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11

The Divinity of Christ and Social Justice[1]

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I OFFER THE FOLLOWING essay in admiring, respectful, and grateful tribute to my faculty colleague Dr. Ralph Del Colle. Though they do not represent the totality of his family and ecclesial life, his theological reflection and scholarship have been a beacon for many. Illness and death cut short his articulate collegiality and an international theological witness to Catholic tradition. His holy life has inspired us and gives confidence about risen joy. Like most Catholic theologians, Dr. Del Colle expounded Catholic doctrine with respect for Catholic social teaching. This essay intersects with Dr. Del Colle's love for the faith of the Church but does not try to represent his published or unpublished theological principles, reflections, and positions.

INTRODUCTION: RESPONSE TO A FUTURE OP-ED

A succinct op-ed by Ross Douthat, "Can Liberal Christianity Be Saved?" was an unknown futurable when this essay was in formation.[2] Douthat

1. The argument in this revised essay first appeared in a paper, "Classical Christology and Social Justice: Why the Divinity of Christ Matters" presented at the Second Annual Colloquium of the Marquette Lonergan Project, "Doing Catholic Systematic Theology in a Multi-Religious World," November 4–5, 2010, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. My thanks to respondents Bryan N. Massingale, Juliana Vazquez, and Darren Dias for valuable comments.

2. Ross Douthat, "Can Liberal Christianity Be Saved?" *New York Times*, July 15,

points to that larger question raised by the Episcopal Church's House of Bishops' July 2012 approval of a rite for the blessing of same-sex unions. Douthat's balanced answer nonetheless evinces a standard American assumption about all of Christianity being summed up in the varieties of American Protestantism. Douthat states that for liberal Christianity, "[F]aith should spur social reform as well as personal conversion." Of course, that description of liberal Christianity applies equally to Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Catholic Christianity. Catholic social doctrine, from Leo XIII's *Rerum novarum* to the Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace's *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* and Benedict XVI's *Caritas in veritate*, teaches why and how faith spurs social reform, and it indicates the main directions of reform. Moreover, many Black Protestants and Black Catholics similarly believe that faith spurs social reform, although they do not necessarily agree with a whole "liberal" agenda. Then too, and Douthat ignores this, the emergence of the Religious Right in the 1980s also depended on the principle that faith should spur social reform, usually reform in the direction of minimizing federal governance except for an expansive foreign policy backed by use of military force. Seldom or never has the Religious Right, old or new, sought means in public policy to help eradicate persistent racial injustice embedded in mores and institutions long since shaped by white culture.[3]

Nevertheless, Douthat's main question escapes the limits of its assumptions. Moreover, his positive, qualified answer has merit. In his view, Christianity committed to social reform can survive and flourish if one condition is fulfilled: that liberal Christianity recover "a religious reason for its own existence." Many congregants of liberal churches have ceased to be convinced about a religious raison d'être for membership since the churches' social agenda seems almost indistinguishable from a secular agenda. Liberal Christianity's best hope, advises Douthat, lies in renewing and articulating its anchorage in the content of faith. Even apart from that challenge, there is every reason to seek that articulation beyond the spelling-out of social-ethical implications in biblical texts and in the region of faith known as tradition.

Now, all Catholics and Protestants I know who are committed to social justice have an anchorage in Scripture and tradition that at least implicitly envelops their social analyses of contemporary conditions.

2012.

3. See Bryan N. Massingale, *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010) on US cultural racism.

Nevertheless, Douthat has it right that there is a problem with a social agenda in US Christianity. The problem is minimal articulation of what links social justice with traditional Christian doctrines on God, Christ, grace, sacraments, kingdom of God, apostolic succession, eschatology, and so forth. A result is confusion about the Church's social mission, with some thinking churches have adopted a secular agenda and others wondering how some church-going Christians can be indifferent to structural causes of avoidable human suffering. A solution for the problem is not out of reach. Systematic theology can assist social ethics and biblical theology in articulating the missing link. Linkage, in this essay with traditional teaching on Christ's divinity, clarifies grounds for a Christian search for social justice and keeps that search accountable to faith, Bible, Church, and tradition. I propose in this essay that commitment to social justice finds its ultimate principle in the divinity of Christ, especially as conceived in the formulation taught by the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE). First, though, what in more detail is the problem?

A PROBLEMATIC OF ECUMENICAL BREADTH

The problem is a specific variation on the typically modern division between faith and everyday life. A chronic disjunction in many Christians keeps apart their sincere faith and their lived sense of the societal implications of their faith especially in regard to social justice. Preparation and dissemination of official social teachings by churches from the Catholic, Lutheran (ELCA), Presbyterian Church USA, Eastern Orthodox, and American Baptist to Evangelicals and some Pentecostals, have not overcome the disjunction. Despite official teachings, some degree of alienation from Christian commitment to social justice troubles almost all churches. Douthat and those for whom he speaks may see the more pressing problem to be alienation of putatively justice-oriented, so-called liberal churches from the revealed content of faith. Which alienation is it? From social consciousness or from the content of faith? In either case there is a weak connection between the core of belief and an orientation to social justice. Many who share Douthat's analysis of "liberal Christianity" have decried alienation from the content of faith. Fewer in the US have concentrated on Christian alienation from social justice. So I would like to provide an illustrative case in point of how a core doctrine of faith underwrites Catholic commitment to social justice expounded by, for example, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. The core doctrine at

issue is the familiar, catechetical, credal yet always mysterious affirmation that Jesus Christ is one divine person in two complete, distinct natures.

Linkage between creed and social justice passes through the Church's social mission. The Church is missionary by Trinitarian nature not solely by the dominical mandate of Matthew 28. According to Benedict XVI, mission has had a social dimension from shortly after Pentecost when the apostles (Acts 6:1–6) initiated a diaconal service in Jerusalem to distribute bread to the Hebrew-speaking and Greek-speaking widows, all of whom presumably were Jewish Christians. Care for the temporal well-being of fellow followers of Christ accompanied evangelizing. That impulse and expression in ever-varying modes has continued ever since and is now called social mission. In *Deus caritas est* Benedict establishes social charity as the primary mode of social mission. Social charities under the sponsorship of the hierarchy, such as Caritas, belong to the constitution and tradition of the Church. This means that Christ and the Holy Spirit instituted the Church with an essential, constitutive social concern for people's temporal well-being alongside the mission of evangelizing unto conversion, faith, and baptism. The parable of the Good Samaritan removed territorial, ethnic, and other barriers between believers and neighbors in need. The heritage of Catholic social doctrine, Vatican II's *Gaudium et spes*, and postconciliar papal teaching all approve and call for commitment to social justice as service on behalf of love for neighbors now a global population. Benedict's *Caritas in veritate* too endorses that commitment to social justice through civic participation in the political order, especially as an element in the vocation and apostolic work of the laity.

The Church's social mission, then, has two complementary components, social charity and social justice.[4] Social charity directly reflects the love for God and neighbor built into the Church. Social justice reflects that love indirectly but really. American Catholics, sociological research shows, have more appreciation for social charity than for social justice. Hence, in discussions of social mission, it is social justice that stands in greater need of further attention, particularly in reference to the core doctrines of Christianity. People readily grasp and revere the social charity of Blessed Mother Teresa and the Missionaries of Charity in their care for the destitute, regardless of religion. However, social mission seeking social justice has a more complex, controversial character. Its doctrinal

4. For clear exposition of the two components, see Charles E. Curran, *The Social Mission of the U.S. Catholic Church: A Theological Perspective* (Washington, DC: Georgetown Univ. Press, 2011).

grounding is not anywhere near self-evident. But the grounding is real and valid, as I will show.

First, though, what is social justice? "Social justice concerns. . .the social, political, and economic aspects and, above all, the structural dimensions of problems and their respective solutions."[5] It analyzes how the major public institutions of the social, legal, economic, or political orders actually function in practice not simply as chartered in ideals. Social justice looks to "the structural requirements for a just society focused on the human rights and needs of each person." [6] It seeks to promote a societal condition in which all people, equal in dignity, enjoy proportionally equal access to participation in the social, economic, cultural, civil, and political life of society. Insofar as changes are needed to bring this access about, commitment to social justice ordinarily leads to advocacy for specific public policies, always a controversial matter.

The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* summarizes the importance of social justice for Catholic faith by stating, "A large part of the Church's social teaching is solicited and determined by important social questions, to which social justice is the proper answer."[7] Racial justice logically falls under social justice but has to be broken out because otherwise the distinctive menace of White supremacy in the United States cannot be seen in regard not only to Americans of African, Asian, and Latin descent but also in regard to Native Americans. Embedded within Catholic social teaching, racial and social justice has proved difficult to hear and to accept as belonging to faith. [8]

Why is that? A study of parishioners commissioned by the US Bishops in 1998 reported that "many Catholics do not understand that the social teaching of the Church is an essential part of Catholic faith."[9] One

5. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, trans. Libreria Editrice Vaticana (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004; Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005) no. 201, 89–90.

6. Brian Hehir, "Social Justice," in Richard McBrien et al., eds., *HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995) 1203–4.

7. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium*, no. 81, p. 36. Reference to *Justice in the World*, the 1971 international Synod of Bishops' statement on social justice belonging to the preaching of the gospel did not find its way into the *Compendium*.

8. See Bryan N. Massingale, "James Cone and Recent Catholic Episcopal Teaching on Racism," *Theological Studies* 61 (2000) 700–37. In the *Compendium* only 4 of 583 paragraphs treat racism.

9. United States Catholic Conference, *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions; Reflections of the U.S. Catholic Bishops* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1998), 3.

reason adduced was a perception that social doctrine was peripheral to the core of faith expressed in Eucharistic liturgy and in the Creed. An indicator of a direction for remedies was "the need to see more clearly Catholic social teaching as authentic doctrine and integral to the mission of Catholic education."[10] The *Compendium* addressed that need with a papally authorized synthesis that integrated social doctrine into the official doctrine of Catholic faith. That integration is hopeful in principle.

But in practice, Jerome Baggett's 2009 analysis of 300 interviews with members of six Catholic parishes in the San Francisco Bay area opens space for some doubt that a volume from the Pontifical Council for Peace and Justice will turn the tide in favor of wider reception of Catholic social doctrine. For one thing, Baggett found that "Catholics gain access to these idioms—concepts such as the 'priority of labor over capital,' human dignity, subsidiarity, the common good, a 'preferential option for the poor,' distributive and social justice, stewardship of the earth's resources, and 'just war' criteria—when they hear them used repeatedly."[11] Indeed, he discovered that "[s]ome use social justice language to describe how institutions perpetuate racial inequality and therefore envision institution-level remedies."[12] But such people are relatively few in number. More generally, "public discourse is occurring in parishes. But it is often undermined by a tendency toward civic silencing, whereby the idioms of the church's social justice tradition are expressed less interactively, less incisively, and less regularly."[13] Parishioners, that is, have not assimilated Catholic social doctrine, at least partly because its language, its idiom, is not coin of the American realm. Parishioners' faith expressed in liturgy, prayer, and profession of the Creed does not seem to involve a societal dimension and so can be classified sociologically as privatized.

A condition not totally dissimilar can be found among many Americans in churches and movements stemming from the Reformation, despite Stanley Hauerwas's alarm at social justice saturating Protestant consciences.[14] Instead of churches' social teaching being a "best-kept

10. United States Catholic Conference, *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching*, 3.

11. Jerome P. Baggett, *Sense of the Faithful: How American Catholics Live Their Faith* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009), 186–87.

12. Baggett, *Sense of the Faithful*, 189.

13. Baggett, *Sense of the Faithful*, 187.

14. For a helpful overview of Stanley Hauerwas's contribution, see R. R. Reno, "Stanley Hauerwas," in Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, Blackwell Companions to Religion (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004) 302–16.

secret" as in Catholicism, according to Hauerwas social teachings have inundated Protestant clergy and laity, all but supplanting gospel and faith. Hauerwas laments, "If there is anything Christians agree about today it is that our faith is one that does justice. . . . We are told that justice demands that we must reshape and restructure society so that the structural injustices are eradicated forever."[15] In Hauerwas's perspective, Christian commitment to the cause of social justice has induced rather than overcome Christians' cultural captivity by the market and the state. So he urges that churches should return from a social agenda to concentrate on renewing an ecclesial identity prior to, and complete without, a social mission.[16] The churches' social mission is to witness by example to how Christ, gospel, and faith transform social existence. That witness will contribute more to the common good than churches seeking to intervene in, or to influence, public matters.

And yet he need not worry too much about Protestant conformity to an allegedly misguided message of social justice. The message has not been heard, or having been heard, has been ignored or resisted. Whichever the case, or a mix of the three, sociologist Brian Steensland found that from the 1960s on mainline Protestants in the pews have distrusted official social teachings from the clerical leadership of churches and from the National Council of Churches. His explanation for the negative reaction is that Protestant faithful heard leaders and ecumenists advocating for, and teaching, racial and social justice for minorities and the poor in the language of policy analysis rather than by invocation of explicit theological and moral justifications.[17] The result was a backlash from 1964 to 2000 against an ecumenical social agenda associated with the headquarters and

15. Stanley Hauerwas, *After Christendom?: How the Church Is to Behave If Freedom, Justice, and a Christian Nation Are Bad Ideas* (1991; repr., Nashville: Abingdon, 1999) 45.

16. For an objection to interest in social justice by all religions, not only Christianity, see Shivesh Chandra Thakur, *Religion and Social Justice*, Library of Philosophy and Religion (New York: St. Martin's, 1996). Thakur argues against religious concern for social justice because "religion's ultimate goal, namely the transcendental state of spiritual salvation or liberation . . . must regard earthly matters as 'ultimately inconsequential,'" 44. "Religion has to do with life in its wholeness," according to a Presbyterian Church USA statement in 1954 in, *Social Witness Policy Compilation*, 257–58 accessed on July 25, 2012 at http://index.pcusa.org/NXT/gateway.dll/socialpolicy/1?fn=default.htm$f=templates$vid=pcdocs:10.1048/Enu.

17. Brian Steensland, "The Hydra and the Swords: Social Welfare and Mainline Advocacy, 1964–2000," in Robert Wuthnow and John H. Evans, eds., *The Quiet Hand of God: Faith-Based Activism and the Public Role of Mainline Protestantism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) 213–36.

member churches of the National Council of Churches USA.[18] There is no published empirical data on Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches in America, but it would be surprising if the situation were not the same there.

A sociological study by James D. Davidson and Ralph E. Pyle confirms ecumenical breadth in a disconnect between faith and social justice. They discovered that in Catholic and Protestant congregations between 1965 and 1995, a period when the gap between rich and poor had been increasing, congregations allocated funds, staff time, and selected themes for preaching and hymns in congruence more with a "good fortune theology" celebrating God's material blessings on the righteous than with a "social justice theology" calling for more equitable distribution of resources.[19] That finding contravenes Hauerwas's contention that a wave of social justice rolled across Protestant America. Or if it did, then unbeknownst to him, a simultaneous and ubiquitous movement rolled it back. Where is the liberal Christianity Douthat pointed to? Is it something only in Church leadership?

To give their due to Hauerwas and those mainline American Protestants rejecting a social agenda, perhaps some advocates of Christian commitment to racial and social justice had conveyed an implicit secularization that portrayed a temporal order of socio-politically institutionalized justice as the central objective in the mission of Christ. Some interpretations of the Jesus of history as a prophet of social change have gone in that direction, and been criticized for it by other exegetes.[20] Perhaps Hauerwas has articulated a broad-based recoil in American Protestantism against a surmised assumption that social justice is the *novum* of the mission of Christ, the be-all and end-all of Christianity. No official social teaching

18. For an example of pre-1960s social teaching, see Presbyterian Church USA, *Compilation of Social Policy*, Chapter 1, "Theological Basis for Social Action . . . 1954 statement" (see n. 15 above).

19. James D. Davidson and Ralph E. Pyle, "Public Religion and Economic Inequality," in William H. Swatos Jr., and James K. Wellman Jr., eds., *The Power of Religious Publics: Staking Claims in American Society* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999) 101–14. Their investigation used a spectrum between good fortune theology and social justice theology. Few congregations were at either the extreme, but more were toward the good fortune end.

20. See Ben Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997) 64–92 (criticism of John Dominic Crossan) and 137–60 (criticism of Gerd Theissen, Richard Horsley, and R. David Kaylor). See also N. T. Wright, *The Contemporary Quest for Jesus*, Facets (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002; an excerpt from *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 1996).

document from any church makes a claim that can be understood to state that. But reception cannot be controlled by texts alone.

At the same time, many but not all Black churches have a tradition of rich social teaching and preaching that links faith with a deprivatized commitment to practice of racial and social justice.[21] Still, my limited collaboration with gifted Black Protestant laity and pastors suggests another kind of problem stemming from congregational independence in the free-church and Pentecostal traditions. While side-by-side practice of worship and of commitment to racial and social justice flourish in the congregations, within and among independent congregations there is not widespread consent to any specific articulation of a strong theological bond joining the two practices of discipleship. Consequently, for some congregants theological doubt hovers around commitments to practical activities for racial and social justice. On the other hand, though far less numerous than their Protestant counterparts, Black Catholics in principle and practice have sustained a strong public record in support of the social tradition and documentary heritage of Catholic social teaching on racial and social justice.[22] The deprivatized faith of Black Catholic clergy and laity exemplifies fidelity to what Andrew Greeley identified as the Catholic imagination underlying Catholic social teaching.[23]

REAFFIRMING THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON

Restating the traditional doctrine of Christ's divinity may not seem well suited to helping solve the problem of Christian alienation from social justice. For one thing, attention to a Christological theme cannot be disengaged from doctrine on the Trinity, and especially the Holy Spirit. But

21. See Peter J. Paris, *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); Andrew Billingsley, *Mighty Like a River: The Black Church and Social Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

22. See the articles in the issue dedicated to "Catholic Reception of Black Theology," *Theological Studies* 61 (December 2000); Catholic Charities of Chicago, *Poverty and Racism: Overlapping Threats to the Common Good: A Catholic Charities USA Poverty in America Issue Brief* (Chicago: Catholic Charities: 2008), which was written by Bryan N. Massingale; Massingale, *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010).

23. Andrew M. Greeley, *The Catholic Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). Greeley long has doubted the efficacy of documentary communication of Catholic social teaching and argues instead for the primacy of a Catholic imagination, transmitted by example, story, and liturgy, that generated Catholic social teaching in the first place.

human discourse proceeds part by part, and attention to the mission of the Spirit internal to, as well as distinct from, that of the Son is not the main preoccupation here. For another, there is the issue of ideological captivity. A study at greater length would have to address the extent to which Chalcedonian Christology has been, and here and there may still be, held captive to the interests of empire, nation, class, gender, or White supremacy. Some think Chalcedon's origin within a Constantinian model of Christian Empire constitutes a permanent tie with authoritarian rule under the reign of Christ.

In defense of a presupposition that Chalcedon can be extricated from ideology and allied with emancipation, I would point, for example, to James Cone's Black liberation theology in its affirmation of spirituals and gospel music as a legitimate *locus theologicus* and to the spirit of veneration for Christ human and divine they breathe, a spirit I would argue is congruent with Chalcedon.[24] Similarly, Virgilio Elizondo's explanation of *mestizo* religion and theology allows a glimpse into *mestizo* piety that likewise resonates positively with Chalcedon.[25] It might be worth noting that according to Chalcedon's teaching the Logos cannot be defined as possessing in a divine nature qualities such as gender that belong to a human nature. It goes without saying that the divine nature of the Logos is not gendered, not male, a point made in studies of Wisdom Christology. Jesus' human nature is male. In Chalcedon's meaning of "person," though not in a modern meaning, it would be accurate to say that Jesus is not a male person because Jesus is one divine person (not gendered) in two natures, divine and human (male-gendered). Jesus is a nongendered divine person with a gendered human nature. Thus, affirmation of Chalcedon's doctrine precisely of the person of Christ does not necessarily project the

24. James H. Cone, *Risks of Faith: The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968–1998* (Boston: Beacon, 1999). See James H. Cone, "Black Liberation Theology and Black Catholics: A Critical Conversation," *Theological Studies* 61 (December 2000) 731–47, for his reiteration of a long-standing challenge to White Protestant and Catholic theologians in the United States to tackle White supremacy as a theological problem. For a response see Laurie M. Cassidy and Alex Mikulich, eds., *Interrupting White Privilege: Catholic Theologians Break the Silence* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007). On the difference between well-meant teaching against individual attitudes and analytic exposure of systemic distortion embedded in social structures and institutions, see Bryan N. Massingale, "James Cone and Recent Catholic Episcopal Teaching on Racism," *Theological Studies* 61 (December 2000) 700–30.

25. Virgilio Elizondo, *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983); Elizondo, "Jesus the Galilean Jew in Mestizo Theology," *Theological Studies* 70 (2009) 262–80.

interests of a dominant group, though such groups have used, and still use, the doctrine in this way.

I do not presuppose that Christ's humanity is primarily *instrumentum justitiae temporalis* rather than *instrumentum salutis*. Rather the theme will be that social justice is inherent in the normative social vision of salvation, *salutis*. What is at stake is who Christ is, as well as what he taught by word and deed, as Scripture and tradition relay the Christ event to succeeding generations in the Church. Value judgments about social justice flow from truths of faith, from the theological-anthropological truth that human beings are created in the image of God, from the ecclesiological truth that the Church has an orientation beyond herself to the rest of humanity, and from the Christological truth confessed at Chalcedon, that Jesus the Christ is the eternal Word of God in two distinct natures, human and divine. Explicit definition by an ecumenical council that the Word is a distinct divine person came only with Constantinople II (553 CE).

RECEPTION OF CHALCEDON: REPETITION, REVISION, OR APPROPRIATION?

Presuming that God's grace is ever-offered and prior to, as well as independent of, human thought or agency, there is room for theology as the thinking of faith to assist grace-led reception of social teachings and social justice. Theology's contribution to conversion to approval for racial and social justice involves more than invaluable, ongoing New Testament exegeses and indispensable studies in social ethics. Unexpectedly perhaps, systematic theology in the area of Christology also has something to offer in the form of recourse to the question posed by Jesus during his public ministry, "Who do you say that I am?" and to the answer taught by the Council of Chalcedon as received and developed by the Second and Third Councils of Constantinople.

Delving into ideas of Christ at issue in discipleship's relation to society at large places the inquiry within public theology, an area that fulfills part of a large theological task outlined by Bernard Lonergan in chapter 14 of *Method in Theology*.[26] Called communications, Lonergan's version of practical theology fulfills systematics and completes the mutual mediation between religion and a cultural matrix. Communications looks to more than how to pass on already attained systematic understandings to catechists, preachers, clergy, and missionaries. Communications also puts

26. Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1979).

systematic theology in dialogue with other disciplines, with ecumenism, and with renewal of common meaning in Church and society. Questions about Church and society also may incite a reverse movement of inquiry back to systematics before coming home again to communications. Such, at least, is the structure of this inquiry: from a question in the life of the Church to systematic Christology, and then back to engaging theology in the life of the Church and through the Church in the life of society.

This return to systematics will retrieve and develop, not revise or reformulate, Chalcedon's classical affirmation of Christ's two natures, human and divine, in the one and the same Son of God. Constantinople II explicitly taught that the incarnate Logos is a divine person. Ecumenical consensus on the divinity of Christ grounds the accessibility of this argument for most Protestant traditions. Affirmation of Christ's divinity figures in the criterion for membership in the World Council of Churches. Baptist rejection of creeds and confessions on a *sola Scriptura* principle nonetheless does not depart from convictions congruent with the early councils including Chalcedon and Constantinople II and III. Oriental Orthodox non-affirmation of Chalcedon has to do with historical, linguistic, religious, theological and cultural contexts but arguably does not oppose the Christological belief confessed at Chalcedon.[27]

However, many theologians think that Christology has been one-sidedly "from above" ever since Chalcedon, though Eastern theologians have been more likely to notice that Western faith, piety, and theology have orbited around the humanity of Jesus.[28] It may well be the case that an undercurrent in Western Christian piety apart from doctrine and theology has been an unofficial, imaginative construal of Jesus that begins and ends with a doctrinal proposition that "Jesus is God." Roger Haight thinks that this approach to Christ is "an imaginative framework that controls the reading of the gospel accounts of Jesus . . . a doctrinal imagination."[29] And yet after more than two centuries of searches for the historical Jesus, there is something to be said for the Eastern perception of a one-sided

27. See Kenneth Yossa, *Common Heritage, Divided Communion: The Declines and Advances of Inter-Orthodox Relations from Chalcedon to Chambésy*, Gorgias Eastern Christian Studies 11 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2009).

28. See the remark that "the fact remains that later Christology has often tended to absolutize Chalcedon, as though it constituted the absolute point of reference," with a consequent accent on the ontological constitution of the person of Jesus as a divine person. Jacques Dupuis, *Who Do You Say That I Am?: Introduction to Christology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994) 105.

29. Roger Haight, SJ, *The Future of Christology* (New York: Continuum, 2005) 20.

affirmation of the humanity of Jesus in Western thought and spirituality that are more eager to be clear that "Jesus is a man" than that he is also divine. In fact, Richard Norris Jr. describes "a new type of Monophysitism—a tendency, in the face of its own strong sense of the incompatibility of divine and human agencies, to reduce Christ not to a God fitted out with the vestiges of humanity but to a human being adorned with the vestiges of divinity." [30] Belgian theologian Jacques Dupuis (1923–2003) noticed the same tendency and called it an "'inverted monophysitism'—that supposes a certain absorption of the divine nature by the human, by which the divine nature is reduced to the measure of the human."[31] In modern Western Christology inverted monophysitism seems to have had more influence than Haight's doctrinal imagination.

In that case, recovering and developing theological reflection on Christ's divinity seeks to regain the mystery of the whole Christ event in an era more given to preoccupation with hypotheses from the Third Quest for the Historical Jesus than to an excessively high Christology. Counteracting inverted monophysitism does not consist in adopting Cyril of Alexandria's pre-Chalcedonian focus on the divinity of Christ as if to ignore explicit affirmation of two natures. Instead, going beyond this new monophysitism begins with the principle that all Christology arises and remains within the structure of the whole, historical Christ event including the incarnation, resurrection, ascension, and Pentecost, to which the New Testament bears written witness. In Christology today it is arguably the divinity of Christ not the humanity that has fallen farther out of theological reflection on the whole Christ event.

Recovery and development of reflection on Christ's divinity does not lack footing in one area of contemporary New Testament research. Larry Hurtado, for example, has shown that among Jesus's earliest disciples, a Jewish, monotheistic reverence for him as somehow divine had emerged. In the Synoptics, that emergence was an incipient movement "from below" to "above." And a pre-Johannine Paul who had to have known about the self-evidently human Jesus of Nazareth crucified under Pontius Pilate already had gone "from below" in and after his conversion and was

30. Richard Norris Jr., "Chalcedon Revisited: Historical and Theological Reflection," in Bradley Nassif, ed., *New Perspectives on Historical Theology: Essays in Memory of John Meyendorff* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 140–59, at 155.

31. Jacques Dupuis, "Universality of the Word and Particularity of Jesus Christ," in Daniel Kendall, SJ, and Stephen T. Davis, eds., *The Convergence of Theology: A Festschrift Honoring Gerald O'Collins, S.J.*, (New York: Paulist, 2001) 320–42, at 333.

moving back "from above" in Philippians, for example.[32] A presupposition of permanent principle not discussed here is that in the New Testament and in Christianity generally, faith in Christ and Christology have, on both the ecclesial and individual level, the structure of a circle continually revolving "from below" in Christ's preresurrection humanity to "above" in his incarnation and risen humanity united to his divinity, and back to his preresurrection humanity in public ministry, all the while rolling forward under the impulse of new questions and insights in successive historical and cultural contexts of mission.

At the same time Roger Haight has casts doubt on the validity of any recourse to Chalcedon that retrieves rather than revises its teaching.[33] I agree with Haight when he prescribes the importance of Christology addressing "the humanly caused and systematically ingrained human suffering that so characterizes our world situation today."[34] He insists too that the postmodern situation changes the whole problematic in a theology of Christ by moving it to a new starting point in the "historical appearance of the historical person, Jesus of Nazareth within the new horizon of historical consciousness. The supposition and point of departure are defined by the human being, Jesus, and the question concerns what it can mean to say that Jesus is divine."[35] Here my agreement is qualified by recognition that New Testament research has shown that this question about what it can mean to say that Jesus is divine was raised and answered within the New Testament and in the early ecumenical councils. Thus, the question is not

32. Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). See important discussions by Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008); James D. G. Dunn, *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus?: The New Testament Evidence* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010).

33. Roger Haight, *Jesus: Symbol of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, second edition, 2000). There is some affinity between Haight's project and that of Friedrich Schleiermacher in *The Christian Faith* since both propose affirming the divinity of Christ without locating that divinity in the subsistent Logos. See, however, Richard Muller, "The Christological Problem as Addressed by Friedrich Schleiermacher: A Dogmatic Inquiry," in Marguerite Schuster and Richard Muller, eds., *Perspectives in Christology: Essays in Honor of Paul K. Jewett* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991) 141–62. In Muller's view (142), Schleiermacher's "absolutely powerful God-consciousness" in Jesus did not intend to deny Chalcedon on the Logos in Jesus. Haight's revision, however, does deny the subsistent Logos.

34. Haight, *Jesus*, 25.

35. Ibid., 291.

a uniquely postmodern query, though historical consciousness is modern and postmodern.

With admirable hermeneutical attention to context, Haight acknowledges that Chalcedon made sense within the classical framework of late antiquity. But he goes on to argue that "the shift to a historical imagination and point of departure undercuts the plausibility of the Johannine framework which in turn dictated the metaphysics of the divine subject, persona, and hypostasis."[36] With that position I strongly disagree because it draws upon a reading of the prologue to John's Gospel that mistakenly denies that this passage affirms the pre-existent Logos, in favor of a metaphoric interpretation of the Logos as a personified divine attribute. Haight's position here is unacceptable, too, because it ignores the heuristic not metaphysical quality of Chalcedonian concepts. To label Chalcedon's categories of person and nature "metaphysical" is to attribute to them a precision and systematic denotation they did not possess in their historical context. Metaphysical elucidation of Chalcedon was the work of Scholasticism, not part of the council in 451 CE.[37]

Chalcedon, according to Haight, confuses when what is needed first of all is a reinstatement of an original meaning that had nothing to do with a divine person in order to reformulate Chalcedon's teaching away from the pre-existent Logos as a distinct divine person. In Haight's view, Christology oriented toward social justice and minimizing avoidable human suffering simply has no path forward except to revise and to reformulate Chalcedon.

36. Ibid., 292.

37. See Richard Cross, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation: Thomas Aquinas to Duns Scotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). On the undefined, heuristic quality of the concepts, see Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "The Origins of Christian Realism," the Seventeenth Annual Robert Cardinal Bellarmine Lecture, St. Louis School of Divinity, September 27, 1972, in Bernard J. Tyrell, SJ, and William F. J. Ryan, SJ, eds., *A Second Collection* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974). Similarly, Sarah Coakley praises Richard A. Norris, amid several criticisms, for insisting that "nature" and "person" in Chalcedon's definition of faith were relatively undefined so that the document is somewhat open-ended; see her "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 Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God* (2002; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 143–63, at 148. Coakley proposes that the Chalcedonian definition has an apophatic character, or what also might be called a mystogogical tendency, that in Eastern Orthodoxy led to its incorporation into the divine liturgy. This is true but does not remove a potential for kataphatic development of the sort that transpired before and after Constantinople III.

Without denying the validity of the project of reformulating Chalcedon's meaning, and without now discussing the merits of Haight's reconstruction of Chalcedon's original meaning and reformulation of it, I accept an alternative priority that flows in another current of Christology.[38] The scholars in this current recognize the contextual, linguistic, and conceptual differences between Chalcedon and us as grounds for keeping Chalcedon open to reformulation, but they accord precedence to expounding that council's teaching. Why would they do that? O'Collins says carefully and rightly, "I have clearly credited the teaching of Chalcedon with at least a certain intelligibility and ongoing validity."[39] I agree with Noll, who declares that Chalcedon's definition of faith "retains its momentous significance" because "the statement faithfully represents the reality about which it speaks."[40]

CRITICAL AND POSTCRITICAL AFFIRMATION

Chalcedon is first of all a place. A visit to contemporary Istanbul, tourists are advised, is best in September or October in order to avoid the broiling summer sun of July and August. Things were not so different on Thursday, October 25, 451 CE, when 370 bishops assembled at Chalcedon a bit north of present-day Istanbul on the eastern shore of the Bosporus to sign and acclaim a definition of the faith they had produced three days earlier in session five.[41] The nucleus of that definition confessed that

38. This current is represented by, for example, Gerald O'Collins, SJ, *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009; 1st ed. 1999); Jacques Dupuis, SJ, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997); Mark Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in Christian History* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997); Davis, Kendall, O'Collins, *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium*; Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity: A Brief Systematic Theology* (2001; repr., Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003); Veli-Matti Kärkäinen, *Christology: A Global Introduction; An Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective* (2003; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005); the commentary and notes in Richard Price and Michael Gaddis, eds. and trans., *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, 3 vols., Translated Texts for Historians 45 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007); Thomas Torrance, *The Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008); Oliver D. Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered*, Current Issues in Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Crisp, *God Incarnate: Explorations in Christology* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2009).

39. O'Collins, *Christology*, 245.

40. Noll, *Turning Points*, 81.

41. Price and Gaddis, *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, 1:44 (Table 3: Chronology

> one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures without confusion [*asugkutos*], change [*atreptos*], division [*adiairetos*], or separation [*achoristos*] (the difference of the natures being in no way destroyed by the union, but rather the distinctive character of each nature being preserved, and coming together into one person and one hypostasis [*hypostasis*]) not parted or divided into two persons but one and the same Son, Only-begotten, God, Word, Lord, Jesus Christ. . . .[42]

Richard Price supports a modern interpretation of this definition as a teaching shaped by Cyril of Alexandria, with a moderating Antiochene affirmation of two natures after the Incarnation.[43] He rejects the interpretation that Chalcedon synthesized Antiochene and Alexandrian tendencies, or forged a compromise between them. I see no reason to disagree with Price. In *Jesus the Symbol of God*, nonetheless, Haight at one point speaks of Chalcedon as a compromise and a synthesis of the two schools of thought. Yet eventually he concludes that "the Alexandrian framework controls the whole vision."[44] He sees the Alexandrian framework as problematic, however, because it conceived the Logos as a subsistent person rather than as an attribute of Christ.

For Haight the Cyrillian problem stemmed from a patristic tradition of interpretations of the prologue to John's Gospel that misread poetic, metaphoric language about divine attributes as propositions about a distinct entity, the Logos. To counteract Chalcedon's Cyrillian concept of the Logos as a divine person, Haight undertakes retrieval of an Antiochene affirmation of Christ's two natures. Dupuis and this inquiry emphasize the

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of the Sessions of the Council of Chalcedon); vol. 2:183–205 (fifth session); vol. 3:193–203 (Appendix 2: Attendance and Ecumenicity). Emperor Marcian's Fourth Edict had 520 bishops attending. Most likely 320 bishops attended, along with some priests serving as proxies for others, so the number of episcopal votes cast differed from the number of bishops in attendance.

42. Price and Gaddis, *Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, 2:204. For the Greek text, see Eduard Schwartz, ed., *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, vol. 1, *Concilium universale chalcedonense*, part 2, *Actio secunda. Epistularum collectio B. Actiones 3–7* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1933), 129. The English word "definition" and Latin word *definitio* translate the Greek term *horos*. In light of ancient usage, Sarah Coakley selects for *horos* here the meaning of pattern or grid so that the definition is a "transitional 'horizon' to which we constantly return, but with equally constant forays backwards and forwards." "What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does It Not?" 161–62.

43. See the fifth part of the General Introduction, written by Price, in Price and Gaddis, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, 1: 56–75.

44. Haight, *Jesus*, 288.

two natures but in support of, not in opposition to, Cyrillian and Chalcedonian affirmation of the person of the Logos. True enough, attention to the two natures of Christ usually serves to keep the historical humanity of Jesus to the fore lest it be thought of as dissolved into, or rendered negligible by, his divinity. However, Chalcedon's distinction of natures equally well directs attention to the divine nature of Christ. That is the path taken by Jacques Dupuis. I will follow in his footsteps, then strike out in another direction.[45]

Dupuis highlights Christ's divine nature in a marvelous theology of religious pluralism.[46] In a series of writings from 1991 to 2001, Dupuis distinguished two aspects of the divine nature of Jesus, the Logos/Son of God incarnate.[47] The most familiar aspect is the *Logos ensarkos*, Jesus the Logos as enfleshed or incarnate, historically causative of, and immanent in, the visible economy of redemption and Christianity as its sacrament. The less familiar aspect of the divine nature of Jesus is the Logos as *asarkos* (unfleshed or non-incarnate). The eternal Logos pre-existent to the Incarnation was *asarkos*.[48] After the Incarnation, *asarkos* simply refers to the fact that the hypostatically united human nature of Jesus cannot possibly contain, participate in, receive, or mediate the totality of Christ's

45. See "A Bibliography of the Writings of Jacques Dupuis, S.J." and Gerald O'Collins, "Jacques Dupuis: His Person and Work," in Daniel Kendall and Gerald O'Collins, eds., *In Many and Diverse Ways: In Honor of Jacques Dupuis* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2003) 231–69 and 18–29, respectively.

46. Among others works, Jacques Dupuis, SJ, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, trans. Robert R. Barr, Faith Meets Faith (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991; originally *Jésus-Christ à la rencontre des religions*, Jésus et Jésus-Christ 39 (Paris: Desclée, 1989); *Who Do You Say I Am?: Introduction to Christology*; *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, trans. Phillip Berryman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002); originally *Il cristianesimo e le religioni: Dallo scontro all' incontro*, Giornale di teologia 283 (Brescia: Queriniania, 2001); *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997), 2002 ed. includes documentation related to Vatican inquiry into the original edition; "Trinitarian Christology as a Model for a Theology of Religious Pluralism," in Terrence Merrigan and Jacques Haers, eds., *The Myriad Christ: Plurality and the Quest for Unity in Contemporary Christology*, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium 152 (Louvain: Louvain University Press, 2000) 83–97; "Le Verbe de Dieu, Jésus Christ et les religions du monde," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 123 (2001) 529–46; "Universality of the Word and Particularity of Jesus Christ," in Kendall and Davis, *Convergence of Theology*, 320–42.

47. See especially Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, chs. 1 and 11; Dupuis, "Universality of the Word and Particularity of Jesus Christ."

48. On difficulties in thinking in terms of a pre-existence before the Incarnation, see Brian Leftow, "A Timeless God Incarnate," in Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, SJ, and Gerald O'Collins, SJ, eds., *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium*, 273–99.

divine nature. Dupuis states that "[t]he divine action of the Word is not 'circumscribed' by, 'exhausted' by, or 'reduced' to its expression through human nature."[49] This is to say that the divine nature does not turn into a non-divine nature.

He expands on the transcendence of Christ's divine nature with respect to his human nature in noting that "[t]he action of the Word reaches beyond the limits imposed on the operative presence of the humanity of Jesus, even in its glorified state, just as the person of the Word exceeds the human nature of Christ, the hypostatic union notwithstanding."[50] This recognition of difference and divine excess is not only allowable but compelled by the definition of Chalcedon.[51] It has been orthodox theology of the Incarnation since Athanasius in the fourth century.

Though Dupuis nowhere discusses the Reformation, it is the case that Luther and early Lutheran theologians took exception to Jean Calvin's assertion of the transcendence of Christ's divine nature in the *Institutes of Christian Religion*. Lutheran celebration of, and communion in, the Eucharist in multiple places and times seemed to require that Christ's glorified bodiliness be omnipresent if Christ is really and simultaneously present in far-flung celebrations of the Eucharist. Lutheran teaching on the *communicatio idiomatum* accordingly attributed, or in the term of Oliver Crisp, "transferred" divine omnipresence to Christ's risen and glorified human nature.[52] Lutheran theologians objected to Calvin's affirmation of a surplus or excess in Christ's divine nature over his human nature in the famous vocabulary of the *extra Calvinisticum*, the "Calvinist extra."[53] Calvin understood the transcendence of the divine nature with respect to the human nature of Jesus to lead to rejection of the omnipresence of the human nature of Jesus. Calvin approved the following scholastic distinction: "Although the whole [*totus*] Christ is everywhere, yet everything [*totum*, i.e., the whole that includes his human nature] which is in him is not everywhere." Paul Helm comments that "[i]f that distinction had

49. Dupuis, "Universality of the Word and Particularity of Jesus Christ," 334.

50. Ibid., 338.

51. Ibid., 332.

52. See Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, 6–26.

53. E. David Willis remarks; "There are two passages in the *Institutes* which are commonly accepted as Calvin's classical statements of the 'extra Calvinisticum.' These are II, 13, 4 and IV, 17, 30 of the 1559 edition." *Calvin's Catholic Christology: The Function of the So-Called Extra Calvinisticum in Calvin's Theology*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1966) 26.

been observed, then, Calvin thinks, it would have ruled out the doctrine of transubstantiation."[54]

In surveying the world's religions from a Christian viewpoint, Dupuis merely points out that the divine nature of Jesus exceeds the powers and capacities of Jesus' human nature as greatly as the divine exceeds the human. After 1994, instead of an *ensarkos/asarkos* distinction in regard to Christ's divine nature, Dupuis spoke about the universality of the Logos and the particularity of Jesus. His focus was on the universal enlightening influence of the Logos described in John 1:9: "The true Light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world." The divine Logos enlightened all people prior to the Incarnation.[55] Dupuis then adds that this universal enlightening is a saving influence that did not cease because of the Incarnation and that continues after the Incarnation has happened, but not only through the mediation of the historical human nature and activities of Jesus prolonged in the Church.

Dupuis did not edge away from the particularity and centrality of the fullness of light from the Logos in and through the whole Christ event. Still, Chalcedon's affirmation of two distinct natures unchanged by their union means that the hypostatic union does not remove the operations proper to each nature, more clearly taught by Constantinople III against monothelitism. But one of the powers proper to the Logos is enlightening all people. Therefore, after the Incarnation too the eternal Logos continues to be universally influential and enlightening directly by his divine nature and not only through the human nature of Jesus active in his ministry, mission, teaching, death, and resurrection and in the redemption visible and communicable in the churches and historical Christianity.

54. Paul Helm, *Calvin at the Centre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 114–28, at 116, quoting Calvin, *Institutes* 4.17.30.

55. Dupuis does not refer to Aquinas's interpretation of John 1:9. But see St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, trans. James A. Weisheipl and Fabian R. Larcher, vol. 1, Aquinas Scripture Series 4 (Albany, NY: Magi, 1980), ch. 1, lecture 5, 69–76, at 71–73. Aquinas explains the enlightening as divine; the Word was "light by his essence," by Whom, before the Incarnation, "all men coming into this visible world are enlightened by the light of natural knowledge through participating in this true light which is the source of all the light of natural knowledge participated in by men." On the other hand, Aquinas notes, the enlightening can be understood to happen by the light of grace, and this in three ways. Origen understood "enlightens" to mean the grace of faith admitting people to the reconciled world of the Church. Chrysostom understands "enlightens" by reference to the Word wanting all to come to knowledge of the truth about God and to be saved. Augustine explains the enlightening as the effect of the Word but only in those who receive the light of saving knowledge from Christ in a dark and perverse world.

Dupuis concluded that the universally operative Logos enlightens and inspires founders and adherents of non-Christian religions at the same time as the same Logos, as incarnate, fulfills that enlightening and becomes present in divine love as redeemer within a humanity that was created through "him" in the first place. The divine Word incarnate, Jesus the Christ, is at once the particular, historical man who taught, suffered, died and rose from the dead, and the universal Logos immanent in and active upon the cosmos, within human history, and in the lives of non-Christians.

In defending Dupuis against some theologians' misreadings, Gerald O'Collins pointed out that Dupuis's texts did not separate the universal Logos from the incarnate Logos. Instead, maintained O'Collins, "What Dupuis has consistently argued is that within the one person of Jesus Christ we must distinguish the operations of his (uncreated) divine nature and his (created) human nature. Here he lines up," O'Collins continued, "with St. Thomas Aquinas who championed the oneness of Christ's person but also had to recognize that Christ's divine nature infinitely transcends his human nature (*divina natura in infinitum humanam excedit*), *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 4, 35,8."[56] According to O'Collins, Dupuis was arguing that the Chalcedonian affirmation of Jesus' divine nature means that "the Word's divine operations are not canceled or restricted by his assumption of a human existence that has now been glorified through the resurrection."[57] I will follow Dupuis's distinction between the original, invisible, constant, and universal divine operation of the Logos and the particular, though central and eschatologically universal, operation of the Logos through the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth. However, I will turn in addition to the creating power of the Logos.

LOGOS AS CREATOR

The affirmation of Jesus' distinct divine nature can be turned from the nature/grace question of God's saving action in non-Christian religions to the origin of social justice in the Creator/creature relationship. Dupuis once mentioned "mediation in creation" by the Logos as an act that

56. Gerald O'Collins, "Jacques Dupuis," 24. Quotation also from an electronic version of Gerald O'Collins's "The Dupuis Case," gratefully received in an email from Daniel Kendall, October 13, 2010.

57. O'Collins, "Jacques Dupuis," 26.

transcends the human nature of Jesus.[58] Yet he never explored the theological consequences of the creating work of the Logos. I note some of these consequences in the following six steps. First, seven New Testament passages attribute divine agency in creating to the Logos (John 1:1–4) and to Christ (1 Cor 8:6; 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:15; Col 1:15–20; Heb 1:1–4; Rev 3:14). This became a standard, formal part of Church tradition enshrined in the creedal profession that "through him all things have come to be."

The second step is realization that the creating agency of the Logos did not, could not, cease and desist at the Incarnation. Indeed, Paul proclaimed that, "there is one Lord Jesus Christ through whom all things come and through whom we exist" (1 Cor 8:6), and Hebrews 1:3 exclaimed about Jesus "sustaining the universe by his powerful command."[59] These statements attribute creating to Jesus, it is true. How could that be, since Jesus is a visible human being? John's Gospel provided the answer: the self-evidently human Jesus not only acted with divine authority and rose in divine power but is the divine Logos who became flesh. In Chalcedonian terms, Who Jesus is upholds the universe, but through his divine, not his human, nature.

That the Incarnation did not interrupt or halt the creating agency of the Logos is the gist of a brief reflection by Athanasius in *On the Incarnation*. Speaking of Jesus as the Logos incarnate, Athanasius declares

> For He was not, as might be imagined, circumscribed in the body, nor, while present in the body, was He absent elsewhere; nor, while He moved the body, was the universe left void of His working and Providence. . . . He was, without inconsistency, quickening the universe as well, and was in every process of nature, and was outside the whole, He was none the less manifest from the working of the universe as well.[60]

The divine creating agency of the Logos, Athanasius says, did not cease at the Incarnation.

58. Dupuis, "Universality of the Word and Particularity of Jesus Christ," 334.

59. O'Collins observes that Pauline and Deuteropauline letters attributed creation to Christ (1 Cor 8:6; 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:10, 2:15; Col 1:15–17; Heb 1:1–3a) before John's Gospel circulated in final form; see "Jesus as Lord and Teacher," in John C. Cavadini and Laura Holt, eds., *Who Do You Say That I Am? Confessing the Mystery of Christ* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004) 51–61 at 56.

60. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, trans. Archibald Robertson, in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, vol. 4 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, 1892) ch. 17.1–2, rev. ed. by Kevin Knight, 2009, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2802.htm.

The third step in my presentation of the consequences of the creating work of the Logos involves recognizing that creating is the divine operation of the Logos least conceivable as an act and attribute of Jesus' human nature. The role of the divine Logos's in mediating, with the Spirit, the act of creation that stems from the Father cannot be transferred to, mediated by, participated in, or enacted by, the human nature of Jesus. Jesus the Logos acted in and through his full, free humanity when he performed miracles of healing, changed water to wine at Cana, walked on the water or calmed the sea, he forgave and remitted sins with divine authority, initiated the Lord's Supper with an unheard-of change in the sacred meal of the Pasch, and breathed the Holy Spirit upon his disciples after the resurrection (John 20:22–23). These are referred to as Jesus' theandric acts.

One can conceive theandric acts, as did Aquinas, in terms of a divine principal cause acting with and through a free, intelligent, human, conjoined instrumental cause in a combined causality producing an effect beyond the capacity of the human instrumental cause by itself. Jesus' human subjectivity, freedom, imagination, speaking, and so forth are human realities able to be drawn into service of the divine operation of the Logos and so to bring about effects beyond the capacity of his humanity that are due to divine power. However, creating by the Logos cannot be a theandric activity in which the human nature of Jesus serves as instrumental cause for his divine nature and person acting as principal cause.[61] The humanness of Jesus' human nature includes its being created. Being created means existing in constitutive difference from the creating source; creatures are not the Creator since they have come to be, and the Creator has brought them to be. Jesus' individual humanity shares the limits of all created reality. The created cannot create itself much less anything else. Jesus' human nature was created through, and exists in dependence on, his creating act as Logos.

Of course, in Chalcedon's definition of faith, both human nature and divine nature are heuristic concepts rather than comprehensive, closed definitions. It follows that whatever is proper to human nature—even if we do not understand what that is in completeness—is inherent in Christ's human nature. Likewise, whatever is proper to God, divinity, and the

61. Aquinas denies that any creature can act principally or instrumentally in creating: "since creation is not from any pre-existing material to be rendered or prepared by an instrumental cause's action . . . for creative action to be attributed to any creature is impossible, either by its own proper power or instrumentally as a minister." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, vol. 8, *Creation, Variety and Evil (Ia. 44–49)*, ed. and trans. Thomas Gilby, OP (London: Blackfriars, 1967) 47 (*ST* Ia, q. 45, a. 5).

Logos—and we have not come to the end of grasping what that is—belongs to the divine nature of Christ. The divine nature of the Logos is the Logos acting. We do receive as true, nonetheless, that, as the prologue to the Gospel of John says, the Logos brings into existence that which has come to be. Therefore, creating cannot be separated from Christ's divine nature. The distinction between the divine person Who is the Logos and the divine nature of Jesus is a convenient, human mental distinction. The distinction between the divine and human natures in Jesus is a real distinction in Jesus.

When Chalcedon affirmed the "distinctive character of each nature being preserved," it professed that the Logos did not lose anything proper to divinity by assuming a human nature. The divine kenosis described in Philippians 2:6–11 refers to withholding manifestation of divinity, sovereignty, and power. Kenosis withheld a manifestation of divine effects, in the humanity of Jesus first of all, but was not loss of divinity. If the Logos had, in its kenosis, left behind the action of creating, then the divine nature of the Logos would have changed because of the hypostatic union, just what Chalcedon rejected in affirming that each of the two natures remains unchanged, *atreptos*.

The fourth step in drawing out the consequences of the creating work of the Logos affirms that the Logos's agency in creating is the divine act that is the ultimate principle of social justice. Indeed, Christ, the incarnate (*ensarkos*) Logos acting universally (*asarkos*) in the power of his divine nature so as to mediate the act of creation constitutes the ultimate and universal principle of social justice for Christians and non-Christians alike. All societies and all religions, not only Christianity, have seeds of social justice sown in their people by the Logos. As Creator, the Logos always and everywhere is that on Whom all creation depends, and that from Whom human nature is constituted in self-presence, that is, in the natural light of human reason, in distinction from its fulfillment through faith in Jesus. The universally and continually active Creator Logos who is Jesus the Christ must be the sole immanent divine source of order in the cosmos and history and, therefore in the social dimension of human existence.

CREATING IS ORDERING

The fifth step begins by asking why this must be so. The continuance of the creating work of Christ, the Logos-become-flesh, is an ordering principle because creation is not chaos, or rather, according to contemporary

understanding, chaos has the potential for emergent order. The meaning of order in the physical universe will not be discussed here but has been a theme in dialogue between science and religion. The omnipresent, immanent activity of the Logos as Creator revealed in John's Gospel implies that the Logos is also the source of order in creation, in whatever way order can be understood. Christ as creating Logos (*asarkos*) is the ultimate source of existence and order in all creation in its every dimension, including human socio-historical existence that also flows so obviously from very concrete, historically accessible human beings. The Logos creates everything that comes to be, including human beings who in their self-transcending acts of intentional consciousness directed toward the good of order are the proximate source of social justice. Creaturely dependence on the Logos extends to the human capacity to generate meaning, and so reaches to conscience and concern for the common good, for the well-being of all members of a society. Social justice has its human inception here. Thus, in creating humanity the Logos is the source, too, of the proximate ordering principle in a society.

The concept of order probably has to be reclaimed from guilt by association with the concept of control, and Lonergan does just this in chapter 2 of *Method*, which is on the human good. He explains that in groups there is cooperation through institutions (family, mores, society, education, state, law, economy, technology, church) with defined and assigned roles and tasks carried out by individuals for the sake of the good of order. The paradigm of order is not an externally imposed unity, direction, and purpose, but a structured, intrinsic unity in multiple operations by an individual or a group. In an individual physical health is order. In a community, regular and successful cooperation for common objectives to the benefit of all and each is the good of order. Spontaneity depends on order and then sometimes reorders.

SOCIAL JUSTICE IS SOCIAL ORDERING

The good of order in a society can be achieved neither by anti-institutional anarchy, nor by a single institution or person controlling all social authority, nor by carefully designed institutions or policies that nevertheless do not result in beneficial effects. To the contrary, one can argue that achieving the good of order depends on, and instantiates, among other things, realizing a substantial degree of social justice. Social justice is crucial because the good of order involves the effective functioning of a society's

major institutions—state, economy, family, education, religion—for the benefit of the society's members. Effective functioning cannot occur except through active contributions from, or active participation by, the members of a society.

Members' contributions take place in myriad concrete activities such as earning a living without working seven days a week, exercising informed citizenship by discussion, voting, accepting jury duty, living out positive family interactions as an education for life in the wider society, attaining an acceptable level of education enabling some participation in music, art, and culture. Today we would add that members of a society contribute to the common good by learning about and practicing ecological responsibility. Social justice deals with institutional impediments that block people's access to making those contributions, to their participation in those activities. Otherwise, only some members of a society actively participate in the major institutions, which in turn only benefit some, while excluding others. Social justice in Catholic social doctrine is primarily about securing access to making those contributions, and secondarily about distribution of resources to bring about conditions making that access possible. Exclusion is marginalization. Social justice seeks to identify and overcome marginalization. Marginalization is a disorder in created reality, a malfunction in one or more major institutions of a society.

HUMAN COOPERATION WITH THE LOGOS

The sixth step by which I detail the consequences of the creating work of the Logos observes that, in any culture or religion, the action of human beings toward the common good in social justice constitutes an inconspicuous divine-human cooperation rather than a Promethean assertion of human intent to remake society. In labors for a socially just society whose basic institutions serve the common good, the creating Logos and created human beings work together asymmetrically. The asymmetry comes from the dependent, participated existence on the human side of the cooperation.

Still, order in the realm of free individual and socially organized human activity is a matter for us of personal and common meaning, truth, and value. When practical attraction to justice emerges in people of any culture and language and begins to enter into individual and corporate decisions that originate and sustain mores, laws, institutions, and habits formed by justice, then justice has gained a foothold in the shaping of

social existence. To that extent justice then becomes an ordering principle in human society in tension with injustice. Social justice as a public standard, as a societal objective, and as a personal virtue that apprehends, inquires, deliberates, decides, and acts toward the common good has an inner affinity with the creating Logos Who Jesus is. Seeking realization of just order and the common good by overcoming marginalization in any society aligns people with the creating, ordering Logos Who Jesus is. Human agency on behalf of the common good serves the purpose of the creating Logos even when that human agency has not been placed under the full effect of saving grace mediated by Jesus' humanity, the gospel, and Christianity and received in faith. Christianity's distinctive belief that Jesus of Nazareth is the divine, creating Logos does not lead into a walled enclave opposed to other religions but becomes an unshakeable Christian principle of support for interreligious dialogue and cooperation on behalf of racial and social justice.

CONCLUSION

Faith in Christ, a gift beyond social justice, opens the believer to accepting all that Christ's divine nature accomplishes beyond (*asarkos*), no less than in and through, Jesus' humanity (*ensarkos*). But creating and ordering creation lies beyond the visible borders of what Christ's humanity mediates in the economy of redemption. Social justice, accordingly, is both native to Christianity insofar as Christ's words and deeds carry its meaning, and something for Christians to discover, appreciate, encourage, and cooperate in plural modalities original to other religions and cultures. Religions other than Christianity also locate conscience and social justice in the divine-human relationship.[62] Christians agree with many Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and other religious people, no less than with people at a distance from any religion, that slave labor, racism, heedless destruction of the environment, absence of universal health care where resources are available, lack of gender equity, and destitution in the midst of affluence offend human dignity and are types of social injustice.

The challenge social justice presents to Christian faith is Christological as well as ethical. The Christological challenge is to let faith in Christ

62. For select texts from various religions, with articles and excerpts that all bear on connections between religions and social justice, see Roger S. Gottlieb, *Liberating Faith: Religious Voices for Justice, Peace and Ecological Wisdom* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

be stirred to expand its scope from the visible economy of redemption centered in Jesus' humanity to affirmative cooperation with the universal action of the Logos Who Jesus is, cooperation to be sought in dialogue with adherents of other religions, or of none. Thus, Christian faith does not stop at the limits of Christ's humanity and of Christianity but casts its obedient gaze to everything coming from his divine nature, too, including creating and ordering within human history under the influence of human self-transcendence in intentional consciousness.

The Christological premise for indifference or resistance to social justice is either a tacit "Nestorian" separation between the divine and human natures of Jesus, as if not joined in the person of the Word-Logos, or a view, perhaps an extreme kenoticism, of Christ's divine nature as having changed in the Incarnation by losing or alienating the divine power to create. But to accept Chalcedon is to accept the inseparability of faith in Jesus from discipleship involving commitment to the social justice to which the Creator Logos continually labors by drawing human beings into their created capacity for self-transcending reason and love in social existence. Chalcedonian dogma clarifies the Christological ground for an impulse and mandate arising within faith for seeking dialogue and cooperation with any who promote social justice that institutionalizes human self-transcendence, a self-transcendence Christians believe is due to the Creator Logos through Whom all has come to be that has come to be.