

CHRISTOLOGY TODAY :  
METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

Bernard Lonergan

Jesus of Nazareth, known as a man, confessed as Son of God, Christ, Lord, Savior, has been the focus and the basis of Christian faith from its origins down to the present time. But as Claude Geffré has put it, we are living in a new age of theology.<sup>1</sup> If our faith has been ever the same, still it has also regularly put forth different expressions to meet the exigences of different times. A new age of theology brings with it new expressions no less in christology than in other areas of belief. It is with what is new in christology that my methodological reflections will be concerned.

In an age of novelty method has a twofold function. It can select and define what was inadequate in former procedures and, at the same time, indicate the better procedures that have become available. But it may have also have to discern the exaggerations or deficiencies to which the new age itself is exposed. Indeed, inasmuch as theological development is dialectical, contemporary risks and dangers are apt to provide, if not the highest motive, at least the most efficacious incentive towards a renewal of theological method.

It is with such an incentive in mind that occasionally throughout this paper I shall refer to Piet Schoonenberg who in 1969 published a book that originally appeared in Dutch, that immediately was translated into German, that two years later came out in English and, after a further lapse of two years, was issued in French.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Claude Geffré, *Un nouvel âge de la théologie*, Paris, Cerf 1972.

<sup>2</sup>Piet Schoonenberg, *Wij is een God van Mensen*, 's-Hertogenbosch: Malmberg, 1969; *Ein Gott der Menschen*, Zürich/Einsiedeln/Köln, Benziger 1969; *The Christ*, New York, Herder and Herder 1971; *Il est le Dieu des hommes*, Paris, Cerf 1973.

B. LONERGAN

It was in between the English and the French translations on February 21, 1972, that the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith decided to oppose certain recent errors and issued an explicit reaffirmation of the doctrines of the council of Chalcedon and of the third council of Constantinople.<sup>3</sup> Nor would it be altogether rash to surmise whose errors the Congregation had in mind, for Fr Schoonenberg had favored replacing the doctrinal pattern of these councils with "...that of God's complete presence in the human person Jesus Christ with his own human will and actions."<sup>4</sup>

More in sympathy with Fr Schoonenberg than with the Roman Congregation Klaus Reinhardt in the *Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift* for May/June 1973 published an extensively documented article. In it he contrasted the old christology, which believed Jesus Christ to be the Son of God made man, with an incipient new christology, which thought of Jesus more simply as the true, the exemplary, the new man.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, in the same month in *Orientierung* Fr Schoonenberg adumbrated the contents of a book on which he was working by enumerating thirty-six propositions. One is led to expect a tome that will try to do away with the trinitarian and christological doctrine that has been taught by the church for over fifteen hundred years.<sup>6</sup>

My purpose however is not controversial and negative but positive and didactic. I shall be concerned with seven related topics. Three regard prolegomena in psychology, history, philosophy. Two more deal with christological method in its religious and its theological aspects. A sixth deals with the meaning of Chalcedon, and the seventh will try to meet the main issue, namely, Can one be truly a man without being a human person? It is an issue that is all the more grave now that we have set Scholasticism aside without as yet putting in its place any commonly accepted doctrine.

<sup>3</sup> AAS 64 (1972), pp. 237-241.

<sup>4</sup> *The Christ*, p. 136; *Ein Gott*, p. 146. I had best note that the concern of this paper is not with Fr Schoonenberg as world-famous catechist but simply and solely with Fr Schoonenberg as theologian. In catechetics, and more generally in communications (see my *Method in Theology*, chapter 14) the rule is pluralism, for one has to express the Christian message in the language and style appropriate to a given class of people in a given culture. Still such pluralism does not imply that there are many, diverse Christian messages; and it is the task of the theologian to ascertain just what is the one message that the many communicators present to the many different audiences.

<sup>5</sup> Klaus Reinhardt, "Die Einzigartigkeit der Person Jesu Christi," *Internationale Kath. Zeitschr.* 3 (1973), pp. 206-224; "In What Way is Jesus Christ Unique," *International Catholic Review*, 3 (1973), pp. 131-142.

<sup>6</sup> Piet Schoonenberg, "Trinität - Der Vollendete Bund: Thesen zur Lehre vom dreipersönlichen Gott," *Orientierung* 37 (1973), pp. 115-117.

## CHRISTOLOGY TODAY: METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

### I - THE FIRST PROLEGOMENON: Psychology

Scholastic psychology was a metaphysical psychology. It was a doctrine of the essence of the soul, of its potencies, of their informing habits and acts, and of the objects of the acts. So little did consciousness enter into this psychology that Aristotle treated in the same work the psychology of men, of animals, and of plants.

Traditionally it has been this psychology that has underpinned theological accounts of the person of Christ, of his human perfections, and of the grace given all men but superabundantly to him.

The basically metaphysical approach in this traditional psychology and theology stems from the Aristotelian view that other sciences were subalternate to metaphysics, that the basic terms and principles of metaphysics held *mutatis mutandis* for all beings, and consequently that these terms and laws formed the nucleus around which particular sciences constructed their further determinations.

There is no need on the present occasion to discuss the validity of Aristotelian architectonics. Suffice to say that, if the contemporary challenge to traditional christology is to be met, then one must go beyond a metaphysical view of the person, a metaphysical account of human perfection, a metaphysical account of the life of grace. One must do so, for the essence of the challenge is an assumption:

- 1) that a person is the psychological subject of interpersonal relations,
- 2) that human development is entry into a symbolic world, a world mediated by meaning,
- 3) that one cannot be truly a human being without being a human person.

By such "going beyond" I mean not a rejection of metaphysics but its inclusion within the dynamic unity of a foundational methodology. Within that unity all cognitional procedures would be recognized, each would retain its proper autonomy, and all would be related within the critical architectonic of transcendental method. And the term, transcendental, would refer not only to objects (one, true, real, good) and not only to the *a priori* of the subject but to both together, to the *a priori* of the subjects' questions and to the range of objects disclosed in answers.<sup>7</sup>

Now when psychology is conceived not as subalternate to metaphysics but as a science in its own right, then it proceeds from the data of cons-

---

<sup>7</sup>Basic presentation in Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, London and New York 1957; *Method in Theology*, London and New York 1972; the transition from Aquinas in *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, Notre Dame 1967 and London 1968; *Grace and Freedom*, London and New York 1971.

B. LONERGAN

**sciousness.** Its basic terms name conscious operations. Its basic relations name conscious processes. Its account of truly human development is of conscious subjects moving cumulatively through their operations to the self-transcendence of truth and love.

On this view of human development ordinary advance is from below upwards. It is from experiencing through inquiry to understanding; from intelligent formulations through reflection to judgement; from apprehended reality through deliberation to evaluation, decision, action.

Still the ordinary process is not the exclusive process. Man's <sup>in-</sup>sertion in community and history includes an invitation for him to accept the transformation of falling in love: the transformation of domestic love between husband and wife; the transformation of human love for one's neighbor; the transformation of divine love that comes when God's love floods our inmost heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us (*Rom 5,5*).

Such transforming love has its occasions, its conditions, its causes. But once it comes and as long as it lasts, it takes over. One no longer is one's own. Moreover, in the measure that this transformation is effective, development becomes not merely from below upwards but more fundamentally from above downwards. There has begun a life in which the heart has reasons which reason does not know. There has been opened up a new world in which the old adage, *nihil amatum nisi prius cognitum*, yields to a new truth, *nihil vere cognitum nisi prius amatum*.

It was such transforming love that enabled Paul to say: "...the life I now live is not my life, but the life which Christ lives in me" (*Gal 2, 20*). It is on the analogy of such transforming love that perhaps we can gain some imperfect understanding of the mystery that the life lived by Jesus of Nazareth really was the fully human life of the second person of the Blessed Trinity.

## II - THE SECOND PROLEGOMENON: Philosophy

Contemporary Catholic theology deprecates any intrusion from philosophy. The result inevitably is, not no philosophy, but unconscious philosophy, and only too easily bad philosophy.

So Fr Schoonenberg explains that he contends for a christology of presence.<sup>6</sup> Very plausibly this makes for a pastoral christology, for everyone knows what is meant by presence, but only philosophers talk about being. Still before we go along with Fr Schoonenberg's ~~rejection~~ of Chalcedon and of the third council of Constantinople, it may be well for us to pause for an instant in an effort to grasp just what one means by presence. Quickly one finds more than one meaning.

<sup>6</sup>*The Christ*, p. 93; *Ein Gott*, p. 98. See my "The Dehellenization of Dogma," *Theol. Stud.*, 28 (1967), pp. 336-351, reprinted in Bernard Lonergan, *A Second Collection*, London 1974 and Philadelphia 1975.

CHRISTOLOGY TODAY: METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

For all of us have lived from infancy in a world of immediacy, a world of sights and sounds, of tastes and smells, of touching and feeling, of joys and sorrows. It was from within that world (as described by Jean Piaget) that we first developed operationally by assimilating new objects to objects already dealt with, by adjusting old operations to new occasions, by combining differentiated operations into groups, and by grouping groups in an ascending hierarchy.

But also within that operational development we came to listen, endeavored to repeat, managed to understand, began to speak, to converse, to learn from others. Thereby we gradually moved out of our original world of immediacy into a world mediated by meaning. It was quite a new world that included the past and the future as well as the present, the possible and probable as well as the actual, rights and duties as well as facts. It was an incredibly rich and varied world, and it was extended by literature and history, by philosophy and science, by religion and theology.

Not only do the two worlds differ vastly in their content. They differ no less in their cognitional procedures and in the criteria governing valid procedure. The world of immediacy is a world of data, of what is given to sense and given to consciousness. It is a world as yet without names or concepts, without truth or falsity, without right or wrong. Its criteria lie quite simply in the presence of absence of successful functioning.

In contrast the world mediated by meaning goes beyond experiencing through inquiry to ever fuller understanding, beyond mere understanding through reflection to truth and reality, beyond mere knowing through deliberation to evaluated and freely chosen courses of action. Now mere experiencing has to be enhanced by deliberate attention. Chance insights have to submit to the discipline of the schoolroom and to the prescriptions of method. Sound judgement has to release us from the seduction of myth and magic, alchemy and astrology, legend and folk-tale; and it has to move us to the comprehensive reasonableness named wisdom. Most of all we have to enter the existential sphere, where consciousness becomes conscience, where the cognitional yields to the moral and the moral to the religious, where we discern between right and wrong and head for holiness or sin.

No one is simply ignorant of these two worlds, of their different procedures, of the differences between their respective criteria. But commonly this advertence is not thematic; it is only lived. As the Scholastics put it, men possess it not *signate* but only *exercita*. And because the possession is only latent and implicit, confusions easily arise. Besides the presence of parents to their infant child, there also is the presence of the parents to one another. No one would fail to notice the difference between these two instances of presence. But when a theologian gets along with a minimal philosophy, he can tell us without further ado that he argues for a christology of presence. When the absence of philosophy is taken as proof of sincere pastoral concern, many will be entranced by his proposal.

But the fact is that the presence of Christ to us is not presence in the world of immediacy: "Happy are they who never say me and yet have found faith" (Jn 20,29). The fact is that divine revelation comes to us through the mediation of meaning. It comes through meaning transmitted by tradition, meaning translated from ancient to modern tongues, meaning here clarified

d/decav..

8/En-

r/or

possess

w/saw

and there distorted by human understanding, meaning reaffirmed and crystallized in cognas, meaning ever coming to life in God's grace and God's love.

So little can Fr Schoonenberg get away from the mediation of meaning that the first ten of his thirty-six propositions published in *Opuscula* lay down laws for theological thought and expression. We are told that we can proceed from this world up to God but not in the opposite direction. We can learn about the trinity from revelation, but we are not to begin from the trinity and proceed to think about Christ. In brief theological thought is to observe the traffic laws of a one-way street and, it is claimed, by such obedience trinitarian doctrine will become concrete, related to human life, and relevant to preaching.<sup>9</sup>

But this claim, I feel, would be more attractive if it were not involved in vast over-simplifications. However much the one-way traffic law may suit a christology of presence, it runs counter to the structure and procedures of the world mediated by meaning. Human development more commonly is from below upwards but more importantly, as we have urged, it is from above downwards. Logic would have us argue from the *causa essendi* no less than from the *causa cognoscendi*, from the sphericity of the moon to its phases as well as from the phases to the moon's sphericity. In a contemporary transcendental method one clarifies the subject from objects and one clarifies the objects from the operations by which they are known. In each of the empirical sciences one proceeds not only from the data of observation and experiment to the formulation of laws, but also from the ranges of theoretical possibility explored by mathematicians to physical systems that include empirical laws as particular cases. In theology, finally, one proceeds not only from the data of revelation to more comprehensive statements but also from an imperfect, analogous yet most fruitful understanding of mystery to the syntheses that complement a *via inventionis* with a *via doctrinae*.<sup>10</sup>

### III - THE THIRD PROLEGOMENON: History

There is the history that is written and the history that is written about. Today the history that is written is the work of an ongoing community of professional specialists, developing their proper skills and techniques, setting their own standards, and making their standards effective through a long and exacting apprenticeship of graduate studies. History in this contemporary sense largely was the creation of the nineteenth century, and its acceptance in the Catholic church has occurred only slowly and

<sup>9</sup>"Diese Begrenzung macht die Trinitätslehre konkret, auf die Menschen bezogen und für die Verkündigung dienstbar." *Op. cit.*, p. 115, thesis 9.

<sup>10</sup>Aquinas composed his *Summa theologiae* in the *via doctrinae*, see the *Prologus*. It corresponds to the functional specialty, *Systematics*, of my *Method in Theology*. The *via inventionis* would cover the first four or perhaps five previous specialties.

## CHRISTOLOGY TODAY: METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

gradually in the present century. It found its way first into church history, then into patristic and medieval studies, and finally in recent decades into biblical studies.

Where earlier history was a matter of believing testimony, contemporary history is a matter of understanding evidence. Any relic or trace of the past may be evidence, but what it might be evidence for emerges only from the accumulated expertise of the history-writing community, and what it actually does establish results only from a consensus based on investigations that have been carried out by competent researchers and submitted to the scrutiny of competent reviewers.

This contrast between precritical belief in testimony and critical understanding of evidence is of the greatest theological significance. When the New Testament is viewed as testimony to be believed because it is credible, then the greatest emphasis will be placed on the words of Jesus Christ himself, for they are supremely credible, while a fundamentalist adherence will spread indiscriminately over every aspect of every word and sentence because all are divinely inspired. Then the theologian has only to open his bible to find convincing proof for whatever preconceived ideas he may happen to entertain. But when the New Testament is viewed as evidence, then one need hardly believe what the synoptic gospels affirm if one is concerned to differentiate stylistic features, discern successive strata, and compose a history of the synoptic tradition. Then what Jesus really said and did belongs to a stratum still earlier than any to be verified in the successive contributions to the synoptic tradition, and the Jesus of history becomes either Bultmann's itinerant rabbi who eventually was crucified or, more recently, the hopefully fuller figure that is the objective of the new quest of the historical Jesus.

In the light of this shift from history as belief to history as science, one is to find in the New Testament in the first instance evidence on the language and the beliefs that were current in the territory and at the time of the writing and diffusion of the various books that make up the New Testament. At a second instance evidence is provided for earlier times and places in so far as earlier strata may be found in later writing and their provenance may be established. In a third instance what antedates established strata and origins is a matter not so much for historical science as for historical inference.

From a theological viewpoint this means that scripture as inspired is mainly evidence on the faith of the early church. In the first instance it reveals what was believed at the time a given book was written, diffused, accepted. At a second instance it reveals what was believed at the time and place of earlier strata found in later writings. At a third instance it provides premisses for inferences on still earlier knowledge or belief.

So at the present time, according to Fr Raymond Brown, New Testament scholars that may be named moderate conservatives distinguish between an implicit and an explicit christology in the Jesus of history. An implicit christology does not attribute to Jesus himself any of the titles the New Testament ascribes to him but does find christological doctrine implicit in his preaching the kingdom of God and in the authority and power he displayed. An explicit christology would attribute to Jesus himself some of his New Testament titles and these the less significant ones. Between these two

B. LONERGAN

views Fr Brown expects moderate conservatives to be divided for the rest of this century.<sup>11</sup>

To specific implications of scholarly history for christological thought we shall presently return. But it has a presupposition to which we may advert at once. Medieval and later theology conceived the psychology of Christ as man not merely in ontological terms but also on the basis of the perfections that on a priori grounds were considered befitting a divine person. Today we have to attend more to the words of scripture (John 4,15) as cited by the council of Chalcedon (DS 301): "similar to us in all things save sin." If we are to think of Jesus as truly a man, we have to think of him as a historical being, as growing in wisdom, age, and grace in a determinate social and cultural milieu, as developing from below as other human beings and from above on the analogy of religious development.

#### IV - CHRISTOLOGY: A Religious Question

The extension of modern historical methods into the biblical field constrains theologians to drop some of their former procedures and to develop new ones. Such is a basic feature of the problem of method in contemporary theology. Concretely it means that theologians may not just read a passage of scripture and at once discover in it the verification of traditional ideas. More gravely it means that the interpretation of scripture is not a static pool of information but a moving stream of cumulative and progressive investigation. The problem of method, then, is to find the approach that can select what is valid in current views without becoming involved in positions open to radical change. Some delineation of that approach, as it concerns christology, I must now attempt.

A first step is a simple reflection that embraces in their complementarity *both* man as attentive, as intelligent, as reasonable, as responsible *and* the human world as given and as structured by intelligence, by reasonable judgement, by decision and action. In this first step there is merely recalled what I may refer to as a post-Kantian transcendental method.

The second step notes that while all fully human behavior involves attention, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility, still different inquiries have different emphases and so different goals and different presuppositions. So it is that the textual critic, the exegete, and the historian proceed from the same data to quite different conclusions. So too it is that historians may start from the same data to reach three quite different types of historical affirmation or negation. There is the goal of history conceived by von Ranke as ascertaining the facts, telling how it really happened, *wie es eigentlich gewesen*. There is the goal of history conceived by Lord Acton as passing moral judgement on the deeds of societies and their leaders. There is the goal of religious history, of *Heilsgeschichte*,

<sup>11</sup> Raymond E. Brown, "Who do men say that I am? Modern Scholarship on Gospel Christology," *Horizons*, 1 (1974), pp. 47 ff.

## CHRISTOLOGY TODAY: METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

that would discern in facts and moral actions what pertained to the salvation of mankind.

t/at  
d/  
did

I have distinguished five different genera of inquiry. All five can be applied to the New Testament. The textual critic can specialize in the manuscript tradition. The exegete can master all related literatures and bring them to bear on an understanding of this or that section of the text. The factual historian can assemble the factual statements in the New Testament, submit them to his critical scrutiny, and seek to fit them in the context of other known contemporary events. The ethically oriented historian can compare the moral attitudes of New Testament personages with those of other human communities or he can subsume them under some moral code to praise them or blame them. But while all of these approaches have their significance and value, none of them deals with what manifestly is the principal concern of the New Testament. For first and last, the New Testament is a book with a message; the message is presented in a great variety of manners, in narratives and parables, in precepts and counsels, in exhortations and warnings. The message is depicted as emanating from the man, Jesus, who suffered, died, was quickened from the dead, and now sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven. The message announces the imminent coming of the kingdom of God, and, as it challenged Jew and Greek two millennia ago, so too today it challenges us with a last word about last things. As Saul on the way to Damascus heard a voice saying: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"<sup>12</sup> so each of us is to hear from the same voice either of two verdicts. That verdict may be: "...anything you did for one of my brothers here, however humble, you did for me." But again it may be: "...anything you did not do for one of these, however humble, you did not do for me."<sup>13</sup>

Our third step continues the second. We began from the exigence of a post-Kantian transcendental method that attends not just to the object, not just to the subject, but to each in itself and in its dependence on the other. We proceeded from that generality to the currently common view that the New Testament pertains to the genus, *Heilsgeschichte*, that it centers on a *kerygma* addressed to *Existenz*. We have now to note that the message is at once simple, radical, and intensely personal, that it stands in correlation with the response it elicits, that in that response there emerges the message as message-for-us.

The message then is simple, as simple as the "Follow me" addressed to Simon and Andrew, to James and John, to Levi the publican.<sup>14</sup> It is as radical as the counsel to leave father and mother and all one possesses, to renounce wealth and honors, to put up with every indignity, day after day to take up one's cross.<sup>15</sup> Simple and radical, the message is intensely personal. It is "Follow me," "for my sake and for the Gospel," "for the sake of my name,"

<sup>12</sup> Acts 9,4.

<sup>13</sup> Mt 25,40.45.

<sup>14</sup> Mk 1,17.20; 2,14; Mt 4,19.22; 9,9; Lk 5,11.27.

<sup>15</sup> Mk 10,17-31; Mt 19,16-30; 10,34-39; 8,20.22; Lk 18,18-30; 14,25-33.

4/God

"for the sake of the kingdom of God,"<sup>16</sup> that is, for the kingdom for which Jesus himself lived and died.

To such a message the essential answer is action. The critical issue is not just the data, not just their interpretation, not just the question of fact, but deliberation, decision, deed. So the relevant answer is action as recounted in the acts of the apostles, in their joy in being found worthy to "...suffer indignity for the sake of the Name."<sup>17</sup> It is action as in the journeys and preaching, the stripes and prisons, as well as the letters of St. Paul.

Answer by action begets further answering action. It comes in the words of those touched by Peter's first sermon, "Friends, what are we to do?"<sup>18</sup> as earlier it had come, according to John, in Peter's own words, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Your words are words of eternal life."<sup>19</sup> It comes, as Heinrich Schlier has effectively set forth, with acclamations acknowledging Jesus as Lord, with confessions that God has quickened him from the dead, with gradually developing and expanding formulas of belief.<sup>20</sup> Finally, as Franz Mussner has added, it was to provide a context for such acclamations, such confessions, such formulas, to clarify their meaning and preclude misinterpretations, that memories of Jesus' earthly ministry were recalled and gospels were written.<sup>21</sup>

Such, then, is our third step, and plainly it leads to a fourth. The third step placed the New Testament in the genre of salvation history, and it placed our response to it on the existential level of confrontation, deliberation, evaluation, decision, deed. But the New Testament not only is a religious document calling for religious living; it also is a personal invitation and the appropriate response to it is a personal commitment. So inevitably there arises the question, Who is this Jesus? It is the question asked by the storm-tossed disciples when the winds and seas obeyed him.<sup>22</sup> It is the question he himself raised at Caesarea Philippi.<sup>23</sup> It is the question recurrent in the gospel of John, when Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well,<sup>24</sup> when the Jews questioned the man cured at the

<sup>16</sup>Mk 10,29; Mt 19,29; Lk 18,29.

<sup>17</sup>Acts 4,41.

<sup>18</sup>Acts 2,37.

<sup>19</sup>Jn 6,68.

<sup>20</sup>Heinrich Schlier, "Die Anfänge des christologischen Credo," in *Zur Frühgeschichte der Christologie*, hrsg. v. Bernhard Welte, *Quaestiones disputatae* 51, Freiburg, Herder 1970, pp. 13-58.

<sup>21</sup>Franz Mussner, "Christologische Homologese und evangelische Vita Jesu," *ibid.*, pp. 59-73.

<sup>22</sup>Mk 4,41.

<sup>23</sup>Mk 8,27.

<sup>24</sup>Jn 4,10.

Bernhard

t/Vita

## CHRISTOLOGY TODAY: METHODOLOGICAL REFLEXIONS

Sneep-pool in Jerusalem,<sup>25</sup> when Jesus contrasted those that belong to the world below with those belonging to the world above,<sup>26</sup> when Jesus revealed himself to the man born blind,<sup>27</sup> what the people asked who is this son of man that is to be lifted up.<sup>28</sup>

### V - CHRISTOLOGY: The Theological Question

As a religious and personal question, the question of christology antedates New Testament times. But in our time it also is a theological question, and it has to deal with certain prior issues. There is the contrast between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. There is the suggested option between a functional and an ontological christology. There is the problem of uniting the concern of the inquiring subject with the objective wealth of scriptural scholarship. On each of these topics some things must be said. stet

The contrast between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith may be approached from the distinction already drawn of three kinds of historical writing, namely, writing that deals mainly:

- 1) with questions of fact, or
- 2) with moral issues, or
- 3) with matters pertaining to salvation.

Now different writing supposes difference in competence. A historian trained to deal with questions of fact also is competent to deal with factual issues that serve to introduce matters pertaining to the second and third style of historical writing. But this does not necessarily imply that he will possess the moral sensibility or the religious concern that will fit him for an open and adequate treatment of matters proper to these further fields. In brief, he can treat certain aspects of the Jesus of history, but he may be unequal to discerning the Christ of faith or to determining the factual presuppositions of the Christ of faith.

Similarly, a religious person will readily discern the Christ of faith but, unless he has been trained in the techniques of scientific history, he will be prone to a fundamentalist interpretation of the New Testament. For him any question of the Jesus of history, as understood by scientific history, will be a matter not of science but of unbelief and infidelity. None the less, there are not only possible but also actually existing

<sup>25</sup> Jn 5,12.

<sup>26</sup> Jn 8,25.

<sup>27</sup> Jn 9,26.

<sup>28</sup> Jn 12,34.

B. LOWERGAN . . .

d/evolved

religious persons, committed to the Christ of faith, yet also fully cognizant of the nature and procedures of scientific history. They are aware that the New Testament was written by men of faith and addressed to men of faith; they are aware that the authors of the books in the New Testament expressed themselves far more in the vocabulary of their own later day than in the less evolved vocabulary possible in the time of the Jesus of history. And so they not only present the Christ of faith but also join in the new quest for the historical Jesus.<sup>29</sup>

For the secularist, then, the Jesus of history easily becomes a shadow figure, since so much in the New Testament only excites his incredulity. For the fundamentalist, on the other hand, the Christ of faith is so sufficient that efforts to reconstruct the thought and language of the Jesus of history are regarded as mistaken and superfluous. But this radical opposition tends to vanish when:

- 1) religious people correct their precritical views of history and;
- 2) learned people come to recognize in the New Testament contemporary and so first-hand evidence on the beliefs of the early church.

It is in this coincidence that there is to be found the clue to christological method. This we have characterized as selecting what is valid in current views without becoming involved in positions open to radical change. Now what is open to radical change, is the incipient and still tentative reconstruction of the thought and language of the Jesus of history. What can be valid in current views is based on the contemporary and so first-hand evidence we possess on the beliefs of the early church. By discerning Christian tradition in that evidence, by coming to grasp its immanent structure and intelligibility, by leaving open the questions still to be settled by the reconstruction of the Jesus of history, the theologian, I submit, will find a first and basic component in a methodically developing christology.

A second determination of christological method comes from asking whether New Testament christology is ontological or functional. Our answer will be that it is neither merely functional nor yet strictly ontological.

A merely functional christology acknowledges no more than a series of religious events. There is factual evidence that people in New Testament and later times believed Jesus to have risen from the dead. Such acts of believing are historically established. They constitute the set of events referred to as christology.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Karl Kertelge, *Rückfrage nach Jesus, Quaestiones disputatae* 63, Freiburg, Herder 1974. For general background, cf. Reginald Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology*, New York, Scribner's, 1965.

<sup>30</sup> See Josef Ernst, "Personale oder funktionale Christologie," *Münchener theologische Zeitschrift*, 23 (1972), pp. 217-240.

## CHRISTOLOGY TODAY: METHODOLOGICAL REFLEXIONS

Now this is all true enough but it ignores the notion of salvation history. It is not a factual history of acts of believing. It is history of what happened on the evidence believers discern in the light of faith. But there was no question for the New Testament writers that the Jesus who was condemned and crucified, who died and was buried, also rose from the dead. One may agree with them or one may disagree; but if one disagrees, one will not attempt Christian salvation history; one will limit oneself to factual history.<sup>31</sup>

At the same time New Testament christology is not strictly ontological. It purports to deal with persons that really existed and with events that really occurred. But it does not go into the hermeneutics of its message and, least of all, does it go into that recondite department of hermeneutics that involves one in cognitional theory, epistemology, and metaphysics.

A third determination of christological method is reached from a consideration of its heuristic structure. But let me begin by an example. Down the ages there have been accepted quite different views on the nature of fire. For Aristotelians it was one of the four elements. For chemists prior to Lavoisier it was attributed to phlogiston. Subsequently to Lavoisier it has been explained as a process of oxydization. The answers differed greatly from one another, but none the less they were answers to the same question. What then was that question?

It involved two elements. There were on the side of the object the data on fire, the sensible flames, their sensible effects. But there also was on the side of the subject inquiring intelligence:

- 1) wanting to know what would be known when the data were understood,
- 2) entertaining answers as long as they seemed to cover all the data, and
- 3) rejecting answers that eventually were found wanting and entertaining different answers that subsequently seemed to cover all the data.

A heuristic structure, then, is a conjunction both of data on the side of the object and of an operative criterion on the side of the subject. Accordingly, a christological heuristic structure will be a similar conjunction giving rise to the succession of christologies set forth in New Testament writings and further developed in the formulations of individuals and of communities down the ages. On the side of the data one discerns three points:

<sup>31</sup> Note however Alan Richardson, *History Sacred and Profane*, London SCM, 1964, chapter six, where the argument for the resurrection of Christ is basically an extrapolation from factual history.

- 1) that Jesus is named *time* and again from different viewpoints and in different contexts the Son of God;<sup>32</sup>
- 2) that we through faith are sons of God and by baptism are one in Christ (*Gal* 3,26-28), that God sent his only Son that we might acquire the status of sons as is proved to us by the sending of the Spirit of Christ crying in our hearts "Abba! Father!" (*Gal* 4,3-7; *Rom* 8,14-17); and
- 3) that the Spirit we have received from God knows all and has been given us that we may know all that God of his own grace gives us (*1 Cor* 2,10-16; *Jn*: 14,16. 17.26).

In correspondence with such data there arises in the Christian subject his or her heuristic structure. In many contexts and from many viewpoints Jesus was named the Son of God, and that gives rise to the multiple question: How are we in our own minds to understand Jesus as Son of God? Are we to suppose it is a mythic or merely honorific title such as was given to kings? Or does it simply denote the mission of the Messiah? Or does it point to an inner reality such as is our own divine sonship through Christ and in the Spirit, so that as God in us is the Spirit, so God in Jesus is the Word? Or does the sonship of Jesus mean, as the Church for centuries has understood it, that Jesus was truly a man leading a truly human life but his identity was the identity of the eternal Son of God consubstantial with the Father?

The heuristic structure then presents a multiple question. Still there is not only question but also criterion. Our own experience of our own sonship provides a first criterion, for if the Spirit in us is God, surely God was in Jesus too. Further the Spirit of God in us enables us to discern what the spirit of the world cannot discern. It is in the progressive clarification of Christian experience and in the continuous exercise of spiritual discernment in the Christian community that christological doctrine developed.

For christologies have been many. They have conformed to the diverse strata represented in New Testament writing. They endeavored to meet the needs of Gentiles that had reached a philosophic monotheism. They reacted against Gnostics and Marcionites by defending the Old Testament's creator God and by allegorizing anthropomorphic accounts of his doings. They suffered from involvement in the world-of-immediacy of Stoic naivete and in the seductive half-way house of Middle Platonism. For over fifteen centuries they found a static equilibrium in the definitions of Nicea, Ephesus, Chalcedon, and the third council of Constantinople. But in our time of hermeneutics and history, of psychology and critical philosophy, there is

<sup>32</sup> See the series of articles on "Jesus Christus - Gottessohn" in *Theologische Quartalschrift*, 154 (1974), pp. 203-278. On the successive meanings of Son of God in the New Testament, see Fuller referred to above, note 29.

## CHRISTOLOGY TODAY: METHODOLOGICAL REFLEXIONS

an exigence for further development. There are windows to be opened and fresh air to be let in. It will not, I am convinced, dissolve the solid achievement of the past. It will, I hope, put that achievement on a securer base and enrich it with a fuller content.

### VI - THE MEANING OF CHALCEDON

The meaning of Chalcedon is not obscure. It teaches, in its opening paragraph, one and the same Son our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and the same perfect in humanity: truly God and the same truly man...: consubstantial with the Father according to his divinity, and the same consubstantial with us according to his humanity,...: before all ages begotten of the Father according to his divinity, and in the last days, for our sake and for our salvation, the same according to his humanity born of the virgin Mary mother of God (DS 301).

e/true

It remains that the clarity of Chalcedon has an essential condition, for it can be clear only if it has a meaning, and it can have a meaning only if dogmas have a meaning. But today there is no lack of people that consider dogmas meaningless. In principle they reject all dogmas from Nicea and the rest of the Greek councils through the medieval councils to Trent and the Vatican. Others would distinguish: the dogmas represent a thought form that in its day was meaningful; but now that day is over. Such perhaps is the opinion of Bernhard Welte who has associated with Nicea the beginning of a type of metaphysics that conforms to the aberration denounced by Heidegger as a forgetfulness of being.<sup>33</sup> Others finally do not seem to advert to the very notion of dogma, to the notion that propositions can be true or false and as true or false refer or do not refer to reality.

<sup>33</sup> Bernhard Welte, "Die Lehrformel von Nikaia und die abendländische Metaphysik," *Zur Frühgeschichte der Christologie, Quaestiones disputatae* 51, Freiburg, Herder 1970, pp. 100-117. Far more substantial is the preceding paper by Friedo Ricken, "Das Homousios von Nikaia als Krisis des altchristlichen Platonismus," *ibid.*, pp. 74-99. I should say that there is, not explicit systematic thought, but an implicit dialectic in antenicene and Nicene theology. Without being technically Stoics the apologists were involved in Stoic naivete, much as Fr Schoonenberg is involved in the world of immediacy. To correct this naivete Origen turned to middle Platonism and reached a thorough-going trinitarian subordinationism. Nicea took its stand on preaching the word of God, and its homousios meant, as Athanasius put it: "What is true of the Father, also is true of the Son, except that the Son is not Father" (*Orat.*, 3 c. Ar., 4; MG 26, 329). The formula became liturgical in the Roman Preface for Trinity Sunday: "Quod enim de tua gloria, revelante te, credimus, hoc de Filio tuo, hoc de Spiritu sancto sine differentia discretionis sentimus." See my *De Deo Trino*, I, pp. 40-112, (Rome 1964).

B. LONERGAN

Fr Schoonenberg seems to belong to this last group. He discusses not the dogma of Chalcedon but what in the English translation is called the pattern of Chalcedon and in the German *das Modell*.<sup>34</sup>

Now I have no doubt of the significance of patterns or models or schemas in exegetical and historical study. They serve admirably to direct attention to resemblances and to bring together texts that share a common feature despite differences of expression and of context. So in patristic study Aloys Grillmeier made excellent use of the patterns, God-Man and *Logos-Sans*. So in New Testament studies one can classify christologies by the perspective they represent: there are texts that begin from Jesus' earthly ministry and look forward to his passion, death, and resurrection or to his future coming; there are texts that begin with the now risen Lord seated at the right hand of the Father; there are texts that begin from heavenly origins, recount his earthly mission, and terminate with his reign from heaven.

However, the significance of patterns is no more than preliminary. Further evidence is needed before one can conclude that different patterns mean more than different occasions or different contexts. When more is established, one still has to ask whether there is being corrected a defect in language, or in conception, or in understanding; and if the defect is in understanding, then whether it was the nature of man that was misunderstood, or some revealed teaching that was overlooked, or adherence to Christ that was at fault.

So from the nature of the case a discussion of patterns has to face deeper issues. The deeper issue at Chalcedon is that its decree is dogmatic and that its pattern results from earlier dogmatic decrees. It results from the affirmation of Nicea that the Son is consubstantial with the Father, that he is not made but begotten (DS 125). It results from the rejection by Nicea of those that claimed there was a time when the Son did not exist or that he did not exist before he was begotten (DS 126). It results from Ephesus<sup>35</sup> and from the *Formula unionis* on which Alexandrines and Antiochenes agreed in the spring of 433 that Jesus Christ the only Son of God was consubstantial with the Father according to his divinity and consubstantial with us according to his humanity (DS 272).

<sup>34</sup>In *The Christ*, pp. 50-66, are concerned with "The Chalcedonian Pattern and the Objections against it." On that basis Fr Schoonenberg proceeds to develop a hermeneutic that ensures a human person in Christ by bracketing God's eternal Son.

<sup>35</sup>The decisive session of Ephesus is found in E. Schwartz, *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum* (Berolini et Lipsiae 1914 ff.), rom. I, vol. I, pars 2, pp. 12-35. The condemnation of Nestorius resulted from the conformity of Cyril's letter with the decree of Nicea and the opposition of Nestorius' letter to the same decree. The letters are in *ACO* I, I, 1, pp. 25-28 and 29-32; also in *KG* 77, 44 ss. and 49 ss. From the letters it is clear that it is not classical christology but Nestorian christology that starts from two distinct natures and endeavors to join them in one individual. The contrary view was expressed by Klaus Reinhardt, *op. cit.*, (at note 5) on p. 210 in *IKZ* and p. 135 f. in *ICR*.

VII - PERSON TODAY

I do not believe that Fr Schoonenberg does justice to the dogmas of the church. I do not believe that he does justice to the very conditions of possibility of man's living in a world mediated by meaning. But I have no doubt that he raises an issue - very real in systematic theology and very urgent in pastoral theology - when he asks whether one can lead a truly human life without being a human person.

The dogmas in fact teach one person in two natures. All along they imply that the one person is divine, and in the third council of Constantinople - not to mention the second - this is explicitly affirmed (DS 554). If in earlier ages it was enough to adore the mystery, if from the medieval period some metaphysical account of person and nature were all that was sought, it remains that in our age of psychology and critical philosophy, of hermeneutics and history, something both different and more exacting is required. We have to be able to say what it means for a divine person to live a fully human life.

To this end I shall attempt to offer some explanation of the statement: the person of Christ is an identity that eternally is subject of divine consciousness and in time became subject of a human consciousness. I shall speak:

- 1) of identity,
- 2) of human consciousness,
- 3) of human subjectivity,
- 4) of divine subjectivity, and
- 5) of the compatibility of one identity with the two subjectivities.

By *identity* I understand the third of the three meanings of *one*. There is *one* in the sense of instance: a first instance is one; a second makes two; still another and there are three; and so on to infinity.

There next is one in the sense of intelligible unity. There are many phases of the moon, for its appearance changes night by night. But there is only one moon, for the many appearances have a single explanation: the moon is spherical.

Thirdly, there is one in the sense of one and the same. It is the one that presupposes the intelligible unity already mentioned but adds to it an application of the principles of identity and contradiction. So it is one in the sense of the old definition: *indivisum in se et divisum a quolibet alio*. Such is the "one and the same" of the Chalcedonian decree.

Next consciousness. Man's sensitive, intellectual, rational, and moral operations have two distinct but related characteristics. They are both intentional and conscious. In so far as they are intentional, they make objects present to us. In so far as they are conscious, they make us present to ourselves. However, if I have used the same word, present, twice, I also have used it in two different senses. Intentionality effects

B. LONERGAN

the presence of an object to the subject, of a spectacle to a spectator. Consciousness is a far subtler matter: it makes the spectator present to himself, not by putting him into the spectacle, not by making him an object, but while he is spectator and as subject.

For adult consciousness subject and object are already distinct. But the distinction is not primordial. For Aristotle coincidence preceded distinction: sense in act is the sensible in act; and intelligence in act is the intelligible in act. Today detailed cognitional theory complements this Aristotelian opinion by conceiving human knowledge as a process of objectification. More radically, educators and moralists have ever urged people to become their true selves, and their contention finds more than an echo in Jungian thought. It can depict a genesis of the *ego* under the guidance of the archetypes;<sup>36</sup> it views complexes on the analogy of the *ego* and so has an explanation of multiple personality;<sup>37</sup> it describes an individuation process from a life centered on the *ego* to a life centered on the self.<sup>38</sup> Here analytic psychology is complemented by social psychology, by personalist reflection, and by post-Hegelian and post-Marxist thought, which concur in teaching that one becomes a person in one's dealings with other persons.<sup>39</sup> Nor can theologians resist such various testimonies, since Jesus himself is credited with the saying: "...a grain of wheat remains a solitary grain unless it falls into the ground and dies; but if it dies it bears a rich harvest" (*Jn* 12,24).

In brief, we cannot conceive subject and object as fixed and immutable things. The world mediated by meaning is not just reality but reality as known, where the knowing is ever in process. The subject that mediates his world by meaning similarly is in a process of self-realization through self-transcendence. So in man we have to distinguish and verify all three meanings of *one*: a man is one as an instance of the human species; he is one as an intelligible unity in an ongoing process; finally, he is one as one and the same, as identity, as himself and nobody else. Further, as we distinguish three meanings of *one* in man, so too we need a distinction between subject and subjectivity. For man's self-realization is by self-transcendence. Without difference there is no self-transcendence. Without identity it is not one's own but some other self that is realized. So we shall reserve the term, subject, to denote the identity. We shall employ the term, subjectivity, to denote the intelligible unity that already is

<sup>36</sup> Erich Neumann, *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, Princeton, Bollingen Paperback 1970. Originally *Ursprungsgeschichte des Bewusstseins*, Zürich, Rascher 1949.

<sup>37</sup> Iolande Jacobi, *Complex / Archetype / Symbol in the Psychology of C.G. Jung*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959, pp. 6-19.

<sup>38</sup> Gerhard Adler, *The Living Symbol: A Case Study in the Process of Individuation*, New York, Pantheon 1961, (Bollingen 63).

<sup>39</sup> David Rasmussen, "Between Autonomy and Sociality," *Cultural Hermeneutics*, 1 (1973), pp. 3-25.

Iolande  
Kegan

teleologically: what it essentially is to become.<sup>40</sup>

We have treated three of our five topics: identity, human consciousness, and human subjectivity. Before going further, we may note that part of our objective has already been attained. For in a truly human life there is identity. I am no longer an infant, a child, a boy, a young man, but however great the differences in my truly human living, I am still the same I that I was from the beginning. Nor is this identity diminished by the fact that the differences are not confined to differences in abilities and skills and habits, that they involve the becoming and the stability of my *ego*, my personality, what I can call myself. For such differences regard not the identity of the subject but his subjectivity.<sup>41</sup> He remains himself though he truly transcends himself.

But we must now turn to the main component in the hypostatic union. Can one speak intelligibly of three distinct and conscious subjects of divine consciousness? I believe that one can, but to do so one must take the psychological analogy of the trinitarian processions seriously, one must be able to follow the reasoning from processions to relations and from relations to persons, and one has to think analogously of consciousness.

The psychological analogy, then, has its starting point in that higher synthesis of intellectual, rational, and moral consciousness that is the dynamic state of being in love. Such love manifests itself in its judgements of value. And the judgements are carried out in decisions that are acts of loving. Such is the analogy found in the creature.

Now in God the origin is the Father, in the New Testament named<sup>42</sup> who is identified with agape (1 Jn 4,8.16). Such love expresses itself in its Word, its Logos, its *verbum spirans amorem*,<sup>43</sup> which is a jud-

<sup>40</sup>As the moon is the intelligible unity in the four-dimensional manifold of positions and phases, so human subjectivity is the intelligible unity in the multi-dimensional manifold of the conscious events of a life-time.

<sup>41</sup>Those with a metaphysical bent may ask whether in one and the same identity there are or are not many subjectivities. The simplest answer is to revert to an earlier controversy. In one and the same man are there three substantial forms, one biological, a second sensitive, and the third intellectual? Or is there just one, which is intellectual, but capable of fulfilling the functions of the other two as well as its own? Now just as the councils (DS 902, 1440) affirm that the intellective soul is the one form of the body in man, so we acknowledge in one man only one subjectivity which, however, manifests itself in time and by degrees in accord with the norms of human development. In Christ, however, who is both divine and human, there is both a divine and a human subjectivity, though but a single identity, and a single human subjectivity.

<sup>42</sup>Karl Rahner, "Theos in the New Testament," *Theological Investigations*, I, pp. 79-148. London, Darton, Longman & Todd 1961.

<sup>43</sup>Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.*, Ia, q. 43, a. 5, ad 2m. *In I Sent.*, d. 27, q. 2, a. 1 sol.

Theos

& Longman  
& Todd

gement of value. The judgement of value is sincere, and so it grounds the Proceeding Love that is identified with the Holy Spirit.

There are then two processions that may be conceived in God: they are not unconscious processes but intellectually, rationally, morally conscious, as are judgements of value based on the evidence perceived by a lover, and the acts of loving grounded on judgements of value. The two processions ground four real relations of which three are really distinct from one another; and these three are not just relations as relations, and so modes of being,<sup>44</sup> but also subsistent,<sup>45</sup> and so not just paternity and filiation but also Father and Son. Finally, Father and Son and Spirit are eternal; their consciousness is not in time but timeless; their subjectivity is not becoming but ever itself; and each in his own distinct manner is subject of the infinite act that God is, the Father as originating love, the Son as judgement of value expressing that love, and the Spirit as originated loving.

Perhaps now we can begin to discern, however imperfectly, the possibility of a single divine identity being at once subject of divine consciousness and also subject of a human consciousness.

For though this implies that a man lived a truly human life without being a human person, still the paradox of this implication is removed by the distinction between identity and subjectivity. Though his identity was divine, still Jesus had a truly human subjectivity that grew in wisdom and age and grace before God and men (*Lk* 2,52) and that was similar to our own in all things save sin (*DS* 301). Nor is the timeless and unchanging subjectivity proper to the divine identity in conflict with the developing subjectivity of a human life. For as Chalcedon would put it, though the identity is without distinction or separation, still the subjectivities are without modification or confusion (*DS* 302).

Moreover, the human subjectivity of Christ conforms to the divine. For the eternal Word is Son, and it is that very Son that introduced into human language prayer to God not simply as Father but as a child's Father, as Abba; and as the Son as man prayed to Abba, so we in the Spirit of the Son also cry, Abba! Father! Again, as the eternal Word is the eternally true expression of the value that God as agape is, so the Word as man by obedience unto death again expressed that value by revealing how much God loved the world (*Jn* 3,16). Finally, in his resurrection and exaltation he beckons us to the splendour of the children of God for which up to now the whole created universe groans in all its parts as if in the pangs of childbirth (*Rom* 8,22). In that beckoning we discern not only the ground of our

---

<sup>44</sup> On the historical and systematic aspects of this see my *De Deo Trino*, I, 198 and II, 193 f.

<sup>45</sup> The three really distinct real relations in God are identical with the divine essence (*DS* 804) and so subsistent. Hence the real relation as relation is a mode of being; but the relation as subsistent is a person. Cf. *Sac. Theol.*, I, q. 33, a. 2, ad 1m. Fr Schoonenberg would have it that there are three modes of the divine being that in the economy of salvation are related to one another and to us as three persons. "Trinität," *Orientierung*, 37 (1973), p. 116, thesis 28.

## CHRISTOLOGY TODAY: METHODOLOGICAL REFLEXIONS

hope but also the cosmic dimension in the new creation of all things in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### VIII - CONCLUSION

To give an account of the meaning of person today, I have had to attempt what never can be more than some analogous and so imperfect understanding of the mysteries of the trinity and the incarnation (*ES* 3016). From the nature of the case, however, such high matters awaken perplexity as much as satisfaction. For this reason it will be well to conclude with a brief and clear-cut statement of the root difference between Fr Schoonenberg's position and my own.

grant

I would grant that Fr Schoonenberg began from impeccable premisses: Jesus was a man; Jesus was a person. From these premisses Fr Schoonenberg concluded that Jesus was a human person. So certain was he of this conclusion that he felt it could overrule any apparently conflicting doctrine, be it scriptural, traditional, or conciliar. Specifically he insisted: "What is said of the pre-existent divine person can never nullify this one and human person."<sup>46</sup> On this basis he proceeded to his mystifying exegesis of scripture, tradition, and the councils.

grant

While I grant Fr Schoonenberg's two premisses, I maintain that his conclusion presupposes not two but three premisses. For his assertion that Jesus was a human person means not simply that Jesus was a person and a man but effectively that Jesus was a person and a man and only a man. If it does not mean 'only a man', then there is no conflict with faith in the pre-existent divine person who became a man. And if it does mean 'only a man', then its source is not Christian preaching but Ebionite heresy. Such is the dilemma in which I find Fr Schoonenberg's position; and I do not find that he has confronted it fairly and squarely.

Bernard Lonergan, S.J.

<sup>46</sup>The Christ, p. 82; *Ein Gott*, p. 87.