Language, Metaphor, and Chalcedon: A Case of Theological Double Vision

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T he question of how human language functions in relation to God
constitutes one of the most difficult problems in Christian theology. I
contend that Christian notions of language about God should be constructed
in light of christology, since both are concerned with the relationship be-
tween the human and the divine. Northrop Frye, drawing on the poetry and
thought of William Blake, speaks of the importance of "the double vision
of a spiritual and a physical world simultaneously present"[1] in understand-
ing how religious language works. This fundamental quality of double vi-
sion or tension characterizes the relationship between the human and the
divine both in language about God and in christology. In this article I shall
examine several aspects of the relationship between the human and the
divine: first, the basic problem of theological language as discussed by
George Lindbeck; second, the notion of theological language as metaphori-
cal, as discussed by Sallie McFague; and third, christology as found in the
Chalcedonian definition of Christian faith. I shall conclude that it is appro-
priate to construct notions of language about God in light of Chalcedonian
christology.

    [1]Northrop Frye, *The Double Vision: Language and Meaning in Religion* (Toronto: Univer-
sity of Toronto Press, 1991) 85.

▓ Language

George Lindbeck has recently addressed the perennial problem of how human language about God functions. In *The Nature of Doctrine*, Lindbeck discusses three possible ways of understanding the doctrines of religion and theological language.[2] The difficulty of finding the correct balance between experiential and cognitive dimensions of language draws attention to the slippery nature of human language about God and the need to bear in mind the double vision of humanity and divinity simultaneously present. Lindbeck maintains that human language relates to the divine in a way that is neither merely expressive nor permanently true. Human language is, rather, meaningful, yet limited. In view of this, Lindbeck sets out to avoid the weaknesses of both simplistic subjectivism and objectivism; although his goal is to steer a middle course between the two, however, he often drifts in the direction of undermining the objective dimension. Indeed, Alister McGrath has commented that "Lindbeck's concept of doctrine is strongly reductionist, facilitating theoretical analysis at the cost of failing to interact fully with the phenomenon in question"[3] and that Lindbeck's view involves "the abandonment of any talk about God as an independent reality."[4] In view of this problem, I shall look more closely at what Lindbeck is trying to achieve.

The first notion of theological language that Lindbeck discusses is the cognitive propositionalist view, in which the propositions of religious discourse are seen as permanently and objectively true. In this view, the cognitive dimension of religious language is emphasized and the language is seen primarily as informative and descriptive. Lindbeck says that "for a propositionalist, if a doctrine is once true, it is always true, and if it is once false, it is always false."[5] This notion of language is reminiscent of that found in Wittgenstein's early writings, namely his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Human language is seen as once and for all picturing a state of affairs that exists apart from the language itself.[6] Language and reality, therefore, operate in a one-to-one or isomorphic manner. According to the second view, the experiential expressive type, the language of religion is made up of "non-informative and non-discursive symbols of inner feelings,

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[2]George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Theology in a Post-Liberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984). In the last decade this work has continued to provoke and influence discussion. See, for example, *Modern Theology* 4 (1988); Richard Lints, "The Postpositivist Choice: Tracy or Lindbeck?" *JAAR* 61 (1993) 655–77; and Stephen L. Stell, "Hermeneutics in Theology and the Theology of Hermeneutics: Beyond Lindbeck and Tracy," *JAAR* 61 (1993) 679–703.

[3]Alister McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990) 34.

[4]Ibid., 29.

[5]Lindbeck, *Nature*, 16.

[6]See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (trans. David F. Pears and Bernard F. McGuiness; London: Routledge, 1974) 21.

attitudes, or existential orientations."[7] Here Lindbeck sees a fundamental polyvalence in the way religious doctrines and propositions function. They can have different meanings at different times and in different circumstances. The significant question is not whether the language pictures a permanently true state of affairs, but rather how effectively it articulates the religious experiences of an individual or a community. Thus, the measure lies in the language's symbolic efficacy in the context of its actual use. The basic experience is prior to the language about it and may then be expressed in a number of different ways. This language has no permanent meaning. For Lindbeck, the cognitive propositionalist and experiential expressive notions of theological language are inadequate. The first emphasizes the cognitive dimension of language at the expense of the experiential, while the second emphasizes the experiential at the expense of the cognitive.

The third view, Lindbeck's own cultural linguistic view, is comparable to the learning of acquired skills. When learning a language or growing up in a culture, one does not first ask whether the rules and procedures are permanently true or adequately expressive. Rather, one simply learns the rules and inhabits the codes of behavior. The necessary skills are acquired and result in the binding together of the participants. This notion of theological language is reminiscent of that found in Wittgenstein's later writings, namely his *Philosophical Investigations,* in which he claims that the meaning of language lies in its use within a particular language game or form of life.[8] For Lindbeck, theological language and the doctrines of religion function primarily like rules in a language, and the meaningfulness of theological discourse lies in its actual use. Thus, Lindbeck also calls this view a "rule theory." Lindbeck's desire to bring together the experiential and cognitive elements of theological language is laudable. When he says that theology and doctrine "assert nothing either true or false about God and his relation to creatures," however, he has undermined the objective dimension of theological and doctrinal language and has drifted into expressivism.[9]

An important illustration of this drift into expressivism can be found in Lindbeck's treatment of the christological statements of Nicea and Chalcedon. Early on, Lindbeck says that "the Nicaenum in its role as a communal doctrine does not make first-order truth-claims."[10] By this he means that the creed of Nicea and its statement concerning the unity of father and son

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[7]Lindbeck, *Nature,* 16.

[8]See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (trans. by Gertrude E. M. Anscombe; Oxford: Blackwell, 1967) 20.

[9]Lindbeck, *Nature,* 69.

[10]Ibid., 19.

should be understood as referring neither to ontological truth, nor to cognitive propositionalist truth, but to regulative truth. Such language tells us nothing about God, but is simply like the rules of a language. Speaking of the key role of Athanasius and the notion of consubstantiality at the Council of Nicea, Lindbeck claims that "the theologian most responsible for the triumph of Nicaea thought of it, not as a first-order proposition with ontological reference, but as a second-order rule of speech. For him, to accept the doctrine meant to agree to speak in a certain way."[11] For Lindbeck, the same is true of the language of Chalcedon. He claims that the ontological or first-order concern developed in the Middle Ages.[12] In treating christology as regulative and second-order, it seems that Lindbeck's emphasis on meaning as use has led him to undermine the objective side of this language, namely, God.

Although I share Lindbeck's basic concern to find a notion of theological language that holds together the experiential and cognitive elements, I wish to avoid his tendency toward expressivism. Moreover, his difficulty with classical christology is more significant than it first seems. If this christology were examined in some detail and if it became a more significant element in the debate about theological language, an altogether different picture would emerge. The christology of Chalcedon deals with the relationship between the human and the divine, precisely the relationship at stake in the question of the meaning of theological language. Karl Barth appreciated this connection more than any other theologian in the twentieth century. Barth stressed the revelation of God in Jesus as the context for all legitimate speaking about God, emphasizing that the word of God does not come to us directly, but comes clothed "in the garments of creaturely reality."[13] For Barth, the God who is hidden and yet revealed in Jesus is described in limited and tentative language, but is nonetheless truly named. If christology provided the climate in which to formulate notions of theological language, such language might remain more adequate to the phenomenon it articulates, and both human and divine elements could be kept in view. Before examining the christology of Chalcedon I shall look further at the basic problem as it has arisen in Sallie McFague's discussion of metaphor.

[11]Ibid., 94.

[12]Ibid. For further discussion of this matter, see Stephen Williams, "Lindbeck's Regulative Christology," *Modern Theology* 4 (1988) 173–86.

[13]Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1/1 (trans. George T. Thompson; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961) 189.

▓ Metaphor

A great deal has been written on the nature of metaphor in recent years, and the issues are wide-ranging and complex.[14] In the western philosophical tradition stemming from Aristotle, the attitude to metaphor has been largely negative.[15] Recent literature on the subject, however, values the cognitive dimension of metaphor to a greater extent. A useful way to discuss metaphor is to contrast it with literal language. The literal sense of language is its "primary matter-of-fact"[16] sense or what it means "on the face of it."[17] By contrast, metaphor is "that figure of speech whereby we speak about one thing in terms which are seen to be suggestive of another."[18] Within this context, the notion that two elements within metaphor produce an interaction or a tension has been stressed.[19] Paul Ricoeur, for example, underlines this double aspect of metaphor, speaking of a fundamental "is and is not" structure.[20]

Paul Ricoeur has had some influence on Sallie McFague's work. In her *Metaphorical Theology*, McFague attempts to avoid two obstacles to understanding the function of theological language: idolatry and irrelevance.[21] If language about God is taken literally, the result will be idolatry—an identification of language with the divine. If language about God becomes

[14]See, for example, Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); Andrew Ortony, ed., *Metaphor and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Eva Feder Kittay, *Metaphor: Its Cognitive Force and Linguistic Structure* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987).

[15]On Aristotle, see Soskice, *Metaphor*, 3–4. For Enlightenment views, see John Locke, "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding," in *The Works of John Locke* (1823; 10 vols.; reprinted Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1963) vols. 1–3. Locke says that figurative language, which includes metaphor, is made up of "perfect cheats" (2. 288). See also Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (ed. Crawford B. Macpherson; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985). Metaphors, he says, "deceive others" (p. 102).

[16]George Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Duckworth, 1980) 133.

[17]Owen Barfield, "The Meaning of the Word 'Literal,'" in Lionel C. Knights and Basil Cottle, eds., *Metaphor and Symbol* (London: Butterworth, 1960) 48.

[18]Soskice, *Metaphor*, 15.

[19]See Ivor A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936) 90; Max Black, "Metaphor," in *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962) 25–47; Monroe Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co.,1958) 134–47; and idem, "The Metaphorical Twist," in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 22 (1962) 292–307.

[20]See Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multidisciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978) 224.

[21]McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, 4.

irrelevant, however, then it is rendered meaningless. McFague's aim is to find "a way of speaking of religious language as referring to God without identifying it with the divine."[22] In Lindbeck's terms, the problem lies between a cognitive propositionalist view and an experiential expressive view. McFague maintains that the way to understand theological language is to acknowledge its metaphorical structure. Her overriding point, like Ricoeur's, is that metaphor consists of a simultaneous "is and is not": "metaphorical theology, most basically, insists on the dialectic of the positive and the negative, on the 'is and is not,' and that tension permeates every aspect of it."[23] Thus, by underlining this tensive quality of metaphor, McFague sets out to avoid seeing language about God either as literally true or as meaningless.

McFague frequently claims that metaphors are not merely ornaments, but are "cognitively oriented for the purpose of understanding the world"[24]; models, which for McFague are sustained metaphors, involve both discovery and creation,[25] and they make intelligibile the unintelligible.[26] Nevertheless, her view that metaphors must be developed without limit tends toward meaninglessness, one of the directions she attempts to avoid. She says that "a metaphorical theology will insist that *many* metaphors and models are necessary, that a piling up of images is essential, both to avoid idolatry and to attempt to express the richness and variety of the divine-human relationship."[27] The danger here, however, is that with such a wealth of metaphors the "is not" element will prevail over the "is," and all will be rendered meaningless.[28]

Another important feature of McFague's *Metaphorical Theology*, mentioned only in passing, is its christology. By way of rejecting the christology of Chalcedon, McFague claims that "an incarnational christology is inevitably static and nature-oriented."[29] In its place, she prefers to see Jesus as the "parable of God." The parables of Jesus are exactly the sort of language needed in theology: "open-ended, tensive, secular, indirect, iconoclastic and

[22]Ibid., 4.
[23]Ibid., 65.
[24]Ibid., 92.
[25]Ibid., 101.
[26]Ibid., 73.
[27]Ibid., 20.
[28]This danger also permeates McFague's more recent work, for example, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); and idem, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993). See also David J. Bromell's discussion of McFague's work in "Sallie McFague's 'Metaphorical Theology,'" *JAAR* 61 (1993) 485–503.
[29]McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, 196.

revolutionary."[30] In light of this view of Jesus' parables, McFague wishes us to see his entire life as a parable of God.[31] Interestingly, although McFague rejects incarnational christology, she bases her entire system on an "is and is not" notion of language. In fact, it seems that McFague has not so much rejected incarnational christology per se, but a particular notion of it. As I shall demonstrate, the christology of Chalcedon is hardly static. Rather, its distinguishing feature corresponds to one of McFague's particular interests, namely, the notion of a dynamic interplay between the human and the divine.[32]

Metaphor constitutes an important element of human speech about God; its double element yields a tensive interaction. While articulating truth at one level, metaphors are usually literally false. They contain an "is and is not" structure, a simultaneous affirmation and denial. This gives them specific power and richness. Even where this feature is stressed, however, a drift into expressivism in views of metaphor is still possible. The ontological or objective dimension can be easily undermined as one focuses on the tentative side. To some extent, as has been discussed, this has happened in both Lindbeck's and McFague's notions of language. Their attempts to avoid overemphasizing the cognitive and literal dimension on the one hand and the expressive dimension on the other have resulted in a tendency toward expressivism and a dissatisfaction with incarnational christology. I have suggested that the connection between language and christology is of central significance, as Karl Barth's work demonstrates. Discussing difficulties in forming an adequate notion of religious language, Roger White has emphasized the connection between language and christology in Barth's theology: "It is a central leitmotif of the *Dogmatics* and perhaps one of the deepest lessons we may learn from it, how much more radically we must be prepared to look to divine revelation—and above all to Jesus Christ— to learn about the very words we use in theology."[33] I shall turn, therefore, to the relationship between the human and the divine as it is found in Chalcedonian christology, examining how this relationship may provide a more constructive climate for the closely related matter of forming concepts of theological language.

[30]Ibid., 48.

[31]Ibid., 42–43.

[32]It is interesting that in *The Body of God* McFague moves clearly toward a dynamic incarnational view of the relationship between God and world.

[33]Roger White, "Notes on Analogical Predication and Speaking about God," in Brian Hebblethwaite and Stewart Sutherland, eds., *The Philosophical Frontiers of Christian Theology: Essays Presented to D. M. Mac-Kinnon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 224.

▓ Chalcedon

The main concern of christology is the relationship between the human and the divine. As suggested earlier, this relationship is important for notions of human language about God. The christological model that has articulated this relationship most adequately has been the Chalcedonian definition of Christian faith (451 CE).[34] I shall turn first to a brief exposition of the Antiochene and Alexandrian traditions which influenced this definition, noting how they understood the relationship between the human and the divine.[35] Charles Waldrop summarizes the respective emphases of these two schools succinctly: "The Antiochenes and the Alexandrians conceive the unity of the person of Christ differently. The latter emphasize the oneness, while the former stress the duality. Each side attempts to deal adequately with the opposite emphasis."[36] Wolfhart Pannenberg calls these two basic types disjunction christology and unification christology, respectively.[37] I shall refer to them here simply as the model of distinction and the model of unity.

The Antiochene tradition is typified in popular thinking by the christologies of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius. A useful entry point into this christology is to discuss their rejection of the term θεοτόκος or "God-bearer" for the Virgin Mary. Nestorius maintained that to call Mary the bearer of God or to say that God had been born of Mary was to claim that the divine had undergone a human birth. To call Mary θεοτόκος, therefore, was to undermine the divine nature. Nestorius's christology overlooked the fact that the term θεοτόκος was used to claim that not God but rather the man Jesus, recognized as divine, was born of Mary. In any case, the word θεοτόκος also opened the door to a blatant docetism, for it could give the impression that the man born of Mary was not really human. In view of this, Nestorius's preference was to qualify θεοτόκος by the expression ἀνθρωποτόκος ("man-bearer") or to use Χριστοτόκος ("Christ-bearer") instead. Even the expression θεοδόχος ("God-receiver") would be preferable to the original word, and in Greek it had the advantage of sounding the same. The key problem here was that the divine and human elements

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[34]For the text of the Chalcedonian definition and some discussion, see T. Herbert Bindley and Frederick W. Green, eds., *The Oecumenical Documents of the Faith* (4th ed.; London: Methuen, 1950) 183–99. For the wider historical and theological background, see Robert V. Sellers, *The Council of Chalcedon: A Historical and Doctrinal Survey* (London: S.P.C.K., 1953).

[35]For a fuller discussion of these two traditions, see Robert V. Sellers, *Two Ancient Christologies* (London: S.P.C.K., 1940).

[36]Charles Waldrop, *Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Alexandrian Character* (Amsterdam: Mouton, 1984) 25.

[37]Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man* (London: SCM, 1968) 287.

were becoming blurred. The Antiochenes' chief concern was to emphasize the distinction within the unity.

Another issue regarding the distinction between human and divine is the so-called *communicatio idiomatum*. In Alexandrian christology this notion of the communion of idioms meant that because of the union of the human and the divine in Christ, language normally referring to the human element in Christ could be used of the divine element and vice versa. Aspects in the gospels relating to the humanity of Christ could be predicated of the divinity, while elements relating to the divinity could be predicated of the humanity. As we shall see, in the Alexandrian tradition there was an eagerness to unite the two elements. For Nestorius and the Antiochenes, however, a distinction between the two elements was essential. The language of the gospels relating to the humanity of Christ was to be taken as referring to the human nature; that relating to the divinity was to be taken as referring to the divine. In his work on Theodore's christology, Rowan Greer says that "predication had to be either to the human nature or to the divine nature."[38] The Antiochenes were thus dissatisfied with this notion of a *communicatio idiomatum* and worked toward emphasizing the distinction within the unity once again.

A brief look at the key words used in Antiochene christology will clarify their concern to bring out this distinction within the unity of the two elements. Central to understanding patristic theology are four key words: οὐσία, φύσις, ὑπόστασις, and πρόσωπον. Their meanings are broad and complex and sometimes overlap to the extent of synonymity. Οὐσία basically indicates the being or identity of a thing, or what makes that thing unique. Φύσις is the nature of a thing; the term thus overlaps with οὐσία. Ὑπόστασις is the reality behind the appearance of a thing. Finally, πρόσωπον is the mask or face of a thing, or that which presents itself to the senses. These words are used to focus the crucial relationship between the human and the divine in Antiochene christology, because while there is total unity at the level of πρόσωπον, there could be said to be two realities—the human and the divine—at the levels of οὐσία, φύσις, and ὑπόστασις. Nestorius thus speaks of a prosopic union, constituted by the mutual reciprocity or dynamic interchange between the humanity and the divinity at this prosopic level.[39] The key contribution here, however, is the notion of a distinction at the deepest levels. This model of distinction has the potential to separate the elements completely.

The Alexandrian tradition, typified in popular thinking by the christology of Apollinarius of Laodicea, holds an opposite emphasis to the Antiochene

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[38]Rowan Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia* (London: Faith, 1961) 61.

[39]For more details on this, see John N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: Black, 1977) especially chap. 12.

tradition. The Alexandrian tradition upheld such notions as θεοτόκος and *communicatio idiomatum*, and its emphasis on a union of the human and divine in Christ led to a confusion of the two. The work of Apollinarius constitutes the first attempt to articulate fully the relationship between the divine and the human elements in Christ. Reacting against the Antiochene tendency toward dualism in this matter, Apollinarius emphasized union. Frances Young observes that "whatever the problems or implications, the union is Apollinarius's chief concern."[40] In order to secure a correct notion of this union, Apollinarius began with a study of human psychology.

For Apollinarius the human person is made up of three elements: σῶμα ("body"), ψυχή ("vital principle"), and νοῦς ("rational principle"). These elements form a hierarchy with the νοῦς, the rational or intellectual principle, at the top. This νοῦς is the feature that separates human beings from animals; it is the seat of human freedom, of free will and thus of sin or sinlessness. Next, the ψυχή, the animal or vital soul which human beings share with the animals, is the nonmaterial part of the human personality. Finally, at the bottom of the ladder, the material aspect, or the body, may be found. This is also called σάρξ, a usage that links the body to the lower soul or ψυχή. This scheme of understanding the human person is crucial to grasping the distinctive features of Apollinarius's christology. As Herbert Maurice Relton summarized Apollinarius's central question: "How could two perfect natures be united in one person, since two natures involve two personalities?"[41] Apollinarius's reply is that in the unity of the two elements in Christ, in the relationship between the divine and the human, the divine λόγος ("Word") has taken the place of the human νοῦς, the rational principle. As a result, the divine λόγος forms the seat of intelligence and freedom and is thus the primary element within the union.

Apollinarius's move to replace the human νοῦς with the divine λόγος, however, undermines Christ's humanity and moves toward docetism. An attempt to articulate a union has slipped into a fundamental confusion of the elements. For Apollinarius, the λόγος has become the sole life-giving aspect of the union, and the νοῦς—that which separates human beings from the animals—has been neglected. In his work on the philosophy of the church fathers, Harry Austryn Wolfson maintains that Apollinarius's christology holds to a "union of predominance," in which the active, divine λόγος predominates over the passive, human flesh.[42] The key soteriological criticism of this notion came from Gregory Nazianzen in his comment that

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[40]Frances Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 188.

[41]Herbert Maurice Relton, *A Study in Christology* (London: S.P.C.K., 1917) 19.

[42]Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970) 441.

"that which He has not assumed He has not healed."[43] In any case, an attempted model of unity has drifted into one of considerable confusion of the elements.

The coming together of the Antiochene and Alexandrian models characterizes the christology of Chalcedon. In Chalcedon, they form a single model in which the divine and human elements are united yet also remain distinct. Many of those who see the document containing the Chalcedonian definition as Nestorian, Monophysite, completely negative, or simply a compromise focus on isolated aspects of its christology. Certain features of the document, however, are integral to understanding its full contribution to an adequate articulation of the relation betwen the human and the divine. In order to understand Chalcedonian christology in a complete way, it is necessary to focus on important words and phrases from the central section of the document.

I begin with the words οὐσία ("being") and ὁμοούσιος ("one being").[44] The document says that Jesus is "of one being with the Father concerning the Godhead and the same of one being with us concerning the Manhood."[45] These two words are among the most complex words in Greek patristic theology, but in the Chalcedonian context they have to do with affirming unity. Probably the best translation of οὐσία into English is "being." Geoffrey Lampe suggests that the basic meaning of οὐσία has to do with "being," "reality," and "ultimate reality."[46] He says that in relation to material things it is the "substance from which a thing is made or in which it exists, stuff, matter."[47] It is thus the "essential element or feature" or "special character" of a thing.[48] The emphasis is on the unique character, distinctive element, or defining characteristic. Lampe suggests that when used to refer to God, this word specifically means the "being of God."[49]

The word ὁμοούσιος means "one" or the "same" being and is specifically concerned with affirming unity. There are several possible transla-

[43]Gregory Nazianzen, "Epistle 101," in Philip Schaff and Henry Wade, eds., *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (14 vols.; 2d ser.; trans. Charles G. Browne and James E. Swallow; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978) 7. 440.

[44]For a thorough study of these words, see Christopher Stead, *Divine Substance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977).

[45]My translation. The original Greek is ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ κατὰ τὴν θεότητα, καὶ ὁμοούσιον τὸν αὐτὸν ἡμῖν κατὰ τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα. See Bindley and Green, *Oecumenical Documents*, 193 and 234–35. For a full translation of the Chalcedonian definition, see ibid., 232–35 and J. Stevenson, ed., *Creeds, Councils, and Controversies. Documents Illustrative of the History of the Church A.D. 337–461* (London: S.P.C.K., 1966) 334–38.

[46]LPGL, s.v. οὐσία.

[47]Ibid.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Ibid.

tions into English. Stead suggests "made of the same element" or "belonging to the same order of beings."[50] George L. Prestige notes that "the original signification of homoousios, apart from all theological technicality, is simply 'made of the same stuff.' 'Stuff' here bears a generic sense, necessarily, since no objects of physical experience are composed of identical portions of matter; it really means 'made of the same stuff.'"[51] Prestige adds that until the Council of Nicea, this word was understood to refer to something material and that "it conveyed a metaphor drawn from material objects."[52] Hence, although the word could have a wide variety of meanings and indicate a very general notion, it could also designate very close association. The emphasis on close unity arose in the anti-Arian context of the Council of Nicea, and this meaning carried over into Chalcedon. Stead says that "the phrase simply denies that the Son had an origin outside, or independent of, the Father."[53] The basic etymology of these words leads to the conclusion that their use in Chalcedonian christology affirms unity between the defining characteristics of two things: a common derivation, continuity, or unity between the λόγος and the Father, on the one hand, and between Jesus' humanity and that of humans, on the other.

The next important word in Chalcedonian christology is πρόσωπον.[54] The definition indicates that there are two natures "running together into one πρόσωπον and one ὑπόστασις, not parted or divided into two πρόσωπα."[55] Originally, πρόσωπον meant mask, face, or the external appearance of a thing. The emphasis was on the concrete or empirical dimension, that which is presented to the senses. Prestige defines it as "the external being or individual self as presented to an onlooker;"[56] it could, therefore, mean the individuality of a thing and thus have a deeper sense. The Semitic background to this word involved a stress on the concrete or tangible dimension, and this appealed to the Antiochene's emphasis on the humanity of Christ. Nestorius's concept of the prosopic union constituted the level at which he saw the unity of the human and divine in Christ. For him there were still fundamental distinctions at other levels. The Chalcedonian definition, however, claims that there is one πρόσωπον and one ὑπόστασις. There is, therefore, a concern to assert unity at every level, so that the

[50]Stead, *Divine Substance*, 193.

[51]George L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: S.P.C.K., 1956) 197.

[52]Ibid., 209.

[53]Stead, *Divine Substance*, 241.

[54]For a comprehensive account of this word's background, see Eduard Lohse, "πρόσωπον," *TDNT* 6 (1968) 768–80.

[55]My translation. The original Greek is εἰς ἕν πρόσωπον καὶ μίαν ὑπόστασιν συντρεχούσης, οὐκ εἰς δύο πρόσωπα μεριζόμενον ἢ διαιρούμενον. See Bindley and Green, *Oecumenical Documents*, 193 and 235.

[56]Prestige, *Patristic Thought*, 157.

Alexandrian interest and tendency prevails. Thus far, the union has been expressed at the expense of the distinction, but the distinction will be emphasized in the second part of the main section of the definition.

The word ὑπόστασις is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to translate into a single English word.[57] Much depends upon the context in which it is used. Its origins lie in Greek science and medicine where the meaning has to do with the sediment or deposit, for example, of urine or stagnant water. Here the sense is simply one of "what settles." Helmut Koester comments that "a constituent part of the concept is that this is the part which can be seen, which manifests itself, which takes concrete shape."[58] In philosophical use, it later came to mean the reality which lies behind appearances. Referring, therefore, to the particular underlying concrete reality of a thing, it means reality and genuineness and has very physical overtones.[59] Cyril of Alexandria used the word most notably in his expression "hypostatic union" to assert the underlying unity of the human and divine in Christ. While the Alexandrian understanding of ὑπόστασις was one of a dynamic unity, the Antiochene view, preserving the impassability of the divinity and the distinction between the elements involved, saw it as a static phenomenon. In the Chalcedonian definition there is only one hypostasis: μίαν ὑπόστασιν.[60] The Alexandrian use of the word in order to assert unity has prevailed. The lack of a human ὑπόστασις in the Chalcedonian Christ, however, is a major point of weakness that will not be overcome until an adequate concept of ἐνυπόστατος has been articulated. As yet, there remains an undermining of the humanity of Christ and the balance between the union and the distinction is disturbed.

The word ἐνυπόστατος, best translated in christology as "having independent existence,"[61] does not occur in the Chalcedonian definition, but is first found in Leontius of Byzantium in the sixth century. It emerged in order to secure a real humanity in the incarnate Christ while still speaking of a hypostatic union. Leontius's view was that the human ὑπόστασις had become enpersoned or really existed in the divine ὑπόστασις. Ephraim of Antioch later refined this notion and spoke of a σύνθετος ἡ ὑπόστασις, a "synthetic" or "composite" ὑπόστασις.[62] In these views the human element is at its fullest and most personal precisely when it is in union with the divine ὑπόστασις. They attempt to balance the relationship between

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[57]For a comprehensive account of this word's background, see Helmut Koester, "ὑπόστασις," *TDNT* 8 (1969) 572–89.

[58]Ibid., 574.

[59]Sellers, *Council of Chalcedon*, 139.

[60]See Bindley and Green, *Oecumenical Documents*, 193.

[61]LPGL, s.v. ἐνυπόστατος.

[62]See John McIntyre, *The Shape of Christology* (London: SCM, 1966) 100–101.

the human and the divine elements, and in doing so a particular notion of full humanity emerges.

In the Chalcedonian definition the word φύσις ("nature") articulates the distinction between the human and divine elements.[63] The interpretation of this word defines the type of christology which emerges. It is said that Christ is "made known in two natures."[64] The usual translation is simply "nature," but this still needs interpretation. Lampe defines the word as: "nature; essence of a person or thing with the attributes proper to it; essence considered from the point of view of activity or function."[65] Clearly there are overlaps with οὐσία and ὑπόστασις, but the sense of the function of a thing in itself or of individual character predominates. The word, which could also be seen in generic or collective terms as a species, was used widely in theology and philosophy in relation to the divine nature, the trinity, christology, and the natural world.

In the Antiochene tradition, φύσις was used to articulate the distinction within the unity of the person of Christ. Theodore and Nestorius spoke of two natures in order to maintain the two realities within the union and to avoid any confusion at the most fundamental levels. The Alexandrian tradition, especially Cyril and Eutyches, saw φύσις as more individual than generic and therefore saw a threat to the unity of Christ in the Antiochene claim to two natures. The Alexandrians, therefore, affirmed the unity in terms of nature: two natures before the union, but one after. In the Chalcedonian definition, the Antiochene practice is maintained and the distinction is articulated in terms of nature (ἐν δύο φύσεσιν, or "in two natures"). The unity is spoken of as μίαν ὑπόστασιν ("one" ὑπόστασις).[66] Although there is overlap in the meaning of the terms, they are used in this way to articulate both unity and distinction.

However, modern theology has shown considerable differences regarding the actual definition of φύσις. The basic divide has been between those who understand this word in its static sense, such as Schleiermacher, Tillich, and the majority of the Enlightenment tradition,[67] and those who have in-

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[63]For a comprehensive account of this word's background, see Helmut Koester, "φύσις," *TDNT* 9 (1968) 251–77.

[64]Translation by Sellers, *Council of Chalcedon*, 211. The original Greek is ἐν δύο φύσεσιν... γνωριζόμενον. See also Bindley and Green, *Oecumenical Documents*, 193 and 235.

[65]LPGL, s.v. φύσις.

[66]For ἐν δύο φύσεσιν and μίαν ὑπόστασιν see Bindly and Green, *Oecumenical Documents*, 193 and 235.

[67]See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (3 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928) 393; and Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (trans. Hugh R. Mackintosh and James S. Stewart; London: SCM, 1978) 2. 148.

terpreted it in a dynamic sense, such as John Macquarrie.[68] The dynamic
sense seems to be correct in the context of patristic christology. Koester
notes that the basic sense of the word is "to become" and "to grow"; used
in early Greek literature in relation to plant life, it has to do with devel-
opment and budding, and was then associated with the form, nature, con-
stitution, and character of human beings and animals.[69] In his *Metaphysics*,
Aristotle gives seven meanings for the word φύσις, but the predominant
meaning has to do with movement and development. Aristotle says that it
is "the source from which the primary movement in each natural object is
present in it in virtue of its own essence."[70] Thus, φύσις has to do with the
growth, development, and movement of a thing towards its true character.
The sense is essentially fluid and dynamic.

At the heart of the Chalcedonian definition lie four negative terms that
are widely known and discussed. The document states that "one and the
same Christ" is "recognized in two natures, ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως,
ἀδιαιρέτως, ἀχωρίστως (unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, insepa-
rably)."[71] Although the words are negative, they safeguard the crucial in-
sight of this document in a very positive way. The positive intention here
is to stave off the two errors of merging the union into confusion and of
turning the distinction into duality. There are two words aimed at each
error: The first two, ἀσυγχύτως and ἀτρέπτως, are aimed at
Apollinarianism; the second two, ἀδιαιρέτως and ἀχωρίστως are aimed
at Nestorianism. While the errors are negated, the truthful insights of each
christological tradition are retained. Again, two natures are affirmed: "the
distinction of the natures being in no way denied because of the unity."[72]
Here, there is neither a mixing nor a total separation of the elements, but
a harmonization of the two natures, a "running together into one" (εἰς
ἕν. . . συντρεχούσης),[73] a distinction within a unity.

[68]John Macquarrie, "Foundation Documents of the Faith III: The Chalcedonian Defini-
tion," *ExpTim* 91 (1979) 68–72.

[69]See Koester, "φύσις," 252–53.

[70]Aristotle *Metaph*. 1014b (trans. and eds. J. A. Smith and William D. Ross; 12 vols.;
London: Oxford University Press, 1908–1952) 5. 4.16.

[71]Translation from Bindley and Green, *Oecumenical Documents*, 235. It is worth noting
that not only are these four terms not wholly negative in intention, but they are also actually
adverbs not adjectives. This makes the usual translation "without confusion, without change,
without division, without separation" less appropriate. The translation I have used draws
attention to the fluid and dynamic nature of the relationship between human and divine in the
Chalcedonian definition.

[72]My translation. The original Greek is οὐδαμοῦ τῆς τῶν φύσεων διαφορᾶς ἀνῃρημένης
διὰ τὴν ἕνωσιν. See Bindley and Green, *Oecumenical Documents*, 193 and 235.

[73]My translation. Bindley and Green have "concurring into one." See *Oecumenical Docu-
ments*, 235.

   This consideration of the main words used in the Chalcedonian definition indicates that the two models of the Antiochene and Alexandrian traditions merge to form a single, dynamic, Chalcedonian christology. Two basic features are articulated together to form the single insight found in this document for the first time. First, the affirmation of unity between the human and the divine is achieved essentially through the words ὁμοούσιος, πρόσωπον, and ὑπόστασις, with some clarification offered by the word ἐνυπόστατος. The word ὁμοούσιος affirms unity of the divinity of the λόγος with the father, on the one hand, and the unity of the humanity of Jesus with humanity, on the other. The other two words affirm unity between the human and the divine within Christ. The second feature, the affirmation of distinction between the human and the divine, is articulated with the word φύσις, interpreted in a dynamic sense. These combine into the single insight of the distinction within the unity in the relationship between the human and the divine.

   In Chalcedonian christology, then, the two elements of humanity and divinity are united and yet distinct. The double vision mentioned at the beginning of this article is very much in evidence. Humanity and divinity are simultaneously present in a dynamic relation similar to that between lovers or between the notes in a musical chord.[74] In the relationship between human beings in love, the individuals retain identity while simultaneously relating to the other. They form a new union while remaining separate and distinct persons. When two or three musical notes sound together, the individual notes sound clearly and distinctly, while also making a new sound together in harmony. In both cases, the union does not eliminate the individuality, nor does the individuality destroy the union. In Chalcedonian christology there is a similar notion of individuality in relationship: a lively, tensive, and fertile interplay between God and humanity. The distinct elements retain their identity within the union. I maintain that it is significant that the notion of a dynamic relation between God and humanity, sought in so many discussions of the meaning of theological language, is readily available in the christology of Chalcedon.

▓ Conclusion

   As mentioned earlier, both Lindbeck and McFague view the Chalcedonian definition with suspicion. Lindbeck sees the language as second-order, while for McFague it is simply static. In looking at the Chalcedonian definition itself, however, I have found that its christology, drawing as it does upon the Antiochene and Alexandrian traditions, attempts to articulate a com-

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   [74]For a discussion of music and christology, see Colin Gunton, *Yesterday and Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983) 115–24.

plex, fluid relationship between the human and the divine. Far from being static and negative, it produces, through subtle and powerful language, a fine-tuned statement of a dynamic relation between the two elements. The human and the divine are united to each other and yet remain distinct within the union. In a very positive way, this christology indicates how the human and the divine can relate and yet remain separate. They can appear together without confusion; there is simultaneous union and distinction and the elements retain their separate identities while existing together in tensive relation.

My overarching statement is not that the christology of Chalcedon can provide some sort of theory of theological language, nor do I wish to encourage a return to Lindbeck's notion of christology as regulative, simply applying Chalcedon as an external measure to our notions of theological language. Rather, the point is that Chalcedonian christology can provide a context in which a more adequate notion of human language about God may emerge for Christian theology. Barth emphasized revelation in Jesus as the context in which human language about God is most properly viewed. Indeed, for him, christology constituted the touchstone and center of all human knowledge.[75] Again, the aim in this article is not simply to apply this measure to our notions of language and fall once again into a form of absolutism. In light of Chalcedonian christology, however, it is necessary to keep constantly in view the very real human limitations of language about God, while also taking seriously the possibility that such language is not merely expressive. While human language may be inadequate with regard to speaking about God, it is possible, nevertheless, to claim that in the end one really speaks about God. This context enables the double vision to be kept the center as notions of language about God are constructed. For Christians, God can only be known and spoken of in embodied and worldly form, and it is here that language and christology are fundamentally related.

Chalcedon articulates a distinction between the human and the divine and maintains that there is a real difference between the two elements. I have shown that a specific word is used in relation to this: two natures (φύσεις). Forming a notion of how language about God functions in light of Chalcedon involves keeping these two natures distinct. Language about God should not be understood to operate in a cognitive propositionalist fashion. Idolatry or identifying God with human language for God should be avoided. Indeed, a variety of metaphors should be valued in articulating the divine, since human language is distinct from God. Nonetheless, it is possible to maintain that language about God relates to God positively. The

[75]Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline* (trans. G. T. Thomson; 1949; reprinted London: SCM, 1957) 66.

other side of Chalcedonian christology articulates unity between the human and the divine. Specific words—ὑπόστασις and πρόσωπον—are used in affirming their relation. In constructing a notion of theological language in light of Chalcedon, Lindbeck's experiential expressive drift and McFague's undermining of the positive side of metaphor can be avoided. Metaphors for God must not proliferate amorphously, as if all were of equal value.

This christological climate leads to understanding language about God as metaphorical. As McFague explains, metaphor contains a double, inter-active element, an "is and is not" dynamic. Even where this is stressed, however, a drift into expressivism is still possible. The "is not" can tri-umph over the "is." Within a christological climate it is necessary always to be conscious of both the positive and the negative contents of metaphor. Although metaphors do not quite mean what they say, they do, neverthe-less, have meaning. Recalling the discussion of Lindbeck and McFague, one should always keep a grounding in the ontological or objective side of the language, maintaining that it is expressive but also genuinely cognitive. The negative side of metaphor in the Chalcedonian context militates against idolatry, while its positive element militates against irrelevance and mean-inglessness. Thus, to speak of God as mother or father would not imply that God really is a mother or a father. It would imply that God really is motherly or fatherly, even though such notions should not be absolutized. Similarly, to speak of the eucharist as a sacrifice, of the church as the pilgrim people of God, or of salvation as justification would be to affirm that it is appropriate to speak of the eucharist, the church, and salvation in these ways, while not reducing the realities thus named to the metaphors used. In this way the double vision of the language and the reality depicted can be preserved in every case.[76] Notions of language would be affected more than the actual use of language. All notions of language presuppose or imply an ontology and an epistemology. A Chalcedonian climate would keep these more clearly in view. It would enable Christians to see both the human and the divine in theological language, but not mistake one for the other.

[76]Neither Lindbeck nor McFague doubts, in principle, that theological language has mean-ing and achieves reference. Broadly speaking, both operate from a position of critical realism in which theological language has meaning but must not be absolutized. It is not my concern to enter into the problems of reference in relation to theological language. The notions of the fixing of reference found in the following discussions, however, would certainly be continu-ous with my overall argument: Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981); Keith S. Donnellan, "Reference and Definite Descriptions," in Stephen P. Schwartz, ed., *Naming, Necessity and Natural Kinds* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977) 42–65; Richard Boyd, "Metaphor and Theory Change: What is 'Metaphor' a Metaphor for?" in An-drew Ortony, ed., *Metaphor and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 356–408; and Soskice, *Metaphor*, chaps. 7 and 8.

Like Lindbeck and McFague, the fathers of the Christian church in the patristic, medieval, and reformation periods were aware of the limitations of human language about God. Nevertheless, they attempted to speak about God and often did so in metaphors. Indeed, it was in their christology that their metaphors occurred most frequently. They had no specific philosophy of metaphor but knew that in speaking about God metaphors are indispensable. They experienced vividly the "double vision of a physical and a spiritual world simultaneously present" and sought to articulate this as adequately as they could. Their language about God—and especially their metaphors—were closely associated with their christology. The decline in appreciation of the power of metaphor, and in some circles, of Chalcedonian christology, has been predominantly a Western, post-Enlightenment process.[77] At the present time, however, the complexities of human language about God are becoming more widely appreciated and metaphor is reemerging into a respectable and powerful position at the heart of Christian theology. It is important that the fundamental relation between the divine and the human be kept in mind as notions of theological language are formed. My suggestion, therefore, has been that the notion of this relation found in the christology of Chalcedon can make a considerable difference to one of Christian theology's most difficult tasks.

[77]Many factors have contributed to this decline, one of the most obvious being the development and predominance of logical positivism, especially as found in Alfred J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (1936; reprinted Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971).