leo's orthodoxy came into question in the East among the monks and theologians affiliated with Alexandria, the pope—probably with Prosper's help—began to fine-tune his vocabulary in order to prove his orthodoxy while simultaneously seeking to preserve his position as a mediating influence between the theologians of Alexandria and Antioch. Early in his pontificate,

52. Augustine, *Enchiridion* 10.35 (PL 40.250): "idemque ipse utrumque ex utroque unus Christus."

53. Augustine, *Contra sermonem quemdam Arianorum* 8.6 (PL 42.688).

54. Augustine, *De praedestinatione sanctorum* (PL 44.959–992); *De dono perseverantiae* (PL 45.993–1034). Prosper's request to Augustine is in Prosper of Aquitaine, *Ep. ad Augustinum de reliquiis Pelagianae* (PL 44.947–954).

55. Augustine, *De praedestinatione sanctorum* 30.15 (PL 44.981–982).

due in part to the position taken by John Cassian in favor of Alexandrine Christology and against Nestorianism and in part to Leo's respect for Cyril of Alexandria, the pope had distanced himself from the Antiochene *homo assumptus* formula. He relied instead on devotional language, such as the traditional *Theotokos* title, to emphasize—sometimes with great hyperbole—the indissoluble unity of Christ's person, as Leo thought the Alexandrine theologians were doing. After Cyril died, however, his banner was picked up by less capable Alexandrine theologians like Eutyches and Dioscorus, who both taught that in the incarnate Christ there was only a single, incarnate nature, in which the sole operating principle was the divine Word.

The powerful Monophysite movement, which grew out of this mutation of Cyril's Christology in the East, showed Pope Leo the limitations of Cyril's vocabulary to express the fullness of the doctrine of Christ Leo inherited from the Western fathers. In response to the Monophysite movement and the political intrigue of the Monophysite monks in Palestine and Egypt, the pope began to distance himself from the Alexandrine theologians. As Eutyches and the Monophysite theologians who followed him took up the "Mother of God" title as their slogan and battle cry, Leo himself prescinded completely from using it. Nevertheless, Leo continued to iterate the *communicatio idiomatum* formula which was paramount in the Western emphasis on the unity of Christ's person, at the same time as he maintained the Western distinction of Christ's two natures. However, balancing these two emphases severely strained the language Leo used to express his doctrine of Christ. In order to ease this strain on his vocabulary, then, Leo began to distinguish the terms *homo* and *humanus*. This distinction made possible the use of the term *homo* to indicate a concrete human individual, whereas he had consistently used the term previously in christological discussion as a synonym of *humanus* to express the general qualities Jesus shares with all humans. Moreover, in Leo's attempt to underscore his more precise usage of the term *homo* and possibly to set in relief his opposition to the Monophysite movement, Leo began to use the same Antiochene *homo assumptus* formula he had purposely avoided during his early pontificate. With this formula the pope could make clear his expressions of Christ's authentic humanity by declaring that the Son of God assumed into the unity of his person a complete "man," consisting of body, soul, mind, and will. Used in conjunction with the Western *communicatio idiomatum*, which the West holds in common with Alexandrine Christology, the Antiochene *homo assumptus* formula provided Leo with the necessary framework to reestablish and to protect the mediating force of the Western christological tradition in the East.