A Fragment of Christology: Feminism as a Moment of Chalcedonian Humanism

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Let no one say that nothing more is really possible in this field any longer.
-Rahner

Abstract: *This theological fragment is concerned with the "humanist" (generally speaking) and "feminist" (particularly speaking) implications of classical Christology. Based on the exigencies of Christology, it proposes that the theological renewal of feminism ought to occur by integration into the broader horizon of the specific humanism proffered by classical Christology, rightly understood. It makes a first step, therefore, towards framing the conditions, nothing more, for a rapprochement between a "horizontal" liberation theology and a classical "vertical" soteriology. Developing a constructive debate between the perspectives on Chalcedonian Christology by two contemporary theologians, Sarah Coakley and Aaron Riches, it proposes that their seemingly contradictory Christologies – beginning, for the former, from the duality of natures, and for the latter, from the unity of person – possess similar intentions (the articulation of a theological humanism) but opposing intuitions about how to realize such a project. It is Riches' interpretation of the human in Christ that must form the appropriate, Christological conditions for the realization of Coakley's aspiration towards an authentic religious feminism.*

Key Words: Feminism; Theological Humanism; Christology; Chalcedon; Sarah Coakley; Aaron Riches

I n his now classic study of Maximus the Confessor, Hans Urs von Balthasar suggests that Maximus understood the meaning of humanity, the cosmos, and their collective relation to God precisely through his "dyothelite" (two wills) approach to the Chalcedonian dogma. According to Balthasar, Maximus was therefore the "real predecessor of Aquinas" in his particular concern to preserve the *difference* and integrity of creaturely freedom, as well as in his constructive account of that concern, which he purports is only possible through a "higher synthesis" achieved within the *unity* of God Godself.[1] Balthasar's creative historical study of Maximus is meant to imply that for theology today as well, the fundamental question of the relation of divinity and humanity as such is best approached as a problem proper to Christology, and answerable through a return, once again, to the history of dogmatic reflection. Along with Maximus and Aquinas (and Balthasar), two contemporary theologians in the Western tradition, Sarah Coakley

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[1] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor*, trans. Brian E. Daley, S. J. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2003), 69.

and Aaron Riches, have also returned to Chalcedon's Christology as the proper starting point for constructive theological anthropology. Further, their questions crystallize in a similar way as their forebears around a deep concern for the preservation of the integrity of humanity in the encounter with God and the question of the meaning of the incarnation for human spirituality and freedom. A look at the surprising convergences and divergences within their proper proposals will elucidate the specific problems *of* contemporary theology and create an opportunity for a renewed constructive Chalcedonian "concentration" *for* contemporary theological anthropology. The debate we shall construct between their proper approaches to Christology concerns precisely this: *how* does Christology realize a vision of theological humanism? What is the significance of Chalcedon for specifically contemporary issues? Using the issue of feminism as a test case, we will see that Chalcedonian Christology's most basic contribution is the *soteriological* re-articulation of specific social concerns and projects. Our thesis finally crystallizes, playing the role, for this essay, of final cause: A Christian approach to the question requires the re-tying of any feminism to this broader religious (Christological) humanism of which it plays an important part.[2]

CLASSICAL CHRISTOLOGY AND CONTEMPORARY DEBATES

A. According to Coakley

(1) The Definition as Source

In an important article published in 2002, Sarah Coakley explores three divergent readings of the Chalcedonian Christological Definition of 451 ("to be acknowledged in *two natures* (*physesin*), inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably … concurring in *one person* and one subsistence (*hypostasis*)")[3] for contemporary theological reflection. In light of the limitations she finds in each of the options she analyses, she proffers a fourth reading, suggesting that it should be understood in a "properly apophatic" way, *viz.*, that the Definition, primarily negatively—and abstractly—defines the relation among the natures in the *hypostasis*, thereby only functioning as the "horizon" that circumscribes what can and cannot be said about Christ's ontological make-up.[4] It is in this primarily negative mode that she understands the dogmatic Definition as the seminal starting point out of which may flower theological development. She proposes, furthermore, that in this negative Christology she is herself closer to the later Eastern tradition of faithful but creative thinking from within the logic of the Definition. Yet Coakley's proposal is not purely apophatic. The most important option that Coakley critiques in her fine study, the "linguistically regulatory" model, purported most eminently by Richard Norris, sees Chalcedon *solely* in a radically apophatic way, eschewing any and all positive content of

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[2] Unfortunately, I cannot develop such constructive a dialogue with feminist theology here. In a larger study of which this is a portion, I develop the concrete implications of this refiguring of the feminine by way of Mary of Nazareth, through Sergei Bulgakov's sophiological Christology. The task of this Christological fragment is merely to frame the conditions by which such refiguring of feminism within Christological humanism is first made intelligible – to make the dialogue possible.

[3] From the Confession of Chalcedon. Emphasis mine.

[4] Sarah Coakley, "What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does It Not? Some Reflections on the Status and Meaning of the Chalcedonian 'Definition'," from *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God* ed. Stephen T. Davis et al. (NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 141-163.

the Definition.[5] For Norris, the Definition, if seen as anything but a negative, linguistic solution to the central question of the simultaneity of divinity and humanity in Christ (which it accomplished by distinguishing between, but not adequately defining, *physis* and *hypostasis*), will only serve to "reify" the two terms predicated of Christ as static substances, thereby degrading into an "onto-theological" (my term) problematic which elides the fundamental difference between the word "nature" as it is predicated of both divinity and humanity. Coakley concurs, of course, with this view in a limited way. Yet, she sees it as critically problematical for the following reason: the merely *linguistic-regulatory* view of Chalcedon is rooted in Norris' own theological assumptions, which Coakley sees to be rooted in an overly-strong apophaticism that *a priori* questions the stability and veracity of any enduring kataphatic element. Now if one takes the influence of post-liberal thought on Norris seriously (as Coakley certainly does), then for Norris, dogmatic definitions are merely formal grammatical rules, meant to guide a community's self-understanding: They are only "truth claims" in a limited sense; the question of their veracity can only be articulated from within the "orthodox" language game, by one who shares the same commitments and liturgical practices. Coakley's problem with this view, following Brian Daley, is that there is no evidence that for the pre- and post-Chalcedonian theologians language can be divorced from reality, i.e., that "linguistic terms" can be

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[5] See Richard Norris, "Chalcedon Revisited: A Historical and Theological Reflection" *New Perspectives in Historical Theology: Essays in Memory of John Meyendorff* ed. Bradley Nassif (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 140-158. One wonders if Norris could be read more sympathetically: Perhaps his highly rhetorical apophaticism cleanses the temple, as it were, in order for Coakley—and others— to offer more constructive accounts. In this light he would be proposing, albeit in a negative fashion, a more radical theological metaphysics of the relation between God and the world, as revealed in Christ (or at least the opportunity for such). This view would draw Norris closer to Thomas Aquinas than George Lindbeck (for Coakley's remarks to the contrary, see "What does Chalcedon solve?", 151). For this see especially his conclusion, Norris, "Chalcedon Revisited", 157-8. Only a few quotes will have to suffice here: "[T]here is no overarching category in which [God and creature] can be classified. 'God,' if the monotheistic hypothesis is correct, does not fall into any class, even if human beings do ... And to the extent that this is true, then the sort of incompatibility that obtains between contraries cannot be thought to obtain between God and creatures. It is in failing thoroughly to explore this vertiginous thought that both classical and modern christologies have, as it were, spiked the gun of their sacred physics" (156). "Thus it would seem that a negative theology is best interpreted as saying precisely that the difference between God and humanity is a matter neither of contrariety nor of contradiction, that God is not related to us as an element or factor or reality that is either interchangeable with the creature as a contrary (i.e., a different thing of the same general sort) or incompatible with the creature as its utter negation" (157). Norris concludes with his own prescriptions "[T]here can be no reason to talk about a 'Christ'" and the incarnation but as a salvific event, which therefore necessitates that "a relation with Christ entails an encounter with God". Likewise, "to talk about Christ is to talk about one whose being humans share". Therefore, in the end, the Definition "can be judged merely to have stated the terms of the Christological problem" (157-8). For Norris, this "religiosity", christic "humanism" and final apophatic reserve, must be the core, and indeed, "horizon" if you like, of Christological reflection: "In stating the 'terms of the Christological problem,' Chalcedon ... defined an agenda and thus posed a question. And the question—the challenge—was not how to fit two logical contraries together into one, as its ancient and modern interpreters have all but uniformly supposed [!], but how to dispense with a binary logic in figuring the relation between God and creatures" (158). In this way Norris articulates the issue in a strikingly similar way to Bulgakov (see below). From here, Norris would seem to make available or possible—despite his harsh dialectical rhetoric— quite a constructive account, one that actually concords with much of Coakley's own proposal, at least more than she seems to allow. To say, as Coakley does, that Norris makes no ontological proposal, is misleading (see. Coakley, "What does Chalcedon solve?", 149). Thus his conclusion that "it is the Council of Chalcedon's Definition ... that allows room for such a conclusion *and for the rethinking to which it might lead*" (158), that the Definition itself is "non-committal" about the relation—and therefore meaning—of divine and human natures in Christ does not reject, but rather calls for, mindful constructive work (italics mine). The difference, of course, is critical. Norris' assessment of the extent of the "onto-theology" of the "sacred physics" of univocity is no doubt more radical than Coakley's, who rightly delimits it to a modern genealogy. Norris seems more like Heidegger than he ought. *This*, I think, is the fundamental difference between Norris and Coakley.

divorced from "ontological commitments".[6] Thus Norris' view is motored by an "anachronistic Lindbeckian engine": he reads back into Chalcedon contemporary post-metaphysical problematics, which divorce language from reality, and from religious experience as well.[7] Norris allows his (so-called) "post-liberal" cultural-linguistic anti-metaphysical commitments to adjudicate the meaning of Chalcedon as such. As for the second and third views—subtly and generously analyzed by Coakley, *viz.*, first, that the Definition is merely "metaphorical," on the one hand, or, second, that it is just simply "literally true" and defines the identity of Christ without ambiguity, on the other—they primarily suffer the same general critique as Norris: they eisegetically make assertions about Chalcedon that are alien to the fifth-century issues surrounding composition of the text.[8] John Hick's "anti-realist" assumption that only metaphor can safeguard the transcendence of God, or the literalism of David Brown or Thomas Morris, for whom the ontological reality of the incarnation wholly corresponds to the Definition, together read back into the text current concerns and thereby reduce the "richness and elusiveness" of the Definition, albeit in contrary ways according to the author's own (problematical) proclivities.[9]

From her study of these three options, Coakley draws some significant conclusions: First, the Definition is properly understood as a "ruling out of disjunctive possibilities." Thus, in contrast to Hick and Norris, Coakley suggests that "a new, and surprising, reality which we could not previously have thought possible is being gestured towards" by the Definition.[10] In contrast to the literalists, Coakley, in a self-consciously Kantian manner, suggests: "[T]he Chalcedonian 'definition'—as Nicaea and Constantinople before it—takes for granted the achievement of salvation in Christ and then asks what must be the case

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[6] Coakley, "What Does Chalcedon Solve?," 150.

[7] One wishes Coakley would have further developed this interesting (dis)connection regarding religious experience and language and being. But see Coakley, "What does Chalcedon solve?", 151 for an interesting juxtaposition of Norris with Ps.-Denys and Thomas Aquinas. Coakley suggest that Norris fails to realize that traditional reflection itself already *constructively* performs the deconstruction that Norris wants. Another interesting dimension to this critique beyond what Coakley offers here would be to see Norris' pre-Lindbeckian, Heideggerian roots, *viz.*, that he mistakes univocal metaphysics (roughly from Suarez to Kant) for pre-modern analogical metaphysics (from Plato to Aquinas). Augmenting Coakley in this way would be to abstract Norris from his own confusions which Coakley does not do and which makes her critique of Norris more heavy-handed than necessary. In any event, beyond Coakley, one could also argue that this traditional analogical metaphysics is itself a mode of articulation rooted in the Chalcedonian definition itself. Here the *analogia entis*, rightly conceived, *pace* Norris, would be the final flowering of Christological reflection, which becomes the very form of theological thought–e.g., as Balthasar said, Christ is the "concrete analogy of being" (see his *A Theology of History*, [San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992] and *Theo-Drama III: Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ*, trans. Graham Harrison [San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994]).

[8] Coakley, "What does Chalcedon solve?", 153-9.

[9] It is potentially confusing that Coakley seems to rest her argument on an apprehension of the original intention of the authors of the document itself, which seems to me to be not only problematical for many contemporary readers—and I would have thought Coakley herself. See ibid., 145-6. To say that a contemporary theologian is eisegetically informing her text is one thing; to say that one has psychological insights into the original intention of another author, and to equate it with one's own reading of the text in contradistinction to others, instead of resting one's argument on more solid ground, philosophical and historical development for example, is another thing entirely. To be sure, Coakley evades this problem directly by mostly negative ascription, i.e., by exposing the eisegesis of others. So it is her use of the term "original intention" that raises the question, though it is still unclear how much she positively equates her constructive proposal with the original, positive intention of the authors, apart from the history of reception of the text (*Wirkungsgeschichte*).

[10] Ibid., 156.

about that Christ if such salvation is possible."[11] In other words, the ontological reality of Christ is described, but in no way circumscribed. The Definition is neither "precise" definition, nor does it lack ontological commitments; it is less metaphorical or logically incoherent, than it is a "paradox" or "riddle," an invitation to thought. Specifically, for Coakley, it defines a "horizon" by dismissing aberrant interpretations, it offers a simple rule (the distinction between *hypostasis* and *physis*) for articulating the unity and duality in Christ, and, finally, most often overlooked, it *recapitulates* in summary form the salvific narrative itself.[12] There are therefore apophatic dimensions of the Definition, which are not divorced from the kataphatic: It neither "explains nor grasps" the reality, but rather mysteriously communicates it. In short, it is a "regulatory and binding pattern" meant to guide worshipful understanding of the wonders of salvation, and thereby "invites" and even "releases" creative reflection.[13]

(2) The Kenotic Meaning of the Definition

Similarly, in her well-known essay on *kenōsis*, Coakley fills in some of the salient elements of the constructive content that this approach to Chalcedon enables.[14] Here Coakley analyzes the history of the term, providing a learned summary of the theories of biblical, patristic, early protestant, as well as the twentieth century British kenoticists and contemporary philosophy of religion. Through a feminist analysis of no less than six conflicting views on the meaning of the term, Coakley concludes that an empowering "vulnerability" before God, in the mode of contemplative prayer, creates the capacity for reception of divine "non-coercive power" to become manifest: "[T]rue divine 'empowerment' occurs most unimpededly in the context of a special form of human 'vulnerability.'"[15] She offers this version of *kenōsis* in order to propose a "vital and distinctively Christian" understanding of *kenōsis* that moves beyond the problematic pseudo-feminist ideal of self-sufficient autonomy (tied as it is, for her, to late-modern, secular, perhaps even atheist-humanistic visions of the good) toward the horizon of a *Christological* feminism.

The corresponding Christology, then, serves as a "corrective" to secular feminism. Coakley demonstrates that the typical rejection of *kenōsis* by contemporary feminist authors—still, as she says, "aping the 'masculinism' they criticize"—only applies to more or less recent understandings of the term, which conceives *kenōsis* as an afflictive release of self-shared by divinity and humanity in salvific action. Instead, Coakley elects a "gentler" kenoticism, primarily understood as an opening to the Other, that is first rooted in the kenotic theory of the Lutheran Giessen theologians, who make a strong distinction between the "self-emptying" that is human, and the divine that retains but refrains from

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[11] Ibid. It is perhaps important to observe that this loosely Kantian Christological (transcendental) deduction is very close to Sergei Bulgakov (and Barth and Balthasar for that matter). Yet Bulgakov of course extends the meaning of the Christological deduction to God and humanity as such by way of his controversial concept of Sophia. The development of the present reflections on Christological humanism (specifically feminism) along sophiological lines will have to be developed elsewhere.

[12] Ibid., 161.

[13] Ibid., 161-3.

[14] Sarah Coakley, "*Kenōsis* and Subversion: On the Repression of 'Vulnerability' in Christian Feminist Writing" *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender* (Oxford: Blackwells, 2002) 3-39.

[15] Ibid., 32.

using its power. She strongly rejects the alternative (Thomasius and the "new kenoticists"), according to which the divine Logos actually (and freely) gives up its own divine power in the act of incarnation. This second view, instead of rearticulating the meaning of divine power in terms of liberative freedom, instead "reduces God's 'power' to an inherent powerlessness."[16] This is an interesting analysis but the more fundamental issue concerns whether the correlation between a receptive vulnerability of the creature (rooted in grace) to an empowering divine and a Christology that orients itself starting from the difference of two terms (divine and human "natures") does not actually retain a problematic sense of relation (implying "competition") - even in the mode of contemplation – and therefore also a (secular, modern) feminist sense of "autonomy" that she rejects.

This last observation makes better sense when one realizes that Coakley, in accordance with her concern for maintaining an *empowering* divine, tends to see that the Alexandrian identification of the *hypostasis* of Christ solely with the transcendent *Logos* necessarily harbors a "lurking 'docetism,'" which, she suggests, is a view related to the total reversal of the meaning of *kenōsis* that occurred between Paul (who was *not* concerned with articulating the relation between divinity and humanity in the kenotic hymn) in the first century and Chalcedonian thinkers in the fifth (for whom the hymn is primarily treated as a theological metaphysics). With this view she agrees with Karl Rahner analysis of the "current crisis" in Christology.[17] For Rahner, the "almost unavoidable consequence" of a deficient view of the meaning of full humanity of Jesus Christ is to lose the necessity of his humanity for his role as mediator between God and humanity.[18] An "Apollinarian" emphasis on person, as in Cyril, leads only to the forfeiture of the "genuine, spontaneous, free, spiritual, active centre, a human self-consciousness" in the fullest sense of the word.[19] Thus, "the doctrine of the two natures is quite insufficient as a ground from which to derive this insight into Christ's mediation as something which arises from the inner tendency of the doctrine."[20] The danger, for Rahner, as in Coakley, is a one-sided emphasis on the hypostatic union, to the denigration of the full humanity of Christ. We will find ourselves required to ask below if this binary view that sees an emphasis on hypostatic unity as dangerous for the distinction of natures, conceived in an a priori manner, is the best approach to the Chalcedonian dogma, and if it is in danger of missing the very genius of conciliar Christianity *tout court*. In Cyrilline reflection after the Council (John of Damascus), for example, as a result of the unity of Christ's *hypostasis*, the humanity of the *Logos* is still reduced to a mere "instrument" (as in Cyril) fully subsumed by the divine through a perichoretic saturation of the humanity with divine attributes*.* Divine power is thus still, according to Coakley, only "forceful obliteration."[21] Instead, Coakley suggests that Christ's personal identity should be comprehended as an event constructed through ("confected out of") the encounter of divine and human realities. In

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[16] Ibid., 38.

[17] See the programmatic essay, Karl Rahner, "Current Problems in Christology", *Theological Investigations,* Vol 1, *God, Christ, Mary and Grace*, trans. Cornelius Ernst, O. P. (NY: Crossroad, 1982), 149-200.

[18] Ibid., 157.

[19] Ibid., 158.

[20] Ibid., 161. See also his later essay "Christology Today?" in *Theological Investigations,* Vol. 3, *The Theology of the Spiritual Life,* trans. Karl H. and Boniface Kruger (London: Denton, Longman and Todd, 1967), esp. 30-1, for a similar assessment.

[21] See Coakely, "*Kenōsis* and Subversion", 11-16.

other words, Coakley wants to read Chalcedon with an Antiochene stress.[22] Coakley's reading of Cyrilline and Alexandrian Christology is arguably facile. Already in Cyril the incarnate hypostasis is understood in "complex" terms to be a person at once human and divine and as much the former as the latter. This hypostatic complexity lies in direct continuity, as our next author will show, with the Dionysian account of the theandricity of Christ ("theandric energies"). This ought to mollify at least Coakley's criticism that the Alexandrian style ignores or even denigrates the full integrity of the humanity of Christ, and if so, it makes the ground on which she builds her Christology shaky.[23] This observation leads us to the crucial question which we will have to ask ourselves subsequently: Is Coakley's intention to preserve one aspect (difference) at a high cost to the other (unity) the best mode of approach to fulfil the very theological and anthropological concerns that motivate her theology?

B. *According to Riches*

(1) *Only Union "Differentiates"*

In a recent essay, Coakley's younger contemporary, Aaron Riches has proffered an alternative view to what we see in Coakley, by which he seeks to fulfil many of the same concerns and constructive interests. Here Riches follows Henri de Lubac's particular mode of ressourcement in contradistinction to Rahner's.[24]

Taking the opposite tact than Coakley, in his Christological reflection Riches begins from union, a union of two natures which alone properly "differentiates." He thus sees the very essence of the creaturely being, its freedom, integrity and self-determination—one could even say its flourishing—to be located beyond it, in God, and thus finding the very fulfilment and integrity of its existence only in its radical contingency vis-à-vis the divine. The key phrase occurs at the beginning of his essay: "union is established in differentiated communion." Now, in order to understand this, it is first crucial to see that, for de Lubac, the general conception of the relation of the natural and supernatural spheres follows from the concrete form of revelation, particularly and definitively in Jesus Christ.[25]

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[22] Textually, she bases this reading on the following: The Definition only uses the word *hypostasis* after the phrase concerned with the "concurrence" of the two natures—which means for her, it seems, that the natures are first considered as two disparate, complete totalities *before* their union in the person of the Logos. See ibid., fn. 81, 38.

[23] Supplementing this perspective, we can note that for the same Alexandrian Christological tradition(s) the notion of *communicatio idiomatum*, understood within the context of the "theandricity" of Christ's hypostasis, was already seen to possess a reciprocity within the exchange: in the incarnation human and divine natures received properties of the other, though in ways appropriate to the integrity of each nature (the divine, for example, comes to "suffer" albeit, "unsufferingly." See the important study, John McGuckin, *St Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy: Its History, Theology and Texts* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 2004), 184-93. See also *The Theology of St. Cyril of Alexandria: A Critical Appreciation,* ed*.* Thomas Weinandy and Daniel Keating (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2003). I would like to acknowledge the anonymous reviewer of this essay who brought this critical point to my attention.

[24] That is, Christological as distinct from "philosophical" (as in Rahner's "theological-anthropology"). Aaron Riches, "After Chalcedon: The Oneness of Christ and the Dyothelite Mediation of his Theandric Unity" *Modern Theology* 24 (2008), 199-224. Riches develops his Christological reflections further in *Christ: The End of Humanism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, forthcoming). See Adrian Pabst's similar perspective from his brief remarks in *Metaphysics: The Creation of Hierarchy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012) 65. Thanks to the anonymous reviewer for pointing out this felicitous connection.

[25] See Henri de Lubac, *The Discovery of God*, trans. Alexander Dru (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 220.

Christology lies behind his thesis regarding the "supernatural" ground of the natural. The same should be said of Riches here. It should be noted that, in contrast to Riches, the opposite movement of the relation between the concrete and general is embraced by Coakley: theology is informed first by particular anthropological assumptions (undergirded by an "extrinsic" account of the relation between God and creature) imported into Christological reflection. Their primary, shared anthropological concern (the integrity of the creature) nevertheless fundamentally orients their thought in opposite directions.

Interestingly, Riches, in agreement with Coakley, suggests that *if* the Chalcedonian Definition is understood "discretely," i.e., apart from the salvific narrative and especially apart from the dogmatic developments in Christology of the latter Councils, it is prone to misinterpretation. The difference is that Riches sees the problem of such "discreteness" in a certain *Antiochene tendency* inherent in the Definition itself: The "dyophysitism (two natures) of Chalcedon actually risks a certain parallelism of the natures of Christ, insofar as it leaves the *communicatio idiomatum* in the One Christ unspecified. Thus, as long as dogmatic Christology limits itself to Chalcedon, going only so far as the 4th ecumenical council, it remains vulnerable to a misconstrual of Christology (and therefore catholic theology *tout court*) in a quasi-Nestorian direction."[26] Constructively, then, Riches argues that the proper, Alexandrian conception of unity is only "decisively articulated" by the 6th Ecumenical Council's (Constantinople III, 680-1) appropriation of Maximus the Confessor's dyothelitism. This Council *develops* Chalcedon by bring its "paradox" into fuller view. That is: "it makes concrete the *communicatio idiomatum* of difference in the Son's theandric unity."[27] Hence, essential to Riches' theology is an awareness of the "paradoxical" (in the Lubacian humanist sense) quality of the Chalcedonian definition, as well as the integrity of its development up to Constantinople III.[28] It will be especially important for us to see whether Riches' "Maximian" Alexandrianism can adequately speak to Coakley (and Karl Rahner's) specific concern with the integrity and freedom of human nature.

For Riches, following Marie-Joseph le Guillou, Constantinople III itself can only properly be understood by reading it through the lens of the specific texts of Maximus (on the agony at Gethsemane) for there it yields a "full 'narrativization'" of the ontology of Christ expressed in the Conciliar Definitions.[29] Riches suggests the import of this integration of contextual theology (Maximus) for understanding the Definition: "Constantinople III affords a dogmatic mode of Christology that is at the same time both a semiotic reading of narrated events-as-signs and a labour of speculative metaphysics." This unity of symbols and narrative from the biblical texts with constructive intellectual

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[26] Riches, "After Chalcedon," 200.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Rahner, on the other hand, emphatically asserts that Christology developed merely "from the New Testament writings (especially Paul and John) down to the statements of the Council of Chalcedon" See "Christology Today?", 25.

[29] Marie-Joseph le Guillou O.P. "Quelques Réflexions sur Constantinople III et la Sotériologie de Maxime", in *Maximos Confessor: Acts du Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur Fribourg, 2-5 Septembre 1980,* ed*.* Felix Heinzer and Christoph Schönborn (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1982) .

venture is ultimately a part of the Hebraic-Hellenistic "narratological" ontology distinctive to Christianity.[30]

Undergirding Riches' reflections is a key sentence in The International Theological Commission's (1979) summary of dyotheletic dogma: "the Church declares that our salvation had been willed by a divine person through a human will."[31] According to Riches, this statement expresses the crucial Christological ontology intended by the Constantinopalitan dyothelitism, *viz*., that the humanity of Christ is *God's own* humanity. For him any account of the implications of Christology for a "humanism" (more broadly) or a "feminism" (more particularly) must seek to think from within this paradoxical horizon. For Riches this is precisely what is given by the Lubacian paradox of grace, which successfully upholds the priority of the divinity—expressed in the unity of the *hypostasis*, and simultaneously, the upraising of human agency in salvation—expressed in the diversity of natures, which is, crucially, the direct result of the unity *for* human nature. So, in other words, the permanent *distinction* of the natures in the Definition is meant to express none other than the meaning of the radical *unity* for humanity: the fullness of humanity is realized in personal *union* with the *Logos*. Reflecting on Maximus, Riches says: "In a Cyrilline sense, Jesus—because he is the incarnate Logos—is the True Man, but he is never a 'pure man'" Thus, "Christ's humanity subsists divinely in the Person of the Son. Therefore everything Jesus is and everything Jesus wills, both 'is' and is 'willed' in the unity of the divine Person."[32] One must say here that dyothelitism is misunderstood if the humanity of Jesus is figured in distinction from its *enhypostatic* actualization. An *anhypostatic* human nature – like the Thomist notion of "pure nature" – can only ever be an *abstraction*. There is, in other words, no conceivable human nature of Christ apart from its union with divine nature in the *hypostasis* of the *Logos*. Again, for this Christological-humanist vision, it is the unity itself that differentiates.

For Riches, the maxim of dogmatic Christology is: the greater, more intensely expressed is the unity with the divine, the greater, more intensely expressed (and therefore more adequately understood) is the humanity as such. Thus it is that in Gethsemane, in the filial prayer of the Son to the Father, that we first learn the theological truth that "unity differentiates". Here there is no opposition between the divinity and humanity of Jesus, but rather an essential relation, organically and hierarchically understood, in which the humanity arrives to itself only as it abandons itself in obedience to the divine. Thus, for this vision, it is the *divinity* of Christ that is the essential precondition, not only for his perfect unity with humanity, but also for the greatest realization of humanity as such. Otherwise said, in Christ, humanity is a gift to itself; this is its greatest freedom. "[T]here is only authentic humanity where there is *theosis*."[33] The complete preservation of the distinction between the divine and human natures of Christ

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[30] Riches, "After Chalcedon," 204, referring also to John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2nd edition, 2006): "Narrative and ontology reinforce each other in an ontology of difference, because God must be known *both* as the 'speaking' of created difference, *and* as an inexhaustible plenitude of otherness" (48).

[31] Riches, "After Chalcedon," 203. See "Select Question on Christology" in *International Theological Commission: Texts and Documents 1969-1985*, ed. Michael Sharkey, (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989), 192. See also the first section of "After Chalcedon" ("Crisis in Christology"), which thoroughly provides all the details concerning the aims and scope of this Commission (201-3).

[32] Ibid., 204.

[33] Ibid., 202.

is not a dualism, but is rather more paradoxical, "a differentiated unity," in which – as in the genuine, Thomist notion of analogy – the increase of the union only *realises* the difference all the more. The upshot is the paradox that the more one seeks a humanity in integral distinction from the divine, the more one has to emphasize the union in order to obtain it in the most radical manner possible. According to this vision we would have to conclude that because the creature's true end is in communion with God (this being what the divine-humanity of Christ reveals), so the creature becomes more completely non-divine in the realization of this end (that is, in divinization itself). Thus since there is no greater unity than in the one *hypostasis* of the Son, there is also therefore no greater preservation of difference; it is the condition of true difference, complete even as it is a dynamic *communicatio*.

(2) The Human Will of God

Like Coakley, Riches finally articulates his ontology of Christ in light of a theology of prayer. Though the general starting point is the same, i.e., an integration of spirituality and dogmatic theology, Riches' notion of prayer is fundamentally different. All Christian prayer, for him, is specified as "filial prayer," which is to be understood in light of the Balthasarian motif of the *missio* of the Son. This *missio* is Christ's "communicative constitution" in which we come to participate via the grace of adoption. What we may call Riches' "kneeling Christology" is therefore rooted in a fundamental sense of vocation determined by obedience to God's fatherly commission.[34] This concrete-spiritual starting point is fitting, for Riches, since Maximus' dyothelitism is rooted in the narratives of Christ's turmoil in prayer in Gethsemane the evening of his arrest. Riches also demonstrates the richness of a Cyrilline-Maximian stress for Pneumatology and Trinitarian theology more generally vis-à-vis this narrative. He finds a "pneumatology underpinning dyothelitism" in the mediation of the Son's relation to the Father, which occurs by the Sprit, and therefore a true union of desire in the two wills of Christ. Finally Riches sees this mode of relation's continuation, again only pneumatologically possible, in the life of those conformed to Christ. He concludes: "The Church is the living continuation of Christ's divine personhood."[35] Here the Spirit would be articulated as the desire that is at once differentiating and unifying, the bond of love that imparts radical freedom only within the deepest communion – an echo of Trinitarian theology at the heart of ecclesiology Christologically "concentrated." Thus the Spirit who cries out within us "Abba, Father!" (Rom. 8:15) is also the very same Spirit of Christ, the complete expression of love that is not content within itself but overflows, opening from within toward the other in love. The Church is the human community caught up into this eternal *perichoresis*. One sees here how the personalist Christological concentration opens up seamlessly onto the social dimension.

The profound (re-)integration of spirituality and Christology evinced here actually owes much to Coakley's prior interpretation of the Chalcedonian Definition as a "horizon," which, as we saw above, understood the Definition as an opening of a new possibility for

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[34] Compare Coakley, "Kenōsis *and Subversion"*, 32-6 and Riches, "After Chalcedon" 214-17. Thanks to Dr. Riches for clarifying this point.

[35] Riches, "After Chalcedon," 217.

the articulation of the divine-human relationship.[36] Riches generously develops Coakley's insights for his own "phenomenological" approach, which he uses to overcome the non-reductive parallelism that we have seen to be integral to Coakley's approach to Chalcedon. Taking an undeveloped reference by Coakley to Gregory Nazianzen's statement that Christ himself is literally the horizon of God for us, Riches says:[37] "[F]or us Jesus is only manifested in the existential act of our own following into that communication itself … Only by tracing the Son's personal communication do we apprehend *who* he is."[38] We see here that Riches follows Coakley in the spiritual reading of the Definition, but he develops it in the complete opposite direction, since, for Coakley, the horizon should first be understood as the articulation of a difference that guards both the transcendence of God and the self-determination of the human. In short, Riches pushes Coakley's spiritual reading of the "horizon" itself to the point of a concrete encounter with Christ. For him the Definition records, articulates and even mediates the salvific event. Riches thus concludes: "In this way the Terminus of Constantinople III partakes of the *horos* ['horizon'] of Chalcedon, placing it now in the field of the action of the 'united double desire' of theandric communication … Constantinopolitan Christology completes Coakley's Chalcedonian Christology: the *horos* ['horizon'] opens through the *Terminus* into the *Sequela Christi*."[39] It must be concluded, though, that this "completion" of Coakley is also a fundamental redirection, seeking to achieve what Coakley desires but by another way.

Finally, Riches suggests that clarification of the *communicatio idiomatum* vis-à-vis a proper (Cyrilline) dyothelitism is enough to specify the "ontological mode of the circumincession of difference in Christ."[40] Summarizing Maximus (*Opusculum* 7), he articulates the *communicatio* in this way: "In Jesus, the human by nature works to will divinely what God by nature works to will humanly."[41] Interestingly, Riches notes a correspondence in Maximus here with both Cyril of Alexandria *and* the "non-Chalcedonian Syriac Christology" of Pseudo-Denys the Areopagite, for whom, most importantly, Christ evinces a "new theandric energy."[42] This notion of "theandric" energy is all-important. Significantly, Riches articulates its meaning for us through Maximus, from *Ambiguum* 48, who enigmatically states:

> God, having made all nature according to wisdom, secretly placed in each being of rational nature a primary dunamis of knowledge of him … for in giving to us humble humans—according to our nature—this yearning and eros for him, God himself naturally partakes in the dunamis of the principle of our being[43]

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[36] I should also mention Ratzinger here as a fundamental influence as well. Thus it is tempting to suggest that Riches' theology of prayer is of the *Communio* school, whereas Coakley's, by comparison, would tend more to the *Concilium* school.

[37] See Coakley, *What Does Chalcedon Solve*?, 160; Gregory Nazianzen, *Theological Orations*, 38. 18.

[38] Riches, *After Chalcedon*, 211. Compare Balthasar's basic thesis in the first volume of his magnum opus, for whom faith is a movement of the whole person into God which is only then true spiritual knowledge (*The Glory of the Lord* Vol. I: *Seeing the Form*, 2nd ed., trans. John Riches et al. [San Francisco: Ignatius, 2009]).

[39] Riches, "After Chalcedon," 212.

[40] Ibid., 207.

[41] Ibid., 209.

[42] See ibid. and Cyril of Alexandria, *In Joannis Evangelium*, 11.2.33 (PG 74.473 D), and Pseudo-Denys, *Epistola 4* (PG 3.1072B-C), for relevant texts.

[43] See Riches, "After Chalcedon," 212. Emphases mine.

With this statement we reach the most sacred interior of Alexandrian dyothelitism, which attempts to express even further the radicality of the paradox of the union of the two natures. According to Maximus, God imparted Godself at the very center of human being in the act of creation in order for human beings to be fundamentally ordered toward God as their natural end. *God* is therefore the very presupposition for the *meaning* of human nature: the total measure of humanity is (by grace) divinity itself, which Riches concretely expresses as "the theandric reciprocity of created and uncreated Love."[44] There is therefore the *very same desire* that defines both divine and human natures—*desiderium naturale videndem Deum*—but existing according to two different modes, a divine and a creaturely. In Christ, then, the radical unity is completed and made explicit through the *communicatio idiomatum* in Christ's concrete acts of love for the Father: *viz.*, the total conformation of his will to the Father's in his obedience all the way from manger through the Garden to the Cross. In the complete conformity of his human will to his divine will, enacted through his limitless, divine desire to please the Father, the Son carries humanity with him through the "wages of sin", overcoming humanity's death by the inexhaustibility of his divine love. He therefore liberates human nature, providing it the capacity to realize its true end, implanted within it from the beginning. The "energy" (*dunamis*) of Christ is both divine and human, truly divine and truly human—theandric—completely divine and *therefore* completely human. Hence, for Riches, "[t]here is no 'pure' life of Jesus that can discretely serve the normative function of an 'original text', there is no 'humanity' of Jesus that can be manifested apart from his divine Person, and there is no 'pure nature' of humanity that can be revealed apart from the theandric Christ who 'reveals man to himself'."[45]

Thus, according to Riches, the Chalcedonian Definition teaches us that in salvation there is a *synergism* (two wills from two natures) rooted within and made possible by the *a priori monergism* (and thus one divine Person) of God: The salvation wrought by grace is truly a human work, but only insofar as it is utterly and definitively rooted in God's prior action.

C. BETWEEN RICHES AND COAKLEY

The Problem of A "Pure Nature"

Following Riches' construction, it would be possible to read in Coakley an unwitting accommodation with an all-too-neo-Scholastic "parallelism," which only serves to reify again the separation of nature and grace into two discrete spheres. It is often said that for Karl Rahner the old *duplex ordo* is dissolved but re-inscribed by a more self-subsisting philosophical anthropology that only serves to naturalize grace in the end. If this is the case, it substantially informs his Christology. This is, of course, a bit of a caricature: Rahner's supernatural existential is much more subtle and complex, owing more to the logic of Christology—filtered through Thomistic metaphysics in its encounter with Kant— than is typically understood. Yet there is no doubt that his theology fundamentally bears an anthropological starting point.[46] Because of this the role of Christology in particular is

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[44] Ibid., 213.

[45] Ibid., 217.

[46] See Rahner, "Current Problems," 166.

unclear in the articulation of his theological anthropology. Nevertheless, even if Rahner's Kantian-Heideggerian (perplexing in itself!) terminology bears much of the blame for this critique, and therefore recognition of this no doubt blunts the edges of the harshest elements of the criticism, Rahner's anthropological construction, apart from the terminology, arrives from somewhere else than concrete revelation. At the very least it is articulated by a philosophical grammar which is less than thoroughly probed and purified by the light of the data of revelation. So, Rahner's conception of "nature", if it is surely (always, already!) uplifted, perfected, healed by grace, it is nevertheless less clear how this transformation relates to the apocalyptic drama of salvation in history. Is the latter an addendum to the former anthropological structure which really does all the soteriological work? For Coakley, one could say, this "parallelism" is subtler, resulting perhaps from the particular weight of her feminist commitments, which, if Riches is right about the unitive origin of human difference and integrity, are less than fully integrated in her constructive thought. If this is the case then it would raise the question whether the final good of female liberation on her account still (at least latently) demands a view of the human creature as autonomous, independent and complete in itself, bearing within a self-realizable end that brings into question the need for a supernatural end that orders the totality of the creature—and this despite her critical theological rearticulation designed to refigure feminist teleology with this particular problem in mind. In other words, the problem is that the articulation of the good of liberation is harshly (if implicitly) distinguished from the final eschatological good of the *visio beatifica*. This we would have to trace back to what we can call at least by comparison to Riches, her bifurcated Christology. To elect the former (liberation) at the expense of the latter (eschatology) is merely to reverse the binary of neo-scholastic "two orders theology" and therefore to remain shackled to its logic. In terms of Christology this inevitably tends towards a stress on the distinction and self-integrity of the human nature conceived in some way apart from its union from the divine, which would seem, therefore, to remain a problem for feminist Christologies in general. However, despite this neo-scholastic remainder of a "pure nature" in her thought, the promise of Coakley's feminism lies precisely here: she may liberate feminism from its debilitating reliance on that which it seeks to deconstruct, i.e., its discourse framed, in an inverse and negative manner, by traditional patriarchal modes of thought.

Rahner, despite rightly rejecting the received view that the gratuity of grace is properly maintained via a nature understood as possessing no intrinsic need for grace, still allows a highly developed anthropocentric starting point to shape the theological dimension. For Coakley though, the relation is again more complex: the problem is figured with feminist liberative ends in mind, in which the Cyrilline unification for the sake of theological coherence results in "strained credibility about the form of Christ's earthly life."[47] Such a reading of the Cyrilline emphasis on the priority of the divine, that is, understood to be asserted *over against* the human may "insidiously fuel masculinist purposes" indeed, but only for conceptions of the divine tied to anthropomorphist perversions.[48] Yet, in light of Riches, one wonders whether this is the best reading of the Christologies of *henosis* [union]: To consider the creature as essentially dependent upon the creator for its very own creaturehood, the end of which is beyond it in God's life—is it advisable or necessary to abandon this conception for some sort of "pure nature"? Perhaps, given Riches' indications, the best approach is to consider this Cyrilline emphasis

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[47] Coakley, "*Kenosis* and Subversion", 14.

[48] Ibid., 15.

as the best Christology for a truly liberative program for humanity in general and woman in particular: *henosis* and *kenosis* are, in Christ, mutually complementary perspectives.

One wonders also, finally, why Coakley's particular reading, so bent on stressing the human freedom of Christ *over-against* the divine, attempts to make a theological decision which the Definition itself attempts to rule out. If read in this way, her proposal would seem to subsume or at least imply, one the one hand, a bizarre Eutychianism, in which Christ becomes a "third thing", an amalgamation of divinity and humanity—only here, strangely, in terms of person instead of nature, and thus, on the other hand, a human fully integral in itself prior to the union, all too redolent of the "prosopic" union of Nestorius. Coakley's concern seems to be that the union itself not be imposed from beyond by divine "fiat" *before* the agency of Christ's humanity. At this point one would wonder then, whether Coakley would still accept the orthodox title *Theotokos* for the Virgin? (Finally, at this point, the horizon of a Mariology would seem to become essential here for feminist concerns.) Taken at face value, it seems her Christology would delimit the incarnation to Christ's adult life—perhaps at the Baptism? But wouldn't this be yet another insidious form of Adoptionism? Otherwise, for her, human freedom and nature is put in jeopardy by a divine power that overwhelms creaturely reality, rather than realizing its inherent possibilities. Coakley does not say whether she accepts Maximus the Confessor's view that human nature as such performs a certain (active) receptivity to the divine. This would alleviate many of these difficulties that I draw out here, though, again, it would demand an Alexandrian rather than Antiochene emphasis, since, for Maximus, the humanity is only really human in self-abandoning surrender to the divine, a *kenōsis* rooted in the Trinitarian life, as Christ showed by his agony in the garden.[49]

If what we outline here has any merit, then Coakley disengages the spiritual meaning of *kenōsis* from its concrete foundations in its originating Christological meaning. For her, the kenotic hymn of Philippians 2 is therefore primarily "an invitation to enter into Christ's extended life in the church, not just to speculate dispassionately on his nature."[50] Clearly, this particular disengagement is undertaken for the sake of a re-engagement of Christology and spiritual praxis—but a Christology cleansed of its alleged tendency to elide the integrity and freedom of the human dimension for the sake of the *hypostatic* union, that corresponds, she insinuates, with a harmful spirituality of self-abnegation, deferral and self-diminishment. This view corresponds with what we have already seen regarding her important insight into the Chalcedonian formula as a summary of the salvific *acta*, rather than an abstract metaphysical schema. In so doing, she still succeeds in making the cross and resurrection central to her religious refigurement of the liberation ideal. Coakley offers much to ponder: the reintegration of spiritual experience (prayer) and praxis (feminist liberation) with constructive dogmatic reflection is clearly a recovery of important modes of theology very much lost in the modern period. The close relation between ethics and spirituality resonates with specifically contemporary

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[49] He compares the soul/body relation to that of God and humanity, even while rejecting an "instrumental" view of human nature. See Maximus, *Ambiguum* 7: "God becomes to the soul (and through the soul to the body) what the soul is to the body, as God alone knows … He remains wholly man in soul and body by nature, and becomes wholly God in body and soul by grace and by the unparalleled divine radiance of blessed glory appropriate to him." "The body is of such a nature that it can make place for the soul by an inherent power that is receptive to the soul's activity." In *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*, trans. Paul Blowers and Robert Wilken (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 71.

[50] Coakley, "*Kenosis* and Subversion", 34.

concerns. Finally, her catholic hermeneutic of integration and patristic *ressourcement* of central Christian thematics re-ordered to directly speak to contemporary cultural issues overcomes the weightless or un-tethered elements of contemporary theological feminism without losing focus on its agenda.

In terms of her Christological vision, it is worth questioning whether Coakley resonates too much with a difficult element of Rahner's "supernatural existential", specifically its *de facto* "banalization" of religious experience and religious praxis (making mundane human experience "spiritual"). That is, there is a question whether Coakley's specific spiritual re-engagement of *kenōsis* in Christology would tend to reduce "authentic spirituality" to, as in Rahner, a subject's vague awareness of transcendence and then delimit the total demand of the Gospel upon one's entire being. Is the call to action and the demand for conversion "watered down" by a fear of the historical (and terrible, no doubt) legitimation of violent patriarchical power structures?

At any rate the final verdict on Coakley's Christology is still out; we must wait upon more thoroughly developed Christological reflection from this important contemporary theologian, which will only come as the trajectory inscribed in her project bears itself out. Only from the vantage of the total *telos* of her project can the question of which is fundamentally prior, nature or grace, be answered. A final assessment can only be attempted then. The central point to be made—for at least I can raise the proper queries here—is that Coakley, as we have seen, elects a certain "Antiochene" duality over against a (supposedly) Cyrilline stress on unity for the same reason: any stress on an Alexandrian Christology drastically debilitates *creaturely* self-integrity and the self-determination that defines it. Pointing out (as I did above) her facile opposition between Antiochene (emphasizing the humanity) and Alexandrian (supposedly denigrating it) Christologies, can open up for us the further conclusion, after Riches, that the concrete union operated by Christ's hypostatic incarnation cannot be approached from the starting point of a conviction or thesis about the general relation of the divine and human natures (as in, say, a metaphysics of creation). Any general conviction about human nature, even one with feminist concerns, must be rethought through Christology, not the other way around. Otherwise, our understanding of humanity will be extrinsic to Christ, and our understanding of Christ will be in danger of being itself "extrinsicist."[51] What this observation seems to suggest is that Coakley's narrative of modern Christological problematic (shared with Rahner), in which an over-Cyrilline stress dominates and threatens to overcome, breach, circumvent, or "obliterate" (to use her word) the integrity of the creaturely nature, can *only* avoid a disastrous elision into a Eutychean confusion of divine and creaturely natures by a (quasi-)Nestorian response. For both Coakley and

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[51] At any rate, such a dualism is offset in Rahner to the degree that his constructive response attempts to find the fullness of humanity starting from the hypostatic union. It seems that this is precisely where he differs from Coakley. Though their account of the problem is the same (a *de facto* monophysitism), Rahner's concern to reject a "pure nature" (though perhaps returning with abandon because of his rejection of a thoroughgoing Christological shape to theological anthropology) allows his Christological proposal to reach the measure of the Lubacian paradox at points. "The only way in which Christ's concrete humanity may be conceived of in itself as diverse from the Logos is by thinking of it in so far as it is united to the Logos. The unity with the Logos must constitute it in its diversity from him, that is, precisely as a human nature; the unity must itself be the ground of the diversity" ("Current Problems," 181; cf. also p.162). One should also see Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth* trans. Paul Burns and Francis McDonagh (Mayknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 240-ff, for another development of the Rahnerian starting point. Sobrino self-consciously subscribes, however, to an assumptionist Christology.

Rahner (and, actually, Nestorius), it is the desire to maintain and promote the difference between the divine and human, primarily for the sake of the integrity and goodness of creaturely nature, that results still in a dualist Christology, expressed in Coakley, for example, as the demand for a "concurrence" *as a starting point* for articulating the relation of the two natures. It could be suggested that the parallelistic Christological proposals of Coakley (and Rahner) is first rooted in her particular parallelistic conceptions of the divine and human relation *in general*, as opposed to Riches'—following Maximus—concentration on the concrete data of biblical revelation. In this way the Christological concentration of theology is foiled by a "competitive" view of the relation of God and creature which loses the key insight at the heart of Chalcedon itself.

CONCLUSION: THE FRAME OF THE QUESTION

We can wholeheartedly agree with Coakley that the enigma of Chalcedon is itself an invitation to constructive, albeit dogmatic, theology. In fact one should say that the dogmatic *horos* is the very locus for the greatest freedom for speculative Christology. Accordingly, then, one must also follow much of what Riches has said above, particularly his development of Coakley's conception of *horos* as encounter (already latent in Coakley's work). But one must opt for Riches' Cyrilline-Maximian interpretation of Chalcedon for the most important reason that the implication, discovered in its light, that Coakley's "confected" Christology is still, at present, too redolent of a "pure nature" (probably resulting from a strong but latent influence of Rahner on her thought, along with the particular difficulties still being worked out within feminist discourse) which, after de Lubac, only tends to lose any stable conception of that which it seeks most to preserve, and therefore, in the long run, may actually tend to perform the very opposite effect for the meaning of human integrity and freedom than Coakley intends. Let us summarize the point by quoting David Burrell, who says that *proper* "attention to creation and the unique relation of creator to creatures can eliminate the tendency to structure divine and human freedom as a zero-sum game, for that very structure simply presumes that the creator is an actor along with others, as does the language of 'concurrence'."[52]

Finally, one must say, therefore, that the enigma of Chalcedon is best approached when understood in developmental continuity with Constantinople III, and therefore consider dyothelitism, paradoxically, as an important development of an Alexandrian Chalcedon. Yet I must ask: Is the enigma of Chalcedon hereby "solved"? One must vigorously agree with Coakley's profound insight that Chalcedon, even read through the lens of later dogmatic development, is *only still an invitation to reflection*: the essential issues raised are in no way resolved. Rather, it is only here that the essential questions of Christology can first properly be asked. What matters is the articulation of the salvation of humanity by means of the hypostatic union that precisely as union expresses the *difference* of humanity from divinity, and thereby, again, precisely as union, manifests the full *integrity* of human creatureliness to its widest possible extent. Christology properly refuses at all costs to let go of an affirmation of both poles of the antinomy and shows how the affirmation of one (unity) is the means toward the affirmation of the other (difference) as a result of the concrete Christological account of *grace* (divine action) and the resulting

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[52] See David Burrell, "Creator/Creatures Relation: 'The Distinction' vs. 'Onto-theology'" *Faith and Philosophy* 25 (2008): 184.

account of human and creaturely *nature* in its definitive and intrinsic relation with divine nature. God and creature live, ultimately, according to—in Kathy Tanner's break-through phrase—a "*non-competitive" mode of relation* that is built into the creation itself as rooted in God and which Christ makes explicit in his incarnation.[53] The potential of such a model is clear for concerns that are generally humanist (as Riches masterfully adumbrated in his essay). Does it come, however, with a particularly feminist vision? We can suggest that this will be the case, but it will be properly approached only insofar as a feminist project is recognized to be necessarily part of a broader humanist one understood within a Christological vision that is soteriological through and through. To raise the question of the feminine, one must understand the Christian proposal of the human as such (otherwise "feminism" is only conscripting theology and the Christian faith as useful tools for its own "political" ends). If Christ is the essence of the latter, he is, however strangely, the answer to the former. Here the lines of Chalcedonian Christology intrinsically unfold for reflection toward Mary of Nazareth, the Mother of God, whose womb is "wider than the heavens," *Platytera ton Ouranon.[54]* The "theological exigency" of difference within the creaturely realm is grounded in the creator-creature relation, of which such difference is a "non-identical repetition," a pleonasm, or better, an icon—or, on the other hand, like the concept of "pure nature," an abstraction, nothing at all.[55]

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[53] For her very important notion of "non-competitive relations," see for example, Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity: A Brief Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998).

[54] I refer here to the image of the Virgin Orans, also called Our Lady of the Sign, The Sign or Plytetera, which shows the Virgin in the orans position, hands lifted in prayer, with the infant Christ circumscribed by an aureole that symbolizes her womb. It is often placed on the half-dome directly above the altar in Orthodox and Byzantine Rite Catholic Churches. It articulates here what concepts can only stutter.

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