

# Incarnation and Redemption in the Christology of Proclus of Constantinople (d. 446)

## Who is Proclus?

- Birthplace: Constantinople
- Time: c. 390 AD
- Education: rhetoric, classical literature, philosophy and logic
- Bishop of Cyzicus (426–434)
- Patriarch of Constantinople (434–446)
- 126 recorded homilies
- *Tomus ad Armenios* (435)

## Aim of Research

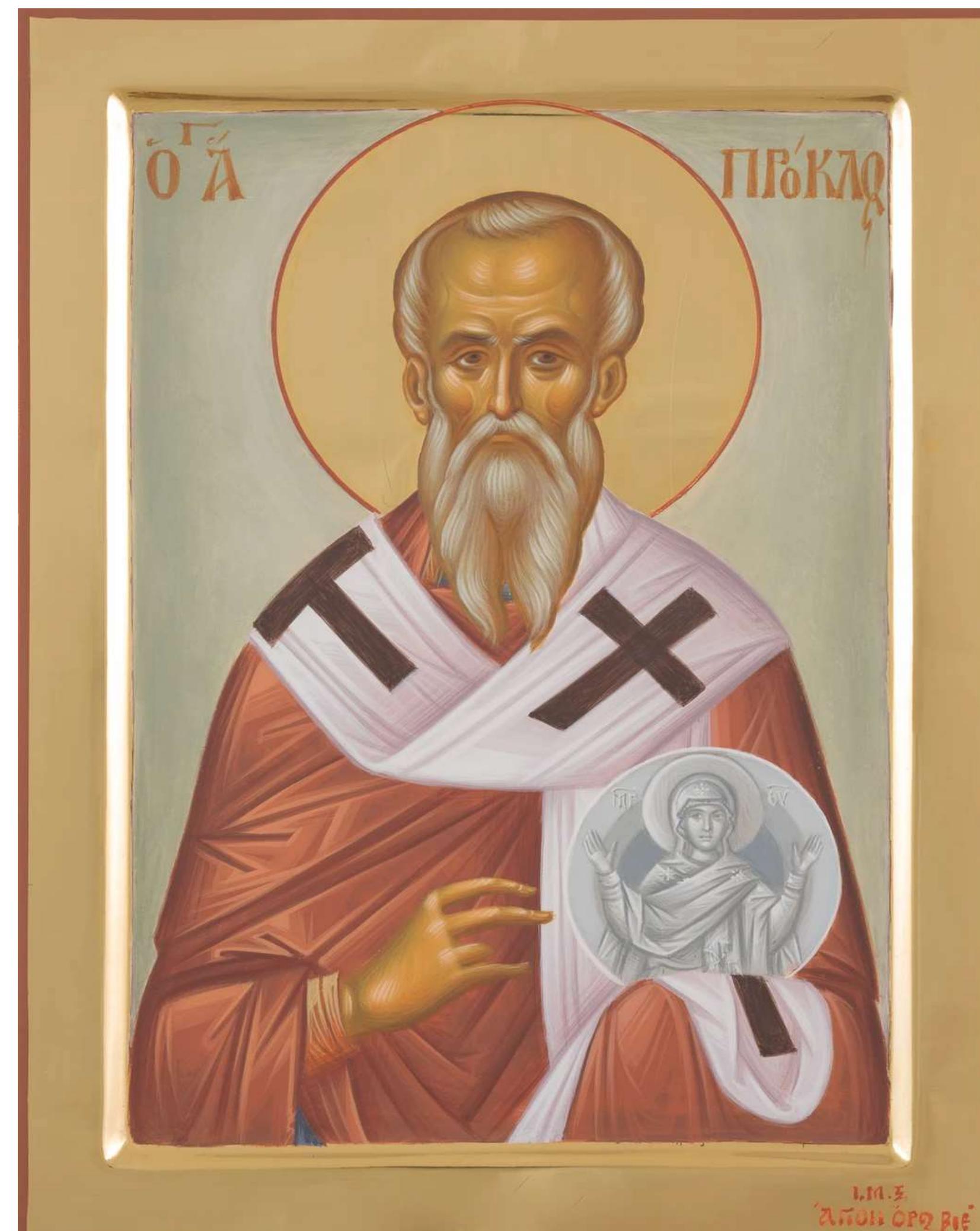
This project aims at strengthening the extant patristic scholarship about Proclus of Constantinople by indicating his large theological contribution. It also intends to show how ancient Greek philosophical terms, such as hypostasis, prosopon and physis, were employed and clarified by Proclus, in order to answer the emerging theological questions of the 5th century. Finally, this project reinforces the understanding of ancient ecclesial schisms, which were occasioned by the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon.

## Proclus the Teacher

**A teacher's duty:** I have invited [to baptism] as I have been commanded to do (*hom. 27, X.60*).

**Ethics:** Leave to oblivion the person that you were. Be the person that you (now) have in your memory. Do not put on that which you have doffed. Do not lay aside that which you receive. Let the fornicator become holy, let the chaste incite purity, let the cruel become a lover of mankind, let the compassionate devote himself to gentleness (*hom. 27, X.61*).

**Scope of faith:** The human race was in great debt, but without the means to settle it. Through Adam we all have subscribed to sin. The devil held us captive as slaves. [...] Man then was not able to save, for he was subjected to this very debt. [...] What happened then? He who created all nature to exist [...] became man as he himself knows how (for no word can interpret the miracle) and died in accordance with what he became, and saved in accordance with what he was (*hom. 1, 5–6*).



St Proclus of Constantinople, tempera on wood, 38 x 28 cm. Holy Monastery of Xenophontos, Mt Athos, 2015 (private collection).

## Proclus the Preacher

### Exhortation through interaction:

*Come, let us observe a virgin's womb wider than creation. For he who is not limited there, is contained in her [Mary] without being limited, and he who in his hand carries his very mother, together with all, is being carried by her (*hom. 4, 1*).*

### Refutation through polemics:

Let the pagans therefore be annihilated, and the Jews destroyed. Let the Samaritans be put to shame, and the Manichaeans be dispersed. Let heretics be destroyed, and all the enemies of the immaculate catholic and apostolic church (*hom. 15, 6*).

### Metaphorical language:

Mary and Christ → bridal chamber and groom; loom and fleece; workshop and sword; field and ear of corn; temple and priest (*hom. 1, 1; 3*); earth and fruit; port and ship; cloud and sun (*hom. 4, 1; 3*).

### Sources

Constas, Nicholas P. *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity: Homilies 1-5, Texts and Translations*. VCS 66; Boston/Leiden: Brill, 2003.  
 Leroy, François-Joseph-Marie. *L'Homilétique de Proclus de Constantinople: Tradition manuscrite, inédits, études connexes*. StT 247; Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1967.  
 Marx, Benedikt. *Procliana: Untersuchung über den homiletischen Nachlaß des Patriarchen Proklos von Konstantinopel*. MBT 23; Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1940.

## Leading Questions:

- 1) How did Proclus influence the Christology of the Council of Ephesus (431), the Formula of Union (433), and the Council of Chalcedon (451)?
- 2) How did he interpret the terms physis, hypostasis and prosopon?
- 3) How did he preach his Christology to the audience of Constantinople?

## Proclus the Theologian

**Holy Trinity:** See the Holy Spirit worshipped along with the Father and the Son; the Trinity glorified in unity, being divided in three *hypostases* and united in nature (*hom. 15, 4*).

**Christology:** Having been piously taught one Son, I confess one *hypostasis* of God the Word incarnate. [...] In order to prove that being God and existing as Logos and staying as he was, he became flesh and infant and human, without degrading the mystery through change, the same one works miracles and suffers, implying what he was [before the incarnation] through the miracles, and proving through passions that he became what he created (*Arm., 19*).

A union of two natures, and the birth of one Son. A union of the Word and flesh without confusion. And he who was born in the flesh, is God in so far as he is of the Father, and man in so far he is of me. O awesome and miraculous mystery! (*hom. 3, 5*)

The Holy Scripture stated "became" (John 1:14) and preached "assumed" (Phil. 2:7), so that *the person's singularity* is described through the former, and nature's unchangeability is declared through the latter (*Arm., 14*).