

SEMINAR ON CHRISTOLOGY

CHALCEDON IN PATRISTICS AND SYSTEMATICS

Michael Slusser of Duquesne University guided the first session through a presentation of key views of Chalcedon, historically and theologically, among patristic scholars. Background materials consisted in Professor Slusser's own studies of the *acta* of the council, as well as A. Grillmeier's interpretation in his *Christ in Christian Tradition I* (relevant sections) and André de Halleux' "La définition christologique à Chalcédoine," *Revue théologique de Louvain* 7 (1976) 3-23, 155-70. The key events and issues of the conciliar sessions presented were: the rehearsal of the Eutychian problem; the deposing of Dioscorus; the first presentation of the proposed text, judged unacceptable to Pope Leo's delegates, with the consequent need to work out a new symbol in committee; a close reading of the final symbol, following Urbina and Halleux especially, with the latter's suggestion about the important influence of Bishop Basil of Seleucia over the phrase "in two natures"; and the non-christological character of the various canons of the council.

Slusser's summation singled out the following views as rather plausible to him, given the present state of scholarship: (1) The symbol, given its carefully crafted nature, was written by a single bishop-theologian, and modified by two simple additions (see lines 17-21 of the symbol). (2) There appears to be little direct influence from Pope Leo's Tome. (Bishop Basil of Seleucia seems more influential here, at least ultimately. Interestingly, however, Slusser indicated that he was not a member of the committee which drafted the final text.) (3) The symbol appears to be the result of a genuinely free consensus. The evidence indicates a true episcopal debate/discussion, even given the imperial desire for harmony in the empire. (4) The phrase "recognized in two natures" (line 17, continuing into line 18 in the Greek) appears to mean: through a mental act, the mind can perceive two natures, an interpretation rather more Cyrillian than Leonine. (5) The word *hypostasis* is intended to preserve *prosopon* from a Nestorian interpretation. (The Word, according to Halleux, is not clearly designated the *hypostasis* here.)

Slusser's presentation generated a good deal of discussion. Much of this centered upon the word *hypostasis*, with Slusser suggesting that the term is used non-technically (that is, not with a sense precisely given through a philosophical school or system), with a more negative meaning (non-Nestorian). The actual subject (Who/what is the *hypostasis*?) also remains ambiguous. Patristic scholarship seems to be moving in the direction of a more Cyrillian interpretation of Chalcedon, with the crucial phrase "in two natures" being interpreted in a manner rather more compatible with Cyril of Alexandria's thought. The later "reception" of Chalcedon by Constantinople II would seem to confirm this Cyrillian tendency. Slus-

ser stressed that the "natures" are more an "origin" than a "thing." They point to a reality, and are not simply "mental," but that reality cannot be simply "pictured," it would seem. He added the view that the symbol is perhaps not as emphatic of Jesus' humanity as we are used to thinking. Perhaps a fear of gnostic views of Jesus lies behind whatever stress on the human the decree expresses. He responded with a qualified "yes, but . . ." to the notion that the symbol is simply providing us with rules of good doctrinal grammar: yes, it sets limits, but it also "innovates" in some way.

Professors Robert Krieg of Notre Dame and Sixto Garcia of St. Vincent's Seminary guided the discussion for the seminar's second session on contemporary mediations of Chalcedon in systematics. Relevant sections of John Dwyer's *Son of Man, Son of God* and William M. Thompson's *The Jesus Debate* provided the background reading. Krieg set his comments within the context of Karl Rahner's celebrated essay on Chalcedon as a work which points beyond itself, both linguistically (a formula, *qua* formula, is a door to something) and theologically (it does not condense Scripture but always needs to return to it for its greater fullness, for it points to a somewhat non-expressible Mystery). Kasper's work supports Rahner's in this regard. We are dealing here with the mediation of Mystery through symbol; the "moreness" indicated in the symbol calls for ever-new mediations to some extent. Krieg presented Dwyer's work as one which wants to express Chalcedon "in other terms," trying to move beyond the Greek language and mentality: Jesus is the stranger breaking all categories, for God's immediacy filled him with great freedom. As such he is God's companion, and we are called to share in that companionship. Krieg suggested that Dwyer gives more "substantive content" to Chalcedon (and thus needs to find "contemporary, non-Greek" formulations, given what Dwyer considers the "Greek limitations" of Chalcedon's horizon of thought), while, following Richard Norris, he would want to pursue the view of the council as providing us with "rules of [doctrinal] grammar."

Garcia, building on *The Jesus Debate*, presented Chalcedon as a continuation of Nicea's defense against an extreme Hellenization, as well as a move in the direction of a more relational, personalistic view of the person (of Jesus) as a being co-constituted through divine-human interrelation. Garcia especially indicated Maximus Confessor as an important source for this relationalism, as well as some modern theologians (Pannenberg, Bouyer, K. Rahner, Von Balthasar), dwelling upon Kasper's own relational model (especially featured in Thompson's book, with the need to bring out the praxis dimension of Jesus' person somewhat more fully). Garcia ended by suggesting, like Krieg, that Chalcedon points to a greater, richer reality, which demands to some extent an interpretation different from but compatible with Chalcedon so that we can remain faithful to it in our own day.

Discussion centered upon how "relationalism" could be an adequate mediation of Chalcedon's *hypostasis*, and also upon whether it is still helpful to speak of Jesus as not simply different in degree, but in kind, from other human persons. It was suggested that Karl Rahner held that, in Jesus, a difference in degree was a difference in kind. Perhaps, too, an interpersonal, more relational anthropology might help us set the question in a helpful framework: does one think of Jesus as only different in kind when one works from an individualistic model of the person? On a relational model, is there more fluidity between persons, yet genuine

uniqueness? Is the "kind/degree" distinction a manner of speaking of "uniqueness through relationship" (in a relational model)? This latter would be a way of speaking of "being," but being is less individualistic here. There was also some discussion of the need to highlight the gratuitous nature of the Incarnation (not simply the result of this-worldly evolution), as well as the "anti-Arian" dimension behind Chalcedon.

With respect to the meaning and origin of the notion of "person" as "relational," a number of things were noted. *Hypostasis* as indicating a relational anthropology seems implied in the Cappadocian theology of the Trinity, in the Fathers influenced by them (Garcia in this respect wants to point especially to Maximus Confessor), in Aquinas's trinitarian theology, etc. To interpret Chalcedon's *hypostasis* as a divine-human duality-in-unity does not indicate a kind of christological schizophrenia, but rather a notion of the human being of Jesus (= unity of person) as becoming through and in divine and human relations.

The seminar did not move in the direction of interrelating the two sessions, but clearly one might raise certain questions in this regard. If the tendency to interpret Chalcedon in a more Cyrillian direction is sustained, will this further confirm the notion of *hypostasis* as relational personhood found widely among modern systematic theologians? One might argue, at least tentatively, that the Cyrillian emphasis upon unity of being (in Jesus Christ) has a dual character of relations of a divine and human kind. A Cyrillian view would seem to move toward the model of "unity in duality," rather than "unity and duality," something which seems rather compatible with the relational anthropology spoken of above. On the other hand, is this Cyrillian tendency only one of several options already alive at Chalcedon itself?

The seminar concluded with a very positive evaluation of the seminar's work and a strong willingness to continue. Some other final decisions: next year's theme will be on soteriology (with one session centered on an historical aspect; one, on contemporary systematics); and Robert Krieg was elected moderator. Krieg was also congratulated for his recently published *A Story-Based Christology* (Paulist Press).

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