

### Description for the General Public

In 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century AD, the Christian world was torn by controversies about the natures of Christ. Political consequences of those debates included, ultimately, division of the Eastern Empire, from which Syria and Egypt were for ever separated. While these ruptures were growing, making it possible for a new religious movement, called Islam, to expand and overtake the Eastern Christian world, at the same time a group of theologians were developing a doctrine that was used by the Emperor Justinian to theologically unify the rest of the Empire and that has remained since the foundation of Christology in Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant churches. Unlike their predecessors, those theologians, including John Grammarian, Leontius of Byzantium, Leontius of Jerusalem, John Maxentius, whom we call today “Neochalcedonians,” resolved to elaborate their own philosophical solutions.

The way that Christians viewed the world differed dramatically from its description offered by metaphysics of Ancient philosophical systems. Christians emphasized individuality of human being, autonomy of human will, and viewed human nature as comprising both spiritual and bodily components. They were not able to explain the existence and fortunes of a particular human as an instance of a general rule or law, brought about by chance within the boundaries established by Platonic Idea, Aristotelians Forms, or Stoic God. They could not see human life, i.e. the life of God’s children, created in His image and likeness, as a mere interplay of Neoplatonic *logoi*, dropping shadows on the screen of matter. The physical reality had for Christians a value of its own, as willed by God, but human embodied life was also a path to resurrection and eternal life with God. Christ was for Christians a true and complete human, who preceded His brothers on this path, but also true God, whose creative love enabled the return of all being to God through new creation. As Neochalcedonians struggled to express this vision, avoiding problems that resulted from reliance of Miaphysits and Nestorians on philosophy of Plato, Neoplatonics, and Aristotle, they proposed not only their own philosophical solutions, but also a created a new way of practicing philosophy.

As the results of research that has already been carried out by the proponents suggest, the uniqueness of Neochalcedonian approach consisted in its capacity of offering a clear description of the world in a precise language and logically rigorous discourse without having to postulate realities and complex structures that are not directly accessible to experience. While Neochalcedonians borrowed many concepts from philosophies of late Antiquity, the conceptions they proposed were transformed and redefined to a point at which one has to speak about a specifically Neochalcedonian conceptual network. Neochalcedonian approach was ultimately formalized and popularized by their most eminent successor, John of Damascus, whose *Philosophical Chapters* constituted the foundation of philosophical education throughout Middle Ages. In this way, the Neochalcedonian Philosophical Paradigm deeply influenced the Scholasticism. In spite of that, it was never given scholarly attention until now, both as a historical phenomenon and in its philosophical specificity. While announcing Scholasticism, the approach of Neochalcedonians differed from the one of Scholastics. Neochalcedonians engaged in critical discussions with a wider range of Ancient philosophical inspirations. They did not treat those inspirations as indisputable authorities, whose solutions could be corrected and improved upon, but whose sturdy toolkit of conceptions and notions could not be rivaled by any Christian proposal.

The proponents of the Project have already devoted their attention to the make-up of the Neochalcedonian conception of individual. The project aims at recovering the paradigm of philosophy proposed by Neochalcedonians, i.e. at (1) defining the methods, principles, and goals of their philosophy, (2) examining whether return to those principles could reinvigorate contemporary debates of Christian Philosophy. On the one hand, the proponents plan to deepen their knowledge of Neochalcedonian philosophy through examination of their texts with the tools of history, history of philosophy and historical theology. On the other hand, they want to examine the explanatory potential of the Neochalcedonian Philosophical Paradigm by putting it to work on a number of philosophical issues.

Tested in this way, the Paradigm will be presented as a possible common point of reference to Christians of various traditions. It may appeal to Protestants by its insistence on impossibility of reducing faith to rational explanation, and to the Orthodox by the capacity of expressing the communitarian and ecclesial vision of reality that is important to Eastern Christian world view, since the paradigm itself, and the conceptions of Neochalcedonian philosophy in particular, were developed as means to resolves the debate about the two natures of and in one “person and hypostasis” of Christ. Alongside, the Paradigm remains one of main historical sources of Scholasticism.

Presenting this Paradigm to international intellectual public is one of the goals of international collaboration proposed in the Project. Research on the Project will be executed by an international team, whose members are among very few researchers in the world that engage in inquiries on Neochalcedonian thought. Collaboration of Polish members of the team with the Sophia Institute in New York City, led by an acclaimed historian of Early Christianity, John A. McGuckin, will both enable finishing the inquires proposed project and give an opportunity to publish its result in world-class publishing houses.