I

Chalcedon and Its Legacy

For more than 1,500 years now, the Chalcedonian Definition has been regarded by the great majority of churches as having established the limits of orthodoxy where discussions of the person of Christ are concerned. But what, we might ask, is the authority proper to ecclesial teachings? What kind of authority might a Protestant grant to them while remaining Protestant (in practice and not just in theory)? The early Reformed confessions speak unanimously on this point. Holy Scripture alone possesses *divine* authority.[1] The authority proper to creeds and confessions is, by contrast, an authority originating in human judgments and decisions that constitute, at their very best, reliable and sound interpretations of Scripture.[2] But no interpretation is perfect. And so, in the very nature of

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[1] The Geneva Confession of Faith (1536), Article I "First, we affirm that we desire to follow Scripture alone as rule of faith and religion, without mixing with it any other thing which might be devised by the opinion of men (sic) apart from the Word of God, and without wishing to accept for our spiritual government any other doctrine than what is conveyed to us by the same Word without addition or diminution, according to the command of our Lord." See Arthur C. Cochrane, *Reformed Confessions of the 16th Century* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 120. With this compare The French Confession (1559), Article V: "We believe that the Word contained in these [canonical] books has proceeded from God, and receives its authority from him alone, and not from men. ... Whence it follows that no authority, whether of antiquity, or custom, or numbers, or human wisdom, or judgments, or proclamations, or relics, or decrees, or councils, or visions, or miracles, should be opposed to these Holy Scriptures, but, on the contrary, all things should be examined, regulated, and reformed according to them. And therefore we confess the three creeds, to wit: the Apostle's, the Nicene, and the Athanasian, because they are in accordance with the Word of God." Ibid., pp. 145–6.

[2] The Second Helvetic Confession (1566), chapter II: "Wherefore, we do not permit ourselves, in controversies about religion or matters of faith, to urge our case with only the

the case, the dogmas proclaimed by councils are *inherently reformable*. It was for this reason that John Calvin saw the appeal being made to conciliar teaching in the disputes of his time as an opportunity both to learn anew what such teaching meant in its own time and to reconsider whether and how far it should still be binding.

Whenever a decree of any council is brought forward, I should like all men first of all diligently to ponder at what time it was held, on what issue, and with what intention, what sort of men were present; then to examine by the standard of Scripture what it dealt with – and to do this in such a way that the definition of the council may have its weight *and be like a provisional judgment*, yet not hinder the examination which I have mentioned.[3]

Calvin was surely right: to understand the "dogma" of a council like Chalcedon certainly requires serious historical excavation. It requires close knowledge of the issues that were then being debated and the positions taken on all sides because its meaning is anything but self-evident. But understanding Chalcedon also requires an understanding of how other theological commitments not made explicit in the Definition itself – those belonging to the doctrine of God, most especially, but also to soteriology – set the limits for what the bishops were able to say in relation to the contended Christological issues. And, indeed, it requires a keen appreciation for pressing issues arising directly from the formulas employed that were left unresolved.

And so: being "faithful" to Chalcedon is not the straightforward matter some might think it to be. It is not a question simply of repeating its teachings – not even where one has understood them in their positive as well as their negative significance.[4] It is also a question of identifying the

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opinions of the fathers or decrees of councils; much less by received custom, or by the large number of those who share the same opinion, or by the prescription of a long time." Ibid., p. 227.

[3] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. by John T. McNeill (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1960), IV.ix.13 (emphasis mine).

[4] Richard Alfred Norris, Jr, argued that the Definition serves only to "regulate" doctrine by setting boundaries against aberrant teaching; it actually defines nothing since none of its key terms are themselves defined. See Richard Alfred Norris, Jr, "Chalcedon Revisited: A Historical and Theological Reflection," in Bradley Nassif, ed., *New Perspectives on Historical Theology: Essays in Memory of John Meyendorff* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 140–58. Sarah Coakley rightly wonders whether a merely regulatory account can do justice to the intentions of the bishops but then proceeds to offer an "apophatic" reading of Chalcedon whose outcome differs little from that of Norris. Sarah Coakley, "What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does It Not? Some Reflections on the Status and Meaning of the Chalcedonian 'Definition'," in Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, SJ, and Gerald O'Collins, SJ, eds., *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary*

lacunae that have, to this day, forced the churches to continue to think with and beyond Chalcedon; to expand or contract its meaning in relation to unforeseen questions and issues to which, if Chalcedon is to remain at least relatively authoritative, it must have something positive to say.

My point is this: we must be more "Chalcedonian" than many of today's defenders of Chalcedon are. We must not rest content with repeating words whose significance we have only dimly understood. We must do our Christology in the light of an appreciation for both the promise of Chalcedon and its limitations – and in that way, be truly "guided" by it.

I THE ARGUMENT

The argument that will be unfolded through close historical analysis in this chapter has been thirty-three years in the making. Thirty-three years of teaching Christology at the University of Edinburgh and at Princeton Theological Seminary have taught me that there exists at the very heart of the Chalcedonian Definition a logical aporia, an unresolved contradiction that has its origins in a twofold pressure placed upon the bishops who were its authors. The first pressure felt had to do with a desire to affirm a *unified subject*, a single "person" or "prosopon." The great majority of bishops at Chalcedon were Cyrilline, committed to a soteriology of divinization that would require the Logos to act through and upon His human "nature," thereby *instrumentalizing* it. That requirement was completely in line with a second commitment, this time in relation to the doctrine of God. The Logos was thought to be simple and impassible. That commitment too had to lead to varying degrees of instrumentalization of the human nature – unless one simply divided and separated the "natures" – in quasi-"Nestorian" fashion.[5] On this showing, the "subject" of the two natures is the preexistent Logos *as such* – a subject who acts through and even upon (in the resurrection and exaltation) His human "nature."

The second source of pressure – that pushed in a direction contrary to the first – lay in the resolution of the Apollinarian controversy in the century. Once Gregory of Nazianzen had declared "the unassumed is the unhealed," no account of human "nature" that failed to give due

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Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 143–63. Such readings are much too negative in my view for reasons that will become clear.

[5] It should be noted that I will not here try to resolve the problem of whether Nestorius himself was a "Nestorian," but will confine my attention to what the ancient Church rejected under this label.

attention to intellect, memory, and agency could be fully adequate.[6] What would later be called "dyothelitism" had its roots right here. If Jesus of Nazareth was "fully human" – that is, possessed of a human mind, will, and energy of operation – then it might well seem that what we have before us is a "two subject" Christology, one divine and one human. To narrow the metaphysical gap between these two subjects, Cyril of Alexandria would make judicious use of an "active-passive paradigm" in order to suggest that, in all activities pertinent to the accomplishment of redemption, the Logos alone is "self-activating"; Jesus of Nazareth followed along "passively" in the sense of not being a "self-activating" or spontaneously active agent. If the preexistent Logos and he alone is the "person of the union," then Jesus' "obedience" was not self-activated but effected in him by the omnipotent Logos acting through and upon him.

But this left unexplained – and here the pressure from the side of dyothelitism begins to become intolerable – those moments in the life of Jesus in which he did or experienced things that could not be done or experienced by a simple and impassible Logos: things like hungering, thirsting, not knowing His "hour," crying out in dereliction, etc. In those moments, given the prior commitment to identifying the "person of the union" with the simple and impassible Logos, two options were available. One could, in relation to such instances, argue that the Logos had suspended his self-activating activity through and upon Jesus, leaving Jesus to function temporarily (!) as a human subject in his own right. Of course, a suspension of whatever duration would require acknowledging the existence in those all too human moments of *two subjects*. This inconsistency did not go unnoticed and so a second option became tempting. Some, as we shall see, were quite willing to believe that the human Jesus could not *really* hunger, thirst, suffer abandonment, etc.; that statements found in the NT that suggested such things were actually there to teach us what would have been the case had the Logos not acted through and upon Him *in an unbroken, fully consistent fashion*. Such claims certainly resolved the inconsistency but only at the cost of making Jesus disappear – becoming not simply a passive follower of the activities of the Logos but an inanimate "object" much like Athenagoras' famous flute.

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[6] St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), p. 158. The passage in question, which appears in the first letter to Cledonius, reads more fully as follows: "The unassumed is the unhealed, but what is united with God is also being saved. Had half of Adam fallen, what was assumed and being saved would have been half too; but if the whole fell he is united to the whole of what was born and is being saved wholly."

But, then, it is hard to see how this option could do justice to the dyothe-litism required by the Nazianzen's solution to the Apollinarian crisis.

My argument is that the majority of bishops at Chalcedon followed Cyril in making the preexistent Logos as such to be the "person of the union," thereby forcing them to choose one of the two remaining options for explaining the implications. The first (a suspension of the activity of the Logos through and upon Jesus) had the advantage of standing closer to Scripture; the second had the advantage of system-atic clarity and consistency. It should be noted that the Chalcedonian Definition followed Cyril in identifying the "person" with the preex-istent Logos. I will defend that claim in due course.

But even now, we have not yet made explicit the aporia at the heart of the Definition. We have only described the intellectual conditions that produced it. The aporia is this: Jesus of Nazareth contributes nothing to the constitution of the "person." He has no constitutive role to play in the composition of the "person" in which two natures are said to "subsist." To be even more precise: he stands in no real relation to the Logos. The Logos has a certain relation to him, perhaps even an onto-logically constitutive relation if one affirms something like the later *an-* and *enhypostasia*, but Jesus has no constitutive relation to the Logos. He is added to the Logos but this addition has no ontological signifi-cance for the Logos. And to ensure that this is the case, it is necessary to deny to Jesus any spontaneous, self-activating agency – a necessity (largely) upheld whenever the topic under discussion is the soteriology of divinization. But whenever the topic shifts to a close consideration of Christology proper (i.e. the ontological constitution of the Mediator) and the problem of the "communication of attributes" begins to rear its head, a relation of Jesus to the "person" of the union is needed if realistic predication is to be secured from a drift into a merely figurative predication characteristic of a "two-subjects" Christology. But that is the one thing that identification of the "person of the union" with the preexistent Logos simply *cannot* allow. Human properties cannot be predicated of a Logos understood to be simple and impassible. Faced with this problem, the later Fathers devised *a second definition* of the "person of the union" as the "whole Christ." But even then, a realistic predication of both natures and their properties to the "whole Christ" could not be carried through. Human properties were predicated of the whole Christ but only according to his human nature – and so, to the whole Christ only figuratively. Therefore, no solution of the relation of Jesus to the "person of the union" could be found. And *that* is the

contradiction. Jesus was supposed to be "fully human" – having a mind, will, and energy of operation entirely his own. And yet he played no role whatsoever in defining the Christological subject – an exercise in taking back with one hand what had just been given with the other.

That is the argument in synoptic form. I will now seek to demonstrate the truth of the claims just made through close historical interpretation(s) of the patristic material. But before turning to that task, let me just say that it will not do to say, as a world-class Catholic patristics scholar once said to me: yes, it is true that the problems created for the full humanity of Jesus by Chalcedon's equation of the "person of the union" with the Logos can never be solved so long as those who seek to do so remain committed to simplicity and impassibility. Yes, he agreed, it is true that under these conditions, Jesus stands in no real relation to the Christological subject. But a commitment to divine simplicity and impassibility is implicitly present in the Chalcedonian teaching and presupposed by all of the orthodox fathers. So we simply have to live with the aporia. Such an appeal to ecclesial authority to trump even a contradiction cannot be made by a Protestant like me. But, I hasten to add, it also won't do to say simply that Chalcedon wisely sought to avoid systems and maintained respect before the mystery. A contradiction is not a mystery. And those who speak in this way are not respecting the genuinely Christian mystery because that mystery can never be one of human contrivance, as the aporia at the heart of Chalcedon most assuredly is.

We turn then to the history of the development of the orthodox Christology before – and after – Chalcedon. I should note that when I say "history," I am not proposing to trace the direct influence of ideas or literature but intend simply to establish the existence of close family resemblances ("traditions") from Origen through Chalcedon.

II THE ROAD TO CHALCEDON

A Origen of Alexandria (184–253?)

The story of the development of the orthodox dogma of Christ begins with Origen. Anyone who fails to recognize that will miss the inner logic of the development and its motivating concerns. There is a fairly direct line of connection that runs from Origen's Christology through Apollinaris to Cyril – and from Cyril to Chalcedon. All of this is easily missed because a fair number of scholars have their attention fixed on those elements in

Origen's thought that the Church would eventually reject. His affirmation of the preexistence of souls and his "theopanism" (the belief that in the end God would be ALL in all) constitute elements that would be left behind by theologians of the fourth and fifth centuries. But if the story told of Origen stopped with a rehearsal of just those elements, we would have done him a considerable disservice. For we would have missed the rich legacy he bequeathed to the Church. We must ask: why did Origen affirm the preexistence of souls? Was this merely a piece of unfettered speculation or did it rest, in part at least, on a sound instinct? What I hope to show here is that Origen had his own distinctive version of a two "natures" logic up and running – a version that, interestingly enough, enabled him to do greater justice to the humanity of Jesus than the orthodox who came later.

The key to understanding the deeper structure of Origen's theology, it seems to me, is to be found in his eschatology.

Seeing, then, that such is the end, when all enemies will be subjected to Christ, and when the last enemy, death, will be destroyed and when the kingdom shall be delivered to the God and Father by Christ, to whom all things have been subjected, let us I say from such an end as this contemplate the beginning of things. For the end is always like the beginning, and, therefore, as there is one end of all things, so ought there to be understood one beginning of all things.[7]

This becomes something of a hermeneutical principle with Origen, and it allows him to say things of the original creation that might otherwise have remained hidden in impenetrable darkness.

What, then, does the "end" look like as it pertains to human beings? Origen's answer is clear.

I reckon that this expression, where *God* is said *to be all in all*, also means that he is all in each individual person. And he will be *all* in each individual in such a way that everything which the rational mind, when cleansed from all the dregs of the vices and utterly swept clean of every cloud of wickedness, can sense or understand or think will be all God; it will no longer sense anything else apart from God; it will think God, hold God; God will be the mode and measure of every movement; and thus *God* will be all to it.[8]

So far does Origen take this thought that it conditions what he thinks about the resurrected body. The resurrected body is a "spiritual body"

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[7] Origen, *On First Principles*, Vol. I, ed. and trans. by John Behr (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 107.

[8] Origen, *On First Principles*, Vol. II, ed. and trans. by John Behr (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 445.

(1 Cor.15:44).[9] It is "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor.5:1).[10] And since the immediately preceding verse to the last cited (2 Cor.4:18) says that "what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal," Origen concludes that "all those bodies which we see, either on earth or in the heavens, and which are able to be seen, and have been made by hand and are not eternal, are very greatly surpassed in glory by that which is *neither visible nor made by hand but is eternal*."[11] What Origen is suggesting is that the final (glorified) state of the resurrected body will transcend what we know of materiality *substantially*.[12]

When the world needed variety and diversity, matter offered itself with all docility throughout the diverse appearances and species of things to the Maker, as to its Lord and Creator, that he might bring forth from it the diverse forms of heavenly and earthly things. But when things have begun to hasten towards that end, *that they all may be one* as the Father is one with the Son, it may be rationally understood that when all are one, there will no longer be any diversity.[13]

When God is all in each and every individual, the individuation that comes from embodiment will itself have been transcended so that all are one. This is an "end" that transcends the beginning; redemption is more than a simple restoration, since no further change in the human will be possible. Origen adds that it will only be when God has finally become all *in each and every one* that the final state of the resurrection body – its eternality, invisibility, and quasi(?)-immateriality – will have been achieved. Before then, there will be other ages to pass through,[14] other worlds in which humans will remain embodied, albeit in "celestial bodies ... made with human hands." So the process of bodily refinement will continue until God is all in all. And then the "end" will have arrived. When God is all in all, then all will be one without remaining differentiation.

   Origen characterizes all of this as a "conjecture" but it is a conjecture based upon 2 Cor.4:18–5:1 most especially, as well as John 17:22. Whether readers find it somewhat compelling or only strange does not matter at this

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[9] Ibid.   [10] Ibid., p. 447.   [11] Ibid. (emphasis mine).
[12] Ibid., p. 451: the bodily nature created by God will undergo "a substantial change."
[13] Ibid., p. 447.
[14] Ibid., p. 449: "It must be understood, however, that this shall happen not suddenly, but gradually and by degrees, during the passing of infinite and immeasurable ages ... until *the last enemy* which is called *death*, is reached, so that it too may be *destroyed* and no longer be an enemy. When, therefore, all rational souls have been restored to a condition like this, then also the nature of this body of ours will be brought into the glory of a *spiritual body*."

point. What matters is that Origen's account of creation makes eminent sense when seen in the light of this eschatology.

Origen held to a two-stage creation. Brian Daley summarizes Origen's conception as follows: "Origen suggests, at least as a hypothesis, that all intelligent creatures were originally brought into being as simple intellects, created to find their bliss in knowing and loving God through union with his Wisdom."[15] "Simple" here means (as it usually does): without composition. And that means further, without bodies. What was in view was the highest part of human nature, created in a state of union with God's Wisdom or Word. This "state" is subject to change, however, because these simple intellects were also rational agents of willed activity. They were created in a state of love that can only be sustained through a freely willed contemplation of God in his Word. Precisely this freedom proved to be the downfall of all but one "soul." I will have more to say of that one soul in a moment.

One by one, the love of all other simple intellects for their Creator "cooled."[16] This "fall" was, we might say, the ontological precondition to the creation of this material world and of bodies. The "fall" was into embodiment. Origen was, without doubt, a dualist when it came to souls and flesh. But this did not entail a wholly negative valuation of flesh. Indeed, as Daley has observed, the creation of this world at the second stage was intended by God to provide rational beings like ourselves with a "therapeutic exile"[17] – a place in which we might learn from whence we have fallen and what we must do to ascend back to God.

We have already gestured towards Origen's doctrine of the incarnation – which is our central topic, obviously. There was one simple intellect whose loving contemplation was so unbroken and complete as to become permanently united to the Word. Just as a piece of iron, when placed in a fire, is so permeated by fire as to become fire itself, so the Word permeated this one simple intellect, becoming "one" with it.

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[15] Brian E. Daley, SJ, *God Visible: Patristic Christology Reconsidered* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 87.

[16] Origen, *On First Principles*, Vol. II, p. 229: appealing to Heb. 12:29 (and other passages), Origen says "without doubt the Word of God is shown to be fiery and hot. ... [T]hose who have fallen away from the love of God are undoubtedly said to have cooled in their love for him and to have become cold." "Cooling" is "fall" since heat rises and cold is proper to earth, to the matter of this world. It should be added that, in the strict sense of the word, these created intellects only became "souls" through their fall away from the original state of union. Prior to the fall, "souls" are "simple intellects" – which left Origen room to think of souls as embodied intellects (to some degree at least).

[17] Daley, *God Visible*, p. 87.

[T]here is in Christ a rational soul . . . [T]his soul, which is Christ's so chose to love righteousness that, in accordance with the immensity of its love, it adhered to it unchangeably and inseparably, so that the firmness of purpose and immensity of affection and inextinguishable warmth of love destroyed all thought of alternation or change, such that what was dependent upon the will is now changed into nature by the exertion of long usage.[18]

And, then, by way of illustration:

If a lump of iron is placed in a fire forever, receiving the fire throughout all its pores and veins and becoming wholly fire, provided that the fire is never removed from it and it itself is never separated from the fire, could we at all say that this, which is by nature a lump of iron, when placed in the fire and incessantly burning, is ever capable of accepting cold?[19]

The attentive reader will already have realized that it is the complex of the Logos and this one created intellect, so completely one as to resist classification as a "composite" entity even though it certainly is that in a unique sense – it is this one created intellect that is made to be the Logos-"soul" by being joined to flesh in the incarnation.[20] Origen's doctrine of the incarnation is from first to last a doctrine of the "assumption of flesh." To be sure, there is a kind of "hypostatic union" in his thinking. But the union in question is the union of the Logos-soul in protology.

Two soteriological possibilities open up here that are compatible in Origen but would be torn apart later. First, Origen very much has a proto-"divinization" theory up and running, one that, like all later instantiations, was Christologically grounded. Unlike later theories, however, he affirms divinization of the protological "soul" of Christ and of us only eschatologically. Some participation in the Word can be realized by believers in this life, by degrees, but it is always incomplete – which leads me to the second soteriological possibility arising on the soil of Origen's Christology. For Origen, the "Son" is one thing; Jesus of Nazareth is another. Origen even has a primitive version of a doctrine of the "communication of attributes," which bears comparison with similar thoughts in Leo the Great's *Tome*.

When, then, we see in him some things so human that they appear to differ in no respect from the common frailty of mortals, and some things so divine, that they are appropriate to nothing else but that primal and ineffable nature of divinity, the narrowness of human understanding is bewildered and struck with amazement at so great a wonder, it knows not which way to turn . . . If it thinks of God, it sees

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[18] Origen, *On First Principles*, Vol. II, p. 211.   [19] Ibid., pp. 211, 213.
[20] Ibid., p. 209: "The soul with the Word of God is made Christ."

a mortal being; if it thinks of a human being, it sees him returning from the dead with spoils after conquering the kingdom of death. This, therefore, must be contemplated with all fear and reverence, that the truth of both natures may be shown to be in one and the same being.[21]

There is here a tendency to ascribe human properties to the human and divine properties to the divine rather than ascribing both sets of properties to a single, unified subject. As we shall see, that would be Leo's tendency as well. And yet, this tendency in Origen lays the foundation for a Jesus who is "fully human," who is self-activating in his obedience and whose obedience, as a consequence, acquires merit.

Origen is thus the author of two tendencies in soteriology: a very powerful divinization theory that leaves one wondering whether Jesus' temptations could possibly have been real, and a very strong exemplarist soteriology, dressed out in contemplative practices and ascetic disciplines – so that the man Jesus becomes the Teacher who leads those who come later into the path of ascent and revelation that is all that is really needed for others to be "saved." The two tendencies can coexist in Origen precisely because of his affirmation of the preexistence of souls. Deny that to him (and virtually all who came after did) and you must choose: either find a version of Christology capable of grounding Origen's divinization theory, or focus your attention more exclusively on the exemplarist pattern of obedience. In the fifth century the so-called "Alexandrians" would go one way and the so-called "Antiochenes" would go the other.

To round out our picture of Origen's Christology, it need only be added that it is the preexistent soul that mediates between the Logos and the flesh in the incarnate

With this substance of the soul mediating between God and the flesh (for it was not possible for the nature of God to be mingled with a body without a mediator) there is born, as we said, the God-man, the medium being that substance for which it was certainly not contrary to nature to assume a body. Yet neither, on the other hand, was it contrary to nature for that soul, as a rational substance, to receive God, into whom … as into the Word and the Wisdom and the Truth, it had already wholly passed.[22]

We will have occasion to return to Origen and to his understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity in a later book. There too, we will encounter the thought of the need for a mediator, this time between the utterly simple and one Father and the multiplicity (diversity) that is present in the world. But this must suffice for our purposes here.

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[21] Ibid., p. 205.   [22] Ibid., p. 207.

There can be no question of the brilliance of Origen's achievement. A young Hans Urs von Balthasar observed that

It is all but impossible to overestimate Origen and his importance for the history of Christian thought. To rank him alongside Augustine and Thomas simply accords him his rightful place in this history. Anyone who has given long hours to studying the Fathers will have had the same experience as a mountain climber: the slow, steady, receding of the seemingly still threatening peaks all around him, until, beyond them, the hitherto-hidden dominant central massif rises majestically before him.[23]

That has been my experience too.

B Apollinaris of Laodicea (310–390)

Apollinaris belongs to this history because his solution to the Christological problem constituted a riff on that of Origen. The problem, as understood by the majority in the late fourth century, has been neatly summarized by John McGuckin. How was it possible for the Logos – who, against the Arians, must surely have participated in the absolute simplicity and impassibility of the Father – to enter into "full communion with a particular historical and relativised life in the incarnation."[24] "Full communion" would surely require that the Logos was in some sense the subject of the human sufferings of Jesus of Nazareth. Given that the Logos could not be the experiencing subject of suffering without detriment to simplicity and impassibility, how could "full communion" be conceived? Expressed somewhat more negatively: how was it possible to avoid so separating the "natures" as to necessitate the acknowledgment of two sons or subjects, the divine Logos indwelling the human Jesus in some way? Clearly, what was at stake was the unity of the Christological subject.

The way forward to a solution had to lie in a close examination of the manner or mode of existence of the one Christological subject. Apollinaris' proposal was radical. But it was also simple, elegant, and far tidier than any solution proposed later. His basic move was to replace the human *nous* (i.e. the spiritual intellect conceived as "above" the sensate soul and the body and as the controlling principle

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[23] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Spirit and Fire: A Thematic Anthology of the Writings of Origen* (London: Bloomsbury T. & T. Clark, 2018), p. 1.

[24] John McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), p. 178.

of the latter) with the divine Logos. That is to say, the Logos assumed human "flesh" in becoming incarnate, making himself to be the controlling principle of all that was done in the flesh and allowed to happen to the flesh. In this way, Apollinaris achieved a *complete* instrumentalization of the human. And he did so in such a way that the Logos was left immune to affect from the side of the flesh, remaining simple and impassible. Even more importantly, perhaps, when judged from the standpoint of later developments, Apollinaris denied to the flesh any "independent, personal reality, outside of the Logos' own life."[25] This was the first instantiation I am acquainted with of what would later be called the *an-* and *enhypostasia* of the humanity of Christ (albeit in a radical form).

Later theologians, most significantly Gregory of Nazianzus, would criticize Apollinaris severely for setting forth a truncated anthropology in the place of the full humanity of Christ. "The unassumed is the unhealed"[26] was meant to say that if Christ had no human *nous* or intellect, then that part of our nature remains unredeemed by his work. As impressive as that principle is when stated by Gregory (and however right the objection to a truncated humanity), it is nonetheless the case that all those sympathetic to Alexandrian concerns were by that point in time deeply committed to a divinization soteriology – which required the Logos to act through and even upon his human "nature." The preexistent Logos simply had to be directly equated with the Christological subject if that soteriology was to be coherent with what was in the process of becoming the "orthodox" Christology. And the truth is that no solution to that problem would ever be as coherent as that of Apollinaris.

I call Apollinaris' solution a riff on Origen's because all Apollinaris had done, at the end of the day, was to substitute for the incarnation of a Logos joined to a preexistent soul an incarnation by replacement (the Logos in place of a human *nous* in Jesus). In both cases the outcome is precisely the same: the Logos is made to be the controlling principle in the God-human and the ontological conditions necessary to explain divinization have been explained. Cyril's Christology would constitute a third (more orthodox) riff on both Origen and Apollinaris.

Before proceeding, we must take note of another building block that Apollinaris put in place and that Cyril would take up in his own way. In

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[25] Ibid., p. 181.   [26] See above, n. 6.

human "nature" as created, body, sensate soul, and *nous* constitute an organic whole; "one nature" (*mia physis*). By replacing the human *nous* in Jesus with the Logos, Apollinaris had entitled himself to speak of the union of Logos and flesh as resulting in "one nature" (*mia physis*). To be sure, the caveats surrounding the non-affectivity of the Logos remained firmly in place even as Apollinaris constructed a single, unified subject. A single subject would remain Cyril's sought-for goal as well, which explains his frequent use of the phrase *mia physis*.

C Gregory of Nazianzus (*c.*330–390)

Gregory of Nazianzus' importance for the elaboration of trinitarian orthodoxy in the form it is still received and honored in liturgy is widely celebrated by historians. His place in the story of the development of the orthodox Christology, however, is more modest and constitutes a first attempt at a course correction. In making that attempt, Gregory anticipated certain post-Chalcedonian developments.

Perhaps it was because of his preoccupation with Apollinarianism and his concern for a complete human "nature" as the object of the deifying work of the divine Word that his Christology was more centrally concerned with what would later be called the doctrine of the "communication of idioms" (or "properties" or "attributes") than it was with the unity of the "person." Indeed, his treatment of the former problem *led him to ascribe properties directly to the "natures" in the first instance rather than to the One whose "natures" they were understood to be.*

For Gregory, the ascriptions in Scripture of activities to the God-human take place on different "levels."

As Word he was neither obedient nor disobedient – the terms apply to amenable subordinates or inferiors who deserve punishment. But as "the form of a slave" he comes down to the same level as his fellow-slaves; receiving an alien "form" he bears the whole of me, along with all that is mine in himself so that he may consume within himself the meaner element, as fire consumes wax or the Sun ground mist, and so that I may share in what is his through the intermingling.[27]

Conspicuous in this formulation is the almost casual way in which Gregory speaks of the constitution of the "person" as the result of an "intermingling" of "natures." Even more loose, if I may put it that way, is his talk of consuming the meaner element "within himself." Gregory is

[27] St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ*, p. 97.

fully committed to the simplicity and impassibility of the Word. Indeed he anticipates Cyril in speaking of the "sufferings of the impassible." The difference is that whenever Gregory speaks of the communication of idioms, he implicitly treats the subject-referent as the "whole Christ" (divine and human) and not as the preexistent Logos as such. That, it seems to me, is the subject to which he refers whenever he says that this subject appears now "as" this, now "as" that.

As man he was baptized, but he absolved sins as God; he needed no purifying rites himself – his purpose was to hallow water. As man he was put to the test, but as God he came through victorious . . . He hungered, yet fed thousands. He is indeed "living, heavenly bread." He thirsted, yet he exclaimed "Whosoever thirsts, let him come to me and drink." . . . He was tired, yet he is the "rest" of the weary and the burdened. He was overcome by heavy sleep, yet he goes lightly over the sea . . . He is stoned, yet not hit; he prays, yet he hears prayer. He weeps, yet he puts an end to weeping. He asks where Lazarus is laid – he was man; yet he raises Lazarus – he was God. . . . If the first set of expressions starts you going astray, the second set takes your error away.[28]

There is no hint of anticipation in Gregory's *Orations* so far as I can see of the later *an-* and *enhypostasia* as had been the case with Apollinaris. No, when Gregory says, for example, "*He* hungered, yet fed thousands" the "he" is not the preexistent Logos as such – now as human, now as God, but the whole Christ, the God-human, now as God and now as human. Throughout his treatment of the "communication," the subject-referent is assumed to be the whole Christ. This marks a modest yet momentous divergence from Alexandrian thinking – to which, I suspect, Gregory would have liked to adhere. The subject-referent has shifted – and shifted necessarily since if it were the case that the "person" were identified with the Logos as such, human properties, activities, and experiences would have to be ascribed to the Logos. And *that cannot be given that the Logos is thought to be simple and impassible.*

Confirming this reading of Gregory is his distribution of Christ's titles. They can be ascribed directly to the "natures" because the "person" is assumed to be the whole Christ rather than the Logos. "Son," "only begotten," and "Word" apply to "him" as God. "Son of man," "way," "door," "shepherd," "lamb," "high priest" apply to "him" as human.[29] "These titles belong to him on both levels: the transcendent and the human."[30] Again, the "him" in question cannot be the Logos as in Origen, Apollinaris, and – later – Cyril. The ascription of human properties or titles to the Logos

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[28] Ibid., pp. 87–8.   [29] Ibid., pp. 109–12.   [30] Ibid., p. 111.

as such would destroy his simplicity and impassibility. So the "him" has to be the whole Christ.

What we see emerging here can be formulated as a principle. Whenever the subject matter under consideration is soteriology, the "person of the union" has to be equated directly with the preexistent Logos so that the Logos can be seen as acting through and upon His human nature. But as soon as the subject matter shifts to the problem of the "communication," a shift in definition to the "person" necessarily had to take place. Human attributes cannot be realistically ascribed to the Logos; the subject-referent has to be the whole Christ. That this sets up an unending vacillation between two definitions of the "person of the union" is clear – and will be made explicit in post-Chalcedonian discussions of Christology. The problem created by this vacillation could be overcome, of course, through the surrender of simplicity and impassibility. Then the ascription of human properties to the Logos would mean that the Logos truly and really *receives* those attributes and the experiences they make possible. But retention of simplicity and impassibility necessitates the view that only divine attributes may truly and really be ascribed to the Logos; human attributes absolutely cannot be – or may be so only *figuratively*. If a realistic ascription is intended, on the other hand, the subject-referent cannot be the Logos but must be the whole Christ. Whether an ascription to the whole Christ that is realistic in its pretensions can ever be successful is a problem to which we will return.

One last observation: Leo's *Tome* would make use of the same logic of distribution of titles, activities, and properties as we have seen in Gregory. But, then, it is hugely significant that his efforts were met with great suspicion and doubt by the Cyrilline bishops at Chalcedon.

D Cyril of Alexandria (378–428)

1 *The Unity (Singularity) of the Christological Subject*

The human nature is . . . not conceived [by Cyril] as an independently acting dynamic (a distinct human person who self-activates) but as the manner of action of an independent and omnipotent power – that of the Logos; and to the Logos alone can be attributed the authorship of, and responsibility for, all its actions. This last principle is the flagship of Cyril's whole argument. There can only be one creative subject, one personal reality, in the incarnate Lord; and that subject is the divine Logos who has made a human nature his own.[31]

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[31] McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, p. 186.

If McGuckin is right – and I think he is – then it would have been impossible for Cyril of Alexandria to assign properties, activities, or titles to the human Jesus in the manner done by Gregory. Jesus is not a self-activating agent; he is the instrument of an omnipotent power at work in and through him. To put it another way, the performative agent of all that is done by the God-human in his divine-human unity is the Logos. The defense of that claim is as follows.

Cyril's preferred expression for describing the "person of the union" is "the Word made flesh" – "a single, solitary individual arising out of both [natures]"[32] – and taking place on the level of "concrete existence" – which is to say, *in* a single "hypostasis." But, then, the single hypostasis is the hypostasis of the Word in which the human "nature" is made concretely real by virtue of the union.[33] There is but one "concrete existence" as Cyril never tires of saying; not two.[34] And for him, that means that the priesthood (for example) cannot be assigned to the one born from David's seed and to him alone but must be assigned to the one concrete existence of the Word incarnate.[35] A distribution of activities to "natures" is impossible because predication must always be made with respect to the "single individual being," never with respect to the "natures" abstracted from that individual. That this will create a problem in understanding what it means to ascribe human properties and activities to the Word is obvious. But it is crucial to see that Cyril will have nothing to do with the ascription of human properties to the human nature alone. To speak in this way suggests to his mind *two* concrete existences and, therefore, two subjects.[36] No, the compositional

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[32] St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Three Christological Treatises* (Washington, DC: CUA Press, 2014), p. 126 (here citing from "A Defense of the Twelve Anathemas Against Theodoret").

[33] "The Word unifies a body endowed with the rational soul into his own being ... ." Sergey Trostyanskiy, *St. Cyril of Alexandria's Metaphysics of the Incarnation* (New York: Peter Lang, 2016), p. 257; cf. ibid., p. 239: "God the Word 'appropriates' or takes into his own being the being of humanity, meaning that his deifying energies remove all infirmities, corruption, and in general – the lack of order and beauty that came with Adam's sin) from the human nature."

[34] Ibid., pp. 145, 147f. [here citing from "A Defense of the Twelve Anathemas Against the Bishops of the Diocese of Oriens"].

[35] Ibid., p. 126. It should be noted that what is said here against Theodoret would have applied just as readily to Gregory of Nazianzen. "How can you say that God the Word was united to the one from David's seed, if you have already attributed the priesthood to the latter only? If the union is a genuine one, then there can in no way be two; Christ is to be understood only as a single, solitary individual arising out of both" [here citing from "Against Theodoret"].

[36] Ibid., p. 147 (here citing from "Against the Bishops of Oriens").

formulation notwithstanding (i.e. "the Word incarnate"), Cyril identifies the Christological subject with the preexistent Word.

On this basis, Cyril can go so far as to treat the activity of the Holy Spirit – his ministry in the life of the earthly Jesus – as indistinguishable from the activity of the Word through and upon the human nature hypostatically united to him. The Spirit is, Cyril insists, the Spirit of the divine Word; the Spirit's actions are the Word's actions (by means of the principle of inseparable operations, one would assume). And so Cyril pronounces anathema on all who disagree.

> If any suggest that the one Lord Jesus Christ was glorified by the Spirit by making use of a power that came through the Spirit, a power that was something other than his own, and that he received from the Spirit the ability to overcome evil spirits and perform divine miracles for people, instead of saying that the Spirit by which he wrought the miracle was his very own, let them be anathema.[37]

Before proceeding, we may note that the obvious problem with this is that although the principle of inseparable operations would guarantee that the omnipotent actions of the eternal Word through and upon his human nature were, at the same time, the actions of the eternal Spirit, that principle says nothing with regard to *the human Jesus* acting in the power of the Spirit (as Matt.12:28 and Luke 11:20 have it). It is only because Cyril has already set aside the possibility of Jesus being a self-activating human agent that he can safely reduce Jesus' actions to the actions of the Logos through and upon Him. But this also means that the outpouring of the Spirit on Jesus in his baptism cannot have been for the purpose of bestowing upon him anything in the way of spiritual equipment needed for his mediatorial activity. For the Spirit had nothing to give to "the Word made flesh" that was not already his as Word. In a very real sense, the role played by the hypostatic union in Cyril's thinking would render the outpouring of the Spirit superfluous to requirements – unless it were understood to have purely didactic value for those who witnessed the event.

2 Cyril's Doctrine of "Appropriations"

If there is but one hypostasis or "person" in the God-human and that "hypostasis" or "person" is the preexistent Word, then the properties or attributes of *both* of his "natures" must be his. That would seem to be an obvious conclusion to draw; the only possible one in fact. But in what

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[37] St. Cyril, "A Defense of the Anathemas Against Theodoret," p. 114.

sense is such a claim to be taken? In what sense "his?" Cyril holds that the divine properties are the properties of the Word by nature, since he shares them with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The properties of the human nature, on the other hand, are made to be "his very own"[38] by "economic appropriation."[39] But now, what does "economic appropriation" entail? The answer is anything but obvious.

The place to begin, I think, is with the concept of "union" (*henosis*). Cyril tells us that a union of two things can be conceived in a number of ways. Persons in conflict can be "united" through reconciliation "when they lay their differences aside."[40] Things can be "united" through being "fastened" to other things "either by synthesis, or brought together in other ways, either by composition, or mixture, or fusion."[41] But the union of the divine Word with His human flesh is an utterly ineffable one; its manner is known to God alone.[42]

Cyril is willing, however, to provide examples that function loosely as analogies. His favorite is that of the relation of soul and body in the human – something we know to be the case but do not comprehend. "For the soul appropriates the things of the body even though in its proper nature it is apart from the body's natural passions, as well as those things that impinge on it from without."[43] And so, for example, if the body is wounded, the soul shares in its grief – because it is the body of this soul which suffers – but the soul does not suffer "in its own nature."[44] So it is with the incarnation: the Word takes to himself "flesh" (a human body together with a rational soul) and makes it to be His own. What happens to him in the flesh can only happen to him since there is no other subject to whom it can happen. But the Word does not suffer in his own nature.

It is of the utmost importance to see that, for Cyril, there is really no such thing as "the man Jesus"[45] – should that phrase be taken to mean that it is a human "person" (an independent entity to whom the Word has

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[38] St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, trans. and with an introduction by John Anthony McGuckin (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), p. 59: "he took what was ours to be his very own so that we might have all that was his."

[39] Ibid., p. 110.   [40] Cyril, "Scholia on the Incarnation," p. 300.   [41] Ibid.   [42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.   [44] Ibid., p. 301.

[45] St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, p. 76: "How can someone who has been honored with a mere conjunction fail to be 'other' to the true and natural Son when he has just been assumed for the office of servant, given the honor of sonship, just like us, and sharing in another's glory which he attains by grace and favor?" Cyril's interlocutor – *On the Unity of Christ* is a dialogue – then says: "So the Emmanuel must not be separated out into a man, considered as distinct from God the Word?" Cyril answers: "On no account."

conjoined himself) to whom human properties are rightly ascribed. There is only one "person" to whom both divine and human characteristics are to be ascribed and that is the Word.[46] Cyril is adamantly opposed to the notion (common to the Syrians) of a "conjoining" of the Word with a human person; not because he worries about "adoptionism" – he knows full well that such conjoining is pushed by the Syrians back to the very beginning of Christ's fetal existence – but on the grounds that it makes logically necessary the conclusion that there be two sons, rather than one. A "mere conjunction" of divine and human persons would result, at best, in an "agreement"[47] of the wills proper to each – the human Jesus placing himself in the service of the divine Word and acting in complete concert with him at every point. What it could not yield is the kind of unity of person that would allow Paul to say, for example, "The Lord of glory was crucified" (1 Cor.2:8).[48] It could not allow Paul to ascribe to Jesus prerogatives that belong to divine nature alone – such as forgiving sins.[49] No, there can only be one Christological subject and that subject is the eternally begotten Son or Word of the Father.[50]

But, then, the problem with which we began comes back to us with renewed force. If there is but one Christological subject and that subject is the Word, what sense does it make to speak of him as "appropriating" what is proper to the human and making it "his very own?" The importance of this question has to do with the fact that Cyril was as committed to the received understanding of divine impassibility as ever his opponents had been. So how can the Word, who is impassible by nature, truly and really "appropriate" human properties (and the human experiences they make possible) without ceasing to be what he is?

Cyril's solution is startlingly simple. That the Word should have made human properties "his own" – and even the experiences they make possible – simply means that he takes possession of them, he "owns" them; "his" is being employed here in a strictly possessive – and to just that extent, *figurative* – sense.[51] These experiences "belong" to the Word; they

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[46] Ibid., pp. 68–9.   [47] Ibid., p. 74.   [48] Ibid., p. 116.   [49] Ibid., pp. 99–100.

[50] Brian Daley put it this way: "It is this single hypostasis whose primordial nature or principle of activity is that of the one divine substance, who Cyril – even in his writings before the Nestorian crisis – recognized as the ontological center of the person of Jesus, the source of the divine gifts and energies manifested in him." See Brian E. Daley, "'One Thing and Another': the Persons in God and the Person of Christ in Patristic Theology," *Pro Ecclesia* 15 (2005): 40–1.

[51] St. Cyril, *On the Unity of Christ*, p. 127: "he made his own a body capable of tasting death and capable of coming back to life again, so that he himself might remain impassible and yet *be said to suffer* in his own flesh" (emphasis mine). Cyril can also say that the

could belong to no one else. But that does not make the Word to be in any sense the *affective subject* of those experiences. Nor could he be, in Cyril's view.

And since on this account [i.e. the necessity of suffering for the sake of human redemption] he wished to suffer, even though he was beyond the power of suffering in his nature as God, then he wrapped himself in flesh that was capable of suffering, and revealed it as his very own, so that even the suffering might be said to be his because it was his own body which suffered and no one else's.[52]

Cyril is unequivocal about this. "So, if he is said to suffer in the flesh, even so he retains his impassibility insofar as he is understood as God."[53] And: "insofar as he is considered as God he remained outside of suffering in order that we might live through him and in him."[54] The point is this: what takes place in the "flesh" has no effect on the Word. What takes place in the flesh remains confined to the flesh. The Word suffers "economically" only and *not* in his being as God – which means, of course, that he does not *really* suffer at all, that he is not the affective subject of human sufferings. To say, then, that the Word "suffered impassibly"[55] – a phrase for which Cyril is famous – is not to say that it is the Word who suffers but only that the human suffering that takes place in "his" flesh "belongs" to him. He "owns" it. Paradoxical though the phrase may be in form, it is not a true paradox. It is rather a thoroughly rational explanation.

It is important to bear this in mind when we come across passages like the following in Cyril's writings: "he allowed the limitations of the manhood to have dominion over himself."[56] For he could also say "there is no other way to honor the slave except by making the characteristics of the

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Word "reckons" the human characteristics to be his own, thus strengthening the impression that what is at stake is an act in which the Word takes ownership of that which is assumed by Him. See St. Cyril, "Scholia on the Incarnation," p. 328.

[52] St. Cyril, *On the Unity of Christ*, p. 118. See also St. Cyril of Alexandria, "A Defense of the Anathemas Against Theodoret," p. 130: "In what way, then, can we say that the Lord of Glory has been crucified? ... Surely it is because he took *personal ownership* of the sufferings that pertained to his own flesh" [here citing from Cyril's defense of the twelfth anathema in his treatise "A Defense of the Twelve Anathemas Against Theodoret," emphasis mine]. Cf. St. Cyril of Alexandria, "A Defense of the Anathemas Against the Bishops of the Diocese of Oriens" in ibid., p. 179: "[A]nd since I affirm that the holy body that he took from the blessed Virgin actually belongs to him himself (sic), for this very reason I can quite appropriately say that the sufferings of the flesh are called his own ...." That, I would say, is a textbook illustration of an argument for the use of a figure of speech.

[53] St. Cyril, *On the Unity of Christ*, p. 117. [54] Ibid., p. 115.

[55] St. Cyril, "Scholia on the Incarnation," p. 332.

[56] St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, p. 110.

slave his very own so that they could be illumined from his own glory. What is pre-eminent will always conquer, and the shame of slavery is thus borne away from us."[57] The truth is that the "separation" that opens up between the human nature and the "person" whenever the problem of suffering is introduced is emphatically closed (from the opposite direction) whenever the problem of the "divinization" of human flesh takes center stage in Cyril's thinking. Put another way: the insistence upon the singularity of the Christological subject and its identification with the preexistent Logos, the rejection of a "mere conjunction" and, with that, of the existence of "the man Jesus" – both of these moves have the same ultimate goal, viz. to explain how mortal flesh is made immortal. "This is why he appeared as we are and made his own body subject to corruption according to the inherent system of its nature. In so far as he himself is life, for he was born from the life of the Father, he intended to plant his own benefit with it, that is life itself."[58] And again: "There was no other way for the flesh to become life-giving ... except that it became the very flesh of the Word who gives life to all things."[59] When thinking about the divinization of the flesh, Cyril makes the Word to be the performative agent who acts through and even upon the flesh as his "instrument." The consequence – when thinking along this soteriological line – is a relatively complete instrumentalization of the human nature.[60] The Word alone is active in restoring and redeeming the human; the human "nature" is seen receptive to that activity. It is important to point out that such instrumentalization as occurs also serves to support the preservation of divine impassibility.

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[57] Ibid., p. 75. Taken by itself, the phrase "making the characteristics of the slave his very own" might be taken to refer to a real communication of human attributes to the divine Word. But Cyril's doctrine of "appropriation" does not allow for that. These characteristics are "owned" by the Word; they are his in a possessive sense. But the predicates proper to passible creatures cannot really be added to him in the sense required by a real communication. Cf. St. Cyril, "A Defense of the Twelve Anathemas Against Theodoret," p. 129: "Of course I agree that the nature of the Word is impassible. I would think that everyone is well aware of this, nor would be so crazy as to suggest that the ineffable nature (which is really above all natures), which is in no way capable of suffering, was possessed by human weaknesses. ... [I]t is impossible for the Word who is begotten of God to suffer in respect of his own nature. For he made the passible body his very own, the result of which is that one can say he suffered by means of something naturally passible, even while he himself remains impassible in respect of his own nature ... ." One can say he suffered: what is in view here is a figure of speech arising from the thought that the Word made flesh suffered according to "his" human nature.

[58] St. Cyril, *On the Unity of Christ*, p. 125.   [59] Ibid., p. 132.

[60] McGuckin make the point well when he says that the human "nature" is made to be the "the economic instrument of the divine Logos." See McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, p. 184; cf. p. 185.

But, now, if all of the traffic between the Christological subject and his human "nature" were thought to flow in one direction only (from the Word to the human), then there could be no *real* communication of human properties to the Word. An "appropriation" by the Word along the lines of taking personal ownership of the human "nature" and giving it reality in his own hypostatic reality (a purely sovereign act with no ontological consequences for the Word) would be the only possible outcome.

Now I have already hinted at the fact that Cyril's instrumentalization of the human "nature" is only *relatively* complete. Cyril knows, as well as Nestorius did, that there are passages in the New Testament that ascribe to Jesus the utterly human experiences of growth and maturation, hunger and thirst, etc. How will Cyril handle these? The answer is through a temporary suspension of the instrumentalization of the human. Cyril's interlocutor in his treatise *On the Unity of Christ* asks: "But if Jesus is said to 'advance in stature and wisdom and grace' (Lk.2:52) then who is the subject who is 'becoming' in this instance? The Word of God the Father is complete and perfect in himself, so what could he progress or advance to?" A reasonable question, to be sure! Cyril responds: "When the wise evangelist introduces the Word as having been made flesh he shows him economically, *allowing* his own flesh to obey the laws of its own nature."[61] The human "nature" belongs to the Word; it is his to do with as he pleases. And so he remains free to allow the human to function humanly (and not as his instrument). It is a matter of divine choice. The Word could easily have "made the body which he united with himself rise up even from its swaddling bands, and bring it straight to the stature of perfect maturity"[62] had he wished to do so. The baby Jesus could have spoken from the manger in which he was laid in the words of a mature man and with the understanding commensurate with that maturity. But the Word determined instead to "allow" Jesus to develop and mature in the normal human way. Thus, instrumentalization remains secure in principle even while being suspended in practice as occasion demands.

But, of course, this also means that there are limits to how far the Word could go in "allowing" Jesus to function in a purely human manner. The instrument of the Word must at all times be and do that which is worthy of the Word. He cannot sin, obviously. But he also cannot make himself guilty of timidity or fear. And so, Cyril interprets Jesus' "cry of

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[61] St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, p. 109 (emphasis mine).
[62] Ibid., pp. 109–10.

dereliction" ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" from Mt. 27:46 and Mk.15:34) as spoken not for himself, but on behalf of sinners.

It was as if he were saying this: "The first man has transgressed. He slipped into disobedience, and neglected the commandment he received, and he was brought to this state of willfulness by the wiles of the devil; and then it was entirely right that he became subject to corruption and fell under judgment. But you Lord have made a second beginning for all of the earth, and I am called the second Adam. In me you see the nature of man made clean ... Now give me the good things of your kindness, undo the abandonment, rebuke corruption and set a limit on your anger. I have conquered Satan who ruled of old, for he found in me absolutely nothing of what was his." In my opinion, this is the sense of the Savior's words.[63]

And so: "He did not invoke the Father's graciousness upon himself, but rather upon us."[64] Extraordinary stuff, this, I have to say. But entirely consistent with Cyril's "system" of thought. And it really is a work of genius – from which there is much to learn at every turn.

Taking a step back, what we have established is that there is a fundamental asymmetry in the way Cyril has handled what would one day come to be called the problem of the "communication of attributes." The communication from the Word to the human is realistically conceived. Divine life is bestowed quite directly upon the human nature so that corruption and mortality are completely overcome. But communication from the human to the Word remains figurative. It has the sense of mere possession, of ownership. And, second, to the extent that the human Jesus is allowed – subtly to be sure – to become a subject in his own right, instrumentalization (the exercise of divine power through or upon the human nature) is suspended.[65] Of course, to put it this way is also to suggest that, in spite of his rather severe handling of Nestorius' drift

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[63] Ibid., pp. 105–6.

[64] Ibid., p. 106. It might seem that Cyril is more consistent in carrying out an instrumentalization of the human nature than I have been willing to grant. But it must be remembered that even if the rational soul of Jesus were invested with a measure of divine impassibility, the "flesh" was not. The investing of "flesh" with immortality only takes place in the resurrection. So it remains true to say for Cyril that the Word allowed his flesh to suffer as his "own" instrument. It is also true that nothing that happens in the flesh has any effect on the Word in his divine nature.

[65] Paul Gavrilyuk seems to think that "appropriation" is more realistically conceived than the explanation offered here would allow. Cyril, he says, "did not have to choose between divine impassibility and passibility"; this was not an "either/or" for him. For him, "both qualified divine impassibility and qualified divine passibility were necessary for a sound theology of incarnation." Paul Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God, The Dialectics of Patristic Thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 149–50. Leaving aside the question of whether "impassibility" could be "qualified" and still be

towards a two-subject Christology, Cyril himself opens the door to that possibility when he is forced to acknowledge a suspension of the instrumentalization of the human. In precisely those moments, Jesus seems to become – contrary to what we were led to expect – a self-activating human subject who can ask in all sincerity where Lazarus has been laid. What has brought about this anomalous state of affairs is the pressure created by his unshakeable commitment to divine simplicity and impassibility on the one side (leading to his figurative treatment of "appropriation"), and his commitment to a soteriology of divinization on the other (leading to a realistically conceived communication of certain of the Word's properties to the human nature).

McGuckin is right – the central problem in Christological reflection after Apollinaris was always the same: "how the existence of a soul in Christ could be reconciled with a single-subject Christology."[66] Once grant that Jesus has a human mind, will, and energy of operation and it becomes very hard to reestablish the unity of the person. Cyril had tried to solve the problem by making only one of what appeared to be two "subjects" active and the other passive. But, as we have seen, he could

impassibility, the interpretive question remains: has Gavrilyuk interpreted Cyril correctly? Did the divine Word submit *himself* to the limitations proper to human being and life (p. 159)? The key to resolving this question lies in rightly discerning what "appropriation" means in Cyril's thinking. For Gavrilyuk, that the Word should have "appropriated" human flesh means that he thinks and acts and even suffers *humanly* (when in the condition of incarnation). This would seem to suggest a two-way (realistically conceived) communication. But does the evidence Gavrilyuk himself brings forward justify such a conclusion? The truth is that the passages he adduces are much the same as the ones appealed to here. The differences between our respective readings are subtle but significant. First, Gavrilyuk seems to take the "temporary restraint of divine power and other perfections" (p. 158) as definitive of the *kenosis* itself, so that such restraint would seem to be continuous, ongoing, rather than occasional as I have interpreted it here. In other words, "restraint" is being made basic to the "condition of life" that the Word assumes in becoming incarnate. Second, Gavrilyuk wants to understand "appropriation" as somehow *qualifying* impassibility. But it could do this only if it were realistically conceived. The problem is that even Gavrilyuk's own most decisive formulations ("decisive" that is, for his case) do not add up to a realistic communication. Consider the following: "Cyril explained that during his earthly ministry the Word permitted his own flesh to experience natural passions and at the same time prevented it from experiencing the sinful ones" (p. 163). But notice: the Word permitted *his flesh to experience*. The Word is not here said to "experience" anything. At the end of the day, the understanding advanced here – viz. that of taking Cyril's phrase "making his own" in terms of "taking possession" – is an interpretive option that does not seem to have occurred to Gavrilyuk. Hence, he can only take such language as realistic. I should add that I wish Gavrilyuk were right. I would love to have had Cyril on my side in the argument that follows in this book. But I am not yet persuaded that I do.

[66] McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, p. 183.

not be entirely consistent with this strategy. Jesus simply has a troublesome tendency to become a subject in his own right in spite of Cyril's best intentions. At its root, however, the problem lies in making the communication realistic in one direction only. A consistently carried through "single-subject" Christology could not be secured on this foundation. The attributes of both "natures" must be "communicated" to the Logos if he is to be the single Christological subject.

Cyril's brilliance lay in his effort to make only one of the two "natures" active and the other receptive. His failure lay in his inability to carry this solution through consistently. Mind you, I do not think it was ever going to be possible to carry this solution through consistently – given Cyril's commitment to divine impassibility. But the attempt itself is most instructive. We will have reason to return to it in Chapter 7 of this book.

In sum: what we have established to this point is that there is a fairly direct line of connection joining Origen, Apollinaris, and Cyril. All three wanted to understand the Christological subject as the preexistent Logos – in support of a soteriology of divinization. If we miss this "prehistory" presupposed by the bishops at Chalcedon, the chances are good that we will misunderstand their Definition.

III THE MEANING OF THE CHALCEDONIAN DEFINITION

Though it has often been maintained that the Chalcedonian Definition is a compromise formula, the grain of truth contained in that statement causes those who stoutly uphold it to lose sight of the fact that it was finally the theology of Cyril of Alexandria that triumphed here – and *not* the theology of Leo the Great as any number of western theologians have maintained since the fifth century.[67] The grain of truth lies in the fact that

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[67] In favor of reading the Chalcedonian Definition in the light of Cyril's theology, see Patrick T. R. Gray, *The Defense of Chalcedon in the East (451–553)* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), pp. 7–16; John McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, pp. 227–43; John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1975); Sergey Trostyanskiy, *St. Cyril of Alexandria's Metaphysics of the Incarnation* (New York: Peter Lang, 2016). In favor of the latter assessment, see Brian E. Daley, SJ, "The Giant's Twin Substances: Ambrose and the Christology of Augustine's *Contra sermonem Arianorum*," in Joseph T. Lienhard, SJ, Earl C. Muller, SJ, and Roland J. Teske, SJ, eds., *Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993), pp. 477–95; Brian E. Daley, SJ, *God Visible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 1–27; Aloys Grillmeier, SJ, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, Vol. 1: "From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (AD 451), rev. ed. (London & Oxford: Mowbrays, 1975), p. 543ff.; Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma*, Vol. 4 (New York: Russell and Russell, 1958), p. 213; Robert Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1 "The Triune God" (Grand

formulations were advanced and approved by the Cyrillian majority at Chalcedon that would not arouse the suspicions of the Syrian and Roman delegates. But, as John McGuckin has successfully demonstrated, virtually all of the basic formulations contained in the Definition can be instantiated in the writings of Cyril.[68] Of even greater importance is the fact that those formulations serve, at the decisive point, to correct that aspect of Leo's teaching to which the Cyrilline party took greatest offense.[69] To put it this way is to suggest that we do better to read Leo's *Tome* in the light of the Definition, rather than the other way around.

Having said that, the difference between "western" and "eastern" readings of Chalcedon should not be exaggerated. What is at stake is a shift in emphasis. Those who read the Definition with the help of Leo's *Tome* tend to lay stress upon the "abiding integrity of the natures"[70] subsequent to their union. Those who read the Definition in the light of Cyril's theology tend instead to emphasize the singularity of the Christological person *and hypostasis*. Still, as McGuckin wisely remarks, "The two positions were not mutually incompatible, though many of their respective protagonists thought they were."[71] What is at stake in the remaining difference is the question of separable activities. Granted that the natures remain distinct in their union, are the actions performed in and through them "one in practice?" Leo had said "The activity of each form is what is proper to it in communion with the other: that is, the Word performs what belongs to the Word, and the flesh accomplishes what belongs to the flesh."[72] The Cyrillines, on the other hand, did not wish

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Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 131–3; Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, Vol. 1 "The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600)" (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 274; Norman P. Tanner, SJ, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Vol. 1, Washington, DC: Sheed & Ward/Georgetown University Press, 1990, p. 75. I should add: it is much easier to conclude that the Definition offered no positive solution (just a "compromise formula") where the distribution of the activities and experiences of the God-human – these to the human Jesus, those to the divine Word – set forth in Leo's *Tome* is made to be the hermeneutical key to the whole. The impression is then given that the bishops sought to mediate between Nestorius and Cyril – and found the key for doing so in Leo. The truth, as McGuckin recognizes, is that they were actually mediating between Nestorius and Apollinaris – with Cyril's highly generative Christology providing the solution. See McGuckin, pp. 236–7.

[68] See McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, p. 238.   [69] Ibid., p. 236.   [70] Ibid., p. 231.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, p. 79. It should be noted that to speak separably of the Word performing and the "flesh" accomplishing is to evoke precisely that "two subjects" division that had so greatly exercised Cyril. It should also be noted that it is precisely Leo's view (as, earlier, it had been Gregory's) that was anathematized by the Council of Ephesus when it approved Cyril's Third Letter to Nestorious – with the

to understand the human "nature" as a somehow independent and self-activating but as the wholly receptive instrument of the divine Word, the Logos. This, as we shall now see, was the point they sought to correct by means of a strict identification of the "person" of the union with the eternal Word who came down from heaven.

What then are the basic considerations that would lead us to the conclusion that the Cyrillines triumphed at Chalcedon? Before attempting an answer, we should have the Definition "proper" before us.

So, following the saintly fathers, we all with one voice teach the confession of one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity; the same truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and a body; consubstantial with the Father as regards His divinity, and the same consubstantial with us as regards his humanity; like us in all respects except for sin; begotten before the ages from the Father as regards his divinity, and in the last days the same for us and for our salvation from Mary, the virgin God-bearer [*theotokou*], as regards his humanity; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation; at no point was the difference between the natures taken away through the union, but rather the property of both natures is preserved and comes together into a single person and a single subsistent being; he is not parted or divided into two persons, but is one and the same only begotten Son, God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ, just as the prophets taught from the beginning about him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ himself instructed us, and as the creed of the fathers handed it down to us.[73]

The victory of Cyrilline theology is demonstrated through attention to the following features of the Definition (understood in its full context, with the preamble).

There is, first, the assertion contained in the preamble that "we also stand by the decisions and all the formulas relating to the creed from the sacred assembly which took place formerly at Ephesus, whose leaders of

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"anathemas" appended. The anathema in question is the fourth, which reads as follows: "If anyone distributes between the two persons or hypostases the expressions used either in the gospels or in the apostolic writings, whether they are used by the holy writers about Christ or by him about himself, and ascribes some to him as to a man, thought of separately from the Word from God, and others, as befitting God, to him as to the Word from God the Father, let him be anathema" (Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, p. 59). Defenders of Leo may wish to point out that Leo affirmed that the two natures came together to form "a single person" (Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, p. 78). But it is precisely the fact that Leo could also speak separably of the Word performing and the flesh accomplishing that had to call into question the sincerity of his affirmation of a single person in the minds of the Cyrillians.

[73] Ibid., pp. 86–7.

most holy memory were Celestine of Rome and Cyril of Alexandria."[74] This is a point of great significance in my view, which is almost never mentioned when systematic theologians attempt to explain the significance of Chalcedon. That Ephesus should be honored in this way makes it much harder to see Chalcedon as a split decision.[75]

Second, the "blessed Cyril" is invoked again, even more directly, at the point at which Chalcedon "accepted" [i.e. formally adopted and promulgated] the second letter of Cyril to Nestorius and his letter to John of Antioch, "as being well-suited to refuting Nestorius's mad folly and as providing an interpretation for those who in their religious zeal might desire understanding of the saving creed."[76] The "saving creed" here referred to is the Nicene-Constantinopolitan.

Third, what is being asserted is that Cyril's theology stands in a relation of continuity with the teachings of that most holy creed. It is true, of course, that Leo also comes in for some praise. But it is important to notice that the praise consists in the acknowledgment that Leo has offered effective resistance to Eutyches. The wording here is telling.

To these [Cyril's Second Letter to Nestorius and his Letter to John] it [i.e. this "sacred and great and universal synod"] has suitably added, against false believers and for the establishment of orthodox doctrine, the letter of the primate of greatest and older Rome, the most blessed and most saintly Archbishop Leo, written to the sainted Archbishop Flavian to put down Eutyches's evil-mindedness.[77]

The question remains, however, were the majority of bishops determined to test the orthodoxy of Leo's teaching by the standard of Cyril's – and only accepting the former to the degree that it conformed to the latter?

Fourth, and we turn now to the formulas contained in the Definition itself, the complementary phrases "one and the same" (used three times) and "the same" (used four times) call immediately to mind the logic of identity found in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed. The creed says that it is the same "only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages, light of light, true God from true God" who "for us humans and for our salvation … came down from the heavens and became incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, became human and was crucified."[78] The grammatical subject of both halves of this statement is the second "person" of the Trinity. It is one and the same

[74] Ibid., p. 84. It should also be noted that Mary is affirmed as "theotokos" in the midst of the Definition proper. See ibid., p. 86.
[75] See n. 70 above for the decisive fourth anathema.   [76] Ibid., p. 85.   [77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid., p. 24.

divine "person" who is the eternal Word and who becomes the incarnate Lord. The use, then, of this logic of identity at Chalcedon testifies to the conviction that fidelity to the creed requires the identification of the Christological "person of the union" with the preexistent Logos. He it is who is now in two natures. The point is hammered home with repeated emphasis: "*the same* truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and body; consubstantial with the Father as regards his divinity, and *the same* consubstantial with us as regards his humanity."[79] And: "*the same* for us and for our salvation from Mary, the God-bearer, as regards His humanity."[80] Why is this important? Because it is the direct identification of the Christological "person of the union" with the preexistent Logos that is intended to solve the ultimate problem facing the bishops, viz. that of the unity of the Christological "person" in whom the two "natures" are said to "subsist." It does so by suggesting that there can only be one "person" and, indeed, only one *hypostasis* in the God-human – affirmed in the phrase "and a single subsistent being." The problem created by Leo's talk of the Word performing what is proper to the Word and the flesh what is proper to the flesh, viz. that it all too easily suggests a "union" that maintains two hypostases, two concrete existences side by side – *that problem* is corrected here by making the Word made man – understood as a *single individual* – to be the agent of both sorts of activities. What the bishops were seeking to set forth at Chalcedon was a single-subject Christology. Whether all of this actually works in practice remains to be seen. But this Christology is unmistakably in line with Cyril.

Fifth, the single-subject Christology is then underscored by a series of clauses that explicitly identify the "person of the union" quite directly with the preexistent divine Word made human. "The property of both natures is preserved and comes together into a single person and a single subsistent being; he is not parted or divided into two persons, but is *one and the same* only begotten Son, God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ."[81] That the Definition should affirm that the properties of both natures are pre-served unchanged subsequent to their union is, in truth, no evidence of Leo's influence – because it had already been affirmed quite explicitly by Cyril. Consider, for example, the following statement taken from Cyril's "Scholia on the Incarnation": "the Word comes to a true union with the humanity, wherein the things so united still remain unconfused."[82] Or this very important statement taken from Cyril's First Letter to Successus.

[79] Ibid., p. 86 (emphasis mine).   [80] Ibid. (emphasis mine).   [81] Ibid. (emphasis mine).
[82] Cyril, "Scholia on the Incarnation" in McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, p. 302.

And so, we united the Word of God the Father to the holy flesh endowed with a rational soul, in an ineffable way that transcends understanding, without confusion, without change, and without alteration, and we thereby confess One Son, and Christ, and the Lord; the same one God and man, not someone alongside someone different, but one and the same who is and is known to be both things.[83]

That, it seems to me, is the teaching of Chalcedon as well.

Sixth, the term chosen by the bishops to speak of the "union" was Cyril's preferred term – *henosis*. *Henosis* refers to a "making one" – the coming together of two "hypostases" (or "concrete existences") in the moment of uniting such that only one concrete existence remains (the concrete existence of the human "nature" having been given reality *in* the concrete existence of the Logos). And it is surely of importance that the bishops chose to speak in terms of *henosis* rather than a mere "conjunction" of the natures as the Syrians had been inclined to do. That surely made surrender of the disputed Cyrilline phrase "out of two natures" much easier for the majority to accept, since "in two natures" would have been given a thoroughly Cyrilline coloring through acceptance of *henosis*.

In sum: the real interest of the majority of bishops at Chalcedon does not lie so much in the integrity of the natures, important as that was to them. Their attention was captured by the unity, the singularity of the Christological "person" in whom the two natures subsist. There is, they say, but one *prosopon* and one *hypostasis* – not two. One *prosopon* might have left ambiguity, but one *hypostasis* (one "concrete existence" of a single individual) most certainly does not. The one *hypostasis* in which the natures subsist is that of the eternal Word. Seen in this light, it is a serious error – made by both conservatives and liberals in twentieth-century Anglo-American theology – to become fixated on the four adverbs (without confusion, without change, without division, without separation), as though the Chalcedonian Definition lived from its negations and had nothing positive to say. No, a well-developed Christological model is being advanced here, albeit in abbreviated form, and that model is Cyril's in all of its decisive respects.

But if the Christology is Cyril's, then the shortcomings of Cyril's Christology are the shortcomings of the Definition as well. Cyril's identification of the "person of the union" with a preexistent Logos understood to be simple and impassible would not allow for a real relation of Jesus of Nazareth to the Logos. And yet, that created an insuperable problem. If the Christological subject (the one *hypostasis*) is the Word, then there is

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[83] Cyril, "First Letter to Succensus" in McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, p. 354.

only one subject to whom the properties of the human "nature" can be assigned. But the prior commitment to simplicity and impassibility would not allow that to happen. And so the situation was this: human properties *ought* to be ascribed to the Logos. But human properties *cannot* be ascribed to the Logos. No resolution of this problem was forthcoming. Nor can any be expected so long as the prior commitment to simplicity and impassibility remains in place. That is a reflection of the logical aporia of Chalcedon (i.e. the inability to specify the relation of Jesus to the "person of the union"). And so, any repair of Chalcedon would have to begin with the surrender of simplicity and impassibility. But, of course, it goes without saying that repairing Chalcedon cannot be the ultimate reason for that surrender in any genuine Protestant theology. The Bible will have to be allowed to speak!

IV POST-CHALCEDONIAN DEVELOPMENTS AS SEEN IN THE WRITINGS OF JOHN OF DAMASCUS

In thorough treatments of post-Chalcedonian Christologies, the three figures treated are typically Leontius of Byzantium, Maximus Confessor, and John of Damascus. Given the limitations of space, I will not be able to treat the first two here but will content myself with an engagement of the third. John of Damascus has an important role to play in the history we are narrating due, as we shall see, to his influence in the Reformation period and the way in which different strands of his thinking came to be unraveled at that time.[84]

At first glance, John's definition of the "person of the union" would seem to constitute a departure from Chalcedon. Certainly, it is different. The definition is as follows.

We ... declare that Christ has a compound nature, not in the sense of something new made from different things, as man is made up of body and soul or as the body is composed of four elements, but in the sense of being made of different things

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[84] John was, arguably, *the* Greek theologian for Thomas Aquinas. On this point, see Alex B. Bruce, *The Humiliation of Christ*, 5th ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1900), p. 73. A translation of John's *De fide orthodoxa* from Greek into Latin was made in the twelfth century by Burgundio of Pisa and revised in the thirteenth by Robert Grosseteste (*c*.1235–1239). A new translation by Faber Stapulensis appeared in 1507. Zwingli's copy of this edition is still extant and heavily marked. And the great Lutheran theologian Martin Chemnitz made extensive use of it. My gratitude must be recorded to the late Professor David Wright, my former colleague in Edinburgh, for acquainting me with this history of texts a number of years ago.

which remain the same. For we confess that from divinity and humanity there is the same perfect God and that he both is and is said to be of two natures and in two natures. We say that the term "Christ" is the name of the person and that it is not used in a restricted sense, but as signifying what is of two natures.[85]

There is no mixing of "natures" in this account. "Natures" are natural structures of being – things like body and soul – which do not and cannot change. The "person" or "hypostasis," on the other hand, is the manner of living – out of and in two natures; the *how* of the concrete existence of the one Christ.

We do not set each nature apart by itself, but hold them to be united to each other in one composite Person. For we say that the union is substantial; that is to say, true and not imaginary. We do not, however, define the substantial union as meaning that the two natures go to make up one compound nature, but as meaning that they are truly united to each other into one composite Person of the Son of God, each with its essential difference maintained intact.[86]

The language of "composite Person" or "composite hypostasis" comes from Leontius.[87] But, as I say, I will not be exploring past usage here. The decisive question for our purposes has to do with the *theological* context in which this formula does its work. And the context is the problem of the "communication of attributes" – which by this point in time had moved to center stage and was no longer a secondary issue as it had been in Cyril.

Listen carefully in the following passage for the subject to whom the attributes of both natures are communicated.

When we speak of the divinity, we do not attribute the properties of the humanity to it. Thus we never speak of a passible or created divinity. Neither do we predicate the divine properties of the flesh, for we never speak of uncreated flesh or humanity. In the case of the person, however, whether we name it from both of the parts or from one of them, we attribute the properties of both natures to it. And thus, Christ – which name covers both together – is called both God and man, created and uncreated, passible and impassible.[88]

The referent throughout this passage is the composite person – the God-human in his divine–human unity – and *not*, as with Cyril and Chalcedon,

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[85] St John of Damascus, "An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith," in St John of Damascus, *Writings*, trans. by Frederic H. Chase, Jr. (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1958), pp. 271–2.

[86] Ibid., pp. 273–4.

[87] Brian E. Daley, SJ, "Nature and 'Mode of Union': Late Patristic Models for the Personal Unity of Christ," in Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, SJ, and Gerald O'Collins, SJ, eds., *The Incarnation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 164–96.

[88] St. John of Damascus, "An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith," p. 276.

the preexistent divine Word. We make a serious mistake, then, if we think that in this formulation, John is ascribing human properties to the divine Word; he is ascribing them to the God-human understood as a whole.

But now, John has a problem on his hands. He is just as committed to a soteriology of divinization as ever Cyril had been. In fact, he operates under the same twofold pressure as had Cyril: divine impassibility and the soteriology of *theosis* on the one side, a full human nature consubstantial with our own on the other. When speaking, then, in relation to soteriology, his definition of the "person" tends to lapse back into the original Chalcedonian identification of the "person" with the preexistent Word.[89]

And so, the Word of God is united to the flesh by the intermediary of mind which stands midway between the purity of God and the grossness of flesh. Now the mind has authority over both soul and body, but, whereas mind is the purest part of the soul, God is the purest part of mind. And when the mind of Christ is permitted by the stronger, then it displays its own authority. However, it is under the control of the stronger and follows it, doing those things which the divine will desires.[90]

In this passage, the stronger is clearly the divine Word. And just as clear is the fact that the Word is the grammatical subject of actions directed towards his human nature as their object. And so John can write "although we say that the natures of the Lord are mutually immanent, we know that this immanence comes from the divine nature. For this last pervades all things and indwells as it wishes, but nothing pervades it. And it communicates its own splendors to the body while remaining impassible and having no part in the affections of the body."[91] Impassibility and divinization are both upheld on this account – but only by equating the "person" with the divine Word as such.

It is because John can also think along this line that he affirms without hesitation the *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* first introduced into theological vocabulary by Leontius. The doctrine of the *an-* and *enhypostasia* says that the human "nature" had no independent hypostasis of its own (that is the force of the particle *an-* "without hypostasis") but was *enhypostasized* (i.e. made concretely real) "in" the hypostasis of the Logos.

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[89] Andrew Louth focuses his attention on this strand of John's thought, judging him as a result to be representative of that "Cyrilline Chalcedonian tradition" that triumphed at the Fifth Ecumenical Council (553). Thus, his reading of John tends to underplay the influence of Leontius (an opponent of Cyrilline Chalcedonianism). See Andrew Louth, *St John of Damascus: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 152, 157.

[90] St. John of Damascus, "An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith," p. 280.

[91] Ibid., p. 284.

And John grants all of this when thinking along the lines of his second definition of the "person" (as anyone committed to a divinization theory would have to do, sooner or later).[92]

So John has not one but *two* definitions of the "person of the union" up and running. He needs to identify the Christological "person" with the preexistent Logos whenever he is concerning himself with a soteriology of divinization. But when he turns to the problem of the "communication of attributes," he employs a different definition of the "person" as the whole Christ.

The question is: how did John get himself into this predicament? Why does he have two definitions of the Christological "person?" My own answer would be that the problem of the communication has a natural tendency to strive for realistic ascription. A "nature" in this case is the nature of someone. Therefore, the properties of the human "nature" must be the properties of someone; not just *said to be* (which would be a figurative ascription) but actually be the properties of someone. But that someone cannot be the simple and impassible Logos. What then? The Definition of Chalcedon is not adequate to this problem because it demands that human properties be assigned to the Logos (the only subject) and it forbids them from being so assigned at the same time. To his credit, John has at least seen the problem and wants to address it. But his solution constitutes no real advance over against Chalcedon. The promise contained in the thought of a "composite person" cannot be realized because human properties are still ascribed to the "person" only figuratively, not realistically. And that is because the Logos, by definition, cannot enter into real "composition." So human properties are ascribed always and only to a part of the whole, never to the whole.

John creates confusion with his two definitions. He vacillates constantly between them, choosing the one that fits the theological context in which he is thinking. But the truth is that he has not fixed the problem created by Cyril and Chalcedon. He has only papered it over with a solution that is no solution at all. At the end of the day, when human properties are assigned to the whole Christ *according to the human nature alone*, Jesus is being treated as an independent, self-activating subject – a second subject, in other words. And so the aporia of Chalcedon remains firmly in place. Jesus has no real relation to the "person of the union."

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[92] Ibid., pp. 286–7. It should be noted that the translation of *anhypostatic* as "impersonal" (as occurred frequently in the nineteenth century and into the twentieth) is simply wrongheaded. "Personality" is not thought here to be lacking to Jesus, equipped as he is with that reason, will, and energy of operation suited to human "nature." The point concerns rather the *how* of it; how this human was given concrete existence in the hypostasis of the Logos.

Before taking our leave of John, we should note that he also had considerable interest in the problem of the "communication of oper- ations." The "communication of operations" is the problem of explaining how it comes about that, in spite of the fact that there are in the God- human two minds, two wills, and two energies of operation, there are not two sets of activities but a single "theandric operation"[93] directed towards a divinely willed outcome in every situation he encountered. To achieve this particular objective, John has to identify the "person" with the preexistent divine Word. "He made flesh animated by a rational and intellectual soul subsist in his person, and himself became the Person to it."[94] And he then insists that the human will was continuously directed to that which was divinely willed.

Since, then, Christ has two natures, we say that he has two natural wills and two natural operations. On the other hand, since these two natures have one Person, we say that he is one and the same who wills and acts naturally according to both natures … . And we say that he wills and acts in each, not independently, but in concert.[95]

But John can no more preserve the unity of a single theandric action in a consistent fashion than Cyril had been able to do. Confronted by those moments in which the God-human is said by Scripture to have done things or experienced things that are incompatible with divine nature as he has defined it, John has no other option but to say that the divine Person "allows" or "permits" his human nature to function in a way that looks very much like an independent action whose existence he has denied. "For, when his divine will willed and permitted the flesh to suffer and to do what was peculiar to it, he willed these things naturally."[96] That is to say, the God-human willed as God to do some things – eating and drinking are mentioned in the context – in a human way only. The problem is that such a move makes Jesus to be the performative agent of particular actions like eating and drinking. The divine Subject with whom the "person of the union" is identified in order to guarantee a single theandric action is reduced in such moments to the role of an onlooker in relation to actions performed by "another."

Now, if it was as God that he thirsted and having tasted [wine mixed with gall] did not want to drink, then as God he was subject to passion, for thirst is a passion and

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[93] Ibid., p. 309.   [94] Ibid., p. 293.
[95] Ibid., p. 296. But compare this phrase "in concert" with the phrasing cited above in n. 72, "under the control of the stronger … ."
[96] Ibid., p. 298.

so is taste. If, however, it was not as God, then it was entirely as man that he thirsted, and as man also he was volitive.[97]

So also with obedience: it is entirely as man that the God-human was obedient. For obedience is a matter of being under authority and the divine Word is under the authority of no one.[98] So it is Jesus alone who obeys.

My own view is that the Cyrilline move John attempts to make here rests on a sound instinct. If one is firmly committed to dyothelitism, then one simply has to make one of the wills active and the other receptive if anything approximating a single-subject Christology is to be achieved. That much seems right to me, though it is not at all obvious that the divine will should be the "stronger" in the lived existence of Jesus Christ. But the problem facing John – as it faced Cyril – is that you cannot remain committed to divine simplicity and impassibility and deal adequately with the all too human activities ascribed by the Gospels to Jesus of Nazareth. The problem is not only that John cannot carry his basic model through with consistency; it is not only that he abandons the divine activity–human receptivity model at the point at which strictly human activities are in view. The problem is that he cannot realistically ascribe such profoundly human activities to the Person of the Word through "communication." If he is to maintain even only *the appearance* of a realistic "communication," then he has to change the definition of the Person when treating the "communication." And that is precisely what he does.

Thus, the unresolved – and, I would insist, unresolvable – problem facing Chalcedonian orthodoxy lies in its inability to provide a clear and consistent answer to the question of the relation of the human "nature" to the "person of the union." A relation of the Word to his human nature is envisioned (*if* you can call the operation of divine causality through and upon the human nature a relation). But the relation of the human nature to the "person" (moving conceptually now in the opposite direction) is a question that is never raised in an adequate fashion because, quite simply, it cannot be answered on the basis of John's revised Chalcedonianism – or the original Chalcedonianism, for that matter.

CONCLUSION

Robert Jenson has suggested that the resolution of the Arian crisis in the late fourth century through robust affirmation of the coeternality and

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[97] Ibid., p. 300. [98] Ibid, pp. 300–1.

coequality of the Son had the effect of shifting the locus of the metaphys-
ical "gap" in the trinitarian relation between the impassible Father and
Arius' Son to the Christological relation of the eternal Son to the human
Jesus in the mid-fifth century.

> The Antiochene escape is in fact just the Arian escape, moved a notch. The Arians
> protected God from suffering by distinguishing the suffering Son Jesus from the
> true God. It having now been dogmatically decided that the Son is true God, the
> Antiochenes protect God by distinguishing the suffering Jesus from the Son. The
> shielding ontological space between God and Jesus is simply pried open at
> a different place: at least as far as the divine mark of impassibility is concerned,
> Jesus must somehow be one thing and God the Son another.[99]

Jenson is absolutely right to observe a shift in the location of the meta-
physical gap between the impassible God and the passibility of the crea-
ture as the attention of the early Church turned from the doctrine of the
Trinity to Christology. He is wrong only in thinking this was a problem
peculiar to the so-called "Antiochenes." For, as we have seen, the
"Alexandrians" had this problem too.

The truth is that the Chalcedonian Definition *as it stands* can never
succeed in producing the single-subject Christology for which it strove
with might and main. It can never succeed because a *real* relation of Jesus
to the "person of the union" can never be allowed so long as one remains
committed to the idea of impassibility. But in the absence of this real
relation, the unity of the "person" would always remain in doubt and the
tendency to regard Jesus on occasion as an independent subject (and,
indeed, a hypostasis) in his own right would prove inescapable. One
might rightly say: there lurks in the heart of every Cyrilline theologian
a "Nestorius" (or, at least, a "Theodoret"!) just waiting for an opportun-
ity to emerge. At the very least, this also shows that Cyril's solution to the
problem of the unity of the "person" was only partially successful because
he was inconsistent in carrying it through.[100]

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[99] Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, p. 126.
[100] Brian Daley has wondered whether the history of Christian reflection on Christology has
      not been controlled by "two basic casts of mind, two pre-dogmatic perspectives." He
      continues: "One tends to place the strongest emphasis on God's *otherness*, God's
      absoluteness and simplicity as the source and goal of being; it draws on the biblical
      narrative, and biblical categories for support, of course, but its driving engine seems to be
      critical reason applied to faith, a philosophical assumption of what God must be like if
      faith is to be credible." This description is intended by Daley to apply to Diodore of
      Tarsus, Theodore of Mopseustia, Nestorius of Constantinople, and Theodoret of Cyrus.
      "The other mind-set tends to place the strongest emphasis on God's *activity within
      history*, on God's personal, concrete presence and accessibility in the world and in

It would not be until the nineteenth century that theologians began seriously to question the controlling functions played by the categories of simplicity and impassility in constructing the concept of God's being, of God's triunity, etc. And when that occurred, it would not be the kenotic theologians who were responsible. It would be their critics; those influenced most especially by Hegel. In the interim, theologians wishing to defend Chalcedonianism on its own terms would find themselves caught in an endless loop, constantly vacillating with John of Damascus between two definitions of the person of the union – until the two definitions were violently ripped apart and defended separately and against each other by competing factions in the Reformation. In the process, the conditions would be created (within Lutheranism) for the emergence of modern kenoticism – the death rattle of a Christology controlled by a God-concept borrowed from Greek philosophers.

religious language and action; it makes use of philosophical language and argument, of course, but its driving engine is religious response to the biblical proclamation." This "cast of mind" is said to be that of Cyril. See Daley, "'One Thing and Another' . . . ", pp. 42–3. There is probably something to this, but its significance should not be exaggerated. These "casts of mind" are not "pre-dogmatic" – as though they were simply the function of differing temperaments. They are rooted in basic dogmatic decisions, many of which were shared on both sides to the conflict. The entire debate seems, with hindsight, to have been very much an in-house affair, a passionate debate amongst quarreling siblings. Seen in this light, perhaps the worst thing that can be done is to seek "balance" between them through some sort of dialectical movement: to think along with one side for a time and then along with the other and back again. Such an approach would, again, only paper over the very real shortcomings of classical Christological orthodoxy.