

2-1-1969

The Significance of the Dogma Concerning Christ as Defined by the Council of Chalcedon

Herbert J. Bouman
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm>



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Bouman, Herbert J. (1969) "The Significance of the Dogma Concerning Christ as Defined by the Council of Chalcedon," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 40, Article 8.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol40/iss1/8>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Print Publications at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Theological Monthly by an authorized editor of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

The Significance of the Dogma Concerning Christ as Defined by the Council of Chalcedon

HERBERT J. A. BOUMAN

I

Jesus asked His disciples at Caesarea Philippi: "What do the people say about who I am? What do you say?" (cf. Matt. 16:13-16). Jesus asked His enemies: "What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he?" (Matt. 22:42). The people, in turn, in perplexity and resentment asked Jesus: "Who do you claim to be?" (John 8:53). And when Saul of Tarsus was struck down near the city of Damascus and was confronted by the risen Lord, Saul's first question was: "Who are you, Lord?" (Acts 9:5)

The questions concerning Jesus Christ have occupied the Christian church from the beginning, and they continue to engage the church's undiminished concern. That is as it should be. Without Christ there would be no Christianity at all, no church, no Gospel, no salvation. Christ is the church's Founder and Savior, Head and Protector, and the content of the church's message. Thus the church's entire existence, life, mission, activity, destiny, and relevance are inextricably bound up with Jesus Christ. This means that in all her

history the church's health and strength, her relevance to every age, and her effectiveness in addressing herself to the needs of the time stand in direct relationship to her fidelity to a true and dynamic Christology. Martin Luther put it thus:

I have perceived and noted in all histories of all of Christendom that all those who have correctly had and kept the chief article of Jesus Christ have remained safe and secure in the right Christian faith. Although they may have sinned or erred in other matters, they have nevertheless been preserved at the last. For whoever stands correctly and firmly in the belief that Jesus Christ is true God and man, that he died and has risen again for us, such a person has all other articles added to him and they firmly stand by him. Therefore, what St. Paul says is quite certain, that Christ is "capital wealth," base, ground, and the whole sum, around and under which everything is gathered and found, and in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and understanding [Col. 2:3]. Christ also says himself, "He who abides in me, he it is that bears much fruit" [John 15:5]; "he who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters," etc. [Luke 11:23].

For thus it is decided (so speaks St. Paul) that in Jesus Christ the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily [Col. 2:9] or personally, in such manner that whoever does not find or receive God in Christ shall nevermore and nowhere have or find

The author is professor of systematic theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He is a member of the Division of Theological Studies of the Lutheran Council in the United States of America. This article was prepared as part of a study of Christology, sponsored by LCUSA.

God outside of Christ, even though he should go beyond heaven, below hell, or outside of the world. (*The Three Symbols or Creeds of the Christian Faith*, trans. Robert R. Heitner; ed. Lewis W. Spitz. *Luther's Works*, American Edition, Vol. 34 [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960], p. 207.)

Conversely, when the church's witness to Jesus Christ became confused and uncertain, fragmented and perverted, the church lost her proper power and influence over the lives of men, became irrelevant, and allowed herself to be panicked into adopting unhappy alternate approaches. Observe Luther's noteworthy comment:

On the other hand, I have also noticed that all error, heresy, idolatry, offense, misuse, and evil in the church originally came from despising or losing sight of this article of faith in Jesus Christ. And if one looks at it correctly and clearly, all heresies do contend against this dear article of Jesus Christ. (*Ibid.*, p. 207 f.)

Since, according to the Biblical witness, Jesus Christ came into the world to "destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8), it is obvious that the devil's principal focus of attack from without and from within has always been the church's teaching concerning Jesus Christ, even as in the days of His flesh our Lord was confronted and actively opposed by a steady manifestation of the demonic powers. Luther was keenly aware of and sensitive to the demonic and its mysterious but devastating force, and he gave constant expression to the awareness both in his joy at Christ's victory over "the power of the devil" and in his tracing all trouble in the church to "the old evil foe," who "means deadly woe" and whose "dread arms in fight" are "deep guile and great might." Speaking specifically to the

doctrine concerning Christ and the demonic onslaughts against it, Luther said:

Thus the devil has work to do and attacks Christ in three lines of battle. One will not let him be God, another will not let him be man, and the third will not let him do what he has done. Each of the three wants to reduce Christ to nothing. For what does it profit you to confess that he is God, if you do not also believe that he is man? Then you do not have the whole, real Christ with that, but only a phantom of the devil's. What does it profit you to confess that he is man, if you do not also believe that he is God? What does it profit you to confess that he is God and man, if you do not also believe that he has become everything and done everything for you? . . . All three articles must be truly believed, namely, that he is God, further, that he is man, further, that he became man for us, that is, as the first symbol says, "conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered, was crucified, died, and rose again," etc. If one article is lacking, then all are lacking, for the faith is supposed to be and must be whole and complete. (*Ibid.*, p. 210)

II

This is what Chalcedon is really all about: an expression of the church's concern that her faith be "whole and complete." The church's witness to Jesus Christ has rarely been "whole and complete." This is not surprising, on the one hand, in view of the uniqueness, the richness, and the complexity of the New Testament record concerning Jesus Christ and, on the other hand, in view of the limitations of the human mind to grasp and the inadequacies of human language to express what is involved in the mutual relationship between God and man. After all, our reli-

gion centers in a mystery that is confessedly great, the mystery that proclaims: "He was manifested in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16). A mystery, by definition, is something that we do not understand. This inability or failure to understand, coupled with human perversity, has led to a host of one-sided, fragmented, and therefore wrong statements, even though each in itself may express valid aspects of the whole. Each new attempt to deal with the mystery of Christology seemed to lead to new distortions and create more problems, and the church felt obliged to redefine the content of her faith in Jesus Christ. The fact that in our own day there is so much preoccupation with the "Jesus of history" and the "Christ of faith," as well as with the question of what He came to do, how He did it, and what it means for mankind, shows how persistent the Christological problem is.

This is probably as good a place as any to clarify a few terms. We begin with the term "Christology." In some circles the word is used in a rather narrow and limited sense to refer to theological formulations about Christ, especially the so-called metaphysical aspects, or those having to do with the "divine" side of Jesus, or the relationship between the "human" and the "divine." In this view, a recital of what the gospels record concerning Jesus of Nazareth is not considered to be "Christological." Furthermore, Christology in this limited sense appears to be restricted to ontological concerns, dealing with the person of Jesus Christ without regard to His work. As a result, one could be led to speak of (1) "Jesus-ology," (2) Christology, (3) soteriology.

But this is a very badly conceived ap-

proach. The New Testament never permits one to compartmentalize and segregate in this way. Jesus and Christ and salvation are simply inseparable. Recall what Luther said about the faith having to be "whole and complete." So then, when I use the term "Christology" I shall always use it to refer to the whole Christ, all that He is and has, all that He has done and continues to do "for us men and for our salvation."

Another clarification: We spoke of the Christological "problem." The problem certainly does not lie with God or with Christ or even with the message concerning Him. Even for many Christians Christ presents no problem at all. An inescapable reality, the source of life, a driving force, an irresistible magnet, an unavoidable imperative, a challenge—all these, yes; but a problem, no. He is rather received and trusted as God's complete solution to human problems. If we nevertheless speak of the Christological problem, we mean to say that there are some things about Jesus Christ that defy analysis or that theological brains find difficult, if not impossible, to formulate neatly and adequately.

In this sense Christian theologians have had a number of problems with Jesus Christ. From the beginning the Christian church bore witness to God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; she baptized her catechumens into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and she confessed the Christian faith in an infinite variety of Trinitarian summaries. At the same time the church took centuries to develop precise formulations concerning the Trinity, specifically the relationship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to one another—formulations that would

be faithful to the Biblical witness concerning the indivisible oneness of God and at the same time to the "threeness" of God. And since Jesus Christ is the Son of God, or the "Second" Person of the Trinity, the precise relationship of the Son to the Father and to the Holy Spirit was one Christological problem that the church strove to settle, particularly at the Second Ecumenical Council at Constantinople in 381 and in the detailed, even ponderous, definitions contained in what we know as the Athanasian Creed.

More exclusively Christological are the problems raised by the "God incarnate, man divine," the relationship of the divine and the human in Jesus Christ. Now, when we here speak of the Christological problem and the church's attempted solution at the Council of Chalcedon, this is in particular what we have in mind.

Let us focus the problem still more sharply. It is possible to read the gospels and get the picture of a thorough and complete human being, a man among men, a man named Jesus. The record gives his family background, his hometown, his relatives, his friends, and his foes. It records his physical experiences of growing up and increasing in wisdom and stature, of weariness and hunger and thirst; and it gives insight into his thinking, his psychological and spiritual aspects in joy and grief, in compassion and anger. He was in every respect a first-century Palestinian Jew, externally indistinguishable from his contemporaries and compatriots in appearance, dress, speech, and manner of life. Like them, he was subject to cold and heat. When he was injured, he suffered pain, and when he was wounded he shed blood. And finally, he died and was buried. He

was a popular speaker and expressed many exciting ideas. He elicited strong reactions. People either loved him or hated him. Ultimately, he appeared to have influenced the great majority of his countrymen not at all. He was, no doubt, a remarkable man; to some, he was "the most unforgettable character" they had ever met. But there have been other unforgettable characters and remarkable men. The real problem, then, does not lie in the story of this man Jesus.

Again, one can read in these same documents about One who made many divine claims for Himself and who demonstrated by His words and actions that He was fully justified in doing so. Again and again He demonstrated His authority and power over the forces of nature and the laws governing the physical universe. He showed His power over disease and even reversed the inexorable processes of death and decay. He assumed and exercised divine prerogatives as if this were the perfectly natural thing to do. The implications were inescapable for his contemporaries, both friend and foe. He was making Himself equal with God (cf. Mark 2:7; John 5:18; Phil. 2:6). He vanquished the most dreadful and potent forces of the demonic powers and achieved a worldwide redemption. This One was the Christ, and those who witnessed to Him called Him Lord and Word of God and Son of God, and they worshiped Him as God. But this too is not the real problem of Christology. Anyone who believes in the existence of a God who made heaven and earth and has in the course of history repeatedly demonstrated His omnipotence and control over people and things should have no difficulty in acknowledging the manifestation of the di-

vine power through the Son of God, the Lord Christ.

No, the real problem lies in the assertion of the record that the story of the man Jesus of Nazareth in his utter and complete and unqualified humanity and the story of the Son of God and His unmistakably divine activity are the story of *one and the same Person at one and the same time*. There is no difficulty in conceiving of and speaking about God and man, each distinct and in his own sphere, clearly maintaining their dual polarity. But when we hyphenate the two subjects and say God-man and bring the two poles into single focus, then we have *the* Christological problem. And this is what Chalcedon and the road that led to it are all about.

III

For the church's preachers and theologians it was not so much a question of accepting the apostolic proclamation concerning Jesus Christ as the performer of God's saving deed for sinful man. Nor was it a question of desiring to reproduce that proclamation faithfully in the church's ongoing mission. It was rather a question of adequately formulating the wonder and the mystery of Christology and particularly of safeguarding the purity of the Biblical witness to Christ against one-sided statements concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, which because of their one-sidedness are distorted, and hence false. From this perspective it will be noted that in the history of the church's doctrinal formulations many, if not most, of these formulas received their specific shape and scope in response to the need of rejecting a specific heresy. It is a fact, perhaps a melancholy one, that much of the church's dogmatic

activity has been, and indeed had to be, defensive and polemical. It has always been so, and it is so today. There is only one Christ and therefore only one Gospel. A distorted Christology inevitably produces "another Gospel," and the apostolic anathema has rested on such an enterprise from the beginning. (Gal.1:8)

So it was in the first centuries after Pentecost. Confronted with the apostolic witness to Jesus Christ, David's Son, yet David's Lord, Son of God and Son of Man, the eternal Word made flesh, the Father's equal assuming the form of a servant, Christian thinkers felt the need to come to grips with the tensions inherent in the union of the divine and the human in Jesus Christ. They felt called upon to provide a logical and reasonable explanation of the Christological mystery. With her roots in an uncompromising Jewish monotheism and surrounded by pagan polytheism and Greek thought, the Christian church strove to remain faithful to the Biblical witness concerning Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and also concerning the Son of God who took our flesh. Thus, in a sense the church was compelled to walk a tightrope, endeavoring to remain unequivocally monotheistic without becoming unitarian, and trinitarian without becoming tritheistic. Coupled with this desire to "explain" the faith was the apologetic concern of defending the Christian message against misrepresentation and false accusations — as, for example, that the Christian trinitarian and Christological affirmations were endangering, if not destroying, the uniqueness and transcendence of God; or that the message of God-made-man led to a contamination of the pure, incorporeal spirituality of God by associating it too

closely with the physical, which was held to be intrinsically inferior and impure.

The church was of course always interested in promoting the widest possible acceptance of the Christian Gospel. There was, too, an ecumenical urge, a desire to reach all sorts and conditions of men. Living and growing in a Greek world, it was natural for the church to use Greek words and ideas to communicate her message. In fact, the milieu of the early church included Greek philosophy (predominantly Platonism, Neoplatonism, and Stoicism), Hellenistic Judaism, Oriental mystic speculations, and Roman jurisprudence (Tertullian). It was not surprising that some attempted an accommodation of the Christian Gospel to this complex of ideas and thus produced an amalgam that might incorporate something from all sources and have something to appeal to everybody.

Self-evidently, this does not tell the whole story of a process covering centuries. There was in itself nothing sinister in the motivation and design of these Christian theologians and churchmen. There is no need whatever to question their sincerity and their devotion to the truth of the Gospel. In fact, the heretics in the church were usually guided by perfectly proper concerns. Beyond the words of the Scriptures there was as yet no generally understood or accepted vocabulary for meaningful and relevant communication. A way had to be found to supply this need. It had to be the way of trial and error, particularly in the earlier years. Christian writers were groping, and in the process they employed many unguarded formulations that by hindsight proved to be inadequate, one-sided, misleading, and even false, and had therefore to be discarded, corrected, quali-

fied, or reinterpreted. Thus, what was once innocently inadequate had to be branded heretical later on. As Luther emphasizes in his great book *On the Councils and the Church*, the ancient church never created new doctrines. Rather, she concerned herself with the task of doing justice to the Biblical witness in correct formulation, in clarification, and in safeguarding the truth of the Gospel against distortion and perversion. This is what the first four Ecumenical Councils, Nicea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431), and Chalcedon (451), tried to do.

IV

As Christian thinkers and theologians reflected on the "mystery of our religion," they sought to resolve the Christological tensions in three or four basic ways. Essentially this is what Luther also suggested in *The Three Symbols*. Luther had said that one heretic will not let Him be God, another will not let Him be man, and the third will not let Him do what He has done. To this list we should add a fourth category, those who are quite willing to acknowledge both the divine and the human in Jesus Christ but do not know how properly to relate the human and the divine to each other in the one Person, Jesus Christ.

1. There were those who strongly asserted the true deity of Christ, but they did it in such a way that the true humanity suffered severe restrictions and at times disappeared altogether. As the Old Testament records instances when God briefly and temporarily adopted some visible form in order to communicate with some patriarch or other godly man and then disappeared again, so in a similar way God

appeared temporarily in a human disguise and walked this earth as Jesus of Nazareth. He was not really a true human being but only appeared as one; or while His flesh or body seemed real enough, there was no human consciousness or feeling, or mind or will. A divine principle, or Logos, took the place of the normal human mind. It is plain to see that on this view the humanity played a very insignificant role. It was simply God playing a part, and since God cannot be said to be subject to any emotions or sufferings, because impassibility is a characteristic of the Deity, Jesus cannot have had any ordinary human experiences. This strain of Docetism (from *dokeo*, to appear or seem) was rather widespread, particularly in Alexandria, the home of several outstanding theologians. And since the humanity was so strongly subordinated, the historical side of Jesus Christ was given very little attention.

All attempts at formulating a Christology that proceeded from the premise of asserting God as an absolute, indivisible Monad, utterly transcendent and incapable of any association with the physical, are variations of this approach. On this view there can be no true Son of God and no incarnation of the Son. Some had the idea that the unipersonal God simply manifested Himself successively in three different modes, acting now as Father, now as Son, now as Holy Spirit. Since there really is no Son, it was the Father Himself who suffered, but even this was a kind of illusion.

2. Another approach to the Christological problem was to assert the complete humanity of Jesus Christ but to safeguard this at the expense of the divinity. There was indeed a strong sense of the genuine

historicalness of Jesus of Nazareth, who was born of a human mother, Mary, in the days of Caesar Augustus and Quirinius and Herod, who suffered and was crucified in the days of Caesar Tiberius and Pontius Pilate and Herod Antipas. Yet the emphasis was one-sided and failed to do justice to the Biblical witness concerning the Son of God. This approach was promoted by the school of theology located at Antioch in Syria. One view in particular found much favor, that of Adoptionism or Dynamic Monarchianism, associated with the name of Paul of Samosata. It claimed that Jesus was simply a man, selected by God and endowed with special powers (*dynamis*) and elevated progressively until he was made a son of God by adoption. Here belong all assertions that involve a reduction or qualification or subordination or limitation of the essential deity of Jesus Christ.

Here, too, belongs the system developed by Arius, the arch-heretic in the early fourth century, who was dealt with and repudiated at the First Ecumenical Council at Nicea. Arius insisted that God is an absolute transcendent Monad; therefore God cannot possibly share His essence with anyone, He cannot be subject to division or change, He cannot have a Son who shares in His essence. If Jesus were God, there would be two gods; by an inescapable necessity, therefore, Jesus must be a creature who had a beginning, who has nothing in common with God, and who is subject to change.

3. A third approach to the mystery of the God-man proceeded from an acceptance of both God and man in Jesus Christ, a position that was sincerely shared by both the Antiochene and the Alexan-

drian schools. Both camps, however, had great difficulty in formulating the *relationship* between the human and the divine in Jesus Christ, and each tried to deal with the problem more or less from its traditional perspective. A representative of the Antiochene orientation was Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople. He himself, or the circle around him, put the stress on the difference between the human and divine natures and the primary need to distinguish between them and keep them clearly apart. It is true, they believed, that both natures were truly present in Christ and were truly united ("like two boards glued together") in the person of Christ. Yet they cannot and do not have anything in common with each other, and there is no intercommunication between them. In his one-sided effort to differentiate the divine and the human in Christ, Nestorius refused to accept the title of *Theotokos*, God-Bearer, as applied to Mary. The Third Ecumenical Council, held at Ephesus in 431, repudiated the position of the Nestorians and emphatically asserted the unity of the two natures in the one Christ and unhesitatingly ascribed the *Theotokos* to the Virgin.

The Alexandrian reaction to Nestorianism came quickly and vigorously. The name of Eutyches, who has been described as an "aged and muddle-headed archimandrite," has been associated with an extreme reaction against the Nestorian trend toward separation. Eutychianism insisted that after the Incarnation there were no longer two natures, human and divine, but that in the process the two had become fused into a third something. This confusion of the two natures eliminated any true humanity. This position lingers on to

the present day in certain Monophysite (one-nature) sects in Eastern Christendom. Faced with the two extreme positions of Nestorianism, in effect separating Christ into two entities, and Eutychianism, robbing Christ of His true humanity, the church had to find a way to recognize the valid concerns of both sides without sanctioning their distortions. This, finally, is what the Council of Chalcedon accomplished in a most constructive manner.

V

It will be neither necessary nor desirable to recount the story of this Fourth Ecumenical Council in detail. It should be noted that, more than any previous council, it represented the pooling of theological wisdom and ecclesiastical statesmanship from both East and West. The most important sources for the Christological settlement achieved by a broadly representative committee at Chalcedon were some writings of the distinguished patriarch of Alexandria, Cyril, now deceased, and the *Tome*, or document, of Leo, bishop or pope of Rome. The Chalcedonian statement reads as follows:

In agreement, therefore, with the holy fathers, we all unanimously teach that we should confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is one and the same Son, the same perfect in Godhead and the same perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, the same of a rational soul and body, consubstantial with the Father in Godhead, and the same consubstantial with us in manhood, like us in all things except sin; begotten from the Father before the ages as regards His Godhead, and in the last days, the same, because of us and because of our salvation begotten from the Virgin Mary, the *Theotokos*, as regards His man-

hood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, made known in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation, the difference of the natures being by no means removed because of the union, but the property of each nature being preserved and coalescing in one *prosopon* and one *hupostasis*—not parted or divided into two *prosopa*, but one and the same Son, only-begotten, divine Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets of old and Jesus Christ Himself have taught us about Him and the creed of our fathers has handed down. (J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* [New York: Harper & Row, 1958], pp. 339 f.)

This Chalcedonian definition of the church's Christological dogma is the culmination of centuries of attempts to formulate the Biblical material comprehensively and correctly, and the virtual conclusion of a century and a half of controversy. In the first four Ecumenical Councils the church had endeavored to express the orthodox faith concerning the triune God and concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. As the closing lines of the Chalcedonian statement declare, the churchmen did not want to bring anything new; they merely wanted to reformulate in a manner relevant to their day and need what the Scriptures were saying and what the Christians had confessed as their creed earlier, as, for example, in the Nicene Creed.

The significance of the Chalcedonian definition lies in its comprehensiveness and balance. It attempted to bring all the church's wrestling with the Christological problem since before Nicea up-to-date. It was not so much a repudiation of former formulations and the introduction of new materials, but rather an earnest endeavor

to recapture all that had been validly said before and to bring it into a meaningful synthesis. The complete deity of our Lord and His relationship to the Father and the Holy Spirit had been affirmed and clarified at Nicea and Constantinople. The union of the divine and the human in the person of Jesus Christ had been emphasized at Ephesus. There remained the task of putting the relationship of the divine and the human in the person of Christ into proper perspective so that both would receive their due recognition and be protected against distortion. The aim was to preserve a clear distinction between the human and the divine without implying a separation, and to maintain unambiguously the inseparable and dynamic relationship and union of the divine and the human in the one person, Jesus Christ, without suggesting a confusion.

A glance at the Chalcedonian definition will quickly bring out the paramount emphases. Notice, near the beginning, the repeated use of the word "same," "one and the same Son," etc. Whereas the Council of Nicea declared Jesus to be "very God of very God," by affirming that He was "of one substance with the Father," Chalcedon added that He was also "consubstantial with us in manhood, like us in all things except sin." Both His divine and His human origin, or birth, are clearly stated. At the same time, however, the mystery and tension of the Son's entry into the world of men are expressed in calling the Virgin Mary *Theotokos*, God-Bearer, as Ephesus had already done.

The most notable feature of the Chalcedonian definition, however, is the assertion that Christ was "made known in two natures *without confusion, without change,*

without division, without separation." In the original these four prepositional phrases are negative adverbs, "unconfusedly, unchangedly, undividedly, unseparatedly." These four terms appear in pairs, the first two designed to reject a one-sided mingling or alteration of the divine and human in Christ, as was done by the Eutychians, while at the same time safeguarding the valid concerns of the Nestorians; the second two adverbs, on the other hand, aiming at repudiating the one-sided division between the divine and the human, as practised by the Nestorians, while preserving the valid interests of the Eutychians. Nearly all these adverbs or their equivalents had been employed in Christological explanations before. The Chalcedonian settlement, therefore, used terms that were familiar and relevant to fifth-century Christians.

The work of the Council of Chalcedon pretty well brought the long-drawn-out Christological controversies to a close. Henceforth the church regarded the dogmatic formulations concerning the Lord Jesus Christ as settled. Subsequent centuries were generally content to take over the Chalcedonian settlement. All the major theological parties in the Reformation century professed an orthodox commitment to this statement, even though interpretations differed. To the present day, no Christologies that ignore Chalcedon can be taken seriously. At the very least, what the fathers said at Chalcedon is used as a launching pad for further exploration, even if it is not accepted as sacrosanct and definitive.

In truth, however impressive and relevant the Chalcedonian formula was for its time and continues to be, it has its short-

comings. An obvious difficulty for us lies in the philosophic and semantic freight carried by the language itself. This is true of any document from another age. Again, except for the phrase "because of us and because of our salvation," which appears also in the Nicene Creed, the ancient church seems to have been preoccupied predominantly with the ontological question, determined to fix precisely and in minute detail *who* Jesus Christ is. The soteriological question, concerned with the good news of *what* God in Christ has done for us men and for our salvation, appears not to have received its due.

Finally let it be said to the credit of Chalcedon, the formulation did not, and did not intend to, solve the Christological problem or explain away the mystery. It affirmed clearly that the Christ whom the church proclaims is one inseparable Person, truly God and truly man at one and the same time. There was no attempt to remove the utter paradox involved in every statement concerning Jesus Christ. In its restraint and balance the Chalcedonian formula calls its admonition to the church across the centuries: "When you proclaim the message entrusted to you, the Word concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, don't mess around with it, don't lose yourself in one corner of it, don't rationalize it, just proclaim it, all of it, whole and unfragmented, and, above all, be sure that the message gets through to your contemporaries."

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barth, Karl. *The Humanity of God*, trans. John Newton Thomas and Thomas Wieser. Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1960.

- Hendry, George S. *The Gospel of the Incarnation*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958.
- Kelly, J. N. D. *Early Christian Doctrines*. New York: Harper & Row, 1958.
- Knutson, Kent S. *His Only Son Our Lord*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966.
- Luther, Martin. *The Three Symbols or Creeds of the Christian Faith*, trans. Robert R. Heitner; ed. Lewis W. Spitz. *Luther's Works*, American Edition, Vol. 34. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960.
- . *On the Councils and the Church*. *Luther's Works*, American Edition, Vol. 41. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav. "Chalcedon After Fifteen Centuries," *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, XXII (December 1951), 926—36.
- Richardson, Alan. *Creeds in the Making*. London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1951.
- Routley, Erik. *The Man for Others*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1964.
- Scharlemann, Martin H. "The Case for Four Adverbs: Reflections on Chalcedon," *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, XXVIII (December 1957), 881—92.