

There is good reason to believe that the earliest explicit christology, making use of Jewish concepts, titles, etc., thought and spoke about Jesus as a human being whom God had appointed Messiah and, in that sense, Son of God. But between this earliest explicit christology and the classical christology of the councils of Nicæa and Chalcedon, there is evidently an important discontinuity, since Jesus is thought and spoken about in the second very differently, as a divine being who has somehow become human. The great problem with this classical christology, however, is how, presupposing that Jesus is one person, not two, one can assert that he is also a human being. As surely as Alexandrine christology, like later so-called neo-Chalcedonian christology, vindicates the presupposition that Jesus is, indeed, one person, it appears at the same time to deny in effect that he is also truly human. On the other hand, Antiochene christology clearly asserts that Jesus is truly human, but it appears to be able to do so only by in effect overthrowing the presupposition that he is not two persons but one. Of course, the Chalcedonian formula was deliberately formulated to avoid the difficulties of both of these solutions. But there is the most serious question whether the settlement that Chalcedon sought to achieve isn't simply a restatement of the problem, as distinct from anything like a tenable solution to it.

Revisionary christology, on the contrary, typically thinks and speaks about Jesus as a human being in whom God is uniquely present. The great problem with this christology, however, is how, again presupposing that Jesus is one person, not two, one can assert that he is also a divine being. If it vindicates the presupposition that Jesus is, indeed, only one person, it appears to do so only by denying in effect that he is also truly God. As a matter of fact, its representatives typically explain that Jesus cannot be one truly human person and also be God, except in the sense that, being a perfect, sinless human being, he is such that God is as present in his human life as God could possibly be in any.

Thus, if classical christology may be said to think and speak of a divine Jesus who does divine things humanly, revisionary christology may be said to think and speak about a human Jesus who does human things divinely.

But whether Jesus is somehow a divine as well as a human being is as irrelevant to the constitutive christological assertion of Christian faith and witness as whether he lived a sinless life of perfect faith working through love. For, as Bultmann rightly observes, although the earliest community did indeed think and speak about Jesus as the Messiah of God, it did not thereby attribute to him a special metaphysical nature because of which his words are authoritative, but, on the contrary, thereby confessed on the authority of his words that God had made him the king of the community (*Jesus*: 180). In other words, aside from the fact that, in the *ordo cognoscendi*, it is the experience not merely of the authority of Jesus' words, but of him himself being the explicit primal ontic source of all authority that is the reason for thinking and speaking about him as the Messiah—aside from this, there remains the difference between attributing to him a divine metaphysical nature, as classical christology does, and asserting, as the earliest community asserted, that, although he is a human being and in no sense divine, he has been appointed by God as Messiah. If, given the assumptions of some world views, Jesus could be the explicit primal ontic source of all that is divinely authorized only by being divine, this is not the case, given the assumptions of all world views, even though they may very well have their own ways of thinking and speaking about a primal source of all authority

Consequently, even if one can quite rightly argue that christological assertions are and must be, in some sense, ontological or metaphysical, this ought not to be confused with the very different argument that they can be adequate only insofar as they include the assertion that Jesus is divine, indeed, is truly God. Judged from the standpoint of the constitutive christological assertion that Christian faith and witness make or imply about Jesus, the typical classical christology is, at best, only a more or less adequate way of formulating it, given certain religious or philosophical assumptions.

But if Jesus' being thought and spoken about as a divine person who does divine things humanly is in no sense necessarily implied by his being the explicit primal ontic source of all that is divinely authorized—there being contrary, but comparably adequate (or inadequate) ways of thinking and saying that this is who he is—his being thought and spoken about as a human person who does human things divinely is equally unnecessary. To

be sure, there may be religious and philosophical assumptions according to which the explicit primal ontic source of all that is divinely authorized is itself "sent," "commissioned," and so authorized by the strictly ultimate reality called "God." But it is clear that, even then, the concept of being authorized is not being used univocally, but analogically. Consequently, the typical revisionary christology is, at best, only another way, more or less adequate, of formulating the constitutive christological assertion.

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