

10 May 2021

Dear Colleagues,

Evaluation of Petr Gallus' "The Perspective of Resurrection. A Trinitarian Christology"

I. Analysis

Petr Gallus has written a comprehensive Christology which should give rise to renewed reflection upon and discussion of this central topic in Christian theology. It not only reflects deeply upon the central problem in this "center" (that, namely, of providing an explanatory model for understanding the relation of divinity and humanity in the one Jesus Christ) and generates an innovative solution to it, it also looks at the consequences of this new model for a theology of the cross, for soteriology more broadly (as applied to human persons), for Trinity and eschatology. It is comprehensive in a second sense as well. It seeks to engage the very best literature in English, German, and (occasionally) Czech in three (principle) fields: NT studies on the life of Jesus, the history of dogma, and original dogmatic reflection. Philosophy and psychology also come into play. Certainly, the work reflects very wide learning, impressive in every way.

I am not going to devote much space to questions surrounding method. Gallus seeks to combine historical inquiry with dogmatic thinking. As a dogmatic theologian himself, it is completely understandable that his default should be to the most consistent application possible of a dogmatic method which seeks to test the adequacy (in terms of clarity and consistency) of previous models before elaborating his own. [Gallus' venture into NT studies has the character of an apologetic endeavor for the most part: to show that the current state of life of Jesus research does not disqualify his own effort to rehabilitate Chalcedon. But that is sufficient, in my view.]

The primary goal of this work is to repair Chalcedon. "With Chalcedon beyond Chalcedon" (p.64) is the motto which names his goal precisely. This goal gives rise to two major tasks: the first is to identify the aporia(s?) of Chalcedon (chapter 3) and to overcome them through reconstruction (chapters 4-6 primarily but also 7-10).

The central problem faced by the bishops at Chalcedon according to Gallus was to understand how the unity of the person of Jesus Christ was/is constituted (p.70). This is absolutely right, in my view. It could not have been otherwise since the majority of the bishops present held to Cyrilline views which made the unity of the "person" to be *the* problem in Christology. But, then, Gallus also holds that the Definition itself only explicitly hinted at one proposed solution to this problem and that proposal was not Cyril's; it was Pope Leo's. He finds this proposal in the clause "...the property of both natures is preserved *and comes together into*

one person and one hypostasis...” (p.71) It is a paradox, Gallus says, that the Cyrilline solution to the problem of the unity of “person” appears nowhere in the Definition - paradoxical because the majority of writers on the drafting committee were Cyrilline (p.67). A Cyrilline solution would have made the pre-existing Logos to be the *hegemonikon* of all that is done by the God-human - thus finding unity to have been constituted in the *hypostasis* of the Logos as such. A second emphasis identified by Gallus (again stemming from the alleged Leonine origin of the phrase “coming together and preserved”) is that in the one person of Jesus Christ, *God remains God and the human remains human*. Divinity, he insists, was not humanized and humanity was not divinized (p.73). The four privatives (no confusion, no change, no division, no separation) then function to ensure this outcome.

And so, Chalcedon is regarded by Gallus to have been a victory for Pope Leo in the main - with room having been left for further development in the direction of a more consistently Cyrilline position by Chalcedon’s inability to advance universally accepted definitions of its two key terms: *hypostasis* and *prosopon*. *Hypostasis* (in the words of Georg Essen) “is the *ousia* with the *idiomata*, or the *koinon* together with the *idion*” (p.80). *Hypostasis* so construed constitutes a kind of bridging term “between *physis* and *prosopon*: not a mere substance, but also not a personality” (in the modern sense, pp.80-81). *Prosopon* then adds to this thought the “specific” qualities of an individual entity. *Prosopon*, Gallus says, is the preferred term for the unity of person in the so-called “Antiochene” tradition (p.83). Once translated into the Latin *persona*, this term opened the door to the modern concept of “personality” - precisely through its reference to the specific characteristics of a concrete individual. Seen in this light, it is not surprising that *hypostasis* should have been regarded by Gallus as the broader, more indefinite term and *prosopon* as the more concrete and materially defined term - and that, therefore, *prosopon* should have been seen by him as a “further specification of *hypostasis*” (p.83), lending its definiteness to it. That is a bit of an odd suggestion, I have to admit, given that Chalcedon placed *prosopon* first and *hypostasis* second - which would seem to suggest that the bishops regarded *prosopon* as the problematic term and Cyril’s preferred term “*hypostasis*” second, more definite term. The use of *hypostasis* would seem to have been a fairly obvious signal that it is the one one *hypostasis* of the Logos which, in good Cyrilline fashion, should define *prosopon*; otherwise, the latter term be taken in the direction of Theodore of Mopsuestia’s “conjunction” of natures. Had that been the case, *hypostasis* would have been the more definite term which would have lent to the less definite *prosopon* its own significance. So why does Gallus reverse the terms? Why make *prosopon* the more definite and *hypostasis* the less? The answer is this. When Gallus interprets the terms as he does “an interesting and important [ontic] space between *hypostasis* and *prosopon*” (p.83) opens up, a space which he will use to introduce his own modern distinction between “personhood” (the relation of the Father to Jesus and Jesus to his Father) and “personality” (the relation of Jesus to the rest of us).

Gallus’ contention to this point is that Chalcedon failed to resolve the problem of the unity of the person. He is surely right about that, though one might well question the reasons he gives. His own explanation is by now unsurprising. Having given the palm of victory to Leo, he thinks that Chalcedon starts with the two natures and only then tries to establish the unity of the person. No unity of “person” could be arrived at in this way. So Chalcedon failed in its central task. My own view is that Gallus misreads Chalcedon when it comes to starting-point. Chalcedon sets forth a Cyrilline understanding of the “person.” But in that case too, Chalcedon

would have ended in failure - for reasons which Gallus himself makes clear in relation to “neo-Chalcedonianism.”

What is of the greatest interest, then, is how Gallus understands the subsequent history. He holds that a direct identification of the Christological “person” with Cyril’s pre-existent Logos was only re-introduced by the “neo-Chalcedonians” at the point at which Leontius of Byzantium coined the term “*enhypostasis*.” The human nature, it was said, is “*hypostasized*” in the *hypostasis* of the eternal Logos. Now this move did indeed succeed in establishing a unity of “person” - but at a high cost, in Gallus’ view. The *enhypostasizing* of the human nature in the *hypostasis* of the Logos brought about the triumph of Cyril’s understanding of the “person” and with that, the “dynamic” of his understanding of Khalid Anatolios has called the “active-passive paradigm” by means of which a “communication of attributes” could flow only from the divine to the human only and never in the reverse direction. The problem, as Gallus rightly says, is that the humanity of Christ could not be “fully” realized where this was thought to be the case. The human nature was seen by Cyril and his followers to have been so completely under the control of the Logos that it could contribute nothing to the constitution of the Christological “person.” All of this is true - and I think Gallus’ identification of the first of his aporias is “spot-on.” The “neo-Chalcedonians” claimed that Christ was “fully human” but their model left no space for complete humanity. And so their efforts ended in logically contradictory statements. The only remaining question (for me) is: was all of this really just a post-Chalcedonian development?

Gallus holds that a second aporia emerged in post-Chalcedonian Christological reflection centered upon “dyotheletism.” For Gallus, the thought of “two natures coming together” would be made worse by dyothelism, since it would open the door to two sets of willed activities (divine and human); two “subjects” in other words, set over against each other in a competitive relation. Of course, it never really came to that and I think Gallus knows it. “Dyothelism” was advanced by the “neo-Chalcedonians” only as a secondary move, designed to address the problem of a “communication of attributes.” When seen against the background of an *enhypostatic* model that made the Logos alone to be person-forming, dyothelism was a mirage. For it led immediately to the two problems, both of which are rightly seen by Gallus. The first is that the “communication of attributes” from the human “nature” to the Logos could only be verbal, a figure of speech, and nothing real. The second is that a “communication of operations” posited on the soil of the *enhypostasis* is an impossible conception. Gallus seems to think of this as a second aporia; I would say it is simply the inevitable consequence of the first (and only) aporia. Be that as it may, however, it strikes me that Gallus needs a version of dyothelism (a better version than the classical, I would say) if the distinction between God and the human which he regards as “fundamental for the whole of theology” (p.103) is to be upheld: God remains God and the human remains human: that much is good. But! he needs a version which has been cut loose from the *enhypostasia*. But that is not the direction he chooses.

Surprisingly enough, Gallus’ own reconstruction of Chalcedon *adopts* rather than leaving behind the *enhypostasis* of Leontius. But he then seeks to overcome its unintended aporia by placing next to it an “*ek-hypostasizing*” of the divine, a “motion which creates the space for humanity and its full and free development” (p.219) which consists finally in an act in which “the Son hands over his *hypostasis* to the humanity...” (p.220). Countervailing movements, so to speak. Gallus says that the mechanism that explains this “handing over” is divine

“accommodation” and its result is an “*enhypostatic* inversion” (p.220). The Logos is “*enhypostasized*” in an “*hypostasis*” which has been made through “accommodation” to be the “*hypostasis*” of Jesus. Or has he? If the hypostasis of the Logos were “in” the hypostasis of Jesus in this way, would he not be “humanized” in that this takes place? But that, as we have already seen, is a consequence Gallus resists. What that leaves us with is unclear. Does the Logos simply disappear in and through the act of “handing over” his hypostasis? That might have been the case, were it not for the fact that Gallus seeks to buttress his model with the help of something akin to Pannenberg’s metaphysics. And here we touch upon a final complication. The resurrection, at the end of the day is not only a hermeneutical aid for Gallus; it is the source of the sought for unity in an ontological sense. And the unity which emerges in this event (which combines handing over with return to self) has retroactive significance. But to get this borrowed metaphysics off the ground in the first place requires that there *be* a Logos to hand over his hypostasis - which there isn’t, until the divine Person has been realized in the resurrection.

The real problem here though lies in Gallus’ retention of the language of “*enhypostasizing*.” This is simply not a coherent notion; it never was. “*Hypostases*” are mere ideas until they are made real through the addition of specific qualities proper to the lived existence of “persons.” In and of themselves, they refer only to the instantiation of class terms; they are the “that-ness” of metaphysical universals. They are indeed alleged to be real, but precisely as bridge terms standing between the metaphysical concept of a “nature” and its concretization in a concrete individual, it drifts back into the unreality of the originating universal. And so: even the traditional language of the Logos giving to his human nature a place in his own eternal *hypostasis* misleads. It treats the *hypostasis* of the Logos as some “thing” he might act upon; as an “object” in other words. But “that-ness” as such was never an object and to speak of the Logos acting upon his own “that-ness” in this way is logical nonsense. And that defect is not in the least remedied by an “*enhypostatic* inversion” since the “accommodation” which is supposed to achieve it can only be the act of a “person.” What Gallus needs, it seems to me, is a uniting of “persons” to form a single “theandric” “person” (much like the early I.A. Dorner). But that is a possibility he runs from because of an allergy to dyothelitism. Left unimagined is a form of dyothelitism which would not yield two competing subjects. But that is a subject for another day.

There is much more to this fascinating Habilitation work than I have sufficient space to treat. I have not been able to touch here upon the role played by the distinction between “personhood” and “personality.” And I would have loved to talk about the doctrine of the Trinity and Gallus’ theology of the cross especially. But this much must suffice.

II. Concluding Remarks

Anyone coming from a reading of the previous analysis might come to the conclusion that I simply regarded this work as a failure. That could not be less true. I have just completed a Christology myself (due out from Cambridge University Press in September). And like Gallus, I have tried to repair Chalcedon (though my model is different). But that then means that my arguments with Gallus have been those of a specialist with another specialist. So my final word is this. The issues thoughtfully unfolded by Gallus have been fought over for centuries and will

continue to be until the world is no more. And his proposed solution - while not without attendant problems of its own - is intelligently argued for throughout. Gallus is a highly creative and profoundly learned thinker who has tried valiantly to synthesize the traditional dogma with impulses emanating from Dalferth, Pannenberg, and Schoonenberg. The result is highly innovative wherever one touches it. I should add that I am also convinced by a fair amount of what he says. I think he is right, for example, to say that an original relation joins the eternal Son to Jesus. For that reason, I think he is also right to adopt Rahner's axiom ("the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and vice versa"). He is right too in finding divine impassibility to be an insuperable roadblock to the unity of Christ's "person." And he is right, finally, in wanting to overcome the first of his aporias. I just happen to think that the second one touching upon "dyothelitism" is not properly an aporia since it admits of a solution (which will have to go unnamed here). And we disagree on the relation of Chalcedon to "neo-Chalcedonianism." Nevertheless, I think Gallus has produced an outstanding work. His proposal will surely be much discussed in the European literature and justly so - and I will do what I can to bring it to the attention of Anglo-American theologians. I recommend the acceptance of this book as satisfying the requirements for habilitation. And if honors are given, I would recommend that the highest be given.

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