

## THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTIAN REALISM

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My approach to the question of the origins of Christian realism is determined by three topics. Elsewhere I have treated these topics separately. But it is my hope that you will be interested in having them brought together in a single focus.

The first topic is the notion of critical realism, i. e., the attempt to get beyond the empiricism of Hume, the critical idealism of Kant, the absolute idealism of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, and the subsequent varieties of subjectivism.

The second topic is how did it happen that the Christian church became involved in such issues. To this the common answer since the pronouncements of Harnack has been the influence of Hellenistic thought. Such an answer, as I have argued in the first volume of my De Deo Trino, is quite inadequate.

The third topic has to do with contemporary Roman Catholic Christology. In 1966 in the sixth volume of the Tijdschrift voor Theologie Fathers Hulsbosch, Schillebeeckx, and Schoonenberg discussed or proposed revisions of Christological doctrine.<sup>1</sup> Father Piet Schoonenberg in 1969 published a book on the topic; a German translation was published in the same year; and in 1971 there appeared an English translation under the title, The Christ.<sup>2</sup> Apparently contrary to Father Schoonenberg's views, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on February 21st., 1972, reaffirmed the doctrines of the councils of Nicea and Chalcedon. The materials then of this third topic come from Dutch and Roman theology. But the question I propose to treat is the relation of this Dutch-Roman conflict to the views I set forth in my ~~St.~~ Marquette lecture on Doctrinal Pluralism.<sup>3</sup>

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- 1) Tijdschrift voor Theologie, 6(1966) 249-306.
- 2) New York; Herder and Herder, 1971.
- 3) Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1971.

## The Ambiguity of Realism

Many no doubt will feel it quite ridiculous for a theologian to confront head on a philosophic issue. While at the back of their minds there may linger some old and mistaken notions of sciences defined by their formal objects and consequently completely disparate, more probably in the foreground will be the conviction that philosophic issues are tremendously profound and difficult.

Let me begin, then, by assuring you that in proposing to speak of the ambiguity of realism I have not the slightest intention of touching on anything either profound or difficult. For in my opinion the ambiguity of realism arises from the very simple and evident fact that infants do not speak while most adults do speak. From this simple and evident fact it follows that infants, because they do not speak, do not live in a world mediated by language. Their world is a world of immediacy, of sights and sounds, of tastes and smells, of touching and feeling, of joys and sorrows. But as infants learn to speak, they gradually move into a far larger world. It includes the past and the future as well as the present, the possible and the probable as well as the actual, rights and duties as well as facts. It is a world enriched by travellers' tales, by stories and legends, by literature, philosophy, science, by religion, theology, history.

Now the criteria of reality in the infant's world of immediacy are given in immediate experience. They are simply the occurrence of seeing or hearing, tasting or smelling, touching or feeling, enjoying or suffering. But the criteria of reality in the world mediated by meaning are far more complex. They include immediate experience but they also go beyond it. To the criteria of immediate experience they add the criteria of relevant understanding, of accurate formulation, of correct judgement, of prudent belief.

For the world mediated by meaning is not just given. Over and above what is given there is the universe that is intended by questions, that is organized by intelligence, that is described by language, that is enriched by tradition. It is an enormous world far beyond the comprehension of the nursery. But it also is an insecure world, for besides fact there is fiction, besides truth there is error, besides science there is myth, besides honesty there is deceit.

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Now such ambiguity and insecurity do not bother the average man but they do trouble philosophers. For philosophers ask strange questions. What am I doing when I am knowing? Why is doing that knowing? What do I know when I do it? Having put to themselves the questions of cognitional theory, of epistemology, and of metaphysics, they are apt to go into a deep huddle with themselves, to overlook the number of years they spent learning to speak, to disregard the differences between the infant's world of immediacy and the adults world mediated by meaning, to reach back to their infancy, and to come up with the infantile solution that the real is what is given in immediate experience. Knowing, they will claim, is a matter of taking a good look; objectivity is a matter of seeing what is there to be seen; reality is whatever is given in immediate experience.

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Such is naive realism. Its offspring is empiricism. For the empiricist takes naive realism seriously and so proceeds to empty the world mediated by meaning of everything that is not given to immediate experience. In turn empiricism begets critical idealism. It awakens Kant from his dogmatic slumbers by revealing to him that one and only apprehension we have of objects is by sensible intuition. It follows that the categories of understanding of themselves are empty, that they can refer to objects only in so far as they are applied to the data of sense. It further follows that the ideals of reason are doubly mediated, for they can be referred to objects only in so far as they guide the use of the categories of understanding when the categories themselves are applied to the data of sense. There results Kant's critical idealism.

Because we have access only to objects sensibly presented, we are confined to a merely phenomenal world. "Things themselves becomes a merely limiting concept, a Grenzbegriff, by which we designate what we cannot know. Knowledge of the soul, of morality, of God, arise only as conclusions from the postulates of practical reason.

In reaction to Kant's critical idealism, there were propounded the absolute idealisms of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. It was their aim to restore speculative reason to its ancient eminence though in a new idealist context. But while they enriched philosophy enormously, their basic project has not prospered. In a variety of ways the primacy of practical reason has been reaffirmed. Schopenhauer wrote on Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung. Kierkegaard took his stand on faith. Newman toasted conscience. Nietzsche praised the will to power. Dilthey wanted a Lebensphilosophie. Blondel insisted on a philosophy of action. Laberthonnière criticized Plato and Aristotle for reducing life to the contemplation of abstractions. Paul Ricoeur has not yet finished his three-volume philosophy of the will. And in similar directions move pragmatists, personalists, and many existentialists.

I too hold for the primacy of conscience, for the primacy of the questions that lead to deliberation, evaluation, decision. Still, responsible answers to those questions presuppose sound judgements of fact, of possibility, and of probability. But such sound judgements, in turn, presuppose that we have escaped the clutches of naive realism, empiricism, critical and absolute idealism, that we have succeeded in formulating a critical realism. The key to such a formulation is basically simple. It is the distinction already drawn between the infant's world of immediacy and the adult's world mediated by meaning. In the infant's world of immediacy the only objects to which we are related immediately are the objects of sensible intuition. But in the adult's world mediated by meaning the objects to which we are related immediately are the objects intended by our questioning and known by correct answering. In more traditional language, the objects intended are beings: what is to be known by intending Quid sit and An sit and by finding correct answers.

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I have been stressing a contrast between a world of immediacy and a world mediated by meaning. But I now must add certain further features that will round out the picture and, perhaps, forestall objections. The recurrent difficulty in cognitional theory and in psychology generally arises from a failure to distinguish between our actual performance and our abbreviated objectification of that performance. Both the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning are ~~unjustified~~ abbreviated objectifications. They are not full accounts of what actually occurs. But they are fair approximations to the accounts that people are prone to give of their own performance. Inasmuch as they are fair approximations to what people think they do, they also are fair approximations to the confusions in which cognitional theory becomes involved.

Infancy, as studied and described by Jean Piaget, is a time of enormous operational development. It is a time in which we learn to use our limbs and senses and to coordinate different uses in all their possible combinations. It is the time in which we discover what is other than ourselves and learn to respond with appropriate affects. It is the time in which we learn to speak and so learn to move beyond the immediate to the world mediated by meaning. All this is true, but it would be untrue to suppose that the infant is a strict empiricist. His activity may be predominantly on the sensitive level but there is no reason to suppose that intelligent activity is to be excluded.

Again, the entry into the world mediated by meaning does not exclude immediate consciousness of the operations by which that entry is effected. On the contrary, it is only the objectification of such conscious operations, of our acts of understanding and formulating, of reflecting, weighing the evidence, and judging, of deliberating, evaluating, deciding, that we can reach any real apprehension of the mediation meaning effects, of the broad and the fine structures of the world that meaning mediates.

## Realism and Christianity

In so far as Christianity is a reality, it is involved in the problems of realism. But this involvement is twofold. There is a remote involvement in which the problems of realism have not yet appeared. There is a proximate involvement in which the problems of realism gradually manifest themselves and meet with an implicit solution. Finally, there is the explicit involvement which arises when people discuss whether or not there is a Christian ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ philosophy. Let us consider ~~these three~~ in turn, the first two of these.

First, then, there is the remote involvement inasmuch as Christianity is mediated by meaning. It is mediated by meaning in its communicative function inasmuch as it is preached. It is mediated by meaning in its cognitive function inasmuch as it is believed. It is mediated by meaning in its constitutive function inasmuch as it is a way of life that is lived. It is mediated by meaning in its effective function inasmuch as its precepts are put into practice.

However, the ambiguity of realism is not absent from Christianity. For the Christian world is not exclusively a world mediated by meaning. It includes as well a world of immediacy. For there is the new man in Christ Jesus, and that new man is primarily, not the product of the preacher, not the fruit of one's own free choice, but the effect of God's grace. Moreover, though the matter has been disputed in various ways, in my opinion at least God's gift of his grace occurs not unconsciously but consciously. It is not confined to some metaphysical realm so that experiencing it would be impossible. It can come as a thunderclap as when, in the prophet Ezechiel's words, God plucks out man's heart of stone and replaces it <sup>with</sup> a heart of flesh. But more commonly it comes so quietly and gently that it is conscious indeed but not adverted to, not inquired into, not understood, not identified and named, not verified and affirmed. For, as you know, consciousness is one thing and knowledge is another.

So much for the remote involvement of Christianity in the problems of realism. This involvement arises inasmuch as Christianity is a reality. It arises in two manners because, in part, Christianity is a reality in the world of immediacy and, in part, it is a reality in the world mediated by meaning.

The proximate involvement of Christianity in the problems of realism arose in the developments effected in Christological thought in the third, fourth and fifth centuries. We shall take three samples of Christian thought and find them to represent three views on the nature of reality. Tertullian we shall find to represent the influence of Stoic materialism; Origen to represent a variant of Platonist idealism; Athanasius to represent the thrust to realism implicit in the fact that, in part, Christianity is in the world mediated by meaning.

Tertullian was concerned to refute an otherwise unknown Praxeas who maintained that God the Father was identical with God the Son and consequently that it was God the Father that was crucified on Calvary. Against this view Tertullian recites a creed very similar to our Apostles' creed. He insists that God the Son is both real and really distinct from the God the Father. Inevitably such a contention has its philosophic underpinnings, for it presupposes some notion of reality and some notion of what is really distinct. And so while Tertullian's intention is apologetic, while his main concern is to defend the faith, while his arguments are from scripture, while his thinking is largely a matter of simile and metaphor, none the less there is to his expression an undertow of Stoic materialism.

Ernest Evans, in his invaluable introduction, edition, translation, and commentary of Tertullian's Treatise against Praxeas,<sup>4</sup> remarks that it was a Stoic fancy that all reality

4) London: SPCK, 1948

was corporeal. Cicero maintained that Zeno held every cause and every effect to be a body. Other authorities concluded that truth, knowledge, understanding, mind, were bodies  
~~because they were bodies~~

because they produced effects. So it is that Tertullian approved the Stoic view that the arts were corporeal and, since the soul was nourished by the arts, the soul too must be corporeal (de anima, 6). He would grant that corporeal and incorporeal constituted a logical disjunction (adv. Hermog., 35), but he would also claim that what is incorporeal also is non-existent (de carne Christi, 11; de res. carnis, 11, 53; de anima, 7).<sup>5</sup> If you were to urge that invisible

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5) For the foregoing and further erudition, see Evans, op. cit., pp. 234 ff. Also M. Spanneut, Le Stoïcisme des Pères de l'Eglise, Paris 1957.

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spirits are real and exist, he would answer that spirits are invisible to us but none the less they have their own bodies and shapes by which they are visible to God alone (adv. Prax., 7).

It is within this horizon that the peculiarities of Tertullian's Christology have to be understood. He was aware that the Greek word, *logos*, meant both the rational principle within man and, as well, the language that man speaks. He maintained that God the Father always had within himself his rational principle, his wisdom. But when the Father at the moment of creation uttered his wisdom with the command, Let there be light, then his wisdom by being uttered became a Son. Tertullian considered the objection that an utterance is just voice and sound and smitten air intelligible in the hearing, and for the rest an empty something void and incorporeal. But Tertullian denied that anything void and empty could come forth from God, least of all the Word through/were<sup>whom</sup> made all things, since nothing can be made through something void and empty (adv. Prax., 7).

Further, Tertullian was careful to distinguish his position from that of the Gnostics, such as Valentine, who spoke of emissions from the *pleroma*. The Valentinian emission, he claimed, was separated from its source and

even ignorant of its source. In contrast, the Word is always in the Father, as he says, I am in the Father (John 14, 11); and always with God, as it is written, And the Word was with God (John 1, 1); and never separate from the Father or other than the Father, because, I and the Father are one (John 10, 30). To the comment that, if there are Father and Son, then there are not just one but two, Tertullian's reply is to distinguish root and shoot, spring and stream, the sun and its beam. He points out that root and shoot are two things but conjoined, that the spring and the river are two manifestations but undivided, that the sun and its beam are two aspects, but they cohere. Whatever proceeds from something must be another beside that from which it proceeds, but it is not for that reason separated from it (adv. Prax., 8).

While he insisted that the Son was distinct from the Father and that the Holy Spirit was distinct from both Father and Son, Tertullian <sup>also insisted</sup> that there was only one God, only one substance. His justification was that <sup>there</sup> are three not in quality but in sequence, not in substance but in aspect, not in power but in manifestation, yet of one substance and one quality and one power. (adv. Prax., 2).

While Tertullian can find very happy formulae for expressing Christian beliefs, still he did not draw one conclusion that later was drawn. If the Father is God and the Son is God, then all that is true of the Father must also be true of the Son, except that the Son is not the Father. For Tertullian there were things true of the Father but not of the Son. He could write, There was a time when there was neither sin to make God a judge nor a Son to make God a Father (adv. Hermog., 3). Again, he wrote, For the Father is the whole substance, while the Son is an outflow and assignment of the whole, as he himself professes, Because my Father is greater than I (adv. Prax., 9; John 14, 28). Again, he distinguished the Father as giving the order and the Son as executing it (adv. Prax., 12).

In a later theology such expressions were regarded as subordinating the Son to the Father for, if the Son is God, he has all the divine attributes and, if he has not all the divine attributes, then he is not God.

While Origen also was/<sup>later</sup> regarded as subordinationist, his thought unfolds in an entirely different climate of opinion. Where Tertullian considered the incorporeal to be non-existent, Origen strongly and insistently affirmed the strict immateriality of both the Father and the Son.<sup>6</sup> While Tertullian could admit

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6) On John 4, 24; Preuschen 244-250; De princ., 1, 1-9; Koetschau 16-27.

the divine wisdom to be eternal, he held that/<sup>the</sup> Son came into existence only at the creation of the world. In contrast, Origen held the Son to be no less eternal than the Father.<sup>7</sup> Tertullian thought of the generation of the Son as of a bodily substance proceeding from the bodily substance of the Father but in no way separated from it. Origen rejected any account of the Son's generation that appealed to the analogy of human or animal generation or to some mythic extrusion from the godhead.<sup>8</sup> For Origen the Son is the image of the Father; he proceeds from the Father spiritually as a choice from the mind; again, whatever the Father does, he also does (John 5, 19).<sup>9</sup>

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7) De princ., 1, 2, 2.4; Koetschau 29, 33.

8) De princ., 1, 2, 5.6; Koetschau 32, 35.

9) De princ., 1, 2, 6; Koetschau 34.

But the basic contrast lies in differing notions of reality. For Tertullian the real had to be bodily; it was what elsewhere I have named the already-out-there-now of extraverted animal consciousness. But for Origen the real was idea, as in middle Platonism. Moreover, because the Father and the Son were distinct, theirs had to be the reality of distinct ideas. The Father was divinity itself, but the Son was divine only by participation.<sup>10</sup> The Father ~~is~~ goodness itself, but the Son ~~is~~ good only by participation.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, the Son ~~is~~ light itself, wisdom itself, truth itself, light itself,

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was/ justice itself, but the Father  $\frac{1}{2}$  the source of all of these and in himself something far better, far more profound, far more mysterious.<sup>12</sup>

10) De princ., 1, 2, 6; Koetschau 34, 21 ff.

11) De princ., 1, 2, 13; Koetschau 47, 3 ff.

12) On John 2, 2; 2; 23; 13, 3; 6, 6 (3); 13, 25; <sup>r</sup>Peuschen 54, 23 ff.; 80, 12-15; 229, 9 f.; 114, 22; 115, 1; 249, 14 ff.  
De princ., 1, 2, 13; Koetschau 47, 3 ff.

The distinction between Father and Son is sharp and subordinationis. Their unity is what today would be called moral. We worship, he wrote, the Father of truth and the Son that is truth. They are two realities in respect of hypostasis, but a single one by consent, concord, and identity of will. So who sees the Son, who is the effulgence of God's splendor and the stamp of God's very being, also will see the Father in him who is the image of God.<sup>13</sup> It is an image in which participation reaches its supreme perfection for it consists in the Son's eternal contemplation of the Father and his constant acceptance of the Father's will.<sup>14</sup>

13) C. Celsus VIII, 12; Koetschau 229, 31 ff.

14) On John ~~ix, 2, 2~~ 2, 2; 13, 36; Preuschen 55, 4 ff.; 261, 24 ff.

Let us now briefly revert to our discussion of the ambiguity of realism. There we distinguished two different meanings of the immediate object of our knowledge. There was the object in the world of immediacy and the object in the world mediated by meaning. The first is immediately experienced in the data of sense or of consciousness. The second is immediately intended in the questions we raise but mediately known in the correct answers we reach. We now must add that the questions we raise are of different kinds. There are questions for intelligence that ask, What? Why? How? There are questions for reflection that ask whether or not this or that really is so. There are questions for deliberation that ask whether or not this or that course of action is truly good.

Now it would seem that Tertullian's Christology and, specifically, his identification of the incorporeal with the non-existent, are connected with an apprehension of reality in terms of the world of immediacy. Again, it would seem that Origen's Christology pertains to the world mediated by meaning, where the meanings in question are ideas, that is, answers to questions for intelligence. But there is a third possibility in which one's apprehension of reality is in the world mediated by meaning, where the meanings in question are affirmations and negations, that is, answers to questions for reflection. It is this third view that finds expression in the Scholastic tag, ens per verum innotescit, reality becomes known through knowing what is true. It is this third view in Christian preaching and teaching and, more generally, in Christianity as a reality mediated by meaning. Finally, it is this third view that is implicit in conciliar pronouncements and particularly in the canons to the effect, If anyone say<sup>s</sup> so and so, then let him be anathema. What is said is all important to a group whose reality, in part, is mediated by meaning.

The origins, then, of Christian realism are twofold. Their root lies in Christian preaching and teaching and in local, regional, and ecumenical gatherings that sought to control preaching and teaching. But that root remained implicit for a long time. Tertullian wrote against Praxeas because he considered Praxeas' teaching to be mistaken and pernicious. Origen rejected Stoic materialism and opted for Platonism because that enabled him to treat of things of the spirit. But it was the council of Nicea and <sup>the</sup> ensuing controversies that provoked from Athanasius, along with his other clarifications, the fundamental little rule that all that is said of the Father also is to be said of the Son except that the Son is Son and not Father.<sup>15</sup>

15) Orat. 3 c. Arianos, 4, MG 26, 330 B.

## Nicea and Chalcedon: What was meant

From Athanasius' rule one may proceed in either of two directions. One may make it more concrete, and this was the course taken by the Latin liturgy in its preface for Trinity Sunday. Quod enim de tua gloria revelante te credimus, hoc de Filio tuo, hoc de Spiritu sancto ~~sunt~~ sine differentia discretionis sentimus. What from your revelation we believe about your glory, that without difference or distinction we hold about your Son and about the Holy Spirit. This statement is more concrete, first, because it occurs in a prayer addressed to God the Father, ~~and~~ secondly, because it refers to what has been revealed by God about his glory, and thirdly because it is a profession of belief in that revelation.

But as one can move to what is more concrete, so too one can move to what is more general. From the context of Athanasius' statement it would seem that his indefinite 'whatever' really meant 'whatever scripture says of the Father, it also says about the Son.' Accordingly, one moves to a far more general meaning when one takes the rule as a proposition about propositions. Then it becomes: whatever propositions are true of the Father, also are true of the Son; except that the Father is Father and not Son, and that the Son is Son and not Father.

Moreover, this transition to a proposition about propositions, <sup>technically,</sup> to a proposition of the second degree, is not without precedent. For the Christological rules for the communicatio idiomatum, the interchange of properties, are quite openly propositions about propositions. They are the traditional rule-of-thumb device for the correct interpretation of the council of Chalcedon.

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Finally, in interpreting the councils, it is desirable not to assume that the participants possessed or the conciliar decree intended some precise technical meaning. Augustine was a thinker of considerable acumen. The Western church was long familiar with the trinity. Yet Augustine employed a purely heuristic device to say what was meant by 'person.'

What, he asked, are there three of in the trinity. Father, Son, and Spirit are three. But there are not three Gods, nor three Fathers, nor three Sons. What, then, are there three of? It is to have an answer to this question that one says there are three persons.<sup>16</sup>

Such a notion of person is, of course, merely heuristic. It puts a question but does not supply a determinate answer. But there was an earlier experience of this state of affairs when Socrates asked definitions, omni et soli, of fortitude, temperance, justice, truth and, while no Athenian could afford to admit that he did not know what the words meant, it also was true that none, not even Socrates, could produce the desired definitions. Indeed, definitions of the virtues and the vices were not forthcoming until Aristotle wrote his *Nicomachean Ethics*, and that writing involved the enormous shift from the commonsense Socratic viewpoint to the elaborate systematic viewpoint of the Aristotelian corpus. The same fact has been experienced in recent times, for the linguistic analysts claim, rightly I believe, that one clarifies the meaning of a word, not by some universal definition, but by showing how the word is used appropriately.

Now if one follows the lead of Augustine and profits by the experience of Socrates and the analysts, then one will explain the meaning of 'nature,' 'person,' 'hypostasis' in the decree of Chalcedon by saying that 'nature' means what there are two of in Christ while 'person' or 'hypostasis' means what there is one of in Christ. Nor is there doubt about what is the one and what are the two. For in the prior paragraph the subject is the one and the same Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. Of this one and the same there is the fourfold predication of opposed attributes. He is

16) See De trin., V, ix, 10 and VII, iv, 7; PL 42, 918 and 939 f. In IOannis evang., tract. 39, n. 4; PL 55, 1683.

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perfect in divinity and the same perfect in humanity, truly<sup>A</sup> God and truly man with a rational soul and a body, consubstantial with the Father in his divinity and the same consubstantial with us in his humanity, before all ages begotten of the Father in his divinity and the same in these last days for our sakes and for our salvation born of the Virgin Mary, mother of God.<sup>17</sup>

But there is a further clarification to be added. For a nominalist the subject of the statement, namely, the Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ is just a proper name and two or perhaps three titles, while truly God and truly man involve the addition of further titles. But if one acknowledges the reality of the world mediated by meaning, then the subject of the statement is not just a proper name with certain titles but primarily a reality and, indeed, a reality begotten of the Father before all ages.

In similar fashion one will say that ousia means the reality mediated by meaning when one speaks of God the Father. Again, one will say that realities are consubstantial when what is true of one also is true of the other, except that one is not the other.

Such a mode of exposition is, of course, minimal. It is not intended to prevent the work of the historical theologian from investigating the use of terms in previous, contemporary, or subsequent writers. It is not intended to replace the work of the systematic theologian who compares the various interpretations and theories that have been propounded and determines where his own preferences lie. But, I believe, a minimal interpretation, however tautologous, none the less has a real utility. It is easily grasped and easily accepted. It accords with the canonical and no less theological principle that what has not been evidently defined has not been defined at all.<sup>18</sup> It provides a guideline in one's estimate of the dogmatic significance of subsequent definitions of the person and metaphysical, psychological, phenomenological, existential, and personalist theories of the person.

17) DS 301.

18) CIC 1323 #5.

## The One Person

The third council of Constantinople (681 A. D.) added to Chalcedon's affirmation of two natures in Christ the further affirmation of two wills and two operations. Naturally enough it placed before its own decree a repetition, with variants, of the decree of Chalcedon. One of the variants that has been thought significant is as follows. Where at Chalcedon the subject of the statement is 'the Son our Lord Jesus Christ', at Constantinople III the subject is 'our Lord Jesus Christ, our true God, one of the holy, consubstantial, life-giving trinity.'<sup>19</sup>

The significance of this variant is that it makes very explicit that the one person in Christ is a divine person. It follows that there is not a human person in Christ. This conclusion was acceptable enough as long as theologians confined their thought on the person to metaphysical definitions and theories. But today thought about the person runs in psychological, phenomenological, existential and personalist channels. In such a context to deny that Jesus was a human person seems tantamount to denying that he was a man. Such, it seems to me, was the basic contention of the Dutch theologians already mentioned and, in particular of Piet Schoonenberg in his book, The Christ.

On this topic I must confine myself exclusively to two brief points. The first is historical. When did there begin explicit recognition of the person of Christ as divine? The second pertains to systematic theology. What precisely is it that is one in Christ?

On the first question Father Schoonenberg has been translated as writing as follows. "But it was not only with Chalcedon that the pattern of classical christology was born. Chalcedon names the one person of Christ first in a concrete way by indicating by Jesus' <sup>name</sup> and titles and by the seven times repeated 'the same', afterwards more technically as the 'prosopon' and 'hypothesis', in which the divine and the human natures come together (DS 301 f.). The latter expression, used also in

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 Pope Leo's letter to Flavian, suggests just as much (or just as little) concerning a pre-existence of the human in Christ as a pre-existence of the divine. The actual personal pre-existence of the Logos or the Son entered the Chalcedonian through later theological expositions, especially that under Alexandrian influence."<sup>20</sup>

This I think is true enough in the sense that speech about one divine person with two natures is later than Chalcedon. But there was a good deal of Alexandrian influence exercised at Ephesus, and Ephesus is the background to Chalcedon. The proceedings there under the presidency of Cyril of Alexandria on June 22, 431, were in their main lines as follows.<sup>21</sup>

19) DS 554.

20) Piet Schoonenberg, The Christ, New York, Herder and Herder, 1971.

21) I shall refer in parentheses to E. Schwartz, Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum, Tom. I, Vol. I, Parts 1 & 2.

The first number will indicate the part, the second the page. and if there is a third it will refer to the line or lines.

After procedural discussions, there was read the Nicene creed. (2, 12). Next was read Cyril's second letter to Nestorius and, when it had been read, Cyril asked whether it were in conformity with the Nicene creed (2, 13). One hundred and twenty-five Fathers singly and then the rest together pronounced in Cyril's favor (2, 13-31). The second letter of Nestorius to Cyril was then read and again Cyril asked the Fathers if it were in agreement with Nicea. (2, 31). Thirty-five Fathers spoke in turn against Nestorius and then the rest together pronounced against him (2, 31-35). Other documents were read (2, 36-52) but no vote was taken. Finally, Nestorius was excommunicated (2, 54) and one hundred and ninety-seven bishops signed the document (2, 55-64).

We have now to ask what in Nestorius' second letter to Cyril grounded his condemnation. And since the synod agreed with Cyril, we have only to select passages in which Nestorius disagrees with Cyril. This occurs early in his letter. He quotes Cyril's state<sup>ment</sup> in his letter to the effect

that "The holy and great synod said that the very only begotten Son generated according to nature from God the Father, true God from true God, the light from light, the one through whom the Father made all things, came down, took flesh, became a man, suffered, rose again" (1, 29, 12-14). To this Nestorius strenuously objects. Cyril thinks the Fathers at Nicea taught that the Word, coeternal with the Father, was passible (1, 29, 20 f.). He should pay closer attention to their words and then he will discover that that divine chorus did not say that the consubstantial divinity was passible, that the one coeternal with the Father was <sup>recently born,</sup> ~~passible~~, or that the solved temple that rose from the dead did the raising (1, 29, 21-24).

Nestorius goes on to beg Cyril to observe how Nicea began from names common to both the divine and the human, from Lord, Jesus, Christ, only begotten, and Son. On the basis of common signs referring to both natures it was possible for the council to speak of both the divine and the human without either separating filiation and lordship or risking a confusion of the two natures (1, 29, 28 - 1, 30, 4).

He praises Cyril for his distinction between the two natures and their union in a single person, for his assertion that God the Word had no need for a second birth from a woman, for his confession that the divine nature was impassible. But he feels that Cyril nullifies all this when he goes on to assert that the one said to be impassible and incapable of a second generation turns out to be passible and produced for a second time. It is as if what naturally pertains to the Word was abolished by his conjunction with his temple (1, 30, 18-28). After all, our Lord did not say, Dissolve the divinity and in three days it will rise again. He said, Dissolve this temple (1, 30, 29-31).



rejected the notion that there were two sons in Christ, and added that unless one acknowledges the union to be hypostatic, one is compelled to acknowledge two sons (1, 28, lines 3-5, 7 f., 10 f.).

To return, then, to Fr Schoonenberg, it is true that Chalcedon does not speak of the actual personal pre-existence of the Logos or the Son. But it also is true that it speaks of the Son our Lord Jesus Christ perfect in divinity and the same perfect in humanity, before all ages begotten from the Father in his divinity, and in these last days the same for our sakes and our salvation born of the Virgin Mary the Mother of God according to his humanity.

There remains the systematic issue. Just what was meant by 'person or hypostasis' in the context of Chalcedon?

To put the question equivalently but differently, how are we to understand these terms as they occur in the Chalcedonian decree without intruding into them the many and varied associations they have since acquired. As long as Scholastic theology was alive, answers were available. But today in many parts of the world Scholasticism has withered away and vanished. Can anything be done to meet current needs for clarification?

A first step in this direction I have already suggested. It is to overcome the ambiguity of realism. As long as the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning are not clearly distinguished, as long as the criteria to be used with respect to these two worlds are not clearly distinguished, confusion will be endless and attempts at clarification will largely be unsuccessful.

A second step would be to distinguish three meanings of the word, one. The first of these meanings is associated with experiential activity; it is 'one more'; it is the numerical 'one' in the sense that one is one more than zero, two is one more than one, three is one more than two, and so on indefinitely. The second meaning of 'one' is associated with understanding. Understanding grasps the functional unity of the parts of a machine, the functional and organic unity of a living thing, the developmental unity of a person's life.

The third meaning of 'one' is associated with judgement; it is 'one' in the sense of identity. To affirm implies negations. Jones is all that Jones is, but he is not somebody else or all that somebody else is. He is himself and just himself.

*i/l.c.*  
 A third step would be to state the conditions of the possibility of the Incarnation. A first condition would be that the Father, Son, and Spirit be identities in the positive sense: each is himself. A second condition would be that they be identities in the restrictive sense with regard to one another: the Father is not the Son; the Father not the Spirit; the Son is not the Spirit. A third condition would be that the Son need not be an identity in the restrictive sense with regard to some rational creature: the Son can become a man. A fourth condition is that <sup>a</sup>man may have his identity not in himself but in another. To affirm the possibility of the Incarnation is to affirm that these conditions can be fulfilled. To affirm the Incarnation as a fact is to say that these conditions have been fulfilled. To say what the Incarnation means is to explain the conditions of its possibility.

*have/*  
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*i/l.c.*  
 The foregoing statement is a statement of the meaning of the repeated 'one and the same' in Cyril's second letter to Nestorius and in the decree of Chalcedon. There is in Christ, God and man, only one identity; that one identity is the identity of the Word; the man, Jesus, has an identity but not in himself but in the Word. Finally, the person or hypostasis of the second paragraph of the Chalcedonian decree refers back to the 'one and the same' of the first paragraph. The distinction between person and nature is added to state what is one and the same and what are not one and the same. The person is one and the same; the natures are not one and the same. While later developments put persons and natures in many further contexts, the context of Chalcedon needs no more than heuristic concepts.<sup>22</sup> What is a person or hypostasis? It is in the trinity what there are three of and in the incarnation what there is one of. What is a nature? In the trinity it is what there is one of and in the incarnation it is what there are two of?

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22) This, I feel, is born out by Aloys Grillmeier's study of the Eve of Chalcedon in Christ in Christian Tradition, London: Mowbray, 1964, pp. 456-477.

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I have still to relate the foregoing to what I said both in the Père Marquette lecture on Doctrinal Pluralism and once more in my chapter on Doctrines in Method in Theology. In both these writings I accepted the statement of the first Vatican council that what has been both revealed by God and defined by the church is permanently valid in the sense determined by its own historical context. But similarly in both and in other writings I contrasted classicist assumptions to the effect that there exists de iure one fixed and immutable culture for the whole of mankind with the empirical fact that there have existed and exist several human cultures all of which are subject to development and decay. When classicist assumptions are pushed to the point of denying matters of fact, I feel I must disagree. The meaning of the term, person, at Chalcedon is not what commonly is understood by the term today, and theologians at least have to take that fact into account.<sup>23</sup>

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23) This is not the occasion for a discussion of Fr Schoonenberg's process theology, much less the very numerous issues he settles in summary fashion.

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#### Conclusion

It is time to conclude. We have been discussing the origins of Christian realism. We began from an account of the ambiguity of realism with one meaning relevant to the world of immediacy and the other relevant to the world mediated by meaning. Between these extremes we intercalated the confusions of naive realists, empiricists, critical idealists, absolute idealists, and subsequent philosophies of pessimism, faith, conscience, power, life, action, will.

Turning to Christianity we noted that both the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning were vital to it: the world of immediacy because of religious experience, because of God's love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us (Rom 5, 5); the world mediated by meaning because divine revelation is God's own entry into man's world mediated by meaning.

It remains, however, that the ambiguity of realism was not among the revealed truths. Christians had to find out for themselves that it was a mistake to assume with Tertullian that the criteria for the world of immediacy also held for the world mediated by meaning and so to conclude that what was incorporeal also was non-existent. They had to find out for themselves that it was a mistake to assume with Origen that the meanings relevant to the world mediated by meaning were ideas, the contents of acts of understanding, and so to arrive at the conclusion that the Father was goodness itself and divinity itself while the Son was good and divine only by participation. At Nicea and in the numerous subsequent synods and decrees that kept multiplying as long as Constantius was emperor, ~~however~~ there did emerge in some implicit fashion that the reality of the world mediated by meaning was known not by experience alone, not by ideas alone or in conjunction with experience, but by true judgements and beliefs. For that became the presupposition not only of their preaching and teaching but also of their deliberations, their decrees, and their anathemas. They wrote, explained, defended, impugned; they invented distinctions and used technical terms; they laid the foundations for the medieval endeavor in systematic thinking. In brief, they employed the criteria relevant to the world mediated by meaning, but they did not thematize the fact they were doing so.

Such, I conceive, were the origins of Christian realism. Implicit from the beginning in preaching and teaching, through mistakes and the correction of mistakes the implication gradually took shape in modes of procedure ever more elaborate and ever more refined in a long series of crises, debates, deliberations, decisions.