

CURRENT THEOLOGY

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHRISTOLOGY: TWO RECURRING THEMES

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The recent *affaires* concerning Edward Schillebeeckx and Hans Küng have made abundantly evident to a wider public what theologians have recognized for some time: Christology is at the center of Roman Catholic scholarly attention. The following report will restrict itself to two major components of contemporary reflection on the meaning of Jesus Christ for faith and world, the theological significance of the earthly Jesus and the meaning of the Chalcedonian formula for late-twentieth-century Roman Catholic Christology. To keep matters within bounds, only selected books written by Roman Catholic theologians which appeared in English or in English translation within the past five years will come under review.

The attention given to the earthly life of Jesus in recent Catholic thinking is the fruit of the decades-long renewal of Catholic biblical scholarship. This new focus marks a striking departure from the older dogmatic tradition. At the same time, such fresh attention to the earthly career of Jesus necessarily reflects on the theologians' understanding of the symbol of faith bequeathed to us by Chalcedon. Two important issues indeed, but the limits of the scope of this report need to be frankly acknowledged as well, because any adequate report would have to enter more thoroughly into the role of Jesus' death and resurrection, the Spirit-dimension of Jesus as Christ, and several other equally urgent issues.¹

WALTER KASPER: *JESUS THE CHRIST*

The Tübingen systematic theologian Walter Kasper has written a Christology which has found widespread use in colleges and seminaries because of its contemporaneity, responsibility to the tradition, and attention to exegetical and historical data.²

The preresurrection Jesus has an important role in Kasper's Christology for explicitly theological reasons. From a historical-exegetical point of view, Kasper is sure that authentic Jesus tradition material can be recovered. Historical interest in this material is overshadowed by the

¹ For a very helpful survey of recent Catholic systematic reflection on Jesus' resurrection, see John Galvin, "The Resurrection of Jesus in Contemporary Catholic Systematics," *Heythrop Journal* 20 (1979) 123-45.

² *Jesus the Christ*, tr. V. Green (New York: Paulist, 1976). The translation is marred by many errors and needs to be used with care.

theological considerations which make it an intrinsic part of a systematic Christology. First, the Christ-event has the character of a once-for-all event and for this reason it is not a free-floating myth; it possesses the unrepeatable character of history. Secondly, to understand the unique reality of Jesus of Nazareth, unique, first of all, as any human is unique, one is referred to the concrete history which was his life, and only in this way can we avoid Docetism. Finally, we can judge the authenticity of enthusiastic movements that claim Jesus as their inspiration, as well as all manner of fads and "updates" of Jesus in the name of current causes, only if the intention of Jesus and the general shape of his mission are discernible through the rich data of the New Testament.³

The question of judgment raises the issue of the criterion which guides a Catholic systematic Christology. Kasper's formulation of the Christological criterion is a complex one. The primary criterion is the earthly and exalted Jesus Christ, who is a living, personal identity in difference: thoroughly one, of God and of us. The secondary norm is the living faith of the Church, both in its foundations as testified to in the NT and its ongoing life of worship and witness through the ages. The subordination of the Church and its faith to the primary criterion, the reality of Christ, is evident in Kasper's formulation.

The starting point of Christology, which Kasper distinguishes from the criterion, is the phenomenology of the Church's faith in Christ. The reason for this is twofold: the living Christ of today is encountered only in the living faith of Christians in the twentieth century, and the Jesus of yesterday is met only through the faith-witness of the NT, the book of the early Church.

His Christology of complementarity, which holds the earthly and resurrected Jesus together while recognizing the difference at the same time, guarantees that Kasper will make the historical aspect of Jesus of Nazareth an essential element. Thus Jesus' activity, message, and death receive close attention, with the result that he finds an implicit Christology in Jesus' preaching of the kingdom, his table fellowship, his call to discipleship, and his offering the cup of eschatological blessing in the face of his impending death. At the same time, Kasper acknowledges that Jesus as he really was is infinitely richer and more complex than the "historical Jesus," who is the fruit of historical-critical reflection. The NT portraits offer us no biography of Jesus, no story of his call, and certainly no psychology of Jesus' interiority.

The eschatological and soteriological character of Jesus' person is grounded in the meaning of his cause, that is, his activity and message concerning the kingdom, and the inseparability of person and cause in Jesus. The kingdom Jesus preached, whose blessing people partook of in

³ Ibid. 33-35.

welcoming him, was the very content of salvation. This central fact receives more weight in Kasper's Christology than any particular finding with regard to titles such as Christ, Son of Man, Son of God, and so forth (even though he is open to Jesus' employment of some of these titles in his public life). Jesus' life and ministry was service of his fellows in the name of God, a service which essentially consisted in making it possible for men and women to share in salvation, i.e., in God's reign and its blessing in the form of new life and forgiveness. Later Christian confessions of Jesus as Christ and Savior thus do no violence to the earthly Jesus but rather make explicit what is given in historical form in Jesus of Nazareth.

The preresurrection Jesus has a significant role to play in Kasper's Christology, but he does not allow it to be the sole content or criterion of Christology. In order to see the theological function of the pre-Easter one as Kasper understands it, it is necessary to appreciate the place which the Resurrection assumes in his reflections.

Kasper is willing to grant that the Resurrection was the confirmation and legitimation by God of the earthly Jesus' message and activity. But that is only one dimension of the Resurrection's significance. Beyond such confirmation, it was a new, creative event which exalted Jesus, bringing him into God's dimension and filling him with the eschatological Spirit so that he in turn could fully share the Spirit with others. Revelationally, the Resurrection is God's definitive self-disclosure which gathers up the earthly Jesus and establishes him in a radically new mode of being and activity. Soteriologically, the kingdom Jesus preached he has now become in person, thanks to God's decisive act. In this twofold perspective Kasper insists that the Resurrection has content and reality in surplus of the earthly Jesus, because God's self-disclosure and Jesus' personal consummation and public empowerment occur indivisibly in Jesus' being raised from the dead. It is not enough to say that the Resurrection makes the Christology implicit in Jesus' earthly ministry explicit; rather Jesus is now the beginning of a new creation, and the exalted one is continuous with the earthly Jesus precisely through his becoming more, through his becoming fully in person God's victorious reign in the world.

The most significant way in which Kasper uncovers the "more" in the Resurrection is by developing the outline of a Spirit Christology. The life, light, and creative power released in the world by the Resurrection, Ascension, and outpouring of the Spirit are the surplus of being and life of the Risen One shared with the universe which groans for redemption. The historical life of the believing community and indeed of all human-kind is the proper place in which to discern the content of the life and activity of the risen Christ. Tradition in this context is the transmission of the life and light of Christ through the Church to all the world. The

age of the Spirit is the age of the resurrected Christ, and the pre-Easter Jesus is a partial dimension of that age but not its full measure or source. In sum, the Resurrection legitimates the earthly Servant of God but, even more, fills him with the overflowing Spirit of God.⁴

A Christology which accords this degree of significance to the preresurrection Jesus at the same time that it invites an exploration of the pneumatological dimension, will not let the Chalcedonian model go uninterpreted for very long. Kasper uses the two-state Christology of the early NT to reinterpret the two-nature model of Chalcedon. The obedience of Jesus to the Father is the historical form of existence of the ontological divine Sonship. This obedience is response to the Father's election of Jesus and to the divine self-communication to him, self-communication which is identical with the *Logos*. Kasper enlarges Chalcedon's perspective by placing the Father-Jesus relationship in the forefront, with the result that the question of the inner constitution of Christ is secondary, requiring illumination from Jesus' relation to the Father, the Spirit, and his fellow men and women. The Council of Chalcedon affirms by its formula the principle of living tradition, by speaking in continuity with Nicaea; at the same time, it represents an advance through its dehellenization of doctrine in the face of Monophysitism. But Kasper refuses to play off Chalcedon against Jesus' own history; rather he sees the conciliar statement as an extremely precise version of what, according to the NT, we encounter in Jesus' history and what befell him, namely, in Jesus Christ God Himself has entered into a human history and meets us there in a fully and completely human way. On the other hand, he faults the dogma for its contraction of Christological truth to the internal ontological constitution of Jesus with the resultant loss of reference to Jesus' history, fate, and eschatological significance.

Kasper offers both historical and philosophical reflections to open up an approach to the mystery of the divine-human unity in Christ. He views personal being as essentially a mediation, placed as it is on both the vertical and horizontal planes, that is, open to the infinite and capable of self-possession as a "center" of the universe. If this situation justifies Pascal's verdict that human existence is a mixture of greatness and wretchedness, it also suggests that the answer to the question of the final meaning of human life does not lie within itself. In other words, a Christology purely "from below" is condemned to failure. In Jesus' case the intrinsic human reality of Jesus is posited by God's self-communicating love. "Precisely because Jesus is no other than the *Logos*, in the *Logos* and through him, he is also a human person." Again,

we cannot merely say that nothing is lacking to Jesus' humanity because through

⁴ Ibid. 250-52.

the person of the *Logos* it is a human person. We must also say that the intermediate and open aspect that belongs to the human person is determined definitively by the unity of person with the *Logos*, so that in Jesus through his unity of person with the *Logos*, the human person comes to its absolutely unique and underivable fulfilment.⁵

Complementing a *Logos* Christology, Kasper maintains that the Spirit's anointing of Jesus is the presupposition of the hypostatic union. Being in person God's love as freedom, the Spirit creates and sanctifies the man Jesus so that he is able to be the incarnate response to God's self-communication. The Spirit is God's freedom to give Himself away beyond Himself and the creative principle which maintains Jesus' freedom in relation to the Father, at the same time that it fosters the radical obedience of Jesus' prayer and ministry in the face of God's mystery.

KARL RAHNER: *FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN FAITH*

The subtitle of Rahner's recent *Foundations of Christian Faith* is a more accurate rendering of the nature of the book, for the German theologian's desire is to introduce his readers to the idea of Christianity.⁶ The term "foundations" in the title can lead one to expect that Rahner will offer a philosophical or fundamental-theological exploration, whereas he is actually writing a work which includes both fundamental and dogmatic theology and which operates on what he calls a "first level of reflection." This level logically precedes the particular scientific disciplines of theology and consists in giving an account of one's faith in an intellectually responsible way by exposing the intrinsic connections between who human beings are (even in the twentieth century) and the message of Christianity. In other words, Rahner wants to introduce his readers to the intelligibility of Christianity, an enterprise which involves him in exploration of the human person (philosophical and theological anthropology), of the reality of faith (dogmatic theology), and of the grounds of faith (fundamental theology).⁷

Because of the specific character of *Foundations*, the reader cannot find here a *summa* of the mature Rahner's theology. But in the section on Christology, which constitutes no less than one fourth of the book, one can recognize Rahner's reflections as touching upon all his major concerns in this area.

The role of the preresurrection Jesus in these reflections depends very closely on the procedure which Rahner is following on this first level of

⁵ Ibid. 248.

⁶ *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, tr. William V. Dych (New York: Seabury, 1978).

⁷ Each "chapter" of *Foundations* is actually an approach to the entirety of the Christian message from a particular angle of the human-divine relationship.

reflection. The starting point of all Christology is an *existentiell* relationship to Jesus Christ, that is, a free, fundamental, responsible commitment to Christ. Such a commitment is always concrete and individual, and functions as the starting point of all more general reflection on the meaning of the relationship. The one encountered is the crucified and resurrected Jesus of Nazareth. This global, unitary, and personal "object" of faith is not at the beginning distinguished into the preresurrection Jesus and the risen Lord.⁸

When Rahner does reflectively distinguish Jesus before and after the Resurrection, it is not a simple process. The pre-Easter Jesus is not simply the Jesus knowable by profane, historical understanding. The prerisen one is, to be sure, partially accessible to historical (*historisch*) understanding, but theologically there is more involved here. For the deeds, miracles, and death are historical realities of the past which are known in faith as both object and ground of faith. The act of faith is a unitary but internally differentiated act which places one in relationship to the one Jesus Christ in the fulness of his reality. The consummation of his life in death and resurrection did not mean that the real history he lived through was flattened out. Rather the resurrection of Jesus renders Jesus actual, present, effective, and accessible (as mystery) in his concretely differentiated unity.

The historical probability one can attain regarding the logia and deeds of Jesus is humanly precious and theologically relevant, but the presence of the believer to the reality pointed to by those historical judgments is not reducible to historical understanding. Rahner is not contending that faith as such produces historical, factual information, but he is making a claim, from within faith, that the *historical* reasons why a Christian believes are interior to the concrete act of faith, not exterior.⁹

The pre-Easter Jesus is important for Rahner first of all for a fundamental theological reason: part of the ground of faith resides in the pre-Easter Jesus as known in faith and by historical understanding. But in addition, there are systematic theological reasons why the pre-Easter Jesus has a role in Rahner's *Foundations*. The reasons are two. First, the acceptance by Jesus in responsible freedom of the Father's self-communication is theologically the reason why God's self-gift has occurred in an unsurpassable and irreversible manner. In NT terms, Jesus' obedience is at the heart of the gospel message (cf. Phil 2:6-11). This acceptance on Jesus' part of the Father's self-communication occurred in the concrete texture of his life: his prayer, preaching, teaching, his commerce with people of all types. The divine initiative (incarnation) came to full concrete actuality through the graced, finite, accepting freedom of Jesus

⁸ Ibid. 305-8.

⁹ Ibid. 235-341.

of Nazareth.¹⁰ Secondly, the pre-Easter Jesus is the one who died and was raised. This apparently simple proposition acquires significance to the degree that systematic theology appreciates the theological role of the Resurrection. Besides providing the divine vindication of Jesus' claim and message, the Resurrection is the consummation, the coming to totality, of the life of Jesus. *Who* was raised is as important as the fact *that* he was raised. The identity of the one raised consists in the one life and death of Jesus through which he became who he was. Thus, in a formal way at least, Rahner has secured an essential place for the pre-Easter Jesus in systematic Christology. It is not accidental that a Resurrection-oriented Christology such as Rahner's would find it necessary to give a distinct place to the preresurrection one. Classical school-Christology did not ordinarily give sufficient attention to either the Resurrection or the pre-Easter Jesus.¹¹

The idea of Christianity, that is, its intelligibility, finally is the message, addressed to the whole person, of God's communication of all that He is to us in Jesus Christ and the Spirit as our salvation and fulfilment. The Chalcedonian formula remains for Rahner the permanently valid expression of the central mystery of faith. But there are three substantial approaches to the formula and the reality it signifies which Rahner offers so that the dogma can regain its "idea," its intrinsic connection with human existence and the truth of God. The approaches are universal-historical, anthropological, and theological.

The hypostatic union which the Council of Chalcedon affirms is for Rahner the expression of the unsurpassable unity of God and the human in Jesus, as well as the necessary moment intrinsic to the divine self-communication of the Father made to all of us who are not Jesus.¹² It is the same Father who gives Himself away to all; it is the same human reality which is recipient of the divine gift; and the transformation and destiny wrought in Jesus' humanity—grace and glory, immediacy with the living mystery of God—is the same transformation and destiny intended for all. The full gift of self on God's part and the full acceptance of the gift on the human Jesus' part is a unitary occurrence which does not diminish the infinite distinction between them but guarantees it. The hypostatic union happens once in human history. But its uniqueness in no way puts a ceiling, so to speak, on those who are not Jesus; rather it opens up the full plenitude of the divine mystery as the goal and beatitude

¹⁰ In Rahner's Christology, talk about incarnation seems always to be talk about God's initiative, offer, becoming (toward us), while Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are also spoken of as a response, acceptance, freedom, becoming (unto God). Jesus' freedom for God and for us is central to Rahner's Christology. What is missing is a developed *narrative* regarding that freedom.

¹¹ Ibid. 285-93.

¹² Ibid. 199.

of all people. While the classical formula implicitly suggests this by the very fact that it is included in a baptismal formula and makes explicit reference to our salvation, Rahner has made this a cardinal point in his Christology.

The hypostatic union is unique not simply because Jesus is the summit of God's involvement with the world, but because the occurrence of full divine offer and human acceptance need happen only once for it to be a real possibility for all other persons. The difference between Jesus and all others is a permanent and necessary one, because Jesus is in person that offer which is God's self-gift; and all others are recipients of that offer, and not themselves the offer. The fact that Jesus is recipient of the divine self-communication whose free acceptance allows the gift to be universally available is expressed in the NT by titles such as Lord, Messiah, head of the Church, and so forth. But all these titles of authority and pre-eminence do not take anything away from the fact that Jesus can just as profoundly be called servant: servant of God and servant of his brothers and sisters.

The anthropological horizon or approach in which Rahner situates the Chalcedonian formula clarifies further the universal perspective by complementing the descent-of-God view with the story of our journey to God. Starting with the living encounter of the Christian with Christ, Rahner inquires about the conditions within the human person which make the surrender of faith to be intelligible, responsible, and truthful freedom. The encounter with Christ reveals not only the reality of Christ but also the fundamental nature of the human person. The person is oriented in all acts of knowledge, love, and hope to the totality of the real and its ground, which is the Holy Mystery. The detailed analysis of *Hearers of the Word and Spirit in the World* is omitted in *Foundations*, but Rahner insists, in agreement with writings which go back forty years, that the hypostatic union is the actualization of the most radical potentiality of human nature as such. The inseparability and unmixedness asserted at Chalcedon is an expression of the fundamental Christian insight that a creature grows in genuine autonomy and independence in direct proportion to its union with the real God. The humanity of Jesus is the guarantee that God's self-communication is tangible and victoriously present in our midst. Jesus' divinity assures us that Jesus is not a surpassable sign of God's saving will but the presence of the saving God Himself. The union of the humanity and divinity in the one Jesus Christ consists in the self-emptying of the Logos in communicating Itself to the humanity of Jesus, which is creatively assumed for the sake of that self-communication.

From the anthropological standpoint this can be expressed in a more "ascending" perspective: "...when God brings about man's self-transcen-

dence into God through his absolute self-communication to all men in such a way that both elements constitute a promise to all men which is irrevocable and which has already reached fulfillment in one man, then we have precisely what is signified by hypostatic union."¹³ The descent-Christology of Chalcedon ("God became man") needs to be complemented, but not replaced, by an ascending, transcendental Christology which draws its nourishment from living faith in Christ, while exposing the reality of the person who is, or can become, a believer in Christ.

The third perspective within which Rahner places the Chalcedonian formula that its idea might be better understood proceeds from the doctrine of God. The dogma gives expression to a twofold history, even though the manner of expression suggests a nonhistorical reality. Jesus as human possesses a unique, unrepeatable history precisely because he is free and worldly. The living, infinite mystery of God also possesses a history in communicating Himself to the world in Jesus and the Spirit. The Word became flesh, the immutable God *became*. God Himself changes in the other, where each element of this statement must be given its proper weight: God changes, God Himself in the other, in His human reality, in the humanity of Jesus. The self-emptying of God receives its theological due only when God's plenitude is recognized as including His capacity to change in the other. This divine mutability is no less mysterious than the divine Trinity and it is as intrinsic as the latter to the saving message of Christianity. The grace and glory which is ultimately God Himself, God intends for all humankind; and God pours Himself out in divine becoming in the other that the gift may be universal and radically fulfilling, and for this purpose Jesus emerged in our midst in the power of the Spirit.¹⁴

EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX: *JESUS: AN EXPERIMENT IN CHRISTOLOGY*

Belgian-born Dominican Edward Schillebeeckx makes abundantly clear to the reader of his Jesus-book that the pre-Easter Jesus is of profound theological significance.¹⁵ He devotes the major portion of his massive volume to exegetical examination of the public ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus, leaving to the concluding section a discussion of classical systematic issues in Christology.

Schillebeeckx invites the reader to join with him in sharing the process whereby full-fledged Christian belief came into existence. Participation in such a process, he feels, can help someone understand what salvation in Jesus can mean to us now. The starting point of this Christological exploration is the movement begun by Jesus, the movement which is the

¹³ Ibid. 201.

¹⁴ Ibid. 212-24.

¹⁵ *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (New York: Seabury, 1979).

medium through which we encounter him. From the very beginning of the movement, Christianity involved an experience of the Spirit in remembrance of Jesus: *pneuma* and *anamnesis*. It is at once evident that a modern Christological interpretation of Jesus cannot start from the *kerygma* (or *dogma*) about Jesus, or indeed from a so-called purely historical Jesus of Nazareth; a historical and critical approach, set within the dynamic of faith, remains the only proper starting point.¹⁶ The constant factor in Christology is the Christian movement itself, in the sense of a community experience which refers to Jesus, although it is pluriform in its verbal expression. The *kerygma* refers back to the historical Jesus, and the Jesus-tradition is rooted in the personal fellowship of disciples with Jesus. Former students of Bultmann who have relativized the distinction between the pre-Easter Jesus and the Christ of the Church have done well, according to the author, and their approach has been accepted by many. The Easter-event by itself is not able to function as the starting point for Christology, because the Easter *kerygma* is substantially informed by recollections of Jesus' life and death. On the other hand, a historically reconstructed picture of Jesus can at best permit the Christian interpretation, but it cannot conclude to it. Salvation from God as an actuality is not objectively confirmable. The Christian interpretative response which recognizes God's saving work in Jesus goes beyond all historical affirmations. The *believer* recognizes divine disclosure in the life of Jesus, in his own, and in the community's life as empowered by Jesus' Spirit.

The normative criterion for the Church's proclamation is Jesus himself, accessible not *per se* but by way of the experiences of his disciples before and after his death, or "only apprehended in the process whereby Christian Churches allow themselves to be defined by Jesus."¹⁷ The absolute identification of the earthly Jesus and the Christ by the early local churches is the hermeneutical key to the Gospels, and this identification entails that history and theological interpretation are intimately intertwined in Christological reflection.

It is striking that Schillebeeckx makes the question of Jesus' trustworthiness and ultimately the trustworthiness of his *Abba*-experience a central one. Historical research of itself cannot justify basing one's life on Jesus' *Abba*-experience; only faith can. But the greatest challenge to this trustworthiness is not Jesus' death, contrary to what many theologians would maintain. Rather the real breakoff point is in the ministry of Jesus, in the resistance to him and the rejection of his message. Jesus, Schillebeeckx would maintain, interpreted his death before its occurrence, and managed to include it within his self-interpretation and his ministry on behalf of the kingdom. The rejection of Jesus, as a possible mode of

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 55.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 78.

response to his activity and message, raises in pointed fashion the whole question of his trustworthiness, and this question points in the direction of Easter as the experience of Jesus' vindication, confirmation, and legitimation by God.¹⁸

Schillebeeckx is developing in all this a Christology from below, in the sense that the starting point is the encounter with and recollection of Jesus of Nazareth as they are mediated to us through the Christian movement. But such an approach does not mean some kind of deliverance from history for faith but rather an appreciation of historical data as divine disclosure from within a faith-intentionality.

The enterprise Schillebeeckx has set for himself is to develop an alternative to the Johannine model which has dominated Christology since the Council of Nicaea. There are possibilities inherent in the Synoptic model which are of significance for contemporary Christian consciousness. Or, better expressed, Schillebeeckx would like to "gather together elements which may lead to a new, authentic disclosure-experience or source-experience."¹⁹ A real source-experience evokes for itself models of its own. Telling the story of Jesus with a critical, second naïveté can beget models of understanding which speak to our present age.

The Council of Chalcedon, like Nicaea and Ephesus which preceded it, expressed in "second-order" affirmation the basic "first-order" confession of faith, namely, that salvation comes to us in Jesus given by God. Within an intellectual horizon very different from our own, that of Greek *paideia*, the fathers of the Council broke through a dominant Middle Platonism and affirmed "straight Gospel": Jesus Christ is one and is consubstantial with God and with us. The point at which patristic Christology becomes a problem lies not in Chalcedon but in the nondogmatic neo-Chalcedonian tradition, where it speaks of an *anhypostasis*, that is, Jesus' being a divine person but not a human person. For his part, Schillebeeckx does not want to say that Jesus is in himself a human person who is taken up into the Logos. The problem with this formulation resides in the ingenuous combination of two language games, one having to do with the human Jesus and the other with religious talk about Jesus' being assumed into the Logos. The difficulty here is that the human Jesus, Jesus' "being a human person," is not actual apart from relation to the Father.

Speaking in the humanly "secular" language-game we shall of course call Jesus a "human person"—apart from a human-cum-personal mode of being, nobody is a "human being." In faith-language we say that the man Jesus is this person *qua* human being thanks to his constitutive relation to the Father, just as at his own level every human being *qua* human being is this person thanks to his essential relation to this Creator-God.²⁰

¹⁸ Ibid. 306-12.

²⁰ Ibid. 656.

¹⁹ Ibid. 571.

The presence model, such as that proposed by Piet Schoonenberg, is useful so long as the theologian can specify the ground of God's presence in Jesus. The creative, constituting act of God, to the extent that simultaneously the man Jesus is constituted by it Son of the Father, is the ground of Jesus' being a person and of his Abba-experience. In other words, the center, support, *hypostasis*, in the sense of what confers steadfastness, was his relationship to the Father. This relationship to the Father does not consist exhaustively in Jesus' human transcendence or human reference to the Father, because such transcendence, as creaturely, is infinitely inadequate to God's divine transcendence.

The ultimate ground in Jesus of his union with the Father and his revelatory power for us is his divine Sonship. Jesus is essentially "Son of God," but in a way which allows us to call Jesus a human person. Chalcedon and modernity differ superficially, not "structurally," in their understanding of person. The "structural" notion is that of person as relation, whereas the more culturally delimited or "conjunctural" notion of person is that of a center of consciousness. The relational notion seems to express, on a second level of reflection, what has been manifested in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. His Abba-experience is expression of a "prior" self-communication of the Father to Jesus. Schillebeeckx speaks of a hypostatic identification of Jesus' humanity and the Logos, and a mutual *enhypostasis* of Jesus' humanity and divinity. He denies *anhypostasis* of Jesus' human reality.

HANS KÜNG: ON BEING A CHRISTIAN

It would be difficult to find a recent Roman Catholic Christologist who has made the preresurrection Jesus more central to his study than has Swiss-born Hans Küng, professor at the University of Tübingen.²¹ Intent upon recovering what is distinctive about Christianity in the face of the increasing impact of secularity and technocracy as well as the developing encounter with other world religions, Küng finds this distinctiveness in the historical Jesus, the one who lived and died in Palestine two thousand years ago.

The typical, basic features of the earthly Jesus are recoverable, maintains the author, even though the documents of the NT are committed accounts. A starting point for Christological reflection is the logia and deeds of Jesus; for we should best proceed if "we started out like the first disciples from the real human being Jesus, his historical message and manifestation, his life and fate, his historical reality and historical activity, and then ask about the relationship of this human being Jesus to God, about his unity with the Father."²²

²¹ *On Being a Christian*, tr. Edward Quinn (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976).

²² *Ibid.* 133.

The historical Jesus recovered by Küng is the Jesus of the "New Quest," who turns out to be someone other than the Christ of piety, of dogma, of enthusiasm, or of literature. He is the enemy of traditionalism and faddism. He resolutely refuses to fit into any of the categories of his own time: priest, rabbi, ruler, zealot revolutionary, Essene monk, or Pharisaic layman.

The kingdom of God as God's cause is at the center of Jesus' life and ministry, and all his actions and words are at the service of that kingdom. All legal structures, political facts, cultural realities, and religious aspirations find their judge in Jesus as the one who expresses God's word and will and life. Jesus puts people first, and all else must serve the good of people. The kingdom of the loving God who comes to word in Jesus is the only true home for the people; all else must be relativized in relation to that divine event.

The earthly Jesus is recoverable with a certain amount of reliability. The procedures to follow for this process of retrieval are those of historical-critical method. The reason, however, why Küng gives the results of historical-method such pride of place is theological. The earthly Jesus is the sole final norm of Christology and Christian faith, because the reality to be interpreted is the norm of all interpretations, and Christian faith has to do essentially with the one historical Jesus of Nazareth who is now risen and in God's presence and who is permanent object of the Christian's faith. While historical-critical method cannot prove the content of faith, it can aid faith by opening up new prospects, insights, and satisfaction and can inspire Christians in a variety of ways.²³

The theological significance of the preresurrection Jesus depends a great deal on Küng's understanding of Jesus' resurrection. The verbs which he employs to express the effect his resurrection had on Jesus are for the most part closely related in meaning: his resurrection justified who Jesus was and what he did; it confirmed the Cross; it revealed Jesus as right; God acknowledged, approved, and authenticated Jesus; his freedom has prevailed, his way has been proved. To be sure, Küng speaks of the resurrection of Jesus as Jesus' assumption into the life of God, and he affirms that Jesus is now the content of faith. But the stress is certainly on the confirmation and vindication of his life and death. Küng explicitly denies the view that the Resurrection effected the revelation of additional truths. The one who is alive and active in the world is identical with the preresurrection Jesus; he lives in a radically new mode of existence, to be sure, but the substance of the risen Lord's reality is the earthly one as uniquely confirmed by his God.²⁴

²³ Ibid. 165.

²⁴ Küng speaks of the confirmation effected by the Resurrection as though the word derives its significance from ordinary language rather than the Old Testament and intertestamental literature.

If this is a faithful summary of Hans Küng, it is apparent how supremely important the preresurrection Jesus is. Küng's theology of the Resurrection points us back to the life and death of the man from Nazareth. Such an understanding of the theological role of the pre-Easter Jesus is a sharp departure from the traditional Catholic Christology.

In light of Küng's avowed preference for the life, message, and fate of Jesus of Nazareth as the center of Christian faith, it is not surprising that the formula of Chalcedon and the type of Christology favoring the Chalcedonian "model" comes under heavy fire. Not only is it unintelligible today because it uses terms and ideas which are Hellenistic; it did not even solve the major Christological difficulties of the early Church. Many exegetes view the two-natures doctrine as by no means identical with the *original* NT message about Christ. Some go further, believing that the doctrine displaced or perhaps even corrupted the original message. By any account, the dogmatic tradition cannot be the starting point for those who wish to determine the intelligibility of Christ for us today.

"Truly God and truly man" is a phrase which Küng believes is capable of an up-to-date paraphrase, with the result that nothing is subtracted from the truths of the councils, as far as this really coincides with the Truth of the New Testament. Jesus Christ is truly God in the sense that the uniqueness, underivability, or unsurpassability of the call, offer, and claim made known in and with Jesus is ultimately not of human but of divine origin and therefore absolutely reliable. Truly human, he is wholly and entirely man, and as such model of what it is to be human. In the last analysis, however, the way of speaking about Christ in our day should be less that of the ancient councils and more in the style of the Synoptic Gospels and of present-day speech.²⁵

JON SOBRINO: *CHRISTOLOGY AT THE CROSSROADS*

Not only is the starting point for Jon Sobrino's Christology the Jesus who is accessible to historical-exegetical examination, but the only truly adequate knowledge of Jesus comes, as he puts it, from following the historical Jesus as his disciple.²⁶ He eliminates Scripture, Jesus' teaching, kerygma, descent-Christology, soteriology, and cultic worship as valid starting points for Christology. The historical Jesus is where Christology must begin, and the historical Jesus is the one we must follow.

But the starting point is more complex. In addition to the historical Jesus, the experience of certain Christians in Latin America right now is a place to begin Christology. The writings of the NT emerged not only from recollection of the historical Jesus but also from contemporary

²⁵ Ibid. 444-50.

²⁶ *Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach*, tr. John Drury (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1978) 1-14.

experience of the local church community. Because the situation in Latin America is similar in many respects to the circumstances of Jesus' public ministry, by staying as faithful as possible to the historical concreteness of both Jesus' ministry and twentieth-century Latin America, the theologian can avoid developing either a general Christology *ad usum omnium* or a narrowly ideological justification for any praxis whatsoever.²⁷

Sobrinho views Jesus' ministry as a paradigm for present-day involvement in Christian praxis. Jesus preached the kingdom, and in his words and deeds he anticipated its occurrence. The kingdom Jesus preached involved at its center God's definitive reign in the world, but it entailed as well the transformation of the inner person and the restructuring of the relationships existing between human beings. All this would occur as gift, it would not be merely an extension of human potentialities; yet Jesus in concrete, limited ways anticipated the kingdom in his action.

Jesus denounced as well as announced; his role was not only conciliatory but also confrontative. His involvement in his world led him to wrestle with the power of sin in its personal and structural forms. His sense of sin as interior reality in the Sermon on the Mount, and his anathemas aimed at the shared assumptions of the Pharisees, bear this out. His ministry was profoundly shaped by his combat with evil and, indeed, the crisis in Jesus' Galilean ministry is made the hinge-event in Sobrinho's view of the pre-Easter Jesus. Prior to the rejection Jesus experienced in Galilee, his ministry was the predominantly active one of living out his relationship to the Father by preaching and anticipating the kingdom in parabolic words and deeds. After the crisis, Jesus recognized the role of suffering in the advent of the kingdom and *may* even have come to see himself as the Suffering Servant.²⁸

The faith and prayer of the pre-Easter Jesus receive extended consideration in Sobrinho's treatment. Both of these dimensions of Jesus' life allow us to appreciate the deepest aspects of his life and at the same time permit us to recognize his profound solidarity with us. Jesus' orientation to the Father in the Spirit is the place where we experience him as most himself and most one with us. Inspired by Catholic authors like Hans Urs von Balthasar and Wilhelm Thüsing and Protestant theologians such as Gerhard Ebeling, Sobrinho tries to outline the contours of Jesus' faith as manifest in his behavior and words. The relationship to the Father is one of trust and fidelity. Jesus is unable to possess the mystery of the Father; he is only able to surrender and obey and thus be empowered to anticipate the Father's kingdom. The divinity of Jesus consists in this concrete relationship to the Father. Jesus reveals this relationship to us; he does not reveal the Father "in himself." "Jesus, then, does not reveal

²⁷ Ibid. 33-37.

²⁸ Ibid. 68, 93-95.

the absolute mystery. He reveals how one may respond to that absolute mystery through trust and obedience to the mission of the Kingdom."²⁹

This faith and the activity it supported led Jesus to the Cross, because this faith placed him in inevitable conflict with the powers of this world. Condemned to death for blasphemy, Jesus died on the Cross in complete rupture with his cause. He died in theological abandonment. The death he underwent was the death of his person and his cause. He experienced the abandonment of God, and that meant that the kind of death he underwent stood in contradiction to his ministry of the kingdom, born of his relationship or nearness to the Father.³⁰

Sobrino both respects and criticizes the role that the great councils have played in the development of Christology. On the one hand, dogmatic formulations are logical explanations of the revelation communicated in Scripture; they purport to give not new knowledge but better understanding in changing cultural and intellectual contexts. Dogmas need to be interpreted, so that their deepest underlying intentions may in each case come to light. But interpretation is not enough. "I would also add that the dogma will have a true and profound Christian sense if the surrender of the ego on the rational level goes hand in hand with the authentic surrender of the ego in real life . . . the ultimate truth of dogma cannot be separated from the liturgy and the following of Jesus."³¹ Orthodoxy is a combination of doxology and praxis, of praise and performance.

It is Chalcedon's achievement that it offered the Church a generic truth about Christ, stressing as it did the personal unity of Jesus Christ in the distinction of his humanity and divinity. The Council asserts positively who Christ is and sets bounds to any future statement. The problems attendant on the Council's formulations, however, are several. The declaration lacks concreteness, historicity, and relationality. There is no reference to Jesus' own life, the historical situation of his ministry, death, and resurrection, and his relationship to Father, Spirit, and fellow human beings. But the most basic difficulty, Sobrino maintains, consists in the impression given by the formula "that one knows at the very outset who God is and what it means to be a human being."³² Actually it is Christ who tells us both who God is and who we are.

The copula "is" in the statement "Jesus is God" is employed meaningfully and in an orthodox way only when we are willing to submit to noetic self-surrender. The usage in the Christological statement is semantically unique, and we are able, doxologically, to affirm the proposition only if we can base it on the insight of faith into the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. But the formula is an ultimate one and cannot be used as a

²⁹ Ibid. 105.

³⁰ Ibid. 217-19.

³¹ Ibid. 324-25.

³² Ibid. 329.

premise for further conclusions. Nor can the statement be used as a starting point or end point for Christology.

A doxological statement, not capable of being intuited in itself, can acquire further intelligibility by means of an explicative model. The model Sobrino chooses is that of personal relationship. Jesus is who he is as person precisely through surrender to the Other who is the Father. "The divinity in Jesus is the modality of this personal relationship with the Father, which takes place in history and amid the conflict-ridden reality of history."³³

Two different kinds of statements are involved here: historical statements about, e.g., Jesus' trust in the Father, and theological statements about the unique character of this trust. The former statements are the first verification noetically of the doxological statement "Jesus is the eternal Son of God." A second type of verification occurs in the history of Christological ideas that ensues from later faith-filled reflection on the Christian mystery guided by conciliar formulations. But a third important form of verification occurs in the actual fashioning by Christians of further doxological statements down through the centuries. Lastly, the orthopraxis that is illumined by and in turn incarnates the doxological statements is the most important criterion of verification.

LOUIS BOUYER: *THE ETERNAL SON*

The French Oratorian Louis Bouyer divides his book into three main parts: Preparations, Proclamation, and The Knowledge of Faith.³⁴ The sweep of the work includes the OT and the intertestamental background of Christ's advent, the ministry of Jesus and his death and resurrection, the Christologies of the NT, and the development of Christology from the early Church to the present day.

What is the theological significance of the pre-Easter Jesus for Bouyer? What first strikes the reader is that the author devotes only sixteen pages to Jesus' public ministry. The reason for this paucity is no doubt due to Bouyer's conviction that "the major theme of Christology in the New Testament is the Logos, the Word of Johannine writings."³⁵

It is not because we cannot learn much about the historical Jesus that he does not play a major role in Bouyer's book. Indeed, he shares the confidence of the Scandinavian School, represented by Harald Riesenfeld and Birger Gerhardsson, that the mode of transmission of Jesus' words was similar to that of rabbinical transmission.³⁶ *Formgeschichte* must not

³³ Ibid. 336.

³⁴ *The Eternal Son: A Theology of the Word of God and Christology*, tr. S. Inkel and J. F. Laughlin (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1978).

³⁵ Ibid. 41.

³⁶ Ibid. 154-59.

be rejected, but theologians need to criticize some of its false presuppositions and consequences. "To achieve His purpose of bringing the People of God to fulfillment, Christ used at least some of the rabbinical methods of teaching in order that the Twelve, His first apostles, might be able to transmit His message, the facts that were related to Him, and ultimately His own interpretation of Himself."³⁷

The theological significance of the preresurrection Jesus is found in a twofold perspective. First, Bouyer views Jesus' words and deeds in conjunction with the Christological titles. Bouyer believes that Jesus saw himself as both the apocalyptic Son of Man and the Suffering Servant of Second Isaiah.

... the pedagogy He used from the beginning of His proclaiming the coming of the Kingdom was first of all to divert the attention of his audience from the figure of the Messiah to the totally supernatural figure of the Son of Man coming in judgment and the attitude of humanity from now on regarding His very person. Such an approach prepared them for the identification. Finally, as His passion drew near, He deliberately and expressly recognized the identification while maintaining the paradox to its ultimate consequence. He identified the celestial King of the Kingdom not only with the man who seemed like all others but also with the Suffering Servant in whom He would be finally revealed ... and so be recognized as saving all through the very sufferings which were inflicted on Him.³⁸

The second perspective is that of incarnational Christology. In the Resurrection Jesus did not become what he was not. Rather the early Church's faith in the resurrection of Jesus by God involved the recognition of the identity of the pre-Easter one and the Risen One, wherein the final message of Jesus is interiorized by the Spirit.

The Council of Chalcedon did not succeed in formulating a true synthesis, but in its formula one can find the basic and most important elements of the problem. A broader vision is necessary if we are to overcome the limitations of the Chalcedonian statement.

A more profound consideration given to the biblical history of salvation, in its relation to the inner divine life of God revealed to us in His word, could alleviate the Chalcedonian confusion, escape the medieval impasse of a badly phrased *Cur Deus Homo*, banish the equivocation of an existentialism devoid of ontology or a transcendentalism without transcendence, and also avoid opposing the human and the divine without falling into some kind of immanentist confusionism.³⁹

What Bouyer seeks is a "true theandrisim." The beginning was made in neo-Chalcedonianism, where the position of Cyril, that the two natures of Christ unite in a unique hypostasis, is emphasized as the authentic

³⁷ Ibid. 166.

³⁹ Ibid. 302.

³⁸ Ibid. 177-78.

meaning of the Council, with the specification that the unique hypostasis is that of the Logos (affirmed by Constantinople II in 552). The next step which Bouyer applauds is the affirmation, inspired to a great extent by Maximus the Confessor, of the distinction between the divine will and the human will in Christ.

He faults modern Christologies for their excessively psychological orientation where a more ontological direction is necessary. The way which Bouyer takes to render intelligible and helpful the Chalcedonian symbol is to lay great stress on Christology as soteriology.

What Bouyer applauds most in the Fathers is the cherished conviction of some of them that the humanity of Jesus is collective or universal rather than simply particular and individual. The *enhypostasis* of Jesus' human nature in the Logos opens that nature out to all other human beings, so that the universality that is part of the potentiality of all human persons is actualized in an unparalleled way in Jesus Christ. Indeed, Bouyer sees in Thomas' identification of personal and capital grace in Christ the insight which dominates and gives life to the whole of Thomas' Christological synthesis, and from it flows the profound and harmonious sanity that makes inconsequential any weakness it details. The problem with Thomas is that he did not offer an explanation to substantiate this identification.⁴⁰

What the intuitive Christology of the Fathers recognizes, and the medievals overlooked or failed to develop, and the first thing to which modern Christology must give its attention is this: the fact that it is Jesus' relationship to God that establishes an intimate relationship of all humanity to him which is no less unique than his own relationship to his Father. To show how an individual, Jesus of Nazareth, Word of God made flesh, is of concern to *all* of us, that is the Christological issue.

Homoousios hēmin does not simply mean, for Bouyer, that Jesus is like us in all things but sin. The phrase signified as well that he bore all of us in his body.⁴¹ Cyril of Alexandria and Leontius of Jerusalem are Bouyer's favorite authors here, and they are rooted further back in Irenaeus' notion of recapitulation.

But how are we to conceive Jesus' human reality as thoroughly his and at the same time thoroughly universal? Bouyer offers two points for reflection. First, human nature in its concrete individual existence possesses a universality, at least potential, which makes human thought possible. Secondly, if we think of an actual human universality in Jesus Christ not in quantitative but qualitative terms, we can find the notion meaningful. God, in whose image humanity is made, is the concrete universal who can unite the human race as one of it and head of it in

⁴⁰ Ibid. 389.

⁴¹ Ibid. 395.

Christ.⁴² In God's eternity God is eternally begetting the Word made flesh and so there is eternally in God something we can call human. In this way God and humanity are one, not by necessity but by the eternal freedom of divine love.

Unlike the strictest Thomists, who stress the replacement of the human person of Jesus by the divine person of the Logos, Bouyer urges that the divine person is made flesh in such wise that by his death and resurrection he reconciles all humans among themselves and with the Father in his individual humanity; this reconciliation occurs in Christ's becoming, in the Spirit, the final human personality, the eschatological personality which is the Church on the way to kingdom.

FRANS JOZEF VAN BEECK: *CHRIST PROCLAIMED*

The Dutch Jesuit van Beeck invites his reader to move out of ecclesiological fatigue to a fresh exploration.⁴³ He traces the journey which the reader must take in order to find this refreshment: one must pass from the logic of Christology to its rhetoric. What does the author mean by this?

Christology as it has been handed on in late scholasticism and modern authoritative statements from Rome has this in common, that terminological language has been given a hypostatized life of its own, so that *anhypostasia*, person, hypostatic union have become standards of orthodoxy if used "at the proper time" in one's Christology. The primacy accorded technical language is understandable but full of dangers, particularly for Christology as lived by the Christian community. Christology is, first of all and last, language of direct address to the Father through Jesus the Lord in the boldness (*parrhēsia*) which the Spirit makes possible. Naming in worship and witness is the primary and unsurpassable "language game." This level of language is the level of encounter, when I name a personal reality in entrusting myself and my concerns to the one named, allowing the one named to relate to me and my concerns out of his freedom.⁴⁴ In a second step, names become words and terms, that is, they become objects of scrutiny and discernment. This second step is necessary and healthy, provided that the terms, the meanings that are looked at themselves, and their mutual relationships are again and again related back to the dynamic life-relationship of worship and witness. *Homoousios* was confessed of Jesus because Christians in their personal devotion went beyond the liturgical situation (through Christ to the Father in the Spirit) and prayed to Jesus as Lord and God. The fathers at Nicaea and afterwards grew comfortable with the term only as they

⁴² Ibid. 397-98.

⁴³ *Christ Proclaimed: Christology as Rhetoric* (New York: Paulist, 1979).

⁴⁴ Ibid. 93-104.

recognized the term as expressing the worshipful relation to Jesus, which they discerned as right belief and right practice. The dynamism of that lived relation to Jesus is richer than the term *homoousios*, and the latter is a precise but partial expression of the meaning involved in that living relationship. To express it in another way, Christology does not simply reflect on *kērygma* ("Jesus is Lord") but on the very act of *kēryssein* in worship and witness.⁴⁵

This very inadequate summary of van Beeck's basic concern in *Christ Proclaimed* can provide the context for appreciating his approach to both the earthly life of Jesus and the Chalcedonian formula. For the author, the most notable defect of the latter is precisely its having no room for Jesus' earthly life in its significance for Jesus or for the Church. Christology is healthy only if it is able to discern the profound and irreplaceable significance of the process of Jesus' history and life for Jesus, for who he *is*, and for the Church in its own process of history and life. The "therefore" (*dio*) of the Philippian hymn is saving truth for all of us. The free, developing obedience of Jesus in solidarity with sinners and in solidarity with his compassionate Father ("in the form of God") even unto death is the way to the exaltation of Jesus, which in turn includes and unites our pathways of obedience and struggle with his.⁴⁶ The story of his way is not illustration, good example, or teaching, but rather the telling in an inclusive and representative way of the way to life of all, in worshipful and witnessing relation to Jesus and his Father in the Spirit. Jesus' status is not independent of his story; the Christian returns to the story to appreciate afresh the good news of Jesus' status. The gospel is proclaimed in the public worship of the Church in order that we can worship the Lord in, with, and through our own gathered stories. Confessing Jesus as one in being with the Father, we ascribe to the human process of Jesus' earthly life and death the full depth of that process: it was in total relation to the Father in the Spirit, and the Father was giving Himself totally to Jesus through the process ("Jesus is the Logos of God"). And that process which was his human life was a process of compassionate identification with sinners, without restriction, manipulation, or evasion of the real truth about them ("one in compassionate identification with and for us": *homoousios hēmin*). *Ousia* and *hypostasis* language is the perfectly valid if limited way of summarizing Jesus' history with his Father and us in the unifying and freeing power of the Spirit. Without the telling of the story ever anew, the metaphysics of *ousia* and *hypostasis* loses its life and becomes blockage for believers. As summary formulae representing but not substituting for the story, the narrative of his earthly life unto death and resurrection, they are touchstones of orthodoxy and orthopraxis.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 259.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 52-53.

It is not for nothing that *homoousios* is placed by the fathers at Nicaea and Chalcedon in liturgical formulae which are expressive of living worship and witness. The formulae are about Jesus, who he was and is, *and* about us who name Jesus thus in our surrender of living faith, hope, and love. "One in being with the Father" and "one in being with us" are formulae that proclaim Jesus (as Lord) and express who we are (as "lorded over," i.e., empowered by Jesus).

Telling the story of Jesus and naming him Lord are as important as the story told and the name named; they are inseparable as *fides qua* and *fides quae*. Christology reflects on the telling *and* what is told, the naming and the name; *fides qua* is never simply the starting point of Christology in the sense of that which is simply implicit in one's reflections at later stages of Christology. The truth of Christology is at every step of the way discovered in reflecting on the faith-filled narrating and naming, and the grace-filled story and name. In other words, actual Christian religious experience, public and personal, is at the center of Christology, not just its implicit context or final "application," because theology is living faith seeking life-giving understanding.

Van Beeck faults Hans Küng in his *On Being a Christian* for neglecting worship, prayer, and witness in his Christological reflection. The New Hermeneutic (the New Quest) is similarly faulted because the *kērygma* and not the *kēryssein* as well is the center of concern.⁴⁷ To be sure, it is very important that one seek the line of continuity between the early Church's kerygma and the earthly Jesus' self-understanding. But that is only part of the task of Christology. The line of continuity between the proclaiming and worshiping community as such and the self-surrendering Jesus in solidarity with the Father and sinners is just as important as a defining concern of a healthy Christology.

In reflecting on the traditional notion of *anhypostasis*, which designates the absence of human personalness in Jesus by virtue of his *enhyposstasis* in the divine Logos, van Beeck invites the reader to reconsider this troublesome aspect of inherited Christology. This neo-Chalcedonian concept expresses a Christological concern, namely, that Jesus' human nature be recognized as being the Logos' own worldly reality, not existing in a dialogical relationship with the Logos but rather the human mode of God's offer of salvation, God's offer of Himself to us.

By affirming that Jesus Christ is divine person and denying that he is human person, terminological language collides with ordinary language. This is not the real problem, however. The real issue for van Beeck is rather: Is the modern concern for personalness a concern which we allow Christ to preside over?⁴⁸ Van Beeck puts the issue in this fashion because

⁴⁷ Ibid. 259, 348-49.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 167-83.

he believes that the rhetoric of Christology is a rhetoric of inclusion and a rhetoric of obedience. In worshipful witness to Christ as crucified and risen, we are emboldened to bring all our human concerns to Jesus; we experience his ability and desire to assume all of them into himself and to be Lord of them by transforming them into ways of serving him in his brothers and sisters. Our desire for full human personalness both for ourselves and Jesus is just such a concern. Van Beeck wonders whether *anhypostasis* does justice to such a concern. Even the earlier concerns designated by this technical term need to be included in and presided over by the living Christ.

Telling the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection allows the Christian to discern that Jesus' openness and receptivity to the Father in the Spirit is the ground of his openness and receptivity to all the people who come to him with their concerns. The only stand Jesus "took" was the being in relation to his Father, a relationship which did not give Jesus particular advantage over others but actualized his unconditional openness to and compassion for all, especially those rejecting him. This modus of being related to the Father is, in other words, irreducible to Jesus' individual humanity, while at the same time Christians professed this modus of being related to the Father of the one unrepeatable human life of Jesus. This modus is not some "inner core" of Jesus; it is the entirety of Jesus' human life as irreducible to its individual humanity, evidenced then and now by his capacity to assume all human concerns into his life and to welcome all people into his love. The modus of being related to the Father is what the tradition boldly affirmed in the Spirit when it proclaimed that Jesus is the Word of God, the Logos. Jesus' divinity consists in his unsurpassable relation to the Father, unsurpassable because divine, which is inclusive of us because it is the living "basis" of his unconditional receptivity to and empowering lordship of all of his brothers and sisters. The human life of Jesus is the enfleshment of the modus of being related to the Father. To know what Logos means when confessed of Jesus, one needs to tell the story of Jesus' life as a story of full human obedience even unto death received and vindicated by the Father who in the Spirit was communicating Himself fully to Jesus from beginning to end.⁴⁹

The traditional discussion of Jesus as possessing a universal human nature, or a human nature without individual characteristics, calls for similar reflection on the rhetoric of inclusion and obedience. Jesus in his earthly life and in his presence as the Risen One in our world is experienced as able to welcome and lovingly transform all human defining characteristics, projects, causes, qualities, statuses, privileges, and experiences. His human life, earthly and raised, is inclusive of all of his

⁴⁹ Ibid. 455-63.

brothers and sisters. The ground of this thoroughly human but shockingly universal openness is the *modus* of his being related to the Father. This *modus* (the Logos) actuates the unheard-of and unsurpassable inclusive character of this man Jesus, and this inclusive human life which is Jesus' reveals and renders present in our history, in terms accessible to us, God's free and loving openness to and acceptance of us and our world (the Logos, in the Spirit).

JAMES MACKEY: *JESUS: THE MAN AND THE MYTH*

James Mackey of the University of San Francisco is convinced that the historical events of Jesus' life, including his death, explain the Resurrection kerygma and the rest of the Jesus myth in the New Testament.⁵⁰ In other words, only a careful study of Jesus' public ministry and of his experience and understanding of the reign of God can lead us to an understanding of the substance of Jesus' distinctive faith, and it is this distinctive faith which Christians recognize and confess as the living source and origin of their own faith-lives when they proclaim the good news that "Jesus is the Risen One." But his faith precedes ours and grounds it; our faith lives from his empowering faith.

Mackey's book is a Christology of the faith of Jesus, in the twofold sense of Jesus' own faith and the faith of those who acknowledge Jesus as their Lord. A favorite text of the author is Gal 2:16: "We have believed in Christ Jesus in order to be justified by the faith of Christ." The faith that was Jesus' is identical, for Mackey, with his relation to the kingdom of God, his freedom in relation to the law, and the obedience he offered his Father. Speaking of Jesus as a person of faith highlights the fact that we encounter the living God only through the perception, evaluation, and acceptance of all life and existence as gift.⁵¹ Jesus was the one who allowed God to be thoroughly gracious, and his faith was of such transcendent quality that in him people encountered the gracious Father. Yet this transcendent faith was a *learned* faith and obedience: he did not become a slave to his fear of death but grew in fidelity to his God and those people entrusted to his care (Heb 5:8). Mackey devotes considerable space in his book to the pre-Easter Jesus because Jesus' faith is the theological key to who Jesus is and to what we owe to him. The authority which allows Jesus to act with sinners as he did, to pray "Abba" with

⁵⁰ *Jesus: The Man and the Myth* (New York: Paulist, 1979) 282.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 165. Mackey avoids any suggestion that divine revelation consists in a divine infusion of truths. Revelation theology nowadays views revelation as the religious meaning contained in historical events and expressed primarily in evocative images and symbols ("myth") and secondarily in conceptual, technical language. Given this perspective, Mackey prefers to speak of faith and its self-expression rather than of revelation and its God-given content. On the other hand, both God and Jesus are subjects of action verbs in his study, but not in a pre-eminent way.

such audacity, is his living faith, his ready listening to the Father, which was so thorough a listening that others, hearing Jesus, could perceive and acknowledge that in him God was reconciling the world to Himself.

Jesus' faith is not an attribute or particular aspect of his being. Mackey views Jesus' faith as his personal identity, and this identity is what remains when Jesus is stripped on the Cross of all other warrants, qualities, or experiences.⁵² Jesus' faith is who he is, and that faith is completely the Father's gracious gift, gift which does not so much come to Jesus (as though he was already constituted prior to his faith) as constitute Jesus in his integral reality. To say, in other words, that Jesus is the Logos of God is convertible with saying that Jesus is essentially *the* person of faith.

Grace, kingdom, spirit, life, freedom, faith—all these terms designate the reality communicated to us by God through Jesus. We recognize and profess that it is Jesus' grace, spirit, and faith which is the source of new life in us. When Christians experience their selfishness overcome, their legalism melted, their slavery to fear and other idols broken, they perceive that Jesus is now Lord and origin of their experiences. Jesus' faith, which is from the Father, becomes our faith because of the Father *and* Jesus. What is most intimately his as unsurpassable gift is ours through that one mediator of faith.

Mackey portrays the link between Jesus' faith and our own as a bond which goes far beyond mere imitation, mere attentive response to a noble example. Jesus is originating cause of our faith and new life. The Resurrection kerygma and the narratives of Resurrection appearances are symbolic expressions of the faith recognition that Jesus not only caused living faith in others but now causes such faith. He is alive, spirited, full of grace—in short, Lord and Christ—and so now is life-giving Spirit in our world. Mackey emphasizes the fact that the NT data are not concerned with a personal resurrection of Jesus that was witnessed and then attested to; rather the data are consistently about a living triad of perception/evaluation/action (= faith) which Christians acknowledge as coming from the living Jesus and owing everything to him.

Jesus' resurrection does not explain his pre-Easter life. Jesus' resurrection is not a "fact" which clinches the more tentative "facts" of Jesus' ministry and death. It is thoroughly a faith experience for the disciples. Their entrusting themselves to the Risen One finds its only possible verification in the new life which they *are* for each other as the body of the Lord in Eucharist and mutual service of love.

The Chalcedonian formula receives an interpretation that is congruent with Mackey's emphasis on faith. The one *prosōpon* or *hypostasis* of Chalcedon is named Son and Word; it also bears a composite name—the

⁵² Ibid. 261.

Lord Jesus Christ. If we say that the one *hypostasis* is that of the divine Lord, then we are saying "that in Jesus the Word or Son of God objectifies itself to us and we encounter it." But then we should also be able to say that the *hypostasis* met in Jesus is that of the man Jesus; for "if we encounter the Word of God in Jesus, we still encounter only Jesus, the man of faith."⁵³ The Thomistic way of expressing the Chalcedonian perspective is for Mackey the least possible form of Apollinarianism. But even here the statement is directed to a faith experience which is ours because it was Jesus', "that in Jesus' human existence we encounter God, and yet we encounter only Jesus."⁵⁴ Jesus and God are not added to each other, juxtaposed, parallel, nor is God the innermost kernel of Jesus' reality. The major mistake to be avoided in interpreting Chalcedon is to view nature and person as entitative building blocks. Nature is a functional term and Jesus indeed functions for believers as man and as God. In Mackey's terms, Jesus' faith is so much his and so much from the Father that encountering Jesus we meet God and believing in Jesus we are rooted in God's own life.

REFLECTIONS

It would be an impossible task to try to follow all the leads offered by these theologians and then to compare, contrast, and perhaps occasionally synthesize their reflections. Instead of that, I would like to step back and reflect briefly on three issues that emerge as significant from my reading of these Christologies: (1) the fresh perspective they offer on the Christology of the Incarnation; (2) the Catholic understanding of merit that is at work in these Christologies; (3) the necessary relation of Christology "from below" to a Christology "from above."

Incarnational Christology

The incarnation of God's Word has always been the attractive and nourishing focus of Roman Catholic Christology. Our instincts, religiously speaking, are too sacramental for the focus to be elsewhere. All of the writers we have explored in this report are incarnationalists in their perspective. But, with the exception of Bouyer, they are suggesting a shift in the way incarnation is to be understood in systematic theology. Several of the aspects of this shift might be profitably mentioned. First, the saving initiative on our behalf is rooted in the Father, working through the Spirit. It is striking how these authors tend to avoid making the eternal Word the subject of action verbs vis-à-vis Jesus' humanity. This usage is not made into an explicit denial of any initiative on the part of the divine Word in salvation history. Rather it seems to grow out of a respect for the evocative power of language. Incarnation language tradi-

⁵³ Ibid. 245.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 247.

tionally evokes images centered on the Logos. Most of our authors write in a way designed to evoke a sense of relationship between Jesus and the Father, effected by the Spirit, and between Jesus and sinners (both those of us open to his compassion and those rejecting him). This matrix of living relationships, involving both solidarity and conflict, is the nourishing source for all Logos statements.

Secondly, incarnation language is no longer the starting point of Christology but rather language which summarizes; it draws its light from faith-filled meditation on the relationships which fashioned and expressed who Jesus was and is. The invisible Father draws near as He hides His glory in the lowliness of Jesus, His Son. And the Father's advent among us in Jesus occurs in the free response of Jesus to the Father's initiative in his life, as the Spirit opens Jesus to the mysterious self-communicating love of the Father. The obedience of Jesus to the Father does not reduce but rather reverences the mystery-character of the Father in his life.

Thirdly, the unity of Jesus and God is a threefold, mutually conditioning relation of Jesus' human life to Father, Spirit, and eternal Word. Jesus, one might say, is dialogically one with the Father, revelationally one with the Spirit, and hypostatically one with the eternal Word. The reality of this last form of unity is grounded in the living, freeing relationship of Jesus' human life to the Father in the Spirit. Refracting, so to speak, the light of the incarnation of God into this threefold, internally differentiated but mutually supportive relation of Jesus' human life to Father, Spirit, and eternal Word permits contemporary systematics to appreciate Chalcedon as the expression of the central concerns of the NT narratives about Jesus. At the same time, the unity evoked by incarnation language is refracted into the story of compassion and conflict which was the stuff of Jesus' life and which continues to be the way he is at work in our history through us, his body.⁵⁵

"Merit" Christology

In a marvelous essay published in 1955, Karl Rahner meditated on "The Comfort of Time."⁵⁶ Essentially the author was reflecting on the deepest meaning of merit in Catholic theology. For many people, "merit" evokes the worst elements of their religious heritage. For Rahner, its healthiest meaning is full of promise. "Man can increase in supernatural merit. This means nothing other than that man is more and more, ever more deeply, ever more existentially seized by God's life and that this life claims him more and more in all the dimensions of his existence; this life

⁵⁵ Wolfhart Pannenberg's Christology has been very influential in many of these authors. For a recent nontechnical reading of Pannenberg, see Dermot A. Lane's *The Reality of Jesus: An Essay in Christology* (New York: Paulist, 1975).

⁵⁶ *Theological Investigations* 3 (New York: Seabury, 1974).

becomes ever more deeply rooted in him."⁵⁷ In the light of this understanding of merit, it is not unfair to see the recent attention to the theological significance of Jesus' pre-Easter life as a retrieval of the Catholic conviction that through his life and death Jesus merited the Resurrection. Jesus was raised by the Father in the Spirit because of his life of obedience, because of his response to the Father's initiative in his life. Jesus came to be fully who he was in being raised. In dying in abandonment, in letting himself fall into the invisible love of his Father, Jesus allowed the Father to have full sway over him. And the Father gave back to Jesus all that Jesus surrendered, namely, who he had become. Jesus is rewarded with nothing other than the free act of his whole existence. Jesus is raised because of who he became; his humanity is rooted in the inner life of Father, Spirit, and eternal Word because of his human obedience which he lived out in response to the Father and to us broken ones. At the same time, his human life is the free, obedient life it was precisely because it was rooted in the initiative of the Father in the Spirit which took flesh by being word-ed among us.

Two Approaches to Christology

By giving extended attention to the pre-Easter Jesus, the majority of the theologians reviewed here make it clear that, as Kasper puts it, Christology "from above" and Christology "from below" are both required and that they cannot be synthesized in a third language.⁵⁸ This terminology is not used uniformly by all contemporary Christologists, and at times Christology "from above" is described in a very prejudiced way. I am using the terms here to refer to the fact that theologians have recently been affirming both God's initiative in Jesus' life and his response to that initiative. The discussion of the relative merits of these two approaches becomes tiresome when one approach is described as theology from God's point of view and the other as theology from our angle of vision. Fundamental issues are at stake here, to be sure. What is the relationship of living liturgy, concrete, healthy prayer, and faith-filled activity in service of others to reflective Christology? Are we justified in saying that in our responsive faith-life we *experience* God as initiator, as acting, speaking, inviting us into dialogue, or is this language which critical thinking must leave behind? If Jesus' human life is the word God spoke to him, and if in Christ that is our deepest truth as well, the life-giving connection between sacramental language and dialogical, relational language must be preserved, the one leading to the other. For Jesus and ourselves, it remains true that we *are* the word, the initiative that is

⁵⁷ Ibid. 143.

⁵⁸ Kasper, *Jesus the Christ* 247.

God's speaking and doing only to the degree that we respond obediently to Him as the loving and hidden mystery of our lives.

A Christology which affirms Jesus' human identity as the incarnation of the Word and enhypostatic in the Word remains saving truth for us only to the extent that it is able at the same time to recognize the fact that Jesus was who he was because the Spirit fashioned him *the* listener of the Father, the divine Other in his life. Only Christians who experience the holy Mystery of God as other, as mystery, and *thus* the sustaining ground of their free identity can develop Christologies which are relationally sacramental and unitively dialogic. Christology from above ("The Lord had done wondrous things for us") and Christology from below ("our redeemed humanity is the path to God") are inseparable, unmixed, undivided, and united in the sustaining ground (*hypostasis*) and visible manifestation (*prosōpon*) of God's covenantal love for us.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Several useful books which I have not included in this report are the following: John Shea, *The Challenge of Jesus* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977); Gerald O'Collins, *What Are They Saying about Jesus?* (New York: Paulist, 1977); Albert Nolan, *Jesus before Christianity* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1978); Peter DeRosa, *Jesus Who Became Christ* (London: Collins, 1975); Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology for Our Time*, tr. Patrick Hughes (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1978).

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